

**'The Stability of Modern governments and the Accuracy of
Modern Philosophy':
The Scottish Enlightenment's Conjunction of Europe and
Modernity**

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Few Enlightenment cultures during the long eighteenth century were more intrigued by modernity, or more alert and ambivalent in their understanding of Europe, than the Scottish Enlightenment. The Scottish lexicon of modernity is strong and self-aware, and its components are conjoined with Europe in various constellations in the works of David Hume, Adam Smith, Adam Ferguson, Henry Home Lord Kames, and William Robertson, among others. This essay discusses some of the better known, as well as lesser known, Scottish conjunctions of Europe and modernity. It attempts to pinpoint a unique Scottish perspective on the connection between European history, the progress of philosophy, and the rise of modernity.

Recent scholarship has dwelled in some detail on the Scottish attempt, which precedes the Enlightenment, to look beyond England to the European continent for intellectual, religious, and political sustenance.¹ The complexity of eighteenth-century Scottish-English relations, deeply felt in such portentous moments as the 1745 uprising and the militia debate, was further complicated for the major Enlightenment thinkers in Edinburgh and Glasgow because of their growing sense of admiration for English thought, science, and freedom. But

Europe, not merely England, was their chosen horizon for intellectual nurturing and interlocution. Here is one small and telling example: in 1756 Smith sent an interesting letter to “the authors” – today we would call them “the editors” – of the new periodical publication, pride of educated Scots, *The Edinburgh Review*. “I take upon me, in the name of several of your readers, to propose to you,” Smith wrote, “that you should enlarge your plan; that you should still continue to take notice, with the same humanity and candour, of every Scotch production that is tolerably decent. But that you should observe with regard to Europe in general the same plan which you followed with regard to England, examining such performances only, as, tho’ they may not go down to the remotest posterity, have yet a chance of being remembered for thirty or forty years to come.”²

If the Editors are worried about the extent of the required expansion, Smith is eager to lay their worry to rest; European intellectual innovation is important, he said, but it is not vast. “Nor will this task be so very laborious as at first one might be apt to imagine. For tho’ learning is cultivated in some degree in almost every part of Europe, it is in France and England only that it is cultivated with such success or reputation as to excite the attention of foreign nations”.³ Italy, the pioneer of modernity, is no longer a leading light, and Spain, “the country in which, after Italy, the first dawnings of modern genius appeared, it has been extinguished altogether”.⁴ As to France, Smith asserts it lags behind Italy, Germany, and of course England, in the “great discoveries” of natural philosophy. French thought had been mired by Cartesian metaphysics, “a fanciful, an ingenious and elegant, tho’ fallacious, system...”⁵ To be sure, modern European thought is required reading for informed Scottish audiences, even if its state-of-the-art accomplishments delineate a smaller map than its continental contours.

Smith’s offhand topography of intellectual endeavor can shed light on a major question: how did the Scottish Enlightenment delineate the geography of modern thought?

The meaning of ‘modern’, in the broad eighteenth-century discourse, can be placed within three overlapping spheres of meaning. First, ‘modern’ still existed

within its late Middle English sense, denoting “of present or recent times”. It derived from French *moderne* and late Latin *modernus*, going back to *modo*, meaning “just now”.⁶ The word was first recorded in English in 1585. Secondly, ‘modern’ is polemically juxtaposed against ‘ancient’, pointing to the range of novelties afforded by present-day cultures. This sphere of meaning can include differing value judgments on the ‘modern’, often referring to European, but at times also to non-European societies.⁷ Thirdly and most significantly, the concept of ‘modern’ is part of a groundbreaking analysis into the unique intellectual, political and commercial changes that has enabled Europe to break free from all past paradigms and move into an itinerary of progress all of its own. The Scottish Enlightenment was instrumental in creating this third sphere of meaning.⁸

In the first sense, ‘modern’ can serve as a mere era-indicator for ‘recent times’, as in Adam Ferguson’s discussion of India and China in his *Essay on the History of Civil Society* (1767): “The modern description of India is a repetition of the ancient, and the present state of China is derived from a distant antiquity, to which there is no parallel in the history of mankind. The succession of monarchs has been changed; but no revolutions have affected the state.”⁹ Thus, modern India amounts to present-day India, unchanged, un-evolved and un-revolutionized, by comparison with its ancient past.

