

## Chapter 1 : The Origins of English Individualism: The Family, Property and Social Transition by Alan Macfarlane

*The Origins of English Individualism is about the nature of English society during the five centuries leading up to the Industrial Revolution, and the crucial differences between England and other European nations. Drawing upon detailed studies of English parishes and a growing number of other.*

Individualism endorses the principle that the ends or purposes of the human individual possess dignity and worth that take precedence over communal, metaphysical, cosmological, or religious priorities. Individualism is commonly seen by both its proponents and opponents to be the creation of the modern Western world, a development of Enlightenment liberal values. The term individualism was first coined in the nineteenth century, initially around in French, and then quickly spread to the other European languages. The language of individualism was picked up and widely spread by the followers of Claude-Henri Saint-Simon in Germany, England, and the United States, however, the negative overtones were soon stripped away. In Germany individualism became closely associated with the aspirations of Romanticism, in England, with utilitarianism and laissez-faire economics, and in America with the core political and social values of democracy and capitalism. Concentration on the linguistic diffusion of individualism overlooks the fact that many cultures outside the Atlantic world at many times before the nineteenth century have promulgated doctrines that were individualistic in inclination. Moreover, it should not be forgotten that many who champion individualism count tendencies inherent in modernity itself among the chief threats to the individual. Thus, a full study of the history of individualism requires a survey of a broad range of thinkers and writings. This entailed not only that the soul was separable from the body—indeed, any body—but that it had a specific identity that transcended even corporeal death. That moral judgment is embedded in dharma—a universalistic system of absolute moral duties—is irrelevant. It still remains central to Indian thought that individual deeds are the wellspring of the moral system. For many Indian schools, and especially for Buddhists and Jainists, spiritual purification and eventual union with the Ultimate stem solely from the personal efforts of the individual. The right path is laid out, but it is up to the individual to follow it. China produced doctrines that echoed the Indian emphasis on the individual. Attainment of superiority thus rests in part on something like self-determination. Daoism, particularly Neo-Daoism, also evinced respect for individuality. The Daoist belief that each thing possessed its own nature could be interpreted not merely to pertain to natural species or types but to individual characters. According to the Daoist Chuang Tzu fourth century b. This focus on the nature of the individual was crystallized in the Neo-Daoist concentration on the particularity of human natures. Rather, each individual must discover what is true for him-or herself. But if wisdom is incommunicable, the philosopher may still question other human beings in order to prod them to realize the falsity that they embrace and to stimulate them in the process of self-questioning that yields self-knowledge. Socrates was not alone among Greek thinkers in proposing a version of individualism. In turn, this theory of individuation has been shown by recent scholars to have direct political overtones that favored the Athenian democracy. The Sophist Protagoras of Abdera c. Revealed Religion Christianity contributed doctrines of the freedom of the will and personal salvation that added a further dimension to human individuality. While Judaism had conveyed some overtones of personal salvation, the dominant relation with God was conditioned by the divine covenant with the Jewish people as a whole. The implicit individualism of early Christian moral theology was reinforced by later thinkers such as St. Augustine of Hippo c. According to Augustine, all human beings possess the capacity to choose between good and evil and to choose to accept or to turn away from the divine will. Of course, the objects between which one chooses are not of equal worth. The individual is the final and ultimate source of the destiny of his or her own soul. Yet the Koran did uphold human freedom, so Muslim teaching maintained that it was the individual, not God, who was responsible for sin. Thus Islam, too, adopted important elements of individualism. Despite the common perception of medieval Europe as monolithic and hostile to expressions of individualism, the period did much to extend the idea of human individuality. In law, the concept of human beings with personal rights and liberties was expressed in both secular and religious documents. In public life, the principle of individual

