

剑桥政治思想史原著系列（影印本）

CAMBRIDGE TEXTS IN THE HISTORY OF POLITICAL THOUGHT

市民社会史

An Essay on the History of Civil Society

Ferguson

弗格森

Edited by

FANIA

OZ-SALZBERGER

中国政法大学出版社

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ADAM FERGUSON

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剑桥政治思想史原著系列

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在政治理论领域，“剑桥政治思想史原著系列”作为主要的学生教科丛书，如今已牢固确立了其地位。本丛书旨在使学生能够获得从古希腊到 20 世纪初期西方政治思想史方面所有最为重要的原著。它囊括了所有著名的经典原著，但与此同时，它又扩展了传统的评价尺度，以便能够纳入范围广泛、不那么出名的作品。而在此之前，这些作品中有许多从未有过现代英文版本可资利用。只要可能，所选原著都会以完整而不删节的形式出版，其中的译作则是专门为本丛书的目的而安排。每一本书都有一个评论性的导言，加上历史年表、生平梗概、进一步阅读指南，以及必要的词汇表和原文注解。本丛书的最终目的是，为西方政治思想的整个发展脉络提供一个清晰的轮廓。

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CAMBRIDGE TEXTS IN THE HISTORY OF POLITICAL THOUGHT

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Introduction

Adam Ferguson was born in 1723 in the village of Logierait, Perthshire, on the border between the Scottish lowlands and highlands. His father was a Presbyterian minister, his mother a distant relation of the dukes of Argyll. The young Adam excelled in Greek and Latin and became an avid reader of the ancient authors. Like other contributors to the Scottish Enlightenment, his thought was shaped by his Presbyterian background and classical education; but what made him an unusual Enlightenment thinker was his acquaintance with the Gaelic-speaking society of the highlands. The first-hand and early encounter with both 'raw' clansmen and 'polished', anglicized lowlanders was a formative experience in his life.

At the age of sixteen Ferguson went to the University of St Andrews. After taking his MA degree in 1742 he began preparing himself for the ministry and moved to the University of Edinburgh. There he joined a circle of young divinity students who were similarly on their way to becoming clergymen, scholars and men of letters. Among them were the future preacher and professor, Hugh Blair, the future playwright, John Home, and the future historian and principal of the University of Edinburgh, William Robertson. These men were to become part of the Edinburgh kernel of the Scottish Enlightenment.

Edinburgh in the early 1740s was a place of tension between rival political powers and competing ideas of national identity. Scotland had joined England in a Union of Parliaments in 1707, forming the United Kingdom of Great Britain. The Union agreement, which dissolved the Edinburgh parliament, terminated Scotland's long

history of political independence. It also guaranteed Scottish acceptance of the Act of Settlement (1701), which conferred the English and Scottish crowns on the Protestant Elector of Hanover, displacing the House of Stuart whose main branch had become Catholic. The first four decades of the Union were marked by mounting Scottish discontent, often channelled into support for the exiled Stuart dynasty. Jacobitism, the attempt to rally round the heirs of the dethroned James VII and II, was a blend of political and religious loyalties with personal hopes and material ambitions. It was spurred by widespread dislike of English arrogance and for the methods, perfected by Walpole, of governing Scotland from London by remote-controlled 'management'. With all its stirring rhetoric of political freedom, the parliamentary monarchy which emerged from the Glorious Revolution could seem a remote and abstract structure from the Scottish perspective.

A long-brewing disquiet in the highlands and a new spell of hostility between Britain and France sparked the final and most spectacular Jacobite attempt to seize power. In August 1745, propelled by reckless bravado, personal charisma, promises of French support, and false hopes of mass mobilization in Britain, the 'Young Pretender' Prince Charles Edward Stuart landed in western Scotland and launched a rebellion. His final defeat at the battle of Culloden came only eight months later. It was preceded, however, by a march of his hastily assembled army of highlanders into an ambivalent and flustered Edinburgh.

