



## Realism in Political Theory

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### ABSTRACT

The physical sciences discarded the method of Cartesian rationalism in the 18th century, but much of contemporary political theory continues to adhere to this outdated method, following the famous rationalist social contract theories of Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, Kant. This paper proposes an alternative, non-rationalist paradigm for political theory, which is based on the writings of empiricist theorists. This realist paradigm is based on five premises: (i) Men are born into families, tribes, and nations to which they are bound by ties of mutual loyalty. (ii) Individuals, families, tribes, and nations compete for resources and honor until a threat from outside recalls them to the mutual loyalties that bind them to one another. (iii) Language, religion, law, economic forms, and government are traditional institutions developed by particular families, tribes, and nations with the aim of strengthening themselves and ensuring the welfare of their members. (iv) Political obligation arises as a consequence of membership in these loyalty groups. (v) These premises are derived from experience, and may be challenged and improved upon in light of experience.

During the 1960s, many Americans and Europeans came to believe that in Enlightenment liberalism, they had discovered the final political theory: A regime so obviously desirable that competition among political ideologies had in effect come to an end, and liberalism would soon be adopted by all nations.

It is difficult to find anyone to defend this view today. Contrary to what many had expected, liberalism is under siege throughout the democratic world, and conflict among competing political visions is fiercely alive: In the political arena, liberals have found themselves struggling to stave off a conservative nationalism that was given dramatic expression in the 2016 election of Donald Trump's "America First" administration in the United States; in Britain's vote to leave the European Union ("Brexit") that same year; and in the rise of nationalist governments in Central Europe, Italy, Brazil, India, and other countries. Meanwhile, an updated version of Marxism (using the slogans "Anti-Racism" or "Social Justice") has mounted a devastating bid to seize control of the principal institutions that had been responsible, until only recently, for the development and circulation of liberal ideas. By the summer of 2020, with many American cities in flames, the most important news media, universities and schools, big tech and other major corporations, and even the courts and the

government bureaucracy, had adopted a policy of accommodating the new Marxists in the hope of not being swept away entirely.

Enlightenment liberalism, which was supposed to last forever, dominated America for fifty years. Now this period of ideological hegemony is ending. What comes next is uncertain.

It is in this context that I published *The Virtue of Nationalism*, which seeks to provide a truer theoretical foundation for the political life of free nations in these increasingly unsettled times. What I have offered is an empiricist and realist foundation—which is for this reason quite distinct from the rationalist structure that undergirds the theories of Enlightenment liberalism.<sup>1</sup> I am grateful to David Schaefer, Fred Baumann, and Martin Yaffe for the time and effort they have invested in exploring the book with me. Here I will offer a few remarks in reply to their comments.

### I. Cartesians vs. Newtonians

*The Virtue of Nationalism* and my other political essays of the last few years seek to offer an alternative to the liberal hegemony of the last fifty years—an alternative that will preserve the beneficial traditions of limited government and individual liberties that were developed in the English-speaking countries over

many centuries, but without the many disadvantages of Enlightenment-liberal political theory.<sup>2</sup> That such an alternative is needed is obvious from the rapid advance of Marxist ideology in liberal institutions. Liberalism has proved itself incapable of staving off this advance, and we must learn why this is so if we are to have a chance of maintaining a democratic regime.<sup>3</sup>

In my book I argued that the key to understanding why Enlightenment liberalism is so vulnerable lies in recalling that it is a sub-species within the failed philosophical enterprise of Cartesian *rationalism*. For Descartes, reason is universal and infallible, beginning with self-evident premises (which he calls “clear and distinct ideas”), and proceeding by means of infallible deductions to attain unassailable conclusions. Descartes’ magnum opus, *The Principles of Philosophy* (1644), claims to have reached a final determination of the nature of the physical universe by this method. In its day, it was considered a masterpiece, and it became the principal textbook of the school of Cartesian science for decades. But it was all folly. There is no way to reach a final determination of the nature of the physical universe by moving from self-evident premises through infallible deductions to unassailable conclusions. In the physical sciences, the Cartesian method was swept away, after a prolonged struggle, by the success of Newton’s *Principia* (1687). As Newton emphasized, what made his mechanics a successful science was the rejection of Descartes’ rationalism, and the adoption instead of an *empiricist* method, in which first principles are gathered from phenomena by induction. Such induction from experience does not produce universal truths, and it is not infallible either.<sup>4</sup> But as Newton wrote in his *Opticks*, “it is the best way of arguing which the nature of things admits of.”<sup>5</sup>

