Introduction

We Americans like to think of our revolution as not being radical; indeed, most of the time we consider it downright conservative. It certainly does not appear to resemble the revolutions of other nations in which people were killed, property was destroyed, and everything was turned upside down. The American revolutionary leaders do not fit our conventional image of revolutionaries—angry, passionate, reckless, maybe even bloodthirsty for the sake of a cause. We can think of Robespierre, Lenin, and Mao Zedong as revolutionaries, but not George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and John Adams. They seem too stuffy, too solemn, too cautious, too much the gentlemen. We cannot quite conceive of revolutionaries in powdered hair and knee breeches. The American revolutionaries seem to belong in drawing rooms or legislative halls, not in cellars or in the streets. They made speeches, not bombs; they wrote learned pamphlets, not manifestos. They were not abstract theorists and they were not social levelers. They did not kill one another; they did not devour themselves. There was no reign of terror in the American Revolution and no resultant dictator—no Cromwell, no Bonaparte. The American Revolution does not seem to have the same kinds of causes—the social wrongs, the class conflict, the impoverishment, the grossly inequitable distributions of wealth—that presumably lie behind other revolutions. There were no peasant uprisings, no jacqueries, no burning of châteaux, no storming of prisons.

Of course, there have been many historians—Progressive or neo-Progressive historians, as they have been called—who have sought, as Hannah Arendt put it, "to interpret the American Revolution in the light of the French Revolution," and to look for the same kinds of internal violence, class conflict, and social deprivation that presumably lay behind the French Revolution and other modern revolutions.[1] Since the beginning of the twentieth century these Progressive historians have formulated various social interpretations of the American Revolution essentially designed to show that the Revolution, in Carl Becker's famous words, was not only about "home rule" but also about "who was

to rule at home."[2] They have tried to describe the Revolution essentially as a social struggle by deprived and underprivileged groups against entrenched elites. But, it has been correctly pointed out, despite an extraordinary amount of research and writing during a good part of this century, the purposes of these Progressive and neo-Progressive historians—"to portray the origins and goals of the Revolution as in some significant measure expressions of a peculiar economic malaise or of the social protests and aspirations of an impoverished or threatened mass population—have not been fulfilled."[3] They have not been fulfilled because the social conditions that generically are supposed to lie behind all revolutions—poverty and economic deprivation—were not present in colonial America. There should no longer be any doubt about it: the white American colonists were not an oppressed people; they had no crushing imperial chains to throw off.[4] In fact, the colonists knew they were freer, more equal, more prosperous, and less burdened with cumbersome feudal and monarchical restraints than any other part of mankind in the eighteenth century. Such a situation, however, does not mean that colonial society was not susceptible to revolution.

Precisely because the impulses to revolution in eighteenth-century America bear little or no resemblance to the impulses that presumably account for modern social protests and revolutions, we have tended to think of the American Revolution as having no social character, as having virtually nothing to do with the society, as having no social causes and no social consequences. It has therefore often been considered to be essentially an intellectual event, a constitutional defense of American rights against British encroachments ("no taxation without representation"), undertaken not to change the existing structure of society but to preserve it. For some historians the Revolution seems to be little more than a colonial rebellion or a war for independence. Even when we have recognized the radicalism of the Revolution, we admit only a political, not a social radicalism. The revolutionary leaders, it is said, were peculiar "eighteenth-century radicals concerned, like the eighteenth-century British radicals, not with the need to recast the social order nor with the problems of the economic inequality and the injustices of stratified societies but with the need to purify a corrupt constitution and fight off the apparent growth of prerogative power."[5] Consequently, we have generally described the Revolution as an unusually conservative affair, concerned almost exclusively with politics and constitutional rights, and, in comparison with the social radicalism of the other great revolutions of history, hardly a revolution at all.

If we measure the radicalism of revolutions by the degree of social misery or economic deprivation suffered, or by the number of people killed or manor houses burned, then this conventional emphasis on the conservatism of the American Revolution becomes true enough. But if we measure the radicalism by the amount of social change that actually took place—by transformations in the relationships that bound people to each other—then the American Revolution was not conservative at all; on the contrary: it was as radical and as revolutionary as any in history. Of course, the American Revolution was very different from other revolutions. But it was no less radical and no less social for being different. In fact, it was one of the greatest revolutions the world has known, a momentous upheaval that not only fundamentally altered the character of American society but decisively affected the course of subsequent history.

It was as radical and social as any revolution in history, but it was radical and social in a very special eighteenth-century sense. No doubt many of the concerns and much of the language of that premodern, pre-Marxian eighteenth century were almost entirely political. That was because most people in that very different distant world could not as yet conceive of society apart from government. The social distinctions and economic deprivations that we today think of as the consequence of class divisions, business exploitation, or various isms—capitalism, racism, etc.—were in the eighteenth century usually thought to be caused by the abuses of government. Social honors, social distinctions, perquisites of office, business contracts, privileges and monopolies, even excessive property and wealth of various sorts—all social evils and social deprivations—in fact seemed to flow from connections to government, in the end from connections to monarchical authority. So that when Anglo-American radicals talked in what seems to be only political terms—purifying a corrupt constitution, eliminating courtiers, fighting off crown power, and, most important, becoming republicans—they nevertheless had a decidedly social message. In our eyes the American revolutionaries appear to be absorbed in changing only their governments, not their society. But in destroying monarchy and establishing republics they were changing their society as well as their governments, and they knew it. Only they did not know—they could scarcely have imagined—how much of their society they would change. J. Franklin Jameson, who more than two generations ago described the Revolution as a social movement only to be roundly criticized by a succeeding generation of historians, was at least right about one thing: "the stream of revolution,

once started, could not be confined within narrow banks, but spread abroad upon the land."[6]

By the time the Revolution had run its course in the early nineteenth century, American society had been radically and thoroughly transformed. One class did not overthrow another; the poor did not supplant the rich.[7] But social relationships—the way people were connected one to another—were changed, and decisively so. By the early years of the nineteenth century the Revolution had created a society fundamentally different from the colonial society of the eighteenth century. It was in fact a new society unlike any that had ever existed anywhere in the world.

Of course, there were complexities and variations in early American society and culture—local, regional, sectional, ethnic, and class differences that historians are uncovering every day—that make difficult any generalizations about Americans as a whole. This study is written in spite of these complexities and variations, not in ignorance of them. There is a time for understanding the particular, and there is a time for understanding the whole. Not only is it important that we periodically attempt to bring the many monographic studies of eighteenth-century America together to see the patterns they compose, but it is essential that we do so—if we are to extend our still meager understanding of an event as significant as the American Revolution.

