The topic selected is comprehensive—so comprehensive indeed that I hasten to delimit it. It is feasible within the space-limits to comment only generally upon certain aspects of English intellectual influence. I should prefer to discuss certain implications of the topic rather than the topic directly. At the outset we are constrained to give some brief attention to a definition of terms. What is liberal thought and liberalism? We do not find it easy to agree upon the meaning of these terms as used today. Within recent years, as you recall, Mr. Herbert Hoover, Mr. Lewis Douglas, and Mr. Ogden Mills have written books in defense of the liberal tradition, and clearly regard their own careers in government as in line with this tradition. It is equally clear, however, that Senators Norris and La Follette are liberals in popular estimation. Is liberal thought essentially laissez-faire, or is it to be identified with a utilitarian conception of the positive rôle of the state in promoting the happiness of the greatest number? From yet another point of view, is liberalism to be interpreted as a mode of capitalistic democracy no longer intellectually respectable? One of the more mordant of our contemporary observers, Robert Briffault, has unburdened himself as follows:

The declared aim of liberal thought is, in brief, to amend traditional civilization while preserving it, to persuade engines of war, that is, sovereign states, into refraining from war, to bring about the social organiza-
tion of mankind through the kind offices of anti-social interests, to evolve cooperation out of competition, the good of mankind out of predatory profit, to produce white by the mixture of various shades of black.

I pose these questions, not with any intention of attempting an answer here, but simply to point out that, if we are so divided in opinion as to what constitutes liberalism in our own day, we should guard against any tendency to apply the term too cavalierly to the political thought of past centuries. Another proviso is here necessary. We may incline to designate as liberal without qualification some political thinkers of the past whose writings were susceptible, in part, of illiberal applications. Was Locke a liberal influence on our political fathers? Possibly, in so far as his theory of the social compact afforded a rationale for separation from the mother country; but somewhat later the Constitutionalists were involving the name of the “Great Mr. Locke” in the support and protection of property rights, and his doctrines were being used to protect the creditors against the debtors, the merchants against the landowners, and the propertied minority against “popular distempers.” Was Harrington a liberal influence? Yes, we may say, in so far as he urged the wide distribution of land and pointed the way to the abolition of primogeniture, but again we must recall the application which our Federalists gave to his theory of natural aristocracy. Was Montesquieu a liberal influence? Yes, if we identify eighteenth century liberalism with the theory of a political balance of power, yet it is well to recall the attacks which the democratic Ideologues of the day made upon his political relativism. Was Bentham a liberal influence? Possibly, if we single out his contributions to the legislative reform movement in the first half of the nineteenth century, but in his Anarchical Fallacies Bentham inveighed against the idealistic slogans of the French revolutionaries. So it goes. Before we generalize on the liberalism of a given writer, we need to give close attention to aspects of his system which may have given comfort to anti-liberal factions.

Our political fathers were practical men, often over-worked, harassed by opposition, and directly engaged in the pressing tasks of political and social reconstruction. It is not to be expected that their study of English or French political thought would be solely or even mainly motivated by any disinterested desire to frame a
philosophically adequate Weltanschauung. Rather, they were in-
tent upon drawing from the writings of English political theorists
such ideas as could be utilized to confound the opposition, to sus-
tain programs dictated by circumstances and perhaps already under
way, and to provide a rationale for immediate policies. In a word,
our Founders tended to extract from English political thought
those common-sensible ideas which served immediate needs, and
to ignore the rest. Thus they would draw from Locke the idea
of the social compact, and at the same time pass over the sensistic
basis of his system of ideas. Thus they might draw from Hobbes
an analysis of human vanity, and practically ignore his moral
relativism. Thus they might extract from Montesquieu the idea
of checks and balances, and overlook his political pessimism. If
we were dependent for our knowledge of European political
thought in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries solely upon
allusions and citations in the writings of our political fathers, we
should, I think, be in a poor way to understand the grounds of
reference for ideas so successfully utilized in the task of revolu-
tionary and constitutional reconstruction. And yet it is possible
that in the teaching of American history some of us are rather
inclined (though I venture this thought with due hesitation) to be
content to form our opinions of European political philosophy on
this meager basis, without troubling ourselves overmuch to turn
directly to the sources.

