

剑桥政治思想史原著系列（影印本）

CAMBRIDGE TEXTS IN THE HISTORY OF POLITICAL THOUGHT

潘恩政治著作选

Paine

Political

Writings

Edited by

BRUCE

KUKLICK

中国政法大学出版社

THOMAS PAINI

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REVISED STUDENT EDITION

EDITED BY

BRUCE KUKLICK

*Nichols Professor of American History,
University of Pennsylvania*

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电子信箱	z5620@263.net
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THOMAS PAINE
Political Writings

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剑桥政治思想史原著系列

丛书编辑

Raymond Geuss

剑桥大学哲学高级讲师

Quentin Skinner

剑桥大学近代史讲座教授

在政治理论领域，“剑桥政治思想史原著系列”作为主要的学生教科丛书，如今已牢固确立了其地位。本丛书旨在使学生能够获得从古希腊到 20 世纪初期西方政治思想史方面所有最为重要的原著。它囊括了所有著名的经典原著，但与此同时，它又扩展了传统的评价尺度，以便能够纳入范围广泛、不那么出名的作品。而在此之前，这些作品中有许多从未有过现代英文版本可资利用。只要可能，所选原著都会以完整而不删节的形式出版，其中的译作则是专门为本丛书的目的而安排。每一本书都有一个评论性的导言，加上历史年表、生平梗概、进一步阅读指南，以及必要的词汇表和原文注解。本丛书的最终目的是，为西方政治思想的整个发展脉络提供一个清晰的轮廓。

本丛书已出版著作的书目，请查阅书末。

CAMBRIDGE TEXTS IN THE HISTORY OF POLITICAL THOUGHT

Series editors

RAYMOND GEUSS

Lecturer in Philosophy, University of Cambridge

QUENTIN SKINNER

Regius Professor of Modern History in the University of Cambridge

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Introduction

Thomas Paine was a unique political thinker. Writing at the end of the eighteenth century while a revolutionary tide swept over North America and Europe, he had an unrivalled reputation not just as a democratic polemicist but also as an activist politician. He lived in England, the new United States, and France, and was hailed by all those eager for an anti-monarchical political order in the Atlantic world. Hated and feared by conservatives in England and America, Paine was nonetheless suspect to the most radical French revolutionaries. Extraordinary because he came not from the cultured classes but from the common folk, he expressed their political feelings and ushered in a new era of political rhetoric and public commitment.

Little is known of the details of Paine's life, especially of the first thirty-seven years he spent in England. He was born at Thetford in Norfolk, in 1737, and was early on subject to the unconventional religious influence of his Quaker father. For a time he followed his father's occupation as a maker of corsets, but also went to sea as a common sailor for two years, ran a small tobacco shop, and had a minor job with the English government collecting customs duties, an "excise officer."

Despite the absence of information, Paine's biographers have rightly speculated on what shaped his life in England in the hope of understanding his later career. For after what appeared to be an entirely ordinary and nondescript life in England, filled with the failures and woes of the lower ranks of that time, he left for the American colonies in 1774, where he began to write in favor of

their separation from the Mother Country. Within a short time he became known in both the Old and New Worlds as a political theorist of great significance. What had gone on in England to prepare him for his novel role?

Paine had obtained enough education to master reading, writing, and arithmetic in Norfolk, a tribute to his family's zeal for education and a sign of the growing aspirations of the class of craftspeople in England to which his family belonged. As an adult, in addition to his other employments, Paine had even briefly been a school teacher. In his early manhood he supplemented his rudimentary knowledge by attending popular lectures on the physics of Isaac Newton that had transformed eighteenth-century intellectual life. Reading and public-house conversation familiarized him with the scientific, political, and religious assumptions of what historians have called Enlightenment Europe – the milieu that questioned the claims of the monarchy and hereditary aristocracy; that speculated on how governments were actually formed and forwarded the rights of “the people” against the titled; that rebutted some of the supernatural assumptions of Christianity; and that looked to reason and science to resolve the deepest problems of human beings.

