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The foundations of Hume's theory of politics

Kolin, Andrew, Ph.D.

City University of New York, 1991

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THE FOUNDATIONS OF HUME'S THEORY OF POLITICS

Andrew Kolin

**A dissertation submitted to the Graduate
Faculty in Political Science in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of Doctor of Philosophy, the City
University of New York.**

1991

1991

Andrew Kolin

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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Political Science in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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Abstract**THE FOUNDATIONS OF HUME'S THEORY OF POLITICS****Andrew Kolin**

Adviser: Professor Martin Fleisher

Hume examines a relation that dates back to the origins of western philosophy, the distinction between nature and artifice. Throughout his investigation of politics, he attempts to reconcile nature and artifice. As he constructs a natural definition of politics founded on sympathy for a common interest, as well as an artificial one which he attributes to rules governing the acquisition of property, it appears that he has formulated contradictory notions of politics.

Government originates out of a need to promote order in society. This indicates a relation between a natural definition, sympathy for a common interest, and an artificial definition, rules used to impose order on society. At the same time, a contradiction emerges between the two definitions.

Hume traces the origin of property in civil society to the distinction between 'mine and thine' which defines property as the ability of individuals to exclude others from using an object. This generates conflict in civil

society, and is the reason why rules are needed to regulate the acquisition of property; but conflicts over property in civil society undermine sympathy for a common interest. Furthermore, for Hume there are no rational justifications for property.

Hume manages to reconcile nature and artifice by formulating a theory of economic and political development. The historical development of the market becomes society's common interest. The market is a progressive force because it promotes economic development. In The History of England and the Essays, Hume constructs a form of government which is stable and allows for economic growth. The essay "Of the Perfect Commonwealth" demonstrates how Hume not only reconciles authority and liberty through a modern notion of mixed government, but it also describes a form of government which allows for economic growth, a modern version of mixed government. This government is ruled by law to counteract conflict among interests in society, which would undermine the political stability necessary for market relations. Hume's contribution to political theory is that he reconciles nature and artifice by providing a theory of economic and political development which combines interest and virtue and brings together Ancient and Modern political theory.

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INTRODUCTION: HUMAN NATURE AND POLITICS

This dissertation is an attempt to explain David Hume's contribution to modern political theory. In trying to comprehend and formulate a coherent explanation of Hume's conception of politics, an underlying theme, largely neglected in the secondary literature, has been uncovered: Hume establishes a foundation for politics from the relation of nature and artifice. The contribution this dissertation makes to the literature is a consideration of how Hume contrasts a natural definition of politics founded on sympathy for a common interest to an artificial one based on rules which determine the acquisition of private property. The tension between a common social good and private interest that dominates the market in civil society is a striking theme in Hume's Treatise and various essays. In an effort to offer a novel definition of nature and artifice, he denies that there is a strict division between the two. Instead, the argument presented in the dissertation is that Hume's initial intention was to undermine both a natural definition of politics founded on sympathy for a common interest and an artificial definition based on rules that regulate private property. In effect, he deconstructs the division between nature and artifice in order to reconstruct the terms, providing a new definition of politics. The

reconstruction of nature and artifice occurs within an historical framework, which provides a theory of economic and political development. Sympathy for a common good, on the one hand, and the market on the other, work together to create a framework for progress and political stability. His argument unfolds from the introduction to the Treatise.

The starting point of Hume's examination of politics is what he calls "the experimental method" of reasoning. He uses this to investigate if man is by nature political. While it is necessary to begin with how things appear, Hume rejects "principles taken upon trust ..."¹ Instead, his experimental method emphasizes the testing of assumptions which appear valid. When used to investigate appearance, an experimental method can establish what is certain and what is uncertain. That important distinction, Hume says, is what will eventually lead to the acquisition of knowledge.

According to Hume, observation operates as the essential component of an experimental method. Since it is impossible to acquire a complete understanding of reality, then the act of observing is by definition selective. This explains why Hume sought to define knowledge from the fewest possible principles. Also, if an experimental method is used to explain the external world, then those explanations must be derived from a basic knowledge of human nature. Without knowledge of human nature, we cannot comprehend the

external world. By the same token, improvements in knowledge of human nature lead to improvements in other bodies of knowledge. Logic is employed to explain how we acquire knowledge of human nature, including the relation between feeling and thinking. From this discussion, Hume traces the origin of morals or moral sentiments. He then examines what he considers to be the social foundation of politics. He uses a critical approach to examine the relation between sympathy and private interests.

Hume begins his analysis of human nature with a critical assessment of perception. He defines the first principle responsible for perceptual awareness as the division of perceptions into impressions and ideas. The difference between them is in "the degrees of force and liveliness"² with which they reach the mind: Impressions are stronger than ideas.

Hume first considers knowledge acquired through sense. "What causes induce us to believe in the existence of body? but 'tis vain to ask, whether there be body or not?"³ Hume insists it is absurd to deny the existence of objects because it is impossible to prove objects do not exist. As applied to sense, Hume's experimental approach to knowledge develops from this question: "Why we attribute a continued existence to objects, even when they are not present to the senses; and why we suppose them to have an existence

distinct from the mind and perception."⁴ Hume highlights the limitations imposed upon knowledge acquired from the senses. Our senses by definition cannot provide a notion of continued unsensed existence. For example, when an individual perceives a chair, the individual is aware of two things, the perception of the chair and the chair itself, but the senses are incapable of representing a perception. It is the mind then, which perceives and interrupts sense data; the senses are mind-dependent. The double image experiment demonstrates this dependence on the mind. "When we press one eye with a finger, we immediately perceive all the objects to become double, and one half of them to be remov'd from their common and natural position."⁵ The senses are also subject to physical changes, which affect the transmission of sense-data.

This opinion is confirm'd by the seeming increase and diminution of objects, according to their distance; by the apparent alterations in their figure; by the changes in their colour and other qualities from our sickness and distempers ... ⁶

According to Hume, these limitations, which are a product of this first stage of consciousness, are relevant when applied to an understanding of politics. Consider the extension of Hume's first principle, in which the perceptions of the mind admit a division into impressions of sensation and reflection. Pains and pleasures which appear

from various impressions of sensation are the source of the passions. There is an important discussion of the passions in book II of the Treatise where Hume divides passions into those that are calm and those that are violent. His description of a calm passion is one that tends to promote moral or social virtues. Violent passions such as pride and humility are examples of passions that cause conflict in society. Pride is the trait in civil society tied to the pursuit of property. In the Treatise, Hume consistently argues that passions that generate social virtues, eventually producing sympathy sharply contrast with those that lead to the pursuit of property. The political organization of society encourages calm passions and suppresses or channels the violent ones. The passions that generate a concern for self-interest in private property tend to work against common goals essential for stable social interactions. A general theme throughout A Treatise of Human Nature, the Essays, and The History of England is that politics involves a confrontation with man's passionate nature. The first level of Hume's experimental approach to knowledge tends to coincide with what Hume considers the subject matter of politics. The first task of politics is to devise solutions which can contain or redirect violent passions. Hume argues that by themselves these violent

passions are an inadequate foundation from which to construct social and political interactions.

To do so, he must first explain the function of reason. The first references in the Treatise are to distinctions between simple and complex ideas. Simple ideas admit no comparison, they are immediately understood. The idea of red is represented in the mind without reference to other distinct ideas. We know the color red without knowing how red relates to the idea of a chair. Hume then examines how the mind creates distinctions among ideas, that is, how simple ideas develop into complex ones. Unlike simple ideas, complex ones admit comparison and are related to the qualities of the objects they describe. To know what is meant by marble in general, we must also know what characterizes a particular piece of marble. Hume describes how the mind can establish a relation between a particular piece of marble and the general idea of it. Once we have compared particular pieces of marble, and have assigned similarities or resemblances among them, we will then be able to define the general features of marble. When presented with a globe of white marble, we distinguish the color and form of it from another piece. We draw a resemblance between black and white marble. According to Hume, the way we become aware of this resemblance is through the reflection and comparison of ideas, or, as he terms it,

"distinctions of reason." Such distinctions are actually philosophic relations and Hume identifies seven of them: resemblance, identity, relations of time and space, quantity or number, degrees in any quality, contrariety, and causation. He then subdivides them into two classes, first, relations that depend on the ideas which are compared and second, ideas which are changed without changing the object, known as constant and inconstant relations. Constant relations are known intuitively. The following is an example: "That the square of the hypotenuse is equal to the square of the sides is a proposition which expresses a relation between the figures."⁷ Through the use of intuitive reason, the mind concludes a constant idea, for example, a triangle will remain the same so long as we do not change our idea of what a triangle is. Hume identifies four qualities found in constant relations: resemblance, contrariety, degrees in quality and proportions in quantity or number known through intuitive reason. These relations are supposed to provide certain knowledge. Initially, Hume defines reason as constant ideas known through intuition and demonstrated as truthful statements.

What Hume sees as the essential principle of human nature, that is, matters of fact, are established through experience. Unlike ideas known through intuitive reason, matters of fact are statements which can provide probable,

not certain, knowledge. "That the sun will not rise tomorrow is no less intelligible a proposition, and implies no more a contradiction, than the affirmation, that it will rise."⁸ Either proposition can be shown to be true.

Once Hume divides knowledge into what is certain and what is probable, he identifies what he considers the limitations of abstract or intuitive reasoning, which will ultimately determine his theory of politics. Hume demonstrates that ultimately, abstract reasoning fails to produce certain knowledge. The degeneration of knowledge from certain to probable tends to occur due to "the irruption of other causes,"⁹ which alter the certain and infallible rules necessary for abstract reasoning. This means A can occur without necessarily being followed by B. This in turn generates a propensity to check our findings, which leads to other difficulties. The process of searching for errors can produce infinite regression. New judgments must be formed to monitor each preceding judgment.

Hume takes his criticism of abstract reasoning even further when he considers politics. Hume acknowledges that attempts have been made to formulate a definition of politics derived from abstract reasoning. The striking example is social contract theory. However, abstract reasoning about politics seeks to establish assumptions prior to careful investigation. This excludes the

possibility of checking to verify whether or not the findings are correct. It also fails to guarantee that knowledge of politics acquired through abstract reasoning is, in fact, certain.

These shortcomings fly in the face of Hume's experimental approach to politics which takes as its starting point observation. According to his theory, it is both possible and necessary to observe the common or regular developmental stages, which characterize politics, starting from the most basic unit, the family, advancing to civil society and finally culminating in the formation of government.

Any discussion of Hume's theory of politics and its basis in human experience must first examine the nature of that experience, which Hume also considers the first principle of human nature, and which Hume defines in terms of causal relations. Understanding what one has experienced necessitates causal reasoning. For example, given a situation where barking is heard behind a door, one infers a dog is making this sound. I hear the dog barking and cannot see the dog. We infer a relation of cause and effect by connecting what is present to what is absent. It is possible to justify the inference from cause and effect by connecting what is present to what is absent. It is possible to justify the inference from cause and effect by

considering objects near and remote. "A man finding a watch or any other machine in a desert island, would conclude that there had once been men in that island."¹⁰ In order to establish a causal relation between a man finding a watch and concluding that other men had been in the island, the cause/effect relation establishes a contiguity in time and space. In addition, the notion of succession, that the cause precedes the effect is essential to causal relations, a principle Hume will eventually use to demonstrate how the development of politics is causal.

At this point, however, Hume's discussion concerns only causal instances and not causal regularity, which will be an essential feature of Hume's theory of politics. Causal instances involve causal relations that are valid in certain instances but not in all conditions. Hume then explains that we understand regular associations that are repeated through constant conjunction.

Hume's example of the billiard balls illustrates that constant conjunction occurs when similar causes are followed by similar effects. We know from experience that if two billiard balls hit, we can expect a third one will also be hit. Our experience consists of repeated instances, which we recall. However, experience alone cannot provide a link from the past to the future.

The bread, which I formerly eat,
nourished me, that is a body of such

sensible qualities was, at that time
 endued with such secret powers: but
 does it follow, that other bread must
 also nourish me at another time ... 11

Since experiences vary, we cannot conclude that the future will resemble the past. Experience alone is not responsible for an association of cause and effect. Only through observing a constant conjunction, can we gain a link with the future through experience. When repeated instances are observed, we learn to expect that the future will resemble the past. In the case of a constant conjunction of billiard balls, we become convinced after careful observations of each repeated association, that this will recur in the future. Whereas initial observations are experimental, subsequent associations confirm them.

As the habit which produces the association, arises from the frequent conjunction of objects, it must arrive at its perfection by degrees, and must acquire new force from each instance, that falls under our observation. The first instance has little or no force: The second makes some addition to it. The third becomes still more sensible.¹²

Hume draws on constant conjunction in the external world to discuss how thinking is also causal due to necessary connection. Necessary connection is the mind's inner determination to connect thoughts in a causal manner, just as constant conjunction connects objects in the external world. When we receive an impression, which in turn generates an idea, we are determined to believe there is an

association or inference between the two. The main characteristic of necessary connection is that it is an impression in the mind, an expectation that observed associations will repeat themselves and thus be regular.

This regularity provides an important link between Hume's epistemology and his theory of politics. For Hume, politics is causal, founded not on chance occurrences but on interactions that are regular and repeated. Therefore, politics attempt to insure that human interactions stay predictable. A striking example of Hume's causal analysis of politics is his definition of sympathy. In turn, the fact that Hume considers sympathy as a social foundation for politics demonstrates the tendency to generalize or make inductions using the imagination.

Inductions are products of the imagination, which extends knowledge by forming a relation between observable and unobservable phenomena. Hume reaches this conclusion by starting from a comparison of memory and imagination. The function of memory is to repeat the same order of ideas without changing them. In contrast, imagination is free to change the order and position of ideas. Another important distinction between them pertains to the degree of force. Strong impressions are known to us through memory, whereas faint impressions are known to us through imagination. "When we remember any past event, the idea of it flows in

upon the mind in a forcible manner; whereas in the imagination the perception is faint and languid ... "13 Proximity to sense-data is what makes for the difference in intensity between memory and imagination. Of the two faculties, memory bears a closer relation to sense-data. On the other hand, when we imagine it is without direct acquaintance with sense-data. The imagination compensates for the fragmentary character of sense-data when objects presented to the mind appear continuous only to disappear after the senses cease to operate. Imagination therefore allows a transition from observable to unobservable phenomena.

Coherence and constancy help explain the imagination. Coherence explains how the imagination confronts variable phenomena that appear and disappear and establishes a relation among them. For instance, an individual observes an insect in one corner of a room; the individual then opens the refrigerator, cooks a meal and later notices this insect on the opposite side of the room. The individual has, in the past, observed an insect move from one side of a room to another. Coherence then establishes a relationship between the appearance and disappearance of the insect, and allows the individual to imagine that the insect exists continuously. When we gather a series of interrupted impressions ignoring the gap between observable and

unobservable phenomena, we create an identification across this gap, which results in an idea of continuous existence.

On the other hand, constancy explains that an object that has been observed earlier and then is not observed, will appear unchanged when it is again observed. An individual observes something, then after an interval in which he has not observed it, finds that it possesses the same characteristics that it previously had. The constancy he ascribes to the object is a function of imagination. With constancy, the mind becomes aware or senses a gap as the difference between impressions which appear and are observable, and those which are unobservable but are known as mental images. Hume determines constancy as the way the mind establishes relations between observable impressions and unobservable ones, regarding objects that remain unchanged.

The ability to use imagination in formulating generalizations--the second principle of human nature--figures prominently in Hume's theory of politics. For instance, in the Treatise, he credits imagination as the faculty which allows man to conceive government by considering what is remote instead of something contiguous. The generalization that politics is a conflict between liberty and authority, a central theme in The History of

England, further illustrates the role imagination plays in an understanding of politics.

Hume establishes a direct relation between human nature and politics from his examination of sympathy. At the same time, Hume also constructs a definition of politics as artifice, which unfolds in relation to his description of property. In effect, Hume presents two definitions of politics, one from human nature, the other from artifice. The chapters that follow show how Hume's natural definition founded on sympathy and the artificial definition based on property establish a foundation for politics.¹⁴

Footnotes

¹David Hume, A Treatise of Human Nature, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983) p. xiii. The clearest statement of Hume's experimental method appears in the introduction to the Treatise, where he states that the purpose is to construct a science of knowledge which has universal application and which is derived from the 'fewest causes.'

²Ibid, p. 1.

³Ibid, p. 187.

⁴Ibid, p. 188. Most of the secondary literature on Hume addresses Hume's criticism of abstract reasoning and sense, such as John Fogelin in Hume's Skepticism in the Treatise of Human Nature. (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1985) The problem with this and other works that address this issue, for instance, Richard Popkin's "David Hume: His Pyrrhonism and his Critique of Pyrrhonism" is the tendency to equate Hume's arguments against abstract reason and the senses as part of an overall skeptical approach. This is misleading because this perspective overlooks the importance of Hume's intention in the Treatise's introduction, which is to construct the principles of human nature. His negative comments regarding sense and abstract reason represent only one aspect of the overall movement of his philosophy. Hume reaches a positive conclusion about human nature by establishing the importance of experience and imagination.

⁵Ibid, p. 210.

⁶Ibid, p. 211.

⁷David Hume, Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding, (New York: Oxford Press, 1983), p. 25.

⁸Ibid, pp. 25-26.

⁹Treatise, p. 180.

¹⁰Enquiry, p. 26.

¹¹Ibid, p. 34.

¹²Treatise, p. 130. The heart of the debate over Hume's examination of causation concerns whether Hume ascribed to the regularity theory or the necessity theory.

A collection of articles that examines this controversy appears in Hume (Ed.) V.C. Chappell (New York: Anchor Books, 1968). Supporters of the regularity theory maintain that Hume describes experience in terms of constant conjunction or an external regularity outside the mind in the external world. Supporters of necessity theory locate regularity in the mind as a determination to associate impressions and ideas.

The intention in this dissertation is to demonstrate Hume's acceptance of both regularity and necessity theory. This interpretation is supported by the comprehensive examination of Beauchamp and Rosenberg Hume and the Problem of Causation (London: Oxford University Press, 1981).

¹³Ibid, p. 9. Jan Wilbank's Hume's Theory of the Imagination (The Hague: Nijhoff Press, 1968) and the earlier work of H.H. Price Hume's Theory of the External World (London: Oxford University Press, 1940) describe Hume's theory of the imagination in terms of how the mind supplements sense data filling in gaps by uniting ideas.

¹⁴That Hume's concept of politics is founded on the nature vs. artifice distinction appears in Book III of the Treatise, where he examines whether politics is a natural or artificial virtue. An approach that is similar to the one followed in this dissertation is in Knud Haakonssen's The Science of a Legislator (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981); Haakonssen also recognizes that Hume's distinction between nature and artifice operates as the foundation for his examination of politics.

CHAPTER I: NATURE AND ARTIFICE

Hume's discussion of politics unfolds from an examination of the terms nature and artifice. Eventually, he will compare the two in order to explain what motivates man to engage in political activity. He first considers nature, acknowledging in the Treatise that efforts to define it have proven problematic and inconclusive: "... our answer to this question depends upon the definition of the word, Nature, than which there is none more ambiguous and equivocal."¹⁵ In the Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding, he dismisses those who attempt to define the term as engaging in 'verbal disputes,' explaining that the term nature is used in so many senses and is so loose a signification that a precise definition is impossible. At the same time, Hume cannot admit that his efforts to define nature are inadequate.

Hume first attempts to define nature as contrary to what is rare and unusual; nature is equated with regularity. But the limitations of this definition become apparent when we consider Hume's description of causation. Constant conjunction explains observable regularity, but we have no way of knowing if all of nature is governed by regularity since phenomena in nature are unobservable. At best,

regularity is established by necessary connection in which the mind determines there is a relation between observable and unobservable objects. According to Hume, it is therefore impossible to determine for certain that regularity is a principle that defines nature.

Hume proposes another definition of nature as the difference between what is natural and unnatural. The natural/unnatural distinction is relevant to Hume's theory of politics because it is the basis for the development of his moral foundation for politics. Natural virtues are motives from which actions are performed with or without social conventions. Hume cites as examples, meekness, beneficence, charity, generosity, clemency, moderation and equality; whereas artificial virtues have motives which lead to their performance only after social conventions are established. The important artificial virtue which comprises most of the discussion in Hume's Treatise is justice.

Hume pursues the distinction between natural and unnatural to its logical conclusion and ends up claiming that man is by nature political because he seeks to perform virtuous acts; thus, vice is unnatural and irregular. However, he realizes this is an absurd claim, since man performs both virtuous and vicious acts on a regular basis and therefore virtue and vice are both natural to man. On

that basis, Hume can no longer claim that man is by nature political.

Hume then pursues a possible resolution of the problem by defining politics as artifice, but even here, he finds that nature and artifice overlap.

Mankind is an inventive species; and where an invention is obvious and absolutely necessary, it may as properly be said to be natural as any thing that proceeds immediately from original principles, without the intervention of thought or reflexion.¹⁶

This quote implies that man's inventions, artificial occurrences, develop out of his mental activity, which, according to Hume is intrinsic to man; therefore anything artificial is also natural when it develops out of necessity: " ... by natural we understand what is common to any species, or even if we confine it to mean what is inseparable from the species."¹⁷ On the other hand, Hume admits that certain actions are artificial or out of nature: " ... 'tis evident, that the actions themselves are artificial and are perform'd with a certain design and intention ... "¹⁸ For example, Hume argues that justice is artificial and distinct from nature: " ... the sense of justice and injustice is not derived from nature, but arises artificially ... "¹⁹ These references in the Treatise to rules illustrate that artifice concerns activity conceived and directed towards a specific end or purpose. The task is

how to reconcile Hume's contradictory remarks regarding nature and artifice in order to present a clear picture of his notion of politics.

Consistent throughout Hume's political writings is his assertion that we need to define human nature as something constant in order to understand politics. This is a useful argument because without a conception of human nature we lack an essential starting point. Furthermore, a consistent relation between human nature and politics unfolds from both Hume's experimental observations and his anthropological perspective that man, unlike animals is ill-equipped to survive in the external world:

Of all animals, with which this globe is peopled, there is none towards whom nature seems, at first sight, to have exercis'd more cruelty than towards man, in the numberless wants and necessities, with which she has loaded him, and in the slender means, which she affords to the relieving these necessities ... In man alone, this unnatural conjunction of infirmity, and of necessity, may be observ'd in its greatest perfection. Not only the food, which is requir'd for his sustenance, flies his search and approach, or at least requires his labour to be produc'd, but he must be possess'd of cloaths and lodging, to defend him against the injuries of weather ...²⁰

The basic problem is, how can man insure his physical existence? Animals adapt to live in nature. On the other hand, man must act and shape his environment to compensate for his natural limitations. The issue of whether or not

man is social is a pseudo-problem for Hume. It is only through society that man can compensate for these limitations. Man's nature develops as he separates from the natural world and engages in social activity. A similar notion is found in the writings of Rousseau; he also considers man's consciousness a product of social interactions. Hume's examination of sympathy describes the relation between individuals and society. Individuals are born into a pre-existing society, and it is the sympathy mechanism that allows them the advantages of social cooperation. Furthermore, Hume employs sympathy in order to argue against the notion that individuals interact without an established social setting. Sympathy explains why an individual can only be understood in a social context; it is presented as additional logical support for Hume's anthropological argument that social cooperation is essential to man. His intention is to develop a natural social definition of government founded upon sympathy for a common interest. Since sympathy as a common interest is derived from a non-rational source, man's passions, Hume intends to undermine rival rational theories of government, such as those based on a social contract.

Hume's natural definition of politics is derived from observable social interactions, beginning with the family. Therefore, social cooperation is essential to man's

survival. On the other hand, Hobbes maintains that self-interest is sufficient to insure self-preservation and in turn establish a basis for society. Hume disagrees, apparently because the theory neglects the important role labor assumes as the means to establish social cooperation. The reference in the Treatise to a state of nature as 'mere fiction', is a direct reference to Hobbes' conception of man motivated by self-interest abstracted from social conventions. According to Hume, a state of nature is not a 'golden age' characterized by abundance; instead, because scarcity is the norm, social cooperation through labor is essential. Hobbes would agree with Hume's contention that conditions of scarcity characterize the natural world. But only Hume recognizes that because of scarcity, man must cooperate in the labor process. Hobbes, on the other hand, assumes self-interest can overcome scarcity when individuals labor in accordance with a Robinson Crusoe model.

Hume's anthropological approach describes how man forms his own notions of social regularity, for example, through the formation of social conventions. On the other hand, the deductive method Hobbes employs describes external regularity only in terms of natural laws and rights which are accepted and imposed on man. In contrast to Hobbes, an important notion Hume proposes is that the main principle of attraction, which creates social bonds is sexual, since the

primary unit of society, the family, is based on sexual attraction. This union indicates that man's primary inclinations are not selfish. When we judge how a father acts towards his children, we find the tendency is to put the child's welfare first:

Do you not see, that tho' the whole experience of the family be generally under the direction of the master of it, yet there are few that do not bestow the largest part of their fortunes on the pleasures of their wives and the education of their children, reserving the smallest portion for their own use and entertainment.²¹

Hume regards the family as society in miniature, an example of observable social interactions essential to a natural definition of politics. On the other hand, Hobbes views the foundation of politics from the point of view of antagonistic individuals who understand each other in terms of possible advantage and gain. The alternative Hume presents is more comprehensive, founded on sympathy; we enter into the minds of others through sympathy. Hume described sympathy as the ability to view others from the perspective of the 'impartial spectator', basing judgments about the actions of others not only on possible gain, but on other factors as well. Hume does admit Hobbes is aware that it is also an aspect of human nature to possess tender feelings for others: "An Epicurean or a Hobbist readily allows, that there is such a thing as friendship in the

world, without hypocrisy or disguise ... "22 However, Hume objects to Hobbes' reduction of feelings to 'self-love.' In spite of Hobbes' recognition that man can display a range of feelings, Hume maintains this does not free him from the charge that self-love is a selfish system of morals. In other words, there is a difference between admitting to a wide range of emotions and acting in accordance with these emotions. Recognizing the emotions of others does not mean self-interest disappears, and self-interest always results in conflict because my feelings are more important than yours. Hume's criticism of Hobbes boils down to an insistence that Hobbes' theory of human nature is an inadequate foundation from which to derive a theory of politics because his theory of human nature lacks a moral foundation.