One of the reasons for the Jacobite failure was that the majority of Scots, most clearly in the lowlands, had a great deal to lose from the overturning of the political status quo. They were essentially satisfied with the Union, and took at face value its promises of economic prosperity, political liberty and cultural sophistication. Educated lowlanders, in particular, were proud of their membership of the British state. In their view, the Glorious Revolution had created a free and virtuous polity unlike any other in Europe; the Act of Settlement had ensured its continuation, and the Union of Parliaments had allowed Scotland to join it. Toward the middle of the eighteenth century, the much-heralded economic benefits of the Union were beginning to emerge in the form of growing manufacture and accelerated trade with Britain's colonies. Men like Ferguson and his friends, Presbyterians and Whigs by education and con-

viction, had little or no sympathy with the exiled Stuarts. Still less did they aspire to the traditional, autocratic, Continental-style monarchy associated with the Jacobite programme.

Although Jacobitism was not a political option for the likes of Ferguson, some of its emotional triggers were deeply felt even by its opponents. Scotland was a proud and ancient monarchy which had become – by the agreement of its own élite – a political periphery. Its court and royal family had, indeed, moved to London with the Union of Crowns in 1603, but political independence ceased with the Union of Parliaments of 1707, when Scotland joined England to create a new British state. By that time there was a great deal to gain from entering the Empire, and loss of political autonomy was mainly symbolic. The problem, and challenge, for the heirs to the Union was to sustain Scotland's unique traditions and cultural resources within Great Britain, in a fast-changing economic reality, and in a language fit for London and purged of Scotticisms.

The '45' was, for many educated lowlanders, a passing episode of political anachronism. Future generations were to treat it as the epic final throes of a lost Gaelic world, the subject matter of nostalgic narration epitomized by the novels of Walter Scott. By contrast, the thinkers of the Scottish Enlightenment, many of whom had witnessed the upheaval first hand and from a Hanoverian viewpoint, developed a more complex view of Gaeldom and Jacobitism. These themes found their way into their universal models of mankind's advance and into their explorations of social and political variety. And yet, with all their scientific detachment, the Enlightenment authors were not exempt from the particular cultural sensitivity which haunted post-Union Scotland.

Ferguson himself was not in Edinburgh during Charles Edward Stuart's stormy sojourn. Unlike his friends, he made an early turn into the world of affairs. He reportedly acted for a while as private secretary to Lord Milton, who managed the affairs of the powerful Scottish statesman, the Earl of Islay. Proceeding with his studies, Ferguson was soon offered a speeded ordination and a military post. He was to serve as deputy chaplain to the Black Watch, a regiment of highlanders recently formed and ready to join the British forces in Flanders. With Jacobitism rife in the highlands, Gaelic-speaking officers of unfaltering Hanoverian loyalty were in urgent demand. It is highly questionable whether Ferguson took up his post in time,

as some biographers tell us, to participate in the battle of Fontenoy in Flanders, valiantly wielding his sword against the triumphant French troops. At any rate he evidently did well, rising to the post of principal chaplain in 1746 and remaining in service for nine years.

Ferguson thus began his adult life as a soldier and as something of an ideologue. He was, as was expected of him, a politically minded preacher. One of his sermons in Gaelic was so warm in its denunciation of the House of Stuart, the Pope, and France, that a Scottish duchess, the mother of his commander, had it translated into English and published at her expense. Yet, as some of his contemporaries testified, Ferguson felt more at home on the battlefield than in the pulpit. He remained in the British army for some nine years, and was proud throughout his life of his military experience: not only did it help him to write a history of Rome, it also touched a deep chord in his self-image as a man and a Scotsman. More than any other thinker of the Scottish Enlightenment, Ferguson was to insist on military valour as a cornerstone of civic virtue.

Ferguson left both army and church ministry in 1754, while retaining both his military commission (until 1757) and his ordination (he acted as a Kirk elder during the 1760s, and possibly later). The cessation of active service was perhaps due to disappointment of his hopes of obtaining a clerical 'living' from his benefactor, the Duke of Atholl. Significantly, he did not return to Scotland right away, but remained on the Continent for over a year longer. We are told that he acted as tutor to a Scottish law student, identified only as 'Mr Gordon', who studied first at the Dutch university of Groningen and then at Leipzig. The Saxon nobility, as a letter to Adam Smith conveys, struck Ferguson as pompous and boorish; not so his landlord Eléazar de Mauvillon, a Protestant convert and French translator of Hume's *Political Discourses*. In his cosmopolitan home, Mauvillon gave his Scottish lodgers a glimpse into the world of the European Enlightenment.

