The Structure of David Hume's Historical Thought and the Emergence of Political Economy

Pedro Faria
Visiting Research Fellow
Centre for Development and Planning
Federal University of Minas Gerais

Abstract: This paper shows how Hume developed his historical thought in an attempt to combine two modes of historical argument: the natural-jurisprudential conjectural history of the *Treatise of Human Nature* and the early eighteenth-century historical narratives of modern Europe that featured in his *Essays*. The *Treatise*'s conjectural history used the developmental categories "rude" and "civilised" to explain the origins of justice, government, and the moral sentiment. The narratives of modern Europe, in contrast, revolved around the historical categories "ancient" and modern". Hume's historical thought was shaped around the status of classical antiquity and its relation to modern Europe: were the ancients civilised and modern Europe a revival of classical antiquity? Or should classical antiquity be considered rude and modern Europe be considered as a progression from thence? The paper shows how Hume moved from the former to the latter between 1740 and 1752. That transition shaped key elements of Hume's political and economic thought, such as his understanding of "luxury" or "civilized monarchy". The paper concludes by suggesting that Hume's combination of pre-Enlightenment modes of historical argument and the consequent rearrangement of historical categories around the transition to commercial societies in the early modern period was essential to the emergence of political economy.

Keywords: David Hume; historical structures; Enlightenment; modern narratives; transition to capitalism

1. Introduction

If we take Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations* as a guide, the primary task of what we now identify as classical political economy was to understand why some nations were able to multiply the power of labour to such an extent that the "meanest person in a civilized country" could still enjoy many comforts of life unavailable to an African king, despite his absolute control "of the lives and liberties of ten thousand naked savages" (*WN* 1.1.11).[1] That task was not set in merely comparative terms. Smith's (and, for that matter, his contemporaries') theoretical contributions— from the determination of wages in Book I to the choice of tax revenue sources in Book V—were situated within a historical structure that bestowed them with a sense of temporal development. By "structure" I mean a set of historical concepts ("ancient" and "modern"; "rude" and "civilized"), historical objects (manners, commerce, political constitution), and temporalities (progress, decline, cycles) that structured not only Hume's later historical narrative but also his interventions in political, economic, social, and even moral debates of his time.

Within the *Wealth of Nations*, the core historical structure was presented in Book III, particularly chapters 2-4: they presented an account of how the processes theorized about in Books I, II and V, had taken place in European history. Briefly, Smith narrated how luxury consumption changed elite

---

[1] Smith, *Wealth of Nations*. Hereafter "*WN*" followed by book, chapter and paragraph numbers according to the Liberty Fund edition.

patterns of consumption and promoted the growth of cities from the fifteenth century onwards, which eventually promoted the development of agriculture in the countryside.

The importance of the historical structure presented in Book III cannot be emphasised enough. It sets the basic understanding of historical development within which political economy itself could emerge as a science of the accumulation of capital. It does so because it identifies the time (and place) when accumulation of capital began and, therefore, when a new form of knowledge became necessary to make sense of it. The prevalent historical structures of the Renaissance world could not explain it and were bound to collapse as capital accumulation became *the* social, political and economic process to be explained: neither humanist ideas of modern Europe as revival of classical antiquity nor Christian providential histories could deal with that.

However, the historical structure of Book III of the *Wealth of Nations* was not of Smith's own creation. In one of the rare explicit references in the *Wealth of Nations*, Smith acknowledged that "Mr Hume [was] the only writer who, so far as I know, has hitherto taken notice of it" (*WN* 3.4.4).[2] In this paper, I investigate how Hume developed the historical structure underlying his and Smith's view of the development of English and European commercial societies. I argue that that historical structure was the result of the combination of two modes of historical argument, each with its own concepts, objects, and temporal frames: natural-jurisprudential theories of the development of property rights and the narratives of modern Europe that emerged with the Quarrel between the Ancients and the Moderns in France at the turn of the century.[3] The former was at the heart of Book III of the *Treatise*, where Hume set out a conjectural history of the development of property rights and government. That conjectural history interpreted the development of human societies in terms of a transition from a "rude" to a "civilized" state. Although Hume gave some indications as to how that developmental account related to actual history, the *Treatise* left the matter in abstract terms— as befitted the intent of the book.[4]

---

[2] I will not discuss this point here, but the conflict between chapters 1 and 2-4 of the *Wealth of Nations* highlights how the process of incorporation of Hume's historical narrative was not completely seamless. *WN* 3.1 presented a pattern of "natural" development derived from the natural order of capital accumulation of Book II (agriculture, manufacturing, internal commerce and, finally foreign commerce) which contrasted with the actual order of development Smith derived from Hume (foreign commerce, manufacturing, agriculture). On this matter, see Bowles, 'Adam Smith and the "Natural Progress of Opulence"', and, for a more charitable interpretation, Hont, *Jealousy of Trade*, chapter 5.

[3] We must distinguish between eighteenth-century self-perceptions and narratives of modern Europe and twentieth-century narratives of modernity. On that distinction see Pocock, 'Perceptions of Modernity in Early Modern Historical Thinking', and, especially, Robertson, 'Enlightenment and Modernity, Historians and Philosophers'.

[4] It should be noted that I am not saying natural-jurisprudential theories (or book III of the *Treatise*, for that matter) are a form of historical argument. However, intellectual historians such as Buckle, *Natural Law and the Theory of Property,* have treated the natural-jurisprudential tradition after Grotius as "historicizing" property rights, that is, as affirming that property rights were developed as life in society developed. As such, natural law *qua* philosophical argument implies the existence of a history (or histories) of the development of property rights. Hume is generally understood by the literature (see works cited in note 6 below) to have impressed an even higher degree of historicization of natural law in the *Treatise*.

The second question was a critical element of Hume's essays and traced back to the Quarrel between the Ancients and the Moderns that rocked French (and, to a lesser extent, English) learned and polite society at the turn of the century.[5] The critical choice here was whether modern Europe was a revival of or a progression from classical antiquity. Hume started his career as an essayist giving a (somewhat hesitant) assent to the revival theory but the idea that modern Europe was a significant improvement in relation to classical antiquity had prevailed in his works by the 1750s. Revival and progression implied very distinct attitudes toward the social, political, and economic institutions of Greco-Roman societies, which in turn shaped attitudes towards contemporary institutions: they decided whether one's institutional models were in the past or in the future.

The paper's main conclusion is that it was not until the 1752 *Political Discourses* that Hume unified the answers to those two questions into a single historical structure underlying his historical arguments. Between the 1741 and 1752, Hume gradually dislocated the place of classical antiquity, distancing it from modern Europe. The distinctive characteristics of Modern European societies—politeness, commerce, civilized monarchy—were all post-ancient. In many ways, which Hume explored at length particularly in "Of the Populousness of the Ancient Nations" (hereafter, "Populousness"), even the most celebrated societies of classical antiquity were marked by a degree of violence, inhumanity and barbarism incompatible with civilised life. However, for Hume (and for all but the most radical Cartesian Moderns in the original Quarrel) the great artistic, military, scientific, and philosophical achievements of classical antiquity were undeniable. Thus, Hume explained the achievements of classical antiquity as the products of a set of exceptional circumstances that allowed them to rise above the general barbarism of the pre-modern world, but which were unlikely to be reproduced.