The second sphere of meaning was punctuated by the famous debate between ancients and moderns. While Scottish thinkers did not invent ‘La querelle des anciens et des modernes’, taking their cue from Bernard de Fontenelle and his French protagonists, they pitched into the debate with gusto. [David Hume famously celebrated the demographic advantages of modern societies.](#)¹⁰ Scottish thinkers pondered the relative merits of ancient and modern *belles lettres*. While Adam Ferguson reflected on the relative merits of ancient and modern poetry, William Robertson and Henry Home, Lord Kames, among others, linked modern societies to the rise of politeness and manners, and suggested a unique European moment beginning in the medieval age of Chivalry. Robertson, in “*A View of the Progress of Society in Europe from the Subversion of the Roman Empire to the*

| *Beginning of the Sixteenth Century*” (1769), [saw](#) Europe’s modern breakthrough as the outcome of a revolution in manners; “sentiments more liberal and generous had begun to animate the nobles”, he wrote. “These were inspired by the spirit of chivalry, which... had a very serious influence in refining the manners of the European nations.... Perhaps the humanity which accompanies all the operations of war, the refinements of gallantry, and the point of honour, the three chief circumstances which distinguish modern from ancient manners, may be ascribed in a great measure to this institution... The sentiments which chivalry inspired, had a wonderful influence on manners and conduct during the twelfth, thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth centuries”.¹¹

| Kames too, in his *Sketches of the History of Man* (1778), [argued](#) that “Chivalry produced a single reformation in the manners of Europe. To what other cause can we so justly ascribe the point of honour, and that humanity in war, which characterize modern manners?”¹²

For Robertson, modernity was also constructed by “The progress of science, and the cultivation of literature”, which “had considerable effect in changing the manners of the European nations, and introducing that civility and refinement by which they are now distinguished”. Commercial progress, opened up by the Crusades and Mediterranean trade, “had considerable influence in polishing the manners of the European nations, and in establishing among them order, equal laws, and humanity”. Not least, commerce increased “intercourse between nations”, in particular between the south and north of Europe.¹³

But this sense of ‘modern’, despite its in-built acknowledgement of change and refinement, did not refer to Europe alone. In his *Sketches*, Kames discussed the separation of governmental powers as a fulcrum of modernity, but ascribed this innovation to an Asian kingdom that Ferguson, as we have just seen, as well as most of the other Scottish ethnologists, preferred to envisage as an immobile continuum from antiquity – ‘modern’ merely in our first sense, merely existing in present times. “The great aim in modern politics”, Kames wrote, “is, to split

government into the greatest number possible of departments, trusting nothing to genius. China affords such a government in perfection.”¹⁴

Kames did not dwell on the question whether China had been ‘modern’, in the split-department sense from ancient times; at any rate, he subscribed to the notion that some standards differentiating latter-day Europe from its own antiquity can be found in other parts of the world.

Arguably the most interesting contribution of the Scottish Enlightenment to the discourse of modernity belongs to the third sphere of meaning, where ‘modern’ meets ‘Europe’ and ‘philosophy’, determining the uniqueness of European thought, society and polity within the ‘modern moment’ of the 16-18th centuries. David Hume created this threefold interconnection, and Adam Smith topped it with an analysis of modern political economy. In parallel, Adam Ferguson struggled with the commercial merits and moral defects of the ‘modern nations of Europe’, dwelling on the ways in which modern Europeans philosophize.

