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I guess the eighteenth century suffers from being tagged with the name of the age of reason and when many people think of the eighteenth century they sum up a whole collection of images the Brandenburg Concerto with their mathematical Serenity.

The proper study of mankind is man Alexander Pope that rather pseudo Greek architecture with columns and Delta architecture the whole thing orderly rational imperturbable unshakable. In fact, of course there always was a tension in the eighteenth century between its striving after this cool and rational out of a mode of living its attempt to reduce philosophy to the form of a science and its uneasy awareness of the subterranean emotions.

It's no coincidence that among many great eighteenth century thinkers there was a partial or entire suspicion of madness and this even spread into the hands of this into the minds of the stupider and more official classes so that at the end of the eighteenth century it could be said that every crowned head of Europe

was or had been mad.

Napoleon was a difference but he'd only just arrived. Now the quest for rationality stemmed out of two main impulses. One was a reaction to the political turmoil and chaos which had characterized much of Europe from Britain to Russia during the middle of the seventeenth century.

Men were inclined to accept authority. Incidentally that is the period after the middle of the seventeenth century as one in which the rights of women were very greatly []so Authority was seen as a good thing in many quarters and the desire for a quiet life was given a boost by the fact that it was a time of sustained and steady economic progress with the exception of one sharp recession round about seventeen ten to seventeen twenty triggered by an unprecedented famine the whole century from about sixteen seventy five to seventeen seventy five is one in Western Europe of steadily improving living standards and steadily improving economic growth. And this is a climate as you know in which optimistic philosophies tend to flourish.

The other factor was of course the outgrowth of this increasing interest in scientific discovery which I spoke to about when we discussed Hobbes this advance into mathematics and physics and chemistry was still progressing and there was a corresponding tendency to try and reduce philosophy to the same sort of scientific principles and the man whose name is associated with this predominantly was the Englishman John Locke L-O-C-K-E.

Now Locke was by training a physician and this meant that he was abreast of all the latest advances in anatomy and physiology he was very much tuned to the idea of man being a body rather than a soul or a spirit and he was of all things a political physician in his adolescence and early manhood the English Civil War had taken place he became the personal physician to the first Earl of Shaftsbury who was a prominent and troublesome politician of the restoration period.

He had to flee into exile in Holland for a while but in sixteen eighty-eight that year which the British with characteristic arrogance described as the Glorious Revolution. If you look in the Oxford dictionary even today you will find that the revolution is described not as the French or the Russian or the Cuban but the sixteen eighty-eight fracas in which hardly a drop of blood was shed. Well, this glorious revolution occurred when James the second the last of the Stuarts who tried to impose autocracy on Britain was deposed and succeeded by William and Mary.

Now the politics of this period concerned block greatly he was particularly concerned to refute the old Divine Right of Kings ideals which was still surviving and to refute them from physiological principles and his main contributions to political theory are as follows.

First that he pushed quite as far as Hobbes the idea of the individual and the individual's interests as being the starting point in political philosophy. He had absorbed something from Descartes that knowledge began with the cogito ergo sum proposition in his case in Locke's case it was more a matter of experience sensations and therefore I exist and in fact one of the main underpinnings of

Locke's philosophy was the idea of man as comprised of a record of sensations of the outside world.

Man as perceiving the outside world and as processing this information almost entirely through his senses and his physiology with only a notional remnant left for ideas of God or any other influence and from this he proceeded to the idea that as in Hobbes they were in a modified form that men were greatly concerned with their self-protection but to this he added the concept that a man's property was almost as central to his essential being but a man's property and himself for technically identical and he argued with a good deal of simple eloquence that what I create what I own what I develop is as much a part of me as my own body my own mind.

I'll come back to this in a moment but it's the defence of property as well as the defence of self which concerns Locke and he rejected Hobbes idea of the surrender of rights to the Leviathan in Locke's view power could not be trusted and the deplorable record of the Stuarts underlined this. Instead he saw government as proceeding from the old view of a social contract something which had gone underground after Thomas Aquinas and was now to enjoy a glorious resurrection and the social contract simply involved in individuals choosing to give limited power to the government to exercise authority and to protect their property and their persons other than that men retained their individual rights and if the government failed to carry out its share of the contract, if the government was unable to protect men and their property or if the government actually used that power entrusted to it to turn oppressive as

the stewards had then the citizens had the right to overthrow the government and replace it with another more suited to their purposes.

Now all this it is pretty plain to see came out of the political debates of Britain in the seventeenth century and it gave no attention at all to the rights of women servants the dispossessed or the lower classes. It was a perfect doctrine made for an age of individualism and it was a doctrine which therefore gained considerable acceptance in a time of economic growth.