When individuals act according to self-interest, there is no basis for reaching agreements in society. What is missing is the means with which to judge the interests of others as impartial reasoners. Hobbes defines artifice as a rational construction when individuals agree to form a social contract. Hume challenges the notion that political artifice is primarily determined by abstract speculative reasoning represented as a social contract. He goes on to demonstrate the logical fallacy of a social contract.

There is no direct relation between the keeping of promises and the formation of government. Man can live without government and still preserve society:

... it is not necessary in all
circumstances nor is it impossible for
men to preserve society for some time
without recourse to such an invention
... 23

Here, Hume calls into question arbitrary arguments used to justify the existence of government. One of Hobbes' arguments maintains that since man is born free and equal, then it follows that government is founded from consent, and when man consents to form government, he creates an obligation to obey the magistrate. In effect, man obeys because he promises to do so. Hume contends there is a difference between the origin of government and a promise to obey it. There is no shortage of historical evidence to show that governments were established by force and conquest:

Almost all the governments, which exist
at present, or of which there remains
any record in story have been founded
originally, either by usurpation or
conquest or both, without any pretense
of a fair consent, or voluntary
subjection of the people.²⁴

The historical references are meant to supplement arguments which demonstrate the logical fallacy of a social contract.²⁵ A government established through force still assumes a contract between the people and government, though

promise-keeping is impossible. Promises are possible, providing we accept Hobbes' argument that equality is an important motive, which leads man to form a social contract. Yet according to Hume, without an objective assessment of interests, what is lacking are moral principles essential for a social contract. Without these principles, which means an equality of interests is inconceivable, the result is not equality, but inequality, which then serves as the foundation of government. The inequality Hume refers to is the enforcement of private interests, or the interests of the stronger. Hume regards Hobbes' notion of artifice as suited to a political system where morality is absent and the state's authority is never questioned, producing tyranny. "Hobbes politics are fitted only to promote tyranny and his ethics to encourage licentiousness."²⁶ Government perpetuates an inequality of power relations by creating a division between ruler and ruled. When the people become dissatisfied with government, rulers use fear to instill obedience. Promises, therefore, are the effect of government and not its cause. Man obeys government which amounts to promise-keeping only when it is in his best interest to do so. When man has an interest in both keeping promises and obeying government, it is impossible that one can be derived from the other.

Hume takes into account that it is also possible for man to consent to government, and he asserts that this is the best possible form of political obligation. In spite of this positive assessment, Hume regards consent as an ideal which does not conform to existing political realities:

My intention is not to exclude consent of the people from being one just foundation of government where it has place. It is surely the best and most sacred of any. I only pretend that it has very seldom had place in any degree, and never almost in its full extent.²⁷

Relations between past and present governments demonstrate the difficulties one faces when attempting to define government from an original contract, which confuses present and future obligations. Why should children follow their parents' footsteps? The present generation is not obligated to an original contract.

Hume also dismisses a sophisticated version of social contract theory, tacit consent, obviously a reference to Locke's discussion in The Two Treatises of Government.²⁸ This version, which bypasses the issue of a government's origin and the problem of open agreements, describes how man can consent indirectly, by remaining silent. In this scenario, there are no outward expressions of support for government and the contractual relation between people and government exists only hypothetically.

The most obvious shortcoming of tacit consent as social contract is a failure in distinguishing between an action which is a sign of consent and one that implies consent. A sign of consent means that an actor clearly intended to consent. On the other hand, in a situation of implied consent, an actor would not agree if given a choice. In situations where consent is only implied, man is unaware that he tacitly agreed to government. There is no rational choice involved in tacit consent:

But were you to ask the far greatest part of the nation, whether they had ever consented to the authority of their rulers, or promis'd to obey them, they wou'd be inclin'd to think very strangely of you; and wou'd certainly reply that the affair depended not on their consent but that they were born to such an obedience.²⁹

The fact that men are born with an allegiance to a government only implies consent and is not a sign of consent. Given the choice, perhaps we would reject a particular ruler or form of government.

In consequence of this opinion, we frequently see them imagine such persons to be their natural rulers, as are at that time depriv'd of all power and authority, and whom no man, however foolish, wou'd voluntarily chuse; and this merely because they are in that line, which rul'd before, and in that degree of it, which us'd to succeed; tho' perhaps in so distant a period, that scarce any man alive cou'd ever have given any promise of obedience.³⁰

Hume indicates that men are bound to their rulers due to the historical fact that the rulers are successors to previous rulers. For Hume, the simple fact is that people do not tacitly consent to government:

But where he thinks (as all mankind do who are born under established governments) that by his birth he owes allegiance to a certain prince or certain form of government; it would be absurd to infer a consent or choice, which he expressly, in this case, renounces and disclaims.³¹

Man must act if he is to form a social contract. People must be aware that they are consenting to government. Since this is not the case with tacit consent, then man has not entered into a contract which could legitimate government. A tacit contract fails to distinguish between the interests of individuals and those of government. Hume points out another problem with tacit consent; if a usurper seizes power, the people would not grant tacit approval to his rule:

Suppose that an usurper after having banished his lawful prince and royal family, should establish his dominion ... Can it be asserted, that the people, who in their hearts abhor his treason, have tacitly consented to his authority, and promised him allegiance, merely because, from necessity, they live under his dominion?³²

Residence, which includes the ability to enter and to leave a given territory, could be considered as a sign of tacit consent.

Hume demonstrates how tacit consent limits how people choose a government. Where people live is not an example of free choice. People are socialized along class lines to reside within a well-defined political space:

Can we seriously say, that a poor peasant or artisan has a free choice to leave his country, when he knows no foreign language or manners, and lives from day to day, by the small wages he acquires? We may as well assert, that a man, by remaining in a vessel, freely consents to the dominion of the master; though he was carried on board while asleep, and must leap into the ocean, and perish, the moment he leaves her.³³

Tacit consent takes into account only the benefits of governments while it tends to overlook their social costs. Government forces compliance. A government confronts individuals or groups which resist commands issued by magistrates; they are dealt with and punished: "We find by experience, that it punishes them very freely for what it calls treason and rebellion ..."³⁴ Furthermore, people can be forced to obey an absolute ruler where there is neither a promise nor consent involved.

Tyranny illustrates the problem with an unqualified acceptance of tacit consent. Hume argues that people should be released from consent to this form of government:

... our submission to government admits of exceptions, and that an egregious tyranny in the rulers is sufficient to free the subjects from all ties of allegiance.³⁵

If men are supposed to form a government because they have in mind its specific advantages, then tyranny--which does not provide these benefits--should free men from their obligations. Instead, all governments, including tyrannies, either restrict or seek to prevent emigration:

And did a prince observe, that many of his subjects were seized with the frenzy of migrating to foreign countries, he would doubtless, with great reason and justice, restrain them, in order to prevent the depopulation of his own kingdom.³⁶

Governments can at the same time prevent emigration and exercise authority over its citizens. They function without tacit consent. While Hume acknowledges it is possible governments may allow people to emigrate, emigration insures that tacit consent will fail. The result is that people do not participate in a social contract with the government.

The home country still claims their obedience:

A country of men, who should leave their native country, in order to people some uninhabited region, might dream of recovering their native freedom; but they would soon find that their prince still laid claim to them, and called them his subjects, even in their new settlement.³⁷

The arguments used against original and tacit forms of social contract should be understood in the context of an underlying theme which runs throughout Hume's political theory. There are two conceptions of politics, the one embodying the relation between human nature and politics,

and the other, the notion of artifice. Artifice concerns rules that develop as man discovers that politics consists of regular principles. These rules are unintended and man is made aware of them only when he interacts with others in a social context.

This argument unfolds when Hume describes the formation of social conventions. He employs artifice to define politics as a developmental body of knowledge. The starting point is the family viewed as a basic social unit. From the family to civil society, Hume views the formulation of social conventions as the basis of artifice. Society is formed when men can see its advantages. The advantages must be apparent to individuals in civil society. Social usefulness or utility as a 'tendency to a certain end', are benefits individuals acquire from society. They recognize society as compensation for man's natural limitations. Hume argues that society satisfies three basic needs:

By the conjunction of forces, our power
is augmented, our ability increases:
And by mutual succour we are less
expos'd to fortune and accidents. 'Tis
by this additional force, ability and
security, that security becomes
advantageous.³⁸

Hume provides interesting insights on how the individual interacts in civil society when he leaves the family unit. He recognized the dual role the family performs: It educates its members for larger social

interactions, but at the same time attempts to hold the unit together against society by delaying the inevitable departure of family members. In this way, the family works against the goals of civil society. For instance, Hume identifies 'confined generosity' as a family's strong preference for its members which also resists formal, impersonal social arrangements. The psychological disposition of family members is such that they prefer what Hume terms relations which are 'contiguous' to those that are 'remote'. In the Treatise, Hume points to how persistent political conflicts, in particular self-interest, are consequences of the psychology based on contiguous relations that family members bring to civil society.

Inevitably, human interactions extend outside the family in the realm of civil society in which individuals interact on an impersonal level. Hume describes civil society as an arena in which individuals interact until a social context is established. What develops are interactions in which every member of society becomes aware that what is good for himself must also be good for others. Enlightened self-interest, the expectation that others will act in the same manner, tends to counteract the tendency to prefer contiguous to remote relations that every family teaches its members.

The notion that politics is also artifice unfolds from Hume's discussion of enlightened self-interest. An individual recognizes that it is generally in his best interest to participate in the formation of rules that develop out of social interactions. Therefore, politics develops as individuals act but they do so without well-defined intentions:

This system, therefore, comprehending the interest of each individual, is of course advantageous to the public; tho' it be not intended for that purpose by the inventors.³⁹

This quote describes how a rational foundation for politics develops and reveals itself through man's social interactions. An important feature is that this rationality is not created prior to social activities. Artifice emerges as man becomes rational through his actions with others. It is the quantity of reason necessary that is important to Hume's notion of political artifice. A lesser quantity gives only the appearance that politics is a highly developed, rational system. The implication is, man will understand rules that define what politics is through acceptance of the fact that politics is a body of knowledge containing consistent principles: "These rules, therefore, are artificial, and seek their end in an oblique and indirect manner."⁴⁰ This quote demonstrates strongly how politics begins to reveal its regularity. The rules develop

by trial and error. Social conventions teach man that rules govern political artifice. Convention is a regularity in the behavior between individuals if and only if it is common knowledge that in most situations other people conform to regularity.⁴¹ What separates convention from other regular forms of behavior in society is that each individual justifies conforming to regularity because there is an expectation and awareness of general conformity.

It is known throughout society that individuals prefer to conform to regularity on the condition that others conform to regularity. It becomes common knowledge that everyone will conform to regularity. This common knowledge of the inclination to conform creates the conditions for actions which produce conformity when a conflict arises. These actions, in turn, reinforce the inclination towards conformity.

Conventions are characterized by slow, developmental growth. There is a gradual process of growing expectations, bargains, guesswork, and so on. But the most significant feature of a convention is not the initial agreement, but the effect the agreement has as time passes. Once it becomes common knowledge that everyone will not conform to alternative regularities, then it may be assumed that conventions have been established.

Hume presents a situation in which each individual in a boat can perform one of two possible actions, to row or not to row. Both men prefer to row; if each adheres to a convention of rowing, then each rejects an outcome in which neither rows. Man not only inclines towards general conformity, but also rejects general nonconformity. An individual tends not to row, unless the other rows. Both men incline towards personal nonconformity in the absence of general conformity.

The rowing example indicates how a single dominant convention becomes apparent to individuals and is accepted without formal or written agreements. Then, if conformity to regularity is preferred over nonconformity, what develops is a stable convention. There is some degree of certainty that the parties involved will carry out an agreement providing others do so.

While man discovers rules that constitute political artifice, the issue is to investigate the principles in human nature that motivate man to become political. The fact that Hume shifts the discussion from rules learned through social conventions to motives points to an interesting movement in his discussion of politics. Hume is attempting to resolve the tension between his two definitions of politics, one founded on human nature and another which defines politics as a distinct body of

knowledge founded on rules or artifice. He is uncomfortable in accepting either definition. Instead, the two definitions that appear as opposite conceptions actually tend to interact and overlap. Hume's attempts to reconcile these two definitions make it easier to understand why his notion of politics tends to appear confusing and contradictory. Human nature reappears to support Hume's definition of politics derived from artifice. This results from a discussion of motives.

A motive indicates a disposition towards a certain kind of behavior. Man acts from motives which are either virtuous or vicious. Hume considers how we evaluate the natural affection of a father towards his child. We approve when a father cares for his child because the motive is virtuous. When we approve we consider the father's action as a sign of a certain disposition. We evaluate the father's duty by reference to a virtuous motive. We would blame a father for neglecting his child. This conduct is condemned because the father is lacking in natural affection, which should be the duty of every parent. It is possible that when a parent is lacking in this virtuous motive, he may still care for the child from a sense of duty; it is also possible that he may acquire a virtuous motive over time, or succeed in concealing from himself or others that he lacks this motive.

Hume considers a father's attention or inattention to his child an example of natural virtue and vice. Natural virtues are motives which govern man's behavior with or without convention and produce pleasant results for an individual and others. The purpose of convention is to establish rules which direct our motives and insure that man seeks justice. Hume denies there are natural motives for justice without rules established by convention, which in turn create the motive for a common interest. Natural motives undirected by conventional rules do not insure that man will seek justice. If we were to ask someone why he should repay a loan, an obvious reply is a regard to justice. From the response we would understand justice is a virtue. Then there is another question which must be considered: why is justice a virtue? Under what conditions should someone repay a loan? Without conventional rules regarding repayment the question of repayment is irrelevant:

And this answer, no doubt, is just and satisfactory to man in his civiliz'd state and when train'd up according to a certain discipline and education. But in his rude and more natural condition, if you are pleas'd to call such a condition natural, this answer wou'd be rejected as perfectly unintelligible and sophistical. For one in that situation wou'd immediately ask you, wherein consists this honesty and justice, which you find in restoring a loan ... 42

The quote indicates that the need for order in society, a first rule of politics, in turn leads to forming obligations

to others. In a non-conventional condition where social interactions are absent, man could not learn this essential rule of politics.

Hume considers various motives that could lead man to seek justice. First a motive to justice from self-love. This principle left unregulated is a source of injustice. The natural movement of man's passions considers what is immediate or pleasant to individuals. Since there is no conception of a larger scheme which judges actions as just, self-love cannot be a motive for justice.

Second, is a regard for the public interest. Hume rejects this motive, because there is no public interest in following rules unless a convention has been established. Individuals may work for or against a public interest. For example, an individual in debt is not motivated to repay out of concern for a larger public interest. The fact that the loan is secret means there is a remote possibility that public pressure or sanctions could insure that an individual would adhere to the public interest. Since he lacks a conception of public interest, repayment or nonpayment is a private matter.

Third, Hume considers 'love of mankind' or 'extensive benevolence' as a source for justice. The problem with this principle is in its application. Benevolent acts are intended to produce benefit, but the outcome, which varies,

can lead to consequences which fail to increase the well-being of the intended benefactor. If people knew the effects of benevolent acts beforehand, perhaps man would refrain from performing them. In effect, separate acts intended to promote justice fail to develop into a larger general scheme. Some acts benefit man while others, motivated by good intentions, produce injury. Since there are no rules to determine benevolent acts, there is nothing to prevent secret acts which benefit private interest.

Fourth, there are the 'interests of the party concerned' or 'private benevolence'. The shortcoming of this motive is that people fail to distinguish friends from enemies. An enemy one day is a friend the next. Furthermore, our motives for seeking justice contradict each other:

For what if he be my enemy, and has given me just cause to hate him? What if he be a vicious man, and deserves the hatred of all mankind? What if he be a miser, and can make no use of what I wou'd deprive him of? What if he be a profligate debauchee, and wou'd rather receive harm than benefit from large possessions? What if I be in necessity, and have urgent motives to acquire something in my family?⁴³

The shortcoming of motives which appeal to self-love, regard for the public interest, love of mankind, or interests of the party concerned is that the reasons why man should perform just acts should also be effective reasons, meaning

sufficient to motivate men to perform the just acts in addition to the fact that the rules are just. What Hume refers to is why we regard justice as an artificial virtue.

The invention of rules through social conventions is a precondition to the establishment of justice as an artificial virtue. The inflexible application of rules throughout society creates the order and stability necessary for justice. When man acts in accordance with rules, justice becomes an artificial virtue. In other words, justice is an artificial virtue because there is social approval that justice is useful, which in turn motivates man to observe that justice is in the common interest.

Hume's definition of justice as an artificial virtue is important for it implies that politics is a discipline independent from human nature since it creates and organizes human behavior in a manner that is new and unique. In addition, politics allows man to change and redirect his behavior. Considered as a virtue, politics allows the possibility for man to fulfill his highest aspirations. The discussion of government in the Treatise describes how politics represents an institutional framework necessary to organize society. An important aspect is the fact that Hume considers government artificial.

If the preservation of society depends on man observing rules, then it is inconceivable that rules would be

violated. When rules are broken, it is because man's passions are affected by what is contiguous and not by what is remote. The preference for contiguous relations is learned in the family, and can cause conflict in civil society. In order to maintain society, men must observe rules that are remote. But the consequences involved in breaking rules also seem remote, and any advantage outweighs any penalty. Individuals commit unjust acts out of a preference for what is contiguous.

The tendency to break rules is reinforced when individuals observe others doing so. The avoidance of what is remote becomes the solution. Placing an interest at a distance allows an individual to determine whether something contiguous or remote is in his best interest. An individual examines a remote good and determines it is beneficial, except the inclination towards something contiguous stands in the way. Man realizes what is needed to create something artificial, i.e. government, which would impel man to find a reason to choose a remote over a contiguous interest. While Hume maintains man creates government, it becomes an autonomous independent entity seeking to regulate the negative features of human nature, such as self-interest, which causes conflict in civil society.

The purpose of government is to maintain society and create conditions from which it can grow and develop. Once

government is established, social interactions are regulated and organized:

Two neighbors may agree to drain a meadow, which they possess in common; because 'tis easy for them to know each other's mind; and each must perceive, that the immediate consequences of his failing in his part is, the abandoning of the whole project. But 'tis very difficult, and indeed impossible, that a thousand persons shou'd agree in any such action ... Political society easily remedies both these inconveniences.⁴⁴

In effect, government becomes responsible for recreating and maintaining social conventions. In doing so, it promotes a wider and more impersonal society, which in turn helps to insure that man will choose a remote over a contiguous interest. Enforcing acceptance of remote over contiguous interests are magistrates who seek to insure that rules are not broken.

It is important to pause and take into account the fact that after he establishes politics from artifice, Hume shifts his emphasis to a notion of politics derived from human nature. This occurs as he interjects sympathy into his discussion. Justice becomes an artificial virtue because it promotes a tendency to regard what is good for society once social conventions are established. Social conventions by themselves cannot generate motives for justice, but once conventions develop, then it is possible to redirect motives, so man will act in a just manner.

Prior to social conventions there are natural virtues which are in effect social virtues. These virtues allow man to consider what is good for society. Hume intends to show how the tendency to approve the natural or social virtues is through sympathy. Sympathy allows man to discover the principles that govern politics, at the same time establishing a relation between human nature and politics.

Footnotes

¹⁵David Hume A Treatise of Human Nature (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983) p. 474. The difficulty Hume encounters as he attempts to define nature is apparent when we consider that A.O. Lovejoy and G. Boas in Primitivism and Related Ideas in Antiquity (Baltimore: 1935) argued there were sixty-six different meanings derived from Greek and Roman sources.

¹⁶Ibid, p. 484.

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Ibid, p. 475.

¹⁹Ibid, p. 483.

²⁰Ibid, pp. 484-485. It is important not to overlook passages in the Treatise and the Essays, where Hume refers to man's relation to the natural world. Hume's anthropological approach operates as the foundation for his definition of politics. R. Mall in Hume's Philosophic Anthropology (New York: Allied Publishers, 1967) also acknowledges that Hume begins an investigation of the social foundation of politics by comparing man to nature.

²¹Ibid, p. 487.

²²David Hume An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983) p. 197.

²³Treatise, p. 539.

²⁴David Hume Essays: Moral, Political and Literary "Of the Original Contract" (Indiana: Indianapolis, 1985) p. 471.

²⁵There is no shortage of books and articles on social contract. The few which are relevant to the discussion in the text are J.W. Gough The Social Contract (New York: Oxford Press, 1936); Lawrence A. Scaff "Hume on Justice and the Original Contract" Philosophical Studies, 1978; P.F. Brownsey "Hume and the Social Contract" Philosophical Quarterly, 1978; Jeffrie G. Murphy "Hume and Kant and the Social Contract" Philosophical Studies, 1978. The dominant theme argued in the text, which is also a central theme in the literature, is that Hume challenges the notion of obedience to government as an agreement reached with the

populace. Hume attacks the fallacy of equality, which appears to be present between contracting parties.

²⁶David Hume, The History of England, Vol. VI (Indiana: Indianapolis, 1985), p. 153.

²⁷Essays, p. 474.

²⁸For Locke, obedience to government is divided into express and tacit consent in the Second Treatise of Government sec. 119.

²⁹Treatise, p. 548.

³⁰Ibid, p. 548.

³¹Hume, "Of the Original Contract," p. 475.

³²Ibid, p. 477.

³³Ibid, p. 475.

³⁴Treatise, p. 548.

³⁵Ibid, p. 549.

³⁶Hume, "Of the Original Contract," p. 476.

³⁷Ibid, p. 476.

³⁸Treatise, p. 485.

³⁹Ibid, p. 529.

⁴⁰Ibid, p. 497.

⁴¹The discussion of convention draws upon the important work of David K. Lewis, Convention: A Philosophical Study. (Massachusetts: Cambridge University Press, 1969).

⁴²Treatise, pp. 479-480.

⁴³Ibid, p. 482.

⁴⁴Ibid, p. 538.

CHAPTER II: SYMPATHY AND POLITICS

Hume uses sympathy as a democratic principle upon which to base his natural definition of politics. Sympathy is understood as an idea transformed into an impression. My perception of someone feeling anger represents the idea. In order to sympathize with this individual my idea of anger must be converted into an impression. The conversion occurs because there is a quality at work in man's nature which transforms ideas into impressions. An impression or passion appears from an enlivening source which Hume indicates is the individual's feeling of self-consciousness, an impression of self:

'Tis evident, that the idea or rather impression of ourselves is always intimately present with us, and that our consciousness gives us so lively a conception of our own person, that 'tis not possible to imagine, that anything can in this particular go beyond it. Whatever object therefore, is related to ourselves must be conceived with a life vivacity of conception.⁴⁵

Since my idea or impression of self is always present, the idea of another object or person is similar and can be known. Hume indicates that sympathy is first known by effects or outward signs. In order to sympathize we must identify and interpret those outward signs or effects. Sympathy develops through our exposure to the effects of an

original feeling. When I observe a pain or pleasure of another, I extend an impression of myself and sympathize.

What determines the intensity in which one individual will sympathize with another individual are three principles of association: resemblance, contiguity, and cause and effect. According to Hume, these three relations increase the association between an individual's conception of self and another individual, by enlivening one's idea of another's passion. A precondition for sympathy is a resemblance among human beings. "The minds of men are mirrors to each other."⁴⁶ This universal trait is observable when we survey man's interactions.

Regarding contiguity, the passions of others have little or no effect when they are far removed from us by time and place. We tend to sympathize best with those closest to us. A relative or friend invokes more sympathy than a coworker or a citizen residing in another country.

Although it appears that contiguity can limit sympathy, Hume upholds its importance by appealing to cause and effect. If a causal relation is established, it is possible to sympathize across great distances or without direct contact with specific individuals. A causal relation convinces one that the passion of another actually exists:

When I see the effects of passion in the voice and gesture of any person, my mind immediately passes from these effects to their causes, and forms such a lively

idea of the passion, as it presently converted into the passion itself. In like manner, when I perceive the causes of any emotion, my mind is convey'd to the effects, and is actuated with a like emotion ... We are only sensible of its causes or effects. From these we infer the passion: And consequently these give rise to our sympathy.⁴⁷

If we always knew what others were feeling and thinking, sympathy would be useless. But since we lack direct knowledge of others, sympathy is characterized as a causal relation, a useful procedure for drawing inductive inferences. To demonstrate this, Hume uses two examples. In the first, two individuals with identical training seek employment in the same town. It is obvious that each regards the other as his rival. Hume compares this with two merchants entering into a partnership, where both parties share common goals. In the case of the rivals, the advantage of one causes the other pain, while the success of the partner produces satisfaction.

Hume illustrates the causal nature of sympathy when we consider relations further removed from daily contact. There is a vast difference not only in terms of distance but affection between loving a brother and a countryman. A rival may appear closer to someone than a countryman. Then it seems easier to feel hatred for a rival than love for a countryman. Although a countryman is more distant than a rival, I would seek the advantage of pleasure of the former

over the latter. It is possible to sympathize with a countryman; a sympathetic response occurs when an individual identifies resembling feelings with a partner and a countryman, establishing a causal relation.

My realization that someone is suffering does not insure I will sympathize with his suffering. Since concern with my well-being precludes my concern in comparison to another's well-being, sympathy will not develop. The point is, Hume denies it is possible to sympathize if individuals act in accordance with self-interest. Comparing one individual to another negates a sympathetic response. For instance, when I experience something pleasant, then it pleases me to observe someone in a similar condition. If I am upset and someone else is content, this increases my misery. The reverse is also true; the misfortunes of others can increase my happiness. Hume presents the following example: he is safe on dry land whereas another is on a boat at sea during a storm. If Hume intends to understand the latter's misfortune, he must focus his attention on him. Yet, in spite of his best efforts, he won't be able to imagine the other person's situation. However, Hume acknowledges it is possible to feel another's misfortune if he is standing on shore watching the ship:

Suppose the ship to be driven so near to me, that I can perceive distinctly the horror, painted on the countenance of the seamen and passengers, hear their

lamentable cries, see the dearest friends give their last adieu, or embrace with a resolution to perish in each other's arms: No man has so savage a heart as to reap any pleasure from such a spectacle, or withstand the motions of the tenderest compassion and sympathy.⁴⁸

This example illustrates how Hume's idea of the misfortune of these people, known through contiguity, is transformed into a corresponding impression. Hume concludes that individuals are unaffected by comparison because their idea of another's passion is weak. On the other hand, they develop an intense idea because they are affected by sympathy. The point is, in order to sympathize, people must experience the same feelings. At this point, the democratic features that characterize Hume's notion of sympathy become apparent. According to Hume, everyone has the capacity to sympathize. Sympathy tends to diminish differences among people; men are equal in their capacity to understand the thoughts and feelings of others, a principle that becomes apparent when Hume examines sympathy in terms of fellow feeling. There are two kinds of sympathetic responses Hume considers democratic, one which he describes as cognitive fellow-feeling, and an extensive sympathy or a kind of emotional infection.⁴⁹

Sympathy is a process in which men become observers of each other's behavior. When I observe someone laughing, I assume he is happy. I reach this conclusion when I conceive

an ideal conception of happiness which is then communicated to me as an actual feeling of happiness. In order to sympathize with B, there is a realization by A that B can feel pain and pleasure. According to Hume, sympathy involves a sharing and transfer of feeling known as 'fellow-feeling'. It does not follow that A develops fellow-feeling for B because B experienced pain or pleasure. What must first occur is that A acquires limited understanding of B's state of mind. Fellow-feeling suggests that a rational frame of reference is used to comprehend a person's joy and sorrow. I cannot sympathize with someone unless I know what it is to feel joy or sorrow. Sympathy implies cognitive fellow-feeling, an understanding that the feelings of joy and sorrow exist in someone else.