Hume

In his famous essay, “Of the Populousness of Ancient Nations”, Hume set out to prove the superiority of modern societal structures – both domestic and political – and to provide evidence for the ensuing demographic advantage of modern nations over the ancient. “The chief difference between the domestic œconomy of the ancients and that of the moderns consists in the practice of slavery, which prevailed among the former, and which has been abolished for some centuries throughout the greater part of Europe”, he wrote. “[H]uman nature, in general, really enjoys more liberty at present, in the most arbitrary government of Europe, than it ever did during the most flourishing period of ancient times”.¹⁵ Petty European despots today may not afford their subject great liberty, but even such principalities are far freer than ancient societies: “so much is domestic slavery more cruel and oppressive than any civil subjection whatsoever”.¹⁶

Not only are domestic habits in modern times “rather superior” to the ancient. So are modern “political customs and institution”. Hume’s analysis offered his readers a carefully argued comparison between political structures ancient and modern, so as to “weigh their influence in retarding or forwarding the propagation of mankind”.¹⁷ Even though much of contemporary Europe is plagued by petty “absolute princes, who ruin their people by a mimicry of the greater monarchs”, and most of its countries are inferior to the ancient republics in “the love of civil liberty and of equality”, still modern societies enjoy “superior manners” both in war and at peace. Ancient victors were prone to “butcher” their rivals. “No form of process”, Hume writes, “no law, no trial, no pardon”.¹⁸

Modern superiority stands out in the areas of “Trade, manufactures, industry, were no where, in former ages, so flourishing as they are at present in Europe”.¹⁹ The rate of interest is consistently lower than it ever was in the heyday of the Roman Empire. Agriculture, “the species of industry chiefly requisite to the subsistence of multitudes”, may have flourished in Greece and Rome, but it is not likely to “subsist alone” “in any great extent of country, and for any great tract of time”; only modern Europe has managed “to excite other kinds of industry, and thereby afford the labourer a ready market for his commodities, and a return of such goods as may contribute to his pleasure and enjoyment. This method is infallible and universal; and, as it prevails more in modern government than in the ancient, it affords a presumption of the superior populousness of the former”.²⁰

Hume’s “Populousness” is such a popular text for scholarly analyses of his view of modernity, that other important aspects of his thought on the matter are left relatively in the shade. Of these, I would like to single out the chapter “Of the Different Species of Philosophy” in *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*. This is not an obvious place to look, since the work is neither about Europe nor about modernity as such. But it includes one of Hume’s most important statements on both.

There are two ways, says Hume, to do moral philosophy. One, which he names “the easy and obvious philosophy”²¹, focuses on man’s active nature and actively promotes virtue through examples. Such philosophers “paint [virtue] in the most amiable colours”²², providing “polite letters”²³, namely attractive and easily digestible texts. The second kind of philosophy, which is “profound”, which is “accurate and abstruse”²⁴, seeks the deep structure, the “original principles”, that control our mechanisms of moral approval and blame. The writing of such philosophers is not popular in any sense. Hume thought that Addison belonged to the first type and Locke to the second. His prophecy on these thinkers is telling: “And Addison, perhaps, will be read with pleasure, when Locke shall be entirely forgotten”.²⁵ Was Hume humbly insinuating that he too would vanish from memory, being a deep-end philosopher of the “abstruse” kind?

But the two types of philosophy need not exclude or alienate one another; just as Man is a reasonable as well as a social being, and Nature seems to recommend both action and reflection as “a mixed kind of life... most suitable to the human race”, “profound philosophy” should be communicative and conducive to everyday experience: “Be a philosopher; but, amidst all your philosophy, be still a man.” Metaphysics should nurture “polite letters”, just the way the somber science of anatomy feeds the beauty of painting and sculpture.²⁶

Furthermore, “the genius of philosophy, if carefully cultivated by several, must gradually diffuse itself throughout the whole society, and bestow a similar correctness on every art and calling”.²⁷ There is a progressive dissemination of deep-end, accurate knowledge that eventually raises the whole of society, the spectrum of cultural output, into a higher level of performance and creativity.