Completing the dislocation of classical societies (and the explanation of their exceptionalism amidst the barbarism of their age) in the *Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals* (1751) and the *Political Discourses* allowed Hume to firmly identify the rude-civilized structure of the *Treatise* with the early-modern transition from agriculture to commerce while at the same time answering the ancient-modern question. In so doing, the *Enquiry* and the *Political Discourses* unified two of the most important modes of historical argument in the eighteenth century: natural-jurisprudential accounts of the emergence of property and the histories of European arts and sciences that gained

---

[5] "Ancient" and "Modern" are capitalized when referring to the parties of the Quarrel. The importance of the Quarrel in Hume's intellectual biography was emphasized by Mossner, 'Hume and the Ancient-Modern Controversy, 1725-1752'. Since then, only Jones, *Hume's Sentiments*, and Baumstark, 'The Biographical Background of the Second Enquiry', have investigated the subject. A full study of the influence of the Quarrel on Hume's thought is still lacking. Hume is discussed briefly in some of the more recent literature about the Quarrel, see Edelstein, *The Enlightenment*, 106–8, and Norman, *The Shock of the Ancient*, 120–30.

importance during the Quarrel.[6] That unified historical structure was at the heart of Hume's view of history—European and English—and his perception of historicity. Indeed, unifying those two modes of historical argument into an account of (what we now consider) the transition from feudalism to capitalism, Hume made political economy as a form of historical and theoretical knowledge possible because his reengineering of pre-existing historical concepts and categories unveiled the object of political economy—the process of capital accumulation and transformation of agriculture in the early modern period. Surely, Hume was not the sole contributor to this process. At around the same time, Montesquieu was also reformulating the concept of "monarchy" to make sense of the fact that modern European monarchies could foster commerce as well as republics, until then understood as the only form of government able to harness commercial might.[7] Moreover, both Hume and Montesquieu lacked the theoretical refinement that would only come with Adam Smith, James Steuart, and the French *economistes*. In any case, the critical reorientation of historical categories derived from previous modes of historical argument had already been achieved by Hume, a fact that has not been fully considered by the literature.

2. The conjectural history of the *Treatise*: rude and civilized

The core of Book III of the *Treatise of Human Nature* was a conjectural history of justice and the moral sentiment. Here, conjectural history is understood not as a *faute de mieux*, supplying conjectures where facts were missing (as Dugald Stewart would have it), but as a 'developmental account' of an institution, passion, or even human society as a whole.[8] In the case of Book III, the conjectural history was prompted by Hume's question about the motive to repay a loan (T 3.2.1.9). The question forced Hume to consider how something completely unintelligible to man "in his rude and more *natural* condition" could become "satisfactory to man in his civiliz'd state, and when

---

[6] Whether Book III of the *Treatise* belongs to the tradition of natural jurisprudence is a debatable question. That interpretation is defended by Forbes, *Hume's Philosophical Politics,* Haakonssen, *The Science of a Legislator*, and Buckle, *Natural Law and the Theory of Property*. Westerman, 'Hume and the Natural Lawyers: A Change of Landscape', criticizes the natural-jurisprudential interpretation, but still retains the idea that Hume must be interpreted as reacting to that tradition. The "sociability" view, which situates Hume between Bernard Mandeville's neo-Epicureanism and Francis Hutcheson's natural sociability thesis, is advanced by Robertson, *The Case for the Enlightenment,* and Harris, *Hume*, ch. 2. Independent of whether we interpret Hume as critical to or part of the natural jurisprudential tradition, its presence as a vocabulary in Book III of the *Treatise* is undeniable. Even the sociability interpretation acknowledges that much of the sociability debate used the language of natural jurisprudence.

[7] On Montesquieu's notion of "modern monarchies" and its centrality in his understanding of modern Europe, see Dijn, 'Was Montesquieu a Liberal Republican?', Mosher, 'Free Trade, Free Speech, and Free Love: Monarchy from the Liberal Prospect in Mid-Eighteenth Century France', Sonenscher, *Before the Deluge*, chapter 2, and Althusser, *Politics and History*.

[8] See Stewart, 'An Account of the Life and Writings of Adam Smith, L.L.D.', 292–96. Marušić, 'Dugald Stewart on Conjectural History and Human Nature', explores the ambiguities of Dugald Stewart's position. Modern commentators avoid Stewart's all-encompassing definition and favour the narrower definition I adopt here. See, for instance, Emerson, 'Conjectural History and Scottish Philosophers', Malherbe, 'Hume's Natural History of Religion', and Santos Castro, 'Hume and Conjectural History'.

train'd up according to a certain discipline and education" (*Treatise* 3.2.1.9).[9] Feeling a moral obligation to repay a loan to a stranger summarised how the foundations of life in society taken for granted in civilised places were not natural and therefore had a history.

Strictly speaking, the conjectural history of Book III encompassed the account of the conventions of justice and the creation of government in part two, which were presented in a sequential frame. At its heart was the redirection of the 'interested affection': the conjectural history was presented as a series of conventions in which rude men and women discover how to overcome the limitations their natural partiality imposes on mutual cooperation—which is a necessity given the unusual combination of humans' numberless wants and lack of natural means of fulfilling them (*Treatise* 3.2.2.2).[10] The conjectural history presented each moment as a solution to a problem raised in the anterior state of the "progress of sentiments": the mismatch between property and needs after the stabilization of the first convention is solved by the transference of property by consent of the second (*Treatise* 3.2.4); the invention of promises solves the transference of absent goods and the exchange of services (*Treatise* 3.2.5); 'self-interested commerce' becomes predominant, which means affective bonds and reputational risks are no longer sufficient to regulate exchange, thus leading to the creation of government (*Treatise* 3.2.5.10).

We can extend the conjectural history beyond the artificial virtues of justice and allegiance to government. Once we understand the entanglements between justice and the moral sentiment, including the moral approbation of natural virtues, it is safe to say that the conjectural history of justice and government of *Treatise* 3.2 is also a conjectural history of the moral sentiment itself, which is discussed in *Treatise* 3.3. Controlling our natural partiality and limited generosity affects our ability to judge even the natural virtues from a general point of view. The same process that shaped the conventions of justice and government, thus allowing humans to live peacefully in society, also gave them the ability to judge from the "general point of view", whose defining characteristic is the ability to overcome one's private standpoint. Therefore, even though no explanation is required about *why* we approve of the natural virtues, it still necessary to explain *how* we come to judge them from the general point of view. Even pride of our possessions can only be properly stabilized once possessions become property.[11] Thus, incorporating the discussion of the

---

[9] Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, 3.2.1.9. Hereafter "*Treatise*" followed by book, part, section, paragraph, quoted on the text. Baier, *The Cautious Jealous Virtue*, ch. 1, discusses the importance of Hume's choice of loan repayment as his starting point.

[10] Baier, *The Cautious Jealous Virtue*, ch. 2, and Forbes, *Hume's Philosophical Politics*, 85–86, discuss the almost exclusive focus of *Treatise* 3.2 on the interested affection.

[11] Hume wrote in *Treatise* 3.2.2.8: 'This partiality, then and unequal affection, must not only have an influence on our behavior and conduct in society, but even in our ideas of vice and virtue. Baier, *A Progress of Sentiments*, 171 and 177–79, argues for the importance of artifice even in the judgment of the natural virtues. On Hume's general point of view, see Sayre-McCord, 'On Why Hume's "General Point of View" Isn't Ideal–and Shouldn't Be'. On pride of possessions and the conventions of justice, see Besser-Jones, 'The Role of Justice in Hume's Theory of Psychological Development'.

general point of view in *Treatise* 3.3.1 to the conjectural history of part two—as Hume himself suggested we should[12]—makes the scope of the narrative of Book III quite broad: it provides the basic structure of the "progress of sentiments" as a whole.

However, how does that broad conjectural history of the progress of sentiments relate to actual history? The *Treatise* was not meant to be a historical book, but it did delineate the shape of a historical process. Was that developmentalist account an a-historical, purely philosophical account of the foundations of *all* societies, an account of the earliest ages of humankind, or an account of the basic institutions of commercial society? Carl Wennerlind, for instance chose the last option—correctly, as we will see, but without noticing the twelve years Hume took to establish that connection.[13] The three conventions of justice can indeed be taken as a distilled, philosophical version of the development of property, markets, and money as described in the *History of England* (to which we could add a parallel between the general point of view in Part 3 and the progress of polite manners). However, what should we make of Hume's repeated references to the "infancy" of society or native Americans and their few possessions (*Treatise* 3.2.2.8 and 3.2.8.1)? How should we relate those references to the history of England up to Henry VII, when the changes that inaugurated modern English history began, as Hume put it to Adam Smith?[14] What marks the beginning of civilized life in real history?