That revolution did more than legally create the United States; it transformed American society. Because the story of America has turned out the way it has, because the United States in the twentieth century has become the great power that it is, it is difficult, if not impossible, to appreciate and recover fully the insignificant and puny origins of the country. In 1760 America was only a collection of disparate colonies huddled along a narrow strip of the Atlantic coast—economically underdeveloped outposts existing on the very edges of the civilized world. The less than two million monarchical subjects who lived in these colonies still took for granted that society was and ought to be a hierarchy of ranks and degrees of dependency and that most people were bound together by personal ties of one sort or another. Yet scarcely fifty years later these insignificant borderland provinces had become a giant, almost continent-wide republic of nearly ten million egalitarian-minded bustling citizens who not only had thrust themselves into the vanguard of history but had fundamentally altered their society and their social relationships. Far from remaining monarchical, hierarchy-ridden subjects on the margin of civilization, Americans had become, almost overnight, the most liberal, the most democratic, the most commercially minded, and the most modern people in the world.

And this astonishing transformation took place without industrialization, without urbanization, without railroads, without the aid of any of the great forces we usually invoke to explain "modernization." It was the Revolution that was crucial to this transformation. It was the Revolution, more than any other single event, that made America into the most liberal, democratic, and modern nation in the world.

Of course, some nations of Western Europe likewise experienced great social transformations and "democratic revolutions" in these same years. The American Revolution was not unique; it was only different. Because of this shared Western-wide experience in democratization, it has been argued by more than one historian that the broader social transformation that carried Americans from one century and one kind of society to another was "inevitable" and "would have been completed with or without the American Revolution." Therefore, this broader social revolution should not be confused with the American Revolution. America, it is said, would have emerged into the modern world as a liberal, democratic, and capitalistic society even without the Revolution.[8] One could, of course, say the same thing about the relationship between the French Revolution and the emergence of France in the nineteenth century as a liberal, democratic, and capitalistic society; and indeed, much of the current revisionist historical writing on the French Revolution is based on just such a distinction. But in America, no more than in France, that was not the way it happened: the American Revolution and the social transformation of America between 1760 and the early years of the nineteenth century were inextricably bound together. Perhaps the social transformation would have happened "in any case," but we will never know. It was in fact linked to the Revolution; they occurred together. The American Revolution was integral to the changes occurring in American society, politics, and culture at the end of the eighteenth century.

These changes were radical, and they were extensive. To focus, as we are today apt to do, on what the Revolution did not accomplish—highlighting and lamenting its failure to abolish slavery and change fundamentally the lot of women—is to miss the great significance of what it did accomplish; indeed, the Revolution made possible the anti-slavery and women's rights movements of the nineteenth century and in fact all our current egalitarian thinking. The Revolution not only radically changed the personal and social relationships of people, including the

position of women, but also destroyed aristocracy as it had been understood in the Western world for at least two millennia. The Revolution brought respectability and even dominance to ordinary people long held in contempt and gave dignity to their menial labor in a manner unprecedented in history and to a degree not equaled elsewhere in the world. The Revolution did not just eliminate monarchy and create republics; it actually reconstituted what Americans meant by public or state power and brought about an entirely new kind of popular politics and a new kind of democratic officeholder. The Revolution not only changed the culture of Americans—making over their art, architecture, and iconography—but even altered their understanding of history, knowledge, and truth. Most important, it made the interests and prosperity of ordinary people—their pursuits of happiness—the goal of society and government. The Revolution did not merely create a political and legal environment conducive to economic expansion; it also released powerful popular entrepreneurial and commercial energies that few realized existed and transformed the economic landscape of the country. In short, the Revolution was the most radical and most far-reaching event in American history.

i MONARCHY

the injunction to obey laws and not men really mean that the dignity and natural social standing of men no longer mattered in government? Were kings really "the servants and not the proprietors of the people," as Jefferson asserted in 1774? It was true that rulers were "exalted above their brethren not for their own sakes but for the benefit of the people." But did this mean that rulers were not to be "great men," perhaps not even to be gentlemen? Were rulers really "of the same species . . . and by nature equal" with those they ruled? And do they "greatly tarnish their dignity when they attempt to treat their subjects otherwise than as their fellow-men"?[45]

These were questions implied but not followed up, suggestions thrown out in the heat of polemics, momentary and sometimes desperate efforts to bridge some of the awful chasm that had traditionally existed between superiors and subordinates, rulers and ruled. But few as yet were willing to draw out fully the significance of the incongruous belief that rulers and masters were servants and that children controlled their parents.

Even the most revolutionary could not shake off the familial imagery of the past. In 1776 in *Common Sense* Thomas Paine tried to clear the air of the "ancient prejudices" that supported hereditary monarchy and all that it implied in patriarchy and family government. Paine rejected outright the whole idea of dynastic monarchy; the king of England was a "royal brute," a "wretch . . . with the pretended title of Father of His People." "The phrase *parent* or *mother country* hath been jesuitically adopted by the king and his parasites, with a low papistical design of gaining an unfair bias on the credulous weakness of our minds." Yet only a year later Paine could find no better means to explain and justify the Revolution than to dredge up once again the familiar parent-child metaphor that he had presumably laid to rest. The colonists had simply grown up and come of age. "To know whether it be the interest of the continent to be independent," he wrote, "we need only ask this easy, simple question: Is it the interest of a man to be a boy all his life?" It was testimony to the lingering power of the old monarchical assumptions that Paine in 1777 should have still felt compelled to put the issue in these familial terms.[46]

10. Revolution

The Revolution brought to the surface the republican tendencies of American life. The "Suddenness" of the change from monarchy to republicanism was "astonishing." "Idolatry to Monarchs, and servility to Aristocratical Pride," said John Adams in the summer of 1776, "was never so totally eradicated from so many Minds in so short a Time." Probably Adams should not have been astonished, for the truncated nature of American society with its high proportion of freeholders seemed naturally made for republicanism. Yet adopting republicanism was not simply a matter of bringing American culture more into line with the society. It meant as well an opportunity to abolish what remained of monarchy and to create once and for all new, enlightened republican relationships among people.[1]

Such a change marked a real and radical revolution, a change of society, not just of government. People were to be "changed," said the South Carolina physician and historian David Ramsay, "from subjects to citizens," and "the difference is immense. Subject is derived from the latin words, *sub* and *jacio,* and means one who is under the power of another; but a citizen is an unit of a mass of free people, who, collectively, possess sovereignty. Subjects look up to a master, but citizens are so far equal, that none have hereditary rights superior to others. Each citizen of a free state contains, within himself, by nature and the constitution, as much of the common sovereignty as another."[2] Such a republican society assumed very different sorts of human relationships from that of a monarchy.

