Prologue

Words and Acts

This is a book about political words—an inquiry into the language of argument in the American past through a handful of the keywords which have boomed and rattled through American politics since independence. It is a commonplace to ask what our political tradition *means.* I have tried, to the contrary, to ask how certain of the central words in our putative political creed were *used:* how they were employed and for what ends, how they rose in power, withered, and collapsed, how they were invented, stolen for other ends, remade, abandoned. For the history of political talk in America—if I have it straight—is not the story of a slowly unfolding tradition but of contention, argument, and power. Yet language is commonly supposed to be ephemeral material, the stuff of ornament, perhaps, or logic, but not of power and not always easy to take seriously amidst the clash of harder historical forces. It may be best, then, to start with words themselves.

"If you want to know what a politician is up to," Marvin Meyers cautioned years ago, "watch his feet, not his mouth."[1] As first lessons in political wisdom go, a better one than this is hard to imagine. Under the flimflam of evasive political noises, someone is certain to have interests at stake, a covert agenda in mind, a hand in the till. It is one of the functions of political rhetoric to cover up acts of this sort, to hide the policy of the day behind the popular

slogans of the moment. Political words mystify. They screen political acts, obscure them behind a cloud of rhetoric so dense that most of us are left to play fools' parts, trying to guess what is really going on. When we dismiss the verbal guff of politics as "mere rhetoric," a veil drawn over the hidden games of politics, we are onto an important truth.

But clearly political words do more than mystify; they inspire, persuade, enrage, mobilize. With words minds are changed, votes acquired, enemies labeled, alliances secured, unpopular programs made palatable, the status quo suddenly unveiled as unjust and intolerable. Through words, coalitions are made out of voters who, stripped of their common rallying cries and slogans, would quickly dissolve into jarring fragments. Words make mass actions possible. With words ringing in their heads, masses of men have made revolutions and crusades, flung themselves into war, savaged other human beings who refused to give up some contrary form of talk. Through words some of the most potent forces of modern politics are wheeled into motion.[2]

Perhaps in some of the small, tightly closed political societies of a distant past, where the political actors all knew each other, took each other's measure over a flagon of beer and wasted no words about it, political language carried fewer consequences. But in modern societies, stretched over vaster territories and far more diverse citizenries, a politics stripped of powerfully expansive words is virtually inconceivable. Mystify as they may, they are the stuff that holds political coalitions and political movements together. "The last thing a political party gives up is its vocabulary," Tocqueville concluded. "This is because, in party politics as in other matters, it is the crowd who dictates the language, and the crowd relinquishes the ideas it has been given more readily than the words it has learned."[3] But not without reason. For it is largely through a string of words—be they "freedom," or "equality," or the "sanctity of property," or the claims of race—that individuals separated from normal sight of each other are shaken into consciousness that their grievances, ambitions, angers, and desires are not peculiarly theirs but, at some slightly altered level of generalization, the material of politics. Abstract, generalizing talk makes private matters public. The bigger, the more sonorous the words, the more private desires they can bind together, the more new desires they can create.

But if words unify and mobilize, they have a still greater, hidden power as well. Words legitimize the outward frame of politics; they create those pictures in our heads which make the structures of authority tolerable and understandable. Thus human beings come to talk of the sacredness of the king's body, the sovereignty of the people, or the destiny of nations—word pictures all, tissues of metaphor, but essential to their reconciliation with realms of power beyond their reach. Many of the most powerful words in the lexicon of politics are of this sort. "Fictions," Edmund Morgan has called them: acts of political make-believe.[4] But of all the functions of political talk, the superimposition of some believable sense and endurable legitimacy on top of the chaotic motions of day-to-day power is the least dispensable. Let the citizens believe that the law is a thing of logic (rather than the whim of men called judges), that their government is a democracy (though only a fraction of the people rule), that human beings were born with rights (though it is plain that they are born to the powerlessness of infancy), and their words have consequences. Let such words shift, let a part of the citizenry suddenly read new meanings into the reigning political figures of speech, let the self-evident truths undergirding the structures of power be open to doubt and contest, and the event is momentous indeed.

If the words work. For the making of words is indeed an act, not a business distinct from the hard, behavioral part of politics but a thing people do. So, by the same token, are the acts of repeating other people's words, rallying to them, being moved by them, believing them. The old dichotomy between behavior and ideas, intellectual history and the history of politics, shopworn with use, never in truth made much sense. Political talk is political action of a particular, often powerful, sort.