It has to be said that Locke was not a profoundly original thinker what he was a consensus thinker a man who pulled together many of the ideas which were floating in the intellectual air of his time and even among practical politicians and gave them a theoretical underpinning which enhanced them with an air of academic respectability well Locke who's enormously successful in all those great eighteenth century houses his bust held the place of honour and the reason for this was twofold.

First of all because within England the settlement of sixteen eighty-nine which transferred effective power from the crown to the aristocracy allied with some of the Mercantile bourgeoisie lasted for over a century. It was the dominant ethos it worked very well for England and therefore it became pretty well holy writ but Locke also enjoyed a reputation on the continent because Britain had advanced politically rather further than the autocracy is of France, Spain, the German States Europe in general and therefore Locke's insistence on the rights of the individual and the safeguarding of his property seemed like fairly radical stuff to people who were still back at the stage of absolute monarchy and for these

reasons, Locke enjoyed a somewhat disproportionate influence. There were two strands in Locke's thought which led to development one was the Idea of looking on science and physiology as the basis of political philosophy and this was run by some of his successors in Britain almost to an intellectual dead end.

In the first place about fifty years later there was an Irish bishop George Berkeley spelt B-e-r-k-e-l-e-y because the British pronounce better than they spell and Berkeley was the Bishop of Cloyne in Ireland he was one of that highly creative minority of Anglo Irish who are probably the only respectable colonial minority that the world has ever seen and Berkeley pondered on how Locke's theory of sensation could be reconciled with his view of himself as a Christian bishop.

After all if reality depended on perception if the only proof of the existence of anything in the world was what you thought you saw, how could you be sure that it wasn't an illusion, how could you be sure of the reality of everything how could you avoid that seeing into a pessimistic agnosticism and Berkeley's courage in pushing this problem further was quite considerable but it was saved by his insistence that the whole world and everything in it was a concept in the mind of God that God perceive the world even if there was nobody else there to do the perceiving that reality might depend on perception but the perception of God was what saved the situation.

Many of you will have heard the limerick which generations of Oxford and Cambridge undergraduates have been brought up on about Berkeley's dilemma there was a young man who said God must think it exceedingly odd if now I

don't know I've got it. If he sees of this tree should cease to be when no one's around in the quad and there's this little [] which says Dear sir your astonishment's odd I am always about in the clot and that's why the tree will continue to these since observed by yours faithfully, God.

Anyway Berkeley then made this desperate Theological high mark if you like in order to save the game but it only took a doer rational start to brush aside this saving clause and to pursue the dilemma of perception to its ultimate and this was David Hume who was born in seventeen eleven and died in seventeen seventy six therefore about twenty five years younger than Berkeley.

Hume was a many sided man he could be a whole lecturer himself. But I want simply to concentrate on two facets of him at this stage. one is that he was a historian and he was a fairly sceptical historian. He was a man who believed in going back to the original sources, going back to the facts and not allowing doctrine to deflect him but the other and more important thing was his philosophical speculation He focussed upon this question of perception very hard.

he pointed out that perception was often used as the basis of prediction that because every time one billiard ball bumped against another that set it into motion we assumed that this would continue to be the case in the future but that there was no strictly logical reason to infer this. no prediction about the future could be predicated on what had happened in the past. Laws in science, laws in any form of science were only a form of history they were only generalizations based upon people's perceptions of recorded experience they were not of any use necessarily in planning for the future excepting by an act of

faith and by what the common man described as common sense.

In other words what Hume was offering was a kind of paradox which suggested that if rationality was applied to philosophy continuously and with unrelenting rigour then philosophy might dissolve then there might be no meaningful questions left in philosophy and in some ways Hume brought the philosophers up against difficulties into which they were not prepared to go further until you reach the scepticism of the twentieth century the linguistic analysts the logical positivists the philosophers who see the science of philosophy as concerning mainly of definitions of terms and the avoidance of ambiguities so that what Hume done was to bring reason up to its limits that if reason is used it may be intended as a basis for the maintenance of a political system it may be intended as the basis for the maintenance of a philosophy but in fact its main use is a destructive use it is to increase the areas of uncertainty it is to increase the areas about which dogmatism is impossible.

Now Hume went down that lane because he was an enemy of the dogmatic the assertive he was a born critic a man who was born irreverent and he matched in perfectly with that established stable, aristocratic world of the eighteenth century that was confident of its position and which was not equipped to quote with those great gusts of political emotion which herald change.

