

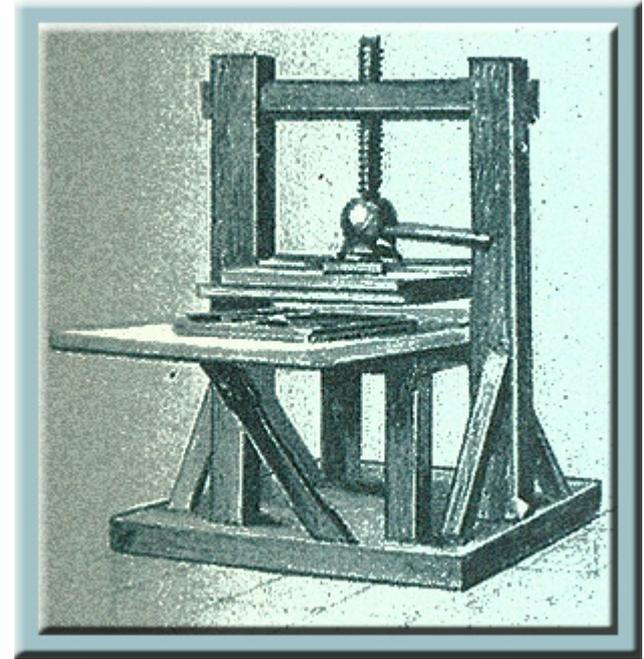
The Pamphleteers: Revolutionary News



The Pamphlet

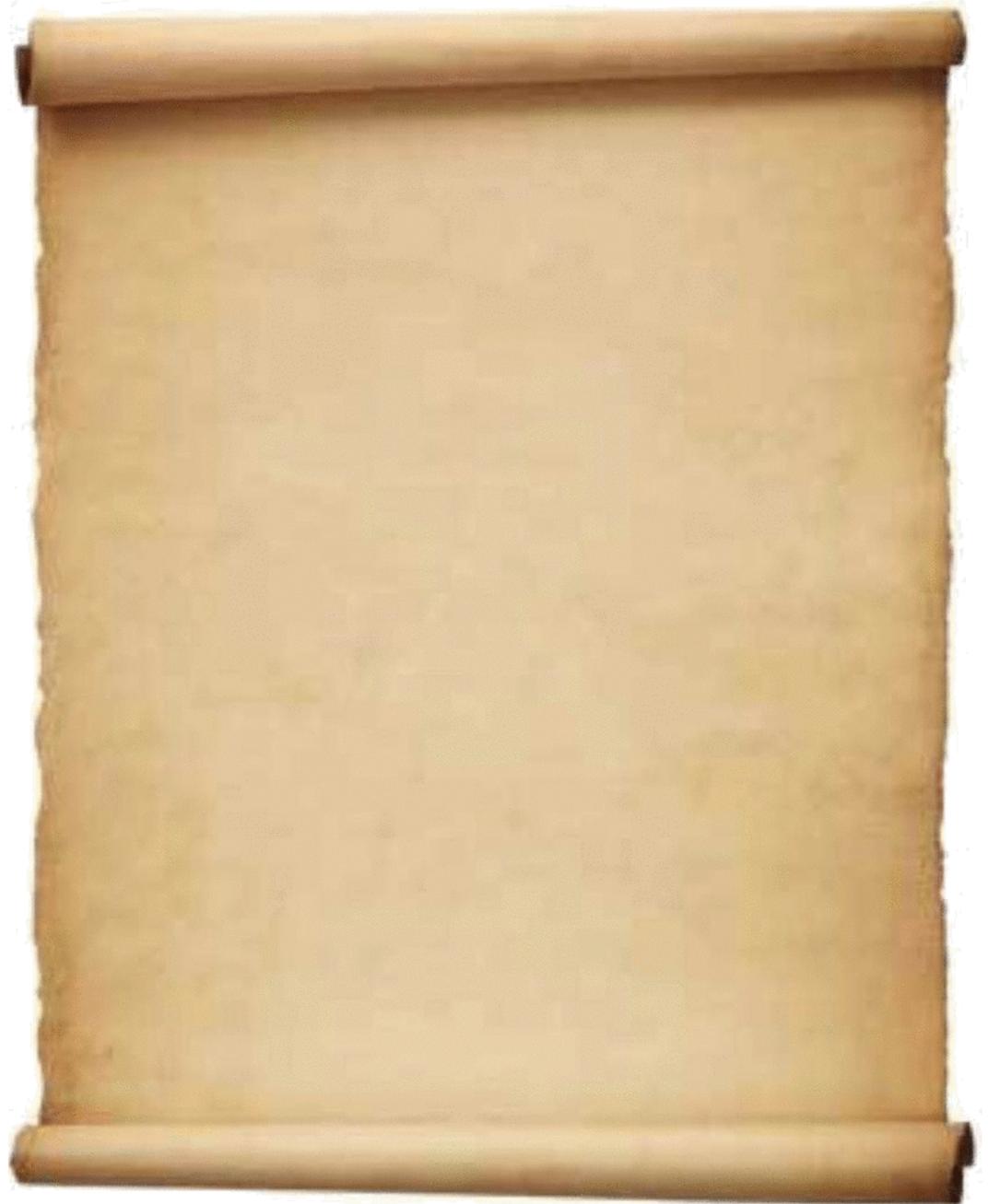
A pamphlet is like a book, but: unbound, with no protective cover. It is a single folded page or a number of pages stuck or stitched or stapled together. Importantly, pamphlets are cheap to produce. In the 17th to 19th centuries, with printing presses easy to access, pamphlets were an important medium of literary and political communication.

The pamphlet was like a wind carrying the seeds of ideas across Europe and to America at a fertile historical moment. At a time of opportunity and upheaval the revolutionary ideas of the Pamphleteers – the authors of pamphlets - took root.

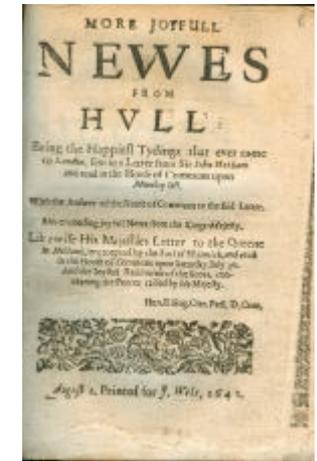


Pamphlets were reproduced in the thousands and millions due to the technological innovation of the printing press.

