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Civilisation, War and the Scottish Enlightenment**

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**Hume's *History*, Smith's *Sentiments*, and Ferguson's
Essay: Civilisation, War and the Scottish
Enlightenment**

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Contemporary political theorists have been slow to direct their enquiries toward the concept of 'civilisation'. This has led to curious omissions in the literature on civil society in particular, whereby its association with the development of militarily powerful states has been misconceived.¹ Stephen Holmes for example, contends that civil society exists due to "liberal *raison d'etat*", that liberal states create and protect civil society in order to secure the population and wealth to extend state power.² The peculiar success of liberal states with civil societies rests, as Holmes sees it, on the separation of powers, "liberalism demands that people without guns tell people with guns what to do."³ Such a view pays scant regard to how the early theorists of civilisation represented the process of state formation. For the Scottish Enlightenment thinkers in particular, state formation transcended the volition of *raison d'etat*.⁴ The writings of the Scottish Enlightenment thinkers show a sustained effort to come to terms with the processes of civilisation acting upon Western European societies giving rise to new and more powerful states. In this paper, I shall focus on the representation of one aspect of those processes, namely the 'military template' implicit within Scottish Enlightenment theories of civilisation.

One of the distinctive features of Scottish Enlightenment thought, according to Pocock, was the deployment of distinctively Scots 'civil histories' explaining the emergence of civil societies based on commerce, and protected by states that were (or were becoming) peaceful at home, but mighty abroad.⁵ While Pocock correctly emphasises the ways that writers such as Hume, Smith and Ferguson differed in the way they traced the parameters of their 'civil histories', the theories of civilisation that emerged from their work shared this much in common. Each was marked by what I have called a 'military template' in which the development of a state monopoly of violence is identified not simply as an *effect* of civilisation, but as one of its foundations. The Scottish Enlightenment thinkers saw that through state monopolisation, new forms of warfare between and within states had developed. Within this 'new' environment, the existence of civil society became the essential precondition for effective statehood in 'civilised' and 'civilising' Western Europe. Pocock contends that Scots historians such as William Robertson and David Hume offered historical narratives illustrating the decline and eclipse of papal authority and religious warfare 'culminating' in the development "of a 'Europe' of contending monarchies, each capable of civil government and reason of state".⁶ Adam Smith offered an account of the rise within those states of civil societies based on commercial relations between autonomous individuals drawn together by benevolent passions (sympathy) and rational interests. Adam Ferguson however, was something of an anomaly in this context. Perhaps because he was a 'moralist' rather than a 'historian' of civil society, he remained ambivalent on the influence of commerce, the division of labour and even of military monopolisation.⁷

I. Hume, Civil Society and the Virtues of Artillery

Hume's *History* has conventionally been interpreted as the story of the development of British liberty premised on the virtues of 'civility', such as politeness, propriety, sociability, respect for law and personal property, which he saw as intimately connected to the flourishing of polished arts and sciences in England.⁸ This interpretation fits closely with his essay 'Of the Rise and Progress of the Arts and Sciences'.⁹ But here Hume offers little in regard to any causal or historiographic explanation, merely claiming that polished arts flourish best under "free governments" able to "exempt one man from the dominion of another" and "protect every one against the violence... of his fellow-citizens."¹⁰ Hume's *History* traces the development of an England distinguished by the liberty of its subjects, the moderation of its government, the strength and extent of its commerce and trade, and the excellence of its arts and sciences. This continuity notwithstanding, his account of the reasons why these accomplishments had taken place in England rested not simply on the diffusion of 'civility' or 'civilised' ideas, but on the development of an unchallengeable state monopolisation of violence.

This becomes clear in his account in the *History* of the transition from allodial to feudal tenure. By recognising one 'sovereign' lord, the feudal barons were able to obtain a decisive military advantage over the allodial lords who recognised none.¹¹ In practice, the feudal lords retained too much military power, and the result was a system based on "raising the military tenants to a kind of sovereign dignity...", establishing the grounds for a continually contested sovereignty and endemic conflict.¹² The signing of Magna Carta in 1216 assumed an 'epochal' significance in Hume's story by establishing a statute able to restrain the "barbarous licence of the kings", and even the nobles, rendering "violence and iniquity" to some extent an offence or 'public injury'.¹³

The development of a more tolerable balance between sovereign power and the liberty of the subject during the Elizabethan period was driven by the feeble growth and extension of commerce and the development of religious toleration. The "taste for elegant luxury" among the nobility, fuelled by the growth of commerce favoured the,

...retrenchment of the ancient hospitality, and the diminution of retainers, [which was]... favourable to the prerogative of the sovereign; and, by disabling the great noblemen from resistance, promoted the execution of the laws, and extended the authority of the courts of justice.¹⁴

The increasing costs of luxurious consumption weakened the aristocracy financially and numerically, and therefore militarily and politically, thus enabling the extension of law and greater security of liberty and private possession. This was particularly significant among the "gentry" and "small proprietors of land" whose power lay in the House of Commons and who were enabled by the decline of the great nobles to assert a greater independence.¹⁵ They could do so in part due to the gradual extension of religious toleration favouring the development of an

independent magistracy for whom religious schisms were “pernicious to civil government” and had to be violently suppressed.¹⁶

The growth of commerce and the practice of toleration laid the foundation for an independent state and the ascendancy of the gentry. The political ascendancy of the gentry ensured that their interests began to suffuse the state and thereby to develop state power to new heights. It is significant in this sense that Hume takes the time to note the establishment of colonies as the ‘chief’ accomplishment of the reign of James I. Unlike the “sloth... avidity and barbarity” of the Spanish empire, the English colonies were “established on the noblest footing” by “industrious planter[s]” whose labour “promoted the navigation, encouraged the industry, and even perhaps multiplied the inhabitants of their mother-country.”¹⁷ The effect of this commercial development was the augmentation of state strength; indeed Hume was in no doubt that “one good county in England” in his day was now able to support a greater military effort than the entire Kingdom had been under the hero of Agincourt, Henry V, “[s]uch are the effects of liberty, industry, and good government!”¹⁸ In making this connection, between the growth of civility (fuelled by commerce and toleration) and the strength of the state, Hume’s earlier expatiation on the virtues of artillery comes into a sharper focus. This “furious engine”,