consent to the imposition of political power captured in the ubiquitous phrase "What touches all must be approved by all" was articulated. In moral philosophy and theology, the conception of the rational will, which defined the individual as the primary unit of analysis, was elevated to axiomatic status. Regardless of the institutional and ecclesiastical barriers to individualism, scholars have repeatedly looked to Latin Christian Europe as a source for individualism. The Reformation and the Aftermath These medieval tendencies came to fruition during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, so that individualism in the modern world deserves to be understood as a culmination of far earlier intellectual trends. The Reformation brought not only a challenge in practice to the unity of the Christian Church but also a transformation of important theological categories. Martin Luther " insisted on the unique presence of God alone in the conscience of believers, with the implication that the faithful Christian is responsible directly and immediately to God. The consequence of this teaching"while perhaps recognized only fleetingly by Luther and his followers"was that salvation did not depend on submission to the authority of the priesthood or the church. Nor did it fall to the secular power, to which pertained the control of bodies and behavior, to discipline the souls of subjects. Thus, whether intentionally or not, Luther opened the door to claims of public respect for liberty of conscience and eventually individual freedom of worship. In the generation after Luther, inferences about personal freedom of religion were deduced by reforming thinkers. Castellion argued that Christian belief must be held with sincere conviction. Hence, clerics and magistrates must refrain from persecution of convinced Christians who cling to doctrines that do not coincide with official teachings. In the seventeenth century, the individualism implicit in confessional pluralism would become more pronounced. Pierre Bayle " asserted that all forms of persecution innocuous as well as harsh of religious diversity encourage hypocrisy and erode social order. An erring conscience, if it be held in good faith, deserves as much protection as a correct one"a principle that Bayle extended even to atheists. John Locke " proposed liberty of individual conscience as justified in the case of most Christian and perhaps some non-Christian rites. For Locke, the role of the magistrate should be confined to the maintenance of public tranquility and the defense of individual rights rather than the care of the soul. Locke crystallized a key Reformation shift: The evolving acceptance of individualism paralleled changes in other European cultural, social, and political practices and attitudes. The invention of the printing press and movable type in the mid-fifteenth century immeasurably enhanced the ability of individuals to spread their ideas and made it possible for a larger public to access the written word. Demands were heard for freedom of the press literally and figuratively from censorship by clerical and secular authorities alike. While republican values that promoted civic virtue over personal choice retained a hold on public discourse, political liberty in geographically extensive regimes with monarchic institutions tended to be conceived in terms of individual freedom rather than civic populism. Hence, it is at this time and place that the origins of the bundle of individualist doctrines known as liberalism are found. Liberalism and Individualism Thomas Hobbes " generally is identified as the most important direct antecedent of modern individualist philosophy. In his *Leviathan* , Hobbes ascribed to all individuals natural liberty as well as equality on the basis of which they are licensed to undertake whatever actions are necessary in order to preserve themselves from their fellow creatures. Hobbes believed that the exercise of such natural liberty logically leads to unceasing conflict and unremitting fear so long as no single sovereign ruler exists to maintain peace. The exchange of chaotic natural freedom for government-imposed order requires renunciation of all freedoms that humans possess by nature except, of course, self-preservation and voluntary submission to any dictate imposed by the sovereign. Arguing against the patriarchal doctrine of Sir Robert Filmer " , Locke insists that no natural basis"neither paternity nor descent"justifies the submission of one person to another. Rather, each individual is the proprietor of his or her divinely endowed physical and mental talents, abilities, and energies. The individual thus constitutes the basic unit of social and political analysis for Locke, who is sometimes considered the proponent of the doctrine of "possessive individualism" par excellence. In contrast to Hobbes, Locke maintains that the natural condition of individual proprietorship can be maintained tranquilly because human beings are deemed sufficiently rational that they can and do generally constrain their free action under the terms of the laws of nature. Hence, should people choose to enter into formal bonds of civil society and authorize a government in order to avoid the "inconveniences" and inefficiency of the precivil world, the only

rule worthy of consent is that which strictly upholds and protects the liberty they naturally possess.

**Individualism and Modern Society** The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries witnessed an emerging role for the individual that culminated in the appearance of the language of individualism. One strand in the intensified interest in the individual was the rise of capitalism as an economic system that emphasized the individual both as the holder of self-interest and as the foundation of all legal rights. Perhaps the most famous early advocate of economic individualism was Adam Smith. Although Smith is sometimes labeled the first great economist of capitalism, he preferred to describe his system in terms of "natural liberty," arguing that the welfare of society is best served when every individual seeks his or her own advantage without reference to any overarching scheme of goodness or justice. When individuals are left to their own devices, Smith held, the ensuing system possesses an inherently self-adjusting quality that will ensure the maximum satisfaction of individual desires. The apotheosis of individualism may be found in the utilitarian doctrine, formulated most clearly by Jeremy Bentham, that social policy should promote the greatest good for the greatest number of people. This idea rested on the principle that all individual estimations of utility deserve equal treatment and respect in comparison with all others. A truly democratic society should treat the wishes and desires of each of its individual members with the same dignity, without regard for moral judgments concerning the content of those aims. Bentham elaborates the basic insight of Smith to cover the full range of political and social programs and institutions. Although liberalism could seem to take individualism for granted, the extreme egalitarianism of the utilitarian position, coupled with the events of the French Revolution, made many thinkers including those of a liberal stripe nervous. Edmund Burke was concerned that the spread of democratic equality and the breakdown of the organic social order would lead to the fragmentation of persons into atomized individuals lacking any sense of identity or place. Under such circumstances, Burke predicted presciently, as it turns out that authoritarian forms of government would step into the breach and provide an artificial identity for individuals as a remedy for their extreme alienation. The French social commentator Alexis de Tocqueville similarly believed that an excess of democratic equality bred individualistic isolation in which people retreat from public life into families and small groups of interested combines. The unavoidable results of individualism are egoism, the suppression of all virtues, and the concession of political deliberation to the "tyranny of the majority" conclusions reached on the basis of his observations of American as well as French modes of democracy. Note that true liberty is not, for Tocqueville, individualistic.