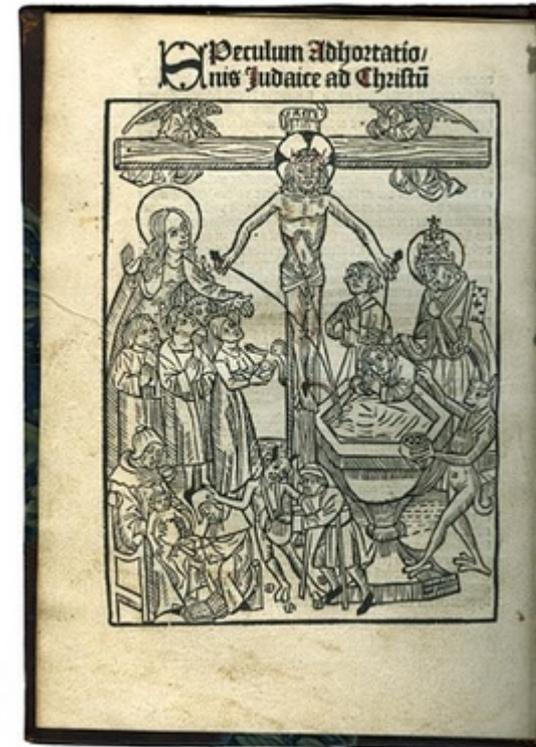
But technology is not alone responsible for what happened next: no pamphlet would have been published at all were it not for the brilliant thinkers and writers who authored them.



Other characters in this drama are ideas: ideas that were developed by thinkers and writers of the day, were distributed among an increasingly literate population, and in this way became cornerstones of Western civilisation.



- i.) Political self-determinism
- ii.) Free speech
- iii.) Reason



“Who holds a
pen, is at war.”

- Voltaire,

('Qui plume a, guerre
a.')



Early Use of the Printing Press

The printing press is not itself a revolutionary force. It is an instrument that has been used equally well for purposes of liberation AND oppression. The early use of the printing press by the common people was constrained as much as possible by States and the Church. For decades bibles and theological works were the principal output of the presses.

As literacy spread bibles were published in other languages. The Protestant movement grew in Europe, challenging the authority of the Church. But presses were still used for oppression: by the Spanish inquisition for the persecution of witches. By kings for the publishing of proclamations and edicts.

And at this time it could be extremely dangerous to publish, especially heterodox views that challenged (or were seen as challenging) Church or State.

A
BRIEF
DESCRIPTION
OF THE NOTORIOUS
LIFE OF *IOHN LAMBE*,
otherwise called Doctor
LAMBE.
Together with his Ignominious
DEATH.



A certaine Relation of the Hog-
faced Gentlewoman called *Mistris Tamakin*
Skinker, who was borne at *Wirkham*
a Neuter Towne betweene the Emperour and the
Hollander, situate on the river *Rhync*.

Who was bewitched in her mothers wombe in the yeare 1618.
and hath lived ever since unknowne in this kind to any,
but her Parents and a few other neighbours. And
can never recover her true shape, till she
be married, &c.

Also relating the cause, as it is since conceived, how her mother
came to be bewitched.



London Printed by J. O. and are to be sold by F. Grove, at his shop
on Snow-hill neare St. Sepulchers Church. 1640.



possible likeness

Giordano Bruno

(b.1548-d.1600)

philosopher, astronomer, mathematician

from Naples (now in Italy)

A Dominican priest until accused of heresy in 1576 when he was discovered to have a copy of the writings of Erasmus

published pamphlets and books, esp. while under protection of French nobility

suggested the sun was a star like infinite others, and that there are infinite other worlds like our own, peopled by intelligent beings

Burned at the stake in 1600 for heretical beliefs, without renouncing his theory of many worlds: 'Perhaps you pronounce this sentence against me with greater fear than I receive it'

On The Infinite Universe and Worlds

Bruno considered as the ancient philosopher Epicurus had (as children do), whether the universe might be infinite, rather than finite, in size:

“..suppose now that all space were created finite; if one were to run on to the end, to its furthest coasts, and throw a flying dart, would you have it that the dart, hurled with might and main, goeth on whither it is sped, flying afar, or think you that something can check and bar its way?

“within infinite space either there may be an infinity of worlds similar to our own; or that this universe may have extended its capacity in order to contain many bodies such as those we name stars”

“Why do you desire that centre of divinity which can (if one may so express it) extend infinitely to an infinite sphere, why do you desire that it should remain grudgingly sterile rather than extend itself, as a father, fecund, ornate and beautiful? Why should you prefer that it should be less or indeed by no means communicated, rather than that it should fulfil the scheme of its glorious power and being? Why should infinite amplitude be frustrated, the possibility of an infinity of worlds [25] be defrauded? Why should be prejudiced the excellency of the divine image which ought rather to glow in an unrestricted mirror, infinite, immense, according to the law of its being?” - Bruno 'On The Infinite Universe and Worlds'

Suppression of ideas by Church

Desiderius Erasmus

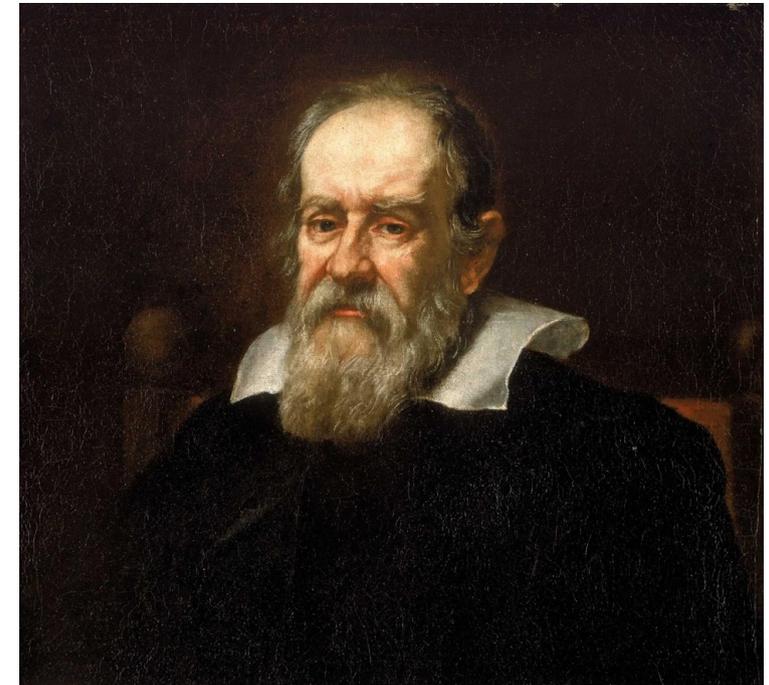
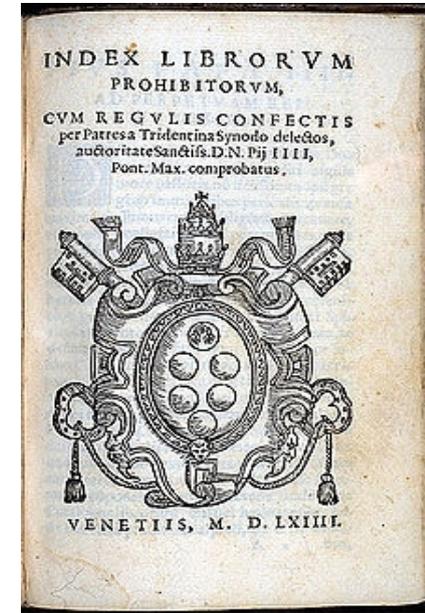
Desiderius Erasmus was a Priest and Latin scholar who argued for free speech in the early sixteenth century. After his death his views were suppressed.