Recent biographers have also cited issues of mid-eighteenth-century English politics in molding Paine's world view. In particular they have pointed to controversies surrounding the popular radicalism of the sometime Member of Parliament, John Wilkes. Wilkes was an unconventional and perhaps unstable political figure who haphazardly attacked the powers of the king and the corruption in the English government. Supporting increased political representation, he was jailed and expelled from Parliament, although he later was re-elected and served without incident. In the 1760s, the slogan “Wilkes and Liberty” was the rallying cry among people in the laboring class and among small merchants and tradesmen, angry for one reason or another at the British system of politics. Paine's biographers have persuasively concluded that Wilkes' irreverent populism may have been a model for Paine.

Paine was rooted in the English social system in a peculiar way. His knowledge of politics and some petitioning that he had done as a customs officer indicated that he was a participant in bourgeois culture. At the same time he was of the poor artisan class, of those marginal people always faced with the prospect of destitution. His

repeated failures to succeed at any one of the trades he took up accentuated his uncertain status. Paine's unusual intellectual abilities made him distinctive, however, and may have enabled him even as a young man to focus a fury about the English class system and its politics. We know, finally, that he began to drink heavily in England – as did a substantial number of men – and his trials were increased by the death of his first wife after a year of marriage and the termination of a second marriage (after three years) by a permanent separation.

In April, 1774, with his second marriage collapsing, his small shop bankrupt, and his job as an excise officer gone, Paine sold everything he had in order to escape imprisonment for debt. Six months later he left England for the New World. Somehow in London prior to his departure he had met Benjamin Franklin, agent in England for the colony of Pennsylvania, from whom Paine had received a letter of introduction and recommendation. We do not know how he made the acquaintance of a colonial of Franklin's eminence. But with the help of the letter, Paine was immediately employed after his arrival, in November, 1774, by a printer in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. In February, 1775 – three months after he set foot in America – he began editing *The Pennsylvania Magazine*, a newly established member of the periodical press that was such a powerful influence on public sentiment among the North American colonists.

Paine carried on this job for the next eighteen months. During this time the American colonies were moving toward a break from England and struggling to find a universal ground for action. Indeed, the first Continental Congress, a gathering of leading colonial political figures, had met in Philadelphia in the fall of 1774 to formulate a response to what it believed was England's unjust governance. Six months later, after men of Massachusetts had skirmished with the British army at Lexington and Concord, in the first battles of what became the American Revolutionary War, the second Continental Congress assembled in Philadelphia. It created a Continental Army, and for the next six years directed the war effort of the colonies.

A newcomer planted in an unprecedented situation, Paine responded not just with a powerful pen but with a devotion to the cause of separation that belied the uncertainties and failings of his

past. In January, 1776, he published a pamphlet, *Common Sense*, that presented arguments for independence from England. The little book became an enormous bestseller, testifying to the appetite for politics in the colonies, to their political literacy, and to Paine's abilities to speak to and for a large audience. *Common Sense* sold an estimated 100,000 copies in 1776, an unbelievable number at the time, and every commentator has credited Paine's work with galvanizing the colonists and almost single-handedly inspiring the Revolution in America. In July 1776 Paine himself joined the Continental Army as aide-de-camp to General Nathanael Greene, and by December had initiated the writing of a series of revolutionary booklets urging the Americans to stay their course. The most famous of these was the *Crisis* series of sixteen pamphlets on the causes and trials of the war against Great Britain, penned between 1776 and the American victory in 1783.

Within two years Paine had been transformed from an oppressed and impoverished English artisan of no significance into an internationally recognized intellectual leader of the American Revolution. And this was only the start of his literary career. The juxtaposition of his early life and later celebrity has attracted wide attention. In the United States Paine has basically had a consistently positive reputation, sustained by his role in an unchallenged democratic tradition, but he has shared his repute with the galaxy of heroes that the Revolution produced. In periods of ferment in America – for example the 1930s or the 1960s – his stature has risen, commentators hailing Paine as an authentic American revolutionary, a democrat of the people whose thought and practice can be a model for radicals. Yet in periods of conservative stability, a minority of commentators has reviled him as an extreme radical on the fringes of the Revolution, a demagogic drunkard not fit to be associated with men like George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, or James Madison – the American Founding Fathers.

