Scottish Political Ideas in Eighteenth Century Germany: The Case of Adam Ferguson

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This thesis examines the reception of the works of Adam Ferguson, a major thinker of the Scottish Enlightenment, by a range of German readers in the late eighteenth century. It provides a survey of Ferguson's main political ideas, and argues that many of his prominent German readers did not come to terms with them. The thesis contrasts the political realities and concerns of Ferguson's Scotland with the profoundly different political concerns of his German readers, and their often vague and inaccurate ideas of Scotland, and of the British constitution. Their documented responses to Ferguson's works are brought as evidence for a cumulative and complex case of misreception.

The terms in which Ferguson expressed his political ideas can be fruitfully analyzed as a political language, a vocabulary of recognizable and mutually complementing political terms. After a close examination of this particular vocabulary, the thesis proceeds to show in detail how Ferguson's German translators, commentators, reviewers and readers unwittingly dismantled this vocabulary, lost or ignored its republican and activist elements, and sometimes shifted it into other vocabularies which were far removed from the author's political intentions. However, the differences between the individual readers are emphasized, not only with respect to their varied intellectual backgrounds and works, but also touching on their personal profiles as readers and thinkers.

The thesis aims especially to highlight three aspects of this Scottish-German encounter: the capacity of Ferguson's texts to be removed from their contexts and misread; the failure of civic humanist ideas to make a serious entry into German political discourse; and the merits of close textual analysis for supporting a type of explanation, which may supplement or counter-balance other explanations, about the limited effect of "imported" political ideas in eighteenth-century German discourse.

Abstract

Scottish Political Ideas in Eighteenth Century Germany: The Case of Adam Ferguson

The general field of this study is the development of modern social and political theories in Europe in the last three decades of the eighteenth century. It aims to highlight an interesting and so far under-researched aspect of British and German cultures in this period - the impact of Scottish political discourse on a range of German thinkers and writers. The study offers a comparative analysis and an account of the reception - and misreception - of political ideas.

The central question of the thesis is, to what extent and with what results did Scottish thought affect the formation of modern German views of State and society? It focuses on the Edinburgh historian and moral philosopher Adam Ferguson (1723-1816), who articulated some of the key insights of the Scottish Enlightenment - its anthropological and sociological enquiry and its debate on the moral significance of the changing economic realities. While sharing Adam Smith's interest in the division of labour and its social and moral consequences, Ferguson's political language was far more committed than Smith's to the tradition of civic humanism. This political idiom, rooted in Aristotle and the Stoics, was transformed by Machiavelli's republican teachings and transmitted to several British thinkers in the seventeenth century. Ferguson, one of its important users in the late eighteenth century, made a highly original contribution to this tradition, while conducting a fruitful dialogue with other political languages, notably that of natural jurisprudence. He is remembered by sociologists, and even dubbed the father of sociology, for his innovative theory of conflict between individuals and nations. His view of human psychology underpinned his advocacy of an active civic arena and of a citizens' militia, both vital to a well-functioning civil society. His political struggle for a Scottish militia was abortive, but his ideas affected, to a degree yet unmeasured, his American contemporaries, as well as several Continental writers.

My choice of Adam Ferguson for this study is further supported by his special and well-documented appeal to his German contemporaries, especially, though not solely, north-German Protestants. Leading figures of the Enlightenment and the so-called "counter Enlightenment" read Ferguson with admiration; for Schiller he was "a great sage of this century", and Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi paid homage to "the noble Ferguson". These thinkers were keenly interested in Ferguson's ideas on history and civil society. They thus paved the way for later German

interest in Ferguson, which has always surpassed his record in English-speaking countries. Through several German and Swiss routes he came to the attention of Hegel, whose use of Ferguson is yet to be evaluated. Marx made him an honorary founder of the theory of alienation. German sociologists in the early twentieth century honoured him as the father of sociology and anthropology; and recently a new German translation of his *Essay on the History of Civil Society* has triggered a surprising claim that Ferguson was an ancestor of "Green" social philosophy.

The present thesis aims to utilize new approaches to the history of political discourse in the English-speaking countries (especially J.G.A. Pocock's seminal work on early modern political language) for the relatively under-researched field of the Scottish-German links in the late eighteenth century. While recent studies, discussed in my first chapter, reconstruct a fruitful philosophical reception of Scottish ideas by German thinkers, I argue that the reception of political ideas was far less straightforward.

The method of this study is primarily the analysis of language and concepts. Although it owes a theoretical debt to Pocock's notion of "paradigms" of early modern political language, its adaptation to the German texts (which are not all "political" in any narrow sense) required a more flexible approach. I have chosen to focus on a number of key terms or concepts which constituted Ferguson's political vocabulary, and to follow their translations into German, which involved the acquisition of new contexts and the loss of old ones.

The first chapter offers a survey of the reception of Scottish works in German intellectual circles, within the broader context of British-German contacts. The German image of Scotland is posed as a key problem. In order to illustrate the problems of reception and alleged misreception the chapter provides brief descriptions of two studies of positive reception, and then four models of misreception, all pertaining to eighteenth-century Germany.

The second chapter describes Adam Ferguson's Scottish context and the general picture of his German readership. Ferguson's famous *Essay on the History of Civil Society* (1767) is a complex analysis of the history of primitive, ancient and modern societies. It accommodates a moral idea of civic virtue with a pointedly non-determinist model of history and a voluntary, participatory notion of political community. What makes Ferguson such an interesting test-case for the reception of Scottish political ideas in Germany is precisely his strong statement of the moral necessity for the citizens' participation in the government of their country, and his conviction (where he differed substantially from both Hume and Smith) that good laws are not sufficient without a constantly

vigilant citizenry. Ferguson was a modern civic humanist with a special eye for economic and social changes. He was no "abstract" liberal, and strongly believed in community, tradition, and national-martial spirit. He nevertheless advocated not only the moral independence of the individual, but also active civic virtue and participation of all capable citizens in the political life of their country. His goal was to accommodate this ideal with the problematic, but not necessarily evil, circumstances of modern commercial and increasingly industrial societies.

The third chapter examines some key concepts of Ferguson's theory, which were substantially altered or eliminated by his German readers. The most significant of those are "civil society", "public spirit" and "active pursuit". In some cases the terms were given German equivalents which removed them from the political-active sphere into spiritual, or pedagogical, or aesthetic spheres of individual self-perfection. Most interesting is the recurrent misplacing of Ferguson's idea of "active pursuit" in the Protestant notion of endless spiritual striving towards the perfectibility of the soul. This shift, flanked by a series of other vocabulary transitions, often made the Scottish texts lose much of their political edge. Occasional examples from other Scottish writers can show that Ferguson's texts were not alone in undergoing such transformation. But Ferguson's outspoken civic activism underwent a particularly interesting shift of meaning.

Chapters 4-9 offer in-depth analyses of the way several distinguished German thinkers read Ferguson, and a comparison of their political ideas with his. These thinkers were chosen for their well-documented admiration for Ferguson, and because they explicitly saw themselves as his followers, disciples or critics. Among them are the Swiss historian Isaak Iselin, the Silesian-Prussian *Popularphilosoph* Christian Garve, Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, the Göttingen scholars Feder, Meiners and Heyne, the allegedly "anti-rationalist" Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi, and Friedrich Schiller. Their readings of Ferguson have some interesting common lines, and one or two surprising deviations.

The thesis will thus offer a revisionist view of the reception of Scottish political and social theories by the German *Aufklärer* and the immediate predecessors of Romanticism. It aims to show that despite the claim for the "politicization of the *Aufklärung*", made by recent German scholarship, much political essence imported from Scotland was shifted and dimmed by the very admirers of Scottish thought. When not explicitly rejected, these ideas were moved into conceptual frameworks that were non-political, or at least non-participationist. The republican argument, and the case for civic activism, all but disappeared.

The conditions which enabled such misreading can be found both in Ferguson's texts and in the concepts of his German readers. On the one hand, Ferguson's social and political thought contained elements and wordings that were easy enough to remove from their political context. On the other hand, some of his German readers were equipped with preconceived notions which were "read into" Ferguson's texts. But the misreception of civic activism is not the exclusive outcome of socio-political "backwardness" or "lack of consciousness", nor is it an indication of malicious tampering with the texts. The thesis will repeatedly emphasise that many (though not all) of the processes it describes belong to subtle mechanisms of language and the dynamics of intellectual discourse that cannot be seen as willful manipulations. To use a generic term of eighteenth-century Scottish thinking, this is mainly a story of unintended consequences. I hope it can add a new perspective to the history of German political thought, and underline the case for a more cautious view of the movement of ideas between languages and across cultures.

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It is a pleasure to thank my teachers at Tel Aviv University for teaching me the historian's craft; special thanks go to Shulamit Volkov and Miriam Eliav-Feldon for their interest and support. In Oxford I have been fortunate to receive the kind encouragement of Sir Isaiah Berlin, who commented on early drafts of several chapters. Paul Langford has been a friendly and supportive Moral Tutor. During my visits to Göttingen, Hans Medick and Hans Erich Bödeker gave helpful feedbacks to my early, vague ideas, and introduced me to such treasures as the University Library and the new Zeitschrift-Index. But my greatest debt is to John Robertson, who supervised the thesis with unfailing attention and genuine care. He has taught me many things about the Scottish Enlightenment, the English language, and clear thinking, for which I am very grateful.

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My parents and mother in law have given me support and sympathy along the way. And without Eli Salzberger this thesis might have been completed in a shorter time, but by a far less happy woman.

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Abbreviations used frequently in the thesis

Essay - Adam Ferguson, *An Essay on the History of Civil Society*, edited, with an introduction, by Duncan Forbes (Edinburgh, 1966)

Institutes - Adam Ferguson, *Institutes of Moral Philosophy. For the Use of Students in the College of Edinburgh* (1st edn., Edinburgh, 1769)

Principles - Adam Ferguson, *Principles of Moral and Political Science: being chiefly a retrospect of Lectures delivered in the College of Edinburgh*, 2 vols. (London, 1792)

ADB - *Allgemeine deutsche Bibliothek*

GGA - *Göttingische Anzeigen von gelehrten Sachen*

A note on quotations

For the purposes of fluency and clarity, most of the quotations from German sources in this thesis have been translated into English. Exceptions, however, were made when the original flavour or literary merit of a text, for instance Herder's prose or Schiller's poetry, justified keeping it in German. The original versions of substantial quotations are provided in an appendix.

Chapter One
The German Enlightenment and Scotland

"...and however little the labours of the speculative may influence the conduct of men, one of the most pardonable errors a writer can commit, is to believe that he is about to do a great deal of good."
Adam Ferguson, *An Essay on the History of Civil Society* (1966 ed.), p. 209.

I

The impact of the Scottish Enlightenment on the German *Aufklärung*[1] has long been neglected, obscured or over-simplified. Recent studies, however, have drawn attention to the potentialities of this field. The similarities between the Scottish and the German (especially the Protestant German) intellectual scenes are now gradually being placed in context, and explained in terms of shared sources and common quests. Instead of an isolated Hume shaking a solitary Kant from his slumber, broader historical and structural relations are brought to light. It is becoming clearer that the Scots and the Germans developed, in the second half of the eighteenth century, two distinct versions of the European Enlightenment which had a great deal in common.[2] It is also established that Scottish works made significant contributions to the development of German philosophy.[3]

The common intellectual sources are an obvious point of departure. The Germans and the Scots were joint heirs to several European traditions: Aristotelian and Stoic ethics, Protestant perfectibilism, the legal and philosophical corpus of Roman law, and the modern tradition of Natural Law. The importance of Natural Law merits special attention: this legal and political discourse evolved from Grotius' and Pufendorf's project of

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1. The treatment of the German Enlightenment in this study incorporates some of its German-Swiss aspects. See especially chapter 4.
2. For an account of the Enlightenment as a European movement with distinctive national variants see R. Porter and M. Teich (eds.), *The Enlightenment in National Context* (Cambridge, 1981).
3. Knud Haakonssen, "Enlightenment Philosophy in Scotland and Germany. Recent German Scholarship", in Karl Eibl (ed.), *Entwicklungsschwellen im 18. Jahrhundert* (Hamburg, 1990; *Aufklärung*, Jg. 4, Heft 1). See also Eckhart Hellmuth's introduction, "Towards a Comparative Study of Political Culture", in *The Transformation of Political Culture. England and Germany in the Late Eighteenth Century*, ed. Hellmuth, (Oxford, 1990), pp. 1-36.

explaining the historical and moral substructure of modern societies, and was diffused from its German and Dutch origins, through the universities of the Netherlands, into Scottish scholarship in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.[4] It provided both Scots and Germans with a philosophical vocabulary which had crucial importance for scholarship in both countries, and it accounts for many instances of likemindedness which German scholars were delighted to find in Scottish works. In both cultures, Natural Law was developed in a constant dialogue with Christian, and specifically Protestant, ideas. Religion remained a central issue for both the Scottish and the German Enlightenments, whose thinkers, unlike the French *philosophes*, were committed to a moral theory which could accommodate faith and reason. But religion also had a subtler presence in their works: in Scotland and in Germany the languages of ethics and universal history were fed by religious concepts even as they struggled to free themselves from received religious forms.[5] It is no accident that these countries, more than any other European participants in the Enlightenment, produced a series of systematic inquiries into human societies, the "science of man" in Scotland and the *Sozialwissenschaften* in Germany. They developed new types of historical narratives fed by the Christian tradition of universal history, the four-stages theory of the Natural Lawyers, and the distinctly Protestant idea of human perfectibility, spiced by the modern fascination with ethnography and primitive societies.[6] These blends of the shared traditions in Scotland and in Germany are yet poorly mapped, and much comparative work remains to be done.

The shared sources were, furthermore, applied to common concerns: the Scots and the Germans in the eighteenth century needed to address a range of strikingly similar problems. The most obvious of these were the

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4. James Moore and Michael Silverthorne, "Gershom Carmichael and the Natural Jurisprudence Tradition in Eighteenth-Century Scotland", in Istvan Hont and Michael Ignatieff (eds.), *Wealth and Virtue. The shaping of Political Economy in the Scottish Enlightenment* (Cambridge, 1983; hereafter WV), pp. 73-87.

5. See especially Ernst Cassirer, *The Philosophy of Enlightenment* (Princeton, 1951), ch. iv.

6. Cassirer, *ibid.*, pp. 182-233; Gladys Bryson, *Man and Society. The Scottish Inquiry of the Eighteenth Century* (Princeton, 1945); R. L. Meek, *Social Science and the Ignoble Savage* (Cambridge, 1976). For the Natural Law foundation see Istvan Hont, "The language of sociability and commerce: Samuel Pufendorf and the 'Four-Stages Theory', in Anthony Pagden (ed.), *The Languages of Political Theory in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, 1987), pp. 253-276.

geo-political facts of peripherality and provincialism. Germans and Scots alike were conscious of their remoteness from great political and cultural centres, but also doubtful about the relevance of these centres to them. London, for many Scots, was alien and hostile. Paris, the great capital of European Enlightenment, was for both Scots and Germans geographically distant, linguistically alien, and philosophically questionable. The provincial character of Scotland and (to a greater extent) Germany was manifest in the multiplicity of local centres and the lack of a dominant one. Edinburgh did not supersede or absorb Aberdeen and Glasgow; far less could Berlin, Hamburg, Weimar, or Göttingen, each belonging to a different political unit, outdo one another as centres of intellectual activity. Theirs was a game of variety and interaction, rather than cultural consolidation. Such was the geo-political framework - variously seen as a weakness, a strength, or a mixed blessing - in which the Germans and the Scots came to understand their respective problems of national identity. But, as we shall see, these were different problems.[7]

In Germany and in Scotland the towns and the universities were the social locus of intellectual life. Both cultures conducted their intellectual transactions though periodicals, societies and clubs.[8] The social profiles of Enlightenment figures are strikingly analogous: many prominent thinkers in both countries were university professors and Protestant clergymen.[9] Adam Ferguson, the Scottish subject of this thesis, was entrusted with both roles. His readers in Germany and Switzerland display a variety of backgrounds and personalities, including men of letters (Lessing, Jacobi and Schiller), professors (Garve, Schiller and the Göttingen scholars) and administrators (Iselin and Jacobi). They were all Protestants, though not equally religious, and differing in their theological stances. All were connected to the German universities, as students or teachers; and they were also interconnected in the extensive network of *Aufklärung* intercourse, through their participation in learned journals and literary periodicals (notably the *Allgemeine deutsche Bibliothek* in Berlin and the

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7. Nicholas Phillipson, "The Scottish Enlightenment", in Porter and Teich (eds.) *Enlightenment*, pp. 19-40; Hellmuth, "Political Culture", pp. 17-20.
8. See the articles of Ulrich Im Hof, Horst Möller, and Hans Erich Bödeker in Hellmuth, *Transformation*, pp. 207-218, 219-234, 423-445 respectively.
9. Richard B. Sher, *Church and University in the Scottish Enlightenment: The Moderate Literati of Edinburgh* (Edinburgh, 1985); M. Raeff, *The Well-Ordered Police State* (New Haven, 1983).

Göttingische Anzeigen von gelehrten Sachen). The Germans, of course, were more widely dispersed than the Scots: while Ferguson could enjoy the company of his fellow literati in the comfort of Edinburgh taverns, at the meetings of the Select Society or the Poker Club, the German intellectuals often had to rely on correspondence and the odd visit (such as Jacobi's famous one to Lessing). Only the Swiss Iselin, the co-founder of the *Helvetische Gesellschaft*, experienced a political group comparable to the Edinburgh societies.[10] These differences aside, the Scottish literati and the German *Aufklärer* had many common features as members of new social elites of educated middle-class town dwellers, sharing the imperative of social utility which was one of the great unifying themes of the European Enlightenment. The German "practical philosophy" and the Scottish notion of "improvement" - different as they were in their degree of abstraction - followed the same impulse, both seeking to apply theoretical and moral reasoning to the economic and social betterment of their environments.[11]

The time-frames of the two movements are fairly parallel: the Scottish Enlightenment, like its German counterpart, flourished during the last four decades of the eighteenth century, and its founding fathers (Hutcheson and Hume in Scotland, Wolff in Germany) wrote their influential works in the first half of the century. However, the Scottish side had an advantage, and not merely a chronological one: the rising international stature of the English language, the Germans' thirst for foreign works, and the reflections of these facts in the German book trade, made Scottish books far more significant to German readers than the other way round.

What did the Germans find in Scottish books? As a preliminary answer, it can be said that they found support for two common causes, one a crusade of sorts and the other a journey of discovery. The first cause was to fight off the radical challenges of the French Enlightenment - Bayle's atheism, La Mettrie's mechanism, d'Holbach's materialism - by means of a rational Christian ethics, a discourse of sensibility, and the search for a

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10. See chapter 4, pp. 107-109.

11. N.T. Phillipson and Rosalind Mitchison (eds.), *Scotland in the Age of Improvement*, (Edinburgh, 1970); Joachim Whaley, "The Protestant Enlightenment in Germany", in Porter and Teich (eds.) *Enlightenment*, pp. 106-117.

reliable new theory of knowledge. Ammunition for this important philosophical battle could be found in Hutcheson's and Ferguson's ethics, and in the common sense epistemology of Reid and Beattie. The second attraction of Scottish authors, especially Robertson, Ferguson and Adam Smith, involved the assimilation of the new ethnographic literature and the inquiry into the history of societies, the problem of progress, and the shaping of a new universal narrative of human advance. We shall later explore these two main sources of interest at greater detail.

The present study, however, is primarily about the limitations of impact and of common agenda: it is concerned with the conceptual intransferability of part of the Scottish political language into German discourse. It thus focuses on a failed reception process, a complex and largely unintentional misunderstanding, which involved the loss of civic and republican language in the wake of spiritual and metaphysical notions of human enhancement. Such failures, themselves far from futile, can make interesting stories; it is important to begin by observing that this kind of misreception is only possible, or indeed interesting, within a fruitful dialogue between two closely related cultures.

II

Scottish authors began to attract a German readership from the 1750s, as part of a general increase in the reception of books from Britain. The heyday of the German Enlightenment, in the second half of the century, was marked by a shift from the French to the British cultural sphere. This re-orientation was not abrupt: Germans travelled to England and wrote about it in the late seventeenth century, and English books were circulated in Germany. Newton and Locke were sources of the German Enlightenment along with Descartes and Leibniz. On a more popular level the most successful English import was the model of Steel and Addison's "moral weekly", a publication type which was eagerly taken up by German writers in the early decades of the eighteenth century.[12]

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12. W.H. Bruford, *Germany in the Eighteenth Century. The Social Background of the Literary Revival* (Cambridge, 1968). Horst Oppel, *Englisch-deutsche Literaturbeziehungen* vol. I: *Von den Anfängen bis zum Ausgang des 18. Jahrhunderts* (Berlin, 1971); Wolfgang Martens, *Das Botschaft der Tugend. Die*

In the second half of the eighteenth century the German interest in Britain began to rise sharply on most measurable scales. More Germans went to Britain on intellectual pilgrimages. It became a popular destination for aristocratic grand tours and for middle class *Bildungsreisen.*[13] English books began to vie with the French at the Easter book fair in Leipzig: in the years 1780-1782, for instance, they comprised 20.68% percent of foreign original-language books sold (with the French leading at 40.46%, and the Italian following with 19.28%). Translations from the English, though never passing the French, left all other languages far behind: in 1775 the Leipzig fair boasted 59 translations from French, 41 from English, 12 from Latin and less than 6 from any other language. In some fields, particularly novels, medicine, philosophy and travel literature, the relative share of English books was even higher.[14]

German periodicals paid increasing attention to news and writings from Britain. English-language periodicals appeared in Hamburg, and English books were reprinted, notably in Basle.[15] Leipzig became the main centre of translation and circulation of books from Britain,[16] while Zurich emerged as another important intermediary.[17] In Göttingen books from Britain were efficiently purchased and enthusiastically read, and the innovative new university made extensive use of British sources. English modes and manners invaded upper middle class circles, partly as a response to the Francophile aristocracy and courts. Not least significantly, English words infiltrated the German language.[18] Britain became, for

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Aufklärung im Spiegel der deutschen moralischen Wochenschriften (Stuttgart, 1968).

13. P.E. Matheson, *German Visitors to England 1770-1795 and their Impressions* (Oxford, 1930). Oppel, *Literaturbeziehungen*, I, 55-56.

14. Bernhard Fabian, "English Books and their Eighteenth-Century German Readers", in Paul J. Korshin (ed.), *The Widening Circle. Essays on the Circulation of Literature in Eighteenth-Century Europe* (Pennsylvania, 1976); H. Kiesel and P. Münch, *Gesellschaft und Literatur im 18. Jahrhundert. Voraussetzungen und Entstehung des Literarischen Markts in Deutschland* (Munich, 1977), pp. 195-197.

15. Fabian, "English Books", pp. 135-137. A major source of English reprints was the Basle house of Tourneisen.

16. Oppel, *Literaturbeziehungen,* I, 57-58.

17. Theodor Vetter, *Zürich als Vermittlerin englisher Literatur im achzehnten Jahrhundert* (Zurich, 1891).

18. Michael Maurer, *Aufklärung und Anglophilie in Deutschland* (Göttingen and Zurich, 1987), p. 16.

many Germans, the great antithesis to France: "The admiration for Corneille and Voltaire", wrote J.W. von Archenholz in 1787, "which Gottsched had implanted in the Germans, diminished considerably when Shakespeare and Milton became known... It was found that in respect of their mentality and civil virtues as well as in view of their literary and philosophical works, the Germans had more in common with the English nation than with any other."[19]

This change of attitude was more than a mere substitution of one cultural dependency for another; it was part of an intellectual re-orientation that transformed the German educated public during the second half of the century. New literary feats were hailed by an educated middle class, increasingly aware of its social and cultural circumstances, and demanding freedom of speech and independence of expression. This movement, whether it is understood in terms of bourgeois emancipation,[20] or the emerging consciousness of a public sphere,[21] or as a process of politicization of social groups and institutions,[22] was undisputably a movement of readership. It came to regard itself as a *Publicum*, primarily in the sense of a reading public. It gave rise to hundreds of journals as well as books; and it provided not only tens of thousands of readers, but also thousands of professional or semi-professional writers.[23] Books from Britain made a timely entrance into this intensifying cultural scene, and played many roles in promoting its ideas and debates.

There are at least three phenomena, often overlapping but nevertheless distinct, which have been described by students of the "English" impact on eighteenth-century Germans. The first of these is the *Anglophilie* or *Anglomanie* - an enthusiastic interest in all aspects of British life, from literature to social etiquette or gardening. This became a fashion in

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19. Johann Wilhelm von Archenholz, "An die Freunde der englischen Litteratur und Sprache" (1787), translated and quoted by Fabian, "English Books", p. 172.
20. Georg Lukács, "Größe und Grenzen der deutschen Aufklärung", Peter Pütz (ed.), *Erforschung der deutschen Aufklärung* (Königstein/Ts., 1980), pp. 114-123.
21. Jürgen Habermas, *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit* (Neuwied and Berlin 1962).
22. Hans Erich Bödeker and Ulrich Herrmann (eds.), *Aufklärung als Politisierung - Politisierung der Aufklärung* (Hamburg, 1987). Hellmuth (ed.), *Transformation*, pts. I, III, V.
23. Bruford, *Social Background*, pp. 289-290. Kiesel and Münch, *Gesellschaft und Literatur*, pp. 90ff, 159ff.

German educated circles during the second half of the eighteenth century, and was closely connected to the increase of *Bildungsreisen* to Britain and their literary descriptions, and with the reception of British prose and poetry.[24]

Secondly, Britain was sometimes hailed as a model for the Germans to follow. In the eighteenth century the wish actively to adopt or emulate British patterns was mainly centred on manners and literature. There were, of course, political thinkers - notably Justus Möser, the journalist C. F. D. Schubart, and the followers of Burke in the 1790s - who did assert that England could teach Germany some immediate lessons; but they were a minority. To most Germans the British political structure, seen mainly through the idealizing eyes of Voltaire and Montesquieu, was considered inapplicable to German reality. The vast majority of the Enlightenment thinkers saw nothing in the English constitution that could encourage a radical change in German political culture. English politics were often criticized even by their keen admirers, and most political thinkers were reluctant to treat them as models.[25] Only later, especially in the *Vormärz* decades, was Britain to become a full-blown political alternative, at least for the liberals who chose to emphasise the contrast between "English freedom" and the post-Napoleonic German regimes.[26]

The third phenomenon, on which this study will focus, is the reception and discussion of British ideas by German writers. To this vast field belong such diverse subjects as epistemology, moral philosophy, theology, science, literary criticism and politics. The reception of English texts on these subjects in Germany - an intellectual activity comparative by its nature, and increasingly critical - was a major component of the late German Enlightenment. Within this field we shall attempt to make sense of the distinct Scottish contribution, mainly in the intertwining areas of social, moral, and political thought.

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24. Maurer, *Anglophilie*, especially pt. 1.

25. On the selective anglophilia of Justus Möser see Maurer, *ibid.*, p. 120. On the similar attitude of Christian Wilhelm Dohm see Rudolf Vierhaus, *Deutschland im 18. Jahrhundert* (Göttingen, 1987), p. 258.

26. Annelise Mayer, *England als politisches Vorbild und sein Einfluß auf die politische Entwicklung in Deutschland bis 1830* (Endingen, 1931). James J. Sheehan, *German Liberalism in the 19th Century* (Chicago and London, 1978), p. 46.

What was the role of the Scottish Enlightenment in this era of German *Anglophilie*, and why has it received so little attention from students of the period? The answer, I think, is threefold: the Scottish contribution was obscured by the widespread and persistent vagueness of the terms "English" and "England"; it was neglected due to the overbearing dominance of belletristic studies; and it was simplistically boiled down to such token links as Herder's and Goethe's Ossian, Kant's Hume, and, to a lesser extent, the Prussian economists' Adam Smith. Let us examine these dimming factors, and the recent bids for their removal.

III

Recent German scholarship has been concerned with liberating the *Aufklärung* from the *Goethezeit*, shifting attention from poetic accomplishments to social-political debates. The causes for this move are beyond our scope; but its result is that intellectual history of the final decades of the eighteenth century has been given fresh impetus by novel approaches to language, and by a new interest in the period as a turning-point in political and social theory.[27] It took longer, however, for the study of British-German "influences" to discard its almost exclusive focus on literature and literary criticism. Despite the pioneering bibliographic work of Price and Price,[28] the belletristic emphasis held fast until about a decade ago.

In part, this tendency is justified by the richness and fertility of German literary encounters with English poetry, drama and prose in the eighteenth century. The receptions of Addison, Shaftesbury, Richardson and Fielding, Edward Young and "Ossian", and the discovery of Shakespeare, make a great story of inter-cultural impact. It could easily pass for the whole story. And, although it is clearly not the whole story,

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27. Two directions of reorientation were initiated by Habermas, *Strukturwandel*; and by O. Brunner, W. Conze, and R. Kosellek, *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe: Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland*, 5 vols. so far (Stuttgart, 1974-1984).

28. Mary Bell Price and Lawrence Marsden Price, *The Publication of English Humaniora in Germany in the Eighteenth Century* (Berkeley, 1934). The Scots are included.

the literary links can be neglected only at one's peril, especially when dealing with politics.

Yet it is especially in the field of belles lettres and literary theory that the Scottish contributions have been swept under the English carpet.[29] Hutcheson's concept of love, which German readers such as Christian Garve skimmed off his moral sense theory, was blended into a vague general notion of English *Gefühlsphilosophie*. To many German readers, past and present, he remains primarily the disciple and mediator of Shaftesbury, the greatest source of German sentimentalism.[30] Shaftesbury himself, however, was known mainly though his disciples; and these, ironically enough, were the three "Englishmen", Hutcheson, Kames and Burke. Between them, they provided the German *Sturm und Drang* and the Romanticist movement with their core ideas of creativity, genius and the sublime.[31] One hallmark of this "English" poetics was that its German recipients developed it in a direction of radical individuality: the genius became a person rather than a quality, and the individual creative artist became the focus of attention.

As far as prose writing was concerned, it is perhaps understandable that the Scot Smollett was not singled out from the English novelists who delighted German readers - Fielding, Sterne, Goldsmith, and especially Richardson.[32] Unlike the notions of individual genius dominating literary theory, the English "bourgeois novels" conveyed to the German middle-class readers a language of sociability, which was effectively reflected in Lessing's dramas. Jürgen Habermas has suggested that Richardson's epistolary novels, for example, helped to shape the consciousness of a public sphere, being a vehicle for the typical middle-class urge to

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29. For example, Robert Van Dusen's *Christian Garve and English Belles-Lettres* (Bern, 1970) distorts Garve's career as a mediator of British works in Germany by "forgetting" his greatest achievements, the annotated translations of Ferguson and Smith. Oppel's full and useful survey of literary connections mentions Ferguson just once, misleadingly, in the chapter on genius.

30. Christian Friedrich Weiser, *Shaftesbury und das deutsche Geistesleben* (Leipzig, 1916). Cassirer, *Philosophy*, pp. 312-331.

31. See especially M.H. Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp. Romantic theory and the critical Tradition* (Oxford, 1953), ch. viii.

32. Between 1740 and 1790, according to one estimate, some 320 English novels were translated into German. The best-known novels were translated within an average of two years from their first English editions. See L.M. Price, *English Literature in Germany* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1953), p. 184; Oppel, *Literaturbeziehungen*, pp. 126-136.

publicize private matters, to objectify the "terrain of subjectivity".[33] But this notion of a public sphere, like the language of sociability and sensibility which dominated its English sources, was not essentially political: it was about membership in society, not citizenship in a polity.

It was the genre of poetry which gave Scotland its greatest chance to make itself known to the Germans as a distinct national entity. In no other genre did British works move German readers to such a degree: Edward Young's immensely popular *Night Thoughts*, the revived Shakespeare, and Thomas Percy's *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry*, were eagerly taken up by Swiss and German writers seeking a model for their own search for literary roots and forms;[34] but Macpherson's Ossianic epos at one point outshone them all, and its Scottishness was difficult to ignore. Its long-term effect on German Romanticism was heralded by its enthusiastic reception during the *Sturm und Drang* decade. "Ossian has replaced Homer in my heart", says the half-way-downhill Werther in Goethe's novel. By rejecting the universal classical primitive poet for a more personal bard in a concrete landscape, Werther anticipated the German Romanticist preference for Nordic poetry and its stress on the Germanic primitivism, which prevailed long after Goethe disowned Ossian.[35] But despite (and perhaps because of) the resulting rage for Gaelic, fuelled by the authenticity debate, German Ossianism seems to have by-passed Scotland. The Ossianic project - the primitivist, folklorist route to a new national identity - in fact served to obscure, rather than buttress, the distinct intellectual culture of eighteenth-century Scotland in German eyes.

The case should not be overstated: some Germans did notice, at an early stage, that Scottish scholarship had a distinct character. Not surprisingly, the more perceptive were often those who visited Britain, such as J.W. von Archenholz in the 1770s. After complaining about the dullness and corruption of the south of England, Archenholz informed his readers that

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33. Jürgen Habermas, "Soziale Strukturen der Öffentlichkeit", reprinted in Peter Pütz (ed.), *Erforschung der deutschen Aufklärung*(Königstein/Ts., 1980), pp. 152-153.
34. Roy Pascal, *Shakespeare in Germany 1740-1815* (Cambridge, 1937); Oppel, *Literaturbeziehungen*, ch. viii; Abrams, *Mirror*, ch. viii.
35. See Howard Gaskill, "German Ossianism: A Reappraisal?", *German Life and letters* XLII (1989), pp. 329-341; Abrams, *Mirror*, pp. 82-83.

"more true learning is to be found in Edinburgh than in Oxford and Cambridge taken together."[36] Visitors to England were also made aware of the particular Scottish-English tensions. When the essayist Helfrich Peter Sturz visited England in 1768, as a member of the entourage of the young Danish king Christian III, he was fortunate enough to meet both Macpherson and Samuel Johnson, and to hear their respective sides of the Ossian controversy. Macpherson, in the presence of the orientalist and dramatist Alexander Dow, read to Sturz several stanzas from some ancient-looking Gaelic manuscripts, thus fully convincing Sturz of Ossian's authenticity.[37] Of Johnson's opinion Sturz bluntly observed: "Macpherson is a Scot, and [Johnson] would rather let him pass for a great poet than for an honest man."[38]

Herder, too, noted in 1772 that "the spirit of British philosophy seems to be situated beyond Hadrian's wall", in "a little group of its own adherents in the Scottish mountains"; he named Ferguson, Robertson, Home, and Millar.[39] By the early nineteenth century both Hegel and Goethe knew that German thought in the preceding decades had been nourished by Scottish rather than English thinkers. Goethe wrote of the *Bildung*-striving Germans' appreciation for "the merits of worthy Scottish men". Hegel put it more sharply:

> Von englischen Philosophen kann nicht mehr die Rede seyn. Die es noch gegeben, bewegen sich in den Graenzen einer sehr gewoehnlichen Verstandesmetaphysik. Die schottischen Philosophen dagegen haben als gebildete, denkende Maenner die Moralische Natur des Menschen betrachtet, wie sie sich in einem gebildeten Geiste reflectirt. Von diesen Moralen sind viele in's Deutsche uebersetzt worden...[40]

But the actual reception of Scottish ideas during the last third of the eighteenth century was blurred by a wrong idea of Scotland's uniqueness.

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36. Quoted in Matheson, *German Visitors,* p. 23.
37. Jaikyung Hahn, *Helfrich Peter Sturz (1736-1779)* (Stuttgart, 1976), pp. 61-63. Sturz, belonging to Klopstock's circle in Copenhagen, was favourably disposed towards Macpherson's claim anyway.
38. *Ibid.*, p. 62.
39. Herder, *Sämtliche Werke*, ed. Suphan, vol. V (Berlin, 1891), p. 452; quoted by Norbert Waszek, *The Scottish Enlightenment and Hegel's Account of Civil Society* (Dordrecht, Boston, London, 1988), p. 82.
40. Both are quoted by Waszek, "Bibliography of the Scottish Enlightenment in Germany", *Studies of Voltaire and the 18th Century* 230 (1985), p. 238.

Herder's *Briefwechsel über Ossian* (1773) is of special interest in this respect. He tells there of a dream to travel to Scotland via England:

> Als eine Reise nach England noch in meiner Seele lebte - o Freund, Sie wissen nicht, wie sehr ich damals auch auf diese Schotten rechnete! Ein Blick, dachte ich, auf den öffentlichen Geist und die Schaubühne und das ganze lebende Schauspiel des englischen Volks, um im ganzen die Ideen mir aufzuklären, die sich im Kopf eines Ausländers in Geschichte, Philosophie, Politik und Sonderbarkeiten dieser wunderbaren Nation so dunkel und sonderbar zu bilden und zu verwirren pflegen. Alsdenn die größte Abwechselung des Schauspiels, zu den Schotten! zu Macpherson! Da ich will die Gesänge eines lebenden Volks lebendig hören, sie in alle der Würkung sehen, die sie machen, die Örter sehen, die allenthalben in den Gedichten leben, die Reste dieser alten Welt in ihren Sitten studieren! eine Zeitlang ein alter Kaledonier werden - und denn nach England zurück, um die Monumente ihrer Literatur und ihre zusammengeschleppten Kunstwerke und das Detail ihres Charakters mehr zu kennen - wie freute ich mich auf den Plan! [41]

For Herder, Ossian's Scotland was a different sort of spectacle from England, public spirit and all. Scotland was still a living *Volk*, and England, in a sense, no longer was. Scotland was genuine, England monumental. Ancient manners could still be studied in Scotland, or, better still, one could think of becoming an ancient Caledonian for a while. The distinction Herder made in 1773 was thus an anticipation of Schiller's categories of the Naive and the Sentimental, with Scotland being the geographical locus of the Naive.[42]

When Herder craved to travel "to Macpherson!" he knew very well that Macpherson was no Highland bard. He sensed the strength of Ossian's modern context - that the enthusiasm of the modern Scots who encouraged Macpherson's "discovery" of Ossian, and then helped to spread its fame, was very different from the sober and scholarly efforts of Bishop Percy.[43] Acquainted as he was with the texts of the Ossianic

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41. Johann Gottfried Herder, "Von Deutscher Art und Kunst", *Werke in zwei Bänden* (Munich, 1953), I, 838-839. Then, he continues, I could have become a translator of Ossian, but different from Michael Denis (the Viennese Jesuit translator), for whom "ist selbst die Macphersonsche Probe der Ursprache ganz vergebens abgedruckt gewesen".

42. Cf. chapter 9, pp. 285, 297.

43. Cf. George Sherburne and Donald F. Bond, *A Literary History of England,* vol. III: *The Restorations and the Eighteenth Century* (2nd edn., London, 1967), 1017.

controversy, and watchful of the small vanguard of philosophers in "the Scottish mountains", Herder could not have overlooked the fact that Ossian's Scottish sponsors were engaged in a conscious effort to form a cultural identity. They could serve as models for an equivalent Germanic root search, as indeed they became for Achim von Arnim and the later generation of Romanticists.[44] But it is far less certain that Herder, or any of his German contemporaries, recognized that Ossian was only a part-time occupation for his Edinburgh advocates, whose main project of national identity was a different one.

The sponsors of Macpherson's project were an influential Edinburgh circle of literati, led by Hugh Blair and Adam Ferguson (the two most excited about Ossian), John Home, Alexander Carlyle, and William Robertson.[45] This group was only one part of the Scottish Enlightenment, but it enjoyed a unity and a sense of national purpose which no German intellectual community could rival. Its members were Presbyterian clergymen and Enlightenment thinkers who worked to combine both identities within a joint political and cultural enterprise. They were linked to the ecclesiastical party of the "Moderates", which was founded in 1752, and controlled the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland during most of the second half of the century.[46] Their intellectual circle, the "moderate literati" in Richard Sher's phrase, combined a relaxed attitude to the kirk with new philosophical horizons. In their preaching, the clergymen among them aimed to combine the principles of the church with the moral theory taught at the universities. Politically they can be seen as "Whig-Presbyterian conservatives", defending the Scottish-English union, Britain's Hanoverian regime, and (with some qualifications) the social status quo.[47] However, their Scottish circumstances made this

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44. Arnim visited Scotland in 1804. Between 1806 and 1811 five complete German translations of the Ossianic epos were published; see Gaskill, "German Ossianism", pp. 335-337.

45. Richard B. Sher, "'Those Scotch Impostors and their Cabal': Ossian and the Scottish Enlightenment", in R.L. Emerson, G. Girard and Roseanne Runte (eds.), *Man and Nature. Proceedings of the Canadian Society for Eighteenth Century Studies* vol. I (London, Ontario, 1982), 55-63.

46. See Ian D.L. Clark, "From Protest to Reaction: The Moderate Regime in the Church of Scotland, 1752-1805", in Phillipson and Mitchison (eds.), *Improvement* , pp. 200-224.

47. Sher, *Church and University*, especially ch. 5. At least in the case of Ferguson, I think Sher is over-emphasizing the religious as well as the (narrowly political) "Whig" element, and under-emphasising the quest for a theory of society and government with universal, or at least European, validity.

stance more complicated than mere British conservatism or whiggism. Their Presbyterian convictions meant that moral justification for political principles was taken very seriously. Recent Scottish history, from the Union through the Jacobite uprising of 1745, meant that the defence of the political status quo - to which they adhered - was a matter of active public virtue, not just passive good-citizenship. Rapid economic change and prospects for industrialization and commercial expansion signalled a danger to public cohesion, responsibility and "spirit", which disallowed any simplistic satisfaction with material progress. The educated Scots found themselves conducting several identity-dialogues - with the "rude" Highlands, with London, and with other European centres of the Enlightenment - about the implications of being Scottish, being British, and being civilized. Still, these identity-dialogues could be conducted from a *terra firma* rather superior to what Germans had: despite their linguistic ambivalence and political peripherality, Scots could draw on a solid and continuous political history, and a fairly unambiguous geography.

The moderate literati, in other words, had a Scotland; Herder and his contemporaries did not have an equivalent Germany. Theirs was a *Reich* of over three hundred political units, a map of dynastic arbitrariness, religiously split, and scarred by internal wars. The vocabulary of *Patriotismus* and *Vaterland*, which Germans acquired from their Swiss neighbours, could not comfortably apply to the Empire. Justus Möser, for one, saw Osnabrück as his only *Vaterland*. But many others looked further afield: Herder and Lessing claimed for all Germans one cultural-national identity. That such an identity was possible, that it could transcend or amend the fragmented political world of the Holy Roman Empire, was widely felt. In Schiller's first play, *Die Räuber* (1780), "der Ort der Handlung ist Deutschland." Germany did exist as a geographical entity, and, more importantly, as a linguistic and cultural space. Herder, wished to consolidate it into a German *Volk*: "unless we have a *Volk*, we lack also a public, a nation, a language, and a literature."[48] But he too, like Lessing, was content to begin with language, literature, and the public.

These were the circumstances which made it easy for German men of letters to pick out the colourful lining of the Scottish agenda rather than

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48. Quoted by James J. Sheehan, *German History 1770-1866* (Oxford, 1989), p. 165.

its theoretical and political substance. In their Scottish context, the Ossian lobbyists can only sarcastically be accused of heralding the literary romanticism of the Walter Scott brand[49]; but in Germany Ossianism actually contributed to the shaping of full-blown nationalist romanticism. This shift of weight is part of the failure of the Scottish Enlightenment to come across to its German recipients as a coherent cultural enterprise, an effort subtler than Ossianism to form a modern national identity.

Without the broader context Ossian remained, for many Germans, an "English" (or a dimly "Celtic") bard. Similarly, Ferguson and Kames were "noteworthy English moralists" in J.G. Buhle's *Geschichte der Philosophie* (1803).[50] This usage was, of course, partly due to the strictly linguistic denotation of the noun or the adjective "English". Terms such as *Anglophilie* or *Anglomanie* contributed to the blur. But even in hands as careful as Kant's, the distinction failed to emerge: in his *Anthropologie* Kant used the term "British" to denote the pre-Saxon times, while "the English people" was the present, ethnically mixed population. Pondering the "mixed" national character of the English, Kant made no mention of the Scots.[51] Many recent scholars have followed suit, retaining the cover-term "English" even when their books deal extensively with the Scots.[52] But this inaccuracy could survive only as long as the belletristic emphasis held strong; new studies, turning to previously neglected fields of impact, are now unearthing the long-obscured *Schottland*.

IV

Two recent studies have now added greatly to our knowledge of the Scottish sources of eighteenth-century German philosophy: Manfred

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49. "Collaborators in Ossian as well as enthusiasts for the militia, the Moderates well deserve to be counted with the earliest inventors of the modern, kilt-ridden tradition of Scottishness"; John Robertson, *The Scottish Enlightenment and the Militia Issue* (Edinburgh, 1985), p. 243.

50. J.G. Buhle, *Geschichte der Philosophie,* vol. V (Göttingen, 1803), 350.

51. Immanuel Kant, *Anthropologie in pragmatischer Hinsicht* (1798). I have used the 12 volume edition of Kant's works, ed. W. Weischedel (Frankfurt a.M., 1977), vol. XII, 663-665.

52. Gustav Zart, *Einfluss der englischen Philosophie seit Bacon auf die deutsche Philosophie des 18. Jahrhunderts* (Berlin, 1881); Horst Oppel's otherwise illuminating *Englisch-deutsche Literaturbeziehungen*. Maurer, *Anglophilie*, defines his subject as "a basic preference for England, the English and everything English" (p. 15), although the book does not neglect the Scots.

Kuehn's work on the German reception of the Scottish common sense school, and Norbert Waszek's work on the Scots' impact on Hegel. Both works are based on extensive bibliographic research; and we, too, may begin with a look at the evidence from the book market.

Scottish works formed an important segment in the general influx of British books into Germany. A large number of books by Scots were either translated into German, or otherwise circulated in German-speaking lands. In the second half of the eighteenth century Scottish and English books were translated into German with increasing speed. This acceleration began in the 1750s, and David Hume was one of its first beneficiaries. The *Treatise on Human Nature* (1739), very slow to impress the British public, was only translated into German in 1790-1791; *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (1751) fared better, appearing in 1755, as a part of the first edition of *Essays, Moral and Political* (1741) which were published in German in 1754-1756. The highly successful *History of England* (1754-1763) became available to German readers from 1762, through two separate translations in Berlin and in Leipzig. The *Four Dissertations* (1757) were published in Germany in the same year as their original English appearance.[53] Hume's impact on German epistemology has recently been surveyed, and shown to range wider than the famous instance of Kant[54]; but the significance of Hume's historical and political works for the German Enlightenment is yet unexplored.

The peak period for the reception of Scottish works was from the mid-1760s through the 1770s, with prompt translations of Ferguson's books, Millar's *Observations concerning the Origins and Distinction of Ranks in Society* and Smith's *Wealth of Nations*. Although the average period between original publications and German translations is estimated, for the major authors, at about 9.5 years, these peak period translations were often complete within a year of the first English editions.[55]

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53. Waszek, "Bibliography", pp. 294-297.
54. Günther Gawlick, Lothar Kreimendahl, *Hume in der deutschen Aufklärung. Umrisse eine Rezeptionsgeschichte* (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt, 1987).
55. Waszek, "Bibliography", p. 286. The authors covered are Beattie, Ferguson, Hume, Hutcheson, Kames, Millar, Monboddo, Oswald, Robertson, and Smith.

The speed of translation is only one proof of the German interest in the Scots, and not always a reliable one. As Bernhard Fabian notes, quick translation *per se* was not always purely a response to intellectual eagerness on the part on the reading public; sometimes it was the only way for the publisher to be the first on the market.[56] But there are other indications that books from Scotland were in demand: many reprints and new editions, several re-translations, and, chiefly from the 1780s, English-language reprints.[57]

Translators were often young academics, sometimes prominent writers, and of varying competence. Bad translation is sometimes blamed for the obscurity of Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations* in its early German edition (1776-1778), while Christian Garve's brilliant second translation and preface (1794-1796) is seen as a key factor in its belated success.[58] In fact, as Keith Tribe has recently argued, the "Smith reception" was more complex than that: the maturing of "*Smithianismus*" in Germany should be seen in the general context of changing economic discourse in the leading German universities; the earlier reception of James Steuart's political economy in fact overshadowed Smith for two decades. The quality of translation was thus just one part of the story.[59] Nevertheless, it was an important part, as Ferguson's case can demonstrate. What Garve did for Ferguson's *Institutes of Moral Philosophy*, an unimpressive translation by C.F. Jünger failed to do for *An Essay on the History of Civil Society*. Similarly, first-rate translators such as J.N. Meinhard, and the great Lessing, ensured that justice was done to Kames' *Elements of Criticism* and to Hutcheson's *System of Moral philosophy*, respectively.[60]

The great days of Scottish books in Germany, at least in terms of publication, had ended by 1800. There are no statistical evaluations for the early nineteenth century, but the data collected by Fabian for 1800

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56. Fabian, "English Books", p. 133.
57. Waszek lists the re-publications and the re-translations of the authors he examined, but not the English reprints. For the importance of original language editions for the emergeing English-reading public, and the special contribution of the Basle publisher Tourneisen (or Thurneysen) in this field, see Fabian, *ibid.*, pp. 135-137.
58. Waszek, "Bibliography", 286.
59. Tribe, *Governing Economy. The Reformation of German Economic Discourse 1750-1840* (Cambridge, 1988), pp. 133-148.
60. Wazsek, "Bibliography", pp. 286-287.

show that while new translations of English belles-lettres were still on the rise, humanistic literature fell down sharply.[61] This probably affected Scottish books more than those from England. However, one should again beware of deducing public interest from publication data. By 1800 the great Scottish philosophy books had been written, and mostly translated into German. As the case of Hegel demonstrates, in the early decades of the nineteenth century they still had distinguished readers and were still very much on the intellectual agenda.

Manfred Kuehn's study of the German reception of the common sense philosophers, Reid, Oswald and Beattie, focuses on epistemology, and its chief aim is to show that Kant's famous derision of these thinkers does not do justice to his true debt to them. In his *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics* Kant dismissed the Scottish common sense school as irrelevant for countering Hume's scepticism, because its thinkers had totally misunderstood Hume. Kuehn suggests that the very vehemence of Kant's attack on the Scots indicates that they were taken seriously in Germany, and proceeds to demonstrate that indeed they were: all major philosophical schools profited from the common sense epistemology, primarily because it offered an attractive combination of rationalism and empiricism - the two poles of eighteenth-century German philosophical discourse. Kant himself, as Kuehn tries to prove, was in fact well acquainted with the Scottish common sense school, and the striking similarity between some of his statements and those of Reid is far from accidental. Kant in fact made use of Reid's ideas in his own response to Hume. The Scots were also important for the reception of Kant's critical philosophy in Germany.[62] Kuehn's account is particularly interesting, for our context, in showing that the same British thinkers were often summoned to support opposing combatants in German debates: thus Reid's common sense epistemology was taken up in different ways by Wolffians and "faith philosophers", naturalists and sceptics.[63]

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61. Fabian, "English Books", pp. 126-127, graphs 1 and 2. There were earlier falls in the number of new translations, notably in the early 1780s. The last peak in humanistic literature was in the mid 1790s.

62. Manfred Kuehn, "The Early Reception of Reid, Oswald and Beattie in Germany", *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 21 (1983), pp. 479-495; *Scottish Common Sense in Germany, 1768-1800. A Contribution to the History of Critical Philosophy* (Kingston and Montreal, 1987).

63. Lewis White Beck's introduction to Kuehn's book, *ibid.*, p. x.

Norbert Waszek's work on Hegel's Scottish sources includes a pioneering survey of the reception of Scottish books in eighteenth-century Germany, with an emphasis on the impressive number of book-reviews and the broadly positive attitude towards the Scots.[64] Adam Ferguson's impact is pointed out in Hegel's analysis of human needs, and his understanding of the psychological effects of the division of labour. On this central theme, however, the impact of Steuart and Smith was probably more decisive; and despite some textual similarities with Ferguson's works, Hegel does not mention him outside the disappointing survey of Scottish thought in his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*.[65]

V

Although the present study owes much to Kuehn's and Waszek's works, it differs from them in two respects: first, its emphasis is on political thought, a field which still awaits investigation.[66] Secondly, mine will be a more suspecting view of the transmission of ideas, looking out for their possible misreading and distortion. We have seen that Ossian's German readers may well have made more of him, as an example for cultural revival, than his original Scottish sponsors did. But the fields of social and political philosophy were even more prone to shifts of emphasis and contents.

When Herder sought to base the German search for national identity on the model of the Scots, he may have seen the Scots as fellow Northerners with a genuine heritage; but he did not dwell on the differences between the two nations and their identity quests. For, despite the similar attempts at literary revival, the German search for cultural identity was profoundly different from the Scottish re-assessment of political community.

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64. Waszek, *Hegel's Account*, pp. 56-83.
65. *Ibid.*, pp. 134-141, 148-149, 225-227. For another recent attempt at unearthing Hegel's Scottish roots see Laurence Dickey, *Hegel. Religion, Economics, and the Politics of Spirit 1770-1807* (Cambridge, 1987). Dickey's reconstruction of the Ferguson-Garve-Hegel link is mentioned in chapter 5 of this thesis, pp. 155-156.
66. See Frederick C. Beiser's review of Kuehn's book in *Eighteenth Century Studies*, vol. 22, no. 4 (1989), especially p. 633

The Scottish problem was a direct result of the Act of Union of 1707, when Scotland gave up its parliament and Privy Council in return for equal partnership in the British State and economic access to the trading routes of the empire. The Scottish Enlightenment had to come to grips with the problem of an identity for Scotland within the assimilated structure, and with the assertion of political membership despite the removal of immediate political leverage. At the same time it was deeply conscious of the economic, and hence social, consequences of modern commerce and industry, which were transforming landscape and social patterns no less than the political change. As recent scholarship has established, the Scottish Enlightenment gave more than one response to this set of problems: it developed a "moral culture" with a new language of virtue and social intercourse[67]; it based its discourse of commerce and sociability on a historical narrative derived from the Natural Law tradition[68]; but it also struggled long and hard with the civic humanist tradition and its central ideal, the active citizen-soldier. Although this Scottish tradition was eventually superseded or essentially transformed, it nevertheless contributed much to the central themes of the Scottish Enlightenment, and left its mark on other European nations and on the Americans.[69]

The political language of civic humanism, which the Scots modified from classical and Renaissance sources, was especially important for the redefinition of Scottish identity on two occasions: the debate preceding the Union of 1707, and the militia agitation in the second half of the century, when the Edinburgh literati tried in vain to demand a militia for Scotland. In both occasions Scottish writers used this language in a bid to re-claim their country's position as a polity, a community of citizens.[70] But there were no equivalent debates in the German political arena. Citizenship did have a meaning - certainly for a Swiss patriot like Iselin, but also for a German thinker like F.H. Jacobi. But civic activism, the

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67. See especially John Dwyer, *Virtuous Discourse. Sensibility and Community in Late Eighteenth Century Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1987).
68. See especially Istvan Hont and Michael Ignatieff, "Needs and justice in the Wealth of Nations: an introductory essay", *WV*, pp. 1-44.
69. J.G.A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment. Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition* (Princeton, 1975), part III; John Robertson, "The Scottish Enlightenment at the Limits of the Civic Tradition", WV, pp. 137-178.
70. Robertson, *Militia*, chs. 2-5. The Scottish language of civic humanism, represented by Adam Ferguson, will be examined in chapters 2 and 3 of this thesis.

demand for political alertness and participation of citizens in the government of their country, and the implied distrust of even the best rulers and laws, did not become a political language in Germany.

Far more accessible to the Germans were the political languages of sociability and sensibility, and of Natural Law: they stipulated a social sphere of essentially private individuals, whose mutual transactions are civil, but not civic. Such a sphere was regulated by principles which a well-ordered constitution could guarantee. Its members could benefit one another by pursuing their private ends, and (especially on the higher echelons of a solid social hierarchy) exercising virtue and partaking in a well-mannered social intercourse.[71]

The failure of the civic humanist ideas to enter German discourse from Scottish sources is traceable through many instances of linguistic tension in the relevant texts. Such tensions - not always acknowledged - arise from disagreements about concepts, their meaning, and their usefulness. An interesting example, in our case, is the concept of "State".

Der Staat, in eighteenth-century Germany, was part of the new political language of increasing princely power, consolidated sovereignty, standing armies and enlarged administrations. Not all Germans liked this concept: Herder shunned the State because it was a cold mechanism, the very opposite of his warm and natural *Volk*. Justus Möser rejected the new concept because it superseded the older central-European notion of *Land*.[72] But for the mainstream of *Aufklärung* thinkers the State was a great vehicle of human improvement. As we shall see, this was what Prussia meant to Christian Garve, and this was the moral basis of the *Staatswissenschaften* of the Göttingen scholars Justi, Achenwall and Schlözer. Here was an important distinction in the respective social positions of the Scottish philosophers and their German counterparts: the Scots, with all their ties to the administration of Scotland and to its system of patronage, were not members of the State apparatus in any

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71. See especially Pocock, "Virtues, rights, and manners: A model for historians of political thought", *Virtue, Commerce, and History* (Cambridge, 1985), pp. 37-50; and Anthony Pagden's introduction to *Languages*, pp. 1-17.
72. Sheehan, *German History*, p. 25.

significant way; the Germans, both as university professors and court administrators, were government officials.

The majority of German political thinkers before the Napoleonic conquest accepted enlightened absolutism, namely the rule of law-respecting, reform-bound and well-advised benevolent princes, as a good pattern for the states of the German *Reich*. There were, admittedly, some significant exceptions: Johann Jacob Moser and Justus Möser defended the traditional corporate order against what they saw as the evil of modern absolutist State. But the mainstream opinion was better represented by the younger Moser, Friedrich Carl, who hailed the enlightened rule of princes while still hoping to revive the declining Holy Roman Empire. Many thinkers still paid some lip service to the Estates of the Empire and those of the individual states, which were in principle considered a sufficient counterbalance to princely authority. A monarchy governed according to laws was for most German jurists and political theorists a fairly acceptable, and happily realistic, form of government. Its improvement was to come from its own structure, motivated by enlightened rulers, bureaucrats and *Aufklärer*. Even the great critics of princely despotism, notably A.L. Schlözer, did not advocate a radical constitutional change, but rather a gradual rationalization.[73] The questions of government were not so much about political form, as about the best ways of wielding governmental powers; and this was the domain of the jurists, the theorists of *Polizeiwissenschaft* and particularly the cameralists.[74] A broad consensus, notwithstanding Herder's and Möser's reservations, looked up to the *Staat* as the locus of future improvements. From the academic *Staatswissenschaften* to Schlözer's *Staatsanzeigen*, it was a central noun in the compounds of political language.

The Scots, by contrast, were not too keen on the concept of State: most participants in the Union debate preferred such terms as "Nation", "People", or "Country".[75] These terms enabled the Scottish Enlightenment to develop broader reference-frames for the economic, social and cultural

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73. On the widespread acceptance of (enlightened) absolutism as a tolerable form of government see especially Rudolf Vierhaus, "Ständewesen und Staatsverwaltung in Deutschland in späteren 18. Jahrhundert", and "Politisches Bewußtsein in Deutschland vor 1789", both reprinted in *Deutschland im 18. Jahrhundert.*

74. Tribe, *Governing Economy*, esp. ch. 2.

75. Phillipson, "Enlightenment", pp. 25-26.

dimensions of communities in history.[76] Even the civic discourse used the concept of political community, the polity, rather than the State, with its associations of delegated sovereignty and the distinction between ruler and ruled. But when Scottish political writings came to Germany the discrepancy of language caused a shift in the translation: as we shall see, the absence of the term "State" from Adam Ferguson's texts (except as an occasional synonym) in fact encouraged his German translators to introduce it in abundance into their versions.[77]

A similar problem arose with the terms "liberty" and "freedom": after 1707, Scotland's independence was predominantly seen in terms of its economic freedom rather than its free political institutions, whose historical existence, even before the Union of Parliaments, was doubtful - at least to those who supported the move.[78] The civic humanist language employed by Andrew Fletcher of Saltoun in the Union debate emphasized the need for a Scottish militia which would retain the country's military and moral integrity - its true assets as a political community - even when it entered an agreement with England.[79] By contrast, the Scottish supporters of the Union wished to ensure Scotland's liberty by transferring its sovereignty to the British Parliament. The language of the late Scottish Enlightenment applied several concepts of liberty, including personal-jurisprudential and economic ones; but its civic humanists, who could no longer aspire for distinct sovereignty, emphasized moral independence rather than political liberty.[80]

German thinkers, on the other hand, made extensive use of the term *Freiheit*, though not exclusively political use. As far as political liberty was concerned, several overlapping concepts can be distinguished; prior to the French Revolution, political discourse was dominated by two of them. One was articulated by the defenders of the traditional rights of the Estates, who demanded that traditional corporate freedoms be upheld, either on the imperial level (J.J. Moser) or on the local principality level (Justus Möser). The other concept belonged to the

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76. *Ibid.*, p. 33.
77. See Chapter 3, p. 88, and chapter 5, pp. 144-145.
78. Phillipson, "Enlightenment", pp. 24-25. Robertson, *Militia*, pp. 26, 34.
79. Robertson, *ibid.*, ch. 2.
80. *Ibid.*, pp. 241-243.

theory of the strong centralized State, often conceived as absolutism or enlightened absolutism; the meaning it gave political liberty referred to the subjects' personal freedom from tyranny and oppression, guaranteed by laws and by the ruler's benevolence. J.H.G. von Justi was fairly representative of this approach when he defined citizens' freedom in terms of their obedience to good laws, laws which promote the common welfare.[81] It was only in the 1790s that some German thinkers first articulated the concepts of freedom which can be classed as "liberal", "democratic", and "conservative".[82] But even these concepts were tempered by the demand for an evolutionist approach, for long-term education and cautious political gradualism. Revolution, like freedom, was largely banished to the intellectual sphere.[83]

If we want to use the concepts "freedom from" and freedom to", we may find that the Scots and the Germans had somewhat different meanings for both. In Scotland, "freedom from" was primarily the jurisprudential guarantee for personal freedom for economic self-promotion, and it could be rephrased in the language of rights; "freedom to" was the civic freedom to participate in the political game and assert one's humanity by exercising one's citizenship.[84] In Germany the situation was subtly different: political freedom was primarily "freedom from" undue intervention of the ruler in the subject's private life and intellectual autonomy; but the *Aufklärung* saw this political arrangement mainly as a necessary support for its strong moral notion of "freedom to": the freedom to think and express one's thoughts, to practice one's form of Christianity, and (largely in Protestant terms) to find and follow one's path to spiritual perfection. It was neither about participation in government nor about social mobility. This, for many of the thinkers discussed in our study, was the freedom that really mattered. The State, as Kant thought, could reform itself in the course of its evolution; for

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81. Sheehan, *German History*, pp. 194ff.
82. Leonard Krieger, *The German Idea of Freedom. History of a Political Tradition* (Chicago and London, 1957); Jürgen Schlumbohm, *Freiheitsbegriff und Emanzipazionsprozeß. Zur Geschichte eines politischen Wortes* (Göttingen, 1973); for a recent critical revision see Diethelm Klippel, "The True Concept of Liberty. Political Theory in Germany in the Second Half of the Eighteenth Century", in Hellmuth (ed.), *Transformation*, pp. 447-466.
83. Rudolf Vierhaus, "The Revolutionizing of Consciousness. A German Utopia?", *Transformation*, pp. 561-577.
84. See especially Robertson, *Militia*, pp. 12 and 225ff.

Fichte, no other freedom but the freedom of thought was required for the metaphysical-historical process which he called "the progress of the human spirit".[85]

The spiritual content of the German language of freedom points to a profound difference in the real strength of religious thinking in Scotland and Germany of the late eighteenth century. The similarities are obvious enough to be misleading: most Scots and almost all German adherents of the Enlightenment refused to abandon faith; many of them saw it as part of their agenda to rationalize religion in various ways, either through natural theology, or by seeking philosophical support for the fundamental moral provisions of Christianity, or by accommodating the scriptures within a universal historical narrative. But there was a difference of proportions between the actual use of religious concepts by the Scots and the Germans. In Germany - and this is a central part of the argument put forward in this study - there were Pietist and Lutheran notions of spiritual freedom and meta-historical perfection which were effective enough to enter and transform Scottish political language. The rejection of civic activism in Germany can be explained through this process more accurately than by the abstract notion of the Lutheran doctrine of obedience to secular authorities.

The relative rareness of both "State" and "freedom" in Scottish political texts naturally baffled their German readers. As we shall see, in the case of Ferguson one solution was to introduce *der Staat* into the German versions of the texts; and his translator Christian Garve, a theorist of spiritual freedom, bitterly reproached Ferguson for neglecting the concept of freedom.[86] Garve's idea of freedom centred on moral perfectibility; but Ferguson's alleged neglect can be understood in the context of the Scottish inclination to steer clear of the term due to its awkward political connotations. When Garve decided to "correct" Ferguson by introducing freedom to his commentary, he helped virtually to "spiritualize" the work and obscure its civic vocabulary.

A different stumbling block can be found in a concept of ostensible mutual interest, such as ancient Greece. The Scots, from Andrew Fletcher

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85. Vierhaus,"Revolutionizing", pp. 569-570.
86. See Chapter 5.

to Adam Smith, invariably saw Athens or Sparta as schools for political institutions, even when they differed about their lessons.[87] In the civic humanist tradition Greece was the first great civic society, paving the way to the Roman republic. By contrast, the Germans' Greece was primarily an aesthetic achievement. Led by J.J. Winckelmann, they claimed it as the great model for moral-artistic harmony. For the young Schiller it was the theatre that "held Greece together"; the Germans, he wrote, will be a nation only "if we are able to have a national theatre".[88] On the strength of this interpretation Rome was often dismissed as a barbaric lapse after Greece's grandeur. Our study will dwell on the frustration caused to Ferguson's readers by his political interpretation of both classical cultures, whose crowning achievements he saw in their republican moments.[89]

Beyond the preferences for particular concepts, the Scots and the Germans also differed in matters of style, rhetoric, and conceived audiences. The Germans saw Enlightenment primarily as a form of education,[90] above all to the future administrators and subjects of enlightened States; the Scots, even in their university textbooks, wrote primarily for the next generation of gentlemen-participants in the Scottish and English intellectual debates, educated laity as well as clergy or officials. The difference was marked enough to be disturbing: as we shall see, Ferguson's German readers, while admiring his pedagogical stature, could not help frowning at some of the "un-educational" aspects of his political thought.

The German thinkers treated in this study represent several variations of the general political ideas we have outlined. Christian Garve was a defender of Prussian absolutism; the Göttingen professors were teachers of *Staatswissenschaften*; Isaak Iselin, despite his contribution to Swiss *Patriotismus*, was a very reserved republican and a committed theorist of education and gradual enlightenment; Lessing and Schiller, in their different ways, subjected political theory to ideas of spiritual freedom

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87. See especially Robertson, *Militia*, pp. 36f, 214, and *passim*.
88. Quoted by Sheehan, *German history*, p. 173. For a comparison of Schiller's and Ferguson's understanding of the theatre, and hence of the relation of art and politics, see chapter 9, p. 292.
89. See chapter 4, pp. 124-125, and chapter 7, pp. 212-213.
90. Cf. Whaley, "Protestant Enlightenment", p. 107ff.

and meta-political perfection. Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi, who understood the substance of civic humanist ethics better than the others, did not develop it into a systematic political statement. Each of these thinkers confronted Ferguson's challenge, and dispensed with it in his own way. Between them, they kept the civic humanist language out of German political discourse.

VI

We are thus dealing with a problem of "reception", of texts and the way they were read. I do not propose to use the term "reception" in any of its specialized theoretical meanings.[91] In order to introduce the more flexible approach used in this thesis, I will briefly present several examples, from recent scholarship, of studies of misreception within the field of eighteenth-century British-German links. Despite their differences, all these examples (and my approach) share at least one underlying assumption: that we can reasonably detect what an author meant, and what a reader understood; and that we may use our judgement to point out, on the basis of textual evidence, cases where a reader got an author wrong.

Our first example is taken from Hans-Georg Gadamer's *Wahrheit und Methode*. Gadamer offers a chronological analysis of the central concepts (*Leitbegriffe*) of what he calls "the humanistic tradition".[92] One of these concepts is *sensus communis*, which Vico used as "the concrete generality that represents the community (*Gemeinsamkeit*) of a group, a people, a nation or the whole of mankind."[93] Vico's ideas were paralleled by the more influential Shaftesbury, whose concept of common sense encompassed, beside the sense for the common weal, also "love of the

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91. The German term *Rezeptionsgeschichte* is often used for a "positivist" account of reading and reaction. By contrast, contemporary literary critics have produced theories, notably deconstructionism, which empty both "reception" and "misreception" of any meaning that could be useful for our purpose. See J.R. Holub, *Reception Theory* (London, 1984); also Pocock's explanation of "the history of discourse" in his "Introduction: The state of the art", *Virtue, Commerce, and History*, pp. 1-34.

92. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode*, 4th edition (Tübingen, 1975), pp. 6-7.

93. *Ibid.*, p. 18.

community or society, natural affection, humanity, obligingness."[94] The Scottish thinkers, especially Reid, took up Shaftesbury's moral sense as a cornerstone of their moral philosophy, which was created to counter both metaphysics and scepticism. While using it in his epistemology, Reid also upheld its social meaning, its use "to direct us in the common affairs of life".[95] This "moral motive" was the legacy of the Scots to the present-day meaning of "common sense", distinguishing it from the German *gesunder Menschenverstand*. It was in Germany in the late eighteenth century, Gadamer claims, that a shift of meaning occurred:

> While in England and in the Latin countries the concept of *sensus communis* denotes, even today, not just a critical parole but a general quality of the citizen, in Germany the disciples of Shaftesbury and Hutcheson, already in the eighteenth century, did not take on the political-social contents denoted by 'sensus communis'. The school metaphysics and popular philosophy of the eighteenth century, much as it was orientated towards learning from and following the leading countries of the Enlightenment, England [!] and France, could not transform itself [to accept these contents], for which the social and political conditions simply did not exist. Although the concept of sensus communis was accepted, it was completely depoliticized [*völlig entpolitisiert*], and thus lost its actual critical meaning.[96]

Gadamer's model of misreception thus assumes that "backward" social and political conditions hindered the German Enlightenment thinkers from grasping the moral meaning of the concept "common sense", which was apparent to the English (i.e. Scots) and French. By making the concept purely epistemological, the Germans missed its function in the humanistic discourse - its connection to the idea of civil society and citizenship. This was a misreception, in the sense that the term *sensus communis* was received by the Germans without its true conceptual content; but Gadamer's model of misreception implies the premature transmission of an idea to a "retarded" culture, which is economically and socially conditioned to misunderstand it.

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94. *Ibid.*, p. 21.
95. *Ibid.*, p. 22.
96. *Ibid.*, pp. 23-24. The pietists, in Gadamer's view, were the one significant exception: Oetinger did understand the moral contents of *sensus communis*.

Gadamer's hermeneutic model of misreception compares most interestingly with Isaiah Berlin's liberal model of a similar phenomenon. While Gadamer attributes all distortion to the recipients' premature material conditions, Berlin makes them such radically free agents that their misreception can only be malicious. In his essay "Hume and the Sources of German Anti-Rationalism"[97] Berlin distinguishes between a legitimate and an illegitimate treatment of Scottish philosophers in Germany. What Kant did with David Hume was one thing; what Hamann and Jacobi did to him was entirely different. Johann Georg Hamann and his disciple Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi, whom Berlin sees as unyielding "anti-rationalists" and philosophers of faith, presumably abducted Hume's notion of "belief" and redeployed it in support of their *Glaubensphilosophie*. Hume was thus recruited against "fellow-rationalists" such as Voltaire and Diderot. Never mind that Hume in fact derived his "belief" from nature and custom. Never mind his empiricism, his scepticism and his anti-clericalism. Hamann and Jacobi, in Berlin's analysis, pounced on Hume's notion of belief and radically changed it. The secular psychological concept became identified with their religious ideas of faith and revelation. "Belief" became "*Glaube*", and the two were presented as one and the same. Thus the Anti-Rationalists made Hume into "an ally despite himself", an unintended fifth column in the army of the Enlightenment.[98] The deliberate, almost conspiratorial nature of these manipulations is further asserted in the conclusion that "this inversion of Hume's empiricism and scepticism in order to prop up faith", is "typical of the entire strategy of this group of dogmatic religious transcendentalists."[99]

The present study will offer a different reading of Jacobi in particular, and a different model of misreception in general. It will assume that the German readers of Scottish texts were neither totally "conditioned" nor

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97. Isaiah Berlin, *Against the Current. Essays in the History of Ideas* (Oxford, 1981), pp. 162-187.

98. *Ibid.*, pp. 172 and 176. The case for a conscious distortion of Hume's thought, rather than an unintentional shift of meaning, is made clear in the claim that Hamann, "in some sense, was not unaware" that his idea of *Glaube* was far removed from Hume's thought (p. 174).

99. *Ibid.*, pp. 184-185. For an even stronger account of deliberate philosophical distortion, with multiple villains, see Rudolf Lüthe, "Misunderstanding Hume: Remarks on German Ways of Interpreting his Philosophy", in V. Hope (ed.), *Philosophers of the Scottish Enlightenment* (Edinburgh, 1984), pp. 105-115.

radically free, and that the process of distortion took place in a complex network of linguistic shifts, and different habits of thinking about political issues. The third example for an account of misreception, which is closer in means and purposes to the present study, is Rudolf Vierhaus' essay "Montesquieu in Germany".[100]

Vierhaus does not make a case for a misreception or misunderstanding of Montesquieu by eighteenth-century Germans. He does, however, make a strong case for selective reading, which was partly intentional and partly conditioned by the political realities in German lands. And although Montesquieu was not a Scot, his reception in Germany is very relevant to our subject, not least because Adam Ferguson was a disciple of his - a complicated and disloyal disciple, but still recognized as such by many of his readers.

De l'esprit des lois was first translated into German in 1753, and quickly acquired fame; but, as Vierhaus shows, this "immortal work" was criticized by its German readers from the outset: initially, for being "too political", and subsequently for its inadequate political premises, especially for being "general and superficial". Justus Möser and Friedrich Carl von Moser attacked the doctrine's inapplicability to specific cases, and Herder joined them in excluding Germany from Montesquieu's over-simplified climatology. The Germans did, however, like the quest for a "Spirit", which led the way to many other concepts of *Geist*. The basic principle that laws determined and represented a form of government was well received, because it was deeply rooted in the absolutist definition of the ruler as law-giver. There was, however, no consensus as to the location of the "German national spirit": the Swiss republicans found it in their republic, the Prussian Thomas Abbt argued against Montesquieu that virtue, and not just honour, can be the foundation of "a well ordered monarchy", and Moser anchored it in the Holy Roman Empire. Abbt and Moser, like many of their contemporaries, took "German freedom" for a unique form of freedom which substantially differed from Montesquieu's chief model of a free State, England.[101]

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100. Rudolf Vierhaus, "Montesquieu in Deutschland. Zur Geschichte seiner Wirkung als politischer Schriftsteller im 18. Jahrhundert", *Deutschland im 18. Jahrhundert*, pp. 7-32.
101. *Ibid.*, pp. 16-22.

The most crucial fact about the German reception of Montesquieu was that his ideas on the separation of powers, and the checks on monarchic authority, were not taken up by his German followers. The abstract distinction between executive and legislative powers was often acknowledged, but it seldom implied any limitation on the absolute ruler. The political theorist Justi spoke of a "third way", in which the king will be given all powers, but will be taught to rule wisely and benevolently. Indeed, Montesquieu's rejection of despotism was eagerly echoed in Germany; but his "pouvoirs intermédiaires" were understood (and here one might say misunderstood) to refer to the old, powerless estates, *Zwischengewalten* with no real *Gewalt*. The German Enlightenment, until the French Revolution and partly after it, continued to rely on "the good prince", ruling by laws and improving his citizens, as the best governmental form for German lands and the best guarantee for German freedom. This "rejection of the separation of powers" was formed through an argument with Montesquieu, but, as Vierhaus shows, its advocates often regarded themselves as his followers. Such selective reading of Montesquieu could enable Graf Hertzberg, the minister of Frederick the Great, to claim that Prussia was a "free monarchy", because its provincial estates took part in the executive.[102]

Unlike Gadamer, Vierhaus does not rely on strict, technical concepts of socio-economic backwardness implying an inevitable intellectual unawareness to "advanced" political ideas. He presents an alternative view in which German thinkers in a sense *chose* to accept foreign political ideas or models in a selective way, because they envisaged their own circumstances as different, and in some ways better, than either French absolutism or British parliamentary monarchy. "Irrelevant" options, such as Montesquieu's republican freedom or British parliamentary accountability, were consciously put aside. But, unlike Berlin, Vierhaus does not accuse the readers of a malevolent tampering with the intentions of the author. It was Montesquieu's versatility, as well as his German readers' selectivity, that enabled a book which inspired revolutionaries elsewhere to support enlightened absolutism in Germany.

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102. *Ibid.*, pp. 24-29.

Vierhaus' combination of causes for misreception allows for social and political factors as well as conscious preferences of readers. The present study is an attempt to add another dimension to this model, the dimension of linguistic processes of reception. Our analysis follows the original text, through its translation, to the quotations, paraphrases, comments and indirect references in other texts at the receiving end. In order to illustrate the merits of this approach let us briefly look at one final example.

In a study of the reception of Laurence Sterne's novels in eighteenth-century Germany, Peter Michelsen shows how Sterne's most successful translator systematically enhanced his emotional language, in order to meet the expectations of German readers.[103] The translator, J.J.C. Bode, saw his widely acclaimed rendering of *Sentimental Journey*[104] as his masterpiece.[105] In this book, which established Sterne's fame in Germany, Michelsen notes a recurring "intensification" of sentimental (*empfindsame*) language. Some of the examples are worth repeating here, since they are not as remote from the political texts examined in this study as one might suppose. Thus, the English "good-nature" became "*Gutherzigkeit*"; "spirits" became "*Herz*"; "weak" - "*weichherzig*"; "it struck me" - "*fiel es mir aufs Herz*"; "sprightliness" - "*seelenvolles Gesicht*"; a "look of kindness" - "*Blick der Liebe*"; "pleasurable anecdote" became "*eine zärtliche Anekdote*"; "fair spirit" - "*schöne Seele*"; "better principle" - "*bessere Empfindung*", and so forth.[106] Michelsen attributes to this "enhanced emphasis on feeling" at least part of the success of Bode's translation (at the expense of a near-contemporaneous one, which unwisely lacked not only upgraded sentimental language, but even the word "sentimental" in its title).[107] Goethe, for one, later observed that the Germans had totally missed Sterne's ironic treatment of sentimentality.[108] The misreception, in this case, was brought about by

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103. Peter Michelsen, *Laurence Sterne und der deutsche Roman des 18. Jahrhunderts* (Göttingen, 1962).

104. *Empfindsame Reise* (Hamburg, 1768), appeared the same year (!) as the original publication in England. *Ibid.*, p. 67. Oppel, *Literaturbeziehungen*, pp. 131-132.

105. The subscribers to Bode's translation of *Tristram Shandy* (1774 and many subsequent edns.) included the Russian Empress, Goethe, Hamann, Herder, Wieland and Jacobi. Michelsen, *ibid.*, pp. 52-53. Oppel, *Literaturbeziehungen*, p. 131

106. Michelsen, *ibid.*, pp. 68-69.

107. *Ibid.*, p. 69.

the translator's choice of words, designed to appeal to a reading public which wanted sentimentality and not irony. Yet presumably not many members of this public could become aware, as Goethe later did, that Sterne's original tone had been distorted.

Linguistic analysis of this kind can prove very useful not only for a literary text, but also for a political one. Political writings in the early modern period, as J.G.A. Pocock has shown, can be fruitfully understood in terms of several distinct (and intertwined) political languages. The civic humanist tradition developed a vocabulary which its Scottish representatives used effectively and consciously. In order to explain why the German readers did not confront civic humanist contents of the texts made available to them, it would be useful to follow the reception of the civic humanist vocabulary and find out how its constituent terms were translated, quoted, paraphrased, borrowed and moved about in German texts.

This study concentrates on Adam Ferguson, arguably the most committed civic humanist of the Scottish Enlightenment. As we shall see, Ferguson was no stranger to the idiom of Natural Law and to the other constituents of Scottish discourse; otherwise he could not have served as a representative case. He was, however, an outspoken advocate of political participation and republican virtues, and an opponent of any legal-constitutional arrangements which dispensed with active citizens. He was also a great favourite with an impressive range of German thinkers. These combined merits have singled him out for our inquiry.

Some ten major German recipients of Ferguson's texts will be treated in this study. Between them, they provide an interesting sample of German intellectual history of the four last decades of the eighteenth century. Their dates of birth roughly span one generation: Iselin and Lessing were born in the late 1720s, Jacobi and Garve in the early 1740s, Schiller in 1759. It so happened that Ferguson's life (1723-1816) outlasted them all, except Jacobi who survived him by three years. The geographic stations in these readers' lives make a good list of the main centres of the

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108. "Es entstand eine Art zärtlich-leidenschaftlicher Ascetik, welche, da uns die humoristische Ironie des Briten nicht gegeben war, in eine leidige Selbstquälerei gewöhnlich ausarten mußte"; Goethe, "Campagne in Frankreich" (1792), quoted by Michelsen, *ibid.*, p. 70.

Protestant *Aufklärung* - Berlin, Hamburg and Wolfenbüttel; Leipzig and Breslau; Jena and Weimar; Basle, Düsseldorf, and the University of Göttingen. In terms of intellectual orientation almost all these thinkers belong to the same "generation": Lessing, Iselin and Garve were prominent *Aufklärer*; Garve and the Göttingen professors Feder and Meiners represent the empiricist branch of *Popularphilosophie*; Iselin and Meiners, as well as Lessing, were historians of the same school. Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi might have stood for the "counter-Enlightenment", but in the focus of this study he is an interesting variant of the general political discourse rather than an epistemological *enfant terrible*. The one exception, in both age and intellectual development, is Friedrich Schiller: our last chapter examines him as the final and definitive transformer of Ferguson's ideas.