Index Librorum Prohibitorum

The index was a 16th century list, regularly updated, of books banned by the Catholic Church. It was first published in 1559. Those found with banned books could be burned at the stake for the crime.

Galileo Galilei

Italian scientist Galileo Galilei was proclaimed a heretic for his critique of the Aristotlean cosmology



'By burning Luther's books you may rid your bookshelves of him, but you will not rid men's minds of him.'

'In a free state, tongues too should be free. '

- Desiderius Erasmus (early 15th Century)



The Star Chamber and Censorship in England

In England censorship was fierce before the English Revolution: all books and pamphlets had to be authorised before publication.

At this time ordinary people could be punished if heard talking about political matters.

Early 'newspapers' (serialised pamphlets) were often written anonymously or overseas, and were not allowed to mention events inside England.

The Star Chamber was a secret court in which the Sovereign could charge and sentence even the nobility. It was employed in cases of suspected treason and treasonous talk.

Henry Burton, John Bastwick and William Prynne were sentenced to mutilation in 1637 for anti-Protestant rhetoric. This event, perceived as a gross injustice, brought England one step closer to revolution.

Act I: English Revolution

confluence of causes:

weak, despotic rule (of the king)

injustice

increased literacy and
education

widely circulated printed
materials (pamphlets, books,
newspapers)

widely circulated ideas
(political self-determination,
free speech, Reason).



List of (a few of the) words invented by Shakespeare

at a time when people from many places shared a cosmopolitan London the English language was open to new words and ideas..

academe, accused, addiction, advertising, arouse,
assassination, bandit, besmirch, birthplace, blanket,
blushing, bet, bump, cater, champion, circumstantial,
compromise, courtship, countless, critic, dawn,
deafeaning, dishearten, dwindle, equivocal, elbow,
exposure, eyeball, fashionable, frugal, generous,
gloomy, gossip, gust, hint, hobnob, hurried, impartial,
invulnerable, jaded, label, lonely, lower, luggage..

Act I: English revolution (1642-1649)

events:

1640 – Oliver Cromwell, elected to Parliament a second time, openly criticises the tax policies of the near-bankrupt King

1641 – November 1641 Grand Remonstrance – Parliament lists its grievances against the King

1642 - King Charles I leaves London in fear of his life, defended by his Cavaliers. The Roundheads seize the Parliament and London.

1642 – 1646 Battles across England between Cavaliers and Roundheads under Cromwell, until Charles is surrendered to the Scottish.

1647 – Parliament meets to determine a new Constitution

1649 – King Charles I executed by beheading in London on January 30th.

Pamphleteering during the English Revolution

1600 – Five printing presses in England, licensed.

1640 – 22 pamphlets published in England.

1641 – Censorship controls break down. Abolition of Star Chamber

1641-1645 – More than 1000 pamphlets published each year (In 1642 there were 1966)

1700 – More than 500 unlicensed printing presses operated in relative freedom. Weekly newspapers in four cities.

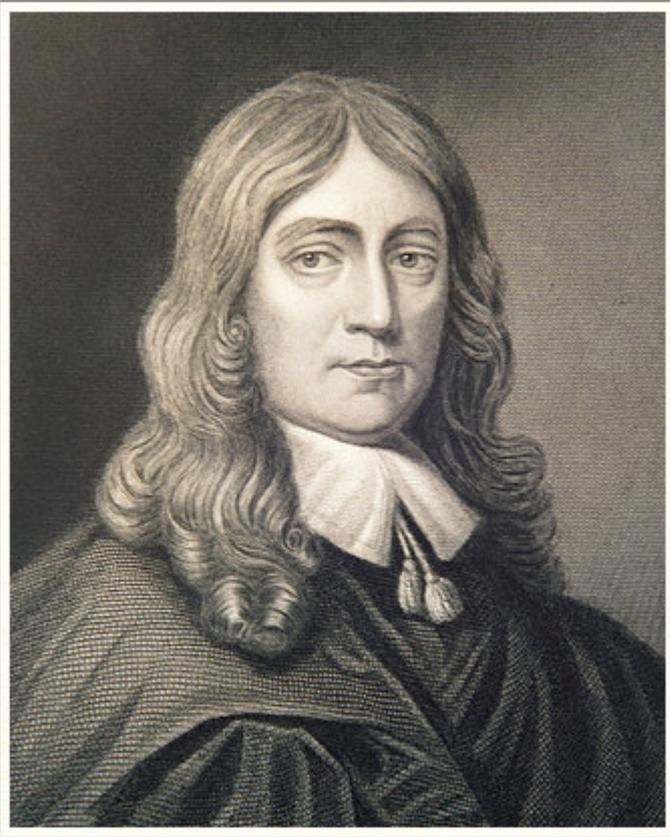
(Seibert, 1980)

At this time more than 80% of adult men in London could read, and in the country more than 30%. (Watt)

“ ..no Order or Declaration of both, or either House of Parliament shall be printed by any, but by order of one or both the said Houses: Nor other Book, Pamphlet, paper, nor part of any such Book, Pamphlet, or paper, shall from henceforth be printed, bound, stitched or put to sale by any person or persons whatsoever, unlesse the same be first approved of and licensed ..”

- Licensing Order of the British Houses of Parliament, 1643

John Milton (1608 – 1674)



John Milton

Poet, scholar, and public servant.