What, we may ask, was the dominant note in our political
thought of the revolutionary and early constitutional period? This
note was sounded, it seems to me, in the title of Anglo-American
Tom Paine's great contribution to the American Revolution,
(Common-Sense. A philosophy of common-sense, a philosophy
imbued with the practical aim of rectifying immediate social and
political abuses and establishing a workable order of society might
have little need to validate its position other than by simple refer-
ence to social experience and enlightened self-interest. Common-
sense, however, when submitted to analysis, can be shown to rest
on assumptions which are susceptible of philosophic inquiry proper.
A philosophy of common-sense is not so much a philosophy as a
derivative sociology. The philosophy of human and social con-
duct is essentially normative in character; it is related to practical
ends, to pressing needs for reform which themselves determine
the form and content of that philosophy. There is no need for
the practical statesman or man of affairs to demonstrate the valid-
ity of normative judgments, to determine the grounds of ultimate
reference, but the systematic philosopher himself must do so.
The fact is that in Europe the systematic political thinkers from
Hobbes to Bentham did attempt to determine the grounds of ulti-
mate reference; and the point to be stressed is that this more
fundamental aspect of their thought appears generally to have
escaped the attention of our practical political fathers. While
references were frequently made to Locke's *Two Treatises on
Government*, for example, little notice appears to have been given
to his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*; yet it became
axiomatic to Locke and his followers that a comprehension of what
we should today call the collective behavior patterns of mankind
depended upon a knowledge of the formation of ideas. In other
words, before the statesman can determine the possibilities of legis-
lating for man, he must understand his nature and the operations
of the human mind. Similarly, while Adam Smith's *Wealth of
Nations* undoubtedly influenced economic thought in our early
Federal period, little attention was paid, so far as I can deter-
mine, to his work entitled *Theory of Moral Sentiments*. And
yet, the social factor of sympathy in the individual articulated in
this ethical work may be interpreted as a pre-condition of the
idea of harmony between public and private interests which under-
lies the doctrine of "natural liberty" expounded in *The Wealth of
Nations*.

Much of the social and political thought of the Revolutionary
Age was linked with the philosophy of sensationalism. In the
seventeenth century Locke had undertaken a systematic investi-
gation of the origin of ideas with a view to determining the
grounds of belief and the certitude of knowledge. The sensistic
psychology outlined in his *Essay Concerning Human Understand-
ing* was adopted by the French Ideologues of the succeeding
century, and developed by Condillac, Cabanis, and Destutt de
Tracy among others into an instrument of revolutionary reform.
Space does not allow us to trace out the important social and
political implications of the sensistic psychology, but I should like
to comment in some detail on one contribution of Helvetius. The
Farmer-General is of especial interest to us for his influence upon
Jeremy Bentham who, in turn, according to Professor Roscoe Pound, deeply influenced the development of Anglo-American law in the early nineteenth century. Helvetius accepted the premise that ideas are products of sensations as the starting-point in establishing ethics and politics on a scientific basis. Sensations, he interpreted, constitute the principle not only of our ideas but of our conduct as well. Corporeal sensations, declared Helvetius, constitute "the sole principle of which all the precepts of morality are the necessary consequences." The pleasure-pain motive is the heart of all ethical consideration. Susceptibility to pleasure and pain, in other words our interest in enjoying the one kind of sensation and avoiding the other, determines our judgment of value. Actions which serve personal interest we denote virtues; actions which harm us, vices. Utility, in the sense of service to self-interest, is the touchstone of value. Just as the individual judges the merit of ideas and actions according to the degree in which they minister to his self-interest, so society appraises conduct and fixes rewards and penalties on the basis of general interest. Since society is but an assembly of individuals, Helvetius reasoned, it follows that public utility is quantitative in character. It is the greatest happiness of the greatest number. While Bentham apparently drew the wording of this fundamental axiom of utilitarianism from Beccaria's *Crimes and Punishments* (translated into English in 1767), he must previously have encountered the same thought in Helvetius' treatise *On the Mind* published in 1758. In his study of the growth of philosophical radicalism, Halévy has made plain Bentham's great indebtedness to Helvetius. According to Professor Raymond Gettell, the utilitarian ethics of Bentham were quickly made current in America and exerted a powerful influence on the thought of the period. It is my impression that our Founders held so firmly to a negative conception of the rôle of the state in human affairs, were so convinced that the less government the better, that the doctrine of using the agencies of government for the positive promotion of mass happiness did not gain widespread acceptance until rather close to our own time. Indeed, a glance at our daily paper will reveal that the issue between these two conceptions of government is still being fought out in this country. However this may be, we are led to the interesting speculation that one important strain in
American political thought was influenced by an English utilitarian philosophy of government which in turn can be traced back to a philosophy of sensationalism worked out by eighteenth century French thinkers following in the footsteps of seventeenth century John Locke. As far as I know, this connection between the utilitarian philosophy and sensationalism was not generally recognized by the political writers of our early period.