The attempt to divide words and acts was not a cavalier distinction, but it hinged from the first on a peculiar kind of essentialism. Did one know a person down to his roots through his talk or through his actions? Did ideas move history or did some putatively nonideational force called interests? Rhetoric or reality? Feet or mouth? As if one were bedrock, the other mere motion. But surely the psychological assumptions back of those distinctions were so thin that we would barely recognize them if applied to everyday life. We act and speak, in and out of politics, with many ends in

view. Some ways of talking we try on for a lark, some for company, some to cover our tracks. From others—those in which we have invested our keenest longings and faiths—we will not be moved, cost what it may. Our repertoire of words, running the octaves from taunt to rallying cry to hypocrisy to prayer, is astonishingly large. Taken in their right sense, we mean them all and know what each is good for. We *use* words, and we are used by words. To be wise to the forces of politics is not only to keep one's eyes peeled but one's ears open.

It is in that spirit that I have tried to look again at what is commonly (though all too neatly) called the American political tradition. The result is, frankly, an inquiry. Out of the huge variety of political talk in the American past—the slogans, pieties, and epithets, the coded talk of backroom dealers, the public oratory of the stump—I have extracted only a sliver. The thread of inquiry I have tried to run, however, leads through a handful of the political words which Americans constructed on a scale bigger than the rest. Immense and changeable as the American political vocabulary was, a few of its terms seemed to the talkers somehow fundamental. Let one ask about the purposes of political life; let one ask what a citizen owed his country or ought to get from it; let one ask what governments were, what they were good for, how far their powers reached, or where indeed they got the powers they wielded, and the political talkers fell back on a relatively small number of words. With these they legitimized public life, explained their governments to themselves, invested their political institutions with big words and generous symbols, mobilized voters, and fought over their political future. Without that kind of expansive political talk, politics atomizes. Where it flourishes, all kinds of political arguments will be funneled through its categories; the keywords will be, literally, everywhere.[5]

Nowhere has this been more true, it seems to me, than in America. Our manifestoes have boomed with abstractions; our political bodies have run awash in high-principled loquaciousness. In the nineteenth century, Americans made political giants out of men we would now call consummate windbags. Even now the national equivalent to the crown jewels, sealed in lead and helium, watched by sentries at arms, is the Declaration of Independence: pure words.

To stress this side of American politics runs against the grain of a great deal of historical and political writing. It has been one of our boasts since the beginnings of this century that Americans did not go in for abstract thinking. "The most distinctive American theory of government is not to theorize," Harvard's leading political historian wrote with some pride in 1907. Our political theorists have singled out our Revolution as a wonderfully untheoretical upheaval, in contrast to the revolution in France, where the citizenry (so the assumption runs) took ideas too seriously. A nation of practical tinkerers, plain Henry Fords who make things work, we have left the high-wire risks of theory making to other folks. We were pragmatic, it is said, centuries before pragmatism was invented, utilitarians without needing to read Jeremy Bentham. In a world swept by ideologies, we have often taken pride in having none.[6]

But ideologies we have had in abundance, and big, impractical words to go with them, often at the expense of a level of talk closer to everyday life, out of which less shallow sorts of political communities, closer to the skin of commonplace dreams and desires, might possibly have been made. So broad an assertion is clearly beyond proof. But that there has been a peculiar expansiveness to American political talk, an unmistakable appetite for powerfully resonant and powerfully abstract words is beyond doubt. That demonstration is the burden of chapter 1, an exploration of the vocabulary of utilitarianism, which eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Americans were exceptionally loath to swallow and whose absence long framed the legitimate boundaries of political argument in America. Lay the language of American politics alongside its English cousin, as I have tried to do at the outset of this inquiry, and there is no mistaking which political culture was the more wordy, the more word obsessed.

"I find that the people of this country are strangely at a loss to determine the nature of their government," Washington Irving wrote in 1807. "Some have insisted that it savors of an aristocracy; others maintain that it is a pure democracy; and a third set of theorists declare that it is nothing more nor less than a mobocracy. [Yet] the simple truth of the matter is, that their government is a pure unadulterated *logocracy*, or government of words."[7] There is a truth to that even now, in a political culture which has otherwise

all but obliterated the one Washington Irving knew. Ronald Reagan's America, our America, swinging back and forth from the crassest sort of interest politics to harebrained political metaphysics is not a new thing under the sun. It has a history worth unraveling.

