Review Articles

History and Theory in the Scottish Enlightenment

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The genealogy of the specialized social sciences occupies a prominent place in contemporary discussions about the characteristics and capabilities of social thought. Two topics are commonly seen as interlinked and equally important: first, how these sciences stand in relation to a view of the human world as “historical” (i.e., as a locus of action or change), and second, whether they are bound to approve as well as to affirm the relationships among social facts which their disciplines oblige them to uncover. Underlying these genealogical investigations is often a conviction that modern disciplined study of man has been fundamentally misdirected and that social theory must understand the revolution which brought separate sciences out of the traditional body of moral and political knowledge if it is to counter this false development. Although these concerns have not altogether displaced the older spirit which celebrates the supposed progress from social myth to social science or the conscientious effort to address textual and historical problems without regard to sweeping philosophical objectives, they have helped to shape the contrasting interpretations whose encounters define this field of study today.

One consequence of this state of affairs is that all the key concepts which one may want to use in ordering the materials of this intellectual history are even more vigorously contested than is normally the case. The confident statement of “topics” offered above must be taken as pointing to two noisy battlefields, rather than to charted places. To underline this point, it may suffice to list the names of some influential commentators who have pondered the relationships between theory and history in the works of the Scottish Enlightenment: Marx, J. S. Mill, Oncken, Meinecke, Cassirer, Teggart, Hayek, Cropsey, Cumming, Nisbet.1 No two can be assumed to refer to the same sorts of things when they affirm or deny that the Scots’ social theorizing builds on a distinctive idea of history.

These difficulties and this setting cannot be avoided in an account of the book under review. In his study of Pufendorf, Locke, and Adam Smith,2

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1 Concerning modern authors, I refer specifically to Ernst Cassirer, The Philosophy of the Enlightenment (Princeton, N.J., 1957); Joseph Cropsey, Polity and Economy: An Interpretation of the Principles of Adam Smith (The Hague, 1957); Robert D. Cumming, Human Nature and History: A Study of the Development of Liberal Political Thought, 2 vols. (Chicago, 1969); Friedrich A. Hayek, The Counter-Revolution of Science: Studies on the Abuse of Reason (Glencoe, Ill., 1952); Friedrich Meinecke, Die Entstehung des Historismus (Munich and Berlin, 1936); Robert A. Nisbet, Social Change and History: Aspects of the Western Theory of Development (Oxford and New York, 1969); and Frederick J. Teggart, Theory and Processes of History (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1941). Cumming has also written an essay on Smith’s use of historical materials, which was presented to the Conference for the Study of Political Thought in 1974 but has not yet been published.

2 Hans Medick, Naturzustand und Naturgeschichte der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft.
Hans Medick means to take issue above all with the contentions of Jürgen Habermas\(^3\) that the Scottish moral philosophy of the eighteenth century was insufficiently "historical" and that the social sciences they did so much to create consequently grew up unable to help men identify or oppose the domination which oppresses them. To qualify as "historical" in the sense intended here, it seems, a theory must distinguish between human actions, which are "practical" in the Kantian sense of implementing a design, and human behavior, which is causally determined. Human actions at any given time and place are to be understood by reference to a particular structured pattern of actions which they may be seen to reproduce or even to revolutionize. The sequence of such structures is the stuff of history, while social theory adds an awareness of future possibilities. The theory itself, from the same point of view, contributes to human enlightenment and "emancipation" only if it presents itself as an actor's intervention in a theater of action and does not claim to contain scientific guidance for technical problem solving in human affairs.

Medick accepts Habermas's distinctive construction of the central concepts but claims that the social science of which Smith was the "Newton" displayed at the outset precisely the features that Habermas seeks. The decision to proceed in his interpretation by reference to this sophisticated contemporary context gives mixed results. By calling attention to elements in the older literature which anticipate an influential recent social theory, the book serves as an interesting introduction to the newer approach for readers familiar with the tradition. At the same time, the readings are too often forced and anachronistic, and the author cannot make good his central interpretative claims. Whether the reader will be more stimulated by the surprising distribution of emphases yielded by Medick's approach or annoyed by structural analyses which disregard what appear to most of us as central themes in the theories studied will depend on interests and temperament.

