

The Reconfiguration of Eighteenth-Century Scottish  
Historiography: Dialogues Between the Present and the Past

by

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A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Affairs in  
partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

in

History

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## Abstract

Changes occurred to the writing of History in eighteenth-century Scotland. Dissatisfied with traditional historical priorities, eighteenth-century Scottish historians changed the focus of their writing to reflect what they felt was more relevant to contemporary sensibilities, giving new importance to the social aspects of daily life, the inward life of the sentiments, and the history of manners. The long-standing historiographical model of the classical tradition, which had given precedence to the history of kings, public affairs and the political, gave way to a variety of new historical genres. This refocusing of historiographical emphasis was a response to a vibrant commercial society, to the era's social interests, to the period's predilection for delicate sensibilities and refined feelings, and to a burgeoning middle class.

One of these new genres of historical writing was called *conjectural history*. A uniquely inventive eighteenth-century discursive form, conjectural history was unlike traditional history in methodology, and was differentiated by its ability to surmount traditional history's intrinsic boundaries. Conjectural history inferred and speculated, as it strove to better understand the fundamental principles of human nature. Based on these changes to historical writing, this study asks a methodological question, and it looks at several different examples of the various historical genres being written at this time.

## Acknowledgements

In the years that it has taken me to reach this academic stage I have received the support of many individuals whom I would like to thank at this time.

I am grateful to my Mother and Father who unfailingly encouraged me and supported me in my academic pursuits, while they were alive.

To my children, Caitilin, Leila, David, Laura and Sarah, who used to think that all Dads worked and went to school, thank you for your love, support and understanding. After all these years of having faith in me, part of my journey is over.

My brother, John, and my sister, Janie, have always been there for me during the course of my studies, and I thank them. Although younger than me, my sister received a Ph. D. decades ago, and her experience and advice has bolstered me in moments of doubt or inarticulateness.

I thank Professor Mark Phillips for having given me the opportunity to work with him on some intriguing eighteenth-century questions. I have come to eighteenth-century History because of his teaching and scholarship. My gratitude runs deep.

I acknowledge Professor William B. Kinsley, formerly of the University of Montreal, now retired, who encouraged me, many years ago, to continue with my studies, and whose example accompanies me in my academic journey.

My special thanks go to Joan White, whose knowledge of departmental policies and deadlines has kept me on track. I am deeply grateful for the assistance she has given me during the course of my studies.

Ronald J. Martini  
Carleton University  
November 27, 2015

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

### *1.1 The Reconfiguration of Eighteenth-Century Scottish Historiography*

The gradual transitions from one historical period to another often include criticism of the historiography of the earlier period as being inadequate to the priorities of the later period. The historical writing of the eighteenth-century is no exception to this generalization. Realizing that new historical forms and methodologies were needed to reflect the concerns of the eighteenth century, the Scottish Enlightenment saw history expand its areas of study, resulting in numerous new genres of historical writings.

Based on these changes to the historiography of the period, this project asks a question, and it considers several different forms of eighteenth century history. *First*, this study asks the question: without documentation to buttress their writings, on what trustworthy foundation did the eighteenth-century historians who wrote on conjecturalist themes rely when writing their histories? *Second*, in the longest portion of this study, I review four examples of the historical genres being written in eighteenth-century Scotland.

History was an extremely popular form of writing in the eighteenth-century. It was in “vogue.” Not only did many read history, but those who had “literary aspirations” also wrote it.<sup>1</sup> Sir John Sinclair, for example, from who’s *Statistical Account of Scotland* we will later discuss an excerpt, was one of these writers who wrote non-traditional histories of the present. Others wrote in more-or-less traditional form, and still others in genres of a more innovative type, in keeping with the eclectic nature of eighteenth-century historiography. In a letter to William

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<sup>1</sup> Gladys Bryson, *Man and Society: The Scottish Inquiry of the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Augustus M. Kelley, 1968), 78.

Strahan, David Hume, affirms his century's and Scotland's predilection for history, writing: "I believe this is the historical Age, and this the historical Nation."<sup>2</sup>

Dissatisfied with Neoclassical historical priorities eighteenth-century Scottish historians enlarged the range, and changed the focus of their writing of history to reflect contemporary sensibilities, giving new importance to sentiments, manners, and the daily lives of the people.<sup>3</sup> The history of monarchies and the political, the "Great Man Theory,"<sup>4</sup> although still being written, obligatorily gave way to a number of historical genres, as history enlarged its field of study, becoming philosophical history, reflecting its new scope.<sup>5</sup> It had become evident to eighteenth-century historians, with David Hume being prominent among them, that what occurred to ordinary people on a daily basis had a barely perceptible, but profound effect on what had been the subject of traditional history, kings, great men, and the political. We see this belief reflected in Hume's *The History of England: From the Invasion of Julius Caesar to The Revolution of 1688*, where he combines the long-established historical form with new priorities.

The long-standing historiographical model of the classical tradition, which since Thucydides had giving precedence to the history of kings, public affairs and the political, gave way to a variety of historical genres.<sup>6</sup> This historiographical realignment gave new importance to

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<sup>2</sup> David Hume, *The Letters of David Hume*, ed. J. Greig, vol. 2 (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1932), 2 vols. 2, 230; qtd. Christopher J. Berry, *Social Theory of the Scottish Enlightenment* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 1997), 55.

<sup>3</sup> Mark Salber Phillips, "Reconsiderations on History and Antiquarianism: Arnaldo Momigliano and the Historiography of Eighteenth-Century Britain." *Journal of the History of Ideas* 57.2 (April 1996): 304-305; Arnaldo Momigliano, "Eighteenth Century Prelude to Mr. Gibbon," in *Sesto contributo alla storia degli studi classici e del mondo antico*, Storia e letteratura: Raccolta di studi e testi, 149 (Roma: Edizioni di storia e letteratura, 1980), 249-251.

<sup>4</sup> Bryson, *Man and Society*, 81.

<sup>5</sup> Mark Salber Phillips, *Society and Sentiment: Genres of Historical Writing in Britain, 1740-1820* (Princeton: New Jersey: Princeton UP, 2000), 10, 17.

<sup>6</sup> Phillips, *Society and Sentiment*, 10.

the history of manners, sentiments, and the quotidian.<sup>7</sup> The social aspects of daily life and the inward life of the sentiments, therefore, took on a new significance, rivaling, if not surpassing in certain genres, the attention given to the history of the affairs of state. This expansion of history, and the refocusing of historiographical emphasis, was a response to a vibrant commercial society, to the era's social interests, to the period's predilection for delicate sensibilities and refined feelings, and to a burgeoning middle class. This shift in historiographical priority was prompted by "social and sentimental questions" that "were registered right across eighteenth-century letters and should not be identified solely with any particular genre."<sup>8</sup>

Some of the genres of this new, distinct historical range accorded specific attention to cultural and social matters. One of these was, *philosophical history*, that form of history, which tried "its best to encompass all the parts of the newly expanded subject" of history.<sup>9</sup> It was a form of historical narrative, which tried to be inclusive of, and germane to, a broader swath of society, in contradistinction to previous, more traditional, historical methods. It gave priority to cultural and social matters, and its subject matter included "not only commerce and navigation, but the history of literature, of the arts and sciences, of manners and customs, even of opinion and sentiment."<sup>10</sup> In general, therefore, a history written with this "philosophical" point of view "would depict the changing climate of opinion as it affected the interests, fears, and affections of humankind."<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Phillips, "Reconsiderations," 304-305.

<sup>8</sup> Phillips, *Society and Sentiment*, xii.

<sup>9</sup> Phillips, *Society and Sentiment*, 16.

<sup>10</sup> Phillips, *Society and Sentiment*, 17.

<sup>11</sup> Phillips, *Society and Sentiment*, 50.

Some of the other new forms, like *conjectural history*, strove to gain an understanding of the basic principles of human nature. For the conjectural historian, Phillips writes, history was “a moral science held together by the desire to investigate fundamental principles of human nature.”<sup>12</sup>

Conjectural history is that historical methodology, which has been called “conjectural” ever since it was recognized and identified as such by Dugald Stewart (1753 – 1828), a professor of moral philosophy at Edinburgh University in his *Account of the Life and Writings of Adam Smith, LL.D.* This speculative form of history, Stewart writes, “deserves our attention less, on account of the opinion it contains, than as a specimen of a particular sort of inquiry, which, so far as I know, is entirely of modern origin.”<sup>13</sup>

The term *conjectural history* need not be restricted, or used exclusively, to denote a form of historical narrative coming out of Scotland in the eighteenth-century, however, but may also be applied to similar textual forms from other, predominantly European, cultures and adjacent historical periods. Founded on natural philosophy, conjectural history is academic, anti-rationalistic,<sup>14</sup> systematic, speculative and experimental in method. In one of its most representative forms, represented in this study by John Millar’s *The Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, it bases itself on the undocumented history of a representative past, depicting the typical,

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<sup>12</sup> Phillips, *Society and Sentiment*, 171.

<sup>13</sup> Dugald Stewart, *Account of the Life and Writings of Adam Smith, LL.D.* In *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*. Adam Smith. (London: George Bell and Sons, 1875), xxxiv.

<sup>14</sup> Frank Palmeri, “Conjectural History and the Origins of Sociology,” *Studies in Eighteenth Century Culture* 37.1 (May 2008): 5.

“original and most simple state,”<sup>15</sup> of inexperienced, “rude and savage”<sup>16</sup> humanity, as it necessarily advanced,<sup>17</sup> acquired experience and sensibility, and matured into a civilized society

In some of its forms, precedence would be given to the undocumented history of a typical past. The historian would infer, looking back in time from where the historical record left off, and in its Scottish manifestation, he would speculate on the earliest forms of social institutions. An eighteenth-century discursive form, a methodology, and a genre of history, conjectural history was unlike traditional history and was differentiated by its ability to surmount the intrinsic boundaries of conventional historical forms. It should be kept in mind, however, that “the characteristic conjecturalist themes echo across the whole spectrum of historically minded genres,” writes Phillips, “and influenced the way contemporary audiences understood the entire framework of historical understanding.”<sup>18</sup>

### ***1.2 Research Goals***

History is one of humankind’s main sources of knowledge about the past. Yet some of the historical genres being written during the Scottish Enlightenment, those that sought to discover the underlying general truths of human nature, or those that attempted to reconstruct a typical human past, did so without recourse to documentation. This methodology gives the appearance of being a rather uncertain way of writing history. This thesis, therefore asks the question: on

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<sup>15</sup> Rev. Alex Stewart, *The Works of William Robertson, D.D.: An Account of His Life and Writings*. Vol. 4. (London: W. Sharpe & Son, 1820), 12 vols., 92.

<sup>16</sup> David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, eds., David Fate Norton and Mary J. Norton (New York: Oxford U P, 2000), Book III, Part ii, Section 2, Paragraph 8, 314.

<sup>17</sup> Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, in *The Glasgow edition of the Works and Correspondence of Adam Smith*, Vol. 2 (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1980), 7 vols., 316.

<sup>18</sup> Phillips, *Society and Sentiment*, 172.

what dependable foundation did the eighteenth-century philosopher-historians rely when writing their undocumented histories?

We may respond to this question by stating that they relied on the inherent uniformity of human nature to guide them in their writing. With the exception of Sinclair, who based his history on collected data, our selections from the writings of Hume, Millar, and Malthus are representative of undocumented history, of inferential, and therefore of uncertain history. While this answer, the uniformity of human nature is correct; it leaves out some more nuanced aspect of the truth.

If we enquire further into human nature, and we add to our original response the fact that these historians also relied on the notion of human experience—that particular experience which is derived from observation and the constant conjunction of causal connections, both in nature and in human behavior—then our original answer is considerably refined. We discover in the idea of experience, as the historians to whom we are alluding knew, a more solid foundation on which to base a history. On this subject of the constant conjunction of cause and effect, Hume writes, “Our idea, therefore, of necessity and causation arises entirely from the uniformity, observable in the operations of nature; where similar objects are constantly conjoined together, and the mind is determined by custom to infer the one from the appearance of the other.”<sup>19</sup>

We asked: without documentation to buttress their writings, on what trustworthy foundation did the eighteenth-century historians rely when writing their histories? While the answers to our original question are correct, and adequate as they stand—namely, that the eighteenth-century historians who wrote the undocumented history of manners, customs, and

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<sup>19</sup> David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Peter Millican (New York: Oxford UP, 2007), Section 8, Part 1, Paragraph 5 and 6, 59-60.

mind based themselves on the uniformity of human nature, and specifically on human experience as constituted by the imagination, in making their historical claims—I believe that there may be a yet more precise category, beyond experience, on which these historians grounded their undocumented histories.

If we search a little deeper in the writings of Hume for that more subtle, and imminently more pertinent answer to our question, we find that in *the Principles of Morals* Hume writes: “The perusal of a history seems a calm entertainment; but would be no entertainment at all, did not our hearts beat with correspondent movements to those which are described by the historian.”<sup>20</sup> I believe that imbedded in this passage we find a reference to what I propose, is *the* reason why the historians whose histories we have chosen to review were able to write as they did.

Readers of history, Hume is saying, enjoy what they are reading, and find “entertainment” in the historians words, if they can feel, and recognize, some type of connection, or link with the people, or with the historical period about which they are reading. In *A Treatise of Human Nature*, Hume writes, “No quality of human nature is more remarkable, both in itself and in its consequences, than that propensity to sympathize with others, and to receive by communication their inclinations and sentiments, however different from, or even contrary to our own.”<sup>21</sup> In other words, for those readers of history, to whom Hume is referring, if sympathy is present, or if a sympathetic communication is established between the present and the past, then history

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<sup>20</sup> David Hume, *The Principles of Morals*, in *Enquiries Concerning Human Understanding and Concerning the Principles of Morals*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., reprinted from the 1777 edition with intro. and analytical index by L. A. Selby-Bigge, with text revised and notes by P. H. Nidditch (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1975), Sect. 5, Part 2, Paragraph 181, 223.

<sup>21</sup> Hume, *Treatise*, Book 2, Part 1, Section 11, Paragraph 2, 206.

becomes recognizable, and can be suitably enjoyed.<sup>22</sup> “Communication” is the essential word in this quotation. Communication helps the historian understand the past, for “sympathy,” Hume writes, “is exactly correspondent to the operations of our understanding.”

The historian who is writing an undocumented history of the past, or any historian, for that matter, must establish a connection with the past: between himself and the past, and between the past and the historian. Sympathy establishes such a methodological communication. Sympathy aids the historian in seeing the history he is writing from his unique 18<sup>th</sup> century perspective, it helps the historian write as if he had been there, in the historical period being written about, and it assists the historian in seeing history through the eyes of the individuals who were living in the historical time period, which is the subject of his writing.

In reference to the historian’s ability to establish a communication with the past—the communication of thoughts, feelings and ideas—Hume writes that, “when any affection” is suffused by sympathy, “This idea is presently converted into an impression, acquires such a degree of force and vivacity, as to become the very passion itself, and produce an equal emotion, as any original affection.”<sup>23</sup> This change from idea to impression occurs in an instant, and while “it proceeds from certain views and reflections, which will not escape the strict scrutiny of a philosopher,” it may well escape the notice of the person, or the historian, who makes them.<sup>24</sup> While a philosopher may be aware, or may speculate about the actual workings of the human mind that lead to this dialogue between the present and the past, historians who did not theorize

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<sup>22</sup> Hume, *Treatise*, Book 2, Part 1, Section 11, Paragraph 8, 208.

<sup>23</sup> Hume, *Treatise*, Book 2, Part 1, Section 11, Paragraph 3, 206.

<sup>24</sup> Hume, *Treatise*, Book 2, Part 1, Section 11, Paragraph 3, 206.

on these matters, wrote their histories, as they did, basing themselves on the less subtle, but adequate, description of their method: the uniformity of human nature.

In this essay, therefore, I am asserting that the eighteenth-century historians who were writing histories, which were effectively detailed inquiries into the essential principles of human nature, were able to write with the assurance they displayed due to their belief in some level of uniformity of human nature, because they trusted their experience of humankind, based on observation, and most importantly, because of *sympathy* with their subject matter, humanity in its historical settings.

As we stated earlier, in the longest portion of this study, I propose a detailed review of four examples of the historical genres being written in eighteenth-century Scotland. The selections are David Hume's "Of the Populousness of Ancient Nations," John Millar's *The Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, Thomas Robert Malthus's *An Essay on the Principle of Population*, and one response from the Parish of Cambuslang, of Sir John Sinclair's *The Statistical Account of Scotland*, as epilogue.

These four representative historical forms, purposely chosen because they varied in their approaches, all deal with the subject of population, with the investigation of the social, as variously depicted, and they are all histories of manners, traditional practices, and of mind, in other words, they are all concerned with typical conjecturalist themes. As I see it, these selections from Hume, Millar, Malthus and Sinclair form a continuum, leading from the conjectural to the statistical, and looking forward to the "scientific" histories and the methodological controversies of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

I believe that we gain an advantage by considering the methodology of the historians writing undocumented history from the perspective I have proposed in this study. Ultimately the

historical activity in which these historians were engaged becomes more nuanced and intelligible and our historical understanding of their methodology is deepened and enhanced.

The uniformity of human nature as a foundational principle explaining the methodology of the historians writing histories with typical conjecturalist concerns is also a foundational principle shared with natural science, as the uniformity of nature. The use of experience, based on a lifetime of observation, as a foundation on which to explain how the historians writing undocumented history could defend their method, also results in the use of a principle shared with natural science, where observation and experience are also valuable methodological tools. We gain an advantage, however, in the explanation of a uniquely human concern, history, by utilizing a distinctively human principle, sympathy; one that is ideally suited to the human science of history.

## CHAPTER 2: CONTEXT; DAVID HUME; AND “OF THE POPULOUSNESS OF ANCIENT NATIONS”

### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter deals with our first selection, “Of the Populousness of Ancient Nations,” one example of the kind of historical writing to be found in this period. This chapter will also serve as an introduction to the author of this example of an eighteenth century historical form, David Hume. A historian and philosopher, Hume was known for his philosophical and conjectural histories, and was notable for his philosophical views, including his “Science of Man.”

The subject of this chapter, therefore, is David Hume and his essay, “Of the Populousness of Ancient Nations.” We will situate Hume in the Enlightenment, where individuals were encouraged to think for themselves, eschewing the authorities of the past as necessary, and only after careful consideration of their dicta. Specifically in Scotland, important changes were occurring in historiography, and we will briefly discuss Hume’s place in this reassessment of historical priorities.

We will see, in this chapter, how Isaac Newton’s achievements in natural science acted as an incentive for David Hume, encouraging him to propose, in his philosophical writings, to do for the human sciences what Newton had done for the natural sciences, a systematization of knowledge on human nature. Hume was subject to philosophical doubt, as he wrote his philosophical works, greatly disappointed with his discoveries relative to the imagination and reason. This chapter proposes to briefly examine the cause of Hume’s philosophical dilemma and self-doubt, as it relates to our study.

In this chapter’s discussion of the essay, “Of the Populousness of Ancient Nations,” we reiterate this study’s basic premise, that the historians who were writing some of these new generic forms, about time periods for which there was little or no historical evidence, buttressed

their historical writing by confidently relying on the uniformity of human nature. They also used, as a solid foundation for their writing of history, their observational experience, to make well-based inferences. These historians also relied on sympathy, the placing of themselves, imaginatively, in the time period they were writing about, and inferring, based on the uniformity of human nature, and their experiential knowledge of human nature, how a person in the past would have behaved, or how a situation would have unfolded.

This chapter's review of Hume's essay on population presents to the reader a new methodology and a unique theme, one not seen in traditional histories, which have customarily focused on the affairs of state, great men and rulers. Hume's essay is representative of a new form, but his methodology in the essay is what is especially intriguing. While the uniformity of human nature, the experience of knowing how a person would behave in certain circumstances, and sympathy with the past are all part of the strategy of the essay, it is Hume's use of inductive reasoning which is the most interesting aspect of his argument.

In this study, therefore, we are presenting four examples of the historical genres of this period in European history, the Scottish Enlightenment. Why have we chosen these particular examples of eighteenth-century historical forms? We think of these selections as forming a continuum extending from the conjectural to the statistical. For the purposes of our study, we regard these four historical forms as being a prelude to the historiography methodologies of the immediate future. We could have chosen other generic forms, but these particular ones complemented one another, and we believe are representative of the history being written at this time.

## ***2.2 David Hume: Changes in Historical Perspective***

Original thinkers, men whose ideas strongly influenced later developments, David Hume, John Millar, Sir John Sinclair and Thomas Robert Malthus were writing history in a new way, changing their historical priorities in order to address new preoccupations and concerns, but with a strong bias towards humankind, and a sharp focus on things human. These historians were men of their time, however, and although innovative thinkers, they were also affected by the intellectual life of the Scottish Enlightenment. These individuals were, therefore, both the originators of ideas, and were themselves molded by the ideas of their historical moment.

The conjectural historians felt confident in their approach to filling in the historical gaps in the record of early human history, and its moral and social development. They grounded their method on an eighteenth-century belief in the consistency of human nature, in experience, and especially in the eminently human principle of sympathy. The historian, David Hume, as an example of this notion, writes: “It is universally acknowledged, that there is a great uniformity among the actions of men, in all nations and ages, and that human nature remains still the same, in its principles and operations. The same motives always produce the same actions: The same events follow from the same causes.”<sup>25</sup> In *An Enquiry concerning Human Understanding*, referring to the essential qualities of human nature as a guide, Hume writes:

By means of this guide, we mount up to the knowledge of men’s inclinations and motives, from their actions, expressions, and even gestures; and again, descend to the interpretation of their actions from our knowledge of their motives and inclinations. The general observations, treasured up by a course of experience, give us the clue of human nature, and teach us to unravel all its intricacies.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Hume, *Enquiry*, Section VIII, Part I, Paragraph 7, 60.

<sup>26</sup> Hume, *Enquiry*, Section VIII, Part I, Paragraph 9, 61.

Eighteenth century history, therefore, especially as it was theorized in Scotland during the time of David Hume, was characterized by the belief that the uniformity of human nature, experience and sympathy were central to the historical understanding of human behavior.

In the actual practice of writing these new forms of history, however, the melding of the “new” philosophical history of sentiments and manners to the “older,” neoclassical, political narrative, depicting the civic activities of public men, was a difficult merger to achieve. Witness, as an instance of the rhetorical legerdemain demanded of such a history, Hume’s division of his *History of England* into, on the one hand, the appendices—where the “general passions and interests”<sup>27</sup> of the people are depicted—and, on the other hand, into the political narrative of traditional historiography, which dealt, generally, with the reigns of kings and the actions of great men. Hume’s methodological innovation resulted in the uneasy interplay of two forms of historical representation; on the one hand, a depiction of the quotidian lives and concerns of the people, and on the other, the subject matter of traditional, classical history, without interjections on the part of the author, or a break in the continuity of the historical narrative.

This assay into new historical forms and methodologies did not please all of Hume’s readers. There were those who had a preference for history written in the traditional fashion, nor was it amenable to Adam Smith, the moral philosopher, who preferred the more classical styles of historiography.<sup>28</sup> Some of Hume’s contemporaries may have been displeased with his refashioning of traditional history, but many historians of Hume’s time wrote these new histories, although not many of them theorized on the craft of historical writing. In his essay “My Own Life,” Hume lamented both the negative reception that his new historical form received,

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<sup>27</sup> David Hume, “Of the Rise and Progress of the Arts and Sciences,” *Essays Moral, Political, and Literary*, ed. Eugene F. Millar, rev. ed. (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1985), 112.

<sup>28</sup> Phillips, *Society and Sentiment*, 82-84.

and the criticism, which his shedding of “a generous tear for the fate of Charles I, and the Earl of Strafford” had garnered him.<sup>29</sup>

The Age of Reason, as the Age of Enlightenment was alternately called, was also a time when skepticism confronted reason, where thinking and thoughtful individual, who had been encouraged to think for themselves, had to confront the belief that, for humankind, certain knowledge was chimerical. These are the conditions under which David Hume, the philosopher, and under which the historians we have selected to review, were doing their thinking and their writing about humanity and human nature.

### ***2.3 David Hume and the Enlightenment***

The period of Western history extending from the mid-seventeenth century to the eighteenth century is, in English, traditionally referred to as the Age of Enlightenment. This was a period where the constraints of superstition, and the dogmatic authority of the past, were being thrust aside. Individuals were encouraged to think for themselves, and although classical thought was for the most part still revered, subjecting all past authority, especially Christianity, to the test of truthfulness, eschewing all childlike naiveté, was an Enlightenment dictum.

Even though it was a period in the history of the west notable for its critical, inquiring attitude, and characterized by a generalized questioning of authority, it also saw rapid advances in science, culture, philosophy and theology. Often referred to as the Age of Reason,<sup>30</sup> the Enlightenment was at the same time, but less often, distinguished by its skepticism. The juxtaposition of this period’s quest for knowledge, with its questioning of reason, its disquieting

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<sup>29</sup> David Hume, “My Own Life,” *Essays: Moral, Political, and Literary*, ed. Eugene F. Millar, rev. ed. (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1985), xxxvii.

<sup>30</sup> Sir Harold George Nicolson, *The Age of Reason: The Eighteenth Century* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1961).

recognition of the limits of human understanding, and its awareness of the severe restrictions on humanity's ability to acquire certain kinds of knowledge, led to a noteworthy intellectual tension in this period of Western civilization. In his role as philosopher, David Hume was well aware of the general philosophical consternation, of the heated intellectual disputes in theology, metaphysics, history, and science, and he was not immune to this period's atmosphere of doubt, asking himself, in the "Conclusion" of Book 1, of *A Treatise of Human Nature*, whether there was any epistemological authority that could hold up under critical inquiry.<sup>31</sup> Despite his reservations, however, David Hume forged on to establish the laws for a science of the human mind, his new "Science of Man."

In his essays, and in the historical and philosophical writings of David Hume, and in the works of Scotland's conjectural historians, this period's writings are notable for a deep interest in humanity, and in human nature, partially usurping God as a focus of study. We find evidence of this shift in priorities in Hume's "Science of Man," in the epoch's preoccupation with the analysis of humanity, in John Millar's delineation of the human experience, in Thomas Robert Malthus's studies in demography, and arguments against the perfectibility of humankind, and we locate this interest in Sir John Sinclair's human archaeology, with his statistical chronicling of human accomplishments in Scotland's recent past.

In this next section we discuss Hume's intention to do for "moral subjects" what Newton had done with gravitation, discover fundamental principles, through experimental means.

#### ***2.4 David Hume and Isaac Newton***

What Isaac Newton (1642-1727) accomplished in discovering the laws of universal gravitation alone, without considering his invention of the calculus, or his *Opticks* of 1704, or his

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<sup>31</sup> Hume, *Treatise*, Book 1, Part 4, Section 7, Paragraphs 1-15, 171-178.

contributions to numerous other areas of intellectual endeavor, were enough to make him renown throughout Europe. Newton eschewed “Hypotheses,” emphasized the empirical, and fostered “Experiments and Observations” in his scientific endeavors. In the second English edition of his *Opticks* (1717) he writes:

This Analysis consists in making Experiments and Observations, and in drawing general Conclusions from them by Induction, and admitting of no Objections against the Conclusions, but such as are taken from Experiments, or other certain Truths. For Hypotheses are not to be regarded in experimental Philosophy.<sup>32</sup>

In *A Treatise of Human Nature* and in *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* David Hume makes it clear that his project of the “science of man” takes its inspiration from Isaac Newton’s success in natural philosophy. Hume makes this connection with the work of Newton very clear in the complete title of the *Treatise*, which is *A Treatise of Human Nature: Being an Attempt to Introduce the Experimental Method of Reasoning into Moral Subjects*. The title leads the reader of this text to take as a given that Hume’s intentions are, quite explicitly, to do for the human sciences what Hume understands Newton to have done in his “experimental philosophy,” or “empirical science.”<sup>33</sup> What is important for our study, however, is how Hume perceived his own proposed project of the “science of man” in contradistinction to what Newton had accomplished. In Hume essay “Of the Middle Station of Life,” he clearly praises Isaac Newton. If we read between the lines, however, we notice a distinct sense of ambivalence, and veiled caveats regarding Newton’s achievements become evident:

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<sup>32</sup> Sir. Isaac Newton, *Opticks; or, a treatise of the reflections, refractions, inflections and colours of light*, the fourth edition, corrected. (London, 1730), 380. *Eighteenth Century Collections Online*, Gale, University of Ottawa, 24 February 2014.  
<http://find.galegroup.com.proxy.bib.uottawa.ca/ecco/infomark.do?&source=gale&prodId=ECCO&userGroupName=otta77973&tabID=T001&docId=CW108038749&type=multipage&contentSet=ECCOArticles&version=1.0&docLevel=FASCIMILE>.

<sup>33</sup> Hume, *Treatise*, 1 (unnumbered page); Alan E. Shapiro, “Newton’s ‘Experimental Philosophy,’” *Early Science and Medicine*, 9.3, Newtonianism: Mathematical and “experimental,” (2004): 185.

Were we to distinguish the Ranks of Men by their Genius and Capacity more, than by their Virtue and Usefulness to the Public, great Philosophers wou'd certainly challenge the first Rank, and must be plac'd at the Top of Human Kind. So rare is this Character, that, perhaps, there has not, as yet, been above two in the World, who can lay a just Claim to it. At least, *Galilaeo* and *Newton* seem to me so far to excel all the rest, that I cannot admit any other into the same Class with them.<sup>34</sup>

Newton is in the “first Rank” if one evaluates his achievement based on his “Genius and Capacity.” The implication, however, is that the outcome would be different if the ranking of Newton’s achievements were based on the “Virtue,” or the “Usefulness,” or the utility to humankind of his project. In these areas, the implication is that Hume believes Newton is wanting, or would not score very high, according to Hume’s normative moral standard. Hume does not appear to doubt Newton’s intellectual accomplishment, but he does seem to have reservations regarding the moral quality of Newton’s achievements in natural philosophy.

David Hume is first and foremost, a moral philosopher.<sup>35</sup> In the eighteenth century “moral” referred to things human. So being a “moral philosopher” meant that Hume’s centre of interest was on human nature, on feeling as opposed to reason, on sympathy, virtue, and utility. Hume, however, is not exclusively a moral philosopher. In his metaphysical and epistemological reflections, Hume addresses such questions as cause and effect, the limits of human knowledge, the independent existence of objects, and questions relative to the enduring self: all crucial aspects of his philosophy. It is our intention to only make reference to those portions of Hume’s *A Treatise of Human Nature*, *Enquiries Concerning the Human Understanding*, and *Enquiries Concerning the Principles of Morals* which are relevant to our essay, and which buttress our

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<sup>34</sup> David Hume, “Of the Middle Station of Life,” *Essays Moral, Political, and Literary*, ed. Eugene F. Miller, rev. ed. (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1985), 550.

<sup>35</sup> Norman Kemp Smith, *The Philosophy of David Hume: A Critical Study of its Origins and Central Doctrines* (London: Macmillan, 1960).

narrative. We will, therefore, give emphasis to those aspects of David Hume's philosophy, which deal with human nature and with moral standards. With this in mind, our next section will deal with Hume's "Science of Man."

### ***2.5 The Science of Man***

*In A Treatise of Human Nature and in his Enquiries Concerning the Human Understanding*

Hume proposes his "science of man," an alternate method to Newton's natural philosophy, one that would prove more beneficial to humankind, thereby rectifying the apparent lapses that Hume identifies in Newton's natural philosophy. Hume's "experiments" would be based on "a cautious observation of human life."<sup>36</sup> In other words, Hume's "experiments," in contradistinction to Newton's, are to be based on life experience, the knowledge that is gleaned from watching and seeing how the human species reacts and behaves through a lifetime of intelligent observation. "Where experiments of this kind are judiciously collected and compad'd," Hume asserts, "we may hope to establish on them a science, which will not be inferior in certainty, and will be much superior in utility to any other of human comprehension."<sup>37</sup> In reference to "certainty," skepticism, objective knowledge and what humankind can know, it will suffice at this juncture to give Hume's preliminary opinion on this subject. "There is nothing which is not the subject of debate, and in which men of learning are not of contrary opinions," Hume avers. "The most trivial question escapes not our controversy, and in the most momentous we are not able to give any certain decision."<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Hume, "Introduction," *Treatise*, 6.

<sup>37</sup> Hume, "Introduction," *Treatise*, 6.

<sup>38</sup> Hume, "Introduction," *Treatise*, 3.