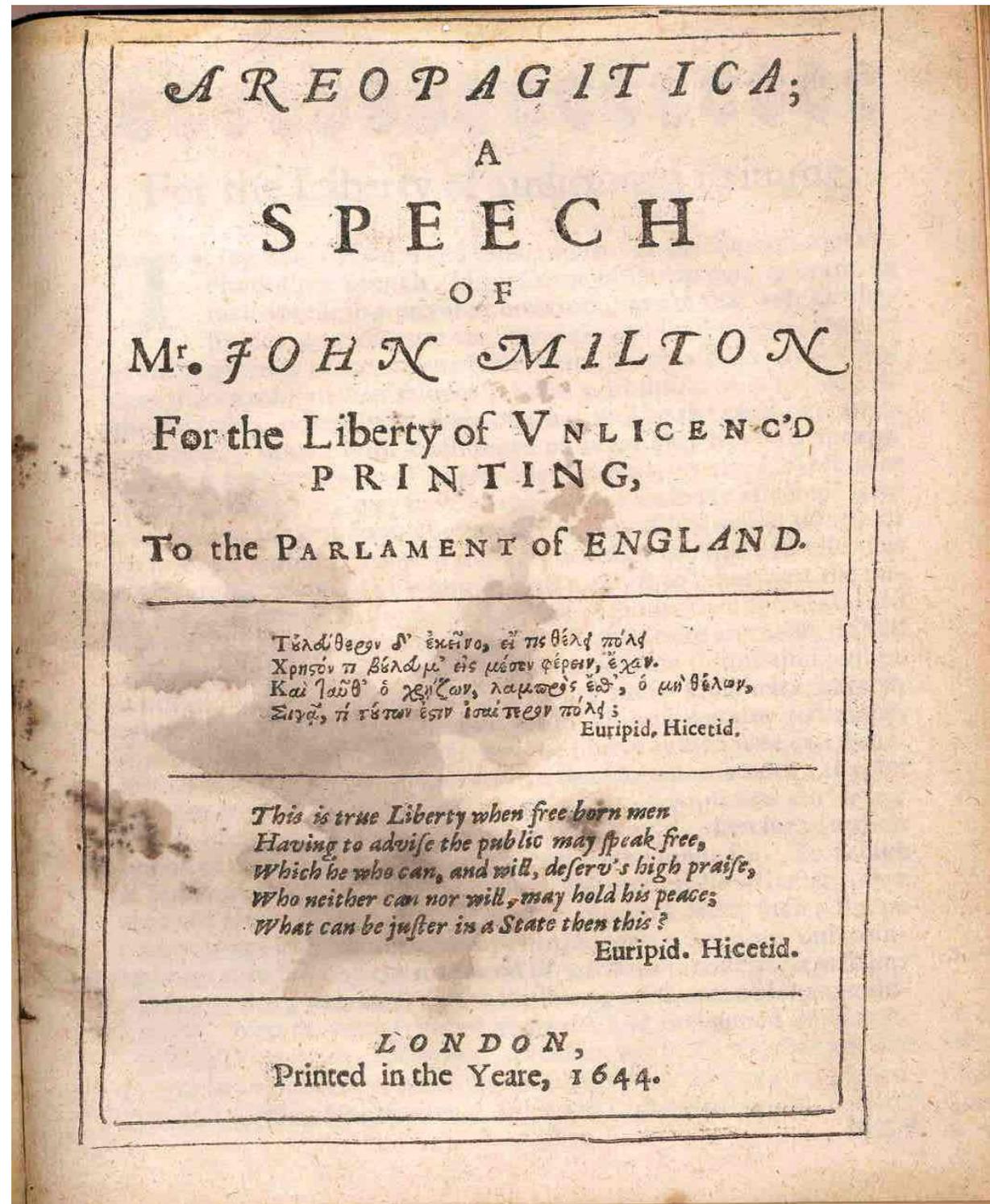
Milton was the author of the seminal long poem *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Found*.

In 1644, after the English Parliament introduced the Licensing Act, Milton wrote and published *The Areopagitica*, a letter to the Parliament making an impassioned defence of free speech and against licensing of pamphlets, books, and other publications.

“..he who destroys a good book, kills reason itself..”

“Give me the liberty to know, to utter, and to argue freely according to conscience, above all liberties.”

- John Milton



Argument for Free Speech

The importance of the idea of free speech in the Enlightenment era can be demonstrated by exploring the relationship between free speech and two related ideas: Self-Determination and Reason.

Free speech and Political Self-Determination (1/2)

Political self-determination is the idea that people – populations – have the right and responsibility to determine their own futures. In other words, no king or emperor or Pope should make choices on behalf of the common people.

This idea was new because it challenged the orthodoxy that Kings ruled by virtue of a Mandate of Heaven: that God authorised and directed their decisions. With the crumbling of the Church the idea of the 'Mandate of Heaven' was challenged.

Free Speech and Political Self-Determination (2/2)

Social contract

“Man is born free, but everywhere he is in chains” - Rousseau

According to Enlightenment thinkers people once lived without regulation. When many people live together, society must be organised by Government. The best for this to happen is that people enter into a kind of voluntary Social Contract to concede power and authority to the State.

Role of Free Speech

“We have a natural right to make use of our pens as of our tongue, at our peril, risk and hazard” – Voltaire

Free speech is required in order that the State can be prevented from becoming too powerful. If people are assured of a legal right to speak freely then they are able to monitor their representative government for signs of Corruption and Tyranny.

Free Speech and Reason

Reason is a process by which Truth is discovered through debate, dialogue and thought.

All ideas should be heard, discussed, questioned, debated, argued and refuted

The only reason that free speech can be restrained under the Social Contract is in the case that it causes harm to others.

Where all ideas are heard, the most Reasonable can be preserved and acted upon

Assisted by Reason an Enlightened Civilisation is able to make Progress.

John Stuart Mill

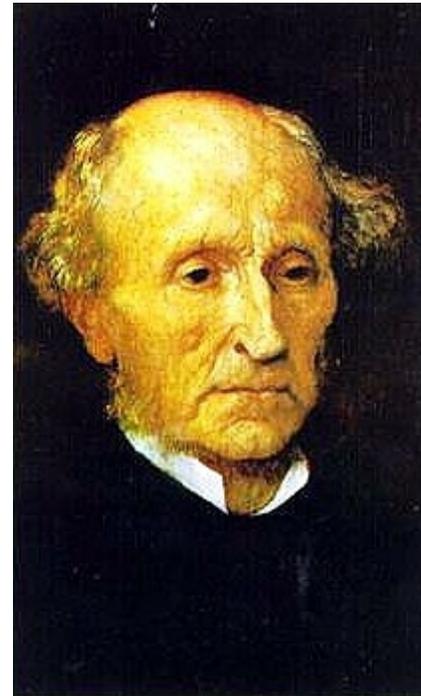
The late Enlightenment philosopher John Stuart Mill, who invented the term Human Rights, articulated the importance of freedom of speech for Reason and self-determination in his tract *On Liberty* :

The most cogent reason for restricting the interference of government is the great evil of adding unnecessarily to its power

The only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilized community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others. His own good, either physical or moral, is not sufficient warrant.

We can never be sure that the opinion we are endeavouring to stifle is a false opinion; and even if we were sure, stifling it would be an evil still.