In sum, philosophy is bound to serve active life “in every art or profession”. This is part of Hume’s famous mission to make metaphysics into a full-fledged science. “The politician will acquire greater foresight and subtlety, in the subdividing and balancing of power; the lawyer more method and finer principles in his reasonings; and the general more regularity I this discipline, and more caution in his plans and operations”.²⁸

Note the term ‘politician’, a word more often used in eighteenth-century Scottish discourse for political theorists²⁹, but here evidently pertaining to the political man of action. Unlike the lawyer and the general, Hume is not content with allotting the politician better intellectual skills, but specifically mentions “the subdividing and balancing of power” as a practical accomplishment. The following sentence makes the modern nature of this accomplishment clear: “The stability of modern governments above the ancient, and the accuracy of modern philosophy, have improved, and probably will still improve, by similar gradations”.³⁰

This is a key sentence, because it patently interlinks modern philosophy with government – subdivided, balanced, and stable. Political progress is openly linked to philosophical progress. The rising profundity and precision of the philosophers’ efforts affects governmental structures and practices, in a spillover effect that was a favorite theme with Scottish philosophers. It is this notion of affective intellectual progress that made Hume single out Europe as the cradle of this philosophy-driven, across-the-board progress in human affairs.

But what about Kames’ China? Why can’t China’s administration, of legendary stability, with its own version of separation of powers, fit into Hume’s matrix of modern governments, as it did for Kames?

The answer to this question leads directly into the more unique aspects of Scottish discourse of modernity. Unlike such French sinophiles as Voltaire, who ascribed what he saw as Chinese political serenity and religious toleration to age-old Confucian wisdom³¹; and unlike the economist François Quesnay who deemed China a laudable constitutional monarchy³²; Hume’s emphasis on the progressive nature of modern philosophy signals the road to a theory of European uniqueness. It is modern Europe, and no other part of the globe, that has juxtaposed ‘profound’ theory with ‘active’ achievement. It is modern Europe that has built a pipeline streamlining metaphysical innovation into practical

improvement in all departments of life. It is modern Europe that found the way, in Hume's precise Enlightenment metaphor, "to bring light from obscurity".³³

The progressive nature of philosophy as well as politics, law, and all other arts and professions is crucial to Hume's understanding of modern times. So is the future-orientation of his analysis, expressing the hope "that the industry, good fortune, or improved sagacity of succeeding generations may reach discoveries unknown to former ages." The basic condition for such progress is "accurate and just reasoning", the bridge between "metaphysical jargon" and "popular superstition".³⁴ Hume's own science of the human mind is one such ambitious, future-oriented project.

It is here, more than in his open discussions of modern Europe, that Hume sets up the deep context of Europe's inimitable climb into modernity, its unmatched creativity: philosophy itself is being constantly transformed and upgraded. Unlike the timeless and unchanging Confucianism applauded by many of Hume's contemporaries, mainly the French, Hume linked modernity to the constantly evolving nature of European. And philosophy feeds all other sciences, while at the same time aiming, in the capable hands of Hume himself, to become a science in the fullest post-Newtonian sense of the term.

China will shortly be discussed again as a litmus test for notions of modernity, but at this stage it is worth mentioning that Jean Jacques Rousseau, no lover of the modern, regarded China as an example for the evil inherent in over-sophistication and exaggerated cultural refinement. Too much in the way of arts and sciences, Rousseau asserted, is harmful to society.³⁵