David Hume believes that his science of man will thoroughly acquaint us “with the extent and force of human understanding,” explaining the nature of the ideas we use in our daily existence, and helping to clarify our understanding of “the operations we perform in our reasonings.”<sup>39</sup> The sciences of “Mathematics, Natural Philosophy, and Natural religion” are dependent on the “knowledge of man,” as are “*Logic, Morals, Criticism, and Politics*,” under which headings are subsumed all the areas of knowledge with which humankind needs to be acquainted, in order to better the minds of humanity.<sup>40</sup> Therefore, “Tis evident, that all the sciences have a relation, greater or less, to human nature;” writes Hume, “and that however wide any of them may seem to run from it, they still return back by one passage or another...[and] are in some measure dependent on the science of man.”<sup>41</sup> Hume’s science of human nature is the foundation upon which all the other sciences rely, it alone leads to an understanding of the human mind, based on “careful and exact experiments, and the observation of those particular effects, which result from its different circumstances and situations.”<sup>42</sup> “In pretending, therefore, to explain the principles of human nature,” Hume argues, “we in effect propose a complete system of the sciences, built on a foundation almost entirely new, and the only one upon which they can stand with any security.”<sup>43</sup>

It was the Age of Reason, but reason was still under attack from skepticism. The next section of our study will briefly address David Hume’s philosophical dilemma and his self-doubt. As he confronts a myriad of philosophical problems, he is very much aware of the limits

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<sup>39</sup> Hume, “Introduction,” *Treatise*, 4.

<sup>40</sup> Hume, “Introduction,” *Treatise*, 4.

<sup>41</sup> Hume, “Introduction,” *Treatise*, 4.

<sup>42</sup> Hume, “Introduction,” *Treatise*, 5.

<sup>43</sup> Hume, “Introduction,” *Treatise*, 4.

of his own human capacities, for there are uncertainties ahead of him, which he believes may be beyond his ability to solve. If Hume is to develop his Science of Man, he needs to either resolve his philosophical predicament, or find another solution, perhaps outside of philosophy.

### ***2.6 The “leaky weather-beaten vessel”<sup>44</sup>***

Beset by doubts and feelings of ignorance, aware of his own limitations and the intellectual inadequacies of human nature—“the wretched condition, weakness, and disorder of the faculties,”<sup>45</sup> as he expresses it—David Hume, in his “Conclusion Of This Book,”<sup>46</sup> is disconsolate as he faces “that boundless ocean”<sup>47</sup> of philosophy still before him, and ponders the philosophical stalemate at which he has arrived. The conclusion of Book 1 of *A Treatise of Human Nature*, finds Hume intimidated, and driven “almost to despair”<sup>48</sup> by the end-point of his philosophical speculations to date, and by the prospect of the “immense depths of philosophy,”<sup>49</sup> which he will have to face, as he contemplates the writing of the remaining two books of his *Treatise of Human Nature*.

The human understanding, ideas of space and time, causality, enduring objects, substance, and the idea of personal identity have all been examined by Hume, resulting in disheartening philosophical conundrums, which had only conjectural solutions or, as Hume frankly admits, which present him with problems he is unable to resolve. When he looks outside of himself, he sees “on every side, dispute, contradiction, anger calumny and detraction,” and

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<sup>44</sup> Hume, *Treatise*, Book I, Part 4, Section 7, Paragraph 1, 172.

<sup>45</sup> Hume, *Treatise*, Book I, Part 4, Section 7, Paragraph 1, 172.

<sup>46</sup> Hume, *Treatise*, Book I, Part 4, Section 7, 171-178.

<sup>47</sup> Hume, *Treatise*, Book I, Part 4, Section 7, Paragraph 1, 172.

<sup>48</sup> Hume, *Treatise*, Book I, Part 4, Section 7, Paragraph 1, 172.

<sup>49</sup> Hume, *Treatise*, Book I, Part 4, Section 7, Paragraph 1, 171.

when introspective he finds only “doubt and ignorance.”<sup>50</sup> Because of his critical stance towards others, and his philosophical opinions, Hume says, “I have expos’d myself to the enmity of all metaphysicians, logicians, mathematicians, and even theologians,” and he feels as if, due to philosophy, he “has been expell’d all human commerce, and left utterly abandon’d and disconsolate.”<sup>51</sup> What justification does he have for thinking that his own philosophical judgments are any more correct than those of his critics, he inquires? Like his critics, Hume says that he also has a “*strong* propensity to consider objects *strongly* in that view, under which they appear to me.”<sup>52</sup> Like everyone, philosophers and humankind alike, his views are formed and animated by experience, and by habit, and not by reason. How can I be certain, Hume inquires, “that in leaving all establish’d opinions I am following truth; and by what criterion shall I distinguish her, even if fortune shou’d at last guide me to her foot-steps?”<sup>53</sup> Then, in a few sentences, which appear to read like a soliloquy, Hume looks thoughtfully within himself, examining his ineluctable conclusions regarding “experience.” In effect Hume is contemplating inferences regarding causal connections. The “constant and regular conjunction”<sup>54</sup> of cause and effect in the past habituates humankind to expect the same concurrence of objects in the future.

At the beginning of the *Treatise*, Hume had divided *perceptions* into *ideas*, which are derived from the intellect, from the process of “thinking and reasoning,” and *impressions*, which

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<sup>50</sup> Hume, *Treatise*, Book I, Part 4, Section 7, Paragraph 2, 172.

<sup>51</sup> Hume, *Treatise*, Book I, Part 4, Section 7, Paragraph 2, 172.

<sup>52</sup> Hume, *Treatise*, Book I, Part 4, Section 7, Paragraph 3, 172.

<sup>53</sup> Hume, *Treatise*, Book I, Part 4, Section 7, Paragraph 3, 172.

<sup>54</sup> Hume, *Enquiry*, Section IV, Part II, Paragraph 16, 24.

are acquired from the senses, from “sensations, passions and emotions.”<sup>55</sup> Now, in the paragraph under discussion, Hume’s consternation is apparent; he recapitulates and considers carefully the philosophical discoveries that he has made in earlier sections of *A Treatise of Human Nature*, and finds himself at a philosophical impasse. It is the concurrence between cause and effect, assisted by memory and perception, which permits humankind to reach out past the limitations of the senses, to the acquisition of knowledge of the outside world. But Hume is intensely surprised, even horrified, to discover that it is through the *imagination* that experience brings about the idea of an effect from an impression of its cause. “No wonder a principle so inconstant and fallacious,” Hume writes, referring to the imagination, “shou’d lead us into errors, when implicitly follow’d (as it must be) in all its variations. Tis this principle, which makes us reason from causes and effects; and ‘tis the same principle, which convinces us of the continu’d existence of external objects, when absent from the senses.”<sup>56</sup> Hume tells the reader that he is disappointed, but this is only one example of the nonfulfillment of the aspirations he had when he first began writing the *Treatise*. Hume’s philosophizing has not produced encouraging results relative to the discovery of general principles of human nature, and both his frustration, and his hopelessness, at the prospect of ever finding these principles, is evident in the following words:

And how must we be disappointed, when we learn, that this connexion, tie or energy lies merely in ourselves, and is nothing but that determination of the mind, which is acquir’d by custom, and causes us to make a transition from an object to its usual attendant, and from the impression of one to the lively idea of the other. Such a discovery not only cuts off all hope of ever attaining satisfaction, but even prevents our very wishes; since it appears, that when we say we desire to know the ultimate and operating principle, as something, which resides in the external object, we either contradict ourselves, or talk without meaning.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Hume, *Treatise*, Book I, Part 1, Section 1, Paragraph 1, 7.

<sup>56</sup> Hume, *Treatise*, Book 1, Part 4, Section 7, Paragraph 4, 173.

<sup>57</sup> Hume, *Treatise*, Book I, Part 4, Section 7, Paragraph 5, 173.

In an earlier paragraph of the “Conclusion Of This Book” Hume had gone over his disappointing discovery that human experience performs its function of linking cause and effect by way of the imagination, and not as he had anticipated, through either reason or the understanding. The imagination seems to Hume to be a rather untrustworthy, erratic quality that can easily lead humankind astray. Hume explains as follows:

Experience is a principle, which instructs me in the several conjunctions of objects for the past. Habit is another principle, which determines me to expect the same for the future; and both of them conspiring to operate upon the imagination, make me form certain ideas in a more intense and lively manner, than others, which are not attended with the same advantages. Without this quality, by which the mind enlivens some ideas beyond others (which seemingly is so trivial, and so little founded on reason) we cou’d never assent to any argument, nor carry our view beyond those few objects, which are present to our senses. Nay, even to these objects we cou’d never attribute any existence, but what was dependent on the senses; and must comprehend them entirely in that succession of perceptions, which constitutes our self or person. Nay farther, even with relation to that succession, we cou’d only admit of those perceptions, which are immediately present to our consciousness, nor cou’d those lively images, with which the memory presents us, be ever receiv’d as true pictures of past perceptions. The memory, senses, and understanding are, therefore, all of them founded on the imagination, or the vivacity of our ideas.<sup>58</sup>

Hume ponders this “illusion of the imagination” and asks himself “how far we ought to yield to these illusions.” Hume is aware that this question presents difficulties, and places the philosopher in “a very dangerous dilemma,” however way the question is answered. If an individual, or a philosopher, approves of every insignificant prompt of the imagination; notwithstanding the fact that these intimations from the “fancy” are frequently opposed to one another; “they lead us into such errors, absurdities, and obscurities,” says Hume, with dissatisfaction, “that we must at last become asahm’d of our credulity.” “Nothing is more

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<sup>58</sup> Hume, *Treatise*, Book I, Part 4, Section 7, Paragraph 3, 172-173.

dangerous to reason than the flights of the imagination,” says Hume dispiritedly, “and nothing has been the occasion of more mistakes among philosophers.”<sup>59</sup>

From another standpoint, Hume continues, we could decide to dismiss as inadequate all the inconsequential insinuations of the imagination, and just remain faithful to the understanding, in other words, “to the general and more establish’d properties of the imagination;” but then, even this decision, if strictly adhered too, would be “dangerous and attended with the most fatal consequences.” “For I have already shewn, that the understanding, when it acts alone, and according to its most general principles,” Hume reiterates, referring to earlier discoveries, “entirely subverts itself, and leaves not the lowest degree of evidence in any proposition, either in philosophy or common life.”<sup>60</sup>

Should we therefore resolve, because of the results of these inquiries, to never again accept “refin’d or elaborate reasoning,” Hume asks? Give due consideration to such a resolution, Hume cautions, and resolutely argues:

By this means you cut off entirely all science and philosophy: You proceed upon one singular quality of the imagination, and by a parity of reason must embrace all of them: And you expressly contradict yourself; since this maxim must be built on the preceding reasoning, which will be allow’d to be sufficiently refin’d and metaphysical. What party, then, shall we choose among these difficulties? If we embrace this principle, and condemn all refin’d reasoning, we run into the most manifest absurdities. If we reject it in favour of these reasonings, we subvert entirely the human understanding. We have, therefore, no choice left betwixt a false reason and none at all. For my part, I know not what ought to be done in the present case.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Hume, *Treatise*, Book I, Part 4, Section 7, Paragraph 6, 174.

<sup>60</sup> Hume, *Treatise*, Book I, Part 4, Section 7, Paragraph 7, 174.

<sup>61</sup> Hume, *Treatise*, Book I, Part 4, Section 7, Paragraph 7, 174.

The naturally occurring, but delusive, influence of the imagination could be ignored, with the philosopher, and humanity, depending on reason alone. This tact, however, would be literally fatal to humankind, Hume avers. The predicament which humanity faces is: to depend on reason alone, or reliance on the imagination? There is no other philosophical solution, much to Hume's dissatisfaction.

Human nature is an important element, even the crucial element, of Hume's philosophical investigations into moral subjects. To human nature may be added the experience derived from the observation of human behavior during a lifetime. As we continue our summary of Hume's dilemma at the end of Book I of the *Treatise*, we propose that Hume finds solace and satisfactory respite from his philosophical conundrums in human nature.

### ***2.7 Experience and Human Nature: David Hume's Philosophical Dilemma***

On the one hand, Hume does not know what to do in his present situation. He writes:

For my part I know not what ought to be done in the present case. I can only observe what is commonly done; which is, that this difficulty is seldom or never thought of; and even where it has once been present to the mind, is quickly forgotten, and leaves but a small impression behind it. Very refin'd reflections have little or no influence upon us; and yet we do not, and cannot establish it for a rule, that they ought not to have any influence; which implies a manifest contradiction.<sup>62</sup>

Although Hume opts to compartmentalize his philosophical dilemma, leaving it unresolved in the arena of "refin'd reflections,"<sup>63</sup> yet he is tormented by the inconsistencies and the faults, which he has found as a result of his philosophical reflections. Hume maintains:

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<sup>62</sup> Hume, *Treatise*, Book I, Part 4, Section 7, Paragraph 7, 174.

<sup>63</sup> Hume, *Treatise*, Book I, Part 4, Section 7, Paragraph 7, 174.

The *intense* view of these manifold contradictions and imperfections in human reason has wrought upon me, and heated my brain, that I am ready to reject all belief and reasoning, and can look upon no opinion even as more probable or likely than another. Where am I, or what? From what causes do I derive my existence, and to what condition shall I return? Whose favour shall I court, and whose anger must I dread? What beings surround me? And on whom have I any influence, or who have any influence on me? I am confounded with all these questions, environ'd with the deepest darkness, and utterly depriv'd of the use of every member and faculty.<sup>64</sup>

On the other hand, David Hume's proposes to find relief from his philosophical despair, and from his skeptical conclusions, in human nature. There is philosophy and there is common life, inhabiting two separate, distinct spheres. While it may appear contradictory, and may not be acceptable from the viewpoint of philosophy, what may be a desperate situation in one sphere of human life, the intellectual world of philosophical inquiry, is of no consequence, or of little relevance, in the daily life of humanity. So, while there is no philosophical solution to the skepticism, or to the philosophical quandary, in which Hume finds himself, there is much to be said for the reassurance, and comfort to be found in human nature. Hume writes:

Most fortunately it happens, that since reason is incapable of dispelling these clouds nature herself suffices to that purpose, and cures me of this philosophical melancholy and delirium, either by relaxing this bent of mind, or by some avocation, and lively impression of my senses, which obliterate all these chimeras. I dine, I play a game of back-gammon, I converse, and am merry with my friends; and when after or four hours' amusement, I wou'd return to these speculations, they appear so cold, and strain'd, and ridiculous, that I cannot find in my heart to enter into them any farther.<sup>65</sup>

In concluding this section of his *Treatise*, Hume proposes to continue doing philosophy, since it is his great interest in life. "I cannot forbear having a curiosity to be acquainted with the principles of moral good and evil," Hume explains, "the nature and foundation of government,

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<sup>64</sup> Hume, *Treatise*, Book I, Part 4, Section 7, Paragraph 8, 175.

<sup>65</sup> Hume, *Treatise*, Book I, Part 4, Section 7, Paragraph 9, 175.

and the cause of those several passions and inclinations, which actuate and govern me.”<sup>66</sup> When reason leads him into doubt and skeptical conclusions, he can always revert to the common life, allowing human nature to relax him and counter his philosophical doubts. If he can do something in the “service of mankind”<sup>67</sup> while following his “own private interests,”<sup>68</sup> he will be satisfied. “For my part,” Hume avers, “my only hope is, that I may contribute a little to the advancement of knowledge, by giving in some particulars a different turn to the speculation of philosophers, and pointing out to them more distinctly those subjects, where alone they can expect assurance and conviction. Human Nature is the only science of man.”<sup>69</sup>

### ***2.8 Human Nature and the Uniformity of Human Nature***

In the depths of despair, and disconsolate over his philosophical findings, Hume turns to the constancy, the dependability, of human nature. On human nature, Hume felt, he could rely.

Hume is pragmatic, realistic, and to a notable degree sensible. So, on my reading of the “Conclusion Of This Book,” Book I of the *Treatise*, it is at this point that he separates philosophical contemplation from real-life. He may not be able to work out a philosophical problem to his satisfaction, he appears to be saying, or he may be disappointed with the results of his investigation, but if the experience derived from causal connections, and the daily inferences that humanity has been making for millennia work for humans, *precisely* how they work is only important in philosophy. In any case, Hume is implying, because of the specter of skepticism,

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<sup>66</sup> Hume, *Treatise*, Book I, Part 4, Section, Paragraph 12, 176.

<sup>67</sup> Hume, *Treatise*, Book I, Part 4, Section 7, Paragraph 10, 175

<sup>68</sup> Hume, *Treatise*, Book I, Part 4, Section 7, Paragraph 10, 175.

<sup>69</sup> Hume, *Treatise*, Book I, Part 4, Section 7, Paragraph 14, 177.

some things simply cannot be known by humankind, and certain knowledge is not possible for humanity.

Certain ideas are foundational to this study: the notion of human nature, with its attendant sub-divisions, the ideas of uniformity, of experience, and sympathy. They underpin our study, and sustain our general assertions about the writing of history, as well as linking together the authors we have chosen, as examples of new forms of history.

Human nature is in the forefront, when David Hume writes about population. As we will soon discover in our review of his essay, “Of the Populousness of Ancient Nations,” he is basing himself on his experience of human nature, on the accumulated experience of the ages, on inferential thinking, and on a sympathetic communication with the past.

Human nature, and that sympathy derived from the knowledge of human psychology, of knowing how humankind would behave under certain conditions, drives Millar’s writing of his history. John Millar’s utilizes a new historiographical form in *The Origins of the Distinction of Ranks*. It is an unconventional methodology, which is more suited to his subject matter, the development of human society, than other available forms. It represents a historical point of view not usually taken into account by traditional historical forms. Millar’s history of the gradual changes to human society, his description of social stratification as economic conditions change, and his study of stadial changes to the human population over time, are based on his sympathetic understanding of human nature.

The effects of human nature are evident in Sir John Sinclair’s statistical account of the changes human progress as brought to the lives of the people and to the social life of Scotland. This history is about multiple facets of human existence. It also studies the human population,

and the changes to population, which progress has brought to Scotland within the span of living memory, with the introduction of new crops, for instance, and novel methods of husbandry.

Human nature continues to be an essential consideration in the selected work of Thomas Robert Malthus. His study of population's rise and decline as food supplies increase or diminish, is in synchrony with the general population concerns of the other authors, and relies on the solid foundation of a sympathetic historical understanding of humanity.

Eighteenth-century philosophers, intellectuals and writers alike, believed in "the uniformity of human nature," after all, "a science of man necessarily presupposes some idea of an unchanging human nature."<sup>70</sup> David Hume's belief in this notion may be taken as an example of what was thought during this historical period. It is because of the belief in the constant conjunction of cause and effect, and this belief in the uniformity of the underlying principles of human nature that Hume can embark on his "Science of Man." The eighteenth century believed that there was both an underlying natural uniformity, and variety, constituting human nature, the latter derived from what Hume called "moral causes." David Hume writes:

It is universally acknowledged, that there is a great uniformity among the actions of men, in all nations and ages, and that human nature remains still the same, in its principles and operations. The same motives always produce the same actions: The same events follow from the same causes. Ambition, avarice, self-love, vanity, friendship, generosity, public spirit; these passions, mixed in various degrees, and distributed through society, have been, from the beginning of the world, and still are, the source of a the actions and enterprises, which have ever been observed among mankind. Would you know the sentiments, inclinations, and course of life of the GREEKS and ROMANS? Study well the temper and actions of the FRENCH and ENGLISH: You cannot be much mistaken in transferring to the former *most* of the observations, which you have made with regard to the latter. Mankind are so much the same, in all times and places, that history informs us of nothing new or strange in this particular. Its chief use is only to discover the constant and universal principles of human nature, by showing men in all varieties of circumstances and situations, and furnishing us with materials, from which we

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<sup>70</sup> Duncan Forbes, *Hume's Philosophical Politics* (New York: Cambridge UP, 1975), 102; 102-121.

may form our observations, and become acquainted with the regular springs of human action and behaviour.<sup>71</sup>

Hume, however, also said something else, something quite different, about the uniformity of humankind, but I believe that, although dissimilar from the first statement, it holds up, and does not constitute a contradiction, and in fact buttresses the uniformity/variety amalgam of human nature. The second example highlights another aspect, which goes into the make-up of human nature, the variable portion of human nature, which depends on many factors: time, place, morals, customs, economic conditions, and what a particular people consider virtuous, opprobrious, or even, what is useful or beneficial to a particular society. “Man is a very variable being,” says Hume, “and susceptible of many different opinions, principles, and rules of conduct. What may be true, while he adheres to one way of thinking, will be found false, when he has embraced an opposite set of manners and opinions.”<sup>72</sup>

“The uniformity of human nature”: an eighteenth-century dictum, which if understood as consisting of underlying, ultimate principles of human nature, melded to more varied, culturally unique, human characteristics, can well serve in the development of a Science of Man, and as a basis for writing some of the new historical genres of the Scottish Enlightenment, notably conjectural history.

At this juncture we begin our discussion of the first of our four unique examples of the varied genres of history, being written during this historical period.

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<sup>71</sup> Hume, *Enquiry*, Section VIII, Part I, Paragraph 7, 60.

<sup>72</sup> David Hume, “Of Commerce,” in *Essays: Moral, Political and Literary*, ed. Eugene F. Millar, rev. ed. (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1985), 255-256.

## 2.9 “OF THE POPULOUSNESS OF ANCIENT NATIONS”

Since its publication in 1752, as one of twelve essays comprising David Hume’s *Political Discourses*, the essay on demography, entitled “Of the Populousness of Ancient Nations,” has been considered an example of a type of “scientific history,” or “natural history.” “Natural” in this usage referring to the *most likely*, or the *typical*, indicating “those broad historical movements,” that in certain clearly identified circumstances would be understood as likely to happen.<sup>73</sup> This essay is also a model of Hume’s use of inductive reasoning leading to inferential knowledge; in other words, an example of *conjectural history*. The Scottish impetus for this historical methodology may be found in Hume’s notion of human nature, or “science of man.” The normal transformations in “habits, customs and manners,” which occur in the human population over time, Hume believes, could be articulated in terms of unambiguous historical principles of generalized human conduct. “Mankind are so much the same, in all times and places,” writes Hume, “that history informs us of nothing new or strange in this Particular.”<sup>74</sup> This sentiment is reiterated in “Of the Populousness of Ancient Nations” when Hume writes, “as far, therefore, as observation reaches, there is no universal difference discernible in the human species.”<sup>75</sup>

The second of David Hume’s published works; the *Political Discourses* (1752) was different from what Hume had done before, and represented his first thoughtful encounter with the economies of states. Soon after its publication in English, Jean-Bernard, abbé Le Blanc,

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<sup>73</sup> Eugene Rotwein, “Introduction,” in *Writings on Economics*, David Hume, ed. and intro. Eugene Rotwein, new intro. Margaret Schabas, 1955; (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Transaction, 2007), xxii.

<sup>74</sup> Hume, *Enquiry*, Section VIII. Part I, Paragraph 7, 60.

<sup>75</sup> Hume, “Of the Populousness of Ancient Nations,” *Essays, Moral, Political, and Literary*, ed., Eugene F. Millar (Indianapolis: Liberty, 1985), 377-378.

translated the Political Discourses into French, in 1754,<sup>76</sup> whereupon writers on economic topics throughout Europe rapidly came to know it.<sup>77</sup> Together with the economic essays was to be found our selection, an essay on population, a topic, which was much debated at the time.<sup>78</sup> At a later date, the twelve essays, which comprised the *Political Discourses*, were merged with *Essays Moral and Political* (1741), resulting in a combined work, which was published as *Essays Moral, Political, and Literary* in 1758. It is from this latter text that the essay we are using is derived.<sup>79</sup>

The period of European history in which Hume was writing produced many works of “theoretical,” “ideal,” or “conjectural history,” or what the French called “*histoire raisonnée*.” This new historiographical form of writing, non-traditional history, or non-classical history, was less concerned with the political activities of the state, and, in general, was more interested in human society and the *moral*. The “moral,” in this historical time period, referred to human nature. It would be helpful to our discussion to divide this new historiographical model into *philosophical history* and *conjectural history*, so as to distinguish between two of the genres of this new form of history.<sup>80</sup>

The subject matter of history had expanded greatly at this time. Now history “incorporated not only commerce and navigation,” writes Mark Phillips, “but the history of

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<sup>76</sup> Giulia Bianchi, “Editions and Translations of David Hume’s *Political Discourses* (1752),” University of Pisa, Pisa / Italy, May 11, 2015, [http://eet.pixelonline.org/files/research\\_papers/IT/Editions%20and%20translations%20of%20David%20Hume's%20political%20discourses.pdf](http://eet.pixelonline.org/files/research_papers/IT/Editions%20and%20translations%20of%20David%20Hume's%20political%20discourses.pdf)

<sup>77</sup> H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (New York: Oxford UP, 2004), 747.

<sup>78</sup> Matthew and Harrison, *Dictionary of National Biography*, 748.

<sup>79</sup> Rotwein, “Introduction,” *Writings on Economics*, xviii.

<sup>80</sup> Phillips, *Society and Sentiment*, 171.

literature, of the arts and sciences, of manners and customs, even of opinion and sentiment.”<sup>81</sup> As a consequence, with the writing of this new form of history, “the old restriction of history to statecraft and military maneuver” was gone, “and with it an easy accommodation to the clarity and linearity of classical ideals of narrative.”<sup>82</sup> *Philosophical history* “was a useful term for designating the literary form that did its best to encompass all the parts of this expanded subject.”<sup>83</sup>

*Conjectural history*, on the other hand, dealt with the natural history of humankind. Derived from principles found in the very makeup of the human mind, a science of the mind was formulated in the Scottish Enlightenment based on observation and experience. Conjectural history utilized this scientific information in order to write naturalistic histories, theorizing what might have occurred, in the early periods of human society, for which documentary evidence did not exist.<sup>84</sup> These forms of historiography—placed under the general rubric of *conjectural histories* ever since so named by Dugald Stewart—were inferences or judgments based on observing, and were representative of sincere efforts to harmonize or to bring congruity to historical datum and speculation, with the intent of filling in the blank spaces in the historical record.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Phillips, *Society and Sentiment*, 17.

<sup>82</sup> Phillips, *Society and Sentiment*, 16.

<sup>83</sup> Phillips, *Society and Sentiment*, 16.

<sup>84</sup> Palmeri, “Conjectural History and the Origins of Sociology,” 3; James McCosh, *The Scottish Philosophy, Biographical, Expository, Critical, From Hutcheson to Hamilton* (London: Macmillan, 1875), 10-11. May 12, 2015. <http://socserv.mcmaster.ca/econ/ugcm/3113/mccosh/scottishphilosophy.pdf>

<sup>85</sup> Rotwein, “Introduction,” xxiii.

This particular example of conjectural history, “Of the Populousness of Ancient Nations,” was chosen, instead of, for instance, Hume’s *The Natural History of Religion* (1757), due to the distinctiveness of Hume’s argumentation. This essay’s distinguishing trait, therefore, resides in its methodology, which Hume employs in order to question what he considers to be an untrue assumption, that the ancient world was more populous than eighteenth-century Europe.<sup>86</sup> “If I can make it appear,” writes Hume, “that the conclusion is not so certain as is pretended, in favour of antiquity, it is all I aspire to.”<sup>87</sup>

Throughout this present work, I have been treating *conjectural history* as both an eighteenth century historiographical form and a methodology. In the case of the essay under discussion, “Of the Populousness of Ancient Nations,” when I write that it is interesting because of Hume’s methodology, I am not only referring to the fact that it is illustrative as a work of conjectural history, but I am making reference to the distinctiveness of Hume’s engagement with the ancient texts. Hume interrogates the ancient texts. He catechizes the antique writings, relentlessly probing, questioning their literal meaning. Hume reads between the lines, or against the grain. He gains insight into the texts he adduces as evidence by making inferences based on what is not explicitly written, what the text does not directly say. In general, Hume treats his evidentiary texts with hermeneutical suspicion.<sup>88</sup>

The topic of population was a subject that was much discussed among the *philosophes* of the eighteenth-century. Dialogue centered on whether or not the ancient world had been more populous than modern Europe, and included commonly heard arguments that augmenting the

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<sup>86</sup> Rotwein, “Introduction,” xxii.

<sup>87</sup> Hume, “Populousness of Ancient Nations,” 381.

<sup>88</sup> Phillips, *Society and Sentiment*, 50-51.

population of Europe would be an advisable goal. Montesquieu, in France, and Dr. Robert Wallace, in Scotland, were proponents of these views, while David Hume, who had been corresponding with Montesquieu since 1749, and who knew Wallace, was an opponent of these notions, as is discernible in *Of the Populousness of Ancient Nations*. Corresponding with John Clephane, in a letter dated April 18<sup>th</sup>, 1750, Hume writes: “The last thing I took my hand from was a very learned elaborate discourse, concerning the Populousness of antiquity; not altogether in opposition to Vossius and Montesquieu, who exaggerate the affair infinitely.”<sup>89</sup> Montesquieu states his position, and develops his arguments on the issue of population in both *The Spirit of the Law* and the *Persian Letters*—with its “theory of degeneration,”<sup>90</sup> and its “theory of the fecundity of Roman slaves,”<sup>91</sup> to which issues Hume responds in his own essay. Except for Hume’s critical rejoinder to the two theories from the *Persian Letters* mentioned above, Hume’s response to Montesquieu is based predominately on the arguments made in *The Spirit of the Law*.<sup>92</sup> Hume’s essay is also a response to a work by Robert Wallace, “a fellow member of the Philosophical Society of Edinburgh,”<sup>93</sup> entitled *Dissertation on the Numbers of Mankind in Ancient and Modern Times* (1753). Eugene Rotwein makes clear that, although Wallace’s work, which argued that the ancient world had a more numerous populous than the modern period, was published after Hume’s essay, Hume was aware of Wallace’s arguments. Hume had read

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<sup>89</sup> Roger B. Oake, “Montesquieu and Hume,” *Modern Language Quarterly* 2.1 (March 1941) and (June 1941): 26, 31, fn. 31.

<sup>90</sup> Oake, “Montesquieu and Hume,” 33; Montesquieu, *Persian Letters*, trans., intro., and notes C. J. Betts (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin, 1973), 114. 206-208.

<sup>91</sup> Oake, “Montesquieu and Hume,” 33; Montesquieu, *Persian Letters*, trans., intro., and notes C. J. Betts (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin, 1973), 115. 208-209.

<sup>92</sup> Oake, “Montesquieu and Hume,” 32.

<sup>93</sup> Hume, “Populousness of Ancient Nations,” 379.

Wallace's dissertation, encouraged its publication, and was responding to it in his own essay on population.<sup>94</sup>

With, presumably reliable, ancient writers referring to cities with huge populations, and antique historical sources speaking of battles with exceedingly numerous armies battling one another, it is understandable that writers and intellectuals of the eighteenth-century, Montesquieu and Wallace among them, should have concluded that antiquity was more populous than the present day Europe in which they lived. The importance of the question of population becomes clear when we consider the fact that, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries a large population was a clear and irrefutable indication of "a happy and virtuous nation and of wise institutions," linking the topic of population magnitude, therefore, to significant concerns in "moral and political philosophy." The proposed decrease of the population in the modern world, then, would be an indication of the deficiencies of the modern age.<sup>95</sup> Indeed, the topic of population growth or decrease emerges as a new and central category of analysis and contemplation during this historical period.

Hume begins his argument by looking at the *general physical causes* that may have effected population. In his essay "Of National Characters," Hume states what he means by *physical causes*. They are "those qualities of the air and climate, which are supposed to work insensibly on the temper, by altering the tone and habit of the body, and giving a particular complexion, which, though reflection and reason may sometimes overcome it, will yet prevail among the generality of mankind, and have an influence on their manners."<sup>96</sup> There is no

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<sup>94</sup> Rotwein, "Introduction," *Writings on Economics*, 184.

<sup>95</sup> Hume, "Populousness of Ancient Nations," 382, fn. 6.

<sup>96</sup> Hume, "Of National Characters," *Essays Moral, Political, and Literary*, 198.

justification, either through human judgments or from intense scrutiny, to come to the conclusion that the world is everlasting or incapable of decay, Hume declares. As we look at the heavens and the world around, the contrary is apparent to any reasonable observer. The world is not eternal, and it, and humankind, and everything on this earth, passes through stages from childhood to advanced age. It may be anticipated, to follow this reasoning, that when the world was young, humankind was in possession of the utmost vitality, the greatest physical well-being, and the highest powers of procreation. But if there are “gradual revolutions”<sup>97</sup> in this state of affairs, and in the human community, they are occurring at an imperceptible pace, unnoticed by history, custom, or usage. “Stature, and force of body,” Hume writes, “length of life, even courage and extent of genius, seem hitherto to have been naturally, in all ages, pretty much the same.”<sup>98</sup> As far as we are able to see, there is no perceptible difference in the human race; and even if we were to concede that all of creation, like a physical body, had a natural cycle extending from birth to advanced age; we would still be unsure if, at this moment in time, humankind were progressing toward “its point of perfection, or declining from it, we cannot thence presuppose,” Hume concludes, “any decay in human nature.”<sup>99</sup> Hume’s opponents in this debate believed that, as both the earth and humanity aged their fecundity diminished. In the early ages of the world, therefore, and in the youth of the human species, Hume’s adversaries contend, both the world and humanity were more vigorous. Hume is of the opinion that this form of reasoning is untenable, and he therefore excludes this line of argumentation from further consideration, together with all further deliberation on *general physical causes*.

