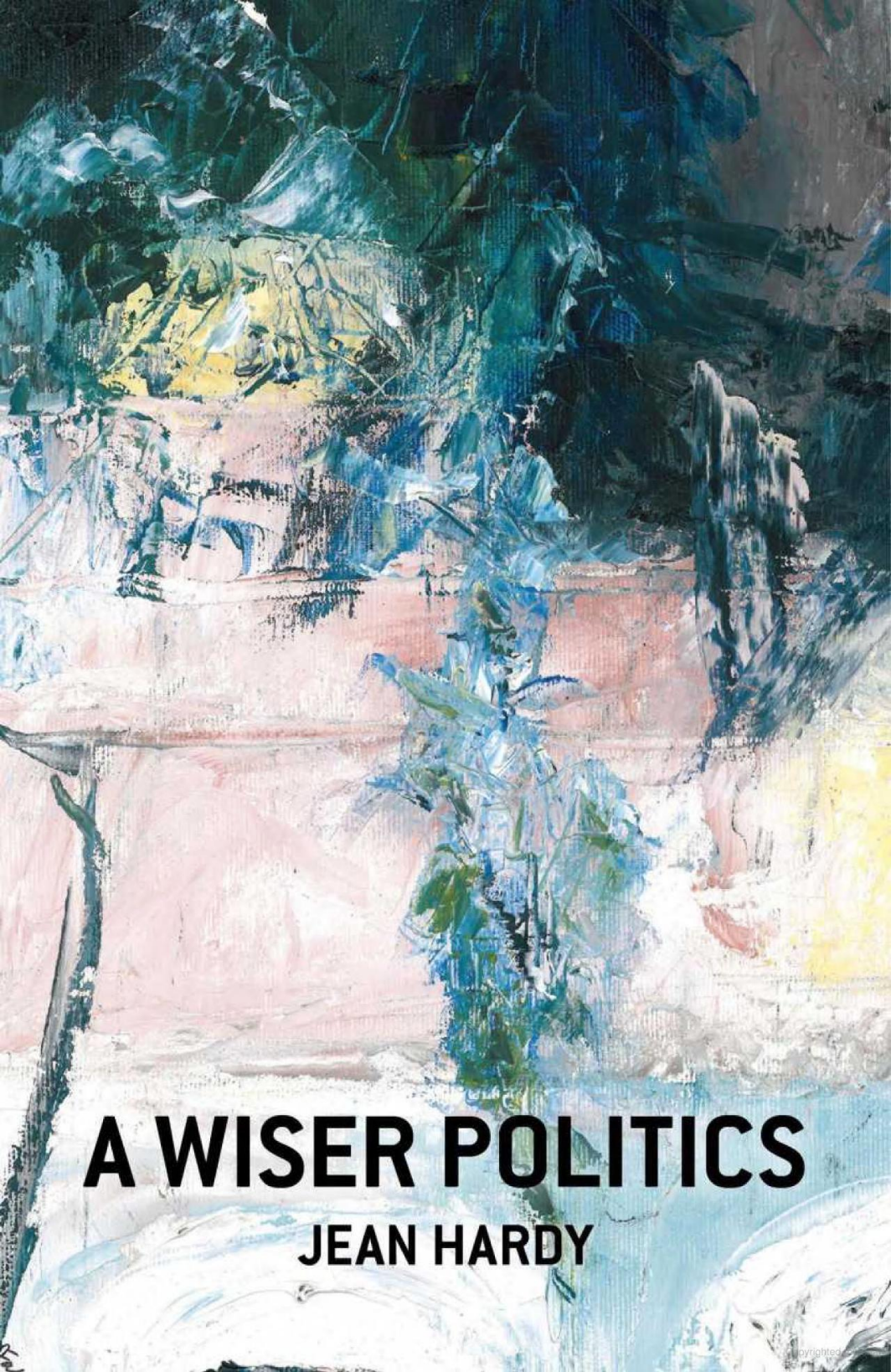

A WISER POLITICS

JEAN HARDY

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Dedication

to Jack Hardy, my father,
1908-1944
who died as a prisoner of war

**

Acknowledgements

my most heartfelt thanks are to the 1944 Education Act, which opened so many doors in my life, to a huge variety of people, and to amazing organizations, so that I can just go on learning with curiosity….

the particular organizations are:- the Nottingham Girls High School: the Universities of London, Birmingham and Brunel: Devon County Council Childrens Department: the Psychosynthesis and Education Trust: the Society of Friends (Quakers): the Scientific and Medical Network: St James Church, Piccadilly: Greenspirit: Dartington Hall: and Schumacher College in Devon, including the Tuesday Group

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and to the Devon countryside

Introduction

It is truly remarkable that in the intense political discussions that take place daily and energetically, there is little overt awareness of the deeper philosophy and values of the political parties. Liberal Democrats do not look back to the long history of liberalism and democracy in Europe to appeal to the electorate. Socialists do not mention the six-hundred year fight for equality between rich and poor, men and women, in this society or feel obliged to apologise for the fact that differences in wealth have increased in the thirteen years of their time in power. Conservatives are the most likely to feel their deep psychological and social adherence to competition, class and capitalism, but by and large prefer not to argue for these values, just to live them out. Indeed most political discourse and persuasion is on a far more pragmatic and managerial level, about policies on housing, education, foreign policy, immigration. It is very short-term: whereas, with the issues facing the world, we need to be thinking 'unto the seventh generation', as some older cultures did.

