# Thomas Paine - A Radical Republican Reconsidered

## Abstract

Whilst there has been an expanding amount of literary works on Thomas Paine in recent years, for a long time his significance was lost to history. This dissertation of 11,982 words (total 15,201) seeks to uncover the significance of Paine during the revolutionary era. To qualify Paine's place within the Enlightenment, I will aim to place him amongst the thinkers of his age whilst attempting to counter critics. Paine's position can only begin to be understood in the context of trans-Atlantic eighteenth-century politics. Paine's writings, whatever the appraisals of modern-day assessments, must be juxtaposed to the prevailing beliefs of the period in order to recognise his destabilising rhetoric. In doing so, we can begin to distinguish Paine as a "radical." A conflation of republicanism and liberalism is also required in order to connect Paine to the founding and identify his multifaceted political and social theories.

Three strands of Paine's republican model will be explored. Artisanal republicanism will uncover Paine's efforts to politicise Philadelphian society, beginning with the *Pennsylvania Magazine* and then the Pennsylvania Constitution, as well as covering Paine's attitudes towards (slave) labour. Francophile republicanism concerns ideas of national identity during the French Revolution and a period of heightened political tension, explaining the beginning of Paine's political decline. Finally, Deistic republicanism will explain Paine's often misconstrued thoughts on religion, dissecting the reception of *Age of Reason*. A conclusion will seek to restore Paine's once supposed negative impression as a positive one; Paine was not nearly as radical as scholars have professed him to be.

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## Introduction

The mid to late eighteenth-century was a tumultuous time for the British and French establishments. Increased political awareness, brought about by the Age of Enlightenment, altered perceptions of the gentry and hereditary monarchs, the underpinnings of both kingdoms. The minds of common men were maturing, indicated by an emerging middling order of literate skilled labourers, as people began to question the arbitrary rule of governmental institutions aided by a newly acquired sense of rationality and natural rights. These developments culminated in the revolutions in America and France, and these newly inspired nations would, slowly but surely, aid the development of majority rule, a fundamental modern-day political aspect. Socio-economic imperfections continue to permeate throughout the world today, but these events marked a great milestone for the ordinary man who had taken a monumental step towards greater equitable citizenship.

Thomas Paine played a political role in both revolutions. *Common Sense* (1776) sold at least 75,000 copies in a single year and *Rights of Man* (1791) would sell 200,000 copies.[1] The popularity of Paine's work is undoubted and his appeal unprecedented. It is suggested that nearly half of the periodicals that most frequently post articles on Paine are literary, as opposed to philosophical, historical or political.[2] Several authors have paid homage to Paine's penmanship. Eric Foner writes that his uniqueness and new designs "helped to extend political discussion beyond the narrow confines of the eighteenth century's 'political nation.'"[3] Alfred Aldridge heralds Paine's "vigorous literary style which influenced the

[1] William A. Speck, *Political Biography of Thomas Paine*, London: Pickering & Chatto Publishers, 2013, p.42-118
[2] Scott Cleary and Ivy Stabell, eds. *New Directions in Thomas Paine Studies*, New York: Springer, 2016. p.4
[3] Eric Foner, *Tom Paine and Revolutionary America,* New York: Oxford University Press, 1976, xxxi

political and religious ideas of millions."[4] Richard Ellis reminds us, however, of Paine's "wild schemes for social and constitutional reform" that "were overwhelmingly rejected by the American people in the postrevolutionary period."[5] It has therefore been commonplace for Paine to be overlooked when examining the efforts that secured the colonies independence from Britain, and a lack of political conformity has spurred individuals to question his credibility. Contradictory ideological views have not helped attempts to classify Paine either. "*Common Sense* breathes an extraordinary hatred of English governing institutions but does not consistently echo any established radical vocabulary." To J.G.A Pocock, Paine was neither a "New Model soldier" nor an "Honest Whig."[6] According to Simon Newman and Peter Onuf, Paine has yet to be "fully integrated into any of the major historiographical schools of the American founding."[7] This is not helped by the fact that "scholarship is divided disciplinarily between historians, literary scholars, philosophers, and political scientists who often don't read each other's work."[8] Interpretations of Paine were and are still dependent on one's political compass. Yuval Levin has marked 1791 and the debate on democracy between Paine and Edmund Burke as the "birth of left and right."[9] Those on the left admire Paine as a liberal egalitarian whilst those on the right deplore him for his

[4] Alfred Aldridge, *Man of Reason: The Life of Thomas Paine,* London: The Cresset Press, 1960. p.7
[5] Richard E. Ellis, "What is the Significance of Tom Paine for the American Revolution?" *Reviews in American History,* Vol. 6, No. 2, 1978, p.190.

[6] John G. Pocock, *Virtue, Commerce, and History: Essays on Political Thought and History,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985, p.276

[7] Simon Newman and Peter Onuf, *Paine and Jefferson in the Age of Revolutions*, Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press. 2013, p.1

[8] Betsy Erkkila & Edward Larkin, "International Society for the Study of Thomas Paine Conference (review)." Early American Literature, vol. 48 no. 2, 2013, p.518

[9] See Levin Yuval, *The Great Debate: Edmund Burke, Thomas Paine, and the Birth of Right and Left*, Arizona: Basic Books, 2013

threatening rebellious and subversive nature. In this sense, Paine is either a one-dimensional protagonist or antagonist.

Academics continue to critique Paine, but the extent of his influence should not be confined to literature. Too many simply regard him as a propagandist pamphleteer, polemicist and rhetorician. Paine was not only a shrewd publicist, but an intellectual who was years ahead of his time and the epitome of true revolutionary dedication. Paine was an idealistic ideologue rather than a pragmatic career politician which distances him from the founding, yet this should not diminish his position within the Enlightenment. A reconsideration of Paine as a political and social theorist is needed to outline his role amongst the Founding Fathers and establish his legacy. This requires not only an analysis of Paine's writings, but a contextualisation and understanding of his frame of thinking. The pejorative use of the term "radical" was perhaps unfair, however, understanding why Paine was deemed a radical amongst his contemporaries is vital in order to unearth the distinct qualities of republicanism he endorsed. How do we accurately define Paine? What was his legacy? However academics choose to define him, Paine's most enduring prominence may have been his impact on democracy and social reform, but on reflection, an equally complex set of elements surrounding Paine – abolitionism, a trio of national affiliations and religion – also requires examination. We also need to reconsider Paine's radicalism against a backdrop of shifting political experiences and adversity.

## Chapter 1 - A Radical Republican

Even though the word radical came into the English language approximately a decade after his death, Paine, in context, should be categorised as such. Broadly speaking, "radical" described any kind of reformer who wanted change "from the roots." This did not just encompass republicans but also campaigners for universal suffrage, annual parliaments and the secret ballot. These reformers were frequently juxtaposed with moderates who campaigned for less comprehensive measures like household suffrage and triennial parliaments.[10] British reformers during the 1790s were stigmatised and ostracised as "Jacobins," acquired from revolutionary France. Malcolm Thomis and Peter Holt perceive the label as a "blanket term" of abuse utilised by a repressive government, covering all who disturbed their complacency and settled ways of thought.[11] Likewise, the definition of radicalism raises questions. Given the conservative inclination of British politics during the revolutionary period, radical can be used as a sweeping description of those who challenged the status-quo. Moreover, whilst there were clearer divisions in France between right-wing monarchists and the republicans, the British government saw little distinction amongst the American revolutionaries as they were fighting collectively. As a result, the perception over-condenses an otherwise multifaceted movement.

Whilst the terminology is rather abstruse, ascribing "radical" to Paine may not be so derogatory. Radicalism generally arose from the detest of the underlying archaic conventions of the British political system. Paine's writings would later draw William

[10] J.R. Dinwiddy, "English Radicalism Before the Chartists," in Peter Catteral, *Britain 1815-1867*, Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1994, "radical" is adapted generically throughout this book

[11] Malcolm Thomis and Peter Holt, *Threats of Revolution in Britain, 1789-1848,* London: The Macmillan Press, 1977, p.6

Cobbett's attention to parliamentary abuses that the *Political Register* would call "Old Corruption." This included borough-mongering, unmerited pensions and sinecures.[12] These practices were necessary for securing power thanks to a tight-knit relationship between the monarchy and an elitist Parliament. Many of the middling orders resented their dependence on the landed elite whose policies could have a profound impact on their economic status. Jack Fruchtman marks 1768 as Paine's radical awakening, shaped by prior knowledges of social and political inequities in London when he was working as a stay-maker and teacher.[13] William Speck believes it was not until 1773-1774 that Paine's interest in radical politics surfaced.[14] These years bore witness to a lacklustre marriage with Elizabeth Ollive and a controversy including Lord Clive during which was a noticeable turning point as Paine became "a major critic of British imperialism."[15] Before this timeframe, Speck holds that Paine was apolitical and conservatively inclined although others argue Quakerism ignited his radicalism.[16] The extent of Paine's early radicalism remains ambiguous but we can assume that his radical beliefs were, as Foner puts it, "fixed by the time he arrived in America."[17] This is backed by J.C.D. Clark, reckoning the American Revolution as "an episode that (Paine)…understood primarily in English terms."[18] The traditional political climate in eighteenth-century England was an undeniable impediment to Paine's radical agenda though after sailing across the Atlantic, Paine would help form the "Philadelphia Radicals"

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[12] Ian Dyck "Local Attachments, National Identities and World Citizenship in the Thought of Thomas Paine." *History Workshop*, no. 35, 1993, p.130

[13] Jack Fructhman Jr. "Thomas Paine's Early Radicalism 1768-1783," eds Newman and Onuf, *Paine and Jefferson in the Age of Revolutions*, Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press. 2013