Cognitive fellow-feeling represents a sufficient but not necessary condition for sympathy. It is possible through an error in judgment to make a mistake regarding another person's state of mind. For instance, a blind man is helped across the street when he has not requested assistance. A sympathetic response was inappropriate, since the blind man can use his cane to cross the street. In a more extreme situation, someone's so-called sympathetic response can become misguided if they fail to realize the best way to help someone. When a homeless individual is told to get a job this can be perceived as giving sympathy,

but it fails to alleviate the pain and suffering. This example points to another problem with cognitive fellow-feeling. While one individual can sympathize with the homeless, it is possible not to have an interest in helping them. Having pity or feeling sorry for the homeless does not generate a concern for their welfare. Sympathy requires putting oneself as the other in a situation. In other words, we view others as we want others to view us. This process, by which sympathy allows man to reach consensus or agreement, not only establishes the terms by which man becomes an impartial spectator, it also demonstrates why sympathy is at the same time a democratic principle. The example Hume employs of the impartial spectator is appreciation of a beautiful face. We derive pleasure easily from two yards away and less pleasure from twenty yards. However, while distance does affect the pleasure we may derive from considering a beautiful face, it does not affect our reasons for doing so. We learn from experience to make a correct judgement about a person's beauty, regardless of our own vantage point. Man assumes the role of impartial spectator because he becomes concerned with approving of and disapproving of tendencies and dispositions in ourselves and others in society. Hume equates adopting the perspective of a sympathetic impartial spectator with the ability to establish moral distinctions.

Moral evaluation develops from feelings or sentiments. We tend to approve of someone who experiences pleasure rather than pain. It is apparent we must distinguish pains and pleasures, because moral distinctions are derived from particular pains and pleasures. There is a qualitative difference between moral and nonmoral pains and pleasures.

Qualities which are morally relevant or immediately agreeable to others and to an individual are determined by judgments regarding the tendencies of these virtues. Then 'the mere survey' of these qualities which give pain and pleasure and therefore become virtues and vices, allows man to assume the perspective of a spectator, someone who adopts "a common point of view, from which their object, and which might cause it to appear the same to all of them."⁵⁰ Then the qualities and dispositions that exist in an individual and others, and that are known through sympathy, create in a spectator feelings of moral approval and disapproval. A spectator can sympathize with either a pain or pleasure which an individual possesses as a trait or habit:

A person in whom we discover any passion or habit, which originally is only incommodious to himself, becomes disagreeable to us, merely on its account ...⁵¹

An impartial spectator can also sympathize with pains and pleasures found in others such as:

Wit, and a certain easy and disengag'd behavior, are qualities immediately

agreeable to others and command their love and esteem.⁵²

When we assume an impartial point of view, we place ourselves in a situation where we view ourselves as others see us: "A man will be mortified if you tell him he has stinking breath: tho' tis evidently no annoyance to himself."⁵³ When we sympathize with ourselves, this leads to worry and concern over what sort of impression we are making with complete strangers.

An impartial spectator can also sympathize with a rival: "The good qualities of an enemy are hurtful to us but may still command our esteem and respect."⁵⁴ My admiration of 'the good qualities of a rival', from an impartial viewpoint allows me not only to admire those qualities, but also to contemplate how these qualities in relation to our competition can lead to my defeat.

Sympathy is a process through which man becomes an impartial spectator through shared social experiences, which result in the creation of general rules for judging conduct:

The best method of reconciling us to this opinion is to take a general survey of the universe, and observe the force of sympathy thro' the whole animal creation and the easy communication of sentiments from one thinking being to another ... We can form no wish, which has not a reference to society. A perfect solitude is, perhaps the greatest punishment we can suffer. Every pleasure languishes when enjoy'd apart from company, and every pain becomes more cruel and intolerable.

Whatever other passions we may be actuated by: pride, ambition, avarice, curiosity, revenge or lust; the sole animating principle of them all is sympathy ...⁵⁵

Man functions as an impartial spectator when he observes uniform social experiences, which in turn generate a propensity to formulate rules:

... in order to establish a general rule and extend it beyond its proper bounds, there is requir'd a certain uniformity in our experiences ...⁵⁶

Sympathy with an impartial spectator describes man's search for a common or general viewpoint, which occurs when individuals exclude references to themselves and consider the thoughts and feelings of others. Hume's notion of an impartial spectator constitutes an important aspect of what is needed to formulate a moral quality of politics, that is, a common good. The search for a common viewpoint means taking into account man's present and future pains and pleasures. By an imaginary change of circumstance, the spectator exposes himself to the identical conditions someone is experiencing. This occurs because what man experiences in society produces general rules which in turn affect the imagination. The pains and pleasures do not belong to ourselves or exist at the present time in other people.

For supposing I saw a person perfectly unknown to me, who, while asleep in the fields was in danger of being trod under

foot by horses, I should immediately run to his assistance; and in this I shou'd be actuated by the same principle of sympathy ...⁵⁷

It is the ability to put oneself in another person's shoes. The fact that Hume attributes to sympathy an ability to imagine another person's future pains and pleasures can help us understand how this applies to a political system founded on democratic principles. By an imaginary change of circumstance, Hume argues, it is possible to understand injustice in terms of how class position is maintained and reinforced by imagining that those below us live an unpleasant existence. The following example illustrates how this occurs: "A rich man feels the felicity of his condition better by opposing it to that of a beggar."⁵⁸ Hume then demonstrates how sympathy can overcome injustice, which works against democracy.

An important underlying theme is the use of the impartial spectator to explain politics in Hume's political essays. The textual evidence appears in "That Politics may be Reduced to A Science," where Hume, as an impartial observer, establishes a relevant historical context for various forms of government. "It may be pronounced as an universal axiom in politics, that an hereditary prince, a nobility without vassals, and a people voting by their representatives, form the best Monarchy, Aristocracy, and Democracy."⁵⁹ A social foundation for politics is

established in accordance with historical impartial observations. In the essay "Of the Principles of Government," 'opinion of interest' and 'opinion of right' are examples of how society establishes a sympathetic allegiance towards a particular government. In "Of the Origin of Government" Hume's argument is consistent with the one presented in the Treatise, that government develops from social relations: "Man, born in a family is compelled to maintain society, from necessity, from natural inclinations and from habit. The same creature in his farther progress is engaged to establish political society."⁶⁰

Consider also the essays "Of the Independency of Parliament" and "Of Parties," where Hume explores political instability as a breakdown in society's ability to judge what is in its best interest, namely the maintenance of political stability:

"Factions subvert government, render laws impotent, and beget the fiercest animosities among men of the same nation, who ought to give mutual assistance and protection to each other."⁶¹ Hume's scheme for political stability as presented in "Of the Independency of Parliament" includes an important theme that also appears in his History of England, that a mixed form of government represents an institutional framework through which society can attain impartial judgments: "... any plan of government, real or imaginary,

where the power is distributed among several courts and several orders of men, we should always consider the separate intent of each court, and each order; and if we find that, by the skilful division of power, this interest must necessarily, in its operation concur with public, we must pronounce that government to be wise and happy."⁶²

Hume's discussion of political parties in the essay "The Parties of Great Britain," provides historical examples to support an argument similar to one he formulates in the Treatise; impartial judgments are a solution to social conflict manifested as political divisions within the structure of government. As an impartial observer, Hume concludes that disputes between political parties manifest the shifting historical relation between liberty and authority. An understanding of this relation is essential in order to determine a foundation for politics. In "The Parties of Great Britain" Hume uses party disputes to demonstrate how impartial judgments about politics must shift in accordance with their historical context. The necessity of placing politics within an historical context is clearly demonstrated in "Of the Coalition of Parties" where Hume carefully qualifies impartial judgments as the process of weighing what is true and false in a political perspective using history as a guide. "We shall proceed to exercise the same moderation with regard to the historical

disputes between the parties, by proving each of them was justified by plausible topics ... "63 At issue is the application of sympathy to circles of people beyond our immediate family and friends.⁶⁴ Our motivation to obey 'rules of justice' is most intense in a small society where it is easy to sympathize with violations. As the population grows, and territory increases, our ability to sympathize with violations of the rules of justice increases, because the persons affected bear no direct relation to us.

As society grows, the motive to observe rules of justice from enlightened self-interest diminishes for the individual, because his self-interest is not involved. Hume acknowledges that occasional violations of the rules of justice in society do not disrupt society; only when injustice becomes so widespread is the order and stability of society threatened. We tend to sympathize when we or members of our family are the targets of another person's unjust acts. Hume considers a situation when other people unknown to us are the victims of injustice. Our memory of the time when family members or friends were subjected to unjust acts, allows us to imagine ourselves in the situation of those who felt injustice. Imagining other people suffering injustice, we can learn to apply the judgement of an impartial spectator to ourselves, if we are inclined to

perform unjust acts. As society develops, we become aware that violating rules of justice undermines the social order:

... when injustice is so distant from us as no way to affect our interest, it still displeases us; because we consider it as prejudicial to human society, and pernicious to everyone that approaches the person guilty of it.⁶⁵

According to Hume, at first man can only sympathize with the effects of injustice. These effects cause us to sympathize, providing we have also felt pain and suffering due to unjust acts. In the Treatise, Hume presents an ahistorical definition of an impartial observer of politics derived from sympathy for a common interest. His intention is to offer sympathy for a common interest as a description of an ideal political system in which social divisions are absent. On the other hand, in the History of England Hume describes a concrete historical version of sympathy as establishing a social foundation for politics. There is an important passage in the Treatise, where Hume evaluates an individual who fails to perform an obligation; he concludes this indicates a 'defect or imperfection':

And where an action is not requir'd by any passion, it cannot be requir'd by any natural obligation; since it may be omitted without proving any defect or imperfection in the mind ...⁶⁶

Failure to perform an obligation produces an unpleasant feeling. Since morality is derived from our sentiments, when a certain feeling or quality of the mind tends to

please us, it is virtuous; their non-performance upsets us. Hume takes this one step further; neglecting an obligation makes us angry, this anger is turned inward producing self-hatred:

When any virtuous motive or principle is common in human nature, a person, who feels in his heart devoid of that principle, may hate himself upon that account without the motive from a certain sense of duty.⁶⁷

This quote also implies that while it is possible that someone may lack moral qualities or may find himself in a situation which does not require moral motives, he can still act as if he possessed those qualities or motives. If an individual observes, as other men do that it is virtuous to perform obligations, then individuals will hate themselves for failing to perform them. According to Hume, the possibility of self-hatred creates a tendency for man to behave in a just manner. Hume takes into account the problem inherent in this argument, whether the ability to sympathize with the effects of injustice is due to natural or artificial virtues. Since social conventions are perpetuated by an obligation to perform artificial virtues, then a failure to perform artificial virtues does not indicate a natural 'defect or imperfection' in man's nature. Man cannot hate himself for failing to perform artificial virtues. Therefore, since justice is an artificial virtue, it cannot acquire its moral quality from natural virtues.

This means that sympathy as a natural motive cannot explain why man wants to perform just acts.

Hume's reply is that while social conventions generate rules which lead to justice, an artificial virtue, nevertheless natural motives remain in society. If man recognizes that he lacks a natural virtue, which is the performance of just acts, he develops self-hatred. It is also possible for man to hate himself for performing unjust acts due to natural motives after social conventions are established. This serves to reestablish a relation between sympathy and politics. The argument Hume formulates is similar to the one Rousseau proposes in The Social Contract that freedom is realized when man stops acting in accordance with self-interest and seeks to promote a general or common interest. In this sense, Hume and Rousseau define freedom in terms of overcoming obstacles that stand in the way of man realizing his potential. What stands in the way is self-interest. For Hume, sympathy for a public interest develops in the absence of injustice. Man sympathizes for the public interest only after there is a consensus that individual interests in society are not engaged in unjust acts:

Taking any single act, my justice may be pernicious in every respect; and 'tis only upon the supposition, that others are to imitate my example, that I can be induc'd to embrace that virtue; since nothing but this combination can render

justice advantageous, or afford me my motives to conform my self to its rulers.⁶⁸

When man sympathizes with the effects of injustice, this becomes a means to an end, the end being a public interest. People sympathize with justice because of its moral character. Sympathy for a public interest means we morally approve a disposition which tends to be useful for someone else.

An interesting and formidable objection to the establishment of a relation between sympathy and politics results from the institution of the development of private property. Hume's analysis of property is useful in showing how he deconstructs a natural definition of politics founded on sympathy. Furthermore, there is ample textual evidence in the Treatise to form a case that Hume was a critic of private property. His critical perspective on private property becomes all the more apparent when it is compared with that of Rousseau.

Footnotes

⁴⁵Treatise, p. 317.

⁴⁶Ibid, p. 365.

⁴⁷Ibid, p. 576.

⁴⁸Ibid, p. 594.

⁴⁹The division of sympathy into cognitive fellow feeling and emotional infection is a theme in Pall Ardal's Passion and Value in Hume's Treatise (Edinburgh: University Press, 1966) and Philip Mercer's Sympathy and Ethics (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972).

⁵⁰Ibid, p. 591.

⁵¹Ibid, p. 589.

⁵²Ibid, p. 590.

⁵³Ibid, p. 589.

⁵⁴Ibid, p. 472.

⁵⁵Ibid, pp. 362-363.

⁵⁶Ibid, p. 362.

⁵⁷Ibid, p. 385. Sympathy is extended through the imagination. Hume's argument for the existence of sympathy is strengthened when he describes its use in larger social interactions. The same argument is presented in R.W. Altmann's "Hume on Sympathy" Southwestern Journal of Philosophy, 1980 and in Christopher Cherry's "Knowing, Imagining and Sympathizing" Ratio, 1980.

⁵⁸Treatise, p. 316.

⁵⁹David Hume, Essays: Moral, Political and Literary, "That Politics May be Reduced to a Science," (Indiana: Indianapolis, 1985) p. 18.

⁶⁰Hume, "Of the Origin of Government," p. 37.

⁶¹Hume, "Of Parties," p. 55.

⁶²Hume, "Of the Independency of Parliament," p. 43.

⁶³Hume, "Of the Coalition of Parties," p. 494.

⁶⁴In "The Case for Hume's Nonutilitarianism" Journal of the History of Philosophy, October 1977, Aryeh Botwinick also argues that sympathy can extend beyond family and friends onto society.

⁶⁵Treatise, p. 499.

⁶⁶Treatise, p. 518.

⁶⁷Ibid, p. 479.

⁶⁸Ibid, p. 498.

CHAPTER III: HUME'S POLITICAL ECONOMY

In this chapter, the purpose is to show how Hume established a definition of property, which is artificial. An important part of this discussion is an explanation of why Hume first seems to accept a natural definition of property, derived from two sources--man's labor and his passions. We can begin to understand Hume's eventual shift from a natural to an artificial definition of property by taking into account his description of civil society. While Hume insists civil society operates as a realm that allows for man's passionate pursuit of property, he also demonstrates why society should curb this pursuit. He then introduces the ways that society forms rules or artifices in order to define property.

Hume's analysis of property begins with its appearance. The starting point is the relation between property and how man labors. Hume regards labor as a life activity, the means with which man organizes social relations and interacts with nature. It is through labor that man becomes conscious and separates himself from the rest of nature:

Brute-creatures have many of their necessities supplied by nature, being cloathed and armed by this beneficent parent of all things ... But man, exposed naked and indigent to the rude elements, rises slowly from that

helpless state ... Everything is sold to
 skill and labour; and where nature
 furnishes the materials, they are still
 rude and unfinished, till industry ...
 refines them from their brute state
 ...⁶⁹

Labor enables man to acquire not only what is essential for his survival, but also that which fulfills his other needs. "Every person, if possible, ought to enjoy the fruits of his labour, in a full possession of all the necessaries, and many of the conveniences of life."⁷⁰

Hume's historical analysis of labor develops in three stages. Historical changes in the labor process make possible the transition from one stage to the next. The social organization of labor reflects these historical changes. In his savage or primitive state, man secures what is necessary for survival by hunting and fishing. Tools and weapons are simple and easily made. In time, man acquires the skills with which to cultivate the soil, leading to the second, or agricultural stage. It is Hume's discussion of agriculture which provides the first insights into his analysis of private property. In his Essay, "Of Interest," Hume writes:

When a people have emerged ever so little from a savage state, and their numbers have increased beyond the original multitude, there must immediately arise an inequality of property; and while some possess large tracts of land, others are confined within narrow limits, and some are entirely without any landed property.

Those who possess more land than they can labour, employ those who possess none, and agree to receive a determinate part of the product.⁷¹

This quote offers important historical clues to what Hume considers the origin of private property. Here, he unequivocally states that a social division of labor is inherent in private property. The excess or surplus of what is socially produced becomes privatized, creating a division between owners and non-owners. Hume uses this discussion to trace the historical development of social classes. The social division of labor operates so that owners own what labor produces, and therefore maintain control over non-owners.

In rude unpolished nations, where the arts are neglected, all labour is bestowed on the cultivation of the ground; and the whole society is divided into two classes, proprietors of land, and their vassals or tenants. The latter are necessarily dependent, and fitted for slavery and subjection, especially where they possess no riches.⁷²

Intrinsic to Hume's discussion about the historical transition from one stage in the labor process to another, is his contention that the exploitation of one class by another is what makes the advance of civilization possible. Hume describes civilization as those refinements in human life which lead to the enjoyment of luxuries. An accumulation of labor, or what Hume refers to as a "stock of

labor," produces the luxuries which advance civilization. The shift produces the luxuries which advance civilization. The shift from agriculture to industry occurs when one group of owners--merchants--replaces another group--landowners.

Merchants, on the contrary, beget industry, by serving as canals to convey their frugality, they acquire great power over that industry, and collect a large property in the labour and commodities, which they are the chief instruments in producing.⁷³

The appearance of a merchant class is due, in part, to an expansion of trade. This increase in trade is attributed to the appearance of specialized crafts, practiced, for example, by weavers, tailors, carpenters, smiths. Hume discusses this historical trend in terms of the growth of towns which become centers for trading and exporting. In their role in helping goods reach the marketplace, merchants operate as middlemen and therefore take a share of the profits.

Hence the origin of merchants, one of the most useful races of men, who serve as agents between those parts of the state, that are wholly unacquainted and as ignorant of each other's necessities.⁷⁴

In the Essays, Hume offers a general historical sketch of private property. However, in the Treatise, we find a far more detailed analysis. Hume starts by considering how private property appears in civil society. He contends that labor is the foundation of social cooperation, producing and

reproducing all that is necessary for society. He supports this contention by demonstrating how the example of Robinson Crusoe, an individual who labors by himself, is irrelevant.

When any individual person labours apart, and only for himself, his force is too small to execute any considerable work; his labour being employ'd in supplying all his different necessities, he never attains a perfection in any particular art; and as his force and success are not at all times equal, the least failure in either of these particulars must be attended with inevitable ruin and misery.⁷⁵

There are practical difficulties associated with accepting a Robinson Crusoe labor model. Since an individual's productive capacity is limited, securing what is necessary for subsistence is always in doubt. It is also doubtful in most instances, that he has or will be able to acquire the skills necessary for him to labor. In criticizing the Robinson Crusoe model, Hume shows why man must exchange his labor within a social framework. The advantage of a social organization of labor is that when everyone exchanges their labor, society has the capacity to produce what is socially necessary. The division of labor also promotes greater skill (i.e. productivity). The exchange insures that when individuals labor, they can acquire objects for use. Hume defines such possessions as objects which can be used and abused by their owners.

We are said to be in possession of anything, not only when we immediately

touch it, as to have it in our power to use it; and may move, alter, or destroy it, according to our present pleasure or advantage.⁷⁶

The realm where goods and services are exchanged, allowing individuals to pursue their self-interest, is civil society.

The stability of civil society, Hume maintains, depends on defining and recognizing possessions. Once possessions are recognized, they can be protected; this protection averts conflicts between individuals. Left unregulated, a relentless acquisition of possessions insures social conflict.

This avidity alone, of acquiring goods and possessions for ourselves and our nearest friends, is insatiable, perpetual, universal, and directly destructive of society.⁷⁷

Hume eventually proposes a tentative solution to the avidity associated with the pursuit of property in the form of rules which govern acquisition. The discussion that follows shows how property develops in civil society, starting from the family. When civil society regulates possessions, however, individuals feel their possessions are safe. The family assumes an important role in educating its members to value possessions. Representing civil society in miniature, the family organizes and distributes possessions among its members.

Once an individual leaves the family, he enters civil society with, what Hume terms "three species of goods."

Hume maintains that an individual is secure in his own mental abilities. In other words, no one can take away another person's mental functions. The second "species" regards a person's physical powers, which Hume acknowledges can be "ravish'd from us." Still, the ravisher cannot appropriate an individual's physical capacities for his own use. Only the third "species," "the enjoyment of such possessions," can be appropriated by others. Hume means that possessions can be appropriated--or transferred--without changing the individual to whom they belong. In part, this transference insures the stability of possessions in civil society. By transferring possessions, individuals can discard or exchange objects of equal and unequal value. Such transference also explains buyers and sellers in the marketplace. But property has to be analyzed further to lay bare its relation to inequality and domination.

In civil society, Hume asserts, an individual owns his capacity to labor. A man's labor is regarded as a possession which he is free to use. But, according to Hume, he does not own his labor. For Hume, private property is distinct from possession and includes the idea of mine and thine and the critical notion of the exclusion of others from the use of the objects. Hume then investigates how private property creates and perpetuates the distinction

between mine and thine and with it the exclusion of others from the use of it.

The foundation of private property is ownership. Something which becomes an individual's property is under the owner's complete control. In the Treatise, Hume discusses "dominion" or ownership as a relation between a person and other people with regard to an object. The example used to illustrate "dominion," is a man that hires a horse for a day. Since he has exclusive right to use it, he is, for that day, considered its owner. His ownership is limited by time, but at the time of use, it is not in question. To Hume, ownership is the right to exert control over something. My property is something which is under the force of my will. Hume insists private property is not the physical thing or object that is owned; instead, it is the right of "dominion" over the object. A thing or object is not property, but it is the foundation for an idea of property which emerges in relation to rights over objects. Private property describes an owner's exclusive rights in relation to a thing.

The horse is part of the ownership relation. The owner is considered the subject of this relation, while the rights are the content which define it. Since Hume defines property as a relation between a person and an object, it follows that his account of this relation is explained by

the three principles of association--resemblance, contiguity, causation. The preceding discussion of the relation between an individual and a horse illustrates why Hume considers property as a species of causation. For Hume, there is a causal relation between two objects when one is the cause of the other, and has the power to produce motion in the other object. Ownership is a causal relation in that property is a customary mental relation. In other words, it is impossible to understand property unless we refer "to morality or sentiments of the mind ..."78 Hume proceeds to investigate the social psychology of market relations in terms of man's passions.

The discussion in the Treatise demonstrates how man's passions help in an understanding of private property. Passion is an original force which motivates man to act. The reason passion appears first is that it isn't derived or copied from anything else. When I am angry, I possess the passion of anger, which is understood without reference to something else. When a passion is felt, what we are feeling is the effect of an intense force upon us. Hume's examination of passion unfolds from the basic distinction between impressions and ideas. There is a difference between impressions of sensation and those of reflection. "Of the first kind are all impressions of the sense, and all bodily pains and pleasures: of the second are the passions,

and other emotions resembling them."⁷⁹ What makes an impression of sensation original is that it is not the product of other impressions or ideas. Our pains and pleasures appear as a source of our passions. Thus, our passions are always impressions of reflection, which ultimately can be traced by the impressions of sensation. Passions develop from pain or from pleasure, they are regarded as direct; when other qualities are also necessary, they are regarded as indirect. Hume also distinguishes between passions which are calm and those which are violent. "Of the first kind is the sense of beauty and deformity in action, composition and external objects. Of the second are passions of love and hatred, grief and joy, pride and humility."⁸⁰ There is also an important difference between calm and violent passions in contrast to direct and indirect passions. The latter take into account how passions appear, while calm and violent passions are defined by the strength of what is felt. For instance, a calm passion is understood as something which is felt as mild in its intensity. On the other hand, a violent passion, such as revenge or hunger is felt with greater intensity.

The indirect passion of pride, Hume argues, is the character trait associated with private property. His epistemology offers insight into how a notion of selfhood is important for understanding the development of property in

civil society. Pride and humility consider the self as the object; love and hate regard another person as the object. Since pride and humility are opposite passions, they must therefore have different causes. "Tis impossible a man can at the same time be both proud and humble."⁸¹ Passions tend to be contrary to each other. Different qualities cause the passions of pride and humility. When someone feels proud, the cause is a quality found in the individual. We can also feel proud because of qualities that exist in other individuals, provided those individuals are related to us. I can feel proud of my house and feel proud regarding the accomplishments of a relative or friend. Pride develops when an object has a close relation to someone.

For Hume, "the passion of pride is that of property." In other words, as an internal relation, "property may be look'd upon as a particular species of causation."⁸² Pride is considered as a cause of private property. Objects which are contiguous to an individual are a source of pride. It is "the free use and possession" of objects, by an individual which establishes a relationship between pride and property. In fact, owners often regard objects as extensions of themselves.