Karl Marx occupies an interesting position in the history of individualism. Although Marx is commonly regarded as a holistic social thinker, he in fact repeatedly asserted that individual self-realization was the standard against which social relations should be judged. In his early writings, he condemned capitalism for the alienating and dehumanizing impact that it exercised on individual workers, while in the Communist Manifesto he called for a system of equitable distribution of the fruits of labor on the grounds that the precondition of the liberty of each is the liberty of all. Like his predecessor Jean-Jacques Rousseau and his contemporaries, such as the anarchist Jean-Pierre Proudhon and the utopian Charles Fourier, Marx believed that communal equality constituted the necessary prerequisite for the flourishing of free individuals.

John Stuart Mill shared some elements of nineteenth-century skepticism about mass democratic society, but his writings crystallized the understanding of individualism still widely shared in Western societies. Mill holds that the societies that are most likely to promote this goal are societies that he terms "civilized" share the common factor of defending and promoting individual liberty. Individualism understood as experimentation with lifestyles and ideas challenges uncritically received certainties and broadens the basis of human knowledge. Borrowing from Tocqueville, Mill admits that democratic society contains the potential to dampen or even forbid many expressions of personal liberty that stand at odds with mass tastes or beliefs. In contrast to Tocqueville, however, Mill maintains that individualism stands on the side of liberty, not equality. A free society supports individualism. The trend toward the foregrounding of the individual continued in the work of Friedrich Nietzsche. Nietzsche reviled the "herd mentality" of modern mass society, which espouses conformity and mediocrity as the highest aspirations of humanity. Principles of this higher sort cannot be imposed or taught by one to another. Rather, the authentic individual must discover in a radically individualized way those precepts that realize his or her own valuation. Nietzsche drew no explicit political

theory from this because politics, as the realm of imposition of coercive authority over others the "will to power" , was incompatible with the deep individualism that he advocated. Persisting Debate The twentieth and early twenty-first centuries have witnessed the spread around the globe of a culture that valorizes the human individual.

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A good many historians returned the compliment by setting about it with the enthusiasm of crusaders clearing the infidel from Jerusalem. On the other hand, Paul Hyams hailed it as a blast of fresh air and the sort of book we need more of, and Ernest Gellner was equally enthusiastic about its intellectual daring. I thought it was a splendid piece of work: Moreover, in its main claims it was clearly right, and none of its critics have in the least disturbed its central contention. For readers unacquainted with Macfarlane and his work, these essays make a very good place to start. Members of his fan-club such as myself may wish, however, that he had pressed forward with his case against his critics; these essays, acute and interesting as they are, mostly recapitulate the arguments which his books spelled out at greater length. They offer many interesting glimpses of the process by which Macfarlane came to occupy his heretical position: The casus belli in the war of Macfarlane versus Lawrence Stone, R. Macpherson and long-dead greats such as Tocqueville, Marx, Weber, Durkheim and Tonnies is his answer to the question of why fully-fledged industrial capitalism first took off in England. Weber stressed the Protestant ethic; Marx the demands of the developing forces of production; political theorists like C. These answers have emphasised different actors and different motivations, and have placed the revolutionary transition from peasant society to modernity at different points in time. Nor have they lacked both subtlety and a willingness to accommodate objections. Conversely, Christopher Hill and other recent Marxist historians have developed a considerable sophistication in their understanding of notions of class interest and class allegiance, of the relation of economic interest and ideological and religious affiliation. But all these have been arguments within one overarching framework. All have assumed that there was a modernising revolution, that there had to be a break with a peasant past. Certainly, England had been for many centuries an agricultural society; most of the population had been village-dwellers. But they had not been what for the purposes of sociological theories of modernisation they should have been: The ideal type of peasant society displays all or most of the following features: The ideal type of modern society simply reverses these features: There was no revolutionary transition to modernity. The full text of this book review is only available to subscribers of the London Review of Books. You are not logged in If you have already registered please login here If you are using the site for the first time please register here If you would like access to the entire online archive subscribe here Institutions or university library users please login here.

Chapter 3 : individualism | Definition of individualism in English by Oxford Dictionaries

*Introduction to The Origins of English Individualism; The Family, Property and Social Transition by Alan Macfarlane (Basil Blackwell, Oxford, ). p This is a book that wrote itself.*