When Ferguson returned to Edinburgh in 1756, his own biography already reflected some of the encounters and contrasts which inspired the Scottish brand of Enlightenment. The most obvious was the unresolved tension between Scots and Scots. In the aftermath of the '45 the highlands were paying a terrible price for the Jacobite misadventure and for years of governmental neglect, while

lowland Scotland was embarked on a route of economic growth and cultural ferment. The philosophers David Hume and Adam Smith, Ferguson's friends, were creating a new theory of progress based on good laws, commerce and social refinement. Ferguson's view was more ambivalent: in the highlands he found a living Scottish tradition of military might and communal bonds. While for many educated Scots the highlander was an alien 'other', an embarrassing remnant of a bygone age, Ferguson's experience began to suggest that the rude clans had effectively preserved values which modern society had, to its detriment, lost.

A different sort of 'other' facing the Scots were the English – the land, the people and to some extent even their language. During the 1750s and 1760s the Edinburgh literati found several ways to place a Scottish bid for equal standing, and creative input, within English culture and the British state. Ferguson was a central figure in the Select Society, a debating club of noblemen and scholars founded in 1754, which discussed current affairs and ideas. Along with the moderate divines William Robertson, Alexander Carlyle and Hugh Blair, he defied Presbyterian traditionalists by supporting the theatre production of *Douglas*, a play written by their friend the Reverend John Home in 1756. Ferguson wrote a pamphlet in its defence, gently evoking his countrymen's fear of cultural inferiority. The theatre, he argued, can teach virtue better than any other public amusement; and it has always been present 'in every civilized and polished nation' (*The Morality of Stage Plays Seriously Considered*, Edinburgh, 1757, p. 22). The *Douglas* affair had a mixed outcome: religious bigotry was successfully combated, but the complex of provincialism held sway; Home's play, contrary to the hopes of its promoters, did not foretell the rise of a Scottish Shakespeare.

Literary ambition next focused on the young poet James Macpherson and his alleged translation of the poetry of a mythical Celtic bard, Ossian. Macpherson's *Fragments of Ancient Poetry Collected in the Highlands of Scotland* were published in 1760, with a preface by Hugh Blair. With the publication of *Fingal* (1761) and *Temora* (1763), the Edinburgh literati hoped that they were presenting the world with a Scottish Homer. The soft elegiac tone of the Ossianic poetry had a true and timely ring in the age of sensibility and refinement, and the poems were well received. Here, too, Ferguson was a key figure: his Gaelic background lent credibility to the pro-

ject, and he was later forced into an awkward and defensive exchange with the English collector of ancient poetry, Thomas Percy, one of the first critics to accuse Macpherson of fraud.

These cultural skirmishes lent fervour to Ferguson's most cherished cause, the Scottish militia. For many Scots the creation of a citizen militia, which parliament made legally impossible after the Jacobite rebellion of 1745, was not only a question of effective defence against what seemed an impending French menace, but also a matter of asserting Scotland's loyalty and her standing within the political union. Yet English suspicion of dormant Jacobitism proved too strong: the militia acts passed in parliament in 1757, and again during the American war, pointedly ignored the Scots.

Ferguson was a central figure in the militia agitation. He founded, and probably named, the 'Poker Club', which was established in 1762 to 'stir up' the militia issue. His pamphlet, *Reflections Previous to the Establishment of a Militia* (1756), focused the problems which occupied his Scottish contemporaries and run through his own later works: is economic strength compatible with traditional public virtue? Can a nation, in his words, 'mix military spirit and commercial policy'? Can it afford not to combine the two? The militia campaign sharpened the distinct Scottish concern with the compatibility of the social quests for wealth and for virtue. It failed as a political cause; but, largely thanks to Ferguson's work, this was an exceptionally fruitful failure.