Where is the wider vision? Can we ever truly change our policies unless we can see our present system from a different more comprehensive, and more spiritual, level? Most societies that have ever existed have a social vision which begins with a story about the universe and the earth: an over-arching story which gives a meaning to the whole. But in ours, there is an extraordinary cultural and philosophical gap between everyday life, including politics, and a feeling for and relation to the earth, the universe and our human part in the whole.

I would therefore like to argue in this book for a way of thinking and feeling that links, as many earlier societies have done, Cosmos (a feeling for the Universe and the Earth), with Polis (the early Greek word for the political and social world, then rooted in a participatory democracy), and also Psyche (the

vexed but essential question of who we are as human beings). Such a perspective provides a realistic way into the nature of the politics we could pursue if we really wanted a wiser world: we desperately need such a vision. It is well known that you cannot solve problems at the same level as they occur.

* * *

The origins of this book began really early in my life. I was born in the 1930s to a working-class family in Nottingham, England. My father died in the 1939-45 war as a Japanese prisoner of war: my mother throughout the time of the War ran a Trade Union office. But the Education Act of 1944 meant that when my sister Ann and I passed the 11+ exam, we were able to go to the excellent Nottingham Girls High School. I subsequently took my first degree at Bedford College, London University, trained and worked for six years as a social worker, then spent the rest of my fulltime career as a University teacher.

The intellectual origins of this book, and other books I have written, came early in that time. I remember walking to my Junior School in the war through the council estate where we lived, thinking: "I wasn't expecting it to be like this". I must have been about seven. The world was full of men fighting and killing each other: my well-loved father had gone: many of the people around lived very harsh lives, and I suppose we did too. It seemed a rather disastrous place to have arrived – just as it must be so for many children in war-torn places today. The interesting thing, however, is that I seemed to have come expecting something different and enormously much better – what had gone wrong? Where did the expectation that things should be better come from? Wordsworth's "shades of the prison-house" had become obvious to me very early after the beginning of the war, but I also seemed to have a faint recollection of "trailing clouds of glory".

I have always been quite political. My father and mother had

both worked for the Nottingham Cooperative Society, and I have always regarded myself as a socialist.

I studied political philosophy in my Sociology degree, attended classes at the London School of Economics. But it wasn't until I was teaching in the Politics and Government Department at Brunel University thirty years later, that I began to develop the ideas basic to this book. I had studied quite a lot of psychology by this time: but what came as a gift when I was in my mid-forties, was finding the Psychosynthesis and Education Trust and their picture of human nature that spoke directly to me, as true. This picture was a dynamic one, quite like Jungian thinking, and contained a sense of spirit, of the clouds of glory I could still at times feel, and which has grown stronger. These two very separate disciplines, the political thought and the psychosynthesis vision, I had to keep quite separate at this time. I wrote my second book, *A Psychology with a Soul* originally in Ph.D. form and it was published in 1987: this book sells pretty well to this day, and has been in five languages.

I left Brunel in 1989, and eventually came to live in South Devon in 1997. I wrote and did all the research work for this politics book in 1993, and put it in a very large red box-file. Life then intervened: one important part of it was attending the ecological and holistic science teaching at Schumacher College, Dartington, and being deeply involved at Dartington Hall, which had been a most creative and beautiful intentional community, and is now a charity, inspiring music, the arts, education and the means for community living. Schumacher College has been a great opportunity for learning, this time about the community of the earth and all her creatures: the College is a living example of the way we all share the same planet and can contemplate the whole universe.

After a startling illness last year, I took out the red file I had put away in 1993, weaving all the learning of the last sixteen years into it, and started to write this book.

* * *

The book is in three sections. The first Part is on our present political myths and philosophies as they have developed since the beginning of the modern European era in the sixteenth century, bringing out the dialogues over the centuries: these stories have come to dominate the modern world. The first chapter is on the importance of stories, myths, and the ways these can become self-fulfilling prophecies. I am not intending to give any kind of definitive overview of the political views of the writers, but rather to weave a thread through the centuries of their philosophical values, around order and change, equality and freedom, government and economics, power and revolution.

The second Part is concerned with the five major elements, concerning the Others, which are omitted, in my view, from this dialogue. The first of these is the female and the feminine – to this day politics is a very male game, not only in terms of persons but also in values. The second is the longstanding, and indigenous, wisdom contained in the history of the human race which modern thinkers have tended to dismiss. The third amazing omission is the Earth and all her creatures who share this place with us – politics has developed as though we lived in a totally human Bubble, and this, I am sure, is the cause of many of our present serious problems. The sense of the spiritual, the mystery, the universe, no longer holds our politics in a framework of wholeness, and this is the fourth omission. And finally, and fifthly, modern politics started from what were concepts of human nature: questioning these concepts is no longer much discussed, even though 'the person', including the child, has been much studied in present times: however our new insights and this understanding has not been applied at all to political thought.

The function of the Third Part is to bring all these diverse and yet deeply related factors together, to begin to put words to a

renewed approach to politics, which would include the conscious as well as the unconscious, the golden as well as the dark elements in the stories, and some thought about the problematic future. This bears upon the way we presently divide knowledge into 'disciplines' in schools and in universities, so that it is difficult to relate political thought to science, or economics, or to poetry, in our present system. This division hopefully will soon begin to evaporate, as the problems faced by our world urgently need a synthesis and width of understanding on many levels.