There were, however, two rather large unresolved problems which this account could not deal with and which I was consequently forced to brush aside as impossible to solve. One of these problems was the reason for the decline of witchcraft prosecutions; the second was the peculiarity of English witchcraft within Europe. In relation to the second, it became clear that if one looked at Scottish or Continental witchcraft beliefs they were fundamentally different from those in England and highlighted what was absent in England. At a very general level, there was a notable absence of a sexual motif in England; the incubus and succubus, the sexual orgies with the Devil and other witches, were absent. English witchcraft was very decorous. Secondly, there was the absence of a food and hunger motif in England. The nearest we get to the cannibalistic orgies described outside England is the roast beef picnics of the Lancashire witches. Thirdly, English witchcraft beliefs made the suspects very individualistic. The covens and group meetings ascribed to witches elsewhere were absent; in England they tended to act alone, even if they sometimes knew the names of other suspects. Fourthly, there was an absence of attack on the nouveaux riches, against those who were marginally gaining on their neighbours and acquiring an unfairly large slice of the local resources. In England, witchcraft was directed against the slightly poorer who made demands on their neighbours. It was not used, as it is in many societies, to prevent economic differentiation, but rather to allow it to occur. These and other differences could not be satisfactorily explained within the framework which I had inherited. Since I was firmly convinced by my general reading that the Continent, despite differences such as language or political system, was basically similar to England in culture, economy and social system. I was unable to understand why witchcraft should have been so different. It could clearly not reflect any deeper differences, since I was led to believe that there were none. This is the first block which I encountered. After witchcraft I turned to the study of sexual and marital relations in England in the same period. He suggested that I should look at the historical material to see how such horror was manifested in England. I found that such revulsion was hardly present at all. The English from early times seemed singularly unconcerned about incest. This led me to an examination of the general sexual and marital pattern, which again did not seem to conform to anthropologists had found in other peasant societies. Kinship seemed relatively unimportant, marriage seemed to be little controlled by parents, the relations between the sexes seemed unusually relaxed, when one compared England with the contemporary Mediterranean region. Once again, what one would have expected if England had been the sort of country historians portrayed did not fit; but since no other model was available I was unable to go further. While working on witchcraft and sexual behaviour I had come across a number of interesting seventeenth century diaries, outstanding among them the diary of an Essex clergyman, Ralph Josselin. It would still carry many of the overtones of the earlier medieval period from which the country was just emerging. His sophistication and wide knowledge were impressively obvious and his feelings were instantly recognizable. Of course there were features that were different; a constant background of chronic sickness, a marked interest in the Day of judgement, certain political and religious beliefs. Yet it was his similarity rather than the difference which was striking. Neither of these or the many other diaries of the period fitted at all well with my general picture of pre-industrial England. Nor was I able to account for the widespread keeping of personal diaries at such an early date in England. I then turned to an anthropological study of a contemporary Himalayan society. The first was the very great difference in per capita wealth in the two societies. But when I compared the technology, the inventories of possessions and the budgets of a contemporary Asian society with those for English sixteenth-century villagers, I found that there was already an enormous gap. The English were, on the whole, an immeasurably wealthier people, with a far higher investment in tools and other productive forces. To think of India or China in the early twentieth century as directly comparable to England just before the industrial revolution appeared to be a serious mistake. This raised the question of how and when England had accumulated wealth at the village level. This was clearly related to another major difference, the demographic

one. Population drops to a low level and then starts to build up again. This pattern characterized much of western Europe up to the eighteenth century, disappearing in the eighteenth century in Norway and France, for example. The curious fact is that, from at least the middle of the fourteenth -century, such a pattern has been absent in England. I could find nothing in the literature on economic or social life to explain why England should have escaped from such a cycle three centuries or more before any other large nation, or on how this was related to its affluence. Finally, I have been engaged during the last fourteen years in an intensive study of two English parishes from the fourteenth to the eighteenth centuries. There were, it is true, considerable fluctuations and certain major changes in the distribution of wealth, the demographic structure and technology. Yet it was just not possible to use the models of community-based societies which historians and 6 Alan Macfarlane, Sarah Harrison and Charles Jardine, *Reconstructing Historical Cambridge*,

**Chapter 4 : The Origins of English Individualism : Alan Macfarlane :**

*English individualism seems to have developed gradually over a lengthy time span that began long before the end of the Middle Ages and continued long after. In particular, it was not a product of major events like the Black Death or the break with Roman Catholicism.*