Our sample was dictated by the nature of textual evidence: neither Herder nor Kant could serve our purpose, since they did not make enough explicit allusions to Ferguson's works. But it is large and varied enough to supply a range of answers to our general question: How did Ferguson's German admirers come to terms with his politics?

"Coming to terms" can sometimes amount to changing the terms. If such a process happened, as I will argue, in the transmission of Scottish political ideas to Germany, its reconstruction may shed more light on both these cultures. There is, however, no claim for uniqueness with regard to the process itself: almost all bi-lingual situations are prone to various instances of misunderstanding and cumulative misreception. My account will proceed according to the common sense order of disentangling such knots: I shall first present the original ideas and their author, then dwell on the relevant vocabulary in the two languages, and finally examine what happened at the receiving end.

Chapter Two
Adam Ferguson: Scottish Context and German Reception

"His politics are, indeed, but his ethical doctrines applied to society." (John Veitch, 1858).
"In general, the author's political principles wholly correspond to the constitution of his fatherland." (A Göttingen reviewer, 1793).

The historian and moral philosopher Adam Ferguson was not the first Scottish writer to be admired by the German Enlightenment, but he was one of the most fortunate. His four major books were speedily translated into German, and attracted distinguished readers and commentators. Ferguson's name first appeared in Germany in 1768, following those of his countrymen Fordyce, Hume, Robertson and Kames. He was gradually forgotten after 1800, sharing the fate of most Scots excluding Hume and Smith. But in the three decades between 1768 and 1800 Ferguson's writings had a significant impact on a number of prominent German thinkers.

Why is Ferguson a good test-case for the reception, or misreception, of Scottish political ideas in Germany? Apart from his civic humanist challenge and his impressive, well-documented readership, we may also point to his peculiar gift for posthumous involvement in a variety of intellectual paternity claims. Duncan Forbes has noted this peculiarity in his introduction to the recent edition of Ferguson's best-remembered work, *An Essay on the History of Civil Society* : "The *Essay* belongs," he writes, "or has been seen as belonging, to a number of 'histories' or 'pre-histories': sociology, romanticism, Historismus, 'historical materialism' and so on; it certainly does not belong to the history of the idea of progress."[1]

It is a central argument of the present thesis that Ferguson's ideas were adopted by not-quite-likeminded readers long before Karl Marx crowned him the earliest Scottish theorist of the division of labour.[2] Ferguson's reception by eighteenth-century German thinkers was marked by an enthusiasm to enlist him for causes that are not always recognizable in his own works, and particularly for assorted "ideas of progress" and

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1. Duncan Forbes, "Introduction" to Adam Ferguson, *An Essay on the History of Civil Society*, edited, with introduction, by Duncan Forbes (Edinburgh, 1966), p. xiv.
2. *Capital* (Moscow, 1954), pp. 123n, 354, 361-362, 362n. *The Poverty of Philosophy* (Moscow, 1956), p. 145.

concepts of perfectibility. The ways in which he was translated, read (sometimes in the original English), reviewed, and quoted by German scholars and thinkers can provide an especially interesting case of a complex reception.

Our account must begin with the author and his ideas, since the "fault" for misreading can hardly be the recipients' alone. The coin is two-sided: various aspects of the original texts can facilitate misunderstanding, or even deliberate mishandling. Indeed, in different cases authors can be said to have varying degrees of "blame" for the ways in which they are understood. Taking an example from the grimmest edge of the spectrum, Nietzsche and his racist readers make a different case from Kant and his totalitarian readers: Nietzsche was rather easier to distort.[3] But such extreme instances of political manipulation of theory belong to the dim future of the period discussed here. Adam Ferguson and his eighteenth-century German readers were far removed from any brutalities inspired by modern philosophy-turned-ideology, because such uses of philosophy were in their times, if anything, embryonic, and limited to such political laboratories as the American and the French Revolutions. The misreceptions we will attempt to analyse in this study are subtle, not crude or sinister; only with extreme caution can they be related to any broader canvas of the German *Sonderweg* in the history of ideas. Ferguson's reception in Germany is a story of the de-politicization of political ideas, but it is not the story of a straightforward rejection of "liberal" or "radical" political theory in favour of a "conservative" or "reactionary" status quo. What emerges from textual evidence is, rather, a transformation of a moderate statement of republican activism into a language of spiritual perfectibilism. And the transformation of the ideas also transformed the public image of the author.

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3. Although a detailed analysis of this difference is beyond our scope, we may briefly observe that two comparably evil cases, such as Hans Günther's use of Nietzsche's concept of *Übermensch*, and Adolf Eichmann's distortion of Kant's idea of duty, in fact belong to different levels of misreception. Nietzsche's "contribution" towards the misreading of his philosophy is demonstrably more substantial than Kant's. Eichmann, we may note, admitted that he had consciously adapted Kant's categorical imperative "for the household use of the little man". See George L. Mosse, *The Crisis of German Ideology* (New York, 1981), pp. 205-209, and Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (Harmondsworth, 1977), pp. 135-137.

Even a fleeting comparison between Ferguson's Scottish image and his German reputation would reveal a striking difference between the ways his character and achievements were understood: in Scotland he was a literatus, an early version of the modern political-minded intellectual, while in Germany he was a *Gelehrter*, a philosopher and scholar of universal standing and no distinct political shade. How did the "Scottish Cato"[4] become Schiller's "great sage of this century", and the oracle of a lachrymose *Sturm und Drang* hero?[5] Let us start with a brief biographical overview, as seen from the Scottish vantage-point.

I. **Ferguson in Scotland: Life**[6]

Ferguson's "singularly complete, and, for a man of letters, exceptionally eventful life"[7] began on June 20th, 1723, in the Perthshire village of Logierait. He was the youngest son of the parish minister, Adam Fergusson, and in his early school years excelled in Latin and was intended for the church. At the age of sixteen he went to study at the University of Aberdeen, supported by a bursary, and did well in classics, mathematics and metaphysics. Upon taking his M.A. degree in 1742 he proceeded to divinity studies, and soon moved to the University of Edinburgh. In this period began his lifelong friendship with John Home and William Robertson, as well as his lifelong involvement in public affairs: he reportedly served for a while as private secretary to Lord Milton, who managed the Scottish affairs of the future third Duke of Argyll.

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4. See, for instance, *The Edinburgh Review*, cxxv (1867), p. 48. I accept David Kettler's view of Ferguson as an early, but recognizable, intellectual in the sense we now use this term: "his work represents an attempt, characteristic of intellectuals, to develop an orientation towards the world of practice through the medium of ideas." Kettler, *The Social and Political Thought of Adam Ferguson* (Ohio, 1965), p. 7.

5. See chapter, 8 pp. 230-234, and chapter 9, p. 269.

6. The main sources for the following survey are John Small, *Biographical Sketch of Adam Ferguson, LL.D., F.R.S.E., Professor of Moral Philosophy in the University of Edinburgh* (Edinburgh, 1864); an anonymous review of this work in *The Edinburgh Review* cxxv (1867), 48-85; and Francis Espinasse's article in the *Dictionary of National Biography* (hereafter DNB), vol. VI (Oxford, 1921-1922), 1200-1204. The latter incorporates other sources touching on Ferguson's life - Principle Lee's memoir, Alexander Carlyle's autobiography, Lord Cockburn's *Memorial of his Time* and Lockhart's *Life of Scott.*

7. *The Edinburgh Review* cxxv, 48-49.

His knowledge of Gaelic, and family connections with the dowager Duchess of Atholl, paved Ferguson's way to an appointment as the deputy chaplain of the newly formed 42nd regiment of highlanders, the Black Watch. He took up his post in 1745 after a speeded ordination, and in time to participate in the battle of Fontenoy on July 2nd. There, if Sir Walter Scott is to be believed, Ferguson led the column of men with his sword drawn, and, upon hearing his colonel's rebuke to the effect that such behaviour is incompatible with his commission, replied "D-n my commission!" and threw it towards the speaker. There is a softer version of this event,[8] but it is clear that Ferguson's Gaelic affinities and fighting spirit were, then and later, more typical of his personality than the clerical bent.[9] He left the service of both the army and the church in 1754, after failing to obtain a living from the Duke of Atholl. Perhaps the step marked a mental move as well as a career disappointment: writing to Adam Smith from Groningen in October 1754, Ferguson asked to be henceforward addressed "without any clerical titles, for I am a downright layman."[10] For most of the forty years after this date he resided in Edinburgh as an academic, a man of letters, and an influential member of the Edinburgh literati.

Ferguson took central parts in all the moderate literati's campaigns. Their first major public act of opposition to kirk traditionalists was a scandalous amateur rehearsal of John Home's stage play *Douglas*, and its subsequent justification as a matter of principle. Ferguson contributed to all phases of the *Douglas* episode, playing the role of Lady Randolph in the rehearsal, and writing a pamphlet in its defence.[11] This affair, however, was but a prelude to the moderates' most important concern, the agitation for a Scottish militia.

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8. Both versions are quoted in the DNB, *ibid.*, p. 1201.

9. These features were shown in his *Sermon preached, in the Ersh Language, to His Majesty's First Highland Regiment of Foot, commanded by Lord John Murray, at their Cantonment at Camberwell, on the 18th day of December 1745...*, translated into English and published in 1746 at the request of Murray's mother, the Duchess of Atholl. Intended to reinforce the Hanoverian loyalty of highlander soldiers during the Jacobite uprising, it was, not surprisingly, "a vigorous denunciation of the Pretender, of popery, and of France"; DNB, *ibid.*

10. Quoted in Small, *Biographical Sketch*, p. 5. Cf. Kettler, *Social and Political Thought*, pp. 47-49..

11. Adam Ferguson, *The Morality of Stage Plays seriously considered* (Edinburgh, 1757).

Twice, during the Seven Years War and the American war, an opportunity arose for widespread agitation in Scotland for a Scottish Militia Bill to be passed in Parliament. For many Scots this was not only a question of effective defence from a pending French menace, but also a matter of asserting Scotland's loyalty *and* her standing within the political union; both points demanded reinforcement after the traumatic events of 1745. The two rounds of militia agitation were a failure, but the participants in this struggle made it intellectually fruitful.[12] It consolidated some of the issues most urgent to the moderate literati and the wider circle of educated lowlands Scots, and it provided a focal point for rethinking Scotland's past and future. Ferguson's pamphlet, *Reflections Previous to the Establishment of a Militia* (1756), crystallized the question which was later to occupy Edinburgh's famous Select Society and Ferguson's own mature writings: how could the nation's economic advance and improving manners be accommodated with the preservation of public virtue and national vigour, how can it "mix military spirit and commercial policy"?[13] Ferguson proceeded to contribute another pamphlet to the militia agitation, which reached a peak in the early 1760s. He actively participated in the Poker Club (named by him), which was founded to promote the militia agitation and continued for over twenty years as a social-intellectual club.[14] In 1761 the moderate literati found Macpherson and his Ossianic poetry, in which episode Ferguson's enthusiasm and his Gaelic both led him astray. He allegedly confirmed the authenticity of Macpherson's "translations" to Thomas Percy, who later accused him of outright cheating.[15]

In the meantime, Ferguson's academic career proved more successful than that of his friend David Hume, whom he briefly succeeded as Librarian of the Advocates' Library in 1757. Two years later he was appointed at a short notice to the chair of natural philosophy at Edinburgh University. This was not his field, but the arrangement was

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12. Robertson, *Militia*, esp. chapters 4-7.
13. *Reflections Previous to the Establishment of a Militia* (London, 1756), p. 3, quoted in Robertson, *Militia*, p. 89.
14. *The History of the Proceedings in the case of Margaret, commonly called Peg, only lawful sister to John Bull Esq.* (London, 1761). On the poker club see Robertson, *Militia*, p. 118.
15. See Sher, "'Those Scotch Impostors'", and Small, *Biographical Sketch*, pp. 33-42.

not unusual and Ferguson coped well: he learned physics very quickly and managed to keep abreast of his students, if also to arouse Hume's mildly ironic admiration. However, Ferguson's prized post, which he got in 1764, was the Edinburgh chair of pneumatics (philosophy of the mind) and moral philosophy. As a teacher, Ferguson now came into his own,[16] and as a thinker and writer he reached maturity.

In 1767 appeared his best-known work, *An Essay on the History of Civil Society*, which possibly incorporated an earlier *Essay on Refinement* (written in 1759, but subsequently lost). Hume, who had approved of the earlier text, did not like the book, for reasons unspecified but possibly interesting.[17] But his was a minority opinion: the *Essay* won prominent admirers in London and abroad, and reached its seventh edition in 1814, in Ferguson's lifetime (after which, significantly, it was not reissued in Britain until 1966). The book and its author impressed one reader, Lord Shelburne, to such a degree that he considered appointing Ferguson Governor of West Florida. We shall presently return to this missed opportunity.

A philosophy textbook, *The Institutes of Moral Philosophy for the Use of Students in the College of Edinburgh*, followed in 1769.[18] Probably based on an earlier syllabus of lectures prepared in 1761, it offered a compact outline of philosophical definitions and topics. Despite its terse and sometimes short-hand style, the book was successful in Britain (where it ran to three editions), and very successful in Germany and in Russia, where it became a favoured university text.[19]

Between 1774 and 1776, as tutor to the third Earl of Chesterfield on his grand tour, Ferguson travelled in Europe. The journey gave him the chance to ponder his broader intellectual horizons in more than a

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16. The popularity of his lectures, attended by high ranking non-academics, eventually increased his £100 annual salary to about £300 from fees. DNB, *ibid.*

17. Blair and Robertson thought that Hume disliked the *Essay* for its moralism, "Rousing and animating Spirit". Hume may have been averse to the all-important place of moral action in Ferguson's theory of government and politics. See Sher, *Church and University*, p. 197.

18. The publishing dates of Ferguson's books are often misquoted. The DNB mistakenly dates the *Essay* to 1766 and the *Institutes* to 1772. Kettler, *Social and Political Thought*, gives the year 1768 for the *Institutes*. There is a surprising number of such mistakes in both English and German scholarship.

19. Small, *Biographical Sketch*, p. 21; For the German translation see chapter 5.

figurative way: while lodging in Calvin's house in Geneva and reading his manuscripts, he also paid several visits to Ferney and respectfully laughed at the blasphemous jokes of the aging Voltaire, "till I began to be considered", he wrote to Alexander Carlyle, "as a person who, tho' true to my own faith, had no ill humour to the freedom of fancy in others." Referring to the translation of his *Institutes of Moral Philosophy*, Voltaire congratulated Ferguson for having "civilized the Russians".[20]

He returned to Britain in time to participate in the American crisis, first as a writer and then, less effectively, as a political actor. His pamphlet, *Remarks on a Pamphlet lately published by Dr. Price*, published at Government expense in 1776, gave a balanced reply to Richard Price's support of the rebels. Ferguson justified the colonies' complaints against Parliament's narrow-minded mercantilism, but he nevertheless attacked their resorting to violence in order to coerce the government to heed their just demands. The pamphlet was well received in London, and made Ferguson influential friends: in the spring of 1778 he was invited, probably at the suggestion of Sir William Pulteney, to accompany the Carlisle Commission sent to negotiate an agreement with Washington and the American Congress. Ferguson's special contact in the Commission was George Johnstone, the Governor of West Florida - a post Ferguson might have succeeded to, had events taken a different course. On June 6th, soon after their arrival in Philadelphia, Ferguson was made official secretary to the Commission. He was promptly dispatched to the Rebels' pickets with a letter to Congress. From that point it was all failure: Ferguson was denied passage, and the Commission loitered a frustrating summer in Philadelphia and New York, rejected and then ignored by Congress. Bribery attempts, anger at the British government's order for the evacuation of Philadelphia, and a general showdown of British disunity was all Ferguson ever saw of the diminishing Empire. The unfortunate fruit of the Commission's frustration was the much-criticized *Manifesto and Proclamation,* of which Ferguson may have been the chief or sole compiler, calling individual Americans or States to meet the Commission on separate terms. Ferguson was blamed by some prominent critics, including Paine, for penning what Rockingham called that "ingenious literary production".[21] After their empty-handed return to Britain, and

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20. Letter to Carlyle, 29.4.1775, quoted by Small, *ibid.*
21. For the whole story see Sher, *Church and University*, pp. 273-274.

some further futile months as secretary to the Commission, Ferguson went back to his Edinburgh professorship. This was the last of his excursions into the world of political action, though he remained publicly alert to the end of his long life.

With his prospects for a governorship gone, Ferguson was an unlucky Scotsman; he had to rest content, as we shall see, in educating more successful empire-builders. But another irony is hidden in the American affair: Ferguson remained a much-reprinted author in the former colonies. The earliest authorized Philadelphia reprint of the *Institutes of Moral Philosophy* was announced in 1771. It was followed by reprints of all his major works, repeated well into the nineteenth century. The American reception of his ideas merits a separate study, and promises an interesting comparison with his reception in Germany and elsewhere in Europe.[22]

Whatever his knowledge of his transatlantic reading public, Ferguson's personal experience with the American rebels evidently made him bitter and disillusioned: abandoning hope for negotiation, he now favoured a strong military response. He was similarly hostile to the Yorkshire reform movement, whose leader, Christopher Wyvill, appealed for his support.[23] These attitudes, however, do not make him into a wholesale defender of the old order. Ferguson's "conservatism" was explicitly based on the estimation that Britain's present government, and its social and political status quo, were beneficial enough to override any advantages promised by hasty or violent innovations. In the militia debate, by contrast, he reckoned that the nation could only gain vigour, not lose stability, and he was therefore prepared for a political fight. In general, Ferguson adhered to a theory of obedience and resistance which Scottish thinkers, notably David Fordyce and Reid, took up from Grotius: obedience is the due of lawful government, and must also persist when rights are violated, unless the causes for resistance are "great and evident".[24] But the moral arithmetic of unrest and stability became more of a dilemma in the

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22. The post-1801 American editions are listed in *The National Union Catalog*, vol. 169, pp. 605-608.
23. Sher, *ibid.*, pp. 274-275. Kettler, *Social and Political Thought,*, pp. 86-88.
24. See J. C. Stewart-Robertson, "Sancte Socrates: Scottish Reflection on Obedience and Resistance", in Emerson et al. (eds.), *Man and Nature*, 65-75; the quotation is from Reid's lectures, *ibid.*, p. 69.

1790s. The French Revolution presented Ferguson - to a greater extent than his fellow literati - with a heady blend of national invigoration and social upheaval, which his own civic humanist beliefs could not allow him to brush aside.

As elsewhere in Europe, the initial phases of the Revolution were welcomed by many potential supporters of reform in Scotland, primarily because the events appeared just, bloodless, and profoundly exciting. The Jacobin terror, however, cost the Revolution most of its admirers and the Scottish reform movement its respectability.[25] Ferguson's attitude to the Revolution, as revealed in letters and in an unpublished essay, was exceptionally favourable. He immediately recognized it as a republican outburst, and subsequently felt that both his historical focus on classical republicanism and his modern analysis of national spirit were put to the test, and epically vindicated. The downfall of the French "frivolous corrupted pretenders to aristocracy"[26] did not worry him. The fervour of the French people and the wonderful effect of egalitarianism on the French army greatly thrilled him. His elation held fast even when he was forced to withdraw his initial prophecy that "what they are engaged in will make them better neighbours both in Europe & Asia than they have been heretofore."[27]

Ferguson therefore denounced the first Coalition's policy towards revolutionary France, and felt that his own history and philosophy enabled him to grasp the logic of the Republic better than most European statesmen: it should have been left to run its course, exhaust its national fervour and moderate its politics, "but this was too profound a secret for German heads."[28] Later, however, he came round to believing that the French Republic could only live on its sword; and he knew that Napoleonic France, though still a marvel of national spirit, must be opposed. In David Kettler's words, "only his conviction that a republic in modern times could exist only by virtue of aggressive militarism and his belief that in Napoleon that French Republic had already found its Caesar must have restrained him from becoming an outright supporter of the

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25. Henry W. Meikle, *Scotland and the French Revolution* (1912, reprinted New York, 1969), chapters iii-v.
26. A letter of 15.7.1799, quoted by Kettler, *Social and Political Thought*, p. 95.
27. National Library MSS, no. 1809, quoted *ibid.*, p. 94.
28. MSS no. 3464 (letters to Carlyle, 1797 and 1800), quoted *ibid.*, p. 93.

regime".[29] Now, he said, was the time for British patriotism to live up to the French model. Judging from the tone of his essays and correspondence of this period, being a civic humanist - even an old one - was something of a bliss.

Ferguson lived his long last decades as "a man of the world and a high-bred gentleman", as Alexander Carlyle characterized him.[30] In 1782 he was made member of the new Royal Society of Scotland, and the next year a three-volume history of the Roman Republic began appearing in print.[31] Despite generous encouragement from Edward Gibbon, Ferguson's fame as a historian of Rome was short-lived and eventually totally eclipsed; but something Roman stuck to his public image in Britain, and shaped the nineteenth century's memory of him.[32]

Upon resigning his chair in 1785 Ferguson handed it over to his brilliant student Dugald Stewart, and lived thirty-one more years. In 1792 appeared an enlarged (and in terms of political activism somewhat moderated) philosophical textbook, *The Principles of Moral and Political Science*.[33] In 1793, planning a second edition of the *Roman Republic*, Ferguson travelled via Germany to Rome, where he sojourned for a while. On 26 September of the same year he was elected external member of the Berlin Royal Academy of Sciences and Arts, the first Scot - indeed, the first Briton - to received this honour for at least two decades.[34] Ferguson lived long enough to see his eldest son, the future Sir Adam, return from

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29. *Ibid.*, p. 94.

30. Quoted in DNB, vol. VI, 1202.

31. *The History of the Progress and Termination of the Roman Republic*, 3 vols. (London, 1783). There were English editions in 1799 and 1813, and a reprint in 1825. Two (!) French translations appeared in Paris, in 1784-1791 and in 1803-1810; DNB, vol. VI, 1203. For the German translation and the Basle reprint see the bibliography.

32. For Gibbon's letter to Ferguson in 1776, see Small, *Biographical Sketch*, p. 24.

33. The *Principles* did not repeat the success of the earlier books in either Britain or Germany. Interestingly, the book was translated into French as late as 1821, and treated with respect in Cousin's *Course d'histoire de la philosophie morale* (1839-1840); DNB, *ibid.*

34. *Mémoires de L'Academie Royale des Sciences et Belles-Lettres 1792-1793* (Berlin, 1798), p. 6. For Ferguson's correspondence with the academy see *ibid.*, p. 37, for a letter of thanks, and *Mémoires... 1794-1795* (Berlin, 1799), pp. 35-36, for a letter on scientific questions; the latter touched on a "Scottish" subject: the properties of strontium, the metallic element discovered in the village of Strontian. The academy's second British member in this period was another Scot, Sir John Sinclair, elected in 1794; *ibid.*, p. 74.

French captivity, and the final defeat of Napoleon. "The news of Waterloo", Walter Scott wrote, "acted on the aged patriot as a Nunc Dimittis."[35] The civic times were over. Ferguson died in St. Andrews, surrounded by his three unmarried daughters, in February 1816.

II. Ferguson in Scotland: Ideas and Impact

The militia debate and the *Essay on the History of Civil Society* are the main markers of Ferguson's position on the map of the Scottish Enlightenment. While David Hume, and more significantly Adam Smith, were moving away from the discourse of civic humanism, Ferguson became its chief standard-bearer. Scottish civic humanism adapted the Machiavellian and Harringtonian legacy to the basic needs of eighteenth-century Scotland by legitimating the pursuit of wealth and re-defining the concept of corruption. Their main concern was still citizenship in a polity, which in post-Union Scotland meant that the public-minded elite needed to maintain its grip on political matters in what had become an institutional periphery. Ferguson's *Essay*, like the works of Robertson and Kames, was an attempt to show that even in a large and commercial society active citizenship was possible, and indeed vital. By the time the *Essay* was written, this view had to be defended on two fronts, and its language was pitted against two competing languages: the social discourse of sensibility, and the powerful natural-jurisprudential language which penetrated, and then overturned, the civic political concepts.

His immediate posterity remembered Adam Ferguson primarily as a figure of "Roman" moral integrity, and as an educator. This image, however, was only superficially similar to Ferguson's German reputation as an author fit for use by pedagogues and "popular philosophers". To his Scottish disciples, most famously to Dugald Stewart, Ferguson gave a unique moral-intellectual education which may be seen as a Scottish *Bildung* of sorts.[36] Here, however, a distinction must be made: the late Scottish Enlightenment nursed an ideal of moral character-building,

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35. Quoted in DNB, *ibid.*

36. "But the philosophical instructor, who, from the character of his mind and doctrines, was most fitted to attract the sympathy and admiration of Stewart, was Adam Ferguson..."; John Veitch, "A Memoir of Dugald Stewart", in *The Collected Works of Dugald Stewart*, ed. Sir William Hamilton, vol. X (Edinburgh, 1858), p. xv.

couched in the language of sensibility and sociability, which is strikingly similar to its German counterpart; it can be found in the educational writings of Ferguson's friends Hugh Blair, James Fordyce, and the novelist Henry Mackenzie.[37] Although this discourse of ethical formation was distinctly aimed at the gentry and aristocracy, rather than the middle classes, it advocated domestic virtues and feminine sensitivity which can compare with the writings of some German *Aufklärer* of the same age. In Scotland, however, there was a fruitful tension between the new language of domestic sensibility and the still dominant language of classical virtue and "manly" ethics.[38] These interlocking discourses shared a concern for the strength of community in a changing world of commerce and specialization. But Ferguson was far closer to the civic side of the spectrum, even though he occasionally used sentimentalist terms. As we shall later emphasize, he was not an educator of women. His ideal of moral culture was far more civic and political than that of Blair or Mackenzie. His pupils, in a way which substantially differed from the contemporary German educational ideal, were intended to become politicians and statesmen rather than court administrators or men of letters. It was an education to conflict as well as to civic spirit.

The gulf between Ferguson's pedagogy and that of Lessing, Garve, or Schiller - and between the ways of life he and they could foresee and prescribe for their disciples - is best exemplified by a letter from Sir John Macpherson, the Governor-General of India and an early student of Ferguson's. It is worth quoting at length, because it amply demonstrates how forthright political Ferguson's moral teachings were for this Scottish builder of the British empire. "I have followed your maxims in the practice of affairs," Macpherson wrote to Ferguson in 1786,

> upon perhaps the greatest theatre of affairs... I have amply experienced the truth of three of your favourite positions:
> 1st. That the pursuits of an active mind are its greatest happiness, when they are directed to good objects, which unite our own happiness with that of our friends and the general advantage of society. Hence the first success in the Carnatic; the subsequent efforts in London; the return to India; the visit to Europe in '77; the

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37. See most recently John Dwyer, "The Imperative of Sociability: Moral Culture in the Late Scottish Enlightenment", *British Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies* vol 13 no. 2 (Autumn 1990), pp. 169-184.
38. *Ibid.*, pp. 177-178.

> intercourse with men of business; the friendship of the ministers; Lord N[orth]'s selection of me for my trust in 1778.
> 2d. I have likewise experienced, that he who has not been in contact with his fellow creatures knows but half of the human heart. But such are the necessary taxes of occupation, of business, and perhaps of life.
> 3d. That all that rests with us individually, is to act our own parts to the best of our ability, and to endeavour to do good for its own sake, independent of events, disappointments, or sufferings.
> Under these impressions I have acted and I now act; and if the India company, the ministers, and the Legislature... will adopt the plans I have laid before them, I am steady in believing that the greatest benefits to Britain from Thule to Land's End, and to Asia, from the Cape Comorin to Tartary, may flow from the practical operations of the commercial and political systems I have opened for the adoption of the empire.[39]

With its elegant glide from Stoic virtue to the East India Company, this letter goes a long way to explain the climate in which Ferguson and his British contemporaries could read philosophy into worldly action without the speculative agonies which featured in German "theory-practice" debates. In Scotland these agonies did not exist, and the bearing of philosophy on politics seemed self-evident. As Dugald Stewart's biographer reminded his readers in the mid-nineteenth century, "no one was better skilled than Ferguson in duly blending the abstract and the concrete... with him Ethics, Politics, and History, went hand in hand, in turn illustrating and borrowing light from each other."[40] Ferguson's image as an educator to action also clarifies the dominance of his character over his actual teachings. Another Victorian writer (after typically observing that Ferguson's life story was not "remarkable" because he had "lived and died in the social position in which he was born") presented him as a model-character "of the manliest type", who, although "scarcely a man of genius...*was* more than he *did*", and was "typical of the whole [Scottish] race in appearance, character, tastes, and fortunes".[41] This tribute to his character signalled the decline of Ferguson's scholarly reputation, at least

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39. The letter is quoted in full by Small, *Biographical Sketch*, pp. 45-49.
40. Veitch, "Memoir", p. xvi.
41. *The Edinburgh Review* cxxv (1867), pp. 48-49.

in Britain, where he was shelved as an undistinguished thinker[42] until his texts were recently aired by historians of the Scottish Enlightenment.[43]

As a historian and moral philosopher Ferguson has never totally been forgotten, but only since the 1960s has he seriously been studied as a political thinker. Ferguson was political in two ways: he practiced politics, and, as we have just shown, he educated his students to public activity. It is perhaps a twentieth-century fallacy to remove an author's "narrow" politics from the wider framework of his belief in God, his understanding of human nature and his view of the good life; but for the present discussion it is important to see that it was precisely his "narrow" politics which did not cross the cultural-linguistic divide between Scotland and Germany. Prior to being a well-read and travelled European intellectual, Ferguson was a Lowlands Scotsman of Gaelic affinities, Presbyterian faith, Whig political loyalties, and moderate-conservative social views. He shared these affiliations with his circle of Edinburgh moderate literati, who provided him with constant intellectual challenge as well as a powerful focus of national and cultural belonging.

From the early phases of his career Ferguson published tracts and pamphlets expressing his political and social convictions with regard to topics of the day: a sermon preaching Hanoverian loyalty to the Black Watch in 1745, the defence of stage plays in 1756, the two militia pamphlets, the vindication of British liberty in 1776, and the ill-fated *Manifesto and Proclamation* of the abortive Carlisle Commission in 1778. None of those publications were known in Germany.[44] Nor was his attitude towards the French Revolution, expressed in unpublished essays and private correspondence. All these political statements were based on a defence of the social and political *status quo* in Great Britain, which could not comfortably be applied to any of the European monarchies. Even his allegiance to the British government was invariably conditional. "After all", as he stated in the *Essay*, "the merit of a man is determined by

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42. "As a speculative philosopher, and even as a historian, he must be contented with a second rank." *Ibid.*, p. 49. Cf. Leslie Stephen, *History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century* (3rd edn., New York, 1949) vol. II, 214-216.

43. Most significant are Duncan Forbes' edition of the *Essay* (1966) with his thought-provoking introduction, and, a year earlier, Kettler's book.

44. One possible exception is the 1776 pamphlet, which the Göttingen university library acquired at an unspecified date.

his candour and generosity to his associates, by his zeal for national objects, and by his vigour in maintaining political rights; not by moderation alone, which proceeds frequently from indifference to national and public interests".[45] Ferguson's German readers, who knew nothing of his concrete political statements as a moderate Scottish Whig, encountered this message of civic activism at the bottom of his moral philosophy, and in the political sections which concluded his two most admired books.

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As his intellectual biographers stress, Adam Ferguson was no systematic philosopher.[46] He was, however, a coherent theorist of action in society. "Mankind are to be taken in groups, as they have always subsisted",[47] was his fundamental principle as a historian and as a moralist. The various drives and dispositions of human nature are meaningful only in society, the good ones contributing to it, and the bad ones abusing or neglecting it. It is useless to hypothesize a non-social state: man's "mixed disposition to friendship or enmity, his reason, his use of language and articulate sounds, like the shape and the erect position of his body, are to be considered as so many attributes of his nature".[48]

Ferguson's avowed empiricism - his insistence that "all we know of human nature comes from observation" - was the basis of his belief in natural sociability. But nature was subject to laws, and Ferguson followed his mentor Hutcheson in adapting the Newtonian concept of law to the study of psychology and ethics. His philosophy textbooks assembled the data of observation under laws of two kinds, either "physical" or "moral". The truly important distinction, he stressed, is not between man's mind and body (which he called "intellectual system" and "material system"), but rather between physical laws and moral laws which govern both these systems. Some philosophers have got it wrong: "frequently, whatever relates to matter, is said to be physical; whatever relates to

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45. *Essay* (1966 edition), p. 199. Unless otherwise stated, all subsequent references are to this edition.
46. Kettler, *Social and Political Thought*, pp. 6-7. Forbes, "Introduction", p. xxx.
47. *Essay*, p. 4.
48. *Ibid.*, p. 3.

mind, is said to be moral." But the difficulties cropping up from this simplistic arrangement - Ferguson was thinking of Hume's naturalistic fallacy - are superfluous. True moral philosophy is not about "any theoretical question relating to mind"; it is solely "the study of what men ought to be, and of what they ought to wish, for themselves and for their country."[49] The is-ought problem, in other words, has no bearing on ethics.

Ferguson's basic moral concept was virtue, the Christian-Stoic virtue of willful action for the public good: "the Stoic enlisted himself, as a willing instrument in the hand of God, for the good of his fellow-creatures."[50] Moral actions are judged not by their unforeseeable consequences, but by the "will, intention, and design" of human beings.[51] This stoicism was couched in Hutcheson's language of benevolence and moral sentiment, but it had a further twist. Ferguson made it more political, and more tinged by restlessness and the love of challenge. "We mistake human nature," says the famous first section of his *Essay on the History of Civil Society,* "if we wish for a termination of labour, or a scene of repose."[52] Virtue was a matter of action; and action, Ferguson held, was first and foremost a social matter.

But action in society - and here Ferguson moved away from Shaftesbury and Hutcheson - also involved conflict, and conflict could be a good thing. It refreshed men's individual fortitude and social bearings. Ferguson described (and prescribed) it on all levels of human interaction - between individuals through play or hunting,[53] between political parties as an unintended means of securing liberty,[54] and between rival societies as a fact of human nature, and not always a sad one. It has, he said, good consequences for the moral vigour of nations: "Their wars, and their treaties, their mutual jealousies, and the establishments which they devise in view to each other, constitute more than half the occupations of

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49. *Institutes* (1st ed., 1769) p. 84. Unless otherwise stated, all subsequenst references are to this edition.
50. Quoted by Sher, *Church and University*, p. 175.
51. *Institutes*, 3rd edn. (Edinburgh, 1785), p. 177.
52. *Essay*, p. 7.
53. *Ibid.*, pp. 42-43, 46.
54. *Ibid.*, pp. 125, 128.

mankind, and furnish materials for their greatest and most improving exertions."[55]

There is a glowing contradiction between this praise of war and Christian and Stoic moral doctrines. Ferguson was aware of it, and, quite simply, unwilling to solve it:

> Peace and unanimity are commonly considered as the principal foundations of public felicity; yet the rivalship of separate communities, and the agitations of a free people, are the principles of political life, and the school of men. How shall we reconcile these jarring and opposite tenets? It is, perhaps, not necessary to reconcile them. The pacific may do what they can to allay the animosities, and to reconcile the opinions, of men; and it will be happy if they can succeed in repressing their crimes, and in calming the worst of their passions. Nothing, in the mean time, but corruption or slavery can suppress the debates that subsist among men of integrity, who bear an equal part in the administration of state.[56]

This idea of human nature underlay Ferguson's idea of the good life: happiness is not the result of as much pleasure and as little pain as possible, but of social virtue expressed in "active pursuits".[57] He consciously distanced himself from David Hume's pleasure-pain psychology: "pleasure", he told his students, "is a term too vague to be substituted for happiness."[58] The emphasis on active pursuit also breathed new life into the well-worn Stoic equation of virtue and happiness. Ferguson duly repeated it - "the definitions of perfect happiness and perfect virtue are the same"[59] - but attached both constituents to political action. Full happiness, he explained, is only achieved by virtuous action; its rewards eclipse the partial, misleading comforts of sensual pleasures.[60]

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55. *Ibid.*, p. 119. There is a certain tension in the *Essay* between the British concept of contending political parties as guarantors of liberty, and the ancient, especially Roman, denunciation of factions as destroyers of the national unity. The ensuing dilemma between war with inner unity and peace with "domestic dissentions" is stated *ibid.*, p. 125.
56. *Ibid.*, pp. 61-62.
57. *Ibid.*, p. 42. For Ferguson's civic activism see especially Kettler, *Social and Political Theory*, pp. 141, 149-150, 164ff, and Sher, *Church and University*, pp. 175-180.
58. *Institutes* , p. 160.
59. *Institutes*, 3rd edn., p. 166.
60. *Essay*, pp. 43-44.

This is Ferguson's theory of human nature, and, with the exception of his idea of conflict, it is not original. The idea of society as the sole or chief locus of moral existence has a Greek and Roman pedigree, and was transmitted to the Scottish Enlightenment through the Natural Law thinkers, primarily Pufendorf. The empirical methodology is Newtonian, its social-moral application developed by Locke (and, in Scotland, by David Fordyce). The notion of moral sentiment is derived from Hutcheson, going back to Shaftesbury's concept of benevolence.[61] The association of happiness and virtue is essentially Stoic, and the insistence on social virtue is rooted in Aristotle, modernized by Machiavelli, and reaffirmed by most eighteenth century moralists. The British civic humanist tradition had already removed the individualist teeth and claws from Machiavelli's *virtù* by steering away from the lone operator, the seducer of *fortuna*, into the more communal dimensions of social and political activism.[62]

Ferguson himself readily referred his readers to his classical and modern sources, including most of the greater Greek and Roman writers, modern voyage literature, Montesquieu, Hutcheson, and Hume. He also proclaimed his *bêtes noires*, Mandeville and Rousseau, who erred in denying the moral primacy of either individual virtue or society itself. Ferguson summed it up well and phrased it powerfully, but with this mixture of ideas he could easily be seen (as he often was in the nineteenth and early twentieth century) as a second-rate, eclectic moralist.[63] But Ferguson's texts are more than melting-pots of received moral philosophy and recent ethnography. They were addressed to the members of modern societies, diagnosed new dangers, and transmitted a strong sense of didactic and political mission, spiced by the sheer urgency of someone who had a solution. Ferguson's often-missed originality lies in the application (and, of course, the belief in the *applicability*) of civic humanism to modern life in commercial societies, such as Scotland was fast becoming, even in large political frameworks such as Great Britain.

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61. Shaftesbury, *Characteristicks of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times* (4th edn., London, 1727), I, 88f; II, 44, 86, 99-101ff, 139ff, 175.
62. Pocock, *Machiavellian Moment*, pp. 405ff.
63. Cf. note 42 above.

Citizen virtue and political activism were far from defunct, and no political society was ever safe without them: this was the message.

It is easy to see Ferguson's position as a rearguard defence of a dying tradition. His Scottish contemporaries who shared his concerns, notably Hume and Smith, did not share his solution. One of these concerns was essentially historical: past and present human societies may be similar in early stages of their development, but they form intriguing and varied patterns as they gradually evolve, and each of them demands close inspection. The other, higher concern was essentially moral: advancing technology, commercial expansion, industrial specialisation, and cultural refinement - all interlinked - tend to destroy simple and valuable social assets. But, unlike Hume and Smith, Ferguson did not consent to trust any system of laws - be they political laws of great wisdom or natural laws allowed a free hand - to maintain and preserve a political society. He dismissed all types of constitutional *perpetuum mobile*, ingenious as they may be. Political matters, he repeatedly stressed, were subject to a bewildering variety of causes, not least of which was human will, passion or whim. So human volition must always intervene: virtue must be exercised not as a keep-fit routine, but in order to maintain its only possible arena, the polity, in working order. In the modern European nations, where civic virtue had been lost or dismissed, it must be revived. Men - here was Ferguson's hidden subversive message - could only be virtuous if they regained possession of their civic life, namely the defence and the government of their countries.

While Ferguson's pluralist approach to human societies echoed Montesquieu (and also, probably unknown to him, Vico), his account of their evolution reflected a set of concerns which the Scottish Enlightenment took from Pufendorf and Turgot.[64] In its mature form, it was a bid for reconstructing the full story of the historical advance of mankind, an approach which Ferguson's pupil Dugald Stewart later called "conjectural history". In Ferguson's hands, this use of history enriched and transformed both Montesquieu's anthropological pluralism and Machiavelli's civic republicanism. To some degree, the project was shared

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64. See especially R.L. Meek, *Social Science and the Ignoble Savage* (Cambridge, 1976).

by William Robertson, Adam Smith, and John Millar. Ferguson's *Essay on the History of Civil Society* is one of its seminal statements.[65]

The *Essay* was well received and highly praised by men of letters from Boswell to d'Holbach. It has six parts, whose titles provide a clear overview of the general Scottish concerns and of Ferguson's personal emphases. A psychological introduction, "Of the General Characteristics of Human Nature", is followed by two historical discussions, "Of the History of Rude Nations" and "Of the History of Policy and Arts". The three last parts - "Of Consequences that Result from the Advancement of Civil and Commercial Arts", "Of the Decline of Nations", and "Of Corruption and Political Slavery" - present a historical-moral analysis of the inherent evils which modern society must confront.[66]

Ferguson's diagnosis of the problems of advanced commercial society was a civic version of the Scottish attempt to work out the coexistence of wealth and virtue. His notion of corruption was not (as some Germans read him) that of a Ciceronian or a Stoic. The real moral danger in our times, he said, was not luxury *per se*, but political laziness. He made a point of conceding that luxury was in every epoch relative, and that riches and material well-being did not in themselves cause or imply moral degeneration.[67] It was specifically the modern economic structure of society, to his mind, which encouraged the well-to-do - specifically the landowning class - to remain out of politics, and therefore out of virtuous life. Ferguson's "virtue" strongly echoed the Aristotelian political virtue and the Machiavellian *virtù*;[68] but his economic analysis of morality was distinctly modern.

The most important of his insights was the vehement denial of the historical primacy of man-made laws, and of the corresponding two myths of the ancient legislator and the original contract.[69] The quality of any polity - Ferguson was not content with the received classification of

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65. Cf. Pocock, *Machiavellian Moment*, p. 499ff.
66. The best discussion of the book is provided in Hans Medick's and Zwi Batscha's "Einleitung" to Medick's recent translation (Frankfurt a.M., 1988), pp. 7-91.
67. *Essay*, pp. 245-246.
68. Forbes, "Introduction", pp. xxvii and xxxi; Pocock, *Machiavellian Moment*, pp. 499-500.
69. Forbes, *ibid.*, pp. xxiv and especially xxxviii.

government types - relied on the constant alertness and activity of its citizens to a greater extent than on its basic constitution. Good governments, in Ferguson's opinion, cannot be perpetuated, but must be constantly nurtured by an active citizenry. No mechanic equilibrium of powers, only a lively and kicking public, can keep a government on its track. Ferguson does not mince his words here: happiness, he tells his readers, is accessible to members of "states where different orders of men are summoned to partake in the government of their country"; and even under such institutions "the liberties they enjoy cannot be long preserved, without vigilance and activity on the part of the subject."[70]

This was Ferguson's most notable self-distancing from Montesquieu, the revered master to whose work he modestly denied adding anything new.[71] But its implications went further than that: the denial of an original contract was a denial of an historical entry into the *status civilis*, as Pufendorf and his followers would have it. For Ferguson there was no pre-political man, and the State was not a unique political state. Political society preceded the legal-constitutional structure called the State, and man's political instincts were more deeply rooted than the natural jurists would have them. While sharing Hume's dislike of the fiction of a social contract, Ferguson concluded, contrary to Hume, that a good government was primarily a question of voluntary political activism by individual members of civil society.

The dialogue with Hume is crucial for our grasp of the biting edge of the *Essay*: it was not just a restatement of old civic convictions, but also a new bid to defend them against the legalist concepts of government which Hume had put forward and Smith was in the process of developing. Hume had modified the civic tradition by inserting the individualist-jurisprudential notions of universal liberty and universal citizenship. The future, he thought, belonged to large commercial States, where all would be citizens, but only watered-down citizens by the exacting standards of the civic humanists. The way to this future might well pass through "civilized" monarchies, including absolute governments of the Continental

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70. *Essay*, p. 56.

71. *Ibid.*, p. 65. Too many scholars took Ferguson at his word, but see Sheila Mason, "Ferguson and Montesquieu: Tacit Reproaches?", *British Journal for Eighteenth Century Studies*, 11 (1988), pp. 193-203.

brand.[72] Adam Smith, in his *Wealth of Nations*, was to break with the civic humanist tradition altogether by abandoning the notions of political community and citizen militia. Instead, he developed a natural-jurisprudential theory of political economy, where individual wealth-pursuit can be made to fit into a great natural course, politically safeguarded by the British doctrine of parliamentary sovereignty.[73] Both Hume and Smith asserted the primacy of political institutions over the participating individual. Ferguson, conscious that they may lose sight of civic virtue altogether, and trust laws and History too much, held fast to the citizen.

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Despite its inner coherence, the constituent parts of Ferguson's theory are easily separable. Ferguson's anthropological interest in primitive societies could be re-tuned into fashionable primitivism; his moral fascination with classical antiquity could be dismissed as neo-stoic idealization. Conversely, these interests could be totally drained of their moral implications and pushed towards a value-free, "scientific" sociology, whose earliest roots were discernible in some German universities in his days. As to Ferguson's marriage of civic humanism with the historical stage-theory of civil society, it could also be easily undone. Karl Marx, for instance, hailed Ferguson as an early alienation theorist.[74] His emphasis on the fragmentation and neglect of the citizen's roles in modern civil society could be moved neatly from the civic to the commercial sphere, and understood as a denunciation of the division of labour in the process of production. In fact, specialization in manufacture worried Ferguson less than the alienation of the citizen from his civic roles.[75]

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72. Duncan Forbes, *Hume's Philosophical Politics* (Cambridge, 1975), pp. 152-172, 224-230. Robertson, "Scottish Enlightenment", pp. 151-177.

73. Here I follow the line of John Robertson, who suggests both a revision of the strictly natural-jurisprudential understanding of Smith (Forbes, Winch, Haakunsen), and a qualification of his status as a civic moralist (Phillipson); Robertson, "Scottish Political Economy beyond the Civic Tradition", *History of Political Thought* IV (1983), 451-482.

74. *Capital* (Moscow, 1954), pp. 123n, 354, 361-62, 362n. *The Poverty of Philosophy* (Moscow, 1956), p. 145.

75. Cf. chapter 9, p. 289.

But if Ferguson was no proto-marxist, neither was he a straightforward Enlightenment moralist. It was (and still is) easy enough to place him in the camp which Moses Mendelssohn called the "*System der Wohlwollens*", comprising the thinkers who upheld man's moral sense, or benevolence, or sympathy, or *pitié*, in the face of the "*System des Eigennutzes*" led by Hobbes, Mandeville and Helvétius.[76] Ferguson, of course, did subscribe to the party whose agenda was simplified by Pope into the maxim "self-love and social be the same"; But his civic humanism made him a rather naughty subscriber, emphasizing society and its earthly restlessness, advocating conflict, and dodging the purely spiritual, or aesthetic, pole of Shaftesbury's legacy.

One striking example, that will emerge time and again in our discussion, is Ferguson's rather half-hearted notion of human perfectibility. Man, he conceded, did yearn for perfection; but Ferguson's affirmation of this yearning is coloured by his dynamic, voluntarist, and political-minded view of human nature. As Duncan Forbes has emphasised, Ferguson was far from progressivism in its crude, one-way, "whig" form. He rejected, and indeed denounced as dangerous, the view of mankind as unintentionally or irreversibly progressing along any moral, social or political course. Technological progress - which he acknowledged - was not a point in question: his real and innovative point was to warn against confusing it with moral progress. Morality, which for Ferguson amounted to social virtue, was in his view not infinitely perfectible, but at best slightly improvable or diligently sustainable. A move in the opposite direction was more probable: the virtue of a man or a nation could easily deteriorate when neglected.

This attitude is expressed most powerfully in the *Essay*, a book about man's crucial (but limited) capacity to create and maintain a good polity within the harsh contours of physical and psychological realities. In the *Institutes of Moral Philosophy*, however, Ferguson opted for a softened, "textbook" theory of perfectibilism. It was this version which had a profound effect on some of his most distinguished German readers.

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76. See, with special reference to Schiller, Manfred Riedel, *Die Anthropologie des jungen Schiller* (Würzburg, 1985), p. 180. Mendelssohn's phrases are from GS 5: 378.

According to the *Institutes*, there are three "Laws of the Will" which regulate the human mind; these are "physical", not "moral" laws - hence they are binding and descriptive, not avoidable and prescriptive. The third Law of the Will is that "men naturally desire what constitutes excellence, and avoid what constitutes defect."[77] As we shall see, many German readers, past and present, have taken this law to refer to a moral striving for perfection (*Vollkommenheit*). However, Ferguson did not mean it to be so. Not only is the law purely descriptive, it is also morally neutral. The word "perfect" appears nowhere in its definition, and it is elsewhere termed "the law of estimation".[78] The quest for excellency, Ferguson makes clear, can refer to success in any human activity. It is true that we always strive for something - "human nature is actually in motion, either in a right or in a wrong path". Sometimes we even strive for moral perfection; but this is nothing but the quest for virtue, and virtue is always understood in its social and civic meaning.[79] Moral perfectibility, however, is neither inevitable nor linear in human affairs. At best, we may achieve real, small-scale "improvement" in the only sphere that matters, that of social and political life.[80] But the history of civil society is not an uphill climb towards a perfect state. Here was the punchline of Ferguson's politicized eudaemonism: the perfectibility of human nature did not imply a constant improvement of minds, morals, or societies.

In Germany, however, the chord of perfectibilism resounded far more forcefully than in Scotland. The way Ferguson was read actually contributed to the shaping of a model of human improvement, a modernized and "secularized" theory of perfectibility. The Protestant German thinkers who developed this model were seeking the willful spiritual enhancement of the individual person within society, and sometimes without it. Ferguson's ideas, removed from their Scottish context, helped, in the last three decades of the eighteenth century, to forge the link between one Christian tradition of perfectibility and the spiritual projects of Schiller, Fichte, and some of the German

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77. *Institutes*, p. 94.
78. *Ibid.*, pp. 99-100, 145.
79. The *Institutes* define virtue as "probity, supported by wisdom, temperance, and fortitude" (pp. 155-156) - a fair blend of stoic beneficence and Machiavellian *virtù*.
80. *Ibid.*, pp. 162-164.

Romanticists.[81] We will explore this development, with respect to Schiller, in our last chapter.

But the shifting idea of perfection is only part of the story. Beneath the apparently harmless stoicism there are, in all of Ferguson's works, political statements that did not lend themselves to such easy transformation. These statements expressed the hard core of his commitment to political activism and the corresponding willingness to advocate social change, which together create the radical potential of his doctrines. We can demonstrate this potential in his least controversial and, in Germany, most popular book, the *Institutes of Moral Philosophy*.

In a passage often (and mistakenly) quoted as a confirmation of the existing social order, Ferguson invokes the Stoic slave Epictetus and the Stoic king Antoninus:

> I am in the station which God has assigned me, says Epictetus... Is not the appointment of God sufficient to outweigh every other consideration? This rendered the condition of a slave agreeable to Epictetus, and that of a monarch to Antoninus.[82]

This statement sounds complacent enough, and, indeed, "Stoic" in the passive and quietist sense of this term. However, in the very next paragraph Ferguson continues with a noteworthy and seldom-quoted reservation:

> Whoever possesses good personal qualities, holds them in dependence only upon God: but the circumstances in which men are placed; the policy or government of their country; their education, knowledge and habits, - have great influence in forming their characters.[83]

This is the conclusion of a chapter significantly titled 'Of opinions, or Circumstances, productive of Happiness'. By referring to political and social circumstances, the social scientist is here qualifying the "Stoic"; looking back from this paragraph, the talk of God's blessing to the likes of Epictetus may even be ironic. To be sure, Ferguson is saying, God's

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81. See especially John Passmore, *The Perfectibility of Man* (London, 1970), pp. 157-158 and 213ff.
82. *Institutes*, pp. 169-170.
83. *Ibid.*, p. 170.

benevolence can create happy and virtuous slaves (even though, in Ferguson's own terms, anyone who is out of the public game cannot really be happy). But for most men the contingencies of birth, education and political status matter a great deal for their chances of happiness.

Towards the end of the book there follows a yet more extreme advocacy of social equality and political activism. Appearing in the section Of the Happiness of a People, it begins harmlessly enough, and then becomes increasingly challenging:

> The happiness of a people consists in the love of their country, and in that distribution of ranks and station which is best suited for their merits and capacities.
> Men who have least private interest, are best disposed to love their country.
> Men who have the fewest adventitious distinctions of birth and fortune, are most likely to be classed according to their merits, to be employed suitably to their abilities, and to find the stations in which they are most likely to cultivate their talents and their virtues.
> That a community may be loved in the highest degree, its members should be relieved of personal anxieties, and occupied in what relates to the public.
> They should be made to consider the state as the equal parent of all, distributing equal benefits, and requiring equal services.
> Where-ever the state confines political consideration to a few, who sacrifice the rights of others to their own interest or fancy, it cannot be loved.
> The reason and the heart of man are best cultivated in the exercise of social duties, and in the conduct of public affairs.[84]

For the German supporters of enlightened reform from above, this statement must have presented an ascending difficulty. As Ferguson stressed in his treatment of Montesquieu's typology of governments, all the existing European forms which were not thoroughly despotic could accommodate the political participation of their members. Not only was such participation possible, it was a moral necessity. Moreover, it was not intended for a dim future, after educational goals are achieved; it was a basic truth of civil society as such.[85]

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84. *Ibid.*, pp. 289-191.
85. *Ibid.*, p. 296.

The need for active political freedom to support passive civil liberties is stated more explicitly in the *Essay*. The following passage was clearly meant as a direct attack on theories of rights which deemed personal civil freedoms sufficient for the happiness of the subjects without the further proviso of political participation. "If to any people", Ferguson warned,

> it be the avowed object of policy, in all its internal refinements, to secure the person and the property of the subject, without any regard to his political character, the constitution indeed may be free, but its members may likewise become unworthy of the freedom they possess, and unfit to preserve it... If this be the end of political struggles, the design, when executed, in securing to the individual his estate, and the means of subsistence, may put an end to the exercise of those very virtues that were required in conducting its execution."[86]

This passage is important not just for its explicit activism, but also for its critique of Locke's political language. Here was a clash of vocabularies: Ferguson was demonstrating the insufficiency of such concepts as personal freedom, secured property and individual rights, if they are divorced from the civic concept of exercised virtue and political struggle. Ferguson left no doubt that his whole critique of polished society rests on the problem of political passivity.

In his later book, *Principles of Moral and Political Science* (1792), Ferguson's soothing defence of the British constitution was spiced with fresh venom against Europe's absolutist regimes. Here he made use of the notion of "mixed government", a classical concept which had recently served Montesquieu for his typology of government forms in *De l'esprit des lois*. Ferguson used it not only as a descriptive category, but also as a normative statement of what a modern State should be. A mixed government, he told his readers, is any government in which the executive power exists side by side with a "fortunate... constitution of the collateral, legislative, and judicative forms." In such a case, "there is greater danger from change than from any trivial inconvenience".[87] So much for British Jacobins; but the formula does not cater for absolutist Prussia quite as comfortably as for parliamentary Britain. By no means, Ferguson continues, does his doctrine justify civic complacency: even

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86, *Essay*, pp. 221-222.
87. *Principles*, vol. II, 498.

those "least disposed to innovation" must "know the good of which they are susceptible, and the evil to which they are exposed." Brushing away arguments for cultural relativism, Ferguson asserts that government is not a relative matter, on which "every age or nation should be left to please itself."

> The slave, we are told, is often more chearful and gay than his master, *and the subject of absolute monarchy more undisturbed, than the citizen of a fair republic*; And if we reason from the tastes of men, we must leave every one to chuse for himself. This is pleaded in matters of private as well as public felicity; but, so long as human nature has its visible destination, in the perfection or excellence of which it is susceptible, we must be allowed to scrutinize the tastes as well as the attainments of men.[88]

It is important to see that precisely Ferguson's idea of human nature led him, as he himself claimed, to reject any form of government which does not grant freedom for political participation. The reference to "absolute monarchy" might be understood as a reference to despotism in its Greek and Roman guise, contrasted with the classic republic; but the context or this quotation strongly suggests that Ferguson is talking of a modern "free State", and hence of a modern absolute monarchy. Once again, Ferguson rejects any quietist interpretation of his political ideas, and proceeds in a way which clearly points to the political structures of his time, the products of the historical evolution he had described elsewhere:

> The trials of ability, which men mutually afford to one another in the collisions of free society, are the lessons of a school which Providence has opened for mankind, and are well known to forward, instead of impeding their progress in any valuable art, whether commercial, elegant, or political.
> Under the last of these titles, more especially, we had occasion to observe, that the most important objects of human concern, and the most improving exercises of ability, are furnished to the members of a free state: And we may now also assume that forms of government may be estimated, not only by the actual wisdom or goodness of their administration, but likewise by the numbers who are made to participate in the service or government of their country, and by the diffusion of political deliberation and function to the greatest extent that is consistent with the wisdom of its administration.[89]

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88. *Ibid.*, II, 499, emphasis added.
89. *Ibid.*, II, 508-509.

There is an inherent value in a free polity, a community whose members can "collide" and experiment, and are not just beneficiaries of kindly state paternalism. The freedom of a state is measured by the number of participants in politics, decision-makers as well as public actors and civil servants. This was the bottom line of Ferguson's political creed in his mature work, explicitly stated after the French Revolution. It was less than democratic, but it was pointedly republican and uncompromisingly participationist. If the Jacobin definition of a *citoyen* follows Rousseau's formulation, "participant à l'autorité souveraine", then Ferguson's citizen certainly came under this definition. In Germany during the 1790s such a view could only be sustained by the democratic extreme of the political spectrum.[90]

This explicit participationism thus runs through all of Ferguson's major works. The *Essay on the History of Civil Society* even contains one direct attack on the Prussian monarch Frederick the Second. Typically for Ferguson, the attack links broad-based political activism with the "free" British legal system, and contrasts both with the absolutist ruler's view:

> Men of superior genius sometimes seem to imagine, that the vulgar have no title to act, or to think. A great German prince is pleased to ridicule the precaution by which judges in a free country are confined to the strict interpretation of the law.[91]

The footnote refers Ferguson's readers to the *Memoirs of Brandenburg*, the English translation of Frederick's treatise.[92] Many German readers, and not only sworn admirers of the Prussian monarch such as Christian Garve, could not have been comfortable with this open criticism. It is not

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90. See Jörn Garber, "Politisch-soziale Partizipationstheorien im Übergang vom Ancien Régime zur bürgerlichen Gesellschaft (1750-1800)", in Peter Steinbach (ed.), *Probleme politischer Partizipation im Modernisierungsprozeß* (Stuttgart, 1982), p. 38.

91. *Ibid.*, pp. 220-221.

92. The probable target is Frederick's "Dissertation on the Reasons for the enacting and repealing of Laws", in *A Supplement to the Memoirs of the House of Brandenburg* (London, 1752), pp. 21-66. "Tho' England has a great many good laws", says the dissertation, "yet there is no country, perhaps[,] in Europe, where they are so badly executed" (p. 42); and, commenting on the acquittal of a bigamist on a technicality: "The want of distinctness in the wording of laws, and the literal interpretation of them in England, has occasioned the most ridiculous abuses" (p. 58).

surprising, perhaps, that all but one of the readers examined for this study chose to ignore it.

III. Ferguson in Germany

Ferguson's books were translated, during the last decades of the eighteenth century, into Russian, French, Swedish, and Italian[93]; but no European country matched the speed and the intensity of his German readership. The German reception began as early as 1768, when the *Göttingische Anzeigen von gelehrten Sachen* welcomed the translation of his first book, "the important and profound philosophical work by Ferguson".[94] His four major works were published in German translation within one to four years of their appearance in Britain.

The first translation was also the fastest, though otherwise not a fully successful one. The *Essay on the History of Civil Society* (1767) was translated anonymously by the Leipzig scholar Christian Friedrich Jünger, and published in 1768 by the respectable firm of Junius in Leipzig.[95] It received a friendly review by the Swiss historian Isaak Iselin in the *Allgemeine deutsche Bibliothek*, though Iselin and others criticized the quality of the translation. As we shall see, the *Essay* - often in the English original - gained the respect of such prominent thinkers as Mendelssohn, Lessing and F.H. Jacobi. However, for reasons pertaining either to the undistinguished translation or to the novelty of the work itself, it was soon overshadowed by the author's second book.

With the *Institutes of Moral Philosophy* (1769) came Ferguson's most significant entry into the German intellectual scene. In 1771 a chapter from the book appeared in the *Hannoverische Magazin*, translated and submitted by "A" (perhaps the Göttingen jurist Gottfried Achenwall). Significantly, the chapter chosen was "Von Staatsgesetzen", the chapter on

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93. For a partial bibliography see DNB, vol. VI, 1203-1204.

94. GGA, 1768, vol. 2, 1056.

95. For the identification of Jünger as the book's translator see Johann Georg Meusel, *Lexicon der vom Jahr 1750 bis 1800 verstorbenen teutschen Schriftsteller*, under "Jünger, Christian Friedrich", vol. 6 (Leipzig 1806), 313. Price, *English Humaniora*, p. 68, give Jünger's name without mentioning the translator's anonymity. Their source is the *Gesamtkatalog der deutschen Bibliotheken*, A-Beethordnung, I-XIV (Berlin 1918-1939).

laws. This choice, as we shall later see, is indicative of the way in which the *Institutes* were read in Germany, and may contribute to understanding the book's appeal.

The full German version of the *Institutes* was published by the house of Dyck in Leipzig in 1772. It was translated and annotated by the already distinguished writer Christian Garve, whose later fame was in part due to this project. The translation, reprinted in 1787, proved very successful: it was in this version that Schiller found his admired "great sage". Interestingly, the Germans granted this work a pioneering status which it never received in Britain: as late as the mid-nineteenth century Ersch and Gruber's *Allgemeine Encyclopädie* saw it as "the first *geistreich* compendium of this science [i.e. moral philosophy] in English literature."[96]

Ferguson's third book, *History of the Progress and Termination of the Roman Republic* (1783) was published in German by the Weidmann house in Leipzig, in three volumes, between 1784 and 1786. It was edited (and probably also translated) by a Leipzig scholar, Christian Daniel Beck. This work was well received and much reviewed.

It is interesting to note that these three books also appeared in English-language reprints intended for German readers between 1786 and 1791, with a second reprint of the *Institutes* in 1800. The Basle house which made three of the reprints specialized in Scottish and English texts, and its activity bears testimony to the impressive increase, during the last decades of the century, in the number of readers capable of tackling an English-language text.[97]

Finally, and of smaller importance, the *Principles of Moral and Political Science* (1792) appeared in Zurich in 1796. It was translated by K.G. Schreiter, the same man who translated Hume's *Dialogues on Natural Religion*. But, just like Hume's book, Ferguson's came too late to be of any real importance to the German philosophical discourse, now in its post-Kantian phase.

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96. Heinrich Döring, "Adam Ferguson", in J.S. Ersch and J.G. Gruber (eds.), *Allgemeine Encyclopädie der Wissenschaften und Künste*, section I, vol. 43 (Leipzig, 1846), 139.

97. The reprints are listed in the bibliography. For the significance of English-language reprints see Fabian, "English books", p. 122.

All these translations, and often the original versions as well, were promptly announced or reviewed in the leading literary and academic journals. Book reviews, ranging from a dry brief report of contents to a serious and critical discussion, were a crucial link in the reception of any foreign book in Germany. Three major journals of the period, *Göttingische Anzeigen von gelehrten Sachen*, *Allgemeine deutsche Bibliothek*, and *Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung* each published several reviews of Ferguson's works. Some of them were written by such prominent scholars as Iselin, J.G. Feder, and Christoph Meiners. Other important articles appeared in the *Erfurtische gelehrte Zeitung* (by Wieland), the *Frankfurter gelehrte Anzeigen*, the *Nürnberger gelehrte Zeitungen* and *Neue Leipziger gelehrte Zeitungen.*

How did Germans read Ferguson? The following chapters of this study will provide analyses of several important readers. It is, of course, impossible to draw a comprehensive picture of Ferguson's reception in German-speaking countries, beyond the assorted mentions in books and journals. Whatever evidence we have of his reading by "ordinary" educated people, who were not writers themselves, is limited and random. For example, we know that two reading societies in Schaffhausen held Ferguson's *Roman Republic*: one society (comprising mainly *Junker* and bureaucrats) owned a six-volume English-language reprint from 1791, while the other (with mostly clergymen as members) had the 1784-1786 German translation.[98] Recent studies of private library inventories have revealed a German translation of Ferguson in the possession of the diplomat and Herrenhuter, Freiherr Ludwig Carl von Weitolshausen, genannt Schrautenbach (d. 1783), and another copy held by a Tübingen merchant in 1806. Such inventory lists, however, are far from representative. The number or social distribution of people who owned Ferguson's books, let alone those who read them, cannot be assessed with any accuracy.[99]

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98. Barney M. Milstein, *Eight Eighteenth Century Reading Societies. A Sociological Contribution to the History of German Literature* (Bern and Frankfurt a.M., 1972), pp. 238-239, 287. The first society owned at least thirty English books, including the works of Hume, Robertson, Kames, Smith and Millar, mostly in Tourneisen's Basle reprints.

99. The information is taken from Fabian, "English books", pp. 155-156.

There are, however, some clues as to the way Ferguson was generally seen, and the kind of author he was taken to be. Among many references to his books, one is especially illuminating in this respect: Joachim Heinrich Campe's best-selling manual for the education of women, *Väterlicher Rath für meine Tochter* (1789), lists Ferguson as recommended reading for young ladies.[100] The contrast between this German usage and Ferguson's "manly" image and self-image in his native land is of great significance. Ferguson probably never published one sentence in his life which was not intended for men, in the concrete sense of *Männer* rather than *Menschen*; men were the subjects of human nature as he defined it and the natural citizens legally and mentally capable of public action. Virtue, in Ferguson's language, was always literally virile, just as its opposite was effeminate. The feminine versions of human nature or virtue never interested him as a writer. The only ladies to appear in the *Essay* are those who "never look abroad", and complain about bored husbands disturbing them on a rainy day, thereby demonstrating men's natural disposition to outdoor pursuits.[101] By human nature as he described it - that of the hunter, gamester, warrior - Ferguson explicitly meant male nature, and hence a multitude of typical statements to the effect that "nations consist of men",[102] or that the true happiness is what "every boy knows at his play".[103] Ferguson wrote the *Essay* and the *Institutes* for colleagues and students, certainly not for persons whose prescribed domain was outside the public sphere. By contrast, the German Enlightenment's pedagogic ideal for the education of women - and Campe can be seen as its main spokesman - aimed at the betterment of thinking human beings within an exclusively domestic sphere of action. The application of Ferguson's philosophy book for this task was thus a complete reversal of Ferguson's intended goals and a complete transformation of his intended audience.[104]

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100. Joachim Heinrich Campe, *Väterlicher Rath für meine Tochter. Ein Gegenstück zum Theophron. Der erwachsenen weiblichen Jugend gewidmet* (Braunschweig, 1789). Other "easy" moral-philosophical readings included Basedow, Garve, and Cicero. Campe saw this syllabus, together with some religious writings, as fully sufficient for women of the *Bürger* class. See Horst Möller, *Fürstenstaat oder Bürgernation. Deutschland 1763-1815* (Berlin, 1989), p. 342.

101. *Essay*, p. 43.

102. *Ibid.*, p. 225

103. *Ibid.*, p. 46.

104. Herder, of all German writers, was closest to Ferguson in this classicist-masculine image of text and audience. He reproached his contemporaries' way of writing "für und als Weiber", and invoked Plato's and Cicero's tomes of "Metaphysik

Such subtle shifts in the role assigned to a corpus of ideas, and the corresponding change of prospective reading publics, should precede and underline any listing of the subjects in which Ferguson presumably "influenced" German readers. Ferguson has been said to affect German discourse in epistemology, moral philosophy, the new "social sciences" (including cameralist economy), and historiography. There is evidence for all these claims, but not everywhere was Ferguson's stamp significant or interesting. The most important impacts, which are well supported by evidence, will be treated in the following chapters of this thesis. It is interesting, however, to glimpse what scholars have so far viewed as Ferguson's impact on German literature and learning.

In the late nineteenth century Gustav Zart, the author of a compendium of British philosophical influences on eighteenth-century Germany, traced Ferguson's "influence" (which he seems to have understood in terms of similarity of concepts rather than direct reference) in such diverse thinkers as H.S. and J.A. Reimarus, Lossius, Garve, Platner, Jacobi, and the Göttingen professors Feder and Meiners. In demonstrating "influence", Zart pointed mainly at Ferguson's unoriginal applications of Lockean epistemology and Stoic ethics.[105]

More recently, when belletristic studies dominated the view of the British impact on Germany, Ferguson was seen (together with Hutcheson and Fordyce) as a chief propagator of Shaftesbury's aesthetic and moral philosophy.[106] This link, however, may have been oversimplified: the Leipzig professor Christian Fürchtegott Gellert, allegedly a major propagator of Ferguson's ideas,[107] in fact did not mention him in his lectures or in his recommended reading list. Gellert would hardly have

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und männliche Künste", in which "es sprach nie ein Weib"; J.G. Herder, *Werke in zwei Bände* , ed. Karl-Gustav Gerold, vol II (Munich, 1953), 68.

105. Gustav Zart, *Einfluss der englischen Philosophie seit Bacon auf die deutsche Philosophie des 18. Jahrhunderts* (Berlin, 1881), pp. 101-105, 141, 149-153, 158-165, 198-199, 203-207, 211-213.

106. L.M. Price, *The Reception of English Literature in Germany* (Berkeley, 1932), p. 108.

107. Price, *English Humaniora*, pp. xv-xvi.

had time to become acquainted with Ferguson's work, since he died in 1770.[108]

Equally problematic is the attempt to trace Ferguson's influence on Herder. Roy Pascal has suggested that Herder's philosophy of history, especially *Auch eine Philosophie der Geschichte zur Bildung der Menschheit* (1774), was deeply influenced by Ferguson's *Essay* and by the works of Robertson and Millar; according to Pascal, Herder's two fundamental concepts of *Eigenwert* and *Entwicklung* owe some debt to these Scottish thinkers.[109] However, Herder's explicit references to Ferguson are few and marginal.

A more careful consideration of the evidence at our disposal shows that as far as pure epistemology went, Ferguson was often seen as a gifted follower of Reid: such was the informed view of both Dugald Stewart and Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi.[110] This pedigree could serve to make him especially popular with the Göttingen philosophers. In view of the philosophical battles they waged, first with the French materialists, and then with Kant, it is not surprising that common-sense notions in Ferguson's doctrines were fervently sought, and, when found, greatly emphasized.[111]

Ferguson may have played a more important role, albeit still secondary to Hume's and Smith's, in the emergence of the new *Staatswissenschaften* in Göttingen and elsewhere. His support for the empirical approach to human affairs was used by the Viennese cameralist Sonnenfels, who relied on Ferguson in his rejection of non-social abstractions of man.[112] The three thinkers most responsible for the Göttingen innovations, Justi, Achenwall and Schlözer, took much from Hume and Smith for their

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108. Gellert's *Moralische Vorlesungen* were edited and published after his death; the tenth lecture contains a recommended reading list, updated to 1769, which specifies Hutcheson, Fordyce and other British writers, but not Ferguson. *See C.F. Gellerts sämmtliche Schriften*, vol. IV (Leipzig, 1840), especially 167-184.

109. Roy Pascal, "Herder and the Scottish Historical School", *Publications of the English Goethe Society,* vol. XIV (1938-1939), 23-42.

110. F.H. Jacobi, "Woldemar", *Werke* (Leipzig, 1812-1825), V, 70; Dugald Stewart, "Account of the Life and Writings of Thomas Reid, D.D.", *The Collected Works*, vol. X (Edinburgh, 1858), 261; cf. Veitch, "Memoir", p. xviii.

111. Kuehn, *Common Sense*, ch. IV.

112. Albion W. Small, The *Cameralists. The Pioneers of German Social Polity* (New York, 1909), p. 489.

theories of production, commerce and finance;[113] but Ferguson could have added little to their specialized economic inquiry, short of his memorable phrasing of the general Scottish belief that there is no science of man outside society.

His contribution to German historiography, though more substantial, has largely gone unnoticed. Ferguson's "conjectural history" had an important effect on German historians, most demonstrably, as a later chapter will show, on the influential Iselin. The immense moral importance of an account of human history from its earlier stages was an insight used by Lessing, Kant, Schiller, and later Hegel. Ferguson did not invent this idea, but he was clearly one of its greatest representatives for German readers. Certain *topoi*, which gained ground among German authors of the genre, can plausibly point to Ferguson as their source. One example is the lifespan metaphor - the analogy between the growth of the individual and the progress of the species - which served as an organizing principle in Ferguson's two books, the *Essay* and the *Institutes*. This metaphor was taken up, expanded, and given new metaphysical horizons by Lessing, Schiller, Hölderlin and Hegel.[114]

But it was in the field of moral philosophy that Ferguson's chief appeal to German thinkers lay, because there his activism could be disguised and transformed with relative ease. Ferguson was hailed, as we shall see, first and foremost as a good Stoic - a proponent of solid, responsible ethics which combined Greek and Christian notions of virtue with Protestant notions of perfectibility. This was equated to a strong commitment to the existing social order. His non-deterministic historiography, his moral analysis of commercial society, and his civic humanism, were in most cases ignored, or marginalized, or subtly rendered harmless. Christoph Martin Wieland is a good example for this problem-ducking admiration: in a glowing review for the *Erfurtische gelehrte Zeitung* he gave a neat arrangement of Ferguson's two books: the *Essay on the History of Civil Society*, he said, was obviously the premises, and the *Institutes of Moral Philosophy* - the conclusion.[115] Wieland was happy to recommend the

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113. Hans-Erich Bödeker, "Political Economy and Staatswissenschaften at the University of Göttingen: The Scottish Influence", unpublished essay (1986).
114. See Mark William Roche, *Dynamic Stillness. Philosophical Conceptions of Ruhe in Schiller, Hölderlin, Büchner, and Heine* (Tübingen, 1987), p. 10.
115. *Erfurtische gelehrte Zeitung*, 27 April 1772, p. 266.

second work to Duchess Anna Amalia of Weimar as part of a philosophical course for her sons.[116] It is difficult to imagine that he seriously read the earlier work, where republican ideas are never far from the surface.

Occasionally, Ferguson's German readers found him too puzzling, or too "English". The chapter on "Arts and commerce" in the *Institutes* was seen by one reviewer as dealing with "specific English matters".[117] Ferguson's concepts often seemed alien and untranslatable, to the frustration of his German readers. "The language of the British is in fact a metaphysical language", wrote Wieland in the same review, as he praised Garve's translation. Philosophical concepts, he explained, were so much part of it that the author could write "*aus dem Kopfe ab*"[118]; the poorer German language found it difficult to catch up, and could only resort to inadequate, compromising, or ingenious solutions. Wieland's verdict may seem strange to a twentieth-century reader; but the German language of his day was only beginning its modern philosophical refurbishing. In order to understand the problems facing Ferguson's translators, a closer look at his language, and theirs, is our next step.

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116. Thomas E. Starnes, *Christoph Martin Wieland. Leben und Werk*, vol I (Sigmaringen, 1987), 445-446.
117. *Allgemeine deutsche Bibliothek* (hereafter ADB), vol. 86 (1789), 151.
118. *Erfurtische gelehrte Zeitung*, 27.4.1772, p. 267.

Chapter Three
Political Vocabularies and the Hazards of Translation

"'No, Emma, your amiable young man can be amiable only in French, not in English.'"
Jane Austen, *Emma* (1816)

I

Adam Ferguson wrote his works in a linguistic context. He was conscious of this context, and expected similar awareness from his readers. His basic political vocabulary belonged to the tradition of civic humanism, and some of its key concepts will be explored in this chapter. There were, however, at least two other political vocabularies which Ferguson used, either *bona fide* (for his world, as historian and sociologist, transcended the limits of traditional civic humanism), or else sarcastically and pejoratively. These two vocabularies represent the eighteenth-century "paradigms", as J.G.A. Pocock has called them, of natural jurisprudence and sociability.[1] Let us begin by looking at Ferguson's personal style.

Ferguson aimed primarily at moving his readers to emotion and action, and his language is expressive rather than precise. Though no elegant stylist, he consciously used rhetorical devices: the *Essay on the History of Civil Society*, our central text in this chapter, contains many effective turns of phrase and memorable passages. Figurative speech is used sparingly - Ferguson was wary with similes and metaphors - but synonyms and rhetorical repetitions abound. Ferguson wrote accurately, but his brand of accuracy did not usually rely on carefully-defined and strictly-applied terms. While in the student textbook *Institutes of Moral Philosophy* he laid more emphasis on definitions, the *Essay* is looser in its use of words, even key words. Its effectiveness comes from a cumulative repetition and development of the basic ideas in a variety of wordings, a rhetoric suitable to the narrative style and the "unfolding" nature of his philosophical history.

In a few cases, Ferguson did abide by "technical terms", earmarked for a specific meaning he assigned them. The best examples for this are

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1. Pocock, "Cambridge Paradigms", pp. 241ff.

"savage" and "barbarian" in Ferguson's special use. In the *Essay*, "savage" refers to a member of a rude society prior to the establishment of property, while "barbarian" belongs to a later, property-owning state of rudeness. The term "rude" itself, though less specific, is given a negative definition by being contrasted with the terms "civil" or "polished", both to be examined in this chapter.

Far less clear-cut is his use of the terms "nation", "people", "society", "community", "State", and "public" as a noun. "Nation", loosely denoting a large group with common ethnic ties and government, predominates, and serves continuously throughout the *Essay*. The other terms are often used as so many nuances or variants on this general theme, either for specific shades of meaning (as when "public" is contrasted with "individual"), or simply for stylistic enrichment. These words form a series of what we may call "uneasy synonyms"; they sometimes appear as full synonyms,[2] and often as distinct, partly overlapping, mutually complementing terms.[3] But they are never clearly and systematically distinguished from one another.

Similarly, when Ferguson speaks of "pursuit(s)", which will be highlighted in this chapter as denoting the key concept of political activism, he does not always use this specific term (though it emerges as the most important in his conveying of the concept), but reinforces or replaces it with "action", "active", "exercise", "occupation(s)", "engagement(s)", often surrounded by a broader terminological area including words such as "ardour", "vigour", "zeal", and "courage".[4] The reader soon acquires the capacity to associate between these terms; they begin to connote one another, as well as the more explicitly political terminology connected with them.

It would therefore be useless to impose any rigorous "conceptual analysis" on Ferguson's texts or on their German translations. Ours is not

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2. A few examples for such synonyms: public=state (*Essay*, p. 56); community= society, (p. 57); society=public=state=community (and another set of uneasy synonyms: members=individuals=subjects=men) (p. 58).

3. "In what society are not men classed by external distinctions, as well as personal qualities? In what state are they not actuated by a variety of principles; justice, honour, moderation, and fear?" *Essay*, p. 71.

4. See, for instance, *Essay*, pp. 42, 44, 48, 49, 134-135.

the story of a concrete concept denoted by one term, and subject to a historically-conditioned change of meaning over a long period of time, as current German *Begriffsgeschichte* would have it. We shall be dealing with one author's use of a number of terms, loosely employed with reference to a system of ideas. Since these terms, and the ideas they convey, had (or lacked) distinct histories in Scotland and in Germany, our task will be to find out how the differences between those histories affected the linguistic transition from English to German.

This chapter will concentrate on three key concepts in Ferguson's *Essay* which are typically denoted by the terms *civil society*; *public* (or *national*, or *political*) *spirit*; and *pursuit* or *active pursuit*. All three concepts are central to the book, linked to one another, and crucial for Ferguson's statement of political activism. All three terms have large and problematic families (consisting of etymological relatives, uneasy synonyms, and other contextually associated terms). And all three, together with some of their relatives, caused interesting problems when translated into German.

Ferguson used the terms *civil society*, *public spirit*, and *pursuit*, as components of a political vocabulary. By "political" I mean that these terms were employed (together with others such as "nation", "State", and "government") to convey the author's ideas about the governing of a polity; in Ferguson's case, ideas about the institutions in which citizens can be active in the public affairs of their State, as well as the qualities which make men into politically active citizens. By "vocabulary" I mean a group of terms which are frequently repeated together, mutually elucidating, often syntactically or rhetorically complementary (for instance, they can have adjective-noun relations, or participate in stylistic devices such as synonyms and antonyms), and thus form a system. One effect of a vocabulary is that it gradually familiarizes the reader with a set of ideas which the author develops throughout the work. Thus, by the time she finishes the *Essay*, a reader should become used to making certain verbal associations: "polished" will be linked with "commercial", and "spirit" with the adjectives "public", "national", "political" or "military". Certain words will become associated with one specific denotation, even if they normally have more than one, and even if their more typical eighteenth-century usage is different: in Ferguson's

language the word "zeal", for instance, cannot be taken for anything but the citizen's earnest dedication to his country.

This political vocabulary, Ferguson's specific version of civic humanist or classical republican language, was lost in the German translation and reception of the *Essay*. It was lost, I will argue, not only because several political terms were very difficult to translate into German (as Christian Garve openly acknowledged with regard to Ferguson's *Institutes*), but also and primarily because it no longer formed a vocabulary. The translation broke the links between the terms, so that they often ceased to connote one another. This dissimilation coincided with other processes: some of the translated terms became entangled in existing German vocabularies, which were a-political, or even anti-political.