Everything belonging to a vain man is
the best that is anywhere to be found.
His houses, equipage, furniture,
cloathes, horses, hounds, excel all
others in this conceit; and 'tis easy to
observe, that from the least advantage

in any of these, he draws a new subject
of pride and vanity.⁸³

In civil society, individuals regard each other as a means to an end, which is the acquisition of material goods. The pride an individual feels in civil society is as an owner, a possessor of objects. Hume illustrates how the market affects individuals by fostering "avidity". There is the description of a miser, representing the contradictions of a market society, in which the enjoyment of possessions means accumulation without use.

A miser receives delight from his money;
that is, from the power it affords him
of procuring all the pleasures and
conveniences of life, tho' he knows he
had enjoy'd his riches for forty years
without ever employing them ...⁸⁴

Still, the pride individuals feel from owning things is a sufficient, but not a necessary cause of private property. A necessary cause of private property in civil society only occurs once private ownership becomes a regular experience for individuals. It is in this sense, that Hume describes property as a "species of causation". There is another reason why there is a relation between property and causation. Hume considers pride as a sufficient (but not necessary) cause of private property; a necessary cause is the exclusion of others from owning or possessing valued objects.

'Tis sufficient to observe on this
occasion that, property may be defin'd,

such a relation betwixt a person and an object as permits him, but forbids any other, the free use and possession of it
 ...⁸⁵

The effect of private property is that valued possessions are acquired and the owner can exclude others from using them. As a right, private property represents an enforceable claim by which an individual can exclude others from using or benefitting from the use of a valued possession.

This intense conflict between individuals in civil society seeking to exclude each other from making acquisitions is an indication Hume conceives a link between passion and property. For Hume, man in civil society is motivated by his passions. Private property becomes a rational solution to man unleashing his passions in civil society. Hume examines the dual purpose of civil society; on the one hand civil society allows man to release his passions, but at the same time it attempts to regulate them.

Regarding the "avidity of acquiring goods and possessions" Hume indicates that this passion is so powerful and destructive that the means to control it must involve either redirecting or restraining this passion.

There is no passion, therefore, capable of controlling the interested affection, but the affection itself, by an alteration of its direction. Now this alteration must necessarily take place upon the least reflection; since 'tis evidence, that the passion is better

satisfy'd by its restraint, than by its
liberty ...⁸⁶

As Hume examines the consequences of this relentless pursuit of property in civil society, he proposes a solution in the form of rules to regulate acquisition. This passion to acquire property originates in civil society which, in turn, further promotes it. In effect, man's passions are satisfied by a continuous pursuit of property. "The larger our possessions are, the more ability we have of gratifying all our appetites."⁸⁷

Ironically, civil society, which allows man the free expression of his passions also devises the means for controlling them. Hume's analysis in the Treatise describes how passion is transformed into the rational pursuit of self-interest, which he considers a solution to the intensity of man's passions in civil society. Self-interest directed towards the acquisition of property is evidence of a shift in man's emphasis from violent to calm passions. The triumph of calm over violent passions is discussed in the essay "Of Interest". "It is an infallible consequence of all industrious professions, to beget frugality and make the love of gain prevail over the love of pleasure."⁸⁸ The "avidity" with which individuals seek to acquire property seems to be sublimated, transformed into a rational pursuit of property which, in turn, prevents conflict in society.

There is an important underlying theme which emerges from Hume's analysis of market relations; it is how property tends to undermine a natural definition of politics founded on sympathy for a common interest. Once Hume describes how this occurs, he paves the way for introducing the reasons why rules regarding property are artificial and why they presuppose a definition of politics based on artifice. There is a conflict between private property and sympathy for a common interest; in fact, Hume argues, private property threatens social stability.

For Hume, sympathy is a principle of communication that allows one individual to participate in another's feelings. What makes that participation possible is the fact that people in society resemble one another. This resemblance, which overcomes boundaries between individuals, acts to attract individuals in society, and therefore make them social. Through sympathy, an individual can undergo an imaginary change of circumstance, placing himself in another's situation and feeling the sentiments being felt by that other person. Because he can share so intimately in the feelings of another, an individual can form moral judgments about other members in society. This is because, Hume argues, he has become an impartial spectator.

According to Hume, the impartial spectator is an imaginary third person who represents an objective standard

against which we judge behavior. The spectator is a fictitious personality, at the same time separate and yet derived from the individual.

Hume acknowledges that while it is in the interests of individuals to form society and sympathize with a common interest, they are, at the same time, compelled to acquire property. These competing interests constitute the underlying tension between maintaining social relations on the one hand, and the pursuit of private property on the other. Through sympathy, individuals recognize it is in their best interest to live in society. Sympathy for a common interest functions so that individuals identify the very existence of society with the formation of impartial moral judgments. When man determines, through the impartial spectator, what is good for society, he reaches the conclusion that social cooperation is essential. In other words, sympathy for a common interest describes how individuals see it is in their best interest to include other individuals in order to achieve social cooperation.

In contrast, Hume defines private property as the ability of one individual to exclude another from acquiring and owning possessions. Sympathy for a common interest is in concert with harmonious social cooperation, but the pursuit of private property works against social cooperation. Civil society reflects the interests of those

individuals who can exclude others from acquiring property. The overall effect is that this exclusion reduces the common interests of society to the interests of property owners. What is particularly interesting here is Hume's description of how the market limits man's ability to sympathize.

Hume argues private property distorts man's ability to function as an impartial spectator. In a market economy, sympathy is no longer extensive and no longer serves as a basis for impartial moral judgments; because it becomes limited or partial, serving to communicate the passions of individuals interested in the pursuit of property. This occurs because the market fosters a tendency for individuals to sympathize with others who reap the benefits of private ownership. In effect, consideration of a common good for society is reduced to self-interested individuals. In the section of the Treatise entitled "Of our Esteem for the Rich and Powerful," Hume depicts how sympathy for riches is a product of a system of private ownership.

Now I assert that where we esteem a person upon account of his riches, we must enter into this sentiment of the proprietor, and that without such a sympathy the idea of the agreeable objects, which they give him the power to produce, would have a feeble influence upon us.⁸⁹

This is the ideology of the market, reality as defined by the pursuit of property. It is a reality in which the

pursuit of property shapes the perceptions of owners and non-owners.

But I carry this farther, and observe, not only that we respect the rich and powerful, where they shew no inclination to serve us, but also when they lie so much out of the sphere of their activity, that they cannot be suppos'd to be endow'd with that power.⁹⁰

This quote is important for it helps us to gain insight into how Hume depicts the ideology of the market. Our sympathy for the rich is an illustration of an identification with the aggressor, which the market fosters. Hume offers an interesting description of how the market in the name of self-interest portrays property as something positive, when in reality it has negative consequences. Identification with the oppressor, the rich and powerful, indicates the extent to which individuals feel powerless confronted with a market society. There is an unequal distribution of rewards in the market. While individuals are in a formal sense equal to pursue property, there are actual differences which determine how property is acquired. Wealth and class position are reproduced and concentrated over time. The ideology of the market overlooks this fact through the notion of equal access. Hume's insight is that what perpetuates the market is the blurring of the distinction between appearance and reality. The market functions so long as everyone agrees there is formal equality of access

to property. When this occurs, owners can justify what they own because there was a semblance of equality in the market. In effect, sympathy for the rich is how non-owners overlook the difference between their situation and that of owners of property, they identify with owners in order to escape their predicament of nonownership. Yet, despite the ideology of the market, it is still possible for social conflict over property to occur. While owners and nonowners subscribe to the same market ideology, Hume points out that the basic distinction between them reflects how private property perpetuates a social division of labor.

The skin, pores, muscles and nerves of a day-labourer are different from those of a man of quality: So are his sentiments actions and manners. The different stations of life influence the whole fabric, external and internal.⁹¹

At this point, Hume begins to examine why government supports property and maintains it as an artificial invention. Since Hume considers social cooperation essential for the existence of society, and private property as a cause of conflict, a possible solution for Hume lies in social conventions, the rules of justice, which regulate property. Social conventions are an attempt by society to remedy conflicts over the distribution of property. What Hume intends to introduce is how an understanding of private property is therefore directly related to an understanding of politics. "'Tis very preposterous, therefore to imagine,

that we can have any idea of property, without fully comprehending the nature of justice ... "92 The social organization and distribution of property is the subject matter of politics. A conception of justice is essential in order to define property. "Our property is nothing but those goods, whose constant possession is established by the laws of society; that is by the laws of justice."93

Hume considers justice useful for reaching decisions regarding the allocation of things considered by society to be valuable. Social conventions regarding property develop when the self-interest of property owners becomes the common interest of society. The motivation to create such conventions is man's passionate pursuit of private property. This pursuit, unrestrained by social conventions, generates conflict because ownership rights are undefined. Social conventions regarding property are in effect the means through which individual owners establish basic agreements and thereby insure stable ownership.

Systems of justice therefore emerge within society as processes through which man settles disputes and establishes basic agreements. Hume views justice as useful for organizing social interactions. In effect, it is apparent for Hume that the development of property relations is a product of politics. The proof is found in Hume's analysis of rules.

There are important indications in the preceding discussion that Hume intends to embark on a critical analysis of property. The first indication is his examination of how property appears in civil society as the outgrowth of man's passions. But upon closer analysis, the market reveals an underlying complexity. Hume deepens his analysis by showing the problem is finding acceptable limits to the social costs which result from market relations. One important social cost is how the pursuit of property undercuts a natural definition of politics derived from sympathy for a common interest. What this leads to is a search for rules and a political system which will enforce them. Hume emphasizes, however, that efforts to impose rules on the market do not make the market less arbitrary. In fact, Hume demonstrates that rules for the acquisition of property are the most arbitrary feature of the market. Furthermore, these rules amount to an abstract rational justification for property, which upon careful scrutiny fail to truly legitimize property arrangements.

Footnotes

⁶⁹David Hume, Essays: Moral, Political and Literary "The Stoic" (Indiana: Indianapolis, 1985) pp. 146-147.

⁷⁰Hume, "Of Commerce," p. 265.

⁷¹Hume, "Of Interest," pp. 297-298.

⁷²Essays, "Of Refinement in the Arts" p. 277. A common subject for these thinkers who comprised the Scottish Enlightenment was an examination of property. See Paul Bowles "The Origin of Property and the Development of Scottish Historical Science" Journal of the History of Ideas, 1985; R. Pascal "Property and Society" Modern Quarterly, 1938; R. Meek "The Scottish Contribution to Marxist Sociology" in Economics Ideology and other Essays (New York: Chapman and Hall 1967); Duncan Forbes "Adam Smith and John Millar--Scientific Whiggism" Cambridge Journal, 1954.

⁷³Hume, "Of Interest", p. 301.

⁷⁴Ibid, p. 300.

⁷⁵Treatise, p. 485.

⁷⁶Ibid, p. 506.

⁷⁷Ibid, pp. 491-492.

⁷⁸Ibid, p. 515.

⁷⁹Ibid, p. 275.

⁸⁰Ibid, p. 276.

⁸¹Ibid, p. 278.

⁸²Ibid, p. 310.

⁸³Ibid., p. 310.

⁸⁴Ibid., p. 314.

⁸⁵Ibid., p. 310.

⁸⁶Ibid., p. 492.

⁸⁷Ibid., p. 492.

⁸⁸Hume, "Of Interest," p. 301. Hume's argument in the Treatise, that the goal of civil society is to redirect man's passionate pursuit of property is similar to the description of the market presented in A.O. Hirschman The Passions and the Interests (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977).

⁸⁹Treatise, p. 360.

⁹⁰Treatise, p. 361. In effect, Hume's analysis of the social psychology of the market bears a striking resemblance to Freud's "identification with the aggressor" concept. The point is, nonowners lack power and seek to escape their predicament by becoming owners who are powerful.

⁹¹Treatise, p. 402.

⁹²Treatise, p. 491.

⁹³Ibid. For a similar approach regarding the relation of Hume's theory of politics and his theory of property, see David Gauthier's "David Hume, Contractarian" The Philosophical Review, January 1979.

CHAPTER IV: A CRITICAL EXAMINATION OF POLITICAL ECONOMY

Consistent throughout Hume's examination of politics is the nature/artifice distinction. His intention is to demonstrate that so long as we maintain distinct boundaries between these terms, it is difficult to conceive of an adequate definition of politics. The preceding chapters demonstrated how Hume argues against this separation. He examined sympathy and property in order to show why a nature/artifice distinction is problematic. Sympathy for a common interest is rejected as the basis for a natural definition of politics when considered in relation to the development of private property. A case will be made to show that Hume rejects an artificial definition of politics founded on rules that regulate property.

Hume presents and dismisses rational justifications for private property. This places Hume in the company of other modern critics of property, such as Rousseau and Marx. In addition, Hume's insight is in recognizing the contradictory movements of private property as both maintaining and redirecting social conflict. The starting point is his discussion of rules that regulate property.

General rules are important to Hume's analysis of political economy, as well as useful explanations of man's

behavior. The starting point of general rules is man's propensity to generate assumptions from experience. The following is Hume's example of a general rule: "An Irishman cannot have wit, and a French cannot have solidity ..."⁹⁴ General rules are derived from the same principle from which our judgments regarding cause and effect are derived, constant conjunction. Once a certain number of regular experiences has been established, the imagination acts to extend the regularity of these circumstances to a resembling set of circumstances:

A man who has contracted a custom of eating fruit by the use of pears or peaches, will satisfy himself with melons, where he cannot find his favorite fruit; as one who has become a drunkard by the use of red wines, will be carried almost with the same violence to white if presented to him.⁹⁵

General rules are the product of how custom and resemblance affect the imagination. Custom affects the imagination which in turn leads to the formation of general rules. The imagination has the propensity to carry forward judgments in certain circumstances. For instance, the opinion that is established from a number of observations leads to a general rule established by the imagination that Irishmen lack wit. The imagination's propensity to form general rules is determined in part by a constant resemblance among objects. It is a function of imagining to supplement or fill in the gaps where data are missing. This

means that not only can imagination form general rules without the direct input of custom, but it can also form a general rule in opposition to one that has been established by custom. The general rules that an Irishman lacks wit or a Frenchman solidity, determined by custom, could be challenged by a general rule determined by the imagination, which identifies the former rule as "what we properly call prejudice." The imagination is capable of forming incorrect general rules. It can establish accidental or superfluous relations when it provides supplemental data.

The point is, rules derived from both experience and imagination are prone to error. Hume's intention is to show how we can correct rules which are derived from custom and imagination. This correction of rules underlies Hume's analysis of political economy. He investigates how rules which determine property are derived from experience and imagination.

The first rule regarding property, "stable possessions," is a product of social experience. Stable possessions appear from social conventions, which result from a developing social awareness between individuals. These common experiences eventually develop into established social practices. According to Hume, social conventions regarding property are needed in order to restrain self-

interested individuals who see no limits to this pursuit, and who therefore threaten social stability.

... the chief impediment to this project of society and partnership lies in the avidity and selfishness of their natural temper; to remedy which, they enter into a convention for the stability of possession, and for mutual restraint and forbearance.⁹⁶

This is the principle of a free market. Rules for stable possessions are used to restrain the interests of individuals pursuing property. If stable possessions are the basis for a rule regarding property, in effect, this rule serves to justify a right to property. On the other hand, if we cannot establish a rule for stable possessions from experience, then we cannot justify a right to property. Unstable possessions, in turn, negate a right to property.

Without a doubt, it is essential to any discussion of Hume's views on property to include Rousseau. Hume admits his intellectual debt to him in a letter:

For I will use the freedom of telling you bluntly, without affecting the Finesse of a well-turned compliment, that, of all men of letters in Europe, since the death of President Montesquieu, you are the person whom I most revere, both for the force of your genius and the Greatness of your mind.⁹⁷

Prior to their London meeting, Hume also expressed his honest opinion of Rousseau to his friend Gilbert Eliot. This letter proves that Hume read, digested and discussed

many of Rousseau's ideas. This justifies a comparison of Hume and Rousseau on property:

... the famous Rousseau, who is obliged to fly France, on account of some passage in a new Treatise of Education which he has published. You have believe, that it gave me great uneasiness that I could fulfill a duty which would have connected me with a man whose character and talents I so much admire. I do not remember whether I have ever had a conversation with you on the writings of that author, and I know not whether you esteem them as much as I do. For my part, though I see some tincture of extravagance in all of them, I also think I see so much eloquence and force of imagination and such an energy of expression, and such a boldness of conception ...⁹⁸

In many respects, Hume's analysis of property bears a striking resemblance to Rousseau's treatment in his Discourse on Inequality. When Hume and Rousseau trace the development of private property from its origins and consider its effects on civil society, they reach similar conclusions. They propose similar origins of private property, the distinction of 'mine and thine'. They consider this division between what I own and what others own as essential to the development of private property. Rousseau describes a man who encloses a parcel of land and states it is his:

The first man who, having enclosed a piece of ground, to whom it occurred to say this is mine and found people sufficiently simple to believe him, was the true founder of civil society.⁹⁹

For both Hume and Rousseau, man's situation as a part of nature and then his separation from it is the problem that leads to the development of private property. This process unfolds with man's need for self-preservation, which must involve social cooperation. But there are differences between Hume and Rousseau regarding man's natural condition. Hume portrays individuals in nature as either unable to secure basic necessities, or able to do so only with great difficulty. In sharp contrast, Rousseau describes individuals as self-sufficient, capable of surviving and fulfilling their needs:

... such as he must have issued from the hands of nature, I see an animal less strong than some, less agile than others, but all things considered, the most advantageously organized of all: I see him sating his hunger beneath an oak, slaking his thirst at the first stream, finding his bed at the foot of the same tree that supplied his meal and with that his needs are satisfied.¹⁰⁰

Rousseau's original man lives a nomadic existence, overall somewhat better off than animals. Family ties develop slowly, representing a faint semblance of social existence. For Hume, the family presupposes a larger society, but this is not the case for Rousseau, who argues there is no society because there are no permanent settlements which would allow man to acquire the vices and virtues which tend to follow social encounters. Without social relations, he concludes, man cannot conceive of private property. Rousseau believes

that man in his natural condition shares all, which rules out jealousy or quarrels.

Hume and Rousseau agree individuals will fully develop only within a social context. Labor is essential for creating social cooperation. But prior to the social organization of labor, Hume describes man as lacking many basic necessities and failing to satisfy his needs. Rousseau depicts stunted, underdeveloped individuals lacking motivation and curiosity:

His imagination depicts nothing to him; his heart asks nothing of him. His modest needs are so ready to hand, and he is so far from the degree of knowledge, that he can have neither foresight nor curiosity.¹⁰¹

To both, labor is a basis for social cooperation because it insures self-preservation and creates and expands civilization.

The development of private property is related to how civil society defines selfhood. Hume calls this notion 'pride' in the Treatise while Rousseau calls it 'amour propre' or self-love in the Discourse on Inequality. Both discussions reach the same conclusion, that private property is an extension of selfhood. In civil society, selfhood is defined as an individual's ability to exclude others from acquiring a valued object. A relentless and often unrestrained pursuit of property occupies the thoughts of

individuals in civil society. Hume speaks of an 'avidity' for goods, while Rousseau identifies a 'consuming ambition'.

... the ardent desire to raise one's relative fortune less out of genuine need than in order to place oneself above others, instill in all men a black inclination to harm one another, a secret jealousy which is all the more dangerous as it often assumes the mask of benevolence in order to strike its blow in greater safety: in a word, competition and rivalry on the one hand, conflict of interests on the other, and always a hidden desire to profit at another's expense, all these evils are the first effect of property ...¹⁰²

Rousseau's comments echo those found in the Treatise, where Hume describes the 'avidity of possessions' as insatiable and destructive, an overwhelming interest which exists among individuals in civil society. They also recognize how property tends to create a contradictory conception of individuality in civil society, promoting a divided self. The characteristics of this divided self is an individual who acknowledges that the affirmation of selfhood in civil society is acquiring property; at the same time, the individual affirms himself in a negative manner by excluding others from acquiring property. Other individuals regard the negation of your property or individuality as the affirmation of their individuality. The overall social effect is that an individual property owner is a contradictory notion because he affirms and denies his individuality at the same time. Hume and Rousseau discuss a

possible solution to the instability and conflict caused by private property in terms of the establishment of social conventions which regulate property. They agree that social conventions regarding property cannot exist outside society. Hume maintains that rules are essential to a notion of property.

There is a striking similarity in how Hume and Rousseau establish a relation between labor and property. They reject a Robinson Crusoe labor model in favor of a social description of labor which appears due to the agricultural revolution. The division of 'mine and thine' occurs when labor produces beyond what is necessary for the reproduction of society. It is obvious a case can be made that Hume and Rousseau are critics of private property, but there is also an indirect positive assessment which emerges from this discussion. Consider how Hume and Rousseau tend to distinguish possessions and property. This distinction demonstrates that Hume and Rousseau accept the fact that man has a basic need for material goods. They describe possessions as objects over which an individual has power. Labor entitles an individual to the right to own possessions that fulfill basic and developed needs. Hume and Rousseau agree with Locke on this point. Possessions are objects which everyone has a right to own. On the other hand, private property defines possessions in terms of how others

are excluded from owning. A right to acquire possessions is based on the premise that the distribution of material goods should be democratic. But, private property implies social goods are available only to those who devise the means to prevent others from gaining possession of them. Rousseau argues there is no property in a state of nature, because man is independent and self-sufficient. The formation of social relations is necessary for the development of the individual. Natural inequalities existing among individuals become social or artificial inequalities. Therefore, property is regarded as representing an artificial inequality that society has created.

While Hume and Rousseau develop a similar argument that property is a product of social conventions, there are important differences worth considering. One lies in how each determines the relation between property and inequality. Hume denies it is possible to draw a distinction between man as a property owner in society and as a non-owner outside society. He rejects Rousseau's contrast between natural and artificial equality. Finally, Hume questions Rousseau's contention that property is a symptom of an individual's social enslavement.

Hume's first objection is to Rousseau's contrast of a fictional state of nature with an established society. Social conventions regarding property exist prior to the

establishment of agreements among individuals. In fact, Hume states that individuals are born into a preexisting system of property relations. Rousseau considered the nature vs. artifice distinction important for understanding private property. Hume counters this claim arguing that, since individuals are understood in a social context, natural inequalities are understood in society.

In fact, Hume's underlying emphasis is that property promotes natural and artificial inequalities. The pursuit of property is natural for individuals in civil society; therefore natural inequalities are a reflection of this pursuit. Hume also argues that artificial inequalities appear in society as rules which regulate property. This is the basis of his final objection to Rousseau's conception of property; it is also the starting point of Hume's criticism of rules which determine property. Hume argues against Rousseau's claim that individuals are enslaved in society through the social organization of property. In fact, Hume maintains, society grants too much freedom to individuals in their pursuit of property. The problem is, man is unrestrained in civil society, without specific limits imposed on the acquisition of possessions. Hume identifies the solution with rules which govern stable possessions. Rules are intended to curb man's pursuit of property which knows no bounds.

There are social costs involved in creating rules for stable possessions. Organized according to rules, the market functions to promote inequality and scarcity. Hume acknowledges the fact that natural resources are limited; but scarcity only becomes an issue when society develops rules for the distribution of goods within a market setting. Inequality and scarcity are features of the market in which man's wants never match what is available. Since abundance would undercut the competition for goods, it is a concept foreign to the market.

The same effect arises from any alteration in the circumstances of mankind; as when there is such a plenty of anything as satisfies all the desires of men: In which case the distinction of property is entirely lost and everything remains in common.¹⁰³

The distribution of scarce goods is necessary for maintenance of the market. Scarcity presupposes unequal access to goods and services. General rules, which insure stable possessions, cannot justify a right to property since this right assumes that individuals share an equal ability with which to acquire property. The market, founded on excluding others, works against equal access in owning possessions. Inequality is the result of excluding others from acquiring property. Under these conditions, the right to property becomes nothing more than the ability to appropriate a desired object by any means necessary.

For Hume, there is a contrast between how property appears and how it actually operates in civil society. When we consider how property appears, that is, founded on formal equality, and then formulate a general rule that stable possessions justify a right to property, we have established a general rule derived from prejudice. Property defined as a rule for stable possessions is 'what we properly call prejudice', in the same way that we form a rule that an 'Irishman cannot have wit and a Frenchman cannot have solidity ... ' Rules for stable possessions are uncertain because they fail to take into account the social costs of property, such as inequality and scarcity, which man experiences in civil society. The reason Hume tends to equate property with inequality and scarcity is that private property cannot exist with what he calls 'perfect abundance'. Scarcity is functional to the continued existence of the market. The potential conflict caused by private property means rules for stable possessions are at best tentative.

If rules for stable possessions lack justification from experience, justifying private property could involve instead, Hume suggests, an appeal to abstract arguments such as 'transference of property by consent'. His intention here is to establish a relation between imagination and property. Hume considers specific categories which

represent transference by consent, such as occupation, prescription, accession and succession. Aspects of this discussion anticipate Proudhoun's arguments in his book What is Property?

In Hume's opening remarks, regarding the transference of property by consent, he indicates that whether or not property is useful it is 'attended with very considerable inconveniences'. The transference of property by consent does not involve physical or perceptible changes to that property. In other words, when one individual agrees to transfer what he owns to someone else, for example, a watch, it changes position from one arm to another, but this does not mean it is another person's property. The watch changes position but can still be owned by the watchless individual. If there are no physical or perceptible changes made in an object which has been transferred, then we cannot assume that a property relation has been established. The solution is 'symbolical delivery', which compensates for our inability to form an idea of property under these circumstances: "giving the keys of a granary is understood to be delivery of the corn contained in it ... "104 The point is, Hume considers property inconceivable as 'something real' without reference to 'the sentiments of the mind'. In other words, if we search for the physical or sensible aspects of objects we cannot conceive an idea of property. Instead, we must

look for a change in the sentiments people have about objects. Although there are no actual physical changes in objects, people feel differently about objects they have just acquired than they did about the same objects before they owned them. This is what Hume means by the 'morality of property'. We observe the way other people behave with something they identify as their property. These observations tell us how an object is treated by the owner, and other people accept this treatment of the object. This is consistent with Hume's claim that property is an 'internal relation'.

When an object is transferred and there is a change in ownership, both the former owner and the new owner experience a dispositional change in relation to the object. But ownership involves more than just a change of owners; there is also the symbolic spoken or written agreement. These agreements are determined by conventional and non-conventional behavior. The conventional aspects take into account established procedures for transference, while the nonconventional aspects concern new and useful exceptions to conventional rules.