Taking Adam Smith's work as the culmination of the Scottish Enlightenment, Medick depicts it as containing an integral science of civil society based throughout upon a philosophy of history. The theoretical work, according to Medick, is designed to inform an intellectual movement of emancipation. The key to such an understanding the author professes to find in the changing uses of the "state of nature" in modern legal and political thought after Hobbes. Accordingly, he opens with a brief treatment of "status naturalis" in Hobbes and Pufendorf, turns then at some length to Locke's state of nature and his account of the beginning of political society, and devotes the last half of the book to a discussion of the "natural history of society" in Dugald Stewart and Smith, taking it as the logical development of the earlier construct and as the "keystone"—though uncompleted—of Smith's "comprehensive scientific system" (p. 178).

Medick is doubtless right to urge greater attention to the jurisprudential tradition, and he provides an interesting excursus on the reception of modern natural law teachings in Scottish universities during the eighteenth

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\(^3\) Jürgen Habermas, *Theory and Practice*, trans. John Viertel (Boston, 1974).
century. But his own use of the materials tends to disregard the distinctively legalistic frame of reference within which its central concepts move. Instead of using the legal concept "status" to help us understand Locke's "state," he is more likely to read contemporary social-theoretical meanings back into the legalistic language. Medick argues that Locke finds in Pufendorf a pattern of argument from "anthropological" premises and a distinction between a "pure" state of nature, embodying abstract normative criteria, and an "actual" state of nature constituted by social processes. In Locke's work, the author maintains, these elements are transformed into a conception which itself anticipates most of what he then ascribes to Smith. Locke's anthropology is said to discern a man who is morally autonomous and capable of self-development through labor and cultural activity. The theory of property in the state of nature, on this view, reveals the progressive schooling of men by means of their own "improving" practice, through social labor, to the historical point where claims for autonomy and the rule of reason become relevant, because men's total subservience to their physical needs can be overcome. Put so baldly in a summary, the thesis looks pretty improbable; but it must be said, in fairness to the author, that he has studied the texts and the secondary literature and that he offers close argument rather than sweeping assertions.

Central to the argument is the attempt to link the discussion of "power" in the Essay concerning Human Understanding (2: 21) to the concept of "labor" in the Second Treatise, depending in part on a remark in Locke's Journals of 1677 to substantiate the connection. Without going into any detail, it is nevertheless possible to give a fair estimate of Medick's interpretative method by noting that he disregards all of Locke's references to God in both texts crucial to his argument. This is no slight omission, since it spares him from dealing with the prima facie meanings of his materials. In the discussion of liberty and power in the Essay, Locke appears to be trying to explain how a will determined by "uneasiness" can be understood to heed divine commands indifferent to natural desires but essential to man's salvation. Liberty allows him to suspend action and to let his will be reoriented by contemplations of posthumous futurity, if the palate is properly sensitized to uneasinesses emanating from this prospect. On its face, then, this is part of a long aside attempting to meet the objection to his epistemology that it renders moral and God-fearing conduct incomprehensible. Just as this discussion, in context, seems to center on the question of the relationship between man and God, so the examination of man's right to the product of his labor opens with the divine enactment constituting man a subject of rights. The major challenge Medick must meet, it seems to me, is the view that Locke systematically delimits contexts of inquiry from one another, so that the ramifications of man as legal person explored in the Second Treatise are distinct from the consideration of man as subject of knowledge in the Essay—just as, according to Locke, the theory of physics is distinct from the theory of human nature relevant to epistemology (see R. D. Cummings's development of this argument in Human Nature and History, vol. 2). Medick obviously need not accept this view, but he cannot avoid the issues by neglecting inconvenient texts.

Overall, it can be remarked that Medick's interpretation depends heavily on digressions in his sources and on clues in out-of-the-way places. In addition to the chapter on power and the remarks in the diary, Medick's
interpretation of Locke stresses the chapter on the origin of political government, which also appears on its face to be a departure from the main line of Locke’s argument, brought in to deal with some special issues which opponents might adduce from Filmer. It will not suffice to say that such a selective reading is justified by Medick’s specialized topic, since the topic, after all, is associated with the claim that it provides a key to the structure of the theory as a whole. Medick’s hunt for anticipations of a certain “anthropology” and “philosophy of history” renders him sensitive to intimations and possibilities, but not sufficiently attentive to the texts in context.