[14] Speck, *Political Biography of Thomas Paine*, xiv

[15] Ibid. p.26

[16] See Chapter 4

[17] Foner, *Tom Paine,* p.3

[18] Jonathan Clark, *Thomas Paine: Britain, America, and France in the Age of Enlightenment and Revolution*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018. p.122

with men such as Benjamin Rush and David Rittenhouse, endorsing American independence, highlighting British corruption and adhering to the popular culture of the working classes.[19] John Belchem investigates the revolutionary era further. Paine's radical influence, primarily through *Rights of Man*, made momentous force. A "rejection of the accepted language of debate… the appeal to history and to traditional liberties" ushered in a new "vocabulary of reason and natural rights." Subsequently, as a political reasoner and populariser, Paine was primarily responsible for the advancement of the reform movement within Britain which became more radical, revolutionary and influential, eventually evolving into Chartism.[20] Moreover, Edward Thompson's magisterial work has its roots in the Paineite rhetoric of the English republican and Jacobin political underground of the 1790s, although it is argued that these views were too extreme for the more reputable debating and corresponding societies.[21] Unlike constitutionalist reformers such as Major Cartwright and John Baxter who "were attempting to take over the rhetoric of the age," Paine's vocabulary was revolutionary, calling for the cessation of British institutions.[22]

Whilst the prevailing influence of Paine points to his radicalism, it remains crucial to examine Paine's relationship with the Founding. Initially, we must distinguish between republicanism and liberalism. Gordon Wood declares that Liberalism itself did not arise out of intellectual tradition but through "the voice of concrete reality" resulting from human competitiveness and self-interestedness.[23] As we will see, these traits would accelerate the

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[19] Foner, *Tom Paine,* p.109

[20] John Belchem, "Republicanism, Popular Constitutionalism and the Radical Platform in Early Nineteenth-Century England." *Social History*, vol. 6, no. 1, 1981, pp.1-3

[21] See Benjamin Weinstein, "Popular Constitutionalism and the London Corresponding Society." *Albion: A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies*, vol. 34, no. 1, 2002, pp. 37–57

[22] Edward P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class,* London: Gollancz, 1963, p.88

[23] Gordon Wood, "Ideology and the Origins of Liberal America," *The William and Mary Quarterly*, vol. 44, no. 3, 1987, p. 634

rise of an artisanal class, however, it is widely accepted that John Locke inspired Anglo-American ideology during the revolutionary period. An acceptance of individuality and private rights formed the basis of liberalism. This was adopted by the Colonial Americans, allowing the greatest possible freedoms to the individual, equality before the law and the toleration of opposing viewpoints. Isaac Kramnick informs us that this point has come under review. It has been debated that Anglo-American social and political thought revolved around a republican tradition accentuating citizenship and public participation, de-emphasising Locke's impact on the founding.[24] Pocock considers American republicanism as dependent on Whiggish or country arguments. At the centre was a stress on civic humanism, a way of thinking that had been emerging in Britain ever since the Glorious Revolution.[25] Kramnick remains adamant that Locke was "very much alive" in Paine's arguments, revived by the American taxation crisis and middle-class radicalism.[26] Countering this view, Clark says that attributing Locke to Paine generates confusion as he had been a supporter of William III. Paine himself had also claimed, "I had never read Locke, nor ever had the work in my hand."[27] This should not, however, detract from the broad-mindedness of Paine's work in which the social contract theory and natural rights, the crux of the Lockean school of philosophy, are present. Irrespective of these deliberations, Paine also exhibited republican ideals. Kramnick labels Paine as a "radical liberal," but liberalism was characteristically radical in the sense that it was a levelling philosophy. Republicanism was arguably less radical as it was an ideology centred around effective government. The English

[24] Isaac Kramnick, *Republicanism and Bourgeois Radicalism: Political Ideology in Late Eighteenth-Century England and America*, New York, Cornell University Press, p.164

[25] John G. Pocock, "Virtue and Commerce in the Eighteenth Century." *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, vol. 3, no. 1, 1972, p.119

[26] Kramnick, *Republicanism and Bourgeois Radicalism,* p.170-172

[27] Clark, *Age of Enlightenment and Revolution*, pp.68-69

variant, neo-Harringtonianism, was designed to confront the most corrupt British Prime Minister of all time, Robert Walpole, and his "court" faction.[28] During the American Revolution, Paine presented several accounts on the importance of civic virtuousness which sought to strike at the heart of a corrupt and oppressive British constitution, never straying from a belief in the public good and a strong citizenship. In this observation, ascribing "radical liberal" to Paine is too narrow and the description somewhat negates itself. "Radical republican" is a far more comprehensive description for Paine in order to recognise his complexity.

Before embarking to the New World, Paine's life in Lewes, a place known for harbouring republicans during and after the English Civil War, exposed him to pro-republican discourse through publications such as the *Sussex Weekly Advertiser.*[29] The editor of this newspaper was also a member of the Headstrong Club which Paine frequented. One can only speculate due to the absence of historical sources, but the topic of debate would have probably verbalised around local and national politics, thus opening the door to talk of parliamentary reform. Additionally, the champion of liberty, John Wilkes, passed through Sussex in 1770 and likely encountered Paine there. Fruchtman claims that Paine knew of Wilkes' activities in London as well, bringing the subject of American independence to Paine's attention.[30] Fruchtman's supposition is uncertain, but time spent in the capital did introduce Paine to Newtonianism delivered by learned lecturers. This new milieu of scientific discovery would have opened ideas to new modes of reasoning concerning political progress. It would soon appear to Paine that such avenues of

[28] Kramnick, *Republicanism and Bourgeois Radicalism,* p.165
[29] Relevant dates of editions are September through December 1772
[30] Jack Fruchtman Jr., *Apostle of Freedom*, New York: Four Walls Eight Windows, 1996, p.29

exploration were also shared by "Almost every Philadelphian" who "had some scientific interest or business."[31] The fact that *Common Sense* was released only a year after his arrival in America provides evidence that Paine was already a convert to the cause of independence. Clark's suggestion that Paine drafted the two opening sections of the pamphlet whilst in England contends that a repudiation of George III preceded an affirmation of republicanism.[32] Nevertheless, this is mere speculation and does not detract from the essence of republicanism – the denunciation of despotism derived from hereditary succession. John Keane proposes that Paine's version of republicanism differed from the traditional perspective in two ways. Firstly, and most crucially, he advocated a modern, representative democratic government, condemning the rule of a natural aristocracy. Secondly, his republicanism was self-taught and did not adhere to classical rhetoric, guided only by first-hand experience of social interactions and surroundings.[33] Also developing the rationale by announcing theories such as popular sovereignty and religious freedom without undermining republican principles, Andreas Kalyvas and Ira Katznelson note that Paine, alongside James Madison, transformed classical republicanism into their liberal "republic of the moderns."[34] Paine held these virtues close to heart but deviated from the norm. He was an enigma in the sense that his political thought was a novelty; Paine's brand of republicanism was extraordinarily progressive and morally advanced, expediating the politicising process of the masses, and thus bringing a new dimension of civil discussion to the table of politics that ordinary people could comprehend and enact.

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[31] Foner, *Tom Paine*, p.20
[32] Clark, *Age of Enlightenment and Revolution*, p.148
[33] John Keane, *Tom Paine: A Political Life,* London: Bloomsbury, 1995, xx-xxi
[34] Andreas Kalyvas and Ira Katznelson, "The Republic of the Moderns: Paine's and Madison's Novel Liberalism." *Polity*, vol. 38, no. 4, 2006, p.453.

In assessing republicanism, the ambiguity of the ideology must be considered. John Adams had protested: "There is not a single more unintelligible word in the English language than republicanism."[35] Divergent interpretations rendered its conceptualisation troublesome, and the leaders of the American Revolution were split over how it was to take shape. The conservatives, Adams and Alexander Hamilton, held a cautious line, striving to maintain an organised class hierarchy centred around wealthy merchants and landowners. Classical republicanism was seen by Paine as a ploy for the elites to conceal their motives. There was unlikely to be a connection between an individual's wealth and their capacity for civic virtuousness as private gains were likely to take precedence over the public good. To offset this, Paine endeavoured to make the public sphere as accessible as possible, as will be explained in the next chapter.[36] Thomas Jefferson, Madison and Benjamin Franklin sought a revolution grounded on values shared with Paine, especially those related to natural law and rights. Unlike Paine, however, these country gentlemen had a vested interest in rural property. Distrustful of urbanisation, their republican image was comprised of agrarian principles and independent yeoman farmers. Paine identified with mercantile economics, appealing to free trade, whilst still realising the significance of agriculture in obtaining wealth. Creating wealth by cultivation was the "fountain head," trade being the "streams which distribute it."[37] The lands were the "real riches of the habitable world, and the natural funds of America."[38]

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[35] Linda Kerber, "Making Republicanism Useful." *The Yale Law Journal*, vol. 97, no. 8, 1988, p.1663
[36] Edward Larkin, *Thomas Paine and the Literature of Revolution*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005, p.51
[37] Thomas Paine, *The Complete Writings of Thomas Paine,* ed. Philip Foner, New York: Citadel Press, 1945, p.283
[38] Ibid. p.329

Offering no more than "simple facts, plain arguments and common sense," Paine realised the golden opportunity to break away from British rule.[39] It was, in theory, a chance to start a new republic without future fears of subjugation. However, such logical endeavour was to be both bold and complex. Bernard Bailyn's hypothesis entails that the outbreak of the Revolution was not "the result of social discontent, or of economic disturbances, or of rising misery." Alternatively, American libertarian republicanism renewed discernments on British colonial politics: "Resistance in the 1760s and 1770s was a response to acts of power deemed arbitrary, degrading, and uncontrollable."[40] It is noteworthy to recall the political atmosphere of the colonies during this time. *Common Sense* was a tremendously effective catalyst for the independence cause, arriving at an opportune time of tension and resentment. Robert Ferguson notes that the expression of anger in the pamphlet thrived off the concurrent emotional swelling of colonial nationalism.[41] Kramnick writes that Paine carried the "rage of English bourgeois radicalism" and successfully applied it in *Common Sense*.[42] These animosities were a central theme to *Common Sense,* but Bailyn's contention has come under scrutiny for being too homogenous. It does not, for example, consider several factors that many working-class colonialists held dear like religious tolerance and social egalitarianism. Furthermore, Whiggish ideologies were also prevalent within the mercantile classes who employed the arguments of commonwealthmen in the hopes to gain greater commercial autonomy. Ultimately, the economic structure of colonial society

[39] Paine, *Political Writings*, ed. Kuklick, p.16
[40] Bernard Bailyn, "The Central Themes of the American Revolution: An Interpretation." eds Stephen G. Kurtz and James H. Hutson, *Essays on the American Revolution*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1973, p.15
[41] Robert A. Ferguson, "The Commonalities of Common Sense." *The William and Mary Quarterly*, vol. 57, no. 3, 2000, p.500
[42] Isaac Kramnick, *Republicanism and Bourgeois Radicalism*, p.148

would result in a newfound struggle for control between the freshly politicised middling orders and local elites, adding to civil tension.[43] Paine would come to augment this power dynamic, providing a voice to the democratic disposition of Philadelphia.