II

Civil society, the *Essay*'s title theme, has a standard German translation as *bürgerliche Gesellschaft*.[5] On the face of it, the translation does not look problematic, because the concept had a philosophical pedigree common to Scots, Germans, and most other educated Europeans of the eighteenth century. Aristotle's *politike koinonia* and *polis*, and their Latin versions *societas civilis* and *civitas*, were received by the early modern Natural Law tradition with their basic classical meaning - a polity, a political community.[6] This fundamental concept was used and elaborated by the German Natural Law theorists. The German term *bürgerliche Gesellschaft* came straight from the Latin *societas civilis*, but it took some time and effort. Earlier versions included *Civil Societät*, *Civil Gemeind* (J.J. Becher, 1673), and *Bürgerliche Societät* (Samuel Pufendorf, 1691). By 1711 Leibniz' *Buergerliche Gemeinschaft* and Rädlein's *Bürgerliche Gesellschaft* became standard, but the term itself was still somewhat alien to German readers. The translator of Pufendorf's *De jure naturae et*

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5. For an interesting allusion to the difference between the English and German terms see Hans Medick's part of the "Einleitung" to Ferguson, *Versuch* , ed. Medick and Batscha, pp. 30-31.

6. The following short survey is based mainly on Manfred Riedel, "Gesellschaft, bürgerliche", in *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*, vol. 2 (1975), 738ff, and Utz Haltern, *Bürgerliche Gesellschaft* (Darmstadt, 1985), ch. 1. Capitalization variants are in accordance with the original quotations.

gentium into German felt obliged to clarify it, thus supplying us with a fairly representative definition of *bürgerliche Gesellschaft* as it was understood in the early eighteenth century:

> This name expresses the author's Latin word *Civitas*... the words *Bürgerliche Gesellschaft* frequently occuring [in the translation] should not be understood to mean anything other than the authorities and subjects, bound together in obligation, which constitute a certain *Reich*, republic and the likes of them."[7]

This basic concept of civil society, which underwent substantial change only in the last decades of the eighteenth century, was understood to denote a union of persons, and more specifically a political union of free men in a city-State or a modern State. It has been emphasised, especially by those considering the modern idea of civil society retrospectively from Hegel's use of the term, that the crucial feature of this "classical" concept of civil society was a negative one, its alleged lack of distinction between the "State" as an institution and "Society" as a bond between citizens or subjects. According to this account, only when political economy redefined civil society as a sphere of free, self-interested individual economic agents, did "society" become detached from the State, and, especially in German philosophy, even contrasted with it.[8] This is a contested analysis, not least because it tends to describe the absence of Hegel's future distinction as a conceptual flaw in earlier accounts of civil society, a reasoning which smacks of a fallacy.[9] Be that as it may, in the present context our crucial observation is that the so-called "classical" concept of civil society was not made of one skin. Adam Ferguson's notion of civil society, as we shall shortly see, was "classical" in a different way from that of Pufendorf and his German or Scottish followers.

For a start, German writers of the eighteenth century still normally understood *civitas*, or *bürgerliche Gesellschaft*, as denoting all political ties which form any kind of government, "sive sit dynastia, sive baronia,

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7.Samuel Pufendorf, *De jure naturae et gentium*, German translation, vol. II (Frankfurt, 1711), quoted by Riedel, "Gesellschaft, bürgerliche", p. 739.

8. Riedel, *ibid.*, p. 721.

9. Cf. Riedel, *ibid.*, p. 739. In 1807 J.H. Campe's *Wörterbuch der Deutschen Sprache* (hereafter WDS), a dictionary sensitive to recent shifts of meanings, explained *bürgerliche Gesellschaft* as "die Gesellschaft, welche den Staat bildet"; vol. I, 652. Elsewhere he equated it with *menschliche Gesellschaft* ; vol. II (1808), 338.

sive comitatus, sive principatus", as Alsted put it in the early seventeenth century.[10] Leibniz defined it as a "natural community [*Gemeinschafft*]" whose members "live together either in a city or in a country [*im Land*]; their goal is temporal wellbeing".[11] This definition could cover a monarchy as well a feudal system of personal dependencies, as Thomasius indeed understood it. The notion of *bürgerliche Gesellschaft* did not contain a strong space for the citizen, or, in his problematic German form, the *Bürger*. As late as 1807 the J.H. Campe's German dictionary still treated "Bürger" first as "a resident of a town", then as "a member of the third estate", and only then, growing out of the second definition, "also as a citizen of a State [*Staatsbürger*]".[12] But *Staatsbürger* was a late eighteenth century solution, and initially a very superficial one. Ferguson's term "citizen" was translated as *Bürger*.[13] Neither the concept of *Bürger* nor that of *bürgerliche Gesellschaft* implied any participation of citizens as such in government, any channel of influence between the ruled and the rulers, or, indeed, any specific relation between rulers and ruled except for their being in the same political entity. In his *Philosophisches Lexicon* the Jena theologian Johann Georg Walch defined "*Bürger*", among other non-political meanings, as either a "subject", or "such person as is to be found in a *bürgerliche Gesellschaft*, and has subjected himself to an authority's power". This contractarian definition proceeds, following Pufendorf's *De officio*, with a distinction between this state and the state of nature, or of sovereigns with respect to one another.[14] Thus the essential characteristic of *bürgerliche Gesellschaft* in Walch's definition was that its members were subjected to political authority. Furthermore, the total separation between subjects and rulers was especially underlined. Walch defined "republic", this time following Pufendorf's *De jure*, as "a civil society which [is] composed of rulers [*Regenten*] and subjects, who have united with one another for the preservation and promotion of the common well-being [*gemeine Wohlfahrt*]." The definition later refers to "princes".[15]

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10. Quoted by Riedel, *ibid.*, p. 739.
11. Quoted *ibid.*
12. Campe, *WDS*, I, 652 (in the definition for *bürgerlich*).
13. For example, in Jünger's translation of the *Essay*, *Versuch über die Geschichte der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft* (Leipzig, 1768) (hereafter *Versuch*), p. 90, and in Adam Ferguson, "Von Staatsgesetzen", *Hannoverisches Magazin* (November, 1771), p. 1498.
14. J.J. Walch, *Philosophisches Lexicon* (Leipzig, "improved edition" 1733), p. 333.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 2156.

Kant brought this sharp separation between rulers and ruled to its logical conclusion. "The Civil Union", he wrote in his *Philosophy of Law*, "cannot, in the strict sense, be called a *Society*; for there is no sociality in common between the Ruler and the Subject under a Civil Constitution. They are not co-ordinated as Associates in a Society with each other, but the one is *subordinated* to the other."[16] The French Revolution profoundly shook these jurisprudential concepts of civil society and *Bürger*; but in 1768, the year in which Ferguson's *Essay* appeared in Germany, there was no German civic humanist vocabulary that could accommodate these concepts in the sense Ferguson gave them.

A word of caution is necessary at this stage. The above observations do not amount to saying that German readers were totally unfamiliar with republican language, or incapable of distinguishing between "citizen" and "subject". No intelligent reader of Ferguson's *Essay* in Jünger's translation could fail to see that the *Bürger* described by Ferguson was no mere *Untertan*, that he was an active participant in political life. Jünger himself, at one point, intelligently corrects Ferguson's text when the author, somewhat surprisingly, fails to make the obvious distinction between the two terms. Ferguson writes "the subjects of monarchy, like those of republics...", and Jünger, with untypical boldness, renders it into "*die Unterthanen einer Monarchie, gleich den Bürgern freyer Staaten...*".[17] The problem with the German terms here was not a problem of mistranslation or misunderstanding. It was a problem of losing the original civic humanist, activist, meaning <u>inherent</u> in the English terms *civil society* and *citizen* themselves, and thus losing some crucial connotations available to British readers. The result was that the

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16. Immanuel Kant, *The Philosophy of Law* (1791), trans. W. Hastie, pt. 1, ch. 3, para. 41. Reprinted in Clarence Morris (ed.), *The Great Legal Philosophers* (Philadelphia, 1985), pp. 252-253. Kant continues: "Those who may be co-ordinated with one another must consider themselves as mutually equal, in so far as they stand under common Laws. The Civil Union may therefore be regarded not so much as *being*, but rather as *making* a Society." This distinction, anticipating Hegel's, would not be possible in Ferguson's view of civil society. The same goes for Kant's distinction between "active" and "passive" citizens, *ibid.*, pt. 2, para. 44 (p. 254). Note, however, that Kant did not dispose of the concept of civil society, but stipulated its perfection by means of his concept of Right. It is "the greatest problem for mankind" to achieve "eine allgemeine das Recht verwaltende bürgerliche Gesellschaft"; *Idee zu einer allgemeinen Geschichte in weltbürgerlicher Absicht* (1784), Fifth clause.
17. *Essay*, p. 71; *Versuch*, p. 105.

vocabulary of natural jurisprudence - in this case still a political vocabulary - took over the key concept of *civil society* and distorted Ferguson's implementation of this phrase.

Ferguson's *civil society* is first and foremost a civic humanist concept. It was not so for all Scots of his and the preceding generation. For most of them the adjective "civil" belonged to a project of explaining the sources, and hence the legitimacy, of political government. John Locke's well-known definition of civil society opposed it to the state of nature:

> Those who are united in one body, and have a common established law and judicature to appeal to, with authority to decide controversies between them and punish offenders, are in civil society with one another; but those who have no such common appeal, I mean on earth, are still in the state of nature, each being, where there is no other, judge for himself and executioner...[18]

Political government was explained in natural jurisprudential terms as a legal entity emerging from a state of nature through a contract between men. The nature of the contract was a point of debate, as was the position of its participants and the exact definition of the powers they gave up. Gershom Carmichael, Pufendorf's transmitter to Scotland, described the historical and conceptual moment of the creation of government as an agreement or contract among heads of households who, having enjoyed domestic *imperium*, promise to transfer it to a ruler or rulers embodying *imperium civile*.[19] His Scottish successors in this debate shared the agenda which set "civil" in opposition to "natural",[20] and discussed civil rights and liberties as the derivatives of the original contract. Even Francis Hutcheson, who incorporated the language of civic virtue into this project, focused on the beginning of civil society by an original contract, whose parties he was anxious to define in classical republican terms as independent landowners.[21]

Ferguson's use of the term *civil society* is historical, sociological, and, primarily, ethical, but not juristic. Examining the text of the *Essay on the*

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18. John Locke, The *Second Treatise of Government* (1690), ch. VII, para. 87.
19. Moore and Silverthorne, "Gershom Carmichael", p. 85.
20. David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. Selby-Bigge, 2nd ed. (Oxford, 1978), p. 475, footnote 1. Cf. Kant, *Philosophy of Law*, pt. 1, para. 41.
21. Moore and Silverthorne, "Gershom Carmichael", p. 86.

History of Civil Society, we can immediately observe that although *civil society* is part of the title and obviously the major theme of the book, it is used rather sparingly in the text itself, and never in the plural. It serves as a category, whose instances in concrete periods and places are usually denoted as "nations", "societies", or "States", in the singular or the plural, with a variety of adjectives. Society had no beginning; civil society did, but that was a slow, evolutionary process. Ferguson's "break with the whole state of nature / contract apparatus", as Duncan Forbes put it, did not stem solely from an innovative taste for anthropological realism.[22] It was also a break with the legalistic view of political government. Ferguson was not interested in a "moment" of its emergence, but in the gradual appearance of its essential features, which then continue to develop, even more interestingly, into the complicated and potentially self-destructive structure of modern civil society. He is certainly not interested, at least not in the *Essay*, with the legal basis of property: he constantly laments the failure of modern societies to separate wealth from virtue and to establish social status on the latter, as only Sparta succeeded in doing,[23] and as rude nations instinctively achieved. By contrasting "civil" not with "natural" but with "rude", and by making both "civil" and "rude" into morally ambiguous terms, Ferguson fully dispenses with the concept of civil society as a solution for a juristic problem. Political society, in his view, needs explanation, but government at its best needs no justification: it is as natural for the members of civil society to run their political affairs as it is natural for them to fight, hunt, or play.

Civil society appeared where geography allowed free and spirited nations, facing one another with energising rivalry, as in ancient Greece, to develop "the genius of political wisdom and civil arts".[24] It developed slowly, acquiring typical features such as regular government, strong military culture, and improving arts and trade. Its institutions and laws were unintentional and gradual, since "no constitution is followed by concert, no government copied from a plan" (123). The crucial ingredient

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22. Forbes, "Introduction", p. xvi.

23. *Essay*, pp. 158-160. The fact that "law.. has a principal reference to property" (156) is but a sad reminder of human weakness. For Ferguson, modern laws "secure the estate, and the person of the subject. We live in societies, where men must be rich, in order to be great" (161-162).

24. *Essay*, p. 108, cf. pp. 120-121. In this and the following paragraphs the numbers appearing in parentheses in the text refer to page numbers in the *Essay*.

which shaped rude nations, with their primitive forms of leadership, army and property, into civil society was the formation of habits, the acquisition of discipline, the regulation of public affairs (97).[25] Ferguson derived this insight from military reason, stressing that "the most celebrated soldiers were also citizens" (155), and placing the timely acceptance of martial law as one of the strengths of civil society: "he who has not learned to give an implicit obedience, where the State has given him a military leader, and to resign his personal freedom in the field, from the same magnanimity with which he maintains it in the political deliberations of his country, has yet to learn the most important lesson of civil society." (148). However, "happily for civil society", men have non-military objects as well, and in the political arena, unlike the autocratic military one, "a national force is best formed, where numbers of men are inured to equality; and where the meanest citizen may consider himself, upon occasion, as destined to command as well as to obey" (149) Civil society therefore ideally has a strong egalitarian and pluralist basis.

This classical statement of civic humanism is Ferguson's typical usage of the concept of civil society. He employs it for his highly idealized accounts of ancient republics, but also for his positive (if qualified) view of the modern British, a people represented in the government and able to "avail themselves of the wealth they acquired, and of the sense of their personal importance", which in turn helped them to limit the monarchy and mix it with republican ingredients (132).

By checking where the term actually occurs in the text, we see that it typically functions in a narrower sense than the politically-minded substitute for 'civilization' suggested by Duncan Forbes.[26] Civil society is, first and foremost, the locus of all exercise of virtue in its sole sense, the political: "It is in conducting the affairs of civil society, that mankind find the exercise of their best talents, as well as the object of their best affections."(155). Ferguson employs the concept of *civil society* as a moral category, a measuring rod for governments or for societies which do or do not live up to it. While States or societies in the course of the history of

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25. Not only men's circumstances and government, but also "their education, knowledge, and habits, - have great influence on forming their characters." *Institutes*, p. 170.
26. Forbes, "Introduction", pp. xix-xx.

civil society can become corrupted and bad, civil society itself never appears in the text with a negative qualification, and rarely (79) as a morally neutral term. "Unmixed" monarchy is never referred to as civil society: it is in fact a type of corruption, though not the worst (250-251), and intended "for a people not fit to govern themselves".[27] Thus it is not really civil society at all, for a "bad civil society" would be meaningless in Ferguson's language. Significantly, the only occurrence of "civil society" in the *Institutes* is in a typical statement of political participation: "Those are the most salutary laws which distribute the benefits and the burdens of civil society in the most equal manner to all its members."[28] *Civil society*, therefore, is in Ferguson's vocabulary no longer a juristic term. It is a moral term, a Platonic "good" insofar as it has no lesser degrees, and it is a misnomer for anything but a republic or a "mixed" government with republican components.

But what of commerce, politeness, refinement? These are phenomena generated by civil society, and also (not only linguistically) its uneasy synonyms. The "advancement of civil and commercial arts" (title of part iv) consists of the "separation of arts and professions" (title of section i in this part), the consequent social "subordination" (section ii), and the much- applauded "manners of polished and commercial nations" (sections iii-iv). Ferguson discusses these developments in terms of their "consequences", with a strong thread leading from this part of the book to the two gloomier last parts, "Of the decline of nations" and "Of corruption and political slavery." Though not accidental to civil society, though part of its story, commerce and refinement do not represent its very essence. "Polished and commercial nations" (188) are an advanced stage of civil society, not its embodiment.

While driving home the point that commerce and specialization were both the legitimate offsprings and the potential killers of civil society, Ferguson was also waging an ingenious linguistic battle over the terms "politeness", "polished", "civility" and "manners". These terms belonged to the enemy camp, the enemy here being not the jurisprudential language

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27. *Institutes,* p. 298.

28. *Institutes*, p. 289. This is part of the chapter "Of political law", where Ferguson's legalistic exposition of civil society often reveals his extra-legalistic ethics of political activism. See *Essay*, especially pp. 161-167, 263, 270.

but rather what Pocock has called the "social" or "Addisonian" paradigm.[29] This paradigm belonged to the type of whig culture which regarded political liberty as self-perpetuating in the present British institutions. It encouraged the virtues of polite conversation and taste rather than military or political activity, and it placed "commerce", in its social and economic meanings, at the centre of an "altogether non-classical conception of liberty",[30] associated with the growth of politeness. While the mainstream Scottish social thought employed versions of the four-stages theory of history, Ferguson was moving against the current (although the *Essay* preceded Millar's and Smith's classic formulations of this theory) with his doubts about linear improvement, the bliss of commerce and the merit of politeness. While Scottish historical anthropology typically reduced the civic-republican ethic to "no more than a crucial episode" in a multi-phased history,[31] Ferguson in all his writings kept it as a living moral standard. Consequently, when the majority of the Scottish Enlightenment "replaced the *polis* by politeness, the *oikos* by the economy",[32] Ferguson was trying to push these demons back into their bottles by reviving their original meanings. He (literally) comes to terms with the "Addisonian" vocabulary by either merging or contrasting it with his own, and it remains for us to observe how hopelessly untranslatable into German this terminological battlefield is. Let us see how the battle is joined.

Ferguson makes it clear that he does not opt for any obscurantist separation between these uneasy, but real and relevant, synonyms: he freely conjoins "civil" and "commercial" as adjectives for "arts"; "polished" and "commercial" as adjectives for "nations"; and the nouns "politeness" and "civilization" with one another. At the same time, Ferguson tries to bring out the political meaning inherent in the terms "polite", "polished", "civil" and "civilized", and thus subtly to distance both families from the unrelated and unbeloved "commerce":

> The term *polished*, if we may judge from its etymology, originally referred to the state of nations in respect to their laws and government [1814: and men civilised were men practiced in the duty

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29. Pocock, "Cambridge Paradigms" pp. 240-241.
30. Ibid., p. 241.
31. Ibid., p. 243.
32. Ibid., p. 242.

> of citizens]. In its later applications, it refers no less to their proficiency in the liberal and mechanical arts, in literature, and in commerce [1814: and men civilized are scholars, men of fashion and traders] (205).[33]

Ferguson obviously wants some partial revival of the original values through the original meaning. To some extent, he manages to re-politicise (and from his viewpoint to rescue) some of these terms: "polished" is used when the active, "the knowing and the polished" are contrasted with the "commonly more quiescent" men who are "ignorant and artless" (216). Another way of reclaiming terms from the enemy camp is through pseudo-irony: "The celebrated nations of antiquity made war under their highest attainment of civility, and under their greatest degree of refinement." (149). Similarly, the recognition of true, active happiness was "a refinement that was made by Regulus and Cincinnatus before the date of philosophy;... a refinement, which every boy knows in his play, and every savage confirms..." (46). The irony is not directed at the term "refinement" itself, but only at its pretentious misuse: this is made clear through Ferguson's sceptic look at modern European notions of "civilized" warfare (200-201, 231), and his open distrust of "the supposed conditions of accomplished civility" (209) and "the boasted refinements... of the polished age" (231). Further down the road, corrupted nations "generally flatter their own imbecility under the name of *politeness.*" (256). The phrasing implies that there is real civility, real refinement, and real politeness, to be found in a political culture closer to that of the celebrated ancient nations. Another Addisonian term, "manners", is often made neutral instead of positive: "severity of manners" (246), or "the manners of a society changed for the worse" (250).

"Commerce" is a more difficult term to claim for civic humanist vocabulary, although Ferguson conceded that in most cases "the commercial and political arts have advanced together." (262). While prone to present their malicious effects, stifling creativity (217), Ferguson is forced to admit that corruption "does not arise from the abuse of commercial arts alone; it requires the aid of political situation." (255). However, no linguistic tactics are wasted on commerce. There is perhaps one civic humanist blow in the direction of "oeconomy", when we are

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33. The square brackets provide additions inserted into the text by the 1814 edition.

"Commerce" became either *Handlung* (86 etc.), or an awkward, somewhat proverbial *Handel und Wandel* (83). This dimming of clear, acute terminology continued with "commercial nations" becoming *Handel und Wandel treibende Völker* (52), while "civil and commercial arts" were rendered *bürgerliche und zur Handlung gehörige Künste* (436). "Commerce" in the sense of social intercourse, was rendered, fairly enough, *Umgang* (104, twice), but this accepted translation shut out the "Addisonian" paradigmatic equation of economic and cultural transaction.[37] Much of Ferguson's irony and implied criticism were lost when this set of familiar English terms, along with their "polite" associations, disappeared into newly-fitted, unassociated German terminology.[38]

No less problematic was the key term *civil*. The two great German lexicographers of our period, J.C. Adelung and J.H. Campe, both translated the English (or French) adjective "civil" in at least two ways, which came under distinct definitions: first, "belonging to a polity [*Stadt*] and its constitution, *bürgerlich, politisch*"; and second, "well-mannered [*gesittet*], or *höflich*, opposed to wild."[39] The fact that the German terms serving each meaning are not etymologically connected undermines the instinctive linking of political society and civilization which the English and French languages readily provide. The "civilizing process", conceptualized on this linguistic basis by French and Scottish philosophers, could not be smoothly translated into German terms. Ferguson's point about the strained family relation between polity and politeness lost its etymological edge. Typical of this problem is Campe's wrestling with the loan-word *civilisiren* in his crusade for the "Germanization" of foreign terms:

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37. Pocock, "Cambridge Paradigms", 241.

38. The early translator of Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations* (1776-1778) did not fare much better, translating "civilized and commercial society" into "civilisirter und handelder Staat" and "mercantile nation" into "Handelsvolk" (in Garve's 1795 translation: "Handelsstaat"). These were all new combinations, the translators were experimenting, and their readers could not be expected to recognize either positive or negative connotations of the term "commerce" and its variants. See Erik Erämetsä, *Adam Smith als Mittler englisch-deutscher Spracheinflüsse. The Wealth of Nations* (Helsinki, 1961), pp. 58 and 75.

39. J.C. Adelung, *Neues grammatisch-kritisches Wörterbuch der Englischen Sprache für die Deutschen...* , 2 vols. (Leipzig, 1783), I, 826. Cf. J.H. Campe's more militant *Wörterbuch zur Erklärung und Verdeutschung der unserer Sprache aufgedrungenen fremden Ausdrücke...* (2nd edn., Braunschweig, 1813), p. 192.

> Meiners has created *entwilden* [as a German equivalent] for it... Since this [suggested term], however, can only indicate the raising of a hitherto wild people to the initial stage of cultivation [*Ausbildung*], we are still lacking a second word for the higher stages of refinement [*Veredelung*].

Campe's own suggestions, *sittigen*, *Gesittung*, and *Sittigkeit*, all belong to the a-political, "manners" brand of meaning.[40] Thus there was no linguistic solution for expressing civilization as a process, and civil society as a historical category. This is not to say that historians such as Iselin or Herder did not grasp and transmit these concepts in an elaborate historical and evolutionary framework. But for the readers of Ferguson's book, *bürgerliche Gesellschaft* remained in its jurisprudential, non-republican denotation, while "civil", "polite", and "polished" lost all their political connotations.[41]

Since Jünger was a painstaking and very faithful translator, keen to render each word in the text into its nearest dictionary equivalent, his problems can highlight the shortcomings of the German political terminology available to him in 1768. Political terms were often confusing stumbling-blocks. He normally translated "nation" into *Nation*, and State into *Staat*; but both could sometimes become *Volk*. The term *Volk* also denoted both "people" and "the multitude", thus alternately serving positive, neutral or pejorative meanings. "Community" could become anything among *Ganze*, *Gemeine*, *Gesellschaft*, or *Staat*. "Sovereignty" was *Oberherrschaft*, but "sovereign" was rendered *Monarch*, or, vaguely, *regierendes Theil*. "Government" was variably *Regierung*, *Regiment*, *Regimentsform*, and *Herrschaft*. "Popular government(s)" became an awkward *Regiment, das dem ganzen Volke zustehet* (99), though elsewhere, more accurately, *demokratische Staaten* (107). Worse still, "republics" were sometimes reduced into mere *kleine Staaten*, or even just *Staaten* (89).

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40. Campe, *Wörterbuch zur Erklärung*, p. 193. There is no separate translation or definition of "Civilization"; the reader is referred to "civilisiren" (see p. 192). Interestingly enough, the loan word "politisiren" also rings strange in German ears. "As far as I know", Campe writes, "this alien word is only used in jocular and mocking speech." *Staatsklügeln* is thus deemed an appropriate rendering. (p. 485).

41. Ferguson's *Institutes* was much easier to receive within the Natural Law tradition, although it, too, contains disquieting civic humanist notions. For the treatment of this text in jurisprudential terms see chapter 7, pp. 198-204, 206-207.

This amounts to a confusing multiplicity of often improvised translations to established English terms, with clearness of argument and precious connotations lost on the way. Two types of interventions by the translator helped to complicate matters even further. First, Jünger systematically inserted the term *Vaterland* wherever Ferguson wrote "his (their, our) country" and the context was suitable for this substitute.[42] This Germanism was more significant than, say, an occasional translation of "district" into *Kreiß* (89). *Vaterland* belonged to the vocabulary of *Patriotismus*, which had a wide range of applications and often served as a substitute to serious discussion of political realities.[43]

Secondly, Jünger found ways round specific embarrassments to contemporary German issues. "The ruinous progress of empire" became *die verderbliche Erweiterung der Herrschaft*; "despotic prince" - *unumschränkter Gebieter* (90, 95). More subtly, when Ferguson complains that public spirit is nonexistent in "too many European nations"[44], Jünger changes the latter to read "most European nations [*bey den meisten Völkern von Europa*]" (82), thus softening the tone of discontent. Without attempting to distort the message on the level of the paragraph or chapter, he sometimes ventures small-scale mollifying of thorny issues. Thus "reform" becomes a less threatening *Besserung* (436).

III

We have so far seen how Ferguson's critique of non-civic humanist political vocabularies was, inevitably perhaps, lost in the German translation. In addition, distinct political terms were sometimes distorted through carelessness or with an intention to tone down embarrassing phrases. But the most interesting shift happened to the typical civic humanist elements in Ferguson's political vocabulary. These include our key concepts *public, political* or *national spirit*, and *active pursuit*. These terms, closely interrelated with *civil society* in Ferguson's use of the

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42. For example, *Versuch*, pp. 84, 90, 105, 436, and *passim*.
43. See Gerhard Kaiser, *Pietismus und Patriotismus. Ein Beitrag zum Problem der Säkularisation* (Wiesbaden, 1961), esp. ch. 4, on the Pietist-inspired ideas of *das innere Vaterland* and *spiritueller Patriotismus*.
44. *Essay*, p. 56.

concept, are also linked with Ferguson's understanding of individual psychology, and especially the tight connection he draws between individual happiness and "national felicity." This connection brings the cognitive and psychological terms *mind* and *habit* into our discussion. It may also help to justify my use of Pocock's controversial term 'civic humanism' for Ferguson's brand of political language. The humanist element in this civic language is precisely the insistence on each individual's understanding and actions as the basis to all statements about society.

Pursuit first and foremost describes an individual psychological procedure and the activity it produces. It is clearly put forward against Hume's pleasure-pain reductionism: "if what we call *pleasure* or *pain*, occupies but a small part of human life, compared to what passes in contrivance and execution, in pursuits and expectations...".[45] It may be neutral or even negative - there is a "class of pursuits which are distinguished by the name of *amusement*" (49) - but normally it is connected to activity, to the Stoic account of true happiness as virtue, and finally to the Machiavellian understanding of virtue as an active political life. "Ask the busy, Where is the happiness to which they aspire? they will answer, perhaps, That it is to be found in the object of some present pursuit" (42). "Happiness is not that state of repose, or that imaginary freedom from care, which at a distance is so frequent an object of desire, but with its approach brings a tedium, or a languor, more unsupportable than pain itself... it arises more from the pursuit, than from the attainment of any end whatever" (49).

This language is smoothly carried on from the *Essay*'s psychological chapters to its political and historical parts. "Men, in fact, while they pursue in society different objects, or separate views, procure a wide distribution of power, and by a species of chance, arrive at a posture for civil engagements, more favourable to human nature than what human wisdom could ever calmly devise" (237). The active pursuit of individuals is the constituent of national spirit. "Nations consist of men;... a nation consisting of vigorous, public-spirited, and resolute men, is strong" (225).

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45. *Ibid.*, p. 42. Cf. Forbes, "Introduction", p. xvii. In this and the following paragraphs the numbers appearing in parentheses refer to page numbers in the *Essay*.

The nation is neither an organism nor a spiritual entity, it does not degenerate and die with biological necessity, nor has it a mind of its own (215). It is individual's arena for exercising virtue (199), and "virtue is a necessary constituent of national strength" (225). But if nations have no *Geist*, they still, "like private men, have their favourite ends, and their principal pursuits..." (136). Without attempting any metaphysical merging between nations and individual human beings, Ferguson can thus occasionally turn his vocabulary round and allot the term "spirit" to the individual and "pursuit" to the nation: "..the effects of a busy, inventive, and versatile spirit, by which men have carried every national pursuit to extremes" (109-110).

With "active virtue" or "zeal" sometimes replacing "pursuit" or "public spirit", some of the grandest declarations in the *Essay* combine our three key concepts: "we may expect that [under corrupted government] many of the boasted improvements of *civil society*, will be mere devices to lay the *political spirit* at rest, and will chain up *active virtues* more than the restless disorders of men." (221, emphases added.)

Finally, we can observe how this strong civic humanist statement emerges as the dominant factor even when whig-constitutional, "Addisonian" values and jurisprudential values are extolled. This "take-over" happens on a higher level than the mere ironical application or re-politicising of particular words from the rival paradigms. Coming to grips with the values themselves, Ferguson shows how Parliament, laws and liberty, as well as commerce and politeness, all continuously depend on the crucial civic- humanist factor of public zeal and active participation: "political establishments, the pretensions of party, commerce, and arts, are subjects which engage the attentions of nations... The ardour and vigour with which they are at any one time pursued, is the measure of a national spirit. When these objects cease to animate, nations may be laid to languish;..." (211). The English principle of *Habeas corpus* is indeed to be admired as "the key stone of civil liberty... But it requires a fabric no less than the whole political constitution of Great Britain, a spirit no less than the refractory and turbulent zeal of this fortunate people, to secure its effects" (167). Hence, "Political rights, when neglected, are always invaded" (213).

This is precisely why individuals and their active pursuits matter. Ferguson not only begins with individual psychology as the cornerstone for his political theory. He also concludes with the individual as the crucial preserver of political freedom and liveliness. "Free constitutions of government", though not created by "a single projector", are "often preserved by the vigilance, activity, and zeal, of single men" (134). But active pursuit is valuable even when it miserably fails on the political level, as in the case of Brutus. "The pursuit, and the love of it, however unsuccessful, has thrown a lustre on human nature" (135). The concept soars out of the narrative when Ferguson reminds us that he, the historian, and we, the readers, jointly "pursue the history of civil society" (121), and even this scholarly pursuit has a long-range political end.

We can now turn to examine what happened to this civic humanist vocabulary in Jünger's translation. *Public spirit* was still an uncommon phrase in German at the time the *Essay* was translated, although some years later Jacobi, Herder and Forster established *Gemeingeist* as the standard translation.[46] Adelung's suggestion, *patriotische Gesinnung*, with "public spirited" becoming *patriotisch*, misleadingly brought the term into the sphere of *Vaterland-Patriotismus* terminology.[47] Other writers preferred to use the original English term, sensing its uniqueness. Archenholz worded this feeling when he wrote that "the main characteristic of the British is the *Public Spirit*, which is their very own pecularity; a virtue so unknown in other countries, that no living language has a name for it. The word *Nationalgeist* does not fully denote this noble British quality."[48] *Gemeingeist*, *öffentlicher Geist* and *Nationalgeist* were all recognized as political terms, although not

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46. *Öffentlicher Geist* was introduced as a German translation to *public spirit* in 1780. F.H. Jacobi was the first to use *Gemeingeist* in a philosophical, though not political, context, in his *Über die Lehre des Spinoza* (1785). Schiller, Forster and Herder were all aware of the British origin and connotations of the term. See Wilhelm Feldmann, "Modewörter des 18. Jahrhundert", *Zeitschrift für Deutsche Wortforschung*, vol. VI, Heft 2 (October 1904), 325; Friedrich Kainz, "Klassik und Romantic", in Maurer and Rupp (eds.), *Deutsche Wortgeschichte*, 3rd ed. vol. II, 333; and Peter F. Ganz, *Der Einfluss des englischen auf den deutschen Wortschatz 1640-1815* (Berlin, 1957), p. 82.

47. J.C. Adelung, *Wörterbuch der Englischen Sprache*, II, 745.

48. J.J. Archenholz, *England und Italien*, vol. II (1791), 1, quoted in Ganz, *Einfluss*, p. 180. Note the reference to *living* languages, possibly alluding to the classical republican sources of *public spirit*. Wieland used the English term as early as 1774; but for an even earlier discussion of the intranslatable *public spirit* see chapter 5, pp. 157-158.

exclusively so: Zinzendorf had used *Gemeingeist* to denote the religious spirit of the Pietist community, Goethe and Hölderlin gave it a Pantheistic sense, and the Romantics applied it to the artist's quest for capturing the organic essence of the *Volk*.[49] However, even when accepted as a translation of *public spirit* in the political sense, *Gemeingeist* was often seen as typically British and significantly un-German. "Among the Germans there was in general little or no *Gemeingeist*", was an exemplary use of the word in Campe's German dictionary.[50]

Working with this alien terminology even before the standard German equivalents were well established, it is small wonder that Jünger supplied uneven and sometimes awkward translations.[51] *Public* as a noun became, on one occasion, *Publicum*, a term which at that period more typically denoted an intellectual audience, a reading public.[52] Elsewhere in the book it was made into *Staat*.[53] "Public affections" were rendered either *patriotischer Eifer* (81) or *Liebe zu dem gemeinen Besten* (104). "Public zeal" became *Eifer für das allgemeine Beste*. The term *allgemeines* (or *gemeines*) *Beste* itself was a harmless cover-all term whose applications were closer to philanthropy than to politics. Jünger used it for Ferguson's "general good", "public utility" (55), and "public good" (56), and "common concern" (103). "Public actions", which Ferguson linked with the citizens, became *öffentliche Handlungen* (80), more of "official actions" performed by the authorities.[54] As for "spirit", it was, sometimes

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49. For Zinzendorf see Ganz, *Einfluss*, p. 82. For Goethe and Hölderlin see Wolfgang Binder, "Grundformen der Säkularisation in den Werken Goethes, Schillers und Hölderlins", *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie* 83 (1964), Sonderheft, p. 45. For the Romanticist notion of *Nationalgeist* and *Nationalseele* , Langen, "Wortschatz", p. 85.

50. Campe, WDS, II, 301.

51. Jünger was not the first to wrestle with such difficulties. In his translation of Hutcheson's *System of Moral Philosophy* in 1756, Lessing omitted many words, among them "publick example" and "juries". See C.C.D. Vail, *Lessing's Relation to the English Language and Literature* (New York, 1936), p. 28. Vail notes Lessing's "vocabulary problems", but in these cases the "vocabulary problem" was shared by many contemporaries.

52. *Versuch*, p. 82. Medick's modern translation is *Öffentlichkeit*. For the problematic variety of meanings see Campe's discussion of *Publicum* in his *Wötrerbuch zur Erklärung*, p. 507.

53. *Versuch*, p. 85, twice. In this and the following paragraphs the numbers appearing in parentheses refer to page numbers in the*Versuch*.

54. A comparable shift occurs in the *Hannoverische Magazin* translation from the *Institutes*, where "public duties" become *bürgerliche Pflichten*: "Von Staatsgesetzen", *Hannoverisches Magazin*, p. 1499.

in the same paragraph (57), translated as either *Geist* or *Seele*.[55] The latter word, with its vast sphere of connotations, acquired a very strong presence in Jünger's translation of the *Essay*. To this vocabulary with its various sub-branches we will now turn.

The most interesting shift of meaning involved a shift of vocabularies. In Jünger's translation of the *Essay*, and, to a lesser degree, in translations of Ferguson's other books, many words appear which belong to recognizable terminologies in eighteenth century Germany: the terminologies of Pietism, mainstream Protestantism, and the secularized literary offspring of both, sentimentalism. The common elements of these languages were their spirituality, their overwhelming concern with the individual, his or her inner search for religious salvation or elevation of the soul, or both, and the ensuing attempt to communicate this quest to other individuals in a language of feeling and faith. The ideas informing these terminologies were often indifferent or even hostile to political activism, or more generally to the significance of society as a polity. The examples chosen for this chapter are aimed to show how these terminologies entered the German translations and discussions of Ferguson's texts, introducing a new system of mutually elucidating terms, which caused a gradual distancing from the author's original vocabulary.

The Pietist vocabulary entered the text with such key words as *Seele*, *Herz*, *Hitze* and *Redlichkeit*.[56] German Pietism was an offshoot of late 17th century mysticism, appearing mainly on Lutheran ground. Its cult of *Innerlichkeit* (inner life) goes back to Augustine, as does its strong belief (shared by Luther, Calvin and the Jansenists) in the radical evil inherent in human nature. The two great founders of Pietism, Philipp Jacob Spener and August Hermann Francke, were deeply pessimistic about human goodness, and preached the experience of pain and sorrow as means for spiritual rebirth. Francke's followers gradually shifted the emphasis to sorrow for its own sake, thus becoming the forerunners of German

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55. Although this was a widespread practice, sensitive linguists such as Campe regretted the synonymous status commonly given to *Seele*, *Geist*, and *Herz*. See W. Feldmann, "Modewörter", p. 336.

56. For a compendium of Pietist vocabulary see A. Langen, *Der Wortschatz des deutschen Pietismus* (Tübingen, 1954).

sentimentalism.[57] The pietist type of individualism involved the abnegation of human will and the passive waiting of the soul to be touched by divine will, through Grace. This mystical experience, often described in erotic terms, has been described as a self-centred radicalisation of the Calvinist notion of being a privileged servant of God. The Calvinist's "humbler" wish to be personally assured of salvation through the external signs of a successful, active life, in a community of believers, became a highly personalised direct union with God, experienced and communicated in emotional and "irrational" language.[58] This psychology, developed by mid-century Prussian and Swabian Pietists, was extremely fruitful in literature. Its most famous exposition is in Goethe's "*Schöne Seele*", a spiritual autobiography incorporated in *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* and based to some extent on the memoirs of the young Goethe's Pietist friend, Susanna Katherina von Klettenberg.[59]

The Pietist movement in Prussia and in Württemberg had been aligned to politics in various ways: in Brandenburg-Prussia its early leaders, Spener and Francke, actively supported the rising central government. But from the early decades of the eighteenth century its standard bearers in both Prussia and Württemberg made a decisive move away from political involvement.[60] For students of the the later decades of the century Pietism is important primarily as a language; and for our present context it is particularly interesting as a language which helped to dim and obscure some of Ferguson's political ideas. The Pietist terminology contains several groups of characteristic themes and metaphors, such as love, the heart, self-surrender, elevation and flying, fire and shining, water and flowing. It is therefore easily recognizable in the text it permeates. The presence of this vocabulary in Jünger's translation of Ferguson's *Essay* is most noticeable in the persistent use of the term *Seele*, soul. This term was not, of course, the exclusive property of Pietists. But the combinations in which it appears in the text are very close to typical Pietist expressions. In the majority of cases, Jünger

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57. H.R.F. Günther, "Psychologie des deutschen Pietismus", *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift* 4 (1926), p. 167.
58. *Ibid.*, pp. 164-166.
59. Daniel J. Farrelly, *Goethe and Inner Harmony. A Study of the 'Schöne Seele' in the Apprenticeship of Wilhelm Meister* (Shannon, 1973).
60. See Hartmut Lehmann, "Der Pietismus im alten Reich", *Historische Zeitschrift* 214 (1972), 58-108; Mary Fulbrook, *Piety and Politics: Religion and the Rise of Absolutism in England, Württemberg, and Prussia* (Cambridge, 1983).

translated "mind" as *Seele*; thus "force of mind" became *Stärke der Seele* (75, 82). "To excite and employ the mind" was rendered *die Seele zu erwecken und zu Unterhalten*, namely "to awaken and sustain the soul" (74). Ferguson's "disorder" or "distemper" of the mind became a much more figurative *Krankheit of the Seele* (59, 64). Only when *Seele* would not do at all did Jünger opt for other solutions: "composure of mind" is *Fassung des Gemüths* (57); "a solicitous and timorous mind" becomes *Gemüth* and not *Seele* (70); "elevation of mind" - *erhabene Denkungsart* (104). *Herz* (heart) is another Pietist term which sometimes replaces *mind* (79). *Herz* and its derivatives appear frequently, for instance when "resolution" becomes *herzhafte Entschließung* (434), "goodwill" - *Gutherzigkeit*, and "courage" - *Herzhaftigkeit* (52).[61] Ferguson himself rarely used the term "soul".

The words "zeal", "candour" and "ardour", which we have shown operating in a strongly civic humanist context in the original text, became *Eifer*, *Redlichkeit*, and *Hitze*, which for contemporary German readers typified Pietist vocabulary. Consequently, the plausible chain "courage"- "ardour of the mind"- "public action" in the original text becomes a less plausible *Herzhaftigkeit - Hitze des Geistes - öffentliche Handlungen* in the translation (80). Occasionally Ferguson's own language, in his more lyrical moods, has a genuine Pietist ring: "his heart may glow with an ardent zeal" - *sein Herz von einem brennenden Eifer glüht* (80), or "ardour in the soul" - *Wärme in der Seele* (82). But more typically, "a candid, an active, and strenuous mind" underwent a real change when it became *ein redliches, ein thätiges, und emsiges Herz* (87), and a similar sentence elsewhere provided *Redlichkeit, Stärke, und Hoheit der Seele* (99).

The discrepancy between Ferguson's activism and the Pietist distinctive "vocabulary of passivity"[62] becomes clear when he makes a pejorative use of terms whose German translations have very positive connotations in the Pietist or sentimentalist contexts. For instance, Ferguson accuses the politically lazy of being "borne with satisfaction on the tide of their emotions and sentiments"; in German they are *mit Zufriedenheit auf dem Strome ihrer Bewegungen und Empfindungen fortgetragen* (84), a state of

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61. Medick's modern translations for the last two terms are *guter Wille* and *Mut*.
62. This is Langen's expression, "Wortschatz", p. 142.

bliss in the sentimentalist view of life. Similarly, "the licence of mere tumult" and "the calm of dejection and servitude" become *die Freiheit einer bloßen Empörung* and *die Stille der Kleinmütigkeit, und der Sklaverey* (110). Both *Freiheit*, in a highly spiritual and individual sense, and *Stille* were desirable Pietist values.[63] To a reader immersed in such language, Ferguson's connection between *Stille* and *Sklaverey*, sharply contrasted with "candour and affection" (*Redlichkeit* and *Liebe*), would lose much of its immediate sense and obviousness.

Does the presence of Pietist terms, however, signify the infiltration of Pietist sense into the German version of the *Essay*? On the face of it, few ideas can be more remote from Ferguson's political activism than the Pietist *Innerlichkeit*. It is important to see that *Seele* (and not just the combination *schöne Seele*) was adopted as a *Modewort* of the German sentimentalist and Romanticist literature, together with a secularised and aestheticist version of *Grazie*. For Winckelmann, Schiller and others it was typically paired with *Stille* and *Ruhe*, an ideal inner state of peace and harmony.[64] In the present discussion, *Seele* and the other Pietist terms can be seen as having a cumulative distancing effect from the original political meanings, especially if we consider the distortion of Ferguson's concept of *active pursuit* into a non-Pietist, though still spiritual and distinctly Protestant, terminological sphere.

IV

Streben, the key concept whose derivatives served to translate Ferguson's concept of *pursuit*, was too active to belong to Pietist language proper. When the Pietist August Hermann Francke used it to describe how the newborn Christian "strives with all earnestness against the evil which arises in his flesh", he hastened to add that "he does not do so through his own power and strength, but... depends on the power of Jesus Christ".[65] Outside Pietism, however, the concept of *Streben* had a long

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63. For the Pietist language of silence, quiet, and rest, see Langen, *Wortschatz des deutschen Pietismus*, p. 173.
64. For a specialist study see Roche, *Dynamic stillness*. Also Kainz, "Klassik und Romantic", pp. 231, 313; Langen. "Wortschatz", pp. 90-93.
65. August Hermann Francke, *On Christian Perfection* (1690), reprinted in Peter C. Erb (ed.), *Pietists. Selected Writings* (London, 1983), p. 115.

tradition of spirituality since early modern German shifted its meaning from physical to mental striving. Its philosophical career may have begun with Luther's translation from the Corinthians, "*Strebt aber nach den besten Gaben*". Its poetic pedigree dates back to Eschenbach's *Parzival*, "*Min herze iedoch nach hoehe strebet*".[66]

From these beginnings the verb *streben*, and the noun forms *Streben* or *Bestreben*, were closely associated with the notions of elevation and perfection. In the late 17th century *Streben* served the emerging philosophical German to translate the Latin *vis appetitiva*, initially correlating to Hobbes' notion of "endeavour", the natural motion towards pleasure and away from pain. But German thinkers preferred to use this concept in its narrower ethical sense, which Christian Wolff phrased as "the capacity of the soul to incline towards a matter which is recognized as good".[67] Christian Garve wrote that the basic imperative of Wolff's moral philosophy was *strebe nach deiner Vollkommenheit*, strive for your perfection. By the late eighteenth century, this had become the immediate association of *streben* and its etymological relations.

It is crucial to note that this German version of the vita activa is not a concept of political action. Quentin Skinner has shown that in English and Scottish discourse the dichotomy *otium - negotium* neatly fitted the political categories of monarchy (where the subject is peaceful and protected) and republic (where the citizen must be active and ready to defend the polity).[68] But the German concept of *negotium* was profoundly different from the British: its restlessness was spiritual. It was the endless drive towards an unobtainable perfection, not the business of the body politic. This was the core of the misreception.

At the time when Ferguson's ideas came to Germany, the notion of *streben* or *das Bestreben* was still flexible enough to appear as a suitable translation for his idea of the political pursuit of action; but it was becoming more markedly a-political as it was "secularised", together with *Seele*, *Grazie* and other items of the same vocabulary, into sentimentalist

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66. *Trübners deutsches Worterbuch* (Berlin, 1955), VI, 633-634.
67. For the history of *streben* as a philosophical term see Rudolf Eisler, *Wörterbuch der philosophischen Begriffe* (Berlin, 1930), III, 161-163.
68. Quenting Skinner, "Sir Thomas More's *Utopia* and the language of Renaissance Humanism", in Pagden (ed.), *Languages*, pp. 123-157.

language, from which it then entered the Romanticist and Idealist terminologies.[69] Goethe was a major transmitter of this term: *streben* became a key word for his Faustian, spiritually active alternative to the all-too-quiet *schöne Seele*. Both Wilhelm Meister and Faust are strivers in Goethe's sense, "*ideales Streben nach Einwirken und Einfühlen in die ganze Natur*". In *Faust* it became the striving of the genius towards the universal and the infinite, what was later named "the divine discontent" - "*es irrt der Mensch, solang' er strebt*",[70] "*ihr nach und immer nach zu streben!*", leading to the ultimate salvation of the striving individual - "*Wer immer strebend sich bemüht, den können wir erlösen*",[71] we can only redeem the one who strives, as the angels sing in the *Bergschluchten* scene. Regardless of Faust's rather dubious and abortive social deeds in the second part of the tragedy, *Streben* is a highly individual achievement, a *geistige Tätigkeit* of very special minds, certainly not meant for ordinary people. Goethe's genius was far removed from Ferguson's citizen.

In his mature writings, however, Goethe took care to identify happiness not with striving, but with the self-imposed limitation of striving, which enables man to participate in worldly affairs.[72] But more important for our analysis is the young Goethe, for whom *Streben* was closely linked with *unendlich*.[73] This combination provided the typical wording for what Lessing and Fichte, among others, recognized as the unique "Protestant spirit". Lessing saw it in the striving for absolute veracity, and Fichte in the never-resting search for truth, culminating in his idealist notion of *ewig protestieren*. Fichte's "Protestant motifs" included the autonomy of the *Geist* and its spiritual *Aktivität*.[74] In his *Foundations of the Entire Science of Knowledge* Fichte described the "self" striving "to fill out infinity", and the "not-self" counterstriving against it.[75] Both

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69. See Roche, *Dynamic Stillness*, pp. 2-3 and *passim*.
70. *Faust* I (1808), line 317.
71. *Faust* II (1832), line 11936.
72. An important conclusion in *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* is that "man is not happy before his unconditioned striving draws its own limitations." See Kainz, "Klassik und Romantic", p. 208.
73. Kainz, *ibid.*, p. 207.
74. Erich Franz, *Deutsche Klassik und Reformation. Die Weiterbildung protestantischer Motive in der Philosophie und Weltanschauungsdichtung des deutschen Idealismus* (Halle/Saale, 1937), pp. 263-265.
75. Eisler, *Wörterbuch*, p. 161.

Fichte and Schelling (for whom nature, not the self, is the "endless becoming") made this limitless extention of limits the basis of their philosophical systems.[76]

This metaphysical language was developed from its Protestant origins by the *Sturm und Drang* and sentimentalist discourse of the 1770s. It was during that decade that *unendlich* came into vogue,[77] often in conjunction with *streben*, especially with the prefix *empor* (upwards). When Karl Philipp Moritz' famous hero, Anton Reiser, nurtures the typically Pietist wish to be able to fly, his craving is for *streben... empor.*[78] Even more significant in our context is Johann Gottfried Herder's use of *Streben* and its derivatives to express his alternative concept of progress in *Auch eine Philosophie der Geschichte zur Bildung der Menschheit* (1774). His idea of human growth and change akin to flowing water or a growing tree, of *Fortgang und Entwicklung... in einem höhern Sinne,*[79] in a sense higher than Voltaire's or Hume's, is delivered in a passage packed with enchanting, resounding variations on one linguistic theme:

> Oder siehest du jenen wachsenden Baum! jenen emporstrebenden Menschen!... alle offenbar im Fortgange! ein Streben aufeinander in Kontinuität!... Indes ists doch ein ewiges Streben!...[80]

The versatility of the *Streben* vocabulary is fascinating: Herder's language of organic progress and natural energy is different from Fichte's mystical formulations, and both differ from Moritz' sentimentalist yearnings of the soul. Schiller, as we shall see in a later chapter, used this language to construct his notion of the Sentimental, the infinite approximation, which he opposed to the Naive, the self-sufficient equanimity.[81] By the early nineteenth century the combination *strebende*

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76. Roche, *Dynamic Stillness*, pp. 14-18.
77. "At that time [1775-1776]", wrote Wieland, "the word *unendlich* was a headword recurring everywhere"; Langen, "Wortschatz", p. 126. See also Feldmann, "Modewörter", pp. 118, 343.
78. Langen, "Wortschatz", p. 80. Both *Emporstrebungen* and *unendlich* appear in the 1790-1793 Leipzig translation of Richardson's *Clarissa*, replacing "aspirations" and "infinite"; see Erik Erämetsä, *Englische Lehnprägungen in der deutschen Empfindsamkeit des 18. Jahrhunderts* (Helsinki, 1955), pp. 88 and 109.
79. J.G. Herder, *Werke in Zwei Bänden* ed. Karl-Gustav Gerold, vol II (Munich, 1953), 36.
80. *Ibid.*
81. Roche, *Dynamic Stillness*, pp. 5-9.

Seele was a common *Schlagwort*,[82] and as such it entered the powerful language of the independence war poetry. Heinrich von Kleist employed it memorably in *Das letzte Lied*: "*empor in's Reich der Sonnen, / Von allen Banden frei, die Seele strebt...*".[83] The different uses, however, had a common ground: whether sentimentalist or metaphysical, national-minded or individual, all these aplications of *Streben* had a connotation of mysterious mental energy, of a high, noble yearning for a distant goal.

This language of spiritual activity took over Ferguson's civic activism in a gradual and subtle way. In Jünger's translation, "pursuit" usually became *Bestreben* (46, 64, 65, 72, 77), or *Bestrebung* (62). "Pursuits" were often *Bestrebungen* (62, 72); and Ferguson's rare use of "striving" or "to strive" was also rendered *Bestreben* (80) and *sich bestreben* (91). Even on this initial level of translation, however, there is some tension about the differentiation between high and low pursuits, *Bestreben* being too spiritual to serve some of the meanings which *pursuit* is able to carry. When Ferguson uses this term in a material and sensual context, Jünger makes it into *Bemühungen* (58). "Intention", however, is rendered *Bestreben* (61). As we further examine the translation, it becomes clearer that the adjective *active* and the verb *engage* do not easily fit with the *Bestreben* terminology. Jünger's solution for the combination *active pursuits* was either to use the "lower" *geschäfftige Bemühungen* (62), or to translate the synonym *active exertions* as *thätige Aeußerungen* (61). The latter word more typically means "utterances" or "expressions", and one of its connotations was a worldly activity contrasted with the peace and truth of *innerlich* life. "To engage" became a more passive *begeben sich* (71). "Active engagements" were toned down into *thätige Unterhaltungen* (74), which again denote conversation more typically than action. The objects of pursuit were distanced into *Endzwecke*. Man's "disposition to action" was mistakenly translated into *seine Neigung mit seiner Thätigkeit* (66).

Man himself, the male citizen, disappears almost completely from the text. "Men" are almost always translated into *Menschen* (the same occurs in Hans Medick's modern translation of the *Essay*). Only when the

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82. It is dated to 1807 by Richard M. Meyer, "Das Alter einiger Schlagworte", *Neue Jahrbücher für das klassische Altertum* 3 (1900), p. 477.
83. *Dichter der Freiheitskriege* (Berlin, R.Oldenbourg, München, n.d.), p. 6.

masculine sense is unavoidable, as when the ladies complain of their bored husbands, does it become *Mannspersonen* (63); also, "men of integrity" is rendered *rechtschaffene Männer* (91).

Several instances of religious language entering the text can demonstrate how easily such a shift could happen. Ferguson's "mind and body" became *Leib und Seele* (68).[84] In the *Hannoverisches Magazin* translation of the chapter "Of political law" from the *Institutes*, the phrase "external conditions" becomes no less than *zeitliches Wohl und Weh*, temporal weal and woe.[85] The translator of this chapter, possibly the Göttingen jurist Gottfried Achenwall, was not deliberately inclined to introduce spiritual terminology into the text. It is more likely that he simply found this language accessible and suitable, as Jünger often did in his translation of the *Essay*.

The sentimentalist vocabulary unavoidably came in when Ferguson's "admiration", "sensibility", "pity", and "compassion" were translated into the more topical *Bewunderung*, *Empfindlichkeit*, *Mitleiden* (48). The combination mind-sentiment thus became *Seele-Empfindung* (50, 51). The abundance of such terms in some paragraphs may have facilitated the rephrasing of Ferguson in sentimentalist terms, as we shall observe in the case of Jacobi.

One important result of the shifts we have described, which is already seen in the translated text itself, is that the vocabulary of collective psychology tends to disappear. *Mind* and *habit* are among the terms which provided the cognitive level of Ferguson's civic humanist view of man. He used them in an objectivist and empiricist way similar to Locke, Hume, and especially Reid. In the German translation, however, this epistemological background was dimmed with the change of terminology. While "mind" became *die Seele*, with all its theological and devotional connotations, "habit" is often replaced by either *Fähigkeit* (70), *Fertigkeiten* (71), or *Gesinnung* (76). Only rarely does it become *Gewohnheit* (82) or *angewöhnte Denkungsart* (104). At one point it is removed altogether and replaced by *Art* (mode), a fashionable borrowing

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84. On the religious connotatin of *Leib* see Maurer, *Anglophilie*, p. 125. Medick's modern translation is *Geist und Körper*.
85. "Von Staatsgesetzen", *Hannoverisches Magazin*, pp. 1473-1474.

from philosophical language. This is done in an interesting sentence, from the chapter "On happiness", which shows how *mind*, *habit* and *active pursuit* form a triangle in Ferguson's reasoning:

> Sensuality is easily overcome by any of the habits of pursuit which usually engage an active mind. [86]

What the German reader got from it was:

> Sensuality is easily overcome by any mode of striving, which usually engages an active soul. [*Die Sinnlichkeit wird leicht durch jede Art von Bestreben überwältiget, das sich einer thätigen Seele gemeiniglich bemächtiget*] (65)

This is already a very Germanized Ferguson, who now speaks of a striving soul, the "striving" being a "mode", something metaphysical, unchanging and inherent, rather than an acquired "habit". Gently and noiselessly, two central pillars of the Scottish empiricism, the Lockeian "mind" and Hume's and Reid's notion of habit, had been removed. We are left with a soul, pre-equipped with a mode or a capacity of striving - as a German Protestant in the eighteenth century would understand it, striving for spiritual perfection. Gone is the social-evolutionary, public element in Ferguson's concepts of mind, habit, and active pursuit. They are no longer necessarily related to society or to rationality. Whereas Hume, Reid and Ferguson stressed the inter-personal character of mind, experience and habit, such notions as *Seele* and *Bestreben* belonged within their typical German vocabularies to the unique, individual, idiosyncratic kind of consciousness. Knowledge and action can now be removed from the collective sphere. The appeal to common human experience, accumulated within a given social and historical setting, had lost its appropriate wording.

V

Our final key for the process of conceptual mistranslation lies in the related concepts of perfection and destination, and their German counterparts, *Vollkommenheit* and *Bestimmung*. As we have seen,

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86. *Essay*, p. 44.

Ferguson's notion of perfection - or, as he sometimes preferred, excellence - was more linked to realistic improvement than to endless spiritual striving. In the *Essay,* the terms "perfect" or "perfection" were employed more casually and neutrally than Jünger was willing to use *Vollkommenheit*. He duly translated "perfect democracy" as *Vollkommene Demokratie*, but "perfect despotism" becomes *völliger Despotismus* (108). More important is Ferguson's point that man is not destined (in the strong sense of "predestined") to become perfect, but should use his idea of perfection as a guide to his moral actions in everyday life. His occasional use of the term "destined" (which Jünger renders *bestimmt*), is applied to traits of human nature and not to human perfectibility.[87] This becomes very significant in the last paragraph of the *Essay*, where Ferguson calls for individual responsibility for social and political life. This is an open attack on those surrendering to "fatality" (*unvermeidliches Schicksal* in Jünger's translation); it culminates in an ironic rephrasing of both the secular and the religious clichés of fatalism. Politically active men, Ferguson says tongue in cheek,

> are the happy instrument of providence employed for the good of mankind; *or if we must change this language*, they show, that while they are destined to live, the states they compose are likewise doomed by the fates to survive, and to prosper.[88]

These words conclude the book's final assertion of free will within the limits of historical and geographical circumstances. Jünger misses this final twist when he translates the italicized phrase into *wenn wir uns auf andere Art ausdrücken sollen* (437), thereby legitimating the fatalistic language which Ferguson had used ironically.

The shift is indeed small, and in its immediate context does not amount to a serious distortion. It does, however, signal the future cumulative misunderstanding of Ferguson's idea that political life is the worthy object of pursuit for citizens exercising their free will. We have seen how Jünger's conscientious translation could help to detach pursuit from politics, make the citizen into a *Mensch*, his mind into a *Seele* and his

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87. *Bestimmung* often adds a pronounced metaphysical flavour to a text. In Lessing's translation of Hutcheson, the sentence "the hound exercising himself for the chase" became "der Hund folgt seiner Bestimmung zur Jagd"; See Vail, *Lessing's Relation to the English*, p. 34.

88. *Essay*, p. 280, emphasis added.

immediate goals into remote *Endzwecke*. The insertion of spiritual striving towards a distant perfection was an easy move within the same vocabulary. It culminated in the nineteenth-century summary of the *Essay*, in Ersch and Gruber's famous *Encyclopädie*, as "a work... in which Ferguson endeavoured to follow the course of Man on his way from the rudest state through all intermediate states [*Mittelzustände*] until the highest level of moral and intellectual perfection."[89] Such smug mechanical progressivism is, of course, exactly what Ferguson denied as a historian, and attacked as a moralist.

The linguistic analysis applied in this chapter is only interesting if it can support the claim that Ferguson's ideas were misunderstood or distorted by some of his readers in Germany. The following chapters will discuss the further stages of reception - the book reviews, articles, quotations and other treatments of Ferguson's ideas by several German thinkers. I hope to show that the vocabularies inadvertently introduced by Jünger and others into the German versions of Ferguson's books had a cumulative and weighty effect on the way the books were read.

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89. Döring, "Adam Ferguson", *Allgemeine Encyclopädie*, p. 139.

Chapter 4
Iselin and Ferguson: history, progress, and "quarrels between decent men"

I

The first German review of a book by Ferguson - Jünger's translation of the *Essay on the History of Civil Society* - was published in the *Allgemeine deutsche Bibliothek* in 1770. The reviewer was the Swiss lawyer and historian Isaak Iselin. Few would have been better qualified for the task: Iselin's own *Geschichte der Menschheit,* which first appeared in 1764, was a philosophical and Natural-Law based exposition of the process of civilization. For some of his contemporaries the book was a breakthrough, the creation of a new historical genre. This view was expressed by the Göttingen historian Christoph Meiners, who wrote his own "history of mankind" twenty years later. Only three writers, Meiners claimed, had attempted to write a full history of mankind: Iselin, Home, and Falconer. Iselin, the best of the three, was the first to establish this "science", and to call the attention of the German-speaking public to it. The acclaim won by his book demonstrated the great need for "a philosophy based on history."[1]

There was another field in which Iselin's German readers felt he had taught them something. "You ask," Moses Mendelssohn wrote, "who are the Swiss writers, who were the first among the Germans to begin to observe human beings in the large-scale political society [*in der grossen politischen Gesellschaft*] with truly philosophical eyes. I think I have given you more than once the names of Iselin and Zimmermann, who among us have cultivated the first fruit in this field. [Iselin's] *Philosophische und patriotische Träume* ... fully deserve the applause they have universally received."[2] He was referring the Iselin's first book, published in 1755.

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1. Christoph Meiners, *Grundriß der Geschichte der Menschheit* (Frankfurt and Leipzig, 1786), preface (n.p). Meiner's survey of the new genre included a positive mention of Ferguson's *Essay*, placed in a more specialized category.

2. Moses Mendelssohn, 143rd *Literaturbrief*, in *Briefe die neueste Literatur betreffend* (Berlin, 1761), pt. 9, p. 21. Quoted in Karl Schwarber, "Schweizerische Einflüsse auf die Entwicklung des deutschen Patriotismus im 18. Jahrhundert", *Basler Zeitschrift für Geschichte und Altertumskunde* 31 (1932), pp. 279-280. On

Several biographical similarities exist between the Scottish professor of moral philosophy, and the jurist, town clerk of Basle and co-founder of the *Helvetische Gesellschaft*. Both were born in the 1720s, went to two universities, and wrote their history books in the 1760s. Both were politically active men, who observed and took part in Enlightenment Europe from the vantage point of small, distinct and alert societies within larger linguistic and cultural zones. A certain semblance between Scotland and Switzerland was noted by each of them: Ferguson was moved to tears when watching a Swiss militia exercise, "the only body of men I ever saw under arms on the true principle for which arms should be carried";[3] while Iselin recognized the physical and human landscape of his native land in Ferguson's coarse portrait of the Scottish Highlands, thinly disguised to pass for ancient Sparta in the *Essay*.[4]

Both Iselin and Ferguson were versed in the ancient writers and well-read in modern Natural Law. Iselin had a good command of Hutcheson, Hume and other Scottish writers. A parallel intellectual path is apparent from the fact that in both cases a lifelong interest in moral philosophy was at some stage expanded to include an interest in history. Both Iselin and Ferguson sought the historical dimension of human perfectibility, opposed philosophical scepticism and historical pessimism, and were "modern", in the sense that they were willing to come to terms with social and economic advance. They shared a belief in the possibility of individual perfection within political society, and a corresponding eagerness to attack Rousseau. And yet, when Iselin sat down to review the German translation of Ferguson's *Essay on the History of Civil Society*, he found much that was alien and worrying in this apparent fellow-*Aufklärer*.

Ferguson was brought to his attention rather unkindly. In June 1768 Iselin received a malicious anonymous letter from Zurich, which was aimed at undermining his position in the *Helvetische Gesellschaft*. The

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Mendelssohn's view of Iselin see also Alfred Stern, "Über Isaak Iselins Geschichte der Menschheit", *Zeitschrift für Schweizerische Geschichte* 10 (1930), pp. 225-228.

3. Small, *Biographical Sketch*, p. 22.

4. *Essay*, pp. 194-198. Iselin's review, ADB, vol. 11, Stück 1 (1770), p. 163

letter told him that after the historical works of Ferguson and Kraft he might well have stayed home with his own efforts.[5]

In the same month, however, a more positive incentive came. Iselin's correspondent Daniel Fellenberg wrote to him warmly recommending the *Essay*.[6] Iselin promptly read the German translation during July and August 1768, the time his own *Geschichte* was going into its second edition.[7] He was greatly impressed by Ferguson, confiding to a correspondent that he saw him as a "dangerous rival".[8] In November he wrote a lengthy review for the *Allgemeine deutsche Bibliothek*,[9] which was published as a central article in 1770.[10] The review is a fascinating blend of small rebukes woven into a framework of laudatory approbation. What were the toned-down disagreements, and why did Iselin nevertheless insist on greeting Ferguson so cordially? This question is seminal for the reception of Ferguson in Germany. Before attempting to answer it we should look at Iselin's own intellectual profile.

II

Iselin was born in Basle in 1728, and studied philosophy and law in his native town.[11] One year (1747-1748) was spent in Göttingen, where he met Haller, Schmauß and Mosheim. Back in Basle, he became "Doctor of both Laws" in 1755. Repeatedly losing in the lots cast for university and administrative posts, Iselin had to content himself with his 1756 election as the town *Ratschreiber*. His service was highlighted by plans for reform of schools, agricultural administration, and various diplomatic representations, as well as a lifelong struggle to open up the Basle burgher right. Iselin was a very sociable thinker even by the standards

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5. Ulrich Im Hof, *Isaak Iselin und die Spätaufklärung* (Bern and Munich, 1967), p. 296, quoted from Is. Arch. 60,355/6.
6. *Ibid*, p. 94.
7. A third, unaltered edition followed in 1770, and the fourth, with alterations, in 1779. Iselin had by that time read Ferguson, Home and Robertson, as well as Hume's histories; *ibid.*, p. 248
8. Letter to Frey, Is. Arch. 54,290, quoted, *ibid.*, p. 296.
9. Iselin's diary, 13, 207/208, quoted *ibid.*, p. 296.
10. ADB vol. 11 St. 1 (1770), 153-168.
11. The biographical survey is based on Im Hof, *Isaak Iselin* (Basle, 1947), vol. II.

of the "sociable century".[12] In his early years he travelled to Paris and met Fontenelle, Rousseau and Buffon. He corresponded with Mendelssohn, F.C. von Moser, Friedrich Nicolai, and many other German and Swiss *Aufklärer*. He was active in two great societies of the Swiss Enlightenment, the *Helvetische Gesellschaft* in Schinznach, which he helped to found, and the *Patriotische Gesellschaft* in Bern. He was also a devoted father of nine children, and linked through birth or marriage to the leading families of Basle.

Iselin's intellect was shaped by an extensive reading in Natural Law. His early years were dominated by Aristotle and the Stoics, Grotius and his followers, Leibniz, Wolff, and the school of rationalist Protestant orthodoxy. In Göttingen this training was modified by the new *Staatswissenschaft,* especially the Hobbesian attempt to liberate Natural Law from the shackles of what Schmauß called "*Moraltheologie*". Schmauß' notion of civil law was especially fruitful for Iselin's newly awakened interest in history. Iselin's doctoral dissertation, on the civil law of the Swiss confederation, contained more history than jurisprudence.[13]

The *Philosophische und Patriotische Träume eines Menschenfreundes*, the book praised by Mendelssohn, appeared in 1755. The *Geschichte der Menschheit* followed in 1764, and an improved edition in 1768 was well received in Germany. In 1767 Iselin began collaborating in the *Allgemeine deutsche Bibliothek*, and his review of Ferguson's book was part of his contribution to the journal. Around 1769-1770 he fell under the spell of the French physiocrats, especially Quesnay, and his *Versuch über die gesellige Ordnung* (1772) was one of the first German formulations of their doctrine. The year 1776 saw the appearance of his *Träume eines Menschenfreundes,* and also the first issue of his successful periodical, *Ephemeriden der Menschheit*. Iselin died of an illness in 1782.

Iselin was not the only Swiss *Aufklärer* to participate the German Enlightenment; his countrymen were highly influential in the Berlin academy and in Göttingen. Unfortunately for Iselin, posterity best

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12. An expression appropriately coined by Iselin's biographer, Ulrich Im Hof, *Das gesellige Jahrhundert* (Munich, 1982).
13. Im Hof, *Isaak Iselin*, II, pp. 300-313.

remembers his "negative" contribution to this tradition: his *Geschichte der Menschheit* epitomized the vices of Enlightenment historiography for Herder and became the chief target of his ridicule.[14] Contemporaries, however, acknowledged Iselin's importance for the formation of an important brand of political language in Germany - the vocabulary of *Vaterland* and *Patriotismus*. Switzerland was, for many reform-minded Germans, the enviable Republic, the land of freedom where patriotism could justifiably flourish. Whether or not Swiss realities conformed to German ideals, Swiss thinkers were considered an authority on the true love of the fatherland.

In Iselin's case, patriotism was both *weltbürgerlich* and easily accommodated with monarchic absolutism.[15] He happily undertook the instruction of his correspondent, Friedrich Carl von Moser, whose subsequent book, *Von dem deutschen Nationalgeist* (1765), shaped German patriotic discourse in strongly moral terms. This vocabulary was at work, as we have seen, in Jünger's translation of Ferguson's *Essay*.[16] Iselin thus encountered, in the translation he read, the familiar terminology of *Vaterland* and *Patriotismus* which he himself had helped to implant in German discourse during the preceding decade. Jünger's use of this terminology in his translation of the *Essay* may be partly responsible for Iselin's over-estimating of Ferguson's likemindedness. Thus, Iselin's reading of the Germanized Ferguson may have created something of a linguistic loop.

A closer look at this "eudaemonist patriotism", as Karl Schwarber has called it, should clarify why it could easily blend with Pietist *Innerlichkeit* discourse, but not with civic activism. In Germany the language of *Vaterland* and *Patriotismus* moulded the basic tenets of pedagogical-minded political evolutionism. Iselin transmitted to Moser not only his practical experience in forming patriotic societies, but also his long-range optimism and primarily his educational ideals. The goal was not to bring republican agendas to the German principalities, but to

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14. See, for instance, Max Rouché, *La philosophie de l'histoire de Herder* (Paris, 1940), pp. 39-41, but also Stern, "Iselins Geschichte", pp. 234-241, which describes Herder's subsequent rapprochement with Iselin's view of history.
15. See the concluding declaration in Isaak Iselin, *Geschichte der Menschheit*, 2nd ed. (Zurich, 1768), II, 406 (hereafter abbreviated as GdM).
16. See chapter 3, p. 89ff.

start a slow process of "patriotic" education.[17] For Herder, incidentally, the idea of the cosmopolitan Iselin with his "platonic dreams" teaching patriotism to the Germans was rather irritating. Moser, he wrote, was much more suited for the job, being acquainted with the good old German ways.[18]

Iselin's mature social and political convictions were put forward in his physiocratic treatise, *Versuch über die gesellige Ordnung*, which is a key text for understanding his reception of Ferguson. Order is the basic concept: *bürgerliche Ordnung* is but part of a larger harmony of economic, moral and political orders underpinning the stratified social order.[19] Civil society is a natural, non-contractual institution, obeying the laws of nature and subject to divine justice: "not human beings, but God and Nature themselves are the founders of civil society."[20] The laws of nature regulate economic life - for instance, free competition[21] - but also the "higher" moral destination of man.[22] Iselin saw economic prosperity as a necessary condition for a virtuous society, while virtue was a necessary condition for sustaining economic bliss. The economic and the moral orders develop interdependently, but in Iselin's conclusion they melt into a simple, all-embracing "Order". The civil order is perhaps the least perfect, since God and Nature left its details to men's own devices under the eternal laws.[23] Iselin's viewpoint remained that of the moral philosopher, delighted with the support which political economy offered his ethical creed. This gratitude of the moralist to the social scientist is also apparent in his approving review of Smith's *Wealth of Nations* some years later.[24]

He easily incorporated the wealth-and-virtue equation into the spiritual vocabulary we have previously explored: "Only under the beneficent

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17. Iselin's more specific plan to set up a special school for future statesmen came to naught. See Schwarber, "Einflüsse"; part of the Iselin-Moser correspondence is quoted on pp. 263-271.
18. Herder, *Über die neuere deutsche Literatur* (1766), quoted by Im Hof, *Spätaufklärung*, p. 145.
19. Isaak Iselin, *Versuch über die gesellige Ordnung* (Basel, 1772).
20. *Ibid.*, p. 108.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 68.
22. *Ibid.*, pp. 88ff.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 108. See Ursula Becher, *Politische Gesellschaft* (Göttingen, 1978), p. 25.
24. ADB, vol. 31 (1777), pp. 586-589, especially p. 587; vol. 38 (1779), pp. 297-303.

influences of economic wellbeing does the human soul [*Seele*] rise to great and publicly useful institutions and to the higher truths, through which it becomes acquainted with its dignity and its destination [*Bestimmung*]."[25] No Pietist himself, Iselin nevertheless emphasised "inner feeling" as "the focus of all forces that set man in motion".[26]

Iselin's political outlook was marked by an increasing disillusionment with short-term involvement in public affairs. At the time he read and reviewed Ferguson he was reflecting on the relativity of all government forms, following his re-reading of "the whole of Montesquieu" in 1765.[27] Years of frustrating petty politics in Basle, and his newly acquired physiocratic notions, led Iselin in the direction of "legal despotism"; he even inserted pro-monarchic remarks into the second edition of the *Geschichte der Menschheit*.[28] His physiocratic turn coincided with his resignation from State affairs and political speculation during the last years of his life: the *Ephemeriden der Menschheit* gave little space to politics.[29] His view of the "harmonious" civil order in the *Versuch* regarded freedom as each person's possibility for unhindered self-perfection within his place in the civil order, namely his social class.[30] Personal rights for security and property are part of this freedom, but political participation is merely an external feature of the republican form of government.[31] Happiness is not, as in Ferguson, action-dependent, but law-dependent. Subjects (*Untertanen*) can be happy only in a State ruled according to "the eternal laws of justice and order"; this itself is an "unbreakable law of nature."[32]

Interestingly enough, Iselin used the concepts of revolution and violence positively, albeit metaphorically, with regard to economic or spiritual upheavals. He spoke of the "absolute necessity" of revolution, of

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25. *Versuch*, pp. 92-93.
26. Quoted in H.P. Reill, *The German Enlightenment and the Rise of Historicism* (Berkeley, 1975), p. 66.
27. Im Hof, *Spätaufklärung*, p. 312.
28. He removed most of them, however, from the fourth edition (1779); *ibid.*, p. 313.
29. *Ibid.*, pp. 123-127.
30. *Versuch*, pp. 70-71. I take issue with Keith Tribe's assertion that Iselin saw Quesnay's economic circulation process "as the means for the dissolution of the bonds of *Stand* and societies"; Tribe, *Governing Economy*, p. 155.
31. Im Hof, *Spätaufklärung*, pp. 128-130
32. *Versuch*, p. 110. This statement is part of a discussion on the duties of princes.

"happy fermentation [*glückliche Gärung*]", "necessary fever [*notwendiges Fieber*]" and "purifying storms [*reinigende Stürme*]".[33] This terminology is surprisingly Herderian, but it is not Fergusonian. Unlike Ferguson, Iselin strictly opposed political upheaval. Moreover, he denied any justification to a substantial change of government in his times. "The more the beneficent principles of true wisdom spread in a nation", he wrote in 1776, "the weaker tyranny will become, the heavier it will find its tools of injustice, the faster it will give ground to freedom, without it even being necessary to change the constitution."[34] The wild faction-politics which underpinned "British freedom" puzzled and upset him: in the *Geschichte der Menschheit* he saw this freedom as the work of generations of fanaticism.[35] Nor was military virtue close to Iselin's heart: national defence was a passing necessity, and war was the utmost Barbarian residue in modern society. Its days, he believed, were numbered.[36] In a similar vein Iselin spoke of modern morality as blissfully feminine, gentle, aesthetic, teaching mankind to dispose of masculine barbaric notions.[37] Despite his tempestuous metaphors, then, no part of Ferguson's doctrine of conflict could appeal to this believer in peace.

Most significant of all, for the present discussion, is Iselin's application of the language of civic virtue and the imperative of political activism to a framework of non-participationist monarchism. This was the gist of his and Moser's *patriotisch* vocabulary. His definition of "political virtue" was "that which makes the State flourishing and strong... the courage, passion for honour and diligence of the citizens and especially the wisdom and the vigilance of the rulers, who regulate the citizens' virtues as well as their vices and weaknesses in a happy harmony for the general welfare."[38] He was angry at Montesquieu for making honour rather than virtue the principle of monarchy, and hailed contemporary "free" European monarchies which seemed to be undergoing enlightened

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33. GdM, I, p. 104, and II, p. 399. See also Im Hof, *Spätaufklärung*, p. 131.
34. *Träume eines Menschenfreundes* (Basle, 1776), pt. 2, p. 342; quoted in Schwarber, "Einflüsse", p. 277.
35. Im Hof, *Spätaufklärung*, p. 129. GdM, II, 328-336, partly relying on Hume.
36. GdM, II, 402-404, 409.
37. Reill, *Rise of Historicism*, p. 68. Cf. chapter 2, pp. 67-68.
38. Isaak Iselin, *Vermischte Schriften* (Zurich, 1770), I, 237-238; quoted by Im Hof, *Spätaufklärung*, p. 133.

reform: Struensee's Denmark, Sweden of Gustav III, Poniatowski's Poland, and even Catherine's Russia.[39] The State being the great giver of order for civil society, and laws the chief vehicle of order, monarchy was the natural abode of virtue.

The legacy of classical republicanism and the new ideas of the physiocrats were subjected to this basic structure, serving as indicators of its good working order: virtuous citizens and a "fermenting" free market became just two more marks of a well-governed State. True freedom remained for Iselin nothing more than "the rule of laws and of the great fundamental drive for general welfare."[40] "Could it not be possible," his *Geschichte der Menschheit* concludes, "that the freedom of the republicans is not yet the true freedom, which might bless a civil society in its most beautiful times? Could it not be possible, that it might be contrary to the eternal laws of justice rather than in accordance with them?"[41] This conclusion was bound to put him on a collision course with Ferguson. But Iselin avoided the collision.

III

Iselin's *Geschichte* preceded Ferguson's *Essay* by four years, and it is unlikely that Ferguson saw it before writing his book; the two works did not affect one another directly, but they nevertheless compare in interesting ways. They are similar in size and general layout. Both open with a psychological introduction, and proceed with a universal stage-theory. Both works describe the development of "civil society" from its "rude" to its "polite" stages, and make no distinction between "known" and "exotic" nations.[42] So do they belong to the same genre of history-writing?

Christoph Meiners, a contemporary and a historian, asked a similar question. Meiners distinguished between the new genre of *Geschichte der*

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39. Im Hof, *ibid.*, pp. 134-135. See GdM, II, 339.
40. GdM, II, 305.
41. *Ibid.*, II, 342.
42. Cf. Im Hof, *Spätaufklärung*, pp. 94-95. Iselin and Ferguson were mentioned together by Rocholl and by Meinecke, among others; but to my knowledge there is yet no thorough comparative analysis of the two works.

Menschheit and the older *Universalhistorie*. He did not define the latter, but implied that it lacked the "principles", such as culture or customs, which must be grasped if events are to be understood.[43] In fact, Meiners was echoing the objections made by Gatterer and Schlözer, his colleagues in Göttingen, against contemporary works following the worn-out Renaissance conventions of "universal history".[44] The new genre, under the fresher (and more German) title of *Geschichte der Menschheit,* is in Meiners' words first and foremost "a philosophy based on history".

Meiners' "philosophical history" merits a more careful comparison with Dugald Stewart's "conjectural history" than the present study can accommodate. Stewart expected the conjectural historian to reconstruct unavailable evidence for a historical process by conjecturing "how it may have been produced by natural causes".[45] Meiners' definition of the new historical genre shares many of the features implied by Stewart's concept: it should contain not only "the basic concepts required to approach any history" (as in Montesquieu, de Pauw, Goguet), but also answers to specific key questions, such as the beginning of civil society and the distinctions of ranks (as in Ferguson and Millar). It should be richly detailed, but details are not enough if not treated "with a philosophical spirit", and "groundless hypotheses" are of no avail if sources are unnamed and details distorted (as Meiners found in Kames).[46] As for Iselin, Meiners found in the *Geschichte der Menschheit* several lapses into the disqualified *Universalhistorie*: some crucial constituents of the new genre, such as "culture, the customs of the savages, and the first civil constitutions" were missing.

Despite these reservations, Iselin's *Geschichte der Menschheit* can be placed next to Goguet's *Origine des lois* (1759) among the pioneers of "ethnologic" history, heralding Kraft, Brosses, and Boulanger.[47] Its context can, of course, be extended to include Voltaire and Turgot, Robertson and

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43. Meiners, *Grundriß*, Vorrede. The synonyms *Historie* and *Geschichte* became increasingly uneasy during the late eighteenth century: see Reinhart Koselleck's part of the article "Geschichte, Historie" in *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe* II, 653-658 and 686-688.
44. See chapter 7, pp. 210-211.
45. Dugald Stewart, "Account of the Life and Writings of Adam Smith" (1793), *Collected Works*, ed. William Hamilton, vol. X (Edinburgh, 1858), 34.
46. Meiners, *Grundriß*, *ibid.*
47. This is the immediate neighbourhood suggested by Im Hof, *Isaak Iselin*, II, p. 88.

Smith; but our question is not whether Iselin's German contemporaries were justified in crediting him for innovation, but to what extent Iselin and Ferguson really shared a common moral and historical agenda.