This pattern of interpretation also marks the treatment of Stewart and Smith. The central problem is the significance to be assigned to the materials which Dugald Stewart speaks of as the “natural or theoretical history of society.” According to Medick, Stewart identifies a “new synthesis of jurisprudence, history, and philosophy” as the “structural principle of Smith’s social philosophy,” and he is correct to do so. Neither claim is borne out by the texts now available. Stewart does emphasize the place of a certain kind of “history” in the philosophical investigations of the late eighteenth century. But he nowhere suggests that it is basic to the structure of the thought of the investigators. He finds no occasion to discuss it when he is dealing with the main themes in Smith’s philosophy, which he considers in relation to Hume and Reid (whose philosophical conceptions are nowhere discussed in Medick’s book: Reid’s name does not occur), or in his account of The Theory of Moral Sentiments. With regard to the Wealth of Nations, Stewart writes (as correctly quoted by Medick): “In Mr. Smith’s writings, whatever be the nature of his subject, he seldom misses an opportunity of indulging his curiosity, in tracing from the principles of human nature, or from the circumstances of society, the origin of the opinions and the institutions which he describes. . . . In his Wealth of Nations, various disquisitions are introduced which have a like object in view, particularly the theoretical delineation he has given of the natural progress of opulence in a country . . .” (p. 203; emphasis supplied). As the following makes clear, Medick builds primarily on these “disquisitions”:

In the form of a “natural progress of opulence,” the model of a historical process of economic growth, stimulated by human needs which are artificial in their nature, released and regulated by institutional guarantees of justice, provides Smith not merely the standard of judgment for a normative natural history, with the help of which he can identify, understand, and criticize empirical history, but also, as telos of the “natural progress of opulence,” the standard of judgment for a “state of nature” with the help of which he analyzes his contemporary society, in order to enlighten it about itself. [P. 250]

Medick concedes that Smith’s only discussions of history, in the Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres, show Smith very close to David Hume in seeing history primarily as a place to exemplify the “constant and universal principles of human nature,” as Hume put it. But he insists that these lectures, given in 1761–62, reproduced an earlier phase of Smith’s thinking, and that he proceeded very differently in the lectures on jurisprudence which he also gave at this time. It seems that we shall have new published notes on the latter lectures soon, and they may prove Medick correct. But the evidence on which he builds in this book simply cannot now substantiate his claims. Since the Glasgow Lectures on Police, Justice, Revenue and
Arms are an important source for Medick’s interpretation, and since these in turn also rest on lectures offered near the earliest date for the lectures on rhetoric, there simply seems to be no reason to doubt that the discussions on history in the latter provide a fit commentary on the uses of “theoretical” or “conjectural” history in the former. There is obviously an interesting sense in which social thought becomes more “historical” in Smith and his contemporaries, but Medick’s eagerness to equate theoretical history with historical social theory in a post-Hegelian sense simply overpowers what Smith is actually doing.

The general contention that Smith uses historical periods in some way similar to the ways Marx does is less eccentric than Medick’s rendition of Locke, but it also requires reexamination. Among the issues to be considered in such a study are Smith’s preoccupation with Rousseau’s “state of nature” as a rhetorically embellished version of Mandeville’s scheme, and his determination to counter it; possible differences among the Scots, parallel to the differences between Ferguson and Smith on the tasks of moral theory itself; connections between Smith’s conception of history and the uniformitarian theories of geological development associated with his close friend and literary executor, James Hutton; and others. None of these questions arises in Medick’s account, and so the work can only make a limited contribution to any such effort.

Then, too, Medick’s interpretation offers little assistance with a question which troubled Smith and his contemporaries, as well as preoccupying much of the current discussion: how and why did the comprehensive moral philosophy give way not to a comprehensive social theory but, beginning with political economy, to diverse specialized social sciences? In his treatment of Smith, as in his treatment of Locke, Medick fails to weigh the evidence on the side of an interpretation stressing the principled division between the subjective psychological studies Smith deemed pertinent to theories of sentiments and the objective social theories he considered appropriate to an account of institutions.

A final observation also brings us back to my point of departure. Medick’s conception of the “historical” brings together features which some alternative views usefully identify for separate analytical treatment. Nisbet, Hayek, and others distinguish between theories which comprehend conduct in terms of individual actions and those which emphasize the development of social forces; Cumming would have us contrast social philosophies which build on theories of human nature with those which build on the logic of diverse historical situations; Meinecke sees the emphasis on individuality as against the universalism of natural-right theories as distinctive for “historicism”; Popper makes a distinction in terms of certain philosophical attributes of arguments. While it may be the case, as Medick supposes, that the theories he studies successfully combine the contrasting features of all these pairings, his interpretation would have more force and subtlety if his apparatus did not exclude many of these issues from distinct consideration.