Or was something already going on beforehand? For most of human history and prehistory, our lives were based on kinship—economically, socially and even spiritually. Kinship determined who provided whom with the basics of life: A nation, for instance, is no longer an ethnic community with a shared historical and cultural heritage. One of my aunts died recently, and my brother phoned her sister to break the bad news. I first thought there had been a conflict between the two of them. But, no, they had merely lost touch with each other. Each had gone her own way. Our modern kin-free society would have been unthinkable to our ancestors and still is to most people on this planet. Ours is a society where you should treat strangers as you would your own kith and kin. To act otherwise is to break the rules. How did this revolution come about? A long line of historians, going back to Marx and Weber, have argued that it all began in late medieval England. As summarized by Macfarlane, this view holds that England had previously been a kinship-based peasant society: The basic element of society is not the individual, but the family, which acts as a unit of ownership, production and consumption. Parents and children are also co-owners and co-workers. The separation between the household and the economy which Weber thought to be a pre-requisite for the growth of capitalism has not occurred. For our purposes, the central feature is that ownership is not individualized. It was not the single individual who exclusively owned the productive resources, but rather the household. Hired labor is almost totally absent. Production is mainly for use, rather than for exchange in the market. Cash is only occasionally used within the local community. Land is not viewed as a commodity which can be easily bought and sold. There is a strong emotional identification with a particular geographical area. Then, very quickly, kinship became much less central to English life: Some lay stress on the expropriation of the peasantry, who then became a landless laboring force, others suggest that the growth of world trade and markets, encouraging the use of cash, severed the old face-to-face relationships. Others again stress the rise of a new acquisitive ethic which paralleled the rise of protestantism. Whatever the cause, the basics of life were no longer being produced, exchanged, and consumed primarily among close kin. Markets had largely taken over this task. And they were no longer just marketplaces—discrete points of activity localized in space and time. These scattered points were growing and coalescing to form a true market economy. A web of production, exchange, and consumption was developing between people who were neither kith nor kin and, often, strangers to each other. He agrees that the end of the Middle Ages brought momentous changes to England—the expansion of the market economy, the rise of parliamentary government, the beginnings of the scientific revolution, the advent of Protestantism, and the establishment of a colonial empire—but these were consequences, and not causes, of a mindset that had been developing for some time. As early as the 13th century, individualism was already trumping kinship in England: Recent work on thirteenth century manorial documents has uncovered a very extensive land market from at least the middle of the thirteenth century. There is rapidly accumulating evidence of the buying and selling of pieces of land by non-kin; the idea that land passed down in the family is now increasingly regarded as a fiction. Whether in Suffolk, Huntingdonshire, the Eastern Midlands, Berkshire or elsewhere, the evidence suggests that the supposedly free and the unfree were buying and selling land. It was not parents and children who formed the basic unit of production, but parents with or without hired labor. This was only made possible by the widespread use of money. The work of Kosminsky and Postan has shown that commutation of labor services for cash was widespread by the middle of the twelfth century. Cash penetrated almost every relationship; selling, mortgaging and lending are apparent in many of the documents. Most objects, from labor to rights in all kinds of property, were marketable and had a price. Production was often for exchange rather than for use. Macfarlane, a Today, the consensus seems to be that Macfarlane is half-right. In the Middle Ages, England had already gone further toward social atomization than the rest of Europe. But loyalty to family—in the sense of lineage—still reigned supreme well into the post-medieval

period. A study of an Essex manor between and found that most land holdings were still being passed down within the family: In any one decade, around 63 per cent of the area of the copyhold land of the manor passed through the court. Of this about two-thirds was land conveyed within the family and a third by extra-familial transaction. As we found at Slaidburn, extra-familial transactions were, on average, of smaller units of land. Whilst 57 per cent of transactions over the years were familial, they conveyed 67 per cent of the land. In particular, it was not a product of major events like the Black Death or the break with Roman Catholicism. It was instead driven by rather subtle behavioral and attitudinal changes that have eluded standard historical analysis. In this, Alan Macfarlane is on the same page as Gregory Clark ; a ; b , who argues that historical change in England was fueled by incremental changes in behavior and attitude from one generation to the next, which in turn reflected an incremental process of demographic, cultural, and even genetic change. This process began with the imposition of Norman rule in the 11th century. England became a unified, pacified country and would remain so for the next millennium to a greater extent than elsewhere. This pacification extended to the local level, with the State now enforcing court rulings previously the job of the aggrieved party and his kin. The violent young male went from hero to zero, his place now taken by the law-abiding man who bettered himself not through plunder but through work and trade. This was particularly so within the nascent middle class, whose descendants steadily grew in number and replaced the lower classes through downward mobility. Their class valuesâ€”thrift, foresight, self-control, and sobrietyâ€”eventually became national values. Meanwhile, the State and the market economy were increasingly taking the place of close kin. People looked to the State for protection, and the State could provide it much more effectively and over a larger land area than blood relations ever could have. This freer environment also enabled the market economy to expand out of the marketplace and into every nook and cranny of society. People were no longer confined to dealing with close kin or long-time friends. They could trust total strangers. Blood relations thus became of minor importance, even obsolete. Macfarlane is less willing than Clark to dwell on initial causes: If most contemporary countries are trying to move from "peasantry" to "urban-industrial" within a generation, whereas England moved from non-industrial but largely "capitalist" to "urban-industrial" over a period of at least six hundred years, it will be obvious that the trauma and difficulties will not only be very different but probably far more intense. Furthermore, if such countries absorb any form of western industrial technology, they are not merely incorporating a physical or economic product, but a vast set of individualistic attitudes and rights, family structure, patterns of geographical and social mobility which are very old, very durable, and highly idiosyncratic. They therefore need to consider whether the costs in terms of the loneliness, insecurity and family tensions which are associated with the English structure outweigh the economic benefits. Macfarlane, a

References Clark, G. The indigent and the wealthy:

**Chapter 5 : ORIGINS OF ENGLISH INDIVIDUALISM**

*The Origins of English Individualism: The Family, Property and Social Transition.* by Alan Macfarlane Blackwell, Oxford