- quotes from *On Liberty*, 1859



UK BILL OF RIGHTS 1688

An Act Declaring the Rights and Liberties of the Subject and Settling the Succession of the Crowne

1. By Assumeing and Exerciseing a Power of Dispensing with and Suspending of Lawes and the Execution of Lawes without consent of Parlyament.

9. That the Freedome of Speech and Debates or Proceedings in Parlyament ought not to be impeached or questioned in any Court or Place out of Parlyament.

The Early Press

In China, appearance of first news sheets in 8th century

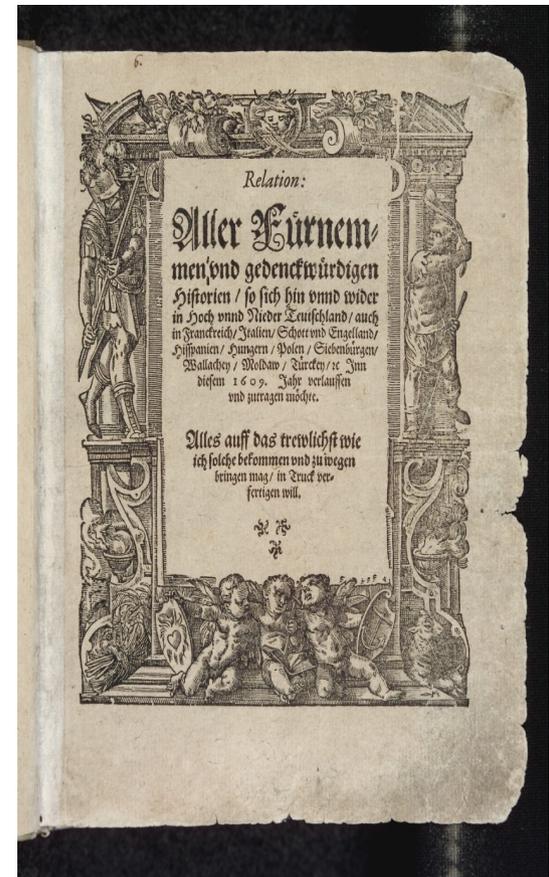
In Europe and America the newspaper evolved from the pamphlet, when some publications were serialised:

Weekly German-language publication *Relation: Aller Fürnemmen und gedenckwürdigen Historien* recognised as the first newspaper (1605)

France: first newspaper *Gazette de France* (1631)

England: *London Gazette* (1666)

America: *Publick Occurrences* (Boston, 1690)



Evolution of the British Press

Newspapers had to be licensed until 1694.

Censorship abolished 1695 (the Licensing Act of 1643 lapsed and was not renewed)

Working class newspapers seen as disturbing social order

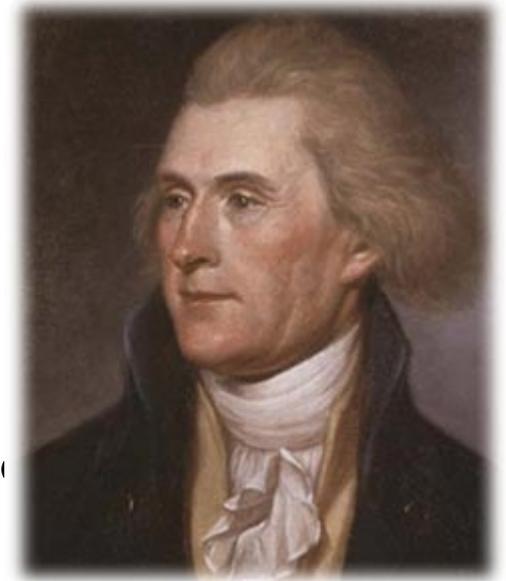
Stamp duty imposed in 1712 to ensure only 'responsible' middle and upper classes could access

Paper taxes limit access to printing

Press is an opinion press (liberals, radicals, conservatives)

Thomas Jefferson (1743 - 1826)

As the newspaper developed, it began to be regarded as a kind of 'guardian of democracy' as John Milton had thought books should be. By the 18th Century a Free Press was seen as essential to democracy. Thomas Jefferson, a pamphleteer, and the principle author of the US Declaration of Independence believed fiercely in the people's right to self-determination, in free speech, and in a free press.



Jefferson held that revolution was the people's right if the Government proved unsatisfactory:

“The tree of liberty must be refreshed from time to time with the blood of patriots and tyrants.”

And of the importance of a free press he said:

“Were it left to me to decide whether we should have a government without newspapers, or newspapers without a government, I should not hesitate a moment to prefer the latter.”

Voltaire (Francois Marie Arouet, b.1694 – d. 1778)

'Monsieur l'abbé, I detest what you write, but I would give my life to make it possible for you to continue to write.' - Voltaire, 1770

Voltaire was a French philosopher, novelist, playwright, essayist, and pamphleteer.

He was a defender of the Enlightenment values of Free Speech and Reasoned Discourse.

Voltaire travelled to England during the 18th Century and was impressed with the PRACTICE of free speech there (before the French revolution)



Long before the 18th Century in England to become the object of a pamphlet was a fate more to be feared than death by torture, according to one Pamphleteer :