Such local exercises in cultural politics would have been of little significance had they not been anchored in deeper philosophical ground. The confrontations of lowlands Scots with what they conceived as Gaelic traditions and with English modernity were conducted in the broad context of the European Enlightenment, to which Scotland contributed a distinct national voice. For literate Scots, continental Europe did not lie 'beyond' England: it was, in some senses, closer to home than England. Scotland had a long tradition of special ties to the Continent, both political and intellectual. The 'Auld Alliance' with France and the Calvinist ties and long-standing links with universities in Germany and the Netherlands made Scottish scholars especially attentive to the intellectual developments in northern Europe.

The European contexts suggest that the distinctly 'Scottish' element in the Scottish Enlightenment was not an indigenous cul-

tural tradition (of the sort that inspired Burns' ballads and Scott's historical novels), but rather a recurring sense of intellectual urgency. There was a powerful motivation to create a feasible philosophy for the new Scotland, but the materials for this philosophy were by no means indigenous: they came from the political thought of classical antiquity, the modern tradition of Natural Law, and the European literature of travel and ethnography. The main concern of Lord Kames, John Millar, Robertson and Ferguson, as historians and theorists of society, was to create categories for the explanation of material, social and economic progress. The 'rude' highlands could be fitted into a stadial account of civil society, but so could contemporary Great Britain: no historical stage was less 'natural' than the other, and Scotland's entrance into the Union could be understood in terms of civil and economic advance. The sociological insight gleaned from a study of the highlands was no less crucial for the identity of an educated dweller of Edinburgh than the poetry of Ossian.

Scottish thinkers were impressed by the modern theory of Natural Law expounded in the works of Hugo Grotius and Samuel Pufendorf. Most effective was the latter's account of the emergence of property as a key social institution, and his theory of economic progress from primitive communities to sophisticated commercial societies. The development of legal and political systems, Pufendorf argued, was informed by patterns of production and trade. Pufendorf's stadial theory of human advance was taken up not only by the Scottish jurists, but also by Scottish historians and theorists of society. It served as the backbone for their narrative of progress in law, politics and the arts. Technological sophistication and commercial activity, these thinkers pointed out, were defining features of modern society.

This concept of progress was enriched by the works of Montesquieu, whose direct impact on Hume, Smith and Ferguson was of vital importance. Montesquieu contributed to Scottish theorists not just his typology of governments, but also a powerful justification for a modern type of political freedom. Montesquieu's novel concept of freedom was developed in parts of his *Persian Letters* (1721) and *Spirit of the Laws* (1748). The freedom which rests on economic progress, social refinement and a well-balanced constitution, he argued, could ultimately replace the freedom of the classical repub-

lic, whose chief resource was its virtuous citizen-soldiers. It is on this point that Ferguson's famous tribute – 'when I recollect what the President Montesquieu has written, I am at a loss to tell, why I should treat of human affairs' (p. 66) – should be taken with a grain of salt. Ferguson, unlike Hume and Smith, did not follow the French mentor all the way in trusting the structural firmness of the modern, commercial state.

The idea of the modern polity as a society resting on solid political institutions, freedom from governmental encroachment, and individual accumulation of wealth, acquired further coherence from another source. Bernard Mandeville's *Fable of the Bees* (1714) suggested an appealing type of historical causality, one which could explain why self-interested actions of private individuals, bent on accumulating wealth, could amount to increasing comfort and liberty in the public sphere. Moreover, it provided a justification for the replacement of political virtue with time-tested institutions. Both the growth of these institutions and the beneficial outcome of individual selfishness could be seen as the fruit of subtle historical mechanisms. Political and economic progress was grasped as an accumulation of the unintended consequences of numerous human actions: that, for a modern mind, was part of its beauty.

The unique relevance of this set of ideas for post-Union Scotland was promptly recognized by the Scottish thinkers. They regarded themselves as members of a modern society well placed to experiment with a new kind of commercial and constitutional liberty. Smith, in particular, developed a theory of progress based on his country's gain in economic improvement at the price of sovereignty. In Hume's masterly hands the new political approach sparkled with scientific certainty: 'So great is the force of laws, and of particular forms of government', he wrote, 'and so little dependence they have on the humours and tempers of men, that consequences almost as general and certain may sometimes be deduced from them, as any which the mathematical sciences afford us' ('That Politics may be reduced to a Science', 1741).