Translated by Katharine Judelson. The title of the present work makes too broad a claim. To even approximately cover the subject of the origins of European individualism, one would at least have to deal with the complex and by no means settled issues of the relations between ancient Greek society and culture on the one hand and the neighboring Oriental kingdoms on the other. One would also necessarily have to investigate the peculiarities of Judaic religion in relation to both Oriental and Greek religion. Finally, any account of those origins which aspires to be even roughly adequate would have to place the greatest emphasis on the breakthrough of Christianity, its early history, and its synthesis with Greek philosophy. With the exception of a few general remarks on early Christianity and a short treatment of St. Gurevich instead focuses entirely on the much-debated issues of the status of individuality in the late Middle Ages and the crossover from the medieval to the Renaissance period. Unfortunately, the absence of a treatment of individuality in ancient Greece and Israel is due to a deliberate stand: Gurevich, after a cursory glance at the period, makes the remarkable statement that "[t]here seems to have been no awareness of individuality in ancient times. Awareness of individuality was present even in the ancient Oriental cultures and even before the age of classical Greece. In ancient Judaism it is evident on all levels. Already in Homer it is obvious. At its best, the generalism and universalism of the Greeks was diligently extracted from the manifold of concrete living reality: The immortality not only of the world-soul, but of the individual soul, was stressed by many philosophers within the Platonic, Gnostic, and, above all, Neoplatonic traditions. Especially in Roman times, a rich literature of private letters also confirms this awareness. There are, however, also some strong reasons for concentration on the periods chosen by Gurevich. First, these periods certainly also would have to be included in every serious account of the origins of European individualism. Second, Gurevich, a Russian historian, is a leading medieval scholar who has published widely on the subject over the years. Officially confined within the intellectual straitjacket established by communist censorship, for many years he nevertheless managed to introduce some heterodox theoretical novelties, as is shown in books published in English before the Russian liberation. Except as partial truths, however, these novelties, especially the structuralist ones, are theoretically problematic, even when not dovetailed with dogmatic historical materialism. At the time, however, they at least evidenced the academic and civic integrity and courage of their advocate. Without relinquishing the insights gained by his former methodological instruments, in the present work another central concern of its author is allowed to burst into the open. Today, Gurevich writes, "[h]istorians have devoted a great deal of time and effort to fruitful study of society from the economic, social and political angles. Russia cannot be drawn into European civilization and I see no other way out of the present crisis without adopting certain values fundamental to that civilization. As a leading authority on the Middle Ages, Gurevich has been asked to contribute a volume to a new series, "The Making of Europe," edited by the French cultural historian Jacques Le Goff. Several other interesting works are included in the series, a few with intriguing though somewhat problematic titles, such as *The European Revolutions* by Charles Tilly. A truly European project! Of course, it is perfectly appropriate that countless series on local history, on various levels, are published around the world. But when it comes to cultural history and the history of ideas, geographical demarcations are sometimes artificial, as Gurevich is well aware in his previous works. And discussing the European revolutions, at least during the last two hundred years, without taking into consideration also the American "revolution," the largely European ideas behind it, and its European consequences, seems to me well-nigh impossible and I cannot really believe Tilly does that. One of the subjects to be included in a more comprehensive study of the origins of individualism is the set of origins to be found after the period here covered. Tracing various strands of individualism, it would then be possible to differentiate at least between one kind of American individualism and some specifically European kinds of individualism. Concerning the origins, it would be superficial to regard American individualism as rooted exclusively in, for example, English puritanism, John Locke, the Enlightenment, and modern liberalism, and to regard European