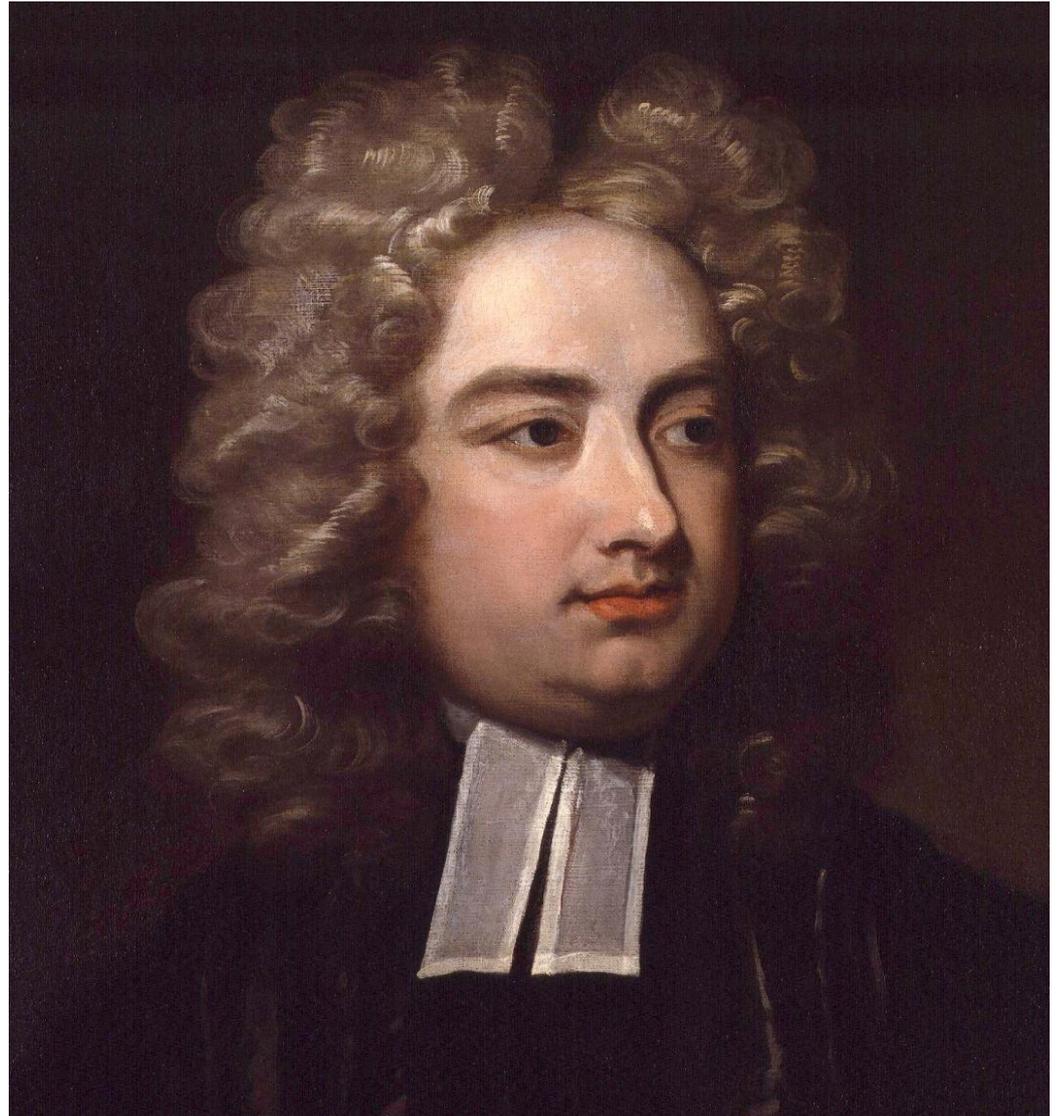
To come to the presse is more dangerous, then to be prest to death, for the payne of those Tortures, last but a few minutes, but he that lyes upon the rack in print, hath his flesh torne off by the teeth of Enuy, and Calumny euen when he means no body any hurt in his graue

– An anonymous Pamphleteer

Jonathon Swift

Satirist and essayist best known for the savagely critical satire *Gulliver's Travels*. The book has become a children's story: sanitised over time.

Swift was also a pamphleteer. Unlike many of his contemporaries, Swift was critical of Enlightenment values and the Absolute Certainty to be had from logic, Reason and Science.



A Modest Proposal (For Preventing The Children of Poor People in Ireland From Being A Burden to Their Parents or Country, and For Making Them Beneficial to The Public) (a pamphlet published in 1729)

Jonathon Swift's Modest Proposal was an assault on the wealthy of England at a time when people were starving in his native Ireland. It also serves as an attack on Reason by proposing a 'reasonable' solution to England's problems.

'I profess, in the sincerity of my heart, that I have not the least personal interest in endeavoring to promote this necessary work, having no other motive than the public good of my country, by advancing our trade, providing for infants, relieving the poor, and giving some pleasure to the rich. I have no children by which I can propose to get a single penny; the youngest being nine years old, and my wife past child-bearing.' - Jonathon Swift

The Modest Proposal was banned, and Swift went to Ireland and wrote Gulliver's Travels, also subsequently banned.

Gulliver's travels

Gulliver's Travels was an even more vicious attack on the British Establishment than the Modest Proposal. It was written as a fiction in which a doctor is shipwrecked and visits fantastical lands: a floating island of scientists and a country where horses are people and human beings are beasts called Yahoos. Upon his return to England Gulliver can barely stand the company of people he has come to see as animals:

“I began last week to permit my wife to sit at dinner with me, at the farthest end of a long table; and to answer (but with the utmost brevity) the few questions I asked her. Yet, the smell of a _Yahoo_ continuing very offensive, I always keep my nose well stopped with rue, lavender, or tobacco leaves. And, although it be hard for a man late in life to remove old habits, I am not altogether out of hopes, in some time, to suffer a neighbour _Yahoo_ in my company, without the apprehensions I am yet under of his teeth or his claws.”

“..this work of mine can possibly meet with no censurers: for what objections can be made against a writer, who relates only plain facts, that happened in such distant countries.”

Act II: American revolution

confluence of causes:

weak, despotic rule (of British)

injustice

increased literacy

widely circulated printed materials (pamphlets, books, newspapers)

widely circulated ideas (political self-determination, free speech, Reason)



