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The 'Scottish Cato'?:
A Re-examination of Adam Ferguson's Engagement with Classical Antiquity

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Declaration

I confirm that the following thesis has been composed by me, and is completely my own work. None of the information has been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification. None of the information has been submitted for publication.

Katherine Cecilia Nicolai 27 June 2011

Abstract

Adam Ferguson (1723-1816) was one of the leading figures of the Scottish Enlightenment, an influential eighteenth-century moral and political philosopher, as well as a professor of ethics at the University of Edinburgh from 1764 to 1785. There has been a wealth of scholarship on Ferguson in which central themes include his role as a political theorist, sociologist, moral philosopher, and as an Enlightenment thinker. One of the most frequent topics addressed by scholars is his relationship to ancient philosophy, particularly Stoicism. The ease with which scholars identify Ferguson as a Stoic, however, is problematic because of the significant differences between Ferguson's ideas and those of the 'schools' of classical antiquity, especially Stoicism. Some scholars interpret Ferguson's philosophy as a derivative, unsystematic 'patchwork' because he drew on various ancient sources, but, it is argued, did not adhere to any particular system.

The aim of my thesis is to suggest an alternative interpretation of Ferguson's relationship to ancient philosophy, particularly to Stoicism, by placing Ferguson in the context of the intellectual history of the eighteenth century. The first section of this thesis is an examination of Ferguson's response to the Quarrel between the Ancients and the Moderns, modern eclecticism and the experimental method to demonstrate how Ferguson's approach to and engagement with ancient philosophy is informed by these intellectual contexts. The second section is a close analysis of the role that ancient schools play in his discussion of the history of philosophy as well as the didactic purpose found in his lectures and published works thereby determining the function of ancient thought in his philosophy. The third section is a re-examination of Ferguson's concept of Stoicism and his engagement with Stoic ethics in his moral philosophy re-interpreting his relationship to the ancient school. With a combination of a new understanding of Ferguson's methodology and new assessment of his engagement with ancient thought, a new interpretation of Ferguson's moral philosophy demonstrates his unique contribution to eighteenth-century thought.

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List of Abbreviations

ECCO	Eighteenth Century Collections Online
Essay	*Essay on the History of Civil Society* (1767) by Adam Ferguson
EUL	Edinburgh University Library
HCP	*Historia Critica Philosophiae* Vol. 1 and II (1742-1744), by J. J. Brucker
History	*The History of the Progress and Termination of the Roman Republic* (1783) in Six Books, by Adam Ferguson
Institutes	*Institutes of Moral Philosophy* (1769) by Adam Ferguson
Lectures	*Lectures on Pneumatics and Moral Philosophy* by Adam Ferguson, MS, EUL Special Collections, Dc. 1.84-1.86
Manuscripts	*The Manuscripts of Adam Ferguson*, ed. Vincenzo Merolle (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2006)
NLS	National Library of Scotland
ODNB	*Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 60 Volumes, ed. H. C. G. Matthew and B. Harrison, Online Edition
P.I.	*Principles of Moral and Political Science, Vol. I* (1792) by Adam Ferguson
P.II.	*Principles of Moral and Political Science, Vol. II* (1792) by Adam Ferguson

I. Introduction

1.1 Introductory Remarks

The two Scottish literary giants of the long eighteenth century, Robert Burns[1] and Walter Scott,[2] met only once at a dinner party in honour of Robert Burns held in a small house in a suburb of Edinburgh in 1787. It was an intimate gathering whose guests included James Hutton, Joseph Black, Dugald Stewart, and 'the famous aeronaut Lunardi',[3] all of whom were excited to meet Burns. Walter Scott was a youth at the time and friend of young Adam, the son of Professor Adam Ferguson,[4] lecturer in moral philosophy at Edinburgh, host of the party. This fortunate meeting of two eminent literary figures[5] connected representations of two generations of the Scottish Enlightenment and brought together champions of the old and new styles. This meeting can be viewed as summarizing the philosophical works of Adam Ferguson himself because his career in a similar fashion brought together different traditions and consciously bridged the gap between the old and the new, the ancient and the modern.

Adam Ferguson (1723-1816) was a central and unique figure of the Scottish Enlightenment. Writing from the mid-eighteenth-century to the early nineteenth century, he not only outlived many of his contemporaries, but experienced the very changes and events that shaped the development of the Scottish Enlightenment: the Jacobite risings and their aftermath, the American and French Revolutions, the growth of the British empire, the discovery and exploration of new locations and

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[1] Robert Crawford, 'Burns, Robert (1759–1796)', *ODNB*, http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/4093 (accessed 26 Oct 2010).
[2] David Hewitt, 'Scott, Sir Walter (1771–1832)', *ODNB*, http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/24928 (accessed 26 Oct 2010).
[3] John Small, *Biographical Sketch of Adam Ferguson, LL.D., F.R.S.E.* (Edinburgh: Neill and Company, 1864), 49. Vincenzo Lunardi (1759-1806) was an Italian pioneer of hot air balloons and successfully demonstrated the launching of a hydrogen balloon in London in 1784, thus rising in popularity in the United Kingdom, having balloon motif skirts named after him as well as a bonnet, which is referred to in Robert Burn's 1789 poem 'To a Louse'. Elizabeth Baigent, 'Lunardi, Vincenzo (1759–1806)'. *ODNB*, http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/17189 (accessed 9 Sep 2009).
[4] Fania Oz-Salzberger, 'Ferguson, Adam (1723–1816)', *ODNB*, http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/9315 (accessed 26 Oct 2010).
[5] Walter Scott had little conversation with Burns, but what did transpire was cherished by Scott for the rest of his life. Small, *Biographical Sketch*, 49-50.

cultures, revolutions in science and technology, advances in theories of law and theology, and the ferocious debates that occupied thinkers in the Enlightenment, both in Scotland specifically and Europe in general. This wide-ranging experience gave him a unique and original perspective as an eighteenth-century thinker. His long life resulted in his participation in debates from the mid-eighteenth century to the later controversies of the early nineteenth century.

Ferguson also maintained a close connection to the works of classical antiquity. Many scholars note Ferguson's debt to ancient authors, particularly the Stoics, and Ferguson himself commented on his strong ties to the Stoic school. In Ferguson's works, this appreciation for antiquity is often paired with discussions of modern topics, issues and sources. It is this blending of the ancient and the modern which is one of the unique characteristics of Ferguson's thought. Certainly Ferguson is not alone in drawing on ancient philosophy. The tradition of classical scholarship and the publication of ancient texts in Europe and Scotland had been established from, at the latest, the Renaissance to the eighteenth century. Many of Ferguson's contemporaries also incorporated discussions of classical literature into their writing as well, but in modern scholarship it is Ferguson who is most often identified as having a recurrent dependence on antiquity.

The history of the study of and engagement with the classical tradition of ancient philosophy and literature in the eighteenth century is considered essential for wider studies of the European and the Scottish Enlightenment. In books about the Enlightenment the use of classical ideas by modern thinkers is inescapable.[6] The influence of ancient philosophy on modern thought is a vast and rich topic and has been a crucial element of eighteenth-century studies. The Enlightenment has been defined as encompassing the 'long eighteenth century', but has its origins remain in the intellectual developments of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Thinkers in the eighteenth century reacted to earlier intellectual trends, particularly in their response to ancient literature. Developments in the study of ancient philosophy, literature and history were of fundamental importance to those writing after the

[6] For discussions of the importance of classics on the Enlightenment see Peter Gay's classic works, *The Enlightenment: an Interpretation Vol. I: The Rise of Modern Paganism* (New York: Knopf, 1966) and *The Enlightenment: an Interpretation Vol. II: The Science of Freedom* (New York: Knopf, 1969).

revival of ancient learning in the Renaissance[7] because the reaction of different thinkers through the early modern period shaped modern thought. Ancient philosophy, in particular the schools of the Stoics, Epicureans and Peripatetics, was central to early modern discussions of philosophy, although the study of ancient literature was not limited to these few subjects, and this scholarship was crucial for the origins of the Enlightenment.[8]

Engagement with ancient philosophy has been studied mainly by two methods: the first is to assess the changing response to antiquity in early modern intellectual history, and the second is to analyse the specific response of individual thinkers to different aspects of ancient literature. This extensive and rich scholarship has provided modern readers with essential insights into the context and mindset of early modern philosophy. Particularly for the study of the Scottish Enlightenment, these studies offer modern scholars a picture of the intellectual context in which eighteenth-century thinkers wrote. As has been clearly demonstrated by such scholars as John Robertson and David Allan, the relationship between Stoicism, Epicureanism, Augustinianism and Aristotelianism is crucial for Scottish Enlightenment thinkers.

In *Philosophy and Politics in Later Stuart Scotland* David Allan has traced the growth of what he terms Neo-Stoicism in the sixteenth century as a result of thinkers reinterpreting ancient Stoic sources.[9] Allan traces the development of Stoicism from the ancient authors to the early modern thinkers. He has looked at how ancient texts and ideas were received in the seventeenth century and proved the importance of neo-classical thought in Scotland: 'What can be inferred about reading tastes in the period also suggests that individual Scots possessed a keen interest in both classical and neo-classical literature which would have exposed them immediately to new European currents in philosophical thinking'.[10] He notes the

[7] Rudolf Pfeiffer, *The History of Classical Scholarship from 1300 to 1850* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), 3. Pfeiffer identifies the poet Francis Petrarca (Petrarch) as being the impetus for the revival of classical scholarship.
[8] See Dan Edelstein, *The Enlightenment: A Genealogy* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2010).
[9] David Allan, *Philosophy and Politics in Later Stuart Scotland*, (East Lothian: Tuckwell Press, 2000), 2.
[10] David Allan, *Philosophy and Politics in Later Stuart Scotland*, 24, 30-34. See also David Allan, *Virtue, Learning, and the Scottish Enlightenment* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1993).

development of Stoicism from the Renaissance through the seventeenth century when Stoicism became notably important in European politics and natural law. He claims that one theory for the survival and importance of Stoicism in the modern world is that it is on the one hand practical and applicable to later political discourse while on the other hand the teachings of later Stoics had a strong and lasting connection to Christianity.[11] He goes on to note that in more recent scholarship the actual relationship between Christianity and Stoicism has been clearly shown. Stoic ideas were so important in the late Roman Empire that the early Christian writers incorporated Stoic ideas into their theology.[12] The connection between Christianity and Stoicism is both well understood generally and for the modern period it is essential.

John Robertson in *The Case for the Enlightenment* (2005)[13] writes an in-depth discussion of the interplay between the modern proponents of Stoicism and Epicureanism and the Augustinians noting that Enlightenment thinkers followed the evolution of these schools in the seventeenth century, but this evolution was not limited to these origins.[14] Due to the influence of seventeenth-century authors,[15] members of the Scottish Enlightenment were familiar with earlier continental neo-Stoic authors like the highly influential Justus Lipsius (1547-1606), who was instrumental in founding the eighteenth-century concept of Christian Stoicism.[16] This process of Christianising pagan philosophy was not limited to Stoic thought and scholars such as the Cambridge Platonists who found similarities between Christian dogma and platonic thought.[17] Robertson further demonstrates the importance of the interaction between modern interpretations of ancient schools, particularly the Augustinian and neo-Stoic reaction to Epicureanism. Epicureanism in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries took on particular connotations related to

[11] Allan, *Philosophy and Politics in Later Stuart Scotland*, 7.
[12] Allan, *Philosophy and Politics in Later Stuart Scotland*, 7-8.
[13] John Robertson, *The Case for the Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).
[14] Robertson, *The Case for the Enlightenment*, 32.
[15] Ibid., 110-127.
[16] Jonathan Israel, *Enlightenment Contested: Philosophy, Modernity, and the Emancipation of Man 1650-1752* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 417. See also Mark Morford, *Stoics and Neo-Stoics: Rubens and the Circle of Lipsius* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991).
[17] Ibid. See also Sarah Hutton, 'The Cambridge Platonists' in *Blackwell's Companion to Early Modern Philosophy*, edited by Steven Nadler (Malden and Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2002, 2008), 308-319.

atomism, atheism and moral corruption and was ascribed to modern thinkers such as Gassendi and Thomas Hobbes.[18] The opposition to Epicureanism and the resulting formulations of different moral theories, either of Aristotelian or Stoic origin, had a great influence in shaping philosophy in the Scottish Enlightenment.[19] Several prominent figures of the early Scottish Enlightenment, Francis Hutcheson in particular, used a form of Christian Stoicism to combat what were perceived as the corrupting effects of Epicureanism, especially Bernard Mandeville's *Fable of the Bees* (1725).[20]

The importance of classical scholarship and the present role of ancient philosophy within modern philosophy are a crucial theme in eighteenth-century studies. The engagement with antiquity defines, to a degree, much of eighteenth-century thought and the broad effects of this must be understood in order to accurately assess Enlightenment philosophy. Of course, not all eighteenth-century thinkers took the same position regarding ancient philosophy and their views on classical literature varied depending on specific background, education and personal preference. The standard curriculum would have exposed the educated elite to most of the same authors, and therefore they would have recognised and understood the allusions to ancient literature, and would have a common conception of the ancient world. The classics provided the received tradition and cultural background for people living in the eighteenth century.[21] The classical tradition was inescapable for anyone educated during the early modern period and created a base-line of understanding and recognition. Therefore, even if not all thinkers responded to classical literature uniformly, one example of a thinker's relationship to the classics is representative of many of the opinions of antiquity in the eighteenth century as grounded on this general understanding of ancient literature.

Adam Ferguson provides the perfect case study to better understand the relationship between ancient and modern thought in the Scottish Enlightenment

[18] For recent studies on Epicureanism in the eighteenth century see Eric Baker, 'Lucretius in the European Enlightenment', in *The Cambridge Companion to Lucretius*, edited by Stuart Gillespie and Philip Hardie (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Catherine Wilson, *Epicureanism at the Origins of Modernity* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2008); *Epicurus in the Enlightenment*, ed. Neven Leddy and Avi S. Lifschitz (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2009).
[19] Robertson, *The Case for the Enlightenment*, 136-143.
[20] Ibid., 284-285.
[21] Gloria Vivenza, *Adam Smith and the Classics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 41.

because he was a thinker who consciously engaged with ancient philosophy and was involved in contemporary intellectual debates. Ferguson's work cannot be divorced from either ancient or modern intellectual traditions and therefore his philosophy can be seen as representative of current opinions about ancient philosophy and the relationship that plays with modern trends of thought. While it is not the aim of this thesis to assess Ferguson's connections to Neo-Stoicism or Epicureanism, an understanding of his relationship to Stoicism is of the most importance to better understand his thought. An examination of Ferguson's personal and intellectual life will further demonstrate the influence of ancient and modern ideas on this central and important figure of the Scottish Enlightenment.

1.2 Adam Ferguson (1723-1816)

A study of Ferguson's intellectual career would be incomplete without an exploration into his personal intellectual history. Ferguson's life and education had a profound impact on his ideas and methods. An exploration into Ferguson's education, his professional life and his publications demonstrates the central role which ancient philosophy and literature played throughout his life. Ferguson, however, is more than one educated in and influenced by antiquity and an examination of his life also highlights the important role which Ferguson played in the Scottish and European Enlightenments. Ferguson's biography reveals a man who was a central and influential member of the Scottish *literati* as well as a European figure. Ferguson's intellectual connections to eighteenth-century thinkers in Europe demonstrate that he engaged with his contemporaries as much as with his ancient sources. In Ferguson's life, these two trends, this strong connection to his education in and his lifelong relationship to ancient thought, as well as his commitment to contemporary issues, characterise Ferguson's thought.

Early Life and Education

Adam Ferguson was born in Logierait, Perthshire on 20 June 1723 to Mary and Adam Fergusson, a Gaelic-speaking minister in the Church of Scotland.[22] His childhood spent on the borders of the Scottish Highlands and Lowlands and his knowledge of Gaelic both influenced his career and his thought and set him apart from many of his English-speaking, Lowland counterparts in the Scottish Enlightenment.[23] Ferguson's intellectual talents were recognised at an early age. His father, who was once a school teacher, first taught him basic reading and writing. Ferguson then attended the local parish school in Logierait, where he was taught by John Conacher[24] who recognised Ferguson's abilities and sent Adam to the Perth Grammar School, headed by the Rector James Martin[25] and Alexander Cornfute. From a young age Ferguson was taught from classical texts. He stood out in the study of Greek and Latin texts, writing compositions following classical models; and as is the case of many of his contemporaries, this foundation in classical education shaped his future works.[26] Ferguson 'excelled in classical literature, and especially in the composition of essays', his themes were highly praised and were 'shown with pride by Mr. Martin, who declared that none of his pupils had ever surpassed the writer'.[27] Ferguson also performed in the Latin play 'Cato' in 1735 at

[22] For biographical information on Ferguson see John Small, *Biographical Sketch of Adam Ferguson* (Edinburgh: Neill and Company, 1864); James Lorimer, 'Adam Ferguson', in the *Edinburgh Review, or critical journal*, 125:255 (1867:Jan.), pp.48-85; Jane B. Fagg's published Ph.D. Thesis, *Adam Ferguson: Scottish Cato* (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms, Inc, 1968); Jane B. Fagg 'Biographical Introduction', in *The Correspondence of Adam Ferguson* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 1995); Fania Oz-Salzberger *Translating the Enlightenment: Scottish Civic Discourse in Eighteenth-Century Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995); Fania Oz-Salzberger's 'Introduction' to her edition of Adam Ferguson's 1767 *An Essay on the History of Civil Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); David Kettler, *The Social and Political Thought of Adam Ferguson*, 2nd edn. (New Brunswick and London: Transaction Publishers, 1965, 2005); David Allan, *Adam Ferguson* (Aberdeen: AHRC University of Aberdeen, 2006); Lisa Hill, *The Passionate Society: The Social, Political and Moral Thought of Adam Ferguson* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2006).

[23] Fania Oz-Salzberger, 'Ferguson, Adam (1723–1816)', *ODNB*, http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/9315 (accessed 25 Jan 2011).

[24] Jane B. Fagg, 'Biographical Introduction', in *The Correspondence of Adam Ferguson*, xxi; Jane B. Fagg, *Adam Ferguson: Scottish Cato*, 9.

[25] James Lorimer, *'Adam Ferguson', Edinburgh Review, or critical journal*, 125:255 (1867:Jan.), 59. 'The Perth rector long after preserved his boyish essays, and exhibited them with pride; and at college he finished his curriculum in Arts with the reputation of being one of the best classical scholars, and perhaps the ablest mathematicians and metaphysicians of his time.'

[26] Fania Oz-Salzberger, 'Introduction', vii; Fagg, *Scottish Cato*, 9-12.

[27] Fagg, *Scottish Cato*, 10.

Perth Grammar School. [28] Ferguson's early education was particularly important to his later writings because it gave him a firm and critical foundation in classical literature and language that would serve as the basis of his analysis of ancient thought in his philosophy.

The example of Ferguson's primary education was typical of the common style of teaching in eighteenth-century Scotland. Most people who had some degree of formal education would also have had an experience of classical literature. In the seventeenth century, the parish school curriculum focused on arithmetic, writing in English, writing 'Latin themes' by translating texts from English to Latin, grammar, 'good manners' and occasionally geography.[29] In the eighteenth century students learned mainly by using the Bible and Catechisms, and would only be taught Latin if their teacher had been instructed in it himself.[30] Some of the more advanced students would also receive special instruction in Latin, mathematics, bookkeeping, land surveying, geometry, algebra and religious instruction depending on their ability and the abilities of their instructors.[31] The education offered in Scottish schools varied by location, but many schools had adopted Thomas Ruddiman's influential *Rudiments of the Latin Tongue* by the end of the eighteenth century.[32]

Some of the text books used in these classrooms displayed particular assumptions about the usefulness of ancient literature. For instance, in Edward Manwarning's *Institutes of Learning: Taken from Aristotle, Plutarch, Longinus, Dionysius Halicar, Cicero, Quintilian and many other Writers both Ancient and Modern*, he wrote about 'the method of teaching the Classics in their most Substantial and Beautiful Parts; The Characters and Affections of Stile; The Art of School-Compositions, and all Kinds of Oratory' and characterised the work as 'a system of the Greek and Roman polite Literature'. [33] Extolling the ancient authors over the moderns, he claims the:

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[28] Fagg, *Scottish Cato*, 10.
[29] James Scotland, *The History of Scottish Education Vol I, From the Beginning to 1872* (London: University of London Press Ltd., 1969), 65.
[30] Scotland, *The History of Scottish Education Vol. I*, 66-67.
[31] For a description of the conditions of schools across Scotland in the early modern period see T.C. Smout, *A History of the Scottish People 1560-1830* (London: Fontana Press, 1998; first published by William Collins and Sons, 1969), especially 425-433.
[32] M. L. Clarke, *Classical Education in Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1959), 134.
[33] Ibid., 66.

> Antient are more solid, more philosophical, and upon Subjects much more material and weighty, but of little Use, because seldom read, or read superficially. The moderns have a double advantage of the Antients in their own Experience, and that of the Antients; yet have never been capable of equalling the Antients in Knowledge and Learning.[34]

Manwarning discussed in detail which authors should be read depending on the subject matter, and compared their faults and attributes.[35] Throughout the book he employed ancient authors to teach students proper style and rules of grammar, citing examples of specific texts and authors to illustrate his general guidelines. This category of textbooks represents one way in which opinions about the value of classical texts were assimilated into basic education. The textbooks used in eighteenth-century education therefore played a central role in the intellectual development of Enlightenment figures, and their later thought and opinions about ancient thought would have derived from these early experiences with the texts.

Ferguson himself maintained a belief in the importance of a classical education beginning at a young age. This is evidenced in an epistolary exchange between David Hume and Ferguson in which Hume requested Ferguson's assistance in organising a supplemental education programme in ancient Greek for his nephew, Josey, who was living in Edinburgh.[36] Ferguson responded by stating that, although it was not the fashion to learn Greek before attending university, he had eventually found a teacher for Josey who could instruct him in the basics of Greek grammar.[37] Ferguson added that Hume's nephew, though skilled, was not proficient enough in Latin to complete his school exercises and he then proposed to find someone to tutor the young man in the evenings in Latin and Greek grammar.[38] Ferguson's close attention to the boy's classical education demonstrates how important he and Hume

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[34] Edward Manwarning, *Institutes of Learning* (First Edition, London: W. Innys & R. Manby, 1737. Facsimile reprint Menston: Scholar Press, 1968), 1.
[35] For example, Manwarning compared historians by their style and substance as 'what Velocity of Stile in Sallust; how unaffected and sweet Xenophon and Herodotus; how weighty, vehement and clear Livy, and how he moves the milder Affections.' Manwarning, *Institutes*, 13.
[36] 'I am afraid there occurs a difficulty at present about entering him to the Greek. He is too far advanced by his learning for the class in the High School, to which he is put, and yet he is too young for the college: For this reason I thought that he might learn something of the Greek before he finished his Latin course, as is the practice in England'. Letter from David Hume, 9 Nov. 1763, *The Correspondence of Adam Ferguson* (London: William Pickering, 1995), 51.
[37] Letter to David Hume, 26 Nov. 1763, *The Correspondence of Adam Ferguson*, 55.
[38] Ibid., 56.

thought it was for the young man to have a solid foundation in classical languages and literature.

In Ferguson's university career the importance of and his exposure to ancient literature continued to play a crucial role in his education and intellectual development. Ferguson attended St. Leonard's College at the University of St. Andrews beginning in 1738 and studied for the Master of Arts in philosophy, receiving a bursary based on his excellent knowledge of Latin.[39] Ferguson studied Greek with Francis Pringle, who was 'said to be without rival in Scotland',[40] devoting particular attention to these studies and to this end Ferguson read 100 lines of the Iliad per day over the summer to improve his proficiency.[41] While at St. Andrews, he also studied mathematics with Charles Gray; logic and moral philosophy; and natural philosophy with David Young, who used John Keill's Newtonian *Introductio ad veram Physicam*.[42]

Ferguson's university education was typical of the curriculum taught at Scottish universities, where classical education remained an important component of education.[43] From the beginning of the seventeenth century, most of the universities taught theology, ancient languages, philosophy and mathematics. The main subjects attended in the eighteenth century were Latin, Greek, logic, moral philosophy and natural philosophy,[44] while Edinburgh in particular added law, medicine, rhetoric and science.[45] Ferguson's university education therefore would have enhanced his knowledge of ancient subjects and his contemporaries would have received the same exposure to those texts. Gloria Vivenza identifies Adam Smith's education at

[39] Small notes that this award was the result of 'his previous excellent training in Latin', (John Small, *Biographical Sketch of Adam Ferguson*, 2). Small also argues that the examination for the bursary included writing and translating Latin. See also Fagg, *Scottish Cato*, 12.
[40] Fagg, *Scottish Cato*, 12.
[41] Lorimer, *Edinburgh Review*, 59, 'Ferguson entered the university at fifteen, and … he carried neither Greek nor mathematics along with him.'
[42] Fagg, 'Biographical Introduction', xxi.
[43] For detailed discussions of the development of the curriculum in Scottish universities in the early modern period see: Christine Shepherd, 'A National System of University Education in Seventeenth-Century Scotland?', in *Scottish Universities: Distinctiveness and Diversity*, ed. Jennifer J. Carter and Donald J. Witherington (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1992); John M. Fletcher, 'The College-University: its Development in Aberdeen and Beyond', in *Scottish Universities: Distinctiveness and Diversity*, ed. Jennifer J. Carter and Donald J. Witherington (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1992), 19. These works trace the influence of classical learning from the Renaissance, through the adoption of Aristotelian ideas, and their replacement by Descartes' natural philosophy.
[44] Scotland, *The History of Scottish Education Vol. I*, 144.
[45] Smout, 447-448.

Glasgow, where he was taught the works of Cicero and specifically learned about Stoic philosophy, as important for his knowledge and understanding of the classics. She argues 'The tenacious (albeit not exclusive) persistence of Stoic philosophy in Smith's thought could perhaps be ascribed precisely to his systematic, first-hand reading of Cicero (and, as has been mentioned, Epictetus); Plato and Aristotle by contrast not being studied directly in the original'.[46] Vivenza argues that this foundation is crucial for understanding Smith's thought and the same conclusion can be claimed for Ferguson.

Upon finishing his Master of Arts degree in 1742, Ferguson had gained a 'reputation of being one of the best classical scholars, and perhaps the ablest mathematician and metaphysician of his time at the University'.[47] Following the encouragement of his father, Ferguson began his Divinity studies at St. Andrews with Professors James Murison and Archibald Campbell.[48] Ferguson soon after left St. Andrews for the University of Edinburgh where he studied Divinity with John Gowdie[49] and Patrick Cuming.[50] He also dedicated himself to the study of philosophy 'for which he showed special aptitude',[51] and it is probable that he attended the lectures on moral philosophy given by William Cleghorn.[52] Cleghorn's lectures have been described as reflective of 'the revival of Greek Studies in Scotland',[53] making constant reference to ancient schools of philosophy and including ancient debates on many of the topics he undertook in his discussion of moral philosophy. For instance, when discussing the question of the materiality or immateriality of the human soul, Cleghorn assessed and compared the ideas of Empedocles, Zeno and the Stoics, Aristoxenes, Xenocrates, Aristotle and Plato, and

[46] Ibid., 7.
[47] Small, *Biographical Sketch*, 2; Kettler, *Ferguson*, 43-44.
[48] 'Campbell wrote what would be his most important work, *An Enquiry into the Original of Moral Virtue*, after reading Bernard Mandeville's Fable of the Bees, which described vice as essential to human nature.' Margaret Batty, 'Campbell, Archibald (1691–1756)', *ODNB*, http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/4476 (accessed 25 Jan 2011).
[49] Laurence A. B. Whitley, 'Gowdie , John (*c.*1682–1762)', *ODNB*, http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/64372 (accessed 25 Jan 2011).
[50] Laurence A. B. Whitley, 'Cuming, Patrick, of Relugas (*bap.* 1695, *d.* 1776)', *ODNB*, http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/64368 (accessed 25 Jan 2011).
[51] Small, *Biographical Sketch*, 3.
[52] See Douglas Nobbs, 'The Political Ideas of William Cleghorn, David Hume's Rival', *Journal for the History of Ideas*, Vol. 6, No. 4 (Oct.-Dec. 1965), 578. http://www.jstor.org/stable/2708501Accessed: 14/10/2010.
[53] Nobbes, 'The Political Ideas of William Cleghorn, Hume's Academic Rival', 586.

finally Democritus as found in Lucretius and Hobbes, before giving his opinion on the subject.[54] Douglas Nobbs has argued that it was from Cleghorn that Ferguson 'had learned perhaps all that he knew in regard to the critical issues of moral philosophy',[55] a statement that both over-emphasises Ferguson's reliance on Cleghorn and diminishes Ferguson's individual contribution. The importance of Cleghorn's lectures for Ferguson's intellectual development, however, cannot be denied. Thus, Ferguson's education, both his primary school and university experiences with ancient literature and languages, gave him a broad knowledge of these topics that he carried with him through his intellectual life.

Another fundamental factor in shaping Ferguson's intellectual development was the community of scholars and friends he met in Edinburgh in particular, and Scotland and elsewhere in Europe. Ferguson made many lifelong friends with his fellow divinity students, many of whom were later important members of the Scottish Enlightenment. These friends include the author John Home; the historian, principal of the University of Edinburgh and head of the Moderate party of the Scottish Kirk, William Robertson; the minister and professor, Hugh Blair; and the minister and memorialist, Alexander Carlyle. This impressive group went on to form a debating club which later became the famous Speculative Society. In Edinburgh, Ferguson also met the architects John and Robert Adam; the philosopher and historian, David Hume; the professor, moralist and economist, Adam Smith; the geologist, James Hutton; and the chronologist, John Blair.[56] Ferguson's friendship with these various scholars left a deep imprint on his life. Their personal interactions and formal discussions in the Speculative Society and other debating societies ensured Ferguson's engagement with and shaped his thought on current issues relating to both Scotland and more varied topics, which can be seen in Ferguson's references to his friends and their ideas in many of his works.

[54] William Cleghorn, *Lectures of W. Cleghorn*, Edinburgh University 1746-1747 (EUL, Dc.3.3-6), vol.1, 14-16.
[55] Nobbes, 'The Political Ideas of William Cleghorn, Hume's Academic Rival', 575.
[56] Fagg, 'Biographical Introduction', xxii.

Life After University

In 1745, although only two years into his six-year course in divinity, Ferguson was given special permission to take up the position of chaplain for the 42 Highland Regiment, the famed 'Black Watch', where his knowledge of Gaelic was essential.[57] Ferguson was with this regiment in Flanders during the War of the Austrian Succession in 1745. Walter Scott reported that in the Battle of Fontenoy Ferguson lead the soldiers into battle, sword drawn, despite being told by his commanding officer to return to the back of the line. When he was informed that his commission did not permit him to fight at the front Ferguson shouted 'Damn my commission!' threw his papers at the officer and continued on to the front of the column. Although this story is probably false because Ferguson was still studying divinity in Edinburgh at the time of the battle,[58] the regiment itself was important in the battle and the report of this incident is an interesting aspect of Ferguson's legacy. Ferguson has subsequently been referred to as the 'Warlike Chaplain' and Jane Bush Fagg has noted 'his famous bad temper and adventurous spirit made the story easily believable'.[59] This story and subsequent opinions of Ferguson as 'fiery' contradicts the equally prominent view of his professed Stoicism.

One of his Gaelic sermons to the Black Watch was published in English in 1746 titled *A Sermon preached in the Ersh Language*,[60] at the request of the Dowager Duchess of Atholl. This sermon criticised the actions of the Jacobites and Bonnie Prince Charlie because he did not believe the government in Britain could be improved by their return and was suspicious of their connections to the Catholic French. He also advised the soldiers to fight by appealing to the duty of men to

[57] This appointment was organised by the family of the patron of the regiment James 2nd Duke of Athol. The Colonel of the Black watch, the Duke's half brother, John Murray wanted a Gaelic speaking Chaplin and his mother the Dowager Duchess of Atholl suggested Ferguson. Fagg, 'Biographical Introduction', xxiii. Small, who quoted Alexander Carlyle, claims that the reason the Duchess chose Ferguson was so that he could be a tutor and help guide Lord John Murray, especially in dealing with the other officers. *Biographical Sketch*, 3.

[58] Fagg, 'Biographical Introduction', xxiii; David Allan, *Adam Ferguson*, 7.

[59] Fagg, 'Biographical Introduction' xxiv.

[60] Ferguson, Adam. *A sermon preached in the Ersh language to His Majesty's First Highland Regiment of Foot, Commanded by Lord John Murray, at their cantonment at Camberwell, on the 18th day of December, 1745. Being appointed as a solemn fast. By the Reverend Mr. Adam Ferguson, chaplain to the said regiment: and translated by him into English, for the use of a Lady of Quality in Scotland, at whose desire it is now published* (London, 1746), ECCO, Accessed on 24 May 2011.

defend their country. More generally, Ferguson's sermons, while well crafted, were criticised for his frequent references to philosophy rather than the more common Presbyterian moralising and religious instruction typical of his time.[61] A description of his sermons preached while serving with the Black Watch was given by 'one of his countrymen, who, like himself, was bred to the church':

> Indeed…the cast of his mind, or, more properly speaking, his habits of composition were little fitted for a popular audience. He had early imbibed a great portion of the spirit of the Stoic philosophy. He could not altogether be said to be a Stoic, but was and has uniformly been a Peripatetic, with a strong bias to Stoicism. His sermons were profound moral essays, exhibiting a philosophy compounded of that of Aristotle and Zeno, and consequently were beyond the comprehensions of a majority of hearers.[62]

Here, even in these early sermons, the influence of the classics on Ferguson's thought was so prominent that his contemporary found it to be a distinguishing characteristic of his work. Furthermore, it is crucial to point out that this early sermon was not a pure form of Stoicism, but one that reviled Peripatetic influence which further demonstrates the fluid nature of the ancient schools in Ferguson's thought. Ferguson here did not only draw inspiration from one school, but from two very distinct systems to sermonise about morality, an element of his thought which would be carried through his career.

Ferguson decided to leave the army sometime in 1751 after a return visit to Scotland, when he realised he wanted to resume his intellectually vibrant life in Edinburgh, but he stayed on with his regiment until 1754. After leaving the army and the clergy behind Ferguson spent time without permanent employment. He remained on the continent for one year before returning to Scotland when he was employed as a tutor for a Scottish law student referred to only as 'Mr. Gordon'.[63] Gordon was studying in the Dutch university of Groningen and then at the

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[61] 'Although, by his polished manners and his great abilities, he took a prominent part in private society, he was deficient in the gift necessary for the popular preacher. His sermons were elaborate disquisitions, showing more acquaintance with systems of philosophy than with the wants of the common hearers.' Small, *Biographical Sketch*, 5.

[62] John Lee, 'Adam Ferguson' in *Annual Biography and Obituary for 1817 Vol. I* (London: Longman, 1817), 240.

[63] Fagg, 'Biographical Introduction', cii, fn. 20; this was probably A. Gordon Hallhead, one of Ferguson's relatives who also attended his wedding.

University of Leipzig. There Ferguson gained first-hand knowledge of the intellectual trends and ideas of the European Enlightenment.[64] This and subsequent experiences as a tutor in Europe exposed Ferguson to ideas outside of his Scottish intellectual circle, ideas that were being taught in other universities and countries. These experiences developed Ferguson's academic network and improved his connections to the main intellectual currents in contemporary Europe. These international connections were fundamental to Ferguson's broader understanding of philosophy as a subject and it is through them that Ferguson remained not only a Scottish, but a European intellectual.

Expanding his role as an important member of the Scottish Enlightenment, in 1756 he joined the Select Society, which was a debating society founded by the painter Allan Ramsay in 1754 'to promote philosophical inquiry and improve the art of Public Speaking among its members' in which any topic could be approached 'except such as regards revealed religion, or which may give occasion to vent any principles of Jacobitism'.[65] Members of this society included Hugh Blair, professor of rhetoric and belles lettres at Edinburgh; Lord Dundas, president of the Court of Session; William Cullen, professor of Chemistry at Edinburgh; William Robertson; and Henry Home, later Lord Kames. As becomes obvious from this list, the members were not limited to one field of study and this society was a place where, as David Allan argues, 'students of man and society… and the moderate clergymen mingled easily with pioneering investigators of the natural world'.[66] This environment must have occasioned a variety of discussions spanning multiple disciplines and enriching the thought of all of its members. Ferguson played a significant role in the society and notoriously participated in a reading of John Home's controversial play, *Douglas*, in which Ferguson read the role of Lady Randolph, a move which angered the Kirk traditionalists who wished to censor the play.[67] Ferguson became so deeply involved in the *Douglas* controversy that he

[64] Oz-Salzberger, 'Introduction', x.
[65] Fagg, 'Biographical Introduction', xxvi.
[66] Allan, *Adam Ferguson*, 13.
[67] Small, *Biographical Sketch*, 7. The cast list according to Small was '*Lord Randolph*, Dr. Robertson (Principal); *Glenalvon*, David Hume (Historian); *Old Norval*, Dr Carlyle (Minister of Musselburgh); *Douglas*, John Home (the Author); *Lady Randolph*, Dr Ferguson; *Anna* (the Maid), Dr Blaire (Minister, High Church)'. According to the *Edinburgh Weekly Chronicle* and Alexander Carlyle 'The audience that day, besides Mr Diggs and Mrs Ward, were the Right Hon. Patrick Lord Alibank,

published a pamphlet in 1757, *The Morality of Stage Plays Seriously Considered*,[68] which proposed that the church should not condemn the theatre. The debating societies, in which Ferguson participated, as well as those in Glasgow, Aberdeen and St. Andrews, formed the backbone of intellectual discussion and the exchange of ideas further demonstrating the importance of sociability in the Scottish Enlightenment.[69]

In 1762 the moderate literati founded the Poker Club, named by Ferguson, to 'stir up the militia issue' with a metaphoric fire poker and, according to Lorimer 'to which nearly the whole of the celebrities of Edinburgh belonged'.[70] The militia issue was an important point of discussion for the Edinburgh literati because, in the wake of the Jacobite rebellion, the English government had banned the Scottish militia in fear of another uprising. The Scottish opposition to this bill argued for the necessity of a militia for protection against the perceived threat of the French.

Ferguson published on the debates addressed in the Poker Club. In 1756 Ferguson had anonymously published the pamphlet, *Reflections previous to the Establishment of a Militia*,[71] a discussion of current politics in Britain, which is a clear presentation of many of his political ideas. In 1760 Ferguson, 'instigated by Carlyle', published *The History of the Proceedings in the Case of Margaret, commonly called Peg, only lawful sister to John Bull, Esq.* which was a satirical criticism of the Scottish Militia Bill.[72]

The Poker Club continued beyond this original militia issue and Fania Oz-Salzberger notes that this club 'remained a social and intellectual caucus of

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Lord Milton, Lord Kames, Lord Monboddo (the two last were then only lawyers), the Rev. John Steel and William Home, ministers.'

[68] Adam Ferguson, *The morality of stage-plays seriously considered* (Edinburgh, 1757), ECCO, accessed on 24 May 2011. In this work he is focused on the church's reaction to the theatre and only mentions classical literature as an example of literature without really engaging with it.

[69] Alexander Broadie, *The Scottish Enlightenment* (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2001), 2-3.

[70] Lorimer, *Edinburgh Review*, 66.

[71] Adam Ferguson, *Reflections Previous to the Establishment of a Militia* (London: R. and J. Dodsley, 1756). For a discussion of this work see David Raynor, 'Ferguson's Reflections Previous to the Establishment of a Militia' in *Adam Ferguson: History, Progress and Human Nature*, ed. Eugene Heath and Vincenzo Merolle (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2008), 65-72.

[72] Small, *Biographical Sketch*, 10. 'The object of this publication, which went through two or three editions, was to turn to ridicule the opposers of the Scotch Militia Bill, which had been rejected in the preceding session of Parliament.' Fania Oz-Salzberger, 'Ferguson, Adam (1723–1816)', *ODNB* http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/9315 (accessed 26 Oct 2010).

Edinburgh luminaries for over twenty years'.[73] Ferguson was also a member of the Philosophical Society of Edinburgh which later became the Royal Society of Edinburgh in 1783. Its members included William Robertson, William Cullen, John Robison, Hugh Blair and Adam Smith. Through participation in these societies, Ferguson would have had access to many of the new, important and ever-changing currents in Scottish Enlightenment thought.

Through his association with these societies and other international contacts Ferguson maintained lifelong friendships with many prominent intellectuals throughout Europe. Although many of his letters have been lost, what remains of his correspondence[74] reveals a large social network through which he was able to find employment, debate current topics, and cultivate personal relationships.[75] Some of his frequent correspondents were Sir John Macpherson (a former student and Governor General of India), Alexander Carlyle, his intimate friend John Home, David Hume, Adam Smith and William Robertson. Other notable correspondents were Hugh Blair, Lord Milton, Lord Melville, William Cullen, William Creech, Baron D'Holbach, Edward Gibbon, James MacPherson, Joseph Black, Henry Dundas and William Clerk.[76] There are several examples of how this group of friends aided Fergusons's employment as well as his world view and intellectual foundations. In August of 1756 Ferguson was asked by Andrew Fletcher of Saltoun, Lord Milton, to travel to Groningen with his son, John Fletcher, who suffered from severe depression, providing company and assistance in the foreign city while

[73] Lorimer, *Edinburgh Review*, 66; Oz-Salzberger, *Translating*, 97.

[74] It is reported that Ferguson burned many of his paper when he thought he was going to die, saying that he would 'Trust nothing to the book-makers of the present age.' Lee, *Annual Biography*, 254.

[75] He was generally well liked and Ferguson's friends remembered these times fondly. Alexander Carlyle, *Autobiography of the Rev. Dr. Alexander Carlyle, Minister of Inveresk: Containing Memorials of the Men and Events of His Time* (Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1861), 229-230. Carlyle characterised Ferguson as follows: 'He had the manners of a man of the world, and the demeanour of a high-bred gentleman, insomuch that his company was much sought after; for though he conversed with ease, it was with a dignified reserve. If he had any fault in conversation, it was of a piece with what I have said of his temper, for the elevation of his mind prompted him to such sudden transitions and dark allusions that it was not always easy to follow him, though he was a very good speaker. He had another talent, unknown to any but his intimates, which was a boundless vein of humour, which he indulged when there were none others present, and which flowed from his pen in every familiar letter he wrote. He had the faults, however, that belonged to that character, for he was apt to be jealous of his rivals, and indignant against assumed superiority.'

[76] Vincenzo Merolle, 'Preface', *The Correspondence of Adam Ferguson* (London: William Pickering, 1995), x-xi.

Fletcher completed his legal studies.[77] Later, in Edinburgh, his friend David Hume assisted in securing Ferguson the position of Keeper of the Advocate's Library in 1757 although he quickly left the Advocate's Library for a position as a tutor to the children of Lord Bute in 1758 when Ferguson moved to Harrow, near London, and was exposed to English society and a wider source of ideas.[78] These experiences as a tutor enriched Ferguson's social networks and allowed him to gain a wider perspective on the world.

Ferguson's University Career and Publications

In 1759 David Hume, John Home and Adam Smith helped Ferguson obtain a teaching position as a professor at the University of Edinburgh. After a few setbacks, Ferguson was appointed as professor of natural philosophy.[79] With only three months to prepare his course, Ferguson set out to educate himself in the field of natural philosophy and was very successful, meeting the approval of David Hume and Alexander Carlyle.[80] Ferguson published *Of Natural Philosophy: for the use of students in the college of Edinburgh* (c. 1760),[81] a brief outline of the topics raised in his course, illustrating his applications of modern methods of natural philosophy.[82]

[77] Fagg, 'Biographical Introduction', xxvi-xxvii.
[78] Ibid., xxx.
[79] 'The subject was one which he had never studied since he left college, for which he had neither special taste nor special aptitude, and of which he must literally have known nothing. Yet he was bound to commence his lectures in October, and had he not performed in the meantime a *tour de force* on which no man ought to calculate, a most scandalous exhibition of incapacity, and consequent revelation of jobbery, must have been the consequence. We are told that he proved fully equal to the occasion…Though he never could have possessed any profound acquaintance with physical science, Ferguson is said to have been a more useful teacher of natural philosophy than many other who have held the chair.' Lorimer, *Edinburgh Review*, 65-66.
[80] Small, *Biographical Sketch*, 9.
[81] Ferguson, Adam, *Of Natural Philosophy: for the use of students in the college of Edinburgh* (Edinburgh, c.1760), EUL De.9.50/2.
[82] At this time Ferguson, to supplement his salary, also began to tutor Charles and Robert Greville, the sons of the Earl of Warwick, and John McPherson, who went on to become Governor-General of India and remained a life-long friend and confidant of Ferguson. Many of the letters of Ferguson's that survive were those to and from McPherson, who kept them as a remembrance of his treasured friend. See Small, *Biographical Sketch*, 10: 'The connection thus formed was of great service to Ferguson, as it brought him more immediately to the notice of many persons of rank, and the fame he acquired shortly afterwards by his writings greatly extended his influence among his contemporaries.'