The transference of property by consent would establish a right to property, if we could justify how the transfer occurs: "This relation of fitness may be common to several at once, 'tis liable to so many controversies." This quote

introduces Hume's investigation of whether or not occupation, prescription, accession and succession could justify a right to property. The fact that Hume refers to these categories indicates he examines property starting from the Roman law of property as explained in The Institutes of Justinian, where various rules are discussed in order to determine ownership. Before we consider these rules, it is important to restate the earlier argument that Hume was a critic of rational justifications or rules for property. This claim is supported in part by reference to the following quote which represents Hume's clearest statement against rules used to justify property:

The questions with regard to private property have filled infinite volumes of law and philosophy, if in both we add the commentators to the original text; and in the end, we may safely pronounce, that many of the rules, there established, are uncertain, ambiguous and arbitrary.¹⁰⁵

Establishing a right to property means taking into account disputes that involve the present owners. Settling disputes means being forced to consider the original owners. In addressing the issue of ownership, Hume raises the question, Is there an original right to property?

In order to justify present ownership, there must be an investigation of original ownership. Present possession is directly related to original possession. Hume describes various implications: first, rules formulated from social

conventions allow the present owners to hold onto their property without considering how they originally acquired property. Second, if property was acquired by force, this would negate a right to property, for the right assumes there was agreement between the parties involved. Third, present possessions are the inheritors of the original abuses which make property possible. In fact, present possessors could face the prospect of having to correct or in certain instances restore property, by what Hume terms 'restitution'. With these examples, Hume illustrates the difficulty in using present possession as a right to property.

When we investigate what constitutes a right to property, we must confront the issue of how the right originates. This is the case when we examine a right to property derived from occupation. Locke and Proudhon are relevant to this discussion. Hume's criticism of occupation is directed against Lock's labor theory of property in his Two Treatises of Government, and it anticipates Proudhon's criticism of occupation in What is Property? The obvious question raised regarding occupation is, who had it first? Occupation implies that property was secured by original acquisition, there were no previous owners. Without previous owners, the occupant avoids counterclaims to his occupancy of the land.

Hume raises objections regarding the implementation of occupation. An important characteristic of occupation which also affects the right of ownership involves measurement. When a potential property owner stakes his claim to a parcel of land, the question is, how far does this claim extend? For Hume, occupation cannot settle this issue, nor can it provide a remedy through the application of certain standards for land measurement. The imposition of standards regarding where acquisitions begin and end works against occupation, which is a conception of property considered nonconventional.

Hume argues that occupation produces results that are contrary to those originally intended. Occupation is supposed to insure man free access to property and establish set boundaries. The inability to determine boundaries represents an important defect of occupation. Hume uses the example of someone landing on a desert island as large as Great Britain. The individual could claim the whole island as his property. But if occupation defines a right to property from the physical presence of an owner, it is impossible for someone to possess a whole island. A similar argument is found in Proudhoun's What is Property? where he argues that property founded on occupation assumes an absolute right to property. However, since there may be no other person present to verify that right, and since

occupation works without agreement, then there can be no right to property from occupation. A mere claim to occupy a parcel of land is insufficient to establish a right to property. The occupation has to be actual in the sense that the individual changes the land in a way that identifies it as his own.

Locke's labor theory of property is one attempt to rescue a right to property derived from occupation. In essence, his theory consists of the following principles: all individuals have property in their bodies; therefore, their labor is their property; labor creates a distinction between something worked on and something unaltered; the basis for the distinction is that labor added something to the object; labor creates and adds value to an object; and, since it is labor which determines the value of objects appropriated, then it follows that the fruits of my labor and the pain endured to transform an object are clearly for my benefit.

In a footnote in the Treatise, Hume raises objections to Locke's labor theory of property. Hume's criticism has a certain resemblance to Proudhon in What is Property? With the following example, Hume undermines Locke's basic claim that labor produces property: "we possess a meadow by grazing our cattle upon it;"¹⁰⁶ what Hume implies is that we can occupy a parcel of land without putting our labor into

it. Hume stated that a right to property is a right to exclude others, and since exclusion means unequal access, then occupation fails to justify a right to property.

Proudhon makes a similar argument when he states: "To tell a man that he has property because he has arms and legs ... is to play upon words and add insult to injury."¹⁰⁷ Hume and Proudhon agree that occupation cannot justify a right to property because labor can only establish something worked on as a possession, which the individual can use and abuse. When an individual through his labor transforms a parcel of land, it becomes his possession for the time he occupies the land.

Hume's second objection to Locke's theory appears as a consequence of the preceding one: "This accounts for the matter by means of accession; which is taking a needless circuit."¹⁰⁸ Accession applies to the products of one's labor and is something distinct from the person who labors. The value attributed to the product is separate from the value of the labor. Hume's criticism of Locke's labor theory of property is based on maintaining property as a 'particular species of causation,' meaning the cause is separate from the effect. Hume states we can only attach our labor to anything in a 'figurative' sense. This means that while labor can alter an object, it does not follow

that we have a claim to the object. It is not clear what we are investing in an object when we labor.

Hume considers accession, as an argument for property established through the imagination.

We acquire property of objects by accession, when they are converted in an intimate manner with objects that are already in our property, and at the same time are inferior to them. Thus the fruits of our garden, the offspring of our cattle, and the work of our slaves, are all esteem'd our property, even before possession.¹⁰⁹

Throughout the Treatise, Hume describes six main features which characterize how the imagination works. First, the imagination is responsible for the mind's ability to produce mental images. Second, Hume identifies 'the liberty of the imagination', the rearrangement of mental images represented as impressions, which are reproduced as mental images rather than copies of impressions. Third, the imagination can transform an impression into an idea, and establishes a relation between ideas. Fourth, it acts to supplement what is missing from impressions. Fifth, it creates a propensity to manufacture false beliefs in the sense that something which is related to us in one way is also related in other ways. Sixth, the imagination allows us the ability to arrange things so that objects already related to us become related to other things.

It is this last characteristic which establishes a relation between imagination and property. One's mind creates an idea of property, when one sees people with their possessions; having something as a possession resembles having something as my property. The following example is used in the Treatise to illustrate how accession allows us to conceive of property through the imagination. A German, A Frenchman, and a Spaniard enter where there are three bottles of wine. The burgundy goes to the Frenchman, the port wine to the Spaniard and the rhenish wine to the German. This example is followed by three others which illustrate how imagination affects accession. While it is not always apparent, Hume's method is aposterioral; he traces arguments used to justify property and presents them only to demonstrate their inadequacy. This is the case when he considers how the imagination can formulate examples that attempt to justify property. Two examples demonstrate how large objects are related to small ones. Although it seems that as no nation has property, 'firths and bays' belong by accession to the owners of the surrounding continent. Second, individuals who own the banks of a stream also acquire the stream. Third, Hume explains how accession is related to alluvion. An owner acquires more property when a chunk of land falls on his bank and becomes joined to his land as vegetation begins to grow.

There is an implied criticism of accession in the Treatise. This criticism develops as Hume evaluates the relation of imagination and property. Consider Hume's fifth definition of imagination, in which it creates a propensity to manufacture false beliefs in the sense that something which is related in one way to something else is also related in other ways. Hume illustrates this shortcoming of imagination using the example of figs.

The 'relish' or aroma of a fig and the fig itself are related by causal relations and temporal contiguity. We also assume they are also related by spatial contiguity. Assuming they are in the same place implies an absurd conclusion, that impressions of taste can have a spatial location when actually they have none.

In a similar manner, the imagination establishes a false relation between possession and property. Accession implies that something which is in one's possession is also one's property. However, there is a difference between possession and property. Hume defines possession as absolute control over an object:

We are said to be in possession of anything not only when we immediately touch it, but also when we are so situated to it, as to have it in our power to use it; and may move, alter or destroy it, according to our present pleasure or advantage.¹¹⁰

On the other hand, Hume defines property as a right to exclude. He contends then, that imagination deceives us by establishing a relation between possession and property. Having something as a possession cannot imply a right of ownership. Possession can and often does imply 'use and abuse' in which the object is dominated by my will, while a right to property assumes agreement is the basis of ownership. Hume concludes possession cannot become a right of ownership because it would amount to establishing agreement from force, whereas a right to property presupposes agreement independent of force.

Another argument used to justify property is prescription or long possession. Prescription avoids the problem of how property originates. Instead, this argument holds that to make something your property, you must have possessed it for a long period of time. Even if property was acquired by force or deceit, the acceptance of what you own over time proves you have acquired a right to property. The main argument Hume employs against prescription amounts to the following:

But as 'tis certain, however everything
be produced in time, there is nothing
real, that is produced by time; it
follows that property being produced in
time, is not anything real in
objects.¹¹¹

This quote indicates that time is the foundation of prescription. The question is, how much time is needed to

make something your property? Since time is only an abstract category in the mind and therefore, according to Hume, arbitrary, it cannot justify a right to property derived from prescription. Furthermore, because man's perception of time is subjective, there is no standardized method with which to determine how much time must pass before something becomes one's property. Prescription can also create a confusion over who is the rightful owner, he who owns something now, or the previous owner? The confusion lies in equating the transfer of property with a right to property. In most instances, the transfer has occurred without agreement between the concerned parties or in the absence of future recipients.

Up to this point, an interpretation of Hume's politics has been presented in which nature and artifice operate as guiding themes. But in the end, Hume dismisses the use of either a natural or an artificial definition for reasons that are evident from his rejection of both sympathy for a common interest and rules used to justify property. Using Hume's Essays and his History of England, we will examine how Hume attempts to reconcile nature and artifice in order to construct a definition of politics. Therefore, sympathy and property are, ultimately, relevant to this discussion; they are the terms Hume employs to reconcile nature and artifice.

Footnotes

⁹⁴Treatise, p. 146. An important article on general rules is by Thomas K. Hearn Jr., "General Rules in Hume's Treatise" Journal of the History of Philosophy, 1970.

⁹⁵Ibid, p. 147.

⁹⁶Ibid, p. 503. A similar argument that property is established by convention appears in an article by James Moore, "Hume's Theory of Justice and Property" Political Studies, 1976.

⁹⁷The Letters of David Hume, J.Y.T. Grieg, Ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1932) Vol I, p. 364, Letter 196.

⁹⁸Ibid, pp. 366-367. There is a gap in the secondary literature regarding a comparison of the economic and political thought of Rousseau and Hume. The standard biography, E.C. Mossner, The Life of David Hume (New York: Oxford Press, 1980) describes the encounters between the two and their different personalities. Richard Popkin's "Did Hume or Rousseau Influence the Other" Revue Internationale de Philosophie, 1978 contains a brief discussion of Hume's intellectual debt to Rousseau, which is supported by references to Hume's Letters. The contribution of this dissertation is to offer a starting point for a comprehensive examination of Hume and Rousseau on property. The recent book by Alan Ryan Property and Political Theory (New York: Oxford Press, 1984), an important work in many respects, lacks an analysis and comparison regarding the similarities and differences between Hume and Rousseau.

⁹⁹Jean-Jacques Rousseau "The First and Second Discourses" (New York: Harper and row, 1986) p. 170.

¹⁰⁰Ibid, pp. 141-142.

¹⁰¹Ibid, p. 150.

¹⁰²Ibid, p. 181.

¹⁰³Treatise, p. 495.

¹⁰⁴Treatise, p. 515.

¹⁰⁵Hume, "Of the Original Contract," p. 482. The standard interpretation among Hume scholars is that Hume adopts an uncritical view of the market. This perspective

is a theme in such diverse works as: Donald Livingston's Hume's Philosophy of Common Life (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984); Frederick G. Whelan's Order and Artifice in Hume's Political Philosophy (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1985) and Jonathon Harrison's Hume's Theory of Justice (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981). A notable example in which Hume's views on property are debated is the exchange between C.B. MacPherson "The Economic Penetration of Political Theory: Some Hypotheses" Journal of the History of Ideas, 1978 and David Miller "Hume and Possessive Individualism" History of Political Thought, June 1980. MacPherson considers Hume's assessment of the market in terms of possessive individualism. Miller challenges specific aspects of MacPherson's argument that hold that Hume presents a model of a rising industrial middle class. The interpretation presented in this text considers Hume's analysis of the market in general terms, it demonstrates the extent to which Hume recognizes the social costs of the market; doing so makes him a critic while his theory of economic and political development demonstrates his support for the market.

¹⁰⁶Treatise, p. 505.

¹⁰⁷P.J. Proudhon What is Property? (New York: Dover Publications, 1970) p. 61.

¹⁰⁸Treatise, p. 505.

¹⁰⁹Treatise, p. 509.

¹¹⁰Treatise, p. 506.

¹¹¹Treatise, pp. 508-509.

CHAPTER V: ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT

With examples drawn from Hume's Essays and The History of England, this chapter will show how Hume blurs the distinction between nature and artifice in order to construct a theory of economic and political development. In doing so, Hume discards the critical analysis of property developed in the Treatise. In emphasizing an historical perspective in the Essays and The History of England, Hume demonstrates his acceptance of inequality and conflict caused by property, providing there is economic and political development. Therefore, a conflict between sympathy for a common interest and private property disappears. Hume argues, society should accept the social costs of property in exchange for national development

This emphasis on development unites the school of thinkers who represented the Scottish Enlightenment. It is apparent that the crucial event that determined the concerns of Scottish intellectuals was the union between Scotland and England in 1707. Consider the founding members of the Select Society, Adam Ferguson, William Robertson, Adam Smith, David Hume. This group shared a common notion that Scotland could overcome its backwardness and Edinburgh would emerge as a rival to London. In part, the emphasis on

national development was shaped by the group's close association with the patronage provided members of the landed class. The efforts by Hume and Robertson to remove 'Scotticisms' from their writing style constitutes important evidence that the writers of the Select Society sought to emulate England. In addition, the Select Society of Edinburgh provided lectures in English elocution. The union fostered a keen interest among members of the Select society who wrote and discussed issues and plans regarding the development of Scotland.¹¹² There is a persistent emphasis throughout the writings of Hume, Smith, Ferguson, Robertson, and Millar, who was closely associated with the Select Society, to stress the relation between social interventions and the mode of production. They considered how the origin of property leads to conflict and unequal distribution in civil society. Furthermore, they viewed the development of society in relation to the mode of production. Hume was in the forefront of this discussion and the Essays and The History of England represent his attempt to explain how society, the market and government could work together to coordinate a national plan for development.

Hume's examination of national development emerges from his discussion of what defines history. His interest in history first appears in an early essay (1725) "An Historical Essay on Chivalry and Modern Honor," written

before the Treatise. Another example is his "Memoranda" (1729-40), further proof that Hume engaged in serious historical and philosophic writing prior to, during and after writing the Treatise. Hume also wrote another important essay, "Of Miracles," before the Treatise was published, examining miracles and historical method. In spite of Hume's treatment of sympathy and property which was, for the most part, ahistorical, the philosophic construction of the Treatise contains and is supported by historical references. Passages in the Treatise indicate that history confirms the reasonings of true philosophy."¹¹³

Throughout the Treatise, Hume demonstrates the importance of historical knowledge. For instance, there is an argument Hume employs to justify the existence of historical facts:

Before the knowledge of the fact cou'd come to the first historian, it must be convey'd thro' many mouths; and after it is committed to writing, each new copy is a new object, of which the connexion with the foregoing is known only by experience and custom.¹¹⁴

Hume establishes the importance of historical narration, using literature as an example. "Nothing but an absolute necessity can oblige an historian to break the order of time, and in his narration give the precedence to an event which was in reality posterior to another."¹¹⁵ "In like manner tragedians always borrow their fable or at least the

names of the actors from some known passage in history ...
 "116

The discussion of time in the Treatise illustrates how all knowledge, including knowledge of politics, is historical.¹¹⁷ Hume's first principle is that we tend to organize our perceptions as a narration in which previous impressions are significant only when viewed in relation to recent ideas. Because ideas are produced from previous impressions, we begin to acquire knowledge due to past occurrences. While a simple idea of blue on its initial appearance is the product of a past impression, presented with a number of simple ideas of blue, we are then able to form an abstract, tenseless idea of blue. According to Hume, we develop an idea of time from conceiving the idea of objects in succession. Hume employs the following example to illustrate why perception of objects in succession leads to our idea of time. "Five notes play'd on a flute gives us the impression of time."¹¹⁸ When we consider objects in succession, we form a tenseless idea. In addition, Hume also explains how we form the idea of tensed time, or past, present and future. He begins by discussing how we acquire an idea of the present.

An idea of present time is formed in relation to the self, because "The idea of ourselves is always intimately present to us ... "¹¹⁹ It is not only the idea of self

which is always present, but there is the object which is " ... ourself, of whom we are every moment conscious."¹²⁰ The objects we perceive are organized in a tenseless order. Our self awareness develops in relation to objects arranged according to a tenseless idea of time. After conceiving of tenseless time, an individual who experiences himself from moment to moment, then develops a notion of his self in present time.

When we reflect, therefore, on any object distant from ourselves, we are oblig'd not only to reach it at first by passing thro' all the intermediate space betwixt ourselves and the object, but also to renew our progress every moment; being every moment recall'd to the consideration of ourselves and our present situation.¹²¹

Once we conceive of the self in present time, it is then possible to conceive of past and future time. Hume argues that the faculty which makes this possible is the imagination, which tends to orient itself to ideas forming in the present, but it can also, as Hume indicates, "turn its attention to foreign and remote objects."¹²² Upon observing an external regularity, the mind, assisted by the imagination, can conceive a notion of future time. It does so through the assistance of one of imagination's key principles, the liberty to supplement what is missing in the succession of these objects, namely, a lively conception of them in the future.

Although the imagination tends to be oriented to the future, it can indirectly provide the means with which to appreciate past events. The past becomes important because the imagination is capable of distinguishing events that are far in the past from those that are more recent. A great distance in time strengthens the imagination, while a small distance weakens it.

The mind, elevated by the vastness of its object, is still farther elevated by the difficulty of the conception; and being oblig'd every moment to renew its efforts in the transition from one part of time to another ... In this disposition, the imagination, passing, as is usual, from the consideration of the distance to the view of the distant objects gives us a proportionable veneration for it.¹²³

When the imagination moves past objects forward, these objects descend and acquire significance. It is " ... as if our ideas acquired a kind of gravity from their objects. It is as if our distance from past objects allows us to move closer to them."¹²⁴ When past events are narrated as significant occurrences, they must be examined in relation to future events; by the same token, future events are important when considered in relation to past events.

An historical frame of reference operates as a consistent theme throughout other books and articles Hume published after the Treatise. There are important remarks in the Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding. In this

work, Hume demonstrates that placing ideas in an historical context is not only important in and of itself, but is also useful in explaining politics. "These records of wars, intrigues, factions and revolutions, are so many collections of experiments, by which the politician or moral philosopher fixes the principles of his science ... "125 We can discover man's political nature through history.

Its chief use is only to discover the constant and universal principles of human nature, by showing man in all varieties of circumstances and situations, and furnishing us with materials from which we may form our observations and become acquainted with the regular springs of human action and behavior.¹²⁶

A survey of Hume's essays demonstrates his continued interest in the relation between politics and history. Consider the titles and topics of the following essays: "Of the Study of History;" "That Politics May be Reduc'd to a Science;" "Of the Rise and Progress of the Arts and Sciences;" "Of Eloquence;" "Of the Populousness of Ancient Nations;" "Of Some Remarkable Customs;" and "Of Commerce." At the same time Hume wrote the essays, he began research on another book which explores the relation between philosophy and history. In a letter to Henry Home (1747), Hume expressed a need for time and income in order "to prosecute my historical projects." The historical project Hume had in

mind was the preparation of the memorandum for The History of England.

In identifying and describing the causal principles that determine economic and political development in the Essays and The History of England, Hume attempts to assume the role of an impartial spectator. It is important to carefully qualify how Hume defines this role. An objection to Hume's assumption of this role is that the concept of an impartial spectator implies a disinterested and objective assessment of events. Had Hume maintained that he had no interest in constructing a certain perspective on historical events he discussed, then the objection would be valid. Instead, he formulates his own perspective of political and historical events in a manner similar to Hegel's 'Owl of Minerva,' that is, he interprets events after they occur. Hume is careful not to impose a viewpoint until all the historical facts have been presented. He states that when men judge events in the present, they are too involved 'as they stand in themselves.' Hume's role as an impartial spectator of politics is qualified in the sense that, as observers, we must be careful to present all perspectives and state a preference. For Hume, an impartial spectator is not someone without preferences, but rather, one who works to construct a consistent argument based on those preferences. Hume constructs his theory of economic and

political development around criteria that specifically exclude obstacles to development. According to Hume, religious perspectives tend to distort an historical understanding of politics; therefore religion and its principles are important examples of obstacles to development.

It is not that Hume fails to consider religion. On the contrary, there are numerous references to religion throughout his writings, and he has devoted books to the subject--The Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion and The Natural History of Religion.¹²⁷ Hume's views on religion deserve our attention not only because they shed light on his historical conception of politics, but also because they explain Hume's criticism of religion according to the established religious authorities of his time. At the height of Hume's reputation as a scholar, he was rejected for the Chair of Moral Philosophy at Edinburgh, due to pressure from religious authorities. Again, it was the opposition of the Glasgow clergy that prevented Hume's appointment to the Chair of Logic at Glasgow University. There also were efforts to excommunicate Hume from the Church of Scotland and Hume was pressured to suppress his essays on immortality and suicide. The concern religious authorities had about Hume's views of religion were to a large extent well-founded. In his letters, Hume was

critical of religion. For instance, Hume stated 'he never had entertained any belief in religion since he began to read Locke and Clarke.' There is also evidence that Hume wrestled with and eventually rejected religious principles.

'tis not long ago that I burn'd an old Manuscript Book, wrote before I was twenty; which contain'd, Page and Page, the gradual progress of my thoughts on that head. It began with an anxious search after arguments, to confirm the common opinion: Doubts stole in, dissipated, return'd were again dissipated, return'd again; and it was a perpetual struggle of a restless imagination against inclination, perhaps against reason.¹²⁸

The best illustration of Hume's personal attitude towards religion is his well-known exchange with James Boswell who came to visit Hume on his deathbed. Boswell inquired whether or not Hume had changed his mind regarding an afterlife. But Hume was steadfast in maintaining that there was no future state: "He answered it was possible that a piece of coal put upon the fire would not burn; and he added that it was a most unreasonable fancy that we should exist forever ... "129 When Boswell pursued the issue further with his question regarding annihilation, Hume replied, "I asked him if the thought of annihilation never gave him any uneasiness. He said not the least; nor more that he had not been, as Lucretious observes ... "130 A frustrated Boswell continued to question Hume, asking if a future state was a pleasant notion. Hume answered, "No, for that it was always

seen through a gloomy medium; there was always a Phlegethon or a Hell."131

A brief survey of Hume's writings further demonstrates his critical approach to religion. In The Natural History of Religion, he describes Polytheism as the form of religion founded on man's fear of future events. For Hume, it is fear of the unknown that religion takes as its starting point. The inclination to worship one deity over the rest which leads to the development of monotheism, functions to focus man's fears on a dominant object. In this sense, Hume formulates a modern criticism of religion in terms of man's separation or alienation from himself. Hume provides examples of this alienation by reference to agents or religious authorities and objects of devotion such as a virgin Mary. The overall argument in The Natural History of Religion is that religion and superstition have the same causes, fear and ignorance. Hume's earlier remark in the Treatise tends to support this view: "That in matters of religion men take a pleasure in being terrify'd, and that no preachers are so popular, as those who excite the most dismal and gloomy passions."132

Hume also excludes providential themes as the prime movers of human history. In The Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding, there is an explicit rejection of the relevance of miracles to an understanding of man's history.

For first, there is not to be found, in all history, any miracle attested by a sufficient number of men, of such unquestioned good-sense, education, and learning as to secure us against all delusion in themselves ... "133

For Hume, an intelligent appraisal of historical events necessitates that what we assume to be true should be in proportion to the available evidence, not imagined factors. This is why Hume tends to rely upon the testimony of witnesses and historians, excluding what an individual would observe by himself. Hume acknowledges that someone may believe he witnessed a miracle, but an accurate account of historical occurrences is not about what we see, but what others tell us. Hume rejects miracles because they are so improbable when measured in relation to everyday experience. Even in the presence of strong evidence that a miracle occurred according to testimony from "reliable" sources, Hume maintains his skepticism about miracles. Hume's criteria for accepting miracles is so stringent that no miracle could ever pass it. For instance, Hume insists there must be assurances against deception and delusion. Proof is also needed that miracles occur in the modern world and not, as Hume indicates, only among primitive peoples and in 'the first histories of all nations.' An important shortcoming Hume identifies with religious interpretations of history is the vested interest of religious authorities, which serves to prevent man from forming a clear historical

narrative because religious authorities function as ideologues who use history to promote religion.

A religionist may be an enthusiast, and imagine he sees what has no reality: he may know his narrative to be false, and yet persevere in it, with the best intentions in the world, for the sake of promoting so holy a cause ...¹³⁴

The ideological function of religion is to demonstrate religion's relevance to man's experiences in the world. Religious ideologues dispute among themselves regarding the role of religion in history. These disputes are waged so that one set of religious dogma will triumph over another.

...let us consider that, in matters of religion, whatever is different is contrary; and that it is impossible that the religions of Ancient Rome, of Turkey, of Siam and of China should, all of them, be established on any solid foundation. Every miracle, therefore pretended to have been wrought in any of these religions (and all of them abound in miracles), as its direct scope is to establish some force, though more indirectly, to overthrow every other system.¹³⁵

The source of the providential view of history is the scriptures which Hume says were written by "a barbarous and ignorant people."

One of Hume's chief objections to the providential view of history is that it is "speculative," partly because of references to a designer. An important part of Hume's critical assessment of religion appears in The Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion, where he challenges the popular

eighteenth century argument used to support the existence of a deity, the design argument. Hume rejects the design argument because it cannot be justified from man's experience.

In the Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding, Hume dismisses the design argument on the grounds that it is irrelevant to known experience. Hume provides an example of what is known by experience using the analogy of the print of a foot in the sand. Based on experience, we know that someone left an imprint in the sand. We also know from experience that there must be other footprints in the sand. Our knowledge of this and other events are understood by an inference from the effect to the cause which is supported by numerous experiences and observations. We know something from experience because we are acquainted by numerous observations that we can expect a certain regularity. From the effect, the imprint of the foot, we can infer that it is related to the cause, which is man. In other words, Hume maintains that experience proves that there cannot be two causes for a single effect. The design argument mistakenly infers the presence of a deity who is the designer, that is, the effect, but who is related to a different cause--man. The fallacy is that the effect is different from its cause. The only way that a design argument could be justified would be if it were established by constant conjunction in which

the cause is related to the effect in several instances and known from experience.