This stance signalled a departure from an older concept of political freedom, stemming from the Renaissance revival of classical republicanism. The older concept rested on an active citizenship in a closely knit political community. It was modelled on the ancient Romans, and inspired especially by Cicero and the Stoic school.

The great early modernizer of classical republicanism was the Florentine Machiavelli in his *Discourses on the First Ten Books of Titus Livius*, completed in 1519. In the seventeenth century, as J. G. A. Pocock has shown, Machiavelli's ideas were brought to bear on English politics by several writers, primarily James Harrington. The civic tradition challenged monarchical autocracy in its insistence on the participation of public-spirited, property-owning citizens in the defence and government of their country. This set of ideas proved especially relevant to Scotland on two occasions: the debate preceding the Union of Parliaments in 1707, and the militia agitation in the second half of the eighteenth century.

In his study of the transmission of republican ideas from Renaissance Florence to England, Scotland and America, Pocock has drawn attention to Adam Ferguson's position as the 'most Machiavellian' of Scottish thinkers. Ferguson was by no means the first: civic rhetoric was used by the Union sceptic Andrew Fletcher of Saltoun, who employed republican terms to assert Scotland's position as a political community of citizens. Ferguson, born into the Union and not averse to it, found Fletcher's language useful for a modified political quest. He was deeply convinced of the importance of a Scottish militia for the moral and social cohesion of his countrymen within the British state.

The civic tradition was encumbered, however, with a moral philosophy which was fast becoming obsolete. Echoing the Stoics, it regarded luxury and 'effeminacy' – the mental corruption of the powerful – as the vices naturally threatening the simple and manly virtues of the active citizen-soldier. Etymology mattered to the civic thinkers: virtue, they claimed, cannot be divorced from virility. Being 'polished', as Ferguson reminds his readers in the *Essay*, has to do with being political; being 'civilized' involves acting as citizens. When the words lose their original meanings, the values they denote are threatened by corruption; when the *polis* is no longer supported by the *vir*, it is doomed to sudden defeat or to slow, sordid decline.

Yet, as the Scottish thinkers would readily admit, the modern senses of 'politeness' and 'civilization' had new power of their own. Delicacy, sensibility, even luxury, were aspects of an advanced civil life which in some crucial ways surpassed the classical models. The traditional republican discourse had no answers for the new respect-

ability of wealth and social refinement, which eighteenth-century Scots came to associate with the modern age. A choice had to be made: the civic values had to be radically adjusted to the new ethics of sociability, commerce and freedom under the law; or else new proof was required for their relevance to the modern state.

David Hume, and more decisively Adam Smith, chose the first of these solutions. Adam Ferguson opted for the second. Public-spirited citizenship, he insisted, was indispensable even in the best of modern polities, namely Great Britain. Ferguson's notion of corruption was not that of a Stoic: the real moral danger in modern times, he said, was not wealth 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. It was precisely the prominence of economic activity in modern society which encouraged the well-to-do, in particular the land-owning classes, to stay out of politics, and therefore out of virtuous life. What matters, then, is not the wealth amassed by members of society, but the retaining of their political personae: a trader, a craftsman or a 'man of the world' must never cease to be a citizen. This reworking of the civic creed was Ferguson's distinct philosophical voice in the Scottish Enlightenment.

This voice was developed along with his academic career, which matched the intensity of his social and political involvement. In 1757 Ferguson succeeded his friend Hume as Keeper of the Advocates' Library. He then worked as tutor to the sons of the Earl of Bute, shortly before Bute rose to brief political prominence. In 1759 Ferguson was appointed to the chair of natural philosophy (physics) at the University of Edinburgh. A more suitable appointment followed in 1764, when he proceeded to the chair of pneumatics (philosophy of the mind) and moral philosophy. As a teacher and a thinker he now came into his own. His first major work, the *Essay on the History of Civil Society*, appeared three years later.