Tools and Paradigms

Not so long ago it was a commonplace to remark that political talk in America, in contrast to political talk elsewhere, ran down strikingly narrow channels. "We have debated fiercely," Clinton Rossiter reaffirmed the point in 1962, "but as men who agreed on fundamentals and could thus afford to sound more ferocious than we really were. We have all spoken the same political language; we have made the same political assumptions; we have all thought the same political thoughts." One could bind our major political writers (Adams, Jefferson, Lincoln, the two Roosevelts, even John C. Calhoun) within a common tradition, a consensus, a common frame—or so it seemed. The most powerful argument in this vein remains Louis Hartz's *The Liberal Tradition in America* (1955), a brilliant, scorchingly critical portrait of a political culture without exits, without critics, imprisoned in one dimensionality.[8]

Merge Hartz's method with a more vivid sense of social power, and the argument comes out as a case for the hegemony of a single, class-based worldview over all its rivals.[9] Yet neither consensus nor hegemony seems to me to do justice to the deep, continuous elements of conflict in our political talk. Critics we have had in abundance (though not always with handy access to printing presses) and deadly serious arguments over precisely the assumptions Hartz and the historians of hegemony have tended to see at every turn. Vying for control of a common vocabulary, stealing each other's terms in hopes of investing them with radically altered meanings, political opponents have often left behind an illusion of consensus. But contemporaries knew better. When the Socialist Labor party wrapped itself in the mantle of Thomas Jefferson, when artisan radicals pleaded for a man's rights to property, when abolitionists

insisted that law-abiding persons could not in good conscience recognize the lawfulness of slavery, the process was not mimicry but struggle of a deadly serious sort over the basic symbols of legitimacy.

To most historians in recent years, to be sure, our past has looked far more fractured than it did to Rossiter and Hartz. Like unity, however, dualisms have a powerful attraction on the mind, and for simplicity's sake recent historians of political culture have increasingly tended to narrow the messy, roiling conflict they have found to a collision of two distinct worlds and worldviews: an old one, now lost, called "republicanism," and a newer one, the one that preoccupied Hartz, called liberalism. Paradigms they are called: logically incompatible ways of imagining the world of politics, so clearly at odds that one could no more hold both in the mind than an astronomer could hold simultaneously to Ptolemy and Copernicus. To see politics from within the liberal, individualistic, Lockean frame was to see the world in private terms: the private self, private property, a wealth of private accumulations held together by the orderly hand of the competitive market and (when the market failed) the second-best efforts of the state. To see the political world in republican terms, in contrast, was to think in public terms: to talk seriously of the public good, to distrust the haggling individualism of the market, to value self-restraint, to prize that active commitment to the commonweal men called "virtue." In a land born republican, so the story goes, that worldview died, and liberalism was shoved into its place. Out of an angry clash of incompatible paradigms in this twice-born land, the political culture of modern capitalist America was born.[10]

That modern America—capitalist, individualistic, hitched to the careening fortunes of private property—is the result of a long series of angry, anguished clashes of value seems to me incontestable. We are hardly through with them yet. But the notion that the history of political argument in America can be shoehorned into a massive paradigm shift seems to me no more convincing than the older assumptions of consensus. In tight intellectual communities (departments of physics, perhaps), people may indeed think in those peculiarly coherent systems of words we call paradigms. But in socially complex societies, political argument proceeds in far less

tidy ways. Public commitments and private preoccupations have vied with each other in America in constantly shifting ways at least since independence. We are still full of conflicting feelings about competition, partisans by turn of the detached self and the militant nation, committed to a dozen incompatible notions of the word "freedom." To hunt through our words and arguments for systems of belief fashioned out of logics as tight as Adam Smith's or Copernicus's is to fall into what can only be called a fallacy of misplaced coherence. Political talk in America has roiled with too many voices, too many groups struggling too hard to find words for their desires and claims of justice, to serve it well by clamping either consensus or paradigms over it.

We use political words, most of the time, not as signs of hidden intellectual systems but as tools. We *do* things with words; William James was never more profoundly right than in that assertion. Out of them we fashion arguments; we persuade, maneuver for space and advantage. Political words take their meaning from the tasks to which their users bend them. They are instruments, rallying cries, tools of persuasion.