However, while the physical sciences concluded that the method of Cartesian rationalism is worthless, political theory has embraced it with enthusiasm and shows no sign of letting go. Descartes’ method was adopted by Hobbes and Locke in England, and later imported back into France by Rousseau’s *The Social Contract*, and into Germany in the form of Kant’s political essays such as *Perpetual Peace*.<sup>6</sup> Martin Yaffe rightly points out that Locke is known as an empiricist, but this view is based largely on his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1689), which was indeed an influential exercise in empirical psychology.<sup>7</sup> His *Second Treatise on Government* is not, however, a similar effort to bring an empirical standpoint to the theory of the state. Locke was one of the

few political writers of his time who did not argue on the basis of historical experience, instead beginning with a series of axioms without any evident connection to what can be known from the historical and empirical study of the state.<sup>8</sup> He thus asserts that (i) all men are by nature in “a state of perfect freedom” and in a “state of perfect equality”; (ii) this state of nature is governed by nothing other than human reason, which “teaches all mankind, who will but consult it”; and (iii) reason reveals that all men “till by their own consents they make themselves members of some politick society.”<sup>9</sup> From these axioms, Locke proceeds to deduce the proper character of the political order for all nations on earth. In other words, Locke adopts Descartes’ rationalist method and applies it to the political realm. As Anthony Quinton correctly concludes:

In Locke, an empiricist account of knowledge in general is combined with a rationalist theory of our knowledge of morality, the basis of Locke’s theory of self-evident natural rights. “Moral knowledge,” says Locke, “is as capable of real certainty as mathematics.” Moral truths, like geometrical theorems, he regards as demonstrable necessities. By the time he reaches Book IV of his *Essay on Human Understanding*, in which this position is taken, and argued for in a startlingly feeble way, Locke has altogether forgotten the moral fallibilism that is intimated by his rejection in Book I of “innate practical principles.” It is this ethical rationalism that is fundamental to Locke’s political theory, being an apt support for passionately dogmatic liberalism.<sup>10</sup>

A long line of empiricist political philosophers—including Selden, Montesquieu, Hume, Smith, Ferguson, Burke, and Mill—has sought to dislodge this discredited method from political theory, often appealing explicitly to Newton’s empiricism for support. But thus far, they have not succeeded in making a dent in the prestige of the Cartesian rationalist school in political theory. On the contrary, the American constitutional revolution of the 1960s can be seen as the final triumph of Cartesian rationalism in politics, with the U.S. Supreme Court leading the way in deducing the proper character of the political order from rationalist axioms.

But Descartes’ method is no better equipped to deducing the proper political order than it is to deducing the true nature of the physical universe. Among other things, it turns out that the highly abstract political terms included in the axioms of rationalist political theory—terms such as *freedom* and *equality*—cannot be given stable content by means of reason alone. Instead, it is particular traditions, such as that of Anglo-American Protestantism, that give stable meanings to these terms for a given society. To

take one of many current examples, by reason alone it can easily be argued that if all men are free and equal, they should be equally free to take up residence in the United States. This appears simple and straightforward. Any argument to the contrary will have to depend on traditional concepts such as *nation*, *state*, *territory*, *border*, *citizenship*, and so on, none of which are at all self-evident or accessible to reason alone. Rationalist political theory, however, does not have a place for concepts whose meanings are handed down and refined by way of tradition. Liberals who want to hold on to traditional conceptions of the nation, its citizenry and its borders, have found that “critical theorists” have no difficulty applying reason to show that such concepts are oppressive and need to be radically revised or discarded. Faced with withering accusations that such concepts are tools of oppression, many liberals have sought to accommodate this revisionism or have capitulated entirely. And the same can be said regarding all other arguments taking place today over what rights individuals do or do not have.