Although Ferguson enjoyed teaching natural philosophy,[83] in 1764 he took up the position of professor of pneumatics and moral philosophy at Edinburgh, which had been his true ambition. According to Lorimer:

> Ten years before, Mr. Cleghorn, then the professor, considered Ferguson so highly qualified for the office, that when on his deathbed he urged him to apply for it; and after expressing his regret that he had not influence with the patrons sufficient to secure his appointment, added, as Ferguson sometimes related with much emotion, "I can only say of you as Hamlet did of Fortinbras, '*He has my dying voice*.'"[84]

Ferguson was said to be a very good teacher and his students enjoyed his lectures, as did members of the public who often attended his lectures.[85] The first part of the course on pneumatics included a definition of natural laws, the history of the species and the history of the individual. In the second part he focused on moral philosophy including the theory of mind, laws of the understanding, laws of the will, the knowledge and attributes of God and the human soul, moral laws and their applications, laws of morality, jurisprudence, casuistry and politics. Ferguson, in his lectures, would use this basic frame-work of the *Institutes of Moral Philosophy* (1767), the published outline of the lectures, and then spoke on whatever topic he thought was most important at the time, thereby keeping his lectures new and interesting to the students in Edinburgh.[86] His lectures survive in the form of his handwritten notes held in the Edinburgh University Library's Special Collections, comprising about one thousand double-sided papers.[87]

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[83] In a letter to Gilbert Elliot Ferguson claims 'I like my Situation very well, & begin to admire Sir Isaac Newton as I did Homer & Montesquieu, but it is on Condition that he will let me go as soon as I become a tolerable Professor of Natural Philosophy.' Quoted in Fagg, 'Biographical Introduction', xxxvii.

[84] Lorimer, *Edinburgh Review*, 66-67.

[85] 'As a Professor of Moral Philosophy, FERGUSON amply sustained the reputation of the institution with which he was so long connected. He was manly and impressive as a lecturer, but at the same time persuasive and elegant.' Small, *Biographical Sketch*, 45.

[86] According to Small, 'As he had delineated the general plan of his course in his 'Institutes of Moral Philosophy', he had for many years no written lectures, but trusted to his mastery of the subject for the expression of his ideas on the spur of the moment. When his health gave way in 1781, however, he found it necessary to write out his course'. Small, *Biographical Sketch*, 45; see also Oz-Salzberger, *Translating*, 100.

[87] There are three volumes of notes: the first two are his lectures dating from 1775 to 1785 based on the original lectures of 1776 including numerous substitutions and changes over the years; the third volume is bound and seems to be Ferguson's master copy of the lectures, though the year is not specified. These lecture notes offer an invaluable and unique insight into Ferguson's philosophy.

As in most of Ferguson's writings, he used both ancient and modern examples and sources to discuss his philosophy. He also discussed ancient philosophy and in particular made a detailed comparison between the sects of the Epicureans, the Peripatetics and the Stoics on their distinction of the sole good of human morality. Although in the lectures Ferguson made far fewer allusions to antiquity overall than in his major publications, he expressed in them some of his most fundamental opinions about the ancient schools.[88] The lectures focused on the teaching requirements of the course, but Ferguson's overall philosophical principles and ideas are also expounded throughout the course of the lecture notes. John Robertson has argued that this restricted Ferguson's work because 'Both Smith and Ferguson, who conformed to the religious requirements of teaching moral philosophy, seem to have chafed at the intellectual restrictions which their chairs imposed.'[89] The result of this aspect of Ferguson's teaching has, in part, led to some of the scholarly criticism of his works because his published texts, based on the lectures, while representative of his philosophy, remain conservative and defined by the expectations of his course. In one way, this has led scholars to view Ferguson as unoriginal, but rather this should be seen as a function of Ferguson's purpose in writing for his intended readership.

Ferguson published several works while lecturing at Edinburgh demonstrating his interest in modern issues and debates, while at the same time continuing his knowledge and love of classical literature. While addressing the contemporary issues of the Scottish militia debate, questions of government and republicanism, the nature of society, the debate over the effects of luxury on society, and the role of virtue in society, Ferguson drew on his classical and modern sources to address current and vital questions. In 1766 Ferguson published *An Analysis of*

David Kettler has used these lecture notes for his work on Ferguson and has published some of the information found in them in an essay 'Political Education for Empire and Revolution' in *Adam Ferguson: History, Progress and Human Nature* (London, 2008), 87-114. He also has made available at http://www.bard.edu/contestedlegacies/kettler/works.shtml his transcriptions of Ferguson's lecture notes. Vincenzo Merolle also uses the lectures to elucidate Ferguson's thought in his edition of *The Manuscripts of Adam Ferguson* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2006).

[88] It is probable that one reason for this discrepancy is the fact that the lecture notes are meant as a prompt for Ferguson, rather than the full text, and that he would have spoken about ancient philosophy when appropriate, while in his published works, particularly those based on the lectures, Ferguson would have wanted to record the references to antiquity for the benefit of the readers.

[89] John Robertson, *The Case for the Enlightenment: Scotland and Naples 1680-1760* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 34.

Pneumatics and Moral Philosophy: for the use of Students in the College of Edinburgh,[90] which was a brief, fifty-five page overview of his course. As it is a summary of his main arguments Ferguson did not offer detailed discussions on any subject, although, in his discussion of happiness Ferguson referenced the ancient sects of the Stoics and the Epicureans and the effect their philosophies had on the actual happiness of men, showing the importance of ancient philosophy to his concept of morality.[91]

Ferguson published *An Essay on the History of Civil Society* (1767),[92] which was widely read and generally well received by such thinkers as James Boswell, the German philosopher Johann Friedrich Jacobi, Voltaire, James Beattie and Baron D' Holbach, and while David Hume was critical of the work, he nevertheless supported his friend and reported the compliments he received for it to Ferguson.[93] The *Essay* was an attempt to solve the problem of commercial wealth and its effect on morality, drawing on ideals of civic virtue. His aim was to discover the role of virtue in 'modern' political societies, while investigating how human morals and intelligence affected societies in their construction and in their decline. This book has been interpreted as a 'warning' against corruption found in every society because his main concern was that in a commercial society, the motivation for public service - a quality highly esteemed by Ferguson - dissipates in favour of individual pursuits. Although he was concerned with rising corruption, he did not advocate a return to non-commercial societies, unlike Rousseau, but rather acknowledged the economic benefits gained in modern states and highlighted the achievements of his contemporary society. Ancient philosophy played a significant role in this work in that Ferguson often addressed aspects of classical philosophy, particularly the Stoics and Epicureans, as well as ancient ideas of politics. Additionally, Ferguson referenced ancient authors as well as historic evidence. Because Ferguson traced the development of civil society he was reliant on the report of 'barbaric' peoples by

[90] Adam Ferguson, *Analysis of Pneumatics and Moral Philosophy: For the use of Students in the College of Edinburgh* (Edinburgh, 1766).
[91] Ferguson, *Analysis*, 35.
[92] There were seven editions published in Ferguson's life time, English editions published in Dublin, Basle and Boston; a German translation published in Leipzig in 1768 and one in French published in Paris in 1783. Oz-Salzberger, 'Introduction', xvii.
[93] Fagg, 'Biographical Introduction', xl.

ancient authors like Caesar and Tacitus, while also using ancient examples to prove his points about society more generally.

Ferguson then published the *Institutes of Moral Philosophy* in 1769, a textbook also based on his moral philosophy lectures, which was a concise outline of philosophical terms and ideas, and was intended to be used by his students as a learning aid to be read in conjunction with his lectures to remind his students of the structure of the course, his main philosophical points, and to suggest some additional reading on specific subjects.[94] The *Institutes* was fairly popular within Britain, with four editions published in Edinburgh, as well as being translated into French, Russian and German[95] and reprinted in the American colonies from 1771.[96] It covers a wide range of topics including metaphysics and natural philosophy, the natural history of man and the individual, the theory of mind, the knowledge of God, moral laws and their applications, and natural jurisprudence and politics. Although some commentators are critical of its short-hand style,[97] it was designed as a work of reference for his students and took on the form of organised lecture notes. Ancient philosophy plays a significant role in this work as well as defining his philosophical positions by relating his ideas to ancient schools, especially that of the Stoics, the Epicureans, the Peripatetics and Socrates, as well as making references to classical examples in almost all subjects.

Although Ferguson was a successful lecturer and author, the money he earned was not sufficient during an economic decline in the late eighteenth century and much of his time was spent attempting to earn more money by whatever means were made available to him. In 1773 Ferguson became the tutor of Philip Stanhope, 5th Earl of Chesterfield. One of Ferguson's duties was to take the young man around the continent and offer him a proper education. Although Ferguson had some difficulty taking leave from the University of Edinburgh in 1774, Ferguson's tour of France and other parts of the continent was a great success and led to many memorable experiences which he detailed in some of his letters. For instance, he

[94] In the lectures, he periodically reminded students to look at the *Institutes* and would highlight the sections of the book that refer to lecture topics. See for example Ferguson, *Lectures, I*, ff. 15.
[95] Fagg, *Ferguson*, 113. The German translator was Christian Garve who was a noted German philosopher.
[96] Kettler, *Ferguson*, 61; Oz-Salzberger, *Translating*, 100.
[97] See Oz-Salzberger, *Translating*; Kettler, *Ferguson.*

stayed in Calvin's historic house in Geneva, where he was able to look over some of the religious reformer's manuscripts.[98] He met Voltaire, who seems to have regarded Ferguson with respect after he demonstrated, while telling jokes, that he was 'a person who, tho' true to my own faith, had no ill humour to the freedom of fancy in others'.[99] This employment as a tutor ended in 1775 and Ferguson returned to Edinburgh when he published a well received pamphlet, *Remarks on a Pamphlet Lately Published by Dr. Price*, which was a 'balanced and uncommonly courteous' response to Price's defence of the actions of the rebels in America.[100]

In 1779 Ferguson returned to teaching at Edinburgh and soon after suffered a paralytic stroke in 1780 which affected the use of his limbs. Due to the excellent care of his cousin, Dr. Joseph Black, a highly restricted diet and a few trips to the spas at Bath, Ferguson mainly recovered, however, there were some life-long effects. Ferguson stopped eating meat, drank only water, ate mainly boiled vegetables and was very susceptible to the cold.[101] He was never content with this confined lifestyle, but nevertheless maintained a high level of discipline that allowed him to live on for many more years.[102]

Retirement

After his recovery Ferguson remained a prominent figure in Edinburgh society. In the 1780s Ferguson was notoriously caught up in the Ossian scandal as a supporter of McPherson's work. In 1782-1783, Ferguson was involved in William Robertson's project of founding the Royal Society of Scotland, which was modelled

[98] Small, *Biographical Sketch*, 15.
[99] Small, *Biographical Sketch*, 21, quoted from a letter written by Ferguson.
[100] Oz-Salzberger notes that in this pamphlet 'Ferguson, who had befriended Benjamin Franklin when the latter visited Edinburgh a few years before, endorsed the colonists' complaints against parliament's narrow-minded mercantilism. Yet he strongly denounced their use of violence. Furthermore, their war against Britain was a bad historical wager.' Fania Oz-Salzberger, 'Ferguson, Adam (1723–1816)', in *ODNB*, http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/9315 (accessed 26 Oct 2010).
[101] 'His palsy ought to have killed him in his fiftieth year, but rigid care enabled him to live, uncrippled either in body or mind, nearly fifty years more. Wine and animal food besought his appetite in vain, but huge messes of milk and vegetables disappeared before him, always in the never-failing cloth and fur. I never heard of his dining out, except at his relation, JOSEPH BLACK'S, where his son, SIR ADAM (the friend of SCOTT), used to say it was delightful to see the two philosophers rioting over a boiled turnip.' Small, *Biographical Sketch*, 59-60.
[102] Fagg, 'Biographical Introduction', lxii-lxiv.

on European societies that combined all the branches of philosophy, science and literature. It also incorporated both the Philosophical Society and the Society of Antiquaries into one royal charter.[103] Ferguson's sole contribution to this society was his 1801 essay on the life of his cousin Dr. Joseph Black. The continued involvement with the societies ensured Ferguson's connection to late eighteenth-century intellectual debates.

In 1783 Ferguson published his *History of the Progress and Termination of the Roman Republic* in three volumes, which he had planned for some time, and had been inspired to write by Edward Gibbon's publication of the first volume of *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* in 1776, which was when Ferguson began his extensive research for this work. It narrated 'the rise and fall of the republic as a story of civic virtue and its corruption', [104] and was written using the model of Tacitus, relying mainly on classical sources.[105] The book begins with the revolt against the monarchy in 509 B.C. The lack of 'reliable sources' resulted in Ferguson writing a summary of the events up to the First Punic War in 264 B.C. His main concern through the final books was the rise of Caesar and the birth of the empire. He concluded his history during the reign of Nerva in 98 A.D.[106] Not only did he attempt to write a truthful, accurate history (neglecting Livy's tales of the foundations of Rome and correcting the inaccuracy of ancient descriptions of battles by inspecting the sites himself),[107] he also interpreted historical events, such as the downfall of the republic and the birth of the empire, using his own moral values. Ferguson used a variety of sources to write this book,[108] both ancient and modern,[109]

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[103] The founding members on its charter include William Robertson, William Cullen, Alexander Monro, Hugh Blair, John Robison, and Adam Smith as well as a number of solicitors and politicians. See Small, *Biographical Sketch*, 43.
[104] Oz-Salzberger, *Translating*, 102
[105] Kettler, *Ferguson*, 65; also Fagg in *Scottish Cato*, 237, who identifies these sources as Livy, Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Polybius, Tacitus, Plutarch, Suetonius, Caesar, and Cicero.
[106] Fagg, *Scottish Cato*, 235.
[107] Kettler, *Ferguson*, 65.
[108] Jane B. Fagg has published 'Ferguson's Use of the Edinburgh University Library: 1764-1806' in *Adam Ferguson: History, Progress and Human Nature*, ed. Eugene Heath and Vincenzo Merolle (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2008), 39-64 in which she details his library lending records from the university and a list of some of his sources can be found.
[109] Small, *Biographical Sketch*, 44. Small claims 'In preparing his work, he of course availed himself of the classical authors, and, amongst modern writers, he made use of the researches of GUAZESSI and VESTRINI, and the Annals of Pighius, and the celebrated Essay of MONTESQUIEU, on the Grandeur and Decline of the Roman People. His aim was rather to give in a connected and elegant form a narrative of the great facts of Roman History, than to indulge in discussions of the many

while his military experience helped solidify, if not form, his particular notions of the importance of civic virtues. In 1793 he visited Rome to observe and in turn to better describe the locations in a later edition of the *History*. For instance, from Verona, 'he rode horseback on the banks of the Adige, checking the details of his Roman history'.[110] Ultimately, his firsthand knowledge of battles, gained during his time as the chaplain to the Black Watch, aided the composition of the *History of the Roman Republic* and led some people to equate him with Polybius, who is also noted as one who wrote histories based on firsthand knowledge.[111] The *History* was well received and widely read in Scotland, Europe and America. Alexander Carlyle stated that the book had many admirers who thought 'that Ferguson's was the best history of Rome; that what he had omitted was fabulous or insignificant, and what he had wrote was more pro-found [*sic*] in research into characters, and gave a more just delineation of them than any book now extant'.[112]

In 1785 Ferguson retired from lecturing, handing the chair of pneumatics and moral philosophy to his pupil Dugald Stewart, but in order to keep a salary, was appointed to the honorary chair of mathematics. In 1792 Ferguson published his two-volume *Principles of Moral and Political Science, being chiefly a Retrospect of Lecture delivered in the College of Edinburgh* which was both an enlargement and refinement of his *Institutes* and a broadening of his thought.[113] It is in this work that many later thinkers find his greatest association with Stoicism. The reason for this is twofold: first, Ferguson addressed the fact that he was seen to be a Stoic in his

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matters of controversy which so extensive a subject necessarily involves. He does not enter upon the story of the origin of Rome, or even of the rise of the Republican form of government, but leans to the view previously held by DE BEAUFORT, and more fully developed by SIR GEORGE CORNEWALL LEWIS, that the early history of Rome was so involved in fable that no profit could result from such inquiries…. FERGUSON was led to undertake this work from the conviction that the history of the Roman people, during the period of their greatness, was a practical illustration of those ethical and political doctrines which were the object of his peculiar study; and he has remarked, that to know the history of Rome well was to know mankind, and to have seen our species under the fairest aspect of great integrity, and courage.'

[110] Fagg, 'Biographical Information', lxxvii. While making his journey he had the occasion to visit colleagues in France, Germany and Italy.

[111] Small, *Biographical Sketch*, 5. Lorimer in the Edinburgh Review, 63 claims 'Dr. [Alexander] Carlyle has remarked that, "it turned his mind to the study of war, which appears in his 'Roman History', where many of the battles are better described than by any historian but Polybius, who was eyewitness to so many."'

[112] Carlyle, *Autobiography of the Rev. Dr. Alexander Carlyle*, 231.

[113] Published in London, Edinburgh, there appeared a German translation in 1796 and French translations in 1796 and 1821.

introduction; second, he engaged with ancient schools more than in any of his other publications. He explained ancient philosophical sects and their competing ideologies, as well as referring to them numerous times throughout the two volumes. In 1808 Ferguson took up residence in St. Andrews, where he continued to write during these years of retirement what would become his unpublished manuscripts. Ferguson died on 22 February 1816.[114]

Although Ferguson certainly was an interesting character for a number of reasons, what becomes evident when analysing his biography is the overwhelming importance of both ancient thought and modern debates to his intellectual development. With an education founded on ancient literature, a distinguished knowledge of ancient Greek and Latin, and a strong appreciation of ancient authors, there can be no doubt that ancient thought played a significant role in Ferguson's thought. Ferguson did not, however, limit himself to discussions of ancient philosophy and the importance of his contemporary intellectual climate cannot be ignored. Ferguson's role as a Scottish Enlightenment thinker and as a member of the international Enlightenment community demonstrates the importance of his connection to the debates of his time. Ferguson, therefore, should perhaps be seen as a European figure whose classical education affected his work in a very specific way which both makes him an integral part of his community while also setting him apart.

1.3 Ferguson and Modern Scholarship: The Scottish Cato?

Scholarship on Ferguson has taken several different directions since his death in the early nineteenth century. For many years Ferguson was perceived as a minor figure in the Scottish Enlightenment and was mainly discussed in relation to other members of the Scottish Enlightenment. It is only since the early twentieth century that scholars have begun to look at Ferguson as an important thinker in his own right and assess his individual contribution to European thought. Several central themes appear in this scholarship, including Ferguson's role as a political thinker, as a

[114] Fagg, 'Biographical Introduction', c.

sociologist, as a moral philosopher, and as an eighteenth-century thinker more generally. One of the most fundamental topics addressed by scholars is Ferguson's relationship to ancient philosophy, particularly Stoicism.

This marginalisation of Ferguson as an Enlightenment thinker has had several serious implications for the study of his works. Because the perception of him as a friend of the leading thinkers of the Scottish Enlightenment rather than a central figure has persisted through the years, the work of scholars on Ferguson often is defined by this characteristic. One consequence of this is that scholars have attempted to discover the individual contribution of Ferguson's thought, or at the very least postulated its existence. Ferguson has been identified as a proto-sociologist which gave new life to the study of his thought and gave him a prominent place among eighteenth-century thinkers in the mind of some twenty and twenty-first-century scholars. Others have noted his independent and original contribution to political thought in the Enlightenment. Ferguson's political and social theory and history of human society have been acknowledged as being a significant contribution to intellectual history. These advances in the scholarship on Ferguson have indeed highlighted the importance of Ferguson as an Enlightenment thinker. Ferguson's moral philosophy, on the other hand, has remained dominated by the opinion that Ferguson's thought is highly unoriginal. Curiously, Ferguson's moral philosophy, although often acknowledged as being central to his overall thought, has been little analysed by recent scholarship compared to the work done on his politics and sociology. The arguments for Ferguson's originality in his political and social theory are not continued in the study of his moral theory, which is a problematic element of scholarship on Ferguson. What has resulted from this is a picture of Ferguson's ethics that demonstrates his absolute reliance on the thought of other thinkers, particularly Francis Hutcheson, Montesquieu, Aristotle, and the Stoics.

Critical analyses of Ferguson's moral philosophy highlight his central relationship to ancient thought, particularly the Stoic and Aristotelian schools. While his political theory and his concept of civic virtue are also noted to have ancient origins, particularly following from Cicero and the Stoics, it is in his moral philosophy where scholars attempt to establish Ferguson's reliance on ancient

philosophy as the origin of his principles. Most scholars consider Ferguson's philosophy to be a mixture of ancient and modern philosophy. They comprehend Ferguson's philosophy as a combination of modern science, modern philosophy and politics, Christianity and ancient philosophy. He was indeed a modern thinker, concerned with modern problems and reading modern authors, but he also respected and considered himself well-grounded in classical literature and brought both elements into his overall philosophical system.

Early Scholarship on Ferguson: The Nineteenth and Twentieth Century

In the nineteenth century, discussion of Ferguson was mainly confined to critical biography and there are three important biographies which later became the foundation of biographical and intellectual scholarship on Ferguson. These biographies, all of which follow the same format and include much of the same information, are based on Ferguson's correspondence and published remarks about him. They offer critical examinations of Ferguson's works and thought, and there are significant differences between them in their treatment of Ferguson as a man, the presentation of what they consider important events in his life, and their analyses of Ferguson's ideas. Since they comprise some of the first works on Ferguson their conclusions have influenced later opinions about Ferguson.

The first followed Ferguson's death in 1816 when John Lee, Church of Scotland minister and university principal,[115] published in the *Annual Biography and Obituary for 1817* an article on Ferguson in which he told the story of Ferguson's life and commented on his works.[116] Of the three biographers, Lee was the only one to have known Ferguson personally and went to some length to prove the greatness of Ferguson's character and was, perhaps unsurprisingly, the least critical of Ferguson's works and most often discussed them by simply repeating

[115] Fergus Macdonald, 'Lee, John (1779–1859)', *ODNB* (accessed 18 Oct 2010).

[116] John Lee, 'Adam Ferguson' in *Annual Biography and Obituary for 1817 Vol. I* (London: Longman, 1817), 235-236. Lee importantly collected as many of Ferguson's papers, letters and manuscripts as he could find and much of what remains of Ferguson's papers are found in this collection.This collection can be found mainly in the National Library of Scotland and the Edinburgh University Library. For a discussion of Lee's catalogue see the Introduction to Yasou Amoh's *Adam Ferugson: Collection of Essays* (Kyoto: Rinsen Book Co., 1996).

large quotes. He found that Ferguson's politics and morals - particularly the assertion in his *History* that the morals of Caesar led to the fall of the Roman republic - were some of the most interesting topics he addressed. Regarding the question of Ferguson's Stoicism, Lee identified Ferguson's association with Stoicism originating in his education as well as the influence of ancient philosophy on Ferguson's thought, but did not see it as being the most important aspect of Ferguson's wider ideas.

The second biography was written in 1864 by John Small, librarian of the University of Edinburgh and publisher of several edited works,[117] who produced the *Biographical Sketch of Adam Ferguson* for the Royal Society of Edinburgh. Following a similar method as Lee, Small used correspondence to tell the story of Ferguson's life, although he included many more letters and quotations. He attempted to prove that Ferguson stood out against his contemporaries, both by the eventful life he led and by his intellectual contributions. The third biographer, jurist James Lorimer,[118] wrote an article in the *Edinburgh Review* in 1867 titled, 'Adam Ferguson', which was based heavily on these two previous biographies. Out of the three Lorimer's work is the most intellectually critical and he devoted a significant amount of time attempting to explain to his mid-nineteenth-century readers why Ferguson did not write the analytical and methodical philosophy to which people in his time would have been accustomed.[119]

These early biographies of Ferguson are important for several reasons. First, they offer some insights into the life of Ferguson. Lee's work in particular is helpful for understanding Ferguson's character because he knew Ferguson personally and for this reason perhaps represented Ferguson more accurately than later authors. Second, they demonstrate nineteenth-century interpretations of Ferguson's work and show how opinions about philosophy as a discipline developed over the nineteenth

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[117] George Stronach, 'Small, John (1828–1886)', rev. Nilanjana Banerji, *ODNB*, http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/25734 (accessed 18 Oct 2010).

[118] John W. Cairns, 'Lorimer, James (1818–1890)', *ODNB* http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/17016 (accessed 18 Oct 2010). The piece is anonymous, but Yasuo Amoh states that Lorimer was the author in his 'Introduction' to his edition of *Adam Ferguson: Collection of Essays*, xix.

[119] Lorimer, *Edinburgh Review*, p. 59. 'An accurate scholar, in a strict philological sense, Ferguson never was. It did not belong to his age; his tastes did not lie in that direction; and even if they had, the events of his life would have rendered their gratification next to impossible.'

century. Furthermore, the first two biographies discuss Ferguson's work, but are not particularly critical of his ideas and instead highlight Ferguson's contribution to scholarship. Small's book provides a more critical analysis of Ferguson's works than Lee's and highlights what he saw as defects in some of Ferguson's thought. Small reminded readers of Ferguson's positive influence on other thinkers, while also relating and comparing Ferguson's ideas to those of his fellow philosophers. While Small also noted Ferguson's connection to the Stoic school, he claimed that although Ferguson was a Stoic morally, in his metaphysics Ferguson followed the 'doctrines of Aristotle revived by Reid'.[120] Lee and Small made references to Ferguson's Stoicism, but did not see it as a defining characteristic of his philosophy. Lorimer, the last and most critical of Ferguson's early biographers, both solidified Ferguson's role as a Stoic and condemned his practice of moral philosophy. Lorimer did not have a high opinion of Ferguson's thought, believing that he did not question the presiding ideas of the eighteenth century, and that Ferguson often avoided dealing with difficult questions, and sometimes reached the correct conclusion by the wrong argument.[121] Lorimer was the author most convinced of Ferguson's Stoicism and his labelling Ferguson the 'Scottish Cato' has affected the perception of Ferguson ever since. Lorimer was quick to associate Ferguson with Stoicism on several occasions and thereby defined his philosophy as such, while at the same time he criticised Ferguson's poor practice of philosophy, explaining to his readers that Ferguson had philosophical goals which were not the same as would be expected at Lorimer's time.

Lorimer's criticism of Ferguson's philosophy is representative of post-Kantian notions of analytical philosophy, which developed in the nineteenth century. Kant proposed that philosophy should be both analytical and systematic and this defined the practice of philosophy well into the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Ferguson wrote the majority of his work before this paradigm shift in philosophy had taken place and was therefore representative of eighteenth-century philosophy, and this aspect was criticised by Lorimer. This post-Kantian philosophical conceptualisation has gone on to affect the perceptions of Ferguson's thought into

[120] Small, *Biographical Sketch*, 51.
[121] Lorimer, *Edinburgh Review*, 81.

the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, as evidenced by many interpretations of Ferguson's thought that assess his philosophy according to modern and therefore inappropriate philosophical standards. These early biographies, therefore, evidence the development of criticism of Ferguson.

Unfortunately, in the fields of history and philosophy, Ferguson remained a minor figure in the Scottish Enlightenment in contrast to other thinkers like David Hume and Adam Smith.[122] The early twentieth century saw the scholarship on Ferguson broaden beyond biography and textual analysis and began to address wider themes related to the eighteenth century. Fania Oz-Salzberger notes 'twentieth-century interest in Ferguson began with the sociologists. At a time when British historians tended to shelve him as a quaint Scottish memento, his work attracted the serious attention of German scholars'.[123] One of the first major works in English to address Ferguson as an important thinker and to a large extent revitalise the study of Ferguson in many other contexts was W. C. Lehmann's 1930 book, *Adam Ferguson and the beginning of Modern Sociology*, in which Lehmann identified the ideas expressed in Ferguson's *Essay* as being the origin of sociology as a discipline.[124] The question of Ferguson's role in the history of sociology and the sociological nature of his ideas continues to be discussed among scholars. For instance, John Brewer has noted that the conjectural history written by Ferguson and others was sociological in its form.[125] Although he is careful to note that Ferguson did not anticipate the nineteenth-century sociologists, as some other historians have argued, Brewer maintains that Ferguson's history does have elements that later came to be identified as sociology. Brewer instead sees the social changes occurring in the late eighteenth century, of which Ferguson was a part, as creating sociology. Although

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[122] Kettler, *Ferguson,* xi. 'Rarely mentioned by philosophers except as a companion of David Hume and Adam Smith, Adam Ferguson contributes a political consciousness to the moral philosophy of eighteenth-century Scotland.'

[123] Fania Oz-Salzberger, 'Introduction', xxxi. She notes Hermann Huth, 'Soziale und individualistische Auffassung im 18. Jahrhundret, vornehmlich bei Adam Smith und Adam Ferguson', *Zeitschrift fur Socialwissenschaft* 12 (1909), 129-216; Theodor Buddeberg, 'Ferguson als Soziologe', *Jarbuch fur Nationalokonomie und Statistik*, 123 (1925), 609-35.

[124] W. C. Lehmann, *Adam Ferguson and the beginnings of Modern Sociology* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1930).

[125] John D. Brewer, 'Conjectural History, Sociology and Social Change in Eighteenth Century Scotland: Adam Ferguson and the Division of Labour', in *The making of Scotland: Nation, Culture and Social Change*, ed. David McCrone, Stephan Kendrick and Pat Straw (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1989), 16.

the work on Ferguson as a proto-sociologist often runs the risk of anachronism and in a sense places modern ideas onto the eighteenth century it, does often highlight aspects of Ferguson's thought that had previously been ignored.

New Editions of Ferguson's Texts

As a result of this increased interest in Ferguson as an Enlightenment thinker, there have been numerous editions of Ferguson's works and subsequent critical academic scholarship on his thought has developed into an important topic. Duncan Forbes was the first to publish a modern English edition of Ferguson's *Essay on the History of Civil Society* in 1966, since Ferguson's final edition was last published in 1814.[126] In the introduction to this edition, Forbes argued that the importance of Ferguson's works lay in his engagement with eighteenth-century debates and his representation of early sociology. In 1995 Fania Oz-Salzberger produced a new edition of the *Essay* in which she included an excellent critical biography of Ferguson and analysis of his works.[127] Yasuo Amoh published in 1996, *Adam Ferguson's Collection of Essays*, which is an edition of Ferguson's unpublished manuscripts found in the Edinburgh University Library.[128] Amoh argues that the unpublished manuscripts are useful because that they demonstrate a new 'dimension' to Ferguson by addressing topics not discussed in his published works. He states 'The "Collection," therefore, is not merely a work by the aged Ferguson, Scottish Cato, but is also very important material for us to reconstruct Ferguson's thought as a whole.'[129]

The Italian scholar Vincenzo Merolle is a prolific commentator on Ferguson and has published Ferguson's collected correspondence and unpublished

[126] Duncan Forbes, 'Introduction', *An Essay on the History of Civil Society* (1767), ed. Duncan Forbes (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1966), xiii.
[127] Fania Oz-Salzberger, 'Introduction', .*An Essay on the History of Civil Society*, ed. Fania Oz-Salzberger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995). In this work she noted the variations between Ferguson's six editions.
[128] Yasou Amoh, *Adam Ferguson: Collection of Essays*, xviii. Amoh notes that Winifred Philip published an edition of the Essays, but found it unsatisfactory. Winifred Philip, *The Unpublished Essays of Adam Ferguson* (1986). Richard B. Sher also notes that Amoh's edition is superior to Philip's 'inaccessible' version. *Selected Biography: Adam Ferguson* (2004), http://andromeda.rutgers.edu/~jlynch/C18/biblio/ferguson.html.
[129] Amoh, *Adam Ferguson: Collection of Essays*, xx.

manuscripts, as well as several editions of scholarship on Ferguson.[130] The two-volume, *Correspondence of Adam Ferguson*, covers much of the correspondence which survived and also includes a 'Biographical Introduction' by Jane Bush Fagg, which is based on her Ph.D. Thesis 'Adam Ferguson: Scottish Cato' (1968) and which is considered the most complete biography of Ferguson to date.[131] This biography is based mainly on his correspondence and includes analyses of Ferguson's works.

Merolle's *The Manuscripts of Adam Ferguson*, co-edited with Robin Dix and Eugene Heath, is a collection of Ferguson's unpublished work including the manuscripts and work previously published by Amoh from Lee's collection, as well as additional material on the reception of Ferguson and Ferguson's correspondence. The edition also includes Merolle's useful and detailed footnotes attempting to contextualise Ferguson's thought both in the wider context of his work and in the context of ancient and modern philosophy. In the 'Introduction' to the manuscripts, Heath claims the manuscripts 'represent a late chapter in the history of Stoicism, and an attempt at giving an answer to contemporary philosophical debate…essentially on the basis of ancient philosophy'.[132]

More recently, Eugene Heath has published an edition of *Adam Ferguson's Selected Philosophical Writings* (2007), which is an anthology of some of Ferguson's most famous and important sections of his various works. Heath stated that in all Ferguson's works there is one moral point, 'that the individual should bring to completion the qualities of human nature productive of virtue and happiness'[133] and that the main question addressed by Ferguson is finding the 'proper end'. The 'Introduction' is an outstanding overview of Ferguson's main

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[130] Eugene Heath and Vincenzo Merolle, eds., *Adam Ferguson: History Progress and Human Nature* (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2008) and *Adam Ferguson: Philosophy, Politics and Society* (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2009).

[131] Richard B. Sher, *Selected Biography: Adam Ferguson*: 'The new standard biography, superseding Small and the author's 1968 Ph.D. dissertation at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill'.

[132] Vincenzo Merolle, 'Introduction', *The Manuscripts of Adam Ferguson* (London: Pickering, 2006), xi. In this edition is also an extensive 'Introduction' which details Ferguson's philosophy generally, his politics, his moral philosophy and his aesthetics as represented in the manuscripts.

[133] Eugene Heath, *Adam Ferguson's Selected Philosophical Writings* (Exeter: Imprint Academic, 2007), 3. In his Introduction Heath gives an excellent overview of Ferguson's main works and brief description of Ferguson's thought. He, like many of Ferguson's commentators, focuses on the relationship between morality and politics in Ferguson's thought.

works and an insightful discussion of Ferguson's thought draws particular attention to Ferguson's influences as well as the originality of his thought.

Beyond the publication of his works, scholarship on Ferguson has continued to grow and there are several main themes that have emerged through the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. In the last fifty years there have been several general studies of Ferguson's thought, which have greatly enhanced the scholarship on him. The earliest example of these studies is David Kettler's *Adam Ferguson: His Social and Political Thought* (1965, 2005), which examines Ferguson's philosophy and his contributions to debates in the eighteenth century. Kettler assesses Ferguson's moral philosophy in relation to his ideas of politics and society and ultimately finds that while Ferguson had some illuminating insights his philosophical project was a failure. Further studies of Ferguson include Fania Oz-Salzberger's *Translating the Enlightenment* (1995) which assesses Ferguson's influence on the German Enlightenment and Lisa Hill's *The Passionate Society* (2006) which analyses Ferguson's intellectual intentions. In addition to these works there have been many which discuss Ferguson's relationship to sociology, his politics, his social theory, and his morality. Through these and many other publications, the critical scholarship on Ferguson has developed and confirmed his place as a prominent member of the Enlightenment.

Politics and Society

Ferguson's work easily lends itself to discussions of politics in the eighteenth century, not only because it is a crucial aspect of his work, but also because he addressed many of the current and important issues of his time. Ferguson is also unique in some respects because of his connections to ancient thought. Although Ferguson's moral philosophy has been widely discussed as being influenced by classical philosophy, his political thought has also been assessed in relation to his classical foundations. As a result there has been significant scholarship done on Ferguson's politics that reflect both his eighteenth-century context and as well as the influence of the classical tradition.

The 'Introduction' to Duncan Forbes' edition of the *Essay* and David Kettler's *Adam Ferguson: His Social and Political Thought* are two of the earliest and most detailed discussions of Ferguson's political theory, and from there the scholarship on Ferguson's political thought has evolved to focus on several characteristics. Ferguson's politics are often discussed with reference to the influence of other thinkers such as Montesquieu,[134] Machiavelli and Cicero. This has often resulted in Ferguson being seen as someone who followed other political thinkers, rather than having an innovative political philosophy. Furthermore, Ferguson is considered to have embraced conservative politics, by not advancing revolutionary claims or conclusions.[135] According to Richard Sher in *Church and University in the Scottish Enlightenment*, Scottish Whigs, although in some ways tolerant, rejected reform, revolution and most instances of progress.[136] Further, Sher argues, Ferguson attempted to create 'a *universal* theory of political conservatism that would provide a sociological justification for supporting virtually every existing government'.[137] As Sher also argues, Ferguson believed each country had a national character that was made up of moral and socio-economic factors, which had a government that suited the particular conditions of the nation, and should only gradually change as the national character itself changed.

It has been noted that many members of the Scottish Enlightenment followed in a republican tradition[138] and Ferguson seems to represent this group, particularly in his *Essay*. Marco Geuna found that Ferguson followed the republican tradition by accepting the economic developments resulting from the rising commercial society while at the same time criticising the 'dehumanising consequence of the division of labour'.[139] Although Ferguson accepted the benefits of a commercial society, with the inevitable division of technical labour, his main concern was the corruption of

[134] Richard B. Sher, C*hurch and University in the Scottish Enlightenment* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1985), 194. According to Sher, in the *Institutes* Ferguson follows, but expands, Montesquieu's categorisation of governments to show the 'superiority' of the British constitution for the British people.
[135] Sher, C*hurch and University*, 189. See also Forbes, *Essay*, xl-xli.
[136] Sher, C*hurch and University*, 189.
[137] Sher, C*hurch and University*, 195.
[138] See M. Geuna 'Republicanism and Commercial Society in the Scottish Enlightenment: The Case of Adam Ferguson' in *Republicanism: A Shared European Heritage*, ed. M. van Gelderen and Q. Skinner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).
[139] Geuna, 'Republicanism', 183.

society, Geuna contended. Iain McDaniel has more recently contended that Ferguson's connection to classical republicanism, and indeed his relationship to Montesquieu, need to be reassessed, and has found that Ferguson did not totally rely on Montesquieu and his conclusions about government were very different from Montesquieu's.[140]

An important element of the republican tradition is the emphasis placed on civic humanism, which is seen as vital for understanding Ferguson's thought. In *The Machiavellian Moment* (1975), the classic book on civic humanism in the Enlightenment, and in *Barbarism and Religion*,[141] a multi-volume work addressing the origins and context of the publication of Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, J.G.A. Pocock discusses the republican tradition in the eighteenth century and describes Ferguson's *Essay* as the 'most Machiavellian of the Scottish disquisitions'.[142] He states that Ferguson's concept of the 'necessary struggles' in society and the 'passion' for society is the same as Machiavelli's *virtu*, as well as being the source for the virtue of patriotic citizens. In this work he also claims that Ferguson answered the political questions of the Aristotelian theories with Machiavellian language,[143] highlighting Ferguson's connection to classical thought and his modern approach.

Another important aspect of Ferguson's politics is found in his discussion of corruption and civic decline. According to Duncan Forbes, Ferguson applies a moral dimension to his political theory when he argued that the decline of civilisations is the result of moral corruption. The division of labour results in social inequality, which is followed by political peace necessary for commercial and industrial progress. Ferguson believed that the decline of a society was the result of decayed morals and could only be solved or avoided by a revival of morality

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[140] Iain McDaniel, 'Adam Ferguson's "History of the Progress and Termination of the Roman Republic" (1783) and its Place in His Political Thought' (Cambridge Ph.D. Thesis, 2004), 3.

[141] J.G.A. Pocock, *Barbarism and Religion*, Vol. II (Cambridge: Cambridge university Press, 1999), 330-346. 'The continuing emphasis on *virtu* in the Greek and Roman sense, the practice and preservation of the autonomous selfhood of the citizen, is what renders Ferguson as much a Stoic as a Christian'.

[142] J.G.A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975), 499.

[143] Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment*, 500. Other authors identify this Aristotelian-Machiavellian idea of civic virtue in Ferguson's thought. See also Genua, 'Republicanism', 189-199 and, Duncan Forbes, 'Adam Ferguson and the Idea of Community', in *Edinburgh in the Age of Reason*, ed. Douglas Young (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1967), 45.

throughout society.[144] Fania Oz-Salzberger finds that in the *Essay,* 'his notion of corruption was not that of a Stoic, but closer to Cicero's thought: the real moral danger in modern times, he said, was not luxury *per se*, but political laziness.' [145] Furthermore, according to Richard Sher, Ferguson also had a didactic purpose in his attempts to demonstrate how to spread virtue according to each form of government, as Ferguson was above all a moralist.[146] Additionally, Duncan Forbes maintains that Ferguson, combining his views of morality with Montesquieu's views of politics, was able to create a solution for the problems he saw in the modern world.[147] Marc Geuna argues that according to Ferguson corruption results from a decline in active citizenship and a lack of public involvement, a sign of a lapse in ethical behaviour.[148] This notion of equating the corruption of society with a corruption of morals also ties into what some scholars see as the influence of Ferguson's moral philosophy on his politics. J.G.A Pocock postulated that Ferguson's politics were a result of his moral thinking and highlighted the effect of ancient thought on Ferguson's views of civil society. Pocock maintained that Ferguson's views are only 'republican' because he thought that individuality needed to be maintained for morality. Ultimately, for Pocock, Ferguson's history of society was a reflection of his concept of morality, following from ancient philosophy,[149] and the importance of the civic humanist tradition is central to understanding Ferguson and Ferguson's notions of civil society are dominated by his moral philosophy.

From Politics to Moral Philosophy

Although it is clear that political philosophy is central for scholarship on Ferguson, it is also evident that his politics cannot be completely separated from his concept of

[144] Forbes draws a connection between this kind of corruptions and Ferguson's relationship to Machiavelli. Forbes, *Essay,* xxxi. See also Iain McDaniel, 'Adam Ferguson's "History of the Progress and Termination of the Roman Republic" (1783) and its Place in His Political Thought' (Cambridge Ph.D. Thesis, 2004), 73-106.
[145] Oz-Salzberger, *Translating,* 98-99
[146] Sher, C*hurch and University*, 196.
[147] Forbes, *Essay*, xl-xli.
[148] Geuna 'Republicanism', 187.
[149] 'All this, however, is expressed in the idiom of a neo-classical moralism, in which ancient examples can be used to rebuke or edify the modern, and he is not constantly required to distance himself from antiquity.' Pocock, *Barbarism and Religion*, Vol. II, 347-348.

morality. Ferguson's moral philosophy has also been widely discussed in modern scholarship, either in connection to his politics or independently. In her book, *Translating the Enlightenment,* where she assesses Ferguson's reception in Germany in the eighteenth-century, Fania Oz-Salzberger argues that Ferguson combined Stoicism, Christianity and contemporary issues to formulate his own moral philosophy. For Ferguson, virtue is an action for the public good; moral actions cannot be judged by their consequences, but by the will of the person and intention of the action. She believes that Ferguson added a political element to his philosophy as well as drawing attention to the importance of action.[150] According to Oz-Salzberger, Ferguson drew on Stoicism's concept of human life as a game: 'Play and competition were, for Ferguson, the true matrix for human well-being.' [151] Conflict was a 'good thing in its own right'.[152] Although Oz-Salzberger discusses Ferguson's political Stoicism clearly, she is less interested in the importance of Stoicism for Ferguson's moral philosophy.

In David Allan's biography of Ferguson he begins his discussion of Ferguson by correctly noting that Ferguson's 'greatest achievement... was to have offered an essentially naturalistic account of man's existence in society'.[153] Because of this, Ferguson has been viewed as either a sociologist or a political theorist, but 'if one feature of Ferguson's intellectual career... should caution us against straightforward acceptance of these long-posthumous re-interpretations of his work, it is his unswerving devotion, as one of the Scottish Enlightenment's leading teachers of philosophy, to the traditional duties of moral instruction. For it bears endless repetition that Ferguson was, more than anything else, a moralist'.[154] Allan's argument that Ferguson's intellectual life was guided by his teaching of moral philosophy is of crucial importance to the study of Ferguson's thought.