individualism as having other roots. The late medieval and Renaissance origins discussed by Gurevich, as well as the origins in classical antiquity and Judaeo-Christian religion, are necessarily, and for the knowledgeable quite obviously, also among the deeper roots of American individualism. Today, in the eyes of many Europeans, above all the French, American liberalism more than ever has come to stand only for the oppressive invasion of consumerist mass culture. On the other hand, a negative view of American liberalism also is held by those who struggle to protect and nourish the same roots. Although it is hard to blame this latter group, the problem here is that not even the defenders of the older roots seem to be properly aware that the shallow individualism engendering mass materialism is at least to some extent still counterbalanced in the United States by the moral force of the deeper, humanistic liberalism represented by a thinker such as Irving Babbitt. Less harmless expressions of a growing alienation between the two continents may not be far behind. America is a further development of Europe, and as such, it has managed by building on the common heritage to inspire and reinvigorate European individualism and freedom as well. Europeans have to learn more about the more profound American individualism represented by a thinker like Babbitt. Also, on a broader scale, the sheer decadence of a globalised false individualistic liberalism will not save friendship and peace, let alone true culture. Instead, the true values of humanity have to be recognized, assimilated, and renewed through a far deeper historical grasp and a far keener discrimination. To the accomplishment of this pressing task, Gurevich, despite leaving out the classical and early Judaeo-Christian origins of individualism, makes a singularly important contribution. For what he manages to do is to reveal instead some other, often neglected origins of individualism that were present in the medieval period. In the Middle Ages, Europe only gradually became a unified culture, and the unity which was established was composed of different elements: The chapter on Northern individualism shows that, with the exception of classical antiquity, Gurevich has a fine eye for universal human values as they come alive in the variegated, individualized richness of concrete historical experience, across the boundaries of cultures. The emerging European unity was a synthesis of North and South, in the sense that the intermingling and invading northerners, while to a large extent remaining in control in the South and never completely relinquishing their own heritage, quickly adopted the rich civilization they encountered and also brought it back home. Each contributed in its own way to individualism, and Gurevich puts forth some strong arguments why the Northern culture should not be considered of secondary importance. Gurevich duly acknowledges the partial truths revealed by the proponents of the "twelfth-century Renaissance" but seems to conclude that the individualist heroes were exceptions rather than representative. A more philosophically oriented historian would put much more emphasis on at least one of the heroes, namely St. Francis, whose truly Christian "individualism," theologically and philosophically first systematically expounded by Duns Scotus, was of the utmost historical importance. The high point of the development on the individual is to be found at the very threshold of the Middle Ages, not, as might well have been expected, at its end. The subject matter is, however, a little too complex to be elucidated within the narrow confines of a short chapter in a book of this kind, which can hardly avoid vague and inexact formulations. The main conclusion, however, is clear enough: But if, as even Gurevich acknowledges with regard to St. Augustine, Christianity had brought a new emphasis on the individual, how could that emphasis have been removed again so quickly when Christianity became exclusively dominant? Unfortunately, for Gurevich, this question simply does not arise, since as we have seen, for him, generally, there was no awareness of individuality in ancient times; St. Augustine was also an exceptional hero. Because for Gurevich there is no problem, he does not provide an adequate explanation or even a historical background. No doubt the degree of Greek individualism in comparison with the Oriental neighbors has sometimes been exaggerated. But the truth seems nonetheless basically incontrovertible that Greek society, relatively, and for better or worse, in many respects brought a new kind of awareness of individuality. Upon its rise to power, however, Christianity also adopted two things from the pre-Christian world, which, I think it fair to say, were not conducive even to maintaining the level of appreciation of individuality already attained, and which instead tended to obscure, subordinate, or even annihilate it. Although never faced squarely by Gurevich, these factors loom irrepressibly over his pages. The first was the organization of the Church on the model of the late Roman empire. Proportionally to its decadence, the latter came ever more to assume the despotic qualities and

structures of the anti-individualistic "oriental" absolute kingdoms that traditionally had been deplored and castigated in classical Greek and Roman political theory. Unlike the late Roman rulers, the medieval Popes were of course not tyrannical despots, and the Church to a considerable extent admirably managed to fill the forms taken over with true spiritual content, just as, in the political field, the medieval Germanic emperors at their best elevated the imperial rule. Again, different meanings of individualism would have to be sorted out in a more comprehensive work. Early Christianity also took over a version of Platonic philosophy, which, under the influence of mystics inspired by radical monism, became even more "generalistic" than in Plato himself. Later, for various reasons, the incorporation of Aristotelianism only confirmed this tendency. Both outer, institutional, and philosophico-theological factors thus contributed to what, without these perspectives, would seem to be simply a paradoxical decline of individuality in the Middle Ages. I would venture to suggest that the picture Gurevich presents is to a large extent the outcome of these factors. So far, Gurevich simply has not found any decisive origins of European individualism in the Middle Ages. The unquestioning adherence to values of the family or clan does not in any way rule out the development of personal initiative and a keen awareness of the individual. Christian rigour, repressing individuals "so that their own identities might be lost in that of the Lord [clearly not an Augustinian notion! Augustine, emphasizing the unique personal relationship with God in faith and love, clearly show. Russell, in *The Germanization Of Early Medieval Christianity* , emphasizes the latter opposition, but clearly the two are often inseparable in the cases discussed by Russell and Gurevich. Kant deepened the concept of reason and made the human subject the focus of epistemological as well as ethical thought, and with the Sturm und Drang, untamed individualism came into its own, confusingly mixed with pantheism. Following upon this, neo-classicism in its Weimar form, while restoring the ideals once abolished and forgotten by Christianity, achieved a new synthesis of the unique development of the individual and moral and aesthetic universality. Although concentrating mainly on Goethe, Korff is not blind to the fact that the dimension of religious transcendence, upheld by Christianity, was not simply to be ignored or denied. Once the exclusive monopoly of the organized, orthodox form of Christianity had been thrown off, it could only return in modified forms or as selectively combined with a transcendence apprehended by equally strong Platonic and German speculative elements. Commenting upon the Reformation, Gurevich seems to come close to a view of this kind. It does not quite do justice to Christianity, but as to the status of the individual, and also on the level of spiritual life, it certainly points to the weaknesses of the medieval Church and society. In the above quotations Gurevich especially draws attention to the "taut dialectic" uniting the individual and society in a way which satisfies the legitimate requirements of both as somehow rooted in the natural character of the German or the Scandinavian. And surely those prerequisites will then be found to lie basically at the level of the moral character of the individual. Its prerequisites being such, a synthesis of this kind can in no way be considered a mere "middle way. This, however, is not the place to discuss further the fascinating philosophical issues here involved. Historically, Christianity has of course been as fundamental a condition for such a synthesis as the personality of the German. Augustine, undeservedly minimizing the early Christian contribution to individualism, reminds us of the important fact, often overlooked, that not only the communal but also the individualist moment of the synthesis has other origins than Christianity, origins that are often equally important. It would take many centuries before both the medieval political ideal, taken over, like the model of medieval Church organization, from the Roman empire, and its heirs, the absolute national monarchies, were supplanted by tenable constitutional orders in the western world. Although this took place under the continuous exegesis of the Roman republic, it was at the same time only then that certain original Germanic freedoms were restored. Following Gurevich, and, partially, Korff, I would suggest, although I do not consider the German spirit an exclusive ethnic characteristic, that it is not unreasonable to contend that, at least as things actually turned out, the German spirit contributed greatly to finding a way out of the modern chaos of absolute state authority, atomistic individualism, empirical sensualism, utilitarianism, mechanical external order, Rousseauistic contradictions, revolutionary terror, neo-Caesarism, and medievalist reaction. At least the dialectic of the German spirit applied to larger communities than the family , as manifested in the British constitutional efforts of by no means only Lockean , in the American Constitution, in some of the French ones, and in the tradition of moral and political idealism