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<sup>97</sup> Hume, “Populousness of Ancient Nations,” 378.

<sup>98</sup> Hume, “Populousness of Ancient Nations,” 378.

<sup>99</sup> Hume, “Populousness of Ancient Nations,” 378.

Some *particular physical causes*, such as diseases, may, however, be of some critical importance to the increase or decrease in population. There were diseases in antiquity that are not known in the modern world, and there are modern diseases, unknown to the ancients, which have devastated the people of the modern world. Venereal diseases and smallpox, a disease equivalent to the three great scourges of mankind, “war, pestilence, and famine,”<sup>100</sup> have caused countless deaths in the modern age. If we could establish without a doubt that the ancient world had a greater population than the modern world, Hume insists, and no *moral causes* could be found for such a great change in the number of habitants in this world; the physical causes ascribed to disease, many believe, would be sufficient in themselves to prove the populousness of the antique world.

How certain can we be, however, that the ancient world was really substantially more populated than at present, Hume queries? An ancient author, renowned for his intelligence, insight and good judgment, has calculated that the present population of the earth is not one fiftieth what it was during the years when Julius Caesar lived. These numbers cannot be accurate; even if we confine ourselves to the area of the Mediterranean. We do not know the precise number of the inhabitants of any European city or nation at present: how could we possibly affix a number to the population of the ancient world when the information we have, in which to judge, is so apparently incomplete. The problem under discussion here could be easily settled, however, if only accurate population numbers were available for both the ancient and modern world. Since accuracy in this area is not available; the problem needs to be approached obliquely or indirectly. “I shall intermingle the enquiry concerning *causes*,” Hume writes, “with that concerning *facts*.” First, Hume proposes to investigate *causes*: “Whether it be probable, from what we know of the

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<sup>100</sup> Hume, “Populousness of Ancient Nations,” 380.

situation of society in both periods, that antiquity must have been more populous?" Second, Hume suggests that he will inquire into the *facts*: "Whether in reality it was so?"<sup>101</sup>

Hume proposes to "compare both the *domestic* and *political* situation of these two periods, in order to judge of the facts by their moral causes." The causes affecting population levels, for Hume, are therefore, "not primarily physical but 'moral' — a matter of mind and manners (opinion), not of physical limitation. "This question of limitation," Phillips maintains, "implies important consequences since it involves 'their whole police, their manners, and the constitution of their government.'" <sup>102</sup> In his essay, "Of National Characters," Hume explains what he means by *moral* causes. "By *moral* causes, I mean," writes Hume, "all circumstances, which are fitted to work on the mind as motives or reasons, and which render a peculiar set of manners habitual to us."<sup>103</sup> He enumerates some examples of what he means by "circumstances." These are "the nature of government, the revolutions of public affairs, the plenty or penury in which the people live, the situation of the nation with regard to its neighbours, and such like circumstances."<sup>104</sup> For Hume, therefore, ancient European demographics are related to economic conditions and to the social conditions of the times. As a consequence, in dealing with the *domestic*, Hume dedicates much of his rhetoric to surveying slavery in the ancient world, and the deleterious effects that the institution of slavery had on the fertility and happiness of this stratum

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<sup>101</sup> Hume, "Populousness of Ancient Nations," 380-381.

<sup>102</sup> Phillips, *Society and Sentiment*, 50-51.

<sup>103</sup> Hume, "Of National Characters," *Essays Moral, Political, and Literary*, 198.

<sup>104</sup> Hume, "Of National Characters," *Essays Moral, Political, and Literary*, 198.

of ancient society. It is the practice of slavery, Hume avers, which distinguishes the “*domestic economy*” of the ancient world from that of the eighteenth century.<sup>105</sup>

Hume’s method of conjecture and inference from predominantly literary sources is a powerful and unique methodology. It will be noted later in our essay, in the chapter dealing with John Millar, that he also refers to examples both literary and Biblical to buttress his argument. It was maintained by Hume’s opponents that the practice of slavery was the main cause of the populousness of the ancient world, because a master would encourage the propagation of his slaves, just like his cattle, thereby increasing his wealth. But this is untrue, Hume retorts, because it would be too costly. Cattle are not bred and raised around populated areas, but are bought from remote and distant countries, where they may be purchased for much less than if they had been locally grown. The same is true of slaves. It appears from reading the ancient authors, that there was “a perpetual flux of slaves to ITALY from the remoter provinces,” and, Hume continues, “far from multiplying, they could not, it seems, so much as keep up the stock, without immense recruits.”<sup>106</sup>

As incontrovertible proof of his argument about slavery’s inability to increase populousness, Hume deduces, infers, and conjectures, based on the word *verna*, and *verna*’s lack of a correlative term. *Verna* is a word that means “a slave, born and bred in the family.”<sup>107</sup> *Verna*’s lack of a correlative, therefore, according to Hume’s argument, indicates that there were

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<sup>105</sup> Hume, “Populousness of Ancient Nations,” 383.

<sup>106</sup> Hume, “Populousness of Ancient Nations,” 388.

<sup>107</sup> Hume, “Populousness of Ancient Nations,” 389.

not many of these slaves, bred within the family, relative to the total number of slaves.<sup>108</sup> Hume observed:

“That where two related parts of a whole bear any proportion to each other, in numbers, rank or consideration, there are always correlative terms invented, which answer to both the parts, and express their mutual relation. If they bear no proportion to each other, the term is only invented for the less, and Marks its distinction from the whole. [...] I infer that if the number of slaves brought by the ROMANS from foreign countries, had not extremely exceeded those, which were bred at home, *verna* would have had a correlative, which would have expressed the former species of slaves. But these, it would seem, composed the main body of the ancient slaves, and the later were but a few exceptions.<sup>109</sup>

Even in those uncommon cases where the master countenanced it, the institution of slavery was not conducive to fostering a desire to raise a family; nor was it economically feasible, in populated areas, to reproduce either cattle or slaves, it being less expensive to purchase them from cheaper sources. “All I pretend to infer from these reasonings is,” Hume explains, “that slavery is in general disadvantageous both to the happiness and populousness of mankind.”<sup>110</sup>

In reference to *political customs and institutions*, Hume admits that the abundance of small republics in antiquity, before Rome became all-powerful, were in the main, probably more conducive to population growth than are the monarchical governments of the eighteenth-century. In these small republics, the citizenry was free, and the wealth, Hume proposes, was more evenly distributed than would be the case in the modern world, so that there would have been an overall equivalence of riches. Due to the smallness of the state, the seat of government would have been near at hand, another positive feature. This state of affairs would have made for very happy citizens, and would have been very conducive to procreation. “It must be owned,” Hume

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<sup>108</sup> Hume, “Populousness of Ancient Nations,” 388-389.

<sup>109</sup> Hume, “Populousness of Ancient Nations,” 389, fn. 21.

<sup>110</sup> Hume, “Populousness of Ancient Nations,” 396.

concedes, “that the situation of affairs in modern times, with regard to civil liberty, as well as equality of fortune, is not near so favourable, either to the propagation or happiness of mankind.”<sup>111</sup>

This concession to the argument for the greater populousness of the ancient world is countered by various impediments or unfavorable conditions, the fact that certain moral factors obviate, or preclude, the advantages enumerated by Hume. “There are commonly compensations in every human condition, avers Hume; and though these compensations be not always perfectly equal, yet they serve, at least, to restrain the prevailing principle.”<sup>112</sup> Living in uncertain circumstances, for example, and with modest riches, there may not have been much incentive to marry, to procreate, and raise a family.

Looking at the disadvantages of living in antiquity, Hume notes that, *first*, there were constant wars, which due to the apportionment of pillage were extremely ruinous to society and harmful to the people. A war in the small nations of antiquity would also be very damaging because the entire population would be called upon to serve in the defense of the state. Due to the small size of the territory, when attacked by the enemy, the entire nation, in effect, would be a national border and easily subject to the advances of their foes. Military engagements in antiquity resulted in incredible bloodshed, with great carnage resulting from what was, in effect, hand-to-hand combat between individuals. This was due, in part, as Hume describes, to the battle array, which usually consisted of a relatively small width of men at the front, but with a depth of as many as fifty combatants. We read in Tacitus, Hume says, that the most bloodshed occurred in internecine conflicts. When wars were between the citizenry of the same country, with no

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<sup>111</sup> Hume, “Populousness of Ancient Nations,” 402.

<sup>112</sup> Hume, “Populousness of Ancient Nations,” 404.

prospect of economic gain from retaining or selling the vanquished as slaves, massacres ensued. At times the slaughter was self-inflicted. Fathers and husbands, in antiquity, have been known to kill those they most cherished; death at the hands of a loved one, in preference to a lifetime of unspeakable brutality and travail as slaves. Plutarch, Hume says, tells how at times the Greek wars were “carried on by inroads, and robberies, and piracies,”<sup>113</sup> an especially debilitating form of conflict in a small nation, impairing the vitality of society.<sup>114</sup>

*Second*, except for the “love of civil liberty and of equality,”<sup>115</sup> the manners of antiquity, both in war and in peace, were inferior to those of the modern world, government was unpredictable and lacked steadfastness,<sup>116</sup> and property ownership was insecure.<sup>117</sup> To preclude strife, dissension, and political intrigue from a “free government” is not an easy matter, says Hume, and perhaps impossible to achieve. In the modern world, Hume avers, intrigue, and deep-seated anger between “factions” is chiefly to be found in “amongst religious parties alone.”<sup>118</sup> In the ancient world, however, conflicts within parties, or between political parties, which resulted in one group gaining ascendancy over the other, was rife and often led to the outright slaughter of a defeated opposition, without due process of law. “A fourth, a third, perhaps near half of the city was slaughtered, or expelled, every revolution,” Hume is aghast to relate. The subsequent political insurrection, which inevitably occurred, would see the same sort of mayhem unleashed on the victors of the prior factious unrest. “The disorder, diffidence, jealousy, enmity, which

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<sup>113</sup> Hume, “Populousness of Ancient Nations,” 406.

<sup>114</sup> Hume, “Populousness of Ancient Nations,” 404-406.

<sup>115</sup> Hume, “Populousness of Ancient Nations,” 406-407.

<sup>116</sup> Hume, “Populousness of Ancient Nations,” 413.

<sup>117</sup> Hume, “Populousness of Ancient Nations,” 411.

<sup>118</sup> Hume, “Populousness of Ancient Nations,” 407.

must prevail, are not easy for us to imagine in this age of the world,” Hume writes. Although there existed a great love of liberty in the ancient states, in Athens, in Rome, to mention two of the most notable examples, there does not appear to have been a genuine appreciation for the true meaning of that word. Thucydides, for example, Hume exclaims, appears to have been at a loss for words in attempting to describe the state of public confusion and civic disorder brought about by faction in Greece.<sup>119</sup>

If the purportedly cultured individuals in the antique world were inclined to conduct themselves in such a manner, what could be expected from the citizenry of those states regarded as being inhabited by “barbarous” people? Perhaps this might explain, Hume proposes, why the Greek states considered themselves humane, gentle, and moderate, in comparison to all other states? We are led to the conclusion, Hume believes, that the political intrigue and civic instability discussed above in the Grecian republics, manifest itself in an even more violent fashion in those uncivilized, “barbarous” commonwealths. If historical accounts are credible, Hume says, the early history of Rome presents a contrast to the situation in Greece. Apparently no rebellion in the history of Rome resulted in bloodshed until the assassination of the Gracchi brothers.<sup>120</sup> “If the Romans were so late in coming to blows,” Hume writes, “they made ample compensation, after they had once entered upon the bloody scene; and Appian’s history of their civil wars contains the most frightful pictures of massacres, proscriptions, and forfeitures, that ever was presented to the world.”<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> Hume, “Populousness of Ancient Nations,” 406-409.

<sup>120</sup> Hume, “Populousness of Ancient Nations,” 413.

<sup>121</sup> Hume, “Populousness of Ancient Nations,” 413-414.

The rules of conduct for the governing of a state in antiquity exhibited so little humaneness, fellow feeling, or restraint that it appears unnecessary to attempt to comprehend why there was so much brutality, Hume believes. He, however, cannot restrain himself, and feels compelled to remark that, “the laws, in the later period of the Roman commonwealth were so absurdly contrived, that they obliged the heads of parties to have recourse to these extremities.”<sup>122</sup> As proof of this state of affairs, Hume declares that, in Rome during this period, death sentences for serious crimes committed were abrogated, and replaced by exile. Under these circumstances, it became inevitable, that in the political disputes between factions, private retribution was taken where the laws of the state provided no legal recourse.<sup>123</sup>

“One general cause” of the frequent breach of civic order in the ancient states was an inability to introduce an “aristocracy,” into the political system of the time, says Hume, and the continual dissatisfactions and rebellions against the authority of the state, if even the lowest in rank or the most destitute were barred from consideration for “the legislature and from public offices.” The very fact of being a *freeman*, instead of a slave, appeared to grant any individual who carried that rank every “power and privilege” of the republic. “Solon’s laws” in Athens, for example, allowed any freeman to vote or to stand for elections. In Rome, “Servius Tullius’s laws,” appear to be equitable and sensible; “power” was determined, or set, in proportion to ones holdings in property: the Roman people, however, never accepted these laws.<sup>124</sup>

*Third*, there were numerous additional disadvantages that existed in antiquity, which in comparison to the present, appear to favor the modern age both for the felicity of the people and

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<sup>122</sup> Hume, “Populousness of Ancient Nations,” 414.

<sup>123</sup> Hume, “Populousness of Ancient Nations,” 414-415.

<sup>124</sup> Hume, “Populousness of Ancient Nations,” 415-416.

for the growth of the population. “Trade, manufacturers, industry,” did not exist in the past, whereas now this commerce is thriving in Europe. Tyre, second only to Carthage, was the most commercial city of the Mediterranean, and yet, prior to its destruction by Alexander, Hume relates, wasn’t an especially great city, based on Arrian’s description. Although known to history as a commercial center, Athens, Herodotus writes, had such an insignificant amount of trade that, even at the height of its business activity, its vessels rarely visited even the adjacent Asian shores.<sup>125</sup>

High rates of interest, and large returns on commercial investments are a certain sign that economic activity and trade are in the early stages of development, Hume avers. He utilizes examples from an ancient Greek orator, Lysias, a Greek statesman, Demosthenes, a Roman magistrate, Verres and Cicero, philosopher, lawyer, orator, consul, to show that in the ancient world both rates of interests and realized profits were very high, a dependable indicator of a nascent commercial environment. It must be admitted, Hume says, that in Rome, “after the settlement of the empire,” interest rates fell, but they did not ever remain at a low rate for a long time, as we see in the nations of this modern age. To continue with his enumeration of the financial disadvantages of the ancient world verses the modern world and, by extension, the deleterious effect that state of affairs must have had on populousness, Hume refers to the fact that, he does not recall any antique writings wherein the increase in size of a city was due to its manufacturing. And, whenever it is written that the commercial activities of a certain city, or state, are thriving, it usually has to do with the trade of agricultural products, or raw materials, “for which different soils and climates were suited.” Hume also concedes that “agriculture” is the chief method by which food necessary to exist is obtained, and he also admits that it is feasible

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<sup>125</sup> Hume, “Populousness of Ancient Nations,” 416-417.

that this economic activity could prosper, in an environment where “manufactures and other arts” were either not known or disregarded.<sup>126</sup> Hume elaborates by saying,

But is it just reasoning, because agriculture may, in some instances, flourish without trade or manufacturers, to conclude that, in any great extent of country, and for any great tract of time, it would subsist alone? The most natural way, surely, of encouraging husbandry, is, first, to excite other kinds of industry, and thereby afford the labourer a ready market for his commodities, and a return of such goods as may contribute to his pleasure and enjoyment. This method is infallible and universal; and as it prevails more in modern government than in the ancient, it affords a presumption of the superior populousness of the former.<sup>127</sup>

Have not all the advancements, and the increases in excellence of manners, taste and thought in this modern period, contributed to facilitate life for humankind, and as a result, towards an increase in natural reproduction and populousness, Hume rhetorically asks? Our increased aptitude in the mechanical arts, Hume queries, the “discovery of new worlds,” such a boost to trading; “the establishment of posts; and the use of bills of exchange”: All appear to be exceedingly beneficial to the advancement of “art, industry, and populousness.” Do we have cause to believe that humankind was as secure in the ancient world, in their homes or in their travels, whether overland or on rivers or oceans, as we are in the modern world, or that the “police” in antiquity was in any way similar to what it is in our own time?<sup>128</sup>

In making a comparison between antiquity and the modern world, therefore, it does not appear to be possible to give any impartial explanation for why antiquity should have had a greater population than the modern world. The even distribution of wealth, the ancient attitude towards liberty, and the small size of the ancient nations were conditions, which were advantageous to the natural reproduction of humankind. On the other hand, the ancients had

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<sup>126</sup> Hume, “Populousness of Ancient Nations,” 417-418.

<sup>127</sup> Hume, “Populousness of Ancient Nations,” 419-420.

<sup>128</sup> Hume, “Populousness of Ancient Nations,” 420.

many wars characterized by great bloodshed and destructiveness, governing bodies that were internally dissentious and unstable, weak and undeveloped “commerce and manufactures,” and the general police more loose and irregular.” The disadvantages that have been enumerated, Hume argues, appear to offset the advantages of antiquity on the question of populousness, so that it would appear that the ancient world was not more populous than the modern.<sup>129</sup>

Facts, however, could counter all of our reasoning. Were the facts to show that, in actuality, the ancient world had a greater population than the modern world, then all of our “conjectures”<sup>130</sup> are mistaken, and we have failed to take into consideration some relevant, or pertinent, information in this questioning and juxtaposing. “But unluckily the main combat, where we compare facts,” explains Hume, “cannot be rendered much more decisive. The facts, delivered by ancient authors, are either so uncertain or, so imperfect as to afford us nothing positive in this matter.”<sup>131</sup> It should also be noted, Hume says, that numbers are unreliable in antique documents, having been exposed to substantially more alteration, or debasement, than any other area of the manuscript; and for self-evident reason. Changes to the words in a document affect the meaning or the grammatical structure, and are more easily noticed. In trying to ascertain correct population numbers in antiquity, we do not have any counts of the numbers of people who lived in a certain city or territory, which has been passed to us by authors who can be relied upon, Hume protests. It is likely that there was originally a good reason for the numbers of inhabitants given for “any free city;”<sup>132</sup> due to the fact that the citizenry would have

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<sup>129</sup> Hume, “Populousness of Ancient Nations,” 420-421.

<sup>130</sup> Hume, “Populousness of Ancient Nations,” 421.

<sup>131</sup> Hume, “Populousness of Ancient Nations,” 421.

<sup>132</sup> Hume, “Populousness of Ancient Nations,” 422.

participated in the governing of the city—casting votes, running for public office, or as elected officials—and precise records would have been kept of these people. Slaves, however, were only rarely accounted for in establishing the population of a city, so that we are left with doubt regarding the population of even one ancient city. In reference to ages distant from our own, the population numbers are frequently so preposterous that they are deprived of credibility and all power of persuasion. It is a common error to think of “all the ages of antiquity as one period,”<sup>133</sup> and to calculate the numbers of inhabitants in the major cities enumerated by antique writers, as all having existed at the same time.<sup>134</sup>

Hume proposes to examine the population claims for the cities of antiquity which are representative of “real history,”<sup>135</sup> in other words, the cities of ancient Greece and those which were part of Rome’s orbit, excluding the population numbers for “Nineveh, Babylon, and the Egyptian Thebes.”<sup>136</sup> Hume admits that, the more he investigates this question of population, the more doubtful he becomes about the claims of significant populousness in antiquity. Plato speaks of Athens as a great city, and it was assuredly the greatest of the ancient Greek cities, Hume agrees, except perhaps, for Syracuse, which during the time of Thucydides was about the same size as Athens, but subsequently grew bigger. Even Cicero thought of Athens as the biggest of the Greek cities in his own time, not including either Antioch or Alexandria under that category. Beginning with the statement of Demetrius Phalereus that Athens had 21,000 citizens, 10,000 strangers, and 400,000 slaves, Hume examines and deconstructs what the ancient sources say

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<sup>133</sup> Hume, “Populousness of Ancient Nations,” 426.

<sup>134</sup> Hume, “Populousness of Ancient Nations,” 421-426.

<sup>135</sup> Hume, “Populousness of Ancient Nations,” 426.

<sup>136</sup> Hume, “Populousness of Ancient Nations,” 426.

about the population of Athens, and other historically notable Grecian cities. Hume considers, and takes into consideration in his own calculations, the fact that population numbers usually referred to mature men, those able to fight, vote, and pay taxes, usually heads of families. He takes into account the number of houses in Athens, and the circumference of the walls around the city. He ponders the comments by Xenophon, Demosthenes and Plautus, that the Athenians treated their slaves with kindness and tolerance, a fact, indicating to Hume that slaves must not have been as numerous as the ancient authors say: twenty slaves for every Athenian citizen. In the British colonies, Hume compares, the proportion is not as great, and yet, the slave owners are compelled to maintain a high degree of discipline over the slaves. From Demosthenes and Polybius, authors whom Hume trusts, he learns that the entire *census* for the “state of Athens was less than 6000 talents,”<sup>137</sup> a number which is not easily brought into agreement with even the much reduced number of 40,000 slaves in Athens. Hume calculates 284,000 as being the total population of Athens, including the adjacent countryside, and reminds the reader “that the number assigned by Athenaeus, whatever it is, comprehends all the inhabitants of Attica, as well as those of Athens. The Athenians affected much a country life, as we learn from Thucydides.”<sup>138</sup> Even with these concessions and recalculations, it must be allowed, Hume says, that Greece was a populous country, surpassing expectations, considering its relatively small land area, with soil of not great fertility, supplying sustenance for its people mainly from the land around the city.<sup>139</sup> Hume summarizes his interrogations of ancient texts regarding the population of Athens, and Greece:

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<sup>137</sup> Hume, “Populousness of Ancient Nations,” 430.

<sup>138</sup> Hume, “Populousness of Ancient Nations,” 431.

<sup>139</sup> Hume, “Populousness of Ancient Nations,” 426-436.

Upon this supposition, therefore, we may thus reason. The free Greeks of all ages and sexes were 860,000. The slaves, estimating them by the number of Athenian slaves as above, who seldom married or had families, were double the male citizens of full age, to wit, 430,000. And all the inhabitants of ancient Greece, excepting Laconia, were about one million two hundred and ninety thousand: No mighty number, nor exceeding what may be found at present in Scotland, a country of not much greater extent, and very indifferently peopled.<sup>140</sup>

Hume now goes about establishing the population of Rome and Italy, using the same method of inquiry. He prefaces his investigation by stating that, he believes that he will not uncover any evidence to buttress the overstated claims made by modern writers for the great populousness of the ancient world. Dionysius Halicarnassaeus, Hume begins, writes that the walls of Rome were the same circumference as the walls of Athens, but the “suburbs”<sup>141</sup> extended further; and it was not easy to distinguish exactly where Rome ended and the environs began. Trying to ascertain the population of Rome based on the numbers who received the monthly allotment of corn, while an excellent idea, is beset with problems. Was the corn given out only to the needy? Perhaps not, since we read in Cicero, Hume says, that the wealthy could also partake of this largesse, without disapproval or discredit. Was the corn given to only the head of a family, or to all men, women, or children? Did the recipient have to be a resident of Rome, or could individuals coming from the immediate environs of Rome be eligible to receive their “five *moddi*”<sup>142</sup> per month? Were all the individuals who received the corn subsidy valid recipients? Caesar, Hume says, removed the names of 170,000 recipients from the list, because they were not eligible for the monthly distribution of corn, and it is doubtful that all the abusers were identified. The most important question, and the most indeterminate, is the number of

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<sup>140</sup> Hume, *Populousness of Ancient Nations*,” 436-437.

<sup>141</sup> Hume, “*Populousness of Ancient Nations*,” 437.

<sup>142</sup> Hume, “*Populousness of Ancient Nations*,” 442.

slaves in Rome, and Hume does not think that the example of Athens can be helpful. Who had the greater number of slaves, Athens, due to their use of slaves in crafts and industry, or Rome, because of their greater opulence and wealth? The best source of inference regarding the populousness of Rome may be drawn from Herodian, who states that Antioch and Alexandria were very little smaller in population than Rome. Diodorus Siculus relates that a street in Alexandria, which went across the city, without meandering, was five miles in length, and since Alexandria was longer than it was wide, Hume approximates that Alexandria was about the size of modern day Paris, and that Rome, he conjectures, would have been about the size of London.<sup>143</sup>

In the time of Diodorus Siculus, Alexandria consisted of 300,000 individuals, presumably including women and children. The number of slaves, however, is not known. From statements made by Herodian, that there was much uncultivated land, which was “put to no manner of use,” from Vopiscus that in Etruria there was much uncultivated fertile land, and from Polybius that herds of pigs could be encountered in Tuscany, Lombardy, and in Greece numbering in the thousands, Hume is able to make conjectures about the populations of Italy and of Greece. Could it not be inferred from these accounts, Hume asks, that the population of Northern Italy, and of Greece, was sparser at that time than it is at present, and that the land not as well cultivated?<sup>144</sup>

Pliny says that Seleucia, the capital of the Eastern Greek empire, had a population of 600,000, and Starbo has written that Carthage had 700,000 inhabitants. Paris and Constantinople, Hume suggests, at the very least do not surpass this number.<sup>145</sup> Hume comments:

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<sup>143</sup> Hume, “Populousness of Ancient Nations,” 437-443.

<sup>144</sup> Hume, “Populousness of Ancient Nations,” 444-447.

<sup>145</sup> Hume, “Populousness of Ancient Nations,” 447.

From the experience of past and present ages, one might conjecture that there is a kind of impossibility, that any city could rise much beyond this proportion. Whether the grandeur of a city be founded on commerce or on empire, there seem to be invincible obstacles, which prevent its further progress. The seats of vast monarchies, by introducing extravagant luxury, irregular expence, idleness, dependence, and false ideas of rank and superiority, are improper for commerce. Extensive commerce checks itself, by raising the price of all labour and commodities.<sup>146</sup>

With either Dover or Calais as a center, suggests Hume, draw a circle with a radius of two hundred miles, by doing so you have encompassed “London, Paris, the Netherlands, the United Provinces, and some of the best cultivated parts of France and England.”<sup>147</sup> It may be stated without exaggeration, says Hume, that no land area can be discovered, in the ancient world, covering the same amount of ground, which held such a large number of significant cities with large populations, and extraordinary wealth and luxury. In order to arrive at the most accurate and exact comparison between antiquity and the modern world on this subject of populousness, Hume suggests, an investigation of which states “possessed most art, knowledge, civility, and the best police.”<sup>148</sup>

L’Abbe du Bos, Hume relates, observes that Italy is warmer at present than it was in antiquity. The Tiber would freeze in Rome, and in 480AD there was snow of the ground for forty days. Juvenal gives the impression that the Tiber freezing was not uncommon, and reading Horace one has the sense that Roman streets are icy and snow covered. It was not the intention of these authors to do so, but in their writings we are able to glean enough particulars to persuade us that the winters are milder now in Rome, than they were formerly, in antiquity. In the modern world the Tiber no longer freezes in winter, no more than the Nile at Cairo, says Hume. In order

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<sup>146</sup> Hume, “Populousness of Ancient Nations,” 447-448.

<sup>147</sup> Hume, “Populousness of Ancient Nations,” 448.

<sup>148</sup> Hume, “Populousness of Ancient Nations,” 448.

to drive home his point about the antique world having been so much colder than the modern day world, Hume cites examples from Petronius, Aristotle, Starbo, Ovid, Tournefort, Polybius and Varro. Assuming that these writers are not mistaken, how do we explain this? Hume resolves this dilemma to his satisfaction by suggesting that the land is more cultivated, and more peopled, now than it was then. The forests that formerly cast their shadow over the earth, keeping it cool, have been dispersed allowing the warmth of the sun to reach the earth.<sup>149</sup>

Hume next proposes to look at those countries, which are implicated in both antique and present history, comparing their circumstances at the present time, to their state of affairs in the past. In doing so, Hume believes, we will see how misplaced the modern day comments are, which insist on how sparsely populated the present is in contradistinction to the past. Some countries are less populous than in antiquity, others are substantially more populated than they were in former times; others may have declined, but are still very populated. In this last category Hume names Egypt, Spain, and Italy. Turkey, Poland, Muscovy, Germany, and France are more populated than in antiquity.

Britain was not very populated in antiquity, owing to the barbarism of her inhabitants, and as a result of the marshy land, as noted by Herodian. Britain is more populous in the modern world than it was in antiquity.<sup>150</sup>

Germany is perhaps twenty times more populous than it was anciently.

Hume does not believe that Gaul was nearly as populated as France is in the modern world. Appian and Diodorus Siculus would have us accept the unbelievable populousness of Gaul, which he proposes. Calculating using the numbers supplied by these writers, Hume

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<sup>149</sup> Hume, "Populousness of Ancient Nations," 448-452.

<sup>150</sup> Hume, "Populousness of Ancient Nations," 453.

estimates that Gaul's population was 200 million people, in a country, which is considered populous in modern times, although it is slightly more than 20 million in population. Such numbers, as presented by Appian and Diodorus Siculus lose all credibility by their exaggeration. Caesar took precise note of the forces arrayed against him when he invaded Belgium, placing the number at 208,000 men at arms. This number of men was not the whole of those that could fight. Caesar writes that the Bellovaci fought him with sixty thousand men, although one hundred thousand could have been brought into the battle. Based on these proportions, Hume calculates that the entire possible fighting force in Belgium amounted to 350,000 men; resulting in a total population of one and a half million people. Since Belgium represented approximately a fourth of Gaul, Hume calculates that the population of Gaul was about six million, not a third of its present populousness.<sup>151</sup>

Hume ends his treatise on populousness by looking at a passage written by Diodorus Siculus, in which extravagant claims are made about Ninus's army. The army consisted of 1,700,000 infantry and 200,000 cavalry, the historian says, remarking that readers should not conceive an opinion of the populousness of the ancient world based on the unoccupied bareness and lack of population extending over the present world. Hume comments on this striking passage:<sup>152</sup>

Thus an author," Hume declares, "who lived at the very period of antiquity which is represented as most populous, complains of the desolation which then prevailed, gives the preference to former times, and has recourse to ancient fables as a foundation for his opinion. The humour of blaming the present, and admiring the past, is strongly rooted in human nature, and has an influence on persons endued with the profoundest judgment and the most extensive learning."<sup>153</sup>

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<sup>151</sup> Hume, "Populousness of Ancient Nations," 453-455.

<sup>152</sup> Hume, "Populousness of Ancient Nations," 463-464.

<sup>153</sup> Hume, "Populousness of Ancient Nations," 464.

Hume's inquiry into the *facts* of the debate, whether antiquity was more populous, is an impressive interrogation of the ancient writers, bringing to light the obvious inaccuracies and exaggerations of the population numbers in the ancient sources. The antique world, based as it was on the institution of slavery, did not, in general, promote the happiness and well being of the people. The quality of manufacturers and commerce was lower, and ancient manners, property rights, and politics were disadvantageous to the general good, or the welfare of the community. "Thus, upon comparing the whole," Hume concludes, "it seems impossible to assign any just reason, why the world should have been more populous in ancient than in modern times."<sup>154</sup>

In the section to follow we look at the history written by John Millar, *The Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, our second example of the various genres of history being written during this historical period. This particular selection is also usually classified as a conjectural history. It is, in general, similar in many ways, to the *Discours sur l'origine et les fondements de l'inégalité parmi les hommes* (1755), by Jean-Jacques Rousseau.

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<sup>154</sup> Hume, "Populousness of Ancient Nations," 420.

## CHAPTER 3: JOHN MILLAR, *THE ORIGIN OF THE DISTINCTION OF RANKS*

### ***3.1 Introduction***

John Millar's *The Origin of the Distinction of Ranks* is our second example of the nontraditional historical forms that developed in eighteenth-century Scotland to document those aspects of the past that traditional history neglected. At this historical point in time, the historiographical tradition was proving to be inadequate, or ill equipped, to represent certain aspects of history, which were now considered important, but which were being ignored by the more traditional historical forms.

Millar is important to our narrative because he breaks with tradition, and writes history in a new way, utilizing a form that is adapted to his subject, and writing about a nontraditional topic. Millar is also significant to our study, because in keeping with our notion of sympathy as an important aspect of human nature, and as a solid foundation on which historians based their writing, Millar's *The Origin of the Distinction of Ranks* is an example of a history which situates itself imaginatively and sympathetically into the state of affairs of the past, in this case, the circumstances of early humanity.