Hume's discussion of the Glorious Revolution (*Treatise* 3.2.10.16-19) provides a clue. The revolution is connected to the analytical, not the sequential/narrative framework of Book III. Hume applied the psychological analysis of Book III to the case at hand instead of plugging it into the sequence of conventions. Indeed, that would have been impossible, because Hume's conjectural history of property and government made had no place for inequality of property, an essential aspect of the changes that ultimately led to the civil war.[15] As Michael Gill noticed, the *Treatise* provides both a "chronological" and a "conceptual" account of the origins of morals.[16] Book III manoeuvres between them, resulting in an uneasy relationship between philosophy and history: the scattered historical markers are supposed to fit within an account of the transition from rude to civilized, but it is unclear how (or perhaps whether) they form a coherent whole. The Glorious Revolution could be plugged into the analytical, but not the sequential framework. Perhaps we can say the *Treatise* faced a losing battle with complexity: in trying to balance the chronological and

---

[12] In *Treatise* 3.2.2.23, Hume pointed to section 3.3.1 as the explanation of the moral approbation of justice.

[13] Wennerlind, 'David Hume's Political Philosophy'.

[14] Hume to Adam Smith, 24 September 1752, in Hume, *Letters*, vol. 1, pp 167-168.

[15] Baier, *A Progress of Sentiments*, 239, notices that Hume's conventions of justice presupposed a reasonable degree of equality in possessions anterior to the stabilization of property, since otherwise those without possessions would have no interest in adhering to the conventions in the first place. Pye, 'Histories of Liberty'. provides an interpretation of the *History of England* and Hume's view of the Civil War compatible with the interpretation I advance here.

[16] Gill, *The British Moralists*, 239. Harris, *Hume*, 253–54, also emphasizes Hume's multitasking in the *Book III* of the *Treatise*, contrasting it with the second *Enquiry*, where, as we will see, the attempt to build a conjectural history of morals is dropped.

conceptual accounts, Hume's system had more variables than equations, so he was forced to leave some of them indeterminate. Conceptual and chronological origins could not be fully integrated.

In the end, the conjectural history of Book III established an overarching, but historically indeterminate distinction between rude and civilised. The rude camp included the earliest ages of human society as well as contemporary Native Americans. It was not clear, however, where the civilized side of history began. It is very reasonable to conjecture that the planned fifth book of the *Treatise* would contain a conjectural history of government (including forms of government).[17] It would likely have provided a greater degree of concreteness or historical determination to the overall conjectural history. That book never came. However, the 1741-42 *Essays* did contain important arguments, particularly concerning the place of classical antiquity in Hume's historical structure.

3.   The ambiguities of the ancient-modern structure of the 1741-42 *Essays*

Hume began to articulate a more concrete historical view in the ancient-modern essays of the first two instalments of the *Essays*, particularly "Of Liberty and Despotism" (1741, later retitled "Of Civil Liberty") and "Of the Rise and Progress of the Arts and Sciences" (1742).[18] Both essays addressed one of the central questions of the Quarrel: how to explain (and how to relate) the two greatest moments of human flourishing Europe had witnessed: Greco-Roman antiquity and the period since the revival of the arts and learning in the sixteenth century. During the Quarrel, which can be roughly dated to the 1687-1719 period, answers to those questions were divided between two main "parties": the Ancients and the Moderns. Twentieth-century historiography painted the Ancients as defenders of the "authority" of the classics against modern science and philosophy favoured by the Moderns. More recent works have highlighted how both parties shared an understanding of the "otherness" of classical antiquity but disagreed about the appropriate reaction to it.[19] Moderns such as Bernard de Fontenelle, often inspired by Cartesianism, increasingly presented classical antiquity as the "infancy" of human reason. Ancients such as Jean-Baptiste Dubos, a pioneer of Lockean philosophy in France, argued that the otherness of antiquity could be a source of inspiration and knowledge (not of unquestioned authority) in artistic, moral, political, and

---

[17] Hume mentions possible fourth and fifth books of the *Treatise* about criticism and politics in the advertisement to Books I and II of the *Treatise*, see Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, 2. Harris, *Hume*, 141–42, suggests a conjectural history of forms of government would most likely be the content of the planned fifth book.

[18] Hereafter "Civil Liberty" and "Rise and Progress" respectively. Harris, *Hume*, ch. 3, divides the two volumes into three kinds of essays: those on politics (primarily English), the polite "Addisonian" essays (many of which Hume later withdrew), and the essays directed at a more erudite audience and addressing topics deriving from the Quarrel.

[19] The roots of the twentieth-century treatment of the Quarrel can be found in Rigault, *Histoire de la querelle des anciens et des modernes*. Hazard, *La Crise de La Conscience Européenne,* is the canonical expression of that view of the Quarrel, which can still be found in Levine, *The Battle of the Books*, notwithstanding the latter's attention to the questions about historical narratives that became important in the recent literature. For recent investigations about the Quarrel focusing on the perceptions of historicity, see Yılmaz, *Le Temps Moderne*, Edelstein, *The Enlightenment*, and Norman, *The Shock of the Ancient*.

even scientific matters because the ancients had given the first steps in those fields and had inspired their revival in the sixteenth century.

The historical structure presented in "Civil Liberty" and "Rise and Progress" put Hume closer to the Ancients because it presented modern European societies as the revival of the positive achievements of classical antiquity.[20] At the heart of that structure was the notion of a "government of laws, not men", as Hume put in "Civil Liberty" (*Essays* 94). That notion was inspired by James Harrington's notion of "ancient" and "modern prudence": modern (that is, post-Roman) nations were governed according to the interests of their rulers, whereas ancient nations had been governed by fixed laws.[21] In both essays, Hume argued that the development of the arts and sciences (and human flourishing more generally) depended on the existence of a government of laws, which made them ancient creations.

"Civil Liberty" established a connection between the free governments of antiquity and the first development of the arts and sciences: the history of learning began in the free Greek city-states and moved to Rome when the Greeks lost their freedom (*Essays* 89-90). Those were governments of law. Other ancient nations such as Persia and Egypt managed to attain great luxury, but they never developed any kind of learning equivalent to that of free nations—we should notice Hume's relative disdain of luxury as an aspect of civilised life here. "Rise and Progress" furthered the idea that *only* a free government could be the first source of the arts and sciences (*Essays* 115-119): in the rude state of humankind, a monarchy would only perpetuate slavery and subjection, thus preventing the rise of the arts and sciences. In contrast, a republic may generate laws from the very conflict between the different groups of society, which would in turn create a sense of security that made dedication to the arts and sciences possible. Once the republics had developed the arts and sciences, monarchies could learn from them (*Essays* 123-124).

Thus, "Civil Liberty" and "Rise and Progress" presented the origins of the arts and sciences as the products of classical liberty. In both essays ("Rise and Progress" in particular), the modern was presented (mostly) as a revival of the ancient: the history of modern Europe was presented as a revival of the ancient in modern Renaissance republics, with subsequent imitation by the larger territorial monarchies. Even the mimicking of geopolitical conditions was necessary: the rise of the free republics of antiquity was associated with their geographical and geopolitical circumstances; territorial fragmentation was necessary to create political and social jealousies that limited abuses of

---

[20] Hume's interest in the Ancient position as expressed by Jean-Baptiste Dubos is particularly important, but remains to be fully studied. Pedro Faria, 'History, Moral Philosophy, and Social Theory in David Hume's Intellectual Development, 1739-1752', chs. 2-3, explores the influence of Dubos on Hume. On Hume and Dubos, see Jones, *Hume's Sentiments,* and Mazza and Mori, '"Loose Bits of Paper" and "Uncorrect Thoughts"'.