Iselin's book is the story of "the progress of mankind from external simplicity to an increasingly higher degree of light and wellbeing."[48] His presentation of historical stages as the ages of an individual life is far more than a rhetoric device: it reveals his deep conviction that mankind progresses epistemically and morally in a unilinear ascent. Some elements in this stage-theory are close to its Scottish version: the social contract is rejected as a chimerical concept, and attention is given to transitions between the early stages of hunting and farming. However, Iselin's primary standard of transition is epistemological and moral: man grows in conceptual knowledge and in goodness. It is therefore not surprising to find the early parts of the work dotted with the *Seele-Bestreben-Vollkommenheit* vocabulary.[49]

The narrative begins with a state of nature, which is an un-Rousseauian state of innocence correlating to early childhood. It evolves into a savage state corresponding to adolescence, after which civil society emerges, via the family and the clan, to the full bloom of political government. Iselin continues with three sub-stages of "known history" - the Oriental empires, Greece and Rome, and the present European nations. Childhood, adolescence and adulthood are governed by three major *Seelenkräfte* - the senses, imagination and reason respectively. Virtues and "concepts" are at first vague and muddled, and gradually clear up and gain strength. Iselin follows this process of learning and betterment with a loving parent's eye, rather than an economic historian's. Rousseau's "animal state" is rejected not because it is an unfounded hypothesis, but on moral grounds, because in the true state of nature men must have had all the "seeds" of humanity and reason, as well as the potential and drive towards progress. Nevertheless, caught in the charm of his own individual age metaphor, Iselin often forgets this rejection and places a

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48. GdM, 4th ed. (1779), I, p. xxiii, quoted in Reill, *Rise of Historicism*, p. 52.

49. Thus, for instance, Locke's psychology of "uneasiness" is rephrased as the "unruhiges Bestreben des Geistes nach einer immer höhern Vollkommenheit"; GdM, I, 40; also 25, 38-39, 105, 306, and *passim*.

hypothetical "animal state" - an *Unding* or a rarity, as he admits - in parallel with early infancy.[50]

Each period has "residues" from its predecessors, a device which helps to explain occasional retrogressions (*Rückfälle*) in history; the grandeur of Greece and Rome was temporary and relative, because they lacked the backbone of true reason and enlightenment. It therefore lapsed into the savage Middle Ages, "an unbroken story of broken trust" which Iselin illustrates using Hume's history of England.[51] But modern Europe is irreversibly advanced. Its wealth is not corrupting, because it is genuinely, though imperfectly, civilised. Even were present-day Europe conquered by barbarians, Iselin conjectures, it would simply civilize them within a few years.[52] When describing this ascent to irretrievable progress the book begins to employ the *Vaterland-Patriotismus* vocabulary.[53]

How does this model compare with Ferguson's? One basic similarity is that moral philosophy set the agenda. The greatest question for both authors was not what happened to mankind, but what is happiness and how can it be achieved and secured. Iselin and Ferguson shared the belief that there is a set of morally significant truths that are, or can be, known about human nature. Since the elements of human nature work alongside physical conditions to shape the history of mankind, knowledge of them and knowledge of history are mutually dependent.

The laws of nature in history, for both Iselin and Ferguson, are the laws which decide how human nature and non-human nature combine to regulate human affairs. These laws are historical in the sense that a human spectator would not be able to grasp them before observing the historical stage in which they begin to operate. But they are universal and eternal in the sense that human nature is structured to obey them. "History", Ferguson told his philosophy students, is "a collection of facts in description or narration".[54] Facts are generalized by the scientist to

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50. *Ibid.*, I, 135-140, 156.
51. *Ibid.*, I, 248.
52. *Ibid.*, II, 395-396.
53. *Ibid.*, II, 9, 61-62, and *passim*.
54. Ferguson, *Institutes*, p. 2.

reveal the laws of nature.[55] So "the history of man's nature", both in its "narrative" sense, narrating "the succession of events",[56] and in its "descriptive" sense, is necessary "before we can ascertain the rules of morality for mankind".[57]

But this deductive zeal alone does not explain the new appetite for a history of mankind, which Ferguson and Iselin shared. Not only does the narrative itself matter, so that history can no longer function as a mere display-kit of random examples in the service of philosophy. More radically, the whole story matters, from the beginning to the present and into the future. This bid for comprehensiveness distinguishes these "historians of mankind" from their immediate predecessors and ties them to their historicist successors. It betrays a sense of narrative logic which is essentially un-Newtonian, notwithstanding Ferguson's frequent Newtonian pledges: why should induction from facts to laws require that, ideally, all facts be known before laws are derived from them? The standard equation between natural laws in physics and in history, often repeated in Ferguson's philosophical textbooks, fails to account for the new responsibilities assumed by his and Iselin's writing of history.

This empirical approach to moral theory was very much a Scottish product, and Iselin indeed learned it from an earlier Scottish thinker. In 1751 he met David Fordyce, the Aberdonian professor of moral philosophy, in Basle. Fordyce died shortly afterwards, upon which Iselin appointed himself as his intellectual heir.[58] But Iselin's subsequent development as a historian shows that he deviated considerably from the Scottish commitment to the factual basis of the laws governing human behaviour. Iselin was more willing to impose a preconceived rational structure on the course of history. It was no accidental choice of adjectives when Ferguson called his field of research "natural history",[59] while the original title of Iselin's book was *Philosophical conjectures on the history of mankind.*

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55. *Ibid.*, p. 3; *Principles*, I, 114-16.
56. *Ibid.*, I, 114.
57. *Institutes*, pp. 9-10.
58. Im Hof, *Isaak Iselin*, II, 459. Im Hof suggests the use of Fordyce for comparing Iselin and Ferguson in *Spätaufklärung*, p. 296.
59. *Essay*, p. 2.

In his *Elements of Moral Philosophy*, posthumously published in 1754, David Fordyce articulated two threads of thought which Iselin and Ferguson were to pull in two different directions: an individualist-epistemological model of evolution on the one hand, and a rejection of historical models not strictly founded on facts, on the other hand. The widening gap between this split legacy accounts for some of the tension between Iselin and Ferguson.

Moral Philosophy, Fordyce wrote, whose object is "Man's Duty" and whose goal is "the Attainment of Happiness",[60] proceeds (i.e. ought to proceed) by a method similar to natural philosophy: "it appeals to Nature or Fact." It observes "Quid faciat & ferat Natura". It collects phenomena and traces them "to some General Principles, or Laws of Operation",[61] which are in turn applied to explain other phenomena. After this assertion of empiricist commitment comes the more radical, Scottish, application of it to the science of man: "Therefore Moral Philosophy enquires, not how Man might have been, but how he is constituted; not into what Principles, or Dispositions his Actions may be artfully resolved, but from what Principles and Dispositions they actually flow".[62] This Newtonian insistence on facts did not prevent Fordyce from constructing a psychological stage-theory of the history of mankind, based on the individual's life-span from infancy to death.[63]

In his lectures, which he discussed with Iselin, Fordyce had a more ambitious plan. He spoke of writing a history of morals and manners, a project which Iselin identified with the *Sittengeschichte* which he himself had already conceived. This was the early impetus for his *Geschichte der Menschheit*; but the book's Scottish inspiration did not confer on it the sociological insights of the later Scottish generation of conjectural historians. Perhaps following Fordyce, yet certainly in contrast with Ferguson and Smith, Iselin accepted the psychological development of the individual as a major concept and a central metaphor in his stage-theory of the history of mankind. It made him expect much more from the

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60. David Fordyce, *Elements of Moral Philosophy* (London, 1754), p. 6.
61. *Ibid.*, pp. 7-8.
62. *Ibid.*, p. 8.
63. *Ibid.*, part I, section 1.

historical narrative than Ferguson could expect: Iselin, in fact, was certain about the future of civil society.

Because of this conviction, Ferguson's *Essay* and Iselin's *Geschichte* were essentially very different works. The differences can best be examined by looking at the *Essay* through Iselin's eyes.

IV

"Herr Ferguson divides his important and excellent work into six parts", is the opening sentence of the review. Iselin did not rest content with describing the outline of the book (many contemporary reviews contained little more than that), but respectfully inserted his own thoughtful comments. Modestly omitting any mention of his own book, he stressed many common ideas and some disagreements. He was displeased with Jünger's translation - this opinion became an important factor in the reception of the book - but he was equally anxious for the German public to become acquainted with Ferguson.

The first important point, which Iselin encountered in the very first pages of the book, is Ferguson's denial of a "unique State of Nature". Iselin paraphrases it thus: "that every state is natural for Man, who is destined to incessant progress towards perfection. [...*daß dem zu einem unaufhörlichen Fortgange in der Vollkommenheit bestimmten Menschen, jeder Stand natürlich sey, in dem er sich befinde*]".[64] This is the first of a series of paraphrases which link Ferguson's historical account with a linear progress scheme strongly tied to determinist perfectibilism. The phrase "incessant progress towards perfection" is well within the *unendlich-Bestreben-Vollkommenheit* vocabulary which we have identified in the previous chapter. Iselin's shift of meaning was, indeed, the first step in a cumulative distortion of Ferguson's historical and political thinking.

Iselin, however, was not aware of a disagreement between Ferguson and himself on the issues of progress and perfectibility. His only contention on this point is that some preliminary state, in which the

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64. ADB, (1770), p. 154.

rudiments of human nature are clearly observable, is still a useful historiographic category:

> But although we refuse to admit any State of Nature, since the sublimity of a Plato is just as founded on the laws of human nature as the stupidity of an Indian who cannot count more than three; we could still imagine a "state of simplicity" [*Stand der Einfalt*], in which the first beginnings of mankind could be observed.[65]

The significance of this contention is that Iselin's reliance on "the laws of human nature" was much stronger than Ferguson's. An allegedly historical "state of simplicity" was taken to be a legitimate thought-exercise for the student of human nature, a state in which the naked truths of human nature - equated with its "earliest" elements - operated in their initial isolation.[66]

The most disturbing aspect of Ferguson's book, to Iselin, was his approval of struggles between nations and conflict between individuals. No other eighteenth-century German-speaking commentator treated Ferguson's theory of conflict so explicitly. As a theorist of human nature Iselin was obliged to agree with Ferguson that elements of discord indeed "lie hidden in the human heart". The *Essay*, furthermore, correctly shows how such "seeds of bitterness" can "kindle national hatred [in] small and large nations" (Iselin freely mixed his metaphors).[67] Hatred, as well as love, was indeed part of any decent *description* of human affairs. The problem begins - as Iselin acknowledged, while other German readers of Ferguson simply ignored - with the *prescriptive* role of conflict in Ferguson's sociology and politics.

Ferguson "seems to consider [national] hatred, even for our times, as a particular source of happiness and virtue, as a precious bond which is necessary for every single nation, and whose destruction would obstruct the most active scenes of national history and virtues."[68] It is clear that

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65. *Ibid.*
66. "Simplicity" has a twofold meaning for Iselin: historically, it is mankind's primitive state; methodologically, it is the most accurate and economical manifestation of the fundamentals of human nature. In the second sense, Iselin used the term "simplicity" in a way comparable to some 20th century philosophers of science, who apply it as a criterion for scientific explanation.
67. ADB, *ibid.*, p. 155.
68. *Ibid.*

Iselin read Ferguson correctly, and it is equally clear that he found the idea of virtue-promoting conflict very unacceptable. As he later observes, the application of this principle to the domestic political sphere is just as bad: "...it seems peculiar to us, that the author thinks a State will be reduced to slavery when quarrels [*Streitigkeiten*] no longer prevail between decent men, who govern it. This is correct if there are many evil ones among these governors. But we would not fear this in a union of virtuous men."[69]

Evidently, what piqued Iselin most of all was not the mere association of hatred with virtue or happiness, but the fact that anyone could seriously consider this association relevant for the eighteenth century. The self-congratulatory attitude behind his bemused "even for our times" is precisely what Herder later attacked in his *Auch eine Philosophie der Geschichte zur Bildung der Menschheit* (1774). It is useful to note, however, that even Herder did not go as far as Ferguson: Herder did not explicitly prescribe violence between nations as a remedy for the eighteenth-century disease. It was Ferguson, as Iselin shrewdly observed (but cordially dismissed with just a light reproach), who advocated international enmity as a timeless principle of moral alertness. It was Ferguson who thought that military conflict was good for any society, in any era, if it wants to remain alive, virtuous, and in working order. Iselin recognized the danger in this idea, but considered it marginal and removable from the *Essay*'s wholesome corpus of ideas. Or perhaps he *decided* to marginalize it in order to ensure the wholesomeness of Ferguson's opus.

One of the chief appeals in the *Essay*, for Iselin and later readers, was Ferguson's theory of happiness. "The happiness of the whole society arises from that of its members, and in turn generates it. - Both are made possible by virtue. - All this is excellent".[70] Indeed, this Stoic equation became the representative showpiece, the stuff "*der Ferguson* " was made

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69. *Ibid.*, p. 157. Iselin alludes here to Montesquieu's typology (also used by Ferguson in his *Institutes of Moral philosophy*, and given a famous twist by Kant's "nation of devils"), in which types of government correspond to varying degrees of vice or virtue in nations. But as Ferguson clearly stated in the *Institutes*, he considered political discord to be not only acceptable in "mostly virtuous" polities, but indeed a *constituent* of their virtuousness. For Iselin this would be a contradiction in terms.

70. *Ibid.*, pp. 156-157.

of, for such diverse thinkers as Iselin, Jacobi and Schiller. There is no ground for disagreement here: Iselin gladly accepts the supremacy and command of virtue over happiness. For our discussion, however, one part of Iselin's paraphrasing of Ferguson's theory is of specific interest, because it provides an excellent instance of a vocabulary shift in the direction of spiritual perfectionism. Iselin writes on Ferguson's ideal of an active social life, and (justly) stresses the moral optimism of this doctrine:

> [Ferguson] also finds, contrary to Messrs. Maupertuis and Voltaire, that the good outweighs the bad on this earth, and he demonstrates very well that in most cases the striving [*das Bestreben*] towards what one calls good fortune, the movement and the labour, form a greater part of human pleasure than the mere consumption [*Genuß*], which [certain] philosophers, who do not always think all that philosophically, reckon as the sole happiness.[71]

This passage is, on one level, a legitimate invocation of Ferguson's activist theory of virtue to combat French moral pessimism and cynical hedonism. It goes some way to show why Ferguson and other Scottish writers were hailed by the German Enlightenment as philosophical allies against the combined French evils of materialism, atheism and what Jacobi termed "nihilism". On another level, it is significant that Iselin, Ferguson's first interpreter in the German language and a sympathetic and fair-minded reader, was also the first to use the term *Bestreben* in his description of Ferguson's idea of activity, and in the same stroke to detach it from any explicit political context. Combined with the earlier mention of *der zu einem unaufhörlichen Fortgange in der Vollkommenheit bestimmten Menschen,* Iselin's presentation of Ferguson's activism becomes an a-political statement of ceaseless striving for perfection. The vocabulary, as we have seen, was already there in Jünger's translation of the *Essay*. Iselin's review simply continued to use it while removing it from the civic political context. Significantly, Iselin linked this "*unruhiges Bestreben* " to his much-praised virtue of diligence (*Emsigkeit*), which he singled out as a Protestant virtue: the backwardness of Valais was his example for its absence among Catholics.[72]

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71. *Ibid.*, p. 156.

72. Im Hof identifies Ferguson as one of the sources for this concept of restless striving for perfection, but overlooks the absence of Ferguson's political punchline from Iselin's Protestant ethics: *Spätaufklärung*, pp. 215 and 348.

The second part of the *Essay*, "Of the history of rude nations", is to Iselin most satisfactory, and it resembles the structure of his own *Geschichte.* It also enables him to prove a point he made earlier. "Although Herr Ferguson rejects the state of Nature as a philosophical chimera, he still seeks, in his second part, the first rudiments of mankind in the history of rude nations."[73] Iselin is implying that this amounts to tacit acceptance of "a state of Simplicity", a historic blueprint of all major human themes. Such a rude state is not to be yearned for (as Rousseau was mistakenly thought to suggest), but Iselin considered it methodologically invaluable for any student of human nature. Seeking the basic motifs in their isolated beginnings does not amount to a denunciation of the sophisticated fugues and counterpoints which emerged from them.

A fundamental disagreement nevertheless arises from Ferguson's theory of civilization. Iselin sees "a great misunderstanding" in Ferguson's view that civilization does not positively enhance virtue, but merely checks lower passions and violence. Here Iselin's sensitive nose again detects something alien to *Aufklärung* ideas:

> Undoubtedly the seeds of tender human feeling, of noble thinking and honourable character, lie in the preliminary structure of the human mind, but we doubt very much whether they can develop for the general utility without the animating light of cultivated reason, and without the beneficent warmth of good government [*Policey*]. - We willingly admit that savage nations such as those Herr Ferguson describes in that point of time can witness the effortless introduction of a Spartan constitution... But was the Spartan constitution in principle much better than a systematic barbarity?[74]

Ferguson thought it was. Here was a disagreement across the board, between the two historians *and* the two moralists: Iselin explicitly rejected the Spartan model of polity that was so dear to Ferguson's heart.[75] Iselin's progressive stage theory did not allow him to share Ferguson's enthusiasm for ancient Greece and Rome, the more so since Ferguson chose Sparta and the Roman Republic as their respective

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73. ADB, p. 157.
74. *Ibid.*, pp. 159-160.
75. Iselin's own analysis of Sparta is in GdM, II, 156ff: Sparta was a "despotism of laws", its march to perfection misdirected and doomed.

peaks.[76] His unease about Sparta did not, however, prevent Iselin from praising the acclaimed section of the *Essay* where Ferguson takes his readers on an imaginary voyage to that bleak and vigorous land. The landscape, which Duncan Forbes sees as highly suggestive of the Scottish highlands,[77] reminded Iselin of certain regions in Switzerland, the way an English traveller might have seen them. "But", he hastens to add, "it is beyond dispute that with all their imperfections, most or even all of the States of this Confederation are better administered, and many are more flourishing and happy, in terms of substantial well-being of the people, than the most brilliant States of Greece could be in those times."[78]

He goes on to rebuke, with gentle irony, Ferguson's all-too-positive image of "savages". Those men of yore, Iselin concedes, were indeed unfailingly proud, brave, rash, restless, factious, immoderate in love and hate, and possessed all "that liveliness of spirit which renders disorder itself admirable", at least to some people. "We believe like Herr Ferguson", Iselin continues, "that our forefathers had those characteristics, and that they had to go through that phase in order to lay the foundation of our present constitution. But we thank heaven that the times of this admirable disorder are by now long gone."[79]

There is more to this passage than just a friendly scolding of a fellow "Modern" led astray by the Rousseauian heresy. The key term linking together most of Iselin's various criticisms of Ferguson is "disorder". Order, as we have seen, was the central concept of Iselin's ethics and politics.[80] Iselin could not admit moral benefits resulting from aggression or chaos. His was a moral cosmos, in a truly classical sense, while Ferguson's morality of disorder was essentially modern. His rejection of the theory of conflict on all levels of human intercourse became a hallmark of the German Enlightenment's reception of Ferguson.[81] Iselin's

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76. Cf. Heyne's parallel problem with Ferguson's praise of the Roman Republic, chapter 7, pp. 212-213.
77. Forbes, "Introduction", p. xxx.
78. ADB, *ibid.*, p. 163.
79. *Ibid.*, p. 161.
80. The order-disorder dichotomy is explored in GdM, I, 20-21.
81. Ironically, the same theory later enabled the revival of a rather different Ferguson in the hands of the 20th century sociologists. I hope to discuss this in a future study.

notion of *Ordnung*, and his wholesale dismissal of all "disorder" in mind, society and politics, is a central feature of *Aufklärung* thought.

One of its linguistic ramifications is the synonymy of "party" and "faction": the adjective *parteyisch* was normally used in a derogatory sense. The gist of "English freedom" was understood, not least by its admirers, in Montesquieu's terms of institutional balance, and not in terms of rival parties or individuals. To be sure, the dislike of faction was a common British sentiment too. Ferguson himself recognized this fear of disorder, and warned against it, in a passage which anticipated Iselin's rebuke:

> We have reason to dread the political refinements of ordinary men, when we consider, that repose, or inaction itself, is in a great measure their object; and that they would frequently model their government, not merely to prevent injustice and error, but to prevent agitation and bustle;... Every dispute of a free people, in the opinion of such politicians, amounts to disorder, and a breach of the national peace.[82]

To Ferguson's mind, then, Iselin would clearly be a political quietist. Iselin's most clear rejection of "agitation and bustle" comes in his verdict on the the sixth and final part of the *Essay*, "Of corruption and political slavery". He has no quarrel with Ferguson's main idea in this part, that the decline of national virtue and communal commitment leads to corruption and slavery. "However, the way [Ferguson] expresses himself could mislead one to think that political divisions, factions, turmoils, are in his view the only convenient means to keep virtue going." Iselin hastens to defend Ferguson from such misreading:

> ... but we believe that he only wants to say that, human opinions being by nature varied, each person should shamelessly express his [opinion] and fearlessly defend it. And he is right [in saying] that when this is no longer the case, then the State had been corrupted and freedom had vanished.[83]

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82. "...What heart-burnings? What delay to affairs? What want of secrecy and dispatch? What defect of police?" *Essay*, p. 220. Ferguson's sarcasm here seems to be directed at the continental adherents of the "well-ordered police State" (as Marc Raeff put it), among them the German theorists of *Polizeiwissenschaft*.

83. ADB, p. 164.

Thus the difficulty is explained away by claiming that it is freedom of expression, not political discord, that Ferguson advocates. Verbal intercourse subtly replaces party politics. This attempt at rephrasing the political conflict theory by dismissing it as an unfortunate choice of words is a further proof that Iselin simply did not want it to be part of the German Ferguson. He therefore systematically toned down or explained away the more disquieting parts of Ferguson's critique: his analysis of the modern type of corruption from political indifference, and his idea that conflict, and even war, is an essential action in a functioning political society. Had Iselin chosen to take Ferguson's ideas as seriously as they were put forward, one may doubt whether the review could have been quite as friendly.

The shift from terms denoting action to terms denoting discourse is pushed further. Iselin, claiming to paraphrase Ferguson, writes that in a well-governed society each member "in his appropriate place" shall "express his efficacy (*Wirksamkeit*) as fully as possible". The verb *äussern* (express, utter, manifest) implies self-expression in the sense of articulation rather than political or social action; it was later to acquire a very personal meaning in pre-romanticist discourse.[84]

Ferguson's philosophy of history poses a problem which is equivalent to that of his conflict theory. "By the way", Iselin curtly reports, "a nation can enjoy a high level of well-being, and thence decline and be subjected to ruin".[85] This short statement conceals a serious disagreement. One of Ferguson's (and Montesquieu's) ideas that Iselin found hard to swallow was the historical relapse, the *Rückfall*. The idea that the history of mankind was not an uninterrupted progress troubled Iselin, as it later troubled Schiller. Had Iselin known Vico, he would have perhaps been even more troubled. As it were, Iselin by-passed the problem in his own work and tried to explain it away in Ferguson. By toning down Ferguson's admiration for Sparta and republican Rome, and by diminishing the extent of their greatness, Iselin attempted to shorten the length of their fall.

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84. Cf. Jünger's translation of *active exertions* into *thätige Aeußerungen*, discussed in chapter 3, p. 101.
85. ADB, p. 164.

Ferguson's concluding statement, defying individual fatalism and calling for virtuous social action, should be "engraved with letters of fire in the hearts of all princes, all ministers, all high-placed men (*Vorsteher*) of free States, and all citizens." Iselin ends his review with an enthusiastic applause, brushing aside (but at the same time summing up) all his own reservations:

> Although we do not agree with Herr Ferguson on all issues; although we deem ourselves convinced that none of the nations known to us have reached such a high level of virtue as he seems to assume in the fifth part, and that if a [nation] would have reached this happy height it could not have fallen as low as Rome and Greece did; although we wish he had spoken more cautiously on the spirit of faction and unrest; we nevertheless consider his work to be among the most valuable written in our times. We even consider it a duty to recommend it particularly to all those who teach young statesmen history and *Staatswissenschaft* .[86]

But since the translation at times looks dubious, and Herr Ferguson's style itself is unfortunately "not the very best and clearest", it is advisable, Iselin thinks, to read the worthy book twice.[87]

V

A careful look at the *Essay* and the *Geschichte der Menschheit*, side by side, will reveal that almost all common premises in the two histories are tainted by some significant disagreement. "The great subject of history is man",[88] but for Iselin man's attributes are scaled, and crowned by reason, while for Ferguson basic drives such as sociability or competition are neither inferior nor subject to reason. Society is natural to man, but Iselin can envisage a non-social state, while for Ferguson this would be no more than a methodological fallacy. Man is sociable by nature, but Iselin identifies all sociability with benevolence, while Ferguson distinguishes between society as "the Physical state of the species",[89] and society as the

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86. *Ibid.*, p. 167.
87. *Ibid.*, p. 168.
88. GdM, I, 3.
89. *Principles*, I, 24.

locus of moral distinction.[90] History can be analysed in stages, but Ferguson applies Montesquieu's notions of corruption and decline even to modern nations, while Iselin, a believer in linear progress, does not. The process of civilization affects morality, but Iselin thinks it can only enhance it, while Ferguson thinks it can often destroy it.[91] Human nature is perfectible, but in Iselin's view historical progress comes necessarily from the *Bestimmung* of the human *Geist* to strive for perfection,[92] while Ferguson sees the realization of this perfectibility in history chiefly as an outcome of the conscious choice to act. Iselin equates perfection with refinement, Ferguson equates some kinds of refinement with moral regression.

They both insist that man is free, but Iselin latches freedom to reason and makes it a product of evolution, while Ferguson does no such thing. They agree that happiness is the final goal and it is derived from virtue, but Iselin invariably links it to pleasure, peace and order, while Ferguson often relates it to competition, conflict, and even war. We should now be able to see why Rousseau's "animal state" is objectionable to Iselin primarily for assaulting human dignity, and to Ferguson primarily for being an unfounded hypothesis. It may also be clear why contemporary Europe is for Iselin enlightened beyond the risk of regression, but for Ferguson it is in a very real danger of corruption and despotism.

Iselin, as we saw, was aware of many of these disagreements and fair about their exposition. Yet his sympathetic review, geared to introduce Ferguson to the educated German reading public, can be charged with two misunderstandings. First, Iselin did not come to terms with Ferguson's doctrine of conflict as a genuine component of his thought. He refused to believe that Ferguson really meant to derive virtue from vice, and social well-being from social discord; at least, he refused to allow Ferguson to be read in this way.

Secondly, he neglected Ferguson's analysis of national corruption and decline. In his *Versuch über die gesellige Ordnung*, written shortly after

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90. *Ibid.*, I, 270.
91. Iselin did not acknowledge "savage virtues", such as faithfulness and truthfulness; for examples of medieval slyness he referred to Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments*; GdM, I, 246, 249.
92. GdM, I, 38-40.

the Ferguson review, Iselin discussed luxury in terms resembling the *Essay*, stressing its historical relativity and distinguishing between virtue-supported wealth and corrupt luxury.[93] But he insisted that advanced nations - unlike the prematurely rich ones - enjoyed incorruptible virtue and stable wealth.[94] Iselin entirely missed Ferguson's modern economic analysis of moral corruption. For Ferguson, wealthy nations did not "incidentally" decline, as Iselin put it, but faced a danger inherent in the very structure of their prosperity. In particular, Ferguson diagnosed in the modern forms of national wealth the causes for dangerous shifts in the social structure and in the corresponding social virtue. This imminent doom, Ferguson concluded, must be consciously faced by bold and virtuous individuals.

All this, save the final imperative, escaped Iselin. He understood the civic version of social virtue well enough, and also the corresponding vice of social indifference; but he understood them under their classical - Stoic or Machiavellian - headings, and not in their novel context of modern political and economic realities. For Ferguson, a *Rückfall* in a modern nation was not only conceivable, but also very probable, unless individual citizens acted to prevent it. His view of the history of nations as non-determinist and cyclical was so opposed to Iselin's determinist and linear model, that Iselin either misunderstood or ignored it.

VI

The disagreement we have outlined is seen most clearly in Iselin's and Ferguson's usages of Natural Law. While both looked beyond the language of natural jurisprudence in their quest for the historical answer to the moral question, Iselin eventually stayed within the framework of Natural Law, while Ferguson kept at least one foot outside it.

Ferguson seems to draw a line, for which he never clearly accounts, between the way Natural Law relates to scientific enquiry, and the way it relates to the actual course of history. His philosophy books contain many references to natural laws, whereas the *Essay on the history of civil*

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93. *Versuch*, pp. 96-98. Cf. *Essay*, pp. 244-248.
94. *Versuch*, p. 99.

society contains very few. His "scientific" usage of this language works as follows. Natural laws, he writes, can be either physical or moral; physical laws are derived from facts; moral laws are "any general expression of what is good" and "exist in being obligatory".[95] We must discover the physical laws of human nature in history, "before we can ascertain the rules of morality for mankind".[96] But when writing his history, Ferguson makes very little reference to natural laws, or to the doctrine of Natural Law. He carefully puts man-made laws in their relative historical context. Natural laws, when they do appear, relate mainly to the parts of history not controlled by men's will, the realms of unintended consequences. But these realms are not the centre of Ferguson's narrative: it is a mistake, and quite a common one, to see Ferguson as a "theorist of unintended consequences" without serious qualification. Where history becomes a morally relevant field, Ferguson is primarily a theorist of human will and deliberate action. Wilful deeds, in his account, often carry both moral and historical significance. Nowhere is this voluntarism clearer than in the final pages of the *Essay*; but it is also upheld in his other works.

By contrast, Iselin employed natural laws within the historical narrative quite often and with no hesitation. His view of history allowed, as the early title of his book suggested, "Philosophical conjectures (*Muthmaßungen*)" which were frequently "hypotheses" of the kind Ferguson would shun. For example, Iselin took his state of nature to be historical, notwithstanding the meagre evidence for it, because it was reasonable to think that the "basic rudiments" of human nature were also the earliest, in full parallel with Grotius' assertion that early childhood virtues make up the basic contents of human nature. This view accounts for his accusation that Ferguson failed to isolate the fundamental drives in their early, clear-cut "state of simplicity". Iselin's historical state of nature was not a mere counter-device against Rousseau; that was the role of his second, ugly, savage state; it was rather the hypothetical starting-point for the evolutionary laws of nature. Accordingly, when these laws continue to appear in the later stages of his history,[97] they not only allow him to fill in factual gaps, but also obey the inner logic he prescribed for

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95. *Institutes*, pp. 4ff.
96. *Ibid.*, p. 9.
97. GdM, I, 35, 149, 155, 177-78, 199, 308, etc.

them. Some of his historical stages, he freely admits, should be taken "more like philosophical hypotheses than historical truths".[98]

It is here that Iselin is at odds with Stewart's "conjectural history": Iselin's hypotheses are more than "conjectures" in Stewart's sense, because they are not even presented as merely explanatory, as complementing missing facts. He explicitly intends them serve a moral, supra-historical goal, and to carry prescriptive weight.[99] The natural laws of society gradually unfold or "develop" in history,[100] regulating their own unfolding. The historical narrative is that of human affairs guided by laws, but also that of the laws themselves as they developed in time. This teleological basis for history enabled Iselin to assert that Progress is a natural law and men are bound and destined by it,[101] or to suggest, as we have seen, that republican government is not grounded in eternal laws. In effect, Iselin's subjection of "the whole story" to discernible unfolding laws leads straight to Schelling's statement that "History as a whole is a progressing, gradually self-unveiling revelation of the absolute"[102]; not a dimension where Ferguson's strong-minded militiamen or lazy home-dwellers would matter much.

But what of Natural Law as the source of justice? In his early years Iselin thought that a Natural-Law based moral theory lacks the essential ingredient of ethical humanism, which must somehow be treated under another name. Early in his career, in his *juridische Lizentiat* disputation of 1751, Iselin went as far as distinguishing between "jus naturale" and what he termed "jurisprudentia transcendentalis", the latter covering the grounds of human history and embodying its "*höhere Gesetzlichkeit* ".[103] But by the mid-1750s his idea of Natural Law had changed. His Göttingen education - Schmauß, Mosheim, his friend Achenwall - which introduced him to historical thinking, also eventually incited Iselin to react against the doctrine of *Staatsräson* and to seek the ethical foundation of the State

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98. *Ibid.*, I, 201.
99. Koselleck sees Iselin's "Mut zur Hypothese" as making possible the move to a new philosophical history ("Geschichte, Historie", p. 670). I suggest it was a move away from the Scots' empiricist commitment.
100. *Ibid.*, I, 328, 344.
101. *Ibid.*, I, 308.
102. Schelling, *System des transzendentalen Idealismus* (1800), quoted by Koselleck, "Geschichte, Historie", p. 671.
103. Im Hof, *Isaak Iselin,* II, 492-493.

within Natural Law and not without it.[104] His reaction against Montesquieu's triple typology of governing principles led to suggesting one great normative principle for all governments - love. A major source and authority for this principle, Iselin claimed, was Grotius. Indeed, a "very careful reading" of the *Jus belli ac pacis* will reveal, he argued, what "I believe nobody has noticed so far, that Grotius puts forward the regard for the Good as a basis of Natural Law."[105] This interpretation of Grotius, (not as original as he thought, perhaps, but mediated by Heineccius and Wolff), became Iselin's preferred version of natural jurisprudence.[106] In the *Geschichte der Menschheit* this Natural Law ethics needed no further devices such as a "jurisprudentia transcendentalis". Only once does Iselin comment that "moral sentiment" somehow precedes "the laws derived from the Law of Nature".[107]

Ferguson too thought that there was more to morality than Natural Law. However, he was unable to resolve the basic tension the way Iselin did. The Law of Nature, he conceded, gives individuals and nations the rights to life, property, and the observance of contracts.[108] But moral approbation has other sources. Natural Law, as Ferguson understood it in his later philosophical work, rules "the natural or instinctive course of things" in the rise of the earliest, imperfect civil societies,[109] and throughout the course of history regulates the unthinking majority of mankind. But this natural datum is "no more than a rude material on which the ingenuity of man is to be exercised."[110] There is no moral relativism here: Ferguson certainly had an objective standard of morality - not love, but true community.[111] The basic mode of this community was not economic but political. Unlike Iselin's *Geselligkeit*, it did not grow on a

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104. *Ibid.*, p. 386.
105. Iselin's note to the book's Prolegomena, quoted in Im Hof, *ibid.*, p. 383. Hutcheson may have noticed it earlier: cf. *Illustrations upon the Moral Sense* (3rd ed., 1742), reprinted in L.A. Selby-Bigge (ed.), *British Moralists*, (Oxford, 1897, rep. 1964), I, 408.
106. Im Hof, *Isaak Iselin*, II, 352.
107. GdM, I, 72-73. His only other hint of dissatisfaction is his remark that even the "immortal" Grotius mistakenly attempted to find rights and justice in the state of war, although war is by definition a barbarous act, and therefore historically premature for justice (GdM, II, 403-404).
108. *Essay*, p. 192
109. *Principles*, I, 256, 259-261.
110. *Ibid*, I, 261.
111. See Duncan Forbes, *Adam Ferguson and the idea of community* (Paisley, 1979).

linear scale as human reason or knowledge progressed. Nor was it regulated by Nature above the heads of individual political agents. Natural law remained, for Ferguson, a safeguard of knowledge, a guide for the scientist of history and society, and a regulator of everything instinctive and unintended in the course of history. But in those junctions where "the ingenuity of man is to be exercised",[112] where men do not wish to "plead a fatality",[113] nature only supplies the "rude material" for autonomous human action. History still strictly obeys the physical laws of nature; but the interesting story is that of the *intended* consequences of men's actions.

The crucial psychological point which distinguished Ferguson from Iselin was that for Ferguson the basics of human nature, including "moral approbation", are not subject to a natural-law regulated linear advance in history.[114] This means that the narrative of history is not their story. It is not the story of how virtue and reason developed from their historicized Aristotelian kernels, obeying inner principles of growth. It is, rather, the story of what men did with their natural dispositions and their given circumstances. "Man is destined to observe and chuse",[115] was Ferguson's voluntarist motto couched in determinist language. This voluntarism, and especially its political dimension, could not be rephrased in the idiom of "endless striving to perfection", or in Iselin's type of *Patriotismus* .[116]

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112. *Principles*, I, 261.
113. *Essay*, p. 280.
114. *Principles* I, 300-301.
115. *Ibid.*, p. 232
116. After completing this chapter I was glad to find that some of its points about Iselin's brand of republicanism and patriotism are also argued by Daniel Brühlmeier in his recently published paper, "Isaak Iselin and the Call for Civic Virtue, a Model of Swiss Republicanism", in Timothy O'Hagan (ed.), *Revolution and Enlightenment in Europe* (Aberdeen, 1991), pp. 69-79.

Chapter 5
Garve and Ferguson: the discourse of spiritual freedom

Christian Garve is the writer most closely associated with the reception of Adam Ferguson's ideas in eighteenth-century Germany. His translation of Ferguson's *Institutes of Moral Philosophy* (1769), published in 1772 by the Leipzig house of Dyck as *Adam Fergusons Grundsätze der Moralphilosophie*, earned Garve fame and esteem; but even more influential were his comments to the book, the famous "Anmerkungen". Contemporaries often attached Garve's name to Ferguson's in subsequent discussions and quotations.[1] His translation, the *Allgemeine deutsche Bibliothek* wrote, had made the original English text "superfluous" for all but the "lovers of the English language".[2] Wieland hailed it as the best translation and commentary to any "englischer strengphilosophischer Autor" ever.[3] Caroline von Wolzogen reported that the young Friedrich Schiller "knew Garve's comments to Ferguson's moral philosophy almost by heart".[4] This sentence has led many Schiller scholars, and other students of the *Aufklärung*, to consider Garve the chief and authoritative *Ferguson-Vermittler* in eighteenth-century Germany.[5]

The present chapter will evaluate this mediating role through an analysis of Garve's translation of, and commentary to, Ferguson's *Institutes*. Our central question can be phrased thus: how did Christian Garve, a staunch supporter of Prussian absolutism and a sentimental admirer of Friedrich the Second, become *the* representative of Adam Ferguson in Germany? I will argue that despite being a careful translator and a sympathetic commentator, Garve substantially shifted the main

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1. See, for instance, ADB 17 (1772), 342, and GGA 1772, 2nd vol., 860. Lossius' university textbook of philosophy discusses the ideas of "Locke, Berkeley, Reid, Ferguson and Garve", whom he considered an "excellent philosopher" (quoted in Kuehn, *Common Sense*, pp. 87-88). Mendelssohn told Garve he had "a little quarrel" with "you and Ferguson"; see Ludwig Geiger (ed.), "Briefe von, an und über Mendelssohn", *Jahrbuch für jüdische Geschichte und Literatur* 20 (1917), 87.
2. ADB 86 (1789), 151.
3. *Erfurtische gelehrte Zeitung*, 27 April 1772, 267.
4. Caroline von Wolzogen, *Schillers Leben. Verfaßt aus Erinnerungen der Familie, seinen eigenen Briefen, und den nachrichten seines Freundes Körner* (Stuttgart and Tübingen, 1845), p. 13.
5. On Schiller see chapter 9. Laurence Dickey's analysis of the Ferguson-Garve-Hegel link will be discussed below. Garve's mediating role is mentioned by Tribe, *Governing Economy*, p. 155.

emphases of Ferguson's corpus of ideas in Germany. An analysis of his mediating performance should help to explain the fact that in his political views Garve was not, and never became, a civic humanist.

I

Garve was a central figure of the German Enlightenment, much better known to his contemporaries than to posterity. He was a prolific translator of major British works and an author of tracts in moral philosophy. He was also perhaps the best-known *Popularphilosoph*, a leader of a movement which dominated the German intellectual scene in the 1770s and 1780s. The main aims of *Popularphilosophie* were to promote education and morality by propagating a simplified and deliberately eclectic philosophy of reason and feeling. It was a none-too-rigid mixture of metaphysics from Leibniz and Wolff with the ideas of the British common-sense school, steering clear of mechanism, materialism, and atheism. The goal of this movement was primarily moral, and can be called political only in a very broad sense: to promote the enlightenment of the people through cautious education, to strengthen religious belief and virtuous behaviour in the public sphere, and to combat any perversion of reason which might result in immorality.[6]

Garve's philosophical reputation is, accordingly, rather vague: he is seen alternately as a Lockeian, a "belletristic eclectic", a "critical empiricist" and more beside.[7] Kant ranked him with Mendelssohn and Tetens among the profound thinkers who he hoped would accept his critical philosophy and help to expound it.[8] Garve disappointed him by joining the Göttingen philosophers to form a staunch opposition to critical philosophy,[9] though he remained fascinated and even tormented by the Kantian challenge until his death.

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6. On *Popularphilosophie* see Max Wundt, *Die deutsche Schulphilosophie im Zeitalter der Aufklärung* (Tübingen, 1945), and Frederick M. Beiser, *The Fate of Reason. German Philosophy from Kant to Fichte* (Cambridge, Mass. and London, 1987), pp. 165-169.

7. These titles are given by Beiser, Zart and Kuehn respectively.

8. Beiser, *Fate*, p. 175. Kuehn, *Common Sense*, p. 47.

9. For a discussion of Garve's controversial review of Kant's first Critique in the GGA see Beiser, *Fate*, pp. 172-177.

Born in Breslau in 1742, Garve lived there most of his life with his mother, who had a strong intellectual and spiritual influence on him. In 1762 he went to study in Frankfort an der Oder. After the death of Baumgarten he moved to Halle, where he gained his *Magister* degree, but disliked the Pietist atmosphere. Moving on to Leipzig in 1766, he became philosophy professor in 1768. Frail health forced him to give up his post in 1772, and retire to Breslau until his death in 1798.[10] It is something of an irony that this weak and confessedly hypochondriac recluse, who used both illness and hypochondria as metaphors for understanding human nature and the contemporary state of society,[11] was the thinker most associated with Adam Ferguson. Garve himself, always an admirer of intellectual rather than physical action, would not have seen the irony: in his own terms, he was an active man. He was, indeed, a prolific writer, translator and correspondent.

In Leipzig Garve became interested in British literature through his mentor, the distinguished professor Gellert, and through his friend, the editor Christian Felix Weiße.[12] The young Garve read *Romeo and Juliet*, *Tristram Shandy*, and Kames' *Elements of Criticism*. Under Gellert's guidance he assembled from these readings a moral theory of love, where love was grasped as the unifying principle of man's emotional and rational faculties. This idea was later to reappear in his political writings.

In the early 1770s Garve began to produce a series of translations which greatly contributed to German reception of British ideas. Ferguson's *Institutes of Moral Philosophy* was one of the first, and so was a revision of J.N. Meinhard's translation (1763-6) of Kames' *Elements of Criticism*, which contributed greatly to the *Sturm und Drang* fascination with Shakespeare. It seems that Garve often had a touch of Midas when it came to producing translations or breathing new life into unsuccessful ones. In 1773 he provided the *Sturm und Drang* with another seminal text, Burke's *Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the*

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10. The best source for Garve's life is Daniel Jacoby's essay in the *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie*, vol. 8 (1878), 385-392.
11. Monike Ammerman, *Gemeines Leben. Gewandelter Naturbegriff und literarische Spätaufklärung: Lichtenberg, Wezel, Garve* (Bonn 1978), pp. 55ff. Garve's views on illness are found especially in his letters to Zollikofer from the years 1772-1773.
12. On the question of Gellert's knowledge of Ferguson see chapter 2, p. 69.

Sublime and the Beautiful. His distinguished translating career was crowned, in 1794-1796, by his very successful new German version of Smith's *Wealth of Nations.*[13]

Garve's own works of literary criticism and social philosophy were heavily reliant on British sources. English literature figured prominently in his critical essays, while Locke and the Scottish thinkers predominated in his early epistemology and ethics. Garve warned against "slavish imitation" of imported ideas, language and style,[14] but he did not attempt to be original in any eighteenth-century sense. His life goal was to be a model *Selbstdenker.* What he meant by this, and what he took to be his responsibilities as a propagator of other men's ideas, merits a closer look. It is especially pertinent to the way in which he approached Ferguson.

Garve's idea of *Selbstdenken* was in essence much the same as Kant's "*Erziehung zur Mündigkeit*". He repeatedly stated that his highest aim was to encourage his readers to think for themselves. But there is an important difference between Kant's *sapere aude* and Garve's pedagogic mission. Garve typically preferred education by example, and the appeal to men's heart as well as their reason, to the rigid statement of truths which Kant deemed available to reason alone. Garve argued that Kant's critical philosophy was not geared to encourage independent thinking and criticism in his readers: it was too technical, abstract and obscure. Too much awe for the ideas of a great man, such as Kant himself, distorted the reader's genuine self-thinking. This was the didactic dimension of Garve's lifelong aversion to the "spirit of systems", where he classed Kant's critiques, as opposed to the empiricist "method of observation" in the tradition of Bacon, Montaigne, Montesquieu and Hume.[15]

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13. For a full list of Garve's translations, including Cicero and Aristotle, see Annalisa Viviani, "Christian Garve-Bibliographie", *Wölfenbüttler Studien zur Aufklärung* 1 (1974), 317-318. Cf. Van Dusen's incomplete account in, *Garve and English Belles-Lettres*, pp. 132-133.

14. Thus, for instance, his admiration for the "true and profound Smith" did not lead him to accept Smith's principle of sympathy wholeheartedly; see Gustav Zart, *Einfluss*, pp. 197-199. Cf. Van Dusen, *Garve*, pp. 122, 125ff.

15. See Kurt Wölfel, "Nachwort", in his edition of *Garve's Popularphilosophischen Schriften*, 2 vols. (Stuttgart,1974), pp. 43*-44*, 48* (this edition hereafter abbreviated as PS.)

Until the mid-1790s, when the Romanticist attack on Garve began, his generation of *Aufklärer* applauded his intellectual goals and feats. They saw him as a first-rate populariser of philosophical and moral ideas, a gifted commentator and a very intelligent reader. This appreciation was shared, as we have seen, by Kant himself. Garve disappointed Kant not only by attacking the *Critique of Pure Reason*, but also by remaining loyal to the epistemologic principles of empiricism and common sense. This insistence drew on Garve's prime commitment, as he saw it - to convey to his readers clear and lucid truths based on observation (*Beobachtung*), and thus give them an example of independent thinking and moral responsibility.[16]

Garve's commentaries, especially those he wrote on Ferguson and later on Cicero, were essentially demonstrations of "how the book should be read". In the opening remarks of his "Anmerkungen" to Ferguson he stated that his comments to the book could serve "instead of an essay [on] how I would like to read it with my young friends",[17] the students he no longer had. Years later, when Garve summed up his life in an address written one month before his death, he took pride in having fulfilled this didactic mission:

> When I review the history of my life... I think I have not been totally useless as a whetstone for others, even if I have achieved only little as a cutting instrument. In my writings alone I have not enriched the sciences with great and new discoveries: but I have brought some readers to reflection, and facilitated their self-thinking by my example and by numerous observations on human nature and its diversities.[18]

This program, which Garve repeatedly announced, should be taken seriously by any historian attempting to explain his role as a transmitter

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16. On the Romanticist devaluation of Garve see Michael Stolleis, *Staatsraison, Recht und Moral in philosophischen Texten des späten 18. Jahrhunderts* (Meisenheim am Glan, 1972), pp. 3-4. In a much ridiculed attack on Kantianism Garve asked, "will it contribute to the heightening and cultivation of national spirit? Or will it separate and estrange even further the philosopher from the man of business and the world, and the System from the mere bon sens?" Letter to Weiße, 12.12.1789, quoted in Wölfel, "Nachwort", p. 37*.

17. "Anmerkungen", in *Fergusons Grundsätze der Moralphilosophie* (Leipzig, 1772), p. 288. Subsequent citations from this edition, referring to both the text and the commentary, will appear in parentheses in the text.

18. Garve, "An den Herrn Rector Manso", preface to *Eigne Betrachtungen über die allgemeinsten Gründsätze der Sittenlehre* (Breslau, 1798), n.p.

of ideas. Garve made no secret of the fact that he was loyal to his readers, or to what he saw as his readers' best interest, more than to the authors he quoted or translated. Kames, Ferguson and Cicero were to him great men with great minds, but he by no means undertook to present them fully or to represent them faithfully. Had he considered his reading public to be already enlightened and self-thinking, capable of making their own responsible sense of the texts, Garve might have been a "transparent" translator or a "balanced" editor. But the immaturity of his public demanded, so Garve felt, conscientious transmission. It meant using the commentary to clarify the text, improve it, emphasise its deserving parts, point out its mistakes and correct its blunders. The ultimate purpose was to enlighten a public of readers, not to do justice to an author. This explicit manipulative intervention must be kept in mind whenever a Ferguson-Garve-Schiller or a Ferguson-Garve-Hegel chain is being reconstructed.

In the case of Ferguson, Garve made it very clear that the educational value of the work is of prime importance to him, and that Ferguson's moral personality rather than his philosophical competence had motivated the translation:

> I have not translated this book because I take it to be the first and most excellent textbook of morals; it is beyond me to pass such judgement... but I have translated it because I take it to be the work of a righteous and great man; and because I think it bears his marks. (287)

The *Institutes*, in Garve's view, was far from perfect: it had "obvious flaws", which Garve's commentary attempted to correct. For instance, it said nothing of the duties of "domestic societies" [*häusliche Gesellschaften*], a moral sphere which had great importance for a German *Aufklärer* but little meaning for a Scottish civic humanist. Nevertheless, Garve conceded, the book partly compensated for this flaw by its very subject matter, by being an ethical guidebook:

> What is the duty of parents, other than the duty of education? And what is a system of education, other than a system of philosophy and morals? (298)

Garve could have turned the question round. What is a system of philosophy and morals, if not a system of education? This conviction guided Garve in everything he took, or chose not to take, from Ferguson.

II

Two seemingly straightforward facts should open our discussion of Garve's treatment of Ferguson: first, Garve did not translate Ferguson's *Essay on the History of Civil Society*. Secondly, Garve's famed commentary refers only to about one half of the *Institutes of Moral Philosophy*.

The first point is neither as obvious nor as trivial as it may sound. Despite the positive identification of C.F. Jünger as the German translator of the *Essay*, many recent scholars, probably following one another's bibliographies, have mistaken Garve for the translator.[19] This identification is, of course, unfounded. The major nineteenth-century bibliographic listings have positively named Jünger as the translator of the *Essay* in 1768.[20] Garve's first recorded mention of Ferguson is in 1770, telling his mother that he had recommended an unnamed book by Ferguson to his audience in Leipzig.[21] All subsequent references to Ferguson were to "my Ferguson", his own translation of the *Institutes*.[22] We may add three minor points: 1768 is a very early date in Garve's career as a writer and translator; the translation of the *Essay* was considered bad; and Garve did not translate history books.[23] The further significance of this last point will be discussed later.

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19. An early version of this mistake appears in Hermann Huth, *Soziale und individualistische Auffassung im 18. Jahrhundert, vornehmlich bei Adam Smith und Adam Ferguson* (Leipzig, 1907), p. xv. It is repeated by Herta Helena Jogland, *Ursprunge und Grundlagen der Soziologie bei Adam Ferguson* (Berlin 1959), p. 168, and elsewhere.

20. See Price, *Humanioria*, p. 68.

21. Letter of 13.3.1770; Garve, *Briefe an seine Mutter* (1830), p. 40; quoted in Wölfel, "Nachwort", p. 59*, n51.

22. See, for example, Garve's letters to Zollikofer, *Christian Garves Sämtliche Werke* vol. XVIII (Breslau, 1804), 25, 193 (hereafter abbreviated as SW); and *Uebersicht der vornehmsten Principien der Sittenlehre von dem Zeitalter des Aristoteles an bis auf unsre Zeiten* (Breslau, 1798), p. 157.

23. One possible exception is John Gillies' *A View of the Reign of Frederick II of Prussia* (London, 1789), which Garve translated; but it should count more as an

The fact that Garve did not translate the *Essay* is important for our understanding of what happened to Ferguson's corpus of ideas in Germany. It is the *Essay*, the attempt at a fresh philosophical history, which Ferguson's contemporaries such as d'Holbach found innovative and intriguing; the *Institutes* were considered merely a useful university textbook.[24] But in Germany, thanks to Garve's translation and commentary, the situation was different: the *Institutes* became Ferguson's primary opus while the *Essay* sank into relative oblivion, despite Iselin's encomium and Jacobi's later complaint.

Things might have been different, had Garve translated the *Essay*. But it is quite possible that Garve would not have chosen to translate the *Essay* at all. Strikingly, he omitted all Ferguson's footnote references to the *Essay* from his translation of the *Institutes*,[25] although the earlier book had recently become available to the German reader. His "Anmerkungen" refer only once, briefly, to "the larger work of the author" (300), without naming it. Ferguson's explicit linking between the historical sections in the *Institutes* (the "history of the species" and the "history of the individual") and the broader discussion in the *Essay* was thus cut out of the German translation. This pruning paved the way for Garve's emphasis on the non-historical and non-political parts of the *Institutes*, those least resembling the *Essay*.

The *Institutes* were tailor-made for Garve in their subject matter and general outlook. It is, as its title says, a textbook on moral philosophy. It has a declared didactic purpose, reflected in its systematic structure and straightforward exposition. The text even discusses educating men and "forming their characters",[26] which translates smoothly into the familiar formulation "*die Bildung seines Charakters*" (149). The book conveniently proceeds from individual and social psychology ("the natural history of

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enconium for Friedrich than a history book. Garve abandoned a plan to translate Robertson's *History of America*.

24. Small, *Biographical Sketch*, pp. 11-16; also Kettler, *Social and Political Thought*, p. 61. It is interesting that D'Holbach attributed to the *Essay* the same intellectual and moral merits that Garve found in the *Institutes*: Small, *ibid.*, p. 13.

25. *Institutes*, pp. 20, 22, 23, etc. Garve also omitted references to Buffon, Montesquieu, Harris, Shaftesbury, and Smith, while retaining Caesar, Cicero, and Charlevoix on the ancient Germans.

26. *Institutes*, p. 170.

man") to a simplified summary of Lockeian epistemology ("theory of mind"), and a short common-sense proof of the existence and goodness of God. This is followed by a largely Stoic presentation "of moral laws", and a discussion, partly based on natural law concepts, of rights ("jurisprudence") and duties ("casuistry"). The last part of the book is a lengthy discussion "of politics", comprising political economy, a version of Montesquieu's typology of governments, and, as we have seen, a mild statement of Ferguson's civic activism.

Garve's translation of the book is, as a whole, both loyal and spirited. His rendering of concepts is accurate and sometimes imaginative: Ferguson's "descriptive" and "narrative" history[27] becomes *beschreibende* and *erzählende Geschichte* (53); "this is not mere supposition"[28] is rendered "*dieß is nicht ein erdichteter Fall*" (261). Without attempting to repeat our detailed analysis of Jünger's translation of the *Essay*, we will briefly look at Garve's handling of the key concepts we have identified in Ferguson's texts.

There is an obvious resemblance between the performance of the terms "mind", "pursuit", and "public spirit" in the two translations. In most cases Garve rendered "pursuit" into *Bestreben*, and its plural form into *Bestrebungen*. "Mind" became almost invariably *die Seele*, the second part of the book now entitled *Die Theory von der Seele*. Perhaps carried away by this term, Garve inflated the book's sentimentalist language: where Ferguson writes "Sentiment is a state of mind",[29] Garve translates it into "*Empfindungen des Herzens oder Empfindniße sind diejenigen Veränderungen der Seele...*" (63). Still, he was sensitive enough to make "the minds of citizens"[30] into *den Geist der Bürger* (283). But the terminology associated with *Seele* nevertheless affected his interpretation of Ferguson's text, as our analysis of the "Anmerkungen" will show.

"Public spirit"[31] was a baffling term for Garve. He opted once for *Liebe zum allgemeinen Besten* (69), but often used, like Jünger and Iselin, the

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27. *Ibid.*, p. 61.
28. *Ibid.*, p. 295.
29. *Ibid.*, p. 72.
30. *Ibid.*, p. 318.
31. *Ibid.*, pp. 77, 251, 304.

Vaterland-Patriotismus vocabulary, and rendered it *Vaterlandsliebe* (219, 269). "Public zeal" became *patriotisches Eifer*, and "public affections" - *patriotische Neigungen* (233). A typical Fergusonian declaration of civic activism took an interesting shape when Garve introduced this vocabulary. Men's civic disposition "to support their country in pursuit of its objects"[32] is made into "*ihrem Vaterland in der Verfolgung seiner Absichten beyzustehen* " (235). Garve's choice of verb (to "stand by") makes the citizens' contribution less active than Ferguson's context demands.

The translation of political terminology is meticulous, but Garve often appears to be in the throes of a terminological shortage or inadequacy. The noun "sovereign", for example, demanded both an in-text definition ("*Der, welche die oberste Gewalt im Staat hat*" (252), or "*die höchste Gewalt*" (279)), and a loan-word, *der Souverain* (252). The adjective "political", applied to early societies, was rendered "*einer bürgerlichen Gesellschaft fähig*" or "*zum bürgerlichen Leben geschickt*" (17). The term *Bürger* is confusingly used for people in both republics and monarchies (234), and also for "the people" in general (249). "Commerce", as in Jünger's translation, is hesitantly rendered into *Handlung* (22) or *Handel* (235), and "commercial nations" become *handlungstreibende Nationen* (236, 244). "The spirit of Faction"[33] was typically translated into *der Geist der Partheyen* (278). "Juries" had to be identified as *die Englischen Jurys* (254, 276).

I have found only two short passages in the *Institutes* which Garve omitted from his translation. These may have been negligent slips made by an otherwise careful performer. However, both passages are about democracy: "In every convention is supposed the consent of the parties given in person, or by others properly authorised"; and "Some of the most important powers, both in Sparta and at Rome, were discretionary".[34] The coincidence is interesting; but whether the omission was deliberate remains an open question.

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32. *Ibid.*, p. 267.
33. *Ibid.*, p. 313.
34. *Ibid.*, pp. 286 and 316.

More striking is the fact that the State, or *der Staat*, steps into the text in a big way. Common German usage made it a natural choice to substitute *Staatskunst* (230) for "Politics", *Staat* (233, 255, 256) for "community",[35] *Staatsgesetze* (232) for "political law" and *Staatsökonomie* (232) for "public oeconomy". But Garve continued in this vein even when other choices were available. The "political law of nature"[36] was made into "*das natürliche Staatsgesetz*" (249); and "wealth" became *Nationalreichtum* (232, 236). "Political institutions" became either *Staatsverfassung* or *Einrichtungen der Staaten* (282).[37] The result is, once again, a subtle shift in the description of civic action. Where Ferguson writes of men being "occupied with what relates to the public",[38] Garve's version is "*...mit dem, was den Staat angeht, beschäftigt seyn*" (256).

All this gave a slightly different - a familiar and unmenacing - flavour to the political language of the book, which Garve, as we shall see, did not deem very important anyhow. But the greatest translator's licence he took is the upgraded use of *Vollkommenheit* terminology. Examples here are too numerous to list,[39] but the emerging pattern is clear: Garve put *Vollkommenheit* in most of the places where Ferguson opted for the more down-to-earth "excellence" (83, 136, 233 etc.), and only rarely settled for *Vorzug* (69) or *vortreflich zu seyn* (84). Plural "perfections" became singular *Vollkommenheit* (70). The perfectibilist pitch is further heightened when "improvement" becomes "*Annäherung an... [die] Vollkommenheit*"(142), and "an accession of happiness" - "*Annäherung zur Vollkommenheit*" (143).

This intensifying of the perfection-by-degrees vocabulary leads us to more subtle shifts of meaning. In various instances Garve inserted evolutionist and perfectibilist language into Ferguson's text. Thus "rude

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35. Elswhere "community" is also *Gesellschaft* (230), *die gemeine Wesen* (267), and *bürgerliche Gesellschaft* (249); some of the translations reflect a sensitivity to the different shades of meaning of the English term.
36. *Institues*, p. 283.
37. In an earlier chapter Garve preferred *bürgerliche Verfassungen* (12) for "political establishments".
38. *Institutes*, p. 290.
39. Consider the following sentence in Ferguson's discussion of population: "The value of numbers is proportioned to their union and character. Numbers without union or virtue, do not constitute strength." (*Institutes*, p. 265). The German translation somehow manages to include both the adjective *vollkommen* and the noun *Vollkommenheit* (*Gründsätze*, pp. 232-233) !

nations"[40] were rendered "*noch ungesittete Völker*" (244, emphasis added). When Ferguson speaks on men's "success" in the practice of the arts,[41] Garve volunteers *glücklicher Fortgang* (26) instead. Most revealing is the translation of Ferguson's idea that unthreatened civil rights are "not to be expected in human affairs".[42] In Garve's version such a state "... *ist bey der jetzigen Beschaffenheit der Menschen nicht zu erwarten*" (251, emphasis added). With this small addition, political imperfection becomes a temporary phase.

Like Jünger, Garve disregarded the male bias of Ferguson's text. He also ignored its third-person-plural, "group" bias, and rendered "men" into a singular *der Mensch* (231, 235, 263). Perhaps we should not make much of this, or our former examples. They may well have been accidental stylistic decisions. But the book's vocabulary was evidently transformed, and Garve's own "Anmerkungen", to which we now turn, show that the change is meaningful.

III

When J.G. Feder reviewed the Ferguson-Garve opus in the *Göttingische gelehrte Anzeigen* he accurately recognized, and duly hailed, the special emphases which Garve's commentary imposed on the book:

> But the translator's appended comments have further enlarged the book by one third. They contain his own reasoning on freedom, happiness, the immateriality of the soul, the existence of God, the difference between animal instinct and human nature, the Stoic and anti-Stoic systems and other important subjects, profoundly and thoroughly contemplated and delivered with amiable modesty; in short, a true philosophy.[43]

Some years later Sigismund Gottfried Dittmar echoed with a biographer's enthusiasm:

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40. *Institutes*, p. 277.
41. *Ibid.*, p. 31.
42. *Ibid.*, p. 284.
43. GGA, 1772, vol. 3, pp. 860-861.

> One reads in his commentary to Ferguson's moral philosophy the explanations of such Gordian issues as freedom, spirit, matter, etc., which occupy Milton's most subtle demons. If after this treatment of the subject anything still remains vague and incomprehensible, one is at least convinced that the limits of human knowledge have been reached, and that there remains no other way of presenting the subject.[44]

What did this much-praised commentary consist of? The "Anmerkungen" hold 133 pages, while the translated text itself holds 284 pages: Garve indeed "enlarged the book by one third". The comments are in part philosophical and in part linguistic, the latter dwelling on the difficulty of finding German equivalents to many English concepts. In general, the comments follow Ferguson's chapters in their original order, although there are many leaps. The quantitative correlation between the original parts of the book and the "Anmerkungen" relating to them is as follows:

Original part/chapter title	number of pages in the original[45]	number of pages in the "Anmerkungen"
Introduction	11	11
Pt. 1: The natural history of man.		
ch. 1: History of the species.	34	2
ch. 2: History of the individual.	31	30
Pt. 2: Theory of mind.	40	24
Pt. 3: Of the knowledge of God.	16	19
Pt. 4: Of moral laws...	52	36
Pt. 5: Of Jurisprudence.	42	7
Pt. 6: Of Casuistry.	27	-
Pt. 7: Of Politics.	57	-

We can see that about one half of the original text, including mainly epistemology, theology and ethics, received almost all of Garve's attention. The other half, 160 pages covering Ferguson's history of the

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44. S.G. Dittmar, "Erinnerungen aus meinem Umgang mit Garve, nebst einigen Bemerkungen über dessen Leben und Charakter", pp. 108-109, in SW, vol. XII (Breslau, 1801).

45. *Institutes*, 1st edn., Edinburgh, 1769

human species, jurisprudence and politics (including political economy), get between them only 9 pages of the "Anmerkungen". Most striking is the fact that Garve fails even to mention the part on politics: this is the second largest, the final and explicitly conclusive part of the book. Let us begin with Garve's comments on the favoured half of the work.

Virtue, perfection and happiness: the chapters on these subjects, wrote Garve, "are in my view excellent chapters. My soul is elated when I read them. I feel their truth, and I feel that I too can be happy" (401-402). Ferguson's statement of the Stoic moral philosophy impressed Garve to the point of conversion. Reading Ferguson, he wrote, "one loses the prejudices commonly held against [the Stoic system]" (378-379). He accepted the Stoic concept of virtue as the only complete good, being the only element in human nature that always causes happiness, never misery. But the inherent goodness of human virtue and the equation of happiness with virtue could, as Garve admitted, be seen as contradicting Christian ethics:

> The doctrine attributing an inherent value to virtue has appeared dangerous to religion, because it was thought that it made the rewards redundant. But tell me this: what kind of rewards for virtue can be promised in future life?... Only virtue can be the reward of virtue. (400-401)[46]

It was perhaps Garve's emphasis on the autonomous standing of virtue which brought the "Anmerkungen" under theological attack. In an undated letter, probably written in 1777, Garve asked Zollikofer to thank his friend Platner for his "composure during the attack on my Ferguson". According to the editors of his letters to Zollikofer, after the *Grundsätze* was mentioned in the *Leipziger Intelligenzblatt*, the Leipzig theology faculty received a *Rescript* requesting it "to report on the spread of mistakes of religion, related to the Leipzig manner of teaching". Garve himself was at this time in Breslau, "out of the fire zone", as he said. In the same letter he ironically expressed the hope that "my comments on Ferguson will never be discussed in an inquisition protocol."[47]

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46. Garve wrote an essay, "Die Tugend macht den Menschen Glücklich" (SW, vol. VI, Breslau, 1801), on this idea. But there he moved away from Ferguson by distinguishing, like Shaftesbury and Hutcheson, between two "modes" of virtue: "active benevolence", and "passive contentment", or complacency.

47. Letter to Zollikofer, no date, SW, vol. XVIII, 193-194, 392n.

But Garve was no atheist, and he was far from indifferent to the theological parts of the *Institutes*. His detailed discussion of Ferguson's (rather conventional) account of the belief in God, idolatry and the immateriality of the soul, is centred around one main theme: the rejection of materialism and the assertion of "the thinking substance" in the universe and in human beings, and with it the assertion of spiritual freedom.

Ferguson's derivation (following Reid) of our belief in God and in the immateriality of the soul from common-sense beliefs inherent in human nature, was for Garve not personal enough and not "spiritual" enough. He criticized Ferguson for not sufficiently relying on "my own feeling", but rather on the "general sentiment of human beings." (370ff). Ferguson's discussion of the existence of God was then re-routed into Cartesian language, which is the language in which Garve and his friends waged war on materialism and mechanism. The question "does God exist?", said Garve, really boils down to the question of movement versus thought, or the priority of mechanical to spiritual forces (358). Garve concluded a long discussion of this question by asserting that "the spirit [*Geist*] which created a human body must have the whole material world in its power... This power is what we call God." (365) The real point of imposing this Cartesian dualism on Ferguson's common-sense account of the existence of God is found in Garve's discussion of human freedom, a concept which, to his dismay, he found nowhere in Ferguson's work.

The fact that the *Institutes* "says very little of freedom" was announced as one of its "obvious flaws" (288).[48] Garve immediately set out to fill the gap with a lengthy discussion of freedom, understood as a property distinguishing men from animals and, within human nature, "rational appetites" from "animal appetites" (289-296). This distinction - and the

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48. The notion of free will is deeply rooted in Ferguson's Stoic morality, and is interconnected, as Kettler points out, with the dignity and grandeur he attributes to human beings as such. But in the *Institutes* volition appears as a datum of "empirical psychology" in the descriptive part of the discussion, and is taken for granted as an presupposition in the prescriptive exposition of moral laws. Only in his later work, *Principles of Moral and Political Science*, did Ferguson raise the issue of free will, and even there it is treated as an axiom rather than a problem. See *Institutes*, pp. 69ff, *Principles*, I, p. 152; cf. Kettler, *Social and Political Thought*, pp. 115-116, 134, and 142.

account of mental growth from man's animal propensities to his future spiritual perfection - was markedly different from Ferguson's insistence that man had always been endowed with reason, language, morality and sociability.[49]

Free will was, for Ferguson, a latent presupposition. For Garve it was clearly a burning issue: personal, spiritual freedom needed to be asserted and invigorated. Ferguson's theory of autonomous virtue was an excellent starting point, but it led Garve into different realms, prompted by concerns which did not haunt Ferguson:

> If virtue is not something good in itself, regardless of its external results, then I am indifferent about my own dispositions [*Beschaffenheiten*]. But how can this be with a feeling creature? So I have no dispositions of my own; so I have no self; so there is only matter; so the source of all things is in movement. There is no God and no future. (397-398)

Barring this materialist *reductio ad absurdum*, the freedom of the thinking and feeling being is defined through its participation in the universal thinking substance, God. Society is not an essential part of this man-to-God axis. Although Garve acknowledged in passing that virtue can find its objects only in society (300), and even that activity in society is necessary for spiritual perfection (320-321), he saw "work in society" only as part of man's unavoidable physical life, akin to "the entire kingdom of living creatures", where man must toil for subsistence - "For what else could he do?" (321) - even when he begins to catch a glimpse of his true goal, his freedom, his spiritual perfection.

Social life is yet another physical vehicle for the awakening of "spiritual faculties" (320); but there is no social dimension in Garve's concept of freedom, let alone a political dimension. The type of activity this freedom allows is individual, spiritual activity. The participation it provides is a participation in the universe, not in a polity. This can be demonstrated by an example from Ferguson's original text, compared with Garve's translation and Garve's commentary. In his discussion of pleasure and pain Ferguson wrote:

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49. *Essay*, p. 5.

> The affection of a mind enlightened to conceive what is the object and what the efficacy of God's providence, is, of all others, most pleasant, and approaches most to an entire exemption from pain.[50]

Garve's translation is:

> Der Zustand einer Seele, die bis auf den Grad erleuchtet ist, daß sie den Plan der göttlichen Vorsehung im Ganzen vor Augen hat, ist der Zustand der glücklichsten Seele. (409)[51]

The translation of "mind" into "soul", which we have noted earlier, is but part of a more general change of vocabulary: "conceive" becomes "have in sight", and "happiness" is introduced instead of the original terms, pleasure and pain. Note also the notion of gradation absent from the original. "Enlightened" is rendered "*erleuchtet* " rather than "*aufgeklärt*", as one might perhaps expect. The language is markedly religious, the experience is more subjective, and the claim is now for happiness rather than pleasure.

Garve quotes this phrase in the "Anmerkungen", and adds the following thoughts:

> But to come closer to such a state, to widen the circle of feeling and participation; to set out from one's room and present hour into the wide world and into the series of ever-progressing centuries: this is the constant occupation of the virtuous and the wise, if he wishes to be content with his fate or with his fellow-man; incidentally, it is also the occupation of the man of genius. This is the true elevation of the spirit [*Geistes*], without which nothing great has ever been accomplished, no lasting happiness has ever been enjoyed. (410)

This text might have served as a blueprint motto for Goethe's *Faust*. Perfection through "feeling and participation" in the vastest stretches of time and space, rather than in one's social sphere, is indeed a task for a man of genius. Garve had driven Ferguson's idea of perfectibility back to its Stoic roots, and forward to its individualist misinterpretation; in either case, away from its social and political locus.

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50. *Institutes*, p. 154.

51. This is the only passage in the otherwise clean British Library copy of *Fergusons Gründsätze* that a distant reader marked with ink.

IV

Having presented Ferguson's Stoic ethics as the central theme of the *Institutes*, Garve saw virtually all the second half of the book - history and politics, and to some extent jurisprudence - as either ancillary or irrelevant. Ferguson's historical discussion of mankind, Garve thought, was a good technique that got slightly out of control. Garve's critique of it gives important clues to his uneasiness with the *Essay on the history of civil society*, and with philosophical history in general:

> The [chapter on] history of mankind is a summary from the larger work of the author. This part of his work is his own [*ihm eigen*], and is an important introduction to ethics. Before learning how the individual person could become perfect, one must first survey the whole human race in its many varieties and stages of perfection; one must step onto the great theatre [*Schauplatz*] of human life, in order to know the different orders of men, the happiness they enjoy, the virtue they practice... The unification of the manifold perfections that [the moral philosopher] finds scattered among human beings, provides his imagination with an ideal, which the mere enquiry into human nature, or the observation of individuals, would not have presented to him. Moreover, just as the philosophers who wanted to describe a perfectly virtuous man have almost always found it necessary to form some kind of a perfect State to place him in - since a human being is formed only through society and finds the objects of his virtues only within it - so, in general, is the knowledge of human duties faulty if human beings are not considered in the context of nature as a whole, and especially of mankind.
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> Only our author sometimes loses sight of the purpose towards which he drives this history of mankind; and follows merely the subject matter for its own sake. This happens in the chapter on population, and even more so in [the chapter on] commerce and the arts, where the treatment is too specialized, and belongs more to politics, where he also repeats it in part. (300-302)

In other words, Garve did not see why the history of mankind should be more than a display-kit for the moral philosopher, a panorama of human diversities and social modes. Put to such use, history is very much like ethnography: it provides the moralist with types of societies rather than with a narrative of the development of mankind along interconnected moral, social and economical lines. Garve's "stages of perfection" are not

historical stages, but degrees of proximity to an ideal. Brought together, they give the observer the ultimate synthesis, "the unification of varied perfections"; and this must not be mixed with politics.

In Ferguson's terms, which he translated so skilfully, Garve's gaze did not go beyond "descriptive" history to "narrative" history. His claim is thus closer to Montesquieu's *De l'esprit des lois* than to Scottish "conjectural history", which was committed to temporal development as an essential ingredient in philosophical inquiry. For Ferguson especially, the historical narrative was important precisely because it did not guarantee a smooth glide towards perfection, and because it revealed the peculiar modern tension between material or technical "excellence" and moral perfection.

When Friedrich Schleiermacher launched a vitriolic assault on the recently-deceased Garve in the *Athenaeum*, a central accusation was that Garve's thought had been totally un-historical. Thank heaven, Schleiermacher wrote, that Garve did not try to write a history of Frederick the Second, "for nothing could have been more alien and unnatural to him than history."[52] Being un-historical, in Schleiermacher's terms, Garve was by definition un-philosophical: he was totally dependent on scattered experiences and individual observations which he was unable to contextualize and integrate on the level of abstract concepts.[53] This typical Romanticist hostility towards the *Aufklärung* eclecticism, empiricism and common-sense commitment - shallowness was the common accusation for these - wronged not only Garve's philosophical insight, but also his intelligence.[54]

Yet Schleiermacher's criticism can, to some extent, be supported by Garve's treatment of Ferguson, which indeed betrays his indifference to historical change. Garve's static approach to history is illustrated by his use of the metaphor of theatre: the world as a huge *Schauplatz* was to

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52. F.E.D. Schleiermacher, "Garve's letzte noch von ihm selbst herausgegebene Schriften", *Athenaeum* 3 (1800), p. 135.

53. *Ibid.*, pp. 132-133. On Schlegel's and Schleiermacher's critiques of Garve see Wölfel, "Nachwort", pp. 32*-34*.

54. This does not, of course, discredit the deeper and better-founded Romanticist accusation that many *Aufklärer* betrayed the autonomy of reason, an ideal both movements shared, by supporting absolutist government. This important point has recently been made by F. C. Beiser.

appear time and again in his observations on politics and society, including momentous events such as the French Revolution.[55] This *Schauplatz* is in space, not in time; it is a great spectacle, not a story. While sharing Iselin's zeal for *Vollkommenheit*, Garve lacked Iselin's and Ferguson's love of the historical narrative. He obviously did not appreciate what David Kettler has called "Ferguson's recurrent reliance on the concept of temporal development for the solution of problems."[56]

Significantly, the sections of the *Institutes* which Garve saw as over-specialized contained some distinctive ideas of the Scottish Enlightenment and some of Ferguson's unique insights. The section on "populousness" draws the line between governments' useful indirect contributions to population growth and their futile direct attempts to promote it. All governments should do is "bestow security and plenty" by protecting their citizens from one another, since "the security and subsistence of men, are most impaired by their own mutual hostilities and oppressions."[57] The section on arts and commerce presents Ferguson's version of the four stages theory. Linked with the history of modes of subsistence, Ferguson also gave his students a short history of three important elements of civil life, weapons, property and ornaments. All three are pertinent to Ferguson's double-edged analysis of modern wealth, luxury and the lack of martial spirit. He then proceeded to describe the introduction of the fourth stage, commerce, as "expedient, and even necessary" from the progress of the arts,[58] briefly mentioning the division of labour. A careful reader of the *Essay* would recognize in this section a conceptual introduction to Ferguson's critique of contemporaneous societies. The problems of excess riches (an outgrowth of the natural inclination to use ornaments), and of the division of social-political roles, stemming from luxury and from territorial disparity, are

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55. See, for instance, *Über die öffentlich Meinung* in *Versuche über verschiedene Gegensätze*, SW, vol. V (Breslau, 1802), 311, 321; *Ueber die Maxime Rochefoucaults: das bürgerliche Air verliert sich zuweilen bey der Armee, niemals am Hofe*, SW, vol. I (Breslau, 1792), 327, 370. This metaphor may have been part of Garve's influence on Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister*; cf. W.H. Bruford, *Germany*, p. 316.

56. Kettler, *Social and Political Thought*, p. 131

57. *Institutes*, pp. 24-25. References are made to Ferguson's *Essay*, to Wallace, and to Hume.

58. *Ibid.*, p. 32. This is followed by a detailed summary of coins and bills and a theory of prices, pp. 33ff.

all revisited elsewhere in the *Institutes*, especially in the final part, which Garve's commentary ignored.

Ferguson began this final part, "Of Politics", with a statement that firmly placed most of the book's main themes - epistemology, ethics and jurisprudence - in a socio-political context:

> It may be proved, that most of the opinions, habits, and pursuits, of men, result from the state of their society; that men are happy in proportion as they love mankind; that their rights and duties are relative to each other; and, therefore, that their most important concerns are to be found in their mutual relations, and in the state of their communities.[59]

In failing to deal with the final part of the *Institutes* Garve thus failed to acknowledge that politics was the book's bottom line, its conclusion, and not just a negligible last chapter. Aware as he was of a connection between Ferguson's historical treatment of arts and commerce and his politics, Garve nevertheless overlooked the moral argument. He did not see the relevance of all this to the chief function of "the history of the species", which is to illustrate a treatise on ethics.

Garve's neglect of Ferguson's history and politics casts serious doubt on his alleged role as a mediator between Ferguson and Hegel. Such a role has been ascribed to Garve, for instance, in Laurence Dickey's recent book on Hegel. Dickey begins with the promising remark that "the Germans did not just read the Scots: they adapted them to their own purposes. A good indication of how this was done can be seen in how the Germans received the work of Adam Ferguson...".[60] However, Dickey's main claim is that "the Germans" - meaning Lessing and Garve - took Ferguson's "sociological realism" at face value, and used it "to underline the call for ethical activism so essential to the emergent Protestant theology of history".[61] Ferguson's work, according to this view,

> enabled Garve to provide a socio-historical explanation of that moment of reflection when man qua animal rationabile could voluntarily and

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59. *Ibid.*, p. 263.
60. Laurence Dickey, *Hegel. Religion, Economics, and the Politics of Spirit 1770-1807* (Cambridge, 1987), p. 188.
61. *Ibid.*

> consciously begin to put his imagination to the service of collective redemption in a theo-teleological sense. And when Garve did that he was providing an easy point of entry for sociological realism and historical evolutionism to move into German thought and establish contact with the tradition of Protestant thought that had developed around the theology of the divine economy argument.[62]

The problem is that Garve, in his comments on Ferguson, did not provide any "socio-historical" argument. He had neither use nor taste for Ferguson's "sociological realism" or "historical evolutionism", and therefore cannot be regarded as a mediator between those ideas and Hegel's historicism.[63] Garve's distinction between animal and rational drives is not based on a historical account. It is true that he criticizes Ferguson's listing of sociability as a rational drive, and claims that only perfectibility is a uniquely human (and thus fully rational) tendency. But Garve's alternative "history of the emergence of rational drives from animal drives", based on "the ancient philosophers" and not on Ferguson, is the process of moral growth in an environment of physical safety and material plenty. It could fit well in a *Robinsonade*, an account of individual striving for perfection in a physical-economic world, where morality can flourish without society.[64] But Garve did not press the economic dimension of moral growth too far: spiritual evolutionism was, for him, a self-contained process.[65] Considering this kernel of his theory, it is far from proven that Garve provided a substantial link between the Scottish Enlightenment and Hegel.

Garve did not explain why he flatly ignored the seventh part of the *Institutes*, Ferguson's 57 pages on politics and political economy. Any attempt to accuse Garve of indifference to politics will be grossly misleading: he was a very political-minded man. In his later years,

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62. *Ibid.*, p. 189.

63. There is even less evidence that Lessing adopted any of Ferguson's sociological notions; see chapter 6. As for Protestant "ethical activism", this dissertation aims to show that such thinking benefited from Ferguson only after his own political activism was deleted, and his doctrine not merely "adapted", but distorted.

64. It is no coincidence that Marx dismissed *Robinson Crusoe* for the same reason he embraced Ferguson - the indispensability of a social and historical context. For the Swiss and German adaptations of Defoe's model see See Ian Watt, "Robinson Crusoe as a Myth", in James L. Clifford (ed.), *Eighteenth Century English Literature* (Oxford, 1959), pp. 158-179.

65. See especially "Anmerkungen", pp. 315-321. It is significant that every time Garve mentioned history, it was to criticize Ferguson (pp. 300, 319).

especially from the mid-1780s, when he prepared his commentary to Cicero, he wrote much about political principles and about contemporary affairs of State and society. But Ferguson's translator was a younger Garve, inclined towards ethics and literary criticism, a reader of Lessing, Herder, Kames and Burke. His early writings and translations seldom touched political subjects. It seems plausible that Ferguson's discussion of politics was too alien, or seemed too unrelated to the other parts of the book. Political vocabulary, as we have seen, was a problem for all translators of Ferguson. Garve's commentary includes a frank and illuminating discussion of this problem.