Contrary to what is often said, Enlightenment rationalism has failed to produce a universally accessible political theory that can be accepted by all. What it has produced is a theory that allows every political tradition to be overthrown in the name of someone’s conception of freedom and equality. Meanwhile, it appears to have no ability to produce a stable regime to replace the traditionalist politics it has destroyed.

## II. Premises of realist political theory

If we wish to develop a regime that can maintain both order and freedom through time, we are going to have to discard Cartesian rationalism in political theory, just as we discarded it in physics. In *The Virtue of Nationalism*, I rely on empiricist traditions to propose a new foundation for the political order.<sup>11</sup> The premises of this realist political theory are as follows:

1. Men are born into families, tribes, and nations to which they are bound by ties of mutual loyalty.
2. Individuals, families, tribes, and nations compete for resources and honor until a threat from outside recalls them to the mutual loyalties that bind them to one another.
3. Language, religion, law, economic forms, and government are traditional institutions developed by particular families, tribes, and nations with the aim of strengthening themselves and ensuring the welfare of their members.
4. Political obligation arises as a consequence of membership in these loyalty groups.
5. These premises are derived from experience, and may be challenged and improved upon in light of experience.

These premises are perhaps less familiar than those of Enlightenment rationalist political theory. But neither are they entirely unfamiliar. Versions of this realist political theory are taught in academic disciplines such as international relations, anthropology, and sociology. Many of us learned something like this view of the political world from our parents and grandparents, or from the Bible and the Jewish or Christian religious communities to which we belong. And others will have encountered such a view while taking part in electoral politics or government, where our mentors were often more realistic about political life than our teachers in school and university.

Yet this realist political framework is rarely recognized for what it is: An alternative way for thinking about political life. Let’s look briefly at its premises.

The realist paradigm regards political order as hierarchical in nature, consisting of multiple levels: An *individual* is born into a *family*, which combines with other families to form a *clan* (today often called a congregation or community). Clans combine to form a *tribe* within the alliance of tribes that together constitute a *nation*. This natural hierarchical ordering means that the individual is not perfectly free and equal, but is rather born into a structure that involves certain constraints and unequal relations from the start. As far as we know, human beings have been born into such political hierarchies for as long as we have lived on earth.

What holds these hierarchies in place is bonds of mutual loyalty. The human individual is by nature fiercely concerned to protect the integrity of his own self. But this “self” is not limited to the physical body of the individual, his reputation, and possessions. The human individual regards others such as his parents, husband or wife, and children, as an integral part of himself, and strives to protect them accordingly. This attachment to others whom I experience as a part of my self is called *loyalty*. When two or more individuals are loyal to one another in this way, the bond that makes them an enduring unity is called *mutual loyalty*. Bonds of mutual loyalty are what forms collections of individuals into families, clans, tribes, and nations, which are strong political structures capable of sustaining great duress and propagating themselves over generations. Political obligation, whether to one’s

family, tribe, or nation, does not arise from consent, but from the bonds of mutual loyalty and gratitude that bind us to the other members of such loyalty groups, including especially the past generations that built up what we have and handed it down to us.

I should emphasize that this realist view does not eliminate consent from the foundations of politics. Individuals can and do become members of a new family, tribe, or nation in adulthood. Marriage is usually by consent; and families, tribes and nations do adopt members who were not born into their circle, also generally by consent. But the presence of consensual relations does not alter the fact that mutual loyalty—which is largely inherited, rather than chosen—is the primary force that establishes loyalty groups and holds them together through time. Mutual loyalty is the principal force that establishes and maintains political order.

The realist sees this hierarchical ordering of human individuals as characterized by constant competition and rivalry. Each individual competes with his neighbors so as to rise in strength and status; and in the same way, families, tribes, and nations compete with their neighbors to rise in strength and status. Even within the most peaceful families, husbands and wives bicker and children fight in an effort to improve their standing in relation to one another. Yet this competition is set aside when a challenge or threat from the outside recalls them to a posture of mutual loyalty and obligation. This is true at the higher levels of the political hierarchy as well: The infighting among competing families and clans is set aside when unity is needed to cope with a danger to the tribe as a whole, just as infighting among rival tribes is set aside to meet a threat to the nation.