I would like to finish this Introduction with a note on my use of poetry in the book. As a lifelong reader of poetry and novels, I hold that poetry can often get right through to the essence of feeling and intuition around an experience, that prose can rarely reach. I want to present a reasoned book, but also an intuitive and feeling one. This is my way of including another aspect of the Other.

Chapter One

Myths, political myths and self-fulfilling prophecies

The gods did not reveal, from the beginning,
All things to us; but in the course of time,
Through seeking we may learn, and know things better.

But as for certain truth, no man has known it,
Nor will he know it; neither of the gods,
Nor yet of all things of which I speak.
And even if by chance he were to utter
The final truth, he would himself not know it;
For all is but a woven web of guesses.

Xenophanes. (430-350 BCE aprox.)

We have to live by stories, all provisional truths though we work hard to make them more certain. We have nothing else. As Louise Young says in her thoughtful book, "into this mysterious universe we are all plunged at birth with no set of instructions, no maps or signposts"[1]. Some of the tales humans tell themselves come down generation after generation. Others are based on the disciplined and investigatory search for knowledge in this complex world, known as science. Sacred texts, religious and spiritual pronouncements, classical fairy stories, all touch on intuitive truth of a deeper, less obvious kind that is often felt to exist beyond everyday reality. Stories are both moral, and practical. They concern the journey of the person through life, the ordering of society and our relationship with the stars. We are born into a world that is full of mystery, beautiful, violent and

often terrifying to human eyes and consciousness. The more we understand the nature of the processes and truths of physical things through modern science, the more awesome the universe becomes. In this amazing structure, we need stories to help make sense of our lives, and to enable societies to function.

The several questions which have fuelled this book are: how much are the political theories we live by at present self-fulfilling prophesies? And how much are they a product of the personal fears, nightmares, deprivations and struggles of their authors? Political philosophies are myths that have hardened into doctrine. They are at least minor and, indeed for some, major myths that societies live out and which deeply influence our own lives and the life of our planet. Can we stand back from the unique way that each creature, including each human being, creates his or her own reality and see more clearly into the roots of the politics, both uniting and divisive, that we have presently created? And could we, with an enlarged and more self-reflexive standpoint, from a different century, develop more comprehensive, less doom-laden stories about the world and the human race than we have now and which could serve us enormously better?

As the anthropologist Ruth Benedict famously wrote, in the language of her time, "No man ever looks at the world with pristine eyes". Even as young babies, we have already started to absorb some of our life-long assumptions, before we are consciously aware and before we can speak or use words. We look and see and are already personally negotiating our place in the surrounding world. And when we begin to use words, there is always a gap between this profound felt experience of life - in so far as we are still in touch with it - and the words we learn to use to share the world with others. We only see what we look at and notice, and we each have a way of seeing which is instinctive. However, the relationship between external knowledge and explanations on the one hand, and the physical,

felt and experiential relationship we have with world of which we are a part, including our own being, is never settled, often problematic. But with words, we learn to listen to and tell stories about how things are, to help us live our lives – or, quite often, to put us in our places!

The great myths of every society deal with the great issues: life and death: facing the unknown: the journey of the individual: the nature of men and women: what is right action: relationships with people, society, animals and the natural world: and the invisible but more powerful world that companions our own. As Karen Armstrong writes "mythology was…designed to help us cope with the problematic human predicament. It helped people to find their place in the world and their true orientation"[2]. And myths can often speak to that felt sense in us which is intuitive and deeper than language. They can carry a timelessness beyond the preoccupations of the present, and unite us to a deeper reality.

Joseph Campbell, that determined seeker after deeper truth, speaks as always to the point, when he writes that the stories all humans tell themselves, the living myths of any culture, are firstly and primarily about reconciling human consciousness to the daunting inexorable nature of life and death. For me, he is such an attractive writer and thinker because he looks so widely and deeply, from a framework of the mystery of the cosmos, to the social and community world all living beings inhabit, to the individual awareness of all beings – and back again. He is particularly empowered to do this as he is so knowledgeable about cultures beyond those of the modern West – indigenous and Eastern societies, philosophies and myths specifically.

He emphasises the point that is key to much of the thinking of this book, that in all early societies, and to this day in many Eastern societies, the myths that helped people face death and suffering also contained a great awareness of the sweetness and the value of life, could hold these opposites in their narration,

and were world affirming: "through the bitterness of pain, the primary experience at the core of life is a sweet, wonderful thing"[3]. Eastern deities, such as the Hindu gods, demonstrated a mix of opposing qualities – cruelty with love, a numinous presence with mischievous social action, in Kali and Krishna and many other vivid deities.