All this is not meant to challenge the judgment of the faculty at Erlangen in awarding its annual prize to the dissertation on which the book rests. Medick is a gifted and resourceful scholar. Nor is it suggested that historical studies of this sort can be radically divorced from contemporary discussions about the structure of social thought. The point is simply that there may

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well be better philosophical uses of the past than is exemplified in Medick's work, and that these require an organization of past thinking within structures of knowledge defined by contexts which are more properly historical (in an obvious sense of that word) than that which Medick employs.
The Passions and the Interests. Political Arguments for Capitalism before Its Triumph.

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*The Economic Journal* is currently published by Royal Economic Society.
Many of the policy prescriptions of the *Wealth of Nations* appear, if the contributors are right, to have lasted better than much that has come since. One can conclude, like Collison Black, by quoting what Burke wrote to Smith on reading the *Theory of Moral Sentiments*: “A theory like yours founded on the nature of man, which is always the same, will last, when those that are founded on his opinions, which are always changing, will and must be forgotten.”

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The *Passions and the Interests. Political Arguments for Capitalism before Its Triumph.*


Early efforts to make sense of the patterns of conduct subsequently labelled capitalist paid rather more attention to the moral and political significance of such conduct than they did to its mechanics or inner logic. Albert Hirschman challenges the view that these patterns were first appreciated by spokesmen for a new class of men deeply implicated in the new economic forms of conduct. He maintains, rather, that capitalism was discerned and approved by writers carrying forward the traditions of moral philosophy and political commentary, and that the triumph of the new social order may have been assisted by the fact that many among established élites came to expect that capitalism could solve moral and political problems that troubled them. The “spirit of capitalism” appears to have had some surprising, influential sponsors.

To enjoy Hirschman’s brief and generally well-written book it is not necessary to accept the strongest version of the thesis just outlined. Whether or not Hirschman’s account substantially undermines claims made on behalf of “bourgeois ideology” or the “protestant ethic”, there is no doubt that it helps to elucidate the genealogy of the premises upon which much economic thought rests and that it provides matter for reflection. Hirschman focuses on two developments. He traces the rise of the idea that a man pursuing his interest engages in moderate and orderly activities far preferable to those his passions would otherwise impel him to pursue. And he considers several writers who viewed the system of commerce as a civilising order within the political field, polishing rude manners and restraining political barbarism. In both cases, he rekindles our wonder at the complacency with which generations managed to combine profession of the old moral maxims with the calm assumption that men will spend most of their time doing things which presuppose a calculus of selfishness and greed. Hirschman’s story helps us to understand how this was done.

Hirschman begins with the decline of glory. Many writers in the sixteenth century ceased to consider magnanimity as a moral force able to elicit virtuous conduct. As realists, they also could not count on reason to hold man in order, and consequently they looked for calming passions to counterbalance the wild ones. The concept of interest emerges in political discourse to comprehend a complex of imperatives derived from reason of state, and it is adapted to
moral discourse to cover the promptings of prudent self-regard. In comparison to the other passions, in this account, interest makes for conduct that is predictable, *douce*, and harmless. An interested man is certainly not a heroic man; but he may well be polished and gentle in manner. And that suffices for civility, at least for such moralists as David Hume.

If there is a major failing in Hirschman's charming review of this literature, it is common to history of ideas as an approach. It would have been helpful to know much more about the philosophical considerations that undercut the trust in magnanimity, decreed realism, and rendered interest eligible for consideration as a mode of the passions. But that would take us far from the story of this idea, to difficult questions about constituting the subject of moral action in the aftermath of the epistemological revolution attending the rise of modern science. Such questions make for long, complicated books, and are beyond the scope of this approach.

In the second part of the book, Hirschman offers short sketches of individual theorists who ascribed positive political worth to the commercial system. He first takes up Montesquieu, Sir James Steuart, and John Millar, as main proponents of such a view, and then treats the Physiocrats and Adam Smith as writers who modified it and then distracted attention from it. Hirschman makes good use of Montesquieu's chapters on commerce in the *Spirit of the Laws*, to show that Montesquieu welcomed commercial progress, including the development of commercial paper, as an important counter to abuses of political power. He acknowledges that for Montesquieu political institutions played at least as important a part, but he neglects to ponder the importance of China for Montesquieu, as a counterpart to Britain and an instance of commercial society which lacks constitutional safeguards and so epitomises despotic rule. It might also have been worthwhile if Hirschman had taken the time to follow Montesquieu's distinction between the "economic" commerce of Britain and the commerce in luxury products which he deemed suitable for France (cf. Thomas L. Pangle's *Montesquieu's Philosophy of Liberalism*). In this matter too, Hirschman's intriguing pursuit of the idea which interests him takes his attention from aspects of the wider context which would help give that idea its more precise meaning. Much more will have to be said, as Hirschman agrees, about the interrelationships among commerce, liberty, and civic virtue, as seen by the writers of the eighteenth century.

