

liberty into one that included an economic and sociological dimension, but also ended up marrying Say's daughter. The new kind of classical liberalism jointly developed by Comte and Dunoyer informs Comte's *Traité de législation* (1827), where he explores, among other things, the class structure of slave societies and the nature of exploitation.

In the later 1820s, Comte became involved in a number of public debates, among them opposing government schemes to heavily subsidize public works to catch up with more economically developed countries such as Britain and defending the National Guard in the face of government efforts to dissolve the citizen militia.

After the July Revolution of 1830, Comte briefly served as the political representative of the Sarthe in the Chamber of Deputies. He resigned his political post to pursue an academic career in the reconstituted Academy of Moral and Political Sciences. Comte edited collections of the works of his father-in-law Say and Thomas Malthus for the liberal publishing firm of Guillaumin. His last substantial work before his death was a lengthy defense of property rights and a history of the evolution of property in *Traité de la propriété* (1834).

DMH

See also Bastiat, Frédéric; Dunoyer, Charles; Free Trade; French Revolution; Say, Jean-Baptiste; Slavery, World

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CONDORCET, MARQUIS DE (1743–1794)

Marie-Jean-Antoine-Nicolas Caritat, Marquis de Condorcet, was born in Ribemont, Picardy, in September 1743, and

died in Bourg-la-Reine before reaching the age of 52. He was a mathematician, a philosophe, a friend of d'Alembert, Voltaire, and Turgot, a permanent secretary of the French Academy of Sciences from 1776, and a politician during the French revolutionary period. He was elected to the Legislative Assembly in 1791 and later appointed its president; he then became a member of the Convention in 1792. Condorcet was active in a number of committees that drew up legislation during the Revolution, especially laws relating to public education and constitutional reform. Alas, he became a victim of Jacobin repression when the liberal Girondin group was expelled from the Convention. After a period of hiding in late 1793, during which he wrote his most famous work, *Sketch for a Historical Picture of the Progress of the Human Mind*, he was arrested and died under suspicious circumstances. It is possible that he committed suicide or was murdered by the Jacobins.

Condorcet was educated at a Jesuit school in Rheims and received a rigorous scientific education at the College of Navarre of the University of Paris. His initial researches were in the areas of calculus and probability theory, and he later attempted to apply mathematics to the study of human behavior and to the structure of political organizations to create a "social arithmetic of man." His "Essai sur l'application de l'analyse de la probabilité des décisions rendues, la pluralité des voix" ["Essay on the Application of Probability Analysis to Decisions Made by Majority Vote"], published in 1785, was an attempt to show how probability theory could be used to make political decision making more rational and, hence, more enlightened. Condorcet wrote articles on this subject for a *Supplement* to Diderot's *Encyclopedia* several years later.

Condorcet lent his wholehearted support to the attempts by the new controller-general, Turgot, in 1774–1776 to free up the grain trade and deregulate the French economy. Turgot appointed him to the post of *inspecteur des monnaies* in 1774, and he wrote numerous pamphlets defending laissez-faire reforms, such as the abolition of forced labor (the *corvée*) and seigneurial dues. His "Vie de M. Turgot" (1786) is a spirited defense of Turgot and of the continuing need for free market policies despite Turgot's failure to overcome the entrenched vested interests that opposed reforms in the French economy.

Condorcet also advocated other enlightened reforms, such as a restructuring of the criminal justice system, the granting of civic rights to Protestants, and the abolition of slavery. With his wife, Sophie de Grouchy, whom he had married in 1786, Condorcet's home proved an important salon for the liberal elite of Paris where contemporary issues were discussed, as well as the progress of the new American republic and the future role of provincial assemblies in a politically reformed France.