This contrast of life and death is the issue brought out most vividly and painfully by Darwin from within the western context in the famous last paragraph of *The Origin of Species,* which was modified from one edition to another, depending on the agonising changes of his own views over time about suffering and death:

"It is interesting to contemplate an entangled bank, clothed with many plants of many kinds, with birds singing on the bushes, with various insects flitting about, and with worms crawling through the damp earth, and to reflect that these elaborately constructed forms, so different from one another, and dependent on each other in so complex a manner, have all been produced by the laws acting around us…..Thus, from the war of nature, from famine and from death, the most exalted object which we are capable of conceiving, namely, the production of the higher animals, directly follows. There is grandeur in this view of life, with its several powers, having been originally breathed into a few forms or into one: and that, whilst this planet has gone cycling on according to the fixed law of gravity, from so simple a beginning endless forms most beautiful and most wonderful have been, and are being evolved."[4]

But even in writing this, I can see that Campbell, Darwin and I are all speaking from a particularly Western liberal viewpoint in our expressed concern about universal suffering. From the viewpoint of the majority of humans who have ever lived, usually in far less favourable conditions than our own, over the last hundreds of thousands of years, eating and being eaten has been primary: you killed other animals or people or you died

yourself: you avoided predators or you died: your own suffering had to be accepted in that: boys were initiated in many societies into rites designed to enforce courage and make killing a way of living. This is the way things had always been, for ourselves as for other animals.

Myths, world-views, religious scriptures, political theories, social and individual attitudes about the natural world of which we are a part, and self-knowledge, consciousness about ourselves, all involve an attempt to reconcile ourselves with inevitable death, and also almost equally if we are lucky, with the sweetness and beauty of the world we see around us. We need stories at all levels – about the political system we require, about who we are, and about existential questions of living in order to live fruitfully in this situation. And these levels are deeply interconnected. "What man believes about himself is of the utmost importance", said Edward Sinnott, "for it will determine the kind of world he will make..."[5]. If we try to do politics without self-knowledge or without a wider sense of the earth and the cosmos, then we become (have become we could presently declare) destructive because our politics have no wider context, and are built on sand. If we are only concerned with the individual, then the social and political system is ignored. If we are only bothered about violence and ignore beauty and love, then the wider sense of the universe cannot give us wisdom. We need renewed, wider, deeper, more paradoxical stories than those we presently have.

* * *

Henry Miller, in his play *A Devil in Paradise* makes one of his characters say: "A day like today I realise what I've told you a hundred different times – there is nothing wrong with the world. What's wrong is our way of looking at it".

The wrongness, it seems to me, is not the stories we tell, the rich never-ending supply of myths, philosophies, deep in each

culture's history, but it is the conviction, the certainty, of most adherents to their own story, that they are **right**. Myths, world-views, churches, political parties, scientists, tend to see their truth as the only one to follow. But in the nature of things, as soon as you have erected a particular pillar of truth, a solid pointer to the future, you tend to see the positive virtues – and ignore the inevitable shadows thrown by that pillar. Nature is so much more subtle than we are. She values her shadows, her ever-shifting reality, her darkness as much as her light.

Heraclitus, another astute classical Greek thinker, was close to our present chaos and complexity theories, when he indicated that the world was a theatre of perpetual change, of eternal 'Becoming'. The symbol, the archetype, he saw most relevant for the human race, was fire, which was about the continuous change and flow of all things. He saw life as a dance of opposites, much as we find in the Eastern yin/yang diagram, where each easily moves into the other, and the energy produced is life-giving, vital. So, instead of the static formulas we develop today, it could be possible to realise that all factors involved in a social situation, and ourselves with them, are ever changing, always becoming, never fixed. And what will emerge can never be predicted with certainty.

Richard Tarnas, in his brilliant first chapters of *Cosmos and Psyche*, gives us a framework which takes us far into the area of the significance of powerful myths. He contrasts the myth of human 'Progress' through the last 2-3000 years which many in the West hold to, with the equally powerful myth and history of 'The Fall' – the loss of the human relationship with the sacred and the earth, which is seen to result in our present parlous state of constant war and environmental disaster – leading to the extinction of many species which may include much of the human race within the next 100 years or so. Both these stories, of Progress on the one hand and Exile on the other, must have their truth and their limitations. Tarnas writes: "knowledge of history,

as of anything else, is ever-shifting, free-floating, ungrounded in an objective reality. Patterns are not so much recognised in phenomena as read into them. History is, finally, only a construct."[6] Indeed, all our myths are only aids to truth, as Xenophanes wrote centuries ago. Wisdom can only come from holding the opposites within any situation we are trying to understand. And you cannot hope to solve many problems on the same level as they occur. Myths are many-layered, some shared, many contradictory.

Furthermore, an increasing number of writers, prompted by a new awareness of the earth and all her creatures, recognise most graphically that humans are not the only species living consciously in this world. Loren Eiseley, a wonderfully poetic naturalist and philosopher, found a teacher in a 'huge yellow-and-black orb spider.' He realises, in his inimitable way, that she too lives an authentic life, when she reacted to his intrusion into her web. He saw that "Spider was circumscribed by spider ideas; its universe was spider universe. All outside was irrational, extraneous, at best, raw material for spider." In fact she was behaving much like the human race. "As I proceeded on my way along the gully, like a vast impossible shadow, I realised that in the world of spider I did not exist…..I began to see that among the many universes in which the world of living creatures existed, some were large, some were small, but that all, including man's, were in some way limited or finite. We were creatures of different dimensions, passing through each others lives like ghosts through doors."[7]. Eiseley felt that we too are webspinners: "let us remember man, the self-fabricator who came across the ice to look into the mirrors and magic of science…he came because he is at heart a listener and a searcher for a transcendental reality beyond himself".