Curiously enough, Hirschman sees the end of his story precisely at the point where many might have begun it. He contends that interest ceases to have the old sort of moral significance in Adam Smith's major writings, because the desire for gain appears to Smith as the universal drive or as an expression of all the others, so that there is no longer a conflict between interest and the passions. The system of commerce, moreover, while it best enhances the wealth of nations, may harm as many political interests as it serves, and cannot be taken as a major contributor to political excellence. With Smith, it seems to Hirschman, the arguments for capitalism cease to be moral and political and become economic. Hirschman's contribution to solving the "Adam Smith problem" about the relationship between the *Theory of Moral Sentiments* and
the Wealth of Nations is tantalizing rather than definitive. It may even be said that Hirschman's own book reproduces a part of that problem, since he too separates the section on human nature from the section on historically established institutions, without working through the problems of relating the theory of individual conduct to the theory of institutions.

Hirschman suggests that the political arguments are overtaken by events as well as by the definitive turn to economics, and more recent moral reflections on capitalism have more in common with the thought of Adam Ferguson and Alexis de Tocqueville, who had deep misgivings about the political effects of capitalism. Nevertheless, Hirschman notes, Keynes and Schumpeter have resurrected the old themes in more recent times. Hirschman concludes that latterday critics and apologists alike would benefit from familiarity with the story he tells. As this modest conclusion suggests, the work does not pretend to great theoretical weight. Perhaps the whole book may most fairly be taken as licensed, although its matter is intellectual history, by the essay form so dear to most of those whose work it considers.

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This volume contains three of Professor Hutchison's recent essays on methodological questions in economics, plus an appendix. One of these essays has already appeared in S. J. Latsis (ed.), Method and Appraisal in Economics (Cambridge University Press, 1976). The essays are rather disparate, and the portmanteau title gives a fair indication of the tenuousness of any theme that might connect them. In the absence of such a theme the author is rather at the reviewer's mercy, and can hardly grumble if the ideas one picks out in the search for something representative are not the ones the author would have wished.

One preoccupation that appears to characterise Hutchison's work is the possibility that the policies advocated by economists are not properly derivable from their theories; or that these theories are not adequately based on experience or supported by evidence. Accordingly, he has a certain amount of sport in the appendix with the kind of things economists advocate in letters to The Times. But since it is part of an economist's training to think in terms of relevant alternatives, one is not going to arrive at any conclusion unless these are systematically compared with the kind of things that non-economists write to The Times on questions of economic policy (not an enticing prospect).

Hutchison's complaints in this connection remain, however, quite unfocused: professional integrity is slurred in a quite uninhibited fashion, without ever actually naming names or citing cases. The following gives a good indication of the belligerent but quite indefinite flavour of such discussion: "For the kind of 'methodology' which many economists want and value is one that boosts up their prestige — vital for raising funds — as 'Scientists' with a capital
Adam Smith’s Sociological Economics

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principles (p. 6), we are treated to a succession of notable anarchist thinkers who justified, encouraged or defended some forms of force and violence. Lysander Spooner justified the right to use arms against despots, Benjamin Tucker viewed violence from a utilitarian standpoint, and Johann Most published technical instructions on dynamite and bombs. Unifying these views was the belief that liberating violence was quite different than the violence visited upon the oppressed. Reichert, however, asserts in his conclusion that "all anarchists are totally pacifists" (p. 586). Are Spooner, Tucker and Most, then, not anarchists?

One of the author's goals is to put to rest the belief that anarchism was a European importation. In this effort, he succeeds, detailing the ideas of dozens of American anarchists. Unfortunately there is little coherence to the book, each chapter detailing the ideas and, occasionally, the life history of one person or group of people. In his search for anarchists, Reichert spends much time on people who merely repeated others' ideas and apparently had no influence on anyone else of note.

*Partisans of Freedom* is poorly written. There are dangling participles, misspellings and trite and hackneyed phrases strewn throughout the book. There are strange statements of fact which are simply untrue. Scholars who know something of the condition of Jews in Russia will be startled to learn that many Russian Jewish families living in the Pale of Settlement in the 1870s were well-off (p. 407). There are logical inconsistencies in argument (p. 40 on Come-Outer-ism).