The profusion of competing families, tribes, and nations permits political societies to be diverse. Each family, tribe, and nation inherits a unique worldview and ways of doing things, including its own language, religion, law, economic arrangements, and form of government. And it innovates upon these received traditions so as to better compete with its neighbors and advance the welfare of its members. But the loyalty of the individual is never given to institutions admired in the abstract. We are loyal to an institution or a tradition because it is that of the family, tribe, or nation to which we are attached by bonds of mutual loyalty. For example, a people may put an end to the destruction caused by warfare among its competing tribes by uniting under a national government, a development that may take place by conquest or voluntarily. Then the loyalty that binds the individual to

his tribe and nation will also bind him to the national government, so that he obeys its laws, pay taxes to it, and serves in its military when summoned. But the individual's obligation to the government is not a consequence of deliberation and consent, which often does not take place at all. It is a consequence of mutual loyalties, which, as has been said, are largely inherited.

The purpose of government, when it arises, is to strengthen the tribe or nation in the face of its rivals, and to better ensure the welfare of its members. But the character of government varies greatly in keeping with the distinctive traditions of each tribe and nation. These varieties of government may be regarded as so many experiments, which, by trial and error, permit mankind to discover the principles most conducive to strengthening the tribe or nation and ensuring the welfare of its members. It is in this way that we learn of salutary principles such as personal liberty (as defined, for example, by the right to life, family, property, and sabbath), equality before the law, and many others.

### III. Realism and natural law

Realist political theory does not begin, as Enlightenment rationalist theories do, by announcing the existence of various natural rights (e.g., to freedom, equality, and obligation by way of consent) that are supposed to be universal. Instead, it seeks the natural laws of political order, which are derived from experience by induction. Once one learns to understand political order in these terms, we are able to recognize Anglo-American traditions of limited government and individual liberties as traditional institutions, just as the independent national state, public religion, democratic elections, marriage, and many other familiar aspects of our political order are traditional institutions.

Rationalists tend to regard this kind of political theory as relativistic: They suppose that anyone who embraces such a view of the political order must, in consequence, adopt the position that whatever is traditional in one's own nation or tribe is right; and that there is no overarching natural law or natural right that holds good for all mankind.<sup>12</sup> This seems to be the reason that David Schaefer interprets my book as "deny[ing] that there are any such universal principles."<sup>13</sup> But I have never denied that there are natural laws or natural rights. On the contrary, I have endorsed the idea of a natural law on many occasions, including in *The Virtue of Nationalism*.<sup>14</sup>

However, it is true that my account of natural law does not give Enlightenment rationalists what it is that they want from this concept. This is for three reasons:

First, my understanding of what the human mind can do (and therefore of what “reason” is) is Newtonian, not Cartesian. That is, I reject as utterly fantastic the Cartesian conceit that every human mind is capable of moving from self-evident premises to universally valid conclusions by way of infallible deductions. As I’ve said, this is impossible in physical science, and it is equally impossible in the sphere of politics and morals. Instead, our knowledge of natural law or natural right must proceed empirically: We must derive our fundamental principles from history and tradition, improving them as a physicist improves his theories—by trial and error, in light of experience.

Second, because of this view of what the human mind can and cannot do, I am unimpressed by the claims of Enlightenment rationalists who believe they have attained some kind of final understanding of what the contents of the natural law or natural right really are. Luther and Calvin, who regarded the Mosaic Ten Precepts as natural law, were certainly closer to the mark.<sup>15</sup> Considering the Ten Precepts as natural law immediately raises the question of how anyone can speak intelligently about the natural law or natural right without any discussion of subjects such as idolatry, adultery, honoring one’s parents, the sabbath, or bearing false witness. For example, marriage is a traditional institution, just as property is a traditional institution. Marriage creates a sphere of freedom, safety from invasion, and peace, in much the same way that the institution of property does. How, then, is it possible for Enlightenment rationalists to consider theft a violation of natural law, or of the natural rights of the individual, while adultery is not? Arguments can of course be advanced to defend this distinction, but these arguments are inevitably based on Enlightenment-rationalist assumptions concerning the primacy of individual liberty and consent in all matters. The truth is that the absence of adultery from the Enlightenment version of natural rights only demonstrates the weakness and fallibility of reason as exercised by Enlightenment rationalist philosophers. It is evidence that there is no final and definitive exercise of reason in these matters, and therefore no universally persuasive theory of natural law or natural right.<sup>16</sup>