Now at this point I need to turn aside from the net British Isles and to focus a little less narrowly on Western Europe. One of the other great characteristics of the eighteenth century was that it was a very international age among those

who could afford to travel.

Despite the fact that numerous wars were fought they were fairly limited affairs on the whole involving only the professional soldiers and the unfortunate presence within the immediate vicinity of the battlefield and even in time of war there was a continual traffic both in individuals and ideas between France and Britain between France and Germany between Austria and Spain, so that the influence of intellectuals was widespread on a basis which had never before happened.

Now it happened that in Europe most of the political philosophers had been stressing the perfectibility and the increasing but nevertheless the increasing welfare of the world, the man whose name is mostly associated with this philosophy of optimism was Gottfried Leibniz the Mathematician l-e-i-b-n-i-z another curious character born sixteen forty six died seventeen sixteen spent most of his life in the court of Hanover and of course that was the rulers of Hanover who were invited over to England in the eighteenth century to form that interminable line of Georges and Leibniz was the court historian a job in which he took his responsibilities in such detailed seriousness that when he died at the age of seventy he carried the story no further than the year one thousand and nine but his great contribution was to foster a philosophy of optimism that the world having been created by God who was perfection must of itself be perfect that any apparent imperfections arose because of a faultiness of man but that with the increasing application of reason these imperfections might in time be got over and in fact it was Leibniz who was in the popular mind associated with the saying that all was for the best in the best of all possible worlds.

Now this is a horribly crude oversimplification of righteousness thought he was a profound mathematician he was a subtle writer and philosopher but as often happens with subtle philosophers what the public gets hold of is a crude oversimplification of one aspect and that's what happened in Leibniz's case and this was a doctrine which of course admirably suited the autocratic regimes of Western Europe if always for the best and on the best of all possible worlds then it was useless if not downright impious to wish for change and to act that change that reforms would come in their own good time and in the meantime one had to put up with the world because it was not capable of more rapid improvement.

In other word it was an optimism which served a conservative philosophy and it was one of the things which brought the use of reason into a certain amount of disrepute later on.

This view pervaded Europe until the middle of the eighteenth century and among writers who took a fairly optimistic view of the human condition one was the French writer Voltaire and Voltaire comes nearly fifty years later he's born in sixteen ninety-four he dies very old in seventeen seventy eight. Voltaire was a critic a satirist a cynic a great admirer of the English system which he saw as more conducive to liberty than the French monarchy and aristocracy of the eighteenth century and much of his early career his young days up to the time he was about sixty were taken in satirizing the abuses of the French state in a way which suggested he confidently looked forward to the overthrow of these abuses.

The church attracted his special hostility abolish the infamous was his praise and he wielded a destructive pen perhaps to the most effective extent when he wrote a long poem called La Pucelle which is a mock heroic set of couplets about the career of Joan of Arc in which she is in constant danger of losing her clothes and her virginity and has a number of hairbreadth escapes of a remarkably amusing slapstick variety is one of the few works yet to be translated into English and market it in paperback.

However this irreverent cynical undercutting based on the view that most of the stupidity and follies and evils in the world were old fashioned that time was on the side of reason that they would be overcome this belief deserted Voltaire and his old age he is like a number of intellectuals of his time seems to have been profoundly influenced by the Lisbon earthquake of seventeen fifty five a natural disaster when a combined earthquake and tidal wave wiped out over two hundred thousand inhabitants of the city of Lisbon on a Sunday morning when most of them were attending church and this incident seems to have struck the eighteenth century with a reminder of the essential irrationality of the world of the fact that the innocent could become victims of the fact that the powers of nature were not controllable by reason and certainly Voltaire here as well as a number of lesser writers you can see from seventeen fifty five onwards a tendency to question the all powerful efficacy of reason a seeking after other mainsprings of human conduct other reasons to belief other standards which they could into their masthead.

In Voltaire case his reaction against treason probably went a little further than writing that short story Candide the story of the innocent young man who has a

tutor Dr Pangloss based on Leibniz who []...for the best of the best of all worlds and sticks doggedly to that doctrine through a whole series of mutilations tortures ravishing thefts wars plagues and other cumulative misfortunes.

However, Voltaire brilliant and amusing as he was essentially a destructive influence a counter-attack a not a creative influence and the question was now open as the eighteenth century rolled into its second half if reason was under attack as the supreme underpinning of human decisions and human philosophy if reason was found to be no longer sufficient if it was not actually possible to apply pure scientific principles to the study of mankind in the study of government where were men and to look for some other moral basis of behaviour.