Millar's originality extends to his charting of the slow and steady progress of society in terms of economic changes, beginning with the private possession of property in land and extending to an economy based on supply and demand. Millar's history helps us understand how society develops by answering the questions on the origins of social diversity, and on the development and changes to rights and authority. Knowledge of society and the various forms of society are important if we are to know human beings and the ideas, which develop as humankind progresses towards civilization and refinement. It is in the crucible of the social that humans live, and it is within society that our thinking and ideas develop.

We write about Millar in this chapter because his history helps us make progress towards our goal of establishing a continuum of different eighteenth-century historical forms, all dealing with population, all based on a nuanced understanding of human nature, and all of them with an undercurrent of the scientific in their methodology. First with the Hume selection, and in this present chapter with Millar, our continuum moves forward into the future of historical writing, extending from the conjectural, to the statistical of Sinclair and Malthus.

One of the genres of eighteenth-century history, was that historical form, and methodology, called “theoretical or conjectural history.” The name for this way of writing history, without the buttress of historical documentation, appears to have originated with Dugald Stewart’s *Biographical Memoirs of Adam Smith, William Robertson, Thomas Reid*, wherein Stewart applies the term to one of the various Scottish forms of history, called *histoire raisonnée* in France.<sup>155</sup> The first example of this historical form, which we will discuss, is John Millar’s *The Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*.

In this work Millar undertakes a historical and comparative inquiry into the basic or inherent features of authority and power-relations, and looks at how authority undergoes modifications over time, and why these adjustments occur. In his investigation, John Millar provides “an empirical analysis of three so-called adventitious personal rights and one adventitious ‘governmental right’ of natural law theory.”<sup>156</sup> These are the rights of the husband over the wife, of the father over his children, of the master over servants or slaves, and of a chieftain over his clan or of a monarch over his people. These rights are analyzed in each of the

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<sup>155</sup> Dugald Stewart, *Biographical Memoirs of Adam Smith, LL.D., William Robertson, D.D., Thomas Reid, D.D.*, ed. Sir William Hamilton, Bart., vol. x of *The Collected Works of Dugald Stewart* (Edinburgh: Thomas Constable and Co., 1858), 10 vols., plus one supplementary volume, 1854-1860, 34.

<sup>156</sup> John Millar, *The Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, ed., and intro. Aaron Garrett, gen. ed. Knud Haakonssen (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2006), ix.

stadial divisions of the history of humankind, “different historical stages,” which for Millar, “were not just distinct but *progressive*.” These stages of human development were “the ages of ‘Hunters,’ ‘Shepherds,’ ‘Agriculture,’ and ‘Commerce.’”<sup>157</sup>

The writing of history is a subjective enterprise, art or craft. This is an undeniable fact, but it need not necessarily be considered pejorative.<sup>158</sup> Objectivity in the writing of history is not possible, since on the most basic of levels, a human subject, a historically contingent subjectivity, writes history, and brings to that representation of the past all that she or he is, knows or thinks. These opinions, I believe, are valid in the writing of history where documents, or traces of the past, are available. These judgments are so much more pertinent, however, in that type of history, like conjectural history, which John Millar and others write, where “authentic materials”<sup>159</sup> are unavailable, especially when attempting to deal with the earliest stages of humanity’s development, where the history that is written is predominantly based on the probable or theoretical.

In order to write this kind of history, a historian needs a solid foundation on which to base his undocumented history, I have proposed that historians of eighteenth-century Scotland, like John Millar, based themselves on their knowledge of human nature, on the uniformity of human nature, and more specifically on sympathy, on a sympathetic understanding of humanity.

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<sup>157</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, ix-xi.

<sup>158</sup> F. R. Ankersmit, *Historical Representation* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 2001), 75-78; 149-151; Paul Veyne, *Writing History: Essays on Epistemology*, trans. Mina Moore-Rivoluceri (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan UP, 1971), 35-36.

<sup>159</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 32.

### 3.2 John Millar

John Millar (1735-1801) was a historian, philosopher, and Professor of Civil Law at the University of Glasgow. When the first edition of his book was published in 1771, entitled at that time, *Observations Concerning the Distinction of Ranks*, John Millar had been the holder of the Regius Professorship in Civil Law, at Glasgow, for a decade.<sup>160</sup> His father, James Millar, was a parish minister of the Church of Scotland, in Shotts, Lanarkshire, and later, of the parish of Hamilton, also in the county of Lanark. After the family's move to Hamilton, John Millar went to reside with his uncle, John Millar, at Milheugh, parish of Blantyre. Under the tutelage of his uncle, and beginning in 1746, at Glasgow College, John Millar demonstrated assiduousness in his studies and displayed an obvious intelligence. John Millar cultivated his "manners" and "taste," both at Milheugh and at Glasgow College. In conversations on "literature, religion, morality, and history" at the home of Mrs. Craig, mother of his future wife, Margaret Craig, he sharpened his intellect, increased the extent of his knowledge, and sharpened his "powers of argument." It was during his years of study at Glasgow that he met and befriended Adam Smith, a meeting resulting in a lasting, mutual friendship. John Millar was also on friendly terms with Lord Kames, whose son he tutored for a time, and with David Hume, whose philosophical opinions he profoundly esteemed, well supported as Millar thought they were.<sup>161</sup>

In the lectures, which he gave at the University of Glasgow, as Professor of Law, notably the ones on Jurisprudence and Government, John Millar had already broached some aspects of the topic of his book, *The Origin of the Distinction of Rank*. Millar had been a student of Adam Smith, and in 1751, had attended Smith's lectures on moral philosophy, or ethics, wherein

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<sup>160</sup> Aaron Garrett, "Introduction," John Millar, *The Origin of the Distinction of Ranks* (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2006), xi.

<sup>161</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 39.

concepts of right and wrong were systematized, discussed and evaluated. In these series of lectures, Adam Smith taught his own views of the historical development and progression of justice and rights in the context of the natural law. In John Millar's rendering of this development, however, the notion of justice and the concept of rights arose as humans progressed through stadial stages of change, from hunters and shepherds, to agriculture, and commerce.<sup>162</sup> In *The Origin of the Distinction of Ranks* Millar departs from David Hume and Adam Smith "in providing a stadial genealogy of particular rights and showing that rights should be understood as evolving responses to human needs. By focusing on familial rights Millar brought the problem of natural rights into sharp focus. If the most basic social rights are mutable and artificial, and if man is social, what is one to make of natural rights at all?"<sup>163</sup>

In his own lectures on Jurisprudence and Government, John Millar made inquiries into the gradual rise of diverse ranks in society, together with the concomitant differentiation of disparate levels of power relations among various individuals within society. Since it seemed apparent to Millar that these dissimilarities in rank and power were based on continuously changing and ubiquitous connections, he endeavored to discover the origin of these dynamic correspondences. His systematic examination resulted in the discovery that, in general, four origins for the distinction of ranks could be distinguished. Those distinctions he based on the sex of an individual, on childhood powerlessness, on voluntary servitude or slavery, and last, on those distinctions whereby the needs of a community result in the promotion of a particular individual to a position of power over them, as in the governance of a state. In the Civil Law, the first three sources of the distinction of ranks are subsumed under the classification, Rights of

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<sup>162</sup> Aaron Garrett, "Introduction," *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, x.

<sup>163</sup> Garrett, "Introduction," *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, xv.

Persons; the fourth distinction forms the foundation, or the point of departure, for the Rights of Government.<sup>164</sup>

In *The Origin of the Distinction of Rank*, John Millar details the suspected progression of society from an early stage of relatively simple social life, to a more complex, refined form of society, as was to be found, for instance, in eighteenth-century England. Millar believed, as did others of his eighteenth century compatriots, that with historical progress, with the transformation wrought by the development of the arts and of economic advancement, human society became less savage and aggressive, leading to an incremental diversification of ranks as humankind progressed. In general, the notion that humankind progressed from “rudeness to refinement” was “one of the leading principles” of the Enlightenment in Scotland.<sup>165</sup> This view was promulgated by some of the most illustrious men of the Scottish Enlightenment, most notably Henry Home, Lord Kames,<sup>166</sup> David Hume and Adam Smith,<sup>167</sup> William Robertson,<sup>168</sup> Adam Ferguson and John Millar.<sup>169</sup>

### ***3.3 Conjectural History as Method***

As with the other writers of conjectural history, Millar worked using a scientific methodology. He looked for causes, in order to formulate explanations, and utilized the similarities, and the repeatability of findings, or descriptions, to formulate a certain theoretical,

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<sup>164</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 47.

<sup>165</sup> Duncan Forbes, “Introduction,” in David Hume, *The History of Great Britain: The Reigns of James I and Charles I*, Pelican Classics ed. (Harmondsworth, England, 1970), 38; qtd. in David Spadafora, *The Idea of Progress in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1990), 253.

<sup>166</sup> Spadafora, *Idea of Progress*, 255.

<sup>167</sup> Spadafora, *Idea of Progress*, 257.

<sup>168</sup> Spadafora, *Idea of Progress*, 258.

<sup>169</sup> Spadafora, *Idea of Progress*, 259.

or speculative result. While the reports from travelers and adventurers about the indigenous populations of the New World were often unreliable, for example, numerous reports coming from disparate sources could be compared, and the similarities noted, leading to empirical results, which could be judged as being reasonably accurate. John Millar explains his reasoning in this way:

Our information, therefore, with regard to the state on mankind in the rude parts of the world, is chiefly derived from the relations of travellers, whose character and situation in life, neither set them above the suspicion of being easily deceived, nor of endeavouring to misrepresent the facts which they have related. From the number, however, and the variety of those relations, they acquire, in many cases, a degree of authority, upon which we may depend with security, and to which the narration of any single person, how respectable soever, can have no pretension.<sup>170</sup>

This information, in turn, could be compared with the manners of other primitive peoples in the contemporary world, such as the Scottish Highlanders, with further analogies being made with sources from classical antiquity, or from the writings of poets and other historians. By such comparative methodologies, and by making inferences based on a knowledge of human nature, this conjectural, natural, or theoretical historian, was able to fill in the gaps, and to provide what the historical record was not able to supply in the form of documentation, what Lord Kames referred to as “cautious conjecture.”<sup>171</sup>

Conjectural history’s utilization of a “nontraditional historiographical form,” therefore, was a necessary response to, and a “concern for a set of historical conditions that the dominant tradition has excluded from consideration.”<sup>172</sup> With John Millar, as with most of the other conjectural historians, there was an interest in the changes to the mores, manners and

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<sup>170</sup> Millar, “Introduction,” *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 90.

<sup>171</sup> Berry, *Social Theory*, 64.

<sup>172</sup> Phillips, *Society and Sentiment*, 185.

government of a society over time. These were aspects of human society, which had not been a major concern of traditional history in the past, but that were becoming increasingly important.

An astonishing variety is to be found in the laws of countries, and even at different times within the same country, Millar notices. He is curious to know how it is that humans came to abide by certain rules of behavior, such as forms of authority or personal rights, and what set of conditions led to the choice of one set of rules of proper practices, principles and expectations over others. Unless we know the particular determining factors, which led to the choice of certain laws or forms of regulation among a people, Millar believes, we are unable to make a judgment as to their utility or feasibility.<sup>173</sup> As was the case with David Hume's essay "Why Utility Pleases," Millar is interested in the "utility" of these laws. He is also curious about other forms of authority, and makes an effort to understand how early humankind, in the best interest of its nascent society, applied these various forms of authority. Although Millar is concerned with various developmental aspects of early human society, in the writing of his conjectural history, he keeps the study of the developing interpersonal rights of humankind clearly in focus. Millar is cognizant of the fact that, different inhabitants, of different regions of the world, due to their own unique circumstances may have developed, out of necessity, diverse manners, habits and laws to suit their particular conditions. In reference to these particular conditions, "the difference of situation, which have suggested different views and motives of action to the inhabitants of particular countries," Millar enumerates:

Of this kind, are the fertility or barrenness of the soil, the nature of its productions, the species of labour requisite for procuring subsistence, the number of individuals collected together in one community, their proficiency in arts, the advantages which they enjoy for entering into mutual transactions, and for maintaining an intimate correspondence. The Variety that frequently occurs in

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<sup>173</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 83.

these, and such other particulars, must have a prodigious influence upon the great body of a people; as, by giving a peculiar direction to their inclination and pursuits, it must be productive of correspondent habits, dispositions, and ways of thinking.<sup>174</sup>

Having made this observation, however, Millar believes that there are certain basic steps that all cultures pass through in their slow progression to civility and refinement. Millar observes:

“There is, however, in man a disposition and capacity for improving his condition by the exertion of which, he is carried on from one degree of advancement to another; and the similarity of wants, as well as of the faculties by which those wants are supplied, has every where produced a remarkable uniformity in the several steps of his progression.”<sup>175</sup>

In his inquiry into the development, progressive change and universal genealogy of authority and rights among human beings, from the earliest times to his own eighteenth-century present, Millar is thinking and writing about matters in which he is very conversant. In his public and professional life as a Professor of Law, teaching courses on justice and jurisprudence, and in his private life, as a well educated, cultivated eighteenth-century man, conversations on topics such as the law, the idea of rights, morals, justice, and human nature must be considered as having been an integral part, or an essential element of his existence.

The most important human need that must be satisfied is the requirement of having adequate access to food and water. In gradual steps, humankind went from the capturing of wild animals as a food source, to the collection of fruits, and other eatable plants, to the realization that the cultivation and rearing of these same foods was possible. After the means of attaining these essential, basic necessities had been acquired, human kind quickly progressed to a state

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<sup>174</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 83-84.

<sup>175</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 84.

where “their appetites and desires are more and more awakened,”<sup>176</sup> producing important changes. Population increases, social bonds are extended, manufacture and commerce develop, and property of various kinds is acquired. This, in a natural progression, leads to the rise of rights and obligations, to variability in “taste and sentiments,”<sup>177</sup> and a more intricate form of governing becomes necessary for a humanity that began living in social groups early in its social development. Millar says:

By such gradual advances in rendering their situation more comfortable, the most important alterations are produced in the state and condition of a people: their numbers are increased; the connections of society are extended; and men, being less oppressed with their own wants, are more at liberty to cultivate the feelings of humanity: property, the great source of distinction among individuals, is established; and the various rights of mankind, arising from their multiplied connections, are recognized and protected: the laws of a country are thereby rendered numerous; and a more complex form of government becomes necessary, for distributing justice, and for preventing the disorders which proceed from the jarring interests and passions of a large and opulent community. It is evident, at the same time, that these, and such other effects of improvement, which have so great a tendency to vary the state of mankind, and their manner of life, will be productive of suitable variations in their taste and sentiments, and in their general system of behavior.<sup>178</sup>

The reasoned explanation, which Millar used, as we saw above, to delineate humanity’s advancement toward a civilized state, is the *stadial* explanation for the development of humankind. This was an eighteenth-century concept, which was used in attempting to explain, in a logical, plausible manner how the process of human progress could have come about, without the benefit of hard evidence for the historiographers use. Humanity, it was deduced, went through four basic stages in its path to civilization, these, as we alluded to above, were the

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<sup>176</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 84.

<sup>177</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 85.

<sup>178</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 84-85.

hunting and gathering stage, the stage where pasturing and grazing animals were kept, the introduction of agriculture, and commerce.

Certain improvements, idiosyncratic forms of behavior, or special ways of believing, behaving, or of doing something, develop and become ingrained in a tribe, or a community of people, as they develop historically. Such traits, Millar maintains, persist over time, giving a distinctive national character to a people, or to their institutions and laws, while maintaining individual diversity.<sup>179</sup>

The variation in climates, it was thought, contributed to the progressive betterment of humanity. That climate could have a substantial effect on man and human society was a belief, which had persisted since antiquity.<sup>180</sup> In the eighteenth-century this belief persisted, grew in complexity, and was a subject, which precipitated much debate among eighteenth-century intellectuals. One of the principal proponents of this belief, which John Millar mentions, but rejects, was Montesquieu, Charles-Louis de Secondat, Baron de La Brède et de Montesquieu, who, in *The Spirit of Laws*, writes on the subject of climate's influence on the nature of humankind and on society:

Men are influenced by various causes, by the climate, the religion, the laws, the maxims of government; by precedents, morals and customs, from whence is formed a general spirit that takes its rise from these. In proportion, as in every nation any one of these causes acts with more force, the others in the same degree become weak. Nature and climate rule almost alone over the savages; customs govern the Chinese; the laws tyrannize in Japan; morals had formerly all their

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<sup>179</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 85.

<sup>180</sup> Clarence J. Glacken, *Traces on the Rhodian Shore: Nature and Culture in Western Thought from Ancient Times to the End of the Eighteenth Century* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1976), 427-460, 551-565.

influence at Sparta; maxims of government, and the ancient simplicity of manners, once prevailed in Rome.<sup>181</sup>

John Millar did not concur with Montesquieu on the issue of climate, writing:

In the history of the world, we see no regular marks of that secret influence which has been ascribed to the air and climate, but, on the contrary, many commonly explain the great differences in the manners and customs of mankind from other causes, the existence of which is capable of being more clearly ascertained.<sup>182</sup>

Millar is, therefore, quite skeptical about the effects of climate on the human population, and does not believe that the “differences of heat and cold, of moisture and dryness, or other qualities of the climate, have a more immediate influence upon the character and conduct of nations.” His last words on the matter are that “national character depends very little upon the immediate operation of climate.”<sup>183</sup>

We begin our review of John Millar’s *the Origin of the Distinction of Ranks* with a quote taken from David Hume’s essay “Of the Study of History,” about the exquisite pleasure to be derived from going back in time, and re-living the progress of humankind from its infancy.

Hume writes:

In reality, what more agreeable entertainment to the mind, than to be transported into the remotest ages of the world, and to observe human society, in its infancy, making the first faint essays’ towards the arts and sciences: To see policy of government, and the civility of conversation refining by degrees, and every thing which is ornamental to human life advancing towards its perfection. To remark the rise, progress, declension, and final extinction of the most flourishing empires: The virtues, which contributed to their greatness, and the vices, which drew on their ruin. In short, to see all human race, from the beginning of time, pass, as it were, in review before us; appearing in their true colours, without any of those

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<sup>181</sup> Montesquieu, *The Spirit of Laws*, A Compendium of the First English Edition, edited, with an introduction, notes and appendixes, by David Wallace Carrithers (Berkeley: U of California P, 1977), Part 3, Book XIX, Chapter 4, Paragraphs 1 and 2, 289.

<sup>182</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 89.

<sup>183</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 89.

disguises, which, during their life-time, so much perplexed the judgment of the beholders.<sup>184</sup>

### ***3.4: Of the Rank and Condition of Women In Different Ages.***

#### ***3.4.1: The Effects of Poverty and Barbarism, With Respect to the Condition of Women***

Millar theorizes that in the early stages of human progress women were generally subservient to men, and lacking any authority. Due to their general inferiority in size, strength, bravery, and in those skills necessary for survival and the procurement of nourishment, women were generally lower in degree than men. In some nations they were slaves to the stronger sex, and considered as property in many others. The physical attraction between males and females, and procreation, are important aspects of Millar's conjectural history of the development of ranks in civil society, and of the growth of affection between men and women. Initially, before the acquisition of property, differences of rank and the distinctions that apply to the relations between males and females came about due to "age and experience, from their strength, courage, and other personal qualities."<sup>185</sup> Intercourse between the sexes follows the urges of nature devoid of the rules governing decorum or propriety, which are a part of eighteenth-century society.<sup>186</sup>

The early unions of male and female was based initially on sexual attraction, and would, most probably, Millar believes, have changed due to the birth of a child and the associated need to care for the infant through the long period of dependence that young humans require. Subsequent births, with the naturally accompanying needs of child rearing would, presumably,

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<sup>184</sup> Hume, "Of the Study of History," in *Essays: Moral, Political, and Literary*, 565-566.

<sup>185</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 94.

<sup>186</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 93-94.

extend the initial union between male and female. This union would persist, therefore, for reasons of further child bearing and the extended care of the children during the early stages of their lives. This arrangement, on the part of the woman, it is presumed, would continue out of utility, and the natural human need to be in the companionship of other people, because this association brought a modicum of safety, and in the declining years of a woman's life, the support and safeguarding derived from the group of which she was a member. What had "in all probability" begun out of the "accidental and unforeseen exertions of parental affection" for a newborn child, due to utility, and the "influence of fashion and example" became early marriages.<sup>187</sup>

The virtue, decorum and modesty of later ages of refinement in interpersonal relations, and in the treatment of women, did not exist in the early ages of human development, which were marked by apathy, barbarity and rudeness. The authority, and power, wielded by a male, or husband, over a wife, or other women under his control, extended to their alienation, as the property, which they were. Since women were generally "slaves of the other sex, it is natural to expect," Miller insists, "that they should be bought and sold like any other species of property."<sup>188</sup> Among the Lydians, the Babylonians, the Troglodites, and the people of early Britain, as noted by Caesar, and recounted by Millar, females were prostituted, infidelity was not regarded with opprobrium, nor was the holding of wives in common, or the sharing of wives and daughters with strangers—as was common in Greece, Rome and Sparta—frowned upon, since women were chattel. Early man, followed his natural inclinations, and without the benefit of education, and the sensitivity, refinement, and feelings, which would be wrought by the progress

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<sup>187</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 95-97.

<sup>188</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Rank*, 110.

of human development, would follow his instincts in the relations between the sexes, so that modesty and propriety were not issues of concern.<sup>189</sup>

Wives could be purchased, and often were, even in England, Millar shows, and they could be sold. Although Millar takes note of a special case, to be found in the Old Testament of the Christian Bible, which is based principally on the Hebrew Bible, wherein Moses allowed females to inherit, if males of the same line were not living, Millar both conjectures, and presents historical evidence to indicate, that women in the earliest ages of human development could not usually inherit property. Millar quotes the words of YHWH to Moses, who thereafter issues his Biblical injunction to the Israelites: “And thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel, saying, If a man die, and have no son, then ye shall cause his inheritance to pass unto his daughter.”<sup>190</sup> Initially, therefore, Millar reflects, “daughters, and all other female relations, were entirely excluded from the right of inheritance; but that afterwards, when the increase of opulence and luxury had raised them to higher consideration, they were admitted to succeed after the males of the same degree.”<sup>191</sup> Yet, even though men in humanity’s early history generally held women in low esteem, divorces must have been infrequent, Millar maintains, and in reference to divorce, as viewed from the man’s perspective, Millar says:

It may however be remarked, that this is a privilege, which, from the manners of a rude people, he seldom has reason to exercise. The wife, who is the mother of his children, is generally the most proper person to be employed in the office of rearing and maintaining them. As she advances in years, she is likely to advance in prudence and discretion; a circumstance of too much importance to be counterbalanced by any consideration relating to the appetite between the sexes. Nothing but some extraordinary crime that she has committed will move the

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<sup>189</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 99-103.

<sup>190</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 110; *New Jerusalem Bible*, Standard Edition (New York: Doubleday, 1999), Numbers 27: 8, 157.

<sup>191</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 110.

husband to put away so useful a servant, with whom he has long been acquainted, and whose labour, attention, and fidelity are commonly of more value than all the money she will bring in a market. Divorces are therefore rarely to be met with in the history of early nations.<sup>192</sup>

It may, therefore, be stated that, women in the early period of human progress were under the domination of their husbands, subject to his authority and power. Millar asserts that:

Having little attention paid them, either upon account of those pleasures to which they are subservient, or of those occupations which they are qualified to exercise, they are degraded below the other sex, and reduced under that authority which the strong acquire over the weak: an authority, which, in early periods, is subject to no limitations from the government, and is therefore exerted with a degree of harshness and severity suited to the dispositions of the people.<sup>193</sup>

The uncivilized behavior and barbarity of early humanity is in keeping with the humble circumstances in which they found themselves, and the privation and countless vicissitudes of their existence. When individuals have continual concerns over the need to find sustenance and shelter, to hide from enemies or thwart attacks by predatory animals, when they could, on a daily basis, be faced with life and death circumstances, Millar muses, “their constitution would surely be ill adapted to their circumstances, were they endowed with a refined taste of pleasure, and capable of feeling the delicate distresses, and enjoyments of love.”<sup>194</sup> It should be kept in mind, however, that although it has been deduced that the conditions of early human existence were pitiable and miserable, there was always within each person the power of human nature, which, with the passage of time and nurturing, would eventually allow early humankind to progress to that state of maturity and refinement to be found in eighteenth-century humans.<sup>195</sup>

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<sup>192</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 112.

<sup>193</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 107.

<sup>194</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 114.

<sup>195</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 114-115.

### ***3.4.2: The Influence Acquired By The Mother Of A Family, Before Marriage Is Completely Established***

Millar takes note of an exception to the condition of women in the early period of human advancement, the hunting and gathering stage. There is historical evidence that in some nations, which he enumerates, women had a status in a familial or tribal society, one not contingent on, nor derived, from physical prowess or military skills. Miller intuitively, and his conjectures are reinforced by historical accounts, that in isolated, or family groups, where the fathers are absent, the mothers acquire authority over their children, an authority, a respect, and a deference, which continues into the adult life of her offspring. “The mother of a numerous family, who lives at a distance from her other relations,” Millar says, “will often be raised to a degree of rank and dignity to which, from her sex, she would not otherwise be entitled.”<sup>196</sup> In some civilizations, women partook of decision making, voicing their opinions at tribal councils, and were active in the government of their community. It has also been heard, Miller concludes, that in some nations women were leaders, maintained numerous husbands, and were active in the making of war, as in the case of the, probably mythical, *Amazons*.<sup>197</sup>

Millar theorizes, that the period of humanity’s advancement represented by the keeping of grazing animals, the pastoral stage, would have ameliorated the conditions of women appreciably by giving a new importance to the intercourse between the sexes. It is at this historical moment that humanity progressed from sexual gratification for its own sake, to something more. “Love becomes a passion,” Millar states, “instead of being a mere sensual

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<sup>196</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 117.

<sup>197</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 116-122.

appetite, and “chastity begins to be recognized.”<sup>198</sup> “The mere animal pleasure is more frequently accompanied with a correspondence of inclination and sentiment,” writes Millar.<sup>199</sup> The availability of an abundant supply of food, as represented by the herds of grazing animals, requiring a modicum of labor to tend, had a tendency to keep privations and tribulations at bay, resulting in a relatively carefree existence. With the pressing needs of life satisfied by their pasturing lifestyle, therefore, early humans at this stadial stage of their development were able to devote more time to “the enjoyments derived from the intercourse of the sexes.”<sup>200</sup>

### ***3.4.3: The Refinement of the Passions of Sex, In the Pastoral Ages***

Property began to be acquired. Some individuals amassed more grazing animals than others, resulting in a distinction of ranks based on something other than valor in battle, or skill in the hunt, as was the case in prior ages. The importance of chastity during this period was related to the general limits that were being placed on contact between the sexes, and the availability of sexual partners. Property and status had to be safeguarded, and fathers and male blood relations exercised their power over daughters and female relatives, in order to make marriages that would serve the best interests of the extended family.

Feelings and sentiments began to be a part of the relations between the sexes, giving rise to pastoral poetry. These Arcadian poets, from Sicily, Millar considers the “first historians.”<sup>201</sup> There may also have arisen feelings of animosity, or a tension, between the different families who had accumulated wealth, effectively blocking sexual liaisons between these groups.

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<sup>198</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 124.

<sup>199</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 114.

<sup>200</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 123.

<sup>201</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 128.

“Among persons living upon such terms,” Millar alleges, “the passions of sex cannot be gratified with the same facility as among hunters and fishers.”<sup>202</sup>

The stadial stage characterized by farming, while more labor intensive than the pasturing of animals, also produced an even greater abundance of food. Now there were vegetables to accompany the meat, derived from the animals that were kept. This situation further augmented the comforts of daily life for early humans. Millar intuits, that this level of comfort “excites in mankind a stronger desire of obtaining those pleasures to which they are prompted by their natural appetites.”<sup>203</sup>

#### ***3.4.4: The Consequences of the Introduction of Agriculture, With Respect to the Intercourse of the Sexes***

Cultivation of the land implies a population, which is obligatorily fixed to the geographical location where they farm, in contradistinction to the itinerant lifestyle of the keepers of grazing animals. This situation, in turn, gives rise to the ownership of land, which according to Millar, is “the most valuable and permanent species of wealth.”<sup>204</sup> The accumulation of wealth in land, affects the distinction of ranks, it forms those qualities, which are characteristic to a people, and it shapes their manners. Due to the envy and resentfulness derived from the distinction of ranks, Millar surmises, hostilities developed between those individuals or family groups who wielded the power, possessed the dignity derived from wealth or from bold or daring battlefield feats, and who had rank in this agricultural society. The contact between the sexes, both the intimate and the social interactions; the former a constant imperative

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<sup>202</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 125.

<sup>203</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 130.

<sup>204</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 130.

of human nature, the latter a product of the improvements in lifestyle, continued to diversify in complexity, gaining increased importance in this early agrarian society.

Covering large swaths of historical time in sentences, or short paragraphs, Millar describes, how wars also probably occurred over injuries sustained to families or individuals due to the abduction of women. The wars and smaller conflicts, which occurred during this extended period of time, Millar believes, led to the recognition, and to an increased value being placed on, feats of valor, notions of individual dignity, and ideas of honor. Instead of turning to magistrates for the settling of wrongs both real and imagined, the sword would often be wielded to settle disputes, giving rise to notions of “romantic love,”<sup>205</sup> war as an art, knights, knightly virtues, tournaments, jousts, and the idea of chivalry.<sup>206</sup> “The high notions of military honour, and the romantic love and gallantry, by which the modern nations of Europe have been so much distinguished,” writes Millar, came about during this period of human development.<sup>207</sup>

The deportment, virtues, the general demeanor, and the mode of thinking of the women and men who were affected by these notions became representative of a style, which influenced others to follow in this popular trend. The idea of love was the principal leitmotif of this manifestation. In the poetry composed as a result of this trend, the poets embellished and praised the sentiments of “valour and generosity, of patience and fortitude, of respect to the ladies, of disinterested love, and inviolable fidelity,” of this chivalric ideal and its attitude towards women. In Romance, the writers of this genre also contributed to the representation of this period’s admiration and idolization of women. In so doing, the writers of romance also provided posterity

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<sup>205</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 133.

<sup>206</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 130-136.

<sup>207</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 133.

with a valuable historical record of the period, including a reliable portrayal of the social norms and traditional practices of that historical epoch.<sup>208</sup>

### ***3.4.5: Changes In the Condition of Women, Arising From the Improvement of Useful Arts and Manufactures***

With the abundance of food created by humankind's advancement into the agrarian phase of its progressive journey toward culture and refinement, writes Millar, most of the essential needs of men and women were satisfied, so their attention now turned towards human wants. This desire for objects, which were not necessary to the survival of humanity, but were wished for, resulted in the production of various kinds of commodities, which were in turn traded among individuals, in order to fulfill their particular wants. This production and bartering of desirable objects, therefore, represented the earliest beginnings of manufacturing and commerce. These developments also constituted the next stage of incremental improvement in the condition of women, who begin to be appreciated for "their useful or agreeable talents," instead of being the "objects of those romantic and extravagant passions"<sup>209</sup> of former times.<sup>210</sup> There is, therefore, an incremental, but dramatic, change to the condition of the female sex with the advancement and progression of humankind. Millar writes that:

When men begin to disuse their ancient barbarous practices, when their attention is not wholly engrossed by the pursuit of military reputation, when they have made some progress in arts, and have attained to a proportional degree of refinement, they are necessarily led to set a value upon those female accomplishments and virtues which have so much influence upon every species of improvement, and which contribute in so many different ways to multiply the

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<sup>208</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 138-139.

<sup>209</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 144.

<sup>210</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 143-144.

comforts of life. In this situation, the women become, neither the slaves, nor the idols of the other sex, but the friends and companions.<sup>211</sup>

With the inauguration and establishment of human creative activity, and with the presence of political authority, Millar avers, there was a prompt amelioration in the condition of women, and in the social intercourse between the sexes. “The women began to be valued upon account of their useful talents, and accomplishments” writes Millar, “and their consideration and rank came to be chiefly determined by the importance of those departments which they occupied, in carrying on the business and maintaining the intercourse of society.”<sup>212</sup>

#### ***3.4.6: The Effects of Great Opulence, and the Culture of the Elegant Arts, Upon the Relative Condition of the Sexes***

In the final stage of humankind’s progressive journey, as it has been systematically investigated by Millar, with the accompanying changes, improvements and refinements to the condition of women that this progress has brought, we have reached Millar’s contemporary world, the world of eighteenth-century Scotland and the modern-day Europe of his own time. Women are now relatively free to leave the privacy and seclusion in which they had formerly lived. They are able to appear in groups of individuals consisting of both sexes, and they are encouraged to pursue those interests and talents, which are amenable to them. Women in this age of “Great Opulence,” living in “The Culture Of The Elegant Arts,” are free to “distinguish themselves by polite accomplishments that tend to heighten their personal attractions,” Millar writes, “and to excite those peculiar sentiments and passions of which they are the natural objects.”<sup>213</sup>

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<sup>211</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 144.