Though it seemed contrived for the destruction of mankind, and the overthrow of empires, has in the issue rendered battles less bloody, and has given greater stability to civil societies. Nations by its means have been brought more to a level: Conquests have become less frequent and rapid: Success in war has been reduced nearly to be a matter of calculation: And any nation overmatched by its enemies, either yields to their demands, or secures itself by alliances against their violence and invasion.¹⁹

This remarkable passage stands out as a dramatic affirmation of the inherently militaristic template of Enlightenment conceptions of civilisation. Hume’s enthusiasm for ordnance played its part in a broader story of the rise and consolidation of the English state within a 'Europe' of similarly sovereign states based on the extension of commerce and the institutionalisation of religious tolerance. The cannon was a machine of civilisation because it embodied the intensification of state and military power and hence of a 'civilised' international order of states whose interaction was shaped by a consciousness of the destructiveness of modern war and an imperative to avoid it.

Other eighteenth-century writers such as Montesquieu made similar connections between the extension of moderate government and military civilisation. In the *Spirit of the Laws*, the civilising influence of Christianity was linked to an implicit military logic of civilisation. The people of Europe, he contended,

...owe to Christianity both a certain political right in government and a certain right of nations in war... [which] leaves to the vanquished... life, liberty, laws, goods...²⁰

The connection between civilisation and military might was a major theme, as Pocock has suggested, in William Robertson's *History of the Reign of Charles the Fifth*.²¹ During the fifteenth-century, Robertson argued, the feudal system – and the preeminence of the nobility – was decisively weakened by the development of professional standing armies which enlarged the power of monarchs who gave their protection to cities as invaluable sources of revenue.²² He was clear that in telling this story he was writing the “history of Europe” in which “a proper distribution of power” is maintained “among all the members of the system into which the states of Europe are formed.”²³ The lynch-pin that held this ‘system’ together was the “command of the national force... to be exerted in foreign wars” enabling each sovereign state to “enlarge the sphere of their operations... multiply their claims and pretensions, and to increase the vigour of their efforts.”²⁴

For Robertson, the reign of the Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V, was the decisive period in which this system took its modern shape, and as had Hume, Robertson identified the rise of religious tolerance (and the political decline of Roman Catholicism) as vital.²⁵ The peace of Augsburg (1555) in particular, he argued, achieved a general “pacification” allowing states belonging to different Confessions to consolidate their power.²⁶ Augsburg thus heralded for Robertson, a largely peaceful Europe based on a sovereign state system incorporating a rough balance of power,

...when nations are in a state similar to each other, and keep equal pace in their advances towards refinement, they are not exposed to the calamity of sudden conquests. ... Other states interpose, and balance any temporary advantage which either party may have acquired. After the fiercest and most lengthened contests, all the rival nations are exhausted, none are conquered. At length they find it necessary to conclude a peace, which restores to each almost the same power and the same territories of which they were formerly in possession.²⁷

“The nations of Europe in that age, as in the present” Robertson ominously claimed, “were like one great family”, and were not separated by those marks of “genius” which, “in almost every period of history, has exalted the Europeans above the inhabitants of the other quarters of the globe, and seems to have destined the one to rule, and the other to obey.”²⁸ In his later *Historical Disquisition*, Robertson elevated Europe's claims to global supremacy or “visible ascendant” over India, Africa, and America, “from which it has derived an immense increase of opulence, of power, and of enjoyments.”²⁹

Robertson's *History* thus culminated, as had Hume's, in the creation of independent, militarily powerful states, based on civilised and refined civil societies. As each were aware, the formalised structure of interaction between sovereign states also provided a model of domestic social interaction, replacing action determined by private conviction with rule-governed,

regulated and disciplined conduct.³⁰ As contemporaries such as Montesquieu were aware, this was above all a secular model of political interaction, one in which considerations of interest rather than conscience were paramount.³¹ Civilised polities were thus identified as far more powerful than those as yet uncivilised. As Hume put it in the essay “Of Commerce”, “as private men receive greater security, in the possession of their trade and riches, from the power of the public, so the public becomes powerful in proportion to the opulence and extensive commerce of private men.”³² Commerce emerged as a vital ingredient capable of delivering domestic peace within English civil society, but delivering a military capacity to the British state far in excess of non-commercial nations. While Scots philosophers were hardly unanimous in support of empire, they each followed Hume in laying out the foundations of why it was that Britain, before all other nations, found itself after 1763 at the apex of civilisation and the apogee of a global empire.

II. Smith and Military Civilisation

As various Enlightenment thinkers saw it, the peculiar achievement of Europe was to recognise that cultivating commerce led to the pre-eminence of pacifying considerations of self-interest as a source of social discipline, and hence of domestic – and global - civilisation.³³ Adam Smith, above all others, was concerned with the problem of how to discipline self-government and ensure thereby the self-regulation of civil society and the avoidance of tyranny.³⁴ In doing so, he sought to give substance to Hume’s claim in ‘Of Commerce’ that, “industry and arts and trade encrease the power of the sovereign as well as the happiness of the subjects; and that policy is violent, which aggrandises the public by the poverty of individuals.”³⁵ It was therefore vital to establish that self-regulation and self-government could be relied upon to maintain public tranquillity.³⁶ The primacy of this concern can be identified in Smith’s *Theory of Moral Sentiments* in which he aimed to demonstrate how to “restrain our selfish, and to indulge our benevolent affections... [which] can alone produce among mankind that harmony of sentiments and passions in which consists their whole grace and propriety.”³⁷