The answer was to be found in two very different ways by an Irishman and a Frenchman or a Swiss he was actually Edmund Burke and Jean Jacque Rousseau who both revolted against reason who both revolted against the glorification of the individual at the expense of the group and who paid their readers to return to a study of group wisdom to subordinate their pursuit of individual happiness to the interests of a larger community.

In Burke and in Rousseau we have three things being stressed which had not previously been stressed in the eighteenth century to any considerable extent. One of them was the role of emotion feeling conscience the interior sentiments as a basis for conducts supplementary to and perhaps at times even overriding the dictates of Pure Reason.

Secondly there was this reminder of responsibility to the community as well as to the possessive individual and thirdly particularly in Rousseau but even to a slight extent in Burke there is a reversion to the importance of right education in producing the good citizen a suggestion that nurture may be greater than nature but it's not simply enough to understand the rules underlying human nature but it's also necessary to understand the principles on which humans are educated and in which their perceptions of the world are trying to happen. And these are the three important things which the early eighteenth century in its stress on reason and its quest for the rational had ceased to pay sufficient attention to and Burke and Rousseau came back to this with a vengeance.

Of the two, Rousseau comes first in time and was the more influential. He was born in seventeen twelve in the city of Geneva, the city of John Calvin and it can be argued that there was a kind of transformed Calvinism in much of what he wrote that like Calvin he stressed the importance of the individual conscience and the feelings of the individual conscience as a guide for right to conduct that like Calvin he said wanted to suppress the premises of the individual in favour of obedience to the community but the world one or two differences as we shall see.

Well, Rousseau's career has been a subject of controversy drew out partly this was because he wrote one of the most honest autobiographies on record at least it may not have been honest but at least it was one of the first autobiographies in which the writer told his readers all the bad things about himself as well as all the virtuous things and some have suggested that Rousseau even exaggerated

this modern readers find it a little hard to accept that his method of birth control was to send his children to a foundling home where they would perish young.

But any rate there's plenty of evidence that he was a most awkward cantankerous character who combined a pathetic belief in his own good intentions and his own sweet natured lovable mankind with a complete incapacity to keep friends and it was not surprising when he died eventually in seventeen seventy eight same year as Voltaire that there were strong suspicions of suicide.

If you want the case against Burke's personality put it it's pettiest and most amusing the relevant chapter of Russell's history of Western Philosophy is the place to go.

However it's always a mistake in philosophy or any other subject to imagine that because a man was a complete no hoper that his ideas can be swept under the table and Rousseau's ideas whether one likes them or not have been profoundly important what Rousseau did was to take once again the concept of the social contract but to urge very strongly that a partial social contract was worse than imperfect that if individuals were allowed to pursue even some of their own selfish interests that these would eventually conflict with the interests of other individuals and that they would conflict still more strongly with the welfare of the whole.

Rousseau knew the facts of the eighteenth century where the aristocrats claim privileges which were denied to the ordinary citizen and he would fully have

sympathize with those modern political philosophers who see politics as a clash of interest groups but he would have said that there is overriding this a communal general good a good welfare of the whole state of the whole community which has to take pride of place before any private interest unlike Hobbes he did not see this as being secured by the choice of a leader who should have totalitarian authority thereafter but he saw it in the Citizens voluntarily subordinating themselves to something which he called the General will.

Now this concept to the general will is all the difficulties it is not quite the same as team spirit it is I suppose often illustrated by people who say that it eighteen men go onto the football field they may not want to get kicked in the head they may not want to get hooted by the spectators but the general will is that they want to win the game and therefore they suppress their individual wills which is to get out of the way when they find a thirteen stone fullback coming towards them. And that's part of it. But on the serious basis it takes up the right of the citizens at their arms and repudiating Hobbes says that of course men seek to preserve their lives but the good of the community may require them to fight in its defence.

The different what he really comes on how you interpret the general will.

Rousseau was himself enough of an outsider enough of a minority man to distrust the tyranny of the majority he was prepared to admit that majority will was not necessarily the same as the general will and that the majority might be mistaken and might be oppressive in what it did but then if that was the case how to determine the general will and Rousseau could only appeal to the

aggregate of the individual conscience of the citizen to suggest that on public questions each citizen should search his heart should ask himself what is for the best of the community and having undertaken this exercise in self-criticism should then agree to follow that even when it clashed with our own narrow and particular interests.

There was also the question of who executed the general will when it was determined and who in fact went about catalysing it and determining it and here Rousseau's ideas were not especially realistic. Brought up as he was in a small city state such as Geneva his model tended to be a small city state such as Geneva or such as the states ancient Greece which were such a persuasive model for the classically educated in the eighteenth century.