Finally, there is an objectionable simplification in this book, illustrated by Reichert's dichotomization of American political life into libertarian and authoritarian camps, into the latter of which is lumped the social contract thinkers. By making such gross generalizations, Reichert minimizes the individualistic strain which is common to anarchism and liberalism and sets both off from traditional conservatives. *Partisans of Freedom* contains useful information about a score of poorly known anarchists but lacks a clear, consistent, significant theme and argument.

**Harvey Klehr**

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David Reisman adds another to the recent efforts to revise the standard pictures of Adam Smith as proponent of bourgeois greed or as precursor of technical utilitarian economics. (Cp. recent writings by Robert D. Cumming, Duncan Forbes, Hans Medick, Ronald Meek, and Donald Winch, as well as the earlier book by Joseph Cropsey.) He offers a coherent account, locating Smith's economic ideas within a comprehensive social theory. Although the design is interesting, centering on a notion of economic policy for growth as means to non-economic social objectives, the work is seriously flawed, and cannot in the end make good its claim of doing more than abstracting a model from Smith's writing. Smith might have reasoned as Reisman says he did; but the evidence is not strong enough to persuade me. We are provided a different picture, but not a better likeness.

At the outset, Reisman quite rightly challenges those who presume that the intellectual map of the eighteenth century provides for economics in the modern sense. Instead of studying the map himself, however, he is content with a conjectural geography, stated in language which testifies how much he remains a stranger to those places:

"Because of his anthropocentrism, he would have sought to integrate economic activity into the broad science of humanity which he (like Comte later) was trying to create. The problem with Adam Smith is not simply where to locate a cosmopolitan intellectual of the eighteenth century in terms of the boundaries laid down by our modern maps, but also where he would have located himself. Here his view is clear: since academic overspecialisation can so easily lead to confusion, intellectual anomy, and the emergence of the Fachidiot, it is best not to locate oneself at all (p. 12)."

Questions about the relationships among the two theories Smith wrote and the theory he never completed—the theory of moral sentiments, the theory of political economy, and the theory of natural jurisprudence—have to be addressed with a subtlety and care which Reisman does not marshal. Consequently he offers an enforced unification of Smith's complex thought rather than a compelling structural analysis.

Reisman contends that Smith has a "functionalist" theory of social integration, an "economic determinist" theory of social structure and social change, and an "historicism" conception of the historically limited relevance of any moral or political recommendations.

He persistently likens Smith's moral theory to Durkheim's, maintaining that the principle
of sympathy provides motive power to a process of internalizing established social norms embodied in a collective consciousness. Reisman does not work through the structure of Smith’s argument in the *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, perhaps because of his preconceived notion as to where such a study would fall within a theory like Durkheim’s. Consequently, he disregards the whole section dealing with judgments of merit and demerit, while he exaggerates the importance of the fourth and fifth sections, which Smith introduced as qualifications to his main argument. The result is a profound distortion of the mix between universal humanist and historicist considerations in Smith’s moral theory, as well as a failure to appreciate the important ironic overtones in Smith’s rehearsal of teleological arguments—overtones which were not missed by Reid and Ferguson and others among his contemporaries who found him too epicurean.

The thesis that Smith builds upon an economic determinist theory of history was earlier elaborated by Ronald Meek and several of his students, as Reisman acknowledges. Reisman states it in very strong terms, contending that “social, political or moral factors . . . are mere dependent variables” (p. 137), and using the language of base and superstructure. There is an arguable case here, perhaps, but much of it depends on passages characterizing great periods of history rather than on Smith’s distinctive detailed theoretical argument about morals or political economy. There is no question that Smith saw mankind’s involvement in the economic system as producers or consumers a crucial part of their experience and of the life of their society; but it is hard to speak of an economic-determinist historical theory when his theories, properly so called by his own criteria, are not for the most part historical, when the sequence of historical stages is barely comprehended in theoretical terms, and when the crucial theory of political and legal activity remains largely unwritten.

According to Reisman, Smith aims at a progressive state of the economy, “a rising G.N.P.”, and he seeks this not to enrich the commercial classes but “to combat moral pollution.” “The technology of economics seems to have been,” Reisman writes, “the fashioning of a new world which a philosopher can behold with pleasure” (p. 105). The change to this new world will be smooth and tranquil, in this account, because the basic structural changes it requires have already been determined by basic economic transformations: now what is needed is to secure the balance of powers within government and among classes, so that public power will no longer impede economic growth. The condition of the laboring class and of social morale in general require the buoyancy provided by the progressive state of the economy.