Smith contrasted ‘social’ passions such as generosity and compassion with ‘unsocial’ passions such as hatred and anger, and sought to regulate those passions by appealing to self-interest as a way of keeping them “within the bounds of prudence and justice”.³⁸ Behind such prescriptions was a conception of the self based on “reason” and “self-command”, who cultivated “frugality, industry, and application” in the “acquisition of fortune”, pursued “remote advantage” by giving up “all present pleasures”, and enduring “the greatest labour both of mind and body” to win a general “approbation”.³⁹ Nonetheless, Smith was also concerned by the attenuation of friendship, and the loss of the warrior's traditional virtues.⁴⁰ The great benefit of commercial society however, was that it promised the self-regulation of conduct, and its realisation was among the chief distinctions of a civilised people, an argument he stated more plainly in his *Lectures on Jurisprudence*.⁴¹ In his discussion of ‘police’ for example, he argued that its chief function,

unlike the Continental discourse of police, was the regulation of commerce in order to cultivate self-government, self-control, and independence. The discipline of independence, he argued, was the most effective form of protection from crime and vagabondage.⁴² Elsewhere he noted that wherever the disciplines of commerce emerged “probity and punctuality” were always produced and self-interest would “regulate... the actions of every man”.⁴³

In the *Wealth of Nations* Smith attributed such improvements to the division of labour which subjected each individual worker to a precise regimen of disciplined labour, thus eliminating rustic inefficiencies.⁴⁴ This new form of discipline enhanced individual and social productivity and created the “universal opulence” of “well-governed” societies.⁴⁵ For Smith the development of the division of labour and increases in agricultural and industrial production were the driving forces of civilisation facilitating “order and good government, and with them, the liberty and security of individuals...”.⁴⁶ By slow and imperceptible advances, new and more efficient economic systems were able to develop, stimulating new ways of producing (and consuming), and hence new ways of thinking and feeling (manners). This causal relationship can be said to be the heart of controversy over Smith's now (in)famous ‘Four Stages’ or ‘Stadial’ theory of development.⁴⁷ According to this theory, societies pass through four distinct stages determined by the sophistication of their means of subsistence or economy, passing from primitive savagery (hunting and gathering), to barbarism (pastoralism), agriculture, and finally commerce and foreign trade.⁴⁸ Whatever the role of ‘stadial’ assumptions about the development of societies, Smith certainly advanced the claim that those savages and barbarians locked in more primitive stages could be supplanted by the more civilised. As Smith observed in the second volume of the *Wealth of Nations*, the difference between the ‘savages’ of America and the ‘barbarians’ of Africa was that the former merely hunted for their subsistence, whereas the latter farmed. This meant that savages were only capable of very insubstantial military arrangements, whereas barbarians were much more formidable.⁴⁹ Smith obviously thought that these ‘savages’ had little claim to their own land, and referred to planting colonies as a great benefit to Europe and indeed to the ‘savages’ themselves.⁵⁰

Commercial economies based on vigorous foreign trade in manufactured goods thus delivered a decisive military advantage to the civilised over the uncivilised. Flourishing commercial economies produced all the wealth needed to support large armies and navies, whereas hunting and gathering or trade in the unrefined “rude produce of the soil” could not deliver sufficient wealth.⁵¹ The sovereignty of commercial nations thus consisted in the careful encouragement of commerce and disciplined expenditure, which contrasted to the profligacy, the incessant hoarding and wasteful expense of uncivilised rulers caught by their need to show their might but lacking the wealth to do it.⁵² The crucial consideration in Smith's conception of civilisation, was the military might that commerce afforded. The most primitive hunters and gatherers were no threat

to the civilised because their mode of subsistence was too precarious; more advanced cultivators were more fearsome, but they were limited by the need to reduce their activities to discrete campaigning and harvesting seasons.⁵³ Only civilised commercial states could exert an untrammelled sovereignty because they were not limited in their ability to wage war; war had become the new standard of advance, its expense, duration and the numbers (and complexity of command) had all increased thanks to the salutary influence of commerce.⁵⁴ As most contemporary observers were aware however, there were clearly different imperial practices, as seen in Reynal's admiration of Dutch commercial sagacity, and condemnation of Portuguese profligacy.⁵⁵ For Smith, such national differences were responsible for the worst "injustices" perpetrated upon the Indians by the rapacious Spanish and Portuguese (or, in the English territories, simply 'by accident').⁵⁶ The chief problems confronting commercial nations therefore, were not scruples about the rights of Indigenous peoples, but the tendency of the division of labour in commercial nations to weaken martial virtues and leave national defence to the "meanest" among the populace.⁵⁷ In turning attention to this issue Smith's contemporary, Adam Ferguson, arguably provided the most ambiguous of the Scottish Enlightenment defences of civilisation, civil society and the military monopoly to which they gave rise.

III. Ferguson: on Using the Sword Politely

Recent work on Adam Ferguson is characterised by uncertainty on how to classify him, a thinker who tried to incorporate the virtues of classical Republicanism with the dynamics of an emergent liberalism based on the primacy of "economic self-interest", resulting in what Hill has called an uneasy "civic liberalism".⁵⁸ Pocock contends that Ferguson and his *Essay* should be seen as "republican" only in his 'moralistic' concern to sustain the "intense individuality" based on personal emulation of the hardy virtues of the warrior.⁵⁹ Although an early observer of the division of labour, he was disturbed by the probable effects he thought it would have on domestic and international peace, the practice of war, and the most suitable military structure for commercial societies. In accord with contemporaries such as Smith and Robertson, Ferguson was convinced that Western European history revealed a progression of the human species from a state of "rudeness" to that of "civilisation" or from "barbarism to refinement".⁶⁰ For Ferguson however, social life required a preponderance of productive over destructive passions and a rigorous constraint of the latter.⁶¹ The effects of such passions however, could only be "worn off... by degrees" by deploying one passion to offset another.⁶² Productive passions Ferguson argued, were those which inclined individuals toward friendship and affection, the pursuit of private wealth as the surest means to the public good, and the advance of civilisation.⁶³

