Conclusions

This book has spelled out the important impact of the principle of necessity and of necessities in structuring modern natural law. Recourse to an imperative though elusive idiom of *necessity* is ubiquitous in seventeenth-century scholarship and political thinking. But how it changed natural law and moral and political philosophy has not been addressed before in scholarship. Chapter 2 traces the specific influence of ideas about necessity in Thomas Hobbes's 'doctrine of necessity' to the necessitarian metaphysics of the type proposed by the Arabic philosopher Avicenna, which were adopted after the thirteenth century by a number of theologians at the prestigious faculty of theology at the University of Paris. Further, also for the first time John Locke's 'doctrine of necessities' has been identified in the book. This term denotes a thread running through Locke's work that comprises a means by which he devised a new political theory and epistemology employing human necessities as an instrument to connect diverse traditions: Hobbes's political philosophy, Neotestamentarian theology and the naturalist philosophy of the philosopher-physicians that he had studied closely. What Hobbes's doctrine of necessity and Locke's doctrine of necessities have in common is the attempt to reconstruct moral philosophy in the face of rampant scepticism and their recourse to epistemology founded on the natural sciences, in which human thinking started with the physical body. Nevertheless, the service provided to natural lawyers and political thinkers by Locke's philosophical effort to combine freedom and publicness in the natural law of an sceptical era is 'widespread', to use Peter H. Nidditch's expression.[1]

The book has demonstrated that the rise of a modern natural law, marked by the sceptical reason and without a robust theological and moral anthropology, characteristic of the seventeenth century is linked with the birth of the nation, the prehistory of classical economics and with

[1] Peter H. Nidditch, 'Foreword' in John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, p. x.

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the ideological origins of the Anthropocene, when human activity started to have a significant impact on the earth's ecosystems, including the ecosystem of humanity. All these novel phenomena occurred within the powerful worldview proposed during the early Scientific Revolution. It is remarkable that among natural scientists during this period the notion of right reason was under the wing of radical voluntarist theology. Hence, the influence of 'right reason' in scientific works was almost non-existent and certainly much weaker than among the most sceptical of natural lawyers. Thus, Robert Boyle, one of the main initiators of the Scientific Revolution, argued in favour of the immense possibilities for reason to acquire knowledge about the physical world and, in practical terms, argued that moral right reason did not exist. I have identified both the cross-fertilization and the tensions that developed between the philosophical projects of natural philosophers and legal philosophers. The second contribution offered by this study is methodological in nature: the appraisal of changes in modern natural law encompassing natural philosophers' perspectives and their novel views on nature, natural laws and voluntarist theology. The book thus seeks to undermine the modern paradigm that separates human nature from nature and the human spirit from the corporeal body.

It is significant that the shift in the theology as to the use of the world – the use of material things – towards utilitarianism occurred both by glossing over the divine commands to human beings to be the guardians of nature *and* the theological and ethical precepts referring to the dangers posed to human beings by money. The book relates this change in moral theology to changes in moral natural law and specific ideas that were in vogue during the Scientific Revolution. Before the seventeenth century, theologians stressed as a matter of course that the use of the world – of material things of the world – ought to be done with a good or virtuous will, and that it was not to be presumed that individuals would do that. Hence the admonitions, prohibitions and counsels about how to deal with riches and money. In contrast to this approach, an ideology of multiplication seized the scientific imagination of seventeenth-century English society – entailing the multiplication of benefits, investments, money, harvests, productions – in such manner that all previous religious and moral strictures that hindered such multiplication started to be vigorously resisted. Suddenly human nature and physical nature appeared immune to hazard and greed.

England – the European country that during that period witnessed more radical constitutional and social changes than any other – also produced the most original transformations in natural law. This book has analysed changes in the classical idea of moral freedom founded on practical reason,

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in the notion of a sacred nature that only God the giver of order may alter, in the idea of a universal natural law, and in the conception of money that was traditionally thought to be dangerous for the moral integrity and eternal destiny of human beings. These classical principles were partially replaced by new and exciting formulas by which to organize the moral life of individuals in space and rationalize political and economic goals. The scientific and theological heterodoxy of Protestant Reformers described in Chapter 4, whose political influence was felt from the 1630s to the Restoration, prompted them to turn to practical arts and trades and seek there the *unum necessarium*: the path to salvation. Nature was observed as the ultimate source of gold within the idiosyncratic alchemical programmatic endeavours that took place at the time. The new natural law was thus conceived in the context of plans for scientific development and economic expansion. The first participants in the Scientific Revolution – natural lawyers, natural scientists and early political economists – endorsed changing conceptions of nature, which led to the manipulation of nature and to the exploitation of natural resources on a massive industrial scale. Buttressed by the novel philosophical influences, the intelligentsia's new moral philosophy shifted from seeking what is good to searching for what is necessary and useful.