The question then remains as to how Fergusons should be viewed – as a political thinker or as a moralist. While many scholars focus on Ferguson's political thought and its importance in the eighteenth century as well as its later reception, his

[150] Oz-Salzberger, *Translating*, 113
[151] Ibid., 114
[152] Ibid.
[153] Allan, *Adam Ferguson*, 21.
[154] Ibid. Duncan Forbes also argues that Ferguson should be seen as a moralist rather than a social scientist. Forbes, *Essay*, xxv.

role as an 'early sociologist' or his relationship to other eighteenth-century political thinkers and events, they are apt to include discussions of his concept of morality into this scholarship and because of this, Ferguson's politics and morals seem to be inextricably linked together. There is a surprisingly small amount written on Ferguson's moral theory when compared to the wealth of information written about his political theory. The reason for this may be simply because it is the political historians who have found value in Ferguson's writings or it may be because Ferguson is not seen to have written a comprehensive system of moral theory, like those of other Enlightenment figures, and as a result his moral philosophy is largely overlooked. The political interpretation of Ferguson's thought, while critical, important and valuable, results in a disproportionate amount of scholarship on this topic when compared to someone who can be seen as 'more than anything else, a moralist'.[155] When Ferguson's moral philosophy is considered on its own, Ferguson's supposed Stoicism is most prominently highlighted.

Stoicism

Ferguson's supposed Stoicism is a pervasive theme in the scholarship on Ferguson. There are three main ways that scholars attempt to comprehend his relationship to Stoicism. First, scholars base this judgement either on the opinions of others or on few pieces of evidence. Second, some scholars attempt to understand Ferguson's relationship to the Stoic school through the concept of Christian Stoicism. Finally, some scholars have made a close textual analysis attempting to discover the influence of Stoicism on Ferguson's. Although some scholars further highlight the influence of Aristotle of Ferguson, it is his relationship to Stoicism that draws the most attention.

One reason this interpretation is so prevalent follows from the identification of Ferguson with Stoicism made by his contemporaries.[156] Fania Oz-Salzberger is understandably critical of the ease with which people discuss Ferguson's Stoicism and notes that subsequent to the publishing of his *Roman Republic* there was an

[155] Allan, *Adam Ferguson*, 21.
[156] Fania Oz-Salzberger, 'Ferguson, Adam (1723–1816)', *ODNB,* http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/9315 (accessed 26 Oct 2010).

attitude about Ferguson and his reliance on classics that 'aided Ferguson's decline by providing him with a simplistic image and epitaph. Contemporaries and posterity came to view him, as the fiery, likable "Scottish Cato", an increasingly quaint moralist of stout but old-fashioned Stoic convictions'.[157] Oz-Salzberger is right to argue that the tendency to see Ferguson as a Stoic is influenced by events in his later years.

For instance, Ferguson's character as a student at Edinburgh has been described as being both interested in modern philosophy, but also having a strong foundation in classical literature.[158] Speaking of his education at Edinburgh, a friend described him as being well 'versed in Grecian and Roman literature', and noted his resemblance to Aristotle. One biographer remarked that Ferguson united 'the acquirements of ancient learning, to a perfect knowledge of the world in which he lived.'[159] Thus, in the records of opinions about Ferguson as a man and as a thinker, his contemporaries have named him as a Stoic or an Aristotelian and identified the importance of classical philosophy in his thought. How influential these accounts are is not something to be determined here, but the presentation of Ferguson in this fashion does seem to drive modern opinions about Ferguson.

From the origins of scholarship on Ferguson, in the original biographies and through to the present day, the importance of Stoicism is seen in the critique and interpretation of his thought. In John Small's *Biographical Sketch of Adam Ferguson*, he repeatedly refers to Ferguson as a Stoic and brings up his connection to the classics more generally.[160] Small also identifies Ferguson as adopting

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[157] Oz-Salzberger, 'Introduction' to *The Essay on the History of Civil Society* (1767), xxiv.

[158] Lee, *Annual Biography* 235-236.

[159] Ferguson's character as a student at Edinburgh has been described as being both interested in modern philosophy, but also having a strong foundation in classical literature. See Lee, *Annual Biography*, 235-236. '"In his private studies", we have been told by one of his friends, " Mr. Ferguson, while at Edinburgh, devoted his chief attention to natural, moral, and political philosophy. His strong, inquiring, unprejudiced mind, versed in Grecian and Roman literature, rendered him a zealous friend of rational and well-regulated liberty. He was a constitutional Whig, equally removed from Republican licentiousness, and Tory bigotry. Aware that all political establishments ought to be for the good of the whole people, he wished the means to vary in different cases, according to the diversity of character and circumstances; and was convinced with Aristotle, that the perfection or defect of institutions in one country, does not necessarily imply either perfection or defect of similar institutions in another; and that restraint is necessary, in the inverse proportion of general knowledge and virtue. These were the sentiments he cherished in his youth; these were the sentiments he cherished in his old age."'

[160] Small, *Biographical Sketch*, 51. 'In his moral system, FERGUSON was a philosopher of the Stoic school. He avoided, however, the exaggerations and paradoxes into which many of its disciples have

Stoicism into his everyday life: 'It has been remarked, that no Stoic philosopher more completely subjected his passions and his emotions to his reason than did FERGUSON…'[161] Lorimer's article in the *Edinburgh Review* made a more definite case for Ferguson's personal Stoicism. Lorimer began his biography of Ferguson by stating 'Hard yet kindly, hot-tempered and outspoken but very prudent and judicious, stout of heart Adam had many claims besides his professed stoicism to be regarded as a Scottish Cato'.[162] Lorimer also referenced an occasion when 'Ferguson's stoicism for once failed him', when, during the cold winter in Scotland while he was living in a castle, Ferguson remarked, 'If anybody think me a philosopher, he is grievously mistaken. I have done nothing but *pest* and scold inwardly' (perhaps outwardly also, if Lord Cockburn may be believed) 'for three or four weeks, not to say months'.[163] Finally, Lorimer remarked that one of Ferguson's friends claimed that there 'still burned a Roman soul in Ferguson'.[164]

Twentieth- and twenty-first-century authors are quick to highlight Ferguson's personal preference for Stoicism. Jeng-Guo Chen's categorical statement, 'The Stoic influence on Ferguson's thought is conspicuous',[165] is indicative of the opinion that many modern authors have of Ferguson. The ease with which he is identified as a Stoic, sometimes based on an analysis of his writings and sometimes based on the scholarship and opinions of other commentators, can be highly problematic. One element in scholars' assertions, particularly those regarding Ferguson's character, is the lack of evidence and reliance on the arguments of others.

In her Ph.D. thesis, 'Adam Ferguson: Scottish Cato', whose title alone identifies Ferguson as a Stoic, Jane Bush Fagg employs the label 'Scottish Cato', which was applied to Ferguson in the 1867 *Edinburgh Review* article, because of his affinity for the classics.[166] Although that article was written over fifty years after his

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fallen, and endeavoured, by selecting what seemed reasonable and just from that and other theories of morals, to enunciate a more perfect system.'

[161] Small, *Biographical Sketch*, 61.

[162] James Lorimer, *Edinburgh Review*, 48.

[163] Ibid., 83.

[164] Ibid., 85.

[165] Jeng-Guo Chen, 'Providence and Progress: The Religious Dimension in Ferguson's Discussion of Civil Society' in *Adam Ferguson: History, Progress and Human Nature*, ed. Eugene Heath and Vincenzo Merolle (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2008), 222.

[166] Fagg, *Scottish Cato*, vi.

death, Fagg accepts this term as accurate and takes the classification a step further, equating Ferguson's own character with his description of Cato in his *History of the Progress and Termination of the Roman Republic*: 'Like Marcus Porcius Cato, one of his own heroes, Ferguson was a professed Stoic strict and austere in his habits, firm in character, brave, and highly esteemed'.[167]

Fagg goes on to state that Ferguson 'apparently saw himself as a Stoic and frequently referred to himself as an "Old Roman"'; this idea has been repeated by other authors such as Lisa Hill. In *The Passionate Society* (2006), Hill states, 'So much the Stoic was Ferguson that he commonly referred to himself as "the Old Roman"',[168] although she only cites Fagg's thesis as evidence for this opinion. Upon further investigation, in the one letter referred to by Fagg written to John Macpherson, Ferguson - discussing his health problems - stated 'My He[ealth] is wonderfully Good. I go into the Wa[rm] Bath every Day like an Old Rom[an]'.[169] When this statement is seen in context, this comment appears to be more of an aside, or a cultural reference, and not actually an admission of Stoicism. Indeed, even in making a comparison of himself to a Roman, Ferguson does not imply any connection to Stoicism at all. This example demonstrates that notions based on this type of comment need to be re-examined by taking the context of the statements into consideration.

Christian Stoicism

One interpretation of the role of Stoicism in the eighteenth century involves understanding its relationship to Christianity. John Dwyer in *Virtuous Discourse: Sensibility and Community in Late Eighteenth-Century Scotland* (1987) focuses on the fundamental moral concerns of members of the Scottish Enlightenment and believes there are three major currents of moral thinking: civic humanism, Stoicism and sensibility.[170] Although he identifies Ferguson as a civic humanist, he goes on

[167] Fagg, *Scottish Cato*, vi
[168] Hill, *The Passionate Society*, 36.
[169] Letter to John Macpherson, EUL MS Dc. I. 77 no. 72, in the *Correspondence of Adam Ferguson*, ed. Vincenzo Merolle, 498.
[170] John Dwyer, *Virtuous Discourse: Sensibility and Community in Late Eighteenth-Century Scotland* (Edinburgh: John Donald Publishers, 1987), 38.

to claim that Stoicism was most important for the Moderate clergy because, as a system of philosophy acceptable to Christian doctrine, it was a 'basis for independent moral decision making'.[171] In *Church and University in the Scottish Enlightenment*, Richard Sher discusses Ferguson's Stoicism in relation to the notion of Christian Stoicism. Sher sees Ferguson as one of the moderate literati who both admitted his own preference for Stoicism and who represented this line of thought. Alexander Broadie has also identified a strong Christian Stoic trend in the preaching of the moderate literati, especially in the writings of Hugh Blair. Broadie claims Blair's metaphysical discussion of God seen in his sermons is Christian Stoic because 'our patience is to be supported by our faith in a future state in which the good Lord will reward those who have walked in his ways'.[172]

According to Sher, Ferguson did not accept Stoicism as a withdrawal from society, as it appears in some definitions, but as a guide to virtuous, benevolent actions within society and as the means to true happiness.[173] Ferguson then adopted the ideas of Francis Hutcheson and incorporated Christian ideas into the broader framework of Stoicism.[174] Sher continues by arguing that Ferguson adopted this Christian Stoicism into his thought because, for Ferguson, virtue and a benevolent disposition are the love of mankind, individuals and all of society. According to Sher, Ferguson fully adopted the Stoic notion of happiness - that happiness is a result of virtue - into his moral philosophy.[175] According to Sher, the main point about

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[171] Dwyer, *Virtuous Discourse*, 46. See also J.G.A. Pocock, *Barbarism and Religion*, Vol. II, 330-346. 'The continuing emphasis on *virtu* in the Greek and Roman sense, the practice and preservation of the autonomous selfhood of the citizen, is what renders Ferguson as much a Stoic as a Christian'.

[172] Alexander Broadie, *The Scottish Enlightenment*,146.

[173] Richard B. Sher, *Church and University*, 175-176.

[174] Sher, C*hurch and University*, 177. Francis Hutcheson (1694-1746) was a professor of moral philosophy at the University of Glasgow from 1730-1746 and author of several influential texts including *An Inquiry into the Original of our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue* (1725) and *An Essay on the Nature and Conduct of the Passions and Affections with Illustrations on the Moral Sense* (1728). Hutcheson maintained that virtue is the only key to happiness because benevolent actions produce a feeling of happiness, without the consequences of that action taken into consideration. On top of maintaining this classical Stoic idea of virtue, Hutcheson included a Christian element to his philosophy. Here Hutcheson combined the Stoic principle of the practice of virtue with the Protestant idea of Providence to replace the negative Stoic concept of fate. Because people cannot know the outcome of their actions they may question the validity of virtuous or vicious actions. Hutcheson's solution was to practice personal and public virtue and leave the consequences to divine providence. According to Sher, Adam Ferguson also adopts this solution to the problem of unintended consequences.

[175] Sher, C*hurch and University*, 178. 'Ferguson's relentless insistence on the Stoic conception of happiness prompted one former student to complain that "he is so entirely and constantly occupied

Christian Stoic morality, especially for Ferguson, is that to be happy one must be benevolent and not worry about the ultimate consequences as those are left to God. It is in this way that Ferguson and others, like Hutcheson and the Edinburgh moderate literati, can combine Stoic principles with Christian ideas to create a complete system.[176] This is, however, not a universally-held view and Lisa Hill questions Sher's thesis that Ferguson was absolutely a Christian Stoic postulating that Ferguson may conversely have been a deist, but continues to note the influence of Hutcheson's Christian Stoicism on him.[177]

Interestingly, some of these characterisations of Ferguson as a Christian Stoic focus solely on the Scottish context; particularly the importance of Hutcheson's thought. This diminishes the importance of a European concept of neo-Stoicism which encompassed much sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth-century thought and which Ferguson would have been exposed to, not only in his personal experiences with thinkers on the continent, but also in his vast erudition. Not only did European Calvinists find particular interest in Stoic ideas, but the natural law theorists, including Grotius, also found the relation of Stoic morality to legal theory a useful combination.[178] To discuss Ferguson's supposed Christian Stoicism without reference to the vital scholarship done on the continent seems to overlook a significant influence on his thought.

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with it, as to forget everything else.' Quoting Sir James Mackintosh's journal, 1812, in *Memoirs of the Life of the Right Honourable Sir James Mackintosh*, 2d edn., 2 vols. (London, 1836), 2:243-44.

[176] Heath, 'Introduction', *Adam Ferguson's Selected Philosophical Writings* (2007), 3. Eugene Heath has argued that Ferguson's position is one of a 'unity of Christianity and Stoicism. Ferguson had read widely in the texts of ancient Greece and Rome and was, by his own admission, heavily influenced by Stoic thought, referring frequently to Roman thinkers. The Stoic emphasis on the reasoned order of the universe, the sufficiency of virtue to happiness, and the way in which virtues, like skills, might be honed and progressively developed, are doctrines easily unified with the providential design of God. Thus, virtue and self-interest do not conflict, for it is in one's interest to acquire non-material qualities of excellence, including a concern for the well-being of others.'

[177] Hill, *The Passionate Society*, 36, 46. 'In a broad sense his theology is probably best described as Christian-Stoic, but in its details it is a composite of Newtonian and Aristotelian theology…;Stoicism…; and Christianity, in the form expounded and transmitted to Ferguson via Francis Hutcheson.'

[178] Israel, *Enlightenment Contested*, 197. See also T.J. Hochstrasser, *Natural Law Theories in the Early Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

Examinations of Ferguson's Stoicism

There are several authors who attempt to assess Ferguson's relationship to Stoic philosophy in a very analytical and helpful way. In the 'Introduction' to her edition of Ferguson's *Essay*,[179] Fania Oz-Salzberger concludes that Ferguson is participating in the civic tradition which, in the modern sense of the term, incorporates Stoic philosophy with eighteenth-century ideas. She believes he was looking to prove that classical values were still important for a modern society and, in effect, tried to bring Stoicism up to date and observes that Ferguson is not adopting Stoic thought, but is taking from it useful and important ideas.[180]

David Allan's 2006 biography of Adam Ferguson also draws attention to his connection with Stoicism. He notes that eighteenth-century moral philosophy is indebted to Cicero, and Ferguson is no exception.[181] Ferguson has much in common with other thinkers who follow the Stoic tradition, such as an interest in the influence of community on man's behaviour and morals.[182] Allan sees significant debts to Stoicism in Ferguson's works, both in his ideas and in his references to Stoic texts,[183] and categorises Ferguson as having an 'ambivalent' relationship to Stoicism because he never fully adopts it as a system. He concludes that

> Stoicism has - literally - a great many virtues to recommend it as the basis of practical morality, particularly in providing compelling arguments in favour of the regulation and essential moderation on inter-personal behaviour. But where Ferguson's moral philosophy ultimately gives way to the preoccupations of the historian and the social theorist, the Stoical values of patience and forbearance are necessarily abandoned for the even more necessary virtues of well directed creativity and ambition.[184]

Allan and Oz-Salzberger note the importance of Stoicism in Ferguson's thought generally and both acknowledge that he was not attempting to adopt the Stoic philosophy, but incorporated elements of Stoicism into his philosophy.

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[179] Fania Oz-Salzberger, 'Introduction', to *An Essay on the History of Civil Society*.
[180] Ibid., xv-xx.
[181] Allan, *Adam Ferguson*, 22- 24.
[182] Ibid., 33.
[183] Ibid., 37-41.
[184] Ibid., 41.

David Kettler was one of the first critical commentators on Ferguson and his work has been of central importance in the scholarship on Ferguson. In his classic work, *The Social and Political Thought of Adam Ferguson* (1965 and 2005), Kettler attempted to identify the strong influence of Stoic ideas on Ferguson's moral philosophy. He noted that Ferguson was influenced both by ancient and modern thinkers: 'Epictetus and Lucretius, Marcus Aurelius and Machiavelli, Cicero and Locke, Reid and Hume, Aristotle and Bacon, Montesquieu and Hobbes, Shaftesbury and Newton, Rousseau and Grotius - he drew on them all for useful information and edifying principles'.[185] He subsequently argued that Ferguson was highly influenced by classical authors rather than contemporary debates.[186] According to Kettler, Ferguson accepted several Stoic principles including the importance of philosophical contemplation, the obligation to fulfil the duties of one's station, and the basic ideas of Stoic morality and virtue.

Kettler further acknowledged that Ferguson did not accept all Stoic ideas. According to Kettler, Ferguson did not think wisdom and contemplation were the true source of virtue, but saw them as a means to achieve virtue. On the other hand, Ferguson did admit the usefulness of wisdom, especially in the study of natural science, and therefore does not differ completely from the Stoics. It is simply a different focus of knowledge and use of that knowledge that Ferguson employed.[187] Kettler also noted that Ferguson differed from the Stoics in his ideas on the importance of social benevolence and political activity in relation to duty. According to Kettler, the Stoics argued that virtuous people ought to play the role assigned to them in society and that for Ferguson, unlike the Stoics, 'passionate involvement in social life is at once the path to virtue and the manifestation of its highest realization'.[188] Another important facet of Ferguson's morality is his belief in self-improvement. Kettler correctly contended that the concept of improvement was pervasive in the wider context of the Scottish Enlightenment and directly contradicts the ideas of the Stoics.[189] Although the Stoics emphasised personal improvement through their methods, members of the Enlightenment were looking for active

[185] Kettler, *Ferguson*, 7.
[186] Ibid., 143.
[187] Ibid., 146-147.
[188] Ibid., 148-149.
[189] Ibid., 150.

improvement relating to all aspects of society. In the end, Kettler finds that Ferguson took from Stoicism what he liked, although he obviously did not agree with all of its principles.

Kettler is highly critical of Ferguson's use of different philosophies and argues that Ferguson was willing to take certain ideas from different philosophies simply to have a continuous argument. Kettler acknowledges that Ferguson deviated from Stoic ideas on certain subjects, although it seems very difficult for Kettler to analyse how much of Ferguson's writing is original and what had its origins in others' thought.[190] Kettler maintains that Ferguson simply borrowed ideas wherever appropriate to such an extent that his philosophy became convoluted and overlooks many aspects of Ferguson's original contribution.

Similarly, Lisa Hill in *The Passionate Society* has noted the importance of Stoicism in Ferguson's wider thought. Hill correctly understands Ferguson's work as being mainly about a question of morals and natural theology more than philosophy or social science. She claimed that he 'rarely allows his moral prejudices to interfere with the empirical evidence and this is partly related to the fact that his theology is a form of Stoic theodicy'.[191] Furthermore she sees Ferguson as a transitional thinker who attempted to create a system of thought that was part of the civic humanist tradition and the new liberalism which she classifies as 'liberal-Stoicism'.[192] She argues that this is Ferguson's contribution to eighteenth-century thought, his unique combination of modern liberalism and his reliance on ancient Roman Stoicism, although it is also difficult to assess his thought for these reasons. She further noted the importance of Stoicism for Ferguson's wider thought: 'Above all, Ferguson is a practical thinker. He does not moralise for the sake of an abstract idea, but in order to find ways of maximising human happiness. Like the pragmatic and influential Roman Stoics he idealised and sought to imitate, Ferguson insisted that philosophy must be of practical use to the community'.[193] Although she talks about Ferguson's ancient and modern sources, she highlights the importance of the Roman Stoics as one of his main sources and claims that he 'liked almost everything

[190] Ibid., 152.
[191] Hill, *The Passionate Society*, 7.
[192] Ibid., 26.
[193] Ibid., 27.

about Stoicism'[194] and believes that Ferguson, above all his contemporaries, was influenced most by it. Ultimately, Hill sees Ferguson's entire social science as being based in Stoic ontology.[195] Hill makes many excellent observations about Ferguson's thought, but her understanding of his relationship to Stoicism, particularly the notion of 'liberal Stoicism', seems to ascribe ideas and intentions to his work that are not Ferguson's.

Ferguson's Self-Perception

The association with Stoicism is so prevalent that Ferguson himself dealt openly with perceptions of his role as a Stoic in his 1792 book, *Principles of Moral and Political Science*. This discussion is one repeatedly used by Ferguson's commentators to demonstrate that he in fact sees himself as a Stoic, although this interpretation seems suspect. He stated, 'The Author, in some of the statements which follow, may be thought partial to the Stoic philosophy; but is not conscious of having warped the truth to suit with any system whatever'.[196] Ferguson explains that his ideas were created in the search for truth and when he read the Stoic view of human life as a 'game' it only supported the opinions he had previously formed from looking at the world with his own eyes. The fact that he agreed with some Stoic concepts only serves to increase his confidence in his ideas, even though 'the name of this sect has become, in the gentility of modern times, proverbial for stupidity'.[197] Several scholars have taken this statement as proof of Ferguson secretly admitting that he is actually a Stoic by openly stating he is not, but this interpretation seems counter-intuitive and misleading. A better explanation is to read it as a straight-forward statement in which Ferguson is arguing against his critics and separating himself from the Stoic school, which he respects, but does not adopt. Perhaps Eugene Heath stated it most appropriately when noting that Ferguson 'borrows heavily from the ancients, especially the Stoic thinkers'.[198]

[194] Ibid., 35.
[195] Ibid., 56.
[196] Ferguson, *P.I.*, 7.
[197] Ibid., 7.
[198] Eugene Heath, 'Ferguson's Moral Philosophy' in *The Manuscripts of Adam Ferguson*, ed. Vincenzo Merolle, *et al.* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2006), xlvii.

Moreover, 'He makes plain, in the opening pages of the *Principles*, his debt to the Stoics, and he offers references to leading Stoic thinkers throughout the essays...emphasising at several points a preference for Stoic thought over that of Aristotle or Epicurus'[199] and argues that Ferguson was demonstrating a debt or preference to Stoicism, which is presented throughout the *Principles*, rather than an adoption of Stoic philosophy.

Ferguson addressed his relationship to Stoicism again in his lectures, providing an in-depth analysis of the differences between the Epicurean, the Peripatetic and the Stoic sects, particularly in reference to their notion of the sole good of morality. In the end, he found that the Stoics had the best concept because they chose virtue over any other consideration of human morality, which leads to goodness and happiness. Ferguson noted the difference between his goals and the goals of the ancient schools as follows:

> As our object is not the same as theirs; to ascertain a sole good exclusive of every other consideration But to ascertain what is best for mankind, the comparison on which we are going to enter may not lead us to embrace the Doctrine of either Sect. When we shall have ascertained what is best it will be wise to adhere to it as the sole good And the Language of Zeno tho not less paradoxical than that of Epicurus is Safer than that of Plato or Aristotle.[200]

Here, Ferguson identified his relationship to Stoicism: he was not adopting the doctrine as a whole, but employed Stoic language to better discuss morality. This is evidence against those who claim Ferguson's absolute Stoicism.

The idea that Ferguson is a Stoic is at the very least problematic, if not false in some senses. Detailed research into Ferguson's ideas has proved, however, that a connection to Stoicism which cannot be denied. The mixed nature of Ferguson's Stoicism has lead to many issues with the study of Ferguson, not to mention some misunderstanding of Ferguson's methods. One of the difficulties academics have faced in assessing Ferguson's Stoicism is separating the aspects of Ferguson's thought that are and are not 'Stoic', which in turn creates another dilemma: how can Ferguson be a Stoic in some cases and not in others?

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[199] Heath, 'Ferguson's Moral Philosophy', xlviii.
[200] Adam Ferguson, *Lectures, II*, ff. 222.

1.4 Solving the Problem of Ferguson's 'Stoicism'

The solution to the question of Ferguson's relationship to classical sources and to his supposed Stoicism is neither easy nor straightforward to answer. As has been seen, many scholars have struggled with how best to understand Ferguson's Stoicism. The aim of this thesis is to suggest an alternative interpretation of Ferguson's relationship to the classical sources, particularly his relationship to the Stoic school.

As has been noted, some scholars view Ferguson as a moralist primarily, while others focus on his political theory. It seems that Ferguson's intellectual purpose was mainly moral and his moral philosophy affected all other aspects of his thought. As a result, it is imperative to analyse his moral philosophy alone, without reference to any other topic, to clarify Ferguson's concept of moral philosophy. This approach is important in understanding his relationship to Stoicism because this is the context in which Stoicism is most discussed in Ferguson's work. Although the question of civic virtue is imperative for understanding Ferguson's politics, this concept cannot be understood without assessing its place in his moral philosophy first and foremost. Ferguson intentionally put Stoicism into an ethical context and ignores all other aspects of their philosophy, including metaphysics and logic, and therefore, to assess Ferguson's relationship to Stoicism, his moral philosophy will be the sole topic discussed.

Another significant consideration must be made of Ferguson's opinions and interpretations of these sources. Determining what Ferguson actually thought about his classical sources has proved problematic for some scholars. In *Adam Smith and the Classics*, Gloria Vivenza addresses the question of direct or indirect influence of classical ideas on Adam Smith. She states

> Within the former group one can further class two types of reminiscence: the one explicit and, so to speak, conscious, including all the express references, quotations, recounted episodes, parallels, and so forth; the other unconscious but of great significance, observed when Smith, not always aware of doing so, echoes classical phrases or passages that he has clearly read over and studies so much that they stick in this memory and re-emerge in his own expressions.[201]

[201] Gloria Vivenza, *Adam Smith and the Classics*, 2.

Vivenza finds that indirect influence is more important for Smith and his contemporaries and that references to the classics were 'common currency'. She maintains that Smith 'allowed himself to be influenced by [classical literature] only to the extent that it could broaden his mind and stimulate its capacity for independent thought'.[202] This must be taken into consideration in the case of Ferguson as well. Ferguson demonstrated in his work both direct and indirect influence of classics and both of these will be addressed when interpreting Ferguson's engagement with the classics.

The question of Ferguson's concept of Stoicism is also very important. One of the difficulties in assessing Ferguson's relationship to Stoicism comes with the definition of Stoicism used to compare ideas. In the eighteenth century, 'Stoicism' was not understood as it might be today or in centuries before. One of the difficulties in dealing with how people use classical literature in more modern thought is that the definitions can be changed to support different opinions. It became clear at a conference held at the University of Edinburgh in September 2009, 'Lucretius in the European Enlightenment', that both Lucretius and Epicureanism more generally had a fluid place in the history of modern thought and that different modern authors transformed the classical text to fit their needs.[203] This is indicative of the way that ancient philosophy was used in the early modern period. Although there was a certain understanding of the ancient school based on the remaining texts, the application of those ideas to modern thinkers changed with the author and the usage.

Additionally, the discipline of philosophy has developed since the eighteenth century into something analytical, systematic and formally structured, which would not have been the pre-Kantian philosophers' priority. Thinkers in the eighteenth century would not have followed the same philosophical rules that are essential now because they were just beginning to develop at the time. To apply a twentieth- or twenty-first-century concept of a 'Stoic philosophy' to Ferguson and assess how he follows this idea, therefore, has proven problematic for scholars.

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[202] Ibid., 5.

[203] *Lucretius in the European Enlightenment*, 3-4 September 2009, University of Edinburgh, SHCA, organizers: Thomas Ahnert, Hannah Dawson, Michael Lurie.

To avoid this problem, Ferguson's own definition of Stoicism is used to compare Ferguson's philosophy and assess its relationship to that school. In several of his works, notably the *History* and his lectures, Ferguson defined Stoic ethics. Using this definition, Ferguson's concept of Stoicism, a proper analysis of his ideas and his ideas of the Stoics raises and answers the question whether Ferguson would consider his philosophy to be Stoic philosophy.

Finally, the central aspect of Ferguson's thought which needs to be addressed to understand his relationship to his classical sources is his methodology. Although some scholars find his work 'unsystematic', Ferguson's methodology – his process of philosophy, the structure he followed, his use of sources and evidence – also explains the role of ancient philosophy in his works.

From a review of the scholarship on Adam Ferguson, it becomes apparent that when considering the question of Ferguson's relationship to ancient philosophy and his ancient sources, the interpretation of him as a Stoic does not give a sufficient answer. Ferguson's relationship to ancient philosophy was actually highly complex and limiting the discussion to Stoic philosophy distorts not only his view of antiquity, but also his own philosophical goals. By addressing the eighteenth-century intellectual context that specifically relates to interactions with ancient philosophy, as well as the ancient world, and modern responses to ancient sources, Ferguson's conception of the ancient and the modern world can be discerned. Only from this intellectual foundation can Ferguson's relationship to ancient philosophy be understood and the ever-present problem of his 'Stoicism' be resolved.

II. Chapter 1: Ferguson's Methodology and Eighteenth-Century Context

Introduction

Adam Ferguson drew frequently on a wide range of both ancient and modern authors. He amassed a varied collection of sources from ancient literature, philosophy and history as well as modern philosophy, history, literature, natural philosophy, travel accounts, economics and politics which he employed in his several published and unpublished works to provide evidence in his moral, political and social theory. This element of Ferguson's work has puzzled scholars who attempt to identify the influence of particular aspects of either ancient or modern philosophy, politics in particular. Some scholars have claimed that Ferguson actually made no independent contribution to Enlightenment thought because he relied so heavily on the thought of other authors, while some have claimed that it is very important that Ferguson attempted to 'combine' his sources in order to have more information when formulating his conclusions.[204] Ferguson's reliance on divergent sources has further led to an often made criticism by scholars that Ferguson's inability to adhere to one philosophy, to follow one pre-set model, means he ought to be viewed as an unsystematic thinker.[205] David Kettler sees this confluence of ancient and modern ideas in Ferguson's work as 'frequently taking on a patchwork appearance, sacrificing depth and consistency for utility'[206] and he has found Ferguson's use of both modern and ancient ideas to be unsystematic and, perhaps, even un-philosophical.[207] Vincenzo Merolle, on the other hand, argues that Ferguson could not explain society without relying on classical thought and finds this adoption of classical references does not make Ferguson an 'unsystematic

[204] See J.G.A. Pocock, *Barbarism and Religion, Vol. II: Narratives of Civil Government* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 333. Pocock notes the importance of Ferguson's use of many sources when formulation his ideas of early human history.
[205] Lisa Hill *The Passionate Society: The Social, Political and Moral Thought of Adam Ferguson* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2006), 40. Hill gives a summary of some of these opinions.
[206] David Kettler, *The Social and Political Thought of Adam Ferguson*, second edition (New Brunswick and London: Transaction Publishers, 2005), 7.
[207] Kettler, *Ferguson*, 121-122. 'And since Ferguson did not disavow, or in some basic way modify, the characteristically modern rejection of the Platonic hierarchy or the Aristotelian teleology, his citations of classical authors in support of "true" happiness is simply an evasion.'

thinker'.[208] This discrepancy in the analyses of Ferguson's work, this unsettled question of whether or not Ferguson was an unsystematic thinker because he used ancient sources to understand his modern world, results from differing interpretations about Ferguson's methodology.

Fania Oz-Salzberger has noted that Ferguson's use of both classical and modern sources has caused problems for scholars: 'As his intellectual biographers stress, Ferguson was no systematic philosopher. This has misled some to see him as unoriginal, though gifted, eclectic, who produced shrewd compilations of moral philosophy and recent ethnography.'[209] As Oz-Salzberger notes this 'unsystematic' approach has led scholars to claim that Ferguson's writings do not constitute an individual contribution to eighteenth-century philosophy. She counters this charge arguing that Ferguson's actual contribution is his insistence on the importance of 'civic virtue in modern life' and also that his insightful combination of different sources can be seen as adding a new element to Enlightenment thought.[210] This is an apt assessment of Ferguson's work that seems closer to identifying the source of the importance of Ferguson's intellectual project.

When interpreting Ferguson's moral philosophy, many scholars connect Ferguson's work to ancient philosophy, particularly the Stoic school and Aristotle and Cicero. There are some scholars, however, who note the importance of modern thought and contemporary debates in Ferguson's works.[211] Both positions are justified because Ferguson undeniably draws inspiration from both ancient and modern philosophy, literature and history. What has yet to be determined is how these two different, yet connected, contexts come into play in Ferguson's thought. Ferguson, as still others have argued, was not an unsystematic thinker, but adopted a

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[208] Vincenzo Merolle, 'Introduction', to *The Manuscripts of Adam Ferguson* (London: Pickering, 2006), xi-xiv.

[209] Fania Oz-Salzberger, *Translating the Enlightenment: Scottish Civic Discourse in Eighteenth-Century Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 111.

[210] 'Leaving aside the question of whether the apt phrasing and novel combining of traditional and current ideas do not produce a creative work in its own right, a stronger argument can be made to the effect that Ferguson's books offered their readers something distinctly new. Addressed to the members of modern societies, they diagnosed novel dangers and transmitted a strong sense of didactic mission and political urgency. Of particular importance was the case that Ferguson made for the application – and, indeed, the applicability – of the principle of civic virtue to modern life.' Oz-Salzberger, *Translating the Enlightenment*, 111.

[211] See Gladys Bryson's *Man and Society: The Scottish Inquiry of the Eighteenth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1945) and Christopher J. Berry, *Social Theory of the Scottish Enlightenment* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997).

methodology that was grounded in the intellectual milieu of his time. There are three contemporary contexts in which Ferguson participated which must be considered in order to explain his methodology: the Quarrel between the Ancients and the Moderns; modern eclecticism; and the experimental method. A new appraisal of Ferguson's methodology based on these contexts will lead to a better understanding of Ferguson's relationship to his sources, and ultimately begin to disentangle his specific relationship to ancient philosophy.

1.1 Ferguson and the Quarrel Between the Ancients and the Moderns

While attempting to determine the eighteenth-century contexts which would most affect Ferguson's opinions of the literary, philosophical and historic sources available to him, the *Querelle des Anciens et des Modernes* is clearly one of the most important.[212] Despite being often referred to as 'The Battle of the Books' after an eponymous work by Jonathan Swift (1697), the *Querelle* was not merely a literary dispute, but one of the central intellectual contests in the cultural history of Europe, one that lasted more than a century and involved 'not only the world of literature but the worlds of science, religion, philosophy, the fine arts, and even classical scholarship.'[213] At the heart of this 'war between tradition and modernism; between originality and authority'[214] were the questions of the possibility and the nature of progress: whether or not people in antiquity were ultimately superior to those living in a modern age or if they could be surpassed, and finally if the rules set out by the ancients had to be perpetuated.[215] When looking at his ancient philosophical, literary and historic sources, Adam Ferguson certainly would have thought about the questions raised in this Quarrel and arrived at his own answers. Understanding this debate leads us to a new assessment of Ferguson's relationship to his ancient and modern literary and philosophical sources and helps us to explain his

[212] Joseph M. Levine, *Between the Ancients and the Moderns: Baroque Culture in Restoration England* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1999), ix.
[213] Gilbert Highet, *The Classical Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press/Clarendon Press, 1949), 261.
[214] Ibid.
[215] Joseph M. Levine, *The Battle of the Books: History and literature in the Augustan Age* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1991), 1.

use of them in his writings and define his overall opinions of antiquity. The central problem which scholars in all fields of enquiry addressed was how to reconcile the importance and authority of antiquity with the changes and discoveries made in the modern period. Continuing the work began by Hippolyte Rigault[216] and Richard Foster Jones' seminal *Ancients and Moderns*,[217] scholarship has focused on two main aspects of the Quarrel: one side has chosen to focus on literature while the other focuses on the divide between science and philosophy and the humanities. Although the main threads of the Quarrel fall into these two categories, the influence of the Quarrel was much wider and can be seen in scholarship about architecture, taste, style and music.[218] Therefore the debates were not limited to a narrow range of topics, but constitute a broad conversation about the 'importance of the new science, the meaning of history, and the mechanisms of cultural transformation'.[219]

The Quarrel is, nevertheless, usually characterised by scholars as mainly a literary phenomenon.[220] This approach largely ignores the fact that the participants did not restrict their discussions only to topics of literature and poetry, but applied their ideas about ancients and moderns to all disciplines. According to George Becker, while some scholars have categorised the quarrel as a literary episode, 'More appropriately perhaps, it merits treatment as a central chapter in the struggle for freedom of the mind and, as such, not only has significance for literature and the history of ideas, but is intrinsically tied to the rise of the modern man of intellect.'[221] Allan Bloom has contributed to the discussion on the Quarrel as follows:

> They understood the dispute over poetry to be a mere subdivision of an opposition between two comprehensive systems of radically

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[216] Hippolyte Rigault, *Histoire de la Querelle des Anciens et des Moderns* (Paris: Librairie De L. Hachette Et C., 1856).

[217] Richard Foster Jones, *Ancients and Moderns, a Study of the Rise of the Scientific Movement in Seventeenth-Century England*, 2nd edn. (St. Louis: Washington University Press, 1961) which has been criticized by Joseph M. Levine. See Joseph M. Levine, 'Ancients and Moderns Reconsidered', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, Vol. 15, No. 1 (Autumn, 1981), 78. Accessed 18/01/2011, http://www.jstor.org/stable/2738403.

[218] See Howard Lee Irving, *Ancients and Moderns: William Crotch and the Development of Classical Music* (Aldershot: England, 1999).

[219] Dan Edelstein's *The Enlightenment: A Genealogy* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 44. Edelstein argues that the Enlightenment can be understood best by looking at it in the context of the Quarrel.

[220] For example, J.B. Bury, *The Idea of Progress: An Inquiry into Its Origin and Growth* (New York: Dover Publications, 1955), 78, cited in George Becker, 'Two Developments in the Rise of the Modern Intellectual', *The School Review*, Vol. 87, No. 4 (Aug., 1979), 400.

[221] Becker, 'Two Developments in the Rise of the Modern Intellectual', 400.

> opposed thought, one finding its sources in ancient philosophy, the other in modern philosophy. The moderns believed that they had found the true principles of nature and that by means of their methods, new sources of power could be found in physical nature, politics, and the arts. These new principles represented a fundamental break with classical thought and were incompatible with it.[222]

The dispute over the authority and relevance of the literature, philosophy and texts of antiquity then is not limited to literary discussions, but was involved in diverse discussions of all topics that were addressed by Enlightenment thinkers.

Prehistory of the Quarrel

The dispute over the supremacy of the 'ancients' or 'moderns' did not occur as a singular event, but is part of the more general trends in the history of thought. The Quarrel on the one hand is fixed in a specific time and context, but on the other has a more general application: all later generations question the validity of their predecessors when reconciling what had come before with subsequent developments that have made significant changes in the way that any discipline is understood. While these questions infamously were brought to the front in the early modern period,[223] François Hartog notes that there is a trend that every generation asserts itself as the younger over those that came before it, and furthermore that while the younger generation creates something new, they are never the first to innovate.[224] According to Hans Robert Jauss, the Quarrel therefore 'is a literary trope dating back to antiquity and returning repeatedly in the generational revolt of the young; it indicates nothing more than the shifting proportions of writers old and new.'[225] The Quarrel between the Ancients and the Moderns, as it will be analysed here, however,

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[222] Allan Bloom, 'An Outline of *Gulliver's Travels*', in *Ancients and Moderns: Essays on the Tradition of Political Philosophy in Honor of Leo Strauss*, ed. Joseph Cropsy (New York: Basic Books, Inc., Publishers, 1964), 239.

[223] Hans Robert Jauss, translated by Christian Thorne, 'Modernity and Literary tradition', *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 31, No. 2 (Winter 2005), 330-331, Accessed: 18/01/2011, doi: 10.1086/430964.

[224] François Hartog, *Anciens, Modernes, Sauvages* (Paris: Galaade, 2005), 27. 'Se revendiquer et se faire reconnaître comme plus jeune, nouveau, amène à pointer le groupe de ceux qui viennent avant, vous précèdent, plus âgés: des anciens, donc. Mais marquant leur place, ces plus jeunes n'en sont pas moins dans le rang, le même rang que les anciens. Simplement, pour le temps d'une génération, ils viennent après et, surtout, ils ne sont pas d'abord là pour << faire du nouveau>>.'

[225] Jauss, 'Modernity and Literary tradition', 331.

is not just this general trope, but one episode that had a specific context and that changed European intellectual life.

The history of the Quarrel between the Ancients and the Moderns is usually located in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, but it had its origins much earlier. While some historians have argued that the concepts of the quarrel originated in antiquity itself,[226] many more find that the debate began in the Renaissance[227] when, with the revival and adoption of classical models in the humanities and sciences, it was common practice to imitate the ancients especially as a stylistic paradigm.[228] While practices and questions of imitation and innovation remained important in the early modern period, Douglas Lane Patey has argued that 'historians who romantically conceive imitation as mere formal and generic recapitulation fail to see that Augustan imitation was a mode of cultural transmission that crucially involved correction of tradition from within'.[229] Although imitation was common, this should not decrease the importance of the innovations made even during the process of imitation. Eventually, authors, as well as those working in the arts and sciences, began to move beyond imitation, particularly in the field of natural philosophy, and made new and innovative developments, although this questioning of the ancients only took full force in the seventeenth century.[230] Once people began to see that contemporary society had surpassed that of antiquity in some areas, some began to question the validity of following ancient authorities in all aspects.[231] Joseph M. Levine states:

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[226] Philip Hicks, *Neoclassical History and English Culture* (Hampshire and London : Macmillan Press Ltd, 1996), 98.

[227] Hans Baron, 'The *Querelle* of the Ancients and the Moderns as a Problem for Renaissance Scholarship', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 20, No. 1 (Jan., 1959), 15: Accessed 18/01/2011, http://www.jstor.org/stable/2707964. For a study of the effect of the Quarrel on the culture of the Renaissance see Ingrid D. Rowland, *The Culture of the High Renaissance: Ancients and Moderns in Sixteenth Century Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998). Charles Trinkaus has studied the role of the early Quarrel in Italy in his *'Antiquitas* versus *Modernitas*: An Italian Humanist Polemic and Its Resonance', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 48, No. 1 (Jan. - Mar., 1987), 11-21. Accessed 18 Jan 2011, http://www.jstor.org/stable/2709609.

[228] Joseph M. Levine, *The Battle of the Books*, 2.

[229] Douglas Lane Patey, 'The Institution of Criticism in the Eighteenth Century', in *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism*, Vol. 4, ed. H. B. Nisbet and Claude Rawson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 8-9.

[230] Becker 'Two Developments in the Rise of the Modern Intellectual', 400.

[231] Baron, 'The *Querelle* of the Ancients and the Moderns as a Problem for Renaissance Scholarship', 15.

> The quarrel, it is true, both preceded the Restoration and continued to be argued for a long time afterward, but it took on a peculiar form and significance in the later seventeenth century... Apparently, everyone was profoundly concerned about the authority of classical antiquity, and everyone had to fix a position with respect to it before taking the plunge into modern life; and apparently, there was no subject, from art and literature to philosophy and science, from religion to politics, that was exempt from its concerns.[232]

One reason why the Quarrel is so pervasive within early modern society is because of the rigorous and methodical education in the classics, which most educated people of the time would have received.[233] Joseph M. Levine has argued that a proper education was believed to have been founded on the models of classical literature and history, and further that, 'The best background to the battle of the books is therefore the history of education under the Tudors and Stuarts; and the first indication of modern resistance, as also its final triumph, appear invariably as challenges to the classical curriculum'.[234] Certainly, this was the case for Adam Ferguson's education; Ferguson learned from classical models himself.[235] This prevalent education among English-speaking intellectuals at least determined their early experience with antiquity and gave them a common starting point in the Quarrel.