I found the closing portion of the book, where this argument is developed, more authoritative in its use of sources than the earlier parts. Still, the author seems torn between appreciation for Smith’s social-mindedness and disdain for what he terms his social conservatism. Sometimes this drives him to serious error, as when he remarks, absurdly, “The Machtapparat of the state becomes necessary to police the ‘sacred rights of property’” (p. 181). To render Smith’s legalistic conception of government in this alien concept doesn’t speak well for the quality of Reisman’s encounter with Smith’s political theory. The work is marred by its failure to render the texts as structured arguments and to relate materials cited or emphasized to these contexts. The author arrogates to himself the right to transmigrate what he finds into a pattern of reasonings constituting the sort of comprehensive theory he thinks Smith must have had.

In short, the book has some value for scholars following the contemporary discussion about Smith. But it is not sufficiently learned or precise to serve well as a treatment of the issues for those whose interests are less specialized. Contemporary political theorists do well to seek out the theoretical resources hidden in the Scottish moral philosophy, if only to counter the trend toward recasting contemporary issues in sometimes mystifying language conditioned by continental problem constellations. Reisman’s book falls short in this respect: he offers Gattungswesen to explicate Smith’s “universal nature,” Angst to render fear, as well as Verstehen and Vernunft and Geist; he finds “Panglossian optimism” and “quasi-Mannheimian struggle for the minds of man” and proto-Keynesian situations,” and even a “Shakespearean distrust of the masses.” Some of these are doubtless stylistic excrescences which his editor should have removed; but one of the things we can learn from Smith’s teachings as from his literary practice is that there are vital inner connections between the form and the matter of theoretical work.

**David Kettler**

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es to convince tender-minded liberals that the
time has come for tough-mindedness about
escalating terrorism.

Sympathy with the "wretched of the earth"
might dispose tender-minded liberals to excuse,
if not to condone, certain terrorist actions.
Even if their attitude is wholly condemnation,
the civil libertarianism of tender-minded liberals
might cause them to blanch before effective
counter-terrorist policies. Wilkinson's tough-
minded liberalism hopes to convince the ten-
der-minded that liberalism is a philosophy of
state; it is not anarchism. The state accordingly
is an organ of social self-defense to be used
against those groups who have declared war on
civility and the liberal polity. Whatever the
ultimate goals of terrorist groups, their opera-
tional code that the end justifies the means, any
means, involves a war of attrition against the
values of liberal civilization. To Wilkinson it is
clear that these values are worth fighting for
and that liberalism's concern for individual
rights is no barrier against serious counter-ter-
rorist measures. There is a long distance be-
tween the current (though decreasingly) inade-
quate policies of liberal regimes and the threat
of a police state.

The conception of terrorism that informs
Wilkinson's book is this: "Political terrorism
may be briefly defined as coercive intimidation.
It is the systematic use of murder and destruc-
tion, and the threat of murder and destruction
in order to terrorize individuals, groups, commu-
nities or governments into conceding to the
terrorists' political demands. It is one of the
oldest techniques of psychological warfare" (p.
49). Wilkinson is at pains to distinguish terror-
ism, thus construed, from violence, especially
legitimate violence, which is inseparable from
any state, liberal or otherwise. A liberal polity
thus has not only a right but indeed a duty to
employ force in the legitimate self-defence of
itself and its citizens.

The first half of the book is devoted to
establishing the above framework. It involves
examining liberalism from a philosophical
standpoint and terrorism from a social science
perspective. The latter includes a useful summa-
tion of the types and roots of terrorism, where
the author avoids any simplistic, say, psycho-
analytical, account of this phenomenon. The
second part of the book reflects a "policy
science" commitment whereby Wilkinson goes
into considerable detail about a wide array of
counter-terrorist strategies, tactics, and devices.
Here the concern is combating internal terror-
ism as with urban guerrillas and "incipient civil
war" (e.g., Northern Ireland) and "international
terrorism" as with highjacking and diplomatic
kidnapping. In either case the author ranges
from brief case studies to evaluation and
recommendation of proper police and military
behavior and techniques. Thus we find him
saying, for example, that the "new American
180 laser sub-machine gun should prove an
invaluable anti-terrorist weapon" (p. 144).