With increasing denial of the existence of the principles of moral practical reason, a tenet which was encapsulated in the disappearance at the time of a cogent notion of the light of reason, the human body became the focus of human beings' source of knowledge. The core of the capacity of reason was thus conceived through a reliance on the body's necessities and by following ever more ambitious patterns of reasoning. These new empirical epistemologies arose as a reaction to the different ways in which Neoplatonist philosophers of the seventeenth century emphasized that human knowledge about the world was a replication of that world within the human mind. In reaction to this, existential and empiricist natural lawyers argued that thinking starts when the human body reacts to its environment. Experimental practice has been at the forefront of science ever since. However, scientists also represented human beings as passive agents of needs and desires and posited that God had created physical nature to satisfy them. Conceptually, nature and economy started to meld together. With the new emphasis on methodological physicalism, money started to be described as a necessity of the nation, in parallel to the needs of the human body. The expectation of profit yields from moneylending was reinterpreted scientifically as a rational, and thus as a morally neutral issue. Greed, derided everywhere, begun its course as a private vice, receding from concerns as to how the public space ought to be constructed.

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This book argues that Hobbes's focus on thinking in terms of body and his recourse in manifold ways to a rich causal principle of necessity greatly facilitated his robust natural law and resilient political philosophy. Certainly, it is more congenial vis-à-vis received tradition to describe Hobbes merely as a mechanistic philosopher. However, I have argued that Hobbes endorsed the materialism or physicalism of Avicenna's philosophy and that this was a novelty within the web of ideas of European natural law that has not been recognized to date. In Hobbes's work, these principles culminated in *Leviathan*. The deterministic stance taken by Avicenna and Hobbes thwarted further thinking on, and the development of, a theory of moral freedom, and indeed of a foundational political theory of freedom. This has been a classic critique of the philosophical work of Hobbes, but also of Avicenna, who – aside from thoughts expressed in certain very minor pieces – never, as discussed in Chapter 9, developed a moral theory. Chapter 3 highlights Hobbes's effort to accommodate a Christian understanding of the liberty of human beings within his doctrine of necessity by uniting them under the umbrella principle of the divine will of God. God had designed, for all eternity, an order of necessary events. However, since knowledge of this was inaccessible to humans, they thought themselves to be free due to ignorance or lack of awareness of the necessary events arranged by God.

Robert Boyle boldly aimed at reinventing knowledge while rejecting the (ultimate) atheist implications of the mechanistic principle of necessary causality. Natural laws and matter became the sole object of his study. He adopted corpuscularianism, a species of atomism influenced by Aristotelian principles, and was thus ready to deconstruct nature. Boyle transformed nature into a system, an *oeconomy*, both in conceptual and literal terms. His writings treat nature as an important asset for the country's economic growth that also gives meaning to the British imperial project. The economic benefits of the exploitation of nature became, after the 1660s, the principle that cemented the utility of empirical science. The fantastic increase in the popularity of natural sciences went hand in hand with their becoming an instrument of political and economic engineering of the English nation which was then emerging from the ashes of the Civil Wars (1642–1646; 1648–1651). The revolution carried out by the Puritans, in whose circles Boyle's experimental work was first nurtured, greatly contributed to his radical stance in relation to knowledge and epistemology and to its economic bent. Chapters 4, 6 and 7 demonstrate that Boyle shared with his mentors an anti-metaphysical stand and a messianic view of science, which he toned down in the Restoration period, leaning towards a utopian

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theology that made prolific use of analogies between the scientist and the priest, the world and the temple. The bulk of Boyle's scientific ideas are supported by a boldly voluntarist theology and an argument in favour of divine design. Despite his piety and faith Boyle did not take a public stand against the burgeoning slave trade. I have argued that this attitude was a consequence of his early abandonment of the study of ethics and his conception of nature as simply matter and movement. The nature of human beings remained, as it were, outside his philosophical study of nature.