Finally, it is impossible to miss how anxious present-day defenders of Enlightenment rationalism are to elevate thinkers such as Descartes, Hobbes, Locke,

Spinoza, Rousseau, and Kant, and indeed, to make of their writings a kind of new Scripture to replace the Bible. This Enlightenment supersessionism appears not only in progressive circles, which are openly revolutionary. It also appears in more conservative settings, where open criticism of the Bible tends to be avoided. In these contexts, the unseemly cultivation of a kind of cult around Enlightenment rationalist philosophers is combined with a variety of evasive maneuvers for averting the influence of the Bible and other traditionalist sources. The overall effect is precisely supersessionist—perhaps gesturing at the significance of the Bible and traditionalist sources in history, but in fact regarding Enlightenment rationalism as the true religion that should be accepted by all.

If I have described this phenomenon correctly, then it is obvious why my version of natural law or natural right does not give Enlightenment rationalists what they are looking for. My insistence that the history of natural-law thinking in the Jewish and Christian West must be rooted in our common Biblical inheritance leaves no room for a cult of the Enlightenment rationalist philosophers. My openness to giving Enlightenment philosophy a respectable place within a much broader tradition is apparently just not enough. What is wanted, evidently, is for the Enlightenment rationalist philosophers to eclipse the Biblical inheritance, which is something I don’t believe can be reconciled with the history of political philosophy in the Western nations, or with an empiricist philosophy.

#### IV. Realism and political obligation

Loving one’s country like a wise Burkean gentleman is a good thing, and loving one’s country in a naïve, unphilosophic way is on the whole a good thing too. So says Fred Baumann, and I agree with him.<sup>17</sup> But love can mean different things. We may say that we love Mozart or ice cream. Yet a love of this kind may be felt one day and gone the next, and it seems to entail no obligation on those who feel it. But when we speak of love of country or nation, we refer to a phenomenon of a different kind. Love of country or nation is like the love of one’s parents and grandparents, brothers and sisters, wife and children. It is like the love of one’s close friends and one’s tribe. In these and similar cases, I find that I am bound to other human beings by ties that are mutual, and that invariably carry obligations with them. These ties can rightly be called mutual love, but it is more precise to

speak of them as *mutual loyalty* (see Premise 1 above).

What is it that makes these bonds of mutual loyalty “on the whole a good thing”? We often benefit from them and take pleasure in them. But just as often, they cause us heartache, and they may in fact inflict genuine harm. Perhaps the best way to describe what is good about mutual loyalties is this: the bond of mutual loyalty, so long as it holds firm, is what permits me to transcend the prison of my self in its narrow sense—the prison of my own body, my own experience, and my own thoughts. This does not mean that I become “selfless,” as is often said. On the contrary, bonds of loyalty permit my self to extend itself, and to experience what is happening to others as though it is happening to me. I feel what is happening to my parents, wife, and children, my friends and the members of my nation, as though it is happening to my own self. This capacity for embracing others within my self is what makes a human being a social creature. And as a general matter, we find that those whose self is extended in this way, full of loves and loyalties that are given and received and relied upon each day, are much stronger and healthier persons than those atomic individuals who make of themselves an island, and live and die alone.

As an empirical matter, then, a recognition of political obligation—and in fact the very concept of *political obligation*—arises in the context of bonds of mutual loyalty within loyalty groups (Premise 4). These obligations first emerge from the extension of the self to embrace our parents. Parents undertake hardship in raising their children, and they remain loyal even under conditions of great distress. The child’s obligations to the parents arise in this context: Children must remain loyal to their parents even under conditions of great hardship—such as when the parents are old and infirm. Of course, a child cannot normally return what he has been given by his parents for many years. But even from a young age, there are acts that a son or daughter can undertake every day and every hour to express gratitude and loyalty to their parents. Herein arises the obligation to honor one’s father and mother, which certainly does not arise from consent.