Seeing and understanding more clearly that we live on the earth with many millions of other species, each perceiving 'reality' in its own way, makes us even more aware that reality is

about relationship for each living being: a reality mediated by the senses and mindset of the observer with the world around. As I wrote previously in a Quaker pamphlet "All creatures must carry their own world round with them. The elephant, the ant and the bird, though they may at any time be living in a similar space, must be experiencing totally dissimilar worlds, each one feeling like reality. The eye is merely an instrument: the world we see as reality is created in the mind, and the mind of each species and each individual in that species is influenced and informed by experience and learning as well as biology."[8] And as for people, we are particularly influenced by the assumptions and the stories carried within our families, our societies, our education and our explicit or implicit cosmologies about who we are and what we have come to believe in.

These reflections may initially seem some distance away from the political theories with which this book is basically concerned – but, on the contrary, they are most relevant. When I taught political philosophy to first year undergraduates at Brunel University, and what I came to realise over the years, is that political philosophy is in no way a science – it is not tested, researched, proved; it is not a scholarly investigation; it is not a collaborative procedure at all. What each political philosopher does from Machiavelli to Marx and onwards, is to tell a story. Each story starts off with an implicit or explicit view of who we are – what is human nature. Hobbes and Rousseau state their understandings of who we are explicitly, gathered from their own life experience. Then, given their view, they deduce what political system should be created to produce the most favourable society they can envisage. And then, depending on the philosopher's power and influence in society, men in power connect with and become drawn to the truth of the story as they see it and implement the system proposed. Some of the stories – I would say myths – have had immense power in shaping our world. Tom Paine's *Rights of Man* greatly influenced the

American Constitution created in the eighteenth century, as did John Locke's *Two Treatises on Government* and *An essay concerning human understanding*. Karl Marx's *Communist Manifesto* has had enormous power all over the world, and dominated large tracts of the world in Russia, China, South America and parts of Europe. Political myths can and do have enormous power.

The other striking thing that I understood, as I was teaching this material, is that each political theorist is inevitably writing from his own experience of life, telling his own tale. Thomas Hobbes produced his *Leviathan* from a life full of conflict in the English Civil War in the 1640s and from exile; Mary Wollstonecraft wrote her *Vindication of the Rights of Women* in 1794 from a lifetime's experience of being a woman in the eighteenth century. Machiavelli was deeply involved in the wars between the Italian city states in the Renaissance. Also it was interesting to see how many of the writers had experienced very hard childhoods – though that was almost certainly the norm in the centuries they were writing. But all these factors would have influenced their political sensibilities and perspectives, and the stories they were writing.

These same factors would have affected in particular the views that the writers formed about the nature of human nature, upon which they built their theories. The primary issue in the myths about human nature is not surprisingly identical to that concerning the human cosmological world – and the political one: that issue is the existence of death, cruelty, violence and suffering. In the twentieth century the work of Carl Jung and allied depth psychologists have contributed whole new dimensions to these questions of what have come to be called 'the Shadow'. Sam Keen, an astute American writer comments wryly: "the most terrible of all moral paradoxes, the Gordian Knot that must be unravelled if history is to continue, is that we create evil out of our highest ideals and most noble aspirations. We so need to be heroic, to be on the side of God, to eliminate evil, to clean

up the world, to be victorious over death, that we visit destruction and death on all who stand in the way of our heroic historical destiny….In the beginning we create the enemy."[9] This is a very modern psychological take on what is the central question about violence and war as expounded by the classical political philosophers – is the human race intrinsically at war with itself and with the world, which is the strong line taken by Hobbes and Machiavelli: or is the development of civilisation the culprit, as Rousseau suggests – or is the problem the development of capitalism and two opposing classes as proclaimed passionately by Marx? Perhaps humans are capable and even likely to make towards an ever more humane political world with the benefit of education, law and a greater an inclusion of the whole human race in social power as argued by John Stuart Mill? Or are there in the twenty-first century, other issues not yet fully discussed? What do Eastern philosophers such as Gandhi or Confucius, or alternative activists like Winstanley have to add? Pope maintained in the Enlightenment that men are "the glory, jest and riddle of the world" which recognises so succinctly the paradoxes of our nature as manifest in the world. Can we get any further at this point?

In discussing the political philosophers in the first section of the book, I am not intending at all to give any new interpretation of their work. I am however, trying to tease out their basic assumptions, their views of 'who we are', how these assumptions are embedded in their own lives and in the societies in which they live, and the stories they have to tell. I also make some comments on where these ideas have been influential in forming the most powerful political frameworks for society. I am dealing with Britain. There are different slants, different emphases, even in those countries most similar to ourselves: for instance, socialist thought is certainly not mainstream in the USA, and the governments of democratic European countries manifest very different emphases. This First Part of the book

traces a dialogue over four centuries and is the political world we have inherited today.

"For all is but a woven web of guesses"

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Part One

Chapter Two

Machiavelli, Hobbes and Burke. The early search for order to control unruly humanity.

And new philosophy calls all in doubt,
The element of fire is quite put out;
The sun is lost, and th'earth, and no man's wit
Can well direct him where to look for it.
And freely men confess that this world's spent,
When in the planets, and the firmament
They seek so many new; they see that this
Is crumbled out again to his atomies.
'Tis all in pieces, all coherence gone;
All just supply, and all relation.....
This is the world's condition now....