Civilisation itself developed due to the emergence of property relations which created "relations of patron and client, of servant and master", necessitating thereby a system of law or "some method of defining possession".⁶⁴ In rude or barbarous societies equality of possession and

power prevailed, and consequently “the titles of *magistrate* and *subject*, of *noble* and *mean*, are as little known as those of *rich* and *poor*”.⁶⁵ Just as civilised and uncivilised societies could be distinguished, so too could civilised from uncivilised selves. The former were motivated by “considerations of interest” and “a view to futurity”, the latter by “great passions”, “the prospects of ruin or conquest”, inclined to “sloth” but “bold, impetuous, artful and rapacious” in the hunt.⁶⁶ Control of the passions by self-interest was vital to the advance from barbarity to civilisation, but it was always counter-balanced by “other habits and other pursuits”.⁶⁷ As Ferguson expressed it in a letter of 1802, “Men are like Planets” that must have “two forces to make them go in their Orbits”, a “Projectile” force to motivate action “Directed to some personal Advantage”, but the other a “Central” pressure perpetually acting that “keeps them from flying off.”⁶⁸ One way of guiding interest toward more productive ends was by law, which Ferguson suggestively described as the “treaty to which members of the same community have agreed...” setting “limits... to the powers of the magistrate”.⁶⁹

Another means was provided by commerce and the disciplines of a market economy, which not only resulted in material advances, but provided a mechanism for creating (voluntarily) self-disciplined individuals.⁷⁰ Ferguson recognised however, that the self-reliance and discipline he commended was linked with broader processes of discipline throughout society which paradoxically enhanced the prospect of violence *between* states as it had reduced it *within* states. Ferguson also saw that commerce itself had altered the very nature of warfare making it subservient to financial rather than dynastic interests,

...what mighty armies may be put in motion from behind the counter; how often human blood is, without any national animosity, bought and sold for bills of exchange; and how often the prince, the nobles, and the statesmen, in many a polished nation, might... be considered as merchants.⁷¹

Ferguson’s point was not simply that commerce had provided the financial means for raising and requisitioning larger armies, but that commerce itself had become a kind of warfare between nations competing for access to resources and markets in the scramble for imperial expansion. Indeed Ferguson went further in arguing that the very development of a commercial society had intensified the capacity of the state to make war.⁷² The state’s increased capacity to make war was attributed to the division of labour, enabling “the practitioner in every profession...” including that of warfare, to specialise their skills and practice them at an ever higher level of sophistication.⁷³ While vital to the development of commerce, Ferguson suspected the division of labour also had deleterious effects on the military, in particular doing nothing to improve the character of soldiers or the wisdom of commanders, and he lamented the loss in modern armies of old martial virtues.⁷⁴

Ferguson's interest in military affairs was not merely academic; he served between 1745 and 1754 in the capacity of regimental chaplain to the 43rd Highland Regiment (later the 42nd, more famously known as 'the Black Watch'), during which time the regiment saw active service in France.⁷⁵ Ferguson's attachment to the regiment presaged his later theory of civilisation, for the regiment was raised after the '45 Jacobite rebellion specifically to guard and keep watch on one of the least 'civilised' parts of the British Isles. Subduing the Highlands meant confronting the more powerful clan chiefs (primarily the Gordons and MacDonalds) who retained a private monopoly of violence sufficient to trouble Westminster's. In all probability, Ferguson joined the regiment immediately after the battle of Fontenoy, which has come to be known as the apogee of highly disciplined, organised dynastic warfare in eighteenth-century Europe.

His barely disguised admiration for the 'modern' laws of war was premised upon the highly disciplined manner with which the nations of Western Europe were then attempting to "carry the civilities of peace into the practice of war..." enabling them to "mingle... politeness with the use of the sword...".⁷⁶ Elsewhere he argued that warfare was now waged "with little national animosity" and combatants were "almost in the very heat of a contest, ready to listen to the dictates of humanity or reason...".⁷⁷ Echoing Montesquieu's desire to see this mode of discipline and conduct extended to the rest of society, Ferguson argued that ordered and rule-bound warfare was the hallmark of civilisation,

Glory is more successfully obtained by saving and protecting, than by destroying the vanquished... the employing of force, only for the obtaining of justice, and for the preservation of national rights. This is, perhaps, the principal characteristic, on which, among modern nations, we bestow the epithets of *civilised* or of *polished*.⁷⁸

This style of warfare however, pertained to conflicts between opponents who chose to abide by the rules of battle between civilised belligerents, and while it may have been seen on the fields of Dettingen or Fontenoy, it most certainly was not at Culloden.⁷⁹ The issue was not one of hypocrisy or inconsistency, rather, it showed the clear stamp of the military template of the Scots theory of civilisation. Within this theory, the process of civilisation culminated in, and its polished accomplishments were to be secured by the creation of sovereign states. The sovereignty of these states rested on their control and use of supreme military force. Within this scheme, civil war or rebellion could only be seen as an assault upon the state, and hence, as a fundamental assault on the very process of civilisation itself. Civil wars threatened the very disciplines and forms of self-control that made life in civil society possible. Consequently, the rules of engagement for a civil as opposed to a foreign or domestic war were very different. In his notes on the 1779 'Enquiry into General Sir William Howe's Conduct in the American War', Ferguson observed that,

It is not easily conceived how Subjects in Arms against Their Sovereign & in Alliance with his enemys, should be entitled to more favour than the Subjects of a Forreign Prince at War upon some problematical Questions of State. The Subjects of a Forreign Prince involved in a War by their Sovereign may not have incurred any personal Guilt by that Circumstance And it is not Lawfull to Distress them except so far as that is allowed in order to Distress the State to which they belong. But Subjects in Rebellion incur a Personal Guilt & may be distressed not only in order to disstress their Community but likewise in order to Punish Their Crime.⁸⁰