Political words are, to be sure, complicated, often recalcitrant tools. Not every conceivable word—or meaning—is available when one might imaginably want it. The stock of arguments and assertions with life to them has its limits; the cupboard is a product of culture and history. That was what Karl Marx meant when he complained that "the tradition of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living. . . . Just when they seem engaged in revolutionising themselves and things, in creating something entirely new, precisely in such epochs of revolutionary crisis they anxiously conjure up the spirits of the past to their service and borrow from them names, battle slogans and costumes in order to present the new scene of world history in . . . time-honoured disguise and . . . borrowed language."[11] Words come to us in clusters, trailing associations and meanings we may not intend. Born into political languages we did not invent, we are never able to talk any which way we might want.

But though words constrain their users, hobble political desires, nudge them down socially worn channels, they are in other circumstances radically unstable. Let enough persons repeat a cant phrase

(all men are created equal, for example), and there is a chance that they will suddenly charge the words with new meaning—take them literally, perhaps, or apply them to circumstances where their inventors never imagined they belonged. That is one of the reasons why the cant phrases are important, why Americans should have fought so intensely over mere words and transparent fictions. They are all double-edged, profoundly radical or profoundly conservative, depending on who has hold of them. Assertion, co-optation, formalization, reinvention—this is the basic stuff of political argument. We get closest to the language of politics not by looking for paradigms nor by stringing our best writers together in traditions but by noticing what the talkers and scribblers are doing with the big words at their disposal. Words are tools, often weapons; the vocabulary of politics is contested terrain and always has been.

Keywords

Utility, Natural Rights, the People, Government, the State, Interests, Freedom. The handful of words I have picked out of the din of argument in our past hardly begins to exhaust the vocabulary of American politics. They are, at one level, simply exemplars; what the talkers would do with this handful of political words, they would do with all the rest. There was nothing static about any of them, no consensus about their meaning. They rose and fell in spectacular arcs, pushed hard and as deeply resisted, their uses open and contested. For those accustomed to thinking of the language of American politics as the logical unfolding of a few bedrock, self-evident truths, this part of the story may come as some surprise. Yet these shifts and reversals, these contests and discordancies, these struggles for legitimacy and advantage are, even now, the central dynamic of our political talk. To unravel the histories of this handful of words is to begin to fathom the processes out of which political language is made.

But there is a second rationale for the words I have chosen: together they offer entry into a series of historical moments when the

basic metaphors of politics were up for grabs. It was out of these words that Americans fashioned the language of political authority: the verbal tools one seized when the issue at stake was the nature, the origins, or the legitimacy of government itself. Was the fundamental purpose of politics to restore to men their natural rights or to set the people's unrolling will in motion? To maximize happiness? To mirror the government of God? To fulfill the higher destinies of the State? Or to balance the claims of the vested social interests? These were no idle figures of speech but keywords in the construction and reconstruction of legitimacy. Their moments of currency and collapse were critical moments in the social history of politics. Lay those half-dozen words, and moments, in a chronological line, and the roiling course of argument falls into patterns—often surprising ones.

Utility, to begin with, was a keyword of a peculiar sort—until the twentieth century not a strong word at all. In eighteenth- and nineteenth-century America it was a vulnerable word in a political culture which was drawn strongly toward the abstract; and therein lies at once its surprise and submerged importance. For though Americans have had a love affair with many kinds of utility, the language of political utility was, for a long time, suspect and controversial. When utilitarianism's prophet, Jeremy Bentham, showered the Americans with entreaties to think first of happiness, to abandon their figures of speech for a calculus of consequences, they responded with a century-long shudder. Why they did so, why the language of utilitarianism planted such shallow roots in nineteenth-century America is the burden of chapter 1. Readers impatient with the story of a failure may wish to begin directly with chapter 2, Natural Rights. But the long, agitated quarrel with the language of utilitarianism is not simply the story of the hazards of an imported jargon. To talk of mere "expediency," at the expense of what Bentham denounced as the "metaphysics" of politics, was to violate a vigorously defended boundary of legitimate argument in post-Revolutionary America. In the puzzling absence of Jeremy Bentham in a society he seemed to fit so well, one begins to fathom the uses of the bigger, booming abstractions that so dominated American political culture in its formative years.