[43] Robert Shalhope "Republicanism and Early American Historiography." *The William and Mary Quarterly*, vol. 39, no. 2, 1982, p.338

## Chapter 2 – Artisanal Republicanism

Republicanism is an ideology of leisure as it favours those who can afford to dedicate their time to civil life, Kramnick argues. Liberalism is an ideology that stresses the importance of work, attributing virtue to those who are industrious and diligent. From as early as the seventeenth-century, American cultural attitudes towards these ideologies reversed. Work became the ideal whereas leisure was frowned upon.[44] One can assert that Paine's first significant prose, *The Case of the Officers of Excise* (1772), was a sympathetic appraisal of the working-classes. The laborious petition was ineffective and resulted in the failure of Paine's tobacco business, but amongst these disenchantments, this early involvement in the political sphere serves as a reminder of Paine's ethical endeavour. He outlined four concerns to Parliament: the poverty of the officers; the temptations arriving from their poverty; their qualifications; and the security of the revenue.[45] Paine's writings in America would later inspire a new generation of working men, helping integrate them into the political domain, challenging the existing hierarchical order. After experiencing the toils of hard-working professions, Paine stood as the perfect representative for Philadelphia's burgeoning class of artisans who were transitioning into a self-educated and politically ambitious sector of society. Paine wrote for all people, but those affected most from his works were the productive artisans who contributed a great deal more to *res publica* than they were rewarded for.

Philadelphia, the most populous and wealthiest settlement of the colonies, was a thriving centre of trade. Instead of being dominated by aristocratic landowners, wealthy

[44] Kramnick, *Republicanism and Bourgeois Radicalism,* pp.1-2
[45] Speck, *Political Biography of Thomas Paine,* p.20

merchants were central to Philadelphia's flourishing status, playing a key role in policymaking. Beneath, a large proportion of the city, about half the population, were skilled craftsmen, mechanics and artisans.[46] Building on Marxist definitions, Michael Hangagan defines an "artisan" as "any worker who was highly skilled, possessed a wide range of skills, and exercised some control over the admission of workers into his trade."[47] Before the American Revolution, artisans were societally connected vertically instead of horizontally, most being immediately concerned with those situated above or below them in the social ladder and therefore not recognising their shared interests.[48] However, there is no doubt that over the course of the revolutionary era such labourers would start to recognise and become actively involved in political progressions, forming a distinct sector of society. Jack Greene has characterised this as the "'modernisation" of political consciousness:

> "The result was a wholly new political mentality for participants at all levels of the political process, a mentality that was not only receptive but eager for change, oriented toward the present and future rather than toward the past, confident of the efficacy of human reason to shape that present and future, and committed to the revolutionary beliefs that criteria for membership in the political nation should be universalistic rather than prescriptive, and that social and political advancement should be based on achievement rather than ascription."[49]

As for the amplification of this awareness and mindfulness, much must be owed to Franklin for the spread of the American Enlightenment within Philadelphia. Foner acknowledges the "international celebrity" status that Franklin had as "the personification of the successful artisan who had emerged from their ranks" but stops short in his analysis.[50] Foner notes the

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[46] Foner, *Tom Paine*, p.28
[47] Michael Hanagan, "Artisan and Skilled Worker: The Problem of Definition." *International Labor and Working-Class History*, no. 12, 1977, p.29
[48] Gordon Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution*, New York: Vintage Books, 1991, p.23
[49] Jack Greene, "Paine, America, and the 'Modernization' of Political Consciousness." *Political Science Quarterly*, vol. 93, no. 1, 1978, p.74
[50] Foner, *Tom Paine*, pp.34-36

maxims of *Poor Richard's Almanack* influencing artisan culture yet does not include Franklin's additional efforts that shaped Philadelphia as a true place of intellectualism. Abetting an expansion of wisdom and knowledge years before Paine would come to the fore, Franklin would form the *Pennsylvania Gazette,* contribute to the first American subscription library and help found the American Philosophical Society.[51] In 1780 Paine would submit a Bill for incorporating this very society into Pennsylvanian politics for aiding "the cultivation of useful knowledge, and the advancement of the liberal arts and sciences."[52] Franklin's letter of introduction six years prior enabled Paine to secure a position as editor of the *Pennsylvania Magazine* shortly after arriving in America. Dating back to 1731, American magazine print culture enabled a cheap circulation of political, social and economic news, encouraging a wide range of readership. Levels of literacy were more developed in the colonies than in Europe. Philadelphian adult male literacy rates from 1773-1775 were remarkably high at 81.6%, and built-up areas elsewhere in America shared comparable results, reflecting the trend of an ever-growing educated and cognisant urban-dwelling populace.[53] Edward Larkin writes that Paine soon became actively involved in the politicisation of Philadelphia, linking the previously mentioned *Almanack's* typical lower and middling readership as a sizeable proportion of Paine's *Pennsylvania Magazine* audience.[54] In his introductory piece, Paine clarified the benefits of a colonial magazine in extirpating the current "impolitic vanity" claiming that "There is nothing which obtains so general an

[51] James Kloppenberg, *Toward Democracy: The Struggle for Self-Rule in European and American Thought,* New York: Oxford University Press, 2016*,* p.255
[52] Thomas Paine, *The Complete Writings,* p.39

[53] F. W. Grubb, "Growth of Literacy in Colonial America: Longitudinal Patterns, Economic Models, and the Direction of Future Research." *Social Science History*, vol. 14, no. 4, 1990, p.454
[54] Larkin, *The Literature of Revolution*, pp.31-32

influence over the manners and morals of a people as the Press."[55] The magazine was an undoubtedly valuable outlet for Paine to establish and consolidate his political position on proceedings and gain a supportive readership.

Several humanitarian themes featured in the magazine. *African Slavery in America* (1775) denounced the wicked trade of an "unnatural commodity," compared to that of "murder, robbery, lewdness and barbarity."[56] The contentious issue of slavery, maintained by most historians, was genuinely abhorred by Paine. However, given the essay's anonymous author, Clark writes that its appearance in the magazine should not be instantly attributed to Paine as the early biographer Moncure Conway mistakenly had done in 1892. Referencing a by-line, Clark names the author as Anthony Benezet, a Quaker publicist.[57] Nevertheless, private correspondence strengthens Paine's views on natural rights which were the antithesis of slavery. In the same month that George Washington became president, Paine voiced his "despair of seeing an abolition of the infernal traffic in Negroes," desiring them to rise and claim their natural rights and overcome their bondage.[58] Given the sensitivity of slavery, Paine seems to have either restricted his comments to reserved audiences or covered his identity under a pseudonym. Acknowledging his detest of the trade, James Lynch remains doubtful over Paine's commitment to abolitionism as he rarely took public action.[59] However, a firm stance against slavery did not necessarily convert into a fully functioning communal abolitionist movement as Paine was still confined to eighteenth-century presumptions on race.

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[55] Paine, *The Complete Writings,* ed. Foner, pp.1110-1113
[56] Ibid. pp.16-18
[57] Clark, *Age of Enlightenment and Revolution,* p.94
[58] Paine, *The Complete Writings,* ed. Foner, p.1286
[59] James Lynch, "The Limits of Revolutionary Radicalism: Tom Paine and Slavery." *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, vol. 123, no. 3, 1999, pp.179-180

Slave labour, once firmly entrenched in Philadelphian society, became less prevalent as the latter years of the century saw a considerable decline of artisan dependence on indentured servants. The percentage of Philadelphia artisans as slave owners in 1745 was 62.6%, 51.3% in 1772 and 28.3% from 1787-1795.[60] One can postulate that changing perceptions on slave labour had a bearing on the standards of artisans and craftsmen, but this decline was essentially a matter of financial incentive.[61] Notwithstanding this change, Paine was soon to discover that his anti-slavery sentiments clashed with the private welfares of the planting class. No less homogenous than urban artisans, farmers and cultivators in the Antebellum South had their own distinct self-interests too. Undeniably, there were serious flaws of libertarian republicanism as wealthy landowners identified as independent, public good driven citizens; the ownership of their slaves being vindicated on the principles of property rights. Paine's egalitarian social vision was the only means of critiquing this political privilege as people would have to turn to Baptist and Methodist teachings of virtue and equality to emasculate slavery.[62] Rachel Cleves highlights the generation of Federalist abolitionist leaders of the mid nineteenth-century departing from their parents' religious conservatism, yet retaining ethical arguments against human violence, shifting theological concerns towards slavery.[63] Even though property rights were a main component of liberalism, Holly Brewer sees slavery's origins in absolutism, "justified by theories that all people were born to a divinely ordained status," facilitating racism and

[60] Sharon V. Salinger, "Artisans, Journeymen, and the Transformation of Labor in Late Eighteenth-Century Philadelphia." *The William and Mary Quarterly*, vol. 40, no. 1, 1983, p.65
[61] Ibid. p.69
[62] Kerber, "Making Republicanism Useful." p.1669
[63] Rachel Cleves. *The Reign of Terror in America: Visions of Violence from Anti-Jacobinism to Antislavery,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009, p.232

xenophobia.[64] Underscoring this remark, Jefferson, the future Democratic-Republican leader, was a high-flying plantation owner.