In Great Britain Paine's renown has been even more sharply etched. Royalists continued to condemn him long after his death in 1809. But reformers constantly valued him as a precursor to the long evolution of representative institutions in England throughout the nineteenth century. In the twentieth century his belligerent attacks on the English caste system have been repeatedly heralded by the socialist left.

Both Paine's critics and his champions have focused on two aspects of his life and times – an appraisal of his revolutionary civic personality and the context that provided such resonance to his ideas. Paine's natural talents and the more open social texture of America had obviously contributed to the astonishing improvement in his fortunes in the mid-1770s. But the colonial uprising was mainly middle class in orientation, and it was led by the political gentry of the colonies. In this social milieu Paine was always something of an outsider. His background and personality made him unpredictable, a bit untrustworthy, never fully acceptable. On the other side, while Paine gloried in the recognition and status he had achieved, he was never at ease in the upper reaches of the new society he was helping to create. Whatever he was like in England, in America he was a difficult man to deal with, known for his vanity about his writing ability and an accompanying angry insecurity. Among the most democratic of the American Founders – men like Franklin and Jefferson – he was regarded as a useful ally; but he was disliked by many more political leaders. His political opponents in the colonies despised him, and his bouts of drunkenness were used to justify the charges of his unworthiness and dissipation. Paine himself was wretchedly uncomfortable with his role as a bourgeois revolutionary.

In the past 200 years, some of Paine's defenders have claimed more originality for his thought than may be warranted. At the same time they have undervalued the clear truth that he was a master of popular exposition. Paine wrote political philosophy with lightning. If he was not as original or profound as John Locke, he had a power of expression that has exceeded that of almost any political thinker in the English language. He had the rare gift – always presumed to be the product of his poor artisanal experience – of being able to write for the populace. The success of the struggle for independence demanded the support of the masses, and among the Founding Fathers only Paine entirely understood what the people wanted or needed to hear. All his tracts from the seventies to the nineties hit the nerve of political debate. As a remarkable publicist and master of persuasive writing, he was able to bridge working-class and middle-class cultures and make palatable to each of them the political ideals of the American gentry.

Unlike most of his fellow revolutionaries, he eschewed contem-

porary stylish discourse and learned jargon. His writing was concrete, using pithy phrases designed to stick in the mind. He skillfully employed effective devices such as repetition and rhetorical questions to make his points. His language, in one sense, was that of the common man. In another sense, he went far beyond what an ordinary person could say – he was able to speak to the deepest political concerns at the same time as he shaped them.

Paine was also an influential thinker not because he had daringly new or erudite ideas but because he could commandingly express matters that were conventional in many quarters. He shared his beliefs with the other Founding Fathers. Like them he was interested in applied science – he invented a smokeless candle and spent much time after the Revolution in England and France trying to gain support for his novel design of a single-span, pierless, iron bridge. More important, as with men like Franklin and Jefferson, Paine had absorbed popular expressions of the physics of Isaac Newton. The natural world was governed by laws that perhaps genius had to uncover, but that by the end of the eighteenth century were open to the understanding of all. Patient investigation of the natural world revealed the simple principles on which it operated and enabled men to make further discoveries, or to put these principles to work for human benefit.

Paine and his contemporaries were “rationalists” in their view that fundamental truths could be arrived at by anyone with the perseverance to examine the world carefully and to cogitate on their experience; these truths could not be honestly gainsaid. The application of this sort of “reason” in the natural world had brought about the scientific advances of Enlightenment Europe and could be extended into the world of human endeavor. The titles of some of Paine’s central writings – *Common Sense* and *The Age of Reason* – suggest the place of the basic postulates held by him and his peers in what has been termed the era of the American Enlightenment.