John Locke was the heir and admirer of both Boyle and Hobbes. From the outset, his reasoning was founded on their physicalism and atomism and on his own studies of classic natural law and medicine. Locke, who was born into the political and religious chaos of the Civil Wars and the 'economic sociability' of the period, is a theoriser of the public sphere. Chapter 8 shows that his initial and enduring preoccupation is to honour individuals' political and religious identities while constructing a commonwealth at the same time. Very early on Locke took up a position against innate ideas in natural law. It would appear that from the outset he radicalized the separation of knowledge and nature in natural law, but in fact, his position was more complex and original than that. Grounded on his studies of theology and of classic philosopher-physicians, Locke inverted Hobbes's case of a war against all due to human needs. In a sceptical era, Locke identified the needs of the individual as the secure foundation for all knowledge and politics, which constituted his attempt to reunite nature and knowledge under the category of natural law. The result was tenuous, since knowledge of natural law would be only tantamount to the principles of the law that human beings may acquire due to the promptings of physical needs. Knowledge would also, however, be certain since there is no empirical or theoretical way of denying human needs. Locke's epistemology is very sophisticated, and I have not considered it in its entirety in this book. Instead, I have benefited from the latest studies, which emphasize the naturalism of his work on the theory of knowledge and traced the way he employed the notion of the necessities of human nature to underpin his conception of what it means to be human and how a human being understands the world.

As a political theologian, Locke recovered the traditional relevance of human necessities in relation to ideas of charity and the common good and elevated them to constitute the main principles of his theory of government: the foundation of property and of the public good. Moreover, he employed these ideas about human necessities as a methodological tool by which to provide a basis for his groundbreaking monetary theories. Chapter 10 has

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reviewed biographical aspects of Locke as a civil servant involved not only with the plantations of the empire but, as a secretary of Lord Shaftesbury between 1667 and 1675, responsible for saving England from collapsing in a situation of disastrous public debt. It shows that money was a key element in building the publicness of Restoration England. In a period of sceptical reason, stressed sociability and political fragmentation, with the ensuing crisis about the common good, Locke's method of aligning private and the public interest manifests itself for the first time in his remarkable studies on money. Through these studies, he came to understand that the country's inhabitants shared a common project as a nation. A fundamental part of that common project was a monetary economy, and he was able to demonstrate scientifically how it should work: thus money became a necessity.

After a long period in which the (English) people had wrestled their political power and authority from Emperor, Pope and King the theories of modern English natural law became nation-centred in practice. Consonant with the emphasis on the body in philosophical thinking during the period, the main expressions of the foundation of physical natural law were articulated as (a) being the principle of a basic equality of wealth among individuals and (b) the growth of the economy of the nation. Locke viewed labour, rather than the hereditary principle, as the natural foundation of property – and money as the consensual means for its accumulation. Thus he integrated both natural and artificial consent into the terms of political obligation. His political theory, as described in Chapter 12, suggests that clashes between these two universalist principles (money and labour) could be avoided by means of rational domestic legislation concerned with the public good and that the *oeconomy* could accordingly be adapted to the proportions of the nation. The relevance attributed to government *for the public good* together with his faith in the rational power of Christianity seem to have been Locke's foundational political principles.

English natural law displays a massive originality as a unified body of thought that has not been recognized to date. My conclusion is that for a postmodern natural law, theirs is an unfinished project and that their accurate conviction in terms of philosophy that the human being is 'a body among bodies' ought to be supplemented by a theology of the human body that aims at discovering the spiritual meaning of that peculiar corporeality.[2]

[2] On this question see John Paul II, *Theology of the Body*.

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Further, in modern political theory, modern international law and contemporary moral philosophy, the space for thinking about issues regarding the morality of money has remained empty. Since around the end of the seventeenth century, moral considerations in respect of money have played no formal role in global governance, jurisprudence or moral philosophy and, even more worryingly, they are also absent from theological thinking. This glossing over of a theory of the morality of money has had a huge impact, not always positive, on theories of growth – to the extent that even John Maynard Keynes of all people wrote in disparaging terms of 'the love of money', which he viewed as both enhancing economic growth while at the same time denuding society of its values. The critique of benefiting from putting money to interest should, according to Keynes, become relevant again.