Paine's *Common Sense* is recurrently acclaimed as a great persuasive prose that was requisite for attaining and solidifying the revolutionary mentality of the colonies. Paine, in his charitable disposition to the war effort, would never accumulate any substantial personal wealth from its sales. He would suffer financially from the costs of printing 27 editions in 14 towns and seven colonies.[65] His occupation as a writer, often burdened by the demands of printers, starkly contrasted to with Franklin's who was a "man of letters," building his affluent career on the print business.[66] Given its immense popularity, a great deal of attention is given to *Common Sense's* ease of style. This is illuminated by Jefferson when he wrote of Paine, "no writer has exceeded Paine in ease and familiarity of style, in perspicuity of expression, happiness of elucidation, and in simple and unassuming language."[67] Consequently, numerous scholars have taken the title of the pamphlet in a literal sense to explain its widespread appeal, pointing out its forthright style acclimatising to the common reader. Its conversational form ensured that the ordinary man could summarily grasp the science of politics. Comparative analysis undertaken by Lee Sigelmen et al. has discovered that *Common Sense* has both the shortest sentence length and fewest long words of all the pre-revolutionary pamphlets. Furthermore, the use of choleric and sanguinic literary techniques - most frequently utilised in *Common Sense* - enhanced the

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[64] Holly Brewer, *Does Locke's Entanglement with Slavery Undermine his Philosophy?* https://aeon.co/essays/does-lockes-entanglement-with-slavery-undermine-his-philosophy, Accessed 15/4/19
[65] Speck, *Political Biography of Thomas Paine*, p.42
[66] Michael Warner *The Letters of the Republic: Publication and the Public Sphere in Eighteenth-Century America,* Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1990, p.73
[67] Ferguson, "The Commonalities of Common Sense." p.470

forcefulness of Paine's rhetoric.[68] Robert Ferguson sees Paine's theory on the origin and design of government as the "plainest version imaginable," written like a parable.[69] Similarly, Clark sees Paine's style as that of a secular preacher yet refuses to acknowledge Paine as anything more than a pamphleteer providing a rationale for the "popular rage" against loyalists.[70] However, Paine did not just exclusively rebuke hereditary systems as being ridiculous and contemptable. Many commentators do not engage with the intellectual thought of *Common Sense*, instead highlighting its provocativeness and reception. Larkin argues that Paine continues to be trivialised in this way by aligning his writings with the "popular" which is "implicitly set in opposition to the supposedly more intellectual work of the revolution done by Adams, Jefferson, Hamilton and Madison."[71] It is important to note that Paine was the first to understand that a plan for a constitutional convention was required for the colonies to establish a new and strong republican government, alleviating the weaknesses of the Articles of Confederation.[72] The continental charter was to be "a bond of solemn obligation, which the whole enters into, to support the right of every separate part, whether of religion, professional freedom, or property."[73] Paine's efforts should therefore not be taken as a passionate call for independence, but for a democratic republic based on broad participation and, alike Federalist wishes, a centralised executive.

Philadelphian politics was well-suited to the espousals of *Common Sense.* As clerk of the Pennsylvania Assembly, Paine was a main proponent for the passage of a new state

[68] Lee Sigelman et al., "The Common Style of 'Common Sense.'" *Computers and the Humanities*, vol. 30, no. 5, 1996, p.377
[69] Ibid. p.490
[70] Clark, *Age of Enlightenment and Revolution*, pp.70-164
[71] Larkin, *The Literature of Revolution,* p.6
[72] Paine, *The Complete Writings,* ed. Foner, p.303
[73] Paine, *Political Writings*, ed. Kuklick, p.36

constitution. Its pure republican make-up enabled popular sovereignty to take hold as the franchise was extended to all freemen aged 21 and over, had one year's residence and paid public taxes.[74] However, the Pennsylvania Constitution's plan for a unicameral assembly to represent the people was mistrusted by Adams in *Thoughts on Government* (1776). In the essay, Adams provided a constitutional blueprint for provincial legislators, rebutting Paine for "pulling down" governments rather than the "building" new ones.[75] Whilst they had their differences, Adams still acknowledged his counterpart's impression on the era: "I know not whether any man in the world has had more influence on its inhabitants or affairs for the last thirty years… Call it then the Age of Paine." However, Adams despised Paine's democratic values. Not only were they nonsensical, but also categorically harmful as such radical notions would undoubtedly impact the political position that he held. Reflecting on Paine, he exclaimed, "I am willing you should call this the Age of Frivolity as you do… or anything but the Age of Reason."[76] This brief letter effectively summarises Paine's legacy. Few men added as much to the revolutionary cause, yet many of Paine's views were too far-reaching and in turn shunned. Most well-to-do colonists were wary of the power of unconstrained democracy and distrusted the mob which Paine mobilised so effectively. Gregory Claeys explains that political fears arose from "the demand for democracy" which "masked a social revolution in which artisans, the labouring classes and the poor might connect the cause of independence with their economic lot."[77]

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[74] Gordon Wood, *The Creation of the American Republic, 1776-1787*, North Carolina: Chapel Hill, 1998, p.169

[75] Bradley C. Thompson, "John Adams and the Coming of the French Revolution." *Journal of the Early Republic*, vol. 16, no. 3, 1996, p.363

[76] Gregory Claeys, *Thomas Paine Social and Political Thought,* Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1989, p.1

[77] Ibid. p.57

As we have seen, however, Paine's economic concerns were not so narrow. He did warn of the corrupting effects of trade on public spirit, but commerce would allow America to prosper peacefully as a free port with ties to Europe.[78] Colonial commercial interdependence was also advised as no nation could "grow rich without communicating a share of that riches to the rest."[79] Ian Dyck explains that Paine's internationalism would assist industrial entrepreneurs who promoted consumerism and shared his belief in the virtue and necessity of international trade and commercial freedom.[80] Furthermore, envisioning a society based on and determined by competitive individualism, private property and free commercial markets, Paine's economic mindset aligned with Adam Smith and Madison. This new meritocracy would replace the biased, illogical strata measured by perk and privilege that concentrated wealth and power in the hands of an inherited aristocracy. Kramnick's phraseology of "bourgeois radical" thus connects Paine's ideas to small farmers, artisans and merchants, challenging the hegemony of conservatives and classical republicans.[81] Clark denies the rise of an urban bourgeois. "Class" was defined as a "group," not a social stratum or identity within the means of production or exchange.[82] As previously discussed, however, this is not to say that any form of political consciousness was absent. Political consciousness was mandatory for future labour interactions and trade union activism. Whilst Paine did not show preference towards any one sector of the economy, his republicanism would be carried by the "noble mechanics" amidst the chaotic

[78] Paine, *Political Writings*, ed. Kuklick, p.19
[79] Claeys, *Thomas Paine Social and Political Thought,* p.50
[80] Dyck, "Local Attachments, National Identities and World Citizenship in the Thought of Thomas Paine." p.123
[81] Kramnick, *Republicanism and Bourgeois Radicalism,* p.154
[82] Clark, *Age of Enlightenment and Revolution,* p.90

1790s and into the nineteenth-century.[83] During this time, the collective political rights of labourers would be fervently guarded, expanding alongside those of the elite. “With a rhetoric rich in the republican language of corruption, equality, and independence,” Sean Wilentz writes that artisans “remained committed to a benevolent hierarchy of skill and the cooperative workshop.”[84]

Paine’s works were indispensable for the political evolvement of small metropolitan independent producers who were too poor to possess their own land or estate. Their property - the fruits of their labour and talents - was to be found in the tools of their trade, and they were understood as quintessential contributors to the market, being just as valuable to the economy as the mercantile and agricultural classes. Jefferson and Madison, previously sceptical to the needs of artisans, would come to accept the importance of “the *yeomanry* of the city,” uniting both urban and rural labourer under the Jeffersonian Republican Party in 1792.[85] The onset of the French Revolution would polarise the newly formed faction against conservative Federalists in a political tug of war which would determine the direction of the new nation.

[83] Sean Wilentz, *Chants Democratic: New York City and the Rise of the American Working Class, 1788-1850*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2004, p.75
[84] Ibid. p.86

[85] Foner, *Tom Paine,* p.102

## Chapter 3 – Francophile Republicanism

Whilst the US federal constitution denied the masses their ambitions for greater political and economic democracy, Paine's achievements in America were momentous. The same can be said for Paine's unparalleled *Rights of Man*. Its polemics propagated the discussion of rights across Western Europe and America on an unprecedented scale. The number of titles in English using the word "rights" during the 1790s quadrupled to 418 compared to 95 during the 1780s.[86] Unbeknownst to him though, Paine was to experience the plight and despair of an entirely different revolution, one that would ultimately land him in the Luxembourg prison. Even though his most famous work would ardently defend the principles of representative government, Paine would still succumb to the vehemence of republican nationalism. Paine's previous advocacy for a unicameral assembly would detract from his standing as a state-builder. Even though many liberal French philosophes, such as the Marquis de Concordat, looked to the Pennsylvania Constitution as the appropriate framework to identify unitary public interest, unicameralism would also inflame Robespierre and the Jacobins, helping explain why the French revolution took a more dangerous democratic turn than 1776.[87] Placing Paine within the context of the 1790s thus impedes his legacy to a significant extent, but it was the launching of anti-Paine propaganda campaigns by both the American and British establishments that exacerbated Paine's downward spiral as he became undeservedly synonymous with the revolution's bloody transformation.