initiated by Kant, contributed decisively to achieving a synthesis. In the pure republics or the constitutional monarchies thus emerging, drawing inspiration from classical and Christian as well as later modern sources, the pre-Christian German factor emphasized by Gurevich surely also played its part, although sometimes hidden. To a considerable extent the results proved successful. Long lost in the maze of materialism, lingering positivism and scientism, the empty extravaganza of the modernist avant-garde, and postmodernism, but still there and waiting for us is the gracefully balanced idealism which overcomes the excesses of both the Enlightenment and Romanticism. That idealism gives to the value-centered historicism made possible by the Enlightenment and Romanticist insights a clearer focus in the individual, and in its own unique way synthesizes and develops the best elements of the classical, Christian and Germanic traditions. Here, the persona finally has found its individuality, and the synthesis of the free development of the unique, individualized persona and the greater human and metaphysical community is the central theme. In accordance with historical practice, I term this current, which was dominant in Scandinavia in the nineteenth century, personal idealism. The context is a discussion of the origins of individualism.

### Chapter 6 : Alan Ryan reviews "The Culture of Capitalism"™ by Alan Macfarlane · LRB 21 January

*The Origins of English Individualism: The Family, Property and Social Transition. Alan Macfarlane Land, Labour and Economic Discourse. Keith Tribe.*

Etymology[ edit ] In the English language , the word "individualism" was first introduced, as a pejorative, by the Owenites in the late 18th century, although it is unclear if they were influenced by Saint-Simonianism or came up with it independently. Although an early Owenite socialist, he eventually rejected its collective idea of property, and found in individualism a "universalism" that allowed for the development of the "original genius". Individual An individual is a person or any specific object in a collection. In the 15th century and earlier, and also today within the fields of statistics and metaphysics , individual means "indivisible", typically describing any numerically singular thing, but sometimes meaning "a person. From the 17th century on, individual indicates separateness, as in individualism. Individuation The principle of individuation , or principium individuationis, [15] describes the manner in which a thing is identified as distinguished from other things. It is a completely natural process necessary for the integration of the psyche to take place. Thus, the individual atom is replaced by a never-ending ontological process of individuation. Individuation is an always incomplete process, always leaving a "pre-individual" left-over, itself making possible future individuations. For Stiegler "the I, as a psychic individual, can only be thought in relationship to we, which is a collective individual. On a societal level, the individualist participates on a personally structured political and moral ground. Independent thinking and opinion is a common trait of an individualist. Ruth Benedict made a distinction, relevant in this context, between "guilt" societies e. Methodological individualism[ edit ] Methodological individualism is the view that phenomena can only be understood by examining how they result from the motivations and actions of individual agents. Becker and Stigler provide a forceful statement of this view: On the traditional view, an explanation of economic phenomena that reaches a difference in tastes between people or times is the terminus of the argument: On our preferred interpretation, one never reaches this impasse: The function of the system is to maintain an inequality in the society and fields of human engagement. It supports the privilege theories that affirms position of certain individuals higher in the hierarchy of ranks at the expense of others. For better individuality cooperation is considered to be a better remedy for personal growth. Nobody will waste his life in accumulating things, and the symbols for things. To live is the rarest thing in the world. Most people exist, that is all. Oscar Wilde , The Soul of Man under Socialism , Individualists are chiefly concerned with protecting individual autonomy against obligations imposed by social institutions such as the state or religious morality. Susan Brown "Liberalism and anarchism are two political philosophies that are fundamentally concerned with individual freedom yet differ from one another in very distinct ways. Because of this, a civil libertarian outlook is compatible with many other political philosophies, and civil libertarianism is found on both the right and left in modern politics. They demanded greater personal autonomy and self-determination and less outside control.

### Chapter 7 : Alan Macfarlane The Origins Of English Individualism - Alan Macfarlane Net Worth

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