The most evident extension of these concepts came in the area of religion. Like many of the Founding Fathers – and peculiarly in American political history – Paine rejected Protestant Christianity. The virgin birth, the miracles of Jesus, the tale of redemption, the notion of a Trinity, and the resurrection of Christ were dismissed as unreasonable, unworthy of critical inspection. These intellectual shortcomings were underscored by the many inconsistencies in the Bible itself.

Instead, the perusal of the harmonies of the natural world led one to conclude that a benevolent and orderly deity had created the cosmos. Indeed, this deity was often said to have a clockmaker's mind. There had to be a first cause of nature, and it was only reasonable to assume that this cause – God – reflected the same law-like principles that were inherent in the organization of the world. This “Deism” of the Founding Fathers did not deny a religious sensibility – a veneration for the author of all things – but it was believed that after establishing a harmonious world, the creator did not intercede in human affairs. The religion of the Founders had little time for a God who directly intervened in our lives, and they diminished the otherworldly concerns of Christianity. Deism also heightened moral impulses directed to man's relations with his fellows and in many instances had an optimistic strain that emphasized human perfectibility. Finally, it must be noted that the American Deists often understated their claims for public consumption and, at times, blandly adapted their convictions to the common providential Protestantism of the New World. Among the Deists Paine was idiosyncratic in loudly espousing anti-Christian views. Many of the Founders – Franklin for example – might deny the truth claims of Reformed Protestantism, yet benignly acknowledge it as a desirable form of social control. Paine's sometimes bitter denunciation of mainstream religious sensibilities could even be construed as socially dangerous by leaders who intellectually shared his disbelief in Christianity and his vision of a Newtonian God. Although Paine's faith was not unconventional, his expression of it was.

These rationalist, Newtonian, ideas led to a novel grasp of political life. The Founders believed it reasonable – though also congenial – to assume that all people – or at least all white men – were made equal by their creator. Differences in station were to be expected and were permitted but could be justified only because of variations in talent, industry, and frugality among individuals. In any event men should, in the order of things, be provided with equal opportunities and, therefore, an equal voice with other men in determining how society should be governed. Such “natural rights” were fundamental to any society human beings devised; their maker “endowed” them with such rights.

There was a distinction to be made between society and govern-

ment. Society was the natural outcome of the human condition – the relationships that derived from collections of human beings living together, raising their young, and cooperating in common endeavor. These joint, implicit responsibilities embodied the social contract. On the other side, government was a negative instrument only necessary to the extent that matters went awry; its powers were limited and, in the natural course of things, largely unnecessary.

What had gone wrong in America to impel her leaders to Revolution? Colonial thinkers had embraced the views of some dissenters in England earlier in the eighteenth century. These “Commonwealthmen” or “radical Whigs” had developed a pervasive and bitter critique of English society as it had, they supposed, been debilitated by eighteenth-century fiscal innovations. The growth of the monetary power of the monarchy destroyed the ideal of “balanced” government among King, Lords, and Commons and led to a situation where the crown bought and sold offices, expanded its power, and ground down the citizenry. The Commonwealthmen looked back to a time of imagined civic virtue and worked for the restoration of what they took to be a natural scheme of governance, overturned by evil and degenerate men.

This nightmarish vision was a constant minority view in English politics, linked, for example, to the agitation over John Wilkes in the 1760s, which we have assumed to have influenced Paine. The ideas of the Commonwealthmen were more widely accepted in political circles in the New World, although the Americans initially lacked the visceral distaste for English politics that the Commonwealthmen regularly expressed. Nonetheless, colonials came increasingly to view England as a nation of rapidly deteriorating virtue and liberty. This belief was corroborated at the conclusion of the Seven Years War. The French and Indian War, as it was known in America, effectively ousted the French from the New World in 1763 and lent new authority to the British Empire. King George III determined that the colonies should bear part of the cost of this triumphal venture. In the next ten years American fears about the corruption of English society seemed to be verified as the Mother Country put into effect a series of legislative acts pertaining to the colonies. Victorious in England, the opponents of the Commonwealthmen had now shifted their focus, it seemed, to America, where they wished to place a yoke of tyranny over the colonists.