What he called the “Rules of War” were designed to protect “Innocent Subjects” and to limit warfare to the “just measure of Hostilities” needed to “force an Ennemy to Justice”, and thus not to cause harm “wantonly”.⁸¹

Ferguson’s admiration of modern rules of war however, was balanced with his awareness that the division of labour which separated the function of warfare from that of ordinary life created at the heart of every civilised society a military structure which threatened “usurpation” and “military government”.⁸² Indeed, these concerns motivated his participation in the public controversy over the desirability of a Scots militia prompted by Prime Minister Pitt’s Militia Bill which called for the raising of a militia to defend England, but excluded any in Scotland.⁸³ Echoing earlier controversies over William III’s standing army, Ferguson appealed to the “valour of freemen armed in defence of their country”.⁸⁴ His position however, was shaped by more than the exigencies of national defence, and derived in large measure from his concern that self-interested commerce and the division of labour - despite their advantages - tended to undermine “public spirit”.⁸⁵ For Adam Smith however, the division of labour had simply made professional, standing armies necessary because workers at war meant lost revenue, and because war had now become an “intricate... science” requiring full-time armies.⁸⁶

Ferguson had read Smith, and admired the *Wealth of Nations*, declaring to its author that he would “reign alone” on the subjects it discussed, merely adding that on the question of the militia “there I must be against you.”⁸⁷ For Ferguson a citizen’s militia was the best means of ensuring the practice of vigorous, martial virtues, introducing the citizen to the disciplines, salutary hardships, obedience, fortitude, and courage of military life.⁸⁸ For Smith however, the invention of firearms meant that the individual skill of the warrior was no longer as necessary to modern warfare as the discipline of large bodies of troops, and such discipline was better accomplished in standing armies than in militias.⁸⁹ With more than a backward glance at the Highlands, Smith argued that standing armies were necessary to civilisation itself. Without them a civilised nation would lie open to “the invasion of a poor and barbarous neighbour”, while it was only by means of standing armies that “a barbarous country” could by “suddenly and tolerably civilised.”⁹⁰ For

Ferguson however, the problem of empire was that the civilised and polished Europeans had to “contend with the savage” and thereby to ‘imitate’ the savage warrior’s skills.⁹¹ The techniques of modern warfare were perilously easy to learn, and in “the use of modern arms, the novice is made learn, and to practice with ease, all that the veteran knows”.⁹² This was one of the fears animating his concern over the prospect of military rule, manifested in striking warnings of the dangers of Empire inherent in commercial states and societies.⁹³

According to Pocock, Ferguson’s fear of military government subduing civil society was not a warning of any present or “immediate peril”, but a ‘moralistic’ exposition of “the dangers inherent in a certain type of society”.⁹⁴ It was in this sense that Ferguson’s fear of standing armies was a generalised concern of the tendency of an institution, rather than a ‘prophecy’. That tendency could indeed be positive, for, while it had intensified the capacity for civilised states to wage war, at the same time relations *within* those states had become ever more pacified; “domestic peace and regular policy” had “disarmed the animosities of civil contention”.⁹⁵ Ferguson was concerned however, that civilisation may degenerate, that polished manners and good government may become corrupted.⁹⁶ The prevention of corruption and degeneration was the task of government, and the problem that governments had to resolve was how to maintain alongside the market and its regime of discipline other salutary disciplines (such as that of a vigorous militia). Echoing Montesquieu, Ferguson argued that an uncivilised society was one in which no such pacific relations and institutions held and the state relied on terror and fear. “The rules of despotism...” Ferguson warned “are made for the government of corrupted men”, and corruption meant not merely the loss of virtue but the loss of discipline.⁹⁷

Hill has pointed out that Ferguson’s theory of civilisation although premised on the upward progress of humanity, nonetheless admitted the possibility of corruption and decay.⁹⁸ The possibility of corruption however, was somewhat at odds with the overwhelmingly optimistic view his contemporaries Hume, Roberstson, and Smith took of the prospects for English and British civilisation. The possibility of corruption though real enough for Ferguson was nonetheless - like troubling clouds on the horizon - far enough distant for evasive measures to be taken. Although Ferguson’s image of civilisation was clouded by the problem of violence in relations between states, he accepted as axiomatic that peace was forged and its benefits enjoyed *within* the confines of civil societies that were themselves artefacts of those very states.

Conclusion

The existence of civil society, Ferguson asserted, required commerce and the monopoly of violence by the state, a condition as vital as it was dangerous to its existence. In arguing for the merits of civil society, Ferguson could not help but acknowledge that the Republican insistence

on popular participation in warfare and the domestic cultivation of virtue faced obsolescence. Only within the shell of the monopoly of violence could the realm of market relations be safely pacified, and in this at least the most articulate recent theorist of civil society, John Keane, has echoed Ferguson.⁹⁹ As Keane has elsewhere acknowledged however, the global spread of civil society owed much to the fact that among all its other exports was its productive capacity for violence.¹⁰⁰

At the dawning of the age of total war in the seventeenth and eighteenth-centuries, warfare was still limited in its extent, localised and usually timed by the pace of the horse, the re-loading of the musket, and even the turning of the seasons. The theory advanced by Hume and his contemporaries was that in warfare of this description, on this scale, sovereign states with commercial economies held the advantage over those with weak or contested sovereignty, and the tide of history appeared to verify the claim. Today however, can any repeat the claim with the same assurance? Globalisation has intensified the challenges to the sovereign state, and the discourse of state sovereignty seems ever less capable of regulating crime, or defending state borders from disorganised, uncivilised violence. The claims of nation, region and religion speak to a seemingly ever widening desire to contest sovereignty, to escape from the cage of one state's sovereignty led by a vision of a better life under that of another. In the process, the fury of violence unleashed by modern weapons technology (another product of commerce and the division of labour) has erased once and for all (if it ever really existed) the idea of the 'battle-field' and the distinction between combatant and non-combatant.