In sum, Wilkinson's book is a somewhat
unpleasant book about a most unpleasant sub-
ject. It has all the strengths and all the
weaknesses of the "policy science" approach.
In its specific concern the book seems measured
and realistic. Its polemical zeal stems from the
author's conviction that "terrorism is more
than simply a manifestation of psychopatholo-
y, and more than a symptom of social discon-
tent, oppression, and injustice—though it may
be both of these things as well. It is also a moral
crime, a crime against humanity, an attack not
only on our security, our rule of law, and the
safety of the state, but on civilized society
itself" (p. 66).

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Adam Smith's Politics: An Essay in Historiog-
graphic Revision. By Donald Winch. (Cam-
Pp. xi + 206. $22.95, cloth; $6.95, paper.)

Donald Winch maintains that the interpreta-
tion of Adam Smith's politics has been con-
fused by treating his account of commercial
society as an approximation to later concep-
tions of "liberal capitalism" and missing his
central preoccupation with the political prob-
lems arising out of the relationships between
commercial society and a regime of liberty and
justice. For Smith, Winch shows, these are
problems to be generally understood by "natur-
al jurisprudence," to be specified by "experi-
mental! and historical thinking, and to be
managed by political wisdom. The nineteenth-
century theorists with which he is mistakenly
associated define the political concepts in terms
of the socioeconomic and merge the accounts
of primary processes in the two or three
domains which Smith distinguishes. To ascribe
such views to Smith deprives us of an under-
standing of his distinctive position and obscures
the need to account for the subsequent shift to
the later types of theories. Winch has reviewed
the textual evidence in the context of political
themes promise among Smith's con-
temporaries and he has uncovered a complex
political conception and a distinctive style of political analysis.

According to Winch, Smith's actual intellectual agenda is strongly influenced by the debates about the political implications of commerce begun in the preceding century and carried on in his time between thinkers who have been recently studied as continuators of a republican tradition of civic humanism and others characterized by Duncan Forbes as proponents of "sceptical Whiggism." Like Forbes, Winch generally takes Smith as representing the latter school of thought, which teaches that commercial society fosters habits and relationships which contribute to liberty and justice. At the same time, Winch shows, Smith must address issues raised by those who see in the triumph of commerce a dangerous source of corruption in the civic order, and he identifies some threatening effects they had not seen, chiefly concerning the degradation of the poor through the division of labor and the political machinations of the merchant class. Winch demonstrates that for Smith the political disadvantages resulting from commercial society can only be countered and the political advantages enjoyed by means of an adequate political conception embodied in wise leaders ruling within an appropriate political constitution. The theory of political economy does not itself provide that political conception and Smith never imagined that it could.

Winch expounds his interpretation in a sequence of studies taking up in turn Smith's relationship to the natural jurisprudence of his teacher, Francis Hutcheson, his appreciation of commercial society as a precondition for a political system of constitutional liberty, and his encounters with the great questions of the public debt, the militia, and policy toward America. The treatments, especially in the last three of these chapters, are full of rich and surprising insights. What emerges is the portrait of a political thinker with a far more generous vision of the ends of government than is credited by those who think that he intended it merely to perform necessary services for those in the marketplace. Winch stresses Smith's concern for the welfare and independence of the poor, his regard for the intrinsic moral worth of the governing function, and his detestation for oppressive, arbitrary regimes. Moreover, Smith is shown to have an astute understanding of political structures and processes. His policy studies put the analysis of substantive problems in the context of care for the state of public opinion concerning the authority of government and accommodation to the complex of motives actuating individuals and factions in the governing class. There are no automatic solutions to be expected from the systems comprehended by either of the finished theoretical works. Civilization requires successful interventions by legislators and magistrates exercising the highest form of prudence and benevolence, even while it is constantly jeopardized by the ignorance and ambition of factious politicians.

The book tells all this very well and fulfills the major promise of the title. The uncertain places are those where questions about the philosophical character of Smith's political thought impinge on the political account. One difficulty concerns the vexing questions about the interrelationships between arguments derived from universal theories of human nature or of the natural economic system and arguments derived from the accounts of historical variety and change, and how both sorts of arguments bear on the justification of ethical judgments. Winch disclaims revisionist ambitions in this domain and declares himself satisfied with the view that Smith's historical interpretations guide the "experimental" specification and application of universal principles derived from the theory of human nature. While he is surely right to argue that Smith's major theories do not rest upon a "philosophy of history" in the nineteenth-century continental sense—let alone the economic determinist philosophy of history—Winch brushes past some materials that suggest that the case is more complicated and unresolved than he allows. But Winch seems willing to leave speculative difficulties to others. He provides a subtle and illuminating reading of Smith's political writings and a valuable corrective to anachronistic stereotypes which hamper the study of modern liberal thought.

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