Smith

For Adam Smith, the advantage of moderns over ancients resides neither in poetry, nor in geometry, where the ancients too excelled. The moderns are vastly superior in two crucial sciences: physics and politics. The former needed a long

process of observation and experiment, while the latter made its leap after the invention of printing. The point is astutely made in the biographical sketch by Dugald Stewart, titled "Account of the Life and Writings of Adam Smith, LL.D." of 1793. "[T]he means of communication afforded by the press have, in the course of two centuries, accelerated the progress of the human mind, far beyond what the most sanguine hopes of our predecessors could have imagined", wrote Stewart of Smith's view of the modern advantage. Thus, "In prosecuting the science of politics, [...] little assistance is to be derived from the speculations of ancient philosophers... It was reserved for modern times to investigate those universal principles of justice and of expediency, which ought, under every form of government, to regulate the social order."³⁶

Akin to Hume, Smith thus derived the cumulative advantages of modernity from the ascending sophistication of philosophy, primarily political philosophy. Stewart described Smith's notion of modern economy thus:

The branch of legislation which Mr. Smith has made choice of as the subject of his work, naturally leads me to remark a very striking contrast between the spirit of ancient and of modern policy in respect to the *Wealth of Nations*. The great object of the former was to counteract the love of money and a taste for luxury, by positive institutions; and to maintain in the great body of the people, habits of frugality, and a severity of manners. The decline of states is uniformly ascribed by the philosophers and historians, both of Greece and Rome, to the influence of riches on national character; and the laws of Lycurgus, which, during a course of ages, banished the precious metals from Sparta, are proposed by many of them as the most perfect model of legislation devised by human wisdom. How opposite to this is the doctrine of modern politicians! Far from considering poverty as an advantage to a state, their great aim is to open new sources of national opulence, and to animate the activity of all classes of the people, by a taste for the comforts and accommodations of life.

One principal cause of [the] difference between the spirit of ancient and of modern policy, may be found in the difference between the sources of national wealth in ancient and in modern times. In ages when commerce and manufactures were yet in their infancy, and among states constituted like most of the ancient republics, a sudden influx of riches from abroad was justly dreaded as an evil, alarming to the morals, to the industry, and to the freedom of a people. So different, however, is the case at present, that the most wealthy nations are those where the people are the most laborious, and where they enjoy the greatest degree of liberty. Nay, it was the general diffusion of wealth among the lower orders of men, which first gave birth to the spirit of independence in modern Europe, and which has produced under some of its governments, and especially under our own, a more equal diffusion of freedom and of happiness than took place under the most celebrated constitutions of antiquity.

What the circumstances are, which, in modern Europe, have contributed to disturb this order of nature, and, in particular, to encourage the industry of towns, at the expence of that of the country, Mr. Smith has investigated with great ingenuity; and in such a manner, as to throw much new light on the history of that state of society which prevails in this quarter of the globe.³⁷

Stewart goes on to paraphrase Smith's concept of unintended consequences, shared by Hume and Ferguson. The rise of towns, manufacture and commerce in Europe were "in their first origin, the natural and the unavoidable result of the peculiar situation of mankind during a certain period;" and they "took their rise, not from any general scheme of policy, but from the private interests and prejudices of particular orders of men."³⁸ But philosophy, that is, in this case, economic theory, must eventually catch up with the social developments and offer a new analysis and an updated set of prescriptions to policy-makers and governments. "The state of society, however, which at first arose from a singular combination of accidents, has been prolonged much beyond its natural period, by a false system of political economy, propagated by merchants and manufacturers[...]"³⁹

Like Hume, Smith too offered – as Stewart saw it - a new and far improved philosophical basis for modernity. The interesting point, so clearly brought out in Stewart’s account of Smith, is that modernity is not only about socio-economic sea-changes, but also about the necessity of philosophical realignment to match the those changes and to lead mankind forward.