The implications which stem from acceptance of a design argument are in fact, unacceptable. One objection is related to Hume's rejection of a designer, using a causal argument. The existence of a designer means we cannot know what the attributes of a designer are; if we did, this would invalidate the argument or would suggest a designer with limited power, who is indifferent to man's affairs. The supporters of a design argument would establish if it was accepted as valid. Man's misfortunes, the cruelty of one individual towards another, challenges the notion that a designer is an all-knowing moral force directly related to human affairs. In addition, Hume proposes that perhaps there was a committee of designers. If there was a designer, the universe was created and then the deity removed himself from intervening in human affairs. In other words, if there was a designer, it was at best a Christian immanent deity who made the universe and then left it alone.

Although Hume rejects providential history because man cannot "foretell future events," he nevertheless maintains that man is capable of predicting future events. This differs from the providential emphasis on foretelling future events. According to Hume, man imagines what future history may hold if the intention is to help us to understand our

present history. On the other hand, a providential conception of history presupposes a mistaken notion that the future can be used as a narrative for past events.

Hume finds additional reasons to reject a providential view of history in the historian's empirical approach. The historian crafts his work using available materials, for instance, physical evidence such as monuments, journals, original manuscripts, papers and reports. These sources help to establish a link between the past and the present. Human testimony is important because past events are accepted as valid statements, when there is confirmation from many individuals. Furthermore, the evidence presented must be consistent and not contradicted by other information.

Should a traveller, returning from a far country, bring us an account of men, wholly different from any with whom we were ever acquainted; men who were entirely divested of avarice, ambition or revenge; who know no pleasure but friendship, generosity and public spirit; we should immediately, from these circumstances, detect the falsehood and call him a liar, with the same certainty as if he had stuffed his narration with stories of centaurs and dragons, miracles and prodigies.¹³⁶

Hume accepts human testimony as valid when the facts are confirmed over time.

The reason why we place any credit in witnesses and historians is not derived from any connexion, which we perceive a priori, between testimony and reality,

but because we are accustomed to find a conformity between them.¹³⁷

In effect, historical evidence is possible because the historian regards events from his perspective as an experimental social scientist. This means he proceeds to investigate events with caution and considers which position is supported by a large number of observable experiments; he then formulates probable judgments. What separates history from other sciences such as "chronology, geography and astronomy" is the narrative character of historical observations. Other disciplines become significant when they are organized within an historical context. According to Hume, the historian seeks to understand what motivates man's history. Hume's rejection of a religious interpretation regarding historical events, is based on his intention to describe human history in terms of economic and political development. We can begin to understand how Hume formulates this theme by considering his definition of development. There are two models of development from which Hume defines and classifies the history of economic and political systems; one is founded on a contrast between civilization and barbarism; the other a comparison of Ancient and Modern systems. The civilization vs. barbarism theory of development appears in various essays and in the first volume of Hume's History of England. For instance, in the essay "Of the Delicacy of Taste," Hume describes a

civilized man as someone who elevates himself by "the cultivating of that higher and more refined taste, which enables us to judge of the character of men, of compositions of genius, and of the production of the nobler arts."¹³⁸

This quote implies a civilized man possesses a certain quality of mind. Hume provides examples of subjects which tend to promote civilized thought, "the study of beauties," such as poetry, eloquence, music, painting and knowledge of books. when the mind is cultivated in this manner, according to Hume, man tends to avoid "the hurry of business and interests," and inclines towards reflection and feels at ease. This leads to a more balanced disposition.

However, a "delicacy of taste" cultivated in a civilized man contrasts sharply with what Hume calls "delicacy of passion." A man unacquainted with the refinements of life acts in accordance with this passion. This means that he is governed by his violent passions in response to prosperity or misfortune and accidental events. "Of the Standard of Taste" refers to an uncivilized or "barbarous" man as ignorant regarding what is refined. "A man, who has no opportunity of comparing the different kinds of beauty, is indeed totally unqualified to pronounce an opinion with regard to an object presented to him."¹³⁹ A "barbarous" individual appreciates what is vulgar and coarse. He cannot judge something beautiful because his

mind is "prejudiced" to favor vulgar notions. On the other hand, a man who is cultivated is trained to appreciate beauty and at the same time can recognize its opposite.

The best example of Hume's first definition of development is his contrast between ancient Rome representing civilization and the barbarism prior to, and following, Rome's collapse. In the first volume of The History of England, he discusses man's condition when political institutions disappear and barbarism prevails. At first, it seems from Hume's opening remarks in the first volume that history cannot provide important information regarding the relation between civilization and barbarism. In fact, at this point, Hume's notion of history seems antihistorical.

The curiosity entertained by all civilized nations, of enquiring into the exploits and adventures of their ancestors, commonly excites a regret that the history of remote ages should always be so much involved in obscurity, uncertainty and contradiction.¹⁴⁰

There are several important reasons why Hume makes this statement. One reason involves Hume's overall examination of English history. Hume defines the historian as someone who works with accurate records and confirmed human testimony. The 'obscurity' and 'uncertainty' he describes concerns the history of pre-Roman England, a period known to lack accurate records; and, since the period which follows

it is barbarous, Hume concludes that serious study is unnecessary.

Neglecting, therefore, all traditions or rather tales concerning the more early history of Britain, we shall only consider the state of their inhabitants, as it appeared to the Romans in their invasion of this country: We shall briefly run over the events, which attended the conquest made by that empire, as belonging more to a Roman than British story: We shall hasten through the obscure and uninteresting period of Saxon annals: And shall receive a more full narration for those times, when the truth is both so well ascertained and so complete as to promise entertainment and instruction to the reader.¹⁴¹

For Hume, the barbaric period lacks historical significance because history should tell the story of man's progress. Therefore, the barbarians--who did not contribute to man's progress--are a people without a history. This is another reason why Hume compared early British history to Roman history. Rome's collapse represents the collapse of civilization. Hume's assessment of Roman history in the Essays, as well as his comments regarding the post-Roman or barbaric period in The History of England illustrates the contrast between civilization and barbarism. This contrast is a recurring theme which provides a structure to Hume's examination of development. His explanation of the shift from the democratic principles which existed in the Roman republic and the movement leading to despotism helps explain

why he considered the contrast between the civilization and barbarism important as a working definition of development. In "Of Liberty," ancient Rome is described as the center of the civilized world. Hume proceeds to explain why liberty began to 'decay', eventually leading to barbarism.

Learning was transplanted to Rome, the only free nation at that time in the universe; and having met with so favourable a soil, it made prodigious shoots for above a century; till the decay of liberty, produced also the decay of letters, and spread a total barbarism over the world.¹⁴²

According to Hume, what eventually undermined Roman civilization was the breakdown of the state. Hume argues that what separated Rome from other uncivilized regions was knowledge of 'the arts of government', in short, the ability to create political stability.

Knowledge in the arts of government naturally begets mildness and moderation, by instructing men in the advantages of humane maxims above rigour and severity which drive subjects into rebellion ... this humanity appears more conspicuous, and is the chief characteristic which distinguishes a civilized age from times of barbarity and ignorance.¹⁴³

Hume attributes the success and ultimate failure of Roman civilization to empire-building. Rome's conquests contributed to the fall of the republican principle.

After the Roman dominions became too unwieldy for the republic to govern them, the people over the whole known world, were extremely grateful to

Augustus for that authority, which, by violence, he had established over them; and they shewed an equal disposition to the successor, whom he left them, by his last will and testament.¹⁴⁴

Hume reaches an interesting conclusion, which is that once a civilization reaches a point of peak growth and can no longer develop, decline is inevitable. A civilization's success becomes the formula for its failure:

Those who cast their eye on the general revolutions of society, will find, that, as almost all improvements of the human mind had reached nearly to their state of perfection about the age of Augustus, there was a sensible decline from that point or period; and man thenceforth relapsed gradually into ignorance and barbarism. The unlimited extent of the Roman empire, and the consequent despotism of its monarchs, extinguished all emulation, debased the generous spirits of men ...¹⁴⁵

Once a civilization begins to decline, it cannot return to the original principles which made the civilization great. "Would it not have appeared ridiculous, in the reign of the Emperor Adrian, to have talked of the republican constitution as the rule of government ..."¹⁴⁶

Hume describes the effects which followed the collapse of Roman civilization. His description illustrates the intrinsic relationship between the collapse of civilization and the collapse of government. Barbarians were uncivilized because they have no notion of politics. As a people, they are unreflective, lacking conceptions of justice and a

cosmopolitan idea of themselves as human beings. Since barbarians are generally lacking in self-conscious rational activity, according to Hume, they exist outside history. They spread death and destruction and left nothing of value. "The invaders carried devastation and ruin along with them; and exerted to the utmost their native ferocity, which was not mitigated by the helpless condition and submissive behavior of the inhabitants."¹⁴⁷

Hume illustrates another example of the contrast between civilization and barbarism when he compares Rome's rule over Britain to that of the Saxons.

The Britons, under the Roman dominion, had made such advances towards the arts and civil manners, that they had built twenty-eight considerable cities within their providence, besides a great number of villages and county-seats. But the fierce conquerors, by whom they were now subdued, threw everything back into ancient barbarity; and those few natives, who are not either massacred or expelled their habitations were reduced to the most abject slavery.¹⁴⁸

The barbarians contributed nothing of lasting significance to Britain. In fact, it was inconceivable that they could do so because, according to Hume, the Saxon mind functioned at the lowest level.

Even the great learning and vigorous imagination of Milton sunk under the weight; and this author scruples not to declare, that the skirmishes of kites or crowns as much merited a particular narrative as the confused transactions and battles of the Saxon Heptarchy.¹⁴⁹

Although the Saxons lived in Britain for many years, Hume remarks that they showed no signs of improving their knowledge beyond that of their ancestors. The striking difference between civilization and barbarism is that in the former, unrest and revolutions have the potential to transform social conditions and allow progress. But barbarians tend to repeat the same destructive patterns of stagnation and regression.

The convulsions of a civilized state usually compose the most instructive and most interesting part of its history; but the sudden violent, and unprepared revolutions, incident to Barbarians, are so much guided by caprice, and terminate so often in cruelty that they disgust us by the uniformity of their appearance
... 150

This quote seems to indicate Hume's continued adherence to a problematic conception of development, in terms of a rigid division between civilization and barbarism. At the same time, when we consider this comment in relation to other comments, it becomes clear that Hume recognizes the limitations of this definition. This reassessment becomes apparent from his comments regarding feudalism. At best, civilization and barbarism must be understood as relative terms, which in an historical context tend to overlap. For example, the reason we call others barbarians is to establish ourselves as civilized.

Treachery and cruelty, the most pernicious and most odious of all vices,

seem peculiar to uncivilized ages; and by the refined Greeks and Romans were ascribed to all the barbarous nations which surrounded them. They might justly, therefore, have presumed, that their own ancestors, so highly celebrated, possessed no greater virtue, and were as much inferior to their posterity in honour and humanity, as in taste and science.¹⁵¹

Hume maintains there was an historical advance in human freedom from ancient Rome to feudalism, and what characterized that advance was the formal abolition of slavery. The political destiny of Rome was tied to slave labor. In fact, Hume condemns the freedom of the Roman republic as one-sided because there were slaves.

Nor can a more probable reason be assigned for the severe, I might say, barbarous manners of ancient times, than the practice of domestic slavery; by which every man of rank was rendered a petty tyrant, and educated amidst the flattery, submission and low debasement of the slaves.¹⁵²

For Hume, feudalism represented an advance over the Roman era, because the direct domination of man over man was not an essential feature. There was a semblance of freedom, which was in part derived from the contractual relation between serf and lord and which did not exist for the Roman slave. Hume's praise for feudalism is, however, short-lived because he recognizes the historical problems and limits which develop when advances are made. On the one hand, Hume sees serfdom as an advance and yet he realizes it raises

other problems regarding liberty. "A great part of them were serfs, and lived in a state of absolute slavery or villainage ... "153 Understood in the historical context of feudalism, the serf was still not free. Hume offers a word of caution about investigating any political system--that we should question what appears to be true. "Of all sciences there is none, where first appearances are more deceitful than in politics ... "154

While Hume is cautious regarding the establishment of certain truths in politics, he admits that there are a few tentative ones which seem valid in comparing British feudalism to ancient Rome. Hume credits feudal institutions with attempting, in a formal sense, to remedy the vast differences between various groups in society. For instance, there is the advance in manners characterized by the example of knights who acquired status and power by protecting the lords:

... raising the military tenants to a kind of sovereign dignity, by rendering personal strength and valour requisite, and by making every baron and knight his own protector and avenger begat that martial pride and sense of honour, which, being cultivated and embellished by the poets and romance writers of the age, ended in chivalry.¹⁵⁵

Feudalism sought to structure and strengthen the mutual dependency between various social orders. This is apparent when we consider Hume's examination of the Great Charter or

Magna Charta. For Hume, the Magna Charta symbolized an advance because certain clauses in it sought to curb tyrannical practices as incompatible with the existence of government. To Hume, this indicated an awareness that the despotism which characterized the Roman empire also caused the decline of its government. The Magna Charta provided an abstract conception of the liberties and privileges for each order in society.

The barbarous license of the Kings, and the Nobles, was, thenceforth somewhat more restrained: Men acquired some more security for their property and their liberties ... Acts of violence and iniquity in the crown, which before were only deemed injurious to individuals, and were hazardous chiefly in proportion to the number, power and dignity of the persons affected by them, were now regarded, in some degree, as public injuries, and as infringements of a charter, calculated for general security.¹⁵⁶

Hume argues feudal Britain attempted to develop stable political institutions, which would provide a formal increase in liberty for society. Hume's description of the advances and setbacks that characterized feudalism indicates his recognition of the limitations implicit in accepting a rigid division between civilization and barbarism. The point is, there are civilized and barbaric aspects in any social system. This emphasis on positive and negative assessments is a guiding theme throughout Hume's comparison of Ancient and Modern systems. At the same time, it is

important to keep in mind that Hume had a preference for modern economic and political arrangements.¹⁵⁷ Hume did not romanticize about the past, and he accepted the fact that economic and political development in the modern world involved progressive changes. The evidence for this interpretation appears in Hume's Essays.

Hume's preference for the modern world view appears in an early essay "On the Independency of Parliament," where he defends those who support a modern perspective because they "never transgressed the bounds of moderation and good breeding;" but those who defend the Ancients, "mixed their reasonings with satire and invective ..."¹⁵⁸ Hume identifies with those who adopt a modern interpretation because they act as innovators. Consider the following description of authors who look backward for knowledge from Ancient writers:

Those who defend the established and popular opinions, are always the most dogmatical and imperious in their stile: while their adversaries affect almost extraordinary gentleness and moderation, in order to soften as much as possible, any prejudices that may lye against them.¹⁵⁹

Hume appears to side with an interpretation of historical events in which change and innovation are primary ingredients; he opposes what he considers to be a more conservative approach founded on reverence for Ancient knowledge. Additional support for this interpretation is

found in the essay "Of the Standard of Taste" where Hume addresses "the celebrated controversy concerning Ancient and Modern learning." It is evident from this essay that Hume sides with modern writers because Ancient writers demonstrated a lack of virtuous principles:

The want of humanity and of decency, so conspicuous in the characters drawn by several of the ancient poets, even sometimes by Homer and the Greek tragedians, diminishes considerably the merit of their noble performances, and gives modern authors an advantage over them.¹⁶⁰

Hume's adoption of a progressive modern perspective is evident in the essays "Of National Characters," and "Of the Populousness of Ancient Nations"; here, he challenges the argument that historical changes are due to physical causes. The one modern thinker among others Hume had in mind was Montesquieu. Hume corresponded with Montesquieu as early as 1749 and Montesquieu read Hume's Political Discourses while Hume read Montesquieu's Spirit of the Laws.¹⁶¹ In order to demonstrate that the sources of historical change are moral causes, Hume argues against Montesquieu's view that the population of Europe had declined from the time of the Roman empire, and that in the medieval period Europe was more populated than in the eighteenth century. The implication was that a large population proves a nation is virtuous and has stable institutions. At the same time, Montesquieu asserted that the movement of history from Ancient to Modern

periods implied decline; the modern world with a smaller population represents an increase in human misery and is characterized by unstable institutional arrangements.

In "Of the Populousness of Ancient Nations," Hume challenges an historical view of human events in terms of infancy, youth, manhood and old age. According to Hume, we know through historical observations that "there is no universal difference discernable in the human species ... "162 If we accept the notion of historical decline, Hume maintains we should also expect a "decay in human nature." For Hume it is fact that human nature is constant throughout history, the obvious reference is the mechanism of sympathy. Sexual attraction and the universal drive to create family ties works against the idea that population in the modern world has declined. In fact, it tends to prove that population growth is a consistent trend. Hume acknowledges civilizations tend to rise and fall but growth and decay are relative to the historical period and cannot be considered in absolute terms.

Population as a physical cause fails to explain the difference between the Ancient and Modern world; Hume also rejects other physical causes, such as disease, war and famine, because these physical causes are a reflection of moral causes. In "Of National Characters," he discusses China as an "extensive government," which over many

centuries developed a national character in spite of vast differences in climate throughout the country's territory. In effect, a government established over time produces a uniform national character. Another example is a difference in national character between Athens and Thebes: these small governments are contiguous to each other, but their peoples have different national characters. The same national character exists on both the French and Spanish sides of the Pyrenees mountains. A national character tends to follow the authority of government to a specific boundary. At the same time, it is possible to locate identical characteristics in population groups separated by great distances. Groups that develop similar national characteristics but are separated by great distances are evidence that it was the government that formed the national character.

For Hume, Ancient political and economic arrangements were based on stagnation and an inability to adapt to changing conditions. In "Of the Populousness of Ancient Nations," Hume argues that ancient republics were almost always in a state of warfare, and the methods used to wage war were without a doubt more bloody and destructive than those used in the eighteenth century. In addition, the republics were prone to political instability. In small republics, Hume notes there was a tendency for 'personal

factions' meaning every and any domestic quarrel, which developed from love, vanity and ambition to become 'an affair of state'. Hume points to the limitations of Greek democracy, with the most notorious example the exclusion of women, slaves and foreign dominions from participating in government.

The republic of Athens was I believe the most extensive democracy, that we read of in history; yet if we make the requisite allowances for the women, the slaves and the strangers, we shall find, that establishment was not, at first made, nor any law ever voted, by a tenth part of those who were bound to pay obedience to it: Not to mention the islands and foreign dominions, which the Athenians claimed as theirs by right of conquest.¹⁶³

Hume points to the chaos and conflict caused in Athens when the majority of citizens were allowed to participate in the democratic process: "The Athenian democracy was such a tumultuous government as we can scarcely form a notion of in the present age."¹⁶⁴

Hume's most basic criticisms of Ancient political systems was that they lack effective constitutional safeguards against unrest; without such safeguards, political stability was at best uncertain. This criticism applies to the Roman republic, where competition among politicians for offices was so fierce that the democratic principle eventually degenerated into disorder and then despotism. The degeneration of the Roman republic is

explained in terms of corruption among members of the legislative body. For Hume, the solution is to limit the number of politicians to the legislature reducing the possibility of corruption. Athens and Rome are useful examples of why a constitutional democracy must work on a regular basis as a representative democracy.

Hume argues it is essential for the maintenance of a constitutional government that "every man ought to be supposed a knave and have no other end, in all his actions than private interest."¹⁶⁵ Given the implications of this quote, Hume seems to abandon an emphasis on virtue central to Ancient political theory in favor of a modern notion of interest as a foundation for politics. However, in his theory of economic and political development, he manages to include both interest and virtue. What characterizes economic and political development in the modern world is the fusion of interest and virtue.¹⁶⁶

The essential weakness of ancient political systems was the tendency to rely upon only virtue as the means of insuring political stability. There were also limitations, built into the ancient economy, such as the subordination of market interests to the maintenance of the virtue of government. Little or no virtue was attached to the pursuit of market interactions in the ancient world. The state defined the uses of the market.

In the essay "Of Commerce" Hume identifies an essential ingredient for economic development, that a proportion of the populace not be engaged in agriculture. Instead, the use of labor shifts towards industrial production, which, according to Hume, allows economic development. Since society is no longer concerned only with the production of necessary goods, the market begins to produce a new commodity, luxuries. However, economic and political arrangements in the ancient world worked against development. Instead of producing luxury items, which contributed to the growth of the economy, surplus labor not employed in agriculture was employed to expand a government's territory through military force, in turn strengthening the power of the state. Sparta and Rome both followed this course. If agricultural workers produce a surplus, they would exchange that surplus for luxury goods; but when such luxuries are unavailable, they will only produce what is necessary for subsistence. The availability of luxury goods was limited to the elites who acquired them through military conquests, but the vast majority of the populace did not have access to these goods.

Perhaps the most striking limitation of an ancient economy is its reliance on slave labor. This reliance results in two major problems. A slave economy is labor-intensive; therefore, over time, the demand for labor

increases. Prosperity in this type of economy is thus uncertain because the economy depends heavily on successful military conquest--hardly a reliable or regular source--for new labor. Furthermore, since slaves do not earn wages, they are not consumers, so expansion of the market is limited.

The modern market begins with an increase in trade, which stems from man's desire for novel luxury items and an emerging merchant class, which derives profit from acting as middle-men between sellers and buyers of these luxury items. The combined increase of imports and exports drive economic development. Profits gained are derived from what Hume terms "the stock of labor". A developing modern market relies heavily on the instillment in society of the notion that acquisition of property is a virtuous activity. For Hume, this happens when individuals equate "the pleasures of luxury" with the acquisition of property. A modern market works to mobilize the populace towards profit-making. While the pleasure attached to the pursuit of property is important, Hume identifies the virtue of the market as action directed towards what he describes as "lucrative employment". The acquisition of property as a virtuous common interest in society stems from a desire for social approval for objects or symbols that represent successful endeavors.

At this point, it is worthwhile to restate the earlier claim that Hume tends to abandon his critical analysis of property in the Treatise, for what seems to be in the Essays an acceptance and justification of property, so long as economic development occurs. However, while Hume appears to embrace a conservative acceptance of property, in fact he approves of the market in the Essays because it is a dynamic force for change. In the Treatise, Hume's examination of property is to some extent critical when the effects of property are considered in a particular society. But Hume is an advocate of property in the Essays because, considered in a larger historical context, the market is a progressive force, capable of transforming older and outdated forms of social behavior. The market defines social relations in terms of dynamic change. Increases in society's productive capacities, in turn, allow for advances in the arts and sciences. In other words, economic development implies the satisfaction of everyone's material needs as a prerequisite for moral enrichment.

In The History of England Hume searches for the form of government most conducive to economic development. He discusses factions in government to illustrate why social conflict hinders development. For Hume, an essential precondition for development is a harmony of interests between society and government. As did other works by

Enlightenment thinkers, Hume's History of England develops a philosophy of history. In it Hume argues that there is a rational plan in history that provides an outline for the overall direction of politics. The argument anticipates a similar theme in Kant's "Idea for a Universal History from a Cosmopolitan Point of View." Hume unfolds the rational plan of history in terms of a political conflict between liberty and authority. Hume begins by providing historical proof for the existence of sympathy. This underlying theme appears in Hume's description of feudalism. Hume's analysis of feudalism describes social interactions that were free, in the sense that they were unrestrained by government. The barons exploited the serfs and resisted formal authority represented by government.

The history of all preceding Kings of England since the conquest, gives evident proofs of the disorders attending the feudal institutions, the licentiousness of the barons, their spirit of rebellion against the prince and laws, and of animosity against each other.¹⁶⁷

Hume describes how government's authority in feudal England grew in order to challenge the power of the nobility. Only when that authority became absolute, could the government assert control over the nobility. Feudal government was, as Hume states, "so little favourable to true liberty." In fact, its primary task was to create conditions for order which would counteract society's conflict and chaos. In

other words, what characterized the feudal age was a conflict between the authority of government and the interests of society represented by the barons. Hume considered the growth of Absolutism as a necessary step that stabilized the state's authority and fostered society's political organization. In effect, absolutism allowed the state to develop and provide order in society.

For example, during the reign of Edward I, in which the various feudal orders were brought under his direct control and representation was clearly defined, there was also an attempt to limit the power of the great barons. In a similar manner, Henry VIII and Elizabeth I are important examples of absolute rulers, and Hume uses them to justify why the authority of government was at that time inflexible. Henry VIII and Elizabeth I recognized that the state's authority must be secure against interest groups in society; if it is not, the state's authority is challenged and conflict occurs. They were able to protect the authority of government because they avoided appearing arbitrary to religious interests in society. In particular, Henry VIII managed to avoid the wrath of both Catholics and Protestants because his apparent ambiguity gave a semblance of neutrality.

... The King meanwhile who held the balance between the factions was enabled, by the courtship played both by

protestants and Catholics to assume an unlimited authority.¹⁶⁸

During this time, the King did not actively promote protestantism, but he didn't try to repress it either, and ultimately, his appearance of neutrality would allow the Protestant doctrine to grow. Later on, the King would begin to repress certain Catholic institutions, in particular, the monasteries, which posed a threat to his authority.

Hume praises the reign of Elizabeth I because "the maxims of her reign were conformable to the principles of the times."¹⁶⁹ The prerogatives which were the foundation of her authority were never in dispute. They were secure because she was supported by the people. Elizabeth was careful not to "infringe any established liberties of the people ... "¹⁷⁰ She maintained liberty because "she believed that her subjects were entitled to no more liberty than their ancestors had enjoyed ... "¹⁷¹ The reign of Elizabeth illustrates that governments should not be founded upon considerations of what is best but rather upon what is established. If other rules besides the established political practices come into play, then unrest and conflict will develop between the populace and government. On the other hand, Elizabeth used her absolute authority to support the "precious spark of liberty," which left room for the Puritans, motivated by religious zeal, to succeed in their efforts to assume the role of innovators. Although

Elizabeth kept a watchful eye on the Puritans, she was careful not to create religious controversies.

Religion was the capital point, on which depended all the political transactions of that age; and the queen's conduct in this particular, making allowance for the prevailing prejudices of the times, could scarcely be accused of severity or imprudence.¹⁷²

Not only did Elizabeth avoid taking sides in religious issues, she also sought to prevent Parliament from doing so.