John Donne,1612
An Anatomy of the World pp 205-19.

Here we are at the beginning of the modern period, with the stories which have created our present world. I start with the great poet John Donne, who was commenting on the tremendous changes which were then reaching England from the Continent. New beliefs were powerfully destroying the old medieval world with its relative certainty and its intrinsic coherence of religious belief, social structure and understanding of the place of the human in the universe: and creating a new world of revolution, the overturning of structures and knowledge, beginning with the Renaissance, the Reformation of religion, the 'new philosophy' and radical science and cosmology. The English monarchy itself

was threatened and the 'Divine Right' of kings to rule questioned. The forces behind these movements led to the English Civil War of the 1640s and eventually the beheading of King Charles 1 in 1649.

Our two first philosophers lived respectively at the beginning and the end of this early modern period. Niccolo Machiavelli, usually accounted the first modern political philosopher, lived in Italy 100 years before Donne's poem, from 1469-1527, at the beginning of the Italian Renaissance. He published his major book *The Prince* in 1513: this is advice to Princes ruling the city states on how to gain and maintain power. He is usually seen as the first modern Western political philosopher. He was a citizen of Florence at a time of constant war between the city states, was a diplomat and writer, and suffered a considerable period in prison.

Thomas Hobbes' *Leviathan* was published 140 years after *The Prince,* in 1651, and was based on his experience of conflict and exile related to the violence and bitterness of the English Civil War. War and strife were fundamental to the lives of both Machiavelli and Hobbes, and their political books and their lives were an attempt to make sense of their experience at this time. For both, Donne's phrase "'Tis all in pieces, all coherence gone" was fundamentally the truth. All three men were, as we are today, trying to break through to new reality, a new framework, a new story, which would make sense of a changing world.

In the middle ages, where the political and social system was embedded in a rigid hierarchical network of mutual obligation, authority and power were seen to reflect the natural and sacred order of the universe, and the law seen as "eternal, universal, absolute"[1]. Joseph Campbell emphasises this coherence even more significantly when he writes; "in the total view of the medieval thinkers there was a perfect accord between the structure of the universe, the canons of the social order, and the good of the individual".[2] But, as Hanna Pitkin writes in her

feisty book on Machiavelli, "for the medieval sense that dependence is natural and that 'someone else is in charge', the Renaissance substituted a lively consciousness of human self-creation – both the individual shaping his character and career, and the community shaping itself through history……authority was becoming internalised" (see endnotes). This is the voice of the modern mode.

Machiavelli's book *The Prince* looked for inspiration to the classic Roman writers for his advice on politics and power: the classic Greek and Roman writers were the major source of wisdom for all the writers and artists of the Renaissance. His book is basically advice to Princes – that is, leaders holding power of a state – on how to gain and handle power, and how to hold on to effective leadership.

Machiavelli had been involved for some years in international negotiation as an ambassador in Europe, particularly Italy, for Florence. However, just before 1511 the Medici family regained power in Florence. He was subsequently imprisoned and tortured, accused of complicity against the Medici, and on his release fled from Florence. Having been both an ambassador and a prisoner (not an unusual combination in those turbulent times), he reckoned he had something of wisdom to say.

His book is about a leader's need for powerful manhood, and on the ubiquity and necessity of war. He taught that the desire for war is deep and permanent in men - specifically men. In *The Discourses* he writes: "Whenever there is no need for men to fight, they fight for ambition's sake: and so powerful is the sway that ambition exercises over the human heart that they never relinquish it, no matter how high they have risen. The reason is that nature has so constituted men that, though all things are objects of desire, not all things are attainable, with the result that men are ill content with what they possess and their present state brings them little satisfaction". In other words, he sees the human situation as one of discontent. Men naturally fight: they want

glory and possessions. "Dependence is characteristic of women, children and animals; for men it is despicable and fatally dangerous"[3]

Because war is so important, central to society in his view, then whether you are at war or at 'peace' – in other words, not actually fighting – then everything in society ought to be geared towards winning – the economy, business, government should all be conducted with war in mind. The successful Prince is the one who adapts himself to the times. What came to the fore in Italy in the Renaissance was the idea, foreign to the medieval period where custom ruled, and indeed to most periods before, that a political order can be set up deliberately. You can think out how to run a state from scratch, depending on the view you have of people and society. Politics in the Renaissance comes to be seen as different from morals, and from religion.

In such a society, it is acceptable, indeed necessary, for those in power to wear a mask. It is dangerous to show your real self – and that mask may come to be so habitual, that you might in fact lose sight of who you are as a private person. Human nature is despicable in general and therefore order is of paramount importance as an external curb, to control the worst excesses of which we are capable. But you *can* develop a good state if the Prince has enough self-knowledge and knowledge of others and of the times, where people can come to see that it is in their own interests to contribute to the common good. All men want order; only a few want freedom and know what it is.