The distinctly European nature of modern urbanization, manufacture and commerce, in Smith’s thought, has been previously explored by voluminous Smith scholarship. Here I would like to return briefly to our Chinese-European axis. French political economists such as Pierre Poivre, in his influential *Voyages d’un philosophe* (1768), took China as an example of the central role of agriculture as the foundation of national prosperity. Poivre’s followers, the physiocrats, and in particular the aforementioned Quesnay, based their similar view of the centrality of farming on the Chinese model. Agriculture, stable administration and the arts: this was China’s time-honored grandeur in the eyes of its European Enlightenment admirers, underscored by the widespread admiration for Confucius (who was introduced to Europe initially from Philippe Couplet’s *Confucius sinarum philosophus* of 1687). We should nevertheless note that other French thinkers, notably Diderot in his article ‘Chinois’ in the *Encyclopedie*, were far less enthralled by Confucianism and not apt to admire China, certainly not (as Diderot said) as long as Europe’s level of acquaintance with it is so very meager.⁴⁰

Smith, as we know well, moved against the grain of the physiocratic agriculturalist creed. On China, too, his take was different from theirs. “China”, he admits in the *Wealth of Nations*, “has been long one of the richest, that is, one of the most fertile, best cultivated, most industrious, and most populous, countries in the world. It seems, however, to have been long stationary”.⁴¹ Stagnation can be measured by comparing Marco Polo’s account of China’s economy and demography, “almost in the same terms in which they are described by travellers in the present times”.⁴² China has stagnated upon reaching the full potential of its system, and “The poverty of the lower ranks of people in China far surpasses that of the most beggarly nations in Europe”.⁴³

Smith thus took Hume's program of modernity into the realm of economic analysis, matching the two focal points of Hume's analysis: that progressive modernity is, so far, a European project; and that philosophy has evolved, and must keep evolving, in order to trace, study and promote this progress.

Did either Hume or Smith expect the march of modernity to transcend Europe? How strong was their adherence to Montesquieu's geo-political fatalism? Interestingly, most members of the Scottish Enlightenment discussed progress, in their favorite terminology of 'advance' and 'improvement', without directly applying their imagination to 'the future', as such. The word itself is not very common in their vocabulary. They did not preempt the meta-historical interest in ages to come that occupied their near-contemporaries and avid readers in Germany, Herder, Kant, and Hegel.⁴⁴

Against this background we should understand the unique connection of 'modern' with 'Europe' that permeates their writings. 'Modern', especially in the third and sophisticated sense I have delineated, could not be conceived, imagined, or hyperboled into non-European cultures. If new philosophy, and especially political philosophy, is a fundamental factor of modernity, even highly refined non-European nations could not viably be seen as matching Europe, or even beginning to compete. Confucius cannot vie with Locke, and there is no one to match Galileo or Newton.

Ferguson

Further evidence of the unique role Scottish analysis gave Europe in its enquiry into modernity is provided by Adam Ferguson, who delivered the most skeptic of Scottish accounts of the modern age.⁴⁵ A tireless ethnographer, Ferguson famously expressed admiration and attached moral significance to primitive and ancient cultures. His interest in non-European cultures, past and contemporary, was exceptionally keen, and often exempt of the Enlightenment focus on Europe and of its self-gazing smugness.

By the same token, Ferguson was both fascinated and concerned about modernity. While fellow historians such as his countryman William Robertson and his avid Swiss reader Isaak Iselin considered Modern Europe enlightened beyond the risk of regression, Ferguson deemed it in very real danger of corruption, despotism, and retreat to barbarism.⁴⁶ Public spirit, he wrote, was virtually non-existent “in too many nations of Europe”.⁴⁷ Ferguson, like his Scottish colleagues, invariably linked modernity to Europe, but he wanted to highlight its ills as well as its benefits.