The news of the fall of the Bastille was celebrated with the utmost fervour amongst republicans and the reform movement. Four months later, Richard Price delivered a sermon

[86]Lynn Avery Hunt, *Inventing Human Rights: A History*, New York: WW Norton & Company, 2007, p.135

[87] Kloppenberg, *Toward Democracy,* p.358

at a dinner held by the Revolution Society. Occurring the previous year, he held the centenary of the Glorious Revolution as a "deliverance from the dangers of popery and arbitrary power," as the French equivalent now began to unfold. Price asserted that the people had obtained a right to choose their own governors, cashier them for misconduct and to frame a government for themselves.[88] Also compelling Price's oratory was the French National Assembly's *Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen* (1789).[89] Amongst the leaders of the Assembly, the Marquis de Lafayette was renowned for being the front-runner of the advancement of the new liberal constitution. The declaration effectively remade France into a constitutional monarchy, doing away with the remnants of feudal privilege, endorsing natural rights and expanding the suffrage.[90] Due to this progress, Paine, in an optimistic outlook, suggested to Washington "the propriety of congratulating the King and Queen of France and the National Assembly, on the happy example they are giving to Europe."[91] Paine's sympathetic views on Louis XVI were remarkably unlike those of George III conveyed in *Common Sense.* It was not against him the people of France had revolted against but the "despotic principle of government," for there was never an absolute monarch who had "possessed a heart (so) little disposed" to that "species of power."[92] Louis XIV was only one product of the grander ancien regime and Paine sought to reform him into

[88] Richard Price, *A Discourse on the Love of our Country, Delivered on Nov. 4, 1789*, Eighteenth Century Collections Online, pp.2-28, http://find.galegroup.com/ecco/infomark.do?&source=gale&docLevel=FASCIMILE&prodId=ECCO&userGroupName=univnott&tabID=T001&docId=CB3327169862&type=multipage&contentSet=ECCOArticles&version=1.0, Accessed 22/4/19

[89] See Appendix One for full text

[90] Foner, *Tom Paine,* p.235

[91] Paine, *The Complete Writings of Thomas Paine* ed. Foner, p.1303

[92] Ibid. p.60

a "republican monarch."[93] In hindsight this was a misinterpretation, but it proves that Paine trusted in the French King as a driving force for radical change.

As the language of civil liberty began to diffuse in France, Paine added his own in with *Rights of Man.* Not forgetting his revolutionary origins, Paine dedicated his work to Washington and the principles of 1776, designing the first part as a riposte to Edmund Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790) and his indictment of Price's sermon and the newly instituted National Assembly. Much like commentaries on *Common Sense,* Keane points to the priority of a literary revolution in order to generate a democratic revolution in politics. In a stark contrast to *Reflections* filled with its time-honoured rhetoric, *Rights of Man* was incredibly colloquial, circumventing Burke's high standards of literary finesse and replacing it with common everyday language. This enhanced the accessibility of political debate to self-educated artisans, working people and lesser professionals.[94] An applicable extract to this dialect confliction was the mocking of Burke's lamentation that "The age of chivalry is gone and the glory of Europe is extinguished forever" as quixotic nonsense.[95] Quotes that appeal to valour are attempts by Burke to conserve heritage and custom, but Paine saw these as nothing more than "facts manufactured through the weakness of sympathy" intended to produce a "weeping effect."[96] A key driver of Paine's argument was exposing the abstract philosophy of Burke's political diatribe. Codification for Paine was paramount. The unwritten constitution of England, arising out of conquest, was queried by Paine: "A constitution is not a thing in name only, but in fact… and wherever it

[93] Keane, *Tom Paine: A Political Life,* pp.283-285
[94] Ibid. p.294-296
[95] Paine, *Political Writings*, ed. Kuklick, p.63
[96] Ibid.

cannot be produced in a visible form, there is none… Can then Mr.Burke produce the English constitution?"[97] On revealing Burke's unfounded opposition, Paine proceeded to explicate the social-contract theory founded on the natural rights inherent in every man, de-emphasising the traditional view of historically grounded liberties. "A government by election and representation" was needed to replace the arbitrary and autocratic "government by hereditary succession." [98] Only then could man's civil rights begin to formulate. If universal rights are integral to every man, then a nation, too, has every right to self-determination to establish its autonomy. Paine claimed that this was exactly the case with the Assembly. The Three Estates - clergy, nobles and commoners - had come together to represent the nation at the consent of the people.

In recent years, scholars have identified Paine's perseverance in building national identities. Paine's definition of "nation" in *Dissertations on Government* (1786) has led Robert Lamb to believe that Paine took an individualistic and cosmopolitan interpretation of nation-building. The organisation of a state's internal affairs was to be legitimately determined by values that safeguarded the rights of citizens. National sovereignty was therefore conditional on the implementation of a liberal constitution.[99] Mark Philip delves into Paine's conviction of integrating American institutions in France in a trans-Atlantic partnership. Much like Lamb's clarification, Paine's conventionism and belief in popular sovereignty would ensure that people remained active participants in the interpretation and amendment of constitutions. Moreover, *Rights of Man Part Two* (1792) would bring the

[97] Ibid. p.81
[98] Ibid. p.137
[99] Robert Lamb, "The Liberal Cosmopolitanism of Thomas Paine." *The Journal of Politics*, vol. 76, no. 3, 2014, pp. 636–648

complete American experience to the French people and beyond the bounds of the "political" nation, adding a wholly new republican dimension to the revolution.[100] However, Speck believes there was "naive idealism" in Paine's preference for republics over monarchies because he instinctively assumed that "they were conducive to peace and harmony, whereas kingdoms perpetuated war and discord."[101] This observation is valid as there were political implications of Paine's theory of international relations. He offered little more than a moral interpretation, hoping on a normative ideal of international cooperation. However unviable this may seem, it still exemplifies Paine's confidence in the good will of human nature, the judgements of individuals and their interpretation of justice. This was displayed when a jubilant Paine was voted a citizen of France and elected to the National Convention when he claimed that France was raising the "standard of liberty for all nations" and contending for the "rights of all mankind," warning against cooperation with the despots of Prussia and Austria.[102] Foner explains that Paine was an efficaciously exceptional political commentator, but the unique point of *Rights of Man* was redefining "republican government." Paine's "artisanal" republicanism generated negativity for being intrinsically democratic, but by replacing direct democracy with representative government, Paine distanced himself from pejorative implications of anarchy.[103] Paine was assured in man's goodwill but understood the necessity of government institutions to "supply the defect of moral virtue."[104] He did support universal manhood suffrage by natural right, but unlike Georges-Jacques Danton, Paine was against the election of judges. The control of political

[100] Mark Philp, "The Role of America in the 'Debate on France' 1791–5: Thomas Paine's Insertion." *Utilitas*, vol. 5, no. 2, 1993, pp.228-230
[101] Speck, *Political Biography of Thomas Paine,* p.111
[102] Paine, *The Complete Writings of Thomas Paine* ed. Foner, p.539
[103] Foner, *Tom Paine,* p.217
[104] Paine, *Political Writings*, ed. Kuklick, pp.4-5

authority required a thoroughly informed impartial judiciary that could never be acquired by "the people."[105] Foner records the impact of *Rights of Man* on British radical organisations such as the Society for Constitutional Information and the London Corresponding Society and, much like *Common Sense,* focuses on its reception. However, Foner fails to provide much detail on the Federalist and Pittite loyalist movement's detrimental effects on Paine's legacy.

The tumultuous decade of the 1790s underpinned the negative reception of *Rights of Man,* cementing Paine's radical branding. In the short-term, events in France enthused extra-parliamentary activity in Britain, shown by the increasing number of radical groups encouraging the participation of artisans and tradesmen. There was initial support for the revolution as the French were adopting a constitutional monarchy. When events took a more extreme turn, however, anxiety gripped Parliament. The execution of Louis XIV and the "Reign of Terror" descended the revolution into Jacobin pandemonium, and British politicians became incredibly hostile to reform, reinvigorating suppression. One of the redeeming qualities of the *Reflections* was that it was extraordinarily prescient. Writing nearly two years before the September Massacres, Burke was correct of the bloody development of the French Revolution.[106] He also predicted the coming of Bonapartism in the eventuality of a fallen monarchy.[107] The ongoing war between the two countries put Paine at an immense disadvantage. Stifled by his self-proclaimed national citizenship, Paine faced xenophobic menace in France when an already suspicious Robespierre demanded

[105] Keane, *Tom Paine: A Political Life,* p.353
[106] See Appendix Two for Burke's brandishing of the dagger in Parliament, signifying what Britain could expect from France
[107] Fruchtman, *Apostle of Freedom,* p.219

more stringent action against foreigners, ordering their imprisonment.[108] It was Paine's multinational identity that was also distrusted by British nationalists. James Gillray's *Tom Paine's Nightly Pest* (1792) depicts Paine in slumber on a tri-coloured pillow reading, "Vive l'America," his nightcap, a revolutionary cockade, emblazoned with "LIBERTAS." The Charges against him were ominous:

> Know, villain, when such paltry slaves presume
> To mix in treason, if the plot succeeds,
> They're thrown neglected by: but if it fails,
> They're sure to die like dogs, as you shall do. [109]

Forcing a corset upon a vulnerable Britannia, Paine's rudimentary upbringing was also alluded to in *Fashion before ease* (1793), his cottage reads: "Thomas Pain, Stay-maker from Thetford. Paris Modes, by express."[110] Allegedly, Gillray was in the payroll of the Tory government, receiving a pension of 200 pounds a year for his "blasphemous" parodies, explained Cobbett in 1818.[111] Having previously mentioned Paine's influence on *Political Register*, initially, Cobbett resented Paine's French affiliation. Writing under "Peter Porcupine," Cobbett backed the Federalists by lambasting republicanism and democracy, launching attacks at Franklin and Jefferson. He also castigated Paine for ten years. One article in the *Anti-Jacobin Review* went: "Whenever or wherever he breathes his last, he will excite neither sorrow nor compassion; no friendly hand will be uttered, not a tear will be