[21] On ancient and modern prudence, see Harrington, *Harrington*, 8–9. On this topic, see Pocock, 'Introduction', 43–75. On the Harringtonian dimension of Hume's political thought, see Harris, *Hume*, pp. 175–183, Forbes, *Hume's Philosophical Politics*, pp. 207–211, and Pye, 'Histories of Liberty'.

authority. The Reformation contributed towards breaking the hold of the Catholic Church and thus allowing a full-scale European version of the original Greek rivalries between city-states (*Essays* 119-123).

However, those two essays already presented arguments that would be central to the dislocation of classical antiquity towards the ruder side of history found in the second *Enquiry* and the *Political Discourses*. The crux of "Civil Liberty" was the fact that the rise of commerce and politeness in territorial *absolute* monarchies since the sixteenth century was invalidating the traditional association between liberty, republican governments, and the development of the arts and sciences (*Essays* 88-89). According to Hume, Machiavelli and "the Italians" lived too close to the change to be able to notice it, which explained their silence concerning commerce as an affair of state even in monarchies—perhaps we could add Harrington to that list. However, eighteenth-century writers (such as Shaftesbury and Addison) who still insisted on a strict interpretation of the connection between republican government, commerce, and the progress of the arts and sciences were wrong (*Essays* 90, esp. footnote 6). The French absolute monarchy, in particular, was a serious challenge to that theory: it had become a government of laws where commerce and the arts flourished without losing a distinctive advantage of monarchical government, namely, the ability to default on public debt (*Essays* 95-96).

The discussion of modern monarchical politeness in "Rise and Progress" would become critical to the dislocation of classical antiquity towards the rude side of history in later works: according to the essay, modern politeness was an exclusively modern (in the sense of post-ancient) phenomenon, produced by the forms of social interaction existent in modern European monarchies (*Essays* 127-128). The idea that politeness was an exclusively modern phenomenon had been a critical element of the Modern argument in the Quarrel. Indeed, Hume seemed to have changed horses midway through "Rise and Progress": if the first part of the essay reproduces Ancient views such as Jean-Baptiste Dubos', the second half puts him closer to the Modern Charles Perrault.[22] That change also marked a departure from Hume's earliest extant text, the "Historical Essay on Chivalry and Modern Honour": there, Hume presented modern politeness as a *corruption* of Roman imperial manners.[23] In "Rise and Progress" it received a positive treatment *and* was fully disconnected from classical antiquity.

Further, as noticed by Tatsuya Sakamoto, the historical structure of "Rise and Progress" and "Civil Liberty" relied on a circular causal reasoning that would be solved only in the *Political Discourses*: as we saw, a barbarous monarchy had to imitate the laws created by republics in order

---

[22] As noticed by Harris, *Hume*, 188. Forbes, "Introduction", 22, emphasises Hume's Francophilia, which is neglected by most Hume scholars to this day.

[23] The essay is reprinted in Wright, 'Hume on the Origin of "Modern Honour": A Study in Hume's Philosophical Development'. See pp. 205-207 for the passage on chivalric politeness as a corruption of Roman imperial manners.

to become civilized.[24] Reconciling monarchy and laws required "great wisdom and reflection" on the part of the monarch (*Essays* 118). However, we should not expect that "a barbarous monarch, unrestrained and uninstructed, will ever become a legislator, or think of restraining his Bashaws." Thus, the 1741-42 *Essays* do not clarify how the process of transplantation of laws and the arts and sciences from republics to monarchies occurred.

In conclusion, "Civil Liberty" and "Rise and Progress" presented a more concrete historical structure than that of the *Treatise* but left open many points of tension between the two. They identified the free governments of classical antiquity as *the* moment of transition from rude to civilized societies and presented modern Europe as a revival of that moment. That identification sat uneasily with the *Treatise*'s chronology of justice and government: governments appeared after laws in the conjectural history and *forms* of government were not considered relevant to the transition from rude to civilized. At the same time, Civil Liberty noticed for the importance of commerce in the modern period but did not see any role for it in the transition from rude to civilized ("Rise and Progress" was completely silent on the role of commerce), which contrasted with the *Treatise*'s emphasis on the development of exchange and commerce.[25] As we will see, once Hume properly introduced commerce into his framework, the notion of the modern as a revival of the ancient would become obsolete.

4. Rude ancients and civilized moderns in the second *Enquiry* and the *Political Discourses*

"Of Commerce", the opening essays of the *Political Discourses*, began with the proposition that "the greatness of a state and the happiness of its subjects, however independent they may be suppos'd in some respects, are commonly allow'd to be inseparable with regard to commerce" (*Essays* 255). However, Hume admitted that there were exceptions to this rule. Understanding when and where the rule held true is the key to understanding the historical structure underlying the *Political Discourses* (and the second *Enquiry* and the *History of England*).

The exception to the rule were the classical republics of antiquity. In societies such as Sparta and the Roman Republic, any surplus production generated in the agricultural sector was used to support the greatness of the state: surplus hands became soldiers, surplus production fed them. Using any share of the surplus to produce manufactured goods would subtract from the greatness of the state (*Essays* 256-258). However, that "ancient policy was violent, and contrary to the more natural and usual course of things". Indeed, anyone "who has considered human nature as it has

---

[24] Sakamoto, 'Hume's Political Economy as a System of Manners', 89–90.
[25] The *Treatise* follows the Pufendorf's separation between *civitas* (the polity) and *cultura* ("society"). The post-Pufendorfian tradition of natural jurisprudence made the state a further development of life in society, reversing the Hobbesian precedence of the state. On this topic see Hont, *Jealousy of Trade*, 170-176.

displayed itself in other nations, and other ages" would "justly esteem" Sparta as a true "prodigy" (*Essays* 259).[26] The greatness of Sparta and Rome was possible only due to "a perfect storm of peculiar laws, demographics, and luck."[27] That perfect storm allowed them to increase agricultural productivity without giving proper incentives to agricultural workers. The geographical and geopolitical circumstances that had been considered fundamental to the first rise or the arts and sciences in "Rise and Progress"—territorial fragmentation and intense national jealousies—were now the explanation of the exceptionality of classical republics.

The rule was quite different. Absent the exceptional circumstances of classical antiquity, agricultural surpluses are exchanged for manufactured goods. If there are no manufactured goods to be exchanged for, farmers will simply not produce any surplus. The availability of foreign luxury goods entices farmers to increase productivity. Observing the opportunity, cities imitate foreign goods and develop a manufacturing sector, absorbing the surplus hands from the countryside. Their production becomes a "storehouse" of labour, which can be tapped in case of an emergence. The taxes levied by the state would create unemployment, which would make part of the urban workforce available to the army if needed (*Essays* 260-264).

"Of Luxury" (later "Of Refinement in the Arts"), the second essay of the *Political Discourses*, added social and political dimensions to the economic argument of "Of Commerce". The social dimension is encapsulated in the "indissoluble chain" of industry, knowledge and humanity, which is "peculiar to the more polished, and, what are commonly denominated, the more luxurious ages" (*Essays* 271). The expansion of commerce also changes the political landscape: it changes political constitutions by introducing the "middling rank of men, who are the best and firmest basis of public liberty" (*Essays* 277). Although Hume's main frame was the English constitution, where the middling rank achieved actual political participation, that change was not less true of other civilized monarchies of Europe. More importantly, we must notice how the order of causality changed between "Rise and Progress" and the *Political Discourses*: in the former, commerce (and the arts and sciences) were the consequence of law; in the latter, the expansion of commerce promotes the development of laws, liberty, and the arts and sciences (which in turn further promotes commercial expansion). Identifying foreign luxury as the trigger for the growth of industry, knowledge, and humanity had a significant effect on the historical structure articulated by the *Political Discourses*. First, it alleviated the circular reasoning of "Rise and Progress". "Of Commerce" and "Of Refinement in the Arts" established a correspondence between a general effect

---

[26] Faria, 'David Hume, the Académie des Inscriptions and the Nature of Historical Evidence in the Early Eighteenth Century', discusses how Hume's historical method relates to the statement that "were the testimony of history less positive and circumstantial, such a government [Sparta] would appear a mere philosophical whim or fiction, and impossible to ever to be reduced to practice," *Essays* 259.