Ferguson did not share Hume’s faith in Europe’s ongoing, unstoppable prosperity, nor did he admire the way contemporary philosophy feeds material culture. On the contrary: Europe of his day was steeped, he claimed, in futile intellectualism. “It is peculiar to modern Europe,” he wrote, “to rest so much of the human character on what may be learned in retirement, and from the information of books.”⁴⁸

Perhaps this brand of Euro-scepticism, that Ferguson may have shared with Vico but with very few other contemporaneous thinkers, led to an interesting future prophecy of his, a statement transcending Eurocentric limits and quite unusual in Enlightenment thought:

“The tents of the wild Arabs are even now pitched among the ruins of magnificent cities; and the waste fields which border on Palestine and Syria, are perhaps become again the nursery of infant nations. The chieftain of an Arab tribe, like the founder of Rome, may have already fixed the roots of a plan that is to flourish in some future period, or laid the foundation of a fabric, that will attain to its grandeur in some distant age”.⁴⁹

Conclusion

Scotland was deemed “the rudest, perhaps, of all European Nations’ in Enlightenment eyes”⁵⁰, and because its thinkers evidently experienced a sharp

sense of provinciality, their fascination with Europe's process of modernization went farther than that of other Enlightenments. Although Vico, Voltaire, Montesquieu, and Lessing explored the modern age in their disparate ways, it is primarily Scottish thinkers that developed a lexicon of modernity that correlates to the third sphere of meaning suggested in this essay: a conjuncture of Europe's uniqueness and a novel political philosophy. While Robertson and Kames, alongside Hume, argued for a historical interdependence of Europe and modernity, and Smith sharpened the economic aspect of this interdependence, Ferguson cast some doubt both on the irreversible nature of modernity within Europe, and on the European monopoly on modernity. Both these doubts, of course, eventually came to typify modernity itself. Thus, the spectrum of the Scottish Enlightenment's engagement with its most crucial subject matter already displays much of the inner tension it later acquired.

¹ .Roger Emerson, "The Contexts of the Scottish Enlightenment", in Alexander Broadie (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Scottish Enlightenment*, Cambridge: Cambridge

² . Adam Smith, "A Letter to the Authors of the Edinburgh Review", *The Edinburgh Review* (1755), 121-122.

³ . Ibid., 122.

⁴ . Ibid.

⁵ . Ibid., 123.

⁶ . Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*, Revised Edition, New York: Oxford University Press, 1983, pp. 208-209; Oxford English Dictionary Online, 'Modern', <http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/modern>.

⁷ . Williams, *ibid.* Hans Baron, "The *Querelle* of the Ancients and the Moderns As a Problem for Renaissance Scholarship", *Journal of the History of Ideas* 20 (1959), pp. 3-22.

⁸ . [The case is put most powerfully by Arthur Herman, *How the Scots Invented the Modern World*, New York: Random House, 2001. On Scotland's pioneering modernity see Nicholas Phillipson, "'The Scottish Enlightenment', in Roy Porter and Mikulas Mikulas Teich, \(eds.\), *The Enlightenment in National Context*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981, 19-40.](#)

⁹ . Adam Ferguson, *An Essay on the History of Civil Society*, edited with an introduction by Fania Oz-Salzberger, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995, 109.

