

### Further Readings

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## TRACY, DESTUTT DE (1754–1836)

Antoine-Louis-Claude Destutt de Tracy was an economist and a political theorist. Destutt de Tracy was a *philosophe* and one of the founders in the 1790s of the classical liberal republican group known as the *Idéologues*, which included Condorcet, Constant, Say, and Madame de Staël. He was active in politics under several regimes spanning the Revolution and the Restoration, and he was an influential author during his lifetime. When the Estates-General were called to meet in 1789, although a member of an aristocratic family that had been ennobled twice (hence his name), he joined the Third Estate and renounced his title. He was later elected to the Constituent Assembly and served in the army under the Marquis de Lafayette in 1792. During the Terror, he was imprisoned and escaped execution only because Maximilien Robespierre beat him to the scaffold. It was during his period of imprisonment that he read the works of Etienne Condillac and John Locke and began working on his theory of *idéologie*. During the Directory, Tracy was active in educational reform, especially in creating a national system of education. His membership in the Senate during the Consulate and Empire gave him many opportunities to express his ideological opposition to Napoleon's illiberal regime, which culminated in 1814 with Tracy's call for the removal of the Emperor. He was rewarded later that year with the restoration of his noble title by Louis XVIII. Nevertheless, he continued to support the liberal opposition during the restoration of Louis XVIII and Charles X. Although Tracy was active in bringing to power a more liberal, constitutional monarchy during the July Revolution of 1830, he quickly became disillusioned with the results.

Tracy coined the term *ideology* shortly after his appointment to the *Institut National* in 1796 to refer to his "science of ideas," which attempted to create a secure foundation for all the moral and political sciences by closely examining our sensations and ideas as these interacted with our physical environment. His deductive methodology for the social

sciences was to have much in common with that of the Austrian School of Economics, which emerged after 1870. For Tracy, *ideology* referred to a liberal social and economic philosophy that provided the basis for a strong defense of private property, individual liberty, the free market, and constitutional limits to the power of the state, preferably a republic modeled on that of the United States. For Napoleon, *ideology* was a term of abuse that he directed against his liberal opponents in the *Institut National*. It was this negative sense of the term that Marx had in mind in his writings on ideology. (He called Tracy a *fischblütige Bourgeoisdoktrin*—a fish-blooded bourgeois doctrine.)

The impact of Tracy's political and economic ideas was considerable. His *Commentary and Review of Montesquieu's Spirit of Laws* (1811) was much admired by Thomas Jefferson, who translated it and had it published in America at a time when a French edition was impossible due to Napoleon's censorship. In the *Commentary*, Tracy criticized Montesquieu's defense of monarchy and supported an American-style republic that operated in the context of an economic order based on free markets. Tracy's multivolume work, *Elements of Ideology* (1801–1815), is his magnum opus, the fourth volume of which appeared in 1815 and dealt with political economy. This volume also was translated and published by Jefferson in 1817. The whole work was quickly translated into the major European languages and influenced a new generation of Italian, Spanish, and Russian liberals who were involved in revolutionary activity in the early 1820s—the Carbonari in France and Italy and the Decembrists in Russia. One of Tracy's most significant economic insights was that "society is purely and solely a continual series of exchanges," and his broader social theory is based on working out the implications of this notion of free exchange. Within France, Tracy's work influenced the thinking of the novelist Stendhal, the historian Augustin Thierry, and the political economists and lawyers Charles Comte and Charles Dunoyer.

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See also Comte, Charles; Dunoyer, Charles; French Revolution; Liberalism, Classical; Montesquieu, Charles de Secondat de

### Further Readings

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## TRANSPORTATION

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The transportation policy of a government constrained by libertarian principles would aim to establish the institutional framework that would enable private entities to supply all the services that transportation users would be prepared to pay for, taking into account characteristics such as safety, frequency, and comfort. In some circumstances, government might have to assist in the provision of the services that users were not prepared to pay for—for example, roads that were specifically needed for national defense but have little other use—but these exceptions are almost certainly rare.

The movement of people and goods is critically important to interaction among individuals and to the development of social and commercial activities. It can take place on land, on water, and in the air. People have a propensity to travel. They may do so to obtain more suitable employment, better housing, and better shopping selections or to enjoy their leisure. As incomes rise, the proportion of income spent on transportation increases. In all countries, the rich tend to rely on motorized mobility—two-wheelers and automobiles—to travel more than the poor. Wealthy individuals only rarely use their increased income to reduce their own travel (e.g., by persuading others to travel to them). In all areas of the world, increases in wealth (or decreases in poverty) are associated with increased travel.

Travelers use their legs, animal power, wheeled vehicles, ships, or aircraft, all of which can be individually owned and controlled. But their movement is facilitated by infrastructure—roads, ports, and air traffic control—that is generally provided and controlled by government. The main transportation problems today arise out of the inadequacy or misuse of infrastructure. However, the safety and regulation of vehicles also pose intractable problems.

Safety on the world's roads is so poor that over a million people a year are estimated to be killed on them. This huge toll is associated with poor management of roads, which, in turn, can be associated with a lack of effective property rights. Safety probably could be improved if—as in maritime transportation—insurers were responsible for the testing and

licensing of the drivers and vehicles insured by them. But it is beyond the capability of most governments even to enforce laws requiring road users to be insured against claims from those they may injure.

Vehicle regulation impacts not only safety, but also the provision of public transportation. In Western countries, it has generally been accepted that public transportation must be supplied by a government-supported monopoly and that it cannot be operated at a profit. Yet Robert Cervero has identified many profitable private systems outside the United States that provide frequent reliable service, among them those in Belfast, Buenos Aires, Manila, Singapore, and a few within the country, such as the legal jitney services in Atlantic City and the illegal ones in New York City. Many of these successful systems have the following characteristics: Their ownership is private, the vehicles and operating systems are small, and private "route associations" coordinate the operations of privately owned vehicles.

Unfortunately, the managers of public transport in most Western cities, which tend to be more responsive to labor unions than to users, prefer public ownership, large vehicles, large systems using fixed rails, and centralized management. The resulting services do not respond to the travel needs of modern, decentralized cities, and these public transport systems are generally unable to cover their operating costs out of revenues, much less their capital costs.

Land transportation involves the movement of people or goods by rail or road. Railroads are generally operated as commercial entities, but most roads are in the public sector and operate, like public parks, outside the market economy. This divergence makes it difficult to compare and coordinate road and rail services.

In the 19th century, before the advent of motorized road transportation, railroads were alleged to have substantial monopoly power and were economically regulated. At the beginning of the 21st century, railroads in most countries are subject to keen competition from road and air travel, and this competition should provide sufficient regulation. Railroads are particularly suitable for carrying freight over large distances and thus are particularly appropriate in Canada, China, India, Russia, and the United States. Railroads, however, are much less competitive for passenger transport, where their main strength is in dense urban areas and in linking large urban areas 100 to 300 miles apart. Inasmuch as railroads are commercially operated, they pose no significant policy problems to a government, which would expect them to pay their way or go out of business.

Most publicly owned roads are run socialistically by politically appointed officials with scant regard to costs, profit, or loss. Road users are not required to pay the costs arising out of their use of roads, and road providers spend taxpayers' funds without regard to market criteria. As a result, road problems include excessive congestion, waste,