[27] McArthur, *David Hume's Political Theory*, 90.

(civilized monarchy) and a general cause (the expansion of commerce). Hume no longer depended on singular events and personal idiosyncrasies as the explanation of general historical developments. The rise of civilized monarchies no longer depended on the unlikely wisdom of a barbarous monarch.

With a new mechanism in place, the *Political Discourses* could articulate a new historical structure defined by the transition from agrarian to commercial societies starting at the beginning of the sixteenth century.[28] The "rude" side of history was clearly identified with agrarian societies, their rustic hospitality and manners, and their lack of respect for property rights. But how did classical societies—the exception to the rule about commerce and the greatness of the state—fit in that scheme? "Populousness" and the second *Enquiry* fully dislocated classical societies to the rude camp.[29]

"Populousness" paraded the barbarity and inhumanity of classical slavery and politics.[30] Indeed, Hume regarded one as the necessary complement of the other: free children, accustomed to exercise unlimited authority over enslaved persons in their household, grew up to become stubborn, unwieldy citizens, each a "petty tyrant" willing to butcher half of the (equally stubborn) political opposition when they held power (*Essays* 383-384). In consequence, "the very quality of a freeman gave such a rank, being opposed to that of slave, that it seemed to entitle the possessor to every power and privilege of the commonwealth" (*Essays* 415). Republican laws only made things worse: the "absurdly contriv'd" laws of the Roman Republic—one of the cradles of civilized society in the 1741-42 version—sometimes made a bloodbath the only viable political solution (*Essays* 414). The state of ancient politics was so abysmally violent and inhumane "that it seems superfluous to give any particular reason for the acts of violence committed at any particular period" (*Essays* 414). Hume contrasted that state with of affairs, where there was no medium between a severe, jealous Aristocracy, ruling over discontented subjects; and a turbulent, factious, tyrannical Democracy" with the "well-tempered aristocracies" that ruled modern commercial European republics (*Essays* 416).

The barbarity of even the most glorious republics of antiquity made property rights remarkably unstable in the classical world. By reading classical sources against the grain, Hume found even more evidence of the banality of violence even in Athens: for instance, in Xenophon's

---

[28] On the centrality of theories about the "agrarian trap" (and the way out of it) in the Enlightenment see Macfarlane, *The Riddle of the Modern World of Liberty, Wealth and Equality*. Macfarlane, 'David Hume and the Political Economy of Agrarian Civilization', covers Hume's case. Berry, 'Hume and the Customary Causes of Industry, Knowledge, and Humanity', 313, argues, correctly in my view, that the two essays were a "potted version" of the structure of the *History of England*.

[29] Sebastiani, *The Scottish Enlightenment*, 40, also interprets Hume as *unambiguously* dislocating classical societies to the rude camp.

[30] On Hume's discussion of ancient slavery, see Watkins, *The Philosophical Progress of Hume's Essays*, 66–80, and Taylor, *Reflecting Subjects*, chap. 6.

Symposium, the character Charmides remarks that losing his wealth made him happier because he no longer feared for his life (*Essays* 411).[31] The disregard for property rights and for the status of wealth was a symptom of the underdevelopment of commerce and the almost complete absence of manufacturing. The only commerce that thrived in the ancient world was the exchange of agricultural goods based on differences of soil and climate (*Essays* 418). However, that commerce could not generate the developmental impulse created by manufacturing (*Essays* 419). Worse, as Hume stated in the *History of England*, ancient climate-based commerce further entrenched slavery: the element of expansion of manufacturing in the modern period that caused all the social and political changes was the changes in the habits of the nobility, who were enticed by luxury to switch from "rustic hospitality" to consumption of goods acquired by monetary means.[32] Although Hume did not expand on the "ancient" side of the comparison, we can conjecture that the expansion of the climate-based commerce that predominated in antiquity did not force any change in patterns of consumption or production.

The *Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals*, written at around the same time as the *Political Discourses* and published less than a year before it, was much more than "recasting anew" of Book III of the *Treatise*, as Hume described it (*Essays* xxxvi). True, the most foundational aspects of the moral philosophy of the *Treatise* were still there: moral judgements were still (mostly) a matter of sentiment, not reason; virtues were still divided in four groups according to their utility and agreeableness, to self or to others; justice was still conventional. However, as a growing body of philosophical literature has shown in the last two decades, there were also some significant differences such as the shift away from psychological mechanisms and towards historical examples.[33]

For our present purposes, the most critical difference was the near absence of the conjectural history that had guided the *Treatise*.[34] Instead, Hume simply presented justice as the expected reaction to the usual circumstances of human societies: the combination of some degree of selfishness and some degree of scarcity makes rules determining mine and thine necessary (*EPM* 3.13).[35] Following Montesquieu, that "late author of great Genius" as Hume put it in the first edition, the second *Enquiry* placed much more emphasis on each society adapted natural justice to its environmental, geographical, social, religious, and economic circumstances (*EPM* 3.34, note

---

[31] On Hume's method of reading sources against the grain, see Baumstark, "Hume's Reading of the Classics at Ninewells", an Box an Silverthorne, "The "Most Curious & Important of All Questions of Erudition": Hume's assessment of the Populousness of Ancient Nations".

[32] Hume, *The History of England*, vol. 2, p. 207.

[33] The recent revisions of the role of the second *Enquiry* have been collected in Taylor, *Reading Hume on the Principles of Morals*, and Kroeker and Lemmens, *Hume's An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals: A Critical Guide*.

[34] This is noticed by Harris, 'Justice in An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals', and Hanvelt, 'History, Context, and the Conventions of Political Society'.

[35] Hume, *Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*. Hereafter "*EPM*" followed by section and paragraph number ("App" for the appendixes and "D" for "A Dialogue").

12).[36] The rather brief discussion of "political society" in section four followed the same path.[37] To be sure, the transition from rude to civilised was still present. Hume still referred to the "natural progress of human sentiments" from simple family units to small tribal societies and then to large nations (*EPM* 3.21). The opposition between the "rude, untaught savage" and "we, accustomed to society" was also present in the conclusion: as in the *Treatise*, the savage was deemed incapable of departing from his partial perspective and forming moral judgments from a genuinely general point of view (*EPM* 9.8 note 57).

Unlike the *Treatise*, the second *Enquiry* was a book full of references to historical characters and peoples, their traits, manners, and institutions. Hume argued repeatedly that, as with justice, the preference for the useful or agreeable virtues was also inflected by each society's context: "the differences of moral sentiment, which naturally arise from a republican or monarchical government, are also very obvious; as well as those, which proceed from general riches or poverty, union of faction, ignorance or learning" (*EPM* D.51, see also 6.35). However, unlike justice, whose variations were still based on the same foundational natural justice, the opposition between useful and agreeable often took the form of a trade-off: an inclination to the social virtues of justice and benevolence, often came at the cost of the agreeable virtues and vice-versa (*EPM* D.47).

