

Government (transliteration of Greek for "piloting," the art & act of piloting, steering, managing a course) is done to you or you do it yourself. The lexical fact that Eng. "you" is both singular & plural parallels the lexical fact that though "self" is singular, "self-" may be either singular or plural. In this Thinksheet, it's both not just as a lexical fact but as an existential reality: **A populace can have only as much self-government as its citizens have** (distributive, individual sense) **self-government**. This Thinksheet is a slice of my praying that selfes-government (1) in America will continue to be adequate to democracy (ie, self-government), & (2) in new democracies will evolve fast enough to make self-government sustainable.

1 The Christian ideal is, to coin a word, **autotheonomy**, governing oneself & one's responsibilities under & within the governing, government, rule, reign, Kingdom of God. "One's responsibilities" include participation in social power at every level from the bio-family to the world community, in given & in voluntary associations. Public & private education should form the minds & affections of succeeding generations to this end....My position rejects the others: (1) **Theonomy**, the direct rule of God, bypassing angelic & human will--the only wills (as Aquinas elaborated) excluding theonomy.* Islam ("kismet") has less room for non-divine wills than do Torah & Gospel (Judaism & Christianity). (2) **Autonomy**, ruling yourself indepenently of God or society. Ayn Rand's super-individualistic books continue to sell in America better than all but a few religion classics. (3) **Heteronomy**, rule by others: monarchy, tyranny, dictatorship, totalitarianism.....

* Atheist reversals of this are (1) fatalism, rule by Moira or The Fates, & (2) cosmic anarchism, the doctrine that any ordering, any governing in heaven or on earth, is only illusion: chaos doesn't reign, it just is.

2 The founding American political philosophy was autotheonomy, & "America"--our basic culture's way of seeing & living in the world, as expressed in our founding documents (Declaration of Independence, Constitution, Federalist Papers, Bill of Rights)--won't work, can't maintain its freedoms & its reciprocal forms of government, without it. Anybody disagreeing with me on this is not a good American unless somebody can come up with a secular (atheist) ethic providing commensurate support for the essential American values, which are.... Well, what are they?

3 **Honesty**, for one. It's on a sharp decline, & our freedoms are declining with it. Not being able to trust the citizenry to pay income taxes, the governments (federal, state, in some areas local) grab the money & runs before the citizens can touch it. Sissela Bok, author of LYING, a classic work on dishonesty: "The tremendous me-first attitude of the '80s" provided us with negative role-models, "such bad examples from the worlds of business & government" (L.A.TIMES/92). Professional ethicists have shifted from asking who's been cheating to asking who hasn't (as Ab. Maslow shifted from who's mentally ill to who isn't). "There are indications that there are more efforts at deception of all kinds." Michael Josephson (L.A.-based Joseph and Edna Josephson Institute for the Advancement of Ethics): "It's a world of 'I wants.' [The downward slide is] "whatever I want I need, whatever I need I deserve, whatever I deserve I have a right to have." ROLLING STONE accepts ads for canned term papers on any subject you're "taking" (so you can "take" the institution for a degree). You can even buy Ethics term-papers! "It's getting harder and harder to be an honest person. You feel like a jerk in a world where other people are getting ahead by taking shortcuts" (ibid.).

4 A great publicschool teacher in Detroit said a few days ago, "Nothing but a moral revolution can save our schools. Each oncoming group of students have fewer inner controls, less **character**." Our choice is between forcing character on those without it (by re-instituting corporal punishment) or freeing from the mass those students who have character. The third way is to continue in our present moral & intellectual morass. What's best for America? The first, I think.