The discussion is centred on the term "public spirit". Garve was not pleased with the available German equivalents, and, as with other English terms, he candidly shared his difficulties with his readers:

> Public spirit... is not patriotism, because that extends itself to any society one is a member of, and at most to mankind; it is not the love of men, because that is applied to individual persons as well, whereas public spirit [*öffentliche Geist*] [applies] only to whole parties; it is the inclination of the soul to see itself always as a part of a whole; it is the capacity of the spirit to conceive this whole vividly; it is the warm participation in everything that we perceive to be occupying a greater number of our fellow men. No virtue, no characteristic is in fact rarer among us [Germans], because it has two qualities, both of which are either less characteristic of the temperament of present-day Germans, or are obstructed due to their circumstances: a great warmth and extension of the imagination; and a certain firmness and toughness of the mind. [We lack] the one, because we are stirred by nothing that we cannot conceive of: in order to be filled with concern for one's town, for one's fatherland or for the human race, one must somehow carry their picture everywhere; this picture must be immutable and vivid, if any prevailing inclination of the soul is to emerge from it. [We lack] the other, because whenever we become very occupied with our own joys and sorrows, they always captivate our heart completely, and leave no room for alien feelings and remoter interests. The man of public spirit must forget his own self, and he must be able to put society in his stead. [...] He must be able to fire his imagination to a high degree. Therefore the public spirit is solely the virtue of great souls. (330-332)

This is one of the earliest German discussions of the English term *public spirit* as a linguistic and a political problem.[66] It gives us a valuable insight into the translator's mind, caught in the midst of a profound vocabulary shift. We can immediately observe that Garve's understanding of "public virtue" introduces *die Seele*, and not just any *Seele* but only a great and a rare one. The plight of the Germans is depicted in epistemologic and mental terms. Garve saw Ferguson's maxim of social involvement, when applied to the Germans, as a long-term goal reached by spiritual betterment alone. Political forms and economic developments were irrelevant to this re-written plot. The main actors were now the Genius and the Philosopher, the action was moved to people's minds or souls, and the scene shifted from the political assembly-room to the library, the classroom, and the pulpit.

V

Was Garve, in his own writings, a disciple of Ferguson's? A case for this can be made on two grounds: first, Garve's later writings did emphasize the demand that active virtue, including political action, should be practiced in society. Secondly, Garve approved of some wars and thought that *Bürger* would reap moral benefit from military service. However, these apparent similarities to Ferguson's doctrine are highly superficial.

Garve's idea of political community was always the idea of the State, focussing on its rulers and its legislators. His concept of the public sphere differed from Ferguson's "civil society" in lacking an elaborate historical or economic dimension, and in being primarily a component within the State. Political public opinion, the application of *sensus communis* to politics, was legitimate insofar as it expressed an enlightened consensus of educated minds, aiming at gradual, rational reform.[67] Like Iselin, Garve never saw any good in rivalry and conflict, although he sometimes justified war waged by rulers; and, again like Iselin and many other

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66. See chapter 3, pp. 92-93.

67. Wölfel, "Nachwort", p. 39*, rightly demands that Garve be excluded from Gadamer's claim that the *Aufklärer* depoliticized the concept of *sensus communis*. But the political application of common sense in Garve's view was restricted to enlightened intellectual debate.

Aufklärer, he never doubted the moral and cultural prominence of Europe in his day.

The main themes of Garve's later writings were the defence of enlightened absolutism, the mental emancipation of the *Bürger*, and the moralizing of the social and political scene. Garve's treatment of these subjects was inspired by his fascination with the chasm between the world of the ancient moralists and the modern German states with their rigid class divisions. Another important object of fascination was the Prussian king, Frederick the Second.

An essay entitled *Abhandlung über die Verbindung der Moral mit der Politik* (1788)[68] has earned Garve the reputation of an "ultra-conservative", a defender of benevolent despotism, property and the social and political status quo.[69] The *Verbindung* was indeed a defence, using the terms of Natural Law, of Frederick's domestic and foreign policies. Garve began by asserting the usefulness of a state of nature hypothesis for analysing the relations between sovereigns.[70] The happiness of a State depends on the power and the influence of its ruler, who is ideally committed to "the security, freedom and wellbeing of all nations."[71] However, the moral sphere in which a statesman acts is by its nature more abstract, and the results are less immediate and direct, than those of the individual in his limited circle. The sovereign bears much greater responsibility than a *Hausvater* does, because the wellbeing of a whole society depends upon him. Consequently, the morality of the ruler's acts is less clear-cut.[72]

The illustration (and punchline) of this principle is unmistakably Prussian: take, for instance, the status of larger powers versus smaller ones. "As whole societies of men have prerogatives over individuals, so

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68. *Abhandlung über die Verbindung der Moral mit der Politik, Noch einige Betrachtungen über die Frage: "in wie fern ist es möglich, die Moral des Privatlebens bey der Regierung der Staaten zu beobachten?"*, appended to *Cicero von den menschlichen Pflichten* (first published Breslau, 1783) from the edition of 1788 onwards. I have used the 1792 edition.
69. Reinhold Aris, *History of Political Thought in Germany from 1789 to 1815*, vol 1 (London, 1936), p. 155.
70. *Verbindung*, pp. 2-4. This doctrine was widely condemned; see Stolleis, *Staatsraison*, p. 11ff.
71. *Verbindung*, p. 74.
72. *Ibid.*, pp. 37-38.

have large societies prerogatives over small ones." So, if a ruler of a large State correctly estimates what lies in the interest of his State, "it is impossible to deny him the power [*Befugniß*] to subordinate a far smaller interest of far fewer people, even if they are independent of him, to his higher goals." History, Garve continues, tends to justify invaders who had taken over smaller territories, provided that the cause and the aftermath are morally defensible.

When it comes to giving examples, this Silesian admirer of Frederick the Great chooses to be silent on Prussia and Silesia, pointing instead at Austria in the Thirty Years War.[73] In the same vein, Garve sought to justify "the attempt of the English to maintain sovereignty over the Scots" by appealing to "the desolation to which their country was continuously subjected by those rapacious neighbours", which provided "such a pressing motive, that one cannot disapprove of their undertakings without being excessively severe."[74]

Mercifully, such cases are no longer to be found in Europe of Garve's day. As "national prejudices" gradually disappear, and "products, skills and sciences" spread from country to country, acquisition by force becomes harder to justify.[75] In a world of enlightened absolute rulers war would often be redundant:

> The more all nations, in the principles of their politics, in their habitual use of their national rights, in their inclination to peaceful diligence, in the gentleness of their manners, come to equal one another, the less can the security of one absolutely necessitate the subjugation of another. Where war is no more waged by nations but by princes... the security of a State demands efforts of defence against the passions of other rulers, that can be found in treatises and alliances, rather than the absolute powerlessness or subjugation of the neighbouring peoples, which can only be achieved through violent acts.[76]

Garve was, thus, no moral cynic, even with respect to international relations. In fact, considering the diminishing Poland next door, this lack

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73. *Ibid.*, pp. 38-39. For Garve's explicit justification of Prussia's acquisition of Silesia in a "preventive war" see Stolleis, *Staatsraison*, p. 17.
74. *Verbindung*, pp. 90-91.
75. *Ibid.*, pp. 96-97, 101.
76. *Ibid.*, p. 91.

of cynicism must have taken some effort. But Garve's concerns are stubbornly Prussian and piously absolutist. The last part of the *Verbindung* repeatedly stresses that even when minding his nation's best interest, for instance in regulating the grain trade, a ruler may not disregard "the happiness of human beings in general" which is "the true and final goal" of all worthy deeds.[77]

So, despite its qualified acceptance of war, the *Verbindung* is very far from Ferguson's political creed. Ferguson hailed war between nations, not between princes, as a crucial exercise for an active society. He would not have regarded the vision of a European balance of power regulated by monarchs as a fulfilment of his ideal. Nor would he subscribe to Garve's optimistic visions, based on the growing prosperity and politeness of European societies. Garve's appeal to the rulers - the final pages of the *Verbindung* are modelled as a "mirror for princes" - would have been alien to Ferguson, who attached little importance to legislators or heads of state, and whose final appeal in the *Essay* is to the active and conscientious citizen.

It should nevertheless be noted that the *Verbindung* represents only one aspect of Garve's political thought, his affirmation of benevolent absolutism. While leaving the government in the hands of the prince and his advisers, and seeing court statesmen and other "great men" as the most important reading public of political works, Garve did not fail to recognize that politics, as well as history, are of interest to everyone.[78]

The role he ascribed to active, informed citizens was stated as an ideal rather than a reality, but it was an ideal central to his philosophy. He closely linked it to his analysis of the state of the *Bürger* in the German

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77. *Ibid.*, pp. 98-104. Political economy must be benevolent and regulated by laws. Garve vehemently attacked commercial rivalry, between States and between individuals, in his comments to the third book of Cicero's *De Officiis* (Breslau, 1792), pp. 68-69.

78. Recent German scholarship extolls Garve as a champion of the emerging *bürgerliche Öffentlichkeit*. See, for instance, Ammermann, *Gemeines Leben*, p. 113 and Wölfel, "Nachwort", pp. 50*-51*. It should, however, be kept in mind that Garve's quest for exellence in political writing was aimed at attracting the attention of the sovereigns. "If it were in our power to put a German Montesquieu in the hands of our princes, then perhaps they would also read our Klopstocks and Geßners and Lessings and Moses [Mendelssohn]." *Ueber den Einfluß einiger besondern Umstände auf die Bildung unserer Sprache und Litteratur*, PS, vol.1, p. 378.

societies of his day. In the opening remarks of one of his key essays, Garve stressed that the German term *Bürger* has the two distinct meanings of the French terms *citoyen* and *bourgeois*. The title of the essay is significant: *Ueber die Maxime Rochefoucaults: das bürgerliche Air verliert sich zuweilen bey der Armee, niemals am Hofe* (1792).[79] It was an attempt to solve the image and self-image problem of the German bourgeois, epitomized by the pejorative connotation of its derivative form, *Bürgerlichkeit*. But Garve's analysis of the *Bürger* does not lead to the battle-cry of the *citoyen*.

The argument of *Maxime Rochefoucaults* runs as follows: a human being can exercise his powers in full only if he is free from petty constraints and narrow-mindedness. The aristocracy is best situated for achieving this goal, because it is polite and refined. It is polite and refined, because it has leisure. Painfully aware of their shortcomings, many German *Bürger* try to become "actors on the court stages",[80] men of the world. They want to mix and mingle with the aristocracy and be part of polite society. They hope that through social intercourse (*Umgang*) they can shed off their bourgeois airs, the awkwardness and embarrassment that poison their meetings with the upper classes. But aristocratic self-confidence and dignity, *Würde*, is not so easy to acquire for those not born into it.

Paradoxically at first sight, it is the army and not the court which can teach the bourgeois to shed his embarrassment and clumsiness and prepare him to learn *Politesse*, the "free and lively manners of the man of the world".[81] War has always promoted "the social drives" of nations, "and nowadays we still note at least the semblance of that first real bond of men, achieved by war, in the confident manners of those who, in our States, fight the war for the other *Bürger*."[82] Military discipline can prepare the ground for a "revolution in a person's circumstances".[83] (One

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79. First published in *Versuche über verschiedene Gegenstände aus der Moral, der Litteratur und dem gesellschaftlichen Leben*, vol. 1 (Breslau, 1792), reprinted in PS, vol. 1, pp. 559-716. I will use the original pagination. Cf. Ernest K. Bramsted, *Aristocracy and the Middle-Classes in Germany*, (revised edn., Chicago and London, 1964), pp. 26-34.
80. *Maxime Rochefoucaults*, p. 327.
81. *Ibid.*, p. 409.
82. *Ibid.*, p. 418.
83. *Ibid.*, p. 438.

is reminded of Garve's earlier point, made in his "Anmerkungen" to Ferguson, that the Germans' "circumstances" prevent them from mentally conceiving public spirit.) Through short-range discipline and through long-range "*Bildung des Geistes*"[84] the gap between the upper classes, who are at present still requisite as a model of refinement, and the "*gute Burgerclasse*"[85] will gradually diminish, until it disappears "to the happiness of both".[86] At that point the military will cease to be an important mediator between the classes.

This argument is certainly reminiscent of Ferguson's insistence on military service as a vital training for active citizens, a socially levelling factor and a strong social bond. "A national force is best formed," Ferguson wrote, "where numbers of men are inured to equality; and where the meanest citizen may consider himself, upon occasion, as destined to command as well as to obey."[87] The difference is that Ferguson did not see the army as a school for manners and as an educational phase on the road into polite society; in fact he thought that voluntary military spirit is one point where polite nations have much to learn from the rude.[88] Whereas Garve thought that army discipline can erase *bürgerlich* habits, Ferguson made the point that mindless drilling is never a substitute for conscious moral action: "A discipline is invented to inure the soldier to perform, from habit, and from the fear of punishment, those hazardous duties, which the love of the public, or a national spirit, no longer inspire."[89] While Garve considered the army a tool to rid the *Bürger* of bad habits, Ferguson saw it as a natural scene for the citizen to exercise his public spirit. These profound differences mean that if Garve's *Maxime Rochefoucaults* is modelled on Ferguson's *Essay*, then Garve got Ferguson wrong. Garve's essay, an early ideological statement of Prussian militarism,[90] can add a new entry to Ferguson's list of dubious paternity claims.

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84. *Ibid.*, p. 444.
85. *Ibid.*, p. 447.
86. *Ibid.*, p. 449.
87. *Essay*, p. 149.
88. *Ibid.*, pp. 149-150, 231-232.
89. *Ibid.*, pp. 151, 230.
90. See Bruford, *Germany*, p. 316.

Another possible impact is the concept of the division of labour, which appears in the *Maxime Rochefoucaults* in a the strange guise of spiritual perfectibilism. Garve's context is the moral decline imminent in the rigid stratification of German society. The narrow-mindedness of the social classes reflects, for Garve, a fragmentation of perfections. With the exception of the nobles, each class or profession strives for its own specific type of "perfection": merchants for order and punctuality, labourers and artisans for industry, scholars for speculative spirit.

> It is clear, that just as the division of labours made the works of men more perfect by limiting their diligence to a sole object, so the more general separation of classes has promoted the higher cultivation of the personal qualities of the people themselves in such a way that it made their efforts towards their own perfection similarly divided.[91]

This is an interesting variant on Smith's or Ferguson's concept, but it does not justify the view that Garve mediated between them and Hegel on this point. As far as Garve is concerned, the technological specialization in production is a mere metaphor for his real topic, the fragmented "perfections" of the petty and crippled *Bürger* mind. In a broad sense, this too is a theory of alienation; but it is not an analysis of either class divisions or civic corruption. It is interested neither in historical development nor in economic processes. It is unconcerned with new technology or techniques of production. Garve's prognosis of contemporary German society seems captured in the humiliating moment when the young Werther is asked to leave the ballroom. It is about etiquette, morality, and spiritual perfection, not about economics and politics. Garve may have conveyed this concept to Hegel, but on this point he hardly represents Ferguson.

Despite his bid for social reform and citizen consciousness, Garve's sole political arena was the State. "Civil society", in his writings, is always a limited group of people within the existing social and political order. *Bürgerliche Gesellschaften* appear in the plural; alternatively, "a society"

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91 *Maxime Rochefoucaults*, pp. 441-442. This essay ignores the peasants altogether. For Garve's treatment of the peasant class, which he excludes from his *Bildung* project and subjects to a patient, paternalistic betterment by their landlords, see his essay *Über den Character der Bauern und ihr Verhältniss gegen die Gutsherrn und gegen die Regierung* (first published Breslau, 1786). Cf. John G. Gagliardo, *From Pariah to Patriot. The changing Image of the German Peasant 1770-1840* (Kentucky, 1969), p. 63 n5 and pp. 131-132.

is always a concrete social circle that develops within a nation or a social class.[92] In his essay *Ueber die öffentliche Meinung* Garve claims that public opinion should be respected only when it is expressed peacefully, in times of peace, and when a certain "level of culture" had been reached.[93] In *Ueber die Gränzen des bürgerlichen Gehorsams*, commenting on the French Revolution, Garve reasserted (against Kant) the theoretical right of resistance against tyranny, only to denounce it in any contemporary state of affairs. "I tend to assume", he wrote,

> that in our time, and in lands ruled as the European [States] are at present, the power of truth and of rational arguments is strong enough to remove the obstacles that still impede our progress to perfection as far as political institutions are concerned. The French Revolution itself has taught me that the dangers related with an open insurrection of a whole nation against its rulers and its government are too great - dangers that arise not only from the losses of commerce and industry, but also from the barbarization [*Verwilderung*] and the licentiousness of the minds.[94]

The conclusion is a classic statement of enlightened political gradualism:

> In a land and in a climate, with morals and a degree of enlightenment such as we luckily have, the man of reason, who best understands the abuses of the government, will surely bear them most patiently, because he can expect their remedy by the power of arguments, by time, and by the ever-increasing reason [*Einsichten*] of upper and lower classes.[95]

For Garve, and here Garve represents the mainstream *Aufklärung*, the choice was between political patience and political madness. Surviving to see the Revolution, he could no longer share Iselin's earlier trust in irreversible progress. "The French Revolution", he wrote, "can certainly bring us to think that even the most enlightened and civilised [*gesittete*]

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92. *Maxime Rochefoucaults*, p. 396.
93. Originally published in *Versuche über verschiedene Gegenstände...*, vol. 5 (Breslau, 1802); reprinted in PS, vol. 2, 1263-1306; see especially (original pagination) pp. 323-324 and 331.
94. *Ueber die Gränzen des bürgerlichen Gehorsams, in Beziehungen auf den Aufsatz von Kant ber den Gemeinspruch: das mag in der Theorie richtig seyn, taugt aber nicht für die Praxis*, in *Vermischte Aufsätze* vol. 2 (Breslau, 1800); reprinted in PS, vol. 2, pp. 1117-1140; here (original pagination) p. 408.
95. *Ibid.*, p. 414.

people, when they abandon the discipline [*Zucht*] of civil subordination, become wild beasts again."[96] Garve, translator of Cicero and Aristotle, did not share Ferguson's civic humanist delight with the new French energies. Ancient republicanism, he said in his commentary to *De Officiis*, is simply not adaptable to modern States; even in its day it was not so perfect.[97]

Parties, for Garve, were always factions. Between individual self-thinking and the sphere of harmonious, rational public discourse, there was no room for institutionalised disagreements or for rival interests: "the more esteem one has for the public opinion, the more aversion one must have against the establishment of parties".[98] In his defence of benevolent despotism Garve stated that "there is only one absolutely fixed point in morals: that is Love."[99] He was willing to qualify this principle in international relations, but never in domestic politics.

And yet republics and "free States" must have parties. In those States "the word enmity will be much more common; it will not have such a bad meaning."[100] In an interesting passage in his commentary to Cicero Garve speaks of the moral theories created in republics or in "free States" (as he elsewhere defines England). It is meant to be an apology for Cicero's views on party politics, but it could also allude to Ferguson:

> The moralists who live in such States form their concepts according to the state of things which they observe. Although they demand love as the basis of all virtues, they nevertheless admit certain permitted enmities, because they see that in political life, without having disputes with rivals, no project for the common good can be carried out.[101]

But this, Garve says, is "how things are". As for "how things should be", the answer is "love thy enemy". It should be qualified and rationalized,

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96. *Ibid.*, p. 398.
97. See Garve's appendix, entitled *Einer Vergleichung zwichen dem Ciceronianischen Zeitalter und dem unsrigen, nach Maaßgabe einiger moralischen Vorschriften unsers Verfassers*, in his commentary to the second book of *De Officiis*, 4th edition, (Breslau, 1792).
98. *Öffentliche Meinung*, p. 323. See also Wölfel, "Nachwort", pp. 51*-52*.
99. *Verbindung*, p. 97.
100. Commentary to the first book of *De Officiis*, p. 182.
101. *Ibid.*

but this is the answer.[102] The bottom line of Garve's own political ethics is a strict rejection of conflict, coupled with a hostility to popular political involvement.

VI

The conclusion of our analysis can be supported by Garve's modified opinions on Ferguson some twenty-five years after his work on the *Institutes*. Shortly before his death Garve completed a history of moral philosophy.[103] In his discussion of the Scottish philosophers he disassociated himself from their moral "principles", claiming that benevolence and sociability were not original but derivative in human nature, and thus not the sole or basic virtues.[104] Ferguson is no longer seen as a philosopher who introduced "a new principle of morals", but as a thinker who is still just interesting enough "not to be overlooked by me". Ferguson, as Garve now describes him, "regards man as created primarily for society, and finds, in the true ancient-Roman and British sense, most of his duties in patriotic acts, and in the activity towards the promotion of the wellbeing of men and citizens."[105] But Ferguson's greatest achievement was to shed new light on the idea

> that man, like all living things, and indeed all organised forms, by his nature is an ever-progressing being, existing, as it were, in succession, never fully present at any one time, never achieving the goal where it can be said, *now it is completed*. From this Ferguson concludes, that the highest end of human beings is not in any accurately defined but static condition, but in an ever-continuing activity and a striving [*Streben*] towards yet higher goals.[106]

This, in the late 1790s, was Garve's final word on Ferguson. It is formulated in the Protestant language of restless striving for perfection, with perhaps an inkling of Faust. Sociability and patriotism had become

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102. *Ibid.*, pp. 191ff
103. *Uebersicht der vornehmsten Prinzipien der Sittenlehre, von dem Zeitalter der Aristoteles an bis auf unsre Jahre* (Breslau, 1798).
104. *Ibid.*, pp. 152-153.
105. *Ibid.*, p. 158.
106. *Ibid.*, pp. 158-159.

"Roman and British" ways of thinking. For the notion, well established by that time, of *Streben nach noch höhern Zielen,* they were merely two possible modes.

Chapter 6
Lessing and Ferguson: God in history?

I

On 9 January 1771 Gotthold Ephraim Lessing wrote from Wolfenbüttel to Moses Mendelssohn in Berlin:

> With Ferguson I want to make a real study now. I can already see from the table of contents that this is a book of the kind I have missed here, where I have mostly books that sooner or later kill my understanding as well as my time. When one does not think for a long time, one ends up being unable to think. But is it really good to contemplate truths, to engage oneself seriously with truths, in whose constant contradiction we already live, and must, for the sake of our peace, continue to live? And many of those truths I already see in the Englishman from afar.
>
> And also such, that I have long ceased to hold as truths. However, I have long been concerned that while throwing away certain prejudices I have thrown away a little too much, which I shall have to retrieve. Only the fear of eventually dragging the whole rubbish back into the house has so far hindered me from doing this in part. It is infinitely difficult to know when and where one should stop, and, in a thousand cases to one, the goal of reflection is set at the point where one gets tired of reflection.[1]

This text has provided an intriguing riddle for several generations of Lessing scholars, especially those concerned with his attitude to religion during the last decade of his life. It is often seen as documenting a profound change in Lessing's thinking. Both its timing and its context are significant: Lessing moved to Wolfenbüttel in 1769 as librarian to the Duke of Braunschweig, and the twelve years spent there, until his death in 1781, were devoted mostly to theological writing. Before leaving Hamburg for Wolfenbüttel the children of his late friend Hermann Samuel Reimarus gave him a manuscript of their father's entitled *Apologie oder Schutzschrift für die vernünftigen Verehrer Gottes*. This

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1. Lessing to Mendelssohn, 9.1.1771; Lessing, *Werke und Briefe*, ed. Wilfried Barner et al., vol. 11/2: *Briefe von und an Lessing 1770-1776*, ed. Helmuth Kiesel et al. (Frankfurt a.M., 1988), 144-145.

was an extreme statement of deism, from which Lessing later published some fragments together with his own "counter-propositions".[2]

When Mendelssohn visited Lessing in October 1770 - the occasion on which he probably recommended Ferguson's book to his friend - Lessing entrusted him with a copy of Reimarus' manuscript. The remainder of the letter from which I have quoted discusses this "unnamed" author and his work, which Mendelssohn had attacked.[3] Lessing proceeds to suggest that the unnamed Reimarus may well have suffered from the kind of intellectual fatigue he has described in the above passage, and this fatigue resulted in his opting for a radical rationalist stance towards revelation and the scriptures. The reason why Lessing himself felt threatened by a similar exhaustion may have to do with his newly launched attempt at a re-evaluation of orthodox Christianity, or indeed "positive" religion as such.

Positive religion, according to the definition of Lessing and his interlocutors, is revelation-based and thus history-based. It is associated with historical events understood as divine interventions in human affairs, or as supernatural interpositions in the course of nature. The credibility of such events, however, rested on human witnessing and transmission, and they were therefore open to criticism on both rationalist and historiographic grounds. Lessing had formerly been a staunch deist, rejecting positive religion as a prejudice-ridden dimming of the pure truths of natural religion. But between 1773 and 1780 he produced a series of theological writings which take Christian dogma seriously. These writings present between them a complex set of positions relating to three main intellectual alternatives: Lutheran orthodoxy, the rationalising attempts of the Halle neologians, and the deist idea of natural religion. The most famous of these works, *Die*

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2. The fragments were published in 1774 and 1777 as part of the censorship-free *Contributions to Literature and History from the Ducal Library of Wolfenbüttel.* See Henry Chadwick, "Introduction", *Lessing's theological writings* (London, 1956), pp. 9, 14-22.

3. Mendelssohn had charged Reimarus with an unfair criticism of the morality of old testament figures. See Mendelssohn to Lessing, 29.11.1770; Mendelssohn, *Gesammelte Schriften,* Jubiläumsausgabe, ed. Alexander Altmann, vol. 12/1 (Stuttgart, Bad Cannstatt, 1976), 237. Lessing responded by arguing that Christians judge biblical "patriarchs and prophets... in the light of divinity", and not in their historical context.

Erziehung des Menschengeschlechts (1777-1780), can be seen as Lessing's fourth alternative, an original attempt to come to terms with both reason and revelation by placing both in an historical and evolutionary framework. This framework appeared to Lessing as the way to retrieve the genuine religious insight without readmitting orthodox prejudices or, worse, inventing new ones like contemporary fashionable theologians.[4]

The new theological interest which dominated Lessing's Wolfenbüttel years was accelerated, as the letter to Mendelssohn shows, at around the time in which he was very eager to read Ferguson. Earlier, on 11 November 1770, he wrote to his brother Karl Lessing:

> ...but before everything else, I ask you to beg Herr Moses to send me the two promised books. If he has no time, then get him to give them to you, and send them to me with the earliest post. It is John Bunckel, or however he spells his name, and Ferguson. [Mendelssohn] has made me all too curious about the former, and the latter I would also prefer to read in English rather than in German.[5]

Mendelssohn responded cordially, but only in mid-December 1770 was the book finally posted to the impatient Lessing.[6]

The correspondence thus shows Lessing awaiting the arrival of Ferguson's unnamed work, eagerly leafing through it, and declaring that it had rekindled his passion to undertake a difficult intellectual quest. But what exactly was the quest, and what did Ferguson have to do with Lessing's struggle with lost truths and discarded prejudices?

There are several levels to the debate. The initial bone of contention is a plain matter of fact: which of Ferguson's books did Mendelssohn send Lessing, the *Essay on the History of Civil Society* (English 1767, German 1768), or the *Institutes of Moral Philosophy* (English 1769, German 1772)? As we shall see, a case can be made for each of these books; and

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4. On Lessing's concern about reclaiming the baby without the dirty bathwater see also his famous "Mistjauche" letter to his brother Karl, 2.2.1774; *Werke und Briefe*, 11/2, 614-617.

5. To Karl Lessing, 11.11.1770; *ibid.*, p. 89. Thomas Amory's *Memoirs of John Buncle* was later (1778) translated into German by Friedrich Nicolai.

6. Mendelssohn to Lessing, 29.11.1770; Mendelssohn, *Gesammelte Schriften*, 12/1, 237-238, 240. Lessing to Mendelssohn, 9.1.1771.

since they are so different from one another, it would seem reasonable enough to assume that the identification of the book in question has an important bearing on our understanding of the "truths" Lessing mentioned in each of the relevant paragraphs. Were they "truths" about religion, metaphysics, or history? The answer to this question in turn bears on the fundamental debate between several noted Lessing scholars in this century: what was Lessing's real attitude, in his late years, to Christianity?

The controversy is worth a look, because in many respects it is a classic: beginning as (or perhaps disguised as) an identification problem linked to the elusive history of book translation, circulation, and readership, it is really about Lessing's alleged re-embracing of Lutheran doctrines, and it sometimes looks like a battle over his soul. A procession of Lessing scholars has dipped into Ferguson's books (either the *Essay,* or the *Institutes*, or both) in order to fish out the clues for Ferguson's effect on their subject, with the sole purpose of substantiating their respective claims that Lessing was a rationalist to the end, or else a repentant Christian, or else a proto-historicist.

The first, and seminal, attempt to estimate Ferguson's contribution to Lessing's ideas was made by Friedrich Loofs in his work on Lessing's attitude to Christianity.[7] Loofs saw the *Essay* as the book whose table of contents revealed lost truths to Lessing, because only the *Essay* was available in both English and German at the time of Lessing's letter to his brother. The *Essay*'s discussion of the state of nature, its "History of Rude Nations", and the richness of its historical materials, all heralded in the table of contents, indeed beckon to "a real study". Ferguson's book, Loofs speculates, prompted Lessing to abandon his view of the positive religions as superstitious aberrations of pure original natural religion; instead, *Die Erziehung des Menschengeschlechts* presented Judaism and Christianity as genuine stages in the progressive development of human understanding. Lessing's fear of "dragging the whole rubbish back into the house" alludes to the readmission of supernatural revelation. Was it not Ferguson's table of contents, Loofs concludes, which reminded Lessing of the truth of a historical progress towards perfection?

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7. Friedrich Loofs, *Lessings Stellung zum Christentum* (Halle, 1910), pp. 22-23.

This interpretation set the stage for the later debate.[8] Woldemar von Olshausen, who denied Lessing's alleged return to orthodox Christianity, claimed that Ferguson helped to bring about "a fundamental turn in Lessing's *Weltanschauung* generally, and especially in his relation to metaphysics", in which religious questions played but a secondary role.[9] Ferguson's crucial contribution was nothing less than a "most decided perfectibility doctrine" (*ausgesprochenste Vervollkommungslehre*), which Olshausen finds in the *Institutes of Moral Philosophy*. Only the *Institutes* has a table of contents which could have moved Lessing so profoundly: God, immortality and freedom figure in it, and its very title suffices to cause the effect Lessing described. Lessing's wish to read it in English rather than German can be explained away: perhaps Lessing thought that a German translation of the second work already existed, or maybe he simply expressed his unwillingness to wait for one.

Olshausen's central point, however, is that Ferguson gave Lessing a sequel to the earlier "English" moralists he knew and loved. In 1756 Lessing had translated Hutcheson's *System of Moral Philosophy*.[10] He was a keen reader of Shaftesbury. Not only did Ferguson continue these thinkers' ideas of sociable benevolence and perfectibility, providing Lessing with the same "optimistic" notion of moral progress which he had earlier received from Leibniz;[11] Ferguson, according to Olshausen's reading of the *Essay*, was even a proto-historicist.[12] He gave Lessing the concept of history later applied in *Die Erziehung des Menschengeschlechts*, history predetermined by Reason and necessarily advancing toward its final goal. So Lessing - in Olshausen's terms - did not become a Christian after all; just a very early Hegelian.

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8. A summary of the principal views on Ferguson's impact on Lessing (omitting Loofs) is given in Edward S. Flajole, S.J., "Lessing's Retrieval of Lost Truths", PMLA 74 (1959), 52-54. This author, as we shall see, wants to reclaim Lessing for Christianity, and his account of the debate is accordingly tuned.

9. Waldemar von Olshausen, "Einleitung des Herausgebers", *Lessings Werke* ed. Julius Petersen and W. von Olshausen, vol. 24, (Berlin, Leipzig, Vienna, Stuttgart, 1919), 41-42.

10. *Franz Hutchesons Sittenlehre der Vernunft* (Leipzig, 1756). See Curtis C. D. Vail, *Lessing's Relation to English Language and Literature* (New York, 1936), pp. 25-37, for an analysis of this translation, "an extremely hasty work" (p. 26).

11. Olshausen, "Einleitung", p. 45.

12. Olshausen used the 1904 German translation of the 7th edition of the *Essay* (1814), and quoted several phrases which do not appear in the first edition Lessing must have used; *ibid.*, pp. 47-49.

Hans Leisegang, in his influential study of Lessing,[13] used only Olshausen's quotations, but nevertheless asserted that the book which transformed Lessing's thinking was the *Essay* rather than the *Institutes*. Leisegang thinks that Lessing found in Ferguson a new philosophy of history, akin to that of Herder's *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit*. "The development of mankind takes place in a gradual linear continuation of the development of nature, not through a declivity (*Abfall*) from nature, but through its progress to higher and higher degrees of perfection."[14] By "natural" - which he opposes to mystical and providential - Leisegang means that human progress is made in slow steps, with no leaps between them. But this kind of progress is no less inevitable for being strictly gradual.[15] Leisegang makes much of Ferguson's phrase that "the individual, in every age, has the same race to run from infancy to manhood, and every infant, or ignorant person, now, is a model of what man was in his original state." Since children mature though education, Leisegang sees this statement as "the seed of the fundamental idea of the "Education of Mankind", which Lessing develops as analogous to the education of a child."[16] The trouble is that Olshausen, the source of Leisegang's quotation, used a translation of the 1814 edition of the *Essay*. This sentence was not in the original 1767 version which Lessing must have used, if he used the book at all.[17] Moreover, Ferguson in fact strongly qualified the analogy between nations (or mankind) and individuals.[18] Education, real or metaphorical, human or divine, does not figure in the *Essay* at all.

One of the few writers to acknowledge that Lessing radically adapted Ferguson's ideas was Karl Aner in *Die Theologie der Lessingzeit*.[19] "The Englishman [!] did not speak of religious matters;" Aner notes, "but Lessing transferred his theory of development from lower to higher forms into the history of religion."[20] Aner sees Ferguson's *Essay* as the

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13. Hans Leisegang, *Lessings Weltanschauung* (Leipzig, 1931).
14. *Ibid.*, p. 117.
15. *Ibid.*, pp. 117-118.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 117.
17. See above, note 12.
18. See below, p. 181.
19. Halle / Saale, 1929.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 351.

source of anti-Rousseauist historical progressivism for both Lessing and Herder. Lessing owed Ferguson the new *geschichtsphilosophisch* approach, that enabled him to make his peace with his Pietist childhood memories through a positive yet selective retrieval of Christian dogmas. Reason could at last accept revelation, thanks to the insight that "the revealed religions were historically necessary transit-phases in the development of human reason, stages on the way to a religion of reason."[21] Whether Ferguson's *Geschichtsphilosophie* is truly represented in this adaptation is of no interest to Aner, and his carelessness about Ferguson's nationality shows how little he was interested in Ferguson himself.

A more recent American scholar, Edward S. Flajole, S.J., has offered a revision of the "historicist" view of Lessing which had become commonplace among German scholars. Flajole's thesis is that Lessing in fact meant to retrieve "religious truths", namely the Christian teachings he had formerly discarded and subsequently accepted.[22] Thus, *Die Erziehung des Menschengeschlechts* accepts the dogma of original sin (mankind in its lowest stage unable to obey moral laws), and the dogma of divine satisfaction (God nonetheless gave them moral laws and forgave their transgressions through his son). Similarly, Lessing accepted Christian revelation, though not without a bitter fight with both its orthodox and its "new-fangled" neologic versions.[23]

Die Erziehung, Flajole rightly observes, is a treatise on divine providence guiding mankind to its destined moral perfection.[24] Lessing's fascination with metempsychosis in the final paragraphs of *Die Erziehung* and elsewhere is an "heroically logical" conclusion of the belief that each individual is perfectible, yet perfection is a historical process transcending individual lifespans. And the "key" to this mystical perfectibilism, Flajole concludes, is no other than Ferguson's two books. Flajole favours the *Institutes* as the unnamed book which shook Lessing: Lessing's difficulties in getting the book seem to point to the recently published, untranslated *Institutes*; the preference of English to German

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21. *Ibid.*, p. 352.
22. Flajole, "Lessing's Retrieval", pp. 55ff.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 58.
24. *Ibid.*, pp. 61-62.

could mean that Lessing already knew that Garve worked on a translation. The wording indicates that Lessing knew little of the book, whereas the *Essay* had already been reviewed at length in the November 1770 issue of the *Allgemeine deutsche Bibliothek*.[25] It seems that Flajole, just like Olshausen whom he follows on this issue, favours the *Institutes* because it provides a concise philosophical exposition of perfectibility, whereas the historical narrative in the *Essay* develops in an annoyingly non-progressivist vein. Despite Flajole's qualification of Ferguson's perfectibilism,[26] he nevertheless asserts that "Ferguson... has assured Lessing that mankind is definitely, inexorably, moving towards individual and collective perfection."[27] Ferguson emerges from Flajole's analysis as the author who showed Lessing the way back to the basic Christian dogmas - the original sin, divine satisfaction, revelation. It was Ferguson who enabled Lessing to modify his Spinozism by introducing historical evolution, the finished formula being a providence-directed perfectibilism which transcends reason without offending it.

Strikingly, all the participants in the debate we have described interpreted Ferguson in much the same way. The disagreement about the identity of Ferguson's book which affected Lessing seems almost superficial, considering that the *Essay* was understood by all these scholars as a treatise on predetermined perfectibility no less than the *Institutes*. This is the reason why even those opting for the *Institutes* (Olshausen and Flajole) also made use - a highly selective use - of the *Essay*. Loofs' analysis in fact provided all the basic common assumptions: Ferguson gave Lessing a model of gradual, irreversible human progress in history. Human reason and morality are progressively approaching perfection as History unfolds. None of the scholars we have surveyed doubts that this is Ferguson's view. Even those who stress the "naturalist" character of his progressivism (the denial of both Rousseauist "unnaturalism" and supernatural intervention) never doubt the deterministic character of this natural advancement. Significantly, all their interpretations of the *Essay* invariably remain in its early parts, especially the first section, "Of the question relating to the State of

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25. *Ibid.*, p. 62. Flajole mistakenly identifies the reviewer as Richter. In fact it was Iselin.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 64.
27. *Ibid.*, p. 65.

Nature". They all disregard the second half of the book, which critically inspects the consequences of technological advancement, and the decline, corruption and slavery of advanced nations. Ferguson's explicit denials of any straightforward intellectual or moral progress are simply ignored.

One result of this misreading are the telling "similarities" found between Ferguson and either Leibniz or Herder, affinities which presumably made him all the more familiar to Lessing. Hence Olshausen's indiscriminate piling of Shaftesbury, Hutcheson and Ferguson as the "English" counterparts of Leibniz' optimistic belief in an irreversible moral growth. Similarly, Aner and Leisegang saw Ferguson all too easily as Herder's mentor, or as a fellow-traveller on Schiller's ascending *Spaziergang* to a glorious future for mankind.[28] Significantly, Leisegang reminds us that Goethe had called Herder's view of history *das liebwerteste Evangelium*.[29] This religious metaphor, applied by extension to Ferguson, may explain why all the uncertain, regressive and voluntarist elements in Ferguson, including his politics as a whole, are almost totally absent from the scholarly interpretations we have examined.

II

The present study differs from those surveyed above in one important respect - it focuses on Ferguson rather than on Lessing. Instead of Lessing's retrieval of lost truths it is therefore concerned with retrieving Ferguson's lost integrity as a thinker. Ferguson was neither a theorist of spiritual perfectionism nor a historical determinist. Even the *Institutes of Moral Philosophy*, where perfectibilism figures more strongly than in the *Essay*, clearly emphasises free will.[30] As we have seen, the much-quoted "Third Law of the Will" is carefully worded, and refers to "excellence" or "excellency" rather than perfection. These terms refer to social success no less than to spiritual or moral achievements.[31] Elsewhere Ferguson

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28. "Nicht rückwärts nach Arkadien, sondern vorwärts nach Elysium führt unser Weg." Quoted by Aner, *Die Theologie*, p. 351.
29. Leisegang, *Lessings Weltanschauung*, p. 117.
30. *Institutes*, p. 79.
31. "Men naturally desire what constitutes excellence, and avoid what constitutes defect... Excellency, whether absolute or comparative, is the supreme object of human desire. Riches, power, and even pleasure, are coveted with extreme ardour only when they are supposed to bestow eminence or rank." *Ibid.*, pp. 94-95.

systematically prefers "improvement" to "perfection",[32] because, "men conceive perfection, but are capable only of improvement".[33] While perfectibilism is perhaps morally laudable, it is certainly neither inevitable nor linear in human affairs.[34] If Lessing understood him otherwise, then he either misunderstood him, or else made a deliberately selective use of his idea of progress.

Beginning with the question of the book Mendelssohn sent Lessing, although a definite answer is very hard to establish, circumstantial evidence seems to point in the direction of the *Essay*. The expression "*der Ferguson* ", used in the friends' correspondence, still referred the *Essay* in 1770,[35] and began to be widely applied to the *Institutes* only after Garve's translation was published early in 1772.[36] It is significant that Göttingen, the mecca of English books, and conveniently close to Wolfenbüttel, did not respond to Ferguson's second book until April 1771, when the *Institutes* were reviewed in the GGA for the first time. If Garve was already working on the translation in November 1770, it was certainly unknown to the reviewer, J. G. Feder, who expressed the wish that a good translator be found.[37] A sample translation of one chapter by an anonymous Göttingen scholar (perhaps Achenwall) appeared in the *Hannoverisches Magazin* only on 22 November 1771. Göttingen was often the fastest digester of English books, being the first to order the new publications from Britain. The *Institutes* does not seem to be an exception: I have found no explicit evidence for anyone commenting on it before the Göttingen response.

Of course, the Berliners may have seen the book before 1771. But there is no proof that Nicolai and Mendelssohn, Lessing's friends, preceded the Göttingen scholars in reading or reacting to Ferguson's *Institutes*. Nicolai's *Allgemeine deutsche Bibliothek*, the central periodical of the circle to

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32. *Ibid.*, titles of chapter iv and part IV with its sub-sections.
33. *Ibid.*, p. 162.
34. *Ibid.*, pp. 162-164. The crucial point is that "human nature is actually in motion, either in a right or in a wrong path" (pp. 163-164).
35. In March 1770 Garve wrote his mother that he had recommended "der Ferguson" to his audience in Leipzig; *Briefe an seine Mutter*, p. 40.
36. The earliest reviews of this translation appeared in Frankfurt and Erfurt in late April - early May 1772. It seems, however, that F.H. Jacobi knew about the translation as early as Novermber 1771.
37. *Zugabe zu den Göttingischen Gelehrten Anzeigen*. 14. Stück, 13 April 1771.

which both Lessing and Mendelssohn belonged, did not review the original English edition of the *Institutes*.[38] As for Mendelssohn, who recommended "*der Ferguson* " to Lessing in the first place, the only reference he ever made to the *Institutes* is to Garve's translation. It was made as late as 1783, in Mendelssohn's *Jerusalem*, following his study of the text in the summer of 1782.[39] It seems rather improbable that, having read the English edition in 1770, Mendelssohn would re-read the book in German translation, or indeed wait so long to make something of it.[40] There is, furthermore, yet another piece of evidence in *Jerusalem*, which seems to have gone unnoticed. The author attacks Lessing's *Die Erziehung* with the following words: "I, for my part, cannot conceive of the education of the human race as my late friend Lessing imagined it under the influence of I-don't-know-which historian of mankind."[41] If the hint is at Ferguson, Mendelssohn can only have meant the *Essay*.

All these pieces of evidence, coupled with the remark "and the latter I would also prefer to read in English rather than in German", make a strong case for *An Essay on the History of Civil Society* as the book Lessing planned to study seriously. This is, indeed, the opinion of the majority of scholars. The central question, however, is not the identity of the unnamed book. Nor is it, for us, Lessing's return to the bosom of Christianity. Our question is to what extent Lessing's work after 1771 bears the marks of a "real study" of either of Ferguson's works.

As several recent writers have pointed out, the evidence is very meagre. Lessing simply does not mention Ferguson again after the letter

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38. For comparison: as late as May 1772 the *Frankfurter Gelehrte Anzeigen*, reviewing the German translation of the *Institutes*, expressed regret at not having the original at their disposal. See reprint of the review in Peter Müller (ed.), *Sturm und Drang*, vol. II (Berlin and Weimar, 1978), p. 71.

39. Mendelssohn discussed Ferguson's "Moralsphilosophie" and the commentary of "his excellent translator" with the jurist E.F. Klein, a subordinate of the Prussian minister K.G. Suarez. Their use of Ferguson's text was natural-jurisprudential, and will be discussed elsewhere. See Moses Mendelssohn, *Jerusalem, or on Religious Power and Judaism*, trans. by Allan Arkush (Hanover and London, 1983), p. 55n.

40. Mendelssohn's library inventory contains German translations of Hume and Blaire, but no books by Ferguson. See *Verzeichniß der auserlesenen Bücherversammlung der seeligen Herrn Moses Mendelssohn* (Berlin, 1786; rep. Berlin and Leipzig, 1926).

41. Mendelssohn, *Jerusalem*, p. 95. On Mendelssohn own, cyclical, idea of history see Alexander Altmann, *Moses Mendelssohn. A Biographical Study* (London, 1973), pp. 540-542.

of 9 January 1771. If *Die Erziehung des Menschengeschlechts* was written under Ferguson's impact, the burden of proof is on the scholar. It is not surprising that some historians, especially those exercising caution with regard to evidence, considered Ferguson to be insignificant, or only marginally significant, to Lessing's further development.[42] However, it is still widely accepted among German scholars that *Die Erziehung* bears obvious Fergusonian fingerprints.[43] While warning against an over-estimation of Ferguson's role in Lessing's intellectual development, they nevertheless emphasise the impact of Ferguson's "anti-Rousseau, ascending-civilization concept of history" on Lessing's new religious evolutionism.[44] The well-informed contemporary testimony of Moses Mendelssohn, who seems almost angry at the "historian of mankind" who led his friend astray, should also bear some weight in this matter.

I will approach the problem through a scrutiny of the relevant text, *Die Erziehung des Menschengeschlechts*, in order to find textual links - either linguistic or conceptual - with Ferguson's writings. *Die Erziehung* is a treatise on the process of human perfection, guided by providence, in the course of history. It consists of a hundred sections, of which the first fifty-three were published in 1777 as the "counter-proposition" to the fourth fragment by Reimarus, "That the Books of the Old Testament were Not Written to Reveal a Religion." The whole treatise was published anonymously in 1780, Lessing presenting himself as its editor.

The aim of the work, as Lessing puts it in his "editor's preface", is to persuade his readers to "see in all positive religions simply the process by which alone human understanding in every place can develop and must still further develop".[45] The first section supplies the basic

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42. See, for instance, Henry Chadwick, "Introduction", p. 37, and Henry E. Allison, *Lessing and the Enlightenment* (Ann Arbor, 1966), pp. 185-186. Chadwick, however, is misled by Leslie Stephen to consider Ferguson a marginal, undeservedly popular writer. Similarly, Allison sees him as "a relatively superficial thinker", who merely reminded Lessing to brush up his reading of Leibniz.

43. See, for instance, Klaus Bohnen, *Geist und Buchstabe. Zum Prinzip des kritischen Verfahrens in Lessings literarästhetischen und theologischen Schriften* (Köln, 1974), pp. 188-190.

44. Martin Bollacher, *Lessing: Vernunft und Geschichte. Untersuchung zum Problem religiöser Aufklärung in den Spätschriften* (Tübingen, 1978), pp. 169-170.

45. I have used the German text from *Lessings Werke*, ed. Kurt Wölfel (Frankfurt a.M., 1967), vol. 3, pp. 544-563, and H. Chadwick's revision of F.W. Robertson's English translation, *Lessing's Theological Writings*, pp. 82-98, with some modifications.

metaphor: "What education is to the individual man, revelation is to the whole human race." God is the great pedagogue in heaven, and he educates the human race through the mutually-complementing effects of revelation and reason. Mankind moves through epistemologic and moral phases - childhood, youth, and a future phase of maturity - towards its perfection, which is the ultimate goal of the educating providence. The old testament was the first "primer" given to a chosen nation; Jesus and the new testament supplied, as it were, the secondary education, extended to many nations. A third stage of teaching is yet to supersede it. But the course (of history and of education) is irreversibly progressing. Retrogression is always an illusion. Lessing speaks of "the great, slow wheel, which brings mankind nearer to its perfection", as being "set in motion by smaller, faster wheels" - individual human beings.[46]

The first and focal image of this work, the analogy between an individual and mankind, is the point where many scholars have seen Ferguson's fingerprint. Ferguson certainly made such an analogy in the very first paragraph of the *Essay*: "Not only the individual advances from infancy to manhood, but the species itself from rudeness to civilization."[47] However, even in its initial appearance the analogy serves mainly to elucidate the common mistake derived from it, "the supposed departure of mankind from the state of their nature."[48] Furthermore, Ferguson carefully differentiated between the childhood metaphor and the lifespan metaphor of societies. The lifespan metaphor - ascribing biological ages to nations - could, for him, lead only to the assumption that old age and decline of nations is "biologically" inevitable. Later in the *Essay* Ferguson fiercely attacks this, and, indeed, any organic metaphor of society. "The images of youth, and of old age, are applied to nations;" this brings about "a general apprehension, that the progress of societies to what we call the height of national greatness, is not more natural, than their return to weakness and obscurity is necessary and unavoidable... But it must be obvious," he continues, "that the case of nations, and that of individuals, are very different... in a society, whose constituent members are renewed in every generation... we cannot, by any parity of reason, expect to find

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46. The wheel metaphor is strikingly similar to the Ptolmeic cosmological model.
47. *Essay*, p. 1.
48. *Ibid.*

imbecilities connected with mere age and length of days."[49] This rejection of inevitable decline is, by the same token, a rejection of inevitable progress to a future state of total bliss. Both cyclical and linear models of historical determinism are rejected through the disposal of the organic metaphor of society. It is interesting to see that Ferguson's anti-metaphorical moods closely correspond with his anti-deterministic moods.[50]

By contrast, Lessing made the individual lifespan metaphor into the central theme of *Die Erziehung*. He developed it into a three age model, consciously drawing on medieval precedents (§87, 88). While the first two ages are biological, the third is apocalyptic, resembling Joachim of Fiore's "third church"[51] and not Ferguson's useless old age. Mankind goes through "childhood" (§16, 38, 50, 70), followed by "youth" (§55, 71). The third and final age is the "time of perfecting" (§85), of "a new eternal gospel"(§86, 87). The vision of this future bliss made Lessing uneasy with his own analogy, because he realized that this evolutionary perfection of mankind is unobtainable by individuals in any given time - unless "every individual man were present more than once in this world." (§94). Ferguson, on the other hand, would not need this "heroic" adoption of metempsychosis, precisely because every historical period, in his view, could provide a worthwhile scene for exerting human potentials.

A central theme in the first half of *Die Erziehung*, which strongly resembles Ferguson's concerns, is the use of nations - "raw" or "rude" nations - as the basic units of human progress and subjects of divine education. It is interesting that Lessing, throughout the treatise, is impatient with revelation to individuals. He feels forced to admit that "the first man", Adam, was "furnished at once with a conception of the One God"; but "as soon as human reason, left to itself, began to elaborate it", this abstract concept was lost (§6). This uneasy move from the biblical first man to primitive society leads Lessing to an unavoidable clash with

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49. *Essay*, pp. 208-209.
50. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 215.
51. On the apocalyptic historian Joachim of Fiore (d. 1202) as Lessing's medieval "enthusiast" see, for instance, Wölfel's commentary, *Lessings Werke*, vol. 3, pp. 696-697.

his own notion of epistemologic progress: between Adam and the rude nations there was evidently some Fall.[52]

Ferguson's justification for focussing on nations is, we may remember, empirical-anthropological: "Mankind are to be taken in groups, as they have always subsisted".[53] Lessing, on the other hand, is not concerned with explaining the historical existence of nations, or with justifying his use of them as the primary units of historical narrative. He simply sees the granting of divine revelation to a whole people as didactic wisdom: God preferred, so to speak, to teach a class rather than to give private tutorials: "...when he neither could, nor would, reveal himself any more to each *individual man*, he selected an *individual people* for his special education". The chosen Israelites were "the most savage [*das verwildertste*] and the most ferocious, in order to begin with it from the very beginning." (§8). For the sake of convenience, Lessing explains away the pre-Egyptian history of the Israelites and their God, and takes the revelation in Egypt (presumably the Mount Sinai event) as the initial point of divine intervention, the recipients being an absolute *tabula rasa* (§9).

Lessing's definition of "rude" (*roh*) is epistemologic and hence pedagogic. It means "untrained to think" (§27), or "unskilled for abstract thought", a rude nation being "entirely in its childhood" (§16). The associated terminology of "degrees" or "steps" (*Stufen*) of human progress is also used in a strictly moral sense. In the "first and lowest step of his humanity" man is unable to obey moral laws (§74), while the future state of moral autonomy is the "highest step of illumination and purity" (§81). Despite the difference of meaning, the very use of these concepts is a strong clue for Ferguson's impact on Lessing's vocabulary. The expression *Rohes Volk*, or *rohe Völker* - most often referring the Israelites - recurs very often (§11, 16, 18, 20, 27, 35). An external piece of evidence strengthens the case for identifying this concept as Ferguson's impact: when the young Lessing translated Hutcheson's *System of Moral Philosophy* more than twenty years earlier, "rude" was one of the words

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52. A second regressivist fallacy occurs in section 95, where Lessing defends the possibility of metempsychosis: "Is this hypothesis so laughable because it is the oldest? Because human understanding, before the sophistries of the Schools had dissipated and weakened it, lighted upon it once?"

53. *Essay*, p. 4.

he omitted from the German translation. The omission may have resulted from negligence or stylistic considerations, but it is also possible that Lessing was uncertain about the meaning of the word.[54] At some point between 1756 and 1777 Lessing became familiar with the "rude" or "raw" terminology in its historically pregnant meaning, and Ferguson's *Essay* is a good candidate for the book which could have given him this instruction.[55]

Interestingly, both Ferguson and Lessing combine the idea of a primitive people with the childhood metaphor and come up with an intellectual experiment: in Ferguson's words, "a colony of children transplanted from the nursery, and left to form a society apart, untaught, and undisciplined."[56] Lessing may have picked it up from the *Essay*, although the idea in general is an eighteenth-century commonplace which was also used by Iselin[57]; but his version is applied to the nations who did not receive divine education. Lessing's "children of nature" (§21) are "the other nations of the earth [who] had gone by the light of reason." Like children left to their own devices, "some educate themselves to an astonishing degree." (§20). This was the case of the ancient Persians, who gave the exiled Jews a rationalist notion of divine unity to complement the revelation-based monotheism (§35), and the Greek philosophers, who gave them a vague idea of immortality (§42). However, most uneducated children "remain quite raw" (§20), and even the rationalist heathens, untouched by revelation, are bound to be overtaken for good by "the child of education", who progresses "with slow but sure footsteps." (§21). In the present context we are not so interested in Lessing's dialectic evolutionism of revelation and reason, but rather in the absolute reliance of his progressivism on the educating providence. By contrast, Ferguson's "colony of children" develops every social trait, including language and conflict and national spirit, without any outside help. "Has not the human race been planted like the colony in question? Who has directed their course? whose instructions have they heard or whose example have they

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54. See Vail, *Lessing's Relation to the English*, p. 28. Hutcheson's text is on natural moral drives existing not only among "the civilized", but "even among rude barbarians and robbers." *A System of Moral Philosophy* (London, 1755), vol. I, 152.
55. Iselin's *Philosophische Muthmassungen* uses the term *wild* rather than *roh*.
56. *Essay*, p. 4.
57. Iselin, GdM, I, 167.

followed?"[58] Lessing, in the last account, is a determinist but not a naturalist: God, not Nature, is ultimately responsible for the ever-ascending progress of mankind. Ferguson, by contrast, is a naturalist but not a determinist: Nature, and no one else, gave mankind its basic capacities, the equipment for developing them and the impulse to act. But how far man takes them is up to man alone, and one type of progress - the technological or the political-institutional - can easily lead to regression in other fields of human activity.

Lessing's complete oblivion to the "cutting edge" of the *Essay*, its last two thirds, is clear from the second half of *Die Erziehung*. Nations, as units of progress, lose their importance when Christianity comes. The Jewish people, who had become educational sub-contractors for God (§18), are left behind when Christ's gospel is extended to a larger part of mankind, the "rational" nations (§54-56). The secondary textbook is diffused to many different nations (§62, 66), upon which national differences become unimportant for Lessing's historical narrative. Since human progress is for him purely epistemologic and moral, he remains uninterested in the social and political aspects of history. The terms "polished" or "civilised" do not appear in the text. Lessing's idea of progress does not encompass technology or manners. Only in one instance, when he describes the unifying elements of "that part of the human race" which was ready to embrace the teachings of Christ, does he mention "language, habits, government, and other natural and political relationships" (§54). But thenceforward the discussion is dominated by the concept of afterlife. The advance of knowledge and morality transcends the issues of earthly social existence: "For although, before [Christ], the belief had already been introduced among many nations, that bad actions have yet to be punished in the life to come; yet they were only such actions as were injurious to civil society, and which had, therefore, already had their punishment in civil society too. To preach an inward purity of heart in reference to another life, was reserved for him alone." (§61). This is the only occurrence of the term "civil society" in *Die Erziehung*.

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58. *Essay*, p. 4.

Lessing did not take up Ferguson's focus on political life in history. If, as Ferguson himself admitted, "no human institution is perfect",[59] Lessing's perfectionist impulse directed him elsewhere, to the immortality of the soul. Lessing may well have made use of the *Essay*'s early parts - the denial of a distinct state of nature, the idea of gradual advancement, the childhood metaphor (ignoring Ferguson's reservations) and the concept of rude nations. He did not, however, make any use of the rigorously empirical attitude, the eye for historical detail, and, above all, the lack of determinism. The rejection of both inevitable progress and inevitable regress is central to Ferguson's narrative. Lessing's alleged borrowing of linear progressivism from Ferguson is therefore simply unfounded. It would seem that neither Lessing nor the scholars who ascribed his views to Ferguson gave any serious attention to Ferguson's diagnoses of "of the Vicissitudes of Human Affairs" and "Of the Corruption incident to Polished Nations".[60]

This fundamental difference is best exemplified by Ferguson's and Lessing's contrasting attitudes to the weight of individual actions in history. In Lessing's education model, the "class" ought to advance in the pace set for it by its divine teacher. Individuals can, at best, catch a glimpse of the future legs of the journey; thus, before the coming of Christ, "the best individuals" had an inkling of afterlife, and "let themselves be ruled by the shadow of such nobler motives" (§56); but such private foresight is simply ineffective before God chooses to bestow true enlightenment on a wider section of the human race. With the possible exception of Christ's disciples, individual human beings cannot bring about any real progress for mankind. Moreover, such brilliant "pupils" who dare prematurely to articulate the glimpse they caught of future "lessons" are didactically told off: "You who are cleverer than the rest, who wait fretting and impatient on the last page of the primer, take care! Take care that you do not let your weaker classmates notice what you are beginning to scent, or even see!" (§68). The medieval "enthusiasts", who may have foreseen the "new eternal gospel" (§87), were much too impatient in predicting its prompt arrival, "and it was just this which made them enthusiasts" (§90). It is not that the individual does not matter for Lessing. Quite the opposite: "the time of perfection" is

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59. *Ibid.*, p. 118.
60. *Essay*, titles of section i in part V, and sections iii-iv in part VI respectively.

a time of individual moral autonomy, when actions will be based on the purest motives (§85); and the problematic introduction of the metempsychosis (§94-100) reflects Lessing's concern that every man who ever lived should be allowed to enjoy this ultimate phase. But individual actions cannot accelerate the progress of mankind, or affect its history in any important way. Indeed, individual activity which attempts to uncover the future divine syllabus is nothing short of unnatural, since it works against the "natural" maturing pace of mankind (§90).

Once again, Ferguson's treatment of the individual is almost diametrically opposed to Lessing's. Individuals do not enjoy linear moral progress in the course of history. Collective progress in technology and institutions often happens at the expense of individual knowledge and integrity. Thus, "the advancement of... mechanical arts" often requires "a total suppression of sentiment and reason".[61] Savage men are in some things more virtuous than civilised ones.[62] Corruption can appear in any stage of civilisation, and each stage has its typical corruptions.[63] Not only is social progress subject to "vicissitudes", there is no cumulative individual moral progress in the course of history. That each generation and each man should rekindle the flame of virtue was Ferguson's chief ethical point.

To conclude: a textual analysis of *Die Erziehung des Menschengeschlechts* can supply reasonable ground for assuming that Lessing read at least part of the *Essay on the History of Civil Society*, and used some of its vocabulary and basic narrative structure. Ferguson may well have helped Lessing to introduce a historical and evolutionary dimension to his understanding of positive religion, and thus to defend it from Reimarus' attack. But, despite superficial similarities in the idea of evolution, in the concept of rude nations and in the childhood metaphor, Lessing's text does not reflect a true response to Ferguson's work. Lessing neither accepted nor attacked Ferguson's model of civilisation, and there is nothing in *Die Erziehung* to reflect even the most cursory reading of the last three parts of the *Essay*. Incidentally, Lessing's use of the threefold biological ages metaphor, combined with his educationist view of history,

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61. *Ibid.*, p. 182.
62. *Ibid.*, p. 186.
63. *Ibid.*, pp. 242-243.

bears much more resemblance to Isaak Iselin's *Geschichte der Menschheit* than to Ferguson's *Essay*; but this possible link cannot be explored here.[64]

In no way can Lessing's *Education of Mankind* be seen as a political treatise. The absence of a political dimension is what distances it most from the *Essay*. Ferguson's book arrived, perhaps, in time to provide Lessing with an incentive to move in a direction which was Lessing's own, not Ferguson's. Its "Englishness", its high credentials, its intellectual novelty among the dusty tomes of the Wolfenbüttel library, the stage theory sketched in the table of contents, could have given Lessing impetus to embark on a new philosophy of religion. Ferguson, however, had little to do with the results.

It would be useful to end with a look at Lessing's own political credo in the same period. It is presented most clearly in the second and third conversations of his Masonic dialogues, *Ernst und Falk* (1778),[65] and reveals just how un-Fergusonian his political outlook was. Political union, despite being a "natural" process,[66] is presented as essential for the happiness of individuals only in the sense of providing them "greater safety".[67] This wholly individualist basis of happiness is probably not meant directly to counteract Ferguson or the ideas of civic humanism: Lessing's choice of words reveals that his blows are directed at the German *Patriotismus - Vaterland* terminology and its underlying national (as opposed to cosmopolitan) ideal.[68] Preaching spiritual cosmopolitanism, Lessing obviously did not care to derive individual happiness <u>in substance</u> from civic life.

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64. Mendelssohn's reference to "I-don't-know-which historian of mankind" (see above), could have referred to Iselin just as well. It is not necessarily a contemptuous remark: Mendelssohn had warmly recommended Ferguson's book to Lessing; as for Iselin, he saw him as his friend and "a truly wise man"; *Jerusalem*, p. 78n.

65. *Ernst und Falk. Gespräche für Freimaurer* (Wolfenbüttel, 1778) I have used a reprint of the first edition (Hannover and Leipzig, 1924), and the English transation by A. Cohen, *Lessing's Masonic Dialogues* (London, 1927). The following notes refer to the English text, used with several modifications.

66. *Masonic Dialogues*, second conversation, p. 43. Lessing accepts the formula of a pre-political "natural state", *ibid.*, p. 45.

67. *Ibid.*, p. 42.

68. *Ibid.*, pp. 43 and 51.

More importantly, he saw the State as imperfect by nature, because "political institutions", being "human means", are, unlike the "means of God", not "infallible".[69] Diversity - of nations, religions, and ranks within every society - is bad, though inescapable. Civil society necessarily creates and deepens gulfs between its members, and such "evils" are "quite contrary to its purpose".[70] Lessing's acknowledgement of diversity, we may note, is only superficially reminiscent of Ferguson: although Ernst admits that in civil society "men can only be united though division, can only be kept in union through continual division",[71] this division is in itself no source of strength whatsoever. The only chance lies in the supra-national, a-political, spiritually egalitarian mission of the Freemasons.[72]

The last resort, then, and the deepest sphere of action, is spiritual and epistemological: it is the restless quest for knowledge of truth. The philosophical chasm between Ferguson and Lessing, as well as most of the other *Aufklärer*, lies precisely in the definition of this final quest. It is no coincidence that Lessing, towards the end of his life, understood this truth-search in terms of the eternal striving for perfection, which we have earlier analysed as the basic pattern mistakenly read into Ferguson's political activism. Man's powers, Lessing wrote in *Eine Duplik*,

> which alone constitute his ever-increasing perfection, are broadened not through the possession of truth, but by his search for it... If God held in his right hand all truths, and in his left hand the single ever-moving drive toward truth, yet with the proviso that I shall always and ever err, and told me - "choose!", I would humbly fall at his left, and say - "Father, give! pure truth is for you alone!"[73]

Indeed, not even the Almighty could be fully and satisfactorily exempt from Protestant restlessness; as Lessing told Jacobi, we cannot imagine God "in the unchangeable enjoyment of his superlative perfection" without stumbling upon "the conception of an infinite boredom".[74]

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69. *Ibid.*, pp. 44.
70. *Ibid.*, p. 48.
71. *Ibid.*, p. 50. On Leibniz' perspectivalism as the possible source of Lessing's notion of the inevitable diversity see Allison, *Lessing and the Enlightenment*, pp. 137-138.
72. *Masonic Dialogues*, pp. 51-52, and in the third conversation, pp. 59 and 62.
73. *Eine Duplik* (1778), *Lessings sämtliche Schriften* (3rd edn., Leipzig, 1904), XIII, 23-24.
74. "F. H. Jacobi über seine Gespräche mit Lessing", Lessing's *Werke*, VIII, p. 572; quoted by Roche, *Dynamic Stillness*, pp. 10-11.

Chapter 7
Ferguson in Göttingen: Natural Law and the British Constitution

I

The University of Göttingen was the most British-orientated and the most innovative institute of its kind in eighteenth-century Germany. Gerlach Adolf von Münchhausen, the Hanoverian minister of King George II, laid its foundations in 1734 and secured the King's sanction for its inauguration in 1737, though most of the funding came from the Hanoverian Estates. Münchhausen remained a dominant figure in the University until his death in 1770.[1] By that time Göttingen had succeeded Halle as the leading and most fashionable German university, with an outstanding group of professors and a select body of students. Its fame rested on fresh academic emphases, modern teaching methods and renowned scholars. Two special features stemmed from its close connection with Britain: considerable academic freedom, and an excellent library. The four faculties - theology, law, medicine, and philosophy - enjoyed almost equal status, and the theology faculty was hindered from censuring the others. Religious enthusiasts (as well as atheists and Catholics) were not accepted as teachers. Against the harsh competition and declining standards of Germany's all-too-numerous universities, this blend of moderation and innovation enabled Göttingen to lure the right kind of students, to survive, and to prosper.[2]

Göttingen's *Anglophilie* - one facet of its fashionable image - can serve as our starting point. Here the reception of Ferguson and the other Scottish writers was part of the general warm welcome for "English" things. The dynastic and administrative link between Hanover and

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1. Götz von Selle, *Die Georg-August-Universität zu Göttingen 1737-1937* (Göttingen, 1937), pp. 35ff. F. Paulsen, *German Universities and University Study* (New York, 1906), pp. 49-50. F.O. Hertz, *The Development of the German Public Mind* vol. II (London, 1962), pp. 360-361.
2. Charles E. McClelland, *State, Society, and University in Germany 1700-1914* (Cambridge, 1980) pp. 35-41, 58-60. Notker Hammerstein, *Jus und Historie. ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des historischen Denkens an deutschen Universitäten im späten 17. und im 18. Jahrhundert* (Göttingen, 1972), pp. 312-314, 323-324.

Britain was powerfully echoed by cultural and intellectual inclinations. Personal ties were important: some of Göttingen's leading professors in the eighteenth century, such as Haller, Michaelis and Lichtenberg, travelled to England and became enthusiastic anglophiles. Michaelis' German translation of *Clarissa* made Richardson a favourite read in Göttingen, and Haller is said to have discussed imaginary sequels to the novel with his students.[3] The emulation of English habits made polite Göttingen look, as Caroline Michaelis wrote to a friend, like a "Londres en miniature".[4]

One of the most tangible aspects of this *Anglophilie* was the university library, uniquely well-stocked with English books. It was widely considered to be the best of its kind in Germany, and it attracted many scholars to Göttingen.[5] The library was exceptionally quick to acquire recent books and foreign periodicals.[6] New works from Britain arrived at Göttingen very fast. Books by David Hume, Adam Smith and James Beattie, among others, were made available to Göttingen scholars soon after their first publication.[7] Not surprisingly, the *Göttingische Anzeigen von Gelehrten Sachen* (GGA) was the first German periodical to announce the translation of Ferguson's *Essay*, very shortly after it appeared.[8] Nor is it surprising that the classical philologist Christian Gottlob Heyne, who penned this announcement, was familiar enough with his subject matter to hail "the important and profound philosophical work by Ferguson".[9] In

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3. Selle, *Georg-August-Universität*, p. 183.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 186. On Lichtenberg see Maurer, *Anglophilie*, p. 416.
5. Herbert Butterfield, "The Rise of the German Historical School", *Man on his Past* (Cambridge, 1955), p. 40. Maurer, *Anglophilie*, p. 48.
6. Butterfield, *ibid.*, p. 52. Fabian, "English books", pp. 164-165. Hans-Erich Bödeker, "Political Economy and Staatswissenschaften at the University of Göttingen: The Scottish Influence", unpublished essay (1986), pp. 5-7.
7. Bödeker, "Political economy", *ibid.* For a comprehensive listing see *A Catalogue of English Books Printed before 1801 Held by the University Library at Göttingen* compiled by Graham Jefcoate and Karen Kloth, edited for the Library by Bernhard Fabian (Hildesheim, Zürich, New York, 1988).
8. GGA, 1768, vol. 2, 1056. On the GGA and its English orientation see Selle, *Georg-August-Universität*, pp. 68-77, Price, "English Humanoria", pp. xxiv-xxv, and G. Roethe, "Göttingische Zeitungen von gelehrten Sachen", *Festschrift zur Feier des 150jahrigen Bestehens der königlichen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen* (Berlin, 1901), pp. 581, 646-667.
9. GGA, *ibid.* Reviews were anonymous, but the names are disclosed in the handwritten marginalia on the Göttingen Library copy of the GGA; cf. Wolfgang Schimpf, *Die Rezensenten der Göttingischen Gelehrten Anzeigen 1760-1768* (Göttingen, 1982).

later years the GGA alerted its readers of Ferguson's new works as soon as they appeared in the English original.[10] The University library acquired the first English editions of Ferguson's four books, as well as one pamphlet, most German translations and Tourneisen's English-language reprints.[11]

Our look at Göttingen begins around 1770. Göttingen had already earned its reputation as a centre of academic innovation which applied fresh empiricist and critical thinking to its fields of learning. The theology faculty, under Mosheim, Semler, and Michaelis, pioneered the philological and historical study of the scriptures. Classical philology was likewise developed in the seminars of Gesner and Heyne, paving the way to modern humanistic studies. But the most significant achievements were related to the study of law, history, and the emerging and transforming sciences of politics.[12]

The law faculty, Münchhausen's favourite, continued the renewed interest in public law (*jus publicum*) which had been sparked off at the University of Halle in the decades preceding the foundation of its Göttingen rival. This discipline had for some time been closely linked with history through the methodology of "pragmatic jurisprudence", which aimed at studying the historical causes and circumstances of Roman and German laws. Göttingen, however, had political and financial reasons to appeal to the nobility - the class providing the University's benefactors and its most sought-after students - by emphasising the German legal traditions which preceded absolutism and its "regalistic" legislation.[13] This tendency, which prevailed late into the century, affected the University's political colours and its understanding of history.

History, however, was not to be merely an ancillary science in the service of Law. The *Historicus*, Münchhausen believed, must serve his

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10. See list of reviews in the bibliography.
11. *Catalogue of English Books*, Part Two, vol. 2, 569-570. The pamphlet was the anonymous *Remarks on a Pamphlet... by Dr. Price* (London, 1776).
12. Butterfield, "German Historical School", pp. 40-41. For a more recent description see McClelland, *State, Society, and History*, p. 60.
13. McClelland, *ibid.*, pp. 43-45.

own discipline first.[14] This belief was put to practice with the election of a historian, rather than a jurist, to the chair of *Historie* or *Eloquenz* in the philosophy faculty.[15] While traditional *Reichshistorie* remained also the domain of jurists, two new directions evolved which merited the independent chair. Both these directions involved the renewal and transformation of older fields of inquiry, and both are pertinent to our study of the reception of Ferguson. One was the revival of *Universal-Historie*, and the other was the emergence of the *Staatswissenschaften*.

Johann Christoph Gatterer was elected in 1759 to the history chair. In 1767 he published his famous "historical plan",[16] in which he claimed that the history of the *Reich* should be understood within the broad framework of European and world history. He called for a history with a "philosophical goal", mapping the significant temporal and geo-political relations between the nations, but at the same time adhering to Göttingen's high standards of scrupulous source-criticism. Gatterer practiced these principles in his *Universalhistorie* (1760, revised seven times), and in his lecture course. His younger colleague August Ludwig Schlözer represents, more than any other Göttingen professor, the commitment to the empirical study of political units. His famed course of *Statistik* offered a comprehensive analysis of contemporary States and societies, based on up-to-date research and extensive personal contacts with other European countries.[17] But Schlözer had an important predecessor, the jurist Gottfried Achenwall, who may be more interesting for our discussion.

It was Achenwall who first founded a course entitled *Statistik*, concerned with gathering and analysing all relevant facts on existing

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14. Hammerstein, *Jus und Historie*, pp. 315ff. Gatterer ascribed the prolific output of history writing in Germany to its legal complexities, necessitating historical enquiry into rights and precedents; see Butterfield, "German Historical School", pp. 37-38.

15. This emancipation of history from law might also reflect the concern of eminent jurists such as J.J. Moser (in a memorandum to Münchhausen) that jurists should not indulge too much in history; see Mack Walker, *Johann Jakob Moser and the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation* (Chapel Hill, 1981), p. 177. On the increasing weight of the philosophy faculty see McClelland, *State, Society, and University*, pp. 42-43.

16. *Allgemeine historische Bibliothek* (hereafter AhB), vol. I (1767).

17. Butterfield, "German Historical School", pp. 41 and 49-50. Bödeker, "Political economy", p. 16ff.

political constitutions, as early as 1749. Overcoming the doubts of Münchhausen and his colleagues, Achenwall in fact established the academic respectability of "practical" or "concrete" political analysis at Göttingen.[18] Schlözer later collaborated in teaching the course. At Achenwall's death in 1772 Schlözer took over, his success compensating for his non-juridical background.[19] But in the present context it is worth emphasising that despite its new methodological and thematic concerns, the Göttingen study of both politics and history remained strongly linked with the parent discipline, jurisprudence.[20]

This link was a complex one, and it is not easy to reconstruct. As we have seen, historical fact-finding and source-criticism initially sprang from the challenges of positive law, and faced problems arising from the multiplicity of historical circumstances in which human laws were made. But another source of historical (or meta-historical) thinking was also at work: the universal patterns sought by Göttingen's leading historians received their impetus and shape from Natural Law. Contemporaries were aware of a process which we might call the mobilization of Natural Law in the service of historiography. The idiom of Natural Law was retained, but also transformed and "historicized", for the new attempts at a "universal" narrative of the history of mankind, such as Iselin's. This mobilization did not always go down well from the jurisprudential viewpoint: Achenwall's death signalled for some people the decline of "real" Natural Law in the University. Georg Brandes, a Hanoverian *Kabinettsekretär*, was concerned in 1781 about the disappearance of "philosophical sense" from Göttingen's jurists. Feder and Schlözer were, in his view, no replacement for Achenwall.[21]

Historical perspective has produced more positive accounts of this project. Recent students of the late *Aufklärung* have pointed out the fertility, rather than the demise, of the language of natural jurisprudence in this period. It is possible to describe the emergence of the

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18. Selle, *Georg-August-Universität*, pp. 111-113. Hans-Heinrich Solf, *Gottfried Achenwall. Sein Leben und sein Werk, ein Beitrag zur Göttinger Gelehrtengeschichte* (dissertation, Göttingen, 1938), p. 37ff.
19. Butterfield, "German Historical School", pp. 51-52.
20. Michaelis complained that students of history find it too encumbered by jurisprudence; Hammerstein, *Jus und Historie*, p. 319. Cf. McClelland, *State, Society, and University*, pp. 42-43.
21. Selle, *Georg-August-Universität*, pp. 157, 258, 362 (endnote 1 to p. 157).

Staatswissenschaften, the precursors of modern social and political sciences, from the womb of Natural Law: Justi, Achenwall and Schlözer are credited with the gradual consolidation of the natural-law-based *Staatsrecht*, together with *Staatenkunde*, history, *Polizei* and cameralistic science, into the amalgam of modern political science.[22] Other studies show how Natural Law itself was transformed into a "late" phase around 1780, with new applications to political theory which indicate fertility rather than decline. This transformation involved a move away from the traditional role of Natural Law as a source of justification for monarchic absolutism, and towards theories of political liberty in the 1790s.[23]

Some of the authors of this shift were associated with Göttingen: the cameralist J.H.G. Justi, who taught there briefly and left a lasting impact, developed a limited notion of civil liberty (which depended on the active support rather than the passive self-limitation of the State). The Göttingen philosopher Johann Georg Heinrich Feder echoed Justi when he attacked the "unnecessary limitation of freedom".[24] The Göttingen thinkers did not, however, proceed to venture a full-blown theory of political liberty within a Natural Law framework. During the 1790s their characteristic response to the French Revolution was in the key of Rehberg and Brandes, accepting Burke's refutation of the revolutionary Natural Law doctrine and embracing an aristocratic view of the English constitution. Something of an exception was Schlözer, who in 1790 employed a language of liberty and human and civil rights, and in 1793 understood political liberty as the "share (*Anteil*) of the citizen in the government"; but in the latter context recommended a hereditary "mixed monarchy" following the English model, and did not accept universal suffrage.[25] The radicalization of Natural Law as a political language in France and among some of the German radicals in the 1790s prepared the way for the reception of Smith's political economy in Göttingen and in Prussia at the turn of the century, which is beyond the scope of the present study.

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22. Bödeker, "Political Economy".

23. For a recent analysis see Diethelm Klippel, "Naturrecht als politische Theorie. Zur politischen Bedeutung des deutschen Naturrechts im 18. and 19. Jahrhundert", in *Aufklärung als Politisierung - Politisierung der Aufklärung*, eds. Hans Erich Bödeker and Ulrich Herrmann (Hamburg, 1987), pp. 267-293.

24. Quoted *ibid.*, p. 272.

25. Quoted in Jürgen Schlumbohm, *Freiheitsbegriff und Emanzipationsprozeß* (Göttingen, 1973), pp. 28 and 32.

While the political language of Natural Law was undergoing these changes, Göttingen's classical scholarship bloomed. It has been suggested that Göttingen's "neo-humanism" in the last decades of the century "can be regarded as a rejection of some aspects of modernity incorporated in the German Enlightenment and in the early Göttingen reform model."[26] The political significance of this classicist trend is an important question not only with regard to Göttingen, but also touching on Weimar and other centres of the German classicist revival. In the present study Göttingen offers an opportunity to examine the impact of Ferguson's civic humanist language of politics - couched in his historical studies of antiquity - on his classicist-minded German readers.

It is important to note that here, perhaps more than anywhere else in German speaking lands, Adam Ferguson was one of many well-known Scottish writers. The impact of the Scots on the various projects developing in Göttingen at this period is yet to be studied. An impressive group of them - Hume, Hutcheson, Home, Smith, Reid, Beattie, Millar, Ferguson, Steuart - were read and discussed at Göttingen. Its professors, especially Feder and Meiners, were among the very first Germans to pay serious attention to Smith's *Wealth of Nations*. As elsewhere, different Scots were doing different things; but even our study of a single Scottish author can reveal a variety of different readings. Ferguson's writings were put into distinguishable uses by Göttingen's jurists, historians, epistemologists and moral philosophers. Yet each of his readers - that is, those who left us evidence of their reading - made some response to his political ideas.

Ferguson's best documented readers at Göttingen are Feder, Meiners, and Heyne.[27] The philosophers Feder and Meiners, who were the foremost mediators of Scottish ideas in Göttingen, were also its leading *Popularphilosophen*, the friends and intellectual allies of Garve. Their project involved an adaptation of British empiricism and Scottish common

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26. McClelland, *State, Society, and University*, p. 61.

27. Recent references to Lichtenberg's interest in Adam Ferguson (e.g. Maurer, *Anglophilie*, p. 291) are a red herring. The "berühmte Ferguson" mentioned in this context by Albrecht Schöne (*Aufklärung aus dem Geist der Experimentalphysik: Lichtenbergsche Konjunktive*, Munich, 1982, p. 51f) was the astronomer James Ferguson.

sense to the German rationalist tradition. In the early 1780s they formed with Garve an anti-Kantian front which tried to defend the *Aufklärung* idea of Reason against Kant's allegedly "Berkeleyan" idealism. In this (doomed) battle they relied on Locke and on the Scottish common sense philosophers, especially Reid and Beattie.[28] As one might expect, the common-sense notions in Ferguson's doctrines were fervently sought and greatly emphasized.

This epistemological battleground is, of course, not the whole story. Other fields of inquiry, such as Feder's moral philosophy and Meiners' history of mankind, made an interesting use of Ferguson. These works have been neglected by students of the period, Meiners' history because of its embarrassingly modern racism, and Feder's ethics because of its rather dull and dated Stoicism. For the present study, however, these works need to be taken as seriously as the better known Göttingen projects. They reflect "late" Natural Law (Feder) and "early" historicism (Meiners), and share an interest in antiquity. Within these contexts, both works convey political ideas; and when it came to politics, even the most ardent followers of British epistemology and Scottish ethics showed clear signs of dissent.