Perhaps two arguments that Keynes put forward in the 1930s help to substantiate this final idea. The British economist predicted that by now, the decade of 2020–2030, exactly the moment we are living through, global society would reconsider its stance towards money. Although himself an ambivalent figure fascinated by the possible uses of interest for the public economy of a country, Keynes also developed intriguing philosophical positions on the matter. In his successful *General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money*, and, as he put it, even though he had been educated in that belief, the British economist felt it important to underscore that the doctrines of the 'Medieval Church' on the use of money were not absurd. The complicated efforts of theologians, he now understood, rather than being a means of escaping moral law in practice, were 'honest intellectual efforts' to distinguish between the marginal efficiency of money and interest. Rule, custom and the moral law ought to maintain the latter at a low rate.[3] More explicitly, in a futurist essay he wrote in 1930 entitled 'Economic Possibilities for our Grandchildren', Keynes predicted in gripping terms that with sufficient accumulation of wealth, by about a century later – that is, in a decade from now:

> The love of money as a possession – as distinguished from the love of money as a means to the enjoyments and realities of life – will be recognised for what it is, a somewhat disgusting morbidity, one of those semi-criminal, semi-pathological propensities which one hands over with a shudder to the specialists in mental disease. All kinds of social customs and economic practices, affecting the distribution of wealth and of economic rewards and penalties, which we now maintain at all costs, however

[3] Keynes, *General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money*, p. 218.

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> distasteful and unjust they may be in themselves, because they are tremendously useful in promoting the accumulation of capital, we shall then be free, at last, to discard.[4]

In his 1930s economic utopia Keynes envisaged that when our economic necessity and that of our neighbours was appeased, people would start to think again about their purpose in life, human beings would again be free to return to principles of 'religion and traditional virtue' and openly recognize that 'the love of money is detestable'.[5] We would no longer think only about enjoying the future, but we would simply learn 'how to pluck the hour and day virtuously and well'. This would be looked at with dread in the beginning, since we have been accustomed to striving for the future. Whereas 'for the first time since his creation' a human being would be faced with the real and perennial problem of how to use one's freedom wisely and well, and what to do with the leisure that 'science and compound interest' will have won for them.[6] However, Keynes warned in the 1930s, the time was not yet ripe for that, and we had to hold on a little longer:

> For at least another hundred years we must pretend to ourselves and to every one that fair is foul and foul is fair; for foul is useful and fair is not.[7]

After almost the century, from the date of Keynes's prediction of a period in which we will be free of 'avarice and usury', and with a completely transformed postcolonial global economic situation, his musings are valuable and worth reconsidering.[8] Keynes's ideas on the pathological love of money are also enlightening in the context of this book. His vision that possessiveness would disappear with scientific and economic development showed Keynes to be the true heir of the authors dealt with in the previous chapters. Notwithstanding the success of the City, the triumph of the Empire and the ideas of some few radical Independents, the English

[4] John Maynard Keynes 'Economic Possibilities for our Grandchildren', in Donald Moggridge (ed.), *Collected Writings of John Maynard Keynes*, vol. IX (London: Macmillan for the Royal Economic Society, 1972), pp. 321–332, p. 329. On his utopianism in this regard and the view that 'love of money' was 'the cancer of economies', in Robert Skidelsky, *John Maynard Keynes. The Economist as Saviour 1920–1937* (London: Macmillan, 1992), pp. 234–238, p. 425.

[5] 'Assuming no important wars and no important increase in population' occurred, Keynes 'Economic Possibilities for our Grandchildren', p. 326.

[6] Keynes 'Economic Possibilities for our Grandchildren', p. 324.

[7] Keynes 'Economic Possibilities for our Grandchildren', p. 331.

[8] 'Avarice and usury and precaution must be our gods for a little longer still.' Keynes 'Economic Possibilities for our Grandchildren'.

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natural law tradition shows a recurrent uneasiness about what Keynes termed 'the love of money'.

In Locke's theory economic equality and distribution revolved around the governmental operations of the nation state. In a scenario of universal international law without a political legislative organ of government to regulate the market for the common good, it is imperative to develop anew a moral law of money concerned with the individual human being, the nations and global society. And in that effort human necessities, rather than interests might be a good theme to start with.

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