By the late 1760s and early 1770s a potentially revolutionary situation existed in many of the colonies. There was little evidence of those social conditions we often associate with revolution (and some historians have desperately sought to find): no mass poverty, no seething social discontent, no grinding oppression. For most white Americans there was greater prosperity than anywhere else in the world; in fact, the experience of that growing prosperity contributed to the unprecedented eighteenth-century sense that people here and now were capable of ordering their own reality. Consequently, there was a great deal of jealousy and touchiness everywhere, for what could be made could be unmade; the people were acutely nervous about their prosperity and the liberty that seemed to make it possible. With the erosion of much of

what remained of traditional social relationships, more and more individuals had broken away from their families, communities, and patrons and were experiencing the anxiety of freedom and independence. Social changes, particularly since the 1740s, multiplied rapidly, and many Americans struggled to make sense of what was happening. These social changes were complicated, and they are easily misinterpreted. Luxury and conspicuous consumption by very ordinary people were increasing. So, too, was religious dissent of all sorts. The rich became richer, and aristocratic gentry everywhere became more conspicuous and self-conscious; and the numbers of poor in some cities and the numbers of landless in some areas increased. But social classes based on occupation or wealth did not set themselves against one another, for no classes in this modern sense yet existed. The society was becoming more unequal, but its inequalities were not the source of the instability and anxiety. Indeed, it was the pervasive equality of American society that was causing the problems—even in aristocratic South Carolina.

Perhaps the society of no colony was more unequal, more riven by discrepancies of rich and poor, more dominated by an ostentatious aristocracy than that of South Carolina. "State and magnificence, the natural attendants on great riches, are conspicuous among this people," declared a wide-eyed New England visitor in 1773. "In grandeur, splendour of buildings, decorations, equipage, numbers, commerce, shipping, and indeed in almost everything, it far surpasses all I ever saw, or ever expect to see in America." Yet, surprisingly, in the opinion of Carolinian Christopher Gadsden, society in his colony was most remarkable, not for its inequality, but for its equality, for the prevalence in it of substantial hardworking farmers and artisans—that is, of all those who "depend, almost, altogether upon their own daily labour and industry, for the maintenance of themselves and families." These honest industrious white folk were extraordinarily prosperous. Even "the poorest of them (unless some very uncommon instances indeed) but must find himself, in a very comfortable situation, especially when he compares his condition, with that of the poor of other nations," or, Gadsden might have added, with that of the black slaves in their own midst. The result, said Gadsden, was that white society in South Carolina was comparatively equal, "the distinctions . . . between the farmer and rich planter, the mechanic and the rich merchant, being abundantly more here, in imagination, than reality."

Yet because such equality and prosperity were so unusual in the Western world, they could not be taken for granted. The idea of labor,

of hard work, leading to increased productivity was so novel, so radical, in the overall span of Western history that most ordinary people, most of those who labored, could scarcely believe what was happening to them. Labor had been so long thought to be the natural and inevitable consequence of necessity and poverty that most people still associated it with slavery and servitude. Therefore any possibility of oppression, any threat to the colonists' hard-earned prosperity, any hint of reducing them to the poverty of other nations, was especially frightening; for it seemed likely to slide them back into the traditional status of servants or slaves, into the older world where labor was merely a painful necessity and not a source of prosperity. "The very apprehension thereof, cannot but cause extreme uneasiness." "No wonder," said Gadsden, "that throughout *America,* we find these men extremely anxious and attentive, to the cause of liberty." These hardworking farmers and mechanics were extraordinarily free and well off and had much to lose, and "this, therefore, naturally accounts for these people, in particular, being so united and steady, everywhere," in support of their liberties against British oppression.[3]

In all the colonies in the 1760s and 1770s the circumstances were similar. The absence of a traditional European nobility and a sprawling mass of the destitute made everyone seem much more alike. At present, wrote John Adams, in 1761, "all Persons under the Degree of Gentlemen are styled Yeoman," including even laborers and those "who never owned an Inch of ground in their Lives." The lack of the customary degrees of distinction and deference was what British visitors to the colonies meant when they said that "an idea of equality . . . seems generally to prevail, and the inferior order of people pay but little external respect to those who occupy superior stations." Equality did not mean that everyone was in fact the same, but only that ordinary people were closer in wealth and property to those above them and felt freer from aristocratic patronage and control than did common people elsewhere in the Western world. And they were ready, as Edmund Burke said, to "snuff tyranny in every tainted breeze"; and as Orange County, North Carolina, stated in 1770 in a common phrase that captured the colonists' sense of the high stakes involved in their politics, they were willing "to risque our All to save our Country from Rapine and Slavery."[4]

This extraordinary touchiness, this tendency of the colonists in their political disputes to argue "with such vehemence as if all had been at Stake," flowed from the precariousness of American society, from its

incomplete and relatively flattened character, and from the often "rapid ascendency" of its aristocracy, particularly in the Deep South, where families "in less than ten years have risen from the lowest rank, have acquired upward of £100,000 and have, moreover, gained this wealth in a simple and easy manner." Men who had quickly risen to the top were confident and aggressive but also vulnerable to challenge, especially sensitive over their liberty and independence, and unwilling to brook any interference with their status or their prospects.[5]

For other, more ordinary colonists the promises and uncertainties of American life were equally strong. Take, for example, the lifelong struggle of farmer and sawmill owner Moses Cooper of Glocester, Rhode Island, to rise from virtual insignificance to become the richest man in the town. In 1767–68, at the age of sixty, Cooper was finally able to hire sufficient slaves and workers to do all his manual labor; he became a gentleman and justice of the peace and appended "Esq." to his name. Certainly by this date he could respond to the rhetoric of his fellow Rhode Islanders talking about their colony as "the promised land . . . a land of milk and honey and wherein we eat bread to the full . . . a land whose stones are iron . . . and . . . other choice mines and minerals; and a land whose rivers and adjacent seas are stored with the best of fish." And Cooper might well have added, "whose forests were rich with timber," for he had made his money from lumber. Yet at the same time Cooper knew only too well the precariousness of his wealth and position and naturally feared what Britain's mercantile restrictions might mean for his lumber sales to the West Indies. What had risen so high could as readily fall: not surprisingly, he became an enthusiastic patriot leader of his tiny town of Glocester. Multiply Cooper's experience of uneasy prosperity many thousandfold and we have the stuff of a popular revolutionary movement.[6]