And in the same way, a more distant but nonetheless real obligation arises with respect to the tribe and nation that have given the child the customs and safety in which he was reared. This then applies, by extension, to foreigners who were not born into a given tribe or nation but have been adopted by it. Here too the adoption confers safety and a way of life

that requires gratitude and loyalty in return: In the normal course of affairs, both the born member of the tribe or nation and the adopted members feel obliged to do what they can to defend it every day by obeying its laws, paying taxes, and serving in the military.

Of course, such obligations are not absolute. A parent has no right to ask his child to murder or steal or violate the sabbath out of loyalty to him. And in the same way, the officials and officers of a nation have no right to ask their people to become criminals out of loyalty to it. Nevertheless, the bonds of mutual loyalty give rise to a presumption of obligation: We assume that we must be loyal to our parents and their traditions if this involves no infamous act on our part. And something similar may be said concerning the laws and customs of tribe and nation. These things are rightly said to have the status of natural laws. And indeed, those obligations that we have to the members of other nations are learned only through our own tribal or national traditions (as in the Mosaic injunction to “Love the stranger, for you were strangers in the Land of Egypt”<sup>18</sup>) or else by direct analogy to tribal or national loyalty.

I have suggested that, as a matter of empirical fact, the content of political obligation arises from tribal or national tradition, or from reasoning on the basis of tribal or national custom. Enlightenment rationalists dislike this conclusion intensely, regarding it as obvious that mankind would advance to a higher condition if only every individual would abandon inherited tradition and “think for themselves.”<sup>19</sup> On this view, an individual who honors the traditions of his family and his nation has of necessity suspended his own capacity for free inquiry, and therefore for arriving at the universal truths that all men are supposedly able to recognize by reason alone. For example, if I honor my family and people by keeping the sabbath in accordance with the traditions of my Jewish ancestors, this is supposed to mean that I am not “thinking for myself”; whereas if I am disloyal to these traditions and rebel against them, as most Enlightenment rationalists do, then this is considered to be a successful instance of “thinking for myself.”

But reality is very different. When Enlightenment rationalists reject Jewish sabbath observance, they actually speak for their own tribe and tradition: the tradition of Enlightenment rationalism, which is itself an attempt to improve upon the inherited tradition of medieval Christian rationalism. It is true that if a Jew decides to become a member of the Enlightenment rationalist tribe and adopts its ways, including the denial of Jewish sabbath observance, this break with

Jewish tradition does involve an assertion of independence from the Jewish tribe and tradition. But there is no more or less “thinking for oneself” in such a case than when an Enlightenment rationalist decides to become a member of the Jewish tribe and adopts its ways, including sabbath observance, in this way asserting independence from the Enlightenment rationalists’ tribe and tradition. The reasoning in either case is rarely original—although in one case out of one hundred thousand, you may get a Spinoza out of the conversion from Judaism to Enlightenment rationalism, or a Moses Hess out of the conversion from Enlightenment rationalism to Judaism. In either case, what this reasoning primarily involves is working out the implications of one’s loyalties, which are known first through the pull of emotion, and whose sources may remain quite obscure, even where they do, on occasion, produce significant works of philosophy or literature.

Rationalists would have us believe that, if it were true, this empirical account of political obligation would mean that obligation is in effect arbitrary, and that there is no way that one tradition can be better or worse than another, or one tradition right and another wrong. This argument sets up a false dichotomy: Either you are a relativist, incapable of recognizing that political traditions contain imperfections and evils. Or else, if you are aware of these things, then you must be exercising Enlightenment-style rationalism to gain knowledge of universally valid truths as to what is right and good.