The Commonwealthmen, however, had only wanted to restore England to the balance in which king and aristocracy had a rightful role to play. In the New World the critique went much deeper and developed into a distinctive American political position. The leadership in the colonies emphasized liberty of individual conscience, religious toleration, resistance to tyrants, and reform of the legislature. More important, the Americans denounced the hereditary English political institutions. What was the basis *in reason* for the rule of a single unelected person? And how could logic legitimate the privilege, wealth, and political power accorded to an aristocracy of *birth*? The philosophy of natural rights taught that men were born equal, and so, for men such as the Founding Fathers, the entire foundation of English society could be questioned.

In place of this society, at best unnatural, at worst corrupt, the colonials proposed a variety of different schemes. The precise form they were to devise for themselves was a matter that experience and argument would decide in the period from 1774 to 1812. But it was at least agreed that power had somehow to be lodged with "the people," no matter how restrictedly they were defined. The people would choose their governors, with whatever necessary hedging. The masses might elect the people who would represent them; in extreme cases democracy – an even more direct rule of the people – was pressed. The common denominator became American "republicanism" – a set of views about the decadent state of England and the causes of its decline. All Americans were persuaded that any kind of hereditary privilege was evil, and that it was essential to fragment interest groups or to subordinate them to the public good.

By the mid-1770s republicanism was a powerful force in America. Many believed that English rule had to be overthrown, the independence of the New World asserted, and reasons given for the decision. These republican themes were best exemplified in the document that formally brought war to the colonies, the 1776 Declaration of Independence, primarily composed by Jefferson.

Paine too was an American republican, but he had had a long history in England. He had been first exposed to the vituperative outpourings of the Commonwealthmen before he came to the New World. Paine's writings throughout the decade of the 1770s were also replete with hyperbolic depictions of the decadence of the English system and the causes and consequences of its corruption.

His attacks were coupled with an exposition of the philosophy of natural rights and the way it pertained to politics in America. He explored how Britain's connection to America legitimated the colonies' desire for independence. All these themes were standard fare for the American leadership, but the character of Paine's writing differed, not just from that of the more cautious revolutionaries such as John Adams, Alexander Hamilton, and Madison, but even from that of men such as Jefferson and Franklin, more sympathetic to Paine. Even the latter could not match Paine as an inflammatory and didactic exhorter. The result, in *Common Sense*, was a rage against the English and an intensity of expression that was unequalled by anyone born in the colonies.

This edition of Paine's works prints the two most significant pieces of his revolutionary writings of the mid to late 1770s. The role of *Common Sense* has already been mentioned, and the reader will find in it what at the time was the most stirring formulation of the ideas that have been previously discussed, although the critique of the monarchy was almost completely couched in terms acceptable to Protestants. The purpose of *Common Sense* was to present a rationale for rebellion. In addition to it, Paine wrote a series of gripping pieces whose goal was to keep the rebels fighting, even during the darkest hours. These sixteen essays on *The Crisis* were even more plainly designed as propaganda than *Common Sense*. The initial and most famous *Crisis* paper is reprinted here. Composed while Paine was accompanying Washington's forces in their retreat across New Jersey early in the war, the first number appeared at the end of 1776: "These are the times that try men's souls," it began. "The summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will, in this crisis, shrink from the services of his country; but he that stands it *now* deserves the love and thanks of man and woman." Washington was so moved by the pamphlet that he ordered it read to his men on Christmas Eve, 1776, before his ragged troops crossed the Delaware above Trenton, New Jersey, in a surprise attack that defeated the Hessian mercenaries in the pay of the British.

Paine himself was no summer soldier and continued to lift the spirits of the Americans. The "crisis" of the end of 1776 was just the first of many that tried them, but Paine was rarely discouraged and always defiant. For the next several years he combined political theorizing and incendiary writing with effective action. After