What people fear most is the vagaries of fortune – in fact Machiavelli would come to call her Fortune, the myth expressing the power of this often hostile world. Chapter 25 in *The Prince* is very lyrical and specific on this point: "I hold it to be true that Fortune is the arbiter of one-half of our actions, but that she still leaves us to direct the other half, or perhaps a little less. I compare her to one of those raging rivers, which when in flood overflows the plains, sweeping away trees and buildings,

bearing away the soil from place to place; everything flies before it, all yield to its violence, without being able in any way to withstand it; and yet, though its nature be such, it does not follow therefore that men, when the weather becomes fair, shall not make provision, both with defences and barriers, in such a manner that, rising again, the waters may pass away by canal, and their force be neither so unrestrained nor so dangerous." In other words, if the leader and his followers can be cunning and ingenious, like the fox which is one of Machiavelli's favourite images, we can learn to guard much of the worst that the world can throw at us as a society.

At the end of Chapter 25, Machiavelli makes one of his most infamous statements: "For my part, I consider that it better to be adventurous than cautious, because fortune is a woman, and if you wish to keep her under it is necessary to beat and ill-use her; and it is seen that she allows herself to be mastered by the adventurous rather than those who go to work more coldly. She is therefore, always, woman-like, a lover of young men, because they are less cautious, more violent, and with more audacity command her." It would be difficult to find a more misogynous statement!

Machiavelli considered that the worst thing is to be dependent, effeminate, powerless. According to Hanna Pitkin's interesting book, "the feminine constitutes 'the other' for Machiavelli, opposed to manhood and autonomy in all their senses: to maleness, to adulthood, to humanness, and to politics."[4] Without doing anything, women motivate men to cause political trouble, and have been very destructive of order.

It is interesting to see written into political discourse, right from the beginning of the modern period, specific and explicit material about the rejection of 'the other'. In Machiavelli's material, the Other is the female and natural forces, the earth, against which men and ordered social forces have to hold out and exert control. He also considers the area of self knowledge,

believing it to be desirable, indeed necessary in the leader of a successful state. But this awareness may need to be masked for your own protection. And it may mean that a 'vice' in the right place will bring you more security and prosperity than a virtue in the wrong one.

* * *

One hundred and forty years later, in England, in 1651, Thomas Hobbes published his book *Leviathan.* A Leviathan is a sea monster, of enormous size, and it was to a leviathan that Hobbes was likening the absolute Monarch or the modern State: "The Matter, Forme and Power of a Common-Wealth, Ecclesiasticall and Civill" is the sub-title of the book. The State, he writes, is a huge human structure. He specifies that the book is "occasioned by the disorders of the present time." And these were disorders indeed. A bitter civil war was fought in England between 1642 and 1648 between the Cavaliers – the King, Charles I, his supporters, and the Catholic church on the one hand and the Roundheads, Parliament, Protestants, much of the army, Oliver Cromwell, and radical thinkers on the other. For much of that period, there was no censorship on writers and many radical pamphlets were published. The Roundheads won and in January 1649, the unthinkable - many thought blasphemous- happened, the King was executed. Until then, English monarchs had ruled by divine right and were believed to be the true representatives of God on the earth.

In publishing *Leviathan* two years later, Hobbes was responding to a great need – a need for a legitimated workable way of governing the country and a whole new system of thinking about human society. Thomas Hobbes was a graduate of Oxford, who searched his classical education in Greek and Latin for some insights into men and government. He worked with Francis Bacon and was drawn into the new science, partic-

ularly its search for knowledge through reasoning, deduction from proof and experiment. He travelled in Europe, met Galileo and became fascinated by the ideas of motion and change, developing new truths by working on a hypothesis. In the 1630s he planned a systematic philosophy, or science, of Body, the nature of Man, and the Citizen. In 1640 he produced *Elements of Law, Natural and Politic*. Shortly afterwards he fled to Paris because of the growing hostilities in England and stayed there in exile until 1650.

"Hobbes is widely, and rightly, regarded as the most formidable of English political theorists; formidable, not because he is difficult to understand but because his doctrine is at once so clear, so sweeping, and so disliked. His postulates about the nature of man are unflattering, his political conclusions are illiberal, and his logic appears to deny us any way out."[5]

Thomas Hobbes famously envisages a 'state of nature' in which men lived before ordered society, deducing this from his observation of their behaviour in ordinary society, and concluding that their basic behaviour 'is either for gain or glory; that is, not so much for love of our fellows, as for love of themselves'[6]

In *Leviathan* he puts forward his famous doctrines some of which are worth expounding in full as they are so clear. He depicts man and state as microcosm and macrocosm in society: they share the same characteristics. Because men are constantly searching for power, and are more or less equal in physical strength, the natural condition of mankind is war. This he knows partly through self-knowledge and partly through observation. In Chapter 11 he writes "so, in the first place, I put for a general inclination of all mankind, a perpetual and restless desire of power after power, that ceaseth only in Death. And the cause of this, is not always that a man hopes for a more intense delight, than he has already attained to: or that he cannot be content with a more moderate Power: but because he cannot assure the power

and means to live well, which he hath present, without the acquisition of more." Men love themselves best, have insatiable desires and want more and more are never satisfied.

This is a search for more and more wealth, goods, power, which is never-ending. It is described by Macpherson, in a well-known book, as possessive individualism, a condition under which we all live in our rationalist, acquisitive and competitive societies, now spread round the world, to this day.