Realist thinkers such as Selden, Montesquieu, and Burke indeed regard some traditions as better than others, and insist that some adjustments in a political tradition are improvements, whereas others are evil. But these thinkers are not rationalists. They are empiricists. An empiricist does accept that there is such a thing as an objective human nature, and an objective good for society. However, empiricists reject the rationalist claim that every individual has access to a universal reason that is capable of arriving at the one true view of human nature, and a view of what is good for society that applies in all times and places. As an empiricist understands things, the experience of each individual is limited and different from the experience of others. This means that the general principles that one individual draws from experience will be different from those drawn by others. Some of these generalizations will cut closer to the truth; but some will simply approach objective reality from a different angle. The only way to know which of these generalizations is best is to test them over centuries

and in different locales so as to learn which of them hold good and over what range of circumstances. Thus the importance that empiricist political theory places on history and tradition. It is the traditions that constrain each nation and tribe, giving its political life a particular form (or set of forms). With the experience of centuries, we can learn which of these forms lead to the flourishing of human societies and which are disastrous illusions. It is through trial and error in history that true political principles reveal themselves.

I submit that such a realist political philosophy is not only a plausible rejoinder to Enlightenment rationalism, but that it is an accurate description of the manner in which we arrive at the fundamental principles that describe healthy societies and successful governments.

## Notes

1. Not all empirically-minded readers are conservatives. There have always been some liberals and socialists who are at the same time political realists. Individuals such as John Stuart Mill and Isaiah Berlin come to mind.
2. Yoram Hazony, *The Virtue of Nationalism* (New York: Basic Books, 2018). See also Ofir Haivry and Yoram Hazony, “What Is Conservatism?,” *American Affairs*, Summer, 2017.
3. Yoram Hazony, “The Challenge of Marxism,” *Quillette*, August 16, 2020.
4. Newtonian induction is not a version of the “enumerative induction” that grounds the search for statistical correlations in much of social science today. Rather, it is a method of deriving concepts that can be regarded as the “general causes” of the phenomena. For more on Cartesian and Newtonian science, see Yoram Hazony, “Newtonian Explanatory Reduction and Hume’s System of the Sciences,” in Newton and Empiricism, eds. Zvi Biener and Eric Schliesser (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 138–70.
5. Isaac Newton, *Opticks* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2003 [fourth edition, 1730]), 404.
6. On the history of rationalism in political philosophy, see Anthony Quinton, *The Politics of Imperfection* (London: Faber and Faber, 1978).
7. Martin Yaffe, “Defending National Loyalty: Yoram Hazony on Nationalism” in this symposium.
8. Trevor Colbourn, *The Lamp of Experience* (Indianapolis, IN: Liberty Fund, 1998), 5–6.
9. John Locke, *Second Treatise of Government* 4, 6–7, 15.
10. Quinton, *The Politics of Imperfection*, 41. See especially Locke’s *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* 4.3.18.
11. Hazony, *The Virtue of Nationalism*, 58–82.
12. See, for example, Leo Strauss, *Natural Right and History* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1953), 86.

13. David Lewis Schaefer, "Comments on Yoram Hazony, *The Virtue of Nationalism*," in this symposium.
14. Yoram Hazony, *The Philosophy of Hebrew Scripture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 61–2, 92–100, 103–4, 139, 172–80, 235–8, 251–6; Hazony, "Three Replies: On Revelation, Natural Law, and Jewish Autonomy in Theology," *Journal of Analytic Theology* 3 (2015), 184–93; Hazony, "The Bible and Leo Strauss," *Perspectives on Political Science* 45, no. 3 (2016), 192–5; Hazony, *The Virtue of Nationalism*, 24, 244 no. 27; and 176–87, 270, no. 113. A natural law is also assumed by earlier writers in the tradition of empiricist or realist political theory, including Hooker, Selden, Montesquieu, Burke, and others. None of them deny the existence of a natural law.
15. I don't mean that the Ten Precepts can be regarded as a complete natural law. The quest for completeness in this area is a chimera.
16. This means that I do not accept the conclusions of present-day rationalists who claim to have established an undeniable and universally accessible natural law or natural right. See Yoram Hazony, "Conservative Rationalism Has Failed," *American Mind*, June 24 and July 1, 2019.
17. Fred Baumann, "Remarks on *The Virtue of Nationalism*" in this symposium.
18. Exodus 22.21; Leviticus 19.33–34; Deuteronomy 10.19, 23.7; Ezekiel 47.22–23.
19. Immanuel Kant, "What Is Enlightenment?," in *Kant's Political Writings*, ed. Hans Reiss, ed., trans., H. B. Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970 [1784]), 55.