Critically, the second *Enquiry* articulated that opposition between the useful and agreeable as a historical opposition between the virtues ancient agrarian societies and those associated with modern commercial societies. It thus presented the moral version of the historical structure of the *Political Discourses*. Hume stressed what he called the "sublime virtues", a subset of the virtues immediately agreeable *to self* linked to the ancient world. He opposed them to the modern preference for the social virtues of justice and benevolence (to be sure, commercial societies also valued agreeable virtues, particularly those agreeable *to others* such as decency, good manners, and wit). Further, although the virtues immediately agreeable to self were genuine virtues, the sublime virtues were approved by a pre-reflective sympathetic reaction: we approve of qualities immediately agreeable to the possessor because we feel a "contagion or natural sympathy" and thus we "cannot forbear loving" their possessor (*EPM* 7.2).[38] That pre-reflective character contrasts with the approval of the social virtues: approval of just persons depends on our understanding the value of justice as a social scheme affecting society as whole (EPM App 3.5-6).[39] Even our approval of

[36] See also the variorum (*EPM* p. 220). The influence of Montesquieu on the second *Enquiry* is noticed by Harris, *Hume*, pp. 250-253, and Baumstark, 'David Hume', 48–65. As Harris suggests, the second *Enquiry* shows much less confidence on "human nature" as a monolithic thing, given precedence to historical diversity.

[37] On section four of the second *Enquiry*, see Hanvelt, 'History, Context, and the Conventions of Political Society', 88.

[38] Taylor, *Reflecting Subjects*, pp. 148-152. See also Watkins, 'Virtues Sublime and Suspect', 145.

[39] Interpreters have highlighted the expansion of the role of reason in Hume's work as he developed his ideas, see Baier, *The Cautious Jealous Virtue*, 246–47. By the time Hume wrote the last volume of the *History of England*, he was arguing that virtue 'is nothing but a more enlarged and cultivated reason,' see Hume, *History of England*, vol. 1, p. 179.

benevolence can be shaped by reasoning, including reasoning about historical change: luxury was deemed a vice until recently, but "those who prove, or attempt to prove, that such refinements rather tend to the increase of industry, civility, and arts"—which included Hume himself, as we learned— "regulate anew our *moral* as well as *political* sentiments" (*EPM* 2.21).

Hume singled out the pre-reflective sublime virtues as a target of criticism—it is almost as if they were actually "vices immediately agreeable to self" or, at least, "suspect virtues".[40] Courage received a scathing treatment: it is the "predominant excellence" among "all uncultivated nations" who have not yet experienced the advantages of the social virtues. In those nations, martial bravery was so supreme that it "destroyed the sentiments of humanity; a virtue surely much more useful and engaging" (EPM 7.13). Even the Athenians would rather boast about their military prowess than their pioneer development of laws and agriculture (EPM 7.25). The preference for the sublime virtue of courage at the expense of the sentiment of humanity was not exclusive to scalp-wearing barbarians like the Scythians; it was a characteristic of the martial age as a whole. Courage was not the only sublime virtue: the more positive treatments they received notwithstanding, "philosophical tranquillity" and "greatness of mind" were also associated with the brutality of the ancient world: the former was a way for philosophers to escape from the violence and barbarity of their world (EPM 7.16-17); the latter was the virtue of those who chose to fight and not be trampled upon in that violent world, such as Medea (EPM 7.4-10).

In the end, all three sublime virtues were appropriate to the proud and bloodthirsty free citizens of classical antiquity. They were the virtues of the barbarous world Hume would describe in "Populousness", where the humane virtues of justice had no place and would be despised if they were known (*EPM* 7.18). From the perspective of Hume's modern reader, they were primarily *spectatorial* virtues: virtues they pre-reflectively sympathised with at the opera or when reading a tragedy, but which most of them would rather not witness first-hand (and perhaps even possess). The "peculiar lustre" (*EPM* 7.11) of courage and the other sublime virtues was above all an effect of the world in which they existed, but that was a world most of us would rather limit to the pages of history books or novels.

In conclusion, the historical picture that emerged from the *Political Discourses* and the second *Enquiry* shifted the division between rude and civilized to the sixteenth century. Classical antiquity was placed firmly within the rude camp: their political and economic structures, manners, and even virtues were described as barbaric. Indeed, Hume asked "if such was the disposition of men's minds among that refined people [the Greeks], what may be expected in the commonwealths

---

See also Taylor, *Reflecting Subjects*, pp. 122–125, and Hanley, 'Justice and Politics in the Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals', 66–71.

[40] Both expressions are Watkins', 'Virtues Sublime and Suspect' pp. 137 and 146 respectively. On the contrast between sublime ancient virtues and the humane modern social virtues, see Taylor, *Reflecting Subjects*, 161–63.

of ITALY, AFRIC, SPAIN, and GAUL, which were denominated barbarous?" (*Essays* 413). Classical societies were rescued from the general barbarism that surrounded them by the highly unusual set of circumstances that allowed them to dissociate the greatness of the state from the happiness of the subject. Those circumstances allowed them to create governments of laws (even though such laws rarely prevented extreme political violence and insecurity of property) and to give the first steps in the arts and sciences. Indeed, the exceptional barbarism of classical antiquity produced great heroes and sublime virtues that made their art and history all the more alluring. But it was an exception to the general rule of Hume's historical structure.

5. Conclusion: the emergence of political economy

As we saw, Hume's *Essays* started from a Harringtonian position that the classical republics had been government of laws. In "Civil Liberty" and "Rise and Progress", Hume presented modern commercial societies as essentially (though not wholly) a revival of those first governments of laws and their achievements in the arts and sciences. By the time Hume published the *Political Discourses*, that position had changed: the barbarity of even the most successful societies of classical antiquity had become much more prominent than their laws. Indeed, by the 1750s, even though Hume kept the Harringtonian (and, later, Court Whig) thesis that there was no such a thing as an "ancient constitution" in feudal England, Hume would depart from one of the most foundational aspects of the historical structure articulated by the Englishman: the idea that the English Civil War had opened a unique opportunity to *return* to the ancient prudence that had guided to liberty the Israelites, the Greeks, and the Roman Republic, with which it died and gave way to modern, feudal prudence—except for the Republic of Venice.[41]

Writing a century later than Harrington, Hume could see that the gradual shift of the balance from the crown and the nobility to the Commons was not merely the effects of the legal reforms of Henry VII that abolished the feudal regime of property. Rather, he could see that fifteenth- and sixteenth-century developments were epochal, wholesale societal changes ignited by the introduction of luxury.[42] The perception of the scale of the change meant the historical perspective of *The Commonwealth of Oceana* was no longer feasible: having witnessed a century of posterior developments, Hume could no longer look at the English Civil War and consider it an opportunity to return, as Harrington had done. It was no longer possible (or, indeed desirable) to return to ancient maxims. Even though Hume remained sceptic about theories of *necessary* progress such as

---

[41] Pocock, *Virtue, Commerce, and History*, 96–97, argues that "'ancient prudence' was Spartan and Roman, a commonwealth of armed freeholders which had been corrupted and feudalized by emperors and their Gothic mercenaries, but might now be restored to its true principle in England in consequence of the decay of military tenures," which he termed "process of classicization".

[42] Hume's critique of Harrington appears in Hume, *History of England*, vol. 4, p. 384.

those sponsored by Fontenelle and his friend Turgot, he understood that history had moved mostly, though not always for the better.[43] In his later years, Hume became increasingly worried about the limits of commercial societies. A ballooning public debt made him even more interested in Montesquieu's idea of the nobility as an "intermediate power".[44] The ancients may serve as an example—the English government could learn something from the Greeks about not mortgaging all its tax revenue (*Essays* 349-351)—but even then, moderns had to be careful about importing ancient models wholesale *à la* Fénelon. In other words, Hume had internalized into his social, economic, political and even moral thought the dictum of Molière's Angélique: "the ancients are the ancients, sir. We are the people of today."[45]

Further, Hume reached that modern perspective by combining two distinct modes of historical argument: natural jurisprudential theories of the origins of property and the ancient-modern accounts of the rise and progress (or rise and revival) of the arts and sciences. It articulated a single historical structure that encompassed questions about forms of government, economic institutions, and artistic and scientific flourishing. Hume's historical arguments in each of those dimensions, when put together, became an argument about the emergence of the modern European world, with the development of modern (or, in our terms, capitalist) agriculture at its heart. By 1752, Hume articulated all the critical historical categories of historical thought (rude and civilized, ancient and modern) around the economic, social, and political transformations beginning in the fifteenth century.