In all these transactions appears clearly the opinion, which Elizabeth had entertained of the duty and authority of the Parliaments. They were not to canvass any matters of state: Still less were they to meddle with the church. Questions of either kind were far above their reach ...¹⁷³

Hume's depiction of government during the reign of the Tudor Kings appears to be that of a rational constitutional order in which the authority of the king was supreme, and the people widely accepted it. In addition, Parliament's agenda appeared to be primarily determined by the king. While religious principles were used to justify royal authority, religion remained separate from government.

When Hume shifts his historical focus from the reign of the Tudors to the Stuart kings, the problem of faction is examined as a hindrance to the development of a modern state. The conflict between Parliament and Crown is a description of how social interests motivated by religious fanaticism and the inflexible authority of the Stuart kings

collided. Hume describes how a struggle for power was born of the desperate actions and attitudes of James I and the Puritans. The King, who harbored hostility against the Puritan movement because of its religious enthusiasm, aimed "to prevent its farther growth in England."¹⁷⁴ In his description, Hume partially agrees with James' assessment, characterizing the Puritans as members of a rigid sect, which was able to portray itself to the populace as possessing 'sanctity and virtue'.

Ironically, James' attitude towards the Puritans increased their influence. "By entering zealously into frivolous disputes, James gave them an air of importance and dignity, which they could not have otherwise have acquired."¹⁷⁵ A striking example are the forceful statements he made to Parliament about royal prerogative. In fact, these statements, in which James asserted his authority as absolute king over elected representatives, served to mobilize Parliament against the crown. Parliament interpreted the King's statement as a threat, an indication that he intended to "seize all our liberties," and consequently they directed their efforts at maintaining their privileges. Hume attributes the conflict between king and Parliament, in part, to attempts by James I and Charles I to maintain absolute rule after it no longer applied, "... that the word absolute bore a different sense from what

it does at the present, or that men's ideas of the English, as well as Irish government were then different."176

Absolutism was justified during feudalism to control the barons. Since the authority of government during the reign of the Stuart Kings was more secure, absolute authority could no longer be justified.

Hume saw James as a victim of historical circumstance, which in the end dictated his response to Parliament. During Elizabeth's reign, the idea of liberty gained popularity in Parliament. But James, a Scotsman, was unfamiliar with these notions, and therefore at a disadvantage in dealing with the changing political climate in Parliament. The combination of James' Scottish roots and events both inside and outside Parliament would encourage his jealousy of regal authority, leading to his adoption of an "abstract system of absolute government." According to that system, heredity and divine right would vest him with all the legal power of English government." James imagined he possessed the same prerogatives as his European counterparts. What he failed to realize was the opinion, the sole support of his authority, had changed. While he could boast that he possessed absolute authority, he had neither the force of arms to support this claim nor the intention to enlist an army to protect it.

The turmoil and unrest which characterized James' reign contrasted sharply with the promise of stability with which the period began.

... the principles in general which prevailed during that age, were so favourable to monarchy, that they bestowed on it an authority almost absolute and unlimited sacred and indefeasible.¹⁷⁷

Royal prerogative, supported by religious sanctions, seemed "real and durable". However, Hume emphasizes that in order to understand a political system's historical transformation, one must take into account the wisdom, ignorance and unforeseen events which shaped the perspectives of the political actors.

That James continued to assert an "abstract system of absolute government," ignoring the reaction of Parliament, was further proof of his political inexperience. Parliament's overreaction also ensured that the transition to a limited monarchy would be violent. It began to formulate a political agenda which was experimental, in hopes of determining political events in the future.

The leading members, men of an independent genius and large views, began to regulate their opinions, more by the future consequences which they foresaw, than by the former precedents which were set before them ...¹⁷⁸

In considering royal prerogative, members of Parliament took notice of the fact that the King for the most part did not

communicate with the elected body. Parliament then embarked on limiting aspects of royal prerogative, in particular those regarding ecclesiastical canons.

They therefore deemed it absolutely necessary to circumscribe this branch of prerogative, and accordingly in the preceding session, they passed a bill against the establishment of any ecclesiastical canons without consent of Parliament.¹⁷⁹

As the attacks against royal prerogative continued, James made repeated appeals to his exalted claims of monarchy. The unforeseen religious enthusiasm, in turn, which motivated the actions of Parliament, also served to further promote extreme responses to royal prerogative.

But it is an observation, suggested by all history, and by none more than by that of James and his successor, that the religious spirit, when it mingles with faction, contains in it something supernatural and unaccountable ...¹⁸⁰

In what Hume describes as a "bold step", Parliament asserted itself and questioned the King's favorite prerogative, "... his cautious and pacific measures, his lenity towards the Rhomish religion and his attachment to the Spanish alliance ..."¹⁸¹ James, who viewed Parliament's inquiries as an invasion of his prerogatives, wrote to the speaker and attacked the body for debating issues which were not its concern. This in turn, inflamed Parliament, which then issued a statement to the effect that it had the authority to provide advice and counsel to the King in matters of

state. Furthermore, Parliament maintained that its powers were justified in English history, "That the liberties, franchises, privileges, and jurisdictions of Parliament, are the ancient and undoubted birth-right and inheritance of the subjects of England."¹⁸² The King, alarmed by what he perceived as a direct threat to his authority, responded by dissolving Parliament. This act was to have larger implications, by far the most important of which was the revelation for the first time, that the King's authority was truly obscure.

Hume notes that supporters on each side were unwilling to adopt a moderate course. What would eventually result from the clash between them was an all-out civil war, pitting crown against Parliament. After James died in 1625, his successor, Charles I, would find himself engaged in a power struggle with Parliament, the end result of which was the first English Revolution.

In the beginning of his reign, Charles met with Parliament to consider raising money for warlike expeditions against France and Spain. This campaign provided an opportunity for Parliament to raise questions regarding the King's prerogative to wage war as he saw fit. The sentiment in Parliament was that the King possessed unbounded power. Members discussed ways to limit his prerogative, which they thought would increase liberty. Parliament proposed the

granting of supplies for these expeditions so long as the King made concessions, which would increase the liberty of Parliament. But Charles perceived these demands almost as acts of sedition and ultimately dissolved Parliament. Hume sides with Charles, in part because even if Charles exceeded his authority, he had no intention of becoming an absolute ruler like Caesar or Nero. In addition, although Parliament encroached on the King's authority out of a genuine concern for liberty, that concern was, however, driven by the religious enthusiasm of the Puritans. While Charles believed that he possessed absolute authority, Hume points out that his authority in relation to Parliament was, in fact, limited. Hume cites Parliament's call for a Petition of Right, in effect, a statement of independence by Parliament. The King's eventual acceptance of it further demonstrates that his monarchy was limited. Here, Hume defends Charles' authority against what he sees as Parliament's extreme demands for liberty. While Hume acknowledges that Charles also seems to have exceeded his authority at times during the clash with Parliament, he points out that it was for the sake of political expediency. In his examination of English government during the reign of Tudors, Hume seeks to justify divine rule as a legitimate form of political authority. However, Hume also asserted that rulers should adapt to changing historical conditions

and divine right had outlived its usefulness as a governing principle. Divine rule was necessary when England needed to reorganize government during feudalism and promote order in society. Charles believed divine right was still a viable ruling principle. Charles exceeded his authority because the people's demand for liberty conflicted with divine or absolute authority. If, however, such acts became a common occurrence, then, Hume says, it would be safe to say that liberty had been subverted.

Acts of power, however irregular might causally and at intervals, be exercised by a Prince, for the sake of dispatch or expediency; and yet liberty still subsist, in some tolerable degree under his administration. But where all these reduced into a system, were exerted without interruption ... it was necessary to find some speedy remedy or finally to abandon all hopes of preserving the freedom of the constitution.¹⁸³

Hume calls into question the irrational and extreme notions of liberty that were rooted in the Puritan leadership's religious enthusiasm. However, he stresses that the outcomes of the Puritans' actions were, in fact, rational. For instance, Parliament considered the Petition of Right as an extension of the ancient liberties outlined in the Great Charter. After the creation of the Great Charter, there were abuses of prerogative by kings which were, according to the Great Charter, neither constitutional nor legal. In those instances, Hume considers rational Parliament's use of

the Petition of Right against a king's prerogative, particularly where it concerns waging war.

He deems the Petition of Right rational because it establishes a relation between a government and its constitution. Hume regards the appearance of a Petition of Right as evidence that Parliament had developed a new attitude toward the crown, namely, that it is laws and not men, that ultimately govern. The prevailing sentiment in Parliament held that unless the authority of the crown was supported by statutes or established precedents then that authority was arbitrary and illegal. Furthermore, liberty was regarded as a precious commodity which could be taken away in an emergency by martial law. The Petition of Right attempted to introduce a degree of uniformity between the crown and Parliament, an event Hume deems so significant that he says it "was almost equivalent to a revolution ..."¹⁸⁴ Over time, Parliament would assume the primary role as legislator. This role would limit royal prerogative and establish clear legal boundaries between crown and Parliament.

Parliament had extended liberty by encroaching on the King's authority. Its underlying intention was to challenge the crown's "uncertain and undefined limits of prerogative and privilege."¹⁸⁵ Charles recognized this encroachment and responded by granting offices to popular leaders of

Parliament. Hume says this is proof that "a secret revolution had happened in the constitution"¹⁸⁶ In other words, the King, who recognized his prerogative was being threatened, was forced to employ new maxims in order to govern. Charles had assumed power with the assumption that he was the supreme magistrate supported by divine right. Though he continued to harbor this idea throughout his reign, he faced a situation created by "the obstinacy of the people," which called for a new plan for government. The Scottish rebellion and the eleven-year interval between Parliaments produced sentiments among members that England faced an historical choice between the arbitrary authority of the King or the "spirit of liberty" which characterized Parliament.

That eleven years intermission of Parliaments, the longest that was to be found in the English annals, was a sufficient indication of the jealousy entertained against the people; or rather of designs formed for the suppression of all their liberties and privileges.¹⁸⁷

The dissolution of the short Parliament summoned to provide taxes to wage war against Scotland was followed by the Long Parliament, which was to undermine the King's remaining prerogatives. The event which marked the essential decline of Charles' arbitrary prerogative to wage war was the effort by his minister, Earl of Strafford to raise money and gather an army to continue the war against

Scotland without consulting with Parliament. Parliament saw Strafford's actions as a threat to liberty and a subversion of the English constitution. It eventually abolished the Star Chamber, which represented the King's power to bind the people to his prerogative; the King's monopolies were also abolished. Parliament reasoned that the continued existence of the King's discretionary powers would lead to the disappearance of liberty. Hume approves of Parliament's actions because they represented a movement toward a limited constitution. What Hume means is that absolute and arbitrary authority exercised by Charles I was challenged by Parliament so that the crown's authority would not only be flexible by adapting to changing circumstances, but would also function in accordance with Parliament's consent.

According to Hume, the greatest accomplishment of the Long Parliament was a quiet revolution which shifted the sovereign authority from the crown to Parliament. The government was able to develop novel political arrangements without disrupting society. This amounted to a political revolution without bloodshed. National development, according to Hume's analysis of these events, involves evolutionary changes. For Hume, this shift, made possible by the spirit of liberty embodied in Parliament, was positive.

The whole sovereign power being thus in
a manner transferred to the commons, and

the government, without any seeming violence or disorder, being changed, in a moment, from a monarchy almost absolute to a pure democracy ...¹⁸⁸

Hume's reference to 'pure democracy' is a description of Parliament liberated from the arbitrary authority of Charles I. In addition, this reference indicates an acceptance of democratic principles providing democracy is defined as a process in which the populace overcomes an oppressor. What symbolized the triumphs of liberty was Charles' assent to a bill which forbade the dissolution of Parliament without its consent. Hume sees this action in two ways: it represented the retrenchment of the King's most essential prerogative, but at the same time, it was absolutely crucial to a "regular plan of liberty." Here is the proof that the spirit of liberty in Parliament at this time and the actions of its leaders followed a rational direction. What made the actions of Parliament rational was that they defined liberty and allowed for the development of man's creative potential by devising plans that would oppose arbitrary authority. Liberty unbounded by authority would further enhance the reshaping of government. "This was the time when genius and capacity of all kinds, freed from the restraint of authority, and nourished by unbounded hopes and projects, began to exert themselves and be distinguished by the public."¹⁸⁹ This quote demonstrates Hume believed there was a relation between democracy and freedom. Hume's reference

to 'genius of all kinds' is evidence that he offers praise of democratic movements as essential to national development, because they liberate man's imagination, which in turn shapes a novel vision of politics. Hume's interpretation of these events is significant since he viewed them as creating the conditions for liberty. At the same time, Hume offers a hint of the fate which awaits this unleashing of liberty. "The nation caught now fire from the popular leaders, and seemed now to have made the first discovery of the many supposed disorders in the government."¹⁹⁰ Hume describes the English revolution as releasing suppressed passions due to a chain of events that undermined the King's arbitrary authority. At the same time, Hume's discussion of disorder and unrest in government recognizes that to form modern states, political stability must be recreated. His analysis of revolutionary change, which creates modern states, involves weighing positive and negative effects.

For Hume, the rebellion in Parliament as well as Charles' response are used to illustrate how "extreme liberty" appears and tends to produce its own brand of tyranny. His use of 'extreme liberty', describing the unfolding of the first English revolution, illustrates his definition of revolutions as natural occurrences. A relevant example is the creation of a volcano. This example

applies to Hume's description of the earlier evolutionary stages of the revolution, as if the populace was gathering steam for the eventual explosion. A volcano is violent and destructive, but it is important for mountain-building. Revolutions are also violent, but they are necessary for the creation of modern states. For Hume, extreme liberty encompasses the explosive and unpredictable direction of revolutionary change. His negative assessment of extreme liberty is rooted in his concern that rational development unregulated by government tends to produce excessive violence and chaos. Yet he is mistaken in his belief that development can occur by maintaining a balance between society and government. According to Hume, the motivating force behind the formation of "extreme liberty" is religious fanaticism. The Puritan sect which prided itself in maintaining purity in all endeavors, worked to unleash man's violent passions. The King recognized his inability to crush the Irish rebellion; he would need the assistance of Parliament. Parliament, however, sought to continue on its course to diminish the King's authority.

The great necessities, to which the King was reduced; the violent prejudices, which generally throughout the nation, prevailed against him ... 191

It was Hume's intention in The History of England to praise the extreme liberty found among religious enthusiasts, who sought to undermine the arbitrary authority

of the King. At the same time, Hume also takes into account the effects which occur when an extreme form of liberty is unleashed. His analysis of events during the Civil War, in particular, the rise of the Independents within the Parliamentary forces, offers important insights regarding the problem of liberty. At first, Hume describes liberty as a movement which defines itself by struggling against the forces which support royal authority. In order to combat these forces, the populace is mobilized and their intense energies are pressed into service. There are no limits imposed on this enthusiasm.

During those times, when the enthusiastic spirit met with such honour and encouragement, and was the immediate means of distinction and preferment; it was impossible to set bounds to these holy fervours ...¹⁹²

Hume concludes there is a danger which increases when the pursuit of liberty tends to accelerate, when new groups and new demands attempt to reach what he identifies as "a higher pitch of saintship and perfection"¹⁹³ This danger became a reality in the Parliamentary army. Hume points to the Independents as an example of what happens when extreme liberty is unleashed and unrestrained. The fanaticism of the Independents was underscored by their efforts to create a more extreme form of liberty than what was proposed by the Presbyterians.

In proportion to its degree of fanaticism, each sect became dangerous and destructive; and as the Independents went to a note higher than the Presbyterians, they could less be restrained within any bounds of temper and moderation.¹⁹⁴

This shift, which occurred within a faction of the Republican ranks in the Parliamentary army, is a striking example of the contrast between the political intentions of the Presbyterians and those of the Independents. Compared to the Independents the Presbyterians presented a moderate political agenda.

The political system of the Independents kept pace with their religions. Not content with confining, to very narrow limits, the power of the Crown, and reducing the King to the rank of first magistrate, which was the project of the Presbyterians; this sect, more ardent in the pursuit of liberty, aspired to a total abolition of the monarchy, and even of the aristocracy; and projected an entire equality of rank and order, in a republic, quite free and independent.¹⁹⁵

The extreme liberty associated with religious fanaticism would generate an inevitable conflict between the Presbyterians in the Commons and the Independents in the army. Once the King's power had diminished, a rift between Independents and Presbyterians became obvious. The unfolding conflict between these two illustrates for Hume the problem of extreme liberty, that is, that the demands of each group tend to exceed those of the group that preceded

it. The result is that extreme liberty knows no limits. Once again, this description further illustrates how Hume perceives revolutionary change as a natural occurrence. Violent and uncontrollable, like a volcano, a revolution expresses its explosive power. Hume justifies the actions of both Presbyterians and Independents because they responded according to a given religious-political disposition.

There were discussions by the Presbyterians in the House of Commons, of "diminishing the Army", after the retreat of the Scottish forces. The Commons had no plan for "the payment of arrears" which were due to soldiers in the Army. Another issue was resistance to military service in Ireland. The Army perceived there were those in the House of Commons who, during the Army's absence, would seek to "defraud them of their right, and oppress them with impunity."¹⁹⁶

From the commencement of the Civil War, Parliament's behavior, including the imposition of heavy taxes, corruption among officials, and various acts committed against the episcopal clergy and royalists, created a large reservoir of resentment against it, and contributed to the conflict between Parliament and the Army. Hume's insight is in describing how the decline and fall of Parliament as a governing body during this period has to do with the

contradictory movements of liberty and authority. Parliament had attacked the authority of the King in the name of liberty, undermined the King's authority and became itself a new authority. In time, that authority was challenged by another group, the Independents, which brought its challenge in the name of liberty. As each supporter of liberty from Parliament to the Army claimed to have overthrown an oppressive authority in the name of liberty, the succeeding group then became less tolerant and began to increase tyranny using liberty as the justification.

An important underlying theme appears as Hume examines the direction of the English Revolution. For Hume, contradictory movements, both rational and irrational, unfold during a revolution. The English Revolution followed a rational cause, on the one hand, by serving to oppose the arbitrary authority of Charles I, but its irrationalism appears, on the other hand, after its triumph over Charles. In part, the irrationalism is due to the Puritan search for religious and political perfection. Revolutionary changes tend to produce excessive actions. Since national development is a learning process, there can be no national blueprint for peaceful change. Hume also implies that national development is a painful process and society should accept the social costs.

The shift from liberty to tyranny began when Parliament used extraordinary measures during the Civil War. "But what excited the most universal complaint was, the unlimited tyranny and despotic rule of the country-committees."¹⁹⁷ During the war, the discretionary power of these courts was justified out of necessity. In the name of liberty, Parliament was becoming another oppressor. "But the nation was reduced to despair, when it saw neither end put to their duration, nor bounds to their authority. These could sequester, fine, imprison and corporally punish, without law or remedy"¹⁹⁸ This comment points to Hume's acknowledgement that the course of the revolution had shifted from the emphasis on liberty to the use of liberty to promote tyranny. The first indication is the country committees, which had no limits placed on their authority. During the revolution, they operated as governing bodies and exercised absolute authority. Hume describes the country committees as incorporating the executive, judicial and legislative powers of government. He considered their existence as proof of the need for mixed governments. Since there were no legal restraints on the country committees, they constituted, in Hume's opinion, a form of arbitrary rule. Hume points out that the extent of the oppression during Parliamentary rule led to not one Star Chamber, which it had originally abolished, but the creation of 'a great number'

strengthened by yet more justifications for oppression and vested with unlimited authority. In turn, the actions of Parliament would instill in the populace a readiness to revolt against what it perceived as tyranny and slavery. "Could anything have increased the indignation against that slavery in which the nation, from the too eager pursuit of liberty, had fallen."¹⁹⁹

Hume argues that historically, liberty and authority move in cycles. When authority declines, it is because liberty is rising; the reverse is also true. Hume traces the rise and fall of liberty and authority, keeping in mind that the movement of history is determined by the relationship between them. He describes how the authority of Parliament declined in relation to the rising aspirations of liberty articulated by the Army.

This army in their usurpations on the Parliaments, copied exactly the model, which the Parliament itself had set them, in their recent usurpations on the Crown. Everyday, they rose in their demands. If one claim was granted him, they had another ready, still more enormous and exorbitant; and they were determined never to be satisfied. At first, they pretended only to petition for what concerned themselves as soldiers: Next, they must have a validation of their character: Then, it was necessary, that their enemies be punished: At last, they claimed a right of modelling the whole government, and setting the nation.²⁰⁰

The Army's greatest demonstration of its might was the march which led to the submission of Parliament. As the conflict between Parliament and Army raged, Charles and the Royalists hoped for a restoration of the monarchy. They thought the chaos and violence would create an outcry among the populace for stability. While Charles believed he held the balance between Parliament and the Army, he also entertained the notion of an alliance with the Army. Hume characterizes Charles as a victim of historical circumstance; the people sought freedom from royal prerogative, while Charles attempted to continue it. The point is, Charles inherited the tradition of royal prerogative. His attempt to form an alliance with the Army indicated Charles' inability to see that this was a desperate act. He had experienced the wrath of Parliament and hoped the Army would hold him in higher regard. Instead, the Army perceived him as a threat; they reasoned that conspiracies and insurrections would occur with or without his help.

According to Hume, the eventual execution of Charles provides important lessons on the relation between liberty and authority, in particular, the need to establish limits. One important lesson Hume presents is that a government's authority is not absolute; rather it is fragile, supported by opinion. Hume identifies two factors which determine the

role that opinion assumes as the basis of obedience to government; first, a government's ability to persuade the populace that obedience is useful and, second, the effect of factions on public opinion. A faction can sway the populace to either obey or resist government. It is apparent Charles I was unable to persuade the people, in particular the Puritans in Parliament, that it is useful to obey government. The change in the people's opinion regarding Charles' government was a combination of his use of arbitrary authority and the vocal Puritan faction. Obedience to government is derived from the people's opinion regarding a ruler's right to power; Hume defines this principle in "Of the First Principles of Government," as the people's recognition that a ruler's authority is rooted in antiquity. Acceptance of a ruler's authority depends on the ruler's ability to convince the people that his governing principle, divine rule, is not only useful, but makes them happy. Since the principle of divine rule as a 'right to power' no longer justified the ruler's authority, then Charles' downfall was his use of a principle which no longer applied. A ruler should adapt to changing historical circumstances which affect legitimacy and consider that the growth of factions is evidence that a ruler's 'right to power' should be changed. While Hume maintains that tyrannical factions grew during the revolution, meaning the

people's opinion of government was changing all the time, what was missing was a legitimate right to power. In this sense, Hume argues popular opinions are not irrational, but reflect the search for a legitimate political order.

Hume specifies under what conditions resistance to governmental authority is possible. In "Of Passive Obedience," Hume states resistance is permitted in 'extraordinary emergencies'. In these situations, under the guise of necessity, monarchs have "assumed more authority than the laws have allowed them;"²⁰¹ this is what occurred during Charles' reign.

Hume acknowledges there is a difference between resisting a Prince and dethroning him. As Hume admits, violence and destruction occur when the people dethrone a sovereign authority, but he also states it is possible to justify dethroning him in "extraordinary cases". It was the "impudent ambition" which characterized the reign of Charles and his refusal to accept that his authority was, in fact, limited which would generate sufficient resentment in the people to dethrone him in the name of liberty. While Hume argues exceptions can be made to justify dethroning a sovereign, there are no exceptions which allow for the king's punishment or execution both of which are open invitations to tyranny. Once a ruler is executed, political stability is uncertain because the new ruler is fearful and

will enact extreme measures, since force is now the primary instrument for achieving political goals. Charles' desperate measures, he explains, simply prove that the people must never "reduce Princes to despair. It was the gap between the authority the King once possessed in contrast to what was left once Parliament encroached on it, that caused Charles to pursue these desperate measures. Hume's comments regarding the difference between resisting a Prince and dethroning him appear contradictory in relation to his argument that the goal of government is to promote national development. Given the conditions of the English civil war, resisting and dethroning a King is a predictable outcome. To some extent, Hume is guilty of a priori reasoning. It is possible to explain this apparent contradiction as Hume's attempt to propose a model of national development from above, in which the ruler seeks to mobilize the populace behind his policies. Hume's attitude seems to indicate tolerance of unrest from the populace, since development produces change and unrest in society. A ruler must provide stability and chart a course for national development as well as convince society to accept the social costs of development.

Important implications unfold from Hume's arguments against the execution of a sovereign; by far the most

important is that the death of Charles represented the collapse of authority.

The confusions, which overspread England after the murder of Charles I proceeded as well from the spirit of refinement and innovation, which agitated the ruling party, as from the dissolution of all that authority, both civil and ecclesiastical, by which the nation had ever been accustomed to be governed.²⁰²

In discussing Charles' execution, Hume depicts what occurs when a revolution paves the way for the growth of a modern state. He explains the death of Charles as a mixed blessing, destroying traditional authority needed to establish a modern state but resulting in a loss of political direction essential to national development. This explains why Hume associated the death of Charles and the rule of Cromwell as a period of uncertainty.

Hume offers an interesting portrayal of Oliver Cromwell, who embodied the complex and contradictory movement of liberty during this period. During the Civil War, he rose to power, representing the Republican-Independent faction. In the name of liberty, he and the Republicans usurped the government's authority, which in turn led to the disintegration of society. Cromwell and the Republicans faced the enormous task of reconstructing the authority of government. First, they would need to create stable social relations. This proved a formidable job, since the Civil War had created an antagonistic assortment

of interests in society. There were the millenarians or fifth-monarchy men, who sought to abolish government in order to pave the way for the dominion of Christ; the Royalists, composed of nobles and gentry, who harbored hatred for the Republicans who had reduced them to subjection; the Presbyterians who felt betrayed by the Republicans and viewed them with contempt, and the Republican Independent faction headed by Cromwell, which was motivated by "every chimera in politics, every frenzy in religion,"²⁰³ and which seemed ill-suited to reestablish order. The political advances made under Cromwell were, Hume argues, to a large extent, a product of the man's unique and complex character.