While education in the classics is of fundamental importance, the changes in education and scholarship developing in the seventeenth century is an equally crucial background for the Quarrel for both the proponents of the Ancients and the Moderns. In the seventeenth century changes in the study of history and literary criticism followed changes in scholarship through the introduction of new methods in philology, textual criticism and hermeneutics. In the Renaissance, scholars had developed new techniques to study the newly rediscovered ancient texts which led to a greater understanding of the ancient world and resulted in Renaissance humanists classifying antiquity as a static model which should be respected, emulated and

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[232] Joseph M. Levine, *Between the Ancients and the Moderns*, viii.
[233] See Peter Gay, *The Enlightenment: an Interpretation Vol. I: The Rise of Modern Paganism* (New York: Knopf, 1966) and *The Enlightenment: an Interpretation Vol. II: The Science of Freedom* (New York: Knopf, 1969).
[234] Joseph M. Levine, *The Battle of the Books: History and literature in the Augustan Age* (Cornell University Press, Ithaca and London, 1991), 5.
[235] See Ferguson's 'Biography' in the Introduction to this thesis.

imitated.[236] This practice was later criticised by scholars, such as Spinoza and Le Clerc, who were developing a new concept of literary criticism. They thought the Renaissance humanists, while translating and commentating on texts, focusing on grammar and style, helped 'obscure from view, as far as most readers were concerned, the precious legacy of humanity's past, tightly restricting it to a mere handful of professional scholars'.[237] Jonathan Israel identifies Spinoza as the leader in this new kind of literary and historical criticism. According to Israel, Spinoza insisted:

> that there can be no valid understanding of a text, and therefore no genuine scholarship, which is not in the first place a 'historical' understanding... Placing all writings in 'historical' context effectively meant, in Bayle and Le Clerc no less than Spinoza, reassessing them within Cartesian-Spinozist mechanistic conceptions of natural cause and effect systematically excluding every miraculous, magical, and revealed factor, explanation, and criterion.[238]

These scholars took up philology and 'humanist erudition' and 'added the requirement for historical contextualization – elucidating the opinions and customs of each age, learning to distinguish different theological, philosophical, and historiographical ideologies, and showing how these tend to govern phraseology and vocabulary'.[239] The critical stance became an attempt to understand better the entirety of the ancient world, not only what could be found in the ancient texts superficially, but to commence exacting research to better understand the meaning of texts. One result of this new method of dealing with ancient texts was the development of the history of philosophy, epitomised by Bayle,[240] who maintained that the only means to approach ancient literature was 'to apply the criterion of natural causality, using the historico-critical method to uncover not just false ideas but also the whole structure of assumptions, imposture, prejudice, fear, and tradition on which the distorted belief structures of the past rest'.[241] These scholars,

[236] Levine, *The Battle of the Books*, 2.
[237] Jonathan Israel, *Enlightenment Contested: Philosophy, Modernity, and the Emancipation of Man 1670-1752* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 416.
[238] Israel, *Enlightenment Contested*, 411.
[239] Ibid., 421.
[240] This was true for Bayle as well as Spinoza, Le Clerc, van Dale and Gundling.
[241] Israel, *Enlightenment Contested*, 425.

particularly Spinoza, Le Clerc and Bayle, developed a new system of hermeneutics which employed a close analysis of text to discover both the obvious and greater philosophical meaning as well as one that ensured that the text was placed into its correct and specific historical context.[242] This new appreciation of history, and the importance of understanding the historical context as well as striving for exacting scholarship, influenced thinkers across Europe in the period just before and during the Quarrel itself.

The Quarrel in France and England

From these foundations, intellectuals in Europe in the late seventeenth century began to ask questions that re-evaluated the authority of ancient texts and launched the Quarrel between the Ancients and the Moderns. Although the Quarrel took place across Europe, its two main theatres, initially, were in France and England.[243] The debate in these two countries, while connected, raised different questions resulting from their different contexts.[244]

In France, the debate continued the hermeneutical developments just discussed and took on its own character and has its own story.[245] The spark that lit this intellectual powder-keg in France was Charles Perrault's poem *Le siècle de Louis le Grand* (1687), in which he argued for the greatness of his own age over antiquity. Perrault took the first outright 'modern' stance against the 'ancients' in order to prove that in science the moderns were superior, extending the debate from one of literary merit and style.[246] From this point, such authors as Racine, Boileau and La Fontaine took the side of the Ancients, while fellow Moderns included

[242] Ibid., 427.
[243] An excellent and recent discussion of the quarrel across Europe can be found in Douglas Lane Patey's 'Ancients and Moderns', in *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism* Vol. 4, ed. H. B. Nisbet and Claude Rawson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997) and Dan Edelstein's *The Enlightenment: A Genealogy* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2010). See also Joseph M. Levine, *The Battle of the Books.*
[244] Joseph M. Levine, *Humanism and History: Origins of Modern English Historiography* (Ithaca and New York: Cornell University Press, 1987), 156.
[245] See Anne-Marie Lecoq, ed., *La Querelle des Anciens et des Modernes* (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 2001).
[246] George Becker 'Two Developments in the Rise of the Modern Intellectual', 401; Edelstein's *The Enlightenment: A Genealogy*, 38; and Patey, 'Ancients and Moderns', 34.

Fontenelle and Antoine Houdar de La Motte.[247] Chantal Grell has argued that in France the members who took the side of the ancients attempted 'to bring about a concept of history directly inherited from the ancients',[248] while the moderns either drew from German scholarship in analysing the ancient texts or 'attempted to propose a new reinterpretation of history they tried to look at with hindsight and a critical spirit'.[249] Several authors[250] have argued that one of the characteristics of the continuing quarrel in France was that it was not only scholars who were aware of the debates on a wide scale, affecting taste, style and fashion.[251]

In England, the Quarrel is more often referred to as the Battle of the Books. Patey writes that 'the English Battle, though like the French Quarrel framed as a debate about the relative merits of ancient and modern literature, was from the start more concerned with *books* themselves with their production, uses and users, and especially with the rules and functions of the critic'.[252] This may be the result of the long argument between Sir William Temple, on the side of the Ancients, and William Wotton, on the side of the Moderns, as well as later authors who famously wrote in English, including John Dryden,[253] Alexander Pope and Jonathan Swift.[254] The debate in England is often characterised as a literary argument more often than the one in France. This literary emphasis is evidenced by an avowed affinity

[247] Edelstein, *The Enlightenment: A Genealogy*, 5.

[248] Chantal Grell, *Le Dix-huitième siècle et l'antiquité en France 1680-1789* (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 1995), 1065. 'les partisans des anciens s'attachèrent à faire prévaloir une conception de l'histoire directement héritée des anciens…'

[249] Chantal Grell, *Le Dix-huitième siècle et l'antiquité en France 1680-178*, 1065. 'D'une part, les progrès de l'érudition allemande renouvelèrent l'analyse et la compréhension des témoignages des anciens ; d'autre part, des protestants comme Louis de Beaufort or Edward Gibbon qui explorèrent des voies que Montesquieu avait commencé à tracer, tentèrent de proposer une réinterprétation nouvelle d'une histoire qu'ils s'efforcèrent d'envisager avec recul et esprit critique.'

[250] See Chantal Grell, *Le Dix-huiteme siècle at l'antiquite en France 1680-1789*, 787; Joan DeJean, 'Did the Seventeenth Century Invent our Fin de Siècle? Or, the Creation of the Enlightenment That We May at Last Be Leaving Behind', *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 22, No. 4 (Summer, 1996), 794. Accessed 18/1/2011, http://www.jstor.org/stable/1344001

[251] DeJean, 'Did the Seventeenth Century Invent our Fin de Siècle? Or, the Creation of the Enlightenment That We May at Last Be Leaving Behind'. This article was later part of Joan DeJean, *Ancients against Moderns: Culture wars and the Making of a Fin de Siècle* (Chicago and London, University of Chicago Press, 1997). For work specifically on the effect of the Quarrel on taste and style see Elena Russo, *Styles of Enlightenment: Taste, Politics and Authorship in Eighteenth-Century France* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007).

[252] Patey, 'Ancients and Moderns', 47.

[253] For discussions of John Dryden's involvement in the Quarrel see Michael Werth Gelber 'John Dryden and the Battle of the Books', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, Vol. 63, No.1/2 (2000), 139-156. Accessed 18/1/2011, http://www.jstor.org/stable/3817867. See also Levine, *Between the Ancients and the Moderns*.

[254] See Allan Bloom, 'An Outline of *Gulliver's Travels*'; Levine, *Battle of the Books*.

between British thinkers and those of Ancient Rome. According to Joseph Levine there was a natural connection between scholars in England and those in ancient Rome. He notes the similarities of 'political life in Augustan Rome and Augustan England', continuing to argue that education and eloquence were required for political life and required many of the same skills and abilities for success. 'What is beyond doubt is that when the eighteenth-century gentleman read the letters of (say) Cicero or Pliny the Younger, he discovered in them a mirror image of himself and he naturally identified with his ancient Roman forbearers'.[255] The works of antiquity held a special place for English authors and thus their debate about the authority of the texts had its own distinct character. This is crucial because the ability to identify with antiquity affected the thinkers' relationship to their sources.

The divide between the French and English debates alleged by modern scholarship draws artificial, albeit convenient, barriers. It is nevertheless clear that French and English authors read and influenced each other's works. In both countries, moreover, the Ancients and the Moderns took basically the same position and, to understand these positions fully, examples from both need to be examined to elucidate their ideas.

The Moderns

To understand the position of the Moderns, it is important to analyse their assumptions in order to explain what problems they found with the accepted superiority of antiquity and thus illustrate their reasoning when arguing against the Ancients. To do this we will look at some authors who wrote for the side of the Moderns and this discussion must begin where the Quarrel itself began: with Charles Perrault.

When Charles Perrault (1628-1703) read his poem *Le siècle de Louis le Grand* (1687) to the French Academy he argued that the works and innovations of his contemporaries were great enough to compare and perhaps surpass those of the ancients. This opening challenge in the battle between the Ancients and the

[255] Levine, *The Battle of the Books*, 5-6.

Moderns caused a heated debate within the Academy.[256] Perrault then published the four volume *Parallèle des Anciens et des Modernes en ce qui regards les arts et les sciences* (1688-1697)[257] in which he discussed his position as a modern and claims to prove the superiority of the moderns based on the innovations developed by scholars since antiquity.[258] In the 'Preface' to this monumental work, Perrault states that it is reasonable to 'show veneration for whatever is possessed of true merit in itself and has the additional merit of age'.[259] This reverence for authority, either for the ancients or other figures, has become 'a criminal superstition' and continues for those whose reputation, once great, has decayed over time. 'A thing had only to be done or said by these great men to become incomparable, and even today, for certain scholars it is a sort of religion to prefer the least production of the Ancients to the finest works of any modern author'. Perrault finds this reverence an 'injustice' and a 'refusal' to accept the greatness of their contemporaries. Perrault acknowledges the 'excellence' of the ancients, but maintains that the moderns are at least equal, if not superior, to the ancients.

Another notable French Modern was Bernard Le Bovier de Fontenelle (1657-1757) who wrote 'A Digression on the Ancients and Moderns'.[260] In it, he argued that it is a claim of the Ancients that those in antiquity must have had better brains than the people of his time as a means to explain their superiority. This cannot have been the case; however, since nature always works with the same 'clay' and therefore the thinkers of antiquity could not have been physically superior to those of his time.[261] He argued that the ancients and moderns were equal and that

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[256] This poem is quoted in Douglas Lane Patey, 'Ancients and Moderns', 34; the full poem is transcribed in Anne-Marie Lecoq, ed., *La Querelle des Anciens et des Modernes*, 257-273. For discussions of the reaction to the poem see Edelstein, *The Enlightenment: A Genealogy*, 37; Patey, 'Ancients and Moderns', 34-35.

[257] Patey, 'Ancients and Moderns', 36-37.

[258] Charles Perrault, *Parallèle des Anciens et des Modernes en ce qui regarde les arts et les sciences* (1688-1697), translated by Christopher Miller, quoted in *Art in Theory 1648-1815: An Anthology of Changing Ideas,* Vol. 1, ed. Charles Harrison, Paul Wood and Jason Gaiger (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2000), 53-62. In this edition there is also a summary of Perrault's positions in this work.

[259] Perrault, 'Preface' to *Parallèle des Anciens et des Modernes en ce qui regarde les arts et les sciences*, in *Art in Theory*, 54.

[260] Bernard Fontenelle, 'A Digression on the Ancients and Moderns', published as an appendix to his *Poesies pastorales* from the translation by Scott Elledge and Donald Schier in *The Continental Mode: Selected Essays of Seventeenth Century France*, revised edition (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1970), 358-67. Quoted in *Art in Theory 1648-1815: An Anthology of Changing Ideas,* Vol. 1, 48-53.

[261] Fontenelle, 'A Digression on the Ancients and Moderns', 49.

the ancients should not be more highly esteemed for their discoveries over the moderns. 'I should be just as willing to see them praised for having drunk first the waters of our rivers and for us to be blamed because we drink only what is left'.[262] Furthermore, the early discoveries made by the ancients were easily done, when compared to the work that moderns accomplished, that builds upon those discoveries. To make new discoveries that surpass what had previously been accepted knowledge is clearly more difficult and worthy of admiration. According to Fontenelle, moderns can make improvements in those fields that allow for progress. In literature, the ancients and the moderns are equal, but in the field of philosophy the moderns are far superior, particularly due to the scientific method which holds absolute reason above all other considerations. This emphasis on the superiority of reason he naturally enough credited to Descartes.[263] Concerning the ancients and philosophy, Fontenelle is critical of their methods, 'No matter the subject, the ancients rarely reason with absolute correctness', which justly proves, in his mind, the modern's superiority in this matter. He concludes 'in sum, there now reigns not in only our good scientific and philosophical works but also in those on religion, ethics and criticism a precision and an exactness which have scarcely been known until now.'[264] Fontenelle acknowledged the achievements of the ancients in the field of poetry, but also highlighted the fact that the ancients themselves had many faults. Ultimately, he believed that the ancients could be equalled in all fields and surpassed in some, particularly in those of philosophy and science.

In England, William Wotton wrote *Reflections upon Ancient and Modern Learning* (1694),[265] which was a response to William Temple's 'Essay upon Ancient and Modern Learning' and which also closely followed Perrault. In this work he summarises the argument of the Moderns. He stated that while the Ancients could make claims on the fields of poetry, rhetoric and style, the Moderns claimed science on their side.

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[262] Ibid., 50.
[263] Ibid., 51.
[264] Ibid., 51.
[265] William Wotton, *Reflections upon Ancient and Modern Learning* (London: Printed by F. Leake, 1694). For a discussion of this work see Levine, *Battle of the Books;* and Harrison, *et al*., *Art in Theory 1648-1815: An Anthology of Changing Ideas, Vol. 1*, 62.

> Among this sort, I reckon *Mathematical* and *Physical Sciences*, considered in their largest Extent. These are Things which have no Dependence upon the Opinions of Men for their Truth; they will admit of fixed and undisputed *Mediums* of Comparison and Judgment: so that, though it may always be debated, who have been the best Orators, or who the best Poets; yet it cannot always be a matter of controversie, who have been the greatest *Geometers*, *Arithmeticians*, *Astronomers*, *Musicians*, *Anatomists*, *Chymists*, *Botanists*, or the like; because a fair comparison between the Inventions, Observation, Experiments and Collections of the contending Parties must certainly put an end to the Dispute, and give a more full satisfaction to all sides.[266]

It is because mathematical and physical sciences do not depend upon any authority, but on observation and experimentation that they can be free of the dictates of antiquity. Wotton then continues to compare the works of different ages of science to determine whether Aristotle and Democritus or Newton and Boyle are the best.[267]

This is the critical argument of the moderns: that while the ancients accomplished much the Moderns could learn from, they were not the pinnacle of human achievement; contemporary scholars and artists could equal the greatness of antiquity and in some ways surpass it. The field in which the Moderns could improve upon the Ancients most clearly was natural science. Perrault identified Francis Bacon and René Descartes as the thinkers who influentially changed, for the better, the correct way to think about the natural world.[268] Jauss has argued that in this context the Quarrel was between the Moderns, who 'pitted the notion of progress, as developed by the methods of modern science and philosophy since Copernicus and Descartes, against the *anciens* and their belief in the transhistorical exemplarity of the ancient world'.[269] The Moderns looked to science to prove the superiority of their world, while the Ancients developed a new notion of history to maintain the importance of antiquity.

[266] Wotton, *Reflections upon Ancient Learning*, 77-78.
[267] Ibid. 80.
[268] Edelstein, 'The Enlightenment Genealogy', 40.
[269] Jauss, 'Modernity and Literary Tradition', 343.

The Ancients

Although the Ancients were the first to have a specific and rigid position, that the authors of antiquity were superior to all modern authors, they had to respond to relentless attacks. In order to be able to defend antiquity against the arguments brought forward by the moderns, the Ancients had to shift ground, developing a new and increasingly sophisticated approach. What resulted from the debate between them was a new concept of history which incorporated historicism and the concept of historical human universals.

Englishman William Temple's 'An Essay upon the Ancient and Modern Learning' provides a good example of the initial response of an Ancient to a Modern critique such as the one made by Perrault and Fontenelle.[270] In this essay he attacked the position of the Moderns who believed, as he argued, first, that modern thinkers must know more than the ancients because they have the benefit of the knowledge of antiquity to learn and expand from, like a dwarf standing on the shoulders of a giant; second, following from the arguments of Fontenelle, that since nature remains constant, that plants and animals must be the same in antiquity as in modernity, the Moderns must have the same capacity for genius which the ancients had.[271] Temple, however, did not agree with this position and strongly argued that authors of antiquity were far superior to anything modern. Temple maintained that the 'ancients'[272] in fact had the benefit of the people who came before them as well; the ancients had their own ancients to learn from and that this was the natural cycle of knowledge.[273] Temple later argued that while the moderns learned from the ancient authors, that received knowledge had been corrupted and decayed over time. Like the decay of society, what the ancients learned and discovered was pure, but as that knowledge was passed to later generations it became corrupt and lost its initial

[270] William Temple, 'An Essay upon the Ancient and Modern Learning' in *The Works of Sir William Temple, Bart. Complete in Four Volumes* (London: Printed by S. Hamilton, Weybridge, 1814).
[271] Temple, 'An Essay upon the Ancient and Modern Learning', 446.
[272] Ibid. Pre-Christian Greek and Roman authors 'from the age of Hippocrates to that of Marcus Aurelius'.
[273] According to Temple, the Greeks learned from the Egyptians, the Phoenicians, and also received wisdom from China and India.Temple traces the learning of Pythagoras to the 'Indian Brahmans' as well as from China and later traces the influence of the philosophy of these countries on the moral and natural philosophy of the Greek 'ancients'. Ibid., 454.

genius much like the empire of Alexander decayed after his death. He argued that the learning of the ancients was greatly lost over time and that what remained was cause for imitation and repetition rather than increased knowledge and discovery:

> Thales, Pythagoras, Democritus, Hippocrates, Plato, Aristotle, Epicurus were the first mighty conquerors of ignorance in our world, and made greater progress in the several empires of science, than any of their successors have been able to reach. These have hardly ever pretended more, than to learn what the others taught, to remember what they invented, and, not able to compass that itself, they have set up for authors upon some parcels of those great stocks, or else have contented themselves only to comment upon those texts, and make the best copies they could, after those originals.[274]

Temple attacked the claims of the Moderns by arguing that they could not claim to have advantages in knowledge simply because they have the benefit of the learning of the ancients.[275] He further appealed to the idea of genius,[276] which is that the ancients consisted of great minds which could not be surpassed, not only in the arts, but in philosophy and science and poetry as well.[277] Ancient thinkers did not have a specific environmental advantage, they were not physically or mentally superior, they were simply better.

Temple made a very clear argument that there are no achievements made by the moderns which can equal those of the ancients. Specifically he argued against the position of the Moderns, stating that there were no modern philosophers who surpassed those of antiquity, although Descartes and Hobbes may 'pretend' to do so.[278] Temple further maintained that there have been no innovations in natural philosophy that can better what the ancients did; because the ancients had so little to start with what they discovered was important and truly revolutionary. The Moderns, deriving their ideas from the foundation of what was discovered in

[274] Temple, 'An Essay upon the Ancient and Modern Learning', 460.
[275] Ibid., 461.
[276] George Becker has traced the development of the concept of an individual being a 'genius' and assesses the 'modern' definition of the term. Becker 'Two Developments in the Rise of the Modern Intellectual', 403-407.
[277] Temple, 'An Essay upon the Ancient and Modern Learning', 463.
[278] 'But what are the sciences where in we pretend to excel? I know of no new philosophers, that have made entries upon that noble stage of fifteen hundred years past, unless Descartes and Hobbes should pretend to it, of whom I shall make no critique here, but only say, that, by what appears of learned men's opinions in this age, they have by no means eclipsed the lustre of Plato, Aristotle, Epicurus or others of the ancients.' Ibid., 468.

antiquity, have not made any innovations from what the ancients discovered that can compare to the magnitude of the discoveries that were accomplished by the ancient thinkers.[279] Temple believed that ancient authors played a vital role in the lives of modern scholars, an idea central to the position of the Ancients.[280]

The writings of Temple are indicative of the early position of the Ancients because he holds to his inflexible, conservative position that progress could never defeat the achievements of the ancients. Temple simply disagreed with the Moderns and would not concede that current developments in the arts and sciences could do more than equal that of antiquity. Other scholars on the side of the Ancients, however, did agree that progress, especially in natural philosophy, could be made by their contemporaries. While it may appear that they incorporated the side of the Moderns into their argument and that the two sides of the debate had more in common than might be assumed, this is not the case. The Ancients, by accepting the idea of progress, were not completely giving in to the position of the Moderns, but were in fact restructuring their argument by appropriating some ideas of the Moderns and rejecting some of their original rigid positions, particularly that antiquity could not be surpassed. It is a credit to the Ancients who fought to hold their position that 'the Moderns could simply not have a monopoly on reason'.[281]

This incorporation of the Modern's view on progress with the Ancient one demonstrates the changing nature of the debate and the innovation of the Ancients to keep their position relevant. In order for the Ancients to be able to claim no longer the absolute superiority of antiquity, but the relevance it had in contemporary people's lives and scholarly work, they adapted some of the claims of the Moderns on the one hand by admitting the existence of modern progress, and on the other hand developed new historical perspectives which enabled them to look at ancient thought in a new light.[282]

Joseph M. Levine has convincingly argued that the Quarrel was 'at bottom a dispute over the uses of the past, a quarrel about history'.[283] Because the Ancients had to change their perspective to fight the attacks of the Moderns, they did not want

[279] Temple, 'An Essay upon the Ancient and Modern Learning', 473.
[280] Patey, 'Ancients and Moderns', 50.
[281] Edelstein, *The Enlightenment: A Genealogy*, 40-41.
[282] Ibid., 39-40.
[283] Joseph M. Levine, *Humanism and History*, 156.

to defend their position blindly and obstinately and as a result they developed two very important historical perspectives: one is that all literature is important because humans are universally the same, the other is historicism, or historical relativism, which allows the Ancients to look at the literature of antiquity in its historical context and under its historical circumstances. If the nature of men must be the same in antiquity and the modern era, here following from Fontenelle's argument, the difference between the two is the result of historical circumstances and Perrault argued from this the notion of the '*homme universel*'.[284] The new conceptualisation of history created by the Ancients placed historicism in the centre of their studies, where they understood that all things produced by people are cultural in nature and determined by their specific external circumstances.[285]

They understood that cultures are different and have their own customs and norms which could not be judged by their present criteria and to successfully engage with the ancient authors they had to adopt an ancient frame of mind. They had to have the scholarly background to know what the ancient context was and have the imagination to place themselves within it. There was an idea, Jauss correctly argued 'by the end of the *querrelle*, that the ancient and modern worlds were simply different. From this notion there sprang a further idea, which Montesquieu, in the *Esprit des lois*, was to give its richest orchestration: that every nation, and not just every historical period, had its own unique, incommensurable "genius."'[286]

Furthermore, it is only because of the universal nature of humans that the Moderns could understand the ancients: the ancient authors tapped into truths about humanity which all people could learn from, that still spoke to modern concerns, and that knowledge, acquired by the great ancient thinkers should not be ignored. This stance is related to the innovations in the field of historical criticism and the changing nature of history throughout the continent where the concept that each era has a specific and individual context which needs to be understood and considered before a true understanding of the literature can be reached. This new perspective on history was adopted by the Ancients as their response to the Moderns, but went on to influence the discipline of history and thinkers in the Enlightenment. The

[284] Jauss, 'Modernity and Literary Tradition', 344.
[285] Patey, 'Ancients and Moderns', 38.
[286] Jauss, 'Modernity and Literary tradition', 345, 353.

ancients argued that since human nature is universal, the ancients hold a place in modern scholarship: 'It was the Ancients' contention that the Greeks and the Romans were the first to have apprehended the true ideal of universal beauty - it was they who had fixed the point of perfection, and indisputably so, in the areas of language, literature, and the arts.'[287] The authors of antiquity should be read because they appeal to people in any time as much as they did when they were first written. Patey notes that, 'Ancients such as Boileau appealed to what had stood the test of time – to universal taste as revealed in ancient works of continuing popularity among readers of taste.'[288] Thus, the role of the ancient authors could be saved and remained important because they appealed to universal human nature and taste.[289]

The influence of historicism and historical universals appears in the Ancients' approach to history itself. The Ancients attempted to write history in the style of ancient authors, following often from Tacitus, Livy and Cicero. According to Patey, 'Thus for Ancients such as Temple, history is still a branch of 'eloquence'...; its "great ends" and "the chief Care of all Historians" are to "argue the Virtues and Vices of Princes" and "serve for Example and Instruction to Posterity", tasks to be accomplished through the construction of shapely historical narratives.'[290] For those on the side of the Ancients, history should maintain a didactic and moral role to instruct the readers through a carefully constructed story. The historian should combine both eloquence and scholarship to create the best kind of history which could teach 'morality and politics by example'.[291]

Outcomes of the Quarrel

One outcome of the Quarrel is the separation of the arts and sciences, a result that would affect the way that all people view the disciplines and the Quarrel has been interpreted as a battle, not of the books, but between science and philosophy, on one

[287] George Becker 'Two Developments in the Rise of the Modern Intellectual', 401-402.
[288] Patey, 'Ancients and Moderns', 56-57.
[289] Patey notes that the idea of universal taste questioned when this specific understanding of historicism was challenged in the late eighteenth by thinkers such as Herder. 'Ancients and Moderns', 56-58.
[290] Patey, 'Ancients and Moderns', 51.
[291] Levine, 'Ancients and Moderns Reconsidered', 86.

side, and the humanities on the other.[292] Levine states: 'In short, it looked to Voltaire and to others that there was not just one simple quarrel in progress, but one for every field and at least two main battlegrounds: one for the arts and literature, the other for the sciences.'[293] It became a question of knowledge and achievement: in the sciences and philosophy, who knew more, and who had achieved more in the arts?[294] It is in this way that the Ancients and the Moderns could divide the subjects that were claimed by each side: 'All those activities that seemed to work by accumulation, such as the sciences and philosophy, were won for the moderns, while all those that seemed to depend upon imitation, such as literature and the arts, were left securely in the hands of the ancients.'[295] This division of disciplines, given to the Ancients or Moderns, affected the way that Enlightenment thinkers viewed and studied them.

Because the Ancients seemingly incorporated aspects of the Modern position into their own, scholars have claimed that there was no real solution to the Battle of the Books, that in this fight there was no clear victor. The Moderns and the Ancients argued for similar goals: they both believed that the ancients were important, just as they believed that the progress of modernity could achieve new heights. The difference between the Ancients and the Moderns is evident in their emphasis on certain topics.[296] As the eighteenth century progressed it seemed that thinkers easily adopted elements of both sides. As Levine argues, 'Now, it is one of the complications of this situations that the *philosophes* of the next generation, like Voltaire and d'Alembert, lined up with the ancients in their disparagement of modern learning and the moderns in their belief in science and their hopes for the future.'[297]

Hans Robert Jauss and Dan Edelstein have insightfully argued that the dividing lines drawn during the Quarrel were the basis for the Enlightenment. Jauss

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[292] J. W. Lorimer, 'A Neglected Aspect of the "Querelle des Anciens et des Modernes"', *The Modern Language Review*, Vol. 51, No. 2 (Apr., 1956), 179-185. Accessed 18/01/2011, http://www.jstor.org/stable/3718436.
[293] Levine, *Humanism and History*, 180.
[294] Joseph M. Levine, 'Giambattista Vico and the Quarrel between the Ancients and the Moderns', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 52, No. 1 (Jan. - Mar., 1991), 56. Accessed 18/01/2011, http://www.jstor.org/stable/2709582.
[295] Levine, *The Battle of the Books*, 1-2. See also Patey, 'Ancients and Moderns', 38 -40.
[296] Levine, 'Ancients and Moderns Reconsidered', 78.
[297] Levine, *Humanism and History*, 184.

has argued that the important members of the Enlightenment, the members that Jonathan Israel might term 'radical', were the Moderns and this was itself the origin of 'the Enlightenment' in that they dictated eighteenth-century views on the notions of history and progress.[298] Edelstein argues:

> From the first embryonic theories of the Enlightenment to its best-known midcentury celebrations..., the Ancients were consistently presented as worthy models and even in some cases, masters. While appropriating the Moderns' celebration of the new science, the *philosophes* may have ultimately been more indebted to the party of the Ancients, who demonstrate how faith in progress was not incompatible with admiration for the philosophers of old.[299]

The origins of the Enlightenment, therefore, the positions that Enlightenment thinkers had to take on the question of Ancient and Modern authority, were central in developing the methods and ideas that dominated the eighteenth century. There is a problem with identifying which side later eighteenth-century thinkers took in this debate. It is easy to see which scholars took the side of the Ancients or the Moderns during the Battle of the Books because they were self-consciously reacting to each other and engaging with the other side in a heated debate. Once this Quarrel ostensibly subsided, when the Ancients and the Moderns had built up their arguments creating new disciplines, new concepts of history, new opinions about science and progress, the need to take unchanging positions that put a thinker on one or the other side dissipated and was replaced by an adoption of the concepts and methods developed as the Quarrel went on. Finding the evidence to support this now subtle and nuanced debate has proved more difficult for later scholars to identify precisely because the Quarrel appears to have ended in the 1730s. Nevertheless, the issues raised in the debate continued to affect not only the early Enlightenment thinkers, but those who continued to write throughout the eighteenth century.

[298] Jauss, 'Modernity and Literary tradition', 343-344.
[299] Edelstein, *The Enlightenment: A Genealogy*, 22.

1.2 Ferguson and the Quarrel: An Ancient or a Modern?

The end of the Quarrel is usually dated between 1730 and 1740, but its effects can still be seen to linger throughout the rest of the eighteenth century. Joseph Levine argued that Edward Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1776) was the last book that openly dealt with the Quarrel and, to a degree, that he synthesised the positions of the ancients and moderns by incorporating 'the best' of ancient and modern scholarship.[300] Yet there remain echoes of the Quarrel in Ferguson's *History* several years later, and there is evidence that the debates surrounding the Quarrel did not actually end early in the eighteenth century, but affected thinkers for generations to come.[301] According to Levine, Gibbon believed in progress, but 'with all those familiar qualifications of the eighteenth-century modern who was at heart still half an ancient',[302] seeing unquestionable progress in the sciences and technology yet believing that in the arts and literature modernity could fall into decline, where the classical models remained 'supreme'.

Identifying Gibbon as the end of the Quarrel on the one hand is useful, but on the other demonstrates that the issues raised by the battling sides were not easily dismissed by thinkers in the Enlightenment. Questions of the nature of history as well as of the authority and the place of ancient literature in the modern world were not finally answered in the debates between the Ancients and the Moderns. Eighteenth-century scholars continued to raise the same questions, or to use the arguments made by either side of the Quarrel to develop new ideas.

Adam Ferguson as well as other thinkers in the eighteenth century participated in the debate and to understand Ferguson's opinions of ancient and modern science, literature and philosophy his response to the Quarrel must be assessed. Ferguson was an Ancient, but not one who only followed the likes of Temple whole-heartedly, believing that antiquity was superior to modernity, but one who attempted to create a place for ancient thought in his modern philosophy.[303] Ferguson accepted the belief in modern progress and was deeply interested in the

[300] Levine, 'Ancients and Moderns reconsidered', 88-89.
[301] Levine, *Humanism and History*, 178.
[302] Ibid., 186.
[303] Oz-Salzberger, *Translating*, 111.

developments of natural philosophy. Having taught a course on it at the University of Edinburgh this was especially important for him. He also defended the importance and usefulness of classical authors and their relevance for his work, particularly in his moral philosophy and in his historical research, thereby epitomising the position of the later Ancients. Ferguson's response to the debate is demonstrated in his opinion about ancient and modern sources, his belief in a universal human nature as well as his concept of history and the task of the historian.

Ferguson and History

Ferguson, like those participating in the Quarrel, was concerned with the nature of history and the job of the historian. He elucidated his views on the subject in his unpublished manuscript 'Of History and Its Appropriate Style'.[304] In this work Ferguson identified narrative history, rather than descriptive history, as the best to state in detail the 'successive Events as in the origin Progress and termination of Past Transactions... Narrative History extends indefinitely the field of Experience and Teaches to Anticipate or conjecture the Event of Transactions from their origin and progress'.[305] It is the task of the narrative historian to truthfully and rigorously record the history of events so that the reader can know the facts of these events, as if the reader was an 'eye and ear witness'. The writer of history must also have the appropriate style in order to instruct the reader properly, otherwise 'his work is impertinent and worse than useless because it misleads the mind of his Reader'.[306] An author should not place too much of his own prejudice and opinions in the work because this detracts from the subject at hand and forces the reader to know more about the author than the history about which they want to learn. To avoid the problem of confusing the reader the author should avoid 'figurative expressions', metaphors and 'Rhetorical Turns'.[307] In short, history should be devoid of both sentiment and all ornamented and rhetorical language so as not to confuse the reader. The author must be careful to use a form of eloquence that is appropriate to

[304] Ferguson, 'Of History and Its Appropriate Style', in *The Manuscripts of Adam Ferguson*, ed. Vincenzo Merolle (London: Pickering & Chatto , 2006), 19-28.
[305] Ferguson, 'Of History and Its Appropriate Style', 20.
[306] Ibid.
[307] Ibid., 21.

history. For Ferguson, Livy, the great Roman historian, was too decorative for the proper style of history.[308]

According to Ferguson, history is instructive when it makes clear the facts and events of particular periods and if presented in such a way that the reader understands the circumstances, causes and effects, and particulars of an event and so that they can understand the future and anticipate the same outcome should certain events bear a similarity. History can also morally instruct the readers who learn from the examples set forth in the work, not in the same fashion as in literature or poetry, but holding to the principles of historical truth. Ferguson was aware that it was as easy to corrupt by example, as it was to instruct, a view that has been criticised by some moralists.[309] If an historian states a fact, it is up to the reader to determine the good or bad of what they have read, and it is because of this that the style of the author must be so eloquent that the reader can experience the effect of the events without being 'told also what to think of it'.[310]

The author of histories should not be a professional soldier or politician, but a 'Person observant of human affairs Intelligent & impartial collecting from the memoirs of those who were present from the Skillful & intelligent in their respective Professions' who can discern what information is important for the reader, and relying on their own scholarship to determine what should be passed down through the ages.[311] Here Ferguson is clearly following in the developments made in the study of history earlier in the century. He is following the position of the Ancients, who believed that history should combine eloquence with fact and that history should retain its moral character. Like Temple, Ferguson saw that history is something that should be different from literature because it has a different purpose, an instructive purpose that should teach by example and focus on truth.

[308] Ibid., 23.
[309] Ibid., 21-22.
[310] Ibid., 22, 24.
[311] Ibid., 25-26.

Ferguson and Historicism

In keeping with the position of the Ancients, Ferguson believed in the universality of human nature. He stated that 'in the nature of man, there the operation of every principle, whether of affection or passion is known to every mind',[312] claiming that basically all people are the same, and that the makeup of the mind and the laws that govern it are the same for all people. He further states that, 'Courage and generosity, fear and envy, are not peculiar to any station or order of men; nor is there any condition in which some of the human race have not shewn, that it is possible to employ, with propriety the talents and virtues of their species.'[313]

For Ferguson, the best place to find evidence of this and to learn about human nature is in the subject of moral philosophy.[314] People recognise their common human nature which leads them to an interest in the study of manners and customs. One can thus recognise similarities with or differences from other people. He states:

> The occasions on which men are so affected with sentiments of complacency or reprobation, command their attention beyond any other consideration in nature; insomuch that pictures of manners are, of all other subjects, the most interesting to the human mind. Hence the principal charm of history, on which the actions and characters of men are detailed; of poetry, in which representations, fictitious or real, are made; even of moral discourse, whence the subjects of admonition, injunction, and precept are, by a recommendation, brought home to the feelings of esteem or contempt.[315]

The truth of the universality of human nature can be observed equally in individuals as in the societies they create.[316] It is because of this that ancient and modern authors can both profitably be read to learn about human nature. In Ferguson's lectures, he stated that the best guides in literature and philosophy were the respected and honoured authors of both ancient Greece and Rome as well as those of

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[312] *P.I.*, 96.
[313] *Essay*, 51.
[314] *P.I.*, 157.
[315] Ibid., 158.
[316] *E*ssay, 10. 'Mankind are to be taken in groups, as they have always subsisted. The history of the individual is but a detail of the sentiments and thoughts he has entertained in the view of his species: and every experiment relative to this subject should be made with entire societies, not single men'.

'Modern Nations'. They should be read so that their conclusions can inform the students about human nature and the choice of conduct. He further wrote:

> In literature and in philosophy… the best guides are writers who have stood the test of ages and for whose titles we continue to study languages of the dead that have long since ceased to be of any use to the living. The Historians and the Poets of Greece and Rome together with those who hold a corresponding place in the Literature of Modern Nations. And to trace facts up to the General conclusions that result from them and to argue from thence either comprehensive views of human Nature or a proper choice of our characters and a right judgement on matters of Public or Private Concern. The Premises hence found in what men have done or exhibited the conclusions in what every man might wish, etc.[317]

Ferguson, like Boileau, found that the merit of ancient history is not in the mere facts presented, but in their literary prowess:

> It has been observed, that those celebrated nations are indebted, for a great part of their estimation, not to the matter of their history, but to the manner in which it has been delivered, and to the capacity of their historians, and other writers. Their story has been told by men who knew how to draw our attention on the proceedings of the understanding and of the heart, more than on the detail of facts; and who could exhibit characters to be admired and loved, in the midst of actions which we should now universally hate or condemn. Like Homer, the model of Greek literature, they could make us forget the horrors of a vindictive, cruel, and remorseless proceeding towards an enemy, in behalf of the strenuous conduct, the courage, and vehement affections, with which the hero maintained the cause of his friend and of his country.[318]

Ferguson limits the usefulness of the ancient authors, to their value as stylistic models not as ultimate sources of information. Here, Ferguson is very much upholding the side of the Ancients by restricting his praise of the ancients to their style rather than their context.

In *An Essay on the History of Civil Society* Ferguson wrote about the history of societies from their origins to the development of modern society. To do this, he read the histories of ancient Greece and Rome, histories of modern Western European countries and the accounts of the newly discovered cultures in North America, India and the new histories of Eastern Europe, particularly those of the

[317] *Lectures, I,* ff. 557.
[318] *Essay*, 185.

Tartars. The reason that he used such a variety of sources was because he believed that they could all inform him about the origin of societies: 'The antiquities of every people, however diversified, and however disguised, contain the same information on this point.'[319]

Ferguson is critical of the ancient authors and cautions against the acceptance of conjecture when writing the history of man; that when there is a lack of actual evidence writers should not create judgements based on imagined situations. From this supposition, people should also be cautious of the information accepted from past times which cannot be supposed to be purely factual:

> If conjectures and opinions formed at a distance, have not sufficient authority in the history of mankind, the domestic antiquities of every nation must, for this very reason, be received with caution. They are, for most part, the mere conjectures or the fictions of subsequent ages; and even where at first they contained some resemblance of truth, they still vary with the imagination of those by whom they are transmitted, and in every generation receive a different form. They are made to bear the stamp of the times through which they have passed in the form of tradition, not of the ages to which their pretended descriptions relate. The information they bring, is not like the light reflected from a mirrour, which delineates the object from which it originally came; but, like rays that come broken and dispersed from an opaque or unpolished surface, only give the colours and features of the body from which they were last reflected.[320]

Ancient sources cannot necessarily be followed because they are based on conjecture, rather than facts and observations, and lose their authenticity through the obstruction of time. Here Ferguson follows the argument of Temple. Ferguson therefore questioned the authority of ancient times based on conjectural history and opinion. He believed there are ancient sources which use the proper methods of intellectual inquiry and brings those sources into his discussions, but he was careful not to accept all thinkers.

Ferguson notes that one barrier between the literature of antiquity and the modern reader is the difference in their customs. The ancient world had completely different customs and behaviour compared to modern Europeans: 'Our manners are

[319] *Essay*, 74.
[320] Ibid., 76.

so different, and in the system upon which we regulate our apprehensions, in many things, so opposite, that no less could make us endure the practice of ancient nations.'[321] Ferguson here acknowledged the inherent differences between ancient and modern cultures, but recognised the usefulness of this kind of text due to the rich history and full descriptions passed down from the literature of antiquity. If the history had related only to facts, 'we should never have distinguished the Greeks from their barbarous neighbours, nor have thought, that the character of civility pertained even to the Romans, till very late in their history, and in the decline of their empire.'[322] It is because of the history left by the ancients that the richness of their culture and the greatness of their thought could be understood.

Ferguson further argued that ancient literature can inform the modern reader, not about the facts of history, but the character and manners of the people of the time. He argued:

> It were absurd to quote the fable of the Iliad or the Odyssey, the legends of Hercules, Theseus, or Oedipus, as authorities in matter of fact relating to the history of mankind; but they may with great justice, be cited to ascertain what were the conceptions and sentiments of the age in which they were composed of to characterise the genius of that people, with whose imaginations they were blended, and by whom they were fondly rehearsed and admired.[323]

Ferguson's views of history, that it needs to be fact-oriented and rigorous, applies to ancient literature as well as modern authors. The ancients, however, can additionally inform the modern reader about the culture and beliefs of an ancient people whose customs are inevitably foreign and otherwise unknown.

The Role of Ancient and Modern Literature

Ferguson believed that both ancient and modern literature played a vital part in forming the modern mind. While ancient literature did not always provide the facts it might have been assumed to do, it was instrumental in teaching about the customs

[321] *Essay*, 185.
[322] Ibid., 185.
[323] Ibid., 77.

and behaviour of people living in different times and places. He argued that knowledge passed down through the ages was a benefit to the later thinkers, as follows:

> Knowledge, whether in the form of history or science, is surely of great value to the intellectual nature of man. And the records of knowledge, preserved in literary compositions, are the principal means of communicating its benefits from age to age, and from one nation to another. An art by which this effect is produced may, no doubt, be placed among the effectual means of cultivating the faculties of man; of forwarding his progress; of extending the fruits of experience, and of augmenting the powers to be derived from a just notion and application of the laws by which human nature is governed.[324]

He further believed that what should be learned from literature about morality should be taken equally from worthy texts, both ancient and modern. It is not when the text was written that should dictate the validity of the source, but the ideas presented therein that determine how the source is used. In his essay 'Of the Comparative Forms of Being', Ferguson draws equally from ancient and modern sources saying that Cato, Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius can instruct 'how happy the Human Soul may become', while Copernicus and Newton were concerned with 'how far its Views may reach'.[325] In his essay, 'Reputed pleasures of Imagination', Ferguson stated that while Newton made 'discoveries in the heavens', Socrates and Zeno had made discoveries in human nature which are not as well known as scientific discoveries. 'The multitude are still gaping for something new without knowing that the Cultivation of Genuine Wisdom is one [of] the newest things that mankind ever found'.[326] Here Ferguson separated the two authors into their disciplines, as already decided in the Quarrel, as we have seen. Ancient authors appeal to human universals; they answer questions about human nature and virtue while modern authors only answer questions about natural philosophy.

Ferguson follows the thinking of others who participated in the Quarrel in his acceptance of progress and his understanding that while his time improves upon the past, subsequent generations will improve upon his: 'The present age is perfecting

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[324] *P.I.*, 296.
[325] Ferguson, 'Of the Comparative Forms of Being', *Manuscripts*, 93.
[326] Ferguson, 'Reputed pleasures of Imagination', *Manuscripts*, 99.

what a former age began; or is now beginning what a future age is to perfect.'[327] Ferguson also believed that his contemporaries excelled the ancient nations on the battlefield: 'the ancient nations have but a sorry plea for esteem with the inhabitants of modern Europe, who profess to carry the civilities of peace in to the practice of war; and who value the praise of indiscriminate lenity at a higher rate than even that of military prowess, or the love of their country'. Ferguson, however, recognised that the ancient Greeks and Romans have been praised for their martial valour and dedication to their country, even if they are more 'barbarous' than their modern counterparts.[328] In a discussion of arts and literature, Ferguson claims that the middle ages with the virtues of honour, chivalry and gallantry separated the moderns from the ancients and states, 'And if our rule in measuring degrees of politeness and civilization is to be taken from hence, or from the advancement of commercial arts, we shall be found to have greatly excelled any of the celebrated nations of antiquity.'[329] Here Ferguson takes the position that the moderns were superior to the ancients, a position which may lead to the questioning of his supposed adoption of ancient Stoicism.