America was no doubt "the best poor Man's Country in the World."[7] But the general well-being and equality of the society set against the gross inequality and flagrant harshness of both white servitude and especially black slavery made many people unusually sensitive to all the various dependencies and subordinations that still lurked everywhere in their lives. Thus in 1765 at the outset of the imperial crisis John Adams's fearful and seemingly anachronistic invocation of an older feudal world of "servants and vassals" holding "their lands, by a variety of duties and services . . . in a state of servile dependence on their lords," could at once arouse the colonists' anxieties over the potentialities, however inchoate and remote, of a dependent world in their own

midst. They repeatedly put into words their widespread sense that very little stood between their prosperous freedom and out-and-out oppression. Indeed, they told themselves over and over that if ever they should agree to a parliamentary tax or allow their colonial assemblies to be silenced, "nothing will remain to us but a dredful expectation of certain slavery." The tenants of one of the New York landlords may have seemed to the landlord's agent to be "silly people" by their resisting a simple extension of the services required of them out of "fear [of] drawing their Posterity into Bondage," but they knew the reality of the eighteenth-century world. They knew the lot of ordinary people elsewhere, and they knew especially the lot of white and black dependents in their own society, and thus they could readily respond to images of being driven "like draft oxen," of being "made to serve as bond servants," or of foolishly sitting "quietly in expectation of a m[aste]r's promise for the recovery of [their] liberty." The immense changes occurring everywhere in their personal and social relationships—the loosening and severing of the hierarchical ties of kinship and patronage that were carrying them into modernity—only increased their suspicions and apprehensions. For they could not know then what direction the future was taking.[8]

By the middle of the century these social changes were being expressed in politics. Americans everywhere complained of "a Scramble for Wealth and Power" by men of "worldly Spirits." Indeed, there were by the early 1760s "so many jarring and opposite Interests and Systems" that no one in authority could relax, no magistrate, no ruler, could long remain unchallenged. More and more ordinary people were participating in electoral politics, and in many of the colonies the number of contested elections for assembly seats markedly increased. This expansion of popular politics originated not because the mass of people pressed upward from below with new demands but because competing gentry, for their own parochial and tactical purposes, courted the people and bid for their support by invoking popular whig rhetoric. Opposition factions in the colonial assemblies made repeated appeals to the people as counterweights to the use of royal authority by the governors, especially as the older personal avenues of appeal over the heads of the governors to interests in England became clogged and unusable. But popular principles and popular participation in politics, once aroused, could not be easily put down; and by the eve of the Revolution, without anyone's intending or even being clearly aware of what was happening, traditional monarchical ways of governing through kin and patronage

were transformed under the impact of the imperial crisis.[9] "Family-Interests," like the Livingstons and De Lanceys in New York, or the Pinckneys and Leighs of South Carolina, observed one prescient British official in 1776, "have been long in a gradual Decay; and perhaps a new arrangement of political affairs may leave them wholly extinct." Those who were used to seeing politics as essentially a squabble among gentlemen were bewildered by the "strange metamorphosis or other" that was taking place.[10]

With the weakening of family connections and the further fragmentation of colonial interests, crown officials and other conservatives made strenuous efforts to lessen popular participation in politics and to control the "democratic" part of the colonists' mixed constitutions. Some royal governors attempted to restrict the expansion of popular representation in the assemblies, to limit the meetings of the assemblies, and to veto the laws passed by the assemblies. Other officials toyed with plans for remodeling the colonial governments, for making the salaries of royal officials independent of the colonial legislatures, and for strengthening the royal councils or upper houses in the legislatures. Some even suggested introducing a titled nobility into America in order to stabilize colonial society. But most royal officials relied on whatever traditional monarchical instruments of political patronage and influence they had available to them to curb popular disorder and popular pressure—using intricate maneuvering and personal manipulation of important men in place of whig and republican appeals to the people.

After 1763 all these efforts became hopelessly entangled in the British government's attempts to reform its awkwardly structured empire and to extract revenue from the colonists. All parts of British policy came together to threaten each colonist's expanding republican expectations of liberty and independence. In the emotionally charged atmosphere of the 1760s and 1770s, all the imperial efforts at reform seemed to be an evil extension of what was destroying liberty in England itself. Through the manipulation of puppets or placemen in the House of Commons, the crown—since 1760 in the hands of a new young king, George III—was sapping the strength of popular representation in Parliament and unbalancing the English constitution. Events seemed to show that the crown, with the aid of a pliant Parliament, was trying to reach across the Atlantic to corrupt Americans in the same way.[11]

Americans steeped in the radical whig and republican ideology of opposition to the court regarded these monarchical techniques of personal influence and patronage as "corruption," as attempts by great

men and their power-hungry minions to promote their private interests at the expense of the public good and to destroy the colonists' balanced constitutions and their popular liberty. This corruption had created pockets of royal influence throughout America and had made the crown itself, said John Adams, nothing but a "private interest." Such corruption had turned the colonies into a dumping ground for worthless place-seekers from Britain, "strangers *ignorant* of the interests and laws of the Colonies . . . sent over," complained William Henry Drayton of South Carolina, "to fill offices of 200£ or 300£ per annum, as their only subsistence in life." Americans were warned that they could no longer trust those "who either hold or expect to hold certain advantages by setting examples of servility to their countrymen." Men who themselves were tied to patrons simply "serve as decoys, for drawing the innocent and unwary into snares."[12] Such corruption had allowed even distinguished Americans like Thomas Hutchinson and his clan in Massachusetts to pile up offices to the exclusion of those who John Adams and James Otis felt were better men. The hatred of Hutchinson was so great that sometimes it could scarcely be contained. "Good God!" declared Josiah Quincy in 1770. "What must be the distress, the sentiments, and feelings of a people, legislated, condemned and governed, by a creature so mercenary, so dependent, and so—but I forbear: my anguish is too exquisite—my heart is too full!" The term "pensioner," Hutchinson ruefully noted, was one "which among Americans conveys a very odious Idea."[13]

By adopting the language of the radical whig opposition and by attacking the monarchical abuse of family influence and patronage, however, the American revolutionaries were not simply expressing their resentment of corrupt political practices that had denied some of them the highest offices of colonial government. They actually were tearing at the bonds holding the traditional monarchical society together. Their assault necessarily was as much social as it was political.

But this social assault was not the sort we are used to today in describing revolutions. The great social antagonists of the American Revolution were not poor vs. rich, workers vs. employers, or even democrats vs. aristocrats. They were patriots vs. courtiers—categories appropriate to the monarchical world in which the colonists had been reared. Courtiers were persons whose position or rank came artificially from above—from hereditary or personal connections that ultimately flowed from the crown or court. Courtiers, said John Adams, were those who applied themselves "to the Passions and Prejudices, the Follies and Vices of Great Men in order to obtain their Smiles, Esteem, and Pa-

tronage and consequently their favors and Preferments." Patriots, on the other hand, were those who not only loved their country but were free of dependent connections and influence; their position or rank came naturally from their talent and from below, from recognition by the people. "A real patriot," declared one American in 1776, was "the most illustrious character in human life. Is not the interest and happiness of his fellow creatures his care?"[14]

Only by understanding the hierarchical structure of monarchical society and taking the patriots' assault on courtiers seriously can we begin to appreciate the significance of the displacement of the loyalists—that is, of those who maintained their allegiance to the British crown. The loyalists may have numbered close to half a million, or 20 percent of white Americans. As many as 80,000 of them are estimated to have left the thirteen colonies during the American Revolution, over six times as many émigrés per 1,000 of population as fled France during the French Revolution.[15] Although many of these American émigrés, unlike the French émigrés, did not have to abandon their nation and could remain as much British subjects in Canada or the West Indies or Britain itself as they had been in one of the thirteen colonies, nevertheless, the emigration of the loyalists had significant effects on American society.