<sup>212</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 149.

<sup>213</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 150-151.

Millar discovers that, historically, in nations which have attained an advanced stage of refinement and sophistication there is no impediment to the communication between the sexes, as was the case during the earliest periods of humankind's development, when men and women were uncivilized and brutish. But, Millar cautions,

In a simple age, the free intercourse of the sexes is attended with no bad consequences; but in opulent and luxurious nations, it gives rise to licentious and dissolute manners, inconsistent with good order, and with the general interests of society. The love of pleasure, when carried to excess, is apt to weaken and destroy those passions which it endeavours to gratify, and to pervert those appetites which nature has bestowed upon mankind for the most beneficial purposes.<sup>214</sup>

In Rome, Millar cites what had occurred in this ancient city as an example, “about the end of the Commonwealth, and after the establishment of the despotism,”<sup>215</sup> the indulgence in pleasure had reached a level of depravity unheard of in the contemporary world. Prostitution was rampant, and divorces were exceedingly common occurrences. “In those voluptuous ages of Rome,” Millar alleges, “it should seem that the inhabitants were too much dissipated by pleasure to feel any violent passion for an individual, and the correspondence of the sexes was too undistinguishing to be attended with much delicacy of sentiment.”<sup>216</sup> Indulging in pleasures to excess, debauchery, and the inordinate indulgence in sensual pleasures, led to an inability on the part of married partners to become close, to bond together, to develop feelings or an emotional attachment with one another, resulting in a high rate of divorces in ancient Rome. Literary production was affected by the dissipation and vice of that period of Roman history. It is remarkable, Millar declares, that “writers of the Augustan age, who have afforded so many models of composition in other branches, have left no work of imagination, describing the manners of their own

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<sup>214</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 151.

<sup>215</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 152.

<sup>216</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 154.

countrymen, in which love is supposed to be productive of any tragical, or very serious effects.”<sup>217</sup>

Affluence and the development of the fine arts, along with the establishment of a certain level of freedom in the relations between the sexes, has had a result, in some nations of the contemporary world, says Millar, resembling that which occurred in ancient Rome: a strong inclination towards inordinate pleasure. Modern European nations, however, have eluded some of the worst effects of the sensual depravity that afflicted Rome, including polygamy and divorce, Millar asserts, due to the influence of the clergy, the Christian religion’s stance on divorce, and its unremitting proselytizing for restraint and self-denial from any form of sensual pleasure.<sup>218</sup>

At the end of his first chapter, Millar concludes that, the alterations in the circumstances and behavior between the sexes are principally a result of the “progress of mankind in the common arts of life.”<sup>219</sup>

### ***3.5: Of the Jurisdiction and Authority of a Father Over His Children.***

#### ***3.5.1: The Power of a Father In Early Ages***

In the earliest periods of humanity’s development, the power exerted by the father over his children was the same as that exercised by the husband over the wife. “Before the institution of regular government,” Millar states, “the strong are permitted to oppose the weak; and in a rude nation, every one is apt to abuse that power which he happens to possess.”<sup>220</sup> In a marriage, the

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<sup>217</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 154-155.

<sup>218</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 155.

<sup>219</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 156.

<sup>220</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 157.

husband exercised full control and jurisdiction over all the members of his family. It is assumed that, in the best of circumstances, the power he exercised over his family was mitigated by sentiments of affection towards his children and wife, and a disposition to advance the fortunes and the well being of his offspring. A father in the “Early Ages” of human development could have felt obliged, in certain circumstances, to abandon his children in order to preserve his own life, to kill his children out of an uncontrolled rage, or to dispose of them into a life of slavery. The children in those rude times had no option other than yielding to the unpredictable and harsh will of the father, or of behaving in such a way as to invite his approval while eluding his disfavor. The father would have been treated with esteem and with the highest regard due to his sagacity and skills, acquired through a lifetime of living and learning. Experience, age, and the authority that went with age, the result of knowledge and skills acquired through a long life of observing, learning, and overcoming vicissitudes, would have been highly respected and influential in these early ages, Millar states, citing examples from the history of several ancient nations.<sup>221</sup>

It is easy to understand, therefore, how both because of custom, and also due to the experience, wisdom, judgment, and age of the father, the children would have had instilled in them the highest regard, the greatest reverence and respect for the father. These feelings, Millar avers, would have lasted a lifetime, even into the age of majority of the children.<sup>222</sup> “We naturally retain,” Millar writes, “after we are old, those habits of respect and submission which

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<sup>221</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 157-161.

<sup>222</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 161-162.

we received in our youth; and we find it difficult to put ourselves upon a level with those persons whom we have long regarded as greatly our superiors.”<sup>223</sup>

### ***3.5.2: The Influence of the Improvement of Arts Upon the Jurisdiction of the Father***

As humankind became more civilized, prosperous, free from danger, living in a state with civil authority in place, it is reasonable to assume that the authority of the father over his children diminished for a variety of reasons. Public censure, vigilant kinsmen, or civic regulations all would have acted together, or severally, to protect children from the undue wrath, inequitable treatment, or cruelty of the father. In reference to the father’s power over his children in a refined and civilized environment, Millar declares, “the progress of arts and manufactures will contribute to undermine and weaken his power, and even to raise the members of his family to a state of freedom and independence.”<sup>224</sup>

As society progresses, therefore, the power of the father over his children diminishes. In a commercially active, and manufacturing environment, children are obligatorily sent out of the home in order to be educated. When their training is completed, it may occur that they are obligated to travel far, away from their family, in order to find employment in the trade or profession they have been trained to practice. It is only reasonable that the wealth and property that they acquire through their efforts should belong to them. Millar cites an example from the Roman Empire where soldiers, who had risked their lives in defense of the Empire, or in the conquering of other peoples in the name of Rome, should be allowed to keep whatever wealth they acquired.<sup>225</sup> “It was enacted by Julius and by Augustus Caesar,” Millar explains, “that

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<sup>223</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 162-163.

<sup>224</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 170.

<sup>225</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 170-171.

whatever was gained by a son, in the military profession, should be considered as his own estate, and that he should be at liberty to dispose of it at pleasure.”<sup>226</sup> It is uncertain, Miller admits, when the exposure of children, left to die in the outdoors, was eventually curtailed, but it was very common to do this in antiquity, even under the rule of the emperors. We do know, however, that it was during Roman times that the power of a father to sell a child into slavery, and of a father’s right to take the life of a child was abolished.<sup>227</sup> Millar relates how the jurisdiction of a father over the life of his children was eliminated, “At length this part of his jurisdiction was finally abolished by the emperor Constantine, who ordained that if a father took away the life of his child, he should be deemed guilty of parricide.”<sup>228</sup>

Among the modern nations of Europe, in those nations that have made the most notable advances in commerce and manufacturing, there are directives in place that have a tendency to diminish the unrestrained and capricious authority held by the father of a family. Members of families in these societies have a great deal of freedom, and when they reach the age of majority, are able to retain, and enjoy, any property they have acquired by their own efforts.<sup>229</sup> In the conclusion of this chapter, Millar avers,

The interest of those who are governed is the chief circumstance which ought to regulate the powers committed to a father, as well as those committed to a civil magistrate; and whenever the prerogative of either is further extended than is requisite for this great end, it immediately degenerates into usurpation, and is to be regarded as a violation of the natural rights of mankind.<sup>230</sup>

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<sup>226</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 171-172.

<sup>227</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 171-173.

<sup>228</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 171-172.

<sup>229</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 175.

<sup>230</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 175-176.

### ***3.6: The Authority of a Chief Over the Members of a Tribe Or Village.***

#### ***3.6.1: The Origin of a Chief, and the Degrees of Influence Which He Is Enabled to Acquire***

When a family increases in number to the point where the members are no longer all able to occupy the same home, some of the individuals move out, eventually leading to the formation of a separate, but allied, village, or a tribe. These communities become more prosperous over time, Millar intuitively, increasing in size, and eventually subdividing into other villages. The individuals who compose these communities are family members and distant kinsmen, with a strong attachment to one another. Lacking the refinements of a civilized lifestyle, and strangers “to all those considerations of utility, by which, in a polished nation men are commonly induced to restrain their appetites, and to abstain from violating the possessions of others,”<sup>231</sup> these various settlements, are inclined to continually steal and loot from those neighbors who were not of the same tribe or of the same interrelated families. The reprisals, which resulted as a consequence of these initial acts of pillage, bring about a continuous cycle of raids and counter raids on the property of neighboring communities. The members of this extended family, encompassing many tribes, or villages, “are linked together by a sense of their common danger, and by a regard to their common interest.”<sup>232</sup> In order to protect themselves from the danger, which affected them all, they defensively banded together under the direction of a leader, or chief.<sup>233</sup>

In the early stages of human development, when there were no distinction of ranks, the tribal chief would be a man who had either distinguished himself in battle, or in the hunt, or who

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<sup>231</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 178.

<sup>232</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 178.

<sup>233</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 177-179.

was recognized for his wisdom, prudence or his extraordinary talents. Instead of being jealous of such a remarkable individual, Millar muses, the members of his kinship group would consider it an honor to have him as their leader, with his greatness bringing credit to them. “Instead of being mortified by his greatness,” Millar writes, “they imagine that it reflects honour upon the society to which he belongs, and are even disposed to magnify his prowess with that fond partiality which they entertain in favour of themselves.”<sup>234</sup> Millar uses Biblical examples and mythohistorical names to buttress his account, citing the choosing of Jephthah to lead the Israelites in battle against their enemy, reminding us of Saul and David, and of Nestor, Ulysses and Ajax from the mythic past.<sup>235</sup>

With the introduction of pasturage, early humankind discover another way of deciding upon a leader or chieftain, instead of relying only on those former ways of choosing based on physical prowess, military accomplishments or superior abilities. With the ownership of herds and flocks of grazing animals came the concept of “wealth.”<sup>236</sup> Some individuals in the community, due to their superior skill in managing the herds they owned, or through good fortune, would become more affluent than others, thereby becoming the most powerful person in the village or tribe. “The authority derived from wealth is not only greater than that which arises from mere personal accomplishments,” posits Millar, “but also more stable and permanent.”<sup>237</sup>

In earlier times the land had been farmed in common by all the people of the community, but as the methods of agricultural production improved, it became possible for individual

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<sup>234</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 181.

<sup>235</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 183-184.

<sup>236</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 184.

<sup>237</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 184-185.

families to farm a portion of land on their own, acquiring the right, therefore, of retaining all the produce of the land which they had farmed. In time, having a right to what they had cultivated developed into a right of ownership over the land, which they farmed. The leader or chieftain of a tribe or community, due to the very skills, capacities or talents, which had allowed him to be chosen as leader in the first instance, has the greatest number of cattle and the largest number of servants and attendants. He will also have the largest portion of agricultural land, from which land, as his need for retainers increases, and as they inevitably become tenants on his land, he is able to feed them all.<sup>238</sup> This situation, Millar maintains, develops to the point where, the retainers and tenants, already dependent on the chieftain for their nourishment “become, therefore, necessarily subservient to his interest, and may at pleasure be obliged either to labour or to fight upon his account.”<sup>239</sup> The wealth accumulated by a chief, once landed property becomes possible, is far superior to what he possessed in grazing animals, and it is less likely to be lost or in any way diminished by damage or injury through some unforeseen event. The power or rights, which accompany vast holdings in land, are also more long lasting and enduring, even increasing, as the land remains in a family for an extended period of time.<sup>240</sup>

### ***3.6.2: The Powers With Which the Chief of a Rude Tribe Is Commonly Invested***

It was a logical next step for that person, whom the tribe or community had authorized to lead them because of his valor, his abilities, or his wealth, to be also the one selected to adjudicate internecine disputes, and those disagreements with adjoining communities. The leader’s power, authority and duty, therefore, eventually extended not only to the protection of

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<sup>238</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 187.

<sup>239</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 189.

<sup>240</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 189.

the tribe, but also to overseeing the resolution of conflicts within his community, and those disputes, which might arise between his tribe and adjacent clans.<sup>241</sup>

In the early stages of the development and exercise of this power to adjudicate, the leader would enlist the assistance of the various familial patriarchs, Millar contends, in order to achieve a harmonious resolution of whatever disagreement had arisen, based on the supplication or the coercion of the disputants. When the power of the leader to deal with these matters becomes secure, recognized and generally accepted, however, he begins to compel obedience to his decisions by use of force.<sup>242</sup> In addition to being a chief and exercising judicial authority, this person, chosen by the community of related individuals, based on his extraordinary capabilities, martial skills, and wealth, may also have assumed the mantle of “chief ecclesiastical officer,”<sup>243</sup> Millar proposes, as well as that of legislator. Millar writes:

In conducting the affairs of a community, in the management of what relates to peace or war, and in the administration of justice, various abuses are apt to be committed, and many more may still be apprehended, the people are gradually led, by experience and observation, to introduce particular statutes or laws, in order to correct or ascertain their practices for the future. Even this legislative power, by which all the other branches of government are controuled and directed, is naturally assumed by the chief, after he has acquired considerable influence and authority.<sup>244</sup>

Subtle exceptions to the generalized development of a chief’s authority over his tribe, as delineated earlier by Millar, are mentioned later in his discussion, and are worthy of note. The American Indians, leading a life characterized by hunting and fishing, do not accumulate wealth, for example, so there is therefore little distinction of ranks, and their chief’s do not carry much

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<sup>241</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 190.

<sup>242</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 190-191.

<sup>243</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 194.

<sup>244</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 194.

authority. The shepherds of Tartary, however, have numerous herds of sheep, giving them great wealth. In the case of these shepherds, the chief is powerful and has a great deal of authority, which is passed on from father to son. Between these two opposed examples, Millar avers, lie the nomadic, “ancient German nations,”<sup>245</sup> as recounted by Tacitus and Caesar, who while they did possess agrarian skills, relied mainly on their pasturing animals for food. The position of leader within their tribes was based either on inheritance, or alternately; the chiefs were selected based on their wealth. When these German tribes crossed the borders of the Roman Empire, conquering the land beyond, as Millar describes, they quickly acquired knowledge from the people they had vanquished, learned from them, and rapidly increased their expertise in agriculture. Victorious in subduing these former Roman provinces, the German invaders became possessors of extensive landed properties, which were worked by captured slaves, with the estate overseen by the kinsmen of the chief or leader. In this case, Millar makes clear, the authority of the leader over his slaves, retainers and family members was unquestioned. The chieftain offered protection, and in an indirect fashion, he also gave sustenance, to all those below him in power and authority, feeding them from the produce of his land. In return the people fought for him when the occasion arose, and supported him in disputes with neighbors and enemies. For their faithful service, and in proportion to their own standing relative to the leader, retainers and family would be rewarded with land.<sup>246</sup> Millar elaborates:

The authority of the baron was extremely absolute over all the members of his family; because they entirely depended upon him for subsistence. He obliged his slaves to labour at pleasure, and allowed them such recompence only as he thought proper. His kindred were under the necessity of following his banner in all his military expeditions. He exercised over both a supreme jurisdiction, in punishing their offences, as well as in deciding their differences; and he subjected

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<sup>245</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 198.

<sup>246</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 194-200; 190-191.

them to such regulations as he judged convenient, for removing disorders, or preventing future disputes. These barons, though in great measure independent, were early united in a larger society, under circumstances which gave rise to a very peculiar set of institutions. The effect of that union [led to] the system of feudal government in Europe.<sup>247</sup>

### ***3.7: The Authority of a Sovereign, and of Subordinate Officers, Over a Society Composed of Different Tribes Or Villages.***

#### ***3.7.1: The Constitution of Government Arising From the Union of Different Tribes Or Villages***

As agrarian production became more abundant, humankind thrived, increased in number and original tribes and villages gave rise to other, numerous, related communities. Due to the fact that there were often disputes and wars among these kindred villages, and with other neighboring settlements, alliances began to be formed. Millar conjectures, based on the reports from travelers, that these associations of tribes or villages would have been based on common interests, and as a way of dealing with threats common to all the members of the alliance. These connections among various communities, originally based on military needs, due to a war or other defensive purpose, would have led to the development of other mutually beneficial relationships. These expanded alliances eventually resulting in the formation of a primitive, nascent government, with a great leader, or king, as its head, with limited power and restricted authority over other chiefs, due to “the jealousy of chiefs unaccustomed to subordination.”<sup>248</sup>

The information we have from the writings of Julius Caesar on Gaul, before the fall of the Western Roman Empire, “may be considered as affording the most authentic evidence of the

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<sup>247</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 200.

<sup>248</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 203; 201-203.

state of government in any rude country,” writes Millar.<sup>249</sup> The country of Gaul was divided into a number of sovereign communities, body politics, or realms, each separate and autonomous, varying in size and in the amount of power they possessed. Men of stature and authority would be chosen to conduct the affairs, and safeguard the various families, tribes, villages or communities which constituted these realms. The business of the nation as a whole was under the direction of a leader, or king, aided in the exercise of his duties by a council.<sup>250</sup>

While they were within their own territory, the German people had made substantial progress in animal husbandry, accumulating great wealth as shepherds and herders. When they began moving into the provinces of the Roman Empire, which were contiguous to their own territory, they conquered, and became possessors of immense estates in land, thereby increasing their power and authority as their wealth grew. Though the estates were far apart from one another, the connections, which had been initially established in Germany between kinsmen, neighbors and acquaintances for the purposes of war, mutual protection or common interests, were maintained and augmented. Another state of affairs that served to preserve and encourage a continued close association between the German subjugators was the high level of cooperation and organization, which they found already existing within the former Roman provinces, and from which they profited.<sup>251</sup> The provinces had interdependence among their many parts, from “the most distant parts of the country, innumerable channels of communication were opened, through the principal towns, where trade was carried on, where taxes were levied, or where

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<sup>249</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 206.

<sup>250</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 206.

<sup>251</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 207-208.

justice was administered.”<sup>252</sup> The relationships, which had existed for extremely long periods of time, between the various divisions of the Roman Empire, and which extended over provincial sized areas of land, did not cease to exist when the German invaders conquered the provinces. The people who inhabited the Roman provinces prior to the barbarian invasion were not destroyed or eliminated by the invaders, but were merged and blended in with the conquering peoples. Even the frontiers or borders of discrete territories remained virtually unchanged from those, which had existed during Roman times, under the control of a governor appointed by Rome. Millar writes

As the ancient inhabitants were no where extirpated, but either by submitting to servitude, or by entering into various treaties of alliance, were incorporated and blended with the conquerors, the habits of intercourse, and the system of political union which remained with the former, was, in some degree, communicated to the latter. When different tribes, therefore, though strangers to each other, had settled in the same province, they were easily reduced under one sovereign; and the boundaries of a modern kingdom, came frequently, in the western part of Europe, to be nearly of the same extent with the dominions which had been formerly subject to a Roman governor.<sup>253</sup>

Although these connections and coalitions between disparate land holders was an important consideration, still these associations were, as Millar emphasizes, “loose and feeble.”<sup>254</sup> Notwithstanding the pledges of cooperation in matters of defense and in areas of common interest, these land owners were self-governing and autonomous chiefs or leaders, free to act in their own best interest, and often engaged in private wars, skirmishes, or disputes, as a result of the lawlessness of the times. The individual owners of these baronial estates were ceaselessly confronted with threats, so that it behoove them to do all in their power to maintain a

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<sup>252</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 208.

<sup>253</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 208.

<sup>254</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 208.

close relationship with those of lesser power and authority who had promised allegiance to them. Millar emphasizes one important method, which the barons used to maintain the allegiance of their kindred and acquaintances. Not wanting to give them an outright grant of land on which they could grow food for their families, because that would make them independent, the barons “assigned them such portions of land as were thought sufficient for their maintenance, to be held upon condition, that whenever they were called upon, they should be ready to serve him in war, and that, in all their controversies, they should submit to his jurisdiction.”<sup>255</sup> These “military tenants,” or “*vassals*,”<sup>256</sup> were not the owners, or legal possessors, of this land, but could use it, at the leader’s discretion, for life, and its use could be passed on to their heirs.<sup>257</sup>

The entire kingdom, or the conquered former Roman provinces, was divided in this way, consisting of a large number of baronial estates with barons at their head. The king was, in effect, the chief among the barons. His land holdings, though more extensive, and with a substantially more numerous retinue of military tenants, kinsmen, retainers and individuals who depended on him for sustenance and protection, was no different from that held by the barons. Millar explains,

The land which belonged to the barons was held in the same independent manner with that which belonged to the king. As each of those warlike chiefs had purchased his demesnes by his own activity and valour, he claimed the absolute enjoyment and disposal of them, together with the privilege of transmitting them to his posterity; and as he had not been indebted to the crown for his original possession, neither was he obliged to secure the continuance of it, by serving the king in war, or by submitting to his jurisdiction. Their property, therefore, was such as has been called *allodial*, in contradistinction to that feudal tenure enjoyed by their respective military tenants. These peculiarities, in the state of the

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<sup>255</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Rank*, 209.

<sup>256</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 209.

<sup>257</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 208-209.

kingdoms which were formed upon the ruins of the Roman empire, had a visible effect upon their constitution of government.<sup>258</sup>

### ***3.7.2: The Natural Progress of Government In a Rude Kingdom***

Significant changes to the government of primitive tribes and emergent communities took place, over time, due to their continued association for defensive reasons and common interest, and as a result of the changes that came about in those relationships. As would have occurred in an individual tribe, Millar notes, where the leader would by degrees be placed at the head of all the other tribal families, so too, in a territory ruled by a king, is he elevated to a position above all the other chieftains, with the authority commensurate to his rank. Notwithstanding his existing power and authority, the king is always eager to increase his standing, and his holdings in land. The incessant strife between the barons who are independent land holders, but subordinate to him in the quantity of land held or in the numbers of their retinue, gives the king the opportunity to extend his power.<sup>259</sup>

Those barons, who had less land holdings than the king, acquired their land by conquest, as did the king, at the time when they invaded and subjugated the former Roman provinces. The property rights, which these independent barons acquired, are called *allodial*<sup>260</sup> by Millar; in other words, these barons had absolute ownership of their land won by force of arms, in the same way that the king owned his extensive land holdings. Continually beset by disagreements, discord and conflict, and fearful for their very survival, the lessor barons, individually, and over time, reach an agreement with the king for his protection and his adjuration of their disputes. Due to this desperate need on the part of the lessor landholders, important, incremental changes

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<sup>258</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 210-211.

<sup>259</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 213-214.

<sup>260</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 217.

occurred over time in the political landscape. An independent baron would voluntarily resign, or relinquish, his allodial rights to the land which he held in complete ownership, becoming, in effect, a vassal, or a military tenant of the king, and thereby also losing his right to a voice in the national assembly.<sup>261</sup>

In former times the leader or chieftain would allow the use of an adequate portion of land to produce crops for the sustenance of his military tenants, kinsmen and family. For the use of this land, the tenants of the leader knew that they had to support him in his disputes with neighbors and aggressors, and were to provide him with manpower during times of armed conflict. There appeared to have been no doubt either with the leader, or with his military tenants, Millar notes, that these ancient arrangements would be respected, as they had always been in the past, even though they had never been formalized in writing. Millar explains,

The ancient military tenants, who were the kindred and relations of the superior, and who had received their lands as a pure gratuity, never thought of demanding to be secured in the future possession; and while they continued to support the interest of the family, which they looked upon as inseparable from their own interest, they had no apprehension that they should ever be deprived of their estates. Thus, according to the more accurate ideas of later times, they were merely tenants at will; though from the affection of their master, and from their inviolable fidelity to him, they were commonly permitted to enjoy their lands during life, and in ordinary cases the same indulgence was even shown to their posterity.<sup>262</sup>

But when the leader was an outsider, with no familial relationship or linkage with his more recent retainers, giving up allodial land holdings with the promise of receiving protection in return, became fraught with potential future difficulties for the lessor baron. So, in order to forestall any capricious or unpredictable behavior on the part of the master, the lessor landowners negotiated for, and received, “a grant of their estates, for a certain limited time, for

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<sup>261</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 213-214; 216, 220.

<sup>262</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 217-218.

life, or to their heirs. By these grants the right of property, instead of being totally vested in the superior, came to be, in some measure, divided between him and his vassals.”<sup>263</sup> Having acquiesced to this new form of arrangement with his newly acquired military tenants, the leader could not but grant the same advantages to his old vassals, that retinue of long standing who had crossed the Roman borders with him as his military tenants. Millar states that these changes were referred to as “the *incidents* of the feudal tenures.”<sup>264</sup> When the vassals had acquired an enduring right to his land holdings—this representing something quite different from that full ownership, or allodial title, independent of any superior, which the vassal had before—“it became necessary to ascertain the extent of the obligations which he came under, and the penalty to which he was subjected upon his neglecting to fulfill them.”<sup>265</sup> If a vassal did not fulfill his duties to his lord, depending on the exact type of feudal land tenure arrangement they had, he could, in the extreme, forfeit his fief, undergoing *an escheat*. In less onerous breaches of the relationship, the vassal would be subject to the payment of a penalty.

As these feudal relationships occurred time and again, eventually the wealth, power, authority and land holdings were concentrated in the hands of an increasingly smaller number of barons competing for superiority, with the largest of all the holders of landed estates, the king, at their head. As the antagonism between these remaining barons increased, the less powerful of their number would seek protection from the king. As was the case with all those lesser landowners who had sought protection from him, giving up their allodial ownership for feudal land tenure, now he, the least of the powerful is obliged by circumstances to the same. The most

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<sup>263</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 218.

<sup>264</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 218.

<sup>265</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 218.

powerful barons, individually, and over time, give up the independent ownership of their land, in order to seek refuge under the protective authority of the king. Millar summarizes the historical turn of events,

From the various disputes which arose, and the accidental combinations that were formed among the great families, the nobles were all, in their turn, reduced to difficulties from which they were forced to extricate themselves by the like compliances; and the sovereign, who laid hold of every opportunity to extend his influence, established his superiority over the barons by the same means which they themselves had formerly employed for subjecting the proprietors of smaller estates. Thus, by degrees, the feudal system was completed in most of the countries of Europe. The whole of a kingdom came to be united in one great fief, of which the king was the superior, or lord paramount, having in some measure the property of all the land within his dominions. The great barons became his immediate vassals, and, according to the tenure by which they held their estates, were subject to his jurisdiction, and liable to him in services of the same nature with those which they exacted from their own retainers or inferior military tenants.<sup>266</sup>

Millar is of the opinion that there are resemblances between the processes which bring about the growth of a society and those that lead to its decline. These like operations inherently result in the development of similarities in the traditional practices of the people and in their social conduct.

### ***3.8: The Changes Produced In the Government of a People, By Their Progress In the Arts, and In Polished Manners.***

#### ***3.8.1: Circumstances, In a Polished Nation, Which Tend to Increase The Power of the Sovereign***

As humankind progresses in the various arts, which have become essential to life in advanced and refined societies, there are changes that occur in the lives of individuals and in the make up of their governing bodies. In former times, due to lawlessness and the lack of good government, disputes and skirmishes between neighbors, and wars against enemies, were

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<sup>266</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 221.

common occurrences in daily life, requiring the people's active participation in the defense of their community, principally through membership in armed militias. As humankind progresses, however, relative opulence, better government, and the protection derived from formalized associations with powerful barons and leaders, lessens the necessity for expertise in the martial arts, and diminishes the fervor which individual members of a village, or town, feel for military duty. Over time, therefore, it becomes no longer habitual to serve in a feudal fighting force. Either through the lack of motivation to serve in such a capacity, or due to a loss of habit, or a preoccupation with business ventures, or with work regimens, compensatory payments begin to be accepted by the sovereign, in lieu of fighting on his behalf, as had been negotiated in, mutually beneficial, feudal agreements. Because sums of money are now being accepted, in lieu of presenting oneself on the field of battle, the sovereign has the funds to begin hiring professional soldiers, or paid mercenaries, to fight on his behalf. Having well-trained, professionally competent troops at his disposal, the king is more inclined to engage in warfare, which now tend to become protracted conflicts, resulting in the gradual refinement and advancement of the art of war.<sup>267</sup> Millar elaborates on this turn of events,

The improvement of arts and manufactures, by introducing luxury, contributes yet more to enervate the minds of men, who, according as they enjoy more ease and pleasure at home, feel greater aversion to the hardships and dangers of a military life, and put a lower value upon that sort of reputation which it affords. The increase of industry, at the same time, creates a number of lucrative employments which require a constant attention, and gives rise to a variety of tradesmen and artificers, who cannot afford to leave their business for the transient and uncertain advantages to be derived from the pillage of their enemies.<sup>268</sup>

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<sup>267</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 229-230.

<sup>268</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 230.

The idea of paying for a mercenary army, instead of one in which members of the community fought on behalf of their leader, soon led to the keeping of a permanent army, one that was not demobilized in times of peace. This change in attitude towards the defense of a people eventually led to the recognition of a new profession, that of being a soldier. Millar insists that this momentous change in attitude was not unique in history, but had occurred in all the wealthy, highly developed and civilized cultures of antiquity. The keeping of a permanent, professional, mercenary military force, however, has a tendency to augment the power and authority of a sovereign. Since the soldiers in such an army are fighting only because they are being paid to do so, their allegiance is to that individual who supplies them with money, that is to say, the king. These hired soldiers, writes Millar, “are apt to become indifferent about the rights of their fellow-citizens;” they would be inclined to carry out the orders of their leader without question, and “the same force which is maintained to suppress insurrections, and to repel invasions, may often be employed to subvert and destroy the liberties of the people.”<sup>269</sup>

The societal advancements which brought about the introduction of a standing military force, also contributed to transformations in the judicial system and in the administration of justice. With an increase in the wealth and refinement of a society, there is a concomitant increase in protracted judicial proceedings. Legal claims or disputes, in former uncivilized times, had been less numerous, and were adjudicated by a court of law presided over by a tribal chief, landed baron, or sovereign. With the advancement of the arts, however, and with the increase in wealth and refinement of a society, the very number and complexity of legal actions required both a greater number of judges, and an increase in the amount of time devoted to the rendering of decisions. This progressive turn of events lead to a need for individuals who were trained and

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<sup>269</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 231-232.

educated in the law, this new grouping of individuals specialized in the law became over time a separate and distinct profession, that of salaried jurists and magistrates.<sup>270</sup>

In contradistinction to former, simpler times, where the machinery of government was relatively uncomplicated, the advancement in the arts, and the general progress of society, led to more complexity in the management of the affairs of the state. Formerly, the costs for the administration of justice and the maintenance of armed militias had been borne by the tribal leader, or later, by the landed barons, or king. In more advanced ages, however, it became necessary to augment the finances of the sovereign by finding additional sources of revenue to defray the costs of the military and the courts. A remedy to this problem was found in the imposition of an excise duty on goods produced within the country, and by the conversion of that sum of money, which was originally being paid in lieu of serving in the military, into a general tax paid by all the citizenry. The establishment of these several taxes had a tendency to increase the power of the sovereign. It may be assumed, Millar declares, that the king would be actively involved in deciding how this new source of revenue would be distributed, and as the sovereign, he would also be actively involved in the appointment of government officials. Because of the king's ever-increasing power and authority, therefore, he would undoubtedly be cultivating relationships with numerous individuals, who in turn would support him and his interests whenever he needed them to do so. One of the consequences of the increase in wealth of a people, and of their advancement in the arts, was the growth in the power and authority of the sovereign. There were other effects, however, which while being caused by the same

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<sup>270</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 232-233,

fundamental changes were productive of other results, notably those that were contributive to the rise of a government by the people.<sup>271</sup>

In the early stages of human progress, when cultivation of the soil was already known, but manufacturing was not, individuals without land were obligated to work for others, either in agriculture or in armed militias. For the wealthy men who had an abundance of land, the support of a large number of attendants or retainers from the produce of their estates, contributed both to their honor and to their safety. Without land holdings, the common people had no way of advancing themselves out of their low status, or rank. With the development of the arts, however, individuals could learn an occupation, trade, craft, or acquire a profession, working for themselves, instead of being subservient to a master. There was also the added advantage, when working for oneself, of having numerous clients so that the loss of one, or a few, did not imperil one's source of livelihood. For the most part, success or failure in such enterprises depended in large measure on the effort expended and the quality of the goods produced.<sup>272</sup>

### ***3.8.2: Other Circumstances, Which Contribute to Advance the Privileges of the People.***

As a people come to have affluence and culture, the possibilities exist for the skilled craftsmen and tradesmen of that society to garner a modicum of wealth. The financial security and independence that individuals of low social standing acquire from being unremittingly perseverant at their trade are connected, it appears, to a continued lack of sophistication, on their part, coupled with a sense of disdain and disrespect for those of a higher social position. In the

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<sup>271</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 233-234.