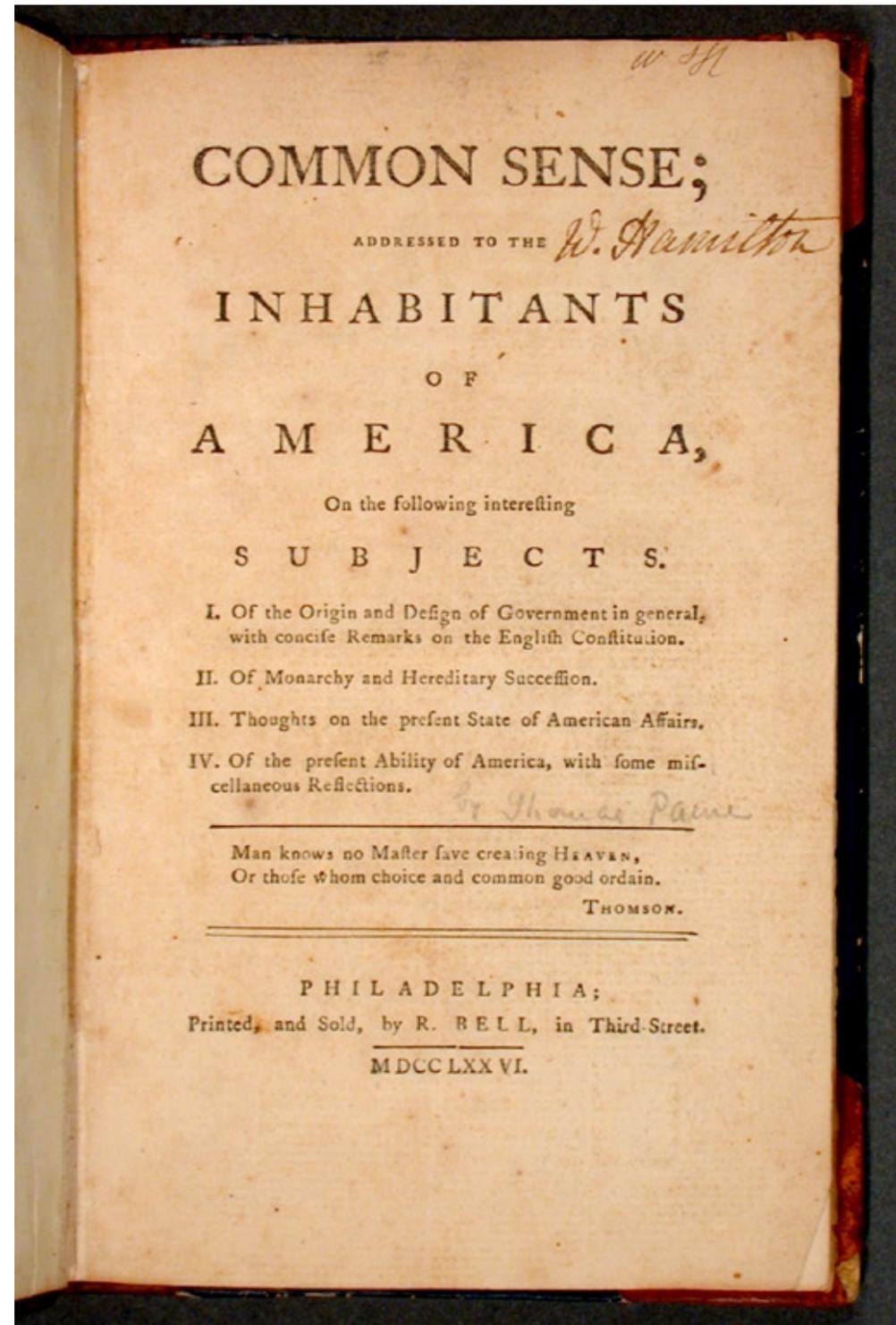
Common Sense

On January 10th 1776 the 48-page pamphlet *Common Sense* was published anonymously ('written by an Englishman'), because its content was treasonous. The pamphlet made an incendiary argument for American independence from British rule.

500,000 copies were sold in Britain and America within a year.

“As my wish was to serve an oppressed people, and assist in a just and good cause, I conceived that the honor of it would be promoted by my declining to make even the usual profits of an author.”

– Thomas Paine



Common Sense

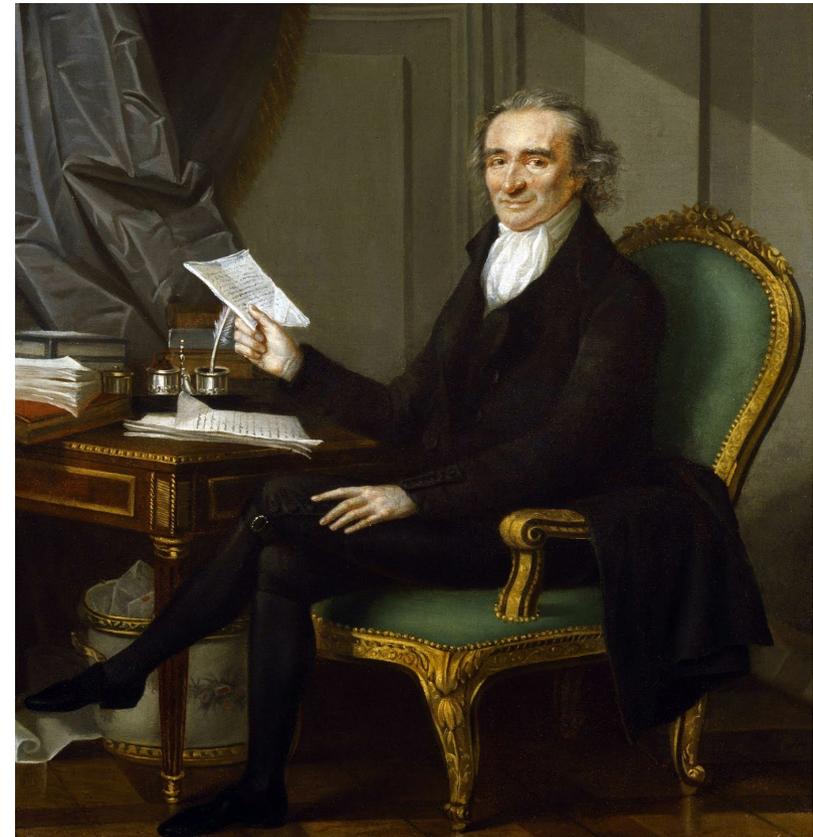
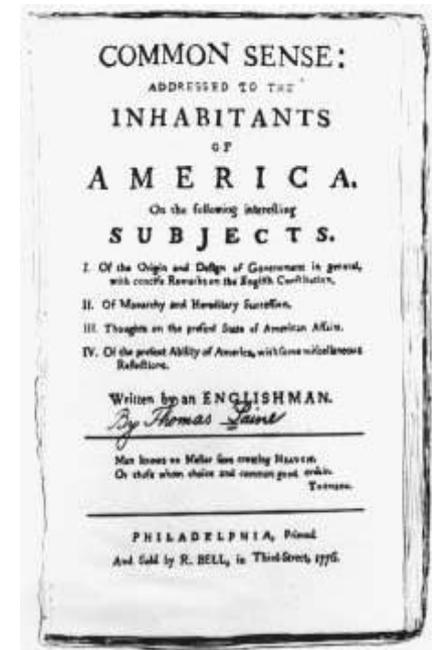
distinguished Government from Society

in communities behaviour is regulated so that people can co-exist. Regulations become formalised as laws

people choose representatives as Government to set laws when society becomes too large for all to meet

tyranny exists where Government serves interests other than those of the Commons

Britain ruled the American colonies for her own benefit, not theirs.



Society is produced by our wants, and government by our wickedness; the former promotes our happiness POSITIVELY by uniting our affections, the latter NEGATIVELY by restraining our vices. The one encourages intercourse, the other creates distinctions. The first is a patron, the last a punisher.

In England a king hath little more to do than to make war and give away places; which in plain terms, is to impoverish the nation and set it together by the ears. A pretty business indeed for a man to be allowed eight hundred thousand sterling a year for, and worshipped into the bargain! Of more worth is one honest man to society and in the sight of God, than all the crowned ruffians that ever lived.

– Thomas Paine 'Common Sense' (1776)

American Revolution (1775-1783)

Events:

1770 – The Boston Massacre – several colonials were killed in a street battle between citizens armed with stones and sticks and a contingent of British soldiers stationed in the city.