It was not how many loyalists who were displaced that was important; it was who they were. A disproportionate number of them were well-to-do gentry operating at the pinnacles of power and patronage—royal or proprietary officeholders, big overseas dry-goods merchants, and rich landowners. Because they commanded important chains of influence, their removal disrupted colonial society to a degree far in excess of their numbers. The emigration of members of the De Lancey, De Peyster, Walton, and Cruger families of New York, who, one historian has said, were related "by blood and marriage to more than half the aristocracy of the Hudson Valley," collapsed the connections and interests holding together large clusters of New York society.[16] Similar ramifying disruptions were felt in Pennsylvania from the departure of members of the Penns, Allens, Chews, Hamiltons, and Shippens, who formed particularly prominent, cohesive, and influential groups. Young James Allen realized only too well what the Revolution was doing. "Private friendships are broken off," he wrote in his diary, and his distinguished family and its important connections were "totally unhinged."[17]

It was the same everywhere. The removal of the loyalist heads of these chains of interest had destructive effects on the society out of all proportion to the actual numbers involved. Only forty-six Boston merchants were named in Massachusetts's banishment act of 1778, yet among these were some of the wealthiest families—the Ervings, Winslows, Clarks, and Lloyds—whose connections of kin, friends, and clients ramified throughout the society. True, the vacancies in Boston created by their removal were quickly filled by ambitious north shore merchants, including the Cabots, Lees, Jacksons, Lowells, Grays, Higginsons, and Gerrys. But the bases of the newcomers' positions were necessarily different, and the very recency of their arrival opened them to resentment and further challenge. As early as 1779 James Warren was complaining that in Boston "fellows who would have cleaned my shoes five years ago, have amassed fortunes, and are riding in chariots."[18]

Many of the loyalists' networks of kin and patronage were, of course, extensive enough to protect some of them from patriot persecution and confiscation of their property and to allow others to return quietly to the United States at the end of the war. Some departing loyalists even left members of their families in America to look after their interests. Yet neither the returning loyalists nor the patriots who took many of their places were able to re-create precisely the old prewar chains of family and patronage. Post-revolutionary society was inevitably put together on new republican terms. Social and business links formed during the war and after were thinner and more precarious, less emotional and more calculating than they had been. The lines of interest and influence created by the Revolution were looser and less personal, based less on kin and more on devotion to the patriot cause or on wealth alone. The Revolution effectively weakened or severed those loyalities of the *ancien régime* that had enabled men like William Allen or James De Lancey to form their extensive webs of personal and familial influence.

To eliminate those clusters of personal and familial influence and transform the society became the idealistic goal of the revolutionaries. Any position that came from any source but talent and the will of the people now seemed undeserved and dependent. Patrimonialism, plural officeholding, and patronage of all sorts—practices that had usually been taken for granted in a monarchical society—came under attack. It might have been possible earlier for a royal governor like Jonathan Belcher of Massachusetts to brag that "I never lost any thing I could get in an honest way." But after mid-century the piling up of offices and fees and the open exploitation of them ceased to be tolerable. "A multiplicity of public trusts" in a few persons, wrote Oxenbridge Thacher of Massachusetts in 1763, was indeed the practice "in the *infancy* of the country." It was necessary then when "gentlemen of education and ability could

not be found . . . to fill up every place in government." But now "the case is very much alter'd."[19]

The prevailing revulsion against corruption and the use of patronage spilled over to affect even those who were unconnected with royal authority. Despite their stands against royal government, the self-perpetuating oligarchies of the Virginia county courts were not free from criticism. Spread of republican sentiments explains some of the anger of Virginians such as Jefferson, Patrick Henry, and Richard Henry Lee against the older clique of Tidewater planters who tended to look after one another and to restrain the entry of others into their inner circle. The scandal in 1766 involving John Robinson, speaker of the House of Burgesses and colony treasurer, who had lent to his friends paper money he was supposed to destroy, together with the easygoing way the Virginia General Court in the same year treated the murder charge against Colonel John Chiswell, smacked of corruption. Such events, one gentleman told Richard Henry Lee, fully justified Lee's "opposition to the confederacy of the great in places, family connections, and that more to be dreaded foe to public virtue, warm and private friendship."[20]

It is in this context that we can best understand the revolutionaries' appeal to independence, not just the independence of the country from Great Britain, but, more important, the independence of individuals from personal influence and "warm and private friendship." The purpose of the Virginia constitution of 1776, one Virginian recalled, was "to prevent the undue and overwhelming influence of great landholders in elections." This was to be done by disfranchising the landless "tenants and retainers" who depended "on the breath and varying will" of these great men and by ensuring that only men who owned their own land could vote.[21]

A republic presumed, as the Virginia declaration of rights put it, that men in the new republic would be "equally free and independent," and property would make them so. Property in a republic was still conceived of traditionally—in proprietary terms—not as a means of personal profit or aggrandizement but rather as a source of personal authority or independence. It was regarded not merely as a material possession but also as an attribute of a man's personality that defined him and protected him from outside pressure. A carpenter's skill, for example, was his property. Jefferson feared the rabble of the cities precisely because they were without property and were thus dependent.

All dependents without property, such as women and young men, could be denied the vote because, as a convention of Essex County,

Massachusetts, declared in 1778, they were "so situated as to have no wills of their own." Jefferson was so keen on this equation of property with citizenship that he proposed in 1776 that the new state of Virginia grant fifty acres of land to every man that did not have that many. Without having property and a will of his own—without having independence—a man could have no public spirit; and there could be no republic. For, as Jefferson put it, "dependence begets subservience and venality, suffocates the germ of virtue, and prepares fit tools for the designs of ambition."[22]

In a monarchical world of numerous patron-client relations and multiple degrees of dependency, nothing could be more radical than this attempt to make every man independent. What was an ideal in the English-speaking world now became for Americans an ideological imperative. Suddenly, in the eyes of the revolutionaries, all the fine calibrations of rank and degrees of unfreedom of the traditional monarchical society became absurd and degrading. The Revolution became a full-scale assault on dependency.

At the beginning of the eighteenth century the English radical whig and deist John Toland had divided all society into those who were free and those who were dependent. "By *Freeman,*" wrote Toland, "I understand men of property, or persons that are able to live of themselves; and those who cannot subsist in this independence, I call *Servants.*"[23] In such a simple division everyone who was not free was presumed to be a servant. Anyone tied to someone else, who was someone's client or dependent, was servile. The American revolutionary movement now brought to the surface this latent logic in eighteenth-century radical whig thinking.