During the early phases of the French Revolution, Condorcet joined other moderate liberal reformers in the

Society of Thirty, for whom he helped draw up *cahiers* or demands for liberal reform that were presented to the Estates General. He also was active in the Society of 1789, whose members included the marquis de Lafayette and Dupont de Nemours. Condorcet edited this group's journal, and it was here that he published his important essay *On the Admission of Women to the Rights of Citizenship* in 1790. Condorcet was elected to represent Paris in the Legislative Assembly in 1791, but broke with the moderate liberals over the issue of curtailing the power of the monarchy. He joined the moderate republicans Brissot and Thomas Paine in calling for the end of the monarchy and the introduction of a republican constitution. He served on the Legislative Assembly's Committee on Public Instruction and wrote their report in April 1792, a report that was not adopted until 1795, after Condorcet's death.

Condorcet's membership in the Convention, where he represented the Aisne, coincided with the trial and execution of the King. Condorcet, while supporting the abolition of the monarchy, opposed the King's execution. In February 1793, Condorcet presented a constitutional plan to the Convention's Constitutional Committee based on his idea of using mathematics to create a rational and representative elected body that would serve the interests of all the people and prevent a small group from seizing control. His constitutional plan fell victim to the power struggle going on in the Convention between the liberal Girondins and the radical Jacobins. When leading Girondins were expelled from the Convention, Condorcet protested and was forced into hiding to avoid arrest. Over the next few months, he wrote his best known work, *Esquisse d'un tableau historique des progrès de l'esprit humain* [*Sketch for a Historical Portrait of the Progress of the Human Mind*] (published posthumously in 1795), which demonstrated how human beings had been able to improve their situation over the centuries through the use of reason, technology, and liberty, and how in the near future a veritable liberal utopia might be created. He left his hiding place in March 1794 and was soon arrested, dying in prison after 2 days in captivity under suspicious circumstances.

DMH

See also *Democracy; Enlightenment; Feminism and Women's Rights; French Revolution; Progress; Turgot, Anne-Robert-Jacques*

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CONSCIENCE

Liberty of conscience, according to John Stuart Mill, was the “first of all the articles of the liberal creed,” and Lord Acton agreed that the idea of conscience played a key role in the development of classical liberalism. A “reverence for conscience,” which consists of “the preservation of an inner sphere exempt from state power,” is essential to a free society. This “appeal to personal autonomy” is the “main protection against absolutism, the one protection against democracy.”

The idea of conscience is deeply rooted in Western thinking about ethics, religion, and politics. Among ancient schools of thought, it was developed most fully by the Stoics, especially Epictetus, who spoke eloquently of an inner freedom that is immune to external coercion. We can, he held, achieve this independence only through the use of “right reason,” a moral faculty that enables us to discern the precepts of natural law and thereby distinguish good from evil. Thomas Aquinas holds pride of place among medieval philosophers for his discussion of conscience—a fact that led Lord Acton to dub Aquinas “the first Whig.” There are instances, Aquinas claimed, where a person is justified in acting according to his conscience even if his judgment is objectively mistaken. Although Aquinas did not pursue the logical implications of this theory, it left open the possibility of innocent error in matters of religious belief.

The expression “liberty of conscience” had become commonplace by the 17th century, and this sphere of inner liberty gradually developed into the notion of inalienable rights. A right that is inalienable is one that cannot be surrendered or transferred by any means, including consent, because it derives from man's nature as a rational and moral agent. For example, it is often argued that we cannot alienate our right to freedom of belief because our beliefs cannot be coerced. Similarly, we cannot surrender our right of moral choice because an action has moral significance only if it is freely chosen. Our beliefs and values fall within the sphere of inner liberty, the domain of conscience. This sphere is inseparable from our nature as rational and moral agents.

Thus, according to the 17th-century English clergyman, John Hale, “All the power in the world is neither fit to convince nor able to compel a man's conscience to consent to anything.”

The inalienability of conscience has been defended not only by thinkers whose primary concern was religious belief, but by more secular thinkers, such as Spinoza, who wrote:

Inward worship of God and piety in itself are within the sphere of everyone's private rights, and cannot be alienated. . . . No man's mind can possibly lie wholly at the disposition of another, for no one can willingly transfer his natural right of free reason and judgment, or be compelled so to do.