I have been stating that our political fathers, as practical men, were not significantly concerned with the systematic philosophy underlying revolutionary slogans and programs of reform. I should like now to call attention to another feature of their practicality. On this point, with your indulgence, I refer in particular to French thought rather than to English. A great deal of European political thinking in the eighteenth century was universalistic and uniformitarian in nature. Under the inspiration of the Newtonian system in the field of physical science, many thinkers (especially the French) sought to reduce social phenomena to a few fixed laws, universal in expression and uniformly applicable to all sorts and conditions of men. Thus Rousseau could believe that all the qualification one needed to be a legislator was a knowledge of what constituted reason and justice. Once in possession of this knowledge, the task was simply to legislate these principles into effect. By the same token, democracy was an absolute system. Once the principles of democracy had been determined, they could be universally and uniformly applied to all peoples.

While universalism and uniformitarianism were dominant modes of political thought during the Enlightenment, Montesquieu had developed in his Esprit des Lois the challenging doctrine of political relativism. Montesquieu held, you recall, that natural conditions, such as fertility, climate, topography, and the like, determine the character of a people; that character in turn determines the kind of government a people shall live under; and, finally, that the form of government determines what kind of laws the people shall have. It is noteworthy that Montesquieu was not popular among the philosophes. Helvetius decried that his relativism played into the hands of the enemies of enlightenment. Condorcet attacked him for his failure to speak of the justice or injustice of cited laws, and charged that his method of justifying laws by reference to the circumstances under which they were enacted rested
only on an ingenious arrangement of notes. "As truth, reason, justice, the rights of man, property interest ... are the same everywhere," maintained Condorcet, "one fails to see why ... all states should not have the same criminal, civil, and commercial laws. A good law ought to be good for all men, just as a true proposition is true for all."

Which of these modes of thought, uniformitarianism or relativism, do we find predominantly expressed in the reflections of our political fathers? One might well expect a hard-headed old realist like John Adams, disdainful as he was of the Utopias and sentimental generalizations of the philosophes, to incline toward a view of man and society which took account of the concrete, practical differences conditioning the medium in which the statesman works. But what may be said of Thomas Jefferson, on the other hand, whose political outlook (until his old age) was sharply in contrast to that of Adams? The fact is that Jefferson, too, was a political relativist. In his Notes on Virginia he emphasized after the fashion of Montesquieu that "Every species of government has its own specific principle." In a letter inscribed to his son-in-law John Randolph in June, 1793, Jefferson complained that the French had erred in their conduct toward other nations by endeavoring to force upon their neighbors liberty in its French form. When pressed for his opinion as to what form of government was best suited to France, he replied that the French could find no better model of government under the circumstances than that of their traditional enemy, the English. What is practical in politics, Jefferson believed, must control what is merely theoretical; furthermore the habits and traditions of the governed determine in great degree what is practical.

We need refer only in passing to the influence of Montesquieu upon American thought of the constitutional period, and the frequency with which he is cited in the Federalist.

While it is possible to search out of early American political thought many apparent borrowings from Hobbes, Locke, Hooker, Harrington, Blackstone, and others, the scholar should be on his guard against overestimating influences. Our political fathers were men of long colonial experience in the practical art of governing. They were bound to arrive at certain outlooks and habits of thought by the force of circumstances and the push and pressure
of affairs. They might often have turned to the philosophy of Europe for merely theoretical confirmation of opinions already arrived at, and policies already set into motion. Political theory is in a surprising degree the product of rationalization. Further, a trend of thought may be essentially indigenous, and yet be best articulated in the philosophy of another country. In my comment on Bentham's influence, I may have given the impression that we are chiefly indebted to him for our present-day conception of the positive rôle of the state in the promotion of happiness. It might be as tenable, however, that our utilitarianism sprang out of the conditions of the frontier in American history. The tracing of influences in intellectual history is always a difficult and precarious study. We shall be on our guard against exaggerations, if we reflect that our forefathers often turned to European political works for facts and definitions rather than for principles and theories, for insights into the methods of solving their own peculiar problems rather than for the solutions themselves.