Even the brief overview attempted here should suffice to show that Göttingen was not an abode of blind worshippers. English gardening and the Richardson fashion were one thing, intellectual dependency quite another. As Götz von Selle has noted, until rather late in our period "in the University itself, strangely enough, not the least attention was paid to England. There are no lectures on English history or English law in the lecture catalogues."[29] It was precisely in the fields of history and law that the Göttingen scholars had a German tradition to draw upon. Gatterer's *Universal-Historie* revived a German Protestant genre, degenerated in the seventeenth century and neglected by the Halle *Reichshistorie* tradition; he brought it to life using the new source-criticism methods of his Göttingen predecessors. A recent study has emphasised that this was part of an indigenous German development, moulded by "the debate with the West European history works" of Voltaire, Montesquieu, Hume, and

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28. Beiser, *Fate of Reason*, ch. 6; Kuehn, "Early Reception", pp. 483-486, and *Scottish Common Sense*, ch. iv.
29. Selle, *Georg-August-Universität*, pp. 183-184.

Robertson.[30] The case may be overstated, but it is well founded: Gatterer's craving for a German Hume[31] did not prevent him from pouncing mercilessly on the petty imitators of Scots or French historians.[32] Anglophilia did not keep Schlözer from dealing the death blow to the German translation of an unsatisfactory English attempt at a universal history.[33]

The reception of Ferguson can thus provide us with a test-case for examining the relevance of ideas from Britain to the various projects-in-the-making at Göttingen from the 1770s to the 1790s. We shall have to distinguish not only between these projects, but also between Ferguson's several "identities" - the epistemologist, paraphraser of Natural Law, historian of Rome and of mankind, political thinker. Our final question remains the focal question of the present study: was Ferguson's civic humanism taken seriously by any of his readers at Göttingen?

II

One of Ferguson's earliest Göttingen readers was a probably a jurist, and his initial is 'A'. In the autumn of 1771 he published in the *Hannoverisches Magazin* an annotated translation of the chapter "Of political laws" from the *Institutes of Moral Philosophy.*[34] Gottfried Achenwall is a very plausible candidate for this anonymous translation: active until his sudden death in the spring of 1772, he published many journal articles in his last years, read Hume and other British writers, and showed interest in political economy.[35] However, Göttingen had at least one other possible 'A', the jurist G.H. Ayrer, who also developed an

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30. Hammerstein, *Jus und Historie*, pp. 360-363. Hammerstein points out the continuity from Halle to Göttingen, emphasises the indigenous evolution of German history writing, and warns against assuming "too close a proximity" between the Göttingen school and the French and British historians; *ibid.*, pp. 310-312.
31. Quoted by Butterfield, "German Historical School", p. 43.
32. "Affektierte Hume'schen oder Robertson'schen, teutsche Voltär'chen; diese Insecten wollen wir ohne Schonung allerorten wo wir sie antreffen, verfolgen. Sie können schädlich werden, wie alle Insecten." AhB, vol. I, Vorrede.
33. Butterfield, "German Historical School", pp. 47-48, 53.
34. "Von Staatsgesetzen (Aus Adam Ferguson's Institutes of moral philosophy...)", *Hannoverisches Magazin*, issues 93-94 (22 and 25 November, 1771).
35. Solf, *Achenwall*, pp. 31, 52.

interest in the English legal system during the 1760s.[36] The translator, of course, may also have been a lesser academic, an *Extraordinarius* or a *Privatdozent*. However, the authoritative phrasing of the footnotes seems to point in the direction of a senior professor with a strong juridical background and a critical acquaintance with the British system.[37]

The choice of the last chapter of the *Institutes*, "Of political law", is interesting in itself: here Ferguson presents his version of Montesquieu's political typology, dwelling on the necessity of political institutions, and on their correlation to social structures, geographic extensions and the ethical condition of a nation. Ferguson's own emphasis is on the moral primacy of participatory government in any of its several varieties, where as many citizens as possible can have some say in the affairs of the polity.[38] The realistic forms he advocates are mixed republic, aristocracy, and mixed monarchy; the latter bears semblance to the British government. The Göttingen scholar who chose the chapter was evidently interested in both the juridical and the political aspects of Ferguson's work, although he did not always feel at ease with them.

The translator was well acquainted with Ferguson's *Essay on the History of Civil Society* - a clue in favour of Achenwall, whose interests transcended mere jurisprudence. While drawing attention to Ferguson's apparent "paradox" that "men who have least private interest, are best disposed to love their country",[39] he offered his readers a concise and intelligent paraphrase of a key idea from the *Essay*. The author "has proved elsewhere", he says,

> that our institutions, in their concern for landed property, money, large-scale commerce, family rights etc., create and nourish selfishness; that our present-day States are afflicted by this universal disease, and patriotic spirit is thus weakened or stifled altogether. From this viewpoint a State, or, in more general terms, a *Völkerschaft* is therefore happier if it is not acquainted with these artificial institutions, and if its members know nothing of exclusive rights, property, wealth, civil and hereditary preferences [*Vorzügen*]. Among

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36. Selle, *Georg-August-Universität*, pp. 56, 107.
37. For instance, "Von Staatsgesetzen", footnote a, columns 1493-1494. Numbers in the text will hereafter refer to column numbers of this translation.
38. See my discussion of some key paragraphs in chapter 2, p. 61.
39. *Institutes*, p. 290.

> them there is no unpatriotic passion of self-interest. Knowing and having little or no private interests, they are better fitted for loving their fatherland in the best, purest, noblest way, quite unselfishly. (Footnote c, 1477-1480)

The paraphrase is obviously attentive to Ferguson's critique of the over-efficiency and over-protectiveness of the modern State and its economic system. Especially striking is the reference to a *Völkerschaft*; a civil society of sorts which preceded the State. However, the paraphrase overstates the *Essay*'s case, because it disregards Ferguson's understanding of the double-edgedness of modernity, and makes him an all-out primitivist. It is also an under-statement, making no mention of Ferguson's prescribed remedy for the evils of modern civil society.

The reason for this neglect of Ferguson's modern civic humanism seems to be a sheer lack of interest: political ethics, or "patriotic spirit", were not the major concern of this Göttingen scholar. He was evidently more interested in the text as an "English" exposition of civil and public law, and on this subject he had two interesting criticisms to make. In the first place, Ferguson's application of the term "natural law" to political laws was disliked by the Göttingen man. An opening paragraph defining the "Political law of nature" was omitted from the translation.[40] And when Ferguson discusses the "principles of natural law" which relate to criminal prosecution, the translator loses his patience. Ferguson lists under this title the following very British ideas:

> That no one shall be obliged to give evidence that may affect himself.
> That no one shall be tortured into confessions or discoveries of any sort.
> That no one shall be punished, unless he shall have committed such overt acts as the law has pronounced to be criminal.[41]

These, a translator's footnote says, are not natural laws. They are -

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40. It reads: "Political law of nature, is that branch of moral law which expresses what is beneficial in the civil institutions of men." *Institutes*, p. 283. The first paragraph of the chapter (p. 282), linking its subject matter with the book's earlier parts, was omitted as well.

41. *Institutes*, p. 287. The first principle in this list, which the translator did not contest, was that everyone is innocent until proven guilty.

> basic rules of English administration of the law [*Justiz*] and pillars of the Briton's freedom. But they cannot be acceptable as law of nature in the simple and general form in which they are put here. The Englishman is accustomed from his youth to think so and not otherwise. How easily he confuses this way of thinking, which is natural for *him*, with Nature itself! There are scholars of other nations who are no better than that. (footnote a, 1475-1476, emphasis given)

This is an interesting statement, because it implies either that the British "freedom" is not universally right, or that it is not universally applicable; either way, it is not "natural" in the strict sense. The reviewer obviously saw some rights as natural: when Ferguson mentions pre-despotic institutions "by which men are stripped of their rights",[42] his translator inserts "*ihrer natürlichen Gerechtsame* " (1499, emphasis added). But Ferguson's use of the adjective "natural" was evidently broader than his German translator's. For Ferguson a natural law of the moral (not physical) kind is precisely an "ought", an ideal for the good polity, and not a universal occurrence. In the political sense it was precisely a normative law, about what a polity ought to be. If the British procedures of trials are right, then they follow natural law even if most nations are incapable or unwilling to apply them. On this point, certainly with respect to European nations, the cultural relativism which Ferguson took from Montesquieu changes into a normative and prescriptive idea of government.

This retreat from relativism is highlighted in Ferguson's ideal political typology, in which he classes nations into four "suppositions" from a perfectly virtuous to a perfectly evil people, and allots the appropriate government to each. In effect, Ferguson tells us, only the two middle suppositions are realistic. One of them defines the appropriate circumstances for a democracy, an aristocracy, a mixed republic or a mixed monarchy - all allowing some participation of the people. It is the other realistic supposition, however, which irritates the Göttingen translator. This is the category of absolute monarchy, although Ferguson avoids this term. The absolutist elements are quite clear from Ferguson's characterization, superadded to his quotation of Montesquieu's principle of honour. In this form, Ferguson says, a hereditary aristocracy co-exists with the strong monarchy, and the ruler is forced to govern by "fixed and

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42. *Ibid.*, p. 318.

determinate laws". The kind of nation which deserves such a government is, in Ferguson's words,

> A people, on whose vanity, and sense of personal importance, rather than virtue, the state must rely for the discharge of the social and political duties.[43]

Now whom did the author have in mind? The very location of the translator's footnote-reference catches the eye: it does not wait for the end of the sentence, but hinges on the word *Eitelkeit* (vanity). This, for our German reader, is the code concealing the identity of the nation Ferguson was hinting at:

> One can see from this supposition, that the British author has in mind the nation of this side of the Channel, with whom the English [nation] stands in the greatest contrast, not only political but also moral. (Footnote d, 1483-1484)

This could only mean the French, and it fits well into the francophobe complement to Göttingen's anglophilia. But what are this jurist's views on the governments which exist under the Holy Roman Empire? Did he deliberately overlook Ferguson's venom towards any absolutist, non-participatory regime? Did he have no stance on the way "British freedom" - natural-law-based or not - compared with Hanover's political layout, let alone other German principalities?

A partial answer is given by another footnote. This time the trigger is Ferguson's statement that "Under monarchy, courts of justice are best composed of many. Here the influence of the crown is more to be dreaded, than the faction of the people."[44] Once more, the translator intervenes authoritatively, and once more he does not shrink from a concrete interpretation:

> This maxim, with its preceding counter-maxim [on republics] comes from a comparison of the English legal system [*Justizverfassung*] with the French, and, as far as I know, is a new observation. But it is doubtful whether it is as important as it seems to the author. It is

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43. *Ibid.*, p. 299.

44. *Ibid.*, pp. 312-313. By contrast, "Under popular, or republican governments, of any sort, courts of justice are best composed of few members"; p. 312.

> useful for the horizon of these two nations, but less so outside it. It could be that in the States in question [the] opposite institutions have the same good effect; but this effect is certainly not to be ascribed merely to the institution itself, but also to other co-effective [*mitwürkenden*] reasons. (Footnote b, 1495-1496)

This comment reflects an important Göttingen insight, indeed the gist of Achenwall's and Schlözer's *Statistik*: the governmental and legal structures of each political unit are a particular growth, which can only be studied as such. The British system too is a product of history, circumstances and chance; hence it is neither a neat application of natural law, nor a model for emulation, even if its laws are praiseworthy.

In Achenwall's book on European constitutions Britain is indeed seen primarily as a monarchy which happened to acquire good laws. Its "liberties", from the Magna Charta to the Union of Parliaments, are seen as a historical accumulation of accidental deviations from the absolutist pattern, its party politics is denounced, and the significance of Parliament is played down.[45] The love of freedom, which Ferguson assigned to every good polity, is for Achenwall part of the Englishmen's national character, just like their inclination to suicide.[46] We are beginning to sense that the translator's evident curiosity about the British constitution is geared to justify difference, not to advocate emulation.

In our text, the rejection of the British government type as a normative model coincides with the dimming of Montesquieu's presence. Ferguson's two footnote references to *De l'esprit des lois* - the second of which supports a short direct quotation from Montesquieu[47] - do not appear in the translation. The terms "legislation, jurisdiction, and execution"[48] are translated awkwardly as *Gesetzgeben*, *Rechtsprechen oder der Gerichtbarkeit* and *Vollstrecken der Gesetze* (1489). This "de-tokenizing" of the separation of powers vocabulary fits well into the broader picture of the German misreception of Montesquieu.[49] Our text clearly reveals

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45. Achenwall, *Staatsverfassung der heutigen vornehmsten Europäischen Reiche im Grundriße*, (4th edn., Göttingen, 1762), quoted and discussed in Maurer, *Anglophilie*, pp. 64-65.
46. Selle, *Georg-August-Universität*, p. 189.
47. *Institutes*, footnotes on pp. 282 and 318.
48. *Ibid.*, p. 305.
49. See discussion of Vierhaus' study in chapter 1, pp. 31-32.

that the main victim of this misreception was Montesquieu's normative evaluation of the British free State. The professors of Göttingen, like Möser and Herder, developed a statement of historical relativism which demolished the English governmental model, while remaining fascinated by the English governmental type. The British polity, for them, was a case unto itself.

It is fascinating to see how this refusal to accept the British system as "natural" is reflected in a series of minor language shifts. The word "custom" is omitted from the definition of political law as "statute, custom or other convention".[50] "Community" becomes either *Nation*, or *Staat*, or *Volk*, and "juries" - *geschworne Männer* (1477). The concept of "rights" is detached from its plural, collective and civil context. Thus, the people's "enjoyment of their rights"[51] is individualized into *Genuß der Gerechtsamen eines Jeden* (1474); similarly "the rights and obligations of men"[52] is rendered *eines Jeden Gerechtsame und Schuldigkeiten* (1475). Significantly, "Civil rights" become *Privatgerechtsame* (1475) or *Privatrechte* (1476). Admittedly, this is a legitimate rendering, equivalent to the standard translation of "civil law" into *Privatgesetze* (1476); however, it helped to obscure the communal and civic resonance of Ferguson's language of rights. Thus, both civic language and the British political terminology were often obliterated or made awkward and complicated, as our final example may demonstrate. In Ferguson's text magistrates and ministers are "accountable"; in German they are "*zur Verantwortung gezogen werden können* " (1498).

III

Göttingen's own academic journal published its first lengthy review of the *Institutes of Moral Philosophy* in April 1771, several months before the *Hannoverisches Magazin* translation. Significantly, the GGA never reviewed the *Essay on the History of Civil Society*, although its appearance in German was duly announced. This does not mean that the *Essay* had no impact in Göttingen: in fact, most of the scholars dealing

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50. *Institutes*, p. 283; "Von Staatsgesetzen", p. 1473.
51. *Institutes*, p. 284.
52. *Institutes*, p. 285.

with Ferguson read it in the English original. But it can mean that they, as most other Germans, found the *Institutes* more important than the *Essay*.

The anonymous GGA reviewer was J.G.H. Feder.[53] A well-known empiricist philosopher, Feder impressed not only fellow-*Aufklärer* such as Garve, but also the young Hegel and Kant himself. His all-out offensive on Kant's critical philosophy, however, eventually led to his intellectual and personal downfall.[54] Both Feder and his colleague, Meiners, were well-disposed towards the Scottish philosophers: Reid, Oswald and Beattie supplied them with their favoured theory of knowledge, and their psychology and ethics were an amalgam of Scottish ideas.[55] In Feder's writings on human nature there were echoes from Hutcheson, Hume, Kames, and Smith. William Robertson was a frequent source of historical and ethnic observations.[56] But when it comes to ethics, it is Ferguson who emerges as his favourite modern Stoic.

The review dealt with the English original of the *Institutes*. Like many other articles of its kind it is chiefly a summary of the book's table of contents, together with some brief remarks. But it is not a very balanced representation of the work, and its emphases and omissions are revealing. The book's first part, "The natural history of man", receives special attention: all chapter headings are listed, and the part on the "history of the individual" is approvingly defined as "empirical psychology".[57] The review then makes a leap forward and comments on Ferguson's theory of mind, especially "the section on the highest dispositions" (probably what Ferguson terms "moral approbation"), which Feder sees as "one of the most interesting sections, and at least a model of the way this very neglected field of psychology should be scientifically cultivated".[58] The stress is thus laid on Ferguson's "empirical", or common sense, approach to ethics and particularly to moral judgements.

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53. Feder's identity as the reviewer is based on the Göttingen Library copy, and confirmed by the Tübingen Library copy (Fambach, *Mitarbeiter*).
54. Beiser, *Fate of Reason*, pp. 180-181 and 335 n. 67-68.
55. For instance, Feder's *Untersuchungen über den menschlichen Willen...* (Göttingen and Lemgo, 1779), frequently borrows concepts from the "*Engländer* " Shaftesbury, Hutcheson, Hume, Fordyce, Smith, Robertson, Home, and Millar, as well as Ferguson.
56. Zart, *Einfluss*, p. 141.
57. GGA 1771, Zugabe, p. cxiii.
58. *Ibid.*, p. cxiv.

Feder briefly described Ferguson's section on the "knowledge of God" as "a very short report of the main principles of natural theology", leading to the "real practical philosophy", namely the theory of happiness.[59] This, for Feder, was the book's centre-piece, where he finds Ferguson the Stoic, an "emphatic" disciple of Antoninus and Epictetus.

All is good and well until Feder hits on Ferguson's doctrine of compulsory law. Here he found some "untenable principles", such as the idea that contracts effected by the use of force cannot be binding.[60] Feder's objection is plausible enough: I may justly demand from another person what is rightly due to me, even if his promise to do so was extracted from him by force. The political significance of this comment, which could be mistaken for a mere point in civil law, comes to the surface if we consider it in its true context, the Natural Law justification of absolute government. The theory of governmental contract to which Feder subscribed grasped the State precisely as a contract which may involve, in some of its stages, the use of force. Ferguson's theory of contract was incompatible with this doctrine, and Feder was not the only one to note this.

In order to gain a better insight into this problem it may be useful to leave Göttingen for a moment and focus our gaze on the leading Berlin *Aufklärer*, Moses Mendelssohn. A clear statement of a related problem can be found in his book *Jerusalem* (1783), which contains the only reference Mendelssohn made to Ferguson in any of his books. It is a significant reference, stemming from Mendelssohn's own wrestling with questions of natural jurisprudence and the basis of the State. In this context he was unable to accept Ferguson's (and Garve's) justification for keeping promises:

> Ferguson, in his *Moral Philosophy*, and his excellent translator find the necessity of keeping promises in the expectation aroused in our fellow

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59. This dismissive attitude to Ferguson's religion contrasts with Garve's lengthy re-introduction of theology in his *Anmerkungen*. The disagreement has a modern parallel: David Kettler argues that Ferguson regards his theological section as a mere pedagogical device, and Richard Sher sees Ferguson's religion as inseparable from his moral teaching. See Kettler, *Social and Political Thought*, pp. 131, 153, 171-172; Sher, *Church and University*, pp. 166-174.

60. This probably refers to the *Institutes*, part V., ch. VIII, section 4.

man, and in the immorality of deception. But from this, it seems, there results only a duty of conscience.[61]

In other words, Ferguson sees the keeping of promises as an imperfect duty, a moral duty which cannot be enforced. In Mendelssohn's view - echoing a central doctrine of modern Natural Law - such was the case in the state of nature, but not under the social contract which underlies civil society. The keeping of promises is now a "compulsory duty", precisely because the right to decide cases of controversy had been irretrievably ceded by the individuals to the State.[62]

Both Feder and Mendelssohn are thus concerned that Ferguson does not make sufficient provision for the enforcement of moral duties by the State, including the vital allegiance of the subject to the government encapsuled in the primary governmental contract. Feder goes even further when he accuses Ferguson of upholding two other "untenable principles": "that no one is justly a slave; [and] that a despot is always a usurper."[63] Feder, and later Mendelssohn, obviously sensed that Ferguson's political ideas were not compatible with the contractarian account of the State which was spelled out in the language of Natural Law. Neither of them, however, tried to come to grips with Ferguson's alternative, the idea of voluntary civic participation.

The review ends with a trivial mention of a footnote from the last part of the book, "Of politics". That is all Feder says on the matter. Ferguson's ideas on the government of law, liberty, the just distribution of civil benefits and burdens, the participation of citizens in government, and the typology of constitutions and societies, are all left out of the review. Feder finishes off with the cheerful remark that here Ferguson is "in his true field [*in seinem rechten Fache*], and therefore excellently instructive". The book is recommended for translation by someone "who has the concepts in his head", so that it could be used "for lectures, or at least for private readings".[64]

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61. Mendelssohn, *Jerusalem*, p. 55n.
62. *Ibid.*, pp. 54-55. Cf. Alexander Altmann's comments, pp. 523-525. Altmann suggests that Ferguson's and Garve's *Grundsätze* "figured largely" in the conversations Mendelssohn had with the *Assistenzrat* E.F. Klein, Garve's friend and the subordinate of the Prussian minister Suarez, in June 1782.
63. GGA 1771, pp. cxiv-cxv.
64. *Ibid.*, p. cxv.

This wish was soon granted. When Feder reviewed Christian Garve's translation of the *Institutes* in the following year, he hailed the work of a man who indeed "had the concepts in his head". Garve's commentary, Feder said, was "at least as valuable as the very best original book".[65] Garve's own opinions on "freedom, happiness, immateriality of the soul, the existence of God, the difference between animal instinct and human nature, the Stoic and anti-Stoic systems and other important subjects"[66] occupied most of the review. Feder's only criticism is aimed at Garve's theological discussion, which he dismisses as "neither necessary nor advisable".[67] There is no mention of politics, or even moral activism. *Der Ferguson* had matured, under Garve's and Feder's hands, into his most popular image for German readers, the "worthy" British Stoicist who opposes greed and selfishness, preaches virtue and beneficence, and serves to support the conventional morality and social order against their enemies. In this distilled version Ferguson entered Feder's own books.

A few examples for his use of Ferguson should suffice to demonstrate the general direction: inserted into the third edition (1775) of Feder's *Lehrbuch der praktischen Philosophie,* Ferguson lends support to a Stoic account of happiness conveyed in strong terms of private *Innerlichkeit*[68] He employes Ferguson as the standard-bearer of the idea of natural sociability, against Rousseau, but interprets sociability solely as love and "various friendly inclinations",[69] of which the "love to the fatherland" is but a marginal occasional derivative.[70] Ironically, when it comes to history - where Feder is a moral progressivist akin to Iselin and Lessing - Ferguson is shunned as a heretic together with the very same Rousseau he was earlier summoned to oppose.[71]

This brief banishment from the enlightened camp did not bring Ferguson into disrepute - at least not yet. In the political part of the

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65. GGA 1772, vol. 3, 860.
66. *Ibid.*, p. 861.
67. *Ibid*, p. 863.
68. Feder, *Lehrbuch*, pp. 54-55.
69. *Ibid.*, p. 84ff.
70. *Ibid.*, pp. 87-88.
71. They are accused of concluding from history that "the cultivation of understanding, of virtue and of manners is disadvantageous"; Iselin's GdM is the sound counter-example. *Ibid.*, pp. 270-271.

Lehrbuch, which Feder put under the more traditional title of *Klugheitslehre*, Ferguson is called once again to support a political theory which is not his own. Feder's idea of civil happiness is based on freedom from restraint or oppression and on the security of property.[72] Political virtue is not more than the observance of laws, supervised, if possible, by rational religious leaders functioning as "*öffentliche Sittenrichter*".[73] Ferguson serves as an authority for the maxim of political wisdom which sees a State's "true wealth and true strength" in the health and industry of its inhabitants.[74] The same paragraph, however, mentions that this maxim must have been obeyed "at the foundation of the State, and in the first legislation".[75] Ferguson, of course, had denied the usefulness of these contractarian concepts; but Feder ignores this.

A different reference to Ferguson's *Essay* was inserted in a discussion of the State's "security". Feder advised such pacific measures as justice, respect for the neighbours, and the "love of the fatherland and of the form of government".[76] Then he adds:

> To make the belligerent spirit of a nation, as it seems to have occurred in several peoples [footnote reference to Ferguson and Aristotle], into a basic goal of the State, to maintain a standing army, to lay out fortresses, are [...] rules, which already transcend the universal [principles of national security], but where they nevertheless apply, they may not be separated from those basic rules.[77]

So a *kriegerisches Geist* - Ferguson's citizens' militia, or perhaps even Prussian militarism - is not vital to a State's defence. The gist of Feder's political theory - and here he represents many of his German contemporaries - is that republican spirit is not an indispensable asset. To be sure, budding republics have displayed strong *Vaterlandsliebe* for a time; but, as Feder soberly reflects in another work,

> the strength of this love of the fatherland would come in this case primarily from the preferences and advantages which the citizen of a

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72. *Ibid.*, pp. 209 and 216.
73. *Ibid.*, pp. 215-216.
74. *Ibid.*, p. 219.
75. *Ibid.*, p. 220.
76. *Ibid.*, pp. 216-217.
77. *Ibid.*, p. 217.

> free State possesses, or rather thinks he possesses [...]. While in the mean time, in a well-managed monarchy, freedom and property can be just as secure as in a free State, and often even better.[78]

To conclude, Feder's reading of Ferguson obeys a familiar pattern: it acknowledged neither republicanism, nor political activism, as vital to a well-governed State; military spirit is secondary, and freedom is understood primarily as the passive enjoyment of secure life and property.[79] Feder transmitted Ferguson to his reading public primarily as a worthy moralist and a slightly dubious historian of mankind. Let us compare this outcome with Ferguson's treatment by other Göttingen readers.

IV

Turning to the historians, our first task is to account for the somewhat surprising fact that Gatterer and Schlözer, Göttingen's two renowned compilers of *Universalhistorie* (or, as Schlözer renamed it, *Weltgeschichte*), did not refer to Ferguson in their works. One immediate reason for this omission is that they seldom mentioned modern historians at all, such was their pioneering gusto. They had little respect for the French, and their ambivalent stance towards "English" historians has been noted earlier. They shared with Herder, their rival, an ambition to break a new path which would depend as little as possible on contemporary Enlightenment historians. In the case of Gatterer, his marked neglect of political issues[80] may also account for his obliviousness to Ferguson. But what of the political-minded Schlözer?

We can gain some insight into what Schlözer might have thought of Ferguson from the opening part of his famous *Universal-Historie* (1772). In the first place, Schlözer denounced elaborate expositions of human nature: "Man", he tells us, "is by nature nothing, and through conjunctures can become everything; the indeterminacy [*Unbestimmtheit*] makes the

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78. Feder, *Untersuchungen*, I, 343-344.
79. This is at odds with Zart's assertion (*Einfluss*, pp. 148-150) that Feder's theory of State was greatly indebted to Ferguson's definitions of contract and obligation.
80. See Hammerstein, *Jus und Historie*, pp. 370ff.

second part of their nature."[81] This is clearly a blow aimed at all *Bestimmung* psychologies, Ferguson's included. Admittedly, Schlözer's dictum, a few pages later, that "the political community is the mother of mankind"[82] contradicted his own brave words; but it does not undo his innovative break from the "human nature" apparatus, which too often, so he felt, got the better of his fellow historians.

Schlözer probably classed Ferguson as a *Specialgeschichtsschreiber*,[83] a category which in fact included everyone except Polybius and himself.[84] Anticipating Ranke, Schlözer demanded "*Keine Kritik... Die blossen Facta, von kritischen Schweise gesäubert.*"[85] He would allow "no *Raisonnements*, no descriptions, no homiletic considerations."[86] Ferguson might have survived these harsh criteria; but Schlözer had other reasons not to see him as a genuine colleague. The traditional guardians of the "history of mankind", Schlözer noted, where the philosophers; It was time for him to claim the genre for its rightful keeper, the historian. But even if Schlözer did accept Ferguson as a fellow historian, perhaps he sensed that their notions of universal history were profoundly different. While Ferguson - like Herder - understood the history of mankind as a discernible pattern made from many different national histories, Schlözer - akin to Iselin, Lessing, and Feder - had no patience for the nation as a historiographic unit; his was a history of the "*Weltbürger*", of "*Menschen überhaupt*".[87]

Gatterer and Schlözer therefore remain out of our account. Still, such was the power of Schlözer's idiom that it was borrowed by those Göttingen academics who did admire Ferguson as a historian. These readers bring us, at last, to Ferguson's other historical work, *The History of the Progress and Termination of the Roman Republic,* which we have neglected so far. First published in 1783, it appeared in an abbreviated and annotated German translation in 1784 and 1786, which was

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81. August Ludwig Schlözer, *Vorstellung seiner Universal-Historie* (Göttingen and Gotha, 1772), p. 6.
82. "... and outside the State men [*Menschen*] would never have become men"; *ibid.*, p. 15.
83. *Ibid.*, p. 22.
84. No modern writer known to him, Schlözer said, employed quite the right formula for a genuine *Weltgeschichte*; *ibid.*, p. 23.
85. *Ibid.*, pp. 25-26.
86. *Ibid.* p. 26.
87. *Ibid.*, pp. 30-31.

prepared by the Leipzig scholar C.D. Beck. Heyne's review of the first volume of the translation abounds with Schlözerian terminology:

> ...the work deserves to be in the hands of all young readers... It is better than all [other] textbooks [*Handbücher*] on Roman History... [It] achieves fundamental knowledge of the Roman *Statistik* through facts, not from *Raisonnements* which are transferred from modern States to those totally different times; the author knew and really used the sources, but he used them with enlightened philosophical spirit.[88]

Just like Ferguson's earlier book, the *Institutes of Moral Philosophy*, the *Roman Republic* was thus hailed primarily as a good introductory work for the use of young students. Heyne praised the translator for making abbreviations which adapted the book for youngsters. His approval of the editorial work done by Beck resounds with the new self-confidence which increasingly marked the German academics in this period. Beck's treatment of the book indeed conveys an authoritative tone: he added an introduction and a systematic source survey, and made many critical comments in the text. Although most bibliographies have put his name as translator, Heyne's hunch was that this respectable editor did not do the actual translation.[89]

The German reception of the *Roman Republic* was thus characterized by the familiar blend of laudatory acclaim, "pedagogic" reorientation (in this case, simplification for young readers) and a new scaffolding of superior source criticism. But this is not the whole story: there is, if we look for it, also a political dimension. Not least among the editorial services which Herr Professor Beck has rendered to the work, so Heyne says, is the

> ... correcting [of] the judgements of Hrn. F., who is time and again dazzled by the beautiful side of the Romans' character: for, basically, the Romans were nothing more than a rude people of barbarians, devastators of the globe to their own ruin. They made little intentional contribution to the well-being of mankind, though this cannot be expected anyway from a military State.[90]

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88. GGA 1785, vol. 1, 629.
89. *Ibid.*, p. 630. The German subtitle of the book reads "Aus dem englischer frey übersetzt und mit Anmerkungen und Zusätzen begleitet von C.D.B." This phrasing is indeed ambiguous about the translator's identity.
90. *Ibid.*

The last phrase might be a sly anti-Prussian aside;[91] but the passage can also plausibly be read as a rejection of the civic humanist ideal, insofar as this ideal was structured in the shape of Rome. Ferguson's two classical models were Sparta and the Roman republic precisely because his type of civic humanist conviction was strongly militarist, or at least "militia-ist". Heyne's condensed statement dismisses not only this moral approbation of republican Rome, but also the possibility of applying it to modern States. On this point Ferguson's German readers - at least those of them who were *Aufklärer* - speak in one voice: Iselin, Feder and Heyne rejected his classic republicanism wholesale, because it was so essentially linked with a military spirit and with the approval of conflict.

Heyne's review was not the only treatment of the *Roman Republic* in the GGA. Earlier, reviewing the book's English original, Christoph Meiners expressed a kinder opinion on the Romans. This criticism, however, had a political edge as well. Interestingly enough, Ferguson's political misunderstanding of Rome is linked to his unsatisfactory use of primary sources. Meiners points out that Ferguson did not make enough use of Roman authors who were not historians. For this reason, his

> history of the manners and enlightenment of the Romans is too incomplete, and even the description of the old Roman constitution and many of its particular changes must often seem too forced [*gedrungen*] or fragmented to readers who are not most closely acquainted with the nature of free States.[92]

Thus Ferguson is taxed once more for being too "English" on matters which should be approached from a clearer, more universal viewpoint. Republican sympathies should not be allowed to blur the Roman history; nor should close acquaintance with a "free" governmental system obscure the facts for readers lacking such knowledge.

Whatever their own political sympathies, both Heyne and Meiners denounced Ferguson's moral affinity with the Roman republic as a historiographic shortcoming - which the German editor, Beck, was deemed right to counterbalance. It did not hinder Meiners from placing

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91. Cf. Feder's attack on "belligerent spirit" in his *Lehrbuch*, quoted above, p. 209.
92. GGA 1784, vol. 2, 892-893.

Ferguson "without doubt" among "the first historians of his people";[93] another Göttingen reviewer similarly recommended the book as supplementary reading to Gibbon's work.[94] But British historians, so we sense from both the edited translations and the reviews, were increasingly viewed from a critical distance.

Meiners' own *Grundriß der Geschichte der Menschheit* (1786) brings us back to the "universal" type of history. Unlike Gatterer and Schlözer, Meiners referred to contemporary historians often and generously. In particular, he shared Feder's regard for Ferguson's psychological insights. The *Grundriß* was an attempt to contribute his own "history of mankind" to the flourishing genre.[95] Meiners saw himself as writing in - and improving on - the method of Goguet, Iselin and Ferguson. He made use of a vast pool of travel books, histories of ancient and "exotic" nations, and former attempts at histories of mankind. His system of references and his acknowledgement of debts is outstanding by eighteenth century standards: among his British sources we find Ferguson and Millar (whom he respects), Home and Falconer (whom he sharply criticizes), Robertson's *History of America*, Hume's *Natural History of Religion* and *Political Essays*, and Smith's *Wealth of Nations*. The latter was, in Meiners' opinion, "the most excellent work created in our century". He read these books in English, and Hume in French.[96]

However, Meiners' book dispensed (perhaps under Schlözer's influence) with his predecessors' habitual survey of universal psychology, and offered a new, anthropological principle instead. The book's organizing concept is race, and it presents a remarkably early theory of racial superiority.

A great part of the *Grundriß* is devoted to a careful scrutiny and mapping of ethnic groups and sub-groups, and to a comparison of their respective merits. The natural advantages of the "Celtic" segment of the "Caucasian" race are painstakingly demonstrated. Racial distinctions and their corresponding physical and mental aspects were, for Meiners, the

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93. *Ibid.*, p. 891.
94. GGA 1791, vol. 3, 1448.
95. For Meiners' discussion of this literature, including Iselin and Ferguson, see chapter 4, pp. 106, 114-115.
96. Meiners, *Grundriß*, Verzeichniß der vornehmsten Schriften (n.p).

focal point of any historical exposition or explanation. At the same time he doubts the conventional categories of savage, barbarian, semi-civilized and civilized nations,[97] although he goes on using them throughout the book.[98] In this context he denounces Rousseau's state of nature as absurd, basing his attack on the opening chapter of Ferguson's *Essay*.[99]

Meiners was fascinated by despotism. In his chapter "on forms of government, or civil constitution", fourteen out of nineteen sections deal with it.[100] The initial explanation is that despotism arises among the "weaker human races", but other explanatory factors are added: tyranny is related to corruption, the decline of trade and the arts, the rise of luxury and moral ruin, anarchy, and finally foreign conquest. All this sounds familiar, but the causal sequence is vague: does tyranny breed corruption, or is it caused by it? How is it related to wealth? In a typically muddled sentence Meiners says:

> Full overturnings [*Umkehrungen*] of despotic regimes, or subjugations of weakened and corrupted nations, are generally the epoches and causes of a higher prosperity.

This statement refers by footnote to one of the last sections of Ferguson's *Essay*,[101] but no further analysis is offered.

In a chapter on "the situation of manners in various nations" Meiners attacks Rousseau's ideas on the innocence and happiness of savages.[102] Again, as in his rejection of the state of nature, he echoes Iselin without Iselin's depth of argumentation. It is enough, says Meiners, to compare one's own society and times with the manners of the Greeks in the heroic era, or those of the medieval Germans, including the extolled knights. On this point he refers to Ferguson, possibly implying disagreement, since Ferguson saw in medieval chivalry the roots of modern European

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97. *Ibid.*, p. 81.
98. *Ibid.*, pp. 83-84 and *passim*.
99. *Ibid.*, p. 81.
100. *Ibid.*, pp. 149-163. The remaining sections discuss hereditary government, aristocracy, and monarchy. The republican type of government is not mentioned; there is one vague and fleeting remark on freedom being a controversial issue.
101. *Ibid.*, p. 161; referring to the 2nd edition of the *Essay*, p. 429.
102. *Grundriß*, pp. 222-230.

manners.[103] More interestingly, Meiners classed as medieval also the deeds of the Spaniards and Portuguese in America. But the moral-chronological line is clearly drawn: like Iselin, Meiners refuses to acknowledge any claim to moral superiority of any past society, be it savage or not, over eighteenth-century Europe.

He proceeds to a defence of Enlightenment, but it is a strange defence, very much aware of Ferguson's critique of modern society and not quite knowing how to deal with it:

> True enlightenment generates neither corruption of morals, nor atheism; it is rather the safest counter-measure against both. Enlightenment can maintain itself, for a while, side by side with moral corruption, but it inevitably becomes curtailed by the latter, and at length it is totally suppressed. Moral corruption irresistibly overthrows the most enlightened nations back into the very same superstitions and the very same despicable vices which we habitually ascribe to savages and barbarians.[104]

There is an obvious contradiction in this statement: on the one hand, Enlightenment can resist moral corruption; on the other hand, it is destined to give way to moral corruption. Even considering Meiners' notorious eclecticism, this contradiction is bizarre. Why does he present Enlightenment as the best weapon against social vice, and, in the next sentence, as its potential victim?

To solve this riddle we can compare Meiners' attitude with that of Iselin, keeping in mind that Iselin published his book in 1764, and Meiners in 1786. They were indeed in the same camp; but the camp was facing a serious attack when the *Grundriß* was written, in what came to be known as the *Pantheismusstreit*. In 1785 Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi published his letters on the teachings of Spinoza, where he denounced rational thought and the *Aufklärung* educational principle of reason as leading to atheism and moral "nihilism" - a word Jacobi coined. The *Aufklärer* were now forced to defend themselves against accusations which tied them with their own declared enemies, immorality and non-belief. Meiners' book did not directly enter the debate, but could not

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103. Ferguson, *Essay*, pp. 200-202. Closer to home, Meiners may also be aiming at Herder.

104. *Grundriß*, p. 229. Reference is made to Ferguson, Falconer, and Home.

ignore it. His mention of "atheism" together with "moral corruption" is a clear allusion to the key issues of the *Pantheismusstreit*. The confused defence we have quoted can well be an outraged early response to Jacobi. But Ferguson's critique of modern society plays a problematic role in this Enlightenment apologetics.

Meiners shares Iselin's pride in the Enlightenment, but not his confidence in it. One main reason for his self-doubt, I suggest, is a more complex view of history, which came from the Scots. It was easier for Iselin to deny Montesquieu's cyclic political history, allowing the decline of civilized nations, because Montesquieu was not a *Historicus*; he was nearer to what Schlözer dubbed a philosopher, approaching the history of mankind in an un-historical way, imposing his *Raisonnements* on it. But Meiners' reading of Ferguson was a different case. He may have scorned Ferguson's admiration of the Romans, but he did not reject off-hand the idea that moral corruption can grow and triumph in the most modern of nations. The Göttingen historians of the 1770s and the 1780s were riper for such an admission, and France became a favourite example for precisely the process Ferguson seemed to be describing. The footnotes in the *Hannoverisches Magazin* can demonstrate, as we have seen, such a francophobe interpretation of Ferguson.

This view of history, however, contradicts the idea of irreversible progress. "Enlightened" society, of course, meant much more to the *Aufklärer* than "polite" or "modern" society meant in the idiom of civic humanism. The failure of "modern" civil society would not shock Ferguson, for whom the redeeming factor is not Enlightenment, but social virtue. Yet the *Aufklärung* relied on its own cumulative, ever-growing light. This disagreement is best seen in the differing diagnoses of moral evil: Ferguson warned of political indifference, while the *Aufklärer* feared ignorance and superstition, and their "counter-Enlightenment" rivals, Jacobi and Herder, denounce excessive rationalism, fatalism and atheism. The German debate was largely about forms of knowledge and teaching, whereas Ferguson's analysis ended in a call for political participation. His complex view of history, allowing patterns of progress and regress and tying them to deliberate human actions, both attracted and baffled such historians as Meiners. On this junction, as Feder had briefly sensed, Ferguson began to appear as a very problematic ally.

V

Examining Ferguson's reception by an academic institute, rather than an individual writer, can provide a better overview of his rise and fall in Germany. As far as journal articles and book references are concerned, Ferguson's significance waned during the 1790s. His epistemology had been surpassed, together with the common sense school, by Kant's critical philosophy. In ethics, too, the Stoic and moral sense language was becoming dated and unsatisfactory. Ferguson's political views became more conspicuous, and more unacceptable, under the growing shadow of the French Revolution. All this can be shown, to some degree, in the last major review of his work in Göttingen's journal.

Ferguson's name needed no introduction when his *Principles of Social and Political Science* - in the English original - were reviewed in the GGA in 1793. The very first sentence in this review refers to the *Institutes*, which had "become very well-known among us through Garve's translation."[105] However, a new critical undertone is apparent from the start, and it is raised to a high pitch towards the end. Significantly, Ferguson's political theory is not by-passed.

The topics of theology and ethics are treated in a way very similar to Feder's earlier reviews of the *Institutes*. The reviewer points out with approval that Ferguson's moral philosophy is based on Reid's common-sense doctrine rather than on Hume's epistemology.[106] Above all, Ferguson represents "pure Stoic philosophy, as Epictetus and Antoninus taught and practiced it", including the idea that virtue and happiness are inseparable. All this is very reminiscent of Feder's reviews twenty years before.

But at this point a new motif intervenes and conquers the stage. The original text, one must admit, facilitated this invasion. The *Principles*,

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105. GGA 1793, vol. 3, 1970. The reviewer's identity is not quite clear. One source identifies him as Feder (Fambach, *Mitarbeiter*), while the Göttingen library copy displays a name which could read as Heyne.
106. *Ibid.*, p. 1973. Here, too, Theology is given a secondary status.

Ferguson's last major work, backed away from the *Essay*'s stark anti-progressivism. It mentioned man's "progressive nature",[107] which makes him "destined to grow in perfection, and may grow without end: its good is advancement, and its evil, decline".[108] The phrasing, of course, is still pointedly non-determinist. The Göttingen reviewer's paraphrase of this idea is striking:

> But as a rational being, man is destined to an unlimitable striving [*unbegrenzbaren Fortstreben*] to an ever greater perfection of knowledge and rational activity. This should be taken as the main principle of the whole theoretical and practical anthropology.[109]

The language of striving for perfection thus takes over, and pulls the paraphrase towards a distinctly German concept:

> Since [man] has the predispositions of an artist, it is right that he is surrounded by raw materials in need of creative forming [*Bildung*].[110]

Although it is applied "to individual people, to nations and to the whole [human] race", this principle of striving remains personal and cosmological, hence a-political:

> Even in the midst of the fiercest storms and the greatest dangers man can feel better, sense higher modes of well-being which make everything else unimportant to him, than in the most leisurely calm and in the uninterrupted possession of external goods.[111]

The external (*äußere*) crops up, as it often does, in opposition to the internal. But the rejection of the external sweeps away Ferguson's sense of the outside world, of social intercourse, of exertion. The Scottish philosopher is then firmly established as a political conservative:

> Besides, the author is not a one-sided and vague panegyrist of enlightenment, innovation, liberty; except only to the extent that it fits a wise, righteous man. Respect for birth seems to him a good counter-

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107. Ferguson, *Principles* (London, 1792), vol. I., ch. iii.
108. *Ibid.*, I., 191.
109. GGA 1793, pp. 1971-1972.
110. *Ibid.*, p. 1972.
111. *Ibid.*

> balance which can prevent a further elevation of the respect for wealth, which is even more dangerous to morality.[112]

Ferguson's notion of man's "progressive nature" is thus made into an anti-radical political creed, opposed to current statements of ruthless progressivism and social egalitarianism. The French Revolution is never mentioned and ever present in this text.

A disquieting radical potential is nevertheless found in Ferguson's theory of rights, especially the right of resisting governmental oppression. The "right of resistance" is, of course, an item of long standing in Natural Law. In his *Prolegomena iuris naturalis* (1758), Gottfried Achenwall accepted that in principle the people have a right to rebel against a despot. He presented this as a middle-of-the road approach, denouncing both extreme absolutists (whom he called *Macchiavellisten*), and regicides. But Achenwall's stipulation for rebellion - the continuous breach of rights outweighing the dangers of violent uprising - was typically devoid of applicable criteria. It prompted one of his readers, Immanuel Kant, to scribble on the margin of the book's 1781 edition: "Quis iudicabit?"[113]

Had Kant's question been posed to Ferguson, his answer would have been clear. Not only did he insist on an absolute natural right to self-defence against injustice, which is distinct from the "social" rights based on open or tacit agreement;[114] more importantly, the citizens must be able to act as informed decision-makers: they must know their right and be able to judge when was the time to assert it. This, however, was precisely the unacceptable part of the doctrine for the Göttingen reviewer:

> The author, too, finds it dangerous to clarify his view on the ultimate rights against the persistent abuse of power. To deny these rights is indeed to betray or disown humanity. But a definite, explicit recognition of it threatens the respect for the highest authority.[115]

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112. *Ibid.*, pp. 1973-1974.
113. Solf, *Achenwall*, pp. 60-68. Kant's solution to the same problem banned any resistance to the sovereign altogether.
114. *Principles*, vol. II, ch. III-IV.
115. GGA 1793, p. 1974.

The reviewer now suggests, in parentheses, his own solution to the problem:

> This reviewer here thinks as follows: if a science is to be taught, then everything belonging to this science must be asserted exactly as it appears to impartial, calm and strictly scientific reason. The opposite contradicts not only the dignity and the goal of scientific teaching, but also honesty. But: 1) This certainly does not entail that scientific truth must be stated inopportunely, out of context; 2) it very much depends on the way the truth is told. Those truths of the ultimate rights against the persistent abuse of highest authority can be made as harmless as any other practical maxim. They must simply not be separated from the other moral and political truths, on which their correct application depends, but must always be very intentionally linked with them.[116]

Ferguson is criticized for avoiding this safe path:

> But to leave the decisions in any case that occurs to instinct, which is not formed by any clear concepts and principles - as our author thinks best, together with Hume - is indeed dangerous as well.[117]

Thus Ferguson ends up being linked with the epistemologically dubious Hume on a very crucial point. His assertion of "moral sense" as such is not satisfactory, even if it is firmly based on the very same epistemology that was applauded earlier in the review. When it comes to political action, well-established moral truths from sound authorities must accompany and direct the individual's moral decisions. Common sense must be supplemented by conventional morality. Most significantly, for the Göttingen reviewer the whole question of the right of resistance is a purely academic one, to be dispensed to the right audience only with the sterilized tools of the "impartial" *Staatswissenschaftler*.

The problem is far from trivial. In the last account, it makes Ferguson's "British" political doctrine untenable to Germans:

> In general, the author's political principles fully correspond to the constitution of his fatherland. He himself remarks that in general enquiries of this kind it is difficult to resist the influence of what one

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116. *Ibid.*, pp. 1974-1975.
117. *Ibid.*, p. 1975.

> is accustomed to, especially under a constitution that gives one reasons for satisfaction.[118]

Regardless of the implicit praise of the British political system, this conclusion is essentially a rejection of its doctrine of political rights. Here, as in the earlier Göttingen commentaries, Britain becomes a circumstantial case, a mere outcome of favourable historical contingencies. But it is also a rejection of Ferguson's idea (which did not "fully correspond" to the British concept of negative liberty) that educated citizens can make their own moral judgements.

Ferguson, we may note, did not deny the right of resisting despotic actions to any but the theoretical beings who are perfectly vicious.[119] The German States of his time would not fit into that category. Their subjects were therefore entitled to exercise this right; in Ferguson's terms it meant that their moral sense was the ultimate standard of political judgement. If this point is unacceptable, then Ferguson's whole political philosophy is unacceptable too.

1793, the date of this last review, was the time by which most German supporters of the Revolution had already turned their backs on it. As we have seen, Göttingen's political theorists showed little revolutionary zeal to begin with. It became, however, more obvious than before that despite his attractive "Englishness", Ferguson was an unacceptable political theorist. At the same time, the other aspects of his work - the sterilized Stoic ethics, the common sense epistemology, and even his celebrated expositions of human nature and society - gradually lost their lustre in the exciting philosophical climate created by Kant. In the 1790s Ferguson was either dangerous news or old news.

VI

The rejection of civic participationism in Göttingen can be explained in terms of straightforward political disagreement. Ferguson was a republican, or at least - in parts of the *Institutes* and the *Principles* - a

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118. *Ibid.*
119. See the chapter "Of political law" in the *Institutes*; cf. Sher, *Church and University*, pp. 103-104.

constitutional monarchist, but always an advocate of active citizenry. Göttingen's social-political sympathies, as we have noted, lay elsewhere: from its foundation it aimed at attracting young noblemen, and its juridical interests were often directed beyond the age of absolutism to the old order of the empire.[120] Later in the century a sociological and pedagogic shift made it increasingly "bourgeois", its reputation for duelling and dancing giving some way to the non-aristocratic idea of *Bildung*;[121] but no political radicalization was involved. During the 1790s the British constitutional ideal became more important for thinkers such as Brandes and Rehberg; but "English liberty" primarily meant aristocratic checks on the monarchy.[122] In this language of liberty there was no element of civic humanism: Schlözer's famous journalistic attacks on contemporary rulers reflected Göttingen's critique of absolutism, and a new boldness of public opinion, but not republican ideals.

Underlying this difference of political creed was a philosophical disagreement about the history of civil society and the historical significance of political action. Ferguson himself summed up his position in the conclusion of the *Essay*, when he wrote that the "duration [of political institutions] is not fixed to any limited period; and no nation ever suffered internal decay but from the vice of its members".[123] This is not only anti-fatalist ethics; it is also an idea of history which is not strictly law-determined. History, of course, obeys the laws of nature and the outcomes of historical circumstances; but the "natural or instinctive course of things",[124] and its political products, are "no more than a rude material on which the ingenuity of man is to be exercised".[125] Ferguson's political participationism was thus strongly tied to his historical voluntarism, as far as civil society is concerned.

Despite the approval expressed by Feder and Meiners for Ferguson's language of virtue, the Göttingen professors of law and history could not embrace the intertwined participationism and voluntarism which was put forward in this very language. Neither the jurists, seeking the history of

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120. McClelland, *State, Society, and University*, pp. 43-46 and 56.
121. *Ibid.*, pp. 95-97.
122. See Maurer, *Anglophilie*, p. 103ff.
123. *Essay*, pp. 279-280.
124. *Principles*, I, 259.
125. *Ibid.*, pp. 260-261.

laws, nor the historians, seeking the laws of history, could approve of Ferguson's doctrine. As we have seen, theirs was a strongly legalist language, rooted in Natural Law and in the traditions of positive law. Whenever Ferguson's civic humanist language clashed with it, it was ignored or rejected.

Nor did the language of classical republicanism necessarily appeal to the classicists: Göttingen's historians and philologists of ancient Greece and Rome disliked Ferguson's bias towards belligerent republics. Their criticism was both professional (accusing him of distorting the historical picture) and moral (opposing his doctrine of "virtuous" conflict and war). These criticisms remained outside Ferguson's idiom: the bewilderment repeatedly expressed by Iselin, Lessing, Garve, Feder and Meiners shows that civic humanism as a language of political theory was unavailable to them.

VII

But perhaps Ferguson's impact in Göttingen was not all distorted and lost. It has been argued that through Göttingen Ferguson affected such men as the Freiherr vom Stein, Johannes von Müller, and Georg Friedrich Hegel. Unfortunately, textual evidence of the kind used in the present study is very meagre. Still, these alleged impacts are worth a brief mention, if only to make my conclusion slightly less well-rounded.

In his *Nassauer Denkschrift*, presented to the king of Prussia in 1807, Freiherr vom Stein first formulated his plan to reform the Prussian administration in a way which would involve more people in public affairs. This concept of *Selbstverwaltung* was to be applied to all levels of government, from the town and the rural community, via the *Kreise*, up to the Prussian *Reichsstände* themselves. In effect, only a limited degree of municipal participation was achieved during Stein's ministry, and the idea was buried away for a long time. Was it inspired by Ferguson?[126]

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126. The case for Ferguson's formative influence is made by Dieter Schwab, *Die "Selbstverwaltungsidee" des Freiherrn vom Stein und ihre geistigen Grundlagen* (Frankfurt a.M., 1971), pp. 48-51 and *passim*. For a more general discussion of the conceptual impact of the English "self government" on the German

As a student at Göttingen Stein maintained, for a while, close contacts with both Feder and Meiners; he borrowed Ferguson's *Essay* from the university library during the summer semester of 1775. Later in his life he also owned the Basle reprint of the *Roman Republic*, together with works by other Scottish authors.[127] The possible influence of Ferguson cannot be substantiated by references in Stein's writings. It has been argued that his emphasis on political activity was similar to Ferguson's and bolder than other Scots, such as Smith, or Germans, such as Rehberg.[128] For our context is interesting to note that Stein saw his reform proposal as a moral project, aiming at the moral perfection of the citizens and the government.[129] This language echoes the characteristic perfectionist reading of Ferguson's civic activism in Germany.

However, Stein's alleged debt to Ferguson might not seem all that convincing under a close scrutiny of language and opinions: his idea of activity, for instance, was associated with a rather un-Fergusonian notion of "calm satisfaction" and "harmony".[130] Moreover, both his fascination with the English constitution during his Göttingen years and his later reform and education plan were centred on the aristocrats or property-owners as political leaders; after 1814 Stein backed off from advocating citizens' participation in the national government, opting for a more limited *Selbstverwaltung* by property-owners and a long-term education of the people for political life.[131] In short, the case for Ferguson's influence remains open due to lack of proof.

And so does the case of Hegel. I have earlier attempted to show that Garve's alleged mediation between Ferguson's and Hegel's philosophies of history is problematic because Garve was not interested in Ferguson's

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"Selbstverwaltung" see Heinrich Heffter, *Die deutsche Selbstverwaltung im 19. Jahrhundert. Geschichte der Ideen und Institutionen* (Stuttgart, 1950), pp. 5-6.

127. Schwab, *"Selbstverwaltungsidee"*, pp. 26ff, 57.

128. *Ibid.*, p. 127.

129. *Ibid.*, pp. 13, 28.

130. The terminology of "ruhige Zufriedenheit" appears in a letter from 1782, not long after Stein left Göttingen; quoted *ibid.*, p. 32.

131. See Werner Gembruch, "Zum England-Bild des Freiherrn vom Stein", in L. Kettenacker, M. Schlenke, H. Seier (eds.), *Studien zur Geschichte Englands und der deutsch-britischen Beziehungen;. Festschrift für Paul Kluke* (Munich, 1981), pp. 27-47.

history.[132] There are, however, other suggestions that Hegel may have been inspired by Ferguson, and these channels run through Göttingen. The Swiss historian Johannes von Müller, who studied and taught at Göttingen, made quotations from Ferguson's *Essay* which Hegel later used. The quotations, however, do not amount to any coherent or exhaustive statement of any of Ferguson's leading doctrines; they are more reminiscent of the eclectic use of the *Essay* as yet another source of history or ethnology, familiar to us from Iselin or Feder.

A weightier claim was made by the historian of modern civil law, Georg Jellinek, to the effect that Ferguson was the first to distinguish historically between State and Society. According to Jellinek, the *Essay* presented the earliest doctrine which allowed the State to emerge from "*menschlichen Gemeinschaftsverhältnissen*" that preceded it. Schlözer drew a similar, but clearer, distinction between State and Society as "the logical conclusion from the doctrine of Natural Law", and provided the German debut of the idea of a pre-State civil society, or *Gemeinde*.[133] No proof is offered for Schlözer's reading of Ferguson; yet this lack of evidence for "influence" has not prevented more recent attempts at reconstructing a "Ferguson-Schlözer-Hegel" link.[134]

The concept of civil society, in the sense of a political community which preceded the State, was "in the air" among German writers as early as the 1770s. We have encountered it in the *Hannoverisches Magazin* translator's reference to a politically significant *Völkerschaft*. Judging from the frequency of Ferguson's appearance in footnotes referring to natural sociability and to civil society, he may well be credited with some responsibility for the circulation of this historical concept, even before it was buttressed and transformed by Adam Smith's political economy. But Ferguson should not be credited with the distinction between modern "Society" (commercial, apolitical) and the State: this idea ran against the very grain of his civic conviction.

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132. See chapter 5, pp. 155-156.

133. Georg Jellinek, *Recht des modernen Staates* vol I: *Allgemeine Staatslehre* (Berlin, 1900), p. 77. A footnote mentions the high esteem in which the *Essay* was held in Germany, contrasted with its reception in England.

134. See Pasquale Salvucci, *Adam Ferguson. Sociologia e filosofia politica* (Urbino, 1972), pp. 525ff.

Chapter 8
Jacobi and Ferguson: a German civic humanist?

I

Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi (1743-1819) was a lifelong admirer of Adam Ferguson. He was also Ferguson's most sympathetic and politically-minded reader in eighteenth-century Germany. This should come as a surprise to anyone acquainted with Jacobi's prevalent image as a "mystical metaphysician", a "fervent anti-rationalist theist", and a leader of the German Counter-Enlightenment movement whose "arch-enemy is Voltaire".[1]

Jacobi is remembered primarily as a novelist of feeling and a philosopher of faith: his reputation was made by the novels *Allwill* and *Woldemar*, and by the famous debate with Mendelssohn over Lessing's alleged Spinozism. This debate, the so-called *Pantheismusstreit,* has earned him a grim - and unjust - reputation, especially among English-speaking scholars: one extreme example places him, with Hamann and Herder, in "a band of dark, tortured and deeply disturbing thinkers from the remoter corners of the German-speaking world."[2] The Jacobi family, cosmopolitan Düsseldorf merchants whose Pempelfort country estate offered cultured hospitality to Goethe and other great guests, might well have taken offence at this definition.

Jacobi's political career is often overlooked. It is noteworthy not just as a context for his political thought, but because it casts into sharp relief the possibilities and the limits of a gifted *Bürger* in the German *ancien régime*.[3] Jacobi began it in 1765 as the only commoner and the only

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1. These phrases are taken from Isaiah Berlin's essays, "The Counter-Enlightenment" and "Hume and the Sources of German anti-Rationalism", reprinted in *Against the Current. Essays in the History of Ideas* (Oxford, 1981); the quotations are from pp. 17, 182, and 9, respectively. Cf. Lewis White Beck, *Early German Philosophy* (Cambridge, Mass., 1969), pp. 368ff.

2. Thus Roger Hausheer in his introduction to *Against the Current*, p. xxxiii.

3. See the article in *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie,* vol. 13 (Leipzig, 1881), pp. 577-584, and Günther Baum, "F.H. Jacobi als politischer Denker und Staatsmann

Protestant among the founding members of the Düsseldorf Freemasons lodge, "Parfait amitié". Masonic contacts with high-ranking administrators of the Duchy of Jülich-Berg led to his nomination to its *Hofkammer* in 1772, with responsibility for industry and agriculture in the Duchy. One of his important achievements was the abolition of the Rhine shipping customs. Like Iselin in Basle, Jacobi was an active promoter of free trade; as we shall see, his idea of political freedom went further than Iselin's.

In 1779, on the strength of his success at Jülich-Berg, Jacobi was called to Munich to serve the Elector of Bavaria as a minister (*Geheimrat*) for "customs and commerce". It was a great honour, which soon turned into a miserable failure. Only four months later Jacobi returned to Düsseldorf and to his former position, having failed to abolish the Bavarian system of *Binnenzölle*. The failure was mostly a result of court politics and personal rivalries, rather than theoretical disagreement. Jacobi recorded his frustration in an article in the *Bairische Beiträgen* which invoked the little-known Adam Smith as an authority on free trade.[4]

Jacobi retreated from political life when war forced him, in 1794, to flee Pempelfort for Eutin. By that time he was a disappointed man - his political philosophy of freedom and governmental self-restraint became "more and more of a utopia", as one scholar comments - but not a depoliticized man.[5] In his life, which ended in 1819, Jacobi witnessed the transformation of all the political and intellectual structures which he had probed and attacked: the Holy Roman Empire gave way to the German Confederation, the *Aufklärung* succumbed to idealist philosophy and Romanticism. Jacobi was neither an idealist nor a Romanticist, and his relationship with the Enlightenment is more complex than is often realized. The Fergusonian element of his thought is of special importance precisely because it can shed more light on Jacobi's political thought and on his general stance towards the European Enlightenment. Moreover, having outlived all the men treated in our study, including Ferguson

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(1774-1794)", in Jörn Göres (ed.), *Goethe, Jacobi und der Kreis von Münster*, an exhibition catalogue published by the Goethe Museum at Düsseldorf (Düsseldorf, 1974), pp. 101-110.

4. "Rhapsodien über die beliebte Torheit der Leitung des Handels durch Auflagen und Verbote" (1779).

5. Baum makes a strong case for this; see "Jacobi als politischer Denker", pp. 108-109.

himself, Jacobi's final verdict on the reception of Ferguson in Germany - which he saw as a missed opportunity - is a weighty testimony from a well-informed witness.

There is abundant evidence for his early and lasting enthusiasm for this particular Scottish author. Jacobi's huge personal library held copies of Ferguson's *Essay* in English and French, the *Institutes* in English and German (twice), the *Principles* in English, and the *Roman Republic* in English and German. The two earlier works bear his typical pencil marks, in the case of the *Essay* a large number of them, as well as numerous marginalia.[6] Admiration began early: in 1771 Jacobi urged Sophie de La Roche to agree with him that Ferguson's *Essay on the History of Civil Society* is "one of the most excellent [books] written".[7] In 1792 he recommended the same work "*ganz besonders*" as a modern book most worthy of reading alongside Plato, Aristotle and Cicero.[8]

Jacobi's unpublished notes and drafts, known as the *Kladden*, make some eleven references to, or citations from, Ferguson's books - chiefly the *Principles*.[9] This last work went largely unnoticed in Germany, a fact which Jacobi regretted; for his part, he used it in a letter to Wilhelm von Humboldt on nature and art, where he compared Ferguson's idea of beauty with that of Kant.[10] No other Scottish philosopher, not even his second favourite Thomas Reid, was so highly esteemed by Jacobi. The contrast between Jacobi's ambiguous reaction to David Hume and his wholehearted reception of Ferguson is indeed striking.

In this chapter I propose to show that Jacobi's moral philosophy was based on a concept of political participation and civic activism, and that he attributed great importance to the use of reason (as he understood it)

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6. *Die Bibliothek Friedrich Heinrich Jacobis. Ein Katalog*, ed. Konrad Wiedemann with Peter-Paul Schneider, 2 vols. (Stuttgart-bad Cannstatt, 1989), pp. 163-164, 413-414. Jacobi's copy of the *Essay* is now in the *Staatsbibliothek* in Berlin; I have not seen it. Most of the handwritten notes are reportedly illegible.

7. Jacobi to M.S. von La Roche, 17.6.1771; F.H. Jacobi,*Briefwechsel*, ed. Michael Brüggen and Siegfried Sudhof, *Gesamtausgabe*, Series I, vol. 1 (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt, 1981), 115.

8. Letter to "N...", 12.6.1792, in *Friedrich Heinrich Jacobis auserlesener Briefwechsel* ed. F. Roth, vol. II (Leipzig, 1827), 90-91.

9. P.-P. Schneider, *Die 'Denkbücher' Friedrich Heinrich Jacobis* (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt,1986), pp. 248-249.

10. See *ibid.*, p. 125; the letter itself was apparently not preserved.

by the members of a free political society. In his political discussions Jacobi was so deeply and self-consciously affected by the Roman republican authors, Machiavelli, and above all Ferguson, that it would not be wrong to dub him a civic humanist. His idea of freedom in the political context is distinctly liberal. Some of the darker aspects of his reputation may therefore merit a reconsideration.

II

Jacobi's first substantial use of Ferguson was in his novel *Woldemar*. Its earliest version appeared in 1779, closely followed by a philosophical fragment in the *Deutsches Museum,*[11] which was later incorporated into the novel's expanded editions. In this fragment Ferguson was cited, but not named. Only after Jacobi made some important references to him in other works, did Ferguson's name appear in the revised *Woldemar*. In the 1796 edition Jacobi even inserted a new character, a young Scottish student of Ferguson's, into the plot.[12]

Woldemar is a *Sturm und Drang* novel with a Werther-like hero, a man of strong feelings and dangerous emotions. The plot revolves round a group of young friends, siblings, spouses and in-laws, pondering love and philosophy in their sheltered domestic sphere in a small German town. The inner plot is Woldemar's story of coming to terms with himself, guided by the sage Henriette. It can be seen as a response to Goethe's tragedy: Woldemar is saved from Werther's fate by "humility", by a mental capacity to compromise.[13] For him, the tragic conflict between nature and art is resolved by religious faith. In his famous comment on Jacobi's book Schlegel contemptuously called it a "salto mortale into the

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11. Jacobi, "Ein Stück Philosophie des Lebens und der Menschheit. Aus den zweiten Bande von Woldemar", *Deutsches Museum* (1779), pp. 307-348, 393-427. This later became the *Kunstgarten* episode in *Woldemar*; see Jacobi, *Werke*, ed. F. Roth and F. Köppen, vol. V (Leipzig, 1823), p. iv.

12. The textual chronology is derived from Frida David, *Jacobi's "Woldemar" in seinen verschiedenen Fassungen* (Leipzig, 1913), pp. 107-122, 168ff, 198ff, and 204ff.

13. The 1794 edition was dedicated to Goethe, with whom Jacobi had a tormented friendship.

abyss of divine mercy", and rejected the novel's solution as "moral debauchery".[14]

In the early philosophical fragment the company strolls outdoors, indulging in what became known as the *Kunstgarten* conversation. The Fergusonian in this episode is not Woldemar but his brother Biderthal, who seems to be serving his turn as Jacobi's mouthpiece. They had been arguing about the source of morality, which Woldemar saw as being purely *innerlich*, not depending on external help or disruption. Another participant, Dorenburg, replied that moral corruption is triggered by external causes, such as luxury.[15] There is nothing particularly novel about either of these views; but at this point Jacobi shifts the familiar *innerlich - äußerlich* metaphor to a new direction.

Biderthal interrupts with a vehement attack on the contemporary vices - self-love and sensuality, egotism and greed - which block all view of higher things, virtue and the love of mankind. It is also an attack on the kind of contemporary philosophy which preaches fear, immoderation and "cool personal interest" as the bases for morality. A footnote informs the reader that "Biderthal apparently has in mind Helvetius, the Chevalier de Chatelus, and generally the philosophy of French moralists, which has become so widespread".[16]

The "outer" world, both physical and intellectual, is thus very relevant to the "inner" morality. But there are other external evils beside materialism: Biderthal's speech reaches an emotional climax where moral weakness is associated with political deprivation:

> ...thus, lacking feelings of fatherland and freedom, lacking all interests of the heart, lacking courage and lacking love - we know how to encourage contempt for death and injury by flogging - and to employ prisoners for our guard and protection; and to be happy and content, without virtue, without immortality, and without God. - So our eyes are wide open; the thousand-year *Reich* is near us, and we preach [*verkündigen*] it with a new kind of enthusiasm, with the strange enthusiasm of materialism, with the rapture of cold blood.

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14. See Werner Kohlschmidt, *A History of German Literature 1760-1805* (London, 1975), pp. 125-132.
15. "Ein Stück Philosophie", p. 394; cf. *Werke*, V, 162-163.
16. "Ein Stück Philosophie", p. 394; this footnote was later deleted.

> But how did this come about? This ridiculous, shameful - monstrous absurdity? I repeat: only from rampant luxury![17]

Having said this much, Biderthal plunges into an earnest - if rather loosely translated - quotation from the chapter "On happiness" in Ferguson's *Essay*. The cited text disassociates happiness from both wealth and sensuality, and bases it solely on benevolent exertion.[18] Speaking from Biderthal's mouth, Jacobi touches on two painful, and interrelated, political topics - the decline of the Holy Roman Empire, and the shameful exploitation of mercenary or coerced soldiers.[19]

This political statement is brief, but significant: it implies that Biderthal's moral ideal is not an introvert *Innerlichkeit*, but an ideal of civic, and perhaps even military, virtue. This becomes even clearer when he mentions Rousseau's praise of Cato,[20] the staunch defender of virtue. Cato was praised, so Biderthal reminds us, not for his ineffective attempt to restore republican spirit to his fatherland, but for the legacy he left to mankind: that the ideal of virtuous life must be upheld, no matter how far it is from current trends. "I am not a Cato, but a burgher and merchant of [the town] B-, and I do not consider my life an example to anyone",[21] Biderthal tells his listeners; a moral private life is all he can attempt, "since in our days there is no form [of government] available to me, in which - with my best powers beckoned, awoken and applied - I could attain the highest enjoyment of [my] humanity."[22]

The crucial point here is that Jacobi sees such hapless *Innerlichkeit* as inferior to the higher human possibilities which only a good polity can set free. The party in the *Kunstgarten* agrees that the right political "form" is vital for the ultimate self-realization of man. Biderthal's monologue ends in true *Sturm und Drang* fashion when a tearful Woldemar passionately

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17. *Ibid.*, pp. 294-395; with minor alterations, *Werke*, V, 166-167.
18. Cf. *Essay*, p. 44
19. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 151, 153, 227-229.
20. Presumably in the *Discours sur l'economie politique.*
21. "Ein Stück Philosophie", p. 396.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 398.

hugs his brother, crying "Beloved!... You have sung me out of the tune of my deepest melancholy."[23]

In the 1796 edition of *Woldemar* Jacobi inserted a completely new episode: Woldemar hears, to his great excitement, that a young Englishman, a former student of Ferguson, is paying a visit to one of his friends. Upon meeting the visitor, Carl Sidney, Woldemar immediately likes him (feeling must precede intellectual intercourse!) and they plunge into a fervent conversation:

> Woldemar related that Ferguson's first work, his Essay on the history of civil society, made an epoch in his life: it stimulated him to reread the ancients afresh; it placed him on a high level of contemplation, and generally woke him up to such a degree, that he still regarded that moment as a passage into a better existence.[24]

The speaker is, quite possibly, Jacobi himself, and the metaphor of awakening is reminiscent of Kant's famous tribute to Hume. Woldemar proceeds to mention yet another fine example of "English philosophy", Thomas Reid. Sidney responds with a panegyric to the philosophy of his homeland: it is holistic rather than dissecting, it is not "hair-splitting" like its counterpart in mainland Europe, but rather "hair-binding". Woldemar sarcastically remarks that the English readers do not appear to respect "Ferguson's masterpiece" as much as it deserves, but incline towards "the sophisms of Helvetius and Rousseau", which Ferguson "so forcefully knocks down."[25] As in the *Kunstgarten* episode, Ferguson is again the chief antidote to French rationalism, which at this late stage also includes the formerly-praised Rousseau.

Woldemar now explains his own admiration for English philosophy, which surpasses all others, primarily on the autonomy of virtue: "even the sceptic Hume" agrees that virtue is valuable in itself and not a mere means to happiness, and acknowledges the existence of an independent

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23. *Ibid.* Woldemar presents a more optimistic vision: "the time is near", he promises his friends, "when from these shattered forms a new one will flow, and - I know this by God! - a much purer and better one." However, the later editions reveal several sobering corrections: God's guarantee is deleted, and the word "perhaps" is inserted before the word "near"; see *Werke*, V, 173.

24. Jacobi, *Werke*, V, 69.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 72.

moral sentiment. This stance is based "less on speculative talent, than on powerful common sense."[26] Most striking of all, for Woldemar (and Jacobi), is Ferguson's distinction between the laws of natural philosophy and those of morality: whereas both are learned through experience and common sense, moral laws are not mathematically binding but require personal contemplation and decision. Hence moral action is a matter of choice.[27]

This affirmation of moral freedom was Ferguson's greatest contribution to Jacobi's thought. It leads directly to the most basic insight of Jacobi's political creed, as well as his position in the *Pantheismusstreit*: that free will, and a mind free of indoctrination, are the key to all morality. No authority, political or intellectual, can enforce moral behaviour on human beings; this radical voluntarism made Jacobi resist both the *Aufklärung* idea of universal reason and the absolutist concept of benevolent government.[28] Adam Ferguson was, as Jacobi gratefully acknowledged here and elsewhere, a major source of inspiration for this whole line of thought.

III

In the year 1782 Pope Pius VI visited the Holy Roman Emperor, Joseph II, to discuss the delicate situation created by the Emperor's Edict of Tolerance and his religious reforms. By one of the strange twists of eighteenth-century public discourse, this visit indirectly triggered Jacobi's most powerful political essay, *Etwas das Lessing gesagt hat.*[29] The immediate causes for this essay were a book by the Swiss historian Johannes von Müller, and the political apprehensions affecting the publication policy of a Hamburg journal.

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26. *Werke*, vol. V., 74.
27. *Ibid.*, pp. 77-78.
28. For a general discussion see Karl Homann, *F.H. Jacobis Philosophie der Freiheit* (Freiburg and Munich, 1973).
29. [F.H. Jacobi,] *Etwas das Leßing gesagt hat. Ein Commentar zu den Reisen der Päpste nebst Betrachtungen von einem Drittes* (Berlin, 1782); I have used the reprint in *Werke*, II (Leipzig, 1815), 325-388.

Johannes von Müller has been mentioned elsewhere in this study as a student at Göttingen and a reader of Ferguson's *Essay*; he was also a friend of Iselin's, and all these facts may be relevant to his role in the present context. The Pope's journey to Vienna prompted Müller - a Protestant - to publish a pamphlet, *Reisen der Päpste* (1782), in which he implied that the papacy compared rather favourably with generations of European lay rulers on the crucial issue of the use of violence to promote political goals.[30] Upon receiving this pamphlet from its author in May 1782 Jacobi found it "so rich in content and so timely" that he wrote a glowing review for the *Hamburgischer Unparteiische Korrespondenten.* The review, however, was rejected: Jacobi's friend Johann Reimarus could not achieve its publication, since, as Jacobi put it, "the authority was afraid of allowing to print an essay recommending a book which probably displeased the Emperor Joseph".[31] It is not quite clear whether the *Obrigkeit* in question was the city rulers or the journal's editors; but it is clear enough that, when it came to the Holy Roman Emperor, freedom of expression in Hamburg had its limits.

Jacobi took back his review, expanded it into a short book, and sent it to a publisher in Berlin. There, as he tells his readers with a wink, "it is well worth noting [that] it passed the censorship examination uninjured."[32] The book's publication history thus provided its first political point: the permission to annoy the Kaiser was a matter of geography.

The book opens with the quotation from Lessing promised in its title. This was a splendid device: for one thing, it proved to be an opening shot in the great *Pantheismusstreit*, in which Jacobi strove to establish himself as the primary intimate and interpreter of Lessing.[33] But the *Etwas* was much more than a prelude to the Jacobi-Mendelssohn controversy. Its first pages reveal that this is not a book about Lessing, nor about the pope. Lessing's remark is merely a respectable platform from which

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30. "My aim in it", Müller confided to a correspondent in May 1782, "is to silence in some measure the jubilation of the public at the subversion of every bulwark against military despotism, and to show that the Popes in old times have opposed an equipoise to the imperial power..."; quoted in Richard Raby's introduction to his translation, *The Journeys of the Popes* (London, 1852), p. 4.

31. *Etwas*, p. 327.

32. *Ibid.*

33. See Beiser, *Fate of Reason*, pp. 62ff.

Jacobi could launch an attack on the German princes, culminating in a daring normative statement on political society.

The alleged quotation ("so I heard Lessing say" is Jacobi's only authorisation) refers disapprovingly to the Catholic thinker Febronius. Under this pseudonym the nobleman and administrator of the Archbishopric of Trier, Johann Nikolaus von Hontheim, published his sensational *De statu ecclesiae* (1760). This book denounced the papal monarchy and proposed that the church be headed by a council of bishops, in close co-operation with the civil authorities.[34] Lessing, so Jacobi tells us, targeted the Febronians' misguided deference for lay rulers:

> So I heard Lessing say: What Febronius and his followers maintained was shameless flattery of the princes; for all their arguments against the rights of the Pope were either groundless, or else twice and thrice as applicable to the princes themselves...[35]

At this point Lessing disappears, and Jacobi takes the lead. He emphatically praises Müller's book for having "said it at last, and loud enough for everyone to hear". Still, it seems that Müller did not make his point quite bluntly enough for those German readers who doggedly refused to understand the "great sense" of the *Reisen der Päpste*. Jacobi seizes this opportunity to mock what he sees as the typical German misreception of an outsider's insight. Müller (just like Iselin) was a Swiss trying to teach political awareness to the Germans, and Jacobi was all too conscious of the conceptual gap between the two nations. "It seems", he remarks, "that we Germans are far too absorbed in our profundity [*zu sehr vertieft sind in unsern Tiefsinn* is the original pun] to be easily and swiftly attentive."[36] The result is misunderstanding and hostility: "*Germans* will do this to the man, who opened his mouth for German freedom, for the most precious right of mankind, and who is himself *not a German*."[37]

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34. See Sheehan, *German history*, pp. 188-189.
35. *Etwas*, p. 334.
36. *Ibid.*
37. *Ibid.*, p. 335, emphases given.

The "inner" core of Müller's statement, Jacobi tells us, was about political freedom. But German readers had overlooked it while they were busy vilifying its "outer" shell; by this Jacobi probably means that the book was seen, as it was in Hamburg, as anti-Emperor propaganda. We should note that Jacobi once again achieves here a rather breathtaking reversal of the familiar "inner-outer" metaphor, much the same way as he did in *Woldemar*: for him the "inner" meaning of the *Reisen der Päpste* is in fact a concrete political message.

Jacobi's object is thus to spell out very clearly, in words which even Germans cannot obscure, that unlimited political power is a bad thing. This was not the first time he expressed this idea: an earlier attack on Wieland's defence of absolutist government cost him his friendship with the author.[38] Undeterred, Jacobi repeated and reinforced his point:

> But force [*Gewalt*], in the shapes it has always existed, divided among several or held by one person - ... such force, which only gives laws but itself obeys none, and may solemnly breach the most sacred rights: such [force] has never produced genuine truth and real welfare among men anywhere.[39]

By contrast, much good has come from opposing such power, from the "*Urgeiste der Freyheit*", from the "eternally moving drive of reason [*Vernunft*] to increase itself."[40] In this political context, at least, Jacobi shows nothing of the "counter-Enlightenment" hostility to reason found in his writings on Hume and Spinoza. His association of freedom and reason seems, at a first glance, in line with most Enlightenment thinkers of his generation.

The relation between reason and the passions, Jacobi continues, is different from the one envisaged by Hobbes and Spinoza in their theories of government. It is wrong to think that human beings are dominated by passions, which reason - in the shape of "a system of coercion" - must curb. Reason and the passions cooperate in a subtler way, and the sole

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38. Jacobi, "Ueber Recht und Gewalt, oder philosophische Erwägung eines aufsatzes von dem herrn Hofrath Wieland, über das göttliche Recht der Obrigkeit...", *Deursches Museum* (1781); Wieland and Jacobi had jointly edited *Der Teutsche Merkur*.
39. *Etwas*, p. 337.
40. *Ibid.*, p. 338.

legitimate function of "formal legislation", or a "machine of coercion", is the protection (*Beschirmung*) of individuals from the injustice caused by the excesses of the passions. Without acknowledging his obvious debt to Locke, which he may have incurred unwittingly, Jacobi wrote of the role of political coercion as limited to "securing... for every member of society the unviolated possession of his person, the free use of all his capacities [*Kräfte*], and the perfect enjoyment of the fruits of their application."[41]

An even clearer declaration of the limits of government power is given several pages later:

> The object of the coercion, without which society cannot exist, is not what *benefits* man, but what *harms* him: not a *positive*, but a *negative* purpose. This can only be obtained and secured by external form; and then all that is positive, virtue and happiness, rise by themselves from their own sources.[42]

This straightforward advocacy of governmental minimalism is buttressed by denouncing all political thinking which gives the State a positive role in human affairs. Jacobi ridicules the hypocrisy latent in theories of the "interest of the State" or the dreams of "a certain general welfare" which demand "the unlimited sacrifice of the parts for the whole". This demand often conceals "mere geographical interests", for instance the territorial reshuffling of "a certain number of square feet of land".[43] Jacobi probably had a very specific example in mind, namely Emperor Joseph's plans to swap Bavaria for the Austrian Netherlands in a deal with the Elector Karl Theodor.[44] Despite its boasted unity, Jacobi concludes, such a State is nothing but "a blind tool, an artificial but mindless [*Vernunftlosen*] body, *without its own soul* ...".[45]

We can read this text as primarily an attack against absolutist rhetoric: Jacobi is opposing the misuse of the concept of reason by the champions

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41. *Ibid.*, pp. 346-347. Jacobi's library included Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, but not his treatises on government.
42. *Ibid.*, p. 373, emphases given.
43. *Ibid.*, pp. 348-349.
44. See *Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi (1743-1819)*, an exhibition catalogue of the Heinrich-Heine-Institut in Düsseldorf, ed. by Klaus Hammacher and Kurt Christ (Düsseldorf, 1985), p. 76.
45. *Etwas*, p. 349, emphasis given.

of benevolent despotism and *raison d'etat,* and the cameralists' distorted concept of the common good. Yet the attack goes even further: it is aimed against the very legitimacy of absolutist regimes. Political government, for Jacobi, is not an agent of collective improvement. By transcending its purely negative role as a shield from violence and injustice, the State is bound to become itself a mechanism of violence and injustice. Couched in the traditional language of *Innerlichkeit*, Jacobi in fact makes a bold assertion on the limits of the State:

> Force must only counteract force, and coercion must only oppose crime... They are capable neither of awakening *capacities* [*Kräfte*], nor of creating anything good *in itself.* This can only spring on its own accord, and its first source everywhere is the *spontaneous inner movement of a free spirit.*[46]

But what is the nature of this creative freedom? Contrary to the expectation arising from his choice of words, Jacobi proceeds with a theory of social and political action rather than individual, "inner" life. This is where Ferguson enters the text: Jacobi's description of voluntary action in political society is an explicit, and recognizable, paraphrase of similar statements in the *Essay*:

> Human beings have first fraternized without force or coercion, and established societies in which the absence of faulty institutions granted them better security than so many artificial arrangements, which often stir up more numerous and greater crimes than those they suppress.[47]

Jacobi thus adheres to Ferguson's notion of pre-institutional polities. He also emphasises another Fergusonian idea, that of activity as a natural human drive and an essential condition for the virtues which make "the band [*das Band*] and the strength of society."[48]

The moral ambiguity of increasingly complex political frameworks was perhaps clearer to this Jülich-Berg *Hofkammerrat* than it was to Ferguson. "The arts of government", Jacobi writes,

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46. *Ibid.*, p. 351, emphases given.
47. *Ibid.*
48. *Ibid.*, pp. 351-352. Cf. *Essay*, pp. 17, 43, 101, and 242, for the terms "bands" or "bond" used in a similar context.