<sup>272</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 236-237.

course of time, these tradesmen come to possess “those sentiments of liberty which are natural to the mind of man, and which necessity alone is able to subdue.”<sup>273</sup>

The changes resulting from the advancement of the arts, together with the refinements in the production and fabrication of goods, brought about dramatic transformations to the antique way of life, and to that mutually beneficial relationships which had existed in various forms since antiquity between the people of higher rank and those of lower rank. In former times, the agricultural production of the baronial lands was used to feed the people who lived and farmed the landed estates of the leader or chief. In turn, the chief or baron had a large retinue of loyal individuals who would fight for him and stand in support of him in all matters. This relationship was broken both by the actions of the vassals and of the barons. Numbers of the common people left the land, acquiring a trade, or became producers and fabricators of goods. The barons for their part sold the produce of their land in order to purchase manufactured goods, which they felt they could not live without. These events conspired to eventually deprive the landed people of high rank of their vast land holdings. Without any source of revenue from business, the owners of landed estates depended on their land as a source of income, but they squandered the revenue they made from selling the agricultural production of their land on manufactured goods. Services, which in former times had been performed by servants and retainers out of an allegiance to the leader, or due to some sort of longstanding arrangement between them, now had to be paid for with money. In the course of time, baronial land, which had been the property of some families for centuries, had to be sold in order to have money to live, or to repay debts. “The hereditary influence of family is thus, in a great measure, destroyed,” Millar states.<sup>274</sup> The now

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<sup>273</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 237.

<sup>274</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 238.

independent former vassals of the barons, industrious craftsmen, fabricators, and artificers, because of their success in business, had the money, and availed themselves of the opportunity, to buy the landed estates of their former masters. These changes to the social order had a tendency to lead to a great democratization of society. Wealth and power began to be spread throughout society instead of being concentrated in the hands of a few.<sup>275</sup> “It is to be expected,” Millar avers, “that the prerogatives of the monarch and of the ancient nobility will be gradually undermined, that the privileges of the people will be extended in the same proportion, and that power, the usual attendant of wealth, will be in some measure diffused over all the members of the community.”<sup>276</sup>

The effects, which affluence and culture had on the sovereign and on the populace, were so completely opposed that it seemed inevitable that dissension between these two divisions of society would arise. The same abundance and civilization that provided the head of state with the means of maintaining a permanent mercenary army, with all its attendant probabilities for despotism and repression, also had a likelihood to arouse, in the people, thoughts of freedom and self-determination.<sup>277</sup>

### ***3.8.3: Result of the Opposition Between These Different Principles***

Millar makes a distinction between a small nation and a large nation and the differing ability of the citizenry of each of these states to counter any incursions into their freedoms by the sovereign. In a small nation, with perhaps only one large city of note, the people, being comparatively less numerous, and proximate to one another, were able to react rapidly to thwart

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<sup>275</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 237-239.

<sup>276</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 239.

<sup>277</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 240.

any attempt at the usurpation of their liberties. In a large nation, however, the very size of the territory involved, and the proportionately greater number of inhabitants, had a tendency to impede the quick mobilization of the people, in response to the attempted infringement of their freedoms. It may also be assumed, Millar writes, that the portion of taxation revenue, which remained after the sovereign's needs were addressed, would be proportionally greater in a large nation, since more people were paying taxes, and as a consequence, the king, being wealthier than any of his subjects, would have had more authority and influence. Millar notes that, of the antique nations known to history, those with the smaller territory, less numerous population, and with the possibility of easy communication between the tribes, villages or towns, developed a sense of independence and liberty before much advancement had been made in the arts. Millar proposes the example of Italy as a small country, and France as representative of a large country. In Great Britain, after the feudal military forces were discontinued, because there was no threat from conquering armies, there was no need for a permanent army or a mercenary force. Millar adduces the case of Charles I, who, without an army on which to call for support, was obliged to give in to the ever increasing authority of the common people, as represented by the House of Commons.<sup>278</sup> "Whenever men of inferior condition are enabled to live in affluence by their own industry," Millar reveals, "and, in procuring their livelihood, have little occasion to court the favour of their superiors, there we may expect that the ideas of liberty will be universally diffused. This happy arrangement of things is naturally produced by commerce and manufacturers."<sup>279</sup>

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<sup>278</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 240-243.

<sup>279</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 243.

### ***3.9: The Authority of a Master Over His Servants.***

#### ***3.9.1: The Condition of Servants In the Primitive Ages of the World***

John Millar next directs his attention to the subject of servants. He considers the extent of power and jurisdiction over their servants, which the rules of conduct, and the traditional practices of various nations, have historically granted to the master. Based on his experience of human nature, and what he knows historically, Millar presumes that the first form of servitude must have occurred out of a need for protection. When human society was in its infancy, primitive and uncivilized, before there was any system of rule or the existence of governing bodies, the weak strove to associate themselves with the strong, voluntarily submitting themselves to the authority of a powerful individual in exchange for being shielded from harm. The early ages of humanity were characterized by lawlessness because society was not yet invested with the power or authority to settle disputes. Whenever disagreements between individuals or neighboring tribes occurred, therefore, they often erupted into armed conflict, resulting in the second source of servitude, as proposed by Millar. These frequent hostilities of former times ineluctably resulted in the vanquished becoming captives of the victors, in which case they were either put to death or kept as servants. In the case where the victorious tribe was wealthy, as with the Tartars,<sup>280</sup> for example, who had great wealth due to their numerous pasturing animals, captives could be usefully employed, and would be kept as servants. Or, if the victors had been so decimated by battle that they required an immediate repopulation of their tribe, then the captives were not killed, but would be retained and adopted into the community by those families that had incurred the heaviest losses. Otherwise, as with the tribes of America,<sup>281</sup>

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<sup>280</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 247.

<sup>281</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 247.

who did not have the wealth to maintain servants, captives resulting from hostilities would be killed. The third way that individuals could become servants, once the rule of law had been established, was by the sentence imposed by a court of justice, as a form of restitution for the commission of a crime against another individual.<sup>282</sup> “In more civilized ages,” writes Millar, “when the magistrate was enabled to restrain these disorders, he sometimes afforded the same redress by his indemnification to the sufferer for the loss he had sustained.”<sup>283</sup>

A servant, Millar surmises, in those early periods of humanity’s progress toward civilization and refinement was, in effect, a slave. It is not clear how much power one individual should morally or humanly be allowed to exert over another, Millar queries, but it is highly probable that throughout the many ages of humanity’s advancement toward civilization, and even past the stage of human society having achieved refinement, a master’s dominion over his slaves, or servants, has been unfettered and unconstrained. Servants or slaves could be killed by their masters, sold to the highest bidder, or, under the master’s direction, slaves would be encouraged to multiply, in order to augment their number, thereby increasing the wealth of the master.<sup>284</sup>

It has been observed that recently, “on the coast of Guinea,” battles between opposing tribes are occurring more often than in previous times, but they result in less bloodshed than in former times. The inhabitants of this part of the world actively strive to capture their enemies alive in order to supply slaves to the European slave trade.<sup>285</sup>

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<sup>282</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 244-245.

<sup>283</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 245.

<sup>284</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 245-246.

<sup>285</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 247-248.

### ***3.9.2: The Usual Effects of Opulence and Civilized Manners, With Regard to the Treatment of Servants***

It has long been accepted as a general truth that a master can get the most benefit out of his servants by reducing them to slavery. With the advent of civilization, however, and the progress made in the arts and manufacturing, this has proved to be, upon reflection, a mistaken notion. A slave who receives no wages for his efforts, and who does not improve his lot by working diligently, will not put much effort into performing his daily tasks. In an advanced and civilized society, little profit can be made for the master from the work of a slave who lacks the skills or the work habits, which are a necessity in industry and commerce. Since in a thriving economy there are many jobs available for even the poorest of individuals, it has become unnecessary for people to indenture themselves as servants, or to give up their liberty, by becoming slaves. In any case, Millar argues, now that the habit of acquiring captives in battle is no longer a part of modern warfare, the expensive alternative is for slaves to be either purchased outright, or bred from the supply of existing slaves.<sup>286</sup> When slavery is examined critically it will be discovered that, “the work of a slave who receives nothing but a bare subsistence, is really dearer than that of a free man, to whom constant wages are given in proportion to his industry.”<sup>287</sup> The practice of owning slaves has been in existence for so long that the benefits to the master are assumed, when this form of servitude is closely examined, however, it becomes evident that, in actuality, it is “pernicious and contrary to the true interest of the master,” in addition to being “inconsistent with the rights of humanity.”<sup>288</sup>

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<sup>286</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 249-252.

<sup>287</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 252.

<sup>288</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 252.

In ancient times, when humanity was in its early stage of development, the living conditions of the master and slave did not differ markedly. In the civilized and refined world, characterized by the progress of the arts and the establishment of industry and commerce, that situation, as Millar explains, of near parity between the situation of master and slave has greatly changed. With the affluence and abundance brought by civilization, the divide between master and slave has widened greatly; while the rich benefit from the refinements of life, the slaves remain in a state of rudeness and extreme poverty. This great contrast in situations cannot but lead to profound anger and bitterness on the part of the slaves toward the slave owners, resulting in a potentially volatile situation, which advanced societies do their utmost to guard against by increased repression.<sup>289</sup>

Although the practice of slavery was allowed to continue, many nations, over the course of historical time, enacted rules to govern the conduct of the master over his slaves. The Jewish people were one of the first civilizations to issue injunctions against the mistreatment of slaves. Millar quotes several examples from Exodus in the Jewish Bible: “If a man smite his servant, or his maid, with a rod, and he die under his hand, he shall surely be punished.” Or, in another instance, once again from Exodus: “And if a man smite the eye of his servant, or the eye of his maid, that it perish; he shall let him go free for his eye’s sake.”<sup>290</sup> In Athens mistreated slaves could flee, finding refuge in the temple of Theseus. The abused slaves of Athenians also had the right to lay a claim against their master in a court of law. Millar also explains that, in Rome, over the course of many emperors, from Augustus, who designated the *Praefectus urbi* to offer a

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<sup>289</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 253-254.

<sup>290</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 255.

remedy to slaves who had been mistreated, through the reigns of Claudius, Adrian, Antoninus Pius, and Constantine, laws were enacted offering protection to slaves against ill-treatment.<sup>291</sup>

### ***3.9.3: Causes of the Freedom Acquired By the Labouring People In the Modern Nations of Europe***

It was a “happy concurrence of events”<sup>292</sup> which led to the abolition of slavery in Europe, as John Millar sees it. A Roman citizen could not own more than seven acres of land, Millar relates. This extent of acreage was the amount of land, which a person, with the help of his family members, could cultivate. When the barbarian tribes from the North invaded the provinces of the Roman Empire, as we discussed earlier, they conquered large expanses of land, and enslaved great numbers of the people they had vanquished in battle. These slaves had few if any rights, while the master had complete dominion over them. Slaves could be sold at the master’s pleasure, whatever they obtained as a result of their industry belonged to the master, and they could not marry without their master’s approbation. In the course of time, however, due to the situation in which both the masters and the slaves found themselves, and out of the necessity of having to respond and adapt to their particular circumstances, the relationship between master and slave changed incrementally. In that part of the former Roman Empire which was now dominated by the barbarians from Northern tribes, the type of labor in which the great majority of slaves were employed was of a kind which inevitably led to the obtaining of certain advantages from the master, rendering the slave’s circumstances more favorable, raising them in rank, and improving the regard in which they were held.<sup>293</sup>

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<sup>291</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 255-256.

<sup>292</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 257.

<sup>293</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 257-258.

In many cases, the landed estates controlled by the Germanic invaders were of great expanse. While being employed in working the land, growing crops and tending to pasturing animals, therefore, slaves were often required to live, unsupervised, on farmsteads far from the master. This was a problem whose resolution required some creativity on the part of the slave owners. The only way to ensure that the slaves would work diligently, it was resolved, was to offer a recompense for their hard work, above and beyond the provision of food and lodging which they ordinarily received. “During all the successive improvements of agriculture, the proprietor of an estate,” Millar relates, “embarrassed with the multitude of his villains was obliged to repose a confidence in them, and came by degrees to discover more clearly the utility of exciting them to industry by the prospect of their own private advantage.”<sup>294</sup> This expeditious method of solving a problem had many unforeseen consequence, one of these was the fact that, by degrees, over the ages, the mastery, which the landowners had formerly had over their slaves, was lost beyond recovery. It also came to be realized that, a slave, or his family, after having worked the land, and managed a farm, for a long period of time, perhaps even generations, would have become so adept at the supervision of their particular estate, that it would not be in the best interest of his master to be rid of him, or to give him another employment.<sup>295</sup> So, Millar writes, it came to be an accepted condition that “the peasants were regarded as belonging to the stock upon the ground, and came to be uniformly disposed of as a part of the estate which they had been accustomed to cultivate.”<sup>296</sup>

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<sup>294</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 261.

<sup>295</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 257-259.

<sup>296</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 259.

In the course of time it also became evident that, one method of estimating how diligently the slaves were working was to look at the productivity of the land in their charge. In order to encourage the utmost productivity from his land, the master opted to give the slave working the land, a proportion of the produce of the farm. What at first was a localized and informal methodology for maximizing production through the offer of a motivating incentive became, over time, an essential condition of the agricultural relationship between master and slave. Such a convenient, practical and mutually advantageous idea was soon willingly adopted throughout Europe. As a result of that initial, obligatory dispersion of the slaves over large expanses of landed estates, and the resulting necessity of overseeing and insuring their diligence from afar, a solution was devised whereby vigorous work would receive recompense.<sup>297</sup> The solution to that original impasse had many unforeseen consequence, which over the ages resulted in numerous changes to the relationship between master and slave, so that it was found that the slaves, or villains, had “entered into a sort of copartnership with their master.”<sup>298</sup> Over time these changes to the master/slave relationship resulted in the slaves becoming prosperous, leading to all sorts of further modification of their rights. The slave/tenant could, for example, retain all the produce of the land, paying the master, or landlord, a fixed yearly rent, thus exempting the master from the consequences of a bad harvest. “Thus, by degrees,” Millar relates, “the ancient villanage came to be entirely abolished. The peasants, who cultivated their farms at their own charges, and at their own hazard, were of course emancipated from the authority of their master, and could no longer be regarded as in the condition of servants. Their personal subjection was at an end.” Since there was no manufacturing in Europe at this time, the only slaves were those attached to the soil,

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<sup>297</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 259-262

<sup>298</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 262.

working in agriculture and husbandry, so that with the many advantages acquired by the villains, the institution of slavery became nonexistent.<sup>299</sup>

Since the people were now working for their own benefit, they accumulated wealth, and life became more comfortable for them, writes Millar. Although principally employed in farming and husbandry, the villains also preformed other services, as needed, for the master. Some of the farmers became especially adept at the particular service that they performed for the master, and over time, this service became another form of employment, as more clients sought their skills. As society progressed, and as the affluence of the people increased, so did the demand for goods, continually increasing the prospects for those villains who were also, collaterally employed in their particular trade, so that in many cases, the villains quite farming to take up that secondary, or subordinate occupation fulltime. Children born into these families, which had historically made their living in agriculture, now also had the option of pursuing alternate occupations as artisans, skilled workers, or as producers of goods for sale.<sup>300</sup> The masters were also involved in these new enterprises. Millar writes,

According to the wealth which this new order of men had accumulated, they purchased immunities from their master; and, by permitting him to levy tolls and duties upon their commerce, they were enabled to secure his patronage and protection. Thus the privileges acquired by the peasants appear to have given rise to domestic freedom, which was communicated to the trading part of the inhabitants; while the employment of the later became, on the other hand, the source of great opulence and contributed, as has been frequently observed, to raise the people of inferior rank to political independence.<sup>301</sup>

Many have believed that the Christian Religion contributed to the abolition of slavery. It does not, however, appear to have been the aim of Christianity to change the rights of people to

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<sup>299</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 262.

<sup>300</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 263-264.

<sup>301</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 264.

political and social freedoms, to promulgate equality, or to do away with generally accepted differences in rank. No tenet of the gospel, for example, expressly curbs the power that the master has over servants or slaves. On the contrary, there are references in scripture, which may be taken to mean that, even after being converted to Christianity, slaves were not relieved of the obligation to serve their masters. Consequently, as history makes clear, the institution of slavery persisted in Europe for many hundreds of years after Christianity became the dominant religion. At the time of Miller's writing, as he says, slavery was well established in the colonies of the nations of Europe, in "Asia," "Africa," and "America." And in some parts of Europe, notably "Russia," "Poland," "Hungary," and in certain areas of "Germany," slavery still persisted.<sup>302</sup> "The Quakers of Pennsylvania," Millar asserts, "are the first body of men in those countries, who have discovered any scruples upon that account, and who seem to have thought that the abolition of this practice is a duty they owe to religion and humanity."<sup>303</sup>

It has also been thought that the influential Christian clergy, due to its power and the long-standing tension between the Church and state that existed in many European nations, had supported the plight of the Church's most devoted adherents, the vulnerable, the powerless, and individuals of low rank, and had been instrumental in ending the state of servitude of the serfs or villains. To a certain extent this is historically accurate, Millar relates, but the motives of the Church were not altruistic, but self-serving. Since uneducated individuals and those of lower rank constituted the base of the Church, the clergy did actively support them, since they were, in turn, the Church's greatest supporters. When individuals died, they often left a bequest to the Church, so it was in the best interest of the Church to encourage the master, or the civil

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<sup>302</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 264.

<sup>303</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 265.

authorities, to allow people of low rank the right of ownership of property and the freedom to donate, or alienate what they owned.<sup>304</sup> “The progress of ecclesiastical rapacity,”<sup>305</sup> says Millar, led to the custom whereby villains who had been liberated through the intercession of the clergy would offer recompense to the Church, and that it became customary for the act of manumission to require ecclesiastical ratification. The emancipation of slaves was endorsed by the Church as a recommended form of atonement for one’s sins; an action, which would prompt both a donation from those who had been liberated, and probably, a fee for the Church’s validation of the act of manumitting. Pope Alexander III issued a decree, or formal proclamation, sealed with a leaden *bull*, strongly urging Christian nations to liberate their slaves. But all of these interventions by the clergy on behalf of the slaves—the arguments for property ownership, freedom to transfer, manumission as a remission of sin, the abolition of slavery—were also, and perhaps principally, intended to fund the Church. In view of the benefits, which the Church arguably derived from the enforced servitude of the people, it may be easily understood why it was reluctant to use the full force of its power, influence and sophistry to eradicate slavery. In reference to the villains working on Church property, however, where nothing could be gained by manumitting them, the clergy exhibited a different attitude.<sup>306</sup> “These being appropriated to pious uses,” Millar goes on to explain, “and being only held in usufruct, were not to be alienated by the present incumbent. Thus we meet with many ecclesiastical regulations, both in France and Germany, by which it is

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<sup>304</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 264-266.

<sup>305</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 266.

<sup>306</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 266.

provided that no bishop, or priest, shall manumit a slave in the patrimony of the church, without purchasing two others of equal value to be put in his place.”<sup>307</sup>

Political considerations were also a factor in the elimination of slavery from the countries of Europe. In many of those nations the monarchy was involved in protracted disagreements with the landed barons. The cause of this strife was predominantly a skillful maneuvering for power; the sovereign wanting to subjugate the barons under his authority, oftentimes by whatever means possible. In many cases, as the opportunities arose, the monarch would strive to safeguard the villains from the wrath of the barons; in this way attempting to subvert the authority of the masters, by removing from the barons sphere of influence those individuals who had formerly been subject to the authority of these barons. Helping some villains achieve independence from their masters benefited the sovereign by subverting the power of the barons, and by increasing the amount of money in the royal coffers. The villains paid money to the monarch under the pretext of receiving validation, or a concretization, from the sovereign himself, of those special rights or advantages which had been given to them by the sovereign, in order to divert their allegiance from the barons to the crown. These former slaves, and now former villains, by their efforts in farming, in the crafts, and in trade, had acquired a modicum of wealth, and were, as a consequence, able to buy their liberty, and make financial contributions for running the government.<sup>308</sup> “From such political considerations,” Millar elaborates, “we find that repeated efforts were made, and many regulations were introduced by different princes of Europe, for

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<sup>307</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 266-267.

<sup>308</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 267-268.

extending and securing the liberties and rights of the lower and more industrious part of their subjects.”<sup>309</sup>

Therefore, in the several ways that Millar has described, and as we enumerated above, slavery was, for the most part, done away with in most of the nations of Europe without the enactment of specific laws, directed at its abolition. In England, what prompted the incremental demise of slavery was the distance between the working peasant slave and the master. This distance separating master and slave was a consequence of the territorial vastness of baronial land holdings, and the undeniable necessity of slaves working on farms, unsupervised, at a far distance from the master. In those cases where some semblance of enforced bondage still exists, as in Scotland, with coal mining, the reason Millar gives for its continuation is the fact that, unlike the dispersion of the villains, the men who worked the mines were working in close proximity to the master, without the necessity, on the part of the master, of relinquishing any of his power over them as an enticement to industry, since he could easily supervise their behavior.<sup>310</sup>

The discovery of the New World occurred after slavery had been introduced in those nations of Europe, which had made the greatest strides in the cultivation of land and raising crops. Due to the distance, which separated the New World from the nations of Europe, Millar states, there was no requirement for the settlers of America, to adhere to the same traditional practices or laws as were current in Europe. The Spanish adventurers who first arrived in the New World were searching for precious metals, for gold and for silver. The native peoples whom they conquered were used as slave labor to mine these metals. The indigenous peoples unused to

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<sup>309</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 268.

<sup>310</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 268-269.

the harsh treatment and the unbearable working conditions in the mines soon succumbed to the unbearable conditions, and great numbers of them died. The Spaniards required an expeditious solution to this impasse, which was found, with the purchase from the Portuguese, and the subsequent importation, of African people as slave labor. At a later date, these same black, African slaves were committed to working on plantations where sugar cane was grown, and eventually came to do all the hard labor in other ventures in America. It should be noted, Millar insists, that continually under the control of an overseer, the African slaves who toiled in the American soil did not have the same opportunities, and were not subject to the same circumstances, as those peasants who worked on farms in the Old World, historical conditions that, in Europe, led to the eventual demise of slavery.<sup>311</sup> “Thus the practice of slavery was no sooner extinguished by the inhabitants in one quarter of the globe,” Millar expounds, “than it was revived by the very same people in another, where it has remained ever since, without being much regarded by the public, or exciting any effectual regulations in order to suppress it.”<sup>312</sup>

#### ***3.9.4: Political Consequences of Slavery***

As human society advanced and prospered, especially since the making of goods and the offering of services became popular, and as the crafts came to be more productive, the ideas of liberty and personal freedom took on a new importance and became essential to life. Yet, while liberty and personal freedom are valuable, significant notions, slavery still persisted in some parts of the world. The inhumane and socially harmful institution of slavery no longer exists in most European countries, Millar admits, but it is an essential part of the economy of the colonies, and this is troubling. It is a well-known fact, Millar generalizes, and one confirmed by the, albeit,

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<sup>311</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 269-270.

<sup>312</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 270.

unique and individual, historical situation of the villains in England, that individuals would put more effort into their work when they are working for themselves, than they will when working for another. The liberty and personal freedom to be found in a society, will inevitably lead to a hard-working, productive populace. By their diligence in agriculture an abundance of food will be available, contributing to population growth, resulting in a strong nation, and one that is safely free from danger.<sup>313</sup>

It has been observed, in reference to the keeping of slaves, that this institution promotes an increase in population, but nothing could be further from the truth, Millar testifies. The work that slaves perform is exceedingly arduous, so that the food provided for their sustenance should, at the very least, be controlled to such an extent as to be adequate to the work they are expected to perform. In order to promote the populousness of a nation, the intake of nourishment and the amount of work performed, should be so managed as to yield the most financial gains. In all probability there is more chance of this being achieved when the workers provide for themselves, than when it is a result of a master's decision regarding what is an adequate sustenance.<sup>314</sup>

Millar also disagrees with the arguments that slavery is conducive to procreation. However much the master may try to regulate the propagation of his slaves, this is a fatuitous exercise unless it is also paired with an increase in nutrition. Working under the harshest of conditions, slaves are disinclined to work energetically or diligently, and therefore they tend to retard the advancement of a nation, and, as a consequence, the propagation rate will be low, notwithstanding all the directives that may be issued, or the persuasiveness of the master.<sup>315</sup>

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<sup>313</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 271-272.

<sup>314</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 272-273.

<sup>315</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 273.

The suggestion has also been made that; the institution of slavery is advantageous to a country, because it provides an expeditious way of dealing with the poor and the needy. In the early ages of human society, when a community consisted of family and relations, a prosperous kin, or neighbors, would render assistance to the indigent. In a modern society, however, individuals are preoccupied with work, the cities are heavily-populated, neighbors remain strangers, blood relatives are far away, there is an excessive concern for oneself, and the suffering of others goes unnoticed. Caring for these less fortunate individuals is also very costly to the state. In a nation with slaves, the problem of the poor is apparently solved since they are the master's responsibility, and not the concern of society at large. No taxes need be levied for the maintenance of the destitute; no costs are incurred for their sustenance and housing, and the streets are free of annoying beggars. How can society, in a country where there is slavery, be certain that the master will actually care for his old and sick slaves, instead of simply neglecting them, and not supplying the care and sustenance required, Millar inquirers?<sup>316</sup>

Slavery not only diminishes the energy, devotion, and diligence that could be brought to an employment, but it also has a negative effect on the morals of both the master and the slaves. The effects on the virtue of a slave, of being deprived of all rights, of being debased to the level of an animal, cannot even be imagined. What impact, we may ask, will the master's treatment of his slaves have on him?<sup>317</sup> "Considering the many advantages which a country derives from the freedom of the laboring people," Millar writes, "it is to be regretted that any species of slavery

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<sup>316</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 274-275.

<sup>317</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 273-274.

should remain in the dominion of Great Britain, in which liberty is generally so understood, and so highly valued.”<sup>318</sup>

The circumstances of the Scottish “colliers and salters,”<sup>319</sup> is not of great moment, since there are not many of them and the form of bondage they work under is not very severe, but it would behoove their masters to ameliorate the conditions under which they work. If a person could make the same income working as a free man, no individual would choose to work under conditions of slavery, but would prefer another form of gaining a living. The colliers are paid extra wages; it appears, due to the conditions under which they work. If an enterprising master would liberate his workers, thereafter paying them less, because they were no longer slaves, but employed as free men, he would have a competitive advantage on the marketplace.<sup>320</sup>

The institution of slavery as is to be found in the colonies is of more concern than are the Scottish “colliers and salters,”<sup>321</sup> whose situation was briefly mentioned above. The slavery to be found in the New World colonies is accompanied by complications which are not as easily resolved. One of the arguments brought forth, in reference to the use of slave labour on colonial plantations, is that men who are free would not do the kind of work required. There is sufficient evidence, however, to support the claim that the very institution of slavery, due to the availability of numerous, unpaid, individuals, has itself contributed to the want of proper, less time-consuming tools. In countries where free men work, they have the advantage of using implements, which both makes the work easier, and decreases the time needed to perform the

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<sup>318</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 275.

<sup>319</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 275.

<sup>320</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 275-276.

<sup>321</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 275.

task at hand. The use of the spade, the saw, the flail, the scythe, the sickle, for example, is almost unknown in the West Indies.<sup>322</sup>

It is to the benefit, or advantage, of the colonies that the treatment of their slaves be improved, and that, in order to motivate them to be more diligent in their work, wages should be paid, based on the work accomplished. As the example of the European villains shows, this incentive has been very effective in the past.<sup>323</sup>

With the progress that humankind has made in “commerce and the arts,”<sup>324</sup> as Millar is fond of phrasing it, has also come the elimination of much intolerance, a moderation of preconceived judgments, and a broadening of viewpoints, both in reference to the enforced bondage of humans and other topics. For a long time, in Britain, it has been understood that, a slave brought into the country, acquired the rights of a free man. As an undisputed example of the liberal attitudes held in mind near the end of the eighteenth century, Millar adduces a court decision of 1778, which fully and unequivocally denounces Negro slavery.<sup>325</sup>

### ***3.10: Some Final Thoughts Before Discussing Sir John Sinclair***

In the previous chapter we discussed David Hume’s essay, “Of the Populousness of Ancient Nations,” and in this chapter John Millar’s *The Origin of the Distinction of Ranks* as examples of the discussions taking place during this historical period on the subject of population and as illustrations of the varied historical methodologies being utilized in this period of history. The different forms of history being written in the Scottish Enlightenment were the result of a

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<sup>322</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 277.

<sup>323</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 278.

<sup>324</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 279.

<sup>325</sup> Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, 279.

need to find the appropriate narrative form, to develop a kind of writing expressly suited to those particular aspect of human social life that were to be written about.

In the four selections we have chosen to discuss in this study, populousness is, in general, the common theme. Populousness, as we see in Hume's essay and in Millar's history, is the outcome of a civilized society, one of the end products of progress, prosperity and civilization. When there exists civil liberty and the rule of law, when a people are industrious, free and happy, population, as a consequence, increases.

I have proposed in this study that, what is also common to Hume, Millar, Sinclair and Malthus, shared in various degrees by them all, is their dependence on the uniformity of human nature, on knowledge of the human species based on experience, which is derived from observation, and on sympathy with the human beings of the past. This is the foundation on which their historical writings are based. The urge to be scientific, however, to do for the human sciences what Newton accomplished in the natural sciences is also a component of their historical method. It acts as a guiding methodological undercurrent to their writing.

We know from David Hume, and John Millar, that humanity's passage toward refinement, civilization, and the achievement of a highly developed culture and society, is a result of adaptations in manners, a function of industry, accumulated knowledge, justice, and liberty. These terms are descriptive of, and highlight what the eighteenth-century historians thought were important considerations in thinking and talking about humanity's passage from its primitive original state, to that of a constitutional government, in the advanced, commercial prosperous, consumption driven society of eighteenth-century Scotland.

Our next selection is an excerpt from Sir John Sinclair's twenty-one-volume history, *The Statistical Account of Scotland*. The undercurrent of the scientific, of wanting to do for the

human sciences what had been done in the natural sciences, now comes to the fore. The contemporary micro history we will present is the response to Sinclair's questionnaire submitted by the Reverend James Meek.

CHAPTER 4: SIR JOHN SINCLAIR'S *THE STATISTICAL ACCOUNT OF SCOTLAND*: THE RESPONSE OF REVEREND JAMES MEEK

**4.1 Introduction**

A prominent feature of the historical writing of the eighteenth century was the comparison of the present with the past, an evaluating, or a judging of the progress made since some former time. We have already seen an example of this in our review of David Hume's "Of the Populousness of Ancient Nations." One of the forms this particular historical interest took was *The Statistical Account of Scotland*. This was a history of the immediate past, compared with a history of the present, in order to document and conserve a historical record of the advances made by the Scottish people at a particular moment in their history. This project took note of, and charted, many aspects of the life of the people of Scotland, looking at population data, and at the advancements, improvements, or regressions, which took place in the lives of the people of various localities in the span of a lifetime, resulting in an accurate rendering of the historical present.

*The Statistical Account of Scotland*, often referred to as the Old Statistical Account, was the idea of Sir John Sinclair of Ulbster, but it is worthwhile mentioning that the general idea of surveys, and of surveying a nation, was not without precedent, and had antecedents, which dated to the late seventeenth century.<sup>326</sup> Sinclair's account stands out, however, for its breadth of survey, and for his depth of historiographical treatment of the changes between the past and the present in those regions of Scotland that were canvassed. His idea resulted in the writing of a new genre of history in Scotland, a contemporary history of the dramatic changes wrought by women and men, on many aspects of the social, agricultural, and manufacturing landscape of

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<sup>326</sup> Michael Carhart, "Anthropology and Statistik in the *Gottingsiches Historisches Magazin* (1787-1794)," in *Historians and Ideologues: Essays in Honor of Donald R. Kelley*, ed. Anthony T. Grafton and J. H. M. Salmon (Rochester, N. Y.: U of Rochester P, 2001), 327-349.

Scotland, within living memory. When the general survey of eighteenth-century Scotland was completed in 1799, “effected” in large measure “by [the] unceasing energy and perseverance”<sup>327</sup> of Sir Sinclair himself, it consisted of 21 volumes, and had taken 8 years to complete.