Natural Rights and the People were abstractions of precisely that

sort. Natural Rights was the central radical political slogan of the Revolution, an ancient phrase suddenly fashioned into a tool of defiance. The cry of "rights" has always been double-edged: radical in the hands of those with novel claims to establish, profoundly defensive in the hands of those with vested privileges to protect. It was one of the unexpected results of the search for a Revolutionary argument that the subversive edge of the word "rights" should have been honed so sharply—or joined to so volatile an adjective. In America, Natural Rights became a tool for those on the margins of power: dissident colonists, workingmen, the opponents of slavery or of domestic paternalism. It was they who kept the language of Natural Rights alive in pre–Civil War America against the determined, nervous efforts by those at the center of power to trim and co-opt it. One of the most powerfully subversive phrases of the early republic, it was never again fully extinguishable from political argument: a phrase whose very abstractness left it permanently open to new meanings, new grievances, new users.

The People was an outsiders' word of a different sort: the keyword of majoritarian democracy in its first, aggressive phase. Its moment of power came later than that of Natural Rights. Though the sovereignty of the people was a commonplace of the Revolution and the early years of the republic, the phrase rose to full pitch only in the 1830s and 1840s, when more common sorts of men than had ever ruled before seized it to wedge open the machinery of government for the many. With it antebellum Democrats pushed the claims of majoritarian democracy as far as they have ever gone in America, tried their tongues around talk of the revolutionary majority and the general will. But if the career of Natural Rights illustrates the ability of an abstraction to absorb recurrent waves of new meanings, the history of the People is an example of the brittleness of the bonds between a political metaphor and its political moment. For the rhetoric of popular sovereignty, its initial occasion passed, proved a set of words desperately hard for its users to hold in check. As their new, white, male democracy skidded toward sectional crisis and civil war, even the People's partisans began to scramble nervously away from a figure of speech the times had suddenly made ambiguous and unstable.

Natural Rights and the People's sovereignty were among the most

highly charged political words to come out of the Revolution. To turn from these to Government and the State is to turn to phenomena of a very different sort. For they were counterrevolutionary words. They rose out of a counterassault on the verbal heritage of the Revolution—far bigger, more ambitious, and far more successful than our histories have fathomed. Forged in repudiation, they took form in opposition to the claims of extralegal rights and majority rule. Struggle over the metaphors of legitimacy, to be sure, there had been since the beginning. But in the second half of the nineteenth century, with the political character of the new democracy up for grabs, those spilled over into every aspect of politics. The result was to blunt badly the Revolutionary rhetoric which had served the outsiders so well and inject a new set of keywords into the language of politics.

Government was the first of these, a word which rolled out of the early nineteenth-century Protestant revival, part of an intense hunger for law and political obligation. A tool of cautious Whigs and aggressive Protestants, the term pitted those who talked of governments as consciously constructed (hence reconstructable) devices against those who talked of Government as the gift of God or the inevitabilities of history. Rising to a pitch during the Civil War, the word marked an attempt to shift the locus of political authority upward into the lap of society or divine law. Dramatically successful as a wartime rallying cry, it likewise dramatically complicated the debates over freedom when, with slavery finally brought to its knees, obfuscation had powerful political consequences.

The State was the term the professional political scientists tried to paste over the conceptual raggedness that was left. It was a word of professional political authority, part of a concerted effort to wrest political argument out of the hands of the people. With it in the 1890s the first generation of political scientists gutted remnant talk of rights, tried hard to push the People to the margins, and did their best to stretch a mantle of legitimacy over the new, raw order of industrial capitalism. The most abstract, contorted, and (so it has usually seemed) the least American of our political words, it stood for an extraordinary piece of intellectual patchwork by a profession eager for authority and a class and generation desperate to make the social chaos of the late nineteenth century whole. The State was a

term of reassurance and not a little outright mystification—an example of the coherence-making functions of political language pushed to their utmost.