Ferguson believed that modern thinkers were able to perfect what the ancients have said with the improvements and innovations of modern times. He stated:

> When nations succeed one another in the career of discoveries and inquiries, the last is always the most knowing. Systems of science are gradually formed. The globe itself is traversed by degrees, and the history of every age, when past, is an accession of knowledge to those who succeed. The Romans were more knowing than the Greeks; and every scholar of modern Europe is, in this sense, more learned than the most accomplished person that ever bore either of those celebrated names. But is he on that account superior?[330]

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[327] *P.I.*, 47.
[328] 'And yet they have, in other respects, merited and obtained our praise. Their ardent attachment to their country; their contempt of suffering, and of death, in its cause; their manly apprehensions of personal independence, which rendered every individual, even under tottering establishments, and imperfect laws, the guardian of freedom to his fellow-citizens; their activity of mind; in short, their penetration, the ability of their conduct, and force of their spirit, have gained them the first rank among nations.' Ibid., 189.
[329] Ibid., 193.
[330] *Essay*, 33.

His answer to this question is that merit is not determined by knowledge, but by what can be achieved: 'Even in literature, they are to be estimated from the works of their genius, not from the extent of their knowledge. The scene of mere observation was extremely limited in a Grecian republic; and the bustle of an active life appeared inconsistent with study: but there the human mind, notwithstanding, collected its greatest abilities, and received its best informations, in the midst of sweat and of dust.'[331] Ferguson was willing to take from all sources, ancient and modern, based on genius or merit. Here it is clear that he is adopting the position of the Ancients, that the merit of the author is based on their personal genius which has stood the test of time, not necessarily on the fact that they are innovative. It is in this way that Ferguson can save ancient literature and accommodate modern literature.

He continued by arguing that people in 'modern' Europe are content to learn about human nature purely by reading 'ancient literature', that people learn from books what should be learned from experience. As a result, 'Our attainments are frequently limited to the elements of every science, and seldom reach to that enlargement of ability and power which useful knowledge should give.'[332] Ferguson believes that experience and activity are the true foundations of all knowledge of human nature and society in general. It is a problem that so many people are willing to learn only from reading great authors and from imagination. Ferguson argued that while being educated 'under the rod' as a child, people are not expected to remember what they have learned once they leave school. This practice continues into adult life and, as a result, 'the human mind could not suffer more from a contempt of literature, as a business for life, not as a help to our conduct, and the means of forming a character that may be happy in itself, and useful to mankind'.[333] Ferguson believes, as do many Scottish Enlightenment thinkers, in the innate ability of human progress and improvement, but also that this progress must happen through an active engagement with society and through experience. Although the ancient authors have much to instruct the modern person, not only scholars, a passive acceptance of their writings, and uncritical learning of their texts, without

[331] *Essay*, 33. See also Duncan Forbes, 'Introduction to *An Essay on the History of Civil Society* (1767) (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1966), xxx.
[332] *Essay*, 33-34.
[333] Ibid., 34.

the added benefit of personal experience and engagement with them is a useless exercise that will not improve a person, but will allow him or her to remain lazy and careless in his or her life.

With all sources considered, Ferguson was concerned with truth and intelligence. He only looked for the truth in his sources, at least what he believed to be truth. Ferguson believed that, in some instances, such as literature and philosophy, the ancients have aspects of 'genius' which remain crucial for his time. In other subjects, such as science and history, the modern techniques that have developed since antiquity offer more to the reader because these developments lead to the truth. Truth, however, is not the only important aspect of intellectual inquiry. In 'Of the Categories or Constituents of Discourse and Fabric of Thought', Ferguson claimed that the reader will only profit from reading if he actively engages with the work, thinks for himself and not from the information in the text alone, 'and if a reader is to emerge from the study of Aurelius or Epictetus a partner in the felicity which they describe, he must owe it to himself however he may be disposed to ascribe it to them.'[334] It is up to the reader to learn from their sources, to use his or her intellect to determine what is right and good. Ferguson found that if readers take from another author they may ascribe that thought to their source; however it is to their credit that they have accessed these glimpses of truth and genius. This is Ferguson's larger methodology, which connects him to another crucial eighteenth-century intellectual trend: modern eclecticism.

[334] Ferguson, 'Of the Categories of Constituents of Discourse and Fabric of Thought', *Manuscripts*, 112.

2.1 Eclecticism and Ferguson's Method

The Quarrel between the Ancients and the Moderns raised questions that extended beyond the initial debate and affected scholars in all disciplines throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. At the heart of the Quarrel, both sides fundamentally challenged the role of authority, either ancient or modern, arguing that no thinkers or systems should be followed simply because of the perceived position of authority. One of the most influential outcomes of the Quarrel between the Ancients and the Moderns therefore was a criticism of sectarianism. Sectarians, those who were seen as adhering to one dogmatic philosophy or religion, were criticised because they were viewed as being uncritical, lacking analysis, and blindly following the thought of others; thus appealing to an authority without further investigation. With this new way of thinking about authority, early modern thinkers developed an innovative approach to argue against their opponents: with the champion of reason on their side, they could convincingly disprove the arguments of dogmatic sectarians which influenced the intellectual history of modern Europe. Philosophical disputes could be answered therefore by a reliance on reason rather than an appeal to one authority or another. The Quarrel therefore ultimately resulted in a new conceptualisation of information passed down from antiquity and new perspectives on the modern writing of history and philosophy.

One response to these questions, a response pervasive in much of eighteenth-century thought, was that of the method of modern eclectics. Although eclecticism originated in Greece in the first century B.C., it was further developed as a method during the early modern period. By the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries eclecticism became more defined and its practitioners began to stress the importance of the knowledge of past philosophers to create a new philosophy[335] and to rely on the experimental method found in modern natural philosophy.[336] Modern eclectics conceived of the answer to the problem of sectarian philosophy by using the tools of experimental philosophy, observation and reason, combined with ancient and

[335] Ulrich Johannes Schneider, 'Eclecticism and the History of Philosophy', in *History and the Disciplines: The Reclassification of Knowledge*, ed. Donald R. Kelley (Rochester, New York: The University of Rochester Press, 2007), 87-88.
[336] Schneider, 'Eclecticism and the History of Philosophy', 85.

modern literature and philosophy used as evidence to 'discern the truths for themselves'.[337] The eclectics studied the arguments of the ancients and moderns, casting aside the absolute authority of both, but adopting what they determined as best from either kind of source. Moreover, eclectics believed that to understand philosophy truly it must be studied from its origins in antiquity, thus developing the concept of the history of philosophy as a discipline. From the study of ancient philosophy they were able to view philosophical principles and schools over time, assess their ideas, and combine those ideas from the past with current thinking to create what they believed was an improved philosophical system.

Perhaps the most concise definition of eclecticism can be seen in Denis Diderot's article in the *Encyclopedie* (1755):

> The eclectic is a philosopher who, trampling underfoot prejudice, tradition, antiquity, general agreement, authority – in a word, everything that controls the minds of the common herd – dares to think for himself, returns to the clearest general principles, examines them, discusses them, admits nothing that is not based on the testimony of his experience and his reason; from all the philosophies he has analysed without respect and bias he makes for himself a particular and domestic one which belongs to him…[338]

Eclecticism is a philosophical method whose members do not rely on authority, who are staunchly opposed to any kind of sectarian philosophy, who instead take their information from their own personal experience and belief, but also allow that the 'truthful' ideas of others should have a place in their systems.[339] Although these philosophers do not base their ideas on those of others, it is advisable to study the history of philosophy in order to examine older texts in the hope of discovering the truth in them and combining a variety of sources for a better understanding of any topic. Donald Kelley has characterised it as 'the revival of ancient and patristic learning; evangelical religious reform; the "liberty of philosophizing," a secular version of the Protestant rejection of dogmatic authority;

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[337] Kelly J. Witmer, 'Eclecticism and the Technology of Discernment in Pietist Pedagogy', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 70 Issue 4 (Oct., 2009), 458.

[338] Translated by A.A. Long, quoted in Pierluigi Donini, 'The History of the Concept of Eclecticism' in *The Question of 'Eclecticism: Studies in Later Greek Philosophy*, ed. John M. Dillon and A. A. Long (Berkeley; London: The University of California Press, 1988), 19.

[339] Witmer argued that the foundation of this was Justus Lipsius' Stoic philosophy which, in an attempt to avoid sectarianism, provided a method of critical philosophical choice. Witmer, 'Eclecticism and the Technology of Discernment in Pietist Pedagogy', 458.

and the adoption of critical history as the basis for understanding'.[340] Eclectics believe that elements of truth can be found in past philosophies and with a critical eye can be used to create a new system. The quintessential example of this is Johann Jakob Brucker's *Historia Critica Philosophiae* (1741-1744) wherein the author traced systems of philosophy from ancient Greece to the seventeenth century and concluded that the best philosophers were modern eclectics. Brucker names thinkers such as Francis Bacon, René Descartes, Thomas Hobbes, Samuel Pufendorf, Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz and Christian Thomasius as examples of eclectic thinkers, who do not simply rely on the authority of other thinkers, but are inspired by those of the past and subsequently create their own systems.

Modern eclectic philosophy had several practitioners writing in the fields of natural philosophy, history of philosophy, natural law and philosophy more generally. Although some fully adopted this as a philosophy and methodology Ferguson did not; he would not have thought of himself as an 'eclectic'. Eclectics were themselves participating in the wider eighteenth-century context of a variety of developments: the debate between the Ancients and the Moderns, the changes in natural philosophy, and the adoption of the scientific method in the social sciences. Eclectics used reason to analyse previous philosophies in order to create what they believed was a new, better philosophy. Their method of analysis strove to mirror that of the natural philosophers following in the systems of Francis Bacon, Robert Boyle and Isaac Newton. It is in this way that eclectics more generally participated in the eighteenth-century debates about the ancients and moderns and developments in natural philosophy which also makes their aims steeped in their contemporary concerns.

Modern eclecticism also relates to growing concerns about organising an increasing amount of information. Many eclectic thinkers used histories of philosophy, and wrote histories of philosophy themselves, to find truthful philosophical principles from past thinkers. This development in eclectic thought mirrors current early modern trends of writing reference books and encyclopaedias that aided readers in easily accessing large amounts of information. Ann Blair has

[340] Donald R. Kelley, 'Eclecticism and the History of Ideas', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 62, No. 4 (Oct., 2001), 580.

recently argued that the practice of compiling large amounts of information into reference books had been attempted since antiquity, but that in the early modern period, after the invention of the printing press, new questions of how to deal with 'too many books' emerged. She claims that one of the main criticisms made about this abundance of literature was that the concept of authority was called into question. Many authors, both ancient and modern, that had previously been largely unknown were now accessible to a wide scope of readers and this new information challenged the place of the traditional authority figures, such as Aristotle. What resulted, she argues, was either syncretism (an attempt to combine all authority figures into a greater narrative), the choice of one authority figure over all others, or scepticism about textual relevance and the role authority figures should play in early modern thought.[341] Blair argues further that one reaction to this was a desire to create a new philosophy based on experience and 'rational principles', which she associates with the Moderns in the Quarrel.[342] This conclusion should be taken a step further to include the practices of the modern eclectics. Richard Yeo, in his study of encyclopaedias and scientific dictionaries in the Enlightenment, *Encyclopaedic Visions* (2001), has argued that one of the important elements of eighteenth-century reference books was the 'appeal of universalism as an aspect of the communication of knowledge'.[343] This further relates the goals and methods of the modern eclectics to current approaches to dealing with knowledge, authority and sources. The methods of the eclectics, therefore, were not limited to German universities, but connect to more general questions raised by early modern and Enlightenment thinkers about the usefulness of authority figures and the role of sources in new kinds of philosophy.

Adam Ferguson's relationship to modern eclecticism can be seen in his overall attitude toward his sources and philosophy in general. Ferguson did not fully adopt one school of thought, but took a rational, analytical, and critical view of all the sources available to him. He used a wide variety of scholarship to better understand the world as inspiration for creating his own ideas, and only referenced

[341] Ann M. Blair, *Too Much Knowledge: Managing Scholarly Information before the Modern Age* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2010), 14, 57-58.
[342] Blair, *Too Much Knowledge*, 57-58.
[343] Richard Yeo, *Encyclopaedic Visions: Scientific Dictionaries and Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 56.

his influences where he saw fit to back up his argument. Although this approach to philosophy has been criticised, particularly by David Kettler,[344] Ferguson was actually participating in a wider tradition in the eighteenth century of rational, experimental, anti-sectarian philosophy which can be compared to the eclectic methods.

One of Ferguson's fundamental concerns is anti-sectarianism, which he discusses in most detail in his *Principles.* He argued that in modern times, ancient philosophical sects have been compared to 'modern sects of religion' instead of 'the varieties of opinion in matters of philosophy that have been entertained in modern times'. He was very critical of religious or philosophical sects, because 'Sectaries are ever ready to value themselves more on their profession of faith, than on their practice; and are fonder of any mystery or paradox they have adopted, than of the plainest and most important dictates of reason or good sense.'[345] Thus, the association of ancient philosophy with sectarianism should further cast doubt upon Ferguson's supposed adoption of Stoicism. Ferguson, however, argued that this was no reason to disregard the examples set by people of great virtue, such as Marcus Aurelius, who go beyond the intricacies and paradoxes of a philosophical system, but who demonstrate the validity of true virtue.[346]

Ferguson, therefore, like the eclectics, believed that a sectarian follows the tenets of a philosophy without assessing its validity, that they do not rely on their reason, but accept the dictates of the faith which they adopt. This is common to all people and nations:[347] 'Confidence in the effect of superstitious observances is not peculiar to any age or nation. Few, even of the accomplished Greeks and Romans, were able to shake off this weakness.'[348] Ferguson was also distrustful of blindly following religious ideas when determining the definition of virtue, because he believed it was actually through an intelligent understanding that people would be

[344] David Kettler, *The Social and Political Thought of Adam Ferguson*, 2nd edition (New Brunswick and London: Transaction Publishers, 1965, 2005), 7.
[345] *P.II.*, 401-402.
[346] Ibid.
[347] Ferguson's concept of the history of peoples, nations and society has been discussed by many scholars. See J.G.A. Pocock, *Barbarism and Religion, Vol. II: Narratives of Civil Government* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 330-333.
[348] *Essay*, 89.

able to define virtue for themselves, not by relying on any other consideration.[349] He states:

> We must not therefore trust to whatever may bear the name of religion or conscience, or to what may have a temporary vogue in the world for our direction in the paths of a just and manly virtue. Every advantage of a benevolent mind and well informed understanding are conductive to the purpose, and the characteristics of a virtuous life, frequently revolved in the mind may have a salutary tendency to the same effect.[350]

Ferguson argued that people should not rely on anything preached by religion or what is fashionable to dictate their ideas of virtue, but only rely on what they can determine from their own reason and sentiments.

It is this strong argument against sectarian philosophy that connects Ferguson to the wider context of modern eclecticism. Ferguson's anti-sectarian ideas are in part his reaction to the Quarrel and he follows a similar method to the modern eclectics, as we shall see. Ferguson did not want to be perceived as following one school and his criticisms of the philosophy of others further demonstrates that he disapproves of any philosophy or religion which is sectarian. It is in this way that an understanding of modern eclecticism is crucial for analysing Ferguson's thought.

2.2 The History of Eclecticism

According to Diogenes Laertius, in his *Lives and Opinions of Eminent Philosophers* eclecticism in its ancient context originated in first century B.C. Greece with Potamon of Alexandria and was characterised as adopting doctrines from other schools to create a new system of philosophy, but was one that did not have its own doctrines,[351] but little more was said of the school in his text. Although the ancient eclectic school was not as prevalent as some others, it had several notable adherents, who either called themselves eclectic or subsequently have been labelled eclectics

[349] *P.II.*, 320.
[350] Ibid.
[351] Pierluigi Donini, 'The history of the concept of eclecticism', 16; Schneider, 'Eclecticism and the History of Philosophy', 84.

including Galen, who discusses it in the context of medicine, Clement of Alexandria, a Christian author, and Xenophon, who claims that Socrates selected ideas from older, wisdom.[352] Further examples include the Romans, Cicero and Seneca and the Greeks, Panaetius, Posidonius, Antiochus, Plutarch, Albinus and Ptolemy.[353] Although the concept of eclecticism certainly originated in ancient Greece, the form of the philosophy as understood by the ancients later evolved from a philosophical school into a philosophical method.[354]

Later, eclecticism became important for thinkers during the Renaissance, some of whom intentionally adopted it thinking it was a new philosophy. Others were critical of eclecticism and classified it as 'Syncretism', which is the process of reconciling different ideas together to form one system of thought without including new or innovative ideas. An example of this reconciling process can be found among the Renaissance Humanists, because they wanted to combine ancient philosophy with Christian ideas in order to make ancient philosophy acceptable to religious thinkers.[355] Renaissance thinkers such as Giovanni Pico della Mirandola (1463-1494) vowed not to accept authority or follow one school, but to incorporate the truth from many schools. He attempted to combine ancient schools with Christianity and also took up the modern scientific tools of linguistics and philology to do so.[356] Here, Mirandola was using eclectic methods with respect to philosophy and questioning authority, but was syncretistic in his attempts to combine philosophy with Christianity.

Eclecticism became more developed in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries when adherents continued to rely on Diogenes Laertius as their model[357] and stressed the importance of the knowledge of past philosophers to create a new

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[352] Donini, 'The history of the concept of eclecticism', 16-17.
[353] John M. Dillon and A. A. Long, 'Introduction', in *The Question of 'Eclecticism: Studies in Later Greek Philosophy*, ed. John M. Dillon and A. A. Long (Berkeley; London: The University of California Press, 1988), 1.
[354] Donald R. Kelley 'History and the Encyclopedia', in *The Shapes of Knowledge form the Renaissance to the Enlightenment*, ed. Donald R. Kelley and Richard H. Popkin, (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishes, 1991), 13; Donini, 'The history of the concept of eclecticism', 18.
[355] Donald R. Kelley, 'Introduction', to *History and the Disciplines: The Reclassification of Knowledge in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Donald R. Kelley (Rochester, NY: The University of Rochester Press, 2007), 4.
[356] Christia Mercer, 'Platonism and Philosophical Humanism on the Continent', in *Blackwell's Companion to Early Modern Philosophy*, ed. Steven Nadler (Malden and Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2002, 2008), 28.
[357] Kelley, 'Eclecticism and the History of Ideas', 583.

philosophy.[358] At this time thinkers attempted to move away from the Humanist and Scholasticist traditions towards methods that relied on modern natural philosophy and ancient traditions, which resulted in some scholars adopting eclecticism.[359]

In Germany in this period eclecticism was an important intellectual current, particularly within the universities.[360] By the 1690s, eclecticism was important especially within the universities of Halle and Leipzig and included Johann Christoph Sturm, Christian Thomasius, Arnold Wesenfeld (professor of ethics, logic and metaphysics at Frankfurt) and Johann Franz Buddeus (professor of theology at the universities of Halle and Jena).[361] It is here that the trends of questioning authority, anti-sectarianism, making conscious attempts to approach philosophy rationally, and using methods taken from natural philosophy can be seen in the works of a number of thinkers. Also, eclecticism became important in the debate between humanism and rational science, as well as in the debate between the Ancients and the Moderns, leading to the conclusion that eclecticism can be seen as Germany's answer to the quarrel between the ancients and moderns,[362] and this can also be seen as Ferguson's answer to the debate. The eclectics chose to question rather than accept ancient authority, thus taking a critical stance on both ancient and modern ideas to discern for themselves what they saw as truthful principles. According to Ulrich Johannes Schneider, this debate illustrated larger issues of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries: 'freedom of teaching and research; independence from authority, both political and theological; and the conditions for forming responsible judgements and reasonable forms of discussion.'[363]

Gerardus Johannes Vossius (1577-1649),[364] a humanist scholar and author, stressed the 'active and methodical' nature of eclecticism to perhaps support his own methodology of interpreting and analysing with reason and judgment.[365] Johann

[358] Schneider, 'Eclecticism', 87-88. Donald R. Kelley, 'Eclecticism and the History of Ideas', 580.
[359] Schneider, 'Eclecticism', 85.
[360] T. J. Hochstrasser, *Natural Law Theories in the Early Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 27.
[361] Hochstrasser, *Natural Law*, 15, 27. See also Whitmer, 'Eclecticism and the Technology of Discernment in Pietist Pedagogy'.
[362] Schneider, 'Eclecticism', 94; Hochstrasser, *Natural Law*, 28.
[363] Schneider, 'Eclecticism', 86.
[364] C. S. M. Rademaker, 'Vossius, Gerardus Joannes (1577–1649)', *ODNB*, http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/28355 (accessed 7 Dec 2009).
[365] Schneider, 'Eclecticism', 85.

Christoph Sturm (1635-1703), professor of mathematics and physics at Altdorf, used the principles of experimental natural philosophy which used observations of nature to rationally settle philosophical disputes.[366] Christian Thomasius (1655-1728) also took ideas from Sturm and Samuel Pufendorf (1632-1694) to create his concept of eclecticism.[367]

This tradition of eclecticism continued into the eighteenth-century where the methods of eclectics were used in critical philosophy and the history of philosophy. For people writing in the eighteenth century the innovations that occurred in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, following developments made in the Renaissance to the study of history and philology,[368] are central for their concept of the study of history. As Aristotelian ideas and methods of natural philosophy were replaced by the new methods of experimentation and the focus on reason over belief, so too were these same methods applied to history and philosophy.[369] The change allowed for a more specialised type of philosophy and the history of philosophy to be written. From the changes in the modern European world a need grew for a systematic history of philosophy and this was answered in the seventeenth century, for example Thomas Stanley's *The History of Philosophy* (1655),[370] who took the Renaissance humanist interest and added new dimensions of scientific, philological and literary inquiry.

Although attempts to improve the discipline were made, the histories of philosophy produced by thinkers like Stanley, who remained heavily influenced by the methodology of Diogenes Laertius, were mainly doxographical and included little analysis or even the concept of development within philosophical schools, and

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[366] Hochstrasser, *Natural Law*, 24-5.
[367] Ibid.
[368] See Constance Blackwell, 'Thales Philosophus: The Beginning of Philosophy as a Discipline', in *History and the Disciplines*, 381-407; and Donald R. Kelley, 'The Problem of Knowledge and the Concept of Discipline', in *History and the Disciplines*, ed. Donald R. Kelley (Rochester, N.Y.: University of Rochester Press, 2007), 18-60.
[369] Constance Blackwell, 'Sturm, Morhof and Brucker vs. Aristotle', in *Method and Order in Renaissance Philosophy of Nature*, edited by Daniel Di Liscia *et al*. (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2007), 382.
[370] Thomas Stanley, *The History of Philosophy: Containing the Lives, Opinions, Actions and Discourses of the Philosophers of Every Sect*, 3rd edn. (London, 1701). For more information see Luciano Malusa, 'The First General Histories of Philosophy in England and the Low Countries', in *Models of the History of Philosophy: From its Origins in the Renaissance to the 'Historia Philosophica'*, edited by C.W.T. Blackwell, *et al.* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic, 1993), 163, 173-175.

attempt little interpretation.[371] Eventually, this doxographical, antiquated method was replaced by syncretism, but the syncretists could hardly be said to improve matters since they maintained that the ancients could not be surpassed.

The eighteenth century saw the beginning of the serious intellectual programme of the history of philosophy as a new 'discipline'[372] and a 'true and independent science'.[373] Eighteenth-century scholars' concept of writing the history of philosophy was a reaction to the Renaissance Humanists who attempted to merge disparate intellectual trends into one system, referred to as syncretism, which seventeenth and eighteenth-century thinkers criticised for forcing ancient pagan philosophies into a Christian framework. The more immediate intellectual context that bore this new conceptualisation of history of philosophy is the debate between the Ancients and the Moderns. They believed that the means to detach themselves from these old, repeated mistakes was to analyse philosophy rationally and empirically, leaving behind any sense of dogmatic prejudices to discern the true merits of a philosophical system, either ancient or modern.[374] One of the main aims of philosophy became the reconciliation of ancient and modern philosophy and this method helped some thinkers reach that goal.[375] Philosophy itself became more systematic and the method of the eclectics offered a clear and influential solution.[376]

One method which accommodated these changes was that of the eclectics, who were critical of any philosophy which was seen as combining individual ideas with those written by past authors or who mixed modern doctrines of philosophy together, which would have been seen as syncretism.[377] The eclectics utilised these new ideas of the history of philosophy when writing their own works and their members included Christian Thomasius, J. F. Buddeus, N. N. Gundling, and J. J. Brucker.[378] C.A. Heumann founded a journal in 1715 called the *Acta Philosophorum* which maintained that eclecticism was the only way to properly

[371] T. J. Hochstrasser, *Natural Law*, 11.
[372] Jonathan Israel, *Enlightenment Contested* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 426, 471.
[373] Donald Kelley, 'History and in the Encyclopedia', in *The Shapes of Knowledge*, ed. D. Kelley and R. Popkin (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1991), 11.
[374] Israel, *Enlightenment Contested*, 472-473.
[375] Kelley, 'History and the Encyclopedia', 11-12.
[376] Ibid., 12-13.
[377] Blackwell, 'Sturm, Morhof and Brucker', 382.
[378] Kelley, 'The Problem of Knowledge', 19.

write philosophy and which offered an 'up-to-date' history of philosophy.[379] Heumann believed that knowledge of the history of philosophy needed to involve discussions of the history and culture surrounding the past philosophy and certain philosophical geniuses,[380] thus participating in the new hermeneuticism developed in the Quarrel.

The history of philosophy became an especially important discipline in Germany in the eighteenth century, and Martin Mulsow has argued that the origin of this trend had three contexts: the influence of Christian apologists on the writing of history in the seventeenth century, the influence of literary history which leads to historical scepticism and a new natural law theory and 'theory of the passions'.[381] It is in Germany that the eclectic method was most prominent and held the widest influence on the new methods developed to for writing and researching history. Specifically, according to Mulsow, Johann Franz Buddeus (1667-1729) saw eclecticism as being linked to the history of philosophy and he thought that both a system and individual analysis were necessary for philosophy.[382] Buddeus argued that historical truth could only be discovered by a reconstruction and reconceptualisation of history itself. He was influenced in these ideas by Jakob Thomasius who sought to discover the origins of philosophical systems in order to reconcile them with Christianity.[383]

Following on this new model of the history of philosophy thinkers developed a methodology of thinking about philosophy in secular terms thereby moving away from a reliance on religion. As this new discipline progressed it became acknowledged as an internationally accepted method of highly critical, highly rational intellectual enquiry.[384] It is from this analytical view of the history of philosophy and overall methodology that reflects the eclectic philosophy. This modern model of eclecticism did not actually imitate the ancient school, but

[379] Donald R. Kelley, 'The Problem of Knowledge and the Concept of Discipline', in *History and the Disciplines: The Reclassification of Knowledge in Early Modern Europe*, edited by Donald R. Kelley, 19.
[380] Kelley, 'The Problem of Knowledge', 20.
[381] Martin Mulsow, 'Gundling vs. Buddeus: Competing Models of the History of Philososphy', translated by Charlotte Methuen, in *History and the Disciplines*, ed. Donald R. Kelley, 104-105.
[382] Martin Mulsow, 'Eclecticism or Scepticism? A Problem of the Early Enlightenment', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 58, No. 3 (July, 1997), 473.
[383] Mulsow, 'Eclecticism or Scepticism?', 475.
[384] Israel, *Enlightenment Contested*, 476.

followed Jakob Thomasius' ideal that 'urged not just open minded review of all possibilities, and eschewing of dogmatism, but a rigorous critical exercise, employing reason and a "free and pure capacity of judgment", to evaluate all the doctrines of the past'.[385] These historians placed themselves within the wider current eighteenth-century trends; and the school itself was associated with empiricism and the new natural philosophy.[386]

The culmination of modern eclecticism is often identified with Johann Jakob Brucker's *Historia Critica Philosophiae* (1741-44) which was later rewritten into English by William Enfield (1792).[387] Johann Jacob Brucker (1696-1770) was a German Lutheran theologian and historian. He was a pastor in Augsburg (1744) and after studying theology with Johann Franz Buddeus, was later elected to the Prussian Academy of Sciences in 1731.[388] Brucker's *Historia* recounted the history of philosophy from antiquity to the modern era and was instrumental in establishing in the philosophical canon which held sway for years to come.[389] It is a comprehensive history of philosophy in which he examines the different sects of philosophy through human history, culminating in a selection of the great minds of the early modern period.[390] He praised some of those he considered modern eclectics because they did not fall prey to the authority of one school, but took in disparate ideas to inspire and create their own philosophy.[391] In this work, Brucker continues in this eclectic tradition of a self-consciously modern history of philosophy. Brucker's history was not only a chronological list of sects and doctrines, but also argued that modern achievements in philosophy were made by means of eclecticism, by which he meant

[385] Israel, *Enlightenment Contested*, 477.
[386] Knud Haakonssen, 'Introduction' to *The History of Philosophy*, by William Enfield, ed. Knud Haakonssen (Bristol: Thoemmes Press, 2001), vii.
[387] Johann Jakob Brucker, *Historia Critica Philosophiae*, translated by William Enfield, in *The History of Philosophy*, ed. Knud Haakonssen (Bristol: Thoemmes Press, 2001)
[388] Knud Haakonssen, *The Cambridge History of Eighteenth Century Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 1154; 'Introduction' to *The History of Philosophy* by William Enfield.
[389] Kelley, 'Problem of Knowledge', 19; Donald R. Kelley, 'History and/or Philosophy', 345-346. http://www.pdcnet.org/pages/Products/electronic/pdf/tnhp_Donald%20R%20Kelley.pdf, Accessed 4 May 2011.
[390] Israel, *Enlightenment Contested*, 481.
[391] John M. Dillon, 'Introduction' to *The Question of 'Eclecticism: Studies in Later Greek Philosophy*, ed. John M. Dillon and A. A. Long (Berkeley; London: The University of California Press, 1988), 5.

a clear discussion of authoritative figures combined with rational analysis.[392] His work can be seen as the 'culmination' of eclecticism and his wide readership brought forward these notions of method not only to eighteenth-century thinkers, but the wider study of philosophy in general.[393]

One unique aspect of Brucker's work was that he attempted to tell the history of philosophy by promoting the idea that the best of philosophy of the modern age was eclectic. As Hochstrasser understands it, 'By this he meant not unsystematic syncretism, but a combination of careful estimation of the current validity of authorities together with abstract rational reflection, a *via media* between dogma and detachment.'[394] Brucker himself stated his positions as follows:

> The human understanding has, at length, however, through the favour of Divine Providence, asserted its native freedom and dignity, and shaken off the yoke of authority. Many independent and exalted geniuses have arisen, who, despising the servile prejudice of yielding implicit deference to the decisions of the ancients, have determined, by the vigorous exertions of their own faculties, to investigate certain and universal principles for themselves, and upon this foundation to frame a system of opinions, which should be truly and properly their own. They have not indeed disdained to consult the records of ancient wisdom; but they have admitted nothing as true, which their reason and judgement have not approved.[395]

For Brucker, not only have the modern eclectic philosophers moved beyond the practice of blindly following authority, they use reason and the experimental method to create their philosophies. He further states

> The true Eclectic philosopher, renouncing every prejudice in favour of celebrated names or ancient sects, makes reason his sole guide, and diligently investigates the nature and properties of the objections which come under his observation, that he may from these deduce clear principles, and arrive at certain knowledge.[396]

The true eclectic, unlike the ancient sects of philosophy where the members follow the authority of the 'master' of the sect, does not follow another thinker simply

[392] Hochstrasser, *Natural Law*, 13-14.
[393] Israel, *Enlightenment Contested*, 481.
[394] Hochstrasser, *Natural Law*, 12.
[395] Brucker, *HCP II*, 578.
[396] Ibid., 578-579.

because he is recognised as an authority figure. Bucker, therefore, argued that eclecticism is the most useful 'method of philosophising'.[397]

The eclectics began to argue that modern philosophy was a progression from antiquity and Brucker's work is one of the first which characterises the practice of philosophy since the Renaissance as surpassing that of ancient philosophy.[398] Brucker argued that during the Renaissance, scholars preferred to emulate the ancient authors, but eventually some thinkers were able to move away from the ancient sects because 'they deplored the abject state to which the human mind has been reduced by indolence, superstition, and blind submission, and with a generous indignation threw off the yoke'.[399]

In his discussion of modern eclectics, Brucker analysed the works of thinkers, who he identified as writing eclectic philosophy, either generally or in certain branches of philosophy, although many of these thinkers would not have considered themselves eclectics. He believes general eclectic thinkers include Giordano Bruno, Gerolamo Cardano, Francis Bacon, Thomas Campanella, Thomas Hobbes, René Descartes, Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, Christian Thomasius, and Christian Wolff. The thinkers he claimed have improved the modern study of 'dialectics and metaphysics' include Petrus Ramus, Baruch Spinoza, Nicholas Malebranche, and John Locke. Of those who attempted to improve moral and political philosophy he lists Michel Montaigne, Hugo Grotius, Samuel Pufendorf, Jean Bodin, and Niccolò Machiavelli, and since Machiavelli there have been the 'true principles of government established by Sydney, Locke, Montesquieu, and many other able writers'.[400] Improvements in natural philosophy have been made by Francis Bacon, Daniel Sennert (a German physician), Sir Kenelm Digby (an English Chemist), Herman Boerhaave (a chemist and physician), Robert Boyle, Nicholas Copernicus, Tycho Brahe, Johannes Kepler, Galileo Galilei, and Isaac Newton. Although many of these scholars would not have considered themselves eclectics, Brucker found in their thought the principles of modern eclecticism: that is, the rejection of all prejudices, sectarianism and the authority of the ancient

[397] Brucker, *HCP II*, 578-579.
[398] Hochstrasser, *Natural Law*, 13.
[399] Brucker, *HCP, II*, 580.
[400] Ibid., 627.

philosophers, and instead they employed critical reason and observation to discover philosophical truths. These thinkers were not part of a sect nor did they follow a master; they were their own masters and relied only on their own logic to formulate truthful principles.[401] Brucker could look through the history of philosophy to find examples of eclectic thinkers, and evidence to prove the effectiveness and greatness of the method.

Brucker's own notion of philosophy exemplifies what he believes that the ancients thought. He maintains that the ancients defined philosophy as asking what perfection is attainable by the human mind. He acknowledges that this perfection can improve and develop over time. Unfortunately, since the ancient period, the human mind has stagnated in its growth because of corrupt religious authority and harmful traditions, which hindered the mind from progressing toward the truth. Once these dogmatic religious traditions were abandoned, people could again move forward in their pursuit of truth and intellectual perfection. For Brucker, true philosophical contemplation requires abandonment of traditions. People need to make a 'radical break' from other authorities and use their own mental faculties and reason to truly understand the nature of the world and thus found a system of philosophy.[402] It is in this way that Brucker was reflecting the Quarrel between the Ancients and the Moderns by praising the progress of modern thinkers, breaking away from tradition and using historicism to contextualise ancient philosophy.[403]

Scholars have recently begun to acknowledge eclecticism as being central to the history of philosophy and the intellectual history of early modern Europe. In fact, throughout the eighteenth century eclecticism was a widespread theme in the intellectual life of thinkers in Germany and in English-speaking countries in a variety of subjects. Although most of the scholarship on eclecticism focuses on Europe in the Renaissance and Germany in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, there also existed a strong current of eclectic thought in England and Scotland in the eighteenth century.

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[401] Ibid., 578-579.
[402] Leo Catana, 'The Concept "System of Philosophy": The Case of Jacob Brucker's Historiography of Philosophy', *History and Theory*, 44 (February 2005), 75.
[403] See Jonathan Rée, 'The End of Metaphysics: Philosophy's Supreme Fiction?', in *Philosophy. Its History and Historiography*, ed. A. J. Holland (Dordrecht: D. Raidel Publishing, 1983), 12.

Ephraim Chambers' *Cyclopaedia: or, an universal dictionary of arts and sciences* (1738) defines eclectic as 'a name given to some antient philosophers, who without attaching themselves to any particular sect, took what they judged good, and solid from each'.[404] Walter Anderson in his *The philosophy of Ancient Greece* (1791) stated that ancient philosophy is a subject which was understudied in the English language, apart from Stanley's work, and his history is the first complete history of ancient Greek philosophy.[405] Anderson argued that the competition among the different sects of Greek philosophy ended in eclecticism.

> The result was, a declining the fetters of any particular system, and taking the liberty to borrow, out of the various theories, those tenets only, which were judged to be most agreeable to reason. Upon this ground arose the sect called Eclectic, from the selection its adherents made of their philosophic principles and opinions.[406]

Although he found that this system confined the research done by thinkers, it was overall 'advantageous'. Ultimately, the reason and 'philosophical study' of the Greeks led to divine revelation because humans were then ready to understand the divine message.[407]

The practice of modern eclecticism had become well established throughout Europe by the late seventeenth century. It drew on the debate between the Ancients and the Moderns as well as the changes in natural philosophy. The eclectics also helped influence the development of the history of philosophy, adapting the new methods to focus on a non-reliance on authority and a systematic, questioning spirit of investigation. As Ferguson adopted his moral philosophy to follow the practices

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[404] Ephraim Chambers, *Cyclopædia: or, an universal dictionary of arts and sciences; By E. Chambers, F.R.S*. Vol. 1.The second edition, corrected and amended; with some additions. In two volumes (London, 1738), 113, ECCO, accessed on 4 May 2011.

[405] Walter Anderson, *The philosophy of ancient Greece investigated, in its origin and progress, to the æras of its greatest celebrity, in the Ionian, Italic, and Athenian schools: with Remarks on the Delineated Systems of their Founders; and Some Accounts of Their Lives and Characters, and Those of their Most Eminent Disciples. By Walter Anderson, D. D.* (Edinburgh, 1791). ECCO, accessed on 4 May 2011.

[406] Ibid., 582-583.

[407] Ibid., 584. This concept of the true religion being only revealed when the world was intellectually ready for it can also be seen in William Robertson's *The situation of the world at the time of Christ's appearance, and its connexion with the success of his religion, considered. A sermon preached before the Society in Scotland for Propagating Christian Knowledge, At their Anniversary Meeting, In the High Church of Edinburgh, on Monday, January 6. 1755. (published at their Desire.) By William Robertson, Minister of the Gospel at Gladsmuir. To which is subjoined, a short account of the present state of the Society* (Edinburgh, 1755), ECCO, accessed 4 May 2011.

of the experimental method, the historians of philosophy used the experimental method, but used historical texts as their evidence. They attempted to dispel hypothesis and report only what was surely noted.

Eclecticism's Wider Influence

The influence of eclecticism as a method of philosophy applies not only to critical philosophy or the history of philosophy, but also in the study of natural philosophy. Brucker identified Bacon's scientific method as one of the foundations of the modern eclectics and especially important in the development of eclecticism and natural philosophy and this method's importance continued throughout the eighteenth century. In an edition of Francis Bacon's *Philosophical Works* printed in 1737, the editor notes that in Bacon's discussion of Aristotle, 'The candor and impartiality of our Author seems everywhere present'. He views Bacon's treatment of Aristotle's philosophy, which relates the facts without opinion, as proof that Bacon is 'deservedly esteemed the Father of the modern *Eclectic Philosophy*'.[408] Francis Bacon has also been credited by the editor with the introduction of the experimental method into philosophy, because 'He considered philosophy as a science calculated to increase, at once, our wisdom and our happiness; confined it to what is really useful, and repeatedly recommended the study of nature.'[409] He further argued that although Bacon created a new method of studying and exploring the natural world, this was not a sect of philosophy where its followers bent to the authority of Bacon's writings, but contemporary and later thinkers were able to use and adapt his method of enquiry. It was not a dogmatic philosophy, like the sects of old, but was one which allowed others to use their reason and judgement: the goal of the eclectics. Here, it can be seen, that well into the eighteenth century, the importance of Bacon's method of natural philosophy was seen as important.

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[408] Francis Bacon, *The philosophical works of Francis Bacon, Baron of Verulam, Viscount St. Albans, and Lord High-Chancellor of England; methodized, and made English, from the originals, with Occasional Notes, to Explain what is Obscure; And shew how far the several Plans of the Author, for the Advancement of all the Parts of Knowledge, have been executed to the present Time. In three volumes*, ed. Peter Shaw, M. D., Vol. 2 (London, 1733), 52. ECCO, accessed 19 Apr. 2011.

[409] Peter Shaw, 'Preface' to *The philosophical works of Francis Bacon, In three volumes, ed. Peter Shaw, M. D.* Volume 2, the 2nd edn. (London, 1737), ii. ECCO, accessed 19 Apr. 2011.

Isaac Watts, English minister and author,[410] is one who identified himself as an eclectic. In his *Works* (1753) he first claimed that Cicero was an eclectic and 'chose out of each [philosophical sect] such positions as in his wisest judgement came nearest to the truth.'[411] He later identifies his philosophy as eclectic because, when discussing different approaches to studying philosophy, he claimed that he was not tied to any one system, but was an eclectic with the result that some of his ideas were Cartesian, while other were Newtonian. He also followed thinkers who have brought the light of reason to philosophy: 'But let those also who have opened the way for so great a light to shine, by removing the rubbish and darkness of former ages, have their proper monuments of praise.'[412] According to Watts, Newton first founded the best kind of philosophy based on reason and experiment and mathematical science. Gassendi, Bacon and Boyle also worked to free 'the world from the long slavery of Aristotle and substantial forms, of occult qualities, and words without ideas. They taught mankind to trace out truth by reasoning and experiment'.[413] He also praises John Locke by stating 'He has proceeded to break our philosophical fetters, and to give us further release from the bondage of ancient authorities and maxims.'[414] Watts, like Brucker, praised those authors that he had determined to have used an eclectic method, who rejected authority in preference for reason and experimentation. Watts' philosophical works display the importance of the eclectic method for both moral and natural philosophy.

Eclecticism is not only important in general discussions of science, but also in specific discussions of the history of medicine. In the preface to his *Medical Dictionary* (1743-1745) Robert James notes the importance of reason in the advancement of medicine, the questioning authority without personal experimentation and observation, thus promoting the eclectic method. In his

[410] Isabel Rivers, 'Watts, Isaac (1674–1748)', *ODNB*, http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/28888 (accessed 19 Apr 2011).
[411] Isaac Watts, *The works of the late reverend and learned Isaac Watts, D.D. published by himself, and now collected into six volumes. In which are also inserted the second part of the Improvement of the mind, An essay on education, and some additions to his Miscellaneous thoughts in prose and verse. Now first published from his manuscripts, and, the Direction of his Will, revised and corrected by D. Jennings, D.D. and the late P. Doddridge, D.D.*, Volume 1 (London, 1753), 293. ECCO. Accessed 19 Apr. 2011.
[412] Ibid., 502.
[413] Ibid.
[414] Ibid., 503.

Dictionary, James argued that Galen would have been an eclectic for he declares that he will not blindly follow any of the Physicians who went before him.[415] Although the author goes on to criticise Galen for actually just following Hippocrates his initial interest in eclecticism proves his approval of Galen's stated methods.

William Cullen (1710-1790),[416] Scottish chemist, author and physician, praised the eclectic system of Dutch physician, Professor of Medicine at the University of Leyden, and chemist Dr. Hermann Boerhaave (1662-1738).[417] In the preface to his *First lines of the practice of physic* (1784), Cullen traced developments in different disciplines of natural philosophy and noted that Boerhaave's work had significantly changed the practice of medicine with his introduction of an eclectic system: 'In forming a System of Physic, he seems to have studied diligently all the several writings of both ancient and modern physicians; and, without any prejudice in favour of any former systems, he endeavours to be a candid and genuine eclectic.'[418] Cullen commended Boerhaave's eclecticism, by reading both ancient and modern texts without preference for either, he was able to create a unique and superior system of his own. Andrew Cunningham has studied Boervhaave's methods, finding that he followed the mechanical philosophy of Isaac Newton and Robert Boyle, but combined it with ancient authors, adopting an eclectic method of reading both kinds of sources in an 'open-minded' and 'disinterested way', rejecting philosophical sects, to find the truthful medical principles.[419]

Cullen's opinions of Boerhaave's eclecticism did not go unchallenged, however. In his *Observations on the principles of the old system of physic,*

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[415]Robert James, *A medicinal dictionary; including physic, surgery, anatomy, chymistry, and botany, in all their branches relative to medicine. Together with a history of drugs; ... With copper plates. By R. James, M.D.* Vol. 1 (London, 1743-45), ixiii. ECCO, accessed on 19 Apr. 2011.

[416] W. F. Bynum, 'Cullen, William (1710–1790)', *ODNB*, http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/6874 (accessed 19 Apr 2011).