Originally the breadth of Sinclair’s survey was to have been characterized by a more modest scope and a more restricted methodology. It was to have been a private, non-published, “General Statistical View of North Britain.” Sinclair had not initially thought of it as being divided into parishes, for example. But the information Sinclair began receiving from the clergy of the Church of Scotland—the surveyors he had recruited—was of such a high quality, he states, that he decided to publish his *Statistical Account*. Sir John Sinclair writes,

My original intention was, to have drawn up a General Statistical view of North Britain, without any particular reference to parochial districts; but I found such merit and ability, and so many useful facts and important observations, in the communications which were sent me, that I could not think of depriving the Clergy, of the credit they were entitled to derive, from such laborious exertions, and thence was induced, to give the Work to the Public, in the manner in which it has been printed.<sup>328</sup>

Sir John Sinclair had already published one volume of his first extensive historical endeavor, *The History of the Public Revenue of the British Empire*, published between 1785-1790, and was working on other volumes of this work, when he went on a tour of northern Europe in 1786. Writing from Whitehall, on February 25, 1785, in the preface to the first edition of the *Public Revenue* Sir John, both in an exculpatory fashion—since this is his first attempt, he

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<sup>327</sup> Sir John Sinclair, Bart. *The Statistical Account of Scotland: Drawn up from the Communications of the Ministers of the Different Parishes*, vol. 20 of 21 (Edinburgh: printed and sold by William Creech, 1791), x. *Eighteenth Century Collections Online*, Carleton University, 13 November 2013. The spelling has been modernized.

<sup>328</sup> Sinclair, *Statistical Account*, vol. 20, xii.

needs forbearance from his readers—and with some degree of evident pride, wrote that “this may be said to be the first attempt at a financial history on an enlarged scale.”<sup>329</sup>

On his voyage to the north of Europe, Sinclair’s lifelong zeal for gathering and accumulating noteworthy data alerted him to the use of a methodology called “*Statistics*,” a word he had acquired while in Germany, a term denoting “a species of political inquiry.”<sup>330</sup> The meaning of the term in Germany was “an inquiry for the purpose of ascertaining the political strength of a country, or questions respecting *matters of state*.”<sup>331</sup> Sinclair modified the usage of the term in transposing it from German to British use, so that the word took on a meaning commensurate with his intended purpose. The meaning Sinclair attached to the word was “an inquiry into the state of a country, *for the purpose of ascertaining the quantum of happiness enjoyed by its inhabitants, and the means of its future improvement*.”<sup>332</sup> This Scottish refinement to the word “*Statistics*,” is reflective of the utilitarian concerns of the period, and of the ideology of improvement, or “progress,” a hallmark of eighteenth century Scottish thought.

While the first volume of Sinclair’s project, dealing with “Jedburgh, Holywood, Port-Patrick, and Hounam”<sup>333</sup> was published on May 25, 1791, within a year of beginning the survey, by June 1, 1792, 413 parish reports were still outstanding. The reasons for the delay were various, and included the great difficulty of getting the cooperation of such a large number of parish ministers, and extended to the uneasiness of the individuals being surveyed relative to the

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<sup>329</sup> Sir John Sinclair, *The History of the Public Revenue of the British Empire*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 2 vols. (London: A. Strahan, for T. Cadell in the Strand, MDCCXC [1790], v.

<sup>330</sup> Sinclair, *Statistical Account*, vol. 20, xiii.

<sup>331</sup> Sinclair, *Statistical Account*, vol. 20, xiii.

<sup>332</sup> Sinclair, *Statistical Account*, vol. 20, xiii.

<sup>333</sup> Sinclair, *Statistical Account*, vol. 20, xiv.

eventual use of the information. Much of the hesitancy and concern centered on economic issues; respondents questioned, would the requested information result in an increase in taxation, for example? In order to expedite matters, Sinclair sent “Statistical Missionaries” to the many delinquent parishes in order to encourage participation.<sup>334</sup> The survey was finally completed on January 1, 1798. Sinclair writes, “the success of this undertaking is to be attributed, to a spirit of perseverance, which no obstacle could resist, and without which, no great enterprise can ever be accomplished.”<sup>335</sup>

#### **4.2 Rev. James Meek, D. D.**

Rev. James Meek, D. D., minister of Cambuslang, County of Lanark was one of the more than 900 clergymen of the Presbyterian Church of Scotland who participated in the survey leading to *The Statistical Account of Scotland*. Rev. Dr. Meek’s contribution to Sir John Sinclair’s “general view of the natural history and political state”<sup>336</sup> of Scotland, will serve as the selection for this portion of our study.

As was the case with the other respondents to Sinclair’s survey, Rev. Meek was supplied with an extensive list of 166 questions.<sup>337</sup> A close reading of his answers, prove them to be the responses of a sensitive, scholarly, cultured man of the Scottish Enlightenment, with diverse interests. This is the reason why we have chosen to include his response in our historical survey of new eighteenth-century historical forms. Meek’s answers to Sinclair’s questionnaire give a thorough and comprehensive account of life in Cambuslang, and its environs, in 1750,

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<sup>334</sup> Sinclair, *Statistical Account*, vol. 20, xiv-xviii.

<sup>335</sup> Sinclair, *Statistical Account*, vol. 20, xx-xxi.

<sup>336</sup> *Annual register, or a view of the history, politics and literature for the year 1791*, vol. 2 (London: printed for F. and C. Rivington, No. 62, St. Paul’s Church-Yard, 1795), 183.

<sup>337</sup> R. L. Plackett, “The Old Statistical Account,” *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*, Series A (General) 149.3 (1986): 249.

juxtaposed to the changed situation in 1791. From Meek's register of temperature, wind direction, barometer readings, rainfall, and agricultural conditions, to discussions of the geography of the area, the width and depth of local rivers, to the condition of roads, farming methods, crops being harvested, acreage under production, and the types of clothing worn by the people in the time period covered by his survey, Meek's response is substantial and detailed.

It is believed that James Meek was born at Fortissat House not far from Shotts, in the year 1739. His family had owned land in this area of Scotland since the seventeenth century, so Meek had deep roots in this part of Scotland. Meek studied to become a clergyman at Glasgow University, at the time that Edmund Burke was Lord Rector, and was probably taught by some of the renowned Scottish Enlightenment thinkers who were teaching there at that time, Adam Smith, among them. He preached at the *College Chapel* of Glasgow University from 1763 to 1765. His appointment to the Parish of Cambuslang by the 8th Duke of Hamilton met with some resistance from the parishioners, but his installation was eventually confirmed.<sup>338</sup>

#### ***4.3 Meek's Survey of Cambuslang***

The Rev. Dr. James Meek writes in response to the questions submitted to him by Sir John Sinclair. His answers may adumbrate some of the special concerns of the Scottish Enlightenment towards the human sciences, but what they most assuredly do is exemplify the astounding effect, which affluence derived from agricultural production, manufacturers, and vigorous, active commerce can have on a society. The responses Meek makes to the queries comprises thirty-three pages of volume five of *The Statistical Account of Scotland*, and begin with a discussion of the derivation of the place name. From the very beginning of our reading of Rev. Meek's responses to Sinclair's questionnaire we are struck by the detailed nature of his

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<sup>338</sup> "James Meek," *Wikipedia*, 10 November 2013, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James\\_Meek](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_Meek)

rejoinders, his responses are scholarly and are either extensively researched, or he is a man who is incredibly curious, with a great variety of interests.

#### ***4.3.1 Four Examples of Meek's Detailed Responses to Sinclair's Questionnaire***

His thorough response to the derivation of the place name of Cambuslang will serve as our first example of this proclivity of his, or perhaps of a distinctive character trait. Cambuslang, was called Drumsargard in ancient times, Meek begins. The name results from an amalgam of the Gaelic name for “a crooked torrent or rivulet,”<sup>339</sup> *Cambus*, and the name of a saint, “*Lan* or *Launus*, now changed into *lang*,”<sup>340</sup> renowned locally for having founded monasteries. In ancient times most of the “kirks,” or Scottish Churches, were placed under the protection of a saint. In Rev. Meek’s words the name Cambuslang comes “from the place where the kirk has flood for time immemorial, and from the saint to whom it was dedicated.”<sup>341</sup>

Another example, which I believe is indicative of his appreciation for the beauties of the natural world, suggestive of his sensitivity, and is expressive of his enthusiasm for life, is his description of the rivers in Cambuslang. This is also another part of his survey, which is especially replete with detail. In reference to the rivers which are part of the parish, Meek relates how at times the Clyde, 200 to 250 feet in breadth, has spring tides just reaching the edge, or border, of the parish, but usually these tides do not come any closer than a mile from the boundaries of Cambuslang. The Clyde does, however, flood, and it does so “at an average, between three and four times yearly,” rarely rising “more than 17 feet above the bed of the river.” On March 12, 1782, he cites an example, occurred the highest flood to be remembered.

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<sup>339</sup> Sinclair, *Statistical Account*, vol. 5, 241.

<sup>340</sup> Sinclair, *Statistical Account*, vol. 5, 241.

<sup>341</sup> Sinclair. *Statistical Account*, vol. 5, 241.

On that occasion the waters rose 20 feet above the bed of the river, “1 foot 6 inches higher than a flood on September 12, 1712.” There is only one area, “consisting of 18 acres of very rich land,”<sup>342</sup> which is so located as to be susceptible to flooding. Although not mentioned by Meek, the very richness and fertility of the soil may be due to the constant flooding over the centuries, with the receding waters leaving behind rich silt acting as a natural fertilizer of the land. The waters of the Calder, forming a border with the parish of about four miles, are “rapid,” but “shallow.” The width of this river is about thirty feet, but it is not ever “covered with water.” There are a number of rivulets in Cambuslang; only one is worthy of notice. The main branch of this rivulet originates on the border of the parish of Carmannock, and after some twists and turns, joins with the Clyde, not far from the Church. At this location, this rivulet, which has many names, is called Kirk Burn, and for approximately a mile before it merges with the Clyde, is “uncommonly wild and romantic.”<sup>343</sup> In some parts its banks are overgrown with trees and bushes, but for most of its length walls of rock fifty to a hundred feet in height bound it.

A third instance of Meek, the man with an appreciation of things beautiful, is the following abbreviation of his description of the prospects in this parish that he obviously loves. There are many beautiful vistas in Cambuslang and the surrounding countryside, Meek relates, exclaiming that the “parish is distinguished by its beautiful scenery.”<sup>344</sup> One of the most beautiful and picturesque can be best appreciated from the height of Dichmount; from which is visible “the finest inland prospect in Scotland.”<sup>345</sup> Perhaps the vistas from Stirling castle or

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<sup>342</sup> Sinclair, *Statistical Account*, vol. 5, 243.

<sup>343</sup> Sinclair, *Statistical Account*, vol. 5, 241.

<sup>344</sup> Sinclair, *Statistical Account*, vol. 5, 243.

<sup>345</sup> Sinclair, *Statistical Account*, vol. 5, 243.

Moncreiss's hill "are prospects in some respects superior," he makes an opinionated comparison; "but neither of them comprehends such an extent of cultivated country, and so great a variety of hills and valleys."<sup>346</sup> Even though the highest point on Dichmount is a mere 700 feet above sea level, it still allows for a very "commanding view, bounded in every direction, by distant high grounds, hills and mountains," and allowing the observer to see "parts of 13 or 14 counties."<sup>347</sup> Visible from this height, looking from the southeast, and moving toward the northwest, Meek names the distant hills and mountains, which can be seen: "Tinto," of the Southern Uplands, "the Tweeddale and Pentland hills"; "Ben Lomond," a mountain in the Scottish Highlands, on the eastern side of Loch Lomond, a number of "the hills of Cowal and Breadalbane"; and "among these last, the conical summit of Ben Loi, which is partly covered with snow, from the end of October to the beginning of July."<sup>348</sup> Meek either knew the names of these particular landmarks of the Scottish Highlands, and the other geological and geographical details to which he refers, because he lived in the area, and was interested in learning these details of his surroundings, or he researched these matters, in order to render a full and dutiful report, based on Sinclair's questionnaire. In either case, Rev. Meek is a most interesting individual, obviously of a sensitive and intellectual disposition. These characteristics of his personality are made apparent in his survey answers, whether he is looking with appreciation at the beautiful and extraordinary natural geography of his parish, reflecting on parish documents, or studying the annual rainfall and wind directions in his parish.

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<sup>346</sup> Sinclair, *Statistical Account*, vol. 5, 243.

<sup>347</sup> Sinclair, *Statistical Account*, vol. 5, 243-244.

<sup>348</sup> Sinclair, *Statistical Account*, vol. 5, 244.

Our fourth example, is of particular note, it is the attention that Meek gives to the air and climate of Cambuslang, perhaps an interest of his, or a manifestation of his inquisitive personality. While on the banks of the Calder and Clyde the weather is mild, inland, and in the more elevated areas, it is colder. The air is conducive to good health and long life, and there are a few residents of the Parish in their 90's attesting to this fact. In reference to the climate, Rev. Meek has kept a daily register of the weather, dating from January 1785 to December 31, 1791, detailing the average and the maximum in barometer readings, temperature, winds, and weather. These reading were apparently takes three times daily for 7 years. This dedication to collecting information on the weather indicates that Meek had an active curiosity, perhaps even an interest in matters of a scientific nature. This may be a result of a natural predilection on his part, but may also be the result of his years at Glasgow University.

Our last example of Meek's predilection for detail is his description of the exact location of Cambuslang. There is a caring, a pride of place in its proximity to Glasgow, even a strong affection for the parish, which comes through to the reader in this description and detailing. Cambuslang is located in county Lanark, in the "Presbytery" of Hamilton, in the "Synod of Glasgow and Ayr." It is a bit less than 3 square miles, and contains approximately 8 square miles of the county Lanark in "superficial extent." The Kirk, or Church,<sup>349</sup> is located 5 miles southeast from<sup>350</sup> "Glasgow," closer to the northwest boundary of the "parish," and some 6 miles from Hamilton. Glasgow is the second largest city in Scotland, and the proximity of Cambuslang to this major Scottish city is very important for both the population of Cambuslang, and for the inhabitants of Glasgow.

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### 4.3.2 *Glasgow*

From Cambuslang, and its environs in the agriculturally productive countryside, comes the produce of the land to feed the inhabitants of Glasgow, and in the city the population of the countryside find whatever they might need or fancy. This connection between Cambuslang and Glasgow is beneficial, even vital, for the farmers, for the weavers, and for commerce in general. For the farmers the dung, which is transported from Glasgow, on much improved roads, is important, and essential, for the growing of their wheat. The abundant harvests of oats and potatoes are transported to the markets of Glasgow, as is most of the butter and churned milk produced by the farmers. Since an earlier time, there is now a considerable increase in the back and forth traffic between Glasgow and the countryside, or from Cambuslang to the city, as the people involved in commerce of various kinds circulate between these two destinations. Now, for example, Glasgow dealers of lawn and cambric supply the yarn to weavers in Cambuslang, and when their work is completed the weavers send the product back to the city. Lawn and cambric are two types of clothe, which in mid-century replaced Holland and fine linen.

To a great extent, therefore, Cambuslang and the surrounding parishes, depend on Glasgow. Glasgow is the main market town, the place where agricultural products, grown in the environs of Cambuslang, are brought for sale, and where the inhabitants of the countryside come to buy their necessities and their wanted luxuries. Glasgow is also very well situated geographically to trade with America, and ever since the Union of England and Scotland, the city has taken advantage of its location to promote a continuous level of commercial active with America, principally in the trading of tobacco. In reference to Glasgow's commercial progress and the tobacco trade, Meek writes that, "its manufacturers and commerce had been advancing gradually, though slowly, from that period to the middle of the century, when it first began to

make rapid progress.”<sup>351</sup> This progress was due in large measure to the “great increase of the tobacco trade.”<sup>352</sup> Glasgow was completely changed in appearance due to the “vigour and success” of the tobacco trade.

The effect of the human propensity to truck, barter and exchange one commodity for another was being felt in Glasgow, and by extension this activity affected the lives of the people in Cambuslang. “An increasing demand for the articles which land produced, and a consequent rise of prices in the market” Meek writes, “gave life and vigour to the exertions of the farmer.”<sup>353</sup> As the people acquired some wealth their new situation led to the new desire for “wants,” in contradiction to needed items, and a “taste for imitation” began to take hold of the people. The farmer and the merchant, over a period of time, began to be habituated to the “conveniences,” and they began to find great enjoyment in the “luxuries of life.”

#### ***4.3.3 Changes, which the Years have Wrought***

Commercial changes, in the sense of prosperity, produce social changes, and these are mirrored by physical changes. “A new and better style was introduced in building, and in furniture,” Meek notes, “as well as in dress and Living.” Meek is describing a social revolution occurring in Cambuslang within a generation.<sup>354</sup> Meek remarks on the many changes brought to Cambuslang by the passage of time and a new prosperity. These changes are a result of the Union between England and Scotland, and as a result of the commercialization of the region. The agricultural landscape has changed considerably in Cambuslang since the 1750’s. On the land,

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<sup>351</sup> Sinclair, *Statistical Account*, vol. 5, 251.

<sup>352</sup> Sinclair, *Statistical Account*, vol. 5, 251.

<sup>353</sup> Sinclair, *Statistical Account*, vol. 5, 251.

<sup>354</sup> Sinclair, *Statistical Account*, vol. 5, 250-251.

for example, the distinction between “croft and field land” no longer exists. Unlike before, all of a field is now cultivated, and all farms are divided, with no commonality between the lands of different owners. No obligatory donation of coal to the landlord, or any requirement to work for him during feed time and harvest, now the farmer may devote all his time and energy to his own farm. There have been changes in the type of crops grown, and the amount of acreage devoted to particular crops has changed. Meek explains that, the crops that had been traditionally grown, “oats, peas, beans, and barley, have been raised from time immemorial.”<sup>355</sup> Since the 1750’s, however, other crops had begun to be planted. These crops, “wheat, potatoes, rye-grass, and clover,”<sup>356</sup> now represent the bulk of the produce grown, and it is with the revenues from these crops that the farmers pay their landlords rent. The greatest numbers of acres are still planted in oats, as in former times, but that number is incrementally decreasing, being steadily replaced by wheat. Dung from the city of Glasgow is the manure used to grow crops, supplemented with lime. It takes 45 carts of dung per acre of land, in order to grow wheat, Rev. Meek states, carted from the city over much-improved roads. Potatoes, introduced during the time of famine, are now grown throughout the parish. The potatoes may require a great amount of work, but the return is bountiful, and the land may subsequently be planted with wheat. In other words the soil is not depleted.<sup>357</sup> Wheat, clover, “rye-grass,” and potatoes while not planted formerly now represent about 650 acres. In 1750 only the “people of wealth and fashion, and not much by them,” ate wheat bread, or had sugar for their tea, or ate a “little butcher meat.”<sup>358</sup> A small

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<sup>355</sup> Sinclair, *Statistical Account*, vol. 5, 247.

<sup>356</sup> Sinclair, *Statistical Account*, vol. 5, 247.

<sup>357</sup> Sinclair, *Statistical Account*, vol. 5, 249.

<sup>358</sup> Sinclair, *Statistical Account*, vol. 5, 253.

quantity of meat was being consumed formerly, with “fat cattle” being slaughtered only by “gentlemen.” By 1790, however, with the new commercial prosperity, the consumption of meat had risen dramatically, with cattle being regularly slaughtered by most of the farmers. All the people now also had access to wheat bread, and many families occasionally used tea and sugar.

Meek’s survey report reads very much like William Creech’s writing, in his *Letters, Addressed to Sir John Sinclair*, both writers take note of the changes, and the real improvements, between the not too distant past and the present. The agricultural changes that have accrued over the past generation have had significant beneficial results: the people no longer starve due to the introduction of potatoes and wheat.

Good roads are another change brought to the region by prosperity and progress. Much time, effort, and money has been spent on the roads, causing them to have “become objects of great consequence.”<sup>359</sup> Formerly, in 1750, the roads were “narrow and rough, scarcely passable with carts in summer, and in winter, so deep as to be hardly passable with horses.”<sup>360</sup> The roads are now usable all year, both for horse or wagon. With Glasgow only a few miles away, this is an immense benefit for all forms of commerce between this major Scottish city, and the countryside surrounding it. The people of the city and the country are now interconnected into a vibrant, mutually dependent, functioning whole. Formerly, the few carts in the parish, available for trips to Glasgow, or for the transporting of agricultural produce, or of wheat to the mill, or for various other purposes, had wheels made of wood; in 1790 the more numerous carts, which now number 170, either have axles of iron, or have iron straps around a wooden wheel.

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<sup>359</sup> Sinclair, *Statistical Account*, vol. 5, 259.

<sup>360</sup> Sinclair, *Statistical Account*, vol. 5, 253.

There are changes in dress, and in the materials out of which clothing is made, and from where the clothing originates. During the time of Meek's survey the family of a typical farmer would be dressed differently than they would have been clothed in 1750. Instead of the farmer and his sons being dressed with cloth that was woven at home, with "plaiden hose," and the wives and daughters "dressed in gowns of their own spinning," in 1790, they are dressed in "English cloth," with "worsted or cotton stockings and hats," very probably manufactured in Glasgow, while the wife and daughters would probably be dressed in "printed calico or silk." Whether they are better dressed in 1790 is a matter to be disputed, but the silk gowns and English cloth are, without a doubt, manufactured, another instance of the commercialization of Scotland.<sup>361</sup>

The momentum of these social and economic phenomena, once begun, was unstoppable. It was not immediately obvious, to the Scots of the eighteenth century that this human predilection for bartering would lead to such wide commercial applications, not until the advantages of commerce were actually apparent. For David Hume and Adam Smith these types of exchanges between people were not considered as being limited to only commercial transactions, but also extended to the give and take of verbal exchanges. Our inherent human predilection to truck, barter and exchange, therefore, refers to more than a commercial dealings. It is also, and perhaps primarily, a form of communication between humans. In effect it is a commercial dialogue, a dialogue requiring, and fostering, mutual cooperation and collaboration. We as a species, exchange things, and we exchange words, and these behaviors may be part of our nature, our inherent human constitution.

Meek shows himself to be an astute observer, and an enlightened interpreter of the effects of the changes he sees evidence of having occurred, as well as the social changes that are taking

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<sup>361</sup> Sinclair, *Statistical Account*, vol. 5, 252-255.

place. In *Letters*, the book by William Creech to which we alluded earlier, the author compares the present state of Edinburgh with what the city was like in the past. There is a sense of excitement at the progress the city has made in his description of the changing urban landscape; the sense of improvement is strongly felt. Customs and manners are changing, and have change perceptibly from a former pivotal date in time. We find this same distinction between past and present in Rev. Meek descriptions of the accrued changes to Cambuslang in the years between 1750 and 1790.

#### ***4.3.4 The Economy of Cambuslang***

In addition to the farmers who make their living in Cambuslang by farming the land, selling its produce, and the butter and churned milk, which they produce from the milk derived from their herds, there are other forms of employments in the parish. There are workers at the colliery, the corn mills, men who work digging marble and ironstone out of the soil, the weavers of cloth, the individuals who work at the cotton work, the teacher at the school, and the minister, Rev. Meek himself, who is paid a salary and therefore contributes to the economy of this small part of Scotland.

The farmers work the 3800 acres of land in the Parish of Cambuslang, which Rev. Meek calculates is suitable for the planting of crops. We are led to understand that all of these farmers rent their land and pay rent to a landlord, of which there are 11. The largest of which, owning about two thirds of the total acreage, is “His grace the Duke of Hamilton.” The soil with which the farmers work is in some areas “thin and gravelly,” near the Clyde it is “partly a light loam, and partly a light sand,” the most common, however, is a “clayey soil, with a till bottom.”<sup>362</sup>

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<sup>362</sup> Sinclair, *Statistical Account*, vol. 5, 242.

The tools that the farmer's employ for working the soil are mainly ploughs, of which there are 70 in Cambuslang, "mostly of the old Scotch fashion." Every farmer who has significant acreage has a minimum of 2 ploughs, a larger plough, used when "only one plowing is necessary," or for that first plowing, when additional plowing may be required, and a smaller plough, used for all "subsequent plowing," after the ground has been turned by a plough once or twice.

As we saw in his description of the terrain of Cambuslang, Meek appears to be surprisingly knowledgeable about detailed aspects of his community, including the different types of soil in his parish. We read in his survey that, in preparing his responses to Sinclair's questions, he had spoken with numerous members of his parish, inquiring about various parish particulars. In his quest for thoroughness, he perused relevant documents, including "records of the University of Glasgow."<sup>363</sup>

The farmers use most of the horses in the locality, of which there are 170, for the preparation of the land for planting crops. The farmers of Cambuslang purchase these horses in the marketplace of Glasgow and Rutherglen, although the horses are "raised in the shires of Renfrew and Ayr." There are 630 black cattle in the parish, 300 of these are kept for the production of milk. The remaining numbers of "partly black cattle" are either meant to be brought to market, or they are "young cattle" used by the farmers primarily for maintaining their stock. All of the 410 sheep in the parish are of the "Scotch breed," except approximately 120, which are "large English sheep, which the farmers pasture along with their cattle." Recently, Meek states, a new breed of sheep has been introduced into the parish; these are "Cheviot

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<sup>363</sup> Sinclair, *Statistical Account*, vol. 5, 254.

sheep,” smaller than the English sheep, but with a “finer wool.” These sheep, says Meek, “promise to do well in this part of the country.”

There are “two corn mills,” in Cambuslang, which supply employment; one of these is on the Calder, and the other is situated on the Clyde. The corn mill on the Clyde is able to grind 30 or 40 “bolls” per day. During the winter and the spring, Meek says, this mill is “almost constantly employed,” responding to the needs of the farmers in the area. During the summer months, and in the fall, the “dealers in foreign grain,” from Glasgow and its surrounding area, use this corn mill on the Clyde extensively. In some years 2000 bolls of oats from outside of Scotland have been ground or crushed here, and 1000 bolls is a yearly average. In the Cambuslang area, “thirlage” still existed at the time of Meek’s survey. Thirlage is an ancient obligation, which the tenants of rented lands still have imposed on them by their landlord. The objective of this duty is to have their grains ground at a certain, specific, mill, to the benefit of the landowner.<sup>364</sup>

There are 62 men, “young and old,” working at the colliery, and contributing to the economy of Cambuslang, 42 of them are employed underground, while 20 work above ground. There are substantial beds of coal in the parish, with about 100 pits in the area, located on the “south side of Clyde,” inclining in the direction of the river. Coal had been taken out of the ground for four centuries in this part of Scotland. The five coal strata’s of various thicknesses are close to the surface, so coal miners do not go deep in this part of Scotland. One of the problems of mining coal is the infiltration of water, and the location of the Cambuslang coalfields, so near to the Clyde make this an especially grave problem for mining in this area of the country.

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<sup>364</sup> Sinclair, *Statistical Account*, vol. 5, 250.

Technical advances, notably the introduction of a steam engine in 1787, have meant that the “coal can be wrought dry at a much greater depth than formerly.”<sup>365</sup> The price of coal has “more than doubled” in the past four decades, Meek relates.

In addition to an abundance of coal, and a small amount of ironstone, there are extensive deposits of freestone in Cambuslang, which supply employment to the men who dig it out of the ground. “On the banks of the kirk-burn,” can be found a kind of freestone of extremely good grade, “white, hard and close of the grain”; as a result this type of freestone may be finished in such a way as to be “very smooth and beautiful.” This particular type of freestone is highly regarded and from time to time is “carried to a great distance.” A layer of marble, perhaps “6 to 12 inches” in thickness, is present in large areas of Cambuslang. It also dips as it approaches the Clyde, as we have noted that the coal deposits do, remarks Meek; and in those places where “coal-pits have been sunk,” this “stratum of marble has been found at the depth of from 180 to 200 feet.” Since this layer of marble is located so deep in the ground it has been difficult to reach, but there is a deposit of it “on the kirk-burn,” which is more accessible and where marble has been dug at various times. Examples of this marble may be found “in the palace of Hamilton,” and there is a “chimney-piece” composed of this marble in the “College Library at Glasgow,” and there are “three pair of solid *jamb* in Mr. Dundas’s new built house at Duddingstoun.”<sup>366</sup>

Weaving is an industry of note in the environs of Cambuslang, employing many individuals. It has been 60 years now since Holland cloth and “fine linen” first began to be woven in the area, we learn from Meek. At first there were only a small number of looms, with

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<sup>365</sup> Sinclair, *Statistical Account*, vol. 5, 257.

<sup>366</sup> Sinclair, *Statistical Account*, vol. 5, 263-264.

the weavers doing all of the tasks associated with the production and distribution of the cloth. They purchased the “yarn, wove it into cloth, bleached the cloth and carried it to market.”<sup>367</sup> Since that time these combined business have become “almost entirely separate.”<sup>368</sup> “In mid-century the weaving of lawn and cambric replaced the weaving of holland and fine linen. In 1783, more changes occurred in the industry, with the arrival of the “weaving of muslin,” which for the past few years has employed all the weavers in the environs of Cambuslang. The fly-shuttle has improved the life of weavers, making weaving more comfortable.

There are about 50 individuals employed as cotton spinners, contributing to the economy of Cambuslang. A “cotton work” began operation in the community of Flemington, in the year 1787. At the time of his survey, Meek says, there were “2 carding machines and 17 jennies” for the production of cotton clothe. The carding machines are run by water, which is transported from a “reservoir at the foot of Dichmount hill.”

The parish has a schoolmaster, and a school for the education of its children, and Rev. Meek, as we know, is the minister of the parish. The school is, according to Meek, in “flourishing condition.” There are 60 to 75 “scholars” in the parish, of which 10 to 15 are “boarders.” The schoolteacher is supplied a salary, a house, and a garden for the growing of vegetables. The “schoolmaster’s living” amounts to L. 40 per year, plus whatever “profit” he derives from the money paid to him by his boarders.

Meek calculates that his own remuneration for a year’s service as pastor amounts to L. 140. He receives an allowance of oatmeal, the “manse,” or the house where he lives, and 4.5 acres of “glebe,” the land within the parish, which has been set aside for the support of the

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<sup>367</sup> Sinclair, *Statistical Account*, vol. 5, 258.

<sup>368</sup> Sinclair, *Statistical Account*, vol. 5, 258.

minister. The “kirk,” or church, in which he preaches to his parishioners, was built in 1743, and the manse dates from 1756, but both are in good shape, having been regularly maintained. The Duke of Hamilton is “patron and titular.”<sup>369</sup>

#### ***4.3.5 Houses and Population Increase***

As we have just discussed in the previous section, the various types of employment to be found in Cambuslang and its surroundings, together with the parish’s relatively easy accessibility to Glasgow, with the added advantage of the new roads, has seen an influx of money come into the area. The people of the parish are not affluent, but they are prosperous. This, in turn, has seen houses, which had stood empty, with some of them having fallen into disrepair, become inhabited by the modest incoming of new families into the parish.

Dating from 1767, Meek relates, at the time that the Duke of Hamilton began leasing his land holdings in more extensive “farms” than he had previously done, there were a large number of unoccupied houses; and a number of them were in disrepair. At the time of the present survey, however, all of the surviving houses have been mended, and are inhabited. “Since 1783,” Meek writes, “16 good new houses have been built, in which about 24 families are well lodged.” Eight families used to live in a small village near the kirk, some 7 years ago, but now that number has tripled.<sup>370</sup>

The increased affluence of Cambuslang and the surrounding countryside has resulted in a rise in population. This is generally considered to be a very good indicator of a prosperous robust society, and it was thought to be especially so in the eighteenth century. An increase in population is suggestive of a community that is progressing, and is indicative of a healthy,

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<sup>369</sup> Sinclair, *Statistical Account*, vol. 5, 259-260.

<sup>370</sup> Sinclair, *Statistical Account*, vol. 5, 262.

happy, vibrant, commercially successful society. As we will discuss in our epilogue, Thomas Robert Malthus's *An Essay on the Principle of Population*, takes a contrary and well-argued position on this subject of population. Meek notes that in the period from 1775 to 1783 a total of 44 families and 200 individuals had moved into the parish. We learn from a table at the beginning of the chapter, in the section named "Contents," that the population of Cambuslang consisted of 934 individuals in 1755, and by 1791-92 had grown to number 1288 inhabitants.<sup>371</sup> It is worth reiterating that this growth is the result of the varied economic activities in the area, the diversity of employments available in Cambuslang and its environs, and its close proximity to a dynamic city like Glasgow. Affluence, in a word, has changed the social landscape of this particular area of Scotland, and the changes Meek enumerates are the direct result of this. In Cambuslang proper the increase in population comes about due to the arrival of people associated with the weavers of muslin, the cotton mill in the village of Flemington, and from the augmented labour force at the colliery, due to the increased production brought about by the introduction of the "steam engine."<sup>372</sup>

As we have seen from our review of the survey of Cambuslang, the Rev. Meek has a good grasp of the effects that the commercial prosperity of Glasgow has had on his parish, and sees the connection between commercial success and social change. Ideologically, Meek appears to be an educated, enlightened individual. We see an example of this, I believe, in his retelling of an occurrence, which we have neither mentioned nor discussed because it is presented as a long footnote, or addendum. I am referring to the revival meetings, called "Cambuslang conversions," which took place in Cambuslang, at an earlier time, a time prior to Meek's arrival in Cambuslang

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<sup>371</sup> Sinclair, "Contents," *Statistical Account*, vol. 20, v-vi.