But these methods of consultation were entirely inappropriate for the states which were emerging in and the eighteenth century for France with its twenty-five million people for Britain with its rapidly growing industrialization with a complex Austrian Empire there was no way in which individual consciences could be consulted on any meaningful basis.

Somewhat unhappily Rousseau had been prepared to concede that there might be times of dire emergency when a great man might step forward a great legislator a lawgiver a man with unusual powers of discernment who could assess the general will and put it into action and this escape cause was to be a let out for numerous totalitarian dictators they're after.

Napoleon who read Rousseau avidly in his youth was probably the first who in seizing power advanced as one of his claims to legitimise that he was the exponent of the general will of the French people that he was carrying out the general will which was higher but more deserving of obedience than the wills of individuals but before that one can see something of this thought already taking place among the leaders of the French Revolution.

And a very eminent scholar J L Talmon has written a whole book called *The Origins of Totalitarian Dictatorship* to put the finger on Rousseau and to suggest that it is from the views he advanced that the whole unhappy catalogue of twentieth century dictatorship Hitler Stalin and the rest of them drew some of their philosophical legitimise which is placing a pretty high premium on the power of ideas.

However, I think this sort of dictatorship was far from Rousseau's intention that what he was wanting to stress was that if politics began with the individual it began with the individual conscience and not with the individual calculation of rational self-interest and that there were occasions when the individual's interests must be subordinated to those of the community and his stress on education led him to urge that the Education of the Young was too important to be left haphazardly to establish ideals that there should be Great attention paid to allowing the child to develop his conscience to develop his concepts of virtue and that these concepts of virtue were ascertainable and more or less reflected the highest aspirations of the community.

This in its time was an advance on the neglect of educational theory which had occurred in much of the eighteenth century but again it has been argued that Rousseau in this way leaves that door open for all sorts of conditioning of the young citizen.

I'm sure he didn't mean to be a systematicist this he was an enthusiast he was a man who strove desperately after emotional expression and honesty and his philosophy has to be read in the light of this quest would it been perked the situation is a bit cloudier and more complicated because Burke was a practicing politician which Rousseau was not Burke was an Irishman who came to England and who without any aristocratic connections of his own made himself so useful to the great aristocratic circles of Britain that he was in politics for about thirty years his dates are born seventeen twenty nine goes into politics seventeen sixty five dies seventeen ninety seven.

Burke himself was a very emotional man but the importance of his thought is that in him the community overrides the individual but the community has to be always mindful of its history and its traditions unlike Rousseau he does not seek for the ideal standards of political conduct in the human heart in the dictates of conscience he stresses the view that no one individual is wise enough or impartial enough to possess the whole of political wisdom that a community stands or falls by the aggregate of experience which it has accumulated.

He is a somewhat evolutionary statesman he sees a kind of survival of the fittest among political institutions if something has survived in the Middle Ages this suggests that it is still functional but it still has a use that it ought not to be

swept away if on the other hand it's gone that means that its use had ceased but Burke stressed the fact that we should cherish the wisdom of our ancestors that if we all pooled our ideas and the ideas well they have to compete in the marketplace of men's minds that those which survive would inevitably be the best the most worthy of respect and reverence and that they ought to be followed.

Therefore and this led him into some somewhat inconsistent but always sincerely felt political postures he supported the American Revolution against the British government because he felt that the Americans were trying generally to adhere to the principles of John Locke and to the maintenance of property where as the government of George the third was endeavouring to pervert these principles and draw them away. He supported the Indians in India against the East India Company which was oppressing them because again he saw the merchants and adventurers as being a rapacious and self-seeking gang who were trying to break down an ancient culture in order to benefit their own pockets.

but the other hand he was hysterically opposed to the French Revolution where again he saw middle class politicians without any experience led astray by theory rolling down the institutions of centuries and totally sweeping away and disregarding the values of the community so that in the end Burke became known as a spokesman of conservative thought and he is still invoked quite often by those who would wish to urge that the community is greater than the individual but who would wish to pursue their thoughts in a conservative direction rather than in the direction of popular autocracy.

So between them both the Conservatives and radicals Burke and Rousseau had brought emotions had brought issues of conscience and feeling had brought the concept of the community back into thought reason as a guide to political conduct seems to have exploded itself seem to have revealed its limitations and the state was now set for a more turbulent a somewhat less cool a certainly less optimistic but in some ways a more fruitful debate among political philosophers and behind them among the more general philosophers who provided them with their basic ideas thinking.

End of Transcription