The importance of Hume's rearticulation of historical categories into a coherent (and coherently modern) historical structure has escaped intellectual historians of the eighteenth century. Istvan Hont, for instance, struggled with an explanation of how exactly Adam Smith discovered a fourth stage of historical development where Samuel Pufendorf, the seventeenth-century Protestant German natural lawyer, had only found three.[46] Pufendorf had recognized a developmental process moving from hunter-gatherers to shepherding and finally to agriculture. Property rights emerged and evolving as societies transitioned from one stage to the other, coming into full existence with the transition to the agricultural stage. Thus, the evolution of property rights could not justify the further addition of a fourth stage. According to Hont,

---

[43] See Hume to Anne-Robert-Jacques Turgot, 16 June 1768 in Hume, *Letters* vol. 1, p. 180. On French theories of progress after Fontenelle's 1688 contribution to the Quarrel, the "Digression sur les Anciens et les Modernes", see Dagen, *L'histoire de l'esprit humain dans la pensée française de Fontenelle à Condorcet*.

[44] On Hume's interest on the role of the nobility in preventing the chaotic consequences of public debt, see Pocock, *Virtue, Commerce, and History*, pp. 125–141, esp. pp. 138-141, Hont, 'The Rhapsody of Public Debt: David Hume and Voluntary State Bankruptcy' esp. p. 345, and Pye, 'Histories of Liberty', 174–77. On the notion of "intermediate powers" in early eighteenth-century French political thought and in the "aristocratic liberalism" that emerged from there see Dijn, *French Political Thought from Montesquieu to Tocqueville*, ch. 1, and Sonenscher, *Before the Deluge*, ch. 2.

[45] Molière, *Oeuvres de Molière*, vol. 9, p. 370.

[46] Hont, *Jealousy of Trade*, 179-184

> a fourth stage had to be added to clarify the preconditions for the secondary acquisition of the means of self-preservation as well as the goods that fulfilled the needs of luxury and which in turn allowed everybody, not only the owners of cattle and land, to survive.[47]

In more open parlance—unafraid of sounding too close to Marxist vocabulary—a fourth stage had to explain *and justify* why part of the population no longer had access to land and therefore had to work for wages ("secondary acquisition"). It must be noticed that justifying is about as important as explaining. Hume's dislocation of classical antiquity, for instance, served both purposes: on the explanatory side, it opened the theoretical space for a distinction between the social, political, economic institutions of slaveholding classical societies and modern commercial societies. On the justificatory side, uniting the pairs rude-civilised and ancient-modern around the agricultural revolution of the early modern period "otherised" the main ideological barrier to the full defence of modern commercial societies: the free republics of classical antiquity. Despite all the glamour and heroism of their virtues, they now belonged to a distant past full of violence and barbarity. Without a past to look back as a reference (as had been the case with Harrington). Hume—and Smith and later political economists—could now paint the emergence of modern Europe as the process of civilization where men

> flock into cities; love to receive and communicate knowledge; to show their wit or their breeding; their taste in conversation or living, in clothes or furniture. Curiosity allures the wise; vanity the foolish; and pleasure both. Particular clubs and societies are everv where formed: Both sexes meet in an easy and sociable manner; and the tempers of men, as well as their behaviour, refine apace. (*Essays* 271)

Further, making violence and barbarity the defining characteristic of what existed before the early modern transition to civilised life freed the way to cleanse the record of modern European commercial societies. All the violence and barbarity of the early modern English enclosures or the Highland clearances (which were taking place as Hume was achieving his unified historical structure) could become "men flocking into cities" to socialize. Indeed, the degree to which eighteenth-century economists tried to disguise the violence of the early-modern agricultural revolution was closely correlated to the degree to which they resisted the narrative of the modern spun by the mode of historical argument Hume brought into life.[48]

---

[47] *Id.*, p. 184.

[48] Perelman, *The Invention of Capitalism*. Adam Smith also covered the role of the British state in imposing the Highland enclosures: as Halikias, 'Adam Smith on the Scottish Highlands and the Origins of Commercial Society', argues, Smith was open about the role of the English crown in fostering the development of commercial societies, which explained its "unnatural and retrograde" order of development, with cities developing before the countryside (WN 3.1.9). However, Smith tried to portray the Highland clearances—a continuity of the early-modern English transition—as the natural development of a commercial society, thus disguising the brutality of the violence and dispossession inflicted on the Scottish peasantry, particularly in the wake of the 1745 Jacobite rebellion.

6. Bibliography

Althusser, Louis. *Politics and History*. London: Verso, 2007.

Baier, Annette. *A Progress of Sentiments: Reflections on Hume's Treatise*. Cambridge-MA: Harvard University Press, 1991.

———. *The Cautious Jealous Virtue: Hume on Justice*. Cambridge-MA: Harvard University Press, 2010.

Baumstark, Moritz. 'David Hume: The Making of a Philosophical Historian. A Reconsideration'. PhD Diss., University of Edinburgh, 2007.

———. 'Hume's Reading of the Classics at Ninewells'. Journal of Scottish Philosophy 8, no. 1 (March 2010): 63–77. <https://doi.org/10.3366/E1479665109000517>.

———. 'The Biographical Background of the Second Enquiry'. In *Reading Hume on the Principles of Morals*, edited by Jacqueline Taylor. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020.

Berry, C. J. 'Hume and the Customary Causes of Industry, Knowledge, and Humanity'. *History of Political Economy* 38, no. 2 (2006): 291–317. <https://doi.org/10.1215/00182702-2005-004>.

Besser-Jones, Lorraine. 'The Role of Justice in Hume's Theory of Psychological Development'. *Hume Studies* 32, no. 2 (2006): 253–76.

Box, M.A., and Michael Silverthorne. 'The "Most Curious & Important of All Questions of Erudition": Hume's Assessment of the Populousness of Ancient Nations'. In *David Hume: Historical Thinker, Historical Writer*, edited by Mark G. Spencer. University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2013.

Bowles, Paul. 'Adam Smith and the "Natural Progress of Opulence"'. *Economica* 53, no. 209 (1986): 109–18. https://doi.org/10.2307/2554524.

Buckle, Stephen. *Natural Law and the Theory of Property: Grotius to Hume*. Clarendon Paperbacks. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993.

Dagen, Jean. *L'histoire de l'esprit humain dans la pensée française de Fontenelle à Condorcet*. Paris: Klincksieck, 1977.

Dijn, Annelien de. *French Political Thought from Montesquieu to Tocqueville: Liberty in a Levelled Society?*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011.

Dijn, Annelien de. 'Was Montesquieu a Liberal Republican?' *The Review of Politics* 76, no. 01 (2014): 21–41. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0034670513000879.

Edelstein, Dan. *The Enlightenment: A Genealogy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010.

Emerson, Roger L. 'Conjectural History and Scottish Philosophers'. *Historical Papers* 19, no. 1 (1984): 63–90. <https://doi.org/10.7202/030918ar>.

Faria, Pedro. 'David Hume, the Académie Des Inscriptions and the Nature of Historical Evidence in the Early Eighteenth Century'. *Modern Intellectual History* 18, no. 2 (2021): 299–322. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1479244319000404>.

———. 'History, Moral Philosophy, and Social Theory in David Hume's Intellectual Development, 1739-1752'. PhD Diss., University of Cambridge, 2021. <https://www.repository.cam.ac.uk/handle/1810/332934>.

Forbes, Duncan. *Hume's Philosophical Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975.

———. 'Introduction'. In *The History of Great Britain: The Reigns of James I and Charles I*, edited by Duncan Forbes. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970.

Gill, Michael. *The British Moralists on Human Nature and the Birth of Secular Ethics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.

Haakonssen, Knud. *The Science of a Legislator: The Natural Jurisprudence of David Hume and Adam Smith*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981.