<sup>372</sup> Sinclair, *Statistical Account*, vol. 5, 260-261.

as pastor. We are able to see from the manner in which Rev. James Meek's talks about what happened during that time, his completely unbiased reportage and discussion of the great revival meetings of the early 18th century, which took place in Cambuslang, that he is an open minded individual. He does not criticize or speak with derision about the evangelical occurrences, but it is clear that he is loath to attribute the enthusiastic conversions that took place as evidence of supernatural activity.

We leave Sir John Sinclair's *Statistical Account*, after our discussion of the response which one minister, the Reverend Doctor James Meek, of the Church of Scotland, minister in Cambuslang, gave to Sinclair's questionnaire, in order to direct our attention to our next selection, Thomas Robert Malthus's, *Principle of Population*, where the overriding concern is unchecked population growth, and the inability of food production to keep up with this growth, which inevitably results in misery, famine, and disease for the laboring classes.

## CHAPTER 5: EPILOGUE: THOMAS ROBERT MALTHUS, *AN ESSAY ON THE PRINCIPLE OF POPULATION*

### ***5.1: Introduction***

The subject of “population,” as we have previously noted, was an important topic of discussion, and of controversy, in the intellectual conversations of the eighteenth century. David Hume’s analysis, in “Of the Populousness of Ancient Nations,” is one example of the various trajectories, which these exchanges of ideas on population took, while the *Essay on the Principle of Population*, the subject of this chapter, allows us to view the topic from another perspective, the distinctive approach of Thomas Robert Malthus, a political economist of the eighteenth century. Malthus’s *Principle of Population* serves not only as a counterpoint to Hume’s treatise on population, and while an important work in its own right, it is interesting and instructive due to its critical judgments on the very idea that an increase in population is a good and positive event for humankind. This opinion is in contradistinction to Hume, Millar, and Sinclair where, as we have noted, either in direct statements or by inference, a population increase is considered a positive occurrence for society.

We have decided to treat Malthus in an epilogue, so our discussion of his ideas will be brief, as we attempt a succinct overview of his principle points relative to population. Whereas we began our study with a discussion of historians who were conjecturalist, who based their histories on a well-founded belief in human nature, as we progressed through the century, we notice that, while we are still dealing with human nature, and with the subject of population, we find that in Sinclair’s history, and presently in Malthus’s, there is a difference in the methodology. This difference is an intimation of the “scientific,” one that may even be distinguished from the “scientific methodology” of Millar, which was hardly scientific, perceived from our own 21<sup>st</sup> century perspective. We find that to experience, to the observational

data on humankind, we are beginning to see what I can only describe as “hard facts” coming into play in Sinclair’s survey, and in Malthus’s writing.

Malthus tells us, in his “Preface” to *An Essay on the Principles of Population*, that it was an essay of William Godwin’s, “Of Avarice and Profusion,”<sup>373</sup> which prompted him to have a conversation with a friend on the subject. This friendly exchange of ideas led to a discussion, which eventually culminated in the decision, on the part of Malthus, to write his own lengthily essay on population. In his rejoinder to Godwin, Malthus, with his unique point of view, strove to formulate “natural laws,” which would account for the persistent existence of poverty in the human population of the world, concluding that famine, vice and misery are unavoidable.

The crux of the theory, which Malthus developed in his *Essay on the Principle of Population*, is that “the power of population is indefinitely greater than the power in the earth to produce subsistence for man. Population, when unchecked, increases in a geometrical ratio. Subsistence increases only in an arithmetical ratio.”<sup>374</sup> The future prospects for humankind, therefore, are not very good if humanity continues as it has been going. According to Malthus’s findings, humanity is, of necessity, relegated to experiencing continual bouts with over population, versus food at subsistence levels, or an abundance of food, should population decrease through disease or catastrophe. Malthus considers that these facts constitute the greatest impediment to the future improvement of humankind.<sup>375</sup>

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<sup>373</sup> William Godwin, “Of Avarice and Profusion,” in *The Enquirer. Reflections On Education, Manners, And Literature. In A Series of Essays* (London: G. G. and J. Robinson, 1797), Part II. Essay II, 168-172 (30-31). [http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/Anarchist\\_Archives/godwin/enquirer.html](http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/Anarchist_Archives/godwin/enquirer.html) (accessed June 27, 2015).

<sup>374</sup> Thomas Robert Malthus, *An Essay on the Principle of Population* (1798; The Online Library of Liberty, September, 2011), 10. [http://if-oll.s3.amazonaws.com/titles/311/Malthus\\_0195\\_EBK\\_v6.0.pdf](http://if-oll.s3.amazonaws.com/titles/311/Malthus_0195_EBK_v6.0.pdf) (accessed May 01, 2015).

<sup>375</sup> Malthus, *Principle of Population*, 5-6.

### 5.2: Malthus's Argument Briefly Stated

The discoveries and advances in science, writes Malthus, the spread of knowledge due to the printing press, the seeking after information, truth and general erudition by both the educated and uneducated people, changes in the political sphere, the French Revolution—whose effects on humanity are yet to be determined—have all contributed to convince many that the human race is entering into a new period of significant transitions, transformations that would be in some way crucial for the fortunes of humanity. According to Malthus, the significant question is whether humankind will advance towards unlimited improvement, or whether it will be regulated to a continual swinging, back and forth, between periods of contentment and intervals of distress and wretchedness.

Malthus makes two assumptions without proof, or two self-evident statements, which since there has been information available on humankind, appear to be “fixed laws of our nature.”<sup>376</sup> These are “that food is necessary to the existence of man,” and “that the passion between the sexes is necessary, and will remain nearly in its present state.”<sup>377</sup> On the assumption of his “postulates,” says Malthus, he firmly believes that the ability of population to increase is greater than the ability of the earth to produce food for humanity, while the growth of population, when unrestrained, is according to a “geometrical ratio,”<sup>378</sup> the increase in the ability of the earth to produce food increases only “in an arithmetical ratio.”<sup>379</sup> Because humankind needs food to survive, “the effects of these two unequal powers must be kept equal. This implies a strong and

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<sup>376</sup> Malthus, *Principle of Population*, 9.

<sup>377</sup> Malthus, *Principle of Population*, 9.

<sup>378</sup> Malthus, *Principle of Population*, 10.

<sup>379</sup> Malthus, *Principle of Population*, 10.

constantly operating check on population from the difficulty of subsistence. This difficulty must fall somewhere, and must necessarily be severely felt by a large portion of mankind.”<sup>380</sup>

“Necessity,” the commanding “all pervading law of nature” suppresses the uninhibited growth of the “seeds of life,” Malthus reasons. Plants and animals, instead of growing and multiplying in an unfettered way, are obliged to “shrink under this great restrictive law” of necessity. “And the race of man,” Malthus insists, “cannot, by any efforts of reason, escape from it.” “Misery and vice” are the result of over population. “This natural inequality of the two powers of population, and of production in the earth” Malthus reasons, “and that great law of our nature which must constantly keep their effects equal, form the great difficulty that to me appears insurmountable in the way to the perfectibility of society.”<sup>381</sup>

### ***5.3: Population and Food Increase in Different Ratios***

Malthus proposes to scrutinize his position in order to see if it is objective and guided by proper reasoning. He begins by noting that, to his knowledge, no nation has ever existed, where the prevailing customs of the people have been so devoid of moral failings and so unaffected, and where food was available in such great plenty, that no attempt need have been made to arrest “early marriages.” For the common people, this restraint on marriage would have been prompted by anxiety over not being able to properly care for a wife and children. For wealthier individuals, a constraint on marriage might have come from trepidation over adversely affecting their life style. In no nation that Malthus knows of, has the population been allowed to increase naturally, geometrically, and without any constraints. If ideal conditions were to exist, however, meaning “equality,” “virtue,” “pure and simple manners,” and an abundant source of sustenance, where

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<sup>380</sup> Malthus, *Principle of Population*, 10.

<sup>381</sup> Malthus, *Principle of Population*, 10.

no sector of a community would be apprehensive about being able to care for a wife and offspring, and if population were allowed to increase unfettered, the result would be a population more numerous than the world has ever had. Based on the experience of what has occurred in the colonies of America, Malthus proposes a “rule,” “that population, when unchecked, goes on doubling itself every twenty-five years or increases in a geometrical ratio.”<sup>382</sup>

Taking England as an example, Malthus examines what would occur, according to his theory, relative to the production of food increasing in an arithmetical ratio and the population increasing geometrically. He takes it as a rule that food production could probably be increased by an amount equal to what England is presently producing, in 1798, every twenty-five years. Beginning his calculations with an English population of seven million, with adequate sustenance for all the people, Malthus computes, the geometrical increase in population, and the arithmetical increase in food production for twenty-five increments. After the first century, or four periods of increase, the population of England would have reached one hundred and twenty million inhabitants, with the resources adequate for the feeding of only thirty-five million people; resulting in seventy-seven million people completely without food!

In order to continue testing the validity of his hypothesis, Malthus engages in some calculations and mental exercises, extrapolating his theory to include the entire earth, in order to see what the consequences of his theory might be. He, therefore, assumes that all restrictions to an increase in population are eliminated. What would the consequences be?

If the total food production of the entire earth were to increase yearly, by an amount equal to what the entire world’s food production is at present, that is in 1798, the result would be an enormous quantity of sustenance for humankind. But once the effects of population increase

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<sup>382</sup> Malthus, *Principle of Population*,” 12.

are factored in, we once again clearly see that the arithmetical increase of food can never reach parity with the geometrical progression of population. “In two centuries and a quarter,” Malthus computes, “the population would be to the means of subsistence as 512 to 10: in three centuries as 4096 to 13; and in two thousand years the difference would be almost incalculable, though the produce in that time would have increased to an immense extent.”<sup>383</sup> No matter how fecund the earth may be, or how productive the earth may have been made through the technological efforts of mankind, yet the results are not encouraging for the future perfectibility of humanity, Malthus avers that, “the power of population being a power of a superior order, the increase of the human species can only be kept commensurate to the increase of the means of subsistence, by the constant operation of the strong law of necessity acting as a check upon the greater power.”<sup>384</sup>

To what are we referring when we speak of “checks” on population growth? In the case of the flora and fauna of the earth the matter is relatively simple, lack of space that can be occupied, and a want of nutrition, are two factors that naturally inhibit population growth. For animals there is also the additional restraint on population due to predation. For humankind, however, the question of checks to population growth is more complex. The same natural drive toward procreation is to be found in humankind, but reason is a factor that often times moderates reproduction, since bringing offspring into the world and not being able to properly care for them is totally unreasonable. Other factors impinge on this reasonable decision, factors having to do with whether having a family will adversely affect one’s social position, whether it will be necessary to work longer hours, whether, in general, having a family to care for will make one’s life more difficult. Many individuals, therefore, are motivated to refrain from committing to one

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<sup>383</sup> Malthus, *Principle of Population*, 14.

<sup>384</sup> Malthus, *Principle of Population*, 14.

woman early in their adult lives, in order to not produce offspring before they are adequately prepared to care for them. In human society this expedient of putting off marriage till a more propitious time, often leads to vice, although not always necessarily so. “Yet in all societies, even those that are the most vicious,” Malthus concedes, “the tendency to a virtuous attachment is so strong that there is a constant effort towards an increase of population. This constant effort as constantly tends to subject the lower classes of the society to distress and to prevent any great permanent amelioration of their condition.”<sup>385</sup>

Whenever the population increases and the means of subsistence are not able to keep up with the increased need, there will be an insufficiency of food, and the poor must suffer increased deprivation. The labor market, having more available hands than are required for the work that is available, also suffers, with a lowering of the cost of labor, while the cost of food increases, since it is in great demand. The worker, who is fortunate to have a job, must now work longer hours to make the same amount of income he was making before the population increased and depressed the labor market. So that, when population growth surpasses the adequate production of food, real wages decline due to the fact that the demand for food brought about by the growing population has caused food prices to increase, so the actual cost of living has also increased. In a situation such as this, the conditions are so onerous that large numbers of individuals are dissuaded from marriage, with the result being that population increase comes to a standstill. Since there is so much idle labor, Malthus continues, property owners would be encouraged to avail themselves of this abundant, cheap labor to both turn otherwise underutilized land into agricultural land, and to improve land already under cultivation. The result of all this effort is an increase in the available food adequate to the population. “The situation of the

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<sup>385</sup> Malthus, *Principle of Population*, 14.

labourer being then again tolerably comfortable,” Malthus admits, “the restraints to population are in some degree loosened; and the same retrograde and progressive movements with respect to happiness are repeated.”<sup>386</sup>

These variations, or back and forth movements, between population increase, and its effects, and the differing levels of food supply, and its consequences, are not readily apparent because past histories of humankind have mainly dealt with the deeds of great men and kings to the exclusion of the daily lives of the people. Malthus is of the opinion that, another factor that has conspired to cast a veil over these fluctuations has been “particularly, the difference between the nominal and the real price of labour; a circumstance, which has perhaps more than any other, contributed to conceal this oscillation from common view.”<sup>387</sup>

It does not often happen that the “nominal price” of labor—in other words, the theoretical price, not measured in real value, as distinguished from the real price of labor, and its ability to purchase—falls in every place without exception; but it often remains the same, while the “nominal price” of food slowly increases. In reality, this situation represents “a real fall in the price of labour,” a situation which adversely affects the lower classes in a major way.<sup>388</sup> At the same time as the lower classes are feeling the effects of this discrepancy, between what they make in wages and the cost of food, land owners and entrepreneurs, due to the cheapness of labor, brought about by the abundance of laborers, a direct result of population increase, are increasing their own wealth. This augmentation of riches allows them to hire more workers. Work, therefore, is in great abundance, and were it not for a lack of freedom in the labor market,

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<sup>386</sup> Malthus, *Principle of Population*, 15.

<sup>387</sup> Malthus, *Principle of Population*, 16.

<sup>388</sup> Malthus, *Principle of Population*, 16.

brought about by “parish laws,” the “unfair combinations” of the rich, and other factors, wages would rise, but they do not rise as they naturally should. “The true cause of the advance in the price of labour,” Malthus writes, “is thus concealed.”<sup>389</sup>

#### ***5.4: The Conditions of Civilized Nations***

There is a greater degree of confidence when discussing the situation of communities that have both herds of grazing animals and agricultural land as a source of food, Malthus writes, since we have “actual experience”<sup>390</sup> of them. Making what is undoubtedly a reference to David Hume’s arguments in “Of the Populousness of Ancient Nations,” Malthus states that the reports of vast populations in the ancient past are obvious exaggerations, and that the population of many of the states of eighteenth century Europe is greater now than in ancient times. The reason for these miscalculations of ancient population, Malthus believes, is due to the effect wrought on ancient observers at the sight of great hordes of barbarians migrating from the North in search of food, giving the mistaken notion that the North was absolutely teeming with people. Population is greater in his own time, Malthus writes, in contradistinction to antiquity, because there is more food available in his present than in the past. “Population,” Malthus reiterates, “constantly bears a regular proportion to the food that the earth is made to produce.”<sup>391</sup>

Malthus is critical of some of Hume’s conclusions in “On the Populousness of Ancient Nations,” remarking specifically that

When he intermingles, as he says, an inquiry concerning causes, with that concerning facts, [he] does not seem to see with his usual penetration, how very little some of the causes he alludes to could enable him to form any judgment of

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<sup>389</sup> Malthus, *Principle of Population*, 16.

<sup>390</sup> Malthus, *Principle of Population*, 22.

<sup>391</sup> Malthus, *Principle of Population*, 22.

the actual population of ancient nations. If any inference can be drawn from them, perhaps it should be directly the reverse of what Hume draws.<sup>392</sup>

Malthus explains that, if in a certain period of ancient history, as Hume has noted, individuals were prompted to have families, and that as a consequence “early marriages”<sup>393</sup> were widespread, and that the number of unmarried persons was low. My inference, Malthus states, would be that population was growing quickly, but not, as Hume assumes, that population was already great in number, but exactly the opposite, that population was sparse and that there was both physical space and adequate sustenance for a larger population of people. If, however, the prospects of raising a family posed great difficulties—Malthus continues to elucidate his reasoning contra Hume’s assumptions—and that as a result there were not many marriages taking place, and many men and women of marriageable age did not marry, then the presumption would be that the population was either at a standstill, almost certainly because the population was considerable, or the fertility of the land not adequate to feed the numbers of people on it. Hume also surmises that the number of unmarried servants in modern communities is indicative of a small population, but Malthus disagrees, believing the opposite, that it signals a great population, but admits that such a presumption cannot be relied on, since there are many sparsely populated nations whose population is at a standstill.<sup>394</sup> To conclude this critical analysis of some aspects of Hume’s treatise on ancient levels of population Malthus writes:

To speak, therefore correctly, perhaps it may be said that the number of unmarried persons in proportion to the whole number, existing at different periods, in the same, or different states, will enable us to judge whether population at these

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<sup>392</sup> Malthus, *Principle of Population*, 23.

<sup>393</sup> Malthus, *Principle of Population*, 23.

<sup>394</sup> Malthus, *Principle of Population*, 23.

periods was increasing, stationary, or decreasing, but will form no criterion by which we can determine the actual population.<sup>395</sup>

Scrutinization of the major nations of eighteenth-century Europe, by Malthus, shows that, although their population is substantially greater than in ancient times, when they were nations of shepherds, their present population growth has slowed down, even diminished, having nothing to do with a diminution of the attraction between the sexes. Malthus ponders why then, since the sexes are attracted to one another as strongly as ever, he is not able to see, in modern Europe, the increase in population that he would expect? Malthus proposes to investigate *positive checks* and *preventive checks* to population, and taking England as an example of a thriving European nation, he wants to answer the question stated above, and show the accuracy of the statement “that a foresight of the difficulties attending the rearing of a family acts as a preventive check; and the actual distresses of some of the lower classes, by which they are disabled from giving the proper food and attention to their children act as a positive check, to the natural increase of population.”<sup>396</sup>

Preventative checks to population growth, Malthus believes, work throughout all the various ranks of English society. A man of education and some measure of revenue just adequate to allow him to mingle with gentlemen, for example, may decide not to marry and have a family if doing so would mean that his position in society would be reduced. The prospective wife of such a man as just described would be a woman raised with the “same tastes and sentiments”<sup>397</sup> as her future husband, and used to the association of a certain level of society. How would she

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<sup>395</sup> Malthus, *Principle of Population*, 23.

<sup>396</sup> Malthus, *Principle of Population*, 24.

<sup>397</sup> Malthus, *Principle of Population*, 24.

cope with a marriage in which her social position was lowered due to the financial hardships brought about by a family, Malthus inquires, and would her future husband want to place the woman he loved in this reduced position? These factors must dissuade many, but not all, of this particular social rank, educated and with a modicum of money, to forego marriage completely, or to refrain from an early marriage.

The male offspring of “tradesmen and farmers” are strongly urged to refrain from marrying until they are in a financial position to do so. The “labourer” who makes a salary adequate to his needs, must necessarily be reluctant to apportion what is sufficient for one person between a wife and several children. While he would work longer hours, and work harder, because of the love he has for his future wife, he may rightly feel indisposed to take a chance on the possibility of some misfortune striking his family, which no amount of industry or frugality could arrest. “Servants” who live and work for wealthy families have even more dismal prospects for marriage in England. While they live in comfortable, even luxurious, surroundings, with all the necessities of life provided, and the ability to leave their employ for another should such a circumstance be required, their ability to marry is not good. Without education, or money, lacking the knowledge for “business or farming, and unused, and therefore unable to earn a subsistence by daily labour” they often remain unmarried.<sup>398</sup>

### ***5.5: The Positive Check To Population***

“The positive check to population,”<sup>399</sup> as defined by Malthus, is a check that inhibits a population expansion that is already underway, like an increase in the mortality rate. It is restricted mainly, but not exclusively, to society’s lower ranks. Although it has not been

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<sup>398</sup> Malthus, *Principle of Population*, 25.

<sup>399</sup> Malthus, *Principle of Population*, 26.

confirmed empirically, Malthus says, it appears from all indications that there are more childhood deaths among the poor due to many factors, but including extreme anxiety, unhealthy living conditions, arduous toil, and most critically, a lack of correct, or adequate nutrition. “The poor-laws of England”<sup>400</sup> were established to alleviate some of the suffering of the poor, but for the most part, they have not achieved this end. Many in England suspect mismanagement and are incredulous at the fact that, with almost three million pounds a year being made available for the poor, their situation in life has been but little improved. Some have suggested increasing the amount of money that is given to those in need, says Malthus, but he disagrees with this strategy.

Malthus maintains that additional money in the hands of the needy would “not increase the quantity of meat in the country.”<sup>401</sup> But it would increase the cost of meat due to its being in short supply, and in high demand in the marketplace. “When an article is scarce,” Malthus asserts, “and cannot be distributed to all, he that can show the most valid patent, that is, he that offers most money, becomes the possessor.”<sup>402</sup> Of course, additional livestock could be raised, but this would involve feeding them corn, which would result in the nation not being able to maintain the present population, due to a shortage of corn for human consumption. When food is insufficient relative to the population, it makes little difference if the most needy have “eighteen pence or five shillings” to spend on meat, Malthus insists, “they must at all events be reduced to live upon the hardest fare and in the smallest quantity.”<sup>403</sup>

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<sup>400</sup> Malthus, *Principle of Population*, 26.

<sup>401</sup> Malthus, *Principle of Population*, 27.

<sup>402</sup> Malthus, *Principle of Population*, 27.

<sup>403</sup> Malthus, *Principle of Population*, 27.

“No possible contributions or sacrifices of the rich, particularly in money,” Malthus avers, “would for any time prevent the recurrence of distress among the lower members of society whoever they were.”<sup>404</sup> It is not possible, by any amount of money, Malthus explains, to improve the lot of the poorest members of society, permitting them to live more comfortably, “without proportionably depressing others in the same class.”<sup>405</sup> This is so because, if only money is given to a poor person, assuming all the agricultural and livestock production of a nation stays the same, what actually occurs is that the person who receives the money is really receiving a larger share of the country’s food supply than before, because now the poor individual has money to buy food. This larger share cannot be distributed unless the share of other people is decreased.<sup>406</sup>

The poor laws of England have a tendency to not help the situation of the poor, first, because they multiply the population without a concomitant augmentation of the food supply to feed those extra people. By giving money to a poor man, thereby empowering him to marry, with little possibility of caring for a family, the poor-laws are actually helping to give birth to those very individuals that they will eventually have to care for. Since the food production of a country must be allocated to every person in the country in proportionately lesser quantity, because of the growth in population, it becomes clear that the industry of the people who receive aid from the poor-laws, will buy a lesser amount of food than before—the price of food having increased due

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<sup>404</sup> Malthus, *Principle of Population*, 27.

<sup>405</sup> Malthus, *Principle of Population*, 28.

<sup>406</sup> Malthus, *Principle of Population*, 28.

to its relative scarcity—and as a result, the number of poor obliged to ask for assistance increases.<sup>407</sup>

The second way in which the poor laws of England have an adverse effect on the situation of the poor has to do with the best utilization of a nation's food supply. The food to feed the poor is sustaining the least productive members of society, while reducing the amount of food available for the more productive members of the community, obliging more individuals to become dependent on parish assistance. Fortunately, in England, there still exists a "spirit of independence," particularly among the peasants. The poor laws, Malthus ruefully admits, are poised to do away with this spirit.<sup>408</sup>

Malthus is convinced that the "parish laws of England" have been an important factor in increasing the cost of food, and in depressing the "real price" of labor. By doing so, these laws have, in effect, caused much of the poverty to be found among those individuals "whose only possession is their labour," while helping to foster that heedlessness and lack of thriftiness to be found among the needy members of society. "The poor-laws of England may therefore be said to diminish both the power and the will to save, among the common people," laments Malthus, "and thus to weaken one of the strongest incentives to sobriety and industry, and consequently to happiness."<sup>409</sup>

The poor laws of England were unquestionably established for the most well meaning and compassionate reasons, writes Malthus, but they have not realized their objective. While they have proved helpful in alleviating the most severe cases of need among the poor, the

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<sup>407</sup> Malthus, *Principle of Population*, 28.

<sup>408</sup> Malthus, *Principle of Population*, 29.

<sup>409</sup> Malthus, *Principle of Population*, 29.

condition of the poor who receive assistance from the parishes is far from being devoid of distress because of this intervention. One of the major complaints against the poor-laws is that, for the help given to the poor, “almost a doubtful blessing,” writes Malthus, “the whole class of the common people of England is subjected to a set of grating, inconvenient, and tyrannical laws, totally inconsistent with the genuine spirit of the constitution.” The constant impediments in the labor market caused by these poor-laws, makes life more burdensome for the individuals who are trying to make it in life on their own initiative.<sup>410</sup>

The harmful effects of the poor laws are to a certain extent almost impossible to repair. If help needs to be given to people in need, then “a power must be given somewhere of discriminating the proper objects, and of managing the concerns of the institutions that are necessary; but any great interference with the affairs of other people, is a species of tyranny.”<sup>411</sup> The “evil” of these laws has “perhaps gone too far to be remedied,” writes Malthus, but there is “little doubt” in his opinion, that if the poor-laws of England had never been enacted, although there may have been a greater number of cases of extreme suffering, there would be a greater degree of “happiness” among the “common people” than we presently see. It must be admitted, as Malthus does, that the economic, physical and mental burdens, the stress, the anxiety felt by the poorest members of society is an “evil” which no amount of inventiveness or imagination can solve. Any solutions proposed would be merely “palliative,” without the real possibility of eradicating the problem.

Malthus, in view of these limitations, proposes, first, the complete eradication of the existing parish-laws. The termination of these harmful laws would “give liberty and freedom of

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<sup>410</sup> Malthus, *Principle of Population*, 30.

<sup>411</sup> Malthus, *Principle of Population*, 31.

action to the peasantry of England,” latitude that they do not presently have. They would be free to go wherever there was an abundance of work, receive more money for their daily labor, and they could live wherever they wanted to live, without impediments. The labor market would be unconstrained, and obstructions in the way of the free movement of price depending on the demand for labor, would be removed.

Second, “premiums” could begin to be paid to those farmers who turned formerly unproductive land, into agriculturally useful land. Agriculture could be stimulated to develop further, in preference to manufacturing, and “tillage” could be privileged over “grazing.” In order to stimulate the production of food even more than the suggestions noted above, every effort should be made to debilitate and demolish those organizations that promote a policy that allows the workers in the field of agriculture to be paid less than those who are employed in trades or manufactures. A nation will have difficulty producing the maximum quantity of food as long as the pay of artisans is superior to the remuneration of agricultural workers. This kind of support to the agricultural sector, Malthus proselytizes, would have the effect of increasing the quantity of produce for the nation, it would augment the amount of healthful work in the labor market, and it would have a tendency to increase the price of labor, while improving the work environment for the laborer.

Last, “county workhouses” could be founded, Malthus proposes, funded by “rates upon the whole kingdom, and free for persons of all counties, and indeed of all nations.”<sup>412</sup> In concluding this section of his book, Malthus writes:

A plan of this kind, the preliminary of which should be an abolition of all the present parish laws, seems to be the best calculated to increase the mass of happiness among the common people of England. To prevent the recurrence of

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<sup>412</sup> Malthus, *Principle of Population*, 32.

misery, is, alas! beyond the power of man. In the vain endeavor to attain what in the nature of things is impossible, we now sacrifice not only possible but also certain benefits. We tell the common people, that if they will submit to a code of tyrannical regulations, they shall never be in want. They do submit to these regulations. They perform their part of the contract, but we do not, nay cannot, perform ours: and thus the poor sacrifice the valuable blessing of liberty, and receive nothing that can be called an equivalent in return.<sup>413</sup>

### ***5.6: Final Thoughts for this Chapter***

The precise form that the various conjectural histories of the eighteenth-century took varied depending on the individual writers, and their various subject matters. As a result, these histories exhibit quite diverse and discretely independent formal characteristics. This may be observed in the differences between David Hume's methods in his "On the Populousness of Ancient Nations," as contrasted with John Millar's methodology in his genealogical survey of the diversification of ranks in the human population. In the case of Thomas Robert Malthus, it is not only his distinctive historical form, which arrests, and gives pause, to the reader, but the basic premise of his argument.

In the historical past, a robust, growing population had been considered as an indicator of a healthy society, well governed and prosperous; Malthus, as we have seen, challenges this notion. Vigorous, healthy human populations, freely reproducing as the laws of nature have intended, are no longer an indicator of a healthy society in Malthus's thinking, but may give rise to an unhealthy society, burdened with the prospect of individuals that cannot be adequately fed. Malthus has come to a realization, not noticed by others, that since population increase is geometrical, and the production of food rises arithmetically; the ability of the earth to produce food cannot keep pace with the human ability to increase in numbers.

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<sup>413</sup> Malthus, *Principle of Population*, 32.

The imbalance between population growth and the ability of the earth to produce sustenance is the biggest obstacle, the one inexorable fact, Malthus is convinced, which those who argue in favour of the perfectibility of humankind and society must confront.

In general, Malthus's arguments revolve around agricultural production and food for the people. Agricultural production has utility, it is productive, and it feeds the laboring poor. This is the central issue for Malthus.

The observational data which Malthus has acquired in studying human nature leads him to the inexorable conclusion, that population growth, while indicative of a robust human constitution, and an adherence to the laws governing human nature, does not, in turn, result in a healthy society. A balance between population increase and the ability of the earth to provide food must be maintained.

## CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

Our study has looked at the historical writings of four Scottish historians, Hume, Millar, Sinclair, and Malthus, as examples of the kind of history being written at a time when historiography was undergoing an important change. In eighteenth-century Scotland, historical writing was moving from a traditional form of history, which documented the affairs of state, to one which gave validity and importance to the lives of the people, by recording for posterity what affected them or was of importance in their daily lives. Traditional history was still being written, of course, but new genres were coming into use, because they were better suited to dealing with the various subject matters, which were becoming of interest to the historians, and they aroused the interest of the historians because they were important to the people. It had become clear to eighteenth-century historians, with David Hume being in the vanguard, that what transpired in the quotidian lives of the people, their manners and sentiments, had a hardly discernible, but nevertheless, a far-reaching, and deeply felt effect on history. In the Scottish enlightenment, therefore, history enlarged its scope of inquiry, giving rise to many new genres of historical writing.

One of these new genres of history was *philosophical history*, a form, which tried to incorporate new concerns and priorities within its traditional historical narrative, making it more relevant to a dynamic commercial society, and a burgeoning middle-class. *Conjectural history* was another new form, and a new methodology, which strove to know and depict the fundamental, general truths of human nature. It was founded on natural philosophy, and was academic, anti-rationalistic, speculative, and experimental in method. Conjectural history was differentiated from traditional history by its ability to surmount the intrinsic boundaries of conventional historical forms. In one of its manifestations, priority would be given to the

undocumented history of a typical past, as in John Millar's, *The Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*. David Hume's, *Of the Populousness of Ancient Nations* also belongs to this genre of history, as does Thomas Robert Malthus's, *An Essay on the Principle of Population*, although we may characterize this history as a hybrid of conjectural history, as it often relates to a quasi-scientific source for its findings on population. Sir John Sinclair's *Statistical Account of Scotland*, while being concerned with changes to the lives of the people of Scotland over a time span that we have characterized as in living memory, is definitely more scientific in methodology, being based on a survey of Scottish parishes.

This study asks the question—in addition to presenting Hume, Millar, Sinclair, and Malthus as examples of the historical genres being written—and this query relates to the methodology of those historians writing conjectural history, or that form of history which sought to understand, the basic principles of human nature, by interrogating the observational experience of how humans nature functions. So, to the question on what dependable foundation did the eighteenth-century historians who wrote undocumented histories rely? We gave the answer, human nature. They felt they could rely on this “unchanging” aspect of being human, and make their inferences based on this.

This period's preoccupation with history in its various genres, and manifestations, became for that upper stratum of philosopher/historians a new dispensation. What was being written was a unique, more inclusive form of historiography, with new “modes of representation” and new “tools of analysis,”<sup>414</sup> giving validation to sentiments, feelings, manners and the social. Historians coming after Hume—and I single him out as representative of the new direction historiography was taking—looked upon his particular innovative historical

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<sup>414</sup> Phillips, *Society and Sentiment*, 14.

methodology with favor. The practice of this new form of historical writing established a lasting precedent, becoming for historians writing later in the century, both a form, and a methodology to be followed.

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