> have indeed exercised the understanding of human beings, and enriched their spirit by giving them occasion for all kinds of pursuits [*Bestrebungen*], investigations, goals, wishes, and plans; but not seldom they also debased and depraved it.[49]

He nevertheless overrules this reservation with a wholly Fergusonian identification of public intercourse with happiness:

> Yet the happiest people are those whose hearts are tied to a community [*Gemeine*]... in which they find every object for magnanimity and enthusiasm, and a purpose for which to practice every talent and virtuous inclination... Only man can *give* advice [*Rath*] to, and *take* it from, his fellow creatures in society; convince, refute, inspire; and in the fire of his love or his indignation disregard personal security and self interest.[50]

These words, Jacobi now tells us, are a paraphrase of Ferguson's *Essay*. We may add that it is an uncommonly honest paraphrase, acknowledging that the public sphere is not only about benevolence and charity, but also about argument and disagreement. Jacobi had discovered Ferguson's idea of conflict, and - unlike Garve, Iselin and the others - chose to embrace it. Admittedly, he understood it as a verbal conflict of opinions rather than party politics or warfare; but this is still a legitimate interpretation of Ferguson's key idea that "the agitations of a free people, are the principles of political life."[51] As Ferguson put it, "A perfect agreement in matters of opinion is not to be obtained in the most select company; and if it were, what would become of society?"[52] Jacobi got this message, and understood its significance. His use of the term *Rat* in this context of open public debate could be a deliberate twist of the erstwhile *Hofkammerrat* and *Geheimrat* against the frustratingly non-public court politics he knew only too well.

Ferguson is now called by his name, and his idea of broad-based political activism is spelt out:

> Ferguson, whose words I have just used, warns very much against the political refinements of ordinary people, whose only object is peace

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49. *Etwas*, p. 352.
50. *Ibid.*, pp. 352-353.
51. *Essay*, p. 61.
52. *Ibid.*, p. 62.

> and inactivity, and by endeavouring to set limitations to evil deeds they wish at the same time to eliminate the noblest activity, as though the common man [*der gemeine Mann*] had no right to act, or even to think.[53]

This is almost too radical a paraphrase of Ferguson's civic humanism. Fired by his own belief in the individual's reason and freedom, Jacobi seems to be pushing Ferguson's cautious republicanism towards a more democratic frontier. Be that as it may, compared with Ferguson's other German treatments this certainly is an outstanding reading: Jacobi dived into the *Essay* and came up with the heart of the matter.

He was also quick to spot Ferguson's comment on Frederick's *Memoirs of Brandenburg*, and did not hesitate to share with his readers the author's "mockery of a great prince who tried to ridicule the caution which binds judges in a free land to the precise interpretation of the laws."[54] But Ferguson supplies Jacobi with a far more serious message to the adherents of paternalist rule; his text can serve, Jacobi observes, to alleviate

> the anxiety of certain people who can envisage, instead of boundless subjection [*Unterthänigkeit*], [only] the defiance of their own rights and lack of police.[55]

Ferguson does this, in the *Essay*, by showing how the present European order would seem anarchic to a Chinese visitor.[56] Jacobi makes full use of this example in setting up his case for a greater political freedom which is no prelude to anarchy.

At this point comes the long quotation from the *Essay*, a device which Jacobi employed earlier in *Woldemar* and later in the first edition of his *Briefe über Spinoza*. The passage shrewdly chosen for the present context is from the section "Of Relaxations in the National Spirit, incident to Polished Nations"; in Part V of the *Essay*, "Of the Decline of Nations", where other German interpreters had feared to tread. The quoted

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53. *Etwas*, p. 353.
54. *Ibid.*, pp. 353-354. The Prussian censors were lenient towards this, as well as Ferguson's original passage; perhaps Jacobi's praise for the Berlin authorities at the preface to this work is not all ironic.
55. *Ibid.*, p. 354.
56. *Essay*, p. 221.

passage includes one of Ferguson's strongest denunciations of the excessive use of laws by governments: it draws the line where protective legislation spills over into life-regulating, stifling paternalism. The climax of Ferguson's original passage reads thus:

> The viper must be held at a distance, and the tyger chained. But if a rigorous policy, applied to enslave, not to restrain from crimes, has an actual tendency to corrupt the manners, and to extinguish the spirit of nations [*alles Edelmuthes unter einem Volke* is Jacobi's translation]; if its severities be applied to terminate the agitations of a free people [*den Ausbrüchen der Freyheit*], not to remedy their corruptions [*Laster und Frevel*]; if forms be often applauded as salutary, because they tend merely to silence the voice of mankind, or be condemned as pernicious, because they allow this voice to be heard; we may expect that many of the boasted improvements of civil society, will be mere devices to lay the political spirit at rest, and will chain up the active virtues more than the restless disorders of men.[57]

This is one of the most important single passages in the *Essay*, and Jacobi grasped its true significance. By this I do not mean that his rendering of it was faithful to the word; let us examine his translation of the final clause of this passage, where his personal style takes over:

> ...und wenn gerade alles dieß der Fall seyn sollte mit so manchen unsrer gerühmten Anstalten zur Verbesserung der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft: dann wird zuletzt sich offenbaren, daß jene gerühmten Anstalten weiter nichts als eben so viele Erfindungen sind, den Geist aller politischen Verbindung zu tödten; Erfindungen, die weit kräftiger dazu dienen, der Menschheit edelste Tugenden in Ketten zu legen, als Unordnung und Verwirrung zu hemmen.[58]

The passage includes some of our previously earmarked key terms, and, on the face of it, Jacobi followed other German translators in weakening this civic vocabulary: "the spirit of nations" becomes *das Edelmuth unter einem Volke*, and "the active virtues" - *der Menschheit edelste Tugenden.* We may also note a more intense and more personal sense of responsibility and urgency in the last part, with "the boasted improvements" becoming *unsrer gerühmten Anstalten* and making a double appearance. On the other hand, Jacobi intensifies the public meaning of the predicted disillusionment: instead of Ferguson's casual

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57. *Ibid.*
58. *Etwas*, p. 355.

"we may expect", he writes *dann wird zuletzt sich offenbaren*, it will finally become manifest. This usage introduces into the text a German sense of *Öffentlichkeit*, implying that truth will inevitably emerge in the course of public debate. It reminds us of Jacobi's much-repeated appeal to the understanding of the "common man"; and this may partly compensate for the loss of the civic humanist terminology.

As the enemy of materialism and mechanism, Jacobi was delighted to find in Ferguson a genuine ally in his aversion to the machine-like State. Our times, he says, have undertaken to eliminate the timeless contrast between "the noble and the mechanical".[59] On the political implications of this trend Jacobi mentions his friend Hemsterhuis' *Lettre sur l'homme et ses rapports,* which says that his contemporaries could not have done better had they deliberately wished to create a society with as little virtue and religion as possible. The legislators of the mechanized State needed some remnants of these spiritual *Kräfte* to set it up, but those virtues will be disposed of when they no longer serve "the uniform motion of the great clockwork."[60] In a more Fergusonian vein, Jacobi also quotes - and slightly mistranslates - Montesquieu on Greek virtue: "the Greek statesmen knew no other support than virtue. Our statesmen speak only of manufacture, commerce, finance, opulence, and even luxury and splendour."[61] In fact, Montesquieu's original text did not speak of "our statesmen" but merely of the modern inhabitants of Greece. Once again we encounter Jacobi's unusual kind of mistranslation: whereas other German translators tried to conceal unpleasant references to current affairs, Jacobi's distortions are often aimed at bringing more political bite and first-person responsibility into the texts.

Spiritual guardianship, Jacobi insists, is for God alone. That no flesh-and-blood ruler can be trusted with it is manifest "from one end of history to the other".[62] At this point we come upon a rather surprising bit of Jacobi's text: a call for individual moral autonomy (based on Ferguson's doctrine of political responsibility) which anticipates Kant's famous *Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?* and uses the same

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59. *Ibid.*, p. 356.
60. *Ibid.*, p. 357.
61. *Ibid.*, footnote; the reference is to *De l'esprit des lois*, book 3, para. 3.
62. *Etwas*, p. 358.

terminology of *Mündigkeit* which Kant later made famous. History shows us, Jacobi says, that

> people who are not themselves in the position to recognize and strive towards what is good for them, would far less owe their happiness to the virtue of a guardian [*Vormund*] without a judge, who never allows [them] to come of age [*mündig werden*].[63]

Rulers, he points out, are "imperfect beings like ourselves". They can only be seen as "shepherds of their nations" if we bring dogs, fences and the other grim instruments into the metaphor. The reign of subjection and terror inflicted by rulers with pretences for guardianship is exactly as described by "the great noble Ferguson" in his analysis of despotism. Jacobi again quotes at length from the *Essay*, this time from the section "Of corruption in general" where Ferguson skilfully leads his readers from ancient despotism to its more dangerous modern counterpart.[64]

Jacobi's translation is, once again, more dramatic than the original, and it again eliminates some civic terminology without damaging the general meaning. Ferguson achieved an ironic twist (which is, admittedly, untranslatable) when he wrote that even such virtuous despots as Antoninus and Trajan could "do no more than apply, with candour and with vigour, the whip and the sword". The irony is couched in the transition from the civic humanist terms "candour" and "vigour" to the despotic associations of "whip" and "sword". In German the order is reversed and the civic vocabulary vanishes: "*...die Peitsche und das Schwert mit Billigkeit und Nachdruck brauchen* ".[65]

Jacobi must have been especially impressed with Ferguson's denunciation of the despot's abuse of the concept of justice, which "may sometimes direct the arm of the despotical sovereign; but the name of justice is most commonly employed to signify the interest, or the caprice, of a reigning power."[66] This Jacobi takes, quite rightly, to refer to modern absolutist governments. There is no beating round the bush: despite their pastoral rhetoric, the European princes are in the same category as the

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63. *Ibid.*, p. 359. Kant's essay was compiled in September 1784, two years after Jacobi's.
64. *Essay*, pt. vi, section 1. Jacobi' quotation is from p. 241 of the 1966 edition.
65. *Etwas*, p. 361.
66. *Essay*, p. 241.

ancient despots. "Why do we not call the thing by its correct name?", Jacobi asks in parentheses.[67]

This truth incites a sharp stylistic turn into the first person singular. Like his fictional character Biderthal, and in similar words, Jacobi explains his own acute sense of alienation from his country:

> The advantage of a better protection against an external enemy, even were it tenable despite the numerous counter-examples, is worth too little, since the domestic enemy is the worst. I have no constitution to defend, in which I could have watched over my rights and defended them myself; no freedom, therefore, and no fatherland. I may always have a *place of birth*; and perhaps I could gain more than lose from a new master; at least it cannot significantly harm me.[68]

These are desperate words, but they do not spell resignation. Jacobi does not convey an angry retreat from the world of affairs, but a painful self-thinker's critique of the existing governmental form.

His definition of freedom is, accordingly, more political than many other German definitions of his day. The opposite of despotism, he says, is the government of freedom. Absolute freedom - being the sole cause of one's actions - is for God alone;

> But free - in the highest degree of its kind - is every person [*Mensch*] and every citizen [*Bürger*], in so far as he is not hindered from promoting his true interest *in every way* as best he can. [...]
> I said: every *person* and every *citizen*, because the definition given above is general, and applies to the inner moral freedom as well as the outer political [freedom]. Both are most closely interdependent. [...]
> Where a higher degree of political freedom exists in effect, and not just in appearance, the degree of moral freedom must be just as high. They are both based solely on the rational [*vernünftigen*] nature of human beings, and... therefore make them more and more human, more and more capable of governing themselves, dominating their passions, being happy and fearless.[69]

This statement of moral progressivism is probably more than Ferguson would subscribe to. Jacobi indeed sketches in this essay a vague notion of

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67. *Etwas*, pp. 362-363.
68. *Ibid.*, p. 363. emphasis given.
69. *Ibid.*, pp. 364-366, emphasis given.

historical progress, and speaks at one point of "that unseen power... the never-resting striving [*Bestreben*] of reason"; he also alludes to the Reformation as a stage in this moral and mental climb.[70] But his use of the familiar formula of "restless striving" does not serve to dim the principle of civic activism. The underlying notion of political participation as the premise for morality is distinctly Fergusonian. Moreover, Jacobi's use of the terms *Mensch* and *Bürger* becomes highly significant when we consider that he saw religion as a matter for the *Mensch*, but not for the *Bürger*.[71] Jacobi's idea of political virtue is thus distinct from his utterly private concept of religious belief. His political setting for freedom, based on man's rational nature, is a stance far from irrationalism, let alone anti-rationalism. No *salto mortale* is recommended on political issues.

At one point his idea of reason even leads him to a radical egalitarianism which echoes Rousseau:

> There is bound to be an abundance of virtue and *moral* freedom wherever plenty of truly political [freedom] exists, because the laws cannot defend themselves, but must be maintained by a general and ever-present power, which irresistibly stands up to anything threatening the laws. Hence the true laws of freedom can only rule if their will is the living will of the people itself. Laws of freedom are none but the laws of strictest justice, that is, of rational equality [*vernünftigen Gleichheit*].[72]

But the radical potential is developed no further. In fact, Jacobi's political vision is markedly (and self-consciously) realistic. Despite his deep-set philosophical dislike for rules and laws, he admits that no polity can rely on virtue alone. Virtue is, alas, too erratic, and it cannot be guaranteed by any political "form". Unlike Ferguson, Jacobi saw Sparta as a failed attempt to enforce virtue from above as a substitute to a civil constitution.[73] He nevertheless agreed with Ferguson that good laws need good citizens to preserve and adjust them. One can sense that Jacobi the machine-hater was sympathetic to Ferguson's demand that keen amateurs, not professional technicians, should govern the polity.

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70. *Ibid.*, p. 372.
71. This was stated in "Ueber Mirabeau's Werk Des lettres de cachet", *Deutsches Museum* (1783).
72. *Etwas*, p. 367.
73. *Ibid.*, pp. 368-369.

Jacobi used the last pages of the *Etwas das Lessing gesagt hat* to bring several authorities to support his central argument and to explore its intellectual roots. Spinoza is quoted on the foolishness of trusting rulers' benevolence.[74] But more interesting for our context is the lengthy treatment of "the best work" of "another great man", namely Machiavelli's *Discorsi sopra la prima deca di Tito Livio*. Jacobi seems to have read him in the original, and decided to "call him, of all others, to give evidence, since no one can honourably deny his clear unbiased understanding."[75] Jacobi's understanding of Ferguson's Machiavellian context is an impressive insight: the *Essay* itself makes no mention of Machiavelli.

Jacobi is equally impressive as a reader of Machiavelli. Somewhat sarcastically, he hailed Machiavelli (and, rather more sarcastically, Hobbes) as the rare political thinker who did not confuse good and evil by trying to derive one from the other. Machiavelli avoided the trend - which had since become fashionable - to draw "a system of virtue and freedom" from the premises of human vices. Hobbes, who was only interested in the dark sides of human nature, was honest enough not to try to "teach others right and virtue... and derive them from things which are not their causes".[76] But Machiavelli is a class unto his own: he managed to analyse both vice and virtue without allowing them to mingle. The analysis of vice is offered in "his *Prince*, which was so unjustly calumniated for giving the true theory of unlimited one-man rule, and nothing false, erroneous, or *delusive*."[77] In the *Discourses*, on the other hand, Machiavelli showed how the best laws and individual virtue (Jacobi uses *Tugend* for Machiavelli's *virtú*) cannot be sustained under unlimited government.[78] The focal argument of the *Discourses* is that political freedom encourages aspiring leaders to show their virtue, and common people to enhance theirs by participating in political affairs. Slightly distancing himself from Machiavelli's focus on the (city-) State, Jacobi emphasises the individual moral benefits of civic humanism:

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74. *Ibid.*, pp. 375, quoting from the *Tractatus politici*, ch. vi, para. 3.
75. *Ibid.*, pp. 375-376.
76. *Ibid.*, p. 384.
77. *Ibid.*, pp. 284-385, emphasis given.
78. The reference is to the corruption of the formerly virtuous decemvir Appius, book I, ch. 9.

> Wherever political administration directly occupies many people, apart from the exuberant advantage that the best virtues and talents appear more often and are more widespread, there is yet another advantage, more closely linked to the external welfare of a State, on which Machiavelli, who only has *this* [aspect] in mind, sheds the clearest light.[79]

The "external" advantage, in this case, is that the polity has a wider variety of potential leaders to face different challenges and "resist its fate longer."[80] Despite his self-professed preference for the "inner" moral rewards of the active life, Jacobi is still deeply committed to Machiavelli's and Ferguson's civic ethics.

Jacobi concludes with his own view of the good polity. It is markedly non-perfectionist, and even anti-perfectionist: men will never be healed of their passions and stupidity, but one person's passions should not be allowed to subjugate those of others. Instead, there will be a "free play" - Jacobi uses this interesting phrase twice - between different *Kräfte*, a concept which here encompasses the passions, reason, and wisdom.[81] "Perfection is nowhere to be hoped for", Jacobi says, "because from mere faulty stuff nothing faultless can ever emerge". Once again, Jacobi's phrase anticipated a more famous maxim of Kant's: "out of timber so crooked as that from which man is made nothing entirely straight can be carved", was Kant's phrasing in his *Idee zu einer allgemeinen Geschichte in weltbürgerlicher Absicht* (1784), published two years after Jacobi's *Etwas das Lessing gesagt hat.*

The book thus ends with an explicit advocacy of political activism, and indeed civic humanism, not unlike Machiavelli's and Ferguson's.[82] Jacobi thus moved from the public sphere to the civic polity, and this, in Germany of the 1780s, was an uncommon step. Himself a politically active member of the middle class, he was perhaps in a good position to

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79. *Etwas*, p. 380. The discussion of Machiavelli is on pp. 376-381.
80. *Ibid.*, p. 381.
81. Ironically enough, Jacobi could almost pass here as an ancestor of Isaiah Berlin's philosophy of negative liberty and creative pluralism.
82. I take issue with Klaus Hammacher, who presents Jacobi's notion of "*Gewaltlosigkeit* " as virtually a-political, based on a sharp separation between "human society and political order"; see Hammacher, *Die philosophie Friedrich Heinrich Jacobis* (Munich, 1969), pp. 101-107.

preach popular participation. His career disappointments did not lead him, as Iselin's did, to despair of political involvement. Nor did Jacobi doubt the validity of true *Vernunft* in the affairs of State. Significantly, he ends his book with a sympathetic quotation from the alleged "arch-enemy", Voltaire:

> Le partage du brave homme est d'expliquer librement ses pensées. Celui qui n'ose regarder fixement les deux poles de la vie humaine, la religion et le gouvernement, n'est qu'un làche.

How did Jacobi, then, come to attack Reason so vehemently only three years after writing *Etwas das Lessing gesagt hat* ?

IV

The present study cannot provide a comprehensive analysis of Jacobi's epistemological arguments in the *Pantheismusstreit.* It can, however, suggest a better understanding of his moral and political ideas, based upon his use of Ferguson in the first edition of his central contribution to the debate, *Über die Lehre des Spinoza* (1785).[83]

In this book Jacobi put forward his critique of the *Aufklärung* principle of reason and its moral consequences. He argued that rigorous and consistent rational thinking, best demonstrated in Spinoza's metaphysics, leads by necessity to atheism and fatalism. The moral result was what Jacobi dubbed "nihilism". Reason, far from promoting morality and religion as thinkers like Mendelssohn believed, can actually destroy them - if it follows its own rules. This is so, Jacobi says, because the backbone of all rational thinking is the principle of sufficient cause: everything must have a cause. But God cannot have a cause, nor can free will; therefore pure rational philosophy must do away with both God and free will, and embrace atheism and fatalism. Spinoza had done just this; and Jacobi scandalously claimed that Lessing, the greatest of the *Aufklärer*, had in his later years become a secret Spinozist. This accusation was privately transmitted to Mendelssohn from 1783, until in 1785 Mendelssohn chose to defend Lessing in his book *Morgenstunden*. This,

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83. The full title is *Über die Lehre des Spinoza in Briefen an den Herrn Moses Mendelssohn* (first edn., Breslau, 1785).

and Jacobi's counter-publication, opened the public phase of the *Pantheismusstreit*. The debate between Jacobi and Mendelssohn over Lessing's alleged Spinozism became a full-blown philosophical battle over the principles of knowledge and ethics. Most major thinkers of the time took some part in it.[84]

Jacobi's positive statement, his alternative to rational philosophy, was a philosophy of faith: we must believe in God and in free will, according to the teachings of Christ, even if it contradicts our reason. In this context Jacobi preached a leap of faith, a *salto mortale*, in order to embrace those truths which reason refutes. This was Jacobi's great step out of the Enlightenment. As Beiser observes, Jacobi, and not Hamann, was the true irrationalist: Hamann merely argued that the two regions, reason and faith, were mutually independent; Jacobi claimed that consistent rational thinking refutes the truths of faith, and must therefore be abandoned.[85]

It is here that Jacobi famously used, or perhaps exploited, David Hume's concept of belief. Like Hamann, Jacobi found in Hume an exemplary critique of rational thought. Both Hume and Reid provided him with a theory of knowledge based of belief. "Belief", in this Scottish sense, means a type of knowledge which is acceptable to the human mind without further demonstration. Jacobi's "faith", however, was a notion far exceeding that of common-sense beliefs, since it incorporated all that Jacobi deemed exempt from rational demonstration. He nevertheless embraced the epistemology of Reid and Beattie as a counterpart to his own.[86] As for Hume, Jacobi made a very selective use of his scepticism insofar as it supported his attack on reason; but he did not accept Hume's doubts concerning everyday beliefs. For Jacobi, the contents of faith were beyond question.[87]

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84. On Jacobi's role in the *Pantheismusstreit* see Beiser, *Fate of Reason*, ch. 2.
85. Beiser, *Fate of Reason*, p. 47.
86. *Ibid.*, p. 90. See also Kuehn, *Scottish Common Sense*, pp. 143-145, and Günther Baum, *Vernunft und Erkenntnis. Die Philosophie F.H. Jacobis* (Bonn, 1969), pp. 42ff and 80ff.
87. See Beiser, *Fate of Reason*, p. 91, and especially Berlin, "Hume and the Sources...".

Such, in a nutshell, is the view - centering on Jacobi's *Briefe über Spinoza* - which sees his idea of faith as a deliberate distortion of the Scottish epistemology of belief, as it appears either in Hume's scepticism or in Reid's concept of common sense. However, the story could be retold in a less incriminating tone: taking into view a broader spectrum of Jacobi's work from *Woldemar* onwards, one can note a philosophical development which owes a great debt to British thinkers. As Gustav Zart pointed out, Jacobi's earlier work was indebted to the English and Scottish discourse of virtue. It centred on virtue as a basic moral principle and the unique source of happiness, thus excluding such "materialistic" notions as utility or pleasure from the realm of ethics.[88] But this impact should be distinguished from Jacobi's use of Scottish ideas for tackling the problem of faith and forming his anti-Kantian notion of *Vernunft*.

In other words, Jacobi did not distort substantially the ethics of the Scottish thinkers, however much he may have mishandled their epistemology. His use of Ferguson can indeed support this argument: in the first edition of his *Briefe über Spinoza* he quotes Ferguson in a context which is, like all his former quotations, faithful to the original meaning. Jacobi fears that the "practical" and "rational [*vernünftig*]" education, by which "the sense and taste of the century are directed solely at pleasure and at the means for it, riches, privilege and power", is gradually "hemming the best qualities of human nature to the brink of disappearance", and threatens to "make our descendants well-trained and ready to become increasingly bad people". This, I think, is a reasonable critique of non-humanistic education: Jacobi is foretelling the *Realschule* and the *Berufsschule*. He supports his point, in the first edition, by a lengthy footnote quotation from Ferguson's section on "The History of Subordination" in the *Essay*, a section which contains some of his most ardent civic humanist statements.[89] Jacobi's passage ends with a stark premonition:

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88. Zart, *Einfluss*, pp. 212-215.

89. The quotation is from the *Essay*, 2nd edition (1768), pp. 188-190. Jacobi had it removed from the later editions of his book, since it was already paraphrased in the text; see Heinrich Scholz (ed.), *Die Hauptschriften zum Pantheismusstreit zwichen Jacobi und Mendelssohn* (Berlin, 1916), p. 190.

> And so, instead of God's peace, which is a mere fantasy, there would be a more real Devil's peace, whose preliminaries, at least, are quite conceivable.[90]

Is this an attack against reason? It is certainly an attack against rationalism, because it opposes Kant's (later) assertion that "even a nation of devils" can set up an orderly State as long as its members "possess understanding".[91] But Jacobi's opposition to Kant's moral system of "unsocial sociability" is not very different from Ferguson's quarrel with *The Fable of the Bees*.[92] Like his Scottish mentor, Jacobi is attacking the rationalist idea of self-interest. We may recall his delight with Ferguson's sharp distinction between physical and moral laws of nature: the "truly rational" education which Jacobi denounces is precisely that which aims at reducing everything to physical laws. Morality, for Jacobi and for Ferguson alike, is beyond the grasp of such narrow rationalist treatment. Jacobi may appeal to God more often than Ferguson does; but our evidence still shows that the moral core of Jacobi's philosophy is not so distant from Ferguson's idea of virtue.

The political aspect of Jacobi's ethics is thus neither "dark" nor "mystical". True morality, in his view, cannot thrive without a creative society of self-thinkers, who help govern themselves in an unimposing, non-paternalistic State. The opposite of such political freedom is despotic government, and an especially despicable type of despotism is the rule of rationalists who dictate their distorted concept of reason to their unthinking subjects.

Recent German scholarship has highlighted the complexity of Jacobi's idea of *Vernunft*.[93] In his late years Jacobi himself distinguished between *Verstand* - the formal rational faculty, a collector and analyst of data - and *Vernunft*, the higher and uniquely human faculty of deep knowledge, comprising what we may call insight and intuition. "I refer", he explained,

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90. *Lehre des Spinoza*, p. 239.
91. Immanuel Kant, *Perpetual Peace*, in *Kant's Political Writings*, ed. H. Reiss (Cambridge, 1970), p. 112.
92. For Ferguson on Mandeville see the *Essay*, p. 33.
93. Günther Baum, *Vernunft und Erkenntnis*, pp. 113-129; Homann, *Jacobis Philosophie der Freiheit*, p. 145ff.

> to an urgent, insurmountable feeling as the first and immediate ground for all philosophy and religion; to a feeling, which makes a person perceptive and aware, that he senses the supersensual. This sense I call *Vernunft*, to distinguish it from the senses of the visible world.[94]

It should nevertheless be clear that even at the height of his *Glaubensphilosophie* Jacobi did not dispense with reasoning, nor did he oppose the use of reason. An aversion to rationalism is one thing, the abolition of the intellect a different one altogether. Jacobi's attack was aimed not at the faculty of *ratio* but at a specific philosophical stance: he saw the extreme "rationalists", namely the French materialists and the Berlin *Aufklärer*, as manipulative sophists who in fact abuse the term "reason". We have seen this argument in his *Etwas*, and it is repeated in later writings against Nicolai and his circle.[95] Indeed, Jacobi was not the only German who sensed an intellectual despotism at work: a similar feeling prompted Pfarrer Stark's ironic remark that Friedrich Nicolai had secretly become a Catholic. Whether Stark or Jacobi did justice to the Berlin *Aufklärer* is a different matter; our point is that Rationalism became, in the public discourse of the 1780s, what Jacobi called a *Meinung*, and we may call an ideology.[96]

The fight, in other words, was political. It was so even before the French Revolution, and it was increasingly so after Jacobi recognized his dreaded intellectual despotism in the Parisian experiment. Jacobi was one of the first Germans to recover from the initial enthusiasm brought by the *Declaration of the Rights of Man*: By mid-1790 he was already accusing the French National Assembly of the same misuse of reason and disregard for true individual freedom which he earlier attributed to the enlightened despots and their philosopher friends. In a letter to J.F. Laharpe (5 May 1790) Jacobi warned against the despotic threat inherent in Mirabeau's "manière fixe d'être gouverné par la seule raison."[97]

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94. *Werke*, IV, p. xxi, quoted by Homann, *Jacobis Philosophie der Freiheit*, p. 163.
95. Jacobi, "Einige Betrachtungen über den frommen Betrug und eine Vernunft, die keine Vernunft ist", *Deutsches Museum* (1788).
96. This valuable point is made by Baum, "Jacobi als politischer Denker", p. 104.
97. *Werke*, II (Leipzig, 1815); see Baum, *ibid.*, p. 105. The letter was eventually redirected by Jacobi to Necker.

Mirabeau's phrase appears also in Jacobi's unpublished notes from the same period, which have recently been researched by P.-P. Schneider. They contain a discussion of Jacobi's disappointment with the French Revolution:

> A composition, a contract of virtue with vice, is impossible, as I have already proved in my *Etwas was* [sic] *Lessing gesagt hat.* Intemperance, lust for power, avarice, cannot in all eternity yield to a maniere fixe d'être gouverné par la raison, the jointures dans l'esprit are totally indispensable to them. It is unreasonable to make such people practically reasonable, instil the love of equality into them, and attempt to rule everything by means of this love. - [It is] unreasonable to abolish monarchy in the name of reason, and at the same time preserve a body politic of 25 millions. (*Kladde* II, 59[1]).[98]

Jacobi's rejection of the revolutionary regime is thus based on Ferguson's and Machiavelli's denial of the possibility (let alone the desirability) of a working compromise between virtue and vice, or individual selfishness and social cohesion, as the basis for a polity.[99] Later events - the Terror, the revolutionary wars, Jacobi's traumatic flight from Pempelfort, and his published denunciation of the regicide - merely reflect the bitter confirmation of this early philosophical verdict.[100]

V

Jacobi remained loyal to Ferguson when the Scottish philosopher went out of fashion in Germany. In the 1790s he used the *Principles* to support his polemic against the ethical doctrines of Kant and Fichte.[101] Some twenty years later an aged and bitter Jacobi saw the ultimate failure of Reid and Ferguson in Germany as part of his own failure in the wake of the Kantian tide. In a letter to Friedrich Jacobs (27 March 1811) he put it thus:

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98. Schneider, *Die 'Denkbücher'*, p. 35. This passage is part of *Kladde* II, dated beween January 1789 and mid-1790.
99. Even Jacobi's point about the relation between the demographic size of a State and its form of government reflects the impact of Ferguson, as the *Kladden* reveal; see Schneider, *ibid.*, pp. 248-249.
100. Baum, "Jacobi als politischer Denker", pp. 104-105.
101. Jacobi, *Werke*, vol. III, 38f.

> What you remark about Ferguson's history of civil society, that only little use has so far been made of it, is very true, and I have often contemplated in my heart of hearts about the reasons for it, and also said something of this, or rather dropped a hint, in *Woldemar*. His earlier book, if I am not mistaken, Institutes of moral philosophy, was, in 1772, well translated and provided with comments that are in part outstanding. The book must have been poorly received, because no second edition has appeared.[102] Of Ferguson's later splendid work, Principles of moral and political science, that appeared in 1792 in two quatro volumes, only the first part was translated into German, but the second was not, apparently because the first found no admirers. Thou shalt have no Gods other than Kant, was then the commandment in Germany. And so two excellent works by Thomas Reid,[103] appearing shortly before that, have remained unnoticed. The Germans always need a golden calf to go before them, and an Aaron who will cast it and set it up ready for them, with an altar before him... But they also allow that their calf be burnt, ground to powder, and given to them to drink; only this may be done not by a Moses, but by another Aaron with another calf.[104]

Jacobi was lamenting not just Ferguson's and Reid's theory of knowledge, but his own too, and perhaps their common political ideas as well.

My analysis has aimed to show that Jacobi was, in important respects, Ferguson's most likeminded disciple in eighteenth-century Germany. He, like Ferguson, believed that men should be virtuous, that they are not always so, and that a good polity should give them ample space to act freely. There were certainly differences in their respective equations of political participation and moral behaviour: Jacobi would probably not agree with Ferguson that nothing but public involvement is worthy of a man's efforts. Jacobi's good polity would presumably have individuals - not just men - bent on non-political moral actions in the privacy of their individual spheres. But this difference is not as important as it may seem: more important is the fact that Jacobi did not circumvent the question of government, nor did he consent to leave it in any guardian's hands, least of all in the care of *la seule raison*, in the present or future. On these issues he differed from most German thinkers of his generation.

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102. Here Jacobi was mistaken: there was a reprint in 1787.
103. *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of man* and *Essays on the Active Powers of Man*.
104. *Jacobis auserlesener Briefwechsel*, vol. 2, pp. 423-424.

The political, creative, and pointedly imperfect society portrayed in *Etwas das Lessing gesagt hat* cannot escape certain evils, which prevail even when all the rights of man had been secured. "In order to eliminate these evils too, and to bring human happiness to perfection", Jacobi concluded, "someone must find a universal means to improve human nature from its roots; this, of all things on earth, only a fool could undertake to look for."[105] Such a fool was our next and final German reader of Ferguson, Friedrich Schiller.

105. *Etwas*, p. 388.

Chapter 9
Schiller and Ferguson: the citizen and the dancer

I

Schiller's politics, and his alleged retreat from politics, have provoked a great deal of debate. Was Schiller, it has been asked, ever a republican? If so, did the French Revolution shock him into a revision of his views? Is there a thread of continuity, or a substantial change of heart, between the youthful rebel of *The Robbers* (1780), the constitutional monarchist of *Don Carlos* (1787), and the abstract theorist of the *Aesthetic Education of Man* (1795)? Did Schiller, in his influential later essays, de-politicize his quest for individual freedom,[1] or, rather, refine it into a theory of *Bildung*, whose great goal is still political?[2]

The problem is not merely academic. There have been many political uses of Schiller's politics: Heine commended his work for supporting "the great ideas of the Revolution" and "the temple of liberty";[3] the founders of the German labour movement wrestled him from the bourgeoisie;[4] the German Jews, in their decades of assimilation, proudly placed him on their bookshelves, ahead of Goethe; his plays, slightly censored at times, were immensely popular on the stages of the Third Reich;[5] and post-war Germans reclaimed him for humanism and liberal democracy.[6]

Such intellectual wars of succession have often focussed on Schiller not as a unique genius, but as an eloquent representative of his

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1. G.P. Gooch, *Germany and the French Revolution* (London, 1965), pp. 208-229.
2. Sheehan, *German History*, pp. 359-360.
3. Heinrich Heine, "Die romantische Schule", *Werke*, historisch-kritische Gesamtausgabe, ed. Manfred Windfuhr, vol. 8/1 (Hamburg, 1979), p. 153.
4. See Gisela Jonas (ed.), *Schiller-Debatte 1905. Dokumente zur Literaturtheorie und Literaturkritik der revolutionären deutschen Sozialdemokratie* (Berlin, 1988).
5. See editors' introduction to *Die Räuber*, ed. C.P. Magill and L.A. Willoughby (Oxford, 1949), p. xviii, footnote 1. For *völkisch* and Nazi readings of Schiller see Norbert Oellers (ed.), *Schiller - Zeitgenosse aller Epochen. Dokumente zur Wirkungsgeschichte Schillers in Deutschland* vol, II (Munich, 1976), "Einleitung", pp. xlvi-xlviii.
6. This attitude features in the 1955 and 1959 bicentenary publications; for a representative view see Rudolf Hagelstange, "Schiller und die Deutschen", in *Schiller Reden im Gedenkjahr 1959*, Veröffentlichungen der deutschen Schillergesellschaft, vol. 124 (Stuttgart, 1961), 53-75.

contemporaries. In this capacity he has been the object of two main lines of interpretation. On the one hand, Schiller has been a favourite landmark of "de-politicization" in the theories of intellectual *Sonderweg*.[7] More recently, he has been summoned to demonstrate that German thinkers retained their political interests, and many of their basic political convictions, notwithstanding the revolutionary upheaval.[8]

Our account of Schiller as a reader of Ferguson must address two main problems. First, attention must be paid to Schiller's place in the context of contemporary German discourse, and hence to the degree of his "representativeness". Secondly, the development of his politics must be traced - not only his political opinions, but also his very notion of the political, of what political thinking is about.

This chapter sets out to show that, as a reader of Ferguson, Schiller can be seen as a culmination (it is tempting to say, a dramatic *finale*) of the reception processes described in this study, especially Garve's adaptation of Ferguson's ideas of history and human nature. The book Schiller read and admired as a young man was "Garve's Ferguson" - the German version of the *Institutes of moral philosophy* with Garve's effective commentary. Guided by Garve, Schiller's reading was both enthusiastic and highly selective. It followed two patterns which we have seen consistently recurring among Ferguson's German readers: the divorce of Ferguson's psychology and ethics from his (largely overlooked) politics, and the significant "upgrading" of his idea of human perfection at the expense of his civic activism. Both these shifts are of crucial importance to Schiller's own way of addressing politics.

Adam Ferguson's impact on Schiller has received far more scholarly attention than any other aspect of Ferguson's reception in Germany. The initial evidence is indeed striking: Ferguson seems to have played an important part in the *Bildung* of his most famous German reader. Several testimonies about Schiller's *Carlsschule* years, and some major quotations

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7. Deric Regin, *Freedom and Dignity. The Historical and Philosohical Thought of Schiller* (The Hague, 1965), pp. 100-101.
8. This is the argument of Frederick C. Beiser's forthcoming book, *Enlightenment, Revolution and Romanticism: the Genesis of Modern German Political Thought, 1790-1800* (to appear at Harvard UP). I am grateful to Professor Beiser for letting me consult the typescript.

or paraphrases from his early dissertations, all point to *Fergusons Grundsätze*. After 1780, however, hard evidence is not to be had. As the young playwright sets out on the road to Mannheim and to the early fame of *Die Räuber*, Ferguson's name disappears from Schiller's writing (and biographical material) for good.

Such disappearance, of course, is to be expected: poetry does not normally come with footnotes. But Ferguson does not reappear in the *Briefe über Don Carlos*, the historical writings, or Schiller's private correspondence. It could therefore be possible to see him as a passing youthful enthrallment; but most biographers, and many studies of Schiller's early years, were not content to leave it at that. Since Jacob Minor's seminal nineteenth-century study,[9] Ferguson has been seen as a central source for Schiller's fascination with the body-soul problem, which for him was primarily the problem of physical determinism and spiritual freedom. This claim is well-founded, although Ferguson himself is often presented as a marginal, "accidental" representative of a greater philosopher - Shaftesbury,[10] Reid,[11] or even Hobbes.[12]

As we shall see, there is indeed some truth in the opinion that Schiller looked "through" Ferguson's text and not "into" it. Garve's impact on Schiller's understanding of Ferguson was enormous: here Garve's pedagogic zeal found its ideal "young friend", a pupil craving for spiritual guidance, enchanted by Garve's commentary, and, moreover, fully dependent on his translation. This fact is of crucial importance: unlike Lessing, Meiners or Jacobi, Schiller's English was not good enough to

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9. Jacob Minor, *Schiller. Sein Leben und seine Werke* (Berlin, 1890), vol. I, pp. 210-212.

10. For instance, Kenneth Dewhurst and Nigel Reeves, *Friedrich Schiller. Medicine, Psychology and Literature* (Oxford, 1978), pp. 124-125; also William Witte, "Scottish Influence on Schiller", in his *Schiller and Burns and Other Essays* (Oxford, 1959), pp. 35-36. Both studies describe Ferguson as an "optimist" theorist of benevolence and perfection, a straightforward disciple of Shaftesbury's.

11. Reinhardt Buchwald, *Schiller*, vol. 1: *Der junge Schiller* (new edn., Wiesbaden, 1953), 213.

12. Benno von Wiese saw Ferguson's account of the savage stage as Hobbesian, and Ferguson's idea of "the State" as derived from Hobbes' Leviathan: *Friedrich Schiller* (Stuttgart, 1959), p. 78. Dewhurst and Reeves object to this view on the grounds of Ferguson's "fundamentally optimistic view of man", which makes his politics "much closer to a social contract" (*Schiller*, pp. 124-125). It seems that both sides of the argument did not look carefully enough at Ferguson's moral and political theory.

enable him to read Ferguson in the original.[13] This clear case of *Vermittlung* underpinns a central argument of the present chapter: that it was Garve, through his misinterpretation of Ferguson, who launched Schiller's idea of human perfectibility.

This can be argued from the texts. Should we, however, stop at the point where "hard" evidence ends? In the case of Schiller, the temptation of "soft" evidence is all but irresistible. Many scholars, beginning with Jacob Minor, have tried their hand at finding Fergusonian fingerprints in Schiller's plays, poems, and historical and philosophical writings. In some cases it is easy enough to dispute these findings: they betray either profound misunderstandings of Ferguson's thought,[14] or else mere lack of acquaintance with it.[15] Yet not all striking instances of likemindedness can be explained away. At times, a more thorough acquaintance with Ferguson can even lead to fresh suspicions: looking especially at the late essays, it is tempting to think that Schiller must have been acquainted with some key ideas from the *Essay on the History of Civil Society*. The critique of modern man, his torn and divided energies, even the healing effects of the *Spieltrieb*, all carry echoes from Ferguson. These suspected fingerprints will also be treated in this chapter, although there is no concrete proof for direct impact, and although they served a philosophical goal very far from Ferguson's.

I do not intend this line of inquiry as a mere wild goose chase of "influence", but as a culmination of the evidence gathered in this study: our previous chapters have shown how Ferguson entered German public discourse through several processes of mediation and adaptation. Schiller may well have caught certain ideas "from the air", from common preoccupations of the German public in his day; but Ferguson helped to put them "in the air" in the first place. It is therefore possible to discern, in some of Schiller's plays and essays, the familiar form of the

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13. See Körner's letter to Schiller, 31.3.1789 (*Werke*, NA, XXXIII, pt. I, 326), about Schiller's need to read Gibbon in translation.

14. For example, Wiese reads into Ferguson an "antagonism" between man's animal and moral-political nature, historicized into a near-dialectic account of "Gesellschaft" and "Staat" (though "he was not yet capable of a real dialectic view"); *Schiller*, pp. 79-82.

15. Luise Gilde, *Friedrich Schillers Geschichtsphilosophie* (London, 1960), attempts a detailed analysis of Ferguson's impact on Schiller that is simply based on the wrong book: Ferguson's *Principles* is mistaken for the *Institutes* (vol. II, pp. 16, 58, 155ff).

"Germanized" Ferguson: a striver for individual perfection, a philosopher of love, perhaps a republican of sorts, but no longer a civic humanist.

II

The *Carlsschule*, the military academy which the Duke Karl Eugen of Württemberg forced the young Schiller to attend, was a practical introduction to personal and political tyranny. It was there that Schiller learned to see the political, which could only mean court politics, as the natural opponent of the heart. The great conflict dominating his early plays is between the political master (or his scheming servant) and his feeling, loving subject-victim: *Kabale* versus *Liebe*. It is important to note that he applied this dichotomy to the contents of his schooling: the philosophical ideas which Schiller encountered, either though his teacher, Jacob Friedrich Abel, or by his own reading and thinking, belonged decisively to the realm of the heart. In a letter of 1788 he reveals:

> I have read almost no other philosophy [but my own], and by chance I have not been made acquainted with any other. From philosophical writings (the few that I have read), I have always taken only that, which allows itself to be poetically felt and treated [*dichterisch fühlen und behandeln läßt*]. Thereafter that material soon became my favourite subject, as the best [source] for wit and phantasy.[16]

In fact, the only philosophy book that can be proven beyond doubt to have been read by Schiller in his school years was Adam Ferguson's *Institutes of Moral Philosophy* in Garve's translation.[17] It appears that Ferguson was, as one scholar put it, "*der Lieblingsphilosoph auf der Militär-Akademie*".[18] The effect of this book on Schiller is described in the oft-quoted testimony of Professor Abel himself:

> He especially sought, with great passion, to entertain himself with the knowledge of mankind... It was even more gratifying for every one who took interest in Schiller, that ethics was of primary importance for him. Ferguson's Moral Philosophy was that which attracted him

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16. Letter to Körner, Weimar, 15 [14?] April 1788, NA, XXV, 40.
17. See Wilhelm Iffert, *Der junge Schiller und das geistige Ringen seiner Zeit* (Halle/ Saale, 1926), p. 41.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 58.

> most. In fact, this book had effects on the heart, which one would not have expected from books written in aphorisms. I know a man of excellent character, a one time fellow-student and lifetime friend of Schiller [Friedrich Wilhelm von Hoven], who is convinced, that he owes his *Bildung* above all to the frequent reading of Ferguson.[19]

Biographers supplement this evidence with Caroline von Wolzogen's claim that Schiller knew Garve's "annotations to Ferguson's Moral Philosophy almost by heart",[20] but it is not always noted that Garve's "Anmerkungen" are a different matter from Ferguson's text. Schiller's sister-in-law in fact placed the emphasis on Garve, "his then favourite philosopher",[21] and not on Ferguson.

Schiller was evidently impressed by both Ferguson and Garve. The *Grundsätze* clearly inspired his two school dissertations and his speech on virtue. Before we deal with these texts, however, it may be useful to cast a brief look at the writings of J. F. Abel. This favourite *Carlsschule* teacher, later a professor ordinarius of philosophy at the University of Tübingen, was Schiller's senior by only eight years. It was Abel who guided his pupils to read Ferguson and Garve; was he himself an interesting reader of Ferguson?

Abel's lifelong interest lies in epistemology and the psychology of the individual, and both concerns seem totally detached from any sociological or political context. Ferguson, in fact, is conspicuously absent from Abel's written work: a recommended list of philosophical authors, included in his *Ueber die Quellen der menschlichen Vorstellungen*, begins with Garve, but does not include Ferguson.[22] In the same book there is a revealing "*Plan der Philosophie überhaupt*", which itemizes such objects of philosophical inquiry as individual psychology and the attainment of happiness. It ends with a brief heading on "*ganze Gesellschaften*", which allots the subject of States to *Staatskunst*.[23] The body politic is similarly absent from Abel's *Einleitung in die Seelenlehre*, where he is content to mention in passing, at the very end of the book, that man's natural need

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19. NA, XL, 10-11.
20. Wolzogen, *Schillers Leben*, p. 13.
21. *Ibid.*
22. Jacob Friedrich Abel, *Ueber die Quellen der menschlichen Vorstellungen* (Stuttgart, 1786).
23. *Ibid.*, pp. 15-16.

for fellow-creatures gets him into ties with "other individuals, or with families and whole States."[24] Perhaps his oral teaching was a different matter: we are told that he discussed politics with Schiller and his fellow-students on their way to the classroom, but there seems to be little record of any systematic philosophical attempt in this direction. What Abel took from Ferguson seems to be a smattering of epistemology, mainly on the impact of physical conditions and needs on the human mind.[25]

Schiller was probably guided by Abel to accept Ferguson's epistemological account of sensory perception. Ferguson saw the nerve system as mediator between the material world and the mind, and Schiller's first essay postulated a "*Mittelkraft*", a transmutative force, which inhabits the nerves and mediates between matter and soul.[26] But Schiller's real interest lay in the mysterious co-existence of the physical and mental aspects of human nature, and not merely in the sensory mechanism which mediates between them. Ferguson helped to introduce Schiller and his fellow-*Carlsschüler* to the mind and body problem; Schiller remained, all his life, far more intrigued by this problem than Ferguson was.

We now come to the gist of Ferguson's impact in Schiller: the three "Laws of the Will", Ferguson's attempt at pin-pointing the "Newtonian" laws of the human mind. Schiller was evidently impressed by these laws, for he paraphrased each of them at least once in his early writings.[27] It does not seem, however, that he paid much attention to Ferguson's distinction between physical and moral laws affecting the mind. As we have seen, Ferguson's "Laws of the Will" are in fact the physical laws, "fixed and invariable", regulating the "intellectual system". They are not to be confused with a moral law, which is "law in the consequence of its rectitude, or of the authority from which it proceeds; not in consequence

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24. Abel, *Einleitung in die Seelenlehre* (Stuttgart, 1786), p. 452.
25. See Dewhurst and Reeves, *Schiller*, pp. 128-129. In an otherwise helpful account, the writers inaccurately claim that Ferguson's ethics, like Abel's, were "based on the pleasure principle" (p. 129).
26. Wolfgang Riedel, *Die Anthropologie des jungen Schiller. Zur Ideengeschichte der medizinischen Schriften und der "Philosophischen Briefe"* (Würzburg, 1985), p. 96. Cf. Dewhurst and Reeves, *Schiller*, p. 171
27. Schiller's paraphrases of Ferguson's three law are quoted by Riedel, *Anthropologie*, p. 126, fn 116.

of its being the fact".[28] The "Laws of the Will" are for Ferguson neither prescriptive nor elective; they are physically binding and morally neutral.

Ferguson's first "Law of the Will" is "the law of self-preservation", that "Men naturally desire whatever they think is useful to themselves".[29] Schiller gave a free paraphrase of this law in his successful dissertation, *Versuch über den Zusammenhang der Thierischen Natur des Menschen mit seiner Geistigen* (1780). In the paragraph on man's "animal sensations" he included "an eternal law of Wisdom [which] has linked a pleasant affectation of the soul with that condition of the human machine which maintains its health [*Flor*] and, on the contrary, a painful affectation with that state which undermines its prosperity and hastens its collapse [*Ruin*]."[30] We may note that Schiller treated this law as "physical", in Ferguson's sense, although he made it even more associated with the body by using the terms "pain" and "pleasure".

Schiller's treatment of is Ferguson's second law, "the law of society", is markedly different. Ferguson's intention, in classing this law as "physical", was to make the same polemic point he had made so memorably in the first part of the *Essay*: that society is man's natural condition, and the pursuit of the common weal is a datum of human nature. The *Institutes* rephrase this statement by giving the stamp of natural law to what the *Essay* had presented as a general observation:

> Men naturally desire the welfare of their fellow-creatures. General calamities are matters of regret; general welfare is matter of joy. This may be termed the law of society; and this is what qualifies the individual to be a member of society, inclines him to contribute to the general good, and intitles him to partake in it.

Since Francis Hutcheson had made a similar argument, Ferguson was familiar with the ensuing objections:

> The reality of this law [*qua* "physical" law] has been disputed:

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28. *Institutes*, p. 82.
29. *Ibid.*, pp. 90-91.
30. "Essay on the Connection between the Animal and the Spiritual Nature of Man"; English translation in Dewhurst and Reeves, *Schiller*, pp. 253-285 (hereafter "Animal and Spiritual"), here p. 261; cf. NA XX, 45.

1. Because men do not generally act for public good.
2. Because what they do of this kind, may be accounted for from other motives.[31]

The response to both objections is the "gravitation analogy", which pleased Schiller a great deal. Ferguson probably borrowed it, too, from Hutcheson.[32] The physical laws operating on the "intellectual system", Ferguson says, can interact and produce complex motions, exactly in the way other physical laws operate on the "material system":

> The general tendency of the law of gravitation is, to cause bodies to approach to each other; as the tendency of the law of society is, to cause men to produce public good, or to abstain from public harm. But... heavy bodies are not always falling, nor social natures always acting for the common good. When bodies are falling, gravitation accelerates; when they are placed on a support at rest, it causes a pressure; when they are thrown upwards, it can only retard; when they are moved obliquely, it turns their motion into a curve path, &c. The analogy of this law may fully illustrate the law of society. This law, in some cases, excites to beneficence; in other cases, only retards mischief.[33]

The point of the analogy is, of course, that the social impulse cannot be fully reduced to self-love; this was the agenda Ferguson had inherited from Shaftesbury and Hutcheson. But the gravitation analogy, in Hutcheson's hands as in Ferguson's, had no metaphysical ring to it. Their aim was to show that acting for the common good was a natural drive. It is noteworthy that Ferguson does not use the terms "benevolence" or "love" at this point.

Love appears later in the book, under the separate heading of the "fundamental Law of Morality". The gist of this "moral law" is that "the greatest good competent to man's nature, is the love of mankind".[34] Ferguson derives three "consequences" from this law:

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31. *Institutes*, pp. 91-92.
32. Francis Hutcheson, *An Inquiry into the Original of our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue* (London, 1725), presents Newton's twofold planetary motion as analogous to man's self-love and sociability. (Newton in fact discerned <u>three</u> planetary motions, which are not to be confused with his three laws of mechanics.)
33. *Institutes*, pp. 92-94; cf. p. 81.
34. *Ibid.*, p. 171.

1. That the good of communities, or of mankind, is likewise that of the individual.
2. That in the works of God the whole is preserved by that which constitutes the good of the part, and that there is no happiness of the part consistent with what is hurtful to the whole.
3. That the greatest service which benevolent men can render to their fellow-creatures, is to promote disinterestedness and candour.[35]

A trained eye should spot here many terms which belong to Ferguson's political vocabulary: "communities" (interchangeable, but not synonymous, with "mankind"!), "service", "men", "disinterestedness", "candour". But no special training is necessary to see that this passage leads to the book's political conclusion, and is echoed in its final paragraph:

> Institutions that preserve equality, that engage the minds of citizens in public duties, that teach them to estimate rank by the measure of personal qualities, tend to preserve and to cultivate virtue... The greatest and most extensive benefit which single men can bestow, is the establishment or preservation of wise institutions.[36]

This is the real context of the "fundamental Law of Morality". But the political context of the "moral law", and its distinction from the merely descriptive "physical law", was not noticed by Schiller. In his first dissertation, "Philosophy of Physiology" (submitted and failed in 1779), he mentions a "splendid and wise law" which

> has joined the perfection of the whole [*Vollkommenheit des Ganzen*] to the happiness of the individual, men [*Menschen*] to men and even men to animals through the bond [*die Bande*] of universal love. Thus love, the finest and noblest impulse of the human soul, the great chain linking sentient Nature, is nothing but the exchange of one's own self with the innermost being of one's fellow. [...]
> And why universal love; why all the delights of universal love? Only for this final, fundamental purpose of helping one's fellow to achieve perfection. And this state of perfection lies in surveying, exploring and admiring the grand design of Nature.[37]

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35. *Ibid.*, pp. 171-172.
36. *Ibid.*, pp. 318-319.
37. Schiller, "Philosophy of Physiology"; English translation in Dewhurst and Reeves, *Schiller*, pp. 150-165 (hereafter "Physiology"); here pp. 150-151; cf. NA XX, 11f.

To establish that this is a paraphrase is not enough: which of Ferguson's "laws" is paraphrased here? Is it the "law of society", or the "fundamental Law of Morality"? Schiller seems to have blended the two, erasing Ferguson's painstaking distinction between the social instinct and the moral concept of love. The relationship of the individual with the whole, in Schiller's paraphrase, leaves out both the social flavour of Ferguson's "law of society", and the political resonance of his "fundamental Law of Morality". "Universal love" becomes a matter for men and animals, for men and Nature, for men and their inner existence. Instead of Ferguson's social participation or public responsibility Schiller describes an ideal of metaphysical intercourse between two souls, or - closer to Shaftesbury - man's contemplation of nature, looking up to the meta-social goal of personal perfection.[38]

A similar shift occurs in Schiller's birthday-speech on virtue, "Die Tugend in ihren Folgen betrachtet". The primary object of virtue, Schiller tells Karl Eugen and his mistress Franziska von Hohenheim, is to promote "the perfection of the whole" namely the "perfection in the spiritual realm [*Geisterwelt*]".[39] The term *Geisterwelt* is Garve's translation of Ferguson's "intellectual system"; Schiller's use of it clearly demonstrates its shift into the vocabulary of *Vollkommenheit*:

> Yet another eternal law reigns in the feeling and thinking nature, namely that the perfection of the whole is most inherently linked with the happiness of the individual being. By force of this law we must always be delighted by whatever makes the whole more perfect, and pained by whatever makes the whole more imperfect. Thus that general result of virtue, the happiness of the whole, leads to a second and inner [result], the happiness of the individual being, who acts virtuously.[40]

Happiness and perfection thus become, in Schiller's paraphrase, synonymous - a relation Ferguson would not have granted; and the final outcome - the happiness or perfection of the individual - is the "*innere Folge*" of virtue.

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38. Buchwald (*Schiller*, p. 224) notes Schiller's perfectibilist interpretation of Ferguson's "three dry 'Laws of the Will'" but does not see it as a misreading.
39. "Die Tugend in ihren Folgen betrachtet ", NA XX, 31.
40. *Ibid.*

Ferguson's gravitation metaphor, as Jacob Minor observed, was for Schiller a particularly appealing alternative to French mechanistic psychology, especially that of Helvétius, who claimed that all human motives could be reduced to the selfish drive alone. In the Scottish version Schiller found a mechanistic metaphor which did not exclude the heart.[41] In Schiller's early poetry this set of metaphors came into its own. Like Pope[42] before him, Schiller eventually made better use of them in his verse than either Hutcheson or Ferguson did in their moral philosophy. Among his best-loved stanzas are the opening lines of the *Phantasie an Laura*:

Meine Laura! Nenne mir den Wirbel,
Der an Körper Körper mächtig reißt,
Nenne, meine Laura, mir den Zauber,
Der zum Geist monarchisch zwingt den Geist.

Sieh! er lehrt die schwebenden Planeten,
Ewgen Ringgangs um die Sonne fliehn...

Here is Ferguson's "gravitation analogy",[43] completely (and beautifully) de-politicized, even though it is supported by the metaphor of monarchic coercion taken from Schiller's own political experience. Both these metaphors are redeployed, with a vengeance, to serve the language of love. This kind of linguistic shift is, of course, outside the scope of our study; but the poet's craft and the poetic license will remain relevant to us as we examine the texts which Schiller intended to deal with politics.

III

In the opening paragraph of the "Philosophy of Physiology" Schiller defines "the destiny of man", which is to strive infinitely "to emulate the grandeur of his Creator... to become God's peer".[44] He supports this

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41. Minor, *Schiller*, p. 212.
42. "On their own axis as the planets run,/ Yet make at once their circle round the sun:/ So two consistent motions act the soul;/ And one regards itself, and one the whole" (*Essay on Man*).
43. Cf. Minor, *Schiller*, p. 212, and Iffert, *Schiller*, I, 323-324. The same metaphor is used in the ode *An die Freude*, along with another Scottish import, *Sympathie*.
44. "Physiology", p. 150.

definition, which approximates the Protestant concept of partaking in God's perfection, by appealing to "a sage of our century". The "sage" is no other than Adam Ferguson, as Schiller's ensuing quotation makes clear. Its source is a sentence from the *Institutes*:

> The affection of a mind enlightened to conceive what is the object and what the efficacy of God's providence, is, of all others, most pleasant, and approaches most to an entire exemption from pain.[45]

Schiller's quotation, however, is in fact based on Garve's paraphrase of Ferguson's original wording. We have earlier seen how Garve's version - which he later repeated in his "Anmerkungen" and commended as a Fergusonian gem of special value - subtly shifted the original text:

> Der Zustand einer Seele, die bis auf den Grad erleuchtet ist, daß sie den Plan der göttlichen Vorsehung im Ganzen vor Augen hat, ist der Zustand der glücklichsten Seele.[46]

And Schiller's quotation reads:

> Eine Seele, sagt ein Weiser dieses Jahrhunderts, die bis zu dem Grad erleuchtet ist, daß sie den Plan der göttlichen Vorsehung im ganzen vor Augen hat, ist die glüklichste Seele.[47]

As far as I know, only one scholar, Wolfgang Riedel, has noted that Garve's translation was in fact a paraphrase.[48] Others have overlooked that fact that Schiller used a shifted text, which substitutes "soul" for "mind", and happiness for pleasure and lack of pain. Garve's shift is, furthermore, immediately echoed and increased in Schiller's own paraphrase of Ferguson's "Third Law of the Will". It was this "Law" which had previously impressed Iselin, Garve, and perhaps Lessing. In Ferguson's text it reads thus:

> Men naturally desire what constitutes excellence, and avoid what constitutes defect... Excellency, whether absolute or comparative, is the supreme object of human desire. Riches, power, and even pleasure, are

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45. *Institutes*, p. 154.
46. *Grundsätze*, p. 135, repeated on p. 409. Cf. chapter 5 of the present study.
47. NA XX, 11. Dewhurst and Reeves' translation uses Ferguson's original sentence (*Schiller*, p. 150, cf. p. 125), thus missing the textual shift.
48. Riedel, *Anthropologie*, p. 159.

> coveted with extreme ardour only when they are supposed to bestow eminence or rank.[49]

We have seen, in earlier chapters, how Ferguson's cautious use of the term "excellence" or "excellency" became, for his German translator and many of his readers, a full-fledged *Vollkommenheit*. Garve introduced this term indiscriminately into his translation.[50] Schiller, in his turn, rephrases it thus:

> An eternal, great and splendid law has joined perfection to pleasure, displeasure to imperfection. Whatever brings man closer to that destiny, whether directly or indirectly, will delight him. Whatever takes him away from it, will distress him... He is only perfect when he is happy. He is only happy when he is perfect.[51]

Here was the beginning of Schiller's journey into his mature concept of *Vollkommenheit*, a unique brand of predestined spiritual perfection by degrees. Schiller took, and continued, Garve's shift from Ferguson's original concept of social virtue and earthbound search for excellence. It should be noted that, like Garve, Schiller did not dismiss the crucial contribution of man's physical nature to the development of his mental faculties; but he also followed Garve into a sharp distinction between material means and spiritual ends. The conclusion in his successful dissertation was already far removed from Ferguson:

> Man had to be an animal before he knew that he was a spirit; he had to crawl in the dust before he ventured on the Newtonian flight through the universe. The body, therefore, is the first spur to action; the senses are the first rung on the ladder to perfection.[52]

Ten years later this idea of perfection matured in Schiller's *Philosophische Briefe*, where the section entitled "Theosophie des Julius " provides a metaphysical concept of the unlimited perfectibility of mankind. This was a continuation of Leibniz and the German tradition of

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49. *Institutes*, pp. 94-95. This third law was conveniently ommitted from Benno von Wiese's account, which spots a "dialectic" relation between Ferguson's first two laws (*Friedrich Schiller*, p. 78); but it is the third law that places Ferguson firmly in the lineage of Shaftesbury; cf. Dewhurst and Reeves, *Schiller*, p. 124.
50. See chapters 2, 3, and 5 of this study.
51. "Physiology", p. 150.
52. "Animal and Spiritual", pp. 267-270; cf. NA XX, 56.

unbegrenzte Vervollkommnung,[53] but it was also flavoured by Ferguson's "second Law", which Schiller understood, as we have seen, in terms of "helping one's fellow to achieve perfection". In Schiller's great philosophical essays it was to become the pole of sentimental striving opposing the pole of naive stillness. It is interesting to observe that Schiller's initial idea of perfectibility, and especially its "sentimental" extreme, was shaped by Garve's misreading and misrepresentation of Ferguson.

Most scholars have overlooked the glowing discrepancy between Ferguson's idea of perfection and Schiller's perfectibilism.[54] Again, the exception is Wolfgang Riedel, who has emphasized the impact of Garve's commentary (rather than Ferguson's) on Schiller's early concept of perfectibility.[55] Schiller fully accepted Garve's "history" of man's rational and spiritual growth, which is aided by "animal desires" but destined to transcend them. He quoted the paragraph from the "Anmerkungen" where Garve described the "*Trieb der Erhaltung*"[56] as a starting point, leading to the gradual emancipation of the human "*Geist*" from all "*äussern Endzwecke*",[57] as it moves towards the "*Erfahrung ihre Vollkommenheit*".[58] This unilinear vision of man's ascent from the animal to the spiritual is, of course, very different from Ferguson's idea of human nature as a more or less unchanging compound of material and intellectual constituents. Nor is Garve's evolutionist model of spiritualization akin to Ferguson's history of mankind and of civil society, where man must constantly test his physical and mental possibilities against the changing circumstances of geography and political life.

Moreover, it was Garve who lent Schiller a metaphysical (and not political) idea of participation, "to set out from one's room and present hour into the wide world and into the series of ever-progressing

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53. See Riedel, *Anthropologie*, pp. 158ff.
54. Thus Iffert refers to Ferguson's "Prinzip der aufsteigenden geistigen Vervollkommnung"; *Der junge Schiller*, p. 58.
55. Riedel, *Anthropologie*, pp. 119-120 and 159-160. However, Riedel does not spell out any suspicion that Ferguson may have been misread; indeed, he too sees Ferguson's third Law as the "'Gesetz' des Strebens nach 'Vollkommenheit'" (p. 125). Cf. Buchwald, *Schiller*, pp. 215-217.
56. "Anmerkungen", p. 319, cited by Schiller, NA XX, 52.
57. "Anmerkungen", P. 321; cited *ibid.*
58. "Anmerkungen", p. 322; cited NA XX, 49 and 53.

centuries",[59] the mission of "the man of genius" rather than the citizen. Schiller echoed it in his first dissertation, where he claimed, as we have seen, that "perfection lies in surveying, exploring and admiring the grand design of Nature". This statement anticipated, in an important respect, Schiller's later idea of aesthetic education: it set up a space for human perfection which was meta-social, although the notion of education itself - also a crucial element of Garve's "Anmerkungen" - is social by definition.

Garve's appeal for Schiller was twofold: his spiritual perfectibilism not only re-opened the problem of freedom, but also left it open. It was Kant who, some years later, helped Schiller to create a coherent idea of moral freedom. But Garve, and not Ferguson, nourished the basic conflict of Schiller's early dramas: the heroes move in a world co-ruled by physical determination and free will. Politics was sometimes its subject matter, but not its great theme.

IV

Schiller's early plays seem the appropriate place to look for Ferguson's fingerprints: they were written in the 1780s, while the stamp of the "contemporary sage" was still fresh in Schiller's mind. Their heroes - Karl Moor, Fiesco, the Marquis of Posa - are leaders of men, fighters for freedom and challengers of arbitrary rule and princely authority. Public life and civic action are consistently affirmed in these plays: most of their heroes overcome, at some point, an appeal to escape from the public arena to a fully private life with their beloved. Thus, in *Die Räuber*, Karl Moor turns away from the dream of Amalia's arms; the hero of *Die Verschwörung des Fiesco zu Genua* rejects Leonore's plea ("Laß uns fliehen"); Ferdinand in *Kabale und Liebe* fruitlessly speculates on a similar flight ("Mein Vaterland ist, wo mich Luise liebt"); and Don Carlos is urged to transform his impossible love for the Queen into political love for the Netherlands' cause.[60] Do these choices reflect the imperative of political participationism of the civic humanist brand?

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59. "Anmerkungen", p. 410.

60. *Die Räuber* I, 2; *Fiesco* IV, 14; *Kabale und Liebe* III, 4; in the later plays *Die Jungfrau von Orléans* and *Wilhelm Tell* a similar temptation to live privately is resisted in favour of civic responsibilities. All these places are mentioned in Roche,

In *Die Räuber*, his first and sensational play, Schiller was evidently interested in social feelings, social actions and political trappings. The robber band is an alternative polity of sorts, roaming the Bohemian forests in defiance of a corrupt State and leadership. By changing the original title, *Der verlorene Sohn*, Schiller can be seen as shifting the emphasis from domestic struggle between father and son, and between rival siblings, to the body politic or the social sphere. [61] It was certainly intended as a critique of contemporary absolutist tyrants: the original version, *Die Räuber, ein Schauspiel*, contained many eighteenth-century references and allusions; most of them were removed at the request of Dalberg, the Mannheim theatre director, and the play was relocated to the sixteenth century.[62]

The most famous censored scene raises the curtain on the hero, Karl Moor, with Plutarch in his hand: "Mir ekelt vor diesem tintenklecksenden Säkulum, wenn ich in meinem Plutarch lese von großen Menschen."[63] The nature of individual greatness is related, in the *Schauspiel*, to freedom and lawlessness: "Das Gesetz hat noch keinen großen Mann gebildet, aber die Freiheit springt über die Pallisaden des Herkommens und brütet Kolosse und Extremitäten aus."[64] In the later version of the play, *Die Räuber, ein Trauerspiel*, peace is substituted for the law, and military heroism for lawlessness: "Der Friede hat noch keinen großen Mann gebildet, aber der Krieg brütet Koloße und Helden aus." Invoking the spirit of Hermann and Barbarossa, Karl Moor utters his resounding call - "Stelle mich vor ein Heer Kerls wie ich, und aus Deutschland- aus Deutschland- Doch! Nein! Nein...".[65]

The Mannheim stage version retained the republican culmination of Karl's speech in the *Schauspiel*: "Und aus Deutschland soll eine Republik werden, gegen die Rom und Athen nur Nonnenklöster seyn sollten! - Es

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Dynamic Stillness, pp. 51-53, where a convincing case is made for Schiller's rejection of political quietude in the face of oppression.

61. Magill and Willoughby, introduction to *Die Räuber, ein Trauerspiel*, p. xviii.

62. *Ibid.*, p. xx.

63. Cited *ibid.*, p. 119.

64. Cited *ibid.*

65. *Die Räuber, ein Trauerspiel* I, 4 (*ibid.*, p. 14).

ist nicht so unmöglich, daß ein Mann nicht zu Stande bringen kan!"[66] The cautious Dalberg clearly did not see any danger here: the call is uttered in the context of wildly anarchic discourse which gradually slants towards the absurd. Not only is it preceded by a wild appeal to military violence, it is also immediately answered by the fellow-robber Spiegelberg, who moves on to his own plan for refounding the kingdom of the Jews.[67] In short, the youthful rebellion of *Die Räuber* is not a programme for the republicanization of the German States. The play's uplifting, if violent, primitivism may well owe something to Ferguson's and Garve's analysis of "animal sensations" as promoting human action, but it is better seen as a *reductio ad absurdum* of the misunderstood Rousseau. When Karl speaks of "die verfluchte Ungleichheit in der Welt",[68] and Spiegelberg of the honourable aim "das Gleichgewicht der Güter wieder herstellen",[69] theirs is clearly not Ferguson's political world, but a far more radical one.

The republican ideal in *Fiesco* is no less problematic: Fiesco himself moves from a dream of virtue and citizenship to individual lust for power, a premonition on the despotic appetite of revolutionaries. Fiesco has been portrayed as the "perfect incarnation" of Machiavellian *virtù*, in the sense of being the ultimate political virtuoso and wooer of *fortuna*;[70] but this individual will to power was precisely the aspect of Machiavelli which is least reflected in Ferguson's idea of civic virtue. Moreover, Schiller's total obliviousness to the people of Genoa means that he ignored the crucial Machiavellian factor of *necessità*.[71]

Verrina, the old-style Roman republican and the most "Fergusonian" character in Schiller's plays, is not a central figure and not a winner in the manifold conflict of personalities and political wishes. Indeed, benevolent absolutism, represented by the ageing Doge, is tolerable by all but the extreme republicans of Verrina's type; and even Verrina is eventually left to steer between the Scylla of ancien régime absolutism

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66. Cited *ibid.*, p. 119.
67. Cited *ibid.*, pp. 119-120.
68. I, 3 (*ibid.*, p. 13).
69. I, 6 (*ibid.*, p. 20).
70. Kurt Wölfel, "Machiavellische Spuren in Schiller's Dramatik", in: Achim Aurnhammer, Klaus Manger, Friedrich Strack (eds.), *Schiller und die höfische Welt* (Tübingen, 1990) pp. 322-328.
71. *Ibid.*, p. 329.

and the Charybdis of new-fangled despotism. Thus *Fiesco* does not vindicate the ideal of civic participation as such, but merely includes it in this drama of political possibilities. Ferguson's impact (primarily as a mediator of Montesquieu) may perhaps be seen in Schiller's fascination with the different types of government - despotism, monarchy, aristocracy and republic - which the protagonists of *Fiesco* personify.[72]

The case of *Don Carlos* is more intriguing. The famous "audience scene" (act III, scene 10) between King Philip and the Marquis of Posa is brimming with political statements which have been traced back to Montesquieu or to Ferguson. Schiller himself set scholars on this path when he mentioned Montesquieu in the tenth of the *Briefe über Don Carlos*. The context there is Schiller's defence of the "abstract" ideas incorporated into his drama. It is right, Schiller argues, to introduce "truths... which have so far belonged only in text-books, into the sphere of the fine arts", where they may be "planted in the human heart as living effective motives, in a powerful battle with the passions." A well-disposed reader may be "not unpleasantly surprised" to find in the play certain "not totally unimportant ideas" which could "remind him of Montesquieu".[73]

It has been noted that Schiller's first serious reading of *De l'esprit des lois* occurred as late as the end of 1788, more than a year after completing *Don Carlos*.[74] Still, he presumably absorbed Montesquieu's ideas during his school years and through intermediaries, including Ferguson's *Institutes*.[75] Posa's famous demands for freedom ("Ich kann nicht Fürstendiener sein", and "Geben Sie Gedankenfreiheit"), and his consistent use of the term *Tugend*, have led some scholars to see him either as a republican and a speaker for "civic virtues",[76] or as a practical utopian who balanced Ferguson's republicanism with Montesquieu's more

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72. Dushan Breski, "Schiller's debt to Montesquieu and Adam Ferguson", *Comparative Literature* 13 (1961), pp. 249-252.
73. *Briefe über Don Carlos* (hereafter BDC), no. 10. I have used Schiller's *Sämtliche Werke in zehn Bänden*, vol. III (Berlin and Weimar, 1987), and all subsequent references are to this edition.
74. Iffert, *Schiller*, p. 257. Breski, "Schiller's debt", p. 254.
75. Breski suggests that Schiller also read the *Essay*; but Montesquieu's typology of government forms and their governing principles can be sufficiently gleaned from the *Institutes*.
76. See especially R. Ayrault, "Schiller et Montesquieu: sur la genèse du Don Carlos", *Etudes Germaniques* 3 (1948), esp. 237ff.

sober constitutional monarchism.[77] These claims are apparently supported by Schiller himself, in the second *Brief über Don Carlos*, where he says that "all the principles and favourite feelings of the Marquis hinge on *republican* virtue [*republikanische* Tugend]".[78]

The true politics of Posa, however, are a much debated issue. The "audience scene"[79] can furnish clues for differing, even contrasting, interpretations: is he a republican, a constitutional monarchist, a lover of mankind, or a megalomaniac cynic? The problem is in the language: the notorious vagueness of Posa's politics in the "audience scene" can be most fruitfully analysed as a linguistic and conceptual eclecticism. Posa's political language is so varied that it would be useless to hunt for Ferguson's or Montesquieu's fingerprints without first attempting to disentangle the web of political terminologies that Schiller weaves for his freedom-loving hero.

Read with an eye for the key terms we have identified in this study, the text discloses a curious mix of several political and non-political vocabularies: 1) moral eudaemonism, or stoicism, with its twin concepts of *Tugend* and *Glück*; 2) the universalist vocabulary of *Weltbürger* and *Menschenliebe*; 3) the Kantian idea of human self-sovereignty and intellectual autonomy 3) the vocabulary of *Vaterland*, *Bürger* and *Patriot* which Moser and Iselin popularized in German discourse; 4) the sentimentalist language (with Pietist undertones) of *inner*, *Seele*, *Geist* and *Gefühl*; 5) the imagery of cold commerce and industrial exploitation depicting the relations of king and subject - *Käufer*, *Münzen*, *Maschinen*; 6) and, finally, the new German concepts of the creative artist, *Genie*, and the *Künstler* as *Schöpfer*, which were crucial for Schiller's own thinking.

Some of Posa's speeches achieve a breathtaking blend of most of these concepts and metaphors:

Ich will

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77. Breski, "Schiller's debt"; however, this author's acquaintance with Ferguson's work and context is dubious, judging from his view of the "radical republicanism" and "bold antimonarchism" of the "freedom-loving Scot" (pp. 248, 252).
78. BDC, no. 2, p. 738, emphasis given.
79. All the subsequent quotations from *Don Carlos* are are from act III, scene 10, of the 1787 version (*Sämtliche Werke in zehn Bänden*, vol. III, pp. 266-282).

Den Käufer nicht betrügen, Sire - [...]
[...] Was ich leiste
Gehört dem Thron. Die Schönheit meines Werks,
Das Selbstgefühl, die Wollust des Erfinders
Fließt in den königlichen Schatz. Von diesem
Werd ich besoldet mit Maschinenglück
Und, wie Maschinen brauchen, unterhalten.
[...] Mir aber,
Mir hat die Tugend eignen Wert. Das Glück,
Das der Monarch mit meinen Händen pflanzte,
Erschüf ich selbst, und Freude wäre mir
Und eigne Wahl, was mir nur Pflicht sein sollte.
Ich würde schwelgen von dem Königsrecht
Der innern Geistesbilligung - [...]
Und ist das Ihre Meinung? Können *Sie*
In Ihrer Schöpfung fremde Schöpfer dulden?
Ich aber soll zum Meißel mich erniedern,
Wo ich der Künstler könnte sein?

The term *Tugend* in this speech, and elsewhere in the "audience scene", is often associated with *Glück*, an association which echoes more of Ferguson than Montesquieu. Schiller's fascination - throughout the dialogue - with the the false usage of the two terms is also reminiscent of Ferguson: wherever the king is the sole agency for promoting happiness, happiness is a misnomer. Wherever he is the sole recipient of virtue, virtue is false. Posa's refusal to accept the honours offered by Philip is an accurate personification of Ferguson's "indignant spirit, that will not court a protection, nor accept as a favour, what is due as a right."[80] Schiller seems to be following Ferguson's idea that monarchy, in its "pure" form, is ultimately an immoral constitution.[81]

But when it comes to the notion of true virtue or happiness, Posa does not follow Montesquieu's typology all that closely, whereas Ferguson's ideal of active civic virtue is not followed at all. Posa (and apparently Schiller too) seems to accept the possibility of "königliche Tugenden". He clearly thinks that it is unfortunate and unnecessary that the king should "Vor jeder Tugend zittern." Virtue, then, need not necessarily be tied to republican government or to civic participation. On this point the

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80. *Essay*, p. 70.
81. *Ibid.*, pp. 68-71. Montesquieu, of course, did not overlook the despotic potential of monarchy.

intermingling of the different vocabularies is most illuminating. In the first place, Posa presents himself as a universalist, a lover of mankind, rather than a *Patriot* (as the king would have him): "Ich liebe / Die Menschheit, und in Monarchien darf / ich niemand lieben als mich selbst." Accordingly, Posa presents himself as a "Bürger dieser Welt", a position contrasting his coerced role as the king's "subject" and servant of the State.

This language, however, is soon superseded by a complex set of concepts and metaphors whose common ground is the call for granting personal freedom, or individual creative autonomy. In the lines we have quoted earlier Schiller achieves a masterly intertwining of two distinct late eighteenth-century metaphors: the commercial-industrial metaphor, pejoratively displaying the monarch as the "buyer" of the subjects' services; and the metaphor of the creative artist, the *Künstler* and *Schöpfer*, who becomes the mindless tool of his political lord. Both metaphors lead to the gloomy imagery of a human machine, or, in Kant's terms, man seen only as a means to an end.[82] The *Künstler* metaphor, the stronger of the two, recurs throughout the scene; at one point it enables Schiller to couple "Tugend und Genie", a combination Ferguson would have found strange.

But this is not Goethe's *Genie*; Schiller's creative, autonomous being is universal, he is everyman, he is even the king himself. Philip, too, is endowed with a "Schöpfers Geist". His crime is that he aimed to impose it on others, thus depriving his subjects of their own creativity, and disregarding the great example of "der große Schöpfer" in heaven.

The creative autonomy sought by Posa must be nurtured by political freedom, but there is no indication that it must embody civic participation. His goal is articulated in terms of an individual's love for a rather impersonal human "whole" ("das Menschenglück... / Dasselbe Glück, das meine reine Liebe / Den Menschen gönnt"). Here the vocabulary of *Innerlichkeit* is of importance, because it distinguishes between true and false *Tugend*: the oppressed subjects flee "Vor dem

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82. The two metaphors are especially fit to describe the misdeeds of Duke Karl Eugen, who sold his subjects as mercenaries in foreign wars and prohibited Schiller's art.

Gespenste ihrer innern Größe", slavishly decorate their chains, "Und Tugend nennt man, sie mit Anstand tragen." True *Tugend*, on the other hand, is sanctioned by an "innern Geistesbilligung". The concrete social and political sphere of action and sanction is completely absent from this setting.

Even when the *Vaterland* vocabulary is invoked, and buttressed by Roman civic virtue, it is still framed in an appeal to a benevolent monarch, and dimmed by a universalist ideal of human value:

Wenn nun der Mensch, sich selbst zurückgegeben,
Zu seines Werts Gefühl erwacht - der Freiheit
Erhabne, stolze Tugenden gedeihen -
Wenn in dem Herzen wieder sich empört
Die Römerwallung, Nationenstolz,
Das Vaterland in jedem Bürger prangt,
Dem Vaterlande jeder Bürger stirbt -
Dann, Sire, wenn Sie zum glücklichsten der Welt
Ihr eignes Königreich gemacht - dann reift
Ihr großer Plan - dann müssen Sie - dann ist
Es Ihre Pflicht, die Welt zu unterwerfen.