The paradox of the appeal to civil society is that its spread has been coeval with the intensification of killing power and its diffusion within and far beyond those societies. Moreover, the vigorous imperialism of civilisation - the globalisation of civil society - has inscribed in our relations with the peoples we were once so desperate to civilise, a history of violence and bitterness that continues to stain race relations in Australia and elsewhere. Perhaps part of a solution to this dilemma requires us to wake up to the violence that we have been so desperate to hide behind the scenes of ordinary life? Perhaps it requires us to accept, as Republicans once did, that violence is an inextricable feature of politics and social life, and that this requires of us particular virtues for its control? Perhaps it requires of us that we think again about the supposed merits of state sovereignty, and especially of that apparently peaceful yet energetic exporter of violence, civil society?

¹ For more detail, Buchan, B., "Liberalism and Fear of Violence", *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy*, 4 (3), 2001, pp. 27-48.

² Holmes, S., "Can Weak-State Liberalism Survive?" in D. Avnon and A. de-Shalit (eds.), *Liberalism and its Practice*, London, Routledge, 1999, pp. 38, 48, 37.[31-49]

³ Holmes, 'Liberalism', p. 37.

⁴ Oz-Salzberger, F., "The Political Theory of the Scottish Enlightenment" in A. Broadie (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Scottish Enlightenment*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2003, p. 160

⁵ Pocock, J.G.A., *Barbarism and Religion; Volume II, Narratives of Civil Government*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1999, pp. 258-262.

⁶ Pocock, *Barbarism*, p. 310.

⁷ Hill, L., 'The Puzzle of Adam Ferguson's Political Conservatism', *Eighteenth-Century Scotland*, 15, 2001, pp. 12-17.

⁸ Jones, P., "On Reading Hume's *History of Liberty*" in N. Capaldi and D.W. Livingston (eds.), *Liberty in Hume's History of England*, Kluwer Academic Publishers, Dordrecht, 1990, p. 10-17 [1-24]. Livingston, D.W., "Hume's Historical Conception of Liberty", in *ibid.*, p. 128 [105-154].

⁹ Darwin, J., "Civility and Empire" in P. Burke, B. Harrison and P. Slack (eds.), *Civil Histories*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2000, p. 324 [321-336]; Robertson, J., "The Scottish Enlightenment at the Limits of the Civic Tradition", in I. Hont and M. Ignatieff (eds.), *Wealth and Virtue: The Shaping of Political Economy in the Scottish Enlightenment*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1983, pp. 152-157 [137-178].

¹⁰ Hume, D., *Political Essays* [1772,1777], edited by K. Haakonssen, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1994, p. 63. Wertz, S.K., "Hume, History, and Human Nature" in D. Livingston and M. Martin (eds.), *Hume as Philosopher of Society, Politics and History*, Rochester, University of Rochester Press, 1991, pp. 77-92.

¹¹ Hume, D., *The History of England from the Invasion of Julius Caesar to the Revolution in 1688*, Volume II, London, J.Mcreeery, 1807, p. 106. (Hereafter, *History*).

¹² Hume, *History*, II, pp. 140, 138.

¹³ Hume, *History*, II, p. 142. Forbes, D., *Hume's Philosophical Politics*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1975, pp. 303-5; Danford, J.W., "Hume's *History* and the parameters of Economic Development" in Capaldi and Livingston (eds.), p. 173. [155-194]

¹⁴ Hume, *History*, V, p. 488.

¹⁵ Hume, *History*, VI, 170.

¹⁶ Hume, *History*, V, p. 66; and VI, p. 165.

¹⁷ Hume, *History*, VI, p. 186. As an aside it is worth noting here that Hume neglects to mention any original inhabitants of those lands that had become 'colonies', which, although he ascribes to them "noble rivers" and "fertile soil", were presumably empty before English colonists "sought for freedom amidst those savage deserts"! Also, Venning, C., "Hume on Property, Commerce, and Empire in the Good Society: The Role of Historical Necessity" in Livingston and Martin (eds.), pp. 144-5. [137-150].

¹⁸ Hume, *History*, V, p. 483.

¹⁹ Hume, *History*, II, p. 432.

²⁰ Montesquieu, *Spirit of the Laws*, translated by Cohler, et.al., Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1985, pp. 461-462.

²¹ Robertson, W., *History of the Reign of Charles the Fifth* [1769], Volume I, London, George Routledge, 1856. See for example, pp. 15-16, 26, 34. (Hereafter, *History*).

²² Robertson, *History*, I, pp. 72-78.

²³ Robertson, *History*, I, p. 67 and 86.

²⁴ Robertson, *History*, I, p. 93

²⁵ Robertson, *History*, II, p. 60; 338-9.

²⁶ Robertson, *History*, II, p. 340.

²⁷ Robertson, *History*, II, p. 413.

²⁸ Robertson, *History*, II, pp. 413-4.

²⁹ Robertson, W., *An Historical Disquisition Concerning the Knowledge which the Ancients had of India*, London, 1791, p. 167.

³⁰ Robertson in fact referred to the emergence within these states of more peaceful forms of "government" or "management". Robertson, *History*, II, p. 426.

³¹ Montesquieu, *Spirit*, p. 487.

³² Hume, *Political Essays*, p. 94. It was in a similar vein that Montesquieu praised Britain's subordination of "political interests" to "the interests of its commerce". Montesquieu, *Spirit*, pp. 343-346.