And then, after so long a quarrel with Bentham, a language of calculus and utility suddenly swept into the twentieth century. The wholistic abstractions, taut and overextended, collapsed. There was no State, the political scientists concluded, no People, no common will. By the end of the 1930s, realistic political talk had come down to Interests: dozens of interest groups looking out for their own advantages. An epithet of the turn of the century became the keyword of realist political science. That, it seems to me, is still the dominant way we talk about politics in America at the trailing edge of the twentieth century. After an intense fling with the word Freedom in the generation after 1940, we have come back once again to interests—though not without massive ambivalences and a few regrets. Interest fuels the machinery of politics; let interest groups more or less balance out, so that no one contending group swipes the whole sack of marbles, and public life is said to be as healthy as reasonable persons have a right to expect. The route from the rights-filled manifestoes of the 1770s to the marketplace metaphors of pluralism had been no gradual unfolding of some basic Americanisms but a twisted, conflict-strewn road.

Every powerful political metaphor has a long and active half-life. That is what distinguishes a keyword from a passing phrase of the moment. Each of the half-dozen words at issue here worked its way deeply into the fabric of political argument. Never fully suppressed even by their most determined repudiators they endured, open to revivals and new employments. I have been less interested in echoes (or anticipations), however, than in moments of dominance: those historical moments when a word first breaks out of the political theorists' texts into power and political authority. The chapters which follow nest, accordingly, in a rough chronological order. From Bentham's first salvos of the 1770s, through the rights-filled rhetoric of the Revolution, the mid-nineteenth-century contests over popular government, the language of late nineteenth-century political science to the interest-group realism of the New Deal, I have tried to set these words where they belong: in the context of sharp reconfigurations in rhetorical authority and political power. A

more comprehensive story might deal more fully with persistence and reverberations. But if we are to comprehend the shards and fragments all around us, the tools we use and those used upon us, there is a fundamental advantage in knowing the circumstances in which we came upon them.

This route through the tangled language of our politics is not a comprehensive one. From declarations of rights through the oratory of constitutional conventions to political science texts, I have tried to match these keywords with the forums of expression which carried and characterized them. But I have slighted many of the talkers—from political theorists like Calhoun to the immense tribe of partisan stump orators. I have not attempted to canvass all the things Americans talked about in politics nor even those issues about which they talked most deeply and heatedly. It would take a different set of words to begin to do justice to the language of political economy, for example, or the rhetoric of international destiny or the complicated ways in which all these languages merged and intertwined. These are at best examplars of the ways in which a certain, powerful class of words have functioned in our political culture. Taken at that, however, there is something to be said for a serious look past the gauze of scholarly and popular myth at a few of the most potent tools and expansive political metaphors we have possessed.

It is not my aim, let me finally repeat, to pin down with a lexicon's timeless precision what we have meant by this handful of our keywords. "A word is not a crystal, transparent and unchanged," Oliver Wendell Holmes wrote; "it is the skin of a living thought."[12] My intent is not to describe a creed, not even a shifting set of common faiths. The words we use, the words the speech writers still zing through the air, counting on something in us to nod in assent, have been made, remade, repudiated, fought over. Should someone try to sell you a piece of political goods as an authentic encapsulation of the American political faith, the wise course is to run for cover. We have been too conflict-ridden a church to have a creed. The keywords, the metaphors, the self-evident truths of our politics have mattered too deeply for us to use them in any but contested ways.

1

Utility

The Puzzling Failure of Jeremy Bentham

Utility was one of the glittering words of the Enlightenment. In the capitals of eighteenth-century Europe, wherever knots of inventive men gathered to talk, to wrangle over the mysteries of religion, or to debate the new discoveries of science, one could hardly help stumbling over the word. Men made moral systems out of usefulness; they founded societies for the promotion of useful knowledge; they let their imaginations run free with useful inventions. When toward the end of the eighteenth century Jeremy Bentham seized upon the term Utility and set it up in capital letters, his achievement was not to invent a philosophy but to codify a powerful, cosmopolitan enthusiasm. That is why the deeply controversial career of Bentham's term in America presents, at the outset, such a puzzle.

Utility began as an inventors' and promoters' word, shoved into the center of eighteenth-century talk by men with a tremendous variety of gadgets on their minds: steam engines and street designs; pumps and penal codes; electricity, eye glasses, encyclopedia. Yet there was no mistaking, at the same time, the sharp, aggressive edge of the word. Talk of useful knowledge was a tool with which the contrivance makers of the Enlightenment hoped to undermine the prestige of the merely verbal sciences. Metaphysics, scholasticism, the casuistry of the natural law scholars, the metaphors which clouded the study of politics and history—whole empires of ab-