Halikias, D. I. 'Adam Smith on the Scottish Highlands and the Origins of Commercial Society'. *History of Political Thought* 41, no. 4 (2020): 622–47.

Hanley, Ryan Patrick. 'David Hume and the "Politics of Humanity"'. *Political Theory* 39, no. 2 (April 2011): 205–33. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0090591710394089>.

———. 'Justice and Politics in the Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals'. In *Hume's An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals: A Critical Guide*, edited by Esther Engels Kroeker and Willem Lemmens. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021.

Hanvelt, Marc. 'History, Context, and the Conventions of Political Society'. In *Hume's An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals: A Critical Guide*, edited by Esther Engels Kroeker and Willem Lemmens. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021.

Harrington, James. *'The Commonwealth of Oceana' and 'A System of Politics'*. Edited by J.G.A. Pocock. Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.

Harris, James. 'Justice in An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals'. In *Reading Hume on the Principles of Morals*, edited by Jacqueline Taylor. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020.

Harris, James A. *Hume: An Intellectual Biography*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015.

Hazard, Paul. *La Crise de La Conscience Européenne*. 2 vols. Paris? Boivin et cie, 1935.

Hont, Istvan. *Jealousy of Trade: International Competition and the Nation-State in Historical Perspective*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010.

———. 'The Rhapsody of Public Debt: David Hume and Voluntary State Bankruptcy'. In *Political Discourse in Early Modern Britain*, edited by Nicholas Phillipson and Quentin Skinner, 321–48. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.

Hume, David. *A Treatise of Human Nature*. Edited by David Fate Norton and Mary J Norton. 2 vols. Clarendon Hume Edition Series. Oxford: Clarendon, 2007.

———. *Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*. Edited by Tom Beauchamp. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998.

———. *Essays: Moral, Political and Literary*. Edited by Eugene Miller. Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1985.

———. *The History of England: From the Invasion of Julius Caesar to the Revolution in 1688*. 6 vols. Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1983.

———. *The Letters of David Hume*. Edited by J. Y. T Greig. 2 vols. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1932.

Jones, Peter. *Hume's Sentiments: Their Ciceronian and French Context*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1982.

Kroeker, Esther Engels, and Willem Lemmens, eds. *Hume's An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals: A Critical Guide*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021.

Levine, Joseph. *The Battle of the Books: History and Literature in the Augustan Age*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991.

Macfarlane, Alan. 'David Hume and the Political Economy of Agrarian Civilization'. *History of European Ideas* 27, no. 1 (January 2001): 79–91. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01916599.2001.11644278>.

———. *The Riddle of the Modern World of Liberty, Wealth and Equality*. Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 2000.

Malherbe, Michel. 'Hume's Natural History of Religion'. *Hume Studies* 21, no. 2 (1995): 255–74.

Marušić, Jennifer. 'Dugald Stewart on Conjectural History and Human Nature'. *Journal of Scottish Philosophy* 15, no. 3 (1 September 2017): 261–74. <https://doi.org/10.3366/jsp.2017.0172>.

Mazza, Emilio, and Gianluca Mori. '"Loose Bits of Paper" and "Uncorrect Thoughts": Hume's Early Memoranda in Context'. *Hume Studies* 42, no. 1 (2016): 9–60. <https://doi.org/10.1353/hms.2016.0006>.

McArthur, Neil. *David Hume's Political Theory: Law, Commerce and the Constitution of Government*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016.

Molière. *Oeuvres de Molière: Les femmes savantes. Le malade imaginaire. La gloire du dôme du Val-de-Grâce. Poèsies diverses.* Edited by A. D. Regnier. Vol. 9. Paris: Hachette, 1886.

Mosher, Michael. 'Free Trade, Free Speech, and Free Love: Monarchy from the Liberal Prospect in Mid-Eighteenth Century France'. In *Monarchisms in the Age of Enlightenment: Liberty,*

Patriotism, and the Common Good, edited by Hans Blom, John Christian Laursen, and Luisa Simonutti. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007.

Mossner, Ernest Campbell. 'Hume and the Ancient-Modern Controversy, 1725-1752: A Study in Creative Scepticism'. *The University of Texas Studies in English* 28 (1949): 139–53.

Norman, Larry F. *The Shock of the Ancient*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011.

Perelman, Michael. *The Invention of Capitalism: Classical Political Economy and the Secret History of Primitive Accumulation*. Duke University Press, 2000.

Phillips, Mark. *Society and Sentiment: Genres of Historical Writing in Britain, 1740-1820*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000.

Pocock, J. G. A. 'Perceptions of Modernity in Early Modern Historical Thinking'. *Intellectual History Review* 17, no. 1 (1 January 2007): 79–92. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17496970601140246>.

Pocock, J.G.A. 'Introduction'. In *The Political Works of James Harrington*, by James Harrington, edited by J.G.A. Pocock. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977.

———. *Virtue, Commerce, and History: Essays on Political Thought and History, Chiefly in the Eighteenth Century*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985.

Pye, Tom. 'Histories of Liberty in Scottish Thought, 1747-1787'. PhD Diss., University of Cambridge, 2018. <https://doi.org/10.17863/CAM.38236>.

Rigault, Hippolyte. *Histoire de la querelle des anciens et des modernes*. Paris: L. Hachette et cie., 1856.

Robertson, John. 'Enlightenment and Modernity, Historians and Philosophers'. *International Journal for History, Culture and Modernity* 8, no. 3–4 (2020): 278–321. <https://doi.org/10.1163/22130624-20200002>.

———. *The Case for the Enlightenment: Scotland and Naples, 1680-1760*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.

Sakamoto, Tatsuya. 'Hume's Political Economy as a System of Manners'. In *The Rise of Political Economy in the Scottish Enlightenment*, edited by Tatsuya Sakamoto and Hideo Tanaka. London: Routledge, 2003.

Santos Castro, Juan Samuel. 'Hume and Conjectural History'. *Journal of Scottish Philosophy* 15, no. 2 (2017): 157–74. <https://doi.org/10.3366/jsp.2017.0162>.

Sayre-McCord, Geoffrey. 'On Why Hume's "General Point of View" Isn't Ideal–and Shouldn't Be'. *Social Philosophy and Policy* 11, no. 1 (ed 1994): 202–28. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0265052500004350>.

Sebastiani, Silvia. *The Scottish Enlightenment: Race, Gender, and the Limits of Progress*. Basingstoke: Springer, 2013.

Sonenscher, Michael. *Before the Deluge: Public Debt, Inequality, and the Intellectual Origins of the French Revolution*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007.

Stewart, Dugald. 'An Account of the Life and Writings of Adam Smith, L. L. D.' In *Essays on Philosophical Subjects*, by Adam Smith, edited by W. P. D. Wightman, J. C. Bryce, and Ian Simpson Ross. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980.

Taylor, Jacqueline. *Reflecting Subjects: Passion, Sympathy, and Society in Hume's Philosophy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015.

———, Jacqueline, ed. *Reading Hume on the Principles of Morals*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020.

Watkins, Margaret. *The Philosophical Progress of Hume's Essays*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019.

———. 'Virtues Sublime and Suspect'. In *Hume's An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals: A Critical Guide*, edited by Esther Engels Kroeker and Willem Lemmens. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021.

Wennerlind, Carl. 'David Hume's Political Philosophy: A Theory of Commercial Modernization'. *Hume Studies* 28, no. 2 (2002): 247–70.

Westerman, Pauline. 'Hume and the Natural Lawyers: A Change of Landscape'. In *Hume and Hume's Connexions*, edited by M. A. Stewart and John P. Wright. University Park-PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995.

Wright, John P. 'Hume on the Origin of "Modern Honour": A Study in Hume's Philosophical Development'. In *Philosophy and Religion in Enlightenment Britain*, edited by Ruth Savage, 187–209. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.

Yılmaz, Levent. *Le Temps Moderne: Variations sur les Anciens et les Contemporains*. Paris: Gallimard, 2004.