The *Essay* met with immediate acclaim, in London as well as in Edinburgh. It had a wide readership, especially in the three decades following its publication. Together with Ferguson's second book, *Institutes of Moral Philosophy* (1769), it made its author famous throughout Europe. The *Essay* was hailed by men of letters as diverse as Boswell, d'Holbach and Jacobi. The ageing Voltaire congratulated Ferguson, who visited Ferney in the mid-1770s, for 'civi-

lizing the Russians': his works were being used in the University of Moscow, as well as in many other places of learning. Ferguson was admired by Herder and Hamann and stirred the soul of the Romantic poet Novalis. Seven editions of the *Essay* appeared in Ferguson's lifetime, and there were other reprints and unauthorized editions. Places of publication included Dublin, Basle and Boston. A German translation appeared in Leipzig in 1768, and a French one in Paris in 1783.

Among the few who disliked the *Essay* was David Hume, one of Ferguson's kindest friends. Hume had praised an earlier work by Ferguson, an 'Essay on Refinement' compiled in 1759 but subsequently lost, as a promising draft for a great book. When the *Essay* appeared, however, Hume could barely conceal his disappointment. The reason for it is not entirely clear. Mutual friends supposed that he found the book too enthusiastic in its moral prescription: Blair described the *Essay* in this context as 'rousing and animating'. Hume may have seen it as too 'Scottish', both in spirit and in terminology. His courteous disapproval was the first of several hints that Ferguson was steering away from a main current in the Scottish Enlightenment.

As Ferguson's Scottish contemporaries could not fail to note, the *Essay* was a bid to reclaim the idea of civic virtue on behalf of the modern, commercial state. In its use of political language, as we will later observe, the book is polemical, and at times subtly subversive. Every aspect of its title – the author's ideas of history, of society, and of what 'civil' is about – reflects a debate involving Ferguson's intellectual mentors and colleagues. It conveys an attempt to come to grips with the ideas of the natural jurists, Montesquieu and Mandeville, and to shift their combined significance into a course different from the one taken by Hume and Smith.

It would take an informed reader, though, to trace these signals of dissent. The majority of readers did not see the *Essay* in the context of a Scottish debate; Scotland was the *Essay*'s hidden source of insight and urgency, but it was not its subject matter. The book deals with questions which concerned Enlightenment thinkers throughout Europe: the nature of political society, differences between nations reflecting temporal and geographical variations, patterns of progress and decline, types of government and the tension between 'private' and 'public' man. The *Essay* is an enquiry

into the material and moral progress of societies, clearly inspired by Scotland's condition, yet not reliant on the Scottish case. Its focal question is about the place, and the replaceability, of civic virtue in the modern state.

The book begins and ends with men and their political nature: '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' (p. 149). Society, for Ferguson, is made of men who compete, fight, interact and rise to challenges. Human nature in the *Essay* is synonymous with playful, aggressive masculinity. Ferguson's theory of government and political community is wholly reliant on this psychological premise.

It is difficult to see the moment in time when Ferguson claims that society became 'civil'. In the most important sense, it always was. In a second sense, that of permanent institutions, civil society evolves from an early 'savage' phase of primitive tribes and transient military leadership to the 'barbarian' phase in which property is established, along with durable patterns of government and social hierarchy, or 'subordination'. The foundations of civil society, however, are communal bonds and public virtue, which are older than property. Ferguson would not subscribe to Rousseau's famous dictum, in his *Discours sur l'inégalité* (1755), that the first appropriation of land was 'the real founder of civil society'.

Despite his reiteration of the stadial theory of human advance, Ferguson's prime concern was with forms of government and political community, not with modes of production and the growth of trade. In the *Essay* he candidly confessed that he was neither 'conversant' with nor 'engaged by' economic theories of progress. A footnote added to the fourth edition (1773) alerts the readers to Adam Smith's forthcoming *Wealth of Nations*, 'a theory of national economy, equal to what has ever appeared on any subject of science whatever'. Yet the same passage appeals to Smith and the other economists 'not to consider these articles as making the sum of national felicity, or the principal object of any state' (p. 140).

The essential point here is that, as a political community of men, civil society was always there; and that some of its essential features are not a matter of progress. Ferguson's obvious *bête noire* in the opening section of the book is Rousseau's speculated non-social state of nature. The state of nature, he responds to Rousseau, is