³³ Abbe Reynal, G.T.F., *A Philosophical and Political History of the Settlements and Trade of the Europeans in the East and West Indies*, Volume I, translated by J. Justamond, 3rd edition, London, 1777, p. 3 and 1; Robertson, W., *The Progress of Society in Europe* [1769], edited by F. Gilbert, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1972, p. 67. Also, Sher, R.B., "From Troglodytes to Americans: Montesquieu and the Scottish Enlightenment on Liberty, Virtue, and Commerce" in D. Wootton (ed.), *Republicanism, Liberty, and Commercial Society, 1649-1776*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1994, pp. 368-401.

- ³⁴ See for example, Pocock, J.G.A., "Cambridge Paradigms and Scotch Philosophers: A Study of the Relations Between the Civic Humanist and the Civil Jurisprudential Interpretation of Eighteenth-Century Social Thought", in I. Hont and M. Ignatieff (eds), *Wealth and Virtue*, pp. 241-5.
- ³⁵ Hume, D., *Political Essays*, p. 98.
- ³⁶ Hill, L., "Ferguson and Smith on 'Human Nature', 'Interest' and the Role of Beneficence in Market Society", *History of Economic Ideas*, 4 (1-2), 1996, pp. 353-399.
- ³⁷ Smith, A., *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* [1759], edited by D.D. Raphael and A.L. Macfie, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1976, p. 25.; Winch, D., *Adam Smith's Politics: An Essay in Historiographic Revision*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1978, p. 175.
- ³⁸ Smith, *Theory*, pp. 173, also 34-39.
- ³⁹ Smith, *Theory*, p. 190.
- ⁴⁰ Smith, *Theory*, pp. 239-240; also, Hill, L., and McCarthy, P., 'Hume, Smith and Ferguson: Friendship in Commercial Society', *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy*, 2 (4), 1999, pp. 33-49.
- ⁴¹ Smith, A., *Lectures on Jurisprudence* [1762-6], edited by R.L. Meek, D.D. Raphael, and P.G. Stein, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1978. (Hereafter, *Lectures*). I follow Winch here in seeing the *Lectures* as a the "bridge" between the *Theory of the Moral Sentiments* and the *Wealth of Nations*.
- ⁴² Smith, *Lectures*, pp. 486-7.
- ⁴³ Smith, *Lectures*, p. 538.
- ⁴⁴ Smith, A., *An Inquiry Into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* [1776], edited by E. Cannan, Methuen, London, 1961, Volume I, pp. 8, 11, 12.
- ⁴⁵ Smith, *Wealth*, I, p. 15.
- ⁴⁶ Smith, *Wealth*, I, p. 433. The following information has been taken from *ibid.*, pp. 433-443.
- ⁴⁷ For some the vast literature on this question see, Murray, G.H., "Historiography", and Garrett, A., "Anthropology: the 'Original' of Human Nature" both in A. Broadie (ed.), pp. 258-279, 79-93; Hont, I., "The Language of Sociability and Commerce: Samuel Pufendorf and the Theoretical Foundations of the 'Four-Stages Theory'", in A. Pagden (ed.), *The Languages of Political Theory in Early-Modern Europe*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1987, pp. 253-256 [253-276]; Harpham, E.J., "Liberalism, Civic Humanism, and the Case of Adam Smith", *The American Political Science Review*, 78 (), 1983, p. 769 [764-774]; Winch, *Adam Smith's Politics*, pp. 63-5; Hopfl, H.M., "From Savage to Scotsman: Conjectural History in the Scottish Enlightenment", *Journal of British Studies*, 17 (2), 1978, p. 36; Meek, R.L., *Social Science and the Ignoble Savage*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1976.
- ⁴⁸ As Robertson observed in his *Historical Disquisition*, this process involved the uniting of families in "independent tribes and communities", followed by the uniting of those tribes in alliances for mutual defence, and only later on to develop an economy to "provide for the wants" of each and finally to "conduct the affairs of a numerous society". (p. 263).
- ⁴⁹ Smith, *Wealth*, II, p. 151.
- ⁵⁰ Smith, *Wealth*, II, pp. 77, 79, 104-5, 141.
- ⁵¹ Smith, *Wealth*, I, pp. 462-7.
- ⁵² Smith, *Wealth*, I, pp. 467-8.
- ⁵³ Smith, *Wealth*, II, pp. 213-14.
- ⁵⁴ Smith, *Wealth*, II, pp. 216-17.
- ⁵⁵ Reynal, *Philosophical and Political History*, Vol. I, pp. 152, 287-90.
- ⁵⁶ Smith, *Wealth*, II, pp. 78-9, 99, 141. See also Robertson, *An Historical Disquisition*, p. 336.
- ⁵⁷ Smith, *Lectures*, p. 542-3; see also Robertson, *History*, pp. 27, 51-2; also *The Progress of Society in Europe* [1769], edited by F. Gilbert, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1972, pp. 32 and 56 (hereafter *Progress*). Sher, R.B., "Adam Ferguson, Adam Smith, and the Problem of National Defence", *Journal of Modern History*, 61 (2), 1989, pp. 245-246.
- ⁵⁸ Kalyvas, A. and Katznelson, I., "Adam Ferguson Returns; Liberalism Through a Glass, Darkly", *Political Theory*, 26 (2), 1988, p. 176; Hill, L., "Ferguson and Smith on 'Human Nature', 'Interest' and the Role of Beneficence in Market Society", *History of Economic Ideas*, 4 (1-2), 1996, pp. 353-399; and Sher, R.B., "Adam Ferguson, Adam Smith, and the Problem of National Defence", *Journal of Modern History*, 61 (2), 1989, pp. 240-68..
- ⁵⁹ Pocock, *Barbarism*, II, p. 347.
- ⁶⁰ Ferguson, A., *An Essay on the History of Civil Society* [1767], Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 1966, p. 1 (hereafter, *Essay*); and Robertson, *Progress*, p. 97.
- ⁶¹ Ferguson, A., *Principles of Moral and Political Science* [1792], Volume I, Georg Olms Verlag, Hildesheim, 1975, p. 143. (Hereafter, *Principles*)
- ⁶² Ferguson, *Principles*, p. 151.