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[108] Moncure Daniel Conway, *The Life of Thomas Paine, With a History of his Literary, Political, and Religious Career in America, France, and England Volume 2,* New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012 p.58

[109] See Appendix Three

[110] See Appendix Four

[111] Ronald Paulson, "Gillray: The Ambivalence of a Political Cartoonist" ed J.D. Browning, *Satire in the Eighteenth Century*, New York: Garland, 1983, p.148

shed. Like Judas he will be remembered by posterity; men will learn to express all that is base, malignant, treacherous, unnatural and blasphemous, by the single monosyllable, Paine."[112] Paine's multinationalism also served to extend his duration in prison as no country would accept him as their own. After his eventual authorised release, Paine would compose a scathing letter in response to Washington's idleness, published in 1796. Five years later, the letter was used by the Federalist *Gazette of the United States* to renounce Paine's citizenship. They cunningly twisted Paine's alleged phrase to Franklin "Where liberty is not, there is my country," a phrase tantamount to his nation-building credentials, to recast him as a lawless infidel:

> "If Tom is an American citizen and *this* country is *his* country, we would be fain be informed whether his letter to "*George Washington, Esquire*," published at the letter to the Aurora, was a letter to *his President*. It will not be pretended, that at *that time*, this was Paine's country, for then law and religion prevailed and were respected; and his motto is "where religion or law dwells there is *not my country*."[113]

To a degree, the Federalist critique was appropriate. Paine was a Founding Father but no true American. He did not concentrate on establishing a political career in the country he had most success in. Instead, an itinerant Paine prided himself as a "citizen of the world," aiming to bring the lessons of the American Revolution to the feudalistic predispositions of Europe. In securing a French republic, Paine almost paid the ultimate price for his endeavours. An idealistic approach to nation-building was ill-suited to the Jacobins who desired direct action to secure quick political results. Even though he would bravely defend the execution of Louis XIV and undergo detainment, there was little sympathy for Paine as the regicidal revolution would severely curtail his image, not to

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[112] Ian Dyck "Debts and Liabilities," ed Dyck, *Citizen of the World: Essays on Thomas Paine*, New York: St Martin's Press, 1988, pp.88-89

[113] Larkin, *The Literature of Revolution,* p.81

mention his most infamous work that would be the breaking point for many of his remaining supporters.

## Chapter 4 - Deistic Republicanism

In the field of religious thought, Paine certainly stood out as an unorthodox theoriser. An outright rejection of Christianity in *Age of Reason* (1794) shocked and no doubt upset a great number of readers. An antagonism to organised religion and his outright rejection of Christianity outraged many nonconformists who had once adorned him. To many he was nothing more than a heretical heathen who planned to subvert the moral and virtuous obligations espoused by the church to destabilise the social order. Holding Paine's philosophy as a notorious vilification of the Christian nation, Federalists and Calvinists, startled by the Illuminati conspiracy in Europe, judged such religious discord a facilitator of local public unrest, as seen in France.[114] The Protestant Dissenters, a highly noteworthy sectarian group renowned for modernising and evolving the radical movement within Britain, would largely rebuke the irreligious structure of *Age of Reason*. Joseph Priestley, a scientific liberalist who had come to Pennsylvania seeking religious and political acceptance, found it "full of palpable mistakes with respect to notorious facts, or… reasoning manifestly inconclusive."[115] Even Rush refused to acknowledge Paine when he returned to America, informing James Cheetham, "his principles, avowed in his 'Age of Reason', were so offensive… that I did not wish to renew my intercourse with him."[116]

It is inappropriate that Paine was given such enmity for his sceptical attitude on religion, for he was not alone on this issue. Adams rejected theological Calvinism and disavowed much of his Puritan past in exchange for a "view of nature, man, and moral obligation that drew heavily on the enlightened views of Francis Bacon, Isaac Newton and

[114] Cleves, *The Reign of Terror in America,* p.91
[115] Claeys, *Thomas Paine Social and Political Thought*, p.189
[116] Speck, *Political Biography of Thomas Paine,* p.169

Locke."[117] It is by examining the "Constitution of our Minds and Bodies" rather than through "supernatural Revelation," that this moral obligation could be appreciated, according to Adams.[118] His interests in rational religion were also akin to those of Jefferson's, but the difference was that Paine's *Age of Reason* was explicit on Christianity which explains why he was ostracised by contemporaries. Even in Europe, most eighteenth-century deists had been content to confine their cynicisms of religion to upper-class salons or to educated audiences.[119] Adams associated Paine's theological accessibility with disorder and immorality, in contrast to his more genteel and learned ideas. The implications of the masses becoming religiously open-minded concerned Adams as he believed this would undermine social and political stability.[120] An audacious bluntness on such a sensitive topic ultimately led to Paine's obscurity as he was forced from the limelight of the political stage. Professing reason as the "only investigation of true and fabulous theology," the language Paine employed was definitely subversive and may have been condescending, but the extent to which many of the critics of *Age of Reason* were ignorant and unwilling to listen or accept Paine's defiance gives us a reflection on the influence and eminence that religion had over people's lives. Knowing the controversial venture he was undertaking, Paine revealed in his introductory note, "You will do me the justice to remember that I have always strenuously supported the right of every man to his own opinion, however different that opinion be to mine. He who denies to another this right makes a slave of himself to his present opinion, because he precludes himself the right of changing it."[121] This statement

[117] Bradley C. Thompson, "Young John Adams and the New Philosophic Rationalism." *The William and Mary Quarterly*, vol. 55, no. 2, 1998, p.262
[118] Ibid. p.271
[119] Foner, *Tom Paine*, p.247
[120] Larkin, *The Literature of Revolution*, p.9
[121] Paine, *Political Writings*, ed. Kuklick, pp.205-206

was not only a reminder of the right to announce one's feelings without the fear of repercussion, calling for toleration amongst its audience, but a note advising listeners to not take refuge purely in popular consensus. Paradoxically, regarding freedom of speech, Thomas Erskine, a lawyer who had defended Paine's seditious libel charge for *Rights of Man*, would prosecute a London bookseller for printing a copy of *Age of Reason*.[122]

First and foremost, *Age of Reason* was a response to the violent outcome of the Reign of Terror. The outward storm of apparent atheism that swept over revolutionary France deeply disturbed Paine. More than 200 priests were killed in the September Massacres, and in the ensuing year, a law was passed sentencing all suspected Christian priests to death.[123] This anarchy was also alarming for conservative statesmen across both the Channel and the Atlantic, although some north-east American dissenting ministers saw the deposition of the Catholic Church as a victory for religious freedom.[124] "In the general wreck of this superstition," Paine professed that the French had "lost sight of morality, of humanity, and of the theology that is true."[125] Even though they had clashed, the issue concerning the dechristianisation of France was shared by Burke. The confiscation of church property to settle public debts by the National Convention breached the natural law of the doctrine of prescription: "With the National Assembly of France possession is nothing, law and usage are nothing."[126] However, there was an exception to this outward atheistic aura that had emanated from the French Revolution. Addressing a Federalist in 1805, Paine denied the notion that the French had completely discarded religion. The national assembly

[122] Paine, *The Complete Writings,* ed. Foner, p.727
[123] See Appendix Five
[124] Cleves, *The Reign of Terror in America,* pp.7-8

[125] Paine, *Political Writings*, ed. Kuklick, p.207
[126] Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, ed. Conor Cruise O'Brien, Harmondsworth: Penguin Classics, 1986, p.260

had merely passed a decree for priests to take an oath of loyalty to the republic before they performed their worship. Paine also referred to the Cult of the Supreme Being that Maximilien Robespierre established, intending it to become the new state religion. The inscription above the National Convention read: "*The Divinity condemns tyrants; the French people execute the decree*."[127] Paine had previously shown no resentment towards religion. He accepted the importance of theology as a rationale for sustaining a healthy sense of mind. Religion was embraced by the downtrodden and was a meaningful comfort to many people, as proven by his confidence in the verbal imagery of God in *The American Crisis.* This imagery aimed to boost army morale and renew soldiers' faith in the cause of independence. Where Paine differed from Burke was on the functions that Christianity should perform.

For Paine, there were two principal enemies of religion, fanaticism and infidelity.[128] Paine persisted to belittle religious authority. The control of the church was questioned, encouraging people to formulate their own rationality and moral sensibilities, contrary to the monarchical and ecclesiastical authorities' desires. These authorities alleged that without church and government men would become uncivilised, animalistic and wicked. Religion held as tight a grip over people's lives as government did, and Paine would later make this point clear: "Tyranny in religion is the worst; every other species of tyranny is limited to the world we live in; but this attempts to stride beyond the grave."[129] Such manipulation, even after death, was akin to the posthumous entitlements of hereditary succession; Paine had formerly impugned Burke's claim of unbending parliamentary

[127] Paine, *The Complete Writings,* ed. Foner, pp.978-979
[128] Ibid. p.749
[129] Ibid. p.728

jurisdiction on future generations.[130] Moreover, church intertwined with state affairs is declared as "morose and intolerant." That which is recommended by Burke is innately exploitive and will lead to the persecution of religious minorities, as was the case with many dissenters who emigrated to America. "All religions are in their nature mild and benign" said Paine, but by succumbing to authoritative desire become "a sort of mule animal, capable only of destroying and not of breeding.[131] A persistent yearning to deliberate and assess rationally instead of capitulating to conventional belief invigorated Paine to build his arguments in *Age of Reason* around the methodology of science. Paine was thoroughly engrossed in this field. He had drawn up plans for the construction of an iron bridge, attempted to uncover the causes and remedies of Yellow Fever and showed an interest in military engineering, comparing the powers and expenses of ships of war, gun-boats and fortifications. Furthermore, he expressed curiosity with Priestley's experiments on air and was in frequent correspondence with Jefferson and Franklin, inquiring into scientific information. By reducing the complexities of religion into that known by the discoveries of scientific headways, Paine valued the validity of proven evidence. This was to be the bond between man in understanding and connecting with God. As an explanation for a first cause still eluded him, Paine believed in a natural theology, that of deism, which did not adhere to scriptural missions or revelations, "I believe in one God, and no more… I do not believe in the creed professed by the Jewish church… nor by any church that I know of. My own mind is my own church."[132] *Age of Reason* reconstructed the conventional credence, reducing God to some distant, non-interventionist first cause. Man was to independently uncover the mysterious workings and intricacies of the universe, whether purposefully created for him