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- 10 . Bernard le Bovier de Fontenelle, *Digression sur les Anciens et les Modernes*, 1688. David Hume, "Of the Populousness of Ancient Nations", in: Hume, *Selected Essays*, ed. Stephen Copley and Andrew Edgar, New York: Oxford University Press, 2008.
- 11 . [William Robertson, *History of the Reign of the Emperor Charles V: With a View of the Progress of Society in Europe From the Subversion of the Roman Empire, to the Beginning of the Sixteenth Century*, London: Harper, 1829, 37.](#)
- 12 . [Henry Home, *Lord Kames, Sketches of the History of Man, Considerably enlarged by the last additions and corrections of the author, edited and with an Introduction by James A. Harris*, Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2007, Vol. 2, Sketch vi.](#)
- 13 . Robertson, [History of the Reign, 72, 76, 77.](#)
- 14 . Kames, *Sketches*, Vol. 2, Sketch ix.
- 15 . Hume, *Populousness*, 226 and 227.
- 16 . *Ibid*, 227.
- 17 . *Ibid.*, 237.
- 18 . *Ibid.*, 242.
- 19 . *Ibid*, 248.
- 20 . *Ibid.*, 250.
- 21 . David Hume, *An Enquiry concerning Human Understanding and Other Writings*, ed. Stephen Buckle, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007, 4.
- 22 . *Ibid*, 3.
- 23 . *Ibid*, 5 and 7.
- 24 . *Ibid.*, 4 and 7.
- 25 . *Ibid.*, 5.
- 26 . *Ibid.*, 6.
- 27 . *Ibid.*, 7-8.
- 28 . *Ibid.*, 8.
- 29 . Cf. Fania Oz-Salzberger, "The Political Theory of the Scottish Enlightenment", in: Alexander Broadie (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Scottish Enlightenment*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003, 157-177, esp. 160-162.
- 30 . Hume, *Enquiry*, 8.
- 31 . François-Marie Arouet de Voltaire, "De la Chine", *Dictionnaire Philosophique* [1764], Paris: Garnier, 1967. Cf. Basil Guy, "The French Images of China Before and After Voltaire", *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century*, 21 (1963), 468.
- 32 . François Quesnay, *Le despotisme de la Chine*, Paris 1767. Anthony Pagden, "The Immutability of China: Orientalism and Occidentalism in the Enlightenment", in: Larry Wolff and Marco Cipolloni (eds.), *The Anthropology of the Enlightenment*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007, 50-64.
- 33 . Hume, *Enquiry*, 8.
- 34 . *Ibid.*, 9.
- 35 . Barbara Widenor Maggs, "China", in: Alan Charles Kors (ed.), *Encyclopedia of the Enlightenment*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003, Vol. 1, 232-234.
- 36 . *Account of the Life and Writings of Adam Smith, LL.D. From the Transactions of the Royal Society of Edinburgh*. Read by Mr [Dugald] Stewart on January 21, and March 18, 1793. *Transactions of the Royal Society of Edinburgh*, vol. 3, part 1, Edinburgh, 1794, 108.
- 37 . *Ibid.*, 115-116.
- 38 . *Ibid.*, 116.
- 39 . *Ibid.*
- 40 . Wigemar Maggs, 'China'; Jonathan Israel, *Democratic Enlightenment: Philosophy, Revolution, and Human Rights, 1750-1790*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011, 558-564.

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- ⁴¹ . Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, ed. R. H. Campbell and A. S. Skinner, Glasgow Edition of the Works and Correspondence of Adam Smith, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976, Book I, Chapter VIII, 86.
- ⁴² . *Ibid.*
- ⁴³ . *Ibid.*
- ⁴⁴ . Cf. Fania Oz-Salzberger, *Translating the Enlightenment: Scottish Civic Discourse in Eighteenth-Century Germany*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995, chs. 1-2.
- ⁴⁵ . Ferguson's unique voice in the Scottish Enlightenment has been explored by David Kettler, *The Social and Political Thought of Adam Ferguson*, Columbus: Ohio State Univ. Press, 1965; Duncan Forbes, 'Introduction', in: Adam Ferguson, *An Essay on the History of Civil Society*, ed. Duncan Forbes, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1966; Oz-Salzberger, *Translating*; Lisa Hill, *The Passionate Society: The Social, Political and Moral Thought of Adam Ferguson*, Berlin/New York: Springer, 2006.
- ⁴⁶ . Ferguson, *Essay*, ed. Oz-Salzberger, pts. IV-V. Cf. Kettler, *Social and Political Thought*, 202-206; Oz-Salzberger, *Political Theory*.
- ⁴⁷ . Ferguson, *Essay*, 57.
- ⁴⁸ . *Ibid.*, 33.
- ⁴⁹ . *Ibid.*, 108.
- ⁵⁰ . Murray G.H. Pittock, "Historiography", in: Broadie (ed.), *Companion*, 264, quoting William Robertson.