Because of this constant competition, modern societies need strong laws, strong controls in society, and strong family structures that can control their children against the child's worst impulses, so that order can prevail. If order is not maintained in this authoritarian way at all levels of society, then the society itself comes to be in a virtual state of war. When men live without any social security, then they have to depend on their own inadequate strength – but then "in such condition, there is no place for Industry; because the fruit thereof is uncertain: and consequently no Culture of the Earth; no navigation, nor use of the commodities that may be imported by Sea; no commodious building….no Knowledge of the face of the Earth; no account of Time; no Arts; no Letters; no Society; and which is worst of all, continuall feare, and danger of violent death; And the life of man, solitary, poore, nasty, brutish and short"[7].

However, if the right mechanisms of control are put into place into society at every level, from the family to the state, then people will be induced to live in peace and order. Their behaviour will be modified to fit in and society will work like a competent machine. One of the most powerful mechanisms of control is economic. Market relationships are seen as the basis of all other working relationship, including marriage. The Commonwealth, or State, is a human construct. "The skill of making, and maintaining Commonwealths, consists in certain rules, as doth arithmetic and geometry; not (as tennis play) upon practice only; which Rules, neither poor men have the leisure,

is against not only our reason but against our instincts". He distrusted reason when it was cut off from feeling and theory unless it was based on practice. Both Machiavelli and Hobbes would have agreed with the latter, though not necessarily with the former.

He had a strong deep view of the nature of society itself. He reckoned that any old society was very complex and contained its own longstanding wisdom. It contained an ancient and continuing social order. He wrote that the social contract is "a partnership not only between those who are living, but between those who are living, those who are dead, and those who are to be born."[10]. He valued societies that had a strong sense of their own traditions, beliefs and mystery and celebrated them, as against the narrowing uniformity and egalitarianism and utilitarianism of the most radical systems.

His religious and social views came together in supporting the class system as given. "The awful author of our being is the author of our place in the order of existence; and that having disposed and marshalled us by a divine tactic, not according to our will, but according to his, he has....virtually subjected us to act the part which belongs to the place assigned to us."[11] He had little time for the state of nature, and thought that civilisation was a welcome change from the anarchy he supposed it superseded. He stated his strong position: to keep an established church, an established monarchy, an established aristocracy and an established (limited) democracy. He also thought that politics themselves were pretty marginal to society under those conditions, and should not be taken too seriously or treated with reverence: the government should consistent of as few as possible virtuous and wise men.

Once the contract of a society is agreed, which may be through time or ratified at a particular juncture, there is no reason to alter it: nor any reason to alter the distribution of land or goods. He had little sympathy and nothing to give to the poor.

He believed there should be "equal rights but not to equal things."

Burke believed that respect for authority is natural. The family, the 'little platoon' in society, together with inherited property, is the foundation of the nation

Edmund Burke's views take on a myth-like quality when he writes of the power of society. "The individual is foolish; the multitude, for the moment, are foolish, when they act without deliberation; but the species is wise, and, when time is given to it, as a species it always acts right…The state of civil society ….is a state of nature; and much more truly so than a savage or incoherent mode of life. For man is by nature reasonable; and he is never perfect in his natural state, but when he is placed where reason may be best cultivated and best predominates"[12]. Then he can fulfil his greatest potential, and so therefore can society. Liberty can therefore be best associated with good government and social order.

Burke's key book *Reflections on the Revolution in France* came out a year after the French Revolution, not surprisingly, and was a deep and impassioned protest against that revolutionary coup against the Monarchy, religion and property rights. He said the leaders "loved mankind but hated man".

In his writings he created a conservative myth of society and politics, where society was predominant and held quite mystical power, and where formal politics was reduced to the background.

* * *

These three men were part of the foundation of political philosophy which has come to be known as conservatism. To this day, the doctrines and myths developed above, are proclaimed by conservative politicians. Chris Patten in '*The Tory Case*' published in 1983 spells modern assumptions spells out fully and explicitly:

"Man was created in the image of God but he is flawed; he inherits Adam's mistake. He is capable therefore of great evil as well as great good. Hitler and St Francis of Assisi are both members of the human race.....Without authority, government and the law, the impulses of an imperfect man are as like to lead him to do what is wrong as to do what is right"[13].

There is always a fear in traditional Conservative thinking that things could get worse: that order is kept against a constant fear of chaos – or in Machiavelli's case, uncontrollable Fortune. It emphasises the significance of tradition, of a strong family in which parents can control and hopefully eradicate the more undesirable traits of their children. There is no doubt that life is a fight of good against evil, and that the side you are on is good. Machiavelli of course has his own particular take on this, not living in a bourgeois society: for him it was fear - of Fortune, of the female and the 'effeminate', of enemies - that made him need the strength of an authoritarian regime. But all conservatives look for the permanency of institutions, and a strong sense of your own rightness against the enemy.

Lord Salisbury well represents conservative belief in the nineteenth century. He is deeply pessimistic about human nature and doubtful about the idea of progress. He comments: "how thin is the crust which the habits of civilisation, however ancient and unbroken, draw over the boiling lava of human passion. Whenever the Anglo Saxon race has been free for a few years from any movements of open violence, there have always been certain philosophers eager to catch at the belief that the need of curbing human nature has gone by and that the millennium of 'enlightened selfishness is dawning' "[14].

The class system is seen as right and proper, and properly backed up by the Church. The upper classes have the right to lead. But they should be fair in their wisdom. And if tradition, patriotism and order do the job of maintaining a peaceful social system, then there is no need for a heavy political presence or

Index of Names, social and political terms, and Events

Names have capital letters: social movements and events are in small case