[417] Richard R. Reynolds, 'Johnson's "Life of Boerhaave" in Perspective', *The Yearbook of English Studies*, 5 (1975), pp. 115-129. Accessed on 19 Apr, 2011. Article Stable URL: http://www.jstor.org/stable/3507178.

[418] William Cullen, *First lines of the practice of physic. By William Cullen, M.D. A new edition. Corrected, enlarged, and completed in four volumes*, Volume 1 (Edinburgh, 1784), xxv. ECCO, accessed on 19 Apr. 2011.

[419] Andrew Cunningham, 'Medicine to calm the mind: Boerhaave's medical system, and why it was adopted in Edinburgh', in *The Medical Enlightenment of the Eighteenth Century*, edited by Andrew Cunningham and Roger French (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 55.

exhibiting a compend of the new doctrine (1787), John Brown was critical about Dr. Boerhaave's eclectic method in medicine because it 'selected from both ancient and modern writings … so the practice, which was the same in all the authorities he followed, remained the same with him and all his followers'.[420] Brown argued that, since Boerhaave took from many sources, his actual medical practice did not change or make any innovations in the field. This is a common criticism of eclecticism: because eclectics take from other thinkers, they are perceived as copying ideas rather than formulating new methods and principles for themselves. While this understanding of eclecticism is flawed fundamentally, because the eclectics do create and innovate, it is a criticism which was made of both ancient and modern eclectics.

Eclecticism and the methods proposed by it affected English thinkers in the eighteenth century to the degree that it appears in Thomas Amory's fictitious novel *The Life of John Buncle* (1766). One of Buncle's wives, Miss Spence, discusses eclecticism at length. Although this is a work of fiction, the philosophical discussions in the book are based on Amory's intellectual curiosity and education.[421] In the section on 'Moral Thoughts' when discussing religion, the author (who is meant to be Miss Spence) states that eclectic philosophy appeared after Epicureanism and that Cicero was an eclectic. She goes on to claim that she is also an eclectic in religion, an 'Eclectic *in divinis*'. 'The practice of reason and truth is the rule of action to God himself, and the foundation of all true religion'.[422] God, therefore, is an eclectic himself because God uses reason and truth and Miss Spence seems justified in following this example in religion. This text also engages with the debate about the nature of eclecticism in the Church. She goes on to say that it is the Catholic Church that has actually perverted the true religion:

> Thus shamefully do the priests sink the credibility of our gospel, and impose upon the silly people, a ball of wax for the religion of

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[420] John Brown, *Observations on the principles of the old system of physic, exhibiting a compend of the new doctrine. The whole containing a new account of the state of medicine from the present times, backward, to the restoration of the Grecian learning in the western parts of Europe. By a gentleman conversant in the subject* (Edinburgh, 1787), 77. ECCO, accessed on 19 Apr. 2011.

[421] Ian Campbell Ross, 'Amory, Thomas (1690/91–1788)', *ODNB*, http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/452, accessed 20 Jan 2010.

[422]Thomas Amory, *The life of John Buncle, Esq; containing various observations and reflections, made in several parts of the world, and many extraordinary relations*, Vol. 2 (London, 1766), 318. ECCO, accessed on 19 Apr. 2011.

> Jesus; making them believe contrary to knowledge, and prefer a system that is a lye against the light of nature, and the gospel. But the chief end, duty, happiness, and highest perfection that man can arrive at consists, and is found in, a perfect exercise of *human reason*.[423]

While Amory's work is one of fiction and satire, and while this whole discussion may be a satirical criticism of eclecticism, the fact that in his philosophical studies he has come across eclecticism and freely discusses it demonstrates the pervasive nature of the eclectic method among English writers.

Discussions of the useful influence of eclecticism can be seen also in histories of the Christian Church. In Johann Lorenz Mosheim's 'An ecclesiastical history, antient and modern, from the birth of Christ, to the beginning of the present century', he presents a view of ancient eclectics that is positive. In his discussion of the state of learning and knowledge in the sixth century, he claims that some authors, such as Chalcidius, mixed Christian doctrine with that of Plato and other pagans. The editor, Archibald Maclaine, tempers his use of Chalcidius as an example with an extensive footnote in which the editor draws upon Brucker's *Historia*. He states that Chalcidius is the cause of great debate amongst historians where some, like Vossius and Fabricius, believe he was a Christian while others believe he was a pagan author,[424] and yet believe that he is in between the two, which could make him an eclectic. According to Maclaine, Brucker agrees that Chalcidius followed the 'motley method of the eclectic Platonists, but does not see anything in this inconsistent with his having publicly professed the Christian religion'.[425] The editor claims that the eclectic first followed the teachings of Plato and when Christianity became the state religion adopted some teaching of the gospel, but maintained their original position.

In East Apthorp's response to Edward Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* entitled *Letters on the prevalence of Christianity* (1778), Apthrop was very positive about the influence of eclecticism on Christianity, unlike his

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[423] Ibid,. 318-319.
[424] Johann Lorenz Mosheim, *An ecclesiastical history, antient and modern, from the birth of Christ, to the beginning of the present century: ... By the late learned John Lawrence Mosheim, ... Translated from the original, ... by Archibald Maclaine, ... In two volumes,* Vol. 1 (London, 1765), 282. ECCO, accessed on 19 Apr. 2011.
[425] Ibid., 283.

clerical colleagues who found it the opposite.[426] Apthorp states that the seventeenth century was 'the age of erudition and criticism, of eclectic and experimental philosophy, of a rational and scriptural theology'.[427] He claims that the combination of rational philosophy and religion as a positive step in the development of human history, which he calls eclectic theology. He finds this best represented in the Church of England:

> Eclectic theology, attached to no sect, compares the best systems, and combines from all such principles as best accord with scripture, antiquity and reason. The church of England was eclectic in its reformation; it retained, from the church of Rome a limited respect for pure antiquity; from the calvinists, their veneration of scripture; and from the lutheran and arminian systems, we may usefully adopt their erudition, method, and connected reasoning.[428]

He also names Bacon as one of the fathers of the modern eclectic school. Although this work is not without inherent bias, the simple fact that he is incorporating this discussion of eclecticism so freely into his history of modern theology demonstrates the pervasiveness of the idea of eclecticism in the eighteenth-century.

Criticism of eclecticism often appears in church histories where the opponents condemned eclectic thinkers for their negative influence on early Christianity. In Joseph Milner's *History of the church of Christ* (1800), eclecticism is described as being a corrupting force in early church writings[429] and Thomas Haweis identifies the eclectic influence on church philosophy as heretical.[430] Brucker is also highly critical of the influence that eclectics had on early Christianity:

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[426] For a full discussion of this issue please see John C. Shields, 'Apthorp, East (1733–1816)', *ODNB*, http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/53400 (accessed 21 Jan 2010).

[427] East Apthorp, *Letters on the prevalence of Christianity, before its civil establishment: with observations on a late history of the decline of the Roman Empire. By East Apthorp, M. A. Vicar Of Croydon* (London, 1778), 170. ECCO, accessed on 19 Apr. 2011.

[428] Ibid., 184.

[429] Joseph Milner, *The history of the Church of Christ. Volume the first. Second edition of Volume I. Revised and corrected By the Rev. Isaac Milner, D. D. Dean of Carlisle, and Master of Queen's College, Cambridge*, Vol. 1 (Cambridge, 1800), ECCO, accessed on 19 Apr. 2011.

[430] Thomas Haweis, *An impartial and succinct history of the rise, declension, and revival of the Church of Christ; from the birth of our saviour to the present time. With Faithful Characters of the Principal Personages, Ancient and Modern. By the Rev. T. Haweis, LL. B. & M. D. Chaplain to the late Countess of Huntingdon, and Rector of All Saints, Aldwinckle, Northamptonshire. In three volumes*, Vol. 1 (London, 1800). ECCO, accessed on 19 Apr. 2011.

> By combining into one system all the important tenets, both theological and philosophical, which were at that time received, either in the Pagan or the Christian schools, they hoped to confirm the heathens in their attachment to their old superstitions, and to reconcile the Christians to Paganism. They endeavoured to conceal the absurdities of the ancient religion, by casting over its fables the veil of allegory, and thus representing them as founded upon important truths… The Eclectic sect, thus raised upon the foundations of superstition, enthusiasm, and imposture, proved the occasion of much confusion and mischief both to the Christian religion and to philosophy.[431]

Brucker here is critical of the ancient eclectic school because it promoted religious superstition rather than reason.

There is another place where eclectics are identified: in Masonic history. There are several historians who discuss 'eclectic masons' and are very negative about this section of the free masons and are negative about their eclectic qualities. Abbe Barruel writes that Eclectic Masons 'should naturally predominate in an age when the Philosophism of the Atheists and Deists only succeeds to the ancient heresies in order to absorb them all'.[432] He was critical of those who 'attach themselves to no particular system, either political or religious, into which they have been initiated, but adopt from them all whatever may best suit their political or religious views'.[433] James Thomson also notes the influence of eclectic masons and claimed that they were in fact influenced by the Illuminati.[434] While the eclecticism discussed in this context is not actually connected to the intellectual movement under discussion, it is however interesting to see the breadth of criticisms against what is perceived to be the eclectic school.

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[431] Brucker, *HCP II*, 344.

[432] Abbé (Augustin) Barruel, *Memoirs illustrating the history of Jacobinism. A translation from the French of the Abbe Barruel*, Vol. 1 (Hartford, 1799), 194. ECCO, accessed on 19 Apr. 2011.

[433] Ibid.

[434] James Thomson, *The rise, progress, and consequences, of the new opinions and principles lately introduced into France; with observations* (Edinburgh, 1799), 107. ECCO, accessed on 19 Apr. 2011. See also John Robison, *Proofs of a conspiracy against all the religions and governments of Europe, carried on in the secret meetings of Free Masons, Illuminati, and reading societies. Collected from good authorities, by John Robison, A.M. professor of natural philosophy, and secretary to the Royal Society of Edinburgh. The third edition, corrected* (London, 1798). ECCO, accessed on 19 Apr. 2011.

The End of Eclecticism

Because of a number of developments in the discipline of philosophy by the end of the eighteenth century, eclecticism was no longer seen as a valid system. Thinkers such as Christian Garve, Immanuel Kant and Georg Wilhelm Frederich Hegel became disillusioned with what they saw as the unsystematic methods of eclecticism.[435] Kant maintained that philosophy should be systematic and based only on reason, not taking ideas from others and the general acceptance of this premise in the German universities spelled the death of eclecticism in the nineteenth century.[436] Although Kant was reacting against a specific philosophy prominent at the university in Halle, i.e. eclecticism, his philosophy went on to influence nineteenth century thinkers and hence eclecticism was viewed as out-dated and was largely abandoned.

These early criticisms of eclecticism continued through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as eclecticism was viewed unfavourably as uncreative, unoriginal and unsystematic. This is due in part to Eduard Zeller's 1883 *A History of Eclecticism in Greek Philosophy*, in which book the idea of the eclectic as a negative term was legitimised and began to affect historians' opinions of the school. Zeller was influenced by Hegel and viewed the history of philosophy in terms of 'high and low creativity', thus classifying the eclectics as 'second-rate, dull, and largely derivative from the past in its perspectives'.[437] In this work, Zeller blamed the eclectics for what he deemed the end of ancient philosophy, which then of course led to the middle ages where philosophy seemingly no longer existed.[438] He believed that eclecticism was mainly uncritical syncretism and much preferred Scepticism, the school which eventually brought about the death of the eclectic school in the ancient world.[439]

Although this is a very brief discussion of the wider influence of eclecticism in the eighteenth century, it is clear that the eclectic method was a crucial part of the

[435] Donini, 'The history of the concept of eclecticism', 22. See also Hochstrasser, *Natural Law*, 18-20.
[436] Kelley, 'The Problem of Knowledge', 20-21.
[437] Dillon and Long, 'Introduction', 2.
[438] Eduard Zeller, *A History of Eclecticism in Greek Philosophy*, trans. S.F. Alleyne (London: Longmans, Green, and Co, 1883), 3.
[439] Zeller, *History*, 17, 22.

intellectual history of the Enlightenment. It can be traced in multiple disciplines and in many different countries. Looking at eighteenth-century methods and practices, modern eclecticism is pervasive, partly due at least to the influence of the experimental method on the thought of the time. Furthermore, modern eclecticism came to the aid of thinkers who were dealing with the Quarrel between the Ancients and the Moderns because it opposed the idea of following one authority or another and allowed for all sources to be used in creating a new system of moral or natural philosophy.

2.3 Ferguson and Eclecticism

Ferguson adopted a methodology that is similar to the modern eclectics in his moral philosophy. Although Ferguson did not identify himself as an eclectic, he was following in the same method that discouraged a blind reliance on authority and instead reliance on the rational, experience based methods of natural science and individual thought and analysis. Ferguson would have come across ideas of eclecticism not only in his frequent visits to German universities and other locations on the continent, but through his international intellectual connections, through his extensive research, and through contact with other members of the Scottish Enlightenment. Furthermore, Ferguson's knowledge of and experience from teaching natural philosophy would have given him the foundation in the experimental method central to modern eclecticism.

Ferguson's methodology in his *Principles of Moral and Political Science* best demonstrates that he was indeed following modern eclectic practices. In the introduction to this work Ferguson attempted to justify his approach to the discussion of the history of man and the mind. Ferguson argued that the only way to gather information about the human mind is through facts of which people themselves are conscious. External information is of little use in this practice because the only way that any person can know the human mind is through reflection.[440]

[440] 'The only condition on which we can receive information [about the human mind and intelligence], that we attend to the facts of which we are conscious in ourselves; and whoever

Ferguson identified his role as author and teacher, and as one who proposes and demonstrates a philosophical method, but that is as far as Ferguson himself could lead the reader. In order for the reader 'to succeed in the study of mind, every reader must perform the work for himself'.[441] In other words, in order for a person to truly understand moral philosophy they must reason and think individually and not rely on any authority to instruct them or proselytise a certain philosophy, but to develop one independently according to information and analysis. To do this, 'He must be content to recollect what everyone knows; to value a fact rather for its consequence than its novelty; and even to value it the more for its being notorious and common.'[442] People must reassess common beliefs and ideas to determine the facts because even the most generally held beliefs need to be examined for their truthfulness. Here Ferguson is clearly following the methods set out by the eclectics. In his general approach to philosophy, Ferguson can provide the model and some evidence, but it is up to the individual reader to draw conclusions from his work. He did not set himself up to be an authority figure, dictating what people should think. Furthermore, Ferguson's acknowledgement that the reader needs to re-examine the basic facts accepted as common knowledge also points to his eclectic leanings because in order to create a unique set of philosophical principles, one must start examining all suppositions. Like Descartes' famous starting point, 'Cogito ergo sum', the thinker must begin with the most basic of premises to build up a set of philosophical principles. Some, such as Brucker, of course, credited Descartes as being one of the founders of the eclectic method himself. It is unsurprising, therefore, if Ferguson wanted to begin his work in a similar fashion.

One concern for Ferguson as well as other modern eclectics is the role of authority, specifically the place of different sources in the creation of a philosophical system. From the Quarrel between the Ancients and the Moderns, questions about the usefulness of literature have been answered to some degree by eclecticism in that the eclectics had allowed that all sources could be used to find true principles. This applies to the position of the Ancients who adopted the practices of historicism and

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pretends to tell us of anything new, or that is not of our own minds, has mistaken his subject, or would mislead us from it. Questions may be stated, and a method proposed; but he alone who can recur to himself with proper reflection can make any advance in such studies'. *P.I.*, 4.

[441] *P.I.*, 4-5.

[442] Ibid.

the concept of historical universals so that the ancient and modern sources could be analysed and criticised equally. The possibility that the truth could be found in either source, meant that the eclectics found both ancient and modern literature and philosophy indispensible. Ferguson's attempts to define a role for ancient philosophy in his own works fall into this eclectic system because it allows him to find a place for both his ancient and modern sources.

Ferguson argued that the lessons of models taken from virtue 'are happily received through the channels of ingenious literature and the fine arts, no less than in the way of formal instruction'. He appealed to the genius of both ancient and modern authors to demonstrate true virtue. He stated 'there are also valuable remains of antiquity in the Memorabilia of Socrates; the Ethics of Aristotle; the offices of Cicero; and still more in the remains of Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius. In our own language also there are many valuable compositions on the subject'. If students read both ancient and modern literature to detect the passages and premises which display accurate and true statements, they will learn about virtue to an even greater extent than if they had only been instructed in the topic. From this foundation, Ferguson argued that it is through the method he has devised with which his students can learn about moral philosophy. He stated: 'I am ambitious to show that is a science of manners or of Ethics, ... and for this purpose would willingly point out a method, by which to derive the offices or duties of a virtuous life from principles at once so comprehensive and unquestionably evident, as to enable every person to fill up the detail for himself'.[443]

A further example of Ferguson's eclectic stance on the question of authority is his approach to the sources of authority. Ferguson maintained the necessity of activity for progress of any kind, especially in education, and wrote that, 'When learned productions accumulate, the acquisition of knowledge occupies the time that might be bestowed on invention'. While learning is crucial for the improvement of human kind, improvement cannot happen without invention. Furthermore, if people only learn what they are taught by their teachers, then their knowledge will be less than that of their teachers. He states:

[443] *P.II.*, 320-322.

> Great names continue to be repeated with admiration, after we have ceased to examine the foundations of our praise: and new pretenders are rejected, not because they fall short of their predecessors, but because they do not excel them; or because, in reality, we have, without examination, taken for granted the merit of the first, and cannot judge either.[444]

Ferguson fears that when people only admire the accomplishments of others they will become perpetual students and 'substitute the knowledge of books, instead of the inquisitive or animated spirit in which they were written'. Ultimately, the study of arts rather than the practice of arts will lead people to move away from their true, active nature and they will stop participating in society.[445] This reasoning is similar to that of the eclectics who esteem thinkers who attempt to think for themselves, who do not only follow their masters, but create their own systems. Although learning from those who are admired is essential, it is more important to take an active participating role creating things independently.

In Ferguson's *Essay* he states openly that it is better to rely on reason rather than the authority of the ancients. He states:

> It is peculiar to modern Europe, to rest so much of the human character on what may be learned in retirement, and from the information of books. A just admiration of ancient literature, an opinion that human sentiment, and human reason, without this aid, were to have vanished from the societies of men, have led us into the shade, where we endeavour to derive from imagination and thought, what is in reality a matter of experience and sentiment: we endeavour, through the grammar of dead languages, and the channel of commentators, to arrive at the beauties of thought and elocution, which sprang from the animated spirit of society, and were taken from the living impressions of an active life.[446]

Ferguson here is seemingly critical of the Renaissance Humanists because it is with the revival of the classics that people began to rely on the reading of the texts to discover the truth about human nature. While it is 'just' to admire and study the works of antiquity, the ancient men of genius arrived at their conclusions by participation in society and the experience and observation of an 'active life'.

[444] *Essay*, 206.
[445] Ibid., 207.
[446] Ibid., 33-34.

Although Ferguson did not explicitly name Renaissance Humanists as the people who rely on learning and reading to write about human nature, it is clear that he is referring to this intellectual tradition. Like other eclectics who adopt the experimental method, who rely on experience and observation, Ferguson believed that a reliance on other authors was not sufficient for the study of humanity, as others had done in the past. While Ferguson remained committed to reading others for opinions and facts, those writings must be informed by a person's own experience and reason.

Ferguson is critical of thinkers who do adopt the ideas of others without analysis as evidenced in his discussion of Hobbes' materialism. Ferguson argued that Hobbes was 'adopting' Epicurean metaphysics, which maintained the materiality of ideas, but offered no evidence for this. He is also critical of people who seem to him to follow Hobbes without much reflection, including Descartes, Malebranche and Locke.[447] While Ferguson was opposed to materialism and atomism as a philosophy, mainly because of the lack of evidence to support it as well as it being opposed to Ferguson's more Newtonian and conservative natural philosophy, he is actually more critical of the people adopting the ideas because they have done so without really considering the ideas themselves and rather simply follow Hobbes.

In Ferguson's conclusion to his *Principles* he defended his method in attempting to define moral rules. He was aware that he could be criticised for following philosophers, he is here likely referring to the Stoics, who formulate systems which 'far exceed what human nature is fit to attain' and that focusing on virtue appears to remove him from the actual world, but this is not his aim, only what he was perceived to be doing. Furthermore, 'It was thus, we may be told that philosophers in antient times affected a language, a manner, and dress peculiar to their respective sects; and hung out the supposed colours of wisdom, with little regard to its real possessions or use.'[448] He was aware of how people saw him, but was critical of the ancient schools for the same reasons.

[447] *P.I.*, 72-73.
[448] *P.II.*, 401.

Ferguson argued that philosophy should not be based on the ideas that the philosopher is separate from humanity 'otherwise than by a superiority which good education may give in any department of life, and by blameless or beneficent intercourse with other men'. Philosophy should not exist as a dogmatic system, although that is the common form it takes when written, and we should behave morally and 'acquit ourselves properly, without any formal display of our general knowledge'. People, therefore, should not slavishly follow a system of philosophy, 'technical terms' and 'formal pretentions' do not help people in their lives, or indeed lead to a virtuous life; people should instead have a good character, a morality that is personal and private rather than public, so that they live well, but without recourse to philosophical pretensions. In Ferguson's time, as he notes, society is critical of those who claim to follow a particular philosophy and 'persons of the most honourable nature do well to avoid any unnecessary parade of their principles or system of action'.[449] Ferguson does not believe that anyone should wholly adopt a system of philosophy so much so that it dictates their actions and reasoning in the face of common sense. Although he acknowledges the usefulness of models of virtue, such as the Stoics, he also realised that no one should base a philosophical system on their ideas alone or by following them as an ideal. For Ferguson, philosophy remains a practical, useful guidance for making choices in the real world. Ferguson is not attempting to be a philosopher who devises a system that has no applicability in the real world, but one that demonstrates the proper means for moral judgements and allows his readers to use it as they see fit. This is the epitome of eclectic philosophy because Ferguson himself is not adopting or defining a dogmatic system and expects his readers to use their reason and observation to learn

[449] 'It must indeed be admitted, that to erect philosophy into a profession, of which the votary is distinguishable from the rest of mankind, otherwise than by a superiority which good education may give in any department of life, and by blameless or beneficent intercourse with other men, is to mistake its nature. In the school, and in our attempts to think comprehensively and justly, we are led into a system; but in reaping the fruits of a culture thus applied to the mind, it may be expected that on every particular occasion we should acquit ourselves properly, without any formal display of our general knowledge. It were piteous indeed, to carry nothing with us from hence into the world, but formal pretensions and technical terms. To this the manners of the world are fortunately repugnant, and perhaps lead to an error in the opposite extreme, that of affecting indifference to considerations of virtue, which we inwardly and justly esteem. To talk of morality in the fashionable world, is said to be quoting the ten commandments. And pretensions are so far from being received as merit, that persons of the most honourable nature do well to avoid any unnecessary parade of their principles or system of action.' *P.II.*, 402.

from his work, but not to follow it to the letter. Ferguson does not think of himself as an eclectic, but the influence of eclectic ideas of philosophy are found here in his work.

2.4 Ferguson and the History of Philosophy

Adam Ferguson's work was also influenced by the techniques used by eclectic historians of philosophy. Although Ferguson did not write a full history of philosophy, detailing the history of ideas and philosophical sects, he did apply the eclectic techniques to his discussions of moral philosophy. Knowledge of ancient philosophy was central to Ferguson's own understanding of philosophy in general and of the methods of philosophy, and he had early experiences with it during his own education.

When Ferguson was a student at the University of Edinburgh he would have been exposed to the history of philosophy when learning about ancient and modern authors. He could for instance have attended John Stevenson's course on Rational or Instrumental Philosophy in the 1740s in which Stevenson gave 'a college upon Heineccii Historia Philosophica; in which he gives accounts of the lives of the most famous philosophers ancient and modern, and the several opinions by which the different sects were distinguished.'[450] If Ferguson was learning about the history of philosophy while earning his degree at Edinburgh, which can safely be supposed because he was closely attached to the lectures on moral philosophy at the same time, then he would have been exposed to an eclectic method of writing the history of philosophy. Johann Gottlieb Heineccius (1681-1741) was a German Natural Law theorist who studied at the University of Halle under the guidance of the eclectic Christian Thomasius as well as Johannes Franz Buddeus.[451] Heinecius was taught by the same people as Brucker, and was therefore equally familiar with the method

[450] *The Scots Magazine*, Vol. 3 (Edinburgh: Jan. 1741 – Dec. 1741), 373. NLS, Mf. SP. Ser. 1/Sc. Mag, 371-375.
[451] Thomas Ahnert and Peter Schroder, eds., 'Introduction' to Johann Gottlieb Heineccius: *A Methodical System of Universal Law: Or, the Laws of Nature and Nations, with Supplements and Discourse by George Turnbull* (1763) (Liberty Fund: Indianapolis, 2008), v.

and principles of an eclectic history of philosophy, as well as participating in the debates about natural law, a topic central to many German eclectic authors. In the *Historia Philosophica*, which is the opening to his *Elementa Philosophiae Rationalis*,[452] Heineccius argues that philosophy is the study of what is good and true derived from proper reason, '*rectae rationes*', compared with the true happiness of man.[453] Moreover, finding truth from reason is hindered when prejudiced opinions dominate and Heineccius argued that as a result people believe truth is what is handed down from authority figures, philosophers or sacred scripture, rather than from reason. As a result, philosophy should 'exile' tradition, scripture and sects because their ideas are not derived from proper reason.[454] Heineccius argued that dividing philosophy into sects is both inaccurate and forces people to take sides, claiming one sect is true while another is false, because of the dogmatic nature of this kind of philosophy which does not help scholars understand human nature.[455] As an example of this, he finds that the dogmatism of the Scholastics discovers nothing about human happiness. Philosophy, the knowledge of truth and goodness, should be investigated theoretically, in which metaphysics determines truths about the nature of man, God and the spirit word, and practically, to show what is good and virtuous and how that can be applied to natural law, politics and economics.[456] It is here where Ferguson would have had the definitive firsthand experience with eclectic methods of developing a history of philosophy and these methods can be found in Ferguson's works.

Ferguson argued that studying the history of philosophy was important for all who delved into the topic of moral philosophy. According to Ferguson, it is the moral philosopher who truly understands human nature and therefore can discover the principles that best lead to a more fulfilling human life, but the philosopher must also develop these principles in accordance with the laws of nature. When discussing the philosophy of Marcus Aurelius, he claimed 'Its foundations are laid in the genius lessons whether of physical or moral science; and are to be met with in

[452] Johann Gottlieb Heineccius, *Jo. Gotl. Heineccii, jurisconsulti et antecessoris, elementa philosophiae rationalis, ex principiis admodum evidentibus justo ordine adornata. Praemissa est historia philosophica* (Edinburgh, 1756). ECCO, accessed 21 June 2011.
[453] Heineccius, *Historia Philosophica*, 1.
[454] Ibid., 2.
[455] Ibid., 2.
[456] Ibid., 3.

the concluding observations of Newton's Principia, no less than in the remains of Socrates or Epictetus, or of Marcus Aurelius.'[457] From Epictetus, Ferguson learns that it takes both knowledge of natural philosophy and moral philosophy to 'raise the mind to a just sense of divine providence.'[458] Thus, for Ferguson as well as for Epictetus, moral philosophy must be combined with natural philosophy to create laws of human nature, and the history of philosophy illustrated how these two realms support each other.[459] Ferguson cited the history of philosophy as an example of human improvement:

> From the distinguished names that appear in the history of philosophy, whether as instructors of mankind, or themselves as actors in the great scenes of human life, such as Socrates, Plato, Xenophon, Epaminondas, Aristotle, Zeno, Cicero, Cato, Thrasea, Helvidius, Epictetus, and Aurelius; we must conclude that the progression of human nature, in this matter, is not less conspicuous, than it is in the other particulars, in which we have attempted to trace its advancement.[460]

Although man is capable of progress, which is perfectly demonstrated by the development of philosophy, there is also a danger of decline: 'The existence of an animal may be naturally limited to the scene for which his organization and his instincts are provided: But intelligence has no specific place.'[461] The memory of philosophy and the improvement of ideas continue through the ages and are not limited by the human lifespan. Ferguson can trace the origins of his ideas back to ancient Greece, but this was not the only source of philosophy – it is the progression of philosophy that improves human intelligence, in moral philosophy and beyond, and as modern philosophy developed it continued to influence people's thinking. Here, Ferguson's connection to the Quarrel between the Ancients and the Moderns is further demonstrated because he draws from the concept of human universals to arrive at a notion of continuity through the history of ideas and thus finds a position which can draw from both ancient and modern philosophy. He further embraced the experimental method in his concept of philosophy, not only learning from Epictetus'

[457] *P.I.*, 312.
[458] Ibid., 313.
[459] Lisa Hill, *The Passionate Society* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2006), 57.
[460] *P.I.*, 310.
[461] Ibid., 315.

methods, but also from the example of the natural sciences which developed natural laws and by which process he hoped to discover similar moral laws. It is therefore by this method that Ferguson applies the ideas of modern eclectics, taking ideas from ancient and modern philosophy to analyse philosophical principles and write the laws of morality.

Ferguson additionally used the examples of ancient philosophy when developing his moral philosophy. In Ferguson's section on good and evil in his *Institutes of Moral Philosophy* he categorised the different opinions of ancient schools and used them to compare different approaches to the topic. He stated 'Disputes among the ancient philosophers, related chiefly to the manner of stating this distinction' between good and evil and includes the example of Cicero's *De Finibus*.[462] Ferguson then set out the principles of each school as he defined them. According to Socrates '*they who prayed for riches, long life, &c. seemed to desire a throw of the dice, or the chance of a battle*'. The Peripatetics 'classed every thing that was by its nature, or use, desirable, under the general predicament of *good*', and everything the opposite as evil. On the other hand, 'The Stoics maintained, that nothing was to be classed under the predicament of *good*, but what was at all times invariably to be chosen. That nothing was to be classed under the predicament of *evil*, but what was at all times invariably to be shunned, or rejected: That to call that good which ought at any time to be rejected, or that evil which ought at any time to be chosen, was not only absurd in terms, but tended to weaken the resolution with which a man ought always to make his choice'.[463] Ferguson here references both Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius. Finally, the Epicureans 'substituted the term *pleasure* for *good*'. In this instance, Ferguson invokes the history of philosophy to present the ideas of the three most important ancient schools, but without criticism or approval, only as evidence to demonstrate different approaches to moral philosophy for his students.

Another example of Ferguson's treatment of different thinkers, both ancient and modern can be seen in his discussion of materialism. Ferguson believes that

[462] *Institutes*, 142.
[463] Ibid., 143-144.

what is observed is what exists and by taking this position opposes materialism and scepticism more generally. He stated:

> Upon the whole, we may venture to sum up the law of assent or dissent, respecting either extreme of credulity or scepticism. In the following terms, "That, as it were absurd to believe without evidence, or to affect knowledge where nature has not furnished any means of information; so it were equally absurd and ruinous in its consequences to reject, in any matter of importance, the only means of information which nature has furnished."[464]

Ferguson's discussion of materialism and scepticism was one of his most critical and opinionated. Ferguson identified the Epicureans as: 'One sect of the antient philosophers [who] chose to forget the quality of mere rhetorical figure, under which such expressions are used; and treated the notion, or mental apprehension, as an image or picture of the thing, in the most literal sense.'[465] In this discussion, he cites both Cicero and Lucretius. Ferguson was critical of modern materialists whom he believed simply followed the system of Epicurus, adopting this sectarian philosophy, without sufficiently considering the validity of the ideas. He stated: 'A similar language has been adopted in modern times, and repeated without sufficient intimation whether it be meant in a figurative or literal sense.'[466] He believed that it was Hobbes, who 'so prone to materialism, and to the use of corporeal images, has led the way, and been followed with little variation, though perhaps with more respect to the distinction between mind and matter, by Descartes, Malebranche, Locke, and others.'[467] Ferguson believes that these thinkers do not deviate much from their ancient sources and he further continues to criticise Hobbes, Locke and Malebranche for what he sees as errors in their understanding of the terms 'ideas' and 'notions'. Like Brucker's criticism of philosophers who follow, but do not innovate, Ferguson is critical of these so-called materialists because they incorrectly adopted the ideas of the ancient philosophers without correctly understanding them or properly analysing them. Ferguson's anti-sectarian methods are furthermore seen in these criticisms. Ultimately, Ferguson claimed that, although Hobbes and Locke have 'expressed many just observations in their metaphorical language of images or

[464] *P.I.*, 92.
[465] Ibid., 72.
[466] Ibid.
[467] Ibid., 72-73.

ideas' in relation to knowledge, 'But, to profit by these observations, we must remember that the fact is not any magical coherence, or association of thoughts, but a habit or disposition of the mind in us, to conceive together things which have been presented together.'[468] While these authors presented something of interest, materialism, which is stimulating, but not accurate in understanding human nature because their theories and hypotheses were not based on actual observation or experience, and furthermore contradict Ferguson's own philosophy.

Ferguson argued that one of Thomas Reid's greatest accomplishments was removing ambiguous, metaphoric language from discussions of science as these previous thinkers had not done.[469] Ferguson summarises this argument by saying that

> the scepticism of ingenious men [David Hume and George Berkeley], who not feeling a proper access to knowledge, through the medium of ideas, without considering whether the road they had been directed to take was the true, or false one, denied the possibility of arriving at the end. The reality of knowledge, never the less, however little to be explained by any corporeal analogy, may be safely assumed, and the facts which relate to the attainment of it, be considered as an important part in the history of the mind.[470]

Thus, Ferguson maintains that, even in the face of these writers, knowledge exists and can be only studied without recourse to false analogies or misleading imagery. As he traces modern ideas back to ancient Greece and to the philosophy of Epicurus, he is in fact connecting Hume and Hobbes to the Epicurean philosophy, and charging both the ancients and the moderns with failing to draw sound conclusions from their starting position; in the case of Hume and Hobbes denying even the 'possibility of arriving at an end', here making the same criticism of both ancient and modern philosophy.

[468] Ibid., 75.
[469] Ibid., 75.
[470] Ibid., 76.

Conclusion

When engaging with his classical sources, Ferguson is participating in the debate between the Ancients and the Moderns, maintaining a healthy respect for ancient authorities, but recognising that people in his time had improved upon the knowledge of the ancients. Also, he did not believe that people should rely solely on the authority of the ancients, but should use their reason and observation to make their own moral choices. This speaks to both the underlying message of the Quarrel and other eighteenth-century intellectual trends: that the reliance on authority, particularly sectarianism, should be rejected and replaced with personal observation. One final aspect of Ferguson's method remains to be analysed: how did Ferguson chose which evidence to be used in his philosophy? What was the process that allowed Ferguson to create philosophical principles? To do this, Ferguson, like some other eclectics and other eighteenth-century thinkers, relied on the experimental method practised in natural philosophy to accurately plumb true facts, whether about science or moral philosophy, in order to save his philosophy from the problems of sectarianism.

3.1 Ferguson's Adoption of the Experimental Method

When considering Adam Ferguson's intellectual context and resulting methodology regarding his combination of ancient and modern thought, the Quarrel between the Ancients and the Moderns and modern eclecticism were essential in forming his ideas. The Quarrel gave him a model to follow, the position of the Ancients allowed Ferguson to accept the progress made in his time in the field of science, while upholding the vital role of ancient thought through historicism and historical universals. The modern eclectics, following from the Quarrel, provided a methodology which rejected blind acceptance of authority and sectarianism, substituting reason and analysis as the guides to create philosophical principles. The eclectics maintained that ancient and modern sources could act as evidence because the truth found in certain texts and ideas did not decay over time. Like those that took the position of the Ancients in the Quarrel, the idea of universal truths and historicism were adopted by the eclectics who employed the ideas of both ancient and modern authors in their search for true philosophy. The combination of the ideas of the Ancients in the Quarrel and the eclectic method then allowed Ferguson to use a variety of sources to create his philosophical system. The larger question of how he used evidence and analysis to formulate his moral philosophy can be answered with an examination of his adoption of the experimental method.

The experimental method initially developed in natural philosophy by Francis Bacon took hold of the European consciousness and even participants on both sides of the Quarrel admitted the effectiveness and usefulness of the method. Practitioners of the experimental method argued that truthful principles were derived from repeatable experiments, experience and observation, combined with critical analysis, to formulate reasoned and correct conclusions. The pervasive adoption of the experimental method throughout Europe led to the widespread implementation of the method not only in natural philosophy, but in all disciplines. The eclectics used this method to combat and prevent sectarianism of any kind because the use of experiments, be they practical, physical or theoretical, resolved sectarian disputes, proving or disproving the arguments on either side. Furthermore, with the experimental method, the eclectics could avoid falling in line with one authority or

another, and attempted to work objectively having rid themselves of all biases, to discover what they believed was the truth.

The experimental method established a new process of scientific investigation that relied on observation and experience combined with experimentation to reach true and useful conclusions about natural philosophy and to disprove sectarian arguments. The eclectics used this method to combat and prevent sectarianism of any kind because the use of experiments either practical, physical or theoretical, resolved sectarian disputes, proving or disproving the arguments on either side. Furthermore, with the experimental method, eclectics could avoid falling in line with one authority or another, and attempted to work objectively having rid themselves of all biases, to discover what they believed was the truth. While this method was designed for scientific inquiry, it was also intended to explain both theological and moral philosophical conclusions. The inclusion of the experimental method into both natural philosophy and moral philosophy was prominent in Europe in the eighteenth century and can be seen as particularly common in the Scottish Enlightenment, especially with philosophers such as David Hume, David Fordyce and Adam Ferguson consciously applying the principles of this method to moral philosophy.

3.2 The Experimental Method in the Scottish Enlightenment

The experimental method's importance in early modern history, especially the eighteenth century, has been widely acknowledged by scholars and has been observed to be crucial for interpreting European thought after Francis Bacon proposed a new method of natural philosophical inquiry. Bacon, however, was not the first thinker to begin changing the concept of philosophy and scholarship because he was following in the general questioning of ancient texts that dominated the Renaissance. From the Renaissance onwards scholars researched the methods proposed by ancient authorities, especially Aristotle's methods of natural

philosophy,[471] and a large volume of translations and commentaries on ancient texts had been produced. As was discussed in the chapter on the Quarrel between the Ancients and the Moderns, discoveries and innovations in natural philosophy began to demonstrate the inadequacies of ancient methods when confronted with the new knowledge developed during the seventeenth century. Bacon's emphasis on the experimental method resulted from these new conceptions of natural philosophy and needs to be discussed in detail in order for his influence on later thinkers to be better understood.

Francis Bacon (1561-1626) was a lawyer and a philosopher who revolutionised the theory and practice of philosophy. Bacon's method solved some of the problems he saw with natural philosophy as practised by alchemists and Scholastics, neither of whom Bacon found effective in their methods.[472] Bacon devised a method that eschewed reliance on the authority of supposed knowledge, what he referred to as 'idols', which are the corrupting force in philosophical inquiry. According to Stephen Gaukroger, Bacon claimed, 'We pursue natural philosophy with seriously deficient natural faculties, we operate with a severely inadequate means of communication, and we rely on a hopelessly corrupt philosophical culture.'[473] Bacon suggested a methodology which corrected these inherent mistakes by 'the discovery of causes which are both necessary and sufficient for their effects'.[474] Bacon uses a process of induction which through repeated experiment and observation rules out a number of causes until a true and final cause can be discovered.[475] Bacon attempted 'a fundamental reform of philosophy from a contemplative discipline exemplified in the individual personal of the moral philosopher, to a communal ... enterprise exemplified in the persona of the experimental natural philosopher.'[476] It is this new method of basing natural

[471] Jill Kraye, 'British Philosophy Before Locke', in *Blackwell's Companion to Early Modern Philosophy*, ed. Steven Nadler (Malden and Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2002, 2008), 284.
[472] Stephen Gaukroger, 'Francis Bacon', in *Blackwell's Companion to Early Modern Philosophy*, ed. Steven Nadler (Malden and Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2002, 2008), 299.
[473] Stephen Gaukroger, 'Francis Bacon', 303.
[474] Ibid.
[475] Stephen Gaukroger, 'Knowledge, Evidence and Method', in *The Cambridge Companion to Early Modern Philosophy*, ed. Donald Rutherford (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 47.
[476] Stephen Gaukroger, 'Francis Bacon', 306.

philosophical principles on experience, observation, and verifiable experimentation, that went on to influenced later thinkers.

Following the method proposed by Bacon, early modern scholars began to develop his method and apply it in a number of disciplines. Perhaps the most important proponent of his thought for English and Scottish thinkers was Robert Boyle. Boyle (1627-1691) was a natural philosopher and influential member of the early Royal Society. He, like Bacon, wanted to supplant the Aristotelian method with a mechanistic philosophy which he called 'corpuscularianism'.[477] In this he too followed an experimental method and believed that theory and experiment should work together.[478] Boyle further intended his method to go hand-in-hand with natural religion, following other early modern debates, and arguing that natural philosophical discoveries reveal intelligent design.[479]

It is arguable that the most important scholar to change the methods of eighteenth-century natural philosophy and to promote the experimental method was Sir Isaac Newton (1642-1727).[480] Newton's works, particularly his *Optics*, displayed a method of using experimental evidence and mathematics to prove his theories.[481] Newton's work was crucial for thinkers in the eighteenth century and his ideas influenced philosophical methods for years to come. Furthermore, in the eighteenth century, Boyle and Newton's methods were often assumed to be the same because both promoted an experimental method.[482]

One reason that Newton was so influential, particularly in Scotland, was the adoption of Newtonian methods and ideas in the university curriculum in the early to mid-eighteenth century. The move away from scholastic Aristotelianism to a new form of natural philosophy, be it Cartesian, Newtonian or something else, in the

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[477] Lisa Downing, 'Robert Boyle', in *Blackwell's Companion to Early Modern Philosophy*, ed. Steven Nadler, 339.
[478] Downing, 'Robert Boyle', 348.
[479] Ibid., 350.
[480] Peter Kail, 'Isaac Newton', in *Blackwell's Companion to Early Modern Philosophy*, edited by Steven Nadler, 391.
[481] Kail, 'Isaac Newton', 391. In his *New Theory of Light and Colours* (1672) 'we see in embryo three key features of Newton's methodology. First, his extrication of theoretical science from substantive global pictures; secondly, his emphasis on carful experimentation and thirdly, his keenness to mathematize physical theory.'
[482] Michael Barfoot, 'Hume and the culture of science in the early eighteenth century', in *Studies in the Philosophy of the Scottish Enlightenment*, ed. M.A. Stewart (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 162.

curriculum of the Scottish Universities has been widely studied. As Roger Emerson has argued, 'By c. 1710 the experimentalist position was well known, summarised impressively in the works of Boyle, Locke, Newton, and Le Clerc. It was available in texts and was seemingly vindicated by the discoveries which had accumulated so rapidly since the beginning of the previous century.'[483] From Francis Bacon and other influential thinkers onwards, the early modern period 'called for an end to scholastic pedantry, dogmatism and disputatiousness in education and for the inclusion of polite and gentlemanly standards that would better equip students to engage in the affairs of the world around them.'[484] Colin Maclaurin, for instance, was an influential professor in Aberdeen and Edinburgh who drew upon the theoretical physics in Newton's *Principia* and the experimental method found in Newton's *Optics* and continued Newton's use of mathematics in the study of natural philosophy.[485]

Michael Barfoot has identified Robert Steuart, professor of natural philosophy at Edinburgh, as being instrumental in the dissemination of Newtonian ideas throughout the Scottish Enlightenment.[486] In his lectures, Steuart followed closely the works of the early Newtonians, John Keill and David Gregory, to demonstrate the experimental method.[487] A study of Steuart's reading list demonstrates that he taught the students an historical over-view of natural philosophy in which he 'presented a review of rival systems of "physiology," particularly within the atomistic, corpuscularian, and mechanical traditions.'[488] One of the most used authors for the course was Robert Boyle, highlighting the influence of Boyle's approach on Scottish natural philosophy. Steuart's experiments in his lectures relied on experience-based, sensory observation as in Boyle's mechanical philosophy, rather than relying on a more Newtonian, mathematics based system.[489]

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[483] Roger Emerson, 'Science and moral philosophy in the Scottish Enlightenment', in *Studies in the Philosophy of the Scottish Enlightenment*, ed. M.A. Stewart, 17.
[484] Paul Wood, 'Science in the Scottish Enlightenment', in *The Cambridge Companion to The Scottish Enlightenment*, ed. Alexander Broadie (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 102.
[485] Judith V. Grabiner, 'Maclaurin and Newton: The Newtonian Style and the Authority of Mathematics', in *Science and Medicine in the Scottish Enlightenment*, ed. Charles W.J. Withers and Paul Wood, 143-171.
[486] Barfoot, 'Hume and the culture of science in the early eighteenth century', 151-190.
[487] Ibid., 153.
[488] Ibid., 157.
[489] Ibid., 164.