Posa thus ends up calling for a universal enlightened monarchy. As in *Fiesco*, there are many hints for the acceptability of benevolent monarchic paternalism ("und Vater dieses Volkes, / Das, dacht ich, das muß göttlich sein!"). The king is seen as a great pedagogue, a teacher of personal autonomy ("Werden Sie / Von Millionen Königen ein König. / [...] Werden Sie uns Muster / Des Ewigen und Wahren"). This is the immediate context of Posa's demand, "Geben Sie Gedankenfreiheit". Posa's wish is to see the Spanish empire purged of despotism, and Flanders benevolently ruled by Carlos, not tyranically by Alba. His long-lost *Vaterland* ("*Der* Staat, / dem ich sie schuldig war, ist nicht mehr") was governed by a lord who was subject to laws ("Ehmals / Gab's einen Herrn, weil ihn Gesetze brauchten; / Jetzt gibt's Gesetze, weil der Herr sie braucht"). Its people are free, creative, virtuous, but they are not necessarily political-minded citizens. Their freedom is guaranteed by an enlightened prince, not by their political participation. Schiller's "republican virtue" - as Posa expresses it in *Don Carlos* - is therefore not of the civic humanist brand.

This conclusion can be supported by Schiller's own interpretation of what "republican virtue" is about, second of the *Brief über Don Carlos*:

> All the principles and favourite feelings of the Marquis hinge on republican virtue [*republikanische Tugend*]. Even his sacrifice of his friend proves this, the capacity for sacrifice being the essence of all republican virtue.[83]

This sustitution of personal friendship for republican virtue is very similar to Schiller's earlier misreading Ferguson's "law of society" and "fundamental Law of morality"; as we have seen, he took these laws to regulate the intercourse between individual and nature, mankind, or fellow-creature, but not between citizens of a polity. Posa, a universal *Menschenfreund* and (arguably) a good personal friend, but no citizen, thus personifies two aspects of Schiller's misinterpretations of Ferguson's laws of society.

But is Posa, perhaps, forced into an *Innerlichkeit* which he does not want? Is his rebellion doomed to be personal, and indeed self-centred? There is a moment in the dialogue when it dawns on Posa that, to the king, "Ich bin / Gefährlich, weil ich über mich gedacht". With his hand on his chest, he bitterly reassures Philip that "Ich bin es nicht, mein König. Meine Wünsche / Verwesen hier." These words touchingly anticipate the twentieth-century "inner exile", who is unable to be a reformer and unwilling to be a revolutionary. It is this sad private person who famously declares that "Das Jahrhundert / Ist meinem Ideal nicht reif. Ich lebe / Ein Bürger derer, welche kommen werden". Schiller did not make Posa a reformer of Spain; he merely made him denounce the two extremes, feudal servility and raging upheaval ("Die lächerliche Wut / Der Neuerung, die nur der Ketten Last, / Die sie nicht ganz zerbrechen kann, vergrößert, / Wird mein Blut nie erhitzen"[84]). The only middle way open to Posa is that of individual fulfilment; in this he fails.

Posa's failure, however, does not discredit his vision. The second *Brief über Don Carlos* painstakingly shows that, in Schiller's mind, Posa was a

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83. BDC, no. 2, pp. 738-739.

84. In the Hamburg stage version and in the 1805 version of *Don Carlos* the word "mein" is emphasized, thus hinting that Posa is not like some other chaps one could mention.

very early (though not an impossibly anachronistic) *Aufklärer*, a far-sighted advocate of "Freiheit und Menschenadel".[85] Posa is no civic humanist, because his real interest lies in individual perfection, and the ways to stop the State interfering with it. This preference, as much as his gift for talking back to monarchs, makes him fit to be Schiller's contemporary: it is also Schiller's preference.

This ultimate focus on the individual's freedom is reflected in the linguistic landscape we have attempted to map. Schiller's use of political concepts is eclectic, but it is nonetheless deeply hierarchical: *Vaterland* and *Tugend*, *Nationenstolz* and *Menschenliebe* are all subordinated to the idea of the autonomous individual, the *Schöpfer* of his own life and destiny. It is wrong to see *Gedankenfreiheit* as a purely political demand: Schiller may have thought of the fate of the imprisoned journalist Schubart, but he was even more deeply concerned with his own quest for poetic freedom, and with the universal ideal of inner *Harmonie*, for individual life undisturbed by the State. This is the true battlefield in Don Carlos, and this is why the drama never moves out to the Netherlands, to the political struggle itself. Schiller's selective use of another Scottish author demonstrates this point: he read the German translation of Robert Watson's *History of the Reign of Philip the Second* (1777) while working on the play, but made little use of its wealth of historical material.[86]

Is it, however, fair to treat Schiller's play as a political treatise, such as Ferguson's or Montesquieu's? Was he a "political poet" in this polemic sense? It has been argued, in recent literature, that he was not. His real interest as a dramatist lies in conflicts between individuals, whose political circumstances are but a part of their complex psychological, sociological, even physiological character. Franz Moor's ugliness or the father-son conflict in *Die Räuber,* bourgeois ethics in *Kabale und Liebe*, trust and deception in *Don Carlos*, are all interesting to Schiller no less than the political questions raised in these plays. Politics - in its narrower sense, the theory of government and the good polity - was one of the

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85. BDC, no. 2, p. 738.
86. See Graham Orton, *Schiller: Don Carlos* (London, 1967), p. 8.

materials serving Schiller's poetic goals; but the goals were poetic, not political.[87]

This point is strengthened by the nature of human agency in Schiller's plays: they were very much heroes' plays. Schiller's favourite backdrop is the court, where strong and memorable individuals - kings and inquisitors, conspirators and traitors, lovers and freedom lovers - join in battle.[88] The Marquis of Posa's daring demand for freedom, which some critics saw as impossibly anachronistic, was defended by Schiller partly on the grounds that "Der Marquis ist außerdem als Held angekündigt".[89] Karl Moor, leafing through Plutarch in perusal of "great men" who may serve him as role-models primarily by virtue of being great, is profoundly different from Ferguson's own reading of Plutarch as a source for the principles of a good republic.[90]

Heroes are solitary beings by definition, and their political actions are seldom part of a civic intercourse. A recent analysis of Schiller's "political heroes", by Dolf Sternberger, is of particular interest here. Sternberger claims that none of those heroes, at least not in the early plays, represent a real fusion of *Politik* and *Herz*. The Marquis of Posa is far more a universal humanist than a statesman. His position is that of the enthusiastic *Menschenfreund*, opposing the cold *Staatsräson* which is represented by the Inquisitor-Kardinal. Their battle over the king's mind is a battle between the *Politicus* and the man of the heart. Indeed, only in the later plays does Schiller begin to merge the two roles, and to create political actors who are also genuinely concerned about benevolence. But such protagonists, like Octavio Piccolomini in the *Wallenstein* trilogy, are no longer abstract revolutionaries and universalists. They are defenders of the old constitution, of the existing order, against new tyrants. Octavio is Schiller's "new political type", no longer a *Menschenfreund* but a

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87. Dolf Sternberger, "Politische Helden Schillers", in Aurnhammer et al. (eds.), *höfische Welt*, pp. 307-317.
88. See Klaus Manger's "Einführung" to part iii, "Schillers politische Helden", *höfische Welt*, pp. 301-306.
89. BDC, no 2, p. 739. That Posa himself is a complex personality and no selfless idealist is argued, for instance, by Orton, *Don Carlos*, pp. 21ff.
90. Characteristically, Plutarch's Solon does not interest Ferguson as a "great man" or an arch-legislator, but simply as someone who understood that "good citizens should be led to dispute"; *Essay*, p. 62.

Staatsfreund.[91] Yet the *Staatsfreund* is still a "hero", a lone operator in the narrative.

But even Schiller's solitary lover of mankind is making a political statement. The poetic purpose need not obscure the political outlook: it should ultimately be in harmony with it. Schiller's historical and philosophical works, to which we now turn, constantly developed the theme of agreement between art and political thinking. But in those works - and this is an important difference - responsibility lies not with a hero, but with the author and his public. Unlike Posa, Schiller himself "would not wish to live in a century other than my own, or to have worked for any other."[92] And, also unlike Posa, Schiller was not obliged to appeal to princes: "the public is everything to me, my study, my sovereign, my confidant." His ideas could be brought "to no other throne but the human mind."[93] We may therefore ask whether Ferguson contributed anything to Schiller's understanding of his age, or his hopes for it.

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Schiller never ceased to be a politically-minded man. There is ample proof for this in his historical and philosophical writings, and it has been persuasively argued by scholars in recent years.[94] Beside his personal interest in the political affairs of his day, his work was demonstrably aimed at a achieving a substantial change in man's political stature. Thus, his study of the revolt in the Netherlands, "the most beautiful monument to the strength of citizens", was explicitly aimed to "create in the hearts of

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91. Sternberger, "Politische Helden", pp. 316-317, contrasts Posa's "schwärmerisches Weltbürgertum" with the "gelassene und tapfere Staatsvernunft" of Leo Sapieha in Schiller's unfinished play, *Demetrius*.

92. Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man in a Series of Letters*, ed. and trans. by Elizabeth M. Wilkinson and L.A. Willoughby (Oxford, 1982) second Letter. I have used this translation, with a few modifications of my own. Further quotations from this work will be followed by the number of the relevant letter; all emphases are in the original.

93. Quoted by T.J. Reed, *Schiller* (Oxford, 1991), p. 37.

94. See Reed, *Schiller*, pp. 64ff, and the Schiller chapter of Beiser's forthcoming *Enlightenment, Revolution and Romanticism.*

my readers a happy feeling about themselves."[95] The French Revolution, which made him (though he did not know it for a long time) an honorary *citoyen français,* was deeply interesting to him despite his grave doubts about its moral staying-power. It also prompted him to public action in the form of publication.[96] His initial intention, to deter the revolutionaries from trying the king, was too late; he then moved on to a philosophical investigation of the question of human freedom. The second letter of the *Aesthetic Education* declares that "the spirit of philosophical inquiry is being expressly challenged by present circumstances to concern itself with that most perfect of all works of art, the construction of true political freedom."

Yet this oft-quoted declaration is - as Schiller himself implies - not the immediate agenda of the *Aesthetic Education.* The book was written to explain why "it is only through beauty that man makes his way to freedom" (3). Its famous diagnosis of the built-in contradiction of modern civilization, the painful disharmony between "physical man" and "moral man", led to the prescriptive assertion that "as long as the split within man is not healed", "we must continue to regard every attempt at political reform as untimely, and every hope based upon it as chimerical" (7).

If we focus on the diagnoses rather than the prescriptions, the *Aesthetic Education* is brimming with Scottish ideas (though not exclusively Scottish): Schiller writes of primitive and refined societies, the irretrievable integrity of the ancient Greeks, the debilitating potential of advanced European civilization, the division of labour, and modern man as a narrow specialist. There is no direct reference to the Scots: Schiller saw his ideas as "derived from constant community with myself" and based "for the most part on Kantian principles" (1). He did not acknowledge any debt to Montesquieu or Rousseau, let alone to Ferguson, Robertson or Adam Smith.

Yet his early interest in Scottish authors, following the school reading of Ferguson's *Institutes*, is easily demonstrable: among twenty books

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95. Quoted by Harold James, *A German Identity 1770-1990* (revised edn., London, 1990), p. 28.
96. Letter to Körner, 21.12.1792.

Schiller asked to borrow in 1782 from the Meiningen library, six were by Scots. They included Hume's *History of England*, Robertson's *History of Scotland* (which may have given him the long-shelved idea of writing a play on Mary Stuart), Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, and also works by Kames and Gerard.[97] During the difficult and prolonged writing of *Don Carlos* he benefited from the German translation of the *History of Philip II* by the Aberdonian Robert Watson,[98] and from Robertson's *History of the Reign of Charles V.*[99] There is, however, no evidence that Schiller read Ferguson's *Essay*, although the possibility constantly springs to mind when one reads the *Aesthetic Education*.

Schiller made no attempt to commit himself to the methodology of the Scottish conjectural historians. He was, to begin with, no empiricist. The greatest topics of his philosophy of history - the free agency of men, the limits set by circumstances, and the progress towards perfection - were worked together into a metaphysical system which consciously echoed Kant's. It also resembled Iselin and Lessing in its confident use of the individual life-span metaphor, which set the history of mankind in a linear narrative of mental growth. But for Schiller, a poet, the loss of man's "childhood" was a matter of agony. He refused to dispose of instinct and imagination, Iselin's convenient milestones on the road to Reason. Instead, Schiller perpetuated these aspects of human nature, showing them not only as part of the torn soul of modern man, but also as the necessary constituents of a future blissful synthesis. In his literary theory they are the creative forces of the Naive.

Like Ferguson, Schiller understood that no constituent of the human personality becomes obsolete in the course of history; but, unlike Ferguson, he chose to bipolarize human nature into "physical" and "moral" elements, and human motivations into *Stofftrieb* and *Formtrieb*. The great missing harmonizer, the *Spieltrieb* (14), was a human drive which needed to be coaxed into re-emergence as man finally moved into the aesthetic state.

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97. Witte, "Scottish Influence", pp. 33-34.

98. "I am deep in Watson right now, and important changes are in store for my Philip and Alva"; letter to Huber, 5.10.1785; quoted by Witte, *ibid.*, p. 33.

99. "While people admire a great poet", he wrote to Körner, "they venerate a man like Robertson - and if that same Robertson had written in a poetic spirit, people would venerate as well as admire him"; letter of 7.1.1785, quoted *ibid.*

The perfectibilism which the young Schiller took from Garve was now a bi-terminal idea of perfection: the lost innocence of the past (which Schiller sometimes understood as the biblical Fall or the classical Arcadia), and the moral state of the future. Schiller's understanding of the present, and of history, was increasingly lodged in this basic bi-terminal narrative, where fallen man is struggling from an irretrievable past towards a future state of harmony. History was the long deprivation between these two perfections. So history, for Schiller, had an end, in the double sense of its goal and its termination.

Harking back to Garve's "Anmerkungen" and his own school dissertation, Schiller speaks of man's (yet indispensable) "means of animal existence [*Mittel zur Tierheit*]" and of the "ladder of Nature" leading to a distant moral autonomy. It was Garve, not Ferguson, who taught Schiller to think that "the natural character of man" is "selfish and violent... aimed at the destruction of society rather than at its preservation" (4). And although he was by no means a staunch "modern" or a simplistic progressivist, Schiller was nevertheless committed to a narrative of gradual perfection.

With this story to tell, Schiller's attention to primitive societies had very little in common with the Scots' anthropological curiosity. As a historian he was concerned, following Iselin and Kant, to reconcile accounts of primitive societies with the biblical narrative.[100] In the third Aesthetic Letter he did away with the whole problem of "a state of nature" and "a state of social contracts", by allotting these fictions, and whatever they stood for, to "the work of blind forces" which "possess no authority before which Freedom need bow". The history which matters, man's moral phase, began after these things: "Out of the long slumber of the senses he awakens to consciousness and knows himself for a human being; he looks about him, and finds himself - in the State." There is nothing here of Ferguson's genuine fascination with the early pre-State societies and their gradual structuring into polities. The narrative of political history is replaced by a moral problem - how can "a people grown to maturity" accomplish their destined goal, "to transform its Natural State into a Moral one." (3)

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100. Reed, *Schiller*, pp. 56-59; Regin, *Freedom and Dignity*, pp. 70-71.

This agenda may explain why Schiller's "savages" and "barbarians" - a couplet he may well have borrowed from Ferguson's *Essay* - are not used in the senses Ferguson gave them. Ferguson's "savages" and "barbarians" are primitive men distinguished by communal and private ownership; the two terms do not denote a moral condition.[101] By contrast, Schiller's "savages" and "barbarians" denote two distinct moral degenerations of his own contemporaries. The "savages" are those of "the lower and more numerous classes" who display "crude, lawless instincts, unleashed with the loosening of the bonds of civil order". The "barbarians", on the other hand, are to be found in "the cultivated classes [*die zivilisierten Klassen*]", who "offer the even more repugnant spectacle of lethargy [*Schlaffheit*], and of a depravation of character which offends the more because culture itself is its source." (5)

Nevertheless, Schiller's "barbarians" are not unlike Ferguson's effeminate members of "polished" nations, whose prosperity and refinement push them to useless diversion, "to fill up the blanks of a listless life".[102] Schiller's critique of modern society, although set in a philosophical framework very different from Ferguson's, can plausibly be read as an impact of the Scottish thinker, and indeed his most genuine and effective "fingerprint" in Schiller's body of thought. There is no denying that Schiller's context, presentation and purpose were different from Ferguson's, but this does not preclude the striking similarities between his critique of *Kultur* and Ferguson's critique of refined civil society.

The clues are in the vocabulary: Schiller speaks of the inherent egoism "in the very bosom of the most refined social life [*der raffiniertesten Geselligkeit*], and the lack of "a heart that is truly sociable [*geselliges Herz*]". Modern civilization, *die Kultur* in his text, "far from setting us free, in fact creates some new need with every new power it develops in us." The sixth Aesthetic Letter speaks of the ancient Greeks, "our rivals, indeed often our models, in those very excellences with which we are wont to console ourselves for the unnaturalness of our manners [*die*

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101. See Forbes, "introduction", p. xxii. Ferguson made both types of society capable of social virtues as well as corruptions: *Essay*, p. 242.
102. *Essay*, p. 57.

Naturwidrigkeit unsrer Sitten]". Ferguson, too, could have asked the question "what individual Modern could sally forth and engage, man against man, with an individual Athenian for the prize of humanity?"

Schiller's questioning of moral progress, especially when it came to the Greeks, was based on a fascination different from Ferguson's: it was not the tribal cohesion of the Spartans and the public spirit of the Athenians, but the Greeks' sense of beauty, which made Schiller reject simplistic models of cultural progress.[103] Like Winckelman and the next generation of German students of ancient Greece, Schiller was more charmed by its aesthetics than by its politics. But he adhered to the general explanation - shared by Ferguson too - that the Greek flowering was temporary by its nature, that it was essentially flawed. The peace (*Ruhe*) achieved by the ancients, Schiller said in his *Universalhistorische Übersicht*, was destructive: "*Ruhe* is the condition of culture, but nothing is more dangerous to freedom than *Ruhe*. All the refined [*verfeinerte*] nations of antiquity paid with their freedom for the blossom of their culture, *because they received their Ruhe from oppression* ".[104]

On these points Schiller may have taken his lead from Montesquieu or from Rousseau. A further paragraph in his sixth Letter, however, bears close resemblance to the distinct English and Scottish idea of the division of labour, understood as part of the general fragmentation of human capacities inherent in modern societies:

> It was civilization [*die Kultur*] itself which inflicted this wound upon modern man. Once the increase of empirical knowledge, and more exact modes of thought, made sharper divisions between the sciences inevitable, and once the increasingly complex machinery of State necessitated a more rigorous separation of ranks and occupations, then the inner unity of human nature was severed too, and a disastrous conflict set its harmonious powers at variance....
>
> This disorganization, which was first started within man [*in dem innern man*] by arts and learning, was made complete and universal by the new spirit of government... That polypoid character of the Greek States, in which every individual enjoyed an independent existence but could, when need arose, become the whole, now made

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103. Cf. the poem *Die Götter Griechenlands* (1788).
104. Quoted by Roche, *Dynamic Stillness*, p. 50; emphasis given.

> way for an ingenious clock-work... State and Church, laws and customs, were now torn asunder; enjoyment was divorced from labour, the means from the end, the effort from the reward. Everlastingly chained to a single little fragment of the whole, man himself develops into nothing but a fragment...
>
> When the community [*das gemeine Wesen*] makes his office the measure of man;... when, moreover, it insists on special skills being developed with a degree of intensity which is only commensurate with its readiness to absolve the individual citizen from developing himself in extensity - can we wonder that the remaining aptitudes of the psyche are neglected in order to give undivided attention to the one which will bring honour and profit?

These passages strongly resemble Ferguson's analysis of the "Separation of Arts and Professions".[105] It is much closer to Ferguson's version than to Adam Smith's, because Schiller, like Ferguson, saw the specialization of economic functions (the "special skills" reared for "profit") merely as one component of the greater and more terrible fragmentation, that of man and citizen.[106] Ferguson saw the real problem in the mistaken application of the specialization principle to the "higher departments of policy and war",[107] which must be every citizen's business; finally, "thinking itself, in this age of separations, may become a peculiar craft."[108] This is strikingly similar to Schiller's point.

It is not necessary to push the question of direct contact too far: although there is no proof that Schiller read the *Essay on the History of Civil Society*, he could well have seen the same idea in the section on "Arts and Commerce" in the *Institutes*. Garve, as we have seen, made at least one paraphrase of it; and other German contemporaries made various allusions to the division of labour as a modern phenomenon, though not always as a problem.[109] There is nevertheless a good case for

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105. *Essay*, pp. 180ff.

106. Smith's analysis of the division of labour, though by no means amoral, was essentially about economy; and, though no stranger to civic humanist ideas, Smith nevertheless opposed the emphasis on man's divided political personality. See Hont and Ignatieff, "Needs and Justice", pp. 6-7.

107. *Essay*, p. 181.

108. *Ibid.*, p. 183.

109. Kant, for one, saw only its benefits; see Philip Kain, *Schiller, Hegel, and Marx. State, Society, and the Aesthetic Ideal of Ancient Greece* (Kingston and Montreal, 1982), p. 19.

seeing this set of ideas as a distinct Scottish contribution, in which Ferguson's role was of special importance.[110]

This part of the *Aesthetic Education*, sometimes misnamed Schiller's "alienation theory", is interesting not just because it could have mediated between comparable notions of Smith and Ferguson, on the one hand, and Hegel and Marx, on the other; in fact such mediation was unnecessary. It is interesting especially because it clearly reveals the break between Ferguson and Schiller: their diagnosis of the modern malaise was similar, but their analyses, and especially their prescriptions, were different to the point of contradiction. Schiller's break is not only between himself and Ferguson, but more generally between the Scottish Enlightenment and the German *Aufklärung*, along with its immediate heirs. It is about the true character of man, and - by extension - also about the tolerability of political realities and the feasibility of working towards a perfect man and State.

For, even as he speaks of the political dimension of man's self-estrangement, Schiller does not say that man can only regain his freedom by becoming again a *homo politicus*, and would certainly not allow it in an imperfect, present-day polity. Schiller's human condition is brought to perfection by "the individual himself *becoming* the State" (4), a metaphysical participation which Ferguson's citizen would surely have found baffling. In that blissful future, all the "antagonism of faculties and functions", admittedly the "great instrument of civilization" (6), will be resolved. The future State will be "the political creation of Reason" (7), and man, a future Aesthetic man, will be fully represented by it. His nature, "healed" and "restored to wholeness", will "become the artificer [*Künstlerin*] of the State." But this, Schiller tells impatient revolutionaries, is "a task for more than *one* century" (7).

Schiller's bipolar tension, like Kant's unsocial sociability, is beneficial and necessary for the course of human history; but both Kant and Schiller envisaged a moment where history will have run its course, and man will

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110. Here I take issue not only with Derek Regin, who sees Schiller as the "father" of the concept of "alienation", but also with the other extreme, Vicky Rippere's *Schiller and 'Alienation'* (Bern, Frankfurt a.M., Las Vegas, 1981), which dismisses most of Schiller's critique of modernity as "mere commonplaces in his world of discourse" (p. 175).

become free of tensions and conflicts. Ferguson did not wish for this moment to come. His remedy for modern ills, the renewal of human integrity through an active life of political participation and pursuit, remained deeply anchored in the imperfect, historical, political society. Schiller's State is not Ferguson's political society: it is, ultimately, the future metaphysical expression of the ideal "moral man". At present, it could at best become an institution of Aesthetic Education, led by "the pedagogic or the political artist" (4). Of course, "the statesman-artist [*Staatskünstler*] must approach his material with a quite different kind of respect from that which the *schöne Künstler* feigns towards his" (4); but the basic relationship is very similar to the one presented by Posa in the "audience scene", between the crowned *Schöpfer* and his subjects.

If we focus on Schiller's proposed remedy, aesthetic education itself, the gulf between him and the Scots becomes even more apparent. The aesthetic aspect of human nature, irreducible to any other, is Schiller's response to such linear accounts of mental progress as Iselin's and Kant's, where the (now commonplace) metaphor of individual life-span for the history of mankind disposed of imagination, as well as other mental forces, on the road to the highest phase of *Vernunft*. Schiller, a poet, was more tormented than Iselin about the role of imagination in the process, and more ambiguous than Kant about the role of reason.[111] But Beauty was a "pure rational concept", which needed to be "deduced from the sheer potentialities of our senso-rational nature" (10) before it could guide us to resolve its tensions.

It is important to note that Ferguson's own aesthetics were not divorced from his ethics or from his understanding of history. After all, both he and Schiller had come in touch with the agenda set by Shaftesbury. Art, for Ferguson, was "natural to man" and indigenous; "man is a poet by nature."[112]

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111. In the poem *Die Künstler* (1789) art is the guiding light of primitive humanity towards the higher steps of moral refinement. Aesthetics was the first form of ethics, but ethics could never fully replace it.

112. *Essay*, pp. 167 and 172.

By a remarkable coincidence both Ferguson and Schiller wrote, early in their careers, essays on the moral aspects of the theatre.[113] Ferguson's was a pamphlet with a rather playful apologia for the stage performance of John Home's *Douglas*, presenting the theatre as an innocent amusement which, in decent hands, could serve as a "school of morality".[114] Schiller - far more serious, not at all apologetic - declared it "a school of practical wisdom, a guide through civil life, an infallible key to the innermost secrets of the human soul."[115] It was here that Schiller began to develop his idea of aesthetic participation. His understanding of the theatre and its magic power of catharsis far surpassed Ferguson's crude notion of moral amusement: "in this artificial world we can dream the real world away, we are restored to ourselves... when men and women of all circles and zones and classes,... joined in brotherhood by one all-embracing sympathy, dissolved back into one family... again come near to their heavenly origin."[116]

Ferguson's idea of art was also an idea of participation, but on a more modest scale. The artist is first and foremost a member of a nation. Individual talent is the source of all art, but Ferguson's main concern is to understand its context - its historical setting, political circumstances and the cumulative effect of its skills. His main point is diametrically opposed to Schiller's idea of aesthetic education: the artist is a citizen of his country and period, "the flourishing of the arts" is a matter of social liveliness and "political felicity at home",[117] and even "literary talents", "imagination and sentiment", are best "excited by the presence and intercourse of men."[118] In one of the most memorable passages of the *Essay*, Ferguson reminds his readers that great art and literature "rose while men were divided into parties, under civil or religious denominations, and when they were at variance on subjects held the most important and sacred."[119] The moral lesson is blatant: "it appears the most glaring of all other deceptions, to look for the accomplishments

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113. [Ferguson], *The Morality of Stage Plays seriously considered* (Edinburgh, 1757); Schiller, *Vom Wirken der Schaubühne auf das Volk* (1784). Schiller's acquaintance with Ferguson's pamphlet is highly improbable.
114. *Stage Plays*, p. 21.
115. Quoted by Sheehan, *German History*, p. 201.
116. Quoted by Reed, *Schiller*, p. 35.
117. *Essay*, p. 170
118. *Ibid.*, pp. 177-178.
119. *Ibid.*, p. 178.

of a human character in the mere attainments of speculation, whilst we neglect the qualities of fortitude and public affection, which are so necessary to render our knowledge an article of happiness or of use."[120] And so, "society itself is the school, and its lessons are delivered in the practice of real affairs."[121] This pedagogic metaphor is profoundly different from Schiller's reliance on the "statesman-artist", or his vision of the future "inner" man. Schiller would hardly have shared Ferguson's venom against those "solitary pastimes", which the resigned rich "are pleased to call a taste for gardening, building, drawing, or music."[122]

But precisely this disagreement about the uses of man's artistic disposition raises a final intriguing question: did Ferguson have anything to do with Schiller's celebrated *Spieltrieb* ? It is a tempting thought, not least because Schiller's attempt to reconcile play and labour was a rare instance of breaking away from Kant's tutelage.[123] Ferguson's unifying concept of active pursuit is indeed comparable to Schiller's *Spieltrieb*: the *Essay* celebrates such players as "the sportsman and the soldier", and even, metaphorically, the "politician, whose sport is the conduct of parties and factions".[124] We must, of course, be careful with Ferguson's vocabulary, where "sport" means hunt, and "game" means gambling; but there is also an explicit reference to play (true happiness being "a refinement, which every boy knows at his play"[125]), and the whole psychology of effort, contest and pursuit is what a modern reader would easily recognize as play psychology.[126] Both Ferguson and Schiller stressed the universal validity, as well as the moral value, of the category of harmonious human effort which combines labour, enjoyment and self-fulfilment. Both traced it to a natural human propensity which precedes civilization, is crucial for its wellbeing, and may become its victim. Both understood this propensity as a force of full-fledged humanity, the opposite of modern specialization. But the similarity ends at this point.

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120. *Ibid.*, p. 179.
121. *Ibid.*, p. 176.
122. *Ibid.*, p. 57.
123. For Kant, work remained starkly opposed to art and play; see Kain, *Schiller, Hegel and Marx*, p. 19.
124. *Essay*, pp. 44-45; cf. pp. 42-43.
125. *Ibid.*, p. 46.
126. The classic study is J. Huizinga, *Homo Ludens. A Study of the Play-Element in Culture*, trans. R.F.C. Hull (London, 1949); unfortunately, Schiller's contribution to this concept is underplayed (p. 186), and Ferguson's unrecognized.

Ferguson's "active pursuit" is not a meta-historic concept like Schiller's *Spieltrieb*, its contribution to happiness does not make it a perfection-agent, and its role is to express man's natural competitiveness, perhaps to direct it to virtuous deeds, but not to lay it to rest. Most important, Ferguson's best active pursuits are political; Schiller's *Spieltrieb*, by its very definition, is not.[127]

And so, in a certain sense, Schiller did suspend political action, although he would never advocate political indifference. The type of quietude which Schiller sometimes called *Ruhe* or *Erschlaffung* was just as abominable to him as the other contemporaneous extreme, that of savagery [*Verwilderung*];[128] but political attention was not the same as political participation. Even before the French Revolution Schiller deemed the moments of virtuous intervention in the course of history, either by individuals like Posa or by bodies of citizens like the rebelling Dutch, far too rare and lucky to allow the stipulation of civic activism as a moral norm. *The Revolt of the United Netherlands against the Spanish Rule* (1786), the book which won Schiller the history professorship at Jena, is no longer about lone operators but about a nation's fight for freedom. This was, perhaps, Schiller's most wholehearted celebration of civic humanism, in what he saw as a rare occasion of virtuous human intervention in the web of historical circumstances to promote human freedom. But Schiller took the Dutch moment to be an uncommonly lucky one; modern man was not really facing such a moment, and, if he did, he was mentally and morally unripe for action.

This was his final judgement on the French Revolution: mankind - including the French - is not mature enough to establish themselves in the "sacred rights of men [*heiligen Menschenrechte*]", Schiller wrote to the Duke of Schleswig-Holstein-Augustenburg in July 1793.[129] "The *moral* possibility is lacking, and a moment so prodigal of opportunity finds a generation unprepared to receive it." (5) Of course, the scarcity of "good"

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127. "The play-drive, therefore, would be directed toward annulling time *within time*, reconciling becoming with absolute being and change with identity" (Letter 14).
128. See letter to the duke of Augustenburg of 13.7.1793, quoted in Roche, *Dynamic Stillness*, p. 51, and Aesthetic Letters 5, 10, and 15.
129. Quoted by Rudolf Vierhaus, "Sie und nicht wir", *Deutschland im 18. Jahrhundert*, p. 214

moments of action in history is anything but a coincidence: men are not yet in their moral state. What they need, then, is aesthetic education, not licence for political intervention in the present corrupt States.

Political freedom remained, for Schiller, a *sine qua non* of true human freedom; but political action in history became increasingly unacceptable. It has been shown that in his late plays his view of the human actors had undergone a subtle change. This change is apparent in his criticism of monarchic courts, a central theme of his dramas. In the early plays, as we have seen, Schiller's *Hofkritik* is directed at the concrete failings of bad or weak individuals (Franz Moor, King Philip). The late plays envisage the state of European courts as a symbol of the historical middle phase of deprivation, between the golden past and the future Idyll. Accordingly, the individuals responsible for the courts' moral shortcomings become less sinister and more human.[130]

Because the moments of chance for a good political action are rare historical accidents, or the promises of centuries to come, Schiller did not build his idea of human perfectibility on the fundamentals of citizenship. This is apparent already in *Don Carlos*, where, as we have seen, the Marquis of Posa sees political freedom as a requisite, but not a constituent, of individual creative flourishing. Schiller's idea of freedom remained individual-centred and *innerlich*. The same line is evident in Schiller's preference of Solon to Lykurgus, because "the State" should serve the individual and not the other way round.[131] This appeal to the State, or the constitution, culminates in the fourth of the Aesthetic Letters:

> ... And a political constitution will still be very imperfect if it is able to achieve unity only by suppressing variety. The State should not only respect the objective and generic character in its individuals; it should also honour their subjective and specific character...

This is only superficially reminiscent of Ferguson's *Essay*, where "the happiness of individuals is the great end of civil society." Ferguson's point is that "the greatest blessing that the public can bestow on its members,

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130. Helmuth Kiesel, *'Bei Hof, bei Höll'. Untersuchungen zur literarischen Hofkritik von Sebastian Brant bis Friedrich Schiller* (Tübingen, 1979), pp. 234-261.
131. See Regin, *Freedom and Dignity*, p. 71.

is to keep them attached to itself".[132] For Schiller, the State - a metaphysical entity - "can assert itself in individuals", the result conceived as "the individual himself *becoming* the State, and man in time being *ennobled to the stature* of man as Idea" (4). This future entity bears little or no resemblance to any political structure known to Schiller's contemporaries. it is therefore hardly surprising that Schiller was not interested in the details of a political constitution. As several scholars have noted, his admiration for republicans was never extended to the mechanisms of a free State.[133] His interest in Montesquieu did not encompass the theory of the separation of powers. In this, as Rudolf Vierhaus has shown, Schiller was very much representative of his generation in Germany.[134]

And thus, with his moral and physical natures finally pacified, "man will combine the greatest fullness of existence with the highest autonomy and freedom, and instead of losing himself to the world, will rather draw the latter into himself in all its infinitude of phenomena, and subject it to the unity of his reason" (13). This is a tall order indeed. It is difficult to see Schiller's free and perfect man having any urge left - let alone time and energy - to trouble himself to attend the citizens' assembly.

VI

As Elizabeth Wilkinson has pointed out, Schiller's commitment to the individual is not "individualism": like Goethe, he shunned notions of eccentricity, and worked "always, and deliberately, towards the human norm."[135] However, the mature Schiller created a notion of normative perfection which was larger-than-political. The political vocabularies he used, including the concept of "republican virtue", remained essentially metaphors for something higher, between man and fellow-man, man and Nature, or man and God. We have attempted to show that a certain typical misreading of Ferguson may have been instrumental for the

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132. *Essay*, p. 58

133. For Schiller's lack of interest in the separation of governmental powers see Wiese, *Schiller*, p. 336.

134. Vierhaus, "Montesquieu", p. 23

135. Elizabeth M. Wilkinson, *Schiller: Poet or Philosopher?* Special Taylorian Lecture, 17 Novermber 1959 (Oxford, 1961), p. 6.

construction of Schiller's perfectibilist vision. It is also possible to argue that Ferguson's diagnosis of modern man's mental fragmentation had an effect on Schiller's formulation of his problem in the *Aesthetic Education*; but there is no evidence that Schiller ever took any interest in the positive political ideas of Ferguson's *Institutes of Moral Philosophy*. Perhaps they already seemed too narrow.

We may end by noting that Schiller's philosophical language was deeply rooted in the conceptual vocabularies which we have seen operating in the German reception of Ferguson. This is apparent in his notion of the Sentimental, Schiller's adaptation of the familiar language of infinite approximation or *unendliches Streben*. He characterized the Sentimental in terms of *Unruhe*, *Bewegung*, and, in general, "*Die Kunst des Unendlichen*". His notion of Idyll encapsulated the *Ruhe der Vollendung*. Like Herder, Goethe and Hölderlin, Schiller articulated a notion of dynamic repose which aimed at a great transformation of human nature.[136] It is wrong to isolate the political thinking of these thinkers from the grand sweep of their metaphysical hopes for mankind. The personification of Schiller's great synthesis, the dynamic *Ruhe*, is therefore not Ferguson's hunter or fighter or statesman, but the more aesthetic creature in *Der Tanz* (1796):

> Ewig zerstört, es erzeugt sich ewig die drehende Schöpfung,
> Und ein stilles Gesetz lenkt der Verwandlungen Spiel.

Here are Ferguson's old "Law", Schiller's new "*Spiel*", and an aesthetic perfection which no active citizen can dare to hope for.[137] Schiller's dancer, and even his master-craftsman in *Das Lied von der Glocke*, are far more beautiful than Ferguson's *homo politicus*. But then, of course, Ferguson's polity is far uglier than Schiller's vision of the future moral State. The important issue at stake - as Jacobi well understood - was the energy one should spend on partaking in a very imperfect political society, perhaps even enjoying it, on the assumption than in this life we may probably have no other.

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136. Roche, *Dynamic Stillness*, pp. 2-9 and *passim*. The terms are quoted by Roche from NA XX, 430, 474, 400, 472 respectively.

137. It is "des Wohllauts mächtige Gottheit, / die zum geselligen Tanz ordnet den tobenden Sprung"; reference to this poem is made by Roche, *ibid.*, p. 56.

Conclusion

This thesis argues that the Scottish civic humanist language of active citizenship, political participation and a non-determinist view of history, was bypassed or substantially distorted by its eighteenth-century German recipients. The findings supporting this argument lead to three different sets of conclusions: about the Scottish civic humanist discourse, and especially Adam Ferguson's important version of it; about German political thinking in the late eighteenth-century; and about the transition of concepts, especially within complex vocabularies, between languages and cultures.

We have seen that Ferguson's civic humanism was made of constituents which could be taken apart or blown out of proportion by his readers. Two of its conspicuous (but unoriginal) components, common-sense epistemology and neo-Stoic ethics, made Ferguson's chief appeal to thinkers such as Garve and Feder; and they also set the clock for his disappearance from the German intellectual scene around 1800, along with most of his Scottish colleagues, in the wake of the Kantian and Idealist philosophy. At the same time, his ethnographic and sociological insights were ousted by the superior performances of historians and social scientists at Göttingen and elsewhere. But, as this study has aimed to show, *Der Ferguson* was never truly Ferguson. His civic humanist ethics and politics did not cross the linguistic and conceptual barrier. His insistence that history is open to human intervention was recast into a unilinear historicism.

It has been argued that Ferguson's thought had "conservative implications", because he accepted the British constitutional monarchy and was not an all-out democrat. I have suggested otherwise by pointing to the radical potentialities of Ferguson's ideas, which some of his German readers, especially after 1789, noted with alarm. But even Ferguson's "conservatism", his qualified support of the British system, could not appeal to most of his German readers: an *Aufklärer* with absolutist sympathies, such as Garve, had to ignore Ferguson's call for the active participation of as many citizens as possible in the defence and shaping of society; while a reader sympathetic to the old order of *Reich* and estates,

like some of his Göttingen readers, had to overlook Ferguson's stance towards both commercial society and classical republican ideals.

As the post-Revolution German references to Ferguson indicate, his civic humanism was irretrievably tainted by French radicalism. This association introduced notions which were alien, and even contradictory, to the civic discourse: crude egalitarianism, violent destruction of the old social order, and, above all, abstract collective sovereignty as the ideological basis of the national State. The German abhorrence of the revolutionary violence was shared, in the long run, even by such radicals as Rebmann; and one victim of this widespread disillusionment was the milder tradition of classical republicanism. But even before the Revolution, as we have shown, the impact of this tradition was limited. Versions of it may have figured in the atypical political tradition of the Hamburg citizenry; struck tentative roots in such minds as Jacobi's or the young Schiller's; and been absorbed by such radicals as Wedekind, who advocated civic participation; but all those were exceptions. The civic agenda of the Scottish Enlightenment did not sink in, and its essentials surfaced during the 1790s only to be disqualified as too close to the Jacobin extreme. The citizen was rejected along with the *citoyen*.

The shaping of nineteenth-century German political thinking, during and after the Napoleonic wars, reflects the overriding supremacy of the concepts of State, the Law, and reform from above, over any idea of civic participation and individual responsibility. This, of course, is a generalization, and it has many significant variants and exceptions: Romanticist nationalism did not care much for Laws, though the State figured prominently in it; Humboldt and (as we have briefly mentioned) Stein expressed civic ideas; but mainstream political discourse, in Prussia and elsewhere, stuck to the legalist and Statist concepts. Nineteenth-century German liberalism, despite its considerable variety, was largely formulated in the language of law-protected rights and negative liberty.

In a fascinating parallel, both the State and the Law are key concepts in nineteenth-century German historiography, and so is the idea of the gradual ascent towards perfection. Adam Ferguson was wrongly taken, by his contemporary German readers and by later scholars, to support this set of ideas. My thesis opposes this claim. Ferguson was first and

foremost a theorist of civic participationism and historical voluntarism, two strongly interlinked ideas, both of which failed to impress his German followers. I hope this thesis has supplied enough evidence to show that Hegel's notions of *Staat* and *Gesellschaft* are as remote from Ferguson's history of civil society as Nietzsche's concept of the Will is remote from Ferguson's civic voluntarism.

The misreception of civic ideas in Germany can be explained in terms of linguistic shifts and conceptual misunderstandings. It is easy to overstate this explanation and imply that some linguistic or conceptual Darwinism was at work, with "stronger" concepts overriding and dimming the "weaker", less familiar vocabulary. This is not my intention. The complex dynamics of textual reception are useful precisely because they can enrich other types of explanation and save them from becoming too monolithic. That Christian Garve was a loyal Prussian official and an admiring subject of the Hohenzollerns; that Jacobi ended his life a lonely and disappointed intellectual with no likeminded audience; that Lessing and Schiller gave more energy to literature than to politics; and that the Göttingen professors were intellectually committed to constitutional law and social science - all these facts belong to the social and political reality of their generation of Germans. The way these people reasoned and used language is partly affected by these circumstances; but it is important to remember that they were not just prisoners of their "consciousness", nor were they all-knowing manipulators eager to reject new ideas.

There are many open ends to the particular story pursued in this thesis: abandoning Ferguson, it is possible to examine other instances of civic humanist discourse in Germany. The non-civic, jurisprudential Scottish impacts on German discourse can benefit from a study of conceptual misreading, particularly the Germanized Adam Smith and his survival as a *Rechtsstaat* theorist. The contribution of the early Scottish "romanticism" to the German nationalist Romanticism may reveal a striking instance of misreception. But it is also possible to stay with Ferguson and pursue his later German career: his rediscovery by nineteenth-century sociologists, his status as a post-darwinian conflict theorist, and his recent resurfacing in *Die Zeit* as an ancestor of the *Grünen*, an impeccably vegetarian "third way" politician. All these directions seem to invite further careful study of textual reception.

Appendix
Main quotations in German

Note: this appendix includes the original German versions of all major quotations appearing in the thesis which I have translated myself. A few other translations, quoted from printed sources, are not included.

P. 29:
Während in England und in den romanischen Ländern der Begriff des sensus communis noch heute nicht nur eine kritische Parole, sondern eine allgemeine Qualität des Staatsbürgers bezeichnet, haben in Deutschland die Anhänger Shaftesburys und Hutchesons schon im 18. Jahrhundert den politisch-sozialen Inhalt, der mit 'sensus communis' gemeint war, nicht mit übernommen. Die Schulmetaphysik und Popularphilosophie des 18. Jahrhunderts, so sehr sie auch lernend und nachnahmend auf die führenden Länder der Aufklärung, auf England und Frankreich, gerichtet war, konnte sich nicht anverwandeln, wofür die gesellschaftlichen und politischen Bedingungen schlechterdings fehlten. Man nahm zwar den Begriff des sensus communis auf, aber indem man ihn völlig entpolitisierte, verlor der Begriff seine eigentliche kritische Bedeutung.
(Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode*).

p. 77:
Mit solchem Namen hat man das vom Autor gebrauchte lateinische Wort Civitas ausdrücken... mit dem öfters vorkommenden Worte Bürgerliche Gesellschaft nicht anders zu verstehen gegeben und gemeinet seie als die zusammen verbundene Obrigkeiten und Untertanen welche ein gewisses Reich Republic u. dgl. ausmachen.
(Pufendorf, *De jure*).

p. 121:
Allein wenn wir keinen Stand der Natur zugeben wollen, weil die Erhabenheit eines Plato eben so sehr in den Gesetzen der menschlichen Natur gegründet ist, als die Dummheit eines Indianers, der nicht über drey zählen kann: so können wir doch uns einen 'Stand der Einfalt' vorstellen, um in demselben die ersten Anfänge der Menschheit zu betrachten.
(Iselin, ADB 1770)

p. 123:
Er findet auch wider den Ausspruch der Hn. von 'Maupertuis' und von 'Voltaire', daß das Gute auf unsrer Erde das Böse überwiege, und er zeigt sehr vortreflich, daß meistentheils das Bestreben nach dem, was man Glücke nennet, daß die Bewegung und die Arbeit einen größern Theil des

menschlichen Vergnügens ausmachen, als der Genuß selbst; welchen Philosophen, die eben nicht allemal allzuphilosophisch denken, allein als Glückseeligkeit in Rechnung bringen.
(Iselin, ADB 1770)

p. 124:
Unstreitig liegen die Saamen des zärtlichen Gefühles der Menschheit, einer edeln Denkungsart und eines ehrwürdigen Charakters in der ersten Anlage der menschlichen Seele; aber daß sie ohne das belebende Licht der angebaueten Vernunft, und ohne die wohlthätige Wärme einer guten Policey sich zu einer gemeinnützigen Wirksamkeit entwickeln können, daran zweifeln wir sehr - Daß bey Völkern, wie Hr. F. die Wilden in diesem Zeitpunkt beschreibet, ohne Mühe eine spartanische Verfassung eingeführet werden könnte... geben wir gerne zu - Aber war die spartanische Verfassung im Grunde viel besser als eine systematische Barbarey?
(Iselin, ADB, 1770)

p. 126:
Indessen könnte man durch die Art, wie er sich ausdrucket, auf die Gedanken verfallen, als ob er nur politische Trennungen, Factionen, Stürme, für die bequemen Mittel hielte, die Tugend in der Wirksamkeit zu erhalten. - Aber wir glauben, er wolle nichts anders sagen, als daß bey der natürlichen Verschiedenheit der menschlichen Meynungen, jeder die seine soll, ohne Scheu, aüssern, und ohne Furcht vertheydigen. Und er hat Recht, daß wo dieses nicht mehr geschiehet, der Staat verdorben und die Freyheit verschwunden ist.
(Iselin, ADB, 1770)

p. 128:
Wenn wir schon nicht in allen Stücken mit Hrn. Ferguson gleich denken; wenn wir schon glauben überzeugt zu seyn, daß noch keine von der uns bekannten Nationen, eine so hohe [sic] Stuffe der Tugend erreichet gehabt habe, als er im fünften Theile vorauszusetzen scheinet, und daß, wenn eine auf diese glückliche Höhe gelanget wäre: sie nicht wieder in die Erniedrigung hätte fallen können, welche Rom und Griechenland entehret hat: wenn wir schon wünscheten, daß er von dem Geiste der Faktionen und der Unruhen mit grösserer Behutsamkeit geredet hätte: so sehen wir doch sein Werk für eines der schätzbarsten an, welches in unsern Zeiten geschrieben worden ist. Wir sehen es sogar als eine Pflicht an, dasselbe vorzüglich allen denjenigen zu empfehlen, welche junge Staatsleute in den Geschichten und in der Staatswissenschaft zu unterrichten haben.
(Iselin, ADB, 1770)

p. 139:

Wenn ich die Geschichte meines Lebens überdenke... ich glaube nicht ganz unnütz als Wetzstein für Andere gewesen zu seyn, wenn ich auch, als schneidendes Instrument, nur wenig ausgerichtet habe. Selbst in meinen Schriften habe ich die Wissenschaften nicht mit großen und neuen Entdeckungen bereichert: aber ich habe manche Leser zum Nachdenken gebracht, und ihnen das Selbstdenken durch mein Beyspiel und durch manche Beobachtungen über die menschliche Natur und deren Verschiedenheiten erleichtet.
(Garve, *Grundsätze der Sittenlehre*)

p. 140:
Ich habe dieß Buch nicht übersetzt, weil ich es für das erste und vortreflichste Lehrbuch der Moral halte; ich bin zu wenig dieses Urtheil zu fällen; ... aber ich habe es übersetzt, weil ich es für das Werk eines rechtschafnen und großen Mannes halte; und weil ich glaube, daß es die Spuren davon trägt.
(Garve, "Anmerkungen")

Was ist die Pflicht der Aeltern anders, als die Pflicht der Erziehung? Und was ist ein System der Erziehung anders, als ein System der Philosophie und Moral?
(Garve, "Anmerkungen")

p. 146:
Aber der Uebersetzer des Fergusons hat noch durch angehängte Anmerkungen das Buch um ein Drittheil vermehrt. In ihnen liegen seine eigenen Räsonnements über Freyheit, Glückseligkeit, Immaterialität der Seele, Existenz Gottes, Unterschied zwichen thierischem Instinct und menschlichem Wesen, Stoisches und Antistoisches System, und andere wichtige Gegenstände; tief durchdachte und mit liebenswürdiger Bescheidenheit vorgetragene, kurz wahre Philosophie.
(Feder, GGA 1772)

pp. 146-147:
Man lese in seinen Anmerkungen zu Fergusons Moral-Philosophie die Erläuterungen über jene gordische Materien, Freyheit, Geist, Materie u.s.w., womit Miltons subtilste Dämonen sich beschäftigen. Wenn nach dieser Entwickelung der Sache noch etwas dunkel und unbegreiflich bleibt, so wird man wenigstens überzeugt, daß man zu den Grenzen menschlicher Kenntniß gebracht, und daß keine andere Vorstellung der Sache übrig ist.
(Dittmar, *Erinnerungen*)

p. 148:
Das System von der innern Güte der Tugend hat der Religion gefährlich geschienen, weil man glaubte, daß es die Belohnungen unnöthig machte.

Aber man sage mir: welches sollen diese Belohnungen seyn, die man der Tugend in einem künftigen Leben verspricht?... nur die Tugend die Belohnung der Tugend seyn kann.
(Garve, "Anmerkungen")

p. 150:
Ist Tugend nicht für sich und ohne die äußern Folgen die sie hat, etwas gutes, so sind also meine eigne Beschaffenheiten mir gleichgültig. Aber wie das bey einem Wesen, das empfindet? Also habe ich keine eigne Beschaffenheiten; also bin ich kein eignes Wesen; also giebt es nur Materie; also ist der Ursprung aller Dinge in der Bewegung. Es ist kein Gott und keine Zukunft.
(Garve, "Anmerkungen")

p. 151:
Aber diesem Zustande näher zu kommen, den Kreis seiner Empfindung und seiner Theilnehmung zu erweitern; sich aus seinem Zimmer und der gegenwärtigen Stunde, in die weite Welt, und in die Reihe der immer fortgehenden Jahrhunderte zu setzen: das ist die beständige Beschäftigung des Tugendhaften und des Weisen, wenn er mit seinem Schicksal oder mit seinem Nebenmenschen zufrieden seyn will; es ist beyläufig zu sagen, auch die Beschäftigung des Mannes von Genie. Dieß ist die wahre Erhabenheit des Geistes, ohne welche niemals etwas großes hervorgebracht, niemals eine standhafte Glückseligkeit genossen worden.
(Garve, "Anmerkungen")

p. 152:
Die Geschichte des menschlichen Geschlechts ist ein Anzug aus dem größern Werke des Verfassers. Dieser Theil seines Werks ist ihm eigen, und ist eine wichtige Einleitung zur Moral. Ehe man untersucht, wie der einzelne Mensch vollkommen werden könne: muß man erst das ganze menschliche Geschlecht in seinen [sic] mannichfaltigen Abwechselungen und Stufen der Vollkommenheit übersehen; man muß auf den großen Schauplatz des menschlichen Lebens treten, um die verschiedenen Ordnungen der Menschen, die Glückseligkeit der sie genießen, die Tugend die sie ausüben... zu kennen. ... Die Vereinigung mannigfaltiger Vollkommenheiten, die er zerstreut unter den Menschen antrifft, giebt seiner Imagination ein Ideal, welches die bloße abstrakte Untersuchung der menschlichen Natur, oder die Beobachtung einzelner Menschen, ihm nicht würde gezeigt haben. - Ueberdieß so wie es den Philosophen, die einen vollkommen tugendhaften Mann haben beschreiben wollen, fast immer nothwendig gewesen ist, eine Art von vollkommnem Staate zu bilden, in die sie ihn setzen; weil der Mensch nur durch die Gesellschaft gebildet auch nur in ihr die Gegenstände seiner Tugenden findet: so ist überhaupt die Kenntniß der menschlichen Pflichten nicht von der rechten

Art, wenn man nicht den Menschen im zusammenhange mit der ganzen Natur, und besonders mit dem menschlichen Geschlechte, betrachtet.
Nur verliert unser V. zuweilen die Absicht aus den Augen, wozu er diese Geschichte des Menschen beybringt; und verfolgt bloß die Materie an sich. So ist in dem Kapitel, von der Bevölkerung, und noch mehr, in dem, Handel und Künste, die Abhandlung zu speciell, und gehört mehr in die Politik, wo er sie auch zum Theil wiederholt.
(Garve, "Anmerkungen")

p. 157:
Public Spirit... ist nicht *Patriotismus*, denn er erstreckt sich auf jede Gesellschaft, deren Glied man ist, und am meisten auf das menschliche Geschlecht; es ist nicht *Menschenliebe*, denn die äußert sich auch gegen einzelne Personen, und der öffentliche Geist nur gegen ganze Partheyen: es ist der Hang der Seele immer sich als ein Theil eines Ganzen zu betrachten; es ist die Fähigkeit des Geistes, sich dieses Ganze lebhaft vorzustellen; es ist die warme Theilnehmung an allem dem, wovon wir sehen, daß es eine größre Anzahl unsrer Nebenmenschen beschäftigt. Keine Tugend, kein Charakter ist in der That bey uns seltner. Denn es gehören zwey Eigenschaften dazu, die beyde entweder dem Temperament unsrer jetzigen Deutschen weniger eigen sind, oder durch ihre Umstände schwerer gemacht werden: eine große Wärme und Ausdehnung der Imagination; und eine gewisse Festigkeit und Abhärtung des Geistes. Das erste; weil nichts uns rühren kann, was wir uns nicht vorstellen: - derjenige, welcher mit der Sorge für seine Stadt, für sein Vaterland oder für das menschliche Geschlecht, erfüllt seyn soll, muß auf gewisse Weise das Bild derselben mit sich herumtragen; dieses Bild muß unwandelbar und lebhaft seyn, wenn daraus eine herrschende Neigung der Seele entstehen soll. Das andre; weil wenn wir von unsern eignen Freuden und Schmerzen sehr gerührt werden, diese allemal das Herz ganz einnehmen, und fremden Empfindungen und einem entferntern Interesse keinen Platz lassen. Der Mann von öffentlichem Geiste, muß sich selbst vergessen, und er muß an die Stelle von sich, die Gesellschaft setzen können... muß er seine Imagination bis auf einen hohen Grad befeuern können. Um deswillen ist der öffentliche Geist nur die Tugend großer Seelen.
(Garve, "Anmerkungen")

p. 160:
Je mehr alle Völker, in den Grundsätzen ihrer Politik, in den Gewohnheiten ihres [sic] Vökerrechts, in ihrer Neigung zu friedlicher Arbeitsamkeit, in der Sanftmuth ihrer Sitten einander gleich kommen: desto weniger kann eines zu seiner Sicherheit die Unterjochung des andern [sic] durchans nöthig haben. Wo nicht mehr die Nationen, sondern nur die Fürsten Krieg führen, ... da erfordert auch die Sicherheit eines Staats mehr Schutzwehre gegen die Leidenschaften andrer Regenten, -

welche in Traktaten und Bündnissen gefunden werden kann, als absolute Ohnmacht oder Unterwürfigkeit der benachbarten Völker, welche nur eine Folge von Gewaltthätigkeiten seyn kann.
(Garve, *Verbindung*)

p. 164:
So viel ist klar, daß, so wie die Vertheilung der Arbeiten die Werke der Menschen, durch die Einschränkung ihres Fleißes auf einen einzigen Gegenstand, vollkommner machte, so auch die mehr ins Große gehende Absonderung der Stände überhaupt, die höhere Ausbildung der persönlichen Eigenschaften des Menschen selbst, in so fern befördert hat, als dadurch die Arbeiten desselben an seiner eignen Vervollkommung, auf ähnliche Weise, gleichsam getheilt worden sind.
(Garve, *Maxime Rochefaucaults*)

p. 165:
Ich bin geneigt, anzunehmen, daß in unsrer Zeit und in Ländern, wie jetzt die Europäischen regiert werden, die Macht der Wahrheit und vernünftiger Gründe stark genug ist, die Hindernisse, die uns noch auf dem Fortgange zur Vollkommenheit von Seiten politischer Einrichtungen im Wege stehen, fortzuschaffen. Die Französische Revolution selbst hat mich gelehrt, daß die Gefahren zu groß sind, die mit einer offenbaren Widersetzlichkeit einer ganzen Nation gegen ihren Regenten und ihre Regierung verbunden sind, - Gefahren, die nicht bloß aus dem Verluste des Handels und der Industrie, sondern aus der Verwilderung und der Zügellosigkeit der Gemüther entstehen.
(Garve, *bürgerlicher Gehorsam*)

Sicher wird in einem Lande und in einem Clima, bey solchen Sitten, bey einem solchen Grade der Aufklärung, wie glücklicher Weise die unsrigen sind, der vernünftige Mann, der die Mißbräuche der Regierung am besten erkennt, sie am geduldigsten ertragen, weil er ihre Abstellung von der Kraft der Gründe, von der Zeit, und den immer wachsenden Einsichten der höhern und niedern Stände erwarten kann.
(Garve, *bürgerlicher Gehorsam*)

p. 166:
Die Moralisten, welche in solchen Staaten leben, werden ihre Begriffe nach dem Zustande der Dinge bilden, der ihrer Beobachtung ausgesetzt ist. Sie werden zwar Liebe als den Grund aller Tugenden gebieten; aber sie werden doch gewisse erlaubte Feindschaften zugeben, weil sie sehen, daß im politischen Leben, ohne mit Gegnern Streitigkeiten zu führen, kein gemeinnütziges Project ausgeführt werden kann.
(Garve, commentary to Cicero)

p. 167:

... daß der Mensch, so wie alle lebenden, und selbst alle organisirten Wesen, - seiner Natur nach, ein immer fortschreitendes und gleichsam in der Succession existirendes Wesen sey, welches nie ganz vollständig auf einmahl vorhanden ist, nie das Ziel erreicht, wo man sagen kann, - *nun ist es vollendet.* Hieraus schließt Ferguson, daß der höchste Zweck des Menschen nicht in irgend einem genau zu bestimmenden, aber ruhigen Zustande, - sondern nur in einer immer währenden Thätigkeit und einem Streben nach noch höhern Zielen liege.
(Garve, *Principien der Sittenlehre*)

p. 169:
Mit dem Ferguson will ich mir nun ein eigentliches Studium machen. Ich sehe schon aus dem vorgesetzten Inhalte, daß es ein Buch ist, wie mir hier gefehlt hat, wo ich größenteils nur solche Bücher habe, die über lang oder kurz den Verstand, so wie die Zeit, töten. Wenn man lange nicht denkt, so kann man am Ende nicht mehr denken. Ist es aber auch wohl gut, Wahrheiten zu denken, sich ernstlich mit Wahrheiten zu beschäftigen, in deren beständigen Widerspruche wir nun schon einmal leben, und zu unsrer Ruhe beständig fortleben müssen? Und von dergleichen Wahrheiten sehe ich in dem Engländer schon manche von weitem.
Wie auch solche, die ich längst für keine Wahrheiten mehr gehalten. Doch ich besorge es nicht erst seit gestern, daß, indem ich gewisse Vorurteile weggeworfen, ich ein wenig zuviel mit weggeworfen habe, was ich werde wiederholen müssen. Daß ich es zum Teil nicht schon getan, daran hat mich nur die Furcht verhindert, nach und nach den ganzen Unrat wieder in das Haus zu schleppen. Es ist unendlich schwer, zu wissen, wenn und wo man bleiben soll, und Tausenden für einen ist das Ziel ihres Nachdenkens die Stelle, wo sie des Nachdenkens müde geworden.
(Lessing to Mendelssohn)

p. 171:
Vor allen Dingen aber bitte ich Dich, Herrn Moses zu ersuchen, daß er mir die zwei versprochenen Bücher schickt. Wenn er nicht Zeit hat, so laß Dir sie nur von ihm geben, und sende sie mir mit der ersten fahrenden Post. Es ist John Bunckel, oder wie er sich schreibt, und Ferguson. Auf den ersten hat er mich gar zu neugierig gemacht, und den andern möchte ich auch gern lieber English als Deutsch lesen.
(Lessing to Karl Lessing)

p. 189:
Denn nicht durch den Besitz, sondern durch die Nachforschung der Wahrheit erweitern sich seine Kräfte, worin allein seine immer wachsende Vollkommenheit bestehet... Wenn Gott in seiner Rechten alle Wahrheit, und in seiner Linken den einzigen immer regen Trieb nach Wahrheit, obschon mit der Zusatze, mich immer und ewig zu irren,

verschlossen hielte, und spräche zu mir: wähle! Ich fiele ihm mit Demut in seine Linke, und sagte: Vater gib! die reine Wahrheit ist ja doch nur für dich allein!
(Lessing, *Eine Duplik*)

pp. 199-200:
Er hat an andern Orten erwiesen, daß unsre Einrichtungen in Ansehung des Landeigenthums, des Geldes, der großen Handlung, der Familienrechte u.s.w. die Eigennützigkeit erzeugen und ernähren, daß unsre heutige Staaten mit dieser allgemeinen Krankheit behaftet sind, und dadurch der patriotische Geist geschwächt oder gar ersticket wird. In diesem Betracht ist also ein Staat, oder allgemeiner zu reden, eine Völkerschaft glücklicher, die diese künstlichen Einrichtungen nicht kennt, deren Mitglieder von ausschlützigen Rechten, von Eigenthum, Reichthum, bürgerlichen und erblichen Vorzügen nichts wissen. Bey diesen fällt die unpatriotische Leidenschaft der Eigennutzes weg. Diese, da sie wenig oder kein Privatinteresse kennen und haben, sind vorzüglich geschickt, ihr Vaterland auf die beste, reineste, edelste Art, ganz uneigennützig zu lieben.
("Von Staatsgesetzen", translator's note)

p. 201:
Diese... Sätze sind Grundregeln der englischen Justiz und Stützen der Freyheit des Britten. Aber als Gesetze der Natur lassen sie sich so schlechthin und so allgemein, wie sie da liegen, nicht annehmen. Der Engländer ist es von Jugend auf gewohnt, so und nicht anders zu denken. Wie leicht verwechselt er diese *ihm* natürliche Denkungsart mit der Natur selbst! Es giebt Gelehrte andrer Nationen, die es nicht besser machen.
("Von Staatsgesetzen", translator's note)

p. 202:
Man sieht es dieser Supposition an, daß der brittische Verfasser diejenige Nation diesseits des Canals zum Augenmerk hat, mir welcher die englische im größten politischen nicht nur, sondern auch sittlichen Contrast steht.
("Von Staatsgesetzen", translator's note)

pp. 202-203:
Dieser Satz mit seinem vorhergehenden Gegensatz ist aus Vergleichung der englischen Justizverfassung mit der französischen erwachsen, und, so viel mir wissend ist, eine neue Bemerkung. Es ist aber zu zweifeln, ob sie so wichtig ist, als sie dem Verfasser scheint. Für den Horizont dieser beyden Nationen ist sie brauchbar, außer derselben weniger. Es mag seyn, daß in gedachten Staaten entgegengesetzte Einrichtungen einerley gute Würkung haben: aber diese Würkung ist gewiß nicht der Einrichtung

selbst allein, sondern zugleich andern mitwürkenden Ursachen zuzuschreiben.
("Von Staatsgesetzen", translator's note)

p. 209:
Einen kriegerischen Geist der Nation, wie es wohl bey einigen Völkern geschehen seyn mochte*), sich zu einer Grundabsicht bey der Staatseinrichtung zu machen, eine beständige Kriegesmacht zu unterhalten, [sic] Vestungen anzulegen, sind... Regeln, die schon über das Allgemeine hinausgehen, aber wo sie auch statt finden, von jenen Grundregeln doch wohl nicht getrennt werden dürfen.
[*) Ferguson Hist of civil society, p. 354 seqq. Aristoteles Polit II 9 VII 2]
(Feder, *Lehrbuch*)

pp. 209-210:
Aber hauptsächlich kömmt doch hier die Stärke dieser Liebe zum Vaterlande von der Vorzügen und Vortheilen her, die der Bürger eines Freystaats besitzt, oder doch zu besitzen glaubt; ... Gleichwie unterdessen in einer wohleingerichteten Monarchie Freyheit und Eigenthum so gut gesichert seyn können, als in einem Freystaate, und oft noch besser.
(Feder, *Untersuchungen*)

p. 212:
... das Werk verdiente in den Händen aller jungen Leser zu seyn... verschafft die Grundkenntnisse der römischen Statistik durch Facta, nicht aus Raisonnements, die von modernen Staaten auf jene so ganz verschiednen Zeiten übertragen werden; - der Verf. kannte und brauchte wirklich die Quellen, aber er brauchte sie mit aufgeklärten philosophischen Geiste.
(Heyne, GGA 1785)

... auch wohl Berichtigung der Urtheile des Hrn. F. welcher hin und wieder von der schönen Seite des Characters der Römer geblendet ist: denn im Grunde waren die Römer doch nichts weiter als ein rauhes Volk von Barbaren bestimmt, Verwüster des Erdkreises zu ihrem eignen Verderben zu seyn. Zum Wohl der Menschheit haben sie absichtlich wenig beygetragen, so wie sich es auch von einem militärischen Staat nicht erwarten läßt.
(Heyne, GGA 1785)

p. 213:
Ueberdem ist die Geschichte der Sitten und Aufklärung der Römer zu unvollständig, und selbst die Schilderung der alten röm. Verfassung, und vieler einzelnen Veränderungen derselben, müssen Leser, die mit der Natur von Freystaaten nicht auf das genauste bekannt sind, oft zu gedrungen oder abgebrochen finden.

(Meiners, GGA 1784)

p. 215:
Gänzliche Umkehrungen despotischer Reiche, oder Unterjochungen entkräfteter und verdorbener Völker sind gemeiniglich die Epochen und Ursachen eines höhern Wohlstandes.
(Meiners, *Grundriß*)

p. 216:
Wahre Aufklärung bringt nicht allein keine Sitten-Verderbniß und Unglauben hervor, sondern ist das sicherste Gegen-Mittel gegen beyde. Aufklärung kann sich eine Zeitlang neben Sitten-Verderbniß erhalten, wird aber unvermeidlich durch diese letztere eingeschränkt, und auf die Länge ganz unterdrückt. Sitten-Verderbniß stürtzt die aufgeklärtesten Völker unaufhaltsam in eben den Aberglauben und eben die schimpflichen Laster zurück, die man für Eigenthümlichkeiten von Wilden und Barbaren zu halten pflegt.
(Meiners, *Grundriß*)

p. 219:
Aber als ein vernünftiges Wesen ist der Mensch zu einem unbegrenzbaren Fortstreben zu immer größerer Vollkommenheit der Erkenntniß und vernünftigen Thätigkeit bestimmt. Dies muß als 'Hauptsatz' der ganzen theoretischen und practischen Anthropologie betrachtet werden.
(GGA 1793)

Da er Anlagen eines Künstlers hat: so ist es recht, daß er mit rohen der Bildung bedürfenden Materialien umgeben ist.
(GGA 1793)

Selbst mitten unter den heftigsten Stürmen und größesten Gefahren kann der Mensch sich besser befinden, höhere, alle andere ihn gleichgültig machende, Arten von Wohlseyn empfinden, als in der gemächlichsten Ruhe und im ungestörten Besitze der äußern Güter.
(GGA 1793)

Uebrigens ist der Verf. kein einseitiger und unbestimmter Lobredner der Aufklärung, Neuerung, Freyheit; sondern in [sic] der Maaße, wie es einem weisen und rechtschaffenen Manne geziemet. Das Ansehen der Geburt scheint ihm gut als Gegengewicht, damit das Ansehen des Geldreichthums nicht noch höher steige; ein für die Sittlichkeit noch gefährlicheres Ansehen.
(GGA 1793)

p. 220:

Ueber die äußersten Rechte gegen anhaltenden Mißbrauch der obersten Gewalt hält es auch der Verf. für bedenklich sich zu erklären. Diese Rechte leugnen hieße freylich die Menschheit verrathen oder verleugnen. Aber ihre bestimmte und ausdrückliche Anerkennung setze das Ansehen der obersten Gewalt im Gefahr.
(GGA 1793)

pp. 220-221:
Recens. denkt hierüber so: Wo Wissenschaft gelehrt werden soll, da muß alles, was in die Wissenschaft gehört, wie es sich der unpartheyisch, ruhig und genau forschenden Vernunft zu erkennen giebt, festgesetzt werden. Das Gegentheil streitet nicht nur mit der Würde und dem Zweck des wissenschaftlichen Unterrichtes, sondern auch mit der Ehrlichkeit. Aber 1) daraus folgt freylich nicht, daß die wissenschaftliche Wahrheit, wo sie nicht hingehört, zur Unzeit gesagt werden müsse; 2) kömmt es auch hier sehr darauf an, wie die Wahrheit gesagt wird. Jene Wahrheiten von den äußersten Rechten gegen anhaltenden Mißbrauch der obersten Gewalt können so unschädlich gemacht werden, als irgend ein anderer practischer Satz. Man muß sie nur nicht von den andern sittlichen und politischen Wahrheiten trennen, von welchen die rechte Anwendung derselben abhängt, sondern immer aufs geflissentlichste damit verbinden.
(GGA 1793)

p. 221:
Dem durch keine deutlichen Begriffe und Grundsätze gebildeten Instinct die Entschließungen im vorkommenden Falle zu überlassen - wie unser Verf. mit Hume fürs Beste hält - ist doch fürwahr auch bedenklich.
(GGA 1793)

Ueberhaupt entsprechen die politischen Grundsätze des Verf. vollkommen der Constitution seines Vaterlandes. Auch macht er selbst dazwichen die Bemerkung, daß es schwer sey, dem Einflusse dessen, woran man gewöhnt ist, in allgemeinen Untersuchungen dieser Art zu widerstehen, zumal unter einer Verfassung, mit der man Ursache hat zufrieden zu seyn.
(GGA 1793)

pp. 231-232:
... indem wir - ohne Vaterlands- und Freiheitsgefühl, ohne alles herzliche Interesse, ohne Mut und ohne Liebe, - Verachtung von Tod und Wunden - mit Stockprügeln hervorzubringen wissen; - Gefangene zu unserer Wache und Beschirmung anzustellen wissen; und glücklich und zufrieden zu sein, ohne Tugend, ohne Unsterblichkeit und ohne Gott. - Also sind unsere Augen aufgethan; das tausendjährige Reich ist uns nahe; und wir verkündigen es mit einer Begeisterung, die auch neuerlicher Art ist, - mit

der komischen Begeisterung des Materialismus, mit dem Enthusiasmus der Kaltblütigkeit.
Woher dieser Vorfall? Dieser lächerliche, schändliche - gräßliche Unsinn? Ich wiederhol' es: Einzig und allein von überhand genommener Ueppigkeit.
(Jacobi, "Ein Stück Philosophie")

p. 233:
Woldemar erzählte, daß Fergusons erstes Werk, sein Versuch über die Geschichte der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft, Epoche in seinem Leben gemacht hätte: es hätte ihn zum Wiederlesen des Alten neu begeistert; ihn auf eine Höhe der Betrachtung gestellt, und überhaupt ihn so erweckt, daß er diesen Zeitpunkt noch immer wie den Uebergang in ein besseres Daseyn betrachtete.
(Jacobi, *Woldemar*)

p. 236:
Dieses hört' ich Lessing sagen: Es wäre unverschämte Schmeicheley gegen die Fürsten, was Febronius und was die Anhänger des Febronius behaupteten; denn alle ihre Gründe gegen die Rechte des Papstes, wären entweder keine Gründe, oder sie gälten doppelt und dreyfach den Fürsten selbst.
(Jacobi, *Etwas*)

p. 237:
Aber Gewalt, wo sie in der Welt auch immer war, vertheilt unter mehrere oder nur bey Einem - ... eine solche Gewalt, die nur Gesetze giebt und selber keine hat, und die heiligsten Rechte mit Heiligkeit verletzen mag: Nie hat eine solche - echte Wahrheit und wirkliche Wohlfahrt unter Menschen irgendwo hervorgebracht.
(Jacobi, *Etwas*)

p. 238:
Derjenige Zwang, ohne welchen die Gesellschaft nicht bestehen kann, hat nicht, was den Menschen *gut*, sondern was ihn *böse* macht, zum Gegenstande: keinen *positiven*, sondern einen *negativen* Zweck. Dieser kann durch äußerliche Form erhalten und gesichert werden; und alles Positive, Tugend und Glückseligkeit entspringen dann von selbst aus ihrer eigenen Quelle.
(Jacobi, *Etwas*)

p. 239:
... daß der Gewalt nur müsse die Gewalt entgegen treten; dem Verbrechen nur der Zwang... *Kräfte* sind sie zu erwecken nicht im Stande, noch im Stande irgend etwas *in sich* Gutes zu erschaffen. Dieses kann nur aus sich

selbst entspringen, und seine erste Quelle überall, ist die *ungeheißene innere Bewegung eines freyen Geistes.*
(Jacobi, *Etwas*)

Ohne Gewalt und Zwang haben Menschen sich zuerst verbrüdert, und Gesellschaften gestiftet, wo die Abwesenheit fehlerhafter Einrichtungen ihnen bessere Sicherheit verlieh, als so viele künstliche Anstalten, welche mehr und größere Verbrechen oft erregen, als sie unterdrücken.
(Jacobi, *Etwas*)

pp. 239-240:
Die Künste der Regierung haben den Verstand der Menschen zwar geübt, und indem sie zu allerhand Bestrebungen, Nachforschungen, Zwecken, Wünschen und Gedanken ihnen Anlaß gaben, ihren Geist bereichert; nicht selten aber auch ihn erniedrigt und verschlimmert.
(Jacobi, *Etwas*)

p. 240:
Die glücklichsten Menschen aber sind diejenigen, deren Herzen mit einer Gemeine in Verbindung stehen... in der sie jeder Gegenstand des Edelmuths und des Eifers, und einen Zweck finden, jedes Talent und jede tugendhafte Neigung daran zu üben... Nur dem Menschen ist es vorbehalten, in der Gesellschaft seiner Nebengschöpfe Rath zu *geben* und zu *nehmen*; zu überzeugen, zu widerlegen, zu begeistern; und im Feuer seiner Liebe oder seines Unwillens, persönliche Sicherheit und eigenen Vortheil außer acht zu lassen.
(Jacobi, *Etwas*)

pp. 240-241:
Ferguson, mit dessen Worten ich so eben redete, warnet sehr vor den politischen Verfeinerungen gewöhnlicher Menschen, die nur Ruhe oder Unthätigkeit zum Gegenstande haben, und durch die Schranken, die sie bösen Handlungen zu setzen trachten, die edelste Geschäftigkeit zugleich vernichten wollen, als hätte der gemeine Mann kein Recht zu handeln, oder nur zu denken.
(Jacobi, *Etwas*)

p. 241:
... und sucht alsdann die Herzensangst gewisser Leute, wo sie, anstatt grenzenloser Unterthänigkeit, Trotz auf eigne Rechte, und Mängel der Polizey erblicken, so gut er kann zu mildern.
(Jacobi, *Etwas*)

p. 244:
... daß Menschen, die nicht selbst im Stande sind, was ihnen gut ist zu erkennen und [sic] darnach zu streben, daß solche Menschen noch viel

weniger ihr Heil der Tugend eines Vormunds ohne Richter, und der nie mündig werden läßt, zu danken haben können.
(Jacobi, *Etwas*)

p. 245:
Der Vortheil einer bessern Vertheidigung gegen feindliche Gewalt von außen, wenn auch diese bey der Menge von widersprechenden Beyspielen sich behaupten ließe, gilt zu wenig, da der innerliche Feind der ärgste ist. Keine Verfassung hab' ich zu vertheidigen, in der ich über meine Rechte wachen und sie selber schützen dürfte: keine Freyheit also, und kein Vaterland. Die *Geburtstelle* bleibt mir immer; und vielleicht gewinn' ich mehr bey'm neuen Herrn, als ich verliere; sonderlicher Nachtheil wenigstens kann nicht daraus für mich erwachsen.
(Jacobi, *Etwas*)

Aber frey - nach seiner Art im allerhöchsten Grade - ist ein jeder Mensch und jeder Bürger, in so ferne er nur nicht gehindert wird seinen wahren Vortheil *auf alle Weise* nach Vermögen zu befördern...
Ich sagte: jeder *Mensch* und jeder *Bürger*: weil die gegebene Erklärung allgemein ist, und sowohl auf die innere moralische Freyheit geht, als auf die äußere politische. Beyde hängen aufs genaueste zusammen...
Wo ein hoher Grad von politischer Freyheit in der That, und nicht allein dem Scheine nach, vorhanden ist, da muß von der moralischen Freyheit nicht weniger ein hoher Grad vorhanden seyn. Beyde sind in der vernünftigen Natur des Menschen einzig und allein gegründet, und ihre Kraft und Folge ist daher: den Menschen immer menschlicher zu machen, immer fähiger sich selber zu regieren, seine Leidenschaften zu beherrschen, glücklich zu seyn, und ohne Furcht.
(Jacobi, *Etwas*)

p. 246:
Darum aber muß viel Tugend, viel *moralische* Freyheit da vorhanden seyn, wo viel wahre politische angetroffen wird, weil die Gesetze sich nicht selbst beschützen können, sondern durch eine überall und immer gegenwärtige Gewalt, welche allem was die Gesetze angreift unwiderstehlich begegnet, müssen aufrecht erhalten werden. Also wo die wahren Gesetze der Freyheit in der That regieren, da muß ihr Wille der lebendige Wille des Volkes selbst seyn. Gesetze der Freyheit sind keine andre, als Gesetze der strengsten Gerechtigkeit, das ist, der vernünftigen Gleichheit.
(Jacobi, *Etwas*)

p. 248:
Wo die Staatsverwaltung Mehrere unmittelbar beschäftigt, da entsteht, außer jenem überschwenglichen Vortheil, daß die besten Tugenden und die besten Geistes-Gaben häufiger erweckt und das Antheil vieler

Menschen werden, noch ein andrer, der sich näher auf die äußerliche Wohlfahrt eines Staats bezieht, und von Machiavell, der immer *diese* nur beäuget, in das hellste Licht gesetzet worden ist.
(Jacobi, *Etwas*)

p. 252:
... und so, anstatt eines Friedes Gottes, der nur ein Hirngespinst ist, ein wirklicher Friede des Teufels, der sich denken läßt, wenigstens die Präliminarien davon, zu Stande kämen.
(Jacobi, *Lehre des Spinoza*)

pp. 252-253:
Ich berufe mich auf ein unabweisbares unüberwindliches Gefühl als ersten und unmittelbaren Grund aller Philosophie und Religion; auf ein Gefühl, welches den Menschen gewahren und inne werden läßt: er habe einen Sinn für das Uebersinnliche. Diesen Sinn nenne ich Vernunft, zum Unterschiede von den Sinnen für die Sichtbare Welt.
(Jacobi, Vorrede, *Werke* IV)

Eine Composition, ein Vertrag der Tugend mit dem Laster ist unmöglich, wie ich schon in meinem Etwas was Leßing gesagt hat erwiesen habe. Die Unmäßigkeit, die Herschsucht, die Begierde nach Reichthum können sich in alle Ewigkeit nicht zu einer maniere fixe d'être gouverné par la raison bequemen, die jointures dans l'esprit sind ihnen überall unentbehrlich. Es ist unvernünftig solche Menschen practisch vernünftig machen, ihnen die Liebe der Gleichheit einflößen, u durch diese Liebe alles regieren zu wollen. - Unvernunft, aus Vernunft die Monarchie abschaffen, u [sic] gelichwohl einen aus 25 Millionen bestehenden Staatkörper erhalten zu wollen.
(Jacobi, *Kladden* II)

pp. 254-255:
Was Sie bei Ferguson's history of civil society anmerken, daß man von diesem Buche bis jetzt noch wenig Gebrauch gemacht habe, ist sehr wahr, und ich habe oft in meinem stillen Geiste Betrachtungen über die Ursachen davon angestellt, auch etwas darüber im Woldemar, weniger gesagt als zu verstehen gegeben. Seine, wenn ich nicht irre, frühere Schrift: Institutes of moral philosophy wurde 1772 gut übersetzt und mit Anmerkungen begleitet, die zum Theil vortrefflich sind. Das Buch muß wenig Eingang gefunden haben, weil keine zweite Auflage erschienen ist. Von Ferguson's späterem herrlichen Werke: Principles of moral and political science, das 1792 in zwei Quartbänden erschien, wurde der erste Theil ins Deutsche übersetzt, der zweite aber blieb aus, wahrscheinlich weil der erste keine Liebhaber gefunden hatte. Du sollst nicht haben andere Götter neben Kant, hieß es damals in Deutschland. So blieben auch zwei kurz zuvor erschienene vortreffliche Werke von Thomas Reid

unbeachtet. Die Deutschen bedürfen immer eines goldenen Kalbes, das vor ihnen hergehe, und eines Aarons, der es ihnen gieße und fertig aufrichte, mit einem Altar vor ihm... Aber sie dulden auch, daß man ihnen das Kalb verbrenne und in Pulver zermalmt zu trinken gebe; nur darf ein Mose dieß nicht thun, sondern ein anderer Aaron mit einem andern Kalbe.
(Jacobi to Jacobs, 1811)

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Abbreviations: ann=announcement, rev=review, Zug=Zugabe
trans=translation, rep=reprint

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