Dependency was now equated with slavery, and slavery in the American world had a conspicuous significance. "What is a slave," asked a New Jersey writer in 1765, "but one who depends upon the will of another for the enjoyment of his life and property?" "Liberty," said Stephen Hopkins of Rhode Island, quoting Algernon Sidney, "solely consists in an independency upon the will of another; and by the name of slave we understand a man who can neither dispose of his person or goods, but enjoys all at the will of his master." It was left to John Adams in 1775 to draw the ultimate conclusion and to destroy in a single sentence the entire conception of society as a hierarchy of graded ranks and degrees. "There are," said Adams simply, "but two *sorts* of men in the world, freemen and slaves." Such a stark dichotomy collapsed all the delicate distinctions and dependencies of a monarchical society and created radical and momentous implications for Americans.[24]

Independence, declared David Ramsay in a memorable Fourth of July oration in 1778, would free Americans from that monarchical world where "favor is the source of preferment," and where "he that can best please his superiors, by the low arts of fawning and adulation, is most likely to obtain favor." The revolutionaries wanted to create a new republican world in which "all offices lie open to men of merit, of whatever rank or condition." They believed that "even the reins of state may be held by the son of the poorest men, if possessed of abilities equal to the important station." They were "no more to look up for the blessings of government to hungry courtiers, or the needy dependents of British nobility"; but they had now to educate their "own children for these exalted purposes." Like Stephen Burroughs, the author of an extraordinary memoir of these years, the revolutionaries believed they were "so far . . . republican" that they considered "a man's merit to rest entirely with himself, without any regard to family, blood, or connection."[25] We can never fully appreciate the emotional meaning these commonplace statements had for the revolutionaries until we take seriously their passionate antagonism to the prevalence of patronage and family influence in the *ancien régime.*

Of course, the revolutionary leaders did not expect poor, humble men—farmers, artisans, or tradesmen—themselves to gain high political office. Rather, they expected that the sons of such humble or ungenteel men, if they had abilities, would, as they had, acquire liberal and genteel republican attributes, perhaps by attending Harvard or the College of New Jersey at Princeton, and would thereby rise into the ranks of gentlemen and become eligible for high political office. The sparks of genius that they hoped republicanism would fan and kindle into flame belonged to men like themselves—men "drawn from obscurity" by the new opportunities of republican competition and emulation into becoming "illustrious characters, which will dazzle the world with the splendor of their names." Honor, interest, and patriotism together called them to qualify themselves and posterity "for the bench, the army, the navy, the learned professions, and all the departments of civil government." They would become what Jefferson called the "natural aristocracy"—liberally educated, enlightened gentlemen of character. For many of the revolutionary leaders this was the emotional significance of republicanism—a vindication of frustrated talent at the expense of birth and blood. For too long, they felt, merit had been denied. In a monarchical world only the arts and sciences had recognized talent as the sole criterion of leadership. Which is why even the eighteenth-century *ancien régime* called the world of the arts and sciences "the republic of letters." Who, it was asked, remembered the fathers or sons of Homer and Euclid? Such a question was a republican dagger driven into the heart of the old hereditary order. "Virtue," said Thomas Paine simply, "is not hereditary."[26]

Because the revolutionaries are so different from us, so seemingly aristocratic themselves, it is hard for us today to appreciate the anger and resentment they felt toward hereditary aristocracy. We tend to ignore or forget the degree to which family and monarchical values dominated colonial America. But the revolutionaries knew only too well what kin and patrimonial officeholding had meant in their lives. Up and down the continent colonial gentry like Charles Carroll of Maryland had voiced their fears that "all power might center in *one family*" and that offices of government "like a precious jewel will be handed down from *father* to *son.*" Everywhere men expressed their anger over the exclusive and unresponsive governments that had distributed offices, land, and privileges to favorites. Real emotion lay behind their constitutional statements, like that of the New Hampshire constitution, which declared that "no office or place whatsoever in government, shall be hereditary—the abilities and integrity requisite in all, not being transmissible to posterity or relations"; or that of the 1776 Virginia declaration of rights drawn up by George Mason, which stated that

> no Man, or Set of Men are entitled to exclusive or separate Emoluments or Privileges from the Community, but in Consideration of public Services; which not being descendible, or hereditary, the Ideal of Man born a Magistrate, a Legislator, or a Judge is unnatural and absurd.[27]

More perhaps than any other revolutionary leader Mason remained preoccupied by the social implications of this republican assault on patrimonialism. A decade later in the Philadelphia Convention he warned his colleagues that they must not forget the meaning of republicanism. The new federal Constitution of 1787 seemed to suggest that the "superior classes of society" were becoming indifferent to the rights of the "lowest classes." This was foolish, he said, because "our own children will in a short time be among the general mass." Such downward mobility was inevitable in the present circumstances of America, said the younger Charles Carroll. "In a commercial nation," he said, "the glory of illustrious progenitors will not screen their needy posterity from ob-

scurity and want." Despite these occasional premonitions, however, few of the revolutionaries realized just how devastating republicanism would be to their children and grandchildren.[28]

All of the founding fathers remained fascinated with the power of lineage and what William Livingston called "the Vanity of Birth and Titles."[29] To his dying day John Adams was haunted by the veneration for family that existed in New England. Jefferson, too, always felt the power of genealogy. He, unlike Adams, was not one to let his feelings show, but even today we can sense the emotion lying beneath the placid surface of his autobiography written in 1821 at the age of seventy-seven. There he described his efforts in 1776 in Virginia to bring down that "distinct set of families" who had used the legal devices of primogeniture and entail to form themselves "into a Patrician order, distinguished by the splendor and luxury of their establishments." The privileges of this "aristocracy of wealth," wrote Jefferson, needed to be destroyed in order "to make an opening for the aristocracy of virtue and talent," of which he considered himself a prime example.