The eighteenth-century Scottish universities were attempting to establish a useful and practical natural philosophy just as moral philosophy was also seen as being didactic and instructive to the morality of the students. Paul Wood argues:

> Thanks to the writings of Robert Boyle, and the apologists for the early Royal Society, natural knowledge was widely thought to bolster religion because it served to illustrate God's providential governance of nature and consequently could be mobilised for the broader purpose of a university education.[490]

Through the lectures on natural philosophy in the Scottish universities students were exposed to the experimental philosophy and this method was applied to religion, history and moral philosophy as well. The experimental method was so influential that it was adopted by thinkers across disciplines. This follows from Bacon and Boyle's own intentions that their method could reveal truth regardless of which kind of truth. Francis Bacon was not only interested in natural philosophy, but the history of philosophy as well. Bacon thought the history of philosophy should not only be a list of philosophical sects and doctrines or simple biographies of ancient philosophers, but also a study of elements that could be scientifically proven.[491] With the introduction of Bacon's method, the more traditional overview of a philosophy was traded for an analysis of the development of ideas, events and knowledge that affected the philosopher. The ancient philosophers were put into their historical context and within the wider development of philosophy. This approach was completely different from that of the Renaissance philosophers who either followed Diogenes Laertius as their model or adopted the sectarian positions of one particular school.[492] Bacon wanted to cleanse history of the attachment to the dogma of particular sects and analyse philosophy without prejudice. Bacon believed that ancient schools were something to be studied, but not followed as models because they did not offer anything to modern thinkers. The result of this was that 'Empirical methods, with their Baconian emphasis on the nature of the human mind and on natural and civil histories, brought in tow antiquarian and historical studies

[490] Paul Wood, 'Science in the Scottish Enlightenment', 103-104.
[491] Luciano Malusa, 'The First General Histories of Philosophy in England and the Low Countries', in *Models of the History of Philosophy: From its Origins in the Renaissance to the 'Historia Philosophica'*, ed. C.W.T. Blackwell (Dordrecht: Academic Publishers, 1993), 164.
[492] Malusa, 'Histories of Philosophy', 167.

which vindicated the new methods that has produced progress',[493] as Roger Emerson notes.

If an eighteenth-century thinker followed the teachings of Newton, therefore, he was also adhering to this wider tradition of experience and experimentation. Alexander Broadie, in his recent *History of Scottish Philosophy,* has noted that members of the common sense school, led mainly by Thomas Reid, 'use a Baconian or Newtonian methodology and see themselves as entitled to employ that methodology because they are studying human nature in the light of the belief that we human beings are part of the natural world.'[494] Furthermore, Broadie claims 'They all considered that they were applying the experimental method of reasoning to moral subjects'.[495] Broadie argues that one of the foundations of the common sense school was the use and application of the experimental method.

Alexander Broadie also argues that George Turnbull taught Thomas Reid that Bacon invented the inductive method, rather than Newton, although the experimental method became associated with Newton in the minds of Scottish Enlightenment philosophers.[496] Michael Barfoot has noted that when David Hume discusses Newton and 'scientific procedure', this is normal: when 'compared with the wider community of 18th-century texts which discuss such matters, it is clear that there is nothing unusual about them. In fact, it can be argued that his rather brief and undeveloped views were either commonplace or vicarious, and perhaps even inconsistent.'[497]

The experimental method was pervasive in the Scottish Enlightenment. One reason the experimental method was so widespread was because of the university education, but it is also reflective of the changing intellectual climate of the eighteenth century. As was the case in the seventeenth century during the Ancients and Moderns debate, the advances made in natural philosophy affected all disciplines. The implementation of the experimental philosophy in the Scottish Enlightenment demonstrates the modern and current elements of Scottish thinkers'

[493] Emerson, 'Science and moral philosophy', 17.
[494] Alexander Broadie, *A History of Scottish Philosophy* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), 237.
[495] Ibid.
[496] Ibid., 243.
[497] Barfoot, 'Hume and the culture of science in the early eighteenth century', 161.

philosophy participating in a debate with their contemporaries in Europe and there are several notable examples of this including David Hume and David Fordyce.

Scholars, such as Alexander Broadie, have analysed David Hume's relationship to the experimental method, and have shown that he had been heavily influenced by Bacon, Newton and Boyle in his application of this method to moral subjects and the understanding of human nature.[498] David Hume set out to write philosophy in his *Treatise on Human Nature* using the experimental method, and this is an idea which runs through many of his works. In the 'Introduction' to the *Treatise* he stated that previously philosophers have built systems of thought on false principles and this is something he wanted to resolve.[499] He argued that metaphysics uses the best kind of reasoning because it assesses 'every kind of argument'.[500] He believed that all sciences are related to human nature and thus all natural philosophy is 'dependant on the science of Man'.[501] He wanted to apply the best of natural philosophy to the study of human nature: 'In pretending therefore to explain the principles of human nature, we in effect propose a complete system of the sciences, built on a foundation almost entirely new, and the only one upon which they can stand with any security.'[502] Hume identified this experimental philosophy, based on experience and observation, originating in the works of Francis Bacon and continued by British philosophers such as John Locke, Shaftesbury, Mandeville, Hutcheson and Butler.[503] He argued that as long as it is based on experience, 'by tracing up our experiments to the utmost' and keeping our system simple, we will be successful.[504] For Hume, experience is the ultimate authority, and he wished to base 'experiments' on 'cautious observation of human life', on the behaviour that he has experienced.[505] Thus, he put into practice the experimental method in moral philosophy. He continued this line of argument in his essay, 'Concerning Principles

[498] Broadie, *A History of Scottish Philosophy*, 151.
[499] 'Principles taken upon trust, consequences lamely deduc'd from them, want of coherence in the parts, and of evidence in the whole, these are every where to be met with the systems of the most eminent philosophers, and seem to have drawn disgrace upon philosophy itself.' David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature* (1739-1740), edited by David Fate Norton and Mary J. Norton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 3.
[500] Hume, *Treatise*, 3.
[501] Ibid., 4.
[502] Ibid., 4.
[503] Ibid., 5.
[504] Ibid.
[505] Ibid., 6.

of Morals', arguing that morals, as facts can be understood by this method: 'As this is a question of fact, not of abstract science, we can only expect success, by following the experimental method, and deducing general maxims from a comparison of particular instances.'[506] Hume, therefore, consciously and influentially applied the experimental method to moral philosophy.

Hume's claims of successfully adopting the experimental method were countered by others, however. In *An essay on the nature and immutability of truth, in opposition to sophistry and scepticism* (1771), James Beattie, speaking out against sceptics, demonstrated the problems of Hume's system. Beattie argued that Hume's system was 'founded on a false hypothesis taken for granted; and whenever a fact contradictory to that false hypothesis occurs in his observation, he either denies it, or labours hard to explain it away. This, it seems, in his judgement, is experimental reasoning!'[507] Thomas Reid also has similar objections to Hume's methods. He stated that Hume was trying 'to introduce into moral subjects the experimental method of reasoning'. While this was a 'very laudable attempt', however, he failed to recognise, 'That conclusions established by induction ought never to exclude exceptions, if any such should afterwards appear from observation or experiment.'[508] After reassessing Newton's method, Reid claims that Hume's approach 'is contrary to the fundamental principles of the experimental method of reasoning, and therefore may be called rash and unphilosophical.'[509] While Reid was critical of Hume's method, perhaps to establish the superiority of his own method, this example shows the importance of the proper experimental method of philosophy for individual thinkers.

David Fordyce[510] also used the experimental method to understand morality. Fordyce was the professor of moral philosophy at Marischal College in Aberdeen

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[506] David Hume, *Enquiries Concerning Human Understanding and Concerning the Principles of Morals* (1777), ed. L. A. Shelby-Bigge, 3rd edn. rev. P.H. Nidditch (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), 176.
[507] James Beattie, *An essay on the nature and immutability of truth, in opposition to sophistry and scepticism. By James Beattie, LL. D. Professor of Moral Philosophy and Logic in the Marischal College and University of Aberdeen,* the second edition, corrected and enlarged (Edinburgh: A. Kincaid and J. Bell, 1771), 215. ECCO, accessed 5 Feb. 2010.
[508] Thomas Reid, *Essays on the intellectual and active powers of man. By Thomas Reid, In three volumes*, Vol. 3 (Dublin: P. Bryne and J. Milliken, 1790), 26-27. ECCO, accessed 5 Feb 2010.
[509] Ibid., 27.
[510] Alan Ruston, 'Fordyce, David (*bap.* 1711, *d.* 1751)', *ODNB*,

and published *The Elements of Moral Philosophy* in 1754.[511] In the introduction to this work Fordyce sets out his concept of philosophy and his definition of moral philosophy. He claims to be following Francis Bacon's division of human knowledge and enquiry into three parts (history, poetry and philosophy). He carries methods of natural philosophy in to his moral philosophy. He claims: '*Moral Philosophy* has this in common with *Natural Philosophy* that it appeals to *Nature* or *Fact*; depends on observation, and builds its Reasonings on plain uncontroverted Experiments, or upon the fullest Induction of Particulars of which the Subject will admit.'[512] He further claims that philosophers must collect 'phenomena' and discover the laws which they follow and then apply those laws to other phenomena. It is by this way that both natural and moral philosophy are approached according to the same method. He applied the experimental philosophy of his time to his moral philosophy: 'Therefore Moral Philosophy enquires, not how Man *might have been*, but how he is constituted; not into what *Principles*, or *Dispositions* his Actions *may be artfully* resolved, but from what Principles and Dispositions they *actually* flow'.[513] Man is to be understood just as a machine or other kind of animal that is subject to experimental investigation and his moral philosophy follows from this foundation.

These are a few selected examples of the influence of the experimental method in the study of moral philosophy in the Scottish Enlightenment. The fact that such different scholars as Hume and Reid would appeal to the same method, while understanding it differently, demonstrates the importance of it in the Scottish Enlightenment. The use of the experimental method to understand the entirety of philosophy, not just natural philosophy, illustrates a change in the intellectual history of the period resulting in a new focus on evidence and observation to prove all conclusions. This method greatly influenced Ferguson's moral philosophy.

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http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/9877 (accessed 5 Feb 2010).

[511] David Fordyce, *The Elements of Moral Philosophy, in Three Books with a Brief Account of the Nature, Progress, and Origin of Philosophy*, ed. Thomas Kennedy (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2003). Accessed from http://oll.libertyfund.org/title/886 on 27 May 2011.

[512] David Fordyce, *The Elements of Moral Philosophy,* 'Preliminaries'.

[513] Ibid.

3.3 Ferguson and Experimental Philosophy

Ferguson's use of the experimental method has been a source of contention among scholars: while some note the importance of the method,[514] particularly for his *Institutes* and *Principles*,[515] others are critical of his 'inconsistent' use of this method. Roger Emerson and Lisa Hill have argued that Ferguson combined Newtonian empiricism with Montesquieu's method of history to formulate a theory about human behaviour and morals based on reason, evidence and experience.[516] Scholars have further argued that Ferguson followed in the tradition of the 'British empiricists', including Shaftesbury, Hutcheson and Fordyce who had created moral philosophies based on the natural science of Newton and Bacon. This is a familiar context that would have been recognised by his readers, where moral philosophy was influenced by Baconian and Newtonian methods of natural philosophy.[517] These scholars have found the centrality of this empirical tradition in Ferguson's thought to be an important characteristic.

David Kettler has found that Ferguson's use of the experimental method confuses his moral philosophy because of the discrepancy between the application of physical laws and the importance of non-factual, sentimental factors that lead to moral decisions. Kettler believes that Ferguson used this method often to add weight to his ideas; however 'it is so clearly an evasion of all the intellectual issues of his time that he could not rely on it alone'. Because he needed more support for his arguments, Ferguson also employed a 'Newtonian type of teleology' which stated that the laws of nature followed God's creation of the universe. Kettler believes that a combination of Ferguson's 'heavy debt to classical sources' and 'his affinity for a conception of virtue more heroic than that promulgated by his

[514] Gladys Bryson's *Man and Society* examined some attempts made in the Scottish Enlightenment to write the 'science of man' and how some thinkers approached the study empirically and 'scientifically'. She addressed the effects of natural philosophy, particularly the methods of Newton and Bacon, on Ferguson's ideas. Gladys Bryson, *Man and Society: The Scottish Inquiry of the Eighteenth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1945), 7. See also Forbes, 'Introduction'; Lisa Hill, *Passionate Society*; David Allan, *Adam Ferguson*; David Kettler, *Ferguson*.

[515] Eugene Heath, *Adam Ferguson's Selected Philosophical Writings* (Exeter and Charlottesville: Imprint Academic, 2007), 3-6; Emerson, 'Science and moral philosophy', 28-29; Forbes, xx-xxi; Hill, *Passionate Society*, 58-59.

[516] Emerson, 'Science and moral philosophy', 28; Hill, *Passionate Society*, 58-59

[517] Oz-Salzberger, *Translating the Enlightenment*, 111, Hill, *Passionate Society*, 59.

contemporaries' led him to follow a classical, or Aristotelian teleology which helped classify man's aims and attributes but was an outdated 'metaphysical apparatus'.[518] Kettler finds that this teleology was not only inadequate for Ferguson's purposes, but was indicative of his lack of systematic logic and metaphysics, claiming that 'such lofty speculative flights were probably beyond his capabilities and certainly outside the range of his interest.'[519] Kettler is perhaps Ferguson's harshest critic and what he finds so problematic about Ferguson's work is that it appears unsystematic, unanalytical, and greatly ignores what Kettler considers to be the most important parts of philosophy: metaphysics and epistemology. Kettler's criticism of Ferguson's thought, while well founded, ignores Ferguson's exacting application of the experimental method to his moral philosophy and the nature of Ferguson's writings on the subject. To counter these criticisms and to get at the heart of Ferguson's philosophical project, a close examination of his understanding and application of the experimental method, in both his lectures and printed works, is of fundamental importance.

In the *Institutes* and the *Principles* Ferguson published his lectures as a reference and for his students and they followed his lecture plan for this reason. One reason that Ferguson's work appears 'inconsistent' is that he is teaching both pneumatics and moral philosophy, two topics that are related, but have a different focus. Moral philosophy is 'the knowledge of what ought to be, or the application of rules that ought to determine the choice of voluntary agents'.[520] In order to determine moral laws, Ferguson first laid out the nature and the history of man so that he could establish their foundation. To accomplish this, Ferguson began with pneumatics, which was the standard teaching method at the University of Edinburgh in the eighteenth century.[521] Pneumatics is the 'physical history of mind' and is the ultimate foundation of moral philosophy. Pneumatics takes a purely 'scientific' approach to man, according to Ferguson, follows the rules of the sciences, and 'treats of man, may contain the history of man's nature, and an explanation or theory

[518] Kettler, *Ferguson*, 131-134.
[519] Ibid..
[520] *Institutes*, 9.
[521] See a description of the lecture of John Pringle, Professor of Pneumatics and Ethical Philosophy in 'A short account of the University of Edinburgh' in *The Scots Magazine*, Vol. 3 (Aug 1741), 371-375.

of the principal phenomena of human life.'[522] Pneumatics holds 'up a picture of man' and verifies it by 'observation and experience and reflection.'[523] Pneumatics also assesses the role of God in people's lives and the nature of the human soul. It is with pneumatics that Ferguson properly employs the experimental method in his work. From the foundations established about the laws that govern the human body and soul, Ferguson can proceed to determine moral laws for the conduct of men. It is this two-part method which causes confusion among some scholars because Ferguson seems to take on two different methods to analyse these two topics. Further investigation, particularly into Ferguson's lecture notes, demonstrates how Ferguson bridges the gap between these two subjects.

Ferguson's writings reflect the fact that he was foremost a teacher of moral philosophy and pneumatics. Three of his major publications were based on his lectures and printed for the benefit of his students. Because what he is writing is basically the same as what he is teaching, Ferguson did not attempt to analyse analytic philosophy in the way that other philosophers of his time did because that was not his goal. Although at university, Ferguson was noted for being particularly fond of and accomplished in the study of metaphysics,[524] in his books, Ferguson was attempting to create a practical, easy-to-follow philosophical system which benefited his students, not to create an entire system of philosophy.

Ferguson begins with an exploration of the universe and its laws. He cannot avoid eighteenth-century natural philosophy and the innovations of his time, particularly the application of the scientific method to his wider methodology.[525] He established that Bacon and Newton's scientific method should be used to understand facts, reality and the laws of nature. People can determine general and particular laws from observing facts. It is through observation and logical analysis that people can understand natural laws. Furthermore, when people observe the natural world and derive conclusions from facts, they are actually viewing the universe which God

[522] *Institutes*, 10.
[523] *Lectures*, I, ff. 5-8.
[524] John Small, *Biographical Sketch of Adam Ferguson, LL.D., F.R.S.E.* (Neill and Company: Edinburgh, 1864), 2-5.
[525] See Adam Ferguson's *Institutes of Moral Philosophy* (1769); *Principles of Moral and Political Science* (1792); *Analysis Pneumatics and Moral Philosophy* (1766); Ferguson's unpublished manuscript *Of the Things that are or may be* (1801-1806).

has created.[526] God created a set of rational laws that people can then observe, as was seen in Boyle's thought. This is not only a means for understanding the material world, but also allows humans to witness the divine plan and God's providence in action.[527] Ferguson claims that God is the creator of the universe, guided by providence which humans can understand through observation of phenomena.[528]

Ferguson went into great detail to explain this experimental method. Ferguson argued that the experimental method revolutionised the study of 'visible and mechanical subjects' by creating new methods to discover the causes of 'operations'. Through numerous experimentation and varied methods, 'the operation of a cause which in the ordinary course of things might have forever remained unobserved, was forced into view, and placed beyond the possibility of doubt or mistake'.[529] According to Ferguson, physical laws are collected from particulars that lead to general conclusions. Once a physical law is established, it can explain a variety of phenomena. Ferguson approved of the absolute nature of 'fact and reality' discovered by physical laws because he was opposed to the use of hypothesis and theory to explain natural occurrences. Ferguson was highly critical of the ancient schools of philosophy for this reason:

> …logic or the science of Investigation and Argument is the great organ to be employed in all our reasonings and discoveries…The logic of Aristotle or the schools were a mere Theory of Syllogism or Argument. The Theory of Investigation was omitted. Lord Bacon has endeavoured to supply this defect and in his *Novum Organum* has given….. This new instrument of Reason has been successfully applied to extend the sciences that relate to the matters of system. But as if the canons of reason were different in the treatments of material and intellectual subjects the use of them has been in a great measure neglected in the latter.[530]

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[526] Hill, *Passionate Society*, 233.
[527] 'Such is the order of things resulting from the energy of Eternal Providence, or, in the language of Plato, Such are the ideas of Eternal mind, which, when thus realized, furnish an object of contemplation congenial to the apprehension even of created intelligence, though greatly extended beyond the limits of its actual comprehension.' *P.I.*, 272.
[528] Ibid., 273.
[529] For examples of this method, Ferguson cited Isaac Newton's optics, Benjamin Franklin's work on electricity, the chemistry of Joseph Black and Antoine Lavoisier and Evangelista Torricelli's work on suction and the pump. *P.I.*, 95-96.
[530] *Lectures*, I, ff. 16-17.

Ferguson further argues that once the laws of nature have been established, additional explanations become unnecessary and, 'Such is the tendency of the rules which Newton laid down to himself in proceeding to explain the phenomena of the planetary system'.[531]

Physical science proceeds from facts and observations to general laws which are then used to understand phenomena and this process greatly increases human knowledge.[532] This method does not provide only a means to categorising and understanding the world, but it also leads to the 'possessions of power, or the command of events' because the knowledge gained from these laws of nature discovered through experimentation can be recreated and the knowledge can be used for invention and innovation: 'Thus, men, knowing the laws of fluid pressure construct the pump and they siphon, and convey water in close pipes over inequalities of ground.'[533] For Ferguson, following from Bacon's conclusions, this method of 'science' is successful when the reality of the conclusions is demonstrated, leading to further discovery, and thus greater increases human knowledge.[534] Ferguson argued that natural philosophers discovered the causes of forces that had not been observed previously and proved, without a doubt, the validity of their conclusions. What Ferguson takes from this method was the practice of basing conclusions and judgements on experience and observation more than the act of creating experiments.

Ferguson applied this method of 'experimentation' and observation to discover truthful principles to his moral philosophy. As has been noted, Ferguson was not the first thinker to relate the experimental method to moral philosophy; it was a common practice among his Scottish contemporaries.[535] Ferguson maintained

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[531] *P.I.*, 115-116.
[532] *P.I.*, 279-280, *P.II.*, 2. 'Science in every application of the term, implies, the knowledge of some one or more general principles with their applications, whether in directing the will, or in explaining appearances, and connecting together our conceptions of things.'
[533] *P.I.*, 280-281.
[534] 'Science, says my Lord Bacon, is fruitful of arts; and an art, after the principle is lost, may serve as the germ of a future discovery, or actually enable the speculative to recall the science on which a practice is founded. Who knows but, in some former age, the pressure of the air was known, and led the mechanic in the construction of his pump... The successful application of science, to the production of effects, is the last and most convincing evidence of its reality, or of the truth of its principles.' *P.I.*, 282.
[535] Eugene Heath, *Adam Ferguson's Selected Philosophical Writings* (Exeter and Charlottesville: Imprint Academic, 2007), 3-6.

that the best method in determining the laws of physical science and moral science was through observation and the use of reason and analysis. People, more specifically his students, must take an active role in making observations about morality and in order to arrive at their own conclusions, [536] as was demonstrated in the discussion about Ferguson's eclectic method. The importance he placed on the active pursuit of philosophical truth speaks to both his use of the experimental method as well as his eclectic methodology.

Ferguson argued that knowledge of mankind originated from the study of the natural world in which men exist, their surroundings, and the laws that govern the world in general. By looking at others, people are inspired to think about their own nature and analyse both the history of man and questions of morals. Ferguson's method then follows this premise:

> For this reason it is thought proper, in the choice of our method, to look abroad into the general order of things, and to contemplate the place as well as the description of man, while we endeavour to fix the distinction of good and evil relative to his nature; a distinction which may be collected from his situation relative to other beings, as well as from the description of what he is in himself.[537]

It is part of man's nature to attempt to understand the operating principles of the universe in which he exists. Man is singularly gifted with the power of understanding, of comprehension, 'qualifying him to perceive, and to estimate the bearings of a whole' to a 'common end'. This power of comprehension allows men to learn the laws which govern the physical world, created by God, and run by providence, thus leading to an understanding of God's laws. Here again, Ferguson follows Boyle and eighteenth-century thinkers who find the proof of God in the discovery of His laws. This does not apply only to physical laws, but also to moral laws. According to Ferguson, man is also capable of making moral judgements, as well as distinguishing right from wrong, which direct his private and public actions and 'is formed on the dictates of a social disposition, which receives, with favour

[536] *P.I.*, 4.
[537] Ibid., 6-7.

and love, what constitutes the good of mankind, or rejects, with disapprobation and abhorrence, what is of a contrary nature.'[538]

Ferguson maintained that people can learn and find meaning in their actions, as well as the principles of moral philosophy; much like in natural philosophy people can correlate cause and effect. The way that people learn to interpret the outcome of their actions is through experience and it takes specific understanding, not just instincts, to form judgements about them.[539] Man is different from other animals because he has the powers of observation and intelligence, both of which he needs to survive.[540] He states:

> The knowledge obtained by reflection, from consciousness, is, of all others, the most intimate and sure. It consists in a conviction of reality that sets every cavil and dispute at defiance, or does not admit of a question, whether that of which we are conscious may not be otherwise than as we are conscious of it: In other matters, even in matters of perception, there is an information and a subject of information, that may be separately stated; but, in this instance, the subject and information it brings, the thought or affection, and the consciousness of thought or affection, are inseparable. Here the evidence of reality remains unshaken and unattempted by the boldest assaults of scepticism. The very statement of doubt is a dogmatic assumption of personal existence and thought.[541]

Thus, people understand the world through their observation and reflection. From this underlying belief, the method which Ferguson chose to follow was that of the modern experimental method.

Ferguson, continuing to place importance on 'laws' of nature following on from Newton,[542] believed that moral philosophy also employs general laws but 'moral principles also direct the choice of voluntary agents'.[543] For Ferguson, 'The specific principles of moral science are some general expression of what is good, and fit to determine the choice of moral agents in the detail of their conduct.'[544]

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[538] Ibid., 35.
[539] Ibid., 38.
[540] Ibid., 53.
[541] Ibid., 78-79.
[542] Hill, *Passionate Society*, 58-59.
[543] *P.I.*, 118. 'Under the last of these titles [science], no doubt, we may include not only the application of generic principles to the explanation of phenomena, or particular appearances; but the application of moral principles also to direct the choice of voluntary agents.'
[544] *P.II.*, 2.

Ferguson argued that there are intellectual laws, while they are less frequently discussed,[545] and these laws relating to the operations of the mind are fixed. A law, however, can also refer to a 'rule of choice, or expression of what is good' and it is in this meaning that Ferguson relates fixed laws to morals.[546] As a result, moral laws may exist without being followed because moral laws do not rely on facts. There are similar laws which exist and relate to the physical world which are laws of arts, aesthetics and utility.[547] The word moral has many 'vague' uses and therefore Ferguson is limiting his concept of moral philosophy to 'the study of what men ought to be, and of what they ought to wish, for themselves, and for their country'.[548]

If Ferguson claims that the experimental method does not work for people, then how does he apply it to his moral philosophy? The best explanation of this is found in his lectures. Ferguson believes that science dealt with facts and reason, but 'In moral philosophy we inquire not what is the Fact: but amidst the Existent and possible Qualities of our nature, what is the Best.'[549] The object of moral philosophy is not to look for facts about people, but to find the 'object of progress and Improvement', looking for what is right and perfectible in a person's innate qualities. To do this the moralist 'consults his own feeling and he suggests to mankind the elevation which he derives from thence'. Thus, it is not fact which Ferguson uses to prove moral positions, but the realities of good and evil.[550] Once the realities of the distinction between good and evil are determined, rather than facts, general principles can be derived. Ferguson is using a similar method to the experimental method, but is using different evidence to create rules. For Ferguson, 'Conscience is the great source of evidence in this matter but there are many collateral considerations to assist our judgement. For Good is probably also pleasant reputable salutary and profitable etc'.[551]

Ferguson makes a conscious effort to distinguish between the application of the experimental method to moral and physical inquiries. He believes that physical

[545] *Institutes*, 80. Ferguson references Montesquieu's *Spirit of the Laws*.
[546] Ibid., 82.
[547] Ibid., 83.
[548] Ibid., 84.
[549] *Lectures*, I, ff. 95.
[550] Ibid., ff. 96.
[551] Ibid., ff. 96.

and moral science should not be combined into one system. He believes that there is a difference between the physical and the moral world.

> Such questions respecting human nature have been confounded together in consequence of vague and ambiguous use of words. All Questions whether of Fact or the Right respecting the Human mind are reckoned moral And whatever relates to the material world is distinguished from what relates to the intellectual, by the appellation of physical. The consequence is that every speculation relating to man or to the conceptions or passions of men is supposed to constitute moral philosophy. And so instituted for that science in which men are instructed in the great interest of human nature or of mankind.[552]

Science is defined by facts and explanations, while moral philosophy is composed of experience, choice and preference. The two are connected 'because we need to know man's actual state before we can understand what is good'. What fundamentally connects the two is pneumatics because people must understand the laws that govern the human body before they can understand what is best for them.[553] Ferguson states 'Pneumatics, like science, looks at the history of the species', while moral philosophy is different in 'the sources of Evidence and in the conduct of Reason'.[554] In moral philosophy Ferguson was looking for facts to find the reality of good and evil, which is vital for people's happiness. The source of this evidence is 'of what we are conscious', or what is observed and experienced. Ferguson is consciously using the methods of physical science when writing his moral science:

> And that the application of physical law and physical science to mind will be admitted in the same sense as it is admitted to matter. It is indeed important that we should be able to state the Fact without mistaking it for the Right and the Right without mistaking it for the Fact… In Physical Enquiry relating to human Nature our object is to Ascertain what men have done or established. In moral Enquiries our object is to select what is best for human Nature and what we ought to wish for ourselves for our country and for mankind… In the first we are led by Evidence of Fact. In the second by the Judgement and discernment of a conduct and just mind.[555]

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[552] *Lectures*, I, ff. 99.
[553] Ibid., ff. 101.
[554] Ibid.
[555] Ibid., ff. 551-552.

Ferguson applied the method of experimental science to his moral philosophy with some adjustments: he did not use experiments, but observations and he is not looking for facts, but realities of good and evil. He makes this explicit in his lectures as well as in his written work.

This method was so central to Ferguson's thought that it also influenced his concept of history. In the *Essay on the History of Civil Society* Ferguson admitted that the natural historian also acknowledges 'that his knowledge of the material system of the world consists in a collection of facts, or at most, in general tenets derived from particular observations and experiments.'[556] Ferguson believed the natural historian should avoid conjecture and hypothesis and rely solely on reason, fact and observation. This use of the experimental method in moral philosophy and in history leads to an explanation of Ferguson's relationship with his sources. In regard to the history of humanity and society, Ferguson used a variety of sources, both ancient and modern, as evidence of different stages of human development. He used ancient accounts of 'primitive society' as well as modern accounts of what he considered to be people in a similar stage as his empirical evidence about people.[557] Instead of performing experiments on people, he used the observations of others as the evidence on which to base his conclusions.

He followed a similar method in his moral philosophy. Because Ferguson believed that the study of the character of man, 'the laws of his animal and intellectual system', and man's happiness, were the most important topics to study,[558] he devoted a large amount of his writing and teaching to developing his method of inquiry into moral philosophy. Ferguson maintained that the principles that explain humans must be based on observation and the principles must be applicable in human life.[559] Ferguson, however, did not believe he could derive these principles from experimentation because people cannot be experimented upon

[556] *Essay*, 8. Duncan Forbes understands this application of the scientific method to history to be Ferguson's argument against the concept of the 'origin' of society. Forbes, 'Introduction', xv-xvi.
[557] Forbes, 'Introduction', xx-xxi.
[558] *Essay*, 8-9.
[559] Ibid., 9.

in unusual situations.[560] Thus, moral philosophy is not based on experimentation, but on the use of facts and evidence found in texts and personal observation. Ferguson used both ancient and modern literature and philosophy to find evidence about human nature and morals combined with his personal observation and reason to conceive of his moral principles. It is in this way that Ferguson was able to adapt the experimental method to explain moral philosophy.

This concept is central to Ferguson's wider views about moral philosophy. All people can make observations about others, either based on personal observations or by reading the testimony of others. If a person makes mistakes in the conclusions he draws from these observations it is because he has made improper judgements about the experiences he has had rather than there being a flaw in the method of basing conclusions on experience and observation.[561] This, however, is not only through observation that people can form judgements about others, it also takes a 'force of mind', or reason, to properly understand human nature and morality. All people have opinions, but it takes a better understanding and reason to direct them to the best form and use. Because Ferguson's moral philosophy is centred around helping people makes these moral choices, this is the ultimate foundation of his method. He believes that each person will be able to make proper moral choices with a combination of his guidance along with their personal observations and experiences.[562] He told his students in a lecture: 'The facts must be verified by your experience, the sentiments must correspond to the feelings of your minds, and every particular to be of use must be …noted and

[560] 'Particular experiments which have been found so useful in establishing the principles of other sciences, could probably, on this subject, teach us nothing important, or new'. *Essay*, 9.

[561] 'Men have sufficiently varied their trials on the effect of external accommodations, diversity of manners, and forms of policy. Every one may observe for himself the effect of such variations, whether amounting to happiness or misery. And if he err, it is not want of experience that misleads him; but presumptive opinions, conceived without examination, and suffered to remain even in opposition to the experience he has actually had.' *P.I.*, 97.

[562] 'In this manner we have not only to cultivate the powers of observation, but to acquire also that force of mind which may give to observation its proper effect. There is no object of human concern on which the dullest of minds has not already imbibed some opinion; and opinions formed into habits of thinking do not give way even to conviction. They may be supplanted by different or contrary habit of thinking; but often set instruction, mere information, or even conviction at defiance. Of this we need no other example, than that person, who, although he is convinced that all the tales of ghosts and apparitions he ever heard are fabulous, yet trembles in entering a church yard or burial vault in the dark.' *P.I.*, 97.

pursued to its consequence.'[563] It is up to each individual to look at what Ferguson has presented and to make up his own mind about its validity based on his experiences and emotions.

It is through a combination of the experimental method and the methods of modern eclecticism that Ferguson sets out his moral philosophy. He begins with the physical study of the human body and mind followed by an understanding of the human soul in his discussions of pneumatics. From this foundation in the physical laws which govern humans, Ferguson proceeds to the laws of morality using the same method. His empirical methodology is maintained through a shift in the evidence used to reach conclusions. Observation and analysis combined with active personal experience are the keys to discovering moral principles. Lisa Hill has argued that Ferguson was attempting to discover the laws of human nature through empiricism and reason, thus following Epictetus, who found the philosopher's purpose to discover natural laws and to live by God's will.[564] While she finds the impetus for Ferguson's adoption of empirical philosophy located in Stoic philosophy, Ferguson more importantly followed in the tradition of modern natural philosophy, and in the methods devised by the modern eclectics to create this concept of moral law.

4.1 Conclusion

Approaching Ferguson's relationship to his ancient sources and ancient philosophy necessitates an examination of his intellectual context. Ferguson's perspective on ancient philosophy was, in part, determined by how people in the eighteenth century thought about classical antiquity. Because Ferguson's work has been often connected to ancient thought by modern scholars, the importance of establishing this context becomes even more imperative when analysing his active engagement with ancient philosophy.

[563] *Lectures*, I, ff. 1.
[564] Hill, *Passionate Society*, 57, 59.

The Quarrel between the Ancients and the Moderns is of fundamental importance for Ferguson's relationship to antiquity. In the Quarrel, the Ancients, those who argued for the relevance of classical literature in the modern context, developed a highly sophisticated historical outlook to maintain this position. With the tools of a new understanding of the importance of the universality of human nature and new techniques of hermeneutics and historicism, the Ancients could successfully argue for the applicability of ancient literature to modern ideas and debates. The Moderns had argued that due to the progress of natural philosophy foremost and improvements and innovations in all disciplines, the works of antiquity had been surpassed and therefore did not hold a place in early modern thought. The Ancients acknowledged the progress of natural philosophy, but also recognised the importance of ancient thought and their techniques allowed them to argue this. Adam Ferguson took up the position of the Ancients: he readily accepted the progress of natural philosophy and the writings of modern authors while maintaining a firm belief in the importance of ancient thought and the usefulness of ancient literature. His use of historicism and the concept of human universals further demonstrate his position as an Ancient in this debate. This has a significant effect on his relationship with his ancient sources: not only did he establish a place for them in his works, he assessed them as he would any source, sometimes being critical, sometimes laudatory, looking at them analytically. Ferguson did not bow to the authority of ancient philosophy, as might be assumed by his use of it in his texts, but viewed it as part of the history of ideas. This stance speaks to Ferguson's wider methodology, that of a modern eclectic.

Modern eclecticism is a method of philosophical inquiry that relies on no authority, but the power of truth and reason and which draws on a number of sources to reach philosophical principles. The eclectics maintained that truth can be found in all sources, ancient and modern, and used the writing of others as evidence to prove and support the observations and analysis done by individual thinkers. Modern eclectics have been studied mainly in the context of the German universities and particularly their influence on the discipline of the history of philosophy, yet Ferguson was well aware of these techniques. The pervasive nature of their methods has been traced in many different areas and the locality of the authors most noted to

be eclectic does not determine their sphere of influence. Ferguson would have been exposed to the methods of the eclectics not only during his visits to German universities during his long career as both a lecturer and private tutor, but also in his extensive reading of seventeenth and eighteenth-century literature. Ferguson did adopt the methods of the eclectics, not only in his working of the history of philosophy, but in his overall approach to philosophy. Ferguson maintained that the philosopher should find philosophical truth from critical observation and the collection of data. Ferguson was sceptical of superstition and enthusiasm, he rejected all elements of dogmatism and blind obedience to an author, and maintained that the path to truth follows from observation and experience followed by an analysis of evidence.

The experimental method is crucial for the eclectic method in stressing both the importance of observation and the use of evidence for discerning philosophical principles. The experimental method promoted by Bacon, Boyle and Newton influenced thought throughout Europe in both natural and moral philosophy. It further provided thinkers with the tools to combat sectarian philosophy and disprove dogmatic positions. Ferguson created his philosophical principles from this method, and encouraged his students to do the same, by observing nature and human behaviour and by reading philosophical and historical texts to find evidence to derive their own concepts of philosophy. Ferguson acknowledged that experimentation on humans was impossible, and therefore was unable to conduct experiments to find the laws of morality and human nature. To meet this challenge, Ferguson used a variety of texts, ancient and modern, as evidence from which he could discover human universals and the laws of morality.

Ferguson therefore uses these methods as tools to create a philosophy that is unique and anti-sectarian. Ferguson also places observation, analysis, the use of personal reason and sentiment, at the centre of his ideas about moral choice. Ferguson did not expect people to follow any one system and Ferguson himself follows this procedure. Ferguson, for example, discusses Stoic philosophy, but does not subscribe to any part of the Stoics' position without first testing their ideas according to the this method. His conclusions may or may not have been critical of Stoic ideas but any Stoic element in his philosophy would have been adopted only

after these ideas had undergone a thorough analysis. Ferguson does not simply adopt their or any other ideas into his philosophy. He has to prove to himself and others that whatever ideas he does propose should have passed through this rigorous questioning of authority, been assessed by experience, and have survived close examination of the assumptions on which they were predicated. This method can further be seen in his approach to ancient philosophy, as we shall see in the next chapter.

III. Chapter 2: Ferguson's Methods in Practice: The Presentation of Ancient Philosophy

Introduction

Adam Ferguson's eighteenth-century intellectual context was strongly influenced by the Quarrel between the Ancients and the Moderns, modern eclecticism and the experimental method. This rich foundation informed Ferguson's understanding of both ancient and modern philosophy and greatly influenced his opinion of different authors. Drawing on these trends, Ferguson was able to formulate his own methodology, one that addressed the issues raised by his contemporaries and one that used the techniques found in the writings of modern authors. From the Quarrel, Ferguson adopted the position of the Ancients, who attempted to establish a role for ancient philosophy through historicism and the acceptance of human universals, while at the same time maintaining an aversion to blindly accepting the authority of specific authors. The modern eclectics promoted a reliance on reason alone to find the evidence to discover true philosophical principles, which also rejected sectarianism and dogmatic beliefs. These modern eclectics formulated their ideas by basing them on the use of reason and a critical analysis of all evidence for any subject. Ferguson too adopted this view when engaging with his ancient and modern sources to formulate his historical and philosophical principles. The experimental method, while often used to explain natural philosophy, was also adapted to moral philosophy and Ferguson incorporated elements of this strategy when addressing other topics.

Ferguson's approach to philosophy and the selection of his philosophical and historical sources was dictated by this method. Ferguson did not simply accept the authority of ancient or modern authors, as has been argued by scholars, but took from ancient literature what he determined to be truth. As with the eclectics, Ferguson had reached philosophical conclusions of his own, and found support for his ideas in other authors. His ancient sources, particularly his philosophical sources, are brought to bear in his works to lend weight to his theories of moral philosophy; they are used as evidence for points he wants to make. Because

Ferguson cannot prove his beliefs about the nature of man experimentally, he relies on the writings of others, both ancient and modern, as evidence to build the case for his philosophical principles. The ancients, therefore, are not an authority he is following, but, thanks to the historicist position of the Ancients, are useful examples from which to draw conclusions.

One way of observing the influence of these methods is to take an in-depth analysis of the role that ancient philosophy plays in Ferguson's lectures and published works. Ferguson has a particular didactic and pedagogical purpose for his discussion of ancient philosophy in his lectures which better explains his complex relationship to his ancient sources and the frequency with which they appear in his works. It further proves his commitment to an anti-sectarian philosophy because of his unbiased, detached approach to the subject of ancient philosophy.

1.1 Adam Ferguson and Ancient Philosophy: A Pedagogical Paradigm

Introduction

Ferguson was foremost a moralist attempting to create a system of moral philosophy which would respond to the problems found in eighteenth-century Scotland. He wrote the majority of his works on moral philosophy for the benefit of his students, offering them a complete view of the issues raised on the topic of moral philosophy, by detailing various philosophical options, and then presenting his own philosophy. In the 'Introduction' to his *Principles of Moral and Political Science* (1792) Ferguson acknowledged that to do this he has to draw on a variety of sources:

> There is not perhaps in this collection any leading thought, or principle of moment, that may not be found in the writings of others; and, if the author knew *where*, he might have been as well employed in pointing them out as in composing this book: But the latter is perhaps the easier task of the two; and, as the concurrence of many in the same thoughts is not a presumption of their falsehood, it is no reason why they should be omitted here. The object is not novelty, but benefit to the student. The Author will not neglect citing those who have gone before him, as often as he is sensible of having

> borrowed his thoughts, or as often as he recollects at the moment, that the student can with advantage be referred to other instructors.[565]

Ferguson included ideas of others so that he could present a more complete picture of philosophy to his students. In addition, Ferguson often suggested texts for further reading and named authors who he believed would be most beneficial to the education of his students. He was careful not to force ideas upon his pupils and readers, but rather demonstrated to them what possible philosophical options they could explore on their own. Ferguson's pedagogical method of referring to both ancient and modern thinkers in his works offered his students and readers a more complete picture of moral philosophy. Although he may not consistently acknowledge his sources, what he provides are general guidelines from which his students can pursue philosophical inquiry. This incorporation of ancient and modern philosophy has led some scholars to view Ferguson's own philosophy as being overly influenced by ancient philosophy, particularly by the Stoic school, and that Ferguson has merely adopted elements of ancient philosophy into his own. A closer analysis of Ferguson's unpublished lecture notes and his published texts demonstrates that Ferguson's relationship to ancient philosophy is much more complex.

Of all aspects of Ferguson's engagement with ancient philosophy, the Stoic school has been discussed as the most important and influential for Ferguson. The significance of Stoic philosophy on Ferguson's concept of moral and political philosophy has been addressed to varying degrees; some scholars attempt to find specific points of Stoic influence on Ferguson while other scholars only comment on its supposed importance. Although some scholars[566] note Ferguson's criticism of the Epicurean school and his account of its relationship to Stoicism, little attention has been paid to his debt to ancient philosophy in general. While the schools of ancient philosophy that seem to be most important for Ferguson's thought are the

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[565] *P.I.*, 8.

[566] The scholars who have made the most detailed study of Ferguson's relationship to Epicureanism include Fania Oz-Salzberger *Translating the Enlightenment* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995); Fania Oz-Salzberger's edition of Adam Ferguson's, 1767 *An Essay on the History of Civil Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); David Kettler, *The Social and Political Thought of Adam Ferguson*, 2nd edn. (New Brunswick and London: Transaction Publishers, 1965, 2005); Lisa Hill, *The Passionate Society: The Social, political and Moral Thought of Adam Ferguson* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2006).

Stoics and the Epicureans, he also included discussions of the Peripatetic school, as well as mentions of Socrates and Aristotle specifically, as well as a range of other thinkers. There is a specific intellectual context which defines Ferguson's interpretation of these schools, their relationship to each other, and modern philosophy, and this context is the Quarrel between the Ancients and the Moderns. The Quarrel began as a literary debate in the seventeenth century and centred on the question of authority and on doubt whether representatives of ancient Greece and Rome should maintain their authority over rules of style and presentation. Theorists wondered if modern representatives could create their own authority having the benefit of learning from the ancients, but moving beyond what they had proclaimed. This debate remained to influence many thinkers, including Adam Ferguson, in the eighteenth century, particularly in the development of historicism. Ferguson, as has been argued, took the side of the ancients. Instead of adopting any ancient system, moreover, he advocated moving beyond their initial philosophical claims and formulating his own. Furthermore, Ferguson used the experimental method and the methods of the eclectics to analyse the truthfulness of ancient and modern philosophy when creating his system. Well-versed in the classics, Ferguson attempted to understand classical philosophy as a thing that had existed in the past. For Ferguson, it is static, it is defined, and it is something of which he could make use to discuss philosophical problems. Furthermore, Ferguson took this initial foundation in ancient philosophy to clarify his position regarding the parameters of modern philosophy.

The importance of understanding Ferguson's concept of ancient philosophy is that it better explains his complex relationship to Stoicism and leads to a different interpretation than has been seen in other scholarship. Ferguson did not discuss Stoicism as if it existed in a vacuum – he placed it within the tradition of classical philosophy and thus his ideas of Stoicism cannot be understood without an understanding of how that school related to the others. Because the scholarship on Ferguson's relationship to ancient philosophy has focused on Stoicism and Epicureanism, an incomplete account of Ferguson's engagement with ancient philosophy has been presented and by attempting to offer a balanced assessment of this engagement, a more complete understanding should be reached.