1773 – The Tea Act passed by the British Parliament meant cheap tea would be sold in the American colonies, which accidentally offended local merchants and was seen as an attempt to buy popular support. Subsequently, the Boston Tea Party saw colonials go aboard British ships and throw tea overboard: all 342 chests of it.

1775 – The first military clash between Minutemen and the British Redcoats at Lexington and Concord.

1776 - June 28: Decisive defeat of British navy in South Carolina following their evacuation of Boston.

July 4: Declaration of Independence adopted by Congress and sent to printers.

Declaration of Independence

In the Declaration of Independence liberal values are asserted before a list of offences of the King of Great Britain is given, and the intention to become independent of Britain stated.

“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. That to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed. That whenever any form of government becomes destructive to these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness.” - US Declaration of Independence (adopted by Congress on July 4th, 1776)

Act III: French revolution (1789)

confluence of causes:

weak, despotic rule

injustice

increased literacy

widely circulated printed materials (pamphlets, books, newspapers)

widely circulated ideas (political self-determination, free speech, Reason).



Act III: French revolution (1789)

events:

1789 – National assembly declared on June 17th. On July 14th the Paris prison the Bastille was stormed, and political prisoners freed. On August 27th the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen was made.

1790 - King Louis XVI accepts the new constitution.

1791 - Royal family flees Paris for Varennes. The National Constituent Assembly is replaced by the Legislative Assembly.

1792 – Monarchy abolished on September 21st.

1793 – Louis XVI executed, prior to declaration of war against Britain, Holland and Spain.

Declaration on the Rights of Man

Men are born and remain free and equal in rights. Social distinctions may be founded only upon the general good.

The aim of all political association is the preservation of the natural and imprescriptible rights of man. These rights are liberty, property, security, and resistance to oppression.

Liberty consists in the freedom to do everything which injures no one else;

No one shall be disquieted on account of his opinions, including his religious views, provided their manifestation does not disturb the public order established by law.

Free Speech in the Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen

In 1791 the philosopher and pamphleteer Voltaire was proclaimed a kind of mentor of the French revolution, although he died too soon to see it. It can be argued his influence on the Declaration of the Rights of Man is clearly in evidence:

“We have a natural right to make use of our pens as of our tongue, at our peril, risk and hazard” – Voltaire

Article 11: The free communication of ideas and opinions is one of the most precious of the rights of man. Every citizen may, accordingly, speak, write, and print with freedom, but shall be responsible for such abuses of this freedom as shall be defined by law.

Post-script: Modernity (and The Demise of the Pamphlet)

So what became of the Enlightenment project anyway?

industrial revolution

new transport

new communication technology

capitalism

colonialism

communism/socialism

= Modernity

Industrial Revolution

New agricultural techniques

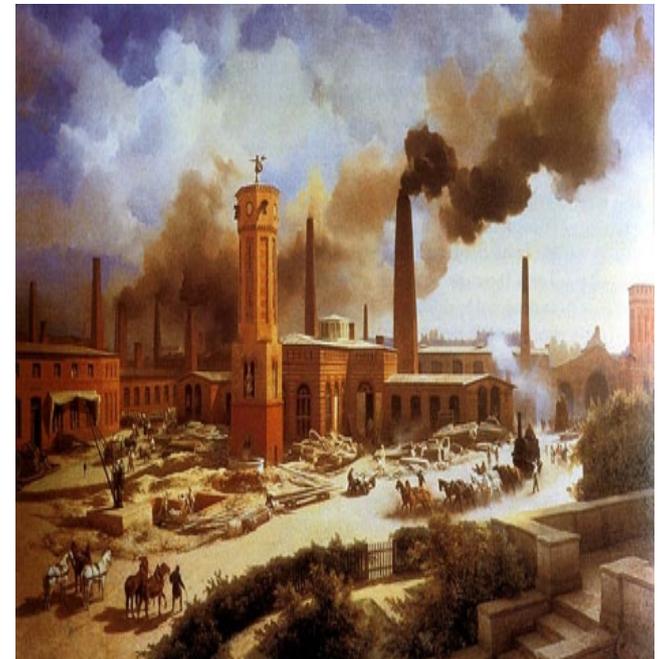
Population boom

Urbanisation (urban population doubled in 50 years)

Mining industry develops as new technology is heavily reliant on coal and iron

Textile industry

Gas (lighting) indispensable



New Communication Technologies

Photography (1839) changed appearance of newspapers

Telephone (1877)

Film

Wireless transmission Marconi establishes first trans-Atlantic wireless transmission in 1901. Initially seen as crucial way to **communicate to ships**

Radio develops about 20 years later

Colonialism

Colonies re-organised to produce primary products and raw materials to serve industrialisation

America produces cotton, sugar

West Africa produced palm oil, cocoa, rubber, gold

Australia produces wool and becomes a place to unload convicts

Capitalism

Bank of England (created in 1694 to find money for royal enterprises)

Banking system allows organisation of credit

Machines and steam power take over

Unprecedented economic growth

A small number of entrepreneurs accumulated huge fortunes

Critics point out 'pollution, messy landscapes, exploited and unhealthy children, threat to community

The Proletariat

Times of huge social upheaval

Controversial 'massing' of people

No longer bourgeoisie versus aristocracy, but
bourgeoisie versus working class

Manufacturing population, with its own habits, way
of living *condemned to an inhuman existence of
mindless routine*

The Modern Press

Lifting of taxes made commercial press possible

New technology allows printing more papers quicker, BUT makes it more expensive to enter the industry

Cheap commercial papers (penny press) financed by advertising

High entertainment value to attract as many readers as possible

Commercial pressures will make it impossible for the working class papers to survive and rival the popular newspapers put in place

New York, 1833, Benjamin Day launches *New York Sun* for a penny.

The "penny press" - first true mass medium

1838 *New York Sun* sells 34,000 copies

Facilitated by advances in printing and papermaking

Financed essentially through advertising

The Free Press and the Fourth Estate

Entertainment function, large readerships do not prevent press from influencing opinion

By 1900 press is a force to reckon with

'Fourth Estate' initially to describe 'a place where reporters sat while documenting the proceedings of the House of Commons in England'

Today 'fourth estate' is a synonym for watchdog journalism

The Legacy of Enlightenment: Modern Role of the Media

Watchdog – guard against excesses of Government and State

Public sphere – provide a forum for public dialogue, the free expression of ideas, as a vehicle of Reason and Progress.

Scrutinise the practices of the powerful

Protect free speech

Journalistic objectivity

(ideas of free speech and self-determination also preserved in populations who continue to EXPECT to be able to exercise it..)