This man, suited to the age in which he lived, and to that lone, was equally qualified to gain the affection and confidence of men, by what was mean, vulgar, and ridiculous in his character; as to command their obedience by what was great, daring and enterprizing.²⁰⁴

Hume acknowledges Cromwell's success in overseas military campaigns, in particular, those waged against Scotland and Ireland. In effect, Cromwell unified Scotland and Ireland in one commonwealth with England. The political price was that these kingdoms were reduced to positions of subjugation, and treated as conquered territory. Hume tends to excuse imperialism providing a state's geopolitical strength is extended. Other kingdoms viewed England's

military might as considerable, " ... the power of England had never, in any period, appeared so formidable to the neighbouring kingdoms as it did at this time, in the hands of the Commonwealth."²⁰⁵ At first, Hume's apparent support for imperialism seems to contradict his earlier support for republican principles. The essay "Of Money," helps us to understand why Hume considers imperialism an important part of national development. As a means of securing new markets and increasing trade, imperialism understood in the historical context of the Scottish Enlightenment would allow Scotland to catch up to England. Hume's acceptance of imperialism is an effort to address the difference between a poor nation--Scotland--and a rich one--England. In "Of Money" Hume argues that wealth from the rich country would trickle down to the poor country through trade, developing the poor country. This aspect of Hume's discussion is disturbing, for he is so desperate for national development to occur in Scotland, that he ignores the historical fallacy of this argument, and demonstrates his own identification with the aggressor, the imperialist nation.

However, in spite of Cromwell's military successes overseas, Hume argues that England under Cromwell would fail to adopt a consistent plan regarding the relation between liberty and authority. When Cromwell seized power, his

authority was accepted, there were no protests or unrests on a grand scale.

The indignation, entertained by the people, against an authority, founded on such manifest usurpation, was not so violent as might naturally be expected. Congratulatory addresses, the first of the kind, were made to Cromwell by the fleet, the Army, even by many of the chief corporations and counties of England ...²⁰⁶

The reason for this acquiescence was that the Royalists and Presbyterians, the dominant groups in England, concluded that Cromwell would allow more liberty than his predecessors. When Cromwell reassembled Parliament, the unsteady and inconsistent relation between liberty and authority became apparent. In its various proceedings, Parliament pronounced that its authority was divine in origin. This infuriated Cromwell who was driven not only to dissolve Parliament, but also to reorganize his authority in relation to it, by making himself the Protector. For Hume, this action shows that England lacked a consistent plan for regulating liberty and authority. While it seems that various duties defined the role of Protector in relation to Parliament and the council, Hume remarks that the establishment of such a position failed to clearly define whether Cromwell intended to form a republic or establish tyranny because the provisions were contradictory.

On the one hand, a first magistrate, in so extensive a government, seemed

necessary both for the dignity and tranquility of the state; and the authority, which he assumed as protector, was in some respects, inferior to the prerogatives, which the laws entrust to the King. On the other hand, the legislative power, which he reserved to himself and council, together with so great an army, independent of the Parliament, were bad prognostics of his intention to submit to a civil and legal constitution.²⁰⁷

According to Hume, Cromwell's role as Protector failed to resolve the tension between liberty and authority in the government. Although Cromwell was "less odious to every party than that of any other party," he was unacceptable to everyone. Various factions, in particular, the Royalists, were skeptical of what they regarded as attempts by Cromwell to provide a semblance of liberty. Eventually, they mounted an insurrection, which Cromwell used to justify the division of England into various military jurisdictions.

Cromwell's actions would alternate in such an extreme manner between the promotion of liberty and authority, primarily because of his reliance on military force.

It must be acknowledged that the protector, in his civil and domestic administration displayed as great regard both to justice and clemency, as his usurped authority, derived from no law, and founded on the sword would possibly permit.²⁰⁸

Ironically, Hume attributes the foundation of Cromwell's military might to his ability to foster religious enthusiasm among his troops; without this powerful mobilizing tool,

Hume believes he would have been removed from office. Although Cromwell exercised arbitrary authority when he implemented violent measures against what he considered to be counter-revolutionary acts, he responded more out of necessity rather than with a plan or design to establish tyranny. On the other hand, Hume also takes into account how Cromwell, motivated by the actions of Parliament did make an effort to promote liberty. This took the form of a proposal by Parliament for "a humble petition and advice" presented to Cromwell.

This was represented as the great basis of the Republican establishment, regulating and limiting the powers of each member of the constitution, and securing the liberty of the people to the most remote posterity. By this deed, the authority of Protector was in some particulars enlarged. In others it was considerably diminished.²⁰⁹

Hume calls this effort "lame and imperfect," and says it should be considered "as a crude and undigested model of government."²¹⁰ He adds that it illustrates the uneasy, inconsistent and haphazard methods used to reconcile liberty and authority during Cromwell's reign. Although Hume points to political instability during Cromwell's reign, his alternative is the standard one offered throughout The History of England, the need for legal restraints or government. This appeal to legalism is at odds with other comments in which he accepts the social costs of

revolutionary change and excludes an appeal to law. Hume cannot demarcate where a revolution ends and where law begins. Hume maintains that Cromwell's efforts to create a regular plan for liberty and authority were, in the end, hindered by his reliance on military force. At the same time, the general attitude of Parliament was, according to Hume, "to temporize with him, and by seeming to be deceived, wait for opportunities of freeing themselves from his dominion."²¹¹ Hume's overall assessment of Cromwell's reign was not that he attempted to impose either liberty or authority, but that it "... was conducted without any plan either of liberty or arbitrary authority."²¹² Nevertheless, Hume tends to sympathize with Cromwell's motives, and explains why he shifted between liberty and authority.

An important and striking example is Hume's examination of Cromwell's motives in relation to the execution of Charles and his repressive actions during his reign. Regarding the execution of Charles, Hume thinks Cromwell believed he was acting from virtuous motives, and furthermore, that his repressive acts were performed out of necessity in order to contain various factions.

The murder of the King, the most atrocious of all his actions, was to him covered under a mighty cloud of republican and fanatical illusions; and it is not impossible, but he might believe it, as many others did, the most meritorious action, that he could perform. His subsequent usurpation was

the effect of necessity; as well as of ambition; nor is it easy to see, how the various factions could at that time have been restrained, without a mixture of military and arbitrary authority.²¹³

Another important implication we can derive from this quote is that during Cromwell's reign, the English Revolution produced unintended rational effects. One of these was the prevention of the reappearance of traditional forms of authority, such as divine rule. Under Cromwell, the revolution would pave the way for the development of a modern secular state. Cromwell's reign was a transitional government between old and new forms. The unrest and conflict revolutions cause are in effect what allows the transition from old to new regimes. This explains why Hume has some degree of sympathy for Cromwell. Hume's examination of the Restoration period following the death of Cromwell further explores the cycle of liberty and authority in government. The Restoration period represents a search within the government for a political middle ground, an attempt to establish an equilibrium between crown and Parliament. This issue shaped the interactions between Charles II and Parliament. Hume describes the specific measures enacted, which should have provided stable legal interactions between crown and Parliament. For instance, an act was passed by Parliament to protect the king from imprisonment or bodily harm; the act was designed to

prohibit Parliament's own use of force against the king. The attitude in Parliament was not to restore the ancient prerogatives exercised by the crown, but rather to repair the damage to his authority which had occurred during the Civil War. Parliament also sought to prevent its own abuse of power; one measure it passed prohibited both houses from exercising military force independent of the king. "... Parliament, therefore, empowered the king to appoint commissions for regulating the corporations, and expelling such magistrates as either intruded themselves by violence, or professed principles, dangerous to the constitution civil and ecclesiastical."²¹⁴ These measures were the product of a Royalist majority in Parliament elected during the fervor of enthusiasm, which followed the return of Charles II from exile. Yet, while the Royalists appeared to be making major concessions to reestablish the authority of the crown, a major schism between Parliament and crown was unfolding.

Once again, Hume identifies religious enthusiasm as the cause of the conflict between Parliament and crown. "Theological controversy alone still subsisted and kept alive some sparks of that flame, which had thrown the nation into combustion."²¹⁵ Hume's explanation that religious enthusiasm lies at the root of conflicts in government illustrates his argument that to form a modern state, religion and religious factions must be excluded. Hume's

assessment of the mixture of religion and politics is that religion has outlived its historical usefulness as a dominant force in government. Therefore, Hume's conception of politics is secular. He believes that politics should be regarded as an autonomous discipline from other concerns including religious ones and that this separation is essential to providing a pure theory of politics.

In constructing a pure theory of politics, Hume initially considered the mixture of religion and politics. Take the actions pursued by the Royalist or Cavalier Parliament, in particular, the Clarendon code and the act of uniformity. These acts were intended not only to effect revenge against the Presbyterians, but also to prevent the reappearance of the Roundhead party. Charles II attempted to expand the power of the crown by the act of indulgence, which would extend religious toleration to dissenters, Catholics and Protestants alike. The interesting twist is that the Cavalier Parliament, which had supported the authority of the Crown, opposed this act on the ground that Charles II was attempting to undermine acts of Parliament. Eventually, he withdrew this act, demonstrating that religious freedom was secondary to a larger political issue, the freedom of Parliament from the crown's efforts to enact legislative prerogatives. The Cavaliers resisted the crown's initiatives by acting according to the interests of

a political party. While religious issues could still serve as a motivation for unrest, the formal and actual articulation of issues was political, manifested by the increasing emphasis on party labels. Hume's discussion of parties illustrates how ideological disputes regarding the relation between society and government shape national development.

In the essay "Of Parties in General," Hume identifies the driving forces behind various kinds of political parties as either personal or real. The former are organized according to common and informal bonds of friendship and a hostility for outsiders, while the latter are organized around a common goal with profound loyalty for a particular ruler or regime. A political party formulates an interest either from principle or from affection. The interests of a political party organized around affection represents an attachment to particular families or persons of a certain dynasty. Hume focuses instead on parties of principle, for they encompass a modern conception of politics. "Parties ... of abstract speculative principle, are known only to modern times, and are, perhaps the most extraordinary and unaccountable phaenomenon, that has yet appeared in human affairs."²¹⁶ Hume acknowledges that general principles have important practical applications, and that disagreements over these principles generate distinct political parties.

The tendency to take extreme and often violent measures stems from the fact that speculative principles have an intense effect on the minds of men, who are easily influenced by opinion. The forerunners of party politics described in "The Parties of Great Britain," the Roundheads and the Cavaliers, represented parties of principle, one the republican, the other the monarchical part of government. During the Civil War, party labels were tentative, due to the mixture of politics with religion. The Restoration period established for the first time the primacy of speculative political practices in which religious concerns were secondary.

Hume examines the claims made by supporters of liberty and authority during the Restoration. He challenges specific arguments used by supporters of authority, who maintained that a ruler's authority is derived from divine right. The obvious difficulty is how to determine that this right is actually given. Evidence in support of this claim is unavailable. Long possession only proves the competence of a ruler, but it fails to prove a divine right exists; at the same time, no proof supports the belief that a ruler was a part of a "general plan or intention of providence" any more than a usurper or robber was. In particular, Hume applies this criticism to the reign of the Stuart Kings. The authority of James I and Charles I was questioned

because of their continued adherence to a principle of divine right. In spite of reservations regarding the excessive religious enthusiasm of the Puritans, Hume felt the supporters of liberty made advances by challenging the authority of the Stuart Kings. Hume's remarks regarding "passive obedience" indicate he leaves room in certain situations for resistance to the authority of government.

Hume also identifies shortcomings among those who support liberty. For one thing, he distrusts popular movements motivated by religious enthusiasm because they promote excessive and violent measures. He also defends the Stuart Kings, stating that they are not to blame for attempting to continue their authority in the name of tradition. Furthermore, Hume attacks the notion that actions taken in support of liberty can be justified by appealing to an ancient constitution. Hume says it is a mistake to interpret the present constitution as the product of a remote past, in which liberty would advance uninterrupted. He points out that if this argument were taken to its logical conclusion, then liberty would have originated with the Saxons, who were barbarians. In The History of England and the Essays, Hume states that history is a mixture of advances and setbacks for liberty and authority. It was an important advance for liberty, when the arbitrary prerogatives of kings were eliminated, but at

the same time, the excessive religious enthusiasm of the Puritans created another form of tyranny.

The critical juncture for Hume's discussion of the tension between liberty and authority is his examination of the party divisions which were firmly established during the reign of Charles II, under the names Whig and Tory.

Adopting the Whig-Tory approach to Hume's The History of England is problematic for a number of reasons. The most troubling aspect is reducing Hume's conception of politics to party disputes. This tends to diminish the larger implications of his conception of politics, such as the importance of economic and political development.²¹⁷ Formed over the issue of succession, the Whigs and the Tories are described in "Of the Parties of Great Britain" as mixed parties, that is, they are organized around both principles and interests.

Hume blames both parties for causing a conflict between liberty and authority. The Tories enacted extreme measures during the Restoration, such as the Clarendon code and the Act of Uniformity. On the other hand, the Whig Parliament which followed was also guilty of harsh acts, for example, the unrest caused over an exaggerated account of a "Popish plot". Both parties supported extreme positions, either to support an unquestioned right of succession, the Tory view,

or to adamantly deny it under all circumstances, the Whig view.

An important aspect of Hume's comparison of Whigs and Tories is that while there are these differences between the two, they are not on extreme sides of the spectrum.

The Tories, as men, were enemies to oppression; and also as Englishmen, they were enemies to arbitrary power. Their zeal for liberty, was, perhaps, less fervent than that of their antagonists
...²¹⁸

The Tories supported liberty when they resisted the encroachment of Charles II's Act of Indulgence.

Party divisions were supported by abstract speculative principles. For example, the Tories represented the interests of a party which strongly identified with the monarchy, and which would " ... naturally be jealous of the right to succession ...";²¹⁹ the Whigs formulated party principles as "jealous lovers of liberty"²²⁰ who held that the king's authority should depend on Parliament. The Whigs argued it is important for the legislative branch to place limits on absolute authority. They felt that without a control on the king's authority, the constitution would allow the king to exercise absolute authority. On the other hand, the Tories denied that the king's authority was absolute, because it is always subject to popular opinion. Furthermore, they held that when a magistrate acts against popular opinions, he undermines his authority. According to

the Tories, the right of succession is a fundamental right, which insures order and stability in government.

Hume's examination of the Whig and Tory perspectives can be understood as a study of the problem of factions. The debate between liberty and authority, the guiding theme of The History of England, represents Hume's identification of what he considers to be the main problem of politics-- finding an institutional framework which will create harmony between the interests of society and those of government.²²¹ An apparent shortcoming of Hume's The History of England is that it lacks a clear description of constitutional restraints needed to promote authority and liberty. Political stability is essential for society's primary interest, economic growth. In "Of the Perfect Commonwealth," Hume proposes an institutional framework which would promote political stability. Hume intended this essay to provide future generations with a model that could be used to reform their governments.

Hume's conception of a perfect commonwealth must adhere to custom; that is, the principles of a perfect commonwealth would develop from an historical reference to existing governments. This is how Hume distinguishes his scheme for a perfect commonwealth from previous attempts such as those described in Plato's Republic and More's Utopia, which he considers products of the imagination. The essential

principle of Hume's perfect commonwealth is a federal structure of government. The foundation of this federal principle is a group of 'county assemblies', of which Hume's model includes about one hundred. Members are elected annually by each parish. These county representatives would in turn annually elect local magistrates and a representative to a national senate. County assemblies operate as the source of legislative power, but new laws would first be discussed by the senate, which also possesses executive power, and would choose two secretaries of state, ambassadors, commissioners of the Treasury, etc. The most important features of Hume's perfect commonwealth are derived from a republican principle. Hume updates this principle by adding that it ensures the people's participation, which in turn regulates those in authority through the rule of law. This works by combining the emphasis on small social units found in Ancient republics with a federal principle, which overcomes the size limitation of Ancient republics.²²² In this manner, Hume dismisses the notion that republican principles are incompatible for large states, implying that his notion of a perfect commonwealth shares something with civilized monarchies. According to Hume, civilized monarchies were able to govern over large territories. Hume also proposes another branch of government, a judiciary, which exists

between the counties and the senate with a "court of Competitors" operating as a court of appeal. It is apparent that this scheme of constitutional arrangement, through mixed government, is meant to counteract the rise of factions. Hume maintains that this government reconciles liberty and authority, thereby creating conditions for political stability, in turn, allowing society to pursue its common interest, economic growth.

**CONCLUSION: AN APPRAISAL OF HUME'S
CONTRIBUTION TO POLITICAL THEORY**

In the introduction to the Treatise, Hume describes his project as an inquiry into how we acquire knowledge. Using an experimental method, which relies on observation, Hume establishes that the two principles which govern human nature, experience and imagination, can lead to an understanding of politics. Experience or causal principles are useful to establish regularity in politics, and imagination uses what man experiences to form inductive generalizations about politics. At first, it seems that Hume's intention is to examine the relation between human nature and politics; but a closer examination of the Treatise reveals that a main feature of his discussion dates back to the origins of western philosophy, the distinction between nature and artifice. This discussion appears as a question, is justice a natural or artificial virtue? Hume's efforts to reconcile nature and artifice are the dominant theme throughout his investigation of politics. As Hume constructs a natural definition of politics founded on sympathy for a common interest, as well as an artificial one which he attributes to rulers governing the acquisition of property, it appears that he has formulated contradictory

notions of politics. His notion of sympathy for a common interest operates as a democratic principle. This implies that when the thoughts and feelings of others are known, it is possible to sympathize with the effects of injustice; in doing so, individuals feel self-hatred when they fail to perform obligations to others which serve as the foundation of politics.

Hume presents two definitions of artifice. One is the direct result of sympathy for a common interest developing from social conventions as rules, such as a need for order in society. Government originates out of a need to promote order in society. This indicates a relation between a natural definition, sympathy for a common interest, and an artificial definition, rules used to impose order on society. At the same time, a contradiction emerges between the two definitions. Hume traces the origin of property in civil society to the distinction between 'mine and thine' which defines property as the ability of individuals to exclude others from using an object. This generates conflict in civil society, and is the reason why rules are needed to regulate the acquisition of property; but conflicts over property in civil society undermine sympathy for a common interest. Rules that attempt to impose order in society, thereby insuring that property becomes the common interest of society fail because they only mask the

conflict, they don't resolve it. Furthermore, for Hume there are no rational justifications for property. In this sense, Hume should be considered a critic of property.

Hume ultimately manages to reconcile nature and artifice by formulating a theory of economic and political development. He demonstrates that the historical development of the market becomes society's common interest. The market is a progressive force because it promotes economic development. In The History of England and the Essays, Hume constructs a form of government which is stable and allows for economic growth.²²³ The essay "Of the Perfect Commonwealth," demonstrates how Hume not only reconciles authority and liberty through a modern notion of mixed government, but it also describes a form of government which allows for economic growth. In the Essay "Of the Perfect Commonwealth," he identifies a modern version of mixed government. This government is ruled by law to counteract conflict among interests in society, which would undermine the political stability necessary for market relations. Hume's contribution to political theory is that he reconciles nature and artifice by providing a theory of economic and political development which combines interest and virtue and brings together Ancient and Modern political theory. The shortcoming of Hume's reconciliation of nature and artifice into a theory of economic and political

development is a persistent attachment for the Enlightenment notion of progress. At best, historical events have shown that efforts to reconcile a common good and private property are short-lived. Hume's vision of a mixed government as a model for political stability useful in providing national development, is a description of the kind of government needed for capitalist development. The history of capitalist development up to the present has been the tendency for the social costs produced by the market to be paid by society.

Footnotes

112 This theme appears in N.T. Phillipson and R. Mitchison (eds.) Scotland in the Age of Improvement (Edinburgh: Edinburgh Press, 1970); Ray Porter and Mikulas Teich (eds.) The Enlightenment in a National Context and Istvan Hunt and Michael Ignatieff (eds.) Wealth and Virtue: The Shaping of Political Economy in the Scottish Enlightenment (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

113 Treatise, p. 562.

114 Ibid, p. 145.

115 Ibid, p. 430.

116 Ibid, pp. 121-122.

117 The discussion of time in Donald Livingston's Hume's Philosophy of Common Life (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984) was helpful in understanding Hume's conception of historical events.

118 Treatise, p. 36.

119 Ibid, p. 317.

120 Ibid, p. 340.

121 Ibid, p. 428.

122 Ibid.

123 Ibid, p. 436.

124 Ibid, p. 435.

125 Enquiry, pp. 83-84.

126 Ibid, p. 83. An important underlying theme which unfolds in the Essays and The History of England is Hume's provision of historical evidence that man is first and foremost social, a theme which, in turn, tends to support the existence of sympathy. In examining Ancient Rome and feudalism, his starting point is social relations. Similar interpretations appear in James Farr "Hume, Hermeneutics, and History: A Sympathetic Account" History and Theory, 1978 and in S.K. Wertz "Hume, History and Human Nature" Journal of the History of Ideas, 1976 as well as in G.

Sabine "Hume's Contribution to the Historical Method"
Philosophical Review, 1906.

127An essential work concerning Hume's analysis of religion is J.C.A. Gaskin's Hume's Philosophy of Religion (London: Macmillan Press, 1978).

128Letters, Vol. I, Letter 154.

129E.C. Mossner The Life of David Hume (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980) pp. 597-598.

130Ibid, p. 598.

131Ibid.

132Treatise, p. 115.

133Enquiry, p. 116.

134Ibid, pp. 117-118.

135Ibid, p. 121.

136Ibid, p. 84.

137Ibid, p. 113.

138Hume "Of the Delicacy of Taste," p. 6.

139Ibid, p. 238.

140History, Vol. I, p. 3.

141Ibid, p. 4.

142Hume, "Of Civil Liberty," p. 89.

143Hume, "Of Refinement in the Arts" pp. 273-274.

144Hume, "Of the Original Contract" p. 478.

145History, Vol. II, p. 519.

146Hume, "Of the Coalition of Parties," p. 496.

147History, Vol. I, p. 13.

148Ibid, pp. 23-24.

- 149 Ibid, p. 25.
- 150 Ibid, pp. 3-4.
- 151 Hume, "Of Refinement of the Arts" p. 278.
- 152 Hume, "Of the Populousness of Ancient Nations" p. 384.
- 153 History, Vol. I, p. 463.
- 154 Hume, "Of the Populousness of Ancient Nations," p. 400.
- 155 History, Vol. I, p. 486.
- 156 Ibid, pp. 487-488.
- 157 This is also the argument of E.C. Mossner, "Hume and the Ancient-Modern Controversy: A Study in Creative Scepticism" Texas University Studies in English, Vol. 28, 1949.
- 158 Hume, "On the Independency of Parliament" p. 608.
- 159 Ibid.
- 160 Hume, "Of the Standard of Taste" p. 246.
- 161 Roger B. Oake's article "Montesquieu and Hume" Modern Language Quarterly, 1941 is an excellent, comprehensive article about the political thought of Montesquieu and Hume.
- 162 Hume, "Of the Populousness of Ancient Nations," p. 378.
- 163 Hume, "Of the Original Contract" p. 473.
- 164 Hume, "Of Some Remarkable Customs" p. 368.
- 165 Hume, "On the Independency of Parliament," p. 42.
- 166 This interpretation contrasts sharply with the one provided by James Moore in "Hume's Political Science and the Classical Republican Tradition" Canadian Journal of Political Science, 1977, in which he argues the difference between Ancient and Modern economic and political arrangements is the modern preference for interest over virtue.

- 167 History, Vol. I p. 372.
168 History, V. III p. 214.
169 History, V. IV p. 145.
170 Ibid, p. 355.
171 Ibid.
172 Ibid, p. 176.
173 Ibid, p. 144.
174 History, Vol. V, p. 11.
175 Ibid, p. 12.
176 Ibid, p. 550.
177 Ibid, p. 127.
178 Ibid, p. 42.
179 Ibid, pp. 43-44.
180 Ibid, p. 67.
181 Ibid, p. 90.
182 Ibid, p. 92.
183 History, Vol. V, p. 181.
184 Ibid, p. 200.
185 Ibid, p. 283.
186 Ibid, p. 222.
187 Ibid, p. 274.
188 Ibid, p. 293.
189 Ibid.
190 Ibid, p. 294.
191 Ibid, p. 348.

192 Ibid, p. 441. The religious radicalism of the puritan sect was an important factor which lead to the political transformation of the English political system. An underlying argument in Hume's History of England, is his recognition that religious radicalism produced a fundamental transformation of English politics. A similar approach appears in Reinhard Bendix, Kings or People, (California: University of California Press, 1978).

193 Ibid, p. 442.

194 Ibid.

195 Ibid, p. 443.

196 Ibid, p. 495.

197 Ibid, p. 501.

198 Ibid, p. 502.

199 Ibid.

200 Ibid, p. 503.

201 Ibid, p. 545.

202 History, Vol. VI, p. 3.

203 Ibid, p. 5.

204 Ibid.

205 Ibid, p. 41. Hume's justification of imperialism as a means of national development also appears as a theme in an article by Corey Venning, "Hume on Property, Commerce, and Empire in the Good Society: The Role of Historical Necessity" Journal of the History of Ideas, 1976.

206 Ibid, p. 58.

207 Ibid, p. 69.

208 Ibid, p. 85.

209 Ibid, p. 98.

210 Ibid.

211 Ibid, p. 109.

212 Ibid.

213 Ibid, p. 110.

214 Ibid, p. 175.

215 Ibid, p. 170.

216 Hume, "Of Parties in General," p. 60.

217 The issue explored in the secondary literature is whether or not Hume in The History of England and the Essays is advocating a Whig or Tory interpretation of politics. A number of books and articles take sides in this debate. Listed are a selection of representative works: Lawrence Bongie, David Hume Prophet of the Counterrevolution (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965); M. Grene "Hume: Sceptic or Tory" Journal of the History of Ideas, 1943; E.C. Mossner "Was Hume a Tory Historian" Journal of the History of Ideas, 1941; Duncan Forbes Hume's Philosophical Politics (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1975); David Miller Philosophy and Ideology in Hume's Political Thought (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981); Donald Livingston Hume's Philosophy of Common Life (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984).

218 Hume, "The Parties of Great Britain" p. 70.

219 History, Vol. VI p. 376.

220 Ibid.

221 This shortcoming is also overlooked by various Hume specialists such as Duncan Forbes in Hume's Philosophic Politics (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1975) and Constant Noble Stockton in "Hume--Historian of the English Constitution" Eighteenth Century Studies, 1970.

222 A similar approach appears in Douglas Adair's "David Hume, James Madison and the Tenth Federalist" in Hume: A Reevaluation ed. Donald Livingston and James King (New York: Fordham University Press, 1976) and John Robertson in "The Scottish Enlightenment and the Limits of the Civic Tradition" in Wealth and Virtue: The Shaping of Political Economy in the Scottish Enlightenment ed. by Istvan Hont and Michael Ignatieff (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

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