[130] Paine, *Political Writings*, ed. Kuklick, pp.55-56
[131] Ibid. p.95
[132] Ibid. pp.207-208

or not. To unlock these complexities, Paine's dialect of mechanics offered a set of easily interpretable analogies to the wider audience. Like a series of gears and levers, the government machine and its political workings could be effectively resolved with the logic of technical improvement. By deflating the supposedly elaborate operations of politics, Larkin writes that Paine's "democratic mechanic" and its instructions aimed to empower the lower and middling sorts, especially those with technical ability such as skilled craftsmen.[133] This argument was particularly equivalent to Immanuel Kant's who encouraged man to escape from self-imposed nonage - the inability to use one's own understanding without another's guidance - especially from religious dogmas and church institutions.[134] Additionally, Claeys highlights Paine's humanistic involvement with the Church of Philanthropy in Paris in 1797 that had plans to present natural science, in conjunction with theology, to artisans to improve their erudition.[135] Clark agrees with Paine's reliance on Newtonianism, dating his views back to English sources in the 1750s. The contentions Paine put forward were indeed not new. For example, Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781) refuted the "Argument from Design" and David Hume's *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* (1779) debated the nature of God's existence.[136]

Clark underlines the inconsistencies of Paine's interpretation of divine revelation, denied in *Age of Reason*, but existent in *Common Sense* as a prescription for the creation of government and in *Rights of Man* for individual natural rights.[137] This observation complicates Paine's relationship to the Quakers who trusted in the doctrine of inner light. In

[133] Larkin, *The Literature of Revolution*, pp.146-147
[134] Immanuel Kant, *What is Enlightenment?* 1784
[135] Claeys, *Thomas Paine Social and Political Thought,* pp.183-184
[136] A.J. Ayer, *Thomas Paine,* Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1988. p.152

[137] Clark, *Age of Enlightenment and Revolution,* p.332

explaining Paine's radical foundation, contrary to Speck's claims that Paine's radicalism did not arise until the very eve of his departure to America, a great emphasis is placed on Quakerism. Foner claims it was "certain" that religion played a part in Paine's rejection of hierarchies of both church and state.[138] Paine's "whole political system" was understandable only by his theocratic Quakerism, Conway alleged.[139] One can claim that Paine's upbringing was moulded around anti-popery; as a non-conformist, it is probable that Joseph Pain bestowed upon his son a set of directions that questioned the rule of hereditary monarchs. These impressionable adolescent years of Paine's life cannot be overlooked, although Clark disagrees with these motivations writing that Paine was insufficiently persuaded to join the Society of Friends, and unlike Price and Priestley, he did not campaign for non-conformist rights. In America, Paine would turn his back on the Quakers due to their accommodating pacifism towards the redcoats and their call for an allegiance to the crown.[140] Paine still admired the social qualities and honest steadfastness of the Quakers, "they are remarkable for their care of the poor… (and) for the education of their children."[141] A connection with the Quakers was never theological, but Paine's secular values drew heavily upon their ethics of anti-authoritarianism and egalitarianism. The ultimate request to be buried in a Quaker cemetery, in respect to his father, exhibits Paine's utmost reverence towards the Society.[142] Clark's comment on Paine's religious discrepancies is correct, but the purpose of *Common Sense* was to allure and arouse the temperaments of a predominantly Protestant readership, not to seek God. Highlighting the imposition of

[138] Foner, *Tom Paine,* p.3
[139] Claeys, *Thomas Paine Social and Political Thought,* p.102
[140] Clark, *Age of Enlightenment and Revolution,* p.22
[141] Paine, *The Complete Writings,* ed. Foner, p.759
[142] Ibid. p.1500

kingship as a sin of the Jews, a pragmatic Paine astutely used biblical citations to drive the cause of independence, painting monarchy with a brush of popery and blasphemy.[143] Clark does not see *Age of Reason* as democratic and this is true in so far as Paine's theology was not millenarian. Paine's millenarianism permeated *Common Sense* and *Rights of Man* in which there were clear attempts to embolden the masses and revolutionise political thought through envisioning a utopian future. Paine's theological concepts left no room for such allusions. His religious ideal was centred around individualism which had no need for priesthood or direct divine intervention, hence, compared to Price and Priestley, Claeys accepts Paine's outlook as "considerably more republican and less apocalyptic (and) perfectibilist."[144] Irrespective of his deism, Paine was still able to link his theology with political radicalism because of a long habit of collective anti-clerical religious dissent. Hence there are similarities between Paine's views and those of Paine with Price and Priestley[145] and future nineteenth-century nonconformists such as Reverend Erasmus Perkins and Richard Carlile.[146]

In a thorough breakdown of Paine's falling repute, Clark fails to truly grasp the enduring subversive effects of *Age of Reason.* It was a simultaneous attempt to break down institutionalised religion and construct a science-based theology, with the aim of redistributing power from the "human inventions set up to terrify and enslave mankind and monopolise power and profit."[147] In this transformation what Nathan Hatch describes as the "democratization of Christianity" would begin to formulate, beginning a trend of rational

[143] Paine, *Political Writings*, ed. Kuklick, p.9
[144] Claeys, *Thomas Paine Social and Political Thought*, p.104
[145] See Appendix Six for the supposed dangerous motifs associated with Paine's and Priestley's radical views
[146] J.F.C. Harrison, "Thomas Paine and Millenarian Radicalism" in Dyck, *Citizen of the World,* 1988, pp.81-83

[147] Paine, *Political Writings*, ed. Kuklick, p.208

religion free of church authority. Lorenzo Dow, a Christian leader of the early nineteenth-century, exemplifies this change. According to Hatch, Dow "was both a holy man, who cultivated the image of John the Baptist, and a radical Jeffersonian, who could begin a sermon by quoting Tom Paine."[148] Hatch finalises by describing a growing culture of secularisation: "Nourished by sources as contradictory as George Whitefield and Tom Paine, many deeply religious people were set adrift from ecclesiastical establishments."[149] Clark insists that the Church of England continued to remain dominant, enshrined in the constitution of a confessional state, but the republicanisation of American Christianity enabled individuals to be their own theologians, with the freedom to choose whichever religious association they deemed appropriate and without ramification. Paine's liberal "infidelity" tarnished his reputation, but the Second Great Awakening would enhance the challenges to religious authority, an authority that Paine so desperately tried to vilify. Religion had become a more personal and voluntary pursuit than ever previously.[150]

[148] Nathan Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989. p.36

[149] Ibid. p.225

[150] Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution*, pp.331-332

## Conclusion

The three strands of Paine's republican model, artisanal, Francophile and deistic, were not refined enough to be considered with much esteem by realist political theorists like Madison or financial masterminds like Hamilton. Instead, Paine built his character as the author of the bestselling pamphlets of his generation. Unable to transcend this identity, he was always limited by his fiery literary persona which would rapidly gain him an Anglo-American image of notoriety and infamy. Paine's legacy was then tarnished by the partisan biographers George Chalmers and Cheetham. For nearly a century, Paine's name was questioned, his livelihood allegedly poisoned by that of alcohol and atheism. "Never was a public character so suddenly exalted to the very pinnacle of fame, or so precipitately hurled into disgrace," one pamphleteer remarked.[151] Due to these issues, many continue to get side-tracked, focusing on the scandals of Paine's turbulent career which further marginalises him as a political thinker. Consequently, it is not surprising that academics persevere to enunciate Paine as a radical. A radical pedigree should not be forgotten, but it should not be a benchmark by which to evaluate Paine by. Preceding biographies, such as those by Fruchtman, Foner and Keane, tend to surmise Paine's early life, generating arbitrary connections to radicalism. Lacking in these accounts, Speck's more nuanced research has fortunately rescued Paine from the more extreme peripheries of radicalism. Alas now a posthumous work, Speck has set the bar for future biographers, however, what is absent is a real sense of Paine's political and social thought.

[151] Speck, "The Image of Tom," eds Sam Edwards and Marcus Morris, *The Legacy of Thomas Paine in the Transatlantic World*, New York: Routledge, 2017, p.1

This dissertation has explored labour, national identity and religion. I have attempted to connect these elements of Paine's thought to the political and social transformations that took place in both America, France and, to a lesser extent, Britain. Acknowledging the limitations of this work, it has been difficult to explicitly link Paine's efforts to specific developments of the social order. Moreover, relating the complexities of revolutionary ideologies to Paine requires more than just a consideration of liberalism and republicanism. Nevertheless, by engaging with the postulations of Paine's thought, it can be deduced that the notions that lay behind them were unimaginably ground-breaking. Continuing to defy any precise categorisation, Paine's thinking certainly had conflictions and was sometimes capricious, but the premises that lay within were unequivocal. Paine shared with Jefferson a common ideology of the innate moral resoluteness of every man and the maintenance of a virtuous society, distrusting government. Jefferson, however, was careful not to publicise his views whereas Paine was an enthusiastic writer eager to disseminate his material. The Democratic-Republican leader even had to distance himself from Paine's religious views when he became dependent on Baptist, Methodist and Presbyterian votes.[152] Consequently, Jefferson ascended to the presidency in 1800 whilst Paine continued to be hounded and snubbed by Federalists.