Jefferson has often been thought to have exaggerated the power of primogeniture and entail and this "Patrician order." Not only was the docking of entails very common in Virginia, but the "Patrician order" does not appear to us all that different from its challengers. But Jefferson obviously saw a difference, and it rankled him. In the opening pages of his autobiography Jefferson tells us that the lineage of his Welsh father was lost in obscurity: he was able to find in Wales only two references to his father's family. His mother, on the other hand, was a Randolph, one of the distinguished families of the "Patrician order." The Randolphs, he said with about as much derision as he ever allowed himself, "trace their pedigree far back in England & Scotland, to which let every one ascribe the faith & merit he chooses."[30]

Benjamin Franklin likewise began his autobiography with a survey of his ancestors, concluding ruefully that he was "the youngest Son of the youngest Son for 5 Generations back"—a powerful indictment of the way primogeniture had worked to deny him through five generations. In the last year of his life, the bitterness was still there. In a codicil to his will written in June 1789 Franklin observed that most people, having received an estate from their ancestors, assumed they were obliged to pass on something to their posterity. "This obligation," he declared with emotion, "does not lie on me, who never inherited a shilling from any ancestor or relation."[31]

In their revolutionary state constitutions and laws the revolutionaries

struck out at the power of family and hereditary privilege. In the decades following the Revolution all the new states abolished the legal devices of primogeniture and entail where they existed, either by statute or by writing the abolition into their constitutions. These legal devices, as the North Carolina statute of 1784 stated, had tended "only to raise the wealth and importance of particular families and individuals, giving them an unequal and undue influence in a republic, and prove in manifold instances the source of great contention and injustice." Their abolition would therefore "tend to promote that equality of property which is of the spirit and principle of a genuine republic."[32]

We have been told that such legal and constitutional changes in inheritance at the Revolution were "largely formal and symbolic," merely attempts to bring the laws of intestacy into line with what men were already doing by wills.[33] It is true that in many colonies fathers in the eighteenth century had tended to divide up their lands fairly equally among their male heirs. But, as we have seen, this partitioning of estates among more than the eldest son did not represent any modern commitment to all children sharing and sharing alike in the property. Eldest sons still had been given preference, and when land became less available fathers had resorted to more traditional patterns of inheritance in order to protect the unity of the estate.[34] The Revolution made a major change in these older patterns of inheritance, particularly in recognizing the equal rights of daughters and widows in the inheriting and possession of property.

Although some states continued the traditional practices, most new post-revolutionary inheritance laws tended to break with a patrilineal definition of kinship and to establish greater recognition of kinship ties through marriage. These new inheritance laws recognized greater equality among sons and daughters and gave greater autonomy to widows by granting them outright ownership of one-third of the estate rather than just the lifetime use that had been usual in the past. Such widows now had the right to alienate the land or to pass it on to their children of a second marriage. Most of the states also strengthened the ability of women to own and control property. In a variety of ways the new state laws not only abolished the remaining feudal forms of land tenure and enhanced the commercial nature of real estate; they also confirmed the new enlightened republican attitudes toward the family.[35]

The Revolution's assault on patriarchy inevitably affected relationships within the family, as decisions concerning women's and daughters' rights were made that conservatives later regarded as "tending to loosen

the bands of society." Changes in the family begun earlier found new republican justifications and were accelerated—showing up even in paintings. In earlier-eighteenth-century family portraits fathers had stood dominantly above their wives and children; now they were portrayed on the same plane with them—a symbolic leveling. With the Revolution men lost some of their earlier patriarchal control over their wives and property. Although wives continued to remain dependent on their husbands, they did gain greater autonomy and some legal recognition of their rights to hold property separately, to divorce, and to make contracts and do business in the absence of their husbands. In the colonial period only New Englanders had recognized the absolute right to divorce, but after the Revolution all the states except South Carolina developed new liberal laws on divorce.[36]

Women and children no doubt remained largely dependent on their husbands and fathers, but the revolutionary attack on patriarchal monarchy made all other dependencies in the society suspect. Indeed, once the revolutionaries collapsed all the different distinctions and dependencies of a monarchical society into either freemen or slaves, white males found it increasingly impossible to accept any dependent status whatsoever. Servitude of any sort suddenly became anomalous and anachronistic. In 1784 in New York, a group believing that indentured servitude was "contrary to . . . the idea of liberty this country has so happily established" released a shipload of immigrant servants and arranged for public subscriptions to pay for their passage. As early as 1775 in Philadelphia the proportion of the work force that was unfree—composed of servants and slaves—had already declined to 13 percent from the 40 to 50 percent that it had been at mid-century. By 1800 less than 2 percent of the city's labor force remained unfree. Before long indentured servitude virtually disappeared.[37]

With the post-revolutionary republican culture talking of nothing but liberty, equality, and independence, even hired servants eventually became hard to come by or to control. White servants refused to call their employers "master" or "mistress"; for many the term "boss," derived from the Dutch word for master, became a euphemistic substitute. The servants themselves would not be called anything but "help," or "waiter," which was the term the character Jonathan, in Royall Tyler's 1787 play *The Contrast,* preferred in place of "servant."[38] "The white servants generally stipulate that they shall sit at table with their masters and mistresses," declared astonished foreigners. When questioned, the servants explained that this was "a free country," that they

were as good as anyone, and "that it was a sin and a shame for a freeborn American to be treated like a servant." Samuel Breck, a sometime senator from Pennsylvania, thought his life would be "perfectly happy" if only he had good servants. "But so easy is a livelihood obtained that fickleness, drunkenness, and not infrequently insolence, mark the character of our domestics." In one year alone Breck hired seven different cooks and five different waiters.[39]

When one English immigrant in the 1790s reported that "the worst circumstance of living" in Newark, New Jersey, was "the difficulty of getting domestic servants," then we know things were bad. Desperate would-be masters in several cities were eventually compelled to form organizations for the encouragement of faithful domestic servants. Some Northerners even concluded that the practice of keeping servants was "highly anti-republican." Consequently, in time Americans built hotels as public residences that were unlike anything existing in Europe. These hotels, combining both eating and lodging, prohibited tipping and were often occupied by permanent boarders. Many found living in these hotels cheaper than setting up a household with servants who were so hard to find. Foreigners found such hotels and boardinghouses to be peculiarly American institutions.[40]

By the early nineteenth century what remained of patriarchy was in disarray. No longer were apprentices dependents within a family; they became trainees within a business that was more and more conducted outside the household. Artisans did less "bespoke" or "order" work for patrons; instead they increasingly produced for impersonal markets. This in turn meant that the master craftsmen had to hire labor and organize the sale of the products of their shops. Masters became less patriarchs and more employers, retail merchants, or businessmen. Cash payments of wages increasingly replaced the older paternalistic relationship between masters and journeymen. These free wage earners now came and went with astonishing frequency, moving not only from job to job but from city to city. This "fluctuating" mobility of workers bewildered some employers: "while you were taking an inventory of their property," sighed one Rhode Islander, "they would sling their packs and be off."[41]

Although both masters and journeymen often tried to maintain the traditional fiction that they were bound together for the "good of the trade," increasingly they saw themselves as employers and employees with different interests. Although observers applauded the fact that apprentices, journeymen, and masters of each craft marched together in

the federal procession in Philadelphia on July 4, 1788, the tensions and divergence of interests were already visible. Before long journeymen in various crafts organized themselves against their masters' organizations, banned their employers from their meetings, and declared that "the interests of the journeymen are separate and in some respects opposite of those of their employers." Between 1786 and 1816 at least twelve major strikes by various journeymen craftsmen occurred—the first major strikes by employees against employers in American history.[42]

One obvious dependency the revolutionaries did not completely abolish was that of nearly a half million Afro-American slaves, and their failure to do so, amidst all their high-blown talk of liberty, makes them seem inconsistent and hypocritical in our eyes. Yet it is important to realize that the Revolution suddenly and effectively ended the cultural climate that had allowed black slavery, as well as other forms of bondage and unfreedom, to exist throughout the colonial period without serious challenge. With the revolutionary movement, black slavery became excruciatingly conspicuous in a way that it had not been in the older monarchical society with its many calibrations and degrees of unfreedom; and Americans in 1775–76 began attacking it with a vehemence that was inconceivable earlier.