- ⁶³ Ferguson, *Essay*, pp. 58 and 73.
- ⁶⁴ Ferguson, *Essay*, pp. 81-2; Ferguson, *Principles*, Volume II, p. 426. Hill, L., "Anticipations of Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Social Thought in the Work of Adam Ferguson", *Archives Europeennes de Sociologie*, 37 (1), 1996, p. 217 [203-228]
- ⁶⁵ Ferguson, *Essay*, pp. 84, 98.
- ⁶⁶ Ferguson, *Essay*, pp. 97, 101, 107.
- ⁶⁷ Ferguson, *Essay*, p. 125.
- ⁶⁸ Letter no. 370, to Sir John Macpherson, 13 August 1802, *Correspondence of Adam Ferguson*, Volume II, 1781-1816, edited by V. Merolle, London, William Pickering, 1995, p. 482.
- ⁶⁹ Ferguson, *Essay*, pp. 156, 161, 205.
- ⁷⁰ Ferguson, *Essay*, p. 143; Ferguson, A., "Of the Separation of Departments, Professions, and Tasks Resulting From the Progress of Arts in Society" in W. M. Philip (ed.), *The Unpublished Essays of Adam Ferguson*, Volume II, Weeks and Son, London, 1986, p. 94; Hamowy, R., "Progress and Commerce in Anglo-American Thought: The Social Philosophy of Adam Ferguson", *Interpretation*, 14 (1), 1986, p. 83.
- ⁷¹ Ferguson, *Essay*, p. 150.
- ⁷² Sher, 'National Defence', p. 254.
- ⁷³ Ferguson, *Essay*, pp. 155, 189; see also *Principles*, I, p. 250.
- ⁷⁴ Ferguson, "Of the Separation of Departments", in *Unpublished Essays*, II, p. 98; and Ferguson, A., "Of Statesman and Warriours" in *Unpublished Essays*, III, pp. 4-22.
- ⁷⁵ Ferguson's letters do not indicate that he was present himself. See Letters no 1 (to John Adam, Sept 11 1745) and 15 (to Gilbert Elliot, March 19 1758) both in *The Correspondence of Adam Ferguson*, Volume I, 1745-1780, edited by V. Merolle, London, William Pickering, 1995, pp. 3-6 and 26-27. Kettler, D., *The Social and Political Thought of Adam Ferguson*, Ohio State University Press, 1965, pp. 45-47.
- ⁷⁶ Ferguson, *Essay*, pp. 198, 199.
- ⁷⁷ Ferguson, *Principles*, II, p. 295.
- ⁷⁸ Ferguson, *Essay*, p. 200.
- ⁷⁹ Weigley suggests that much of the bloodshed of this latter conflict was owing to the taint of civil war; nonetheless, he writes "...the aftermath of Colloden is yet another indication of the fragility of the limits upon warlike violence that had grown up since the Thirty Years War... [and] the denouement of the Forty-Five [Jacobite rebellion] blurs the conception of the eighteenth century as an age of limited war." Weigley, R., *The Age of Battles: The Quest for Decisive Battle From Breitenfeld to Waterloo*, Pimlico, London, 1993, p. 211.
- ⁸⁰ Notes on the Enquiry into General Sir William Howe's Conduct in the American War, 10 May 1779, *Correspondence of Adam Ferguson*, Volume II, p. 561.
- ⁸¹ Ferguson, 'Notes', p. 562-564.
- ⁸² Ferguson, *Essay*, p. 230.
- ⁸³ Robertson, J., *The Scottish Enlightenment and the Militia Issue*, John Donald Publishers, Edinburgh, 1985, p. 7.
- ⁸⁴ Ferguson, "Of Statesmen and Warriours", in *Unpublished Essays*, III, p. 9.
- ⁸⁵ Ferguson, A., *Principles*, Volume II, pp. 415, 425; and Kettler, *Social and Political Thought*, footnote 11, pp. 100-101.
- ⁸⁶ Smith, *Wealth*, II, pp. 217-219.
- ⁸⁷ Letter 89, Ferguson to Smith 1776, *Correspondence of Adam Ferguson*, Volume I, pp. 142-143.
- ⁸⁸ Robertson, *Scottish Enlightenment*, pp. 88-90.
- ⁸⁹ Ferguson, *Essay*, p. 222.
- ⁹⁰ Ferguson, *Essay*, p. 228
- ⁹¹ Ferguson, *An Essay on the History of Civil Society* [1767], edited by F. Oz-Salzberger, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1995, pp. 216-17.
- ⁹² Ferguson, *Essay*, Cambridge, pp. 219-20.
- ⁹³ Ferguson, *Essay*, pp. 148, 257. Notwithstanding those concerns, Ferguson would later take a hard-line against American Independence. Ferguson, 'Notes', *Correspondence of Adam Ferguson*, II, p. 564. Also, 'Memorial respecting the measures to be pursued on the present immediate prospect of a final separation of the American Colonys from Great Britain', in *Correspondence*, II, pp. 556-559.
- ⁹⁴ Pocock, *Barbarism*, II, p. 350.
- ⁹⁵ Ferguson, *Essay*, p. 225.
- ⁹⁶ Hill, L., "Adam Ferguson and the Paradox of Progress and Decline", *History of Political Thought*, 18 (4), 1997, pp. 677-706.
- ⁹⁷ Ferguson, *Essay*, pp. 225, 228, 238-9.
- ⁹⁸ Hill, L., "Paradox", pp. 681-3.
- ⁹⁹ Keane, J., *Reflections on Violence*, Verso, London, 1996, pp. 137, 139, 141, 154-5.

¹⁰⁰ Keane, J., *Civil Society: Old Images, New Visions*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1998, p. 147.