A contribution to radical reform and the rising libertarian republican agenda is undoubted, but Paine's decline should be examined against the volatile nature of revolutionary society and its intricacies. Taking an anti-anachronistic approach, Clark's contextualisation of eighteenth-century philosophical thought has been methodically applied to Paine. Such revisionism has been vital in exposing Paine to the milieu of the

[152] Harry Harmer, *Tom Paine: The Life of a Revolutionary,* London: Haus Publishing, 2006, p.102

revolutionary era; however, a milieu of heavy censorship should also be accommodated. On this observation, Larkin's work has found a suitable angle to explore Paine's shortcomings in greater detail. As is recurrently argued by Clark, Paine was no original thinker, but the headwinds posed by political adversaries were strong enough to deflect Paine's course from becoming a legitimately putative Enlightenment figure. Whenever and wherever Paine found himself as a politician, he performed admirably but generally in vain; at no point did Paine have the capability to enact significant political change. Prevailing forces repeatedly conspired against him to thwart the possibility of a future in which individual autonomy flourished; Calvinist preconceptions of human decadence thwarted popular political discourse. An appeal to populism made Paine attractive to the "swinish multitude" but incredibly threatening to the established order. Yet, Paine should not be judged by who he influenced but by his merits as a spirited intellectual, willing to speak his mind even in the most dangerous of circumstances, deep within the circles of two revolutions. This is the true test of any revolutionary. In the end, Paine would remain true to his principles, his will read: "I have lived an honest and useful life, my time has been spent in doing good, and I die in perfect composure and resignation to the will of my Creator, God."[153]

[153] Speck, *Political Biography of Thomas Paine,* p.204

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## Appendix One


"French Constitution, Rights of Man and Citizen," *Liberty, Equality, Fraternity* (1789)

## Appendix Two


Isaac Cruikshank's *Reflections on the French Revolution* (1793)

**Appendix Three**

James Gillray's *Tom Paine's Nightly Pest* (1792)

**Appendix Four**


James Gillray's *Fashion before ease* (1793)

**Appendix Five**


James Gillray's *The zenith of French glory* (1793)

## Appendix Six


Isaac Cruickshank's *The Friends of the People* (1792)

## Literature Review

**Kramnick, Isaac. *Republicanism and Bourgeois Radicalism: Political Ideology in Late Eighteenth-Century England and America*, New York: Cornell University Press, 1990**

In ascertaining Paine's relation to the Founding, an uncovering of the ideological factors of the American Revolution is needed. Isaac Kramnick has stressed the importance of liberalism on the political discourse of the colonialists. This orthodox argument has come under investigation by Pocock, Bernard Bailyn and Gordon Wood amongst other revisionists who have attempted to dethrone John Locke as the predominant philosophical instigator of the revolution. Whilst emphasising the role of liberalism, Kramnick does not entirely rule out the "republican thesis" as "no one paradigm cleared the field in 1788 and obtained exclusive dominance."

There were many intricacies to American revolutionary ideology of which this dissertation cannot do justice, however, a conflation of liberal and republican, an idea that Kramnick does not consider, can describe the complexities and the admissible inconsistencies of Paine's political and social thought. However, Kramnick also labels Paine under "bourgeois radical" which effectively amalgamates both republicanism and liberalism under a separate guise, thus creating a distinct classification for Paine's political and social thought. The emergence of a middle-class of bourgeois radicals claimed by Kramnick is likely to have its detractors, J.C.D Clark included, but the statement is helpful in clarifying Paine's economic ties to both the mercantile classes and emerging class of artisans in colonial Philadelphia. The bourgeois radicals drew from values of popular sovereignty, a diligent work ethic, civic humanism and anti-corruption. Kramnick has also identified four other distinct political discourses that helped shape the American Revolution: Utilitarianism,

Protestantism, Scottish “moral sense” philosophy and Enlightenment rationalism. Of these I have managed to illuminate the Protestant appeal in *Common Sense* and examined religious dissenters such as Joseph Priestley and Richard Price and their ties to radicalism.

**Clark, Jonathan. C. D. *Thomas Paine: Britain, America, and France in the Age of Enlightenment and Revolution*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018**

In undertaking any piece of academic investigation, one needs to consult the revisionist as well as the orthodox arguments. After reading the book’s dismissive review by Colin Kidd of *The Guardian,* I immediately set about to uncover the so-called “veteran enfant terrible of English historians.” Some readers may be off put by Jonathan Clark’s traditional Tory partisanship, but it is this position that plays to the benefit of debate. Clark is extremely investigative, having a great knack for enquiry, and has evidently scoured historical records to a considerable degree. In the field of British early-modern history, Clark has great knowledge from the Glorious Revolution to the intellectual world of Newtonianism and deism. Clark is part of the Cambridge School, led by Quentin Skinner and J.G.A. Pocock to name a few. The role of this intellectual band of historians and political theorists is to avoid anachronism and perennialism whilst focusing on contextualising primary source material. In this mode of research, Clark has set about to rediscover Thomas Paine by placing him within his revolutionary milieu.

In many respects, Clark has taken up a position opposite to mine though there a few comparable themes that run through our work. There were indeed convincing flaws with Paine’s approach to politics. He was an impractical idealist, much to the detriment of his career, and his status as a determinable abolitionist was and remains ambiguous. However,

Clark's claim that Paine was a polemicist and little else is rather acrimonious. Paine was no novel theorist; however, he was certainly a novel Enlightenment figure. In reviewing Paine, Clark's conviction to contextualise Paine has its limits. He does little to contemplate on the confines of a political milieu which were undoubtedly an impediment to Paine's agenda. From this perspective, it is easy to dismiss the influence of Paine or pass him off as having little significance to the development of trans-Atlantic politics.

For social historians engaged in investigating the revolutionary era, Clark's book presents complications. It is understandable that Clark's Paine should be treated with the utmost accuracy and deliberation, but with the benefit of hindsight, we can now begin to uncover Paine in the ensuing light of modernity and societal transformations. Irrespective of clashing historical interpretations, in researching Paine, Clark's revaluation has been an eye-opening experience. This freshly published book of equally fresh interpretations has been valuable in challenging the standard discourse of Paine scholarship.

**Speck, William A. *Political Biography of Thomas Paine*. London: Pickering & Chatto Publishers, 2013**

The most recent biography of Paine, William Speck's work has been useful for highlighting the endurances and discontinuities of Paine's career. Alas now a posthumous work, Speck has placed Paine within the recently established era of "Atlantic History" and points to the biblical references of *Common Sense* thus ensuring the significance of Protestantism as a political discourse of the American Revolution. Newfound knowledge on Paine has illuminated his antagonism to slavery, however, Paine's the degree of Paine's outspokenness on abolitionism remains as equivocal as ever and is still open to

interpretation. Speck has covered Paine's years in England unlike any biographer before him which has been constructive in uncovering Paine's radical origins. Preceding biographies that I have consulted tend to assume Paine's connections to radicalism. This is not to discredit the sincerity of their work, in fact, Keane's biography is by far the most in-depth scholarship on Paine to date. That being said, in an excessive number of works stressing Paine's intimate relation to the radical movement, Speck's biography is a well-balanced interpretation. Speck has not entirely avoided such relations but has endeavoured to make sure that Paine has not come to be overly-defined by his radicalism. In similar fashion to Speck, Clark has repeatedly emphasised that Paine was nowhere near as radical as earlier academics have framed him. Speck has also covered Paine's decline thoroughly which has been advantageous, however, an insight into Paine's immediate post-mortem legacy is absent. A preface of four pages does not sufficiently assess Paine's influence either. Though very well researched and structured, a detailed account of Paine's social and political principles remains wanting. The biography format constricts any in depth study of topics or any solid conclusion of Paine as a philosophe.

**Larkin, Edward. *Thomas Paine and the Literature of Revolution*, New York: Cambridge University Press. 2005**

Edward Larkin's work is a breath of fresh air in the ever-expanding and ever-conflicting number of scholarly works on Paine. Larkin, like Clark, offers a historical contextualisation but also a careful analysis of Paine's language, style and rhetoric. In doing so, Larkin has altered Paine's image from incoherence and indistinctness to one of clarity. As a member of the International Society for the Study of Thomas Paine, Larkin continues to produce new

material, and in this book, Larkin seeks to unravel a politically inhibited Paine and reinstate him as a credible literary figure, regardless of the constrains of heavy censorship. In my attempt to explain the development of Paine's declining image, Larkin has obtained numerous historical sources of the Federalist offensive against the Democratic-Republicans. One of which is an article of the *Gazette of the United States* which will be featured in my dissertation. Paine's most ill-reputed yet intellectually unique political theory, scientist deism, is also meticulously covered by Larkin. In assessing Paine's intrepid religious thought, such deep analysis is valuable and places Paine within the inimical environment of Protestantism. There is unfortunately little regard to Paine's upbringing in England which obscures any early relation to radicalism. This can be overlooked by the fact that this work specifically engages in literature and there is no hard evidence that Paine ever wrote for the *Sussex Weekly Advertiser*, regardless of its style and tone.

I have obtained from this book an understanding into the print culture of Revolutionary America which has proven useful in connecting Paine's early ideas to colonial society. In setting about to discover Paine's links to humanitarianism, one must consult his contributions to the *Pennsylvania Magazine*. It is common for this to be overlooked as only a year later; Paine had produced the immensely popular *Common Sense*. I myself have been limited in delving into this material, but, as gathered from supplementary research, there is a general agreement of Paine's unique unswerving literary skill. Larkin highlights Paine's language as direct and unswerving compared to other Founding Fathers such as Franklin who held a more diffidence approach. *The Literature of Revolution* has enabled me to explore Paine's decline in greater detail, but also as one characterised by his forceful and ardent literary persona.