For a century or more the colonists had taken slavery more or less for granted as the most base and dependent status in a hierarchy of dependencies and a world of laborers. Rarely had they felt the need either to criticize black slavery or to defend it. Now, however, the republican attack on dependency compelled Americans to see the deviant character of slavery and to confront the institution as they never had to before. It was no accident that Americans in Philadelphia in 1775 formed the first anti-slavery society in the world. As long as most people had to work merely out of poverty and the need to provide for a living, slavery and other forms of enforced labor did not seem all that different from free labor. But the growing recognition that labor was not simply a common necessity of the poor but was in fact a source of increased wealth and prosperity for ordinary workers made slavery seem more and more anomalous. Americans now recognized that slavery in a republic of workers was an aberration, "a peculiar institution," and that if any Americans were to retain it, as southern Americans eventually did, they would have to explain and justify it in new racial and anthropological ways that their former monarchical society had never needed. The Revolution in effect set in motion ideological and social forces that doomed the institution of slavery in the North and led inexorably to the Civil War.[43]

With all men now considered to be equally free citizens, the way was prepared as well for a radical change in the conception of state power. Almost at a stroke the Revolution destroyed all the earlier talk of paternal or maternal government, filial allegiance, and mutual contractual obligations between rulers and ruled. The familial image of government now lost all its previous relevance, and the state in America emerged as something very different from what it had been.

Overnight modern conceptions of public power replaced older archaic ideas of personal monarchical government. No longer could government be seen as the king's private authority or as a bundle of prerogative rights. Rulers suddenly lost their traditional personal rights to rule, and personal allegiance as a civic bond became meaningless. The revolutionary state constitutions eliminated the crown's prerogatives outright or regranted them to the state legislatures. Popular consent now became the exclusive justification for the exercise of authority by all parts of the government—not just the houses of representatives but senates, governors, and even judges. As sovereign expressions of the popular will, these new republican governments acquired an autonomous public power that their monarchical predecessors had never possessed or even claimed. In republican America government would no longer be merely private property and private interests writ large as it had been in the colonial period. Public and private spheres that earlier had been mingled were now to be separated. Although the state legislatures, to the chagrin of many leaders, often continued to act in a traditional courtlike manner—interfering with and reversing judicial decisions, probating wills rejected by the courts, and passing private legislation affecting individuals—they now became as well sovereign embodiments of the people with a responsibility to promote a unitary public interest that was to be clearly distinguishable from the many private interests of the society.

From the outset the new republican states thus tended to view with suspicion the traditional monarchical practice of enlisting private wealth and energy for public purposes by issuing corporate privileges and licenses to private persons. In a republic no person should be allowed to exploit the public's authority for private gain. Indeed, several of the states wrote into their revolutionary constitutions declarations against any man or group of men receiving special privileges from the com-

munity. "Government," said the New Hampshire constitution, was "instituted for the common benefits, protection, and security of the whole community, and not for the private interest or emolument of any one man, family, or class of men." The North Carolina constitution stated that "perpetuities and monopolies are contrary to the genius of a State, and ought not to be allowed."

Consequently, the republican state governments sought to assert their newly enhanced public power in direct and unprecedented ways—doing for themselves what they had earlier commissioned private persons to do. They carved out exclusively public spheres of action and responsibility where none had existed before. They now drew up plans for improving everything from trade and commerce to roads and waterworks and helped to create a science of political economy for Americans. And they formed their own public organizations with paid professional staffs supported by tax money, not private labor. For many Americans the Revolution had made the "self-management of self-concerns . . . the vital part of government."[44] The city of New York, for example, working under the authority of the state legislature, set up its own public work force to clean its streets and wharves instead of relying, as in the past, on the private residents to do these tasks. By the early nineteenth century the city of New York had become a public institution financed primarily by public taxation and concerned with particularly public concerns. It acquired what it had not had before—the power of eminent domain—and the authority to make decisions without worrying about "whose property is benefited . . . or is not benefited." The power of the state to take private property was now viewed as virtually unlimited—as long as the property was taken for exclusively public purposes.[45]

Many concluded that the state legislatures could now do for the public whatever the people entrusted them to do. "A community must always remain competent to the superintendence of its concerns," wrote James Cheetham in 1802. "These general powers of superintendence must be entrusted somewhere. They can be no where more safely deposited than with the legislature. Subject to the constitution, all the rights and privileges of the citizen are entrusted with them."[46] The people under monarchy, of course, had possessed long-standing rights and privileges immune from tampering by the prerogative powers and privileges of the king. But under republicanism could such popular rights continue to be set against the government? In the new republics, where there were no more crown powers and no more prerogative rights, it

was questionable whether the people's personal rights could meaningfully exist apart from the people's sovereign power—the general will—expressed in their assemblies. In other words, did it any longer make sense to speak of negative liberty where the people's positive liberty was complete and supreme? To be sure, as the Pennsylvania constitution together with other revolutionary constitutions declared, "no part of man's property can be justly taken from him, or applied to public uses, without his own consent," but this consent, in 1776 at least, meant "that of his legal representatives."[47]

Such assertions that all power to superintend and improve the society belonged to the people and was embodied in the popular state legislatures flowed naturally from republican doctrine. But well before 1800 many Americans had come to challenge the belief that such a monopoly of public power ought to be entrusted to any governmental institution whatsoever, however representative and popularly elected. Indeed, limiting popular government and protecting private property and minority rights without at the same time denying the sovereign public power of the people became the great dilemma of political leaders in the new republic; indeed, it remains the great dilemma of America's constitutional democracy.

II. *Enlightenment*

Destroying the ligaments of patronage and kinship that had held the old monarchical society together was only half the radicalism of the republican revolution. Something else would have to be put in place of these ancient social ties, or American society would simply fall apart. The first steps in constructing a new republican society were to enlighten the people and to change the nature of authority. Not only would the culture have to be republicanized, but all superior-subordinate relationships would necessarily change. If parents and masters were kind and caring, children and servants would naturally obey. If the political rulers were men of merit and talent and governed only in the public interest, they would naturally command the affection and respect of the people, and the crises of authority bedeviling American society would end. Love and gratitude would replace fear and favor as social adhesives.

The vision of the revolutionary leaders is breathtaking. As hard-headed and practical as they were, they knew that by becoming republican they were expressing nothing less than a utopian hope for a new