1.2 Ferguson's Concept of Ancient Philosophy

An examination of Ferguson's works demonstrates a complex and broad knowledge of ancient philosophy and, adopting the mantle of the historian of philosophy, Ferguson presented his students and readers with a detailed account of philosophical schools in their ancient context. He examined the interconnected relationship between the principal ancient schools, specifically the Epicureans, the Peripatetics, and the Stoics, in order to teach his students about different approaches to moral philosophy. Furthermore, an analysis of Ferguson's views on these schools reveals his critical opinion of them and accounts for their repeated references through his works.

Ferguson's lectures on Pneumatics and Moral Philosophy given at the University of Edinburgh (1776-1785) offer his clearest discussion of ancient philosophy. These unpublished lectures are an under-used source[567] in the scholarship on Ferguson, possibly due to their location at the University of Edinburgh and their confused organisation.[568] Nevertheless, they contain his most complete presentation of the ancient schools and therefore should be examined in detail for a full understanding of his thought. Following these lectures, Ferguson published the *Institutes of Moral Philosophy* (1769), an outline of the lectures which was intended for students to use as a textbook in conjunction with his lectures, and *The Principles of Moral and Political Science* (1792) which Ferguson published in his retirement as an expansion of the *Institutes*. A close examination of the lectures

[567] David Kettler and Vincenzo Merolle have made an excellent study of Ferguson's lecture notes in some of their work, but the majority of Ferguson's scholars have not made use of them as a source. Because the *Institutes* and the *Principles* are based on the lectures most of the information contained in them can be found in his published works, but many of the subtle nuances of Ferguson's thought are better presented and explained in the lecture notes and provide a much more complete and detailed discussion of ancient philosophy and its importance to Ferguson's thought.

[568] Ferguson's lecture notes are located in the EUL Special Collections. They consist of three volumes of hand-written lecture notes. The first two volumes are unbound, mainly loose-leaf pages and appear to be the notes he used each day he lectured, with the date and lecture number noted on many of the pages from the years 1775-1785, though not all of the years have complete courses of the lectures. One of the problems with these volumes is that they are not in numerical order, lecture number or page number and there are several lectures whose date is unclear or unknown due to its placement in the file. The third volume is a bound, but incomplete copy of the lecture notes which additionally has the disadvantage of a second person's handwriting, probably Ferguson's successor Dugald Stewart, which corrects and rewrites some of Ferguson's lectures, but has the benefit of only containing one copy of each lecture and contain most of the information found in the previous two volumes.

and the printed material will offer a more complete discussion of Ferguson's view of the ancient schools.

In the section, 'Of the Progress of Moral Apprehension' in the *Principles*, Ferguson traced the history of moral philosophy from its humble origins to the advances made by thinkers such as Socrates. He believed moral philosophy is one of man's 'common interests'; that 'Men are deeply concerned to ascertain, and to apply the distinction of good and evil'.[569] From this basic starting point, all people attempt to set out rules of right and wrong, praise and blame, as well as of proper conduct[570] and this comprises Ferguson's definition of moral philosophy.[571] Ferguson maintained that philosophers, particularly 'well distinguished' by the ancients, have attempted to find a 'measure of just estimation'.[572] While Ferguson addressed the topic of ancient moral philosophy, unlike other contemporary historians of philosophy,[573] Ferguson did not present accounts of the lives of the philosophers or a history of the development of the sects and schools. Instead, Ferguson focused on the principal question of defining the 'Sole Good' and explored the different answers given in the surviving works of the founders or their 'votaries'. Ferguson states; 'My object is not [to] enumerate the sects to particularize the lives of Individuals or state all the diversity of opinions. But to specify the principal subjects of controversy and the doctrines to which the tenets of sects may be referred.'[574]

According to Ferguson, after societies began to develop science, asking questions about the nature of the universe, an innovation came when Socrates

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[569] *P.I.*, 300.
[570] Ibid., 300.
[571] *Lectures, I*, ff. 6.
[572] *Lectures, II*, ff. 144. 'Men of Speculation and Philosophy have endeavoured to ascertain the Truth amidst the variety of opinions Or to assign a measure of just estimation. This is the primary object of Moral Philosophy, well distinguished in general by the Antients, and by many of them nobly conceived on the model of human Nature in many of its highest exertions'.
[573] For example see Jean-Henri-Samuel Formey, *A concise history of philosophy and philosophers* (Glasgow, 1767), 58, ECCO, accessed 20 Jul 2010; Thomas Stanley, *The history of philosophy: containing the lives, opinions, actions and discourses of the philosophers of every sect. Illustrated with the effigies of divers of them*, the third edition (London, 1701), ECCO, accessed 20 Jul 2010.
[574] *Lectures*, II, ff. 144, 229. 'I mean not to enter into the History of these Sects But as we have now had the Question more fully before us and have incurred to Nature and experience for an opinion on this Subject... We are better qualified to judge the argument as it stood between the Patrons or Votaries of those Different Sects. And having Already stated the Variety of opinions I shall now return to the Question as it stood in their manner of considering the Subject.'

substituted moral philosophy for cosmology[575] and 'is said to have brought down philosophy from the heavens; or, to have substituted, for conjecture relating to the origin of worlds, the consideration of what man is more immediately concerned to know; the distinction of excellence and defect, of good and evil, relative to his own nature, and the conduct of his own affairs.'[576] Socrates' 'disciples' included Plato, Antisthenes and Aristippus, and it was from these thinkers that the main sects of philosophy, one hundred years after Socrates, the Peripatetics, the Stoics and the Epicureans, respectively, developed.[577] Ferguson further argued that all ancient philosophy could be reduced to the Epicureans, the Peripatetics, and the Stoics.[578] Ferguson acknowledged that each of these sects had 'complete systems' of cosmology, physics, metaphysics and 'Dialectics, as well as Morals and Politics'.[579] He claimed that in physics these three main schools 'almost all equally mistook their way', in logic 'some of them were more successful', while in morals they 'were fortunate in the state of their Questions although they differed in the manner of solving them. On the Solution of this question they agreed to rest the foundations of moral Philosophy.'[580] Limiting his discussion of these schools, Ferguson focused his discussion on the question of the 'specific good competent to human nature, that in which the individual can most benefit himself and his fellow creatures'.[581] Moral philosophy is based on the distinctions between good and evil and this was furthered

[575] *Lectures, II,* ff. 230.
[576] *P.I,* 309. This concept can also be seen in Brucker's *HCP I,* 89.
[577] *Lectures, II,* ff. 159, 197. 'Socrates is said to be the first who brought down philosophy from Heaven to Earth. Among those who conversed with him and are termed his disciples Plato Antisthenes and Aristippius were distinguished from their different schools and tenets arose in process of time Sects of the Different denominations mentioned.'
[578] *Lectures, II,* ff. 159.
[579] *Lectures, III,* ff. 352-353. 'It has been observed, that the founders of Sects among the Greeks and other antient Nations endeavoured to distinguish themselves by complete systems of cosmology, Physicks, Metaphysicks and Dialectics, as well as Morals and Politics. Without adverting to their success or disappointment in these lofty pretensions we are now concerned only to state the foundations which they laid for these latter branches of science in which they were more intelligent than in any other former.'
[580] *Lectures, II,* ff. 149. 'And they were divided between the sets I have mentioned of Epicurus, of Aristotle and of Zeno termed the Epicureans, the Peripatetics and the Stoics. Each of these sects had their System of Physics and Logic as well as morality. In the first they almost all equally mistook their way. In the 2nd some of them were more successful. And in the Last were fortunate in the state of their Questions although they differed in the manner of solving them. On the Solution of this question they agreed to rest the foundations of moral Philosophy.'
[581] *P.I.,* 309.

by the ancients, who stated the 'chief good' as the moral standard.[582] Ferguson recognised that he was basing his knowledge of the ancient philosophers and their thought on what remained in the written record, and that what has survived might not be complete, but was sufficient for assessing their ideas.[583]

Ferguson's discussion of the ancient schools of Epicureans, Peripatetics and Stoics was intentionally limited to and exclusively focused on how they defined the sole good and the arguments they had with each other on this topic.[584] Ferguson summarised his argument in the *Institutes of Moral Philosophy*:

> Socrates always stated it in the strongest terms. According to him, *they who prayed for riches, long life, &c. seemed to desire a throw of the dice, or the chance of a battle*. The Peripatetics classed everything that was by its nature, or use, desirable, under the general predicament of *good*. And every thing, by its nature or abuse, to be shunned, under the opposite predicament of *evil*. The Stoics maintained, that nothing was to be classed under the predicament of *good*, but what was at all times invariably to be chosen. That nothing was to be classed under the predicament of *evil*, but was at all times invariable to be shunned, or rejected: That to all that good which ought at any time to be rejected, or that evil which ought any time to be chose, was not only absurd in terms, but tended to weaken the resolution with which a man ought always to make his choice. The Epicureans substituted the term *pleasure* for *good*; intimating that whatever was pleasant was therefore good.[585]

In the *Lectures*, Ferguson began with the Epicureans who 'limited the appellation of good to Enjoyment or pleasure',[586] but, while animal sense and physical gratification were the main sources for pleasure, they could be remembered and felt without any actual sensual gratification, thus demonstrating that the Epicurean philosophy was not pure hedonism. Also, they believed that men were

[582] *Lectures III,* ff. 357. Moral philosophy 'was understood among the Antient Philosophy to be the first object of Moral Science, and they endeavoured to state the chief good competent to human Nature as the standard of estimation in every subject of deliberation – and choice and the source from which they were to derive every maxim and rule of the conduct of human life.'
[583] *Lectures, II,* ff 197-198.
[584] This summary of Ferguson's comparison of the schools of the Epicureans, the Peripatetics and the Stoics is taken from different lectures in *Lectures, II*, ff. 147-156, 159-164, 166-167; *Lectures, III*, ff. 352-392.
[585] *Institutes*, 141-142. See also *P.I.*, 309.
[586] *Lectures, II,* ff. 147.

happier when in 'retirement from Public cares or the Affairs of State'.[587] According to Ferguson, Epicurus maintained that all things, including personal qualities and external circumstances, were awarded value which was based on the enjoyment or suffering they produced.[588] Not all pleasures and pains were equal, however. Some pleasures should be avoided because of the amount of pain that results from them, such as the headache after a night of heavy drinking, and some pains should be endured in recognition of the long-term pleasure that results, such as the pain of the dentist's chair which relieves a toothache. The greatest pleasure actually comes from a 'uniform state of mind' resulting from controlled emotions. Furthermore, according to Ferguson, the Epicureans found that 'rational enjoyments', produced by virtue (i.e., 'The Enjoyment of a Good Conscience. The pleasure of Benevolence. The Serenity of the Temperate The Intrepidity of the Brave.') made them happier than any physical pleasure'.[589] Ferguson continued: 'What one termed the Pleasures of the mind are preferable to those of the body And the Pleasures of Wisdom and Virtue the Supreme measure of happiness. That the perfect or wise man possessed of wisdom must be happy in the absence of every other cause of Pleasure and even in the midst of every accidental cause of pain even in the Bull of Phalaris.'[590] The opponents of this system found fault in the concept of defining good as pleasure; the first school which opposed this view that Ferguson addressed were the Peripatetics.

The Peripatetics, according to Ferguson, were different from the Epicureans because they viewed the 'Sole Good' as consisting of virtue, pleasure and prosperity. They believed external circumstances were important for a person's happiness, and also that pleasure could be the source of happiness, but maintained that virtue should always be preferred over any other consideration.[591] Their main criticism of the Epicureans was that the term 'pleasure' was ambiguous and, while the Epicureans equated pleasure with virtue, this new terminology was 'commonly taken in a bad sense', allowing people to prefer sensual pleasure to rational

[587] Ibid.
[588] Ibid., ff. 149.
[589] Ibid., ff. 149-150.
[590] Ibid., ff. 160. The 'Bull of Phalaris' was a hollow bronze bull used by the tyrant Phalaris where he could punish someone by placing them inside, lighting a fire underneath and burning them alive, while the sounds of agony mimicked the sounds of the bull. This was a common classical image referenced by Cicero, Diodorus of Sicily and others.
[591] Ibid., ff. 47.

enjoyments.[592] The Peripatetics, as Ferguson noted, worried that 'good' defined as 'pleasure' would always outweigh the choice of virtue when compared with easy and passing sensual gratification.[593] The Peripatetics believed that if people thought that pleasure, specifically sensual pleasure, was the Sole Good, there would be no impetus for performing virtuous acts because people would believe that physical pleasure was easier and more satisfying. Ferguson continued by arguing that the Peripatetics countered this system by demonstrating that for people to find 'true pleasure' they should choose what is 'excellent and worthy' and avoid what is 'base and unworthy'. Furthermore, to be happy, 'We should be told to study the good Qualities of our Nature and that Pleasure will follow. To shun its depravity and that shame and Remorse and despair And Malice and Envy and hatred and discontent will Remain at a Distance from us.'[594] Thus, the Peripatetics, to counteract the ideas of the Epicureans, defined the sole good as leading a virtuous, active and good life in the context of a prosperous and happy life following Aristotle's maxim, 'A Proper exertion of the Mind in a life of Prosperity'. Virtue leads to the greatest happiness, but prosperity or external advantage can also lead people to be happy, although virtue should always be chosen over these other considerations.[595] While Ferguson thought this was a worthy definition of virtue, he was also critical of the fact that they believed possessions were central to a person's happiness.[596] Ferguson follows the discussion of the Peripatetics with his discussion of the Stoics, who are also critical of the ideas of both the Peripatetics and the Epicureans.

The Stoics agreed with the Peripatetics in their criticisms of the Epicureans, but they disagreed with the idea that pleasure and external circumstances should be considered good.[597] According to Ferguson, the Stoics took an extreme view of what should be considered the sole good by limiting good or right to virtue, and evil or wrong to vice, that anything else was 'indifferent', and that actively to choose good was to be happy. Furthermore, they believed intentions and actions were more important than outcomes because all one could control was one's own mind and

[592] Ibid., ff. 150.
[593] Ibid., ff. 151.
[594] Ibid.
[595] Ibid., ff. 151-152.
[596] *P.II.*, 80-81.
[597] *Lectures, II,* ff. 162.

everything else was left to providence.[598] When discussing the nature of the soul, Ferguson stated: 'Plato conceived that the spirit came from the storehouse of Intelligent natures and returned thither. The Stoics that it was a spark from the Divine Nature and was absorbed in that Nature again upon the dissolution of the Body, Etc'.[599]

Ferguson further stated that the Stoics criticised the Peripatetics because the Stoics did not believe that anything that should not always be chosen should be considered good, that what is good is always good, and whatever is considered bad or wrong is never to be considered good. When the Peripatetics allowed that pleasures or possessions could be good some of the time, the Stoics saw this as misleading and believed that only what was always to be chosen should be considered good, that being virtue.[600] Pleasure and virtue were not actually comparable and therefore could not both be termed good and this ultimately resolved any confusion as to which choice was best. Additionally, personal qualities or external circumstances should always be valued for its 'fitness to furnish a scene for the exercise of virtue',[601] and all questions of valuation depended upon their relationship to virtue.

In this examination of these school, Ferguson did not address the entirety of their systems, instead he limited his explication to their ideas on the greatest good. Part of this analysis included a very detailed comparison between the Peripatetics and the Stoics[602] because they criticised each other in their ideological reaction to the Epicureans on specific points and then could criticise the other school on similar points.[603] He also examined the similarities between these three schools which ultimately allowed Ferguson to present ancient philosophy as a concrete structure or model. One of the main similarities was their method of explaining their philosophy using the representative figure of the 'wise man', or a 'perfect character'.[604] This

[598] Ibid., ff. 147-148.
[599] Ibid., ff. 121.
[600] Ibid., ff. 152.
[601] Ibid.
[602] See also *P.II.*, 81-82.
[603] *Lectures, II*, ff. 153-155.
[604] Ibid., ff. 154. 'Such was the variety of language or the opposite tenets which these Sectarys held on this important Point. All of them stated the Perfection which they taught their Votarys to admire under the Denomination of a Wise man or a prefect Character they were supposed to Speak of themselves or pretend to be what they described.' See also *Lectures, II*, ff. 178.

model as well as others opened up these three schools to criticism from each other as well as philosophers and contemporary and modern critics. Specifically, the Epicureans and the Stoics were ridiculed in particular for being highly paradoxical, a fault Ferguson finds with some of the later thinkers in these schools. The paradox of the Epicureans was that while they maintained that happiness was defined by pleasure, their 'wise man' could be happy while enduring physical pain. The paradox of the Stoics was that although they were meant to be virtuous, benevolent and socially minded, their 'wise man' could be happy in the destruction of his country or in the suffering of a friend.[605]

Ferguson's analysis of the differences between these schools can be reduced to a 'question of Arrangement and Classification rather than a question of Fact, or even a question of choice'. This was the case because all schools eventually admitted that virtue led to the best kind of happiness and invariably should be chosen, it was the definitions and terms used to find this virtuous conclusion which led to their differences.[606] Furthermore, Ferguson maintained that the Stoics and the Epicureans were the extremes of these cases and that the Peripatetics lay somewhere in between and this position gave the Peripatetics cause to criticise both the Epicureans and the Stoics, but he also acknowledged that the Stoics appeared successfully to refute those criticisms.[607] Ferguson concluded that the Peripatetics were most similar to common opinion and appeared to promise 'integrity and Good Sense'. The Epicureans, whose opinions could lead to moral corruption, 'suppressed affection and public spirit, and sunk the Pretensions of human Nature'. The Stoics 'raised the Courage the affections the love of mankind and were supposed to form the school of Heroes', but this also meant that they raised the aims and abilities of human nature out of the reach of most people.[608]

Ferguson finished his discussion of these schools by crucially comparing how the objectives of his university course related to them. He stated that the

[605] Ibid., ff. 155, 148. 'The Epicureans Boasted that their wise man not withstanding he measures happiness by pleasure would be happy in the Bull of Phalaris. The Stoics not withstanding they measured happiness by the disposition of a just and benevolent mind boasted that their wise man would be as happy in the midst of the Ruin of his Country and his Friends as in the midst of their prosperity.'
[606] Ibid., ff., 166-167; 148.
[607] Ibid., ff. 171 – 172.
[608] Ibid., ff. 148.

ancient philosophers 'disputed' what was to be considered the 'Sole Good', but this was not his aim. Ferguson wanted to determine what is 'best', demonstrate what is good and evil, and show what should guide moral choice.[609] Ferguson was not attempting to copy the ancient thinkers in his lectures because he was not forcing a definition of the 'Sole Good' onto his students, but was demonstrating means with which his students could make moral choices and believed that looking for the 'chief good' would actually make him more successful than the ancients in discussing morality.[610] Ferguson distanced himself further from these schools and maintained that he was not attempting to adopt the philosophy of any of these sects, but recognised the usefulness of employing the language of the Stoics in the explanation of his philosophical ideas:

> As our object is not the same as theirs; to ascertain a Sole Good exclusive of every other consideration But to Ascertain what is best for mankind, the comparison on which we are going to enter may not lead us to embrace the Doctrine of either Sect. When we shall have ascertained what is best it will be wise to adhere to it as the sole good And the Language of Zeno tho not less paradoxical than that of Epicurus is Safer than that of Plato or Aristotle.[611]

This explanation of his relationship to the ancient schools of philosophy is crucial for understanding his opinion of the ancient schools, his own philosophy, and the motivation for incorporating them into his philosophical discussions. Here, Ferguson declared that he was not following any sect, including the Stoics, a statement he famously echoes in the 'Introduction' to the *Principles of Moral and Political Science*:

> The Author, in some of the statements which follow, may be thought partial to the Stoic philosophy; but is not conscious of having warped the truth to suit with any system whatever. His notions were taken up, where certainly Truth might be learned, however little it were formed into system by those from whom it was collected...If his inquiries led him to agree with the tenets that were held by a sect of philosophers about two thousand years ago, he is the more confirmed in his notion; notwithstanding the name

[609] Ibid., ff. 155-156.
[610] *Lectures, III*, ff. 374.
[611] *Lectures, II*, ff. 222.

> of this sect has become, in the geniality of modern times, proverbial for stupidity.[612]

These two pieces of evidence prove that, at the very least, Ferguson was not adhering to any one system of philosophy. Ferguson did not follow their definitions of the sole good, but set out to determine its definition for himself based on his considerations of what is best for mankind. In stating that the 'Language of Zeno' is 'Safer' to use, Ferguson is neither saying that he agreed with the Stoics nor that he will adopt Stoicism, but that the language they use in describing the sole good is the most appropriate and useful when dealing with the topics of morality. This also proves that Ferguson employed the methods of the eclectics because he employed the foundations laid in ancient philosophy, examined them, but improves upon them with his personal philosophy. Ferguson drew upon the thought of the ancients to articulate his own ideas and used the same words and phrases so that his students and readers were presented with moral philosophy in a language and with terminology with which they were already familiar.

The presentation of the Epicureans, the Peripatetics and the Stoics in this way also enabled Ferguson to establish a philosophical framework for his moral philosophy. Ferguson defined all philosophy by their relationship to these schools and therefore conceived of moral philosophical questions in reference to them. He identified Epicureanism and Stoicism as the extremes of philosophy, Epicureanism representing the worst of all philosophies because of its corrupting nature, and Stoicism as the extreme of good philosophy, which is unfortunately too perfect for people to follow.[613] Ferguson claimed there were other sects that attempted to 'find a middle way between these two extremes', but those schools only differed in the amount they resembled these 'opposite systems'.[614] In the lectures, the three schools are presented together in this introductory discussion to demonstrate the extremity of the Epicureans and the Stoics and the middle ground the Peripatetics occupy.

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[612] *P.I.*, 7-8. In the statement Ferguson argues that his ideas are said to be Stoic, but that he has not intentionally adopted them into his system. This statement is often used by scholars to prove that Ferguson was actually admitting his Stoicism, but taking this statement with the previous one their interpretation of Ferguson's words becomes more problematic.

[613] *P.II.*, 82. 'This may well be considered as a degree of perfection, far raised above the ordinary state of human nature: It is, nevertheless, that, for which it was given, a noble idea, upon which the ingenuous mind cannot too nearly form itself.'

[614] *History*, 180.

Ferguson intentionally presented these two schools as the extremes of philosophy in between which all other schools fall; therefore, his view that Epicureanism was necessarily corrupting and Stoicism was absolutely virtuous is best viewed in these absolute terms. This is Ferguson's most fundamental conception of philosophy. Because these are the two extremes of philosophy, Ferguson would not want to adopt either; he believed people should practice philosophy that is moderate, between extremes. Thus, Ferguson would not think of himself as a Stoic or an Epicurean because those extremes are unattainable or harmful and should be avoided. This then explains Ferguson's concept of ancient philosophy, although the dichotomy between the Stoics and the Epicureans is actually most important for Ferguson's thought and hence the relationship between these two schools needs to be examined more closely in order to determine his opinion of them and their function in his thought.

1.3 Stoics and Epicureans: Philosophical Opposites

When dealing with all aspects of his moral philosophy, Ferguson made constant reference to the ancient schools. He used Stoicism and Epicureanism, and to a lesser extent Socratic, Platonic and Peripatetic thought, to ground his discussions of moral questions in the history of philosophy. Ferguson characterised Stoicism and Epicureanism as being diametrically opposed and he implemented this model of the Stoics versus the Epicureans as a valuable didactic tool; this is the framework Ferguson developed to teach his students about morality. The two extremes of Stoicism and Epicureanism demonstrated the two extremes of philosophy as a framework or a foundation for all moral questions, a foundation of which his students would have been well aware. Ferguson is not the only person to conceive of these schools as being extreme opposites; he is in fact following in a long tradition which dates back to antiquity and was maintained through to the eighteenth century.[615] He presented Epicurean ethics as the opposite of a virtuous life and

[615] Some early modern historians of philosophy point to the development of the doctrines of Stoicism and Epicureanism as arguing against each other. See Brucker, *HCP II*, 184; Formey, *A concise*

considers those in antiquity who practised Epicurean philosophy to have misconceptions about the ultimate nature of humanity because Epicureanism always leads to corruption and selfishness. In opposition to this school, he placed Stoicism, which he presented as always leading to virtue. In Ferguson's mind moral philosophy exists along a spectrum where Epicureanism at one end is the least virtuous of all philosophies, while at the other end Stoicism is the most virtuous and all other philosophies fall in between. This positive presentation of Stoic thought, however, does not make Ferguson a Stoic and does not necessitate that Stoicism is the philosophy which should be taken up as a way of life. Ferguson is critical of Stoic philosophy in several instances, but uses their concept of virtue to explain to his students what is the most virtuous choice. The divide between the Stoics and the Epicureans represents a paradigm Ferguson implements in his teaching so that students better understand their philosophical choices. This presentation of a Stoic and Epicurean dichotomy in Ferguson's work appears more regularly than any other discussion of ancient philosophy.[616] It is drawn upon repeatedly in all of Ferguson's main works and is evidenced in his politics as well.

Ferguson believed that Epicureans, Peripatetics and Stoics were the most important schools of ancient philosophy; his discussion mainly addressed only the extremes of the Stoic and Epicurean philosophy. The Stoics believed the chief good was virtue, while the Epicureans believed it was pleasure. Although they made this distinction, the Epicureans did not maintain that all pleasure was equal and could not claim virtue was not pleasurable, thereby conceding the positions of the Stoics. This was one point in which the two schools agreed: virtue was pleasurable and virtue was 'the only secure and true source of enjoyment'. Ferguson, however, maintained the schools defined the term 'virtue' differently:

> Though to both it was a state of tranquillity and exemption from fear and sorrow, this exemption was supposed by the one to be obtained by a seclusion from care, and by indifference to all the

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history of philosophy and philosophers, 58; Stanley, *The history of philosophy*. Scholarship on this divide has been addressed by many historians, including David Allan, *Philosophy and Politics in Later Stuart Scotland* (East Lothian; Tuckwell Press, 2000); Reid Barbour, *English Epicures and Stoics: Ancient Legacies in Early Stuart Culture* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1998); Thomas Ahnert, 'Epicureanism and the transformation of natural law in the early German Enlightenment', in *Epicurus in the Enlightenment*, ed. Neven Leddy and Avi S. Lifscitz, (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2009).

[616] Hill, *Passionate Society*, 41.

> concerns of mankind, whether private or public. By the other, virtue was supposed to consist in the affectionate performance of every good office towards their fellow creatures, and in full resignation to providence for every thing independent of their own choice.[617]

Ferguson demonstrated that the Epicureans reached a tranquil state by removing themselves from society, while the Stoics embraced their active role and the truth of providence. These notions also affected their views on religion. Ferguson admitted that the Epicureans, 'when urged in argument by their opponents, made some concessions in religion, and many more in morality'. They believed in the gods, but thought that they had no connection to human life. The Epicureans believed 'the deity was a retired essence enjoying itself, and far removed from any work of creation or providence', while the Stoics saw God as a benevolent 'intelligent principle of existence' who brought order to the universe, gave men goodness, free will, and the knowledge of providence, which men learn to follow.[618]

According to Ferguson, as a result of these principles, the Epicureans 'recommended seclusion from all the cares of family or state', while the Stoics 'recommended an active part in all the concerns of our fellow-creatures, and the steady exertion of a mind, benevolent, courageous, and temperate'. Consequently, they believed that 'All good was private' and this focus on solitary, private lives rather than any form of society, including family, meant that followers of this philosophy thought only of personal pleasure and this was a corruption and 'licentiousness, both in morality and religion'.[619] Ferguson believed this affected people's choices in life and their conduct. Because Epicureans withdrew from society, Ferguson believed, 'The Epicurean was a deserter from the cause of his fellow-creatures, and might justly be reckoned a traitor to the community of nature, of mankind, and even of his country, to which he owed his protection.'[620] Essentially, the Epicureans denied providence; they reduced all moral questions to considerations of pleasure and pain and 'Every man's pleasure was to himself the

[617] *P.II.*, 4.
[618] Ibid., 4.
[619] *History*, 179.
[620] *P.II.*, 5.

supreme rule of estimation and of action'[621] and they also believed that the truest pleasure was to be found in virtue, a pleasure that could be felt even during physical pain.[622] The problem with this philosophy is that the average person, who might adopt it, would be apt to choose physical pleasure over virtue because the basic definitions of the Epicurean philosophy focus on pleasure, even if, when pressed, they admit pleasure comes from virtue, and this misleading aspect ends in corruption and vileness. Because the Epicureans equate virtue as the best choice of pleasure, Ferguson believed they ignore the 'specific sentiments of a conscience and elevation of mind' and allow for vice and criminality to be seen as mere mistakes in choice rather than actual evils of human nature.[623] It is noteworthy that Ferguson attempts to find redeeming qualities in this school even though it is so different from his own views, demonstrating his commitment to writing an accurate history of philosophy for this school that goes beyond his personal bias. The Stoics, on the other hand, acted as a 'willing instrument' for God and for the good of others. The activity and performance of duties constituted pleasure and defined benevolent actions. These considerations, he thought, are the most important question any person can answer, but the effects of misapprehension of good and evil could lead to dire consequences.[624] Therefore, Ferguson needed both schools, set up as a contrast to each other, to both define each other and to demonstrate the importance of having the correct understanding of the distinctions of good and evil.

In the *Institutes of Moral Philosophy* and *The Principles of Moral and Political Science*, Ferguson constructs a picture of philosophy in which these schools are polar opposites and all other philosophical ideas are judged in relation to them. He incorporates this distinction of ideas into his general definition of morality, stating that these philosophers teach two different approaches to human action. The Epicureans aim to 'refer our actions, and to limit our views, to private separate gratifications; to court an exemption from care and solicitude on the

[621] *History*, 179.
[622] Ibid., 'Yet the Epicureans, when urged in argument by their opponents, made some concessions in religion, and many more in morality. They admitted the existence of gods, but supposed those beings of too exalted a nature to have any concern in human affairs. They owned that, although the value of virtue was to be measured by the pleasure it gave, yet true pleasure was to be found in virtue alone; and that it might be enjoyed in the highest degree even in the midst of bodily pain.'
[623] Ibid.
[624] *P.II.*, 4-5.

concerns of other men; and to fill up the moments of life with the least possible trouble or avocation from our own personal state and enjoyments.'[625] This view goes against man's actual nature, which 'seems to require that we seek for the interesting scenes of human life; that we consider our own, and the cause of mankind, as common; that we consider our sociable dispositions as the better part of ourselves; and that we willingly seize the occasions which exercise the powers of a wise and beneficent mind.'[626] Ferguson illustrates his point by comparing men to sailors on a ship: if one person does not perform his duties and relies on the work of others the ship will not function.[627]

This does not mean however that Ferguson embraces Stoic moral philosophy. The complex nature of his views of the two schools is evident in the section 'Of Opinions productive of Misery, or that hinder Improvement'.[628] Although at the outset of this discussion Ferguson references Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius as his sources, he is critical of both Stoicism and Epicureanism when discussing why people are unhappy. Ferguson states:

> It is unhappy to lay the pretensions of human nature so low as to check its exertions. It is unhappy to entertain notions of what men actually are, so high, as upon trial to incur disappointment, disgust, or despair of virtue. It is unhappy to rest our own choice of good qualities on the supposition, that we are to meet with such qualities in other men.[629]

One of the common objections to Stoicism is that the ends of its philosophy are unattainable by most people; and Ferguson makes this same point. Ferguson believes it is best to have a definition of morality which leads people to improve themselves, but that placing the bar too high only leads to unhappiness. When Ferguson considers the causes of misery, he finds that both Stoicism and Epicureanism have negative aspects.

In his account of Stoicism, Ferguson differentiates specific points where Stoics and Epicureans are at greatest odds. Unlike the Epicureans, the Stoics believed in providence and that a correct choice between right and wrong, rather

[625] *P.II.*, 329.
[626] Ibid., 329.
[627] Ibid., 329-330.
[628] *Institutes*, 165-168.
[629] Ibid.

than pleasure, determines human happiness. He also notes that the Stoics believed virtuous qualities were good for the individual as well as the public and 'there is no private good separate from the public good'. Someone who is virtuous in the Stoic definition will be happy because the characteristics of virtue are the best of human nature. In his definition of Stoic philosophy, Ferguson makes an explicit comparison to the Epicureans when he states:

> the Epicureans mistook human nature when they supposed all its principles resolvable into appetites for pleasure, or aversion to pain; that honour and dishonour, excellence and defect, were considerations which not only led to much nobler ends, but which were of much greater power in commanding the human will; the love of pleasure was grovelling and vile, was the source of dissipation and of sloth; the love of excellence and honour was aspiring and noble, and led to the greatest exertions and the highest attainments of our nature.[630]

Ferguson, therefore, defined Stoicism as the opposite of Epicureanism. Yet the juxtaposition of these two schools also demonstrates their interconnectedness, because Ferguson defined Stoicism and Epicureanism in reference to each other. The schools are presented together and this inherent connection means that they are intellectually linked in his historical interpretation. Because Ferguson sees Epicureanism as leading to corruption and self-interestedness on the one hand and Stoicism as leading to improvement and virtue, he presents them together. The point presenting them as opposites is to give examples of the kind of ideas which lead to these two extremes. Ferguson is not, by this reasoning, choosing Stoicism as the correct philosophy, but presenting these two schools as two sides of the great coin of philosophy and they cannot be separated from each other.

One of Ferguson's most explicit examples of this comparison of schools lies in his *History of the Progress and Termination of the Roman Republic,* in which he discussed this topic in great detail. There Ferguson analysed some of the causes leading to the end of the republic and the foundation of the empire, specifically the moral implications of these philosophical schools for the politics at the end of the republic. He claimed people admire the Roman empire because it appears to have been successful and wealthy, 'but the greatness we admire in this case, was ruinous

[630] *History*, 179-180.

to the virtue and the happiness of mankind; it was found to be inconsistent with all the advantages which that conquering people had formerly enjoyed in the articles of government and manners'.[631] Ferguson traced the effects of the Epicurean and Stoic schools to Greek and Roman history and claimed that it was the corrupting forces of the Epicureans which brought an end to the Roman republic.[632] Lisa Hill has argued that Ferguson believed, like Montesquieu and Rousseau, that corruption can be a result of prosperous nations and that the decline of the Roman republic 'was traceable to the moral corruption engendered by the decline of Stoicism and the popularity of Epicureanism'.[633]

In his *History*, Ferguson traced the fall of the Roman Republic to the influence of Epicureanism, which was a problem because it turned virtue into a private and a relative issue, and therefore the decline in morals both of state leaders, i.e., Julius Caesar, and the people led to the fall of the government. In the *History*, Ferguson also pits Epicureanism against Stoicism and it is seen as a battle between self-interest and public virtue on a grand scale. Sher identifies this fascination with ancient Rome and its decline by Ferguson and many others in the Scottish Enlightenment as a reflection of concerns about their own society.[634]

Ferguson claimed that the philosophy of these ancient schools was 'communicated' to Rome, where philosophy was adopted because philosophies were seen as fashionable ornaments and worn like a diamond among the high ranking members of society: 'Emperors make it their Pastime Men of Business the Rule of their Conduct. And they took their sect as we take our Professions in Religion.'[635] Tracing both Epicurean and Stoic philosophy from their Greek origins and following the work of Cicero, he claimed Greek philosophy had become fashionable during the end of the republic, as well as being a staple of Roman education.[636] He claimed that Epicureanism was popular at the end of the Roman republic when a high level of 'National prosperity made people believe there was no occasion for Virtue', while Stoicism 'prevailed with men of Ingenious minds after the Fall of the Roman

[631] *Essay*, 60.
[632] Hill, *Passionate Society*, 41.
[633] Ibid., 164.
[634] Richard B. Sher, C*hurch and University in the Scottish Enlightenment* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1985), 203.
[635] *Lectures, II*, ff. 147.
[636] *History*, 179.

Republic because men of this disposition became Sensible of the necessity of Virtue' and these men employed Stoic ideas to counteract the corruption left by the Epicureans.[637] Ferguson claimed the people of Rome, enjoying the rewards of their virtuous, Stoic predecessors, had given into a life of pleasure and adopted Epicurean philosophy. Those who followed Stoic philosophy during the republic were concerned with justice and the well-being of others.[638] Even though the empire was corrupt it could not diminish the strength of this philosophy from all people because some remained concerned with public matters and formal justice. Augustus himself attempted to retain the codes of Roman law which remained intact throughout the empire, while all other arts and elements of politics declined.[639]

In his *History of the Progress and Termination of the Roman Republic,* Ferguson reasoned that one of the factors leading to the end of the republic was the influence of Caesar in particular on the politics of the time.[640] Ferguson advanced the argument that Caesar was influenced by Epicureanism, which was the cause of the vice that Caesar brought into the minds of his countrymen and eventually led to the end of the republic and the beginning of the empire. Ferguson laid moral blame on Caesar the Epicurean for this historical event - the end of the republic and the origin of the empire - and by portraying it as a moral issue he was able to find a Stoic champion who fought for the ideals of the republic in the figure of Cato. When he used these same schools to discuss the difference between Caesar and Cato, he created a philosophical divide between the two men to explain history, thus invoking his concept of two schools: 'Caesar is said to have embraced the doctrines of Epicurus; Cato those of Zeno. The first, in compliance with fashion, or from the bias of an original temper. The other, from the force of conviction, as well as from the predilection of a warm and ingenuous mind.'[641] Ferguson characterised Cato as Caesar's 'opponent',[642] but found that Cato and Caesar had similar qualities. They both were courageous and intelligent; but Caesar used his virtues to attain his

[637] *Lectures, II,* ff. 155. See also *History*, 179.
[638] *P.I.*, 311.
[639] Ibid., 311-312.
[640] See also Iain McDaniel, 'Adam Ferguson's "History of the Progress and Termination of the Roman Republic" (1783) and its Place in His Political Thought' (Cambridge Ph.D. thesis, 2004).
[641] *History*, 180.
[642] Ibid., 180.

personal ambition, while Cato did so to pursue questions of moral philosophy.[643] Additionally, although Caesar chose to follow Epicurus, he could have been a Stoic because of his 'vigorous efforts and active exertions for the attainment of his ends'.[644] Ferguson continued to characterise them by their sects in discussing their actions toward the state, stating that 'Cato endeavoured to preserve the order of civil government, however desperate, because this was the part it became him to act, and in which he chose to live and to die', thereby identifying Cato's adherence to providence and devotion to the civic order. By contrast, 'Caesar proposed to overturn it; because he wished to dispose of all the wealth and honours of the state at his own pleasure',[645] demonstrating that Caesar was more concerned with his personal ambition and pleasure than upholding a just form of government. One further example illustrates Ferguson's opinion of ambition: he claimed Cato and Antoninus had ambition to emulate God, which he judged as the 'highest measures of personal worth', while Caesar's 'vile' ambition was to 'reduce his fellow-citizens and equals, to hold their lives and fortunes at his discretion'. Although Caesar was an Epicurean, he was still an admirable man who led an active and productive life. This adoption of Epicureanism led to the ultimate downfall of Rome, corrupting first Caesar and eventually the republic. The Romans lost the Stoic virtues which had made them great and replaced them with Epicurean indulgence; Caesar fell prey to the fashion of Epicureanism and brought down the whole republic with him.

1.4 Conclusion: Further Implications of Ferguson's Concepts of Ancient Philosophy

Ferguson's reliance on ancient philosophy in his teaching and writing demonstrates an extensive knowledge of the topic as well as a complex relationship with his sources. On the one hand, Ferguson used ancient philosophy to present the history of philosophy to his students. When addressing the three schools which he argues

[643] *History*, 180. 'They were both of undaunted courage, and of great penetration; the one to distinguish what was best; the other to distinguish the most effectual means from the attainment of any end on which he was bent.'
[644] Ibid., 181. See also *Lectures, II*, ff. 12.
[645] Ibid., 180.

represent all philosophy, his comparison of their definitions of the 'Sole Good' and assessment of their criticism of each other was used to begin his lectures on the topic of how to determine what is best and how to make moral choices. On the other hand, in order to teach the basic premises of philosophy, Stoicism and Epicureanism are presented as opposite philosophies, where Epicureanism is clearly defined as bad and Stoicism is defined as good, the Peripatetics are mainly left out of the discussion because they do not prove to be extreme philosophical examples. To this end, Lisa Hill has noted, 'Epicureanism taught people prodigality, described a Godless world governed by chance, reduced morality to hedonism and taught that "all good was private"....Conversely the cures for the ills of modern times lay in the teachings of Stoicism.'[646] While this appears to be Ferguson's motivation in designing this construction of a philosophical dichotomy, it actually does not take Ferguson's view of Stoicism or his individual philosophy into account. It would be a valid assumption to look at his presentation of Stoicism in this context as the solution to an Epicurean problem, but this is not the case. Ferguson was not suggesting that Stoicism is the answer; in fact, he proposes his own solution to the problems arising from Epicurean ideas.

In his *Essay on the History of Civil Society* (1767), Ferguson discussed human happiness and the effect of self-interest or virtue on appetites. He states: 'The division of our appetites into benevolent and selfish, has probably, in some degree, helped to mislead our apprehension on the subject of personal enjoyment and private good; and our zeal to prove that virtue is disinterested, has not greatly promoted the cause.'[647] Here, he acknowledges that his discussion has been divided into two parts: self-interest (Epicureanism) and beneficence (Stoicism). Ferguson was aware that in his limiting the definition of happiness to either an Epicurean or Stoic definition could misrepresent the actual conclusion he was trying to reach. The confusion could arise from the fact that in Ferguson's opposition to Epicureanism, it appeared that he argued that pleasure was evil, which is not the case. He believes pleasure is good, by definition if nothing else; that any gratification is pleasurable; and 'high-quality' pleasures have more value than

[646] Hill, *Passionate Society*, 166.
[647] *Essay*, 55.

others. Furthermore, pleasure is not simply self-interested because one can experience pleasure in making others happy, for instance. If this is the case, that pleasure can be good, Ferguson is not agreeing with the Stoics. He is mindful of the fact that his use of the Stoic/Epicurean paradigm may lead people to believe he is a Stoic, but he demonstrates that he is not. As Ferguson stated himself, he does not attempt to adopt the ideas of one sect or another. Ferguson is most interested in truth and if one thinker or school, either ancient or modern, writes something Ferguson believes himself to be true, Ferguson references it in his writing. In this way, Ferguson was following in the eighteenth-century context of modern eclecticism. Modern eclecticism attempted to create philosophy based on the search for truth, used reason to assess ideas, in conjunction with a thinker's own ideas. They used these ideas in conjunction with the experimental method not only to prove the truth of specific principles, but to argue against sectarian philosophy. This is exactly how Ferguson approached philosophy. He had beliefs about morality, human nature and what is best for individuals and used these ideas to assess the philosophy of others.

Ferguson's use of ancient philosophy, be it Stoic, Epicurean or Peripatetic, created a foundation for his moral philosophy. This was employed to teach his students about moral philosophy by presenting ancient philosophy as a basic framework of philosophical possibilities, either good or bad. Ferguson did not define his own philosophy by the mandates of these schools, but placed himself in relation to them. It then becomes clear that Ferguson did not adopt Stoic philosophy, but employed it to place his ideas in the context of the history of philosophy. Ferguson also had a didactic purpose to demonstrate how to spread virtue according to each form of government, as Ferguson was above all a moralist.[648]

Ferguson's division of Stoicism and Epicureanism was also used to understand the history of the Roman republic. Because Ferguson carried the argument of the effects of these two philosophies in to his analysis of history, it is clear that Ferguson's moral philosophy also affected his concept of other topics. Equating Cato and Caesar to Stoicism and Epicureanism not only gave an historical

[648] Sher, C*hurch and University*, 196.

example of the effects of these philosophies, it also helped to determine Ferguson's interpretation of historical events. Ferguson did this in his eighteenth-century context as well in his reaction to the ideas proposed by Bernard Mandeville in the *Fable of the Bees* (1715, followed by numerous editions). Ferguson criticised Bernard Mandeville, whom he identifies as an Epicurean, for presenting misleading discussions of morality. He also believes that Mandeville denies 'the reality of moral distinctions' and ridicules the fact that real morality exists. He claims Mandeville's aim is to 'pretend to detect the fraud by which moral restraints have been imposed'.[649] For Ferguson, Mandeville's assertion that pride is a virtuous quality is derived from an incorrect usage of the word. Ferguson goes on to criticise Mandeville's principles in more general terms, through his works which can be seen as a general attack on eighteenth-century Epicureanism. Ferguson believes that since man wants to fulfil his desires he can often be fooled into thinking that sensual gratification is the most important result: 'It arises from the principles of self-preservation in the human frame; but it is a corruption, or at least a partial result, of those principles, and is upon many accounts very improperly termed *self-love*.'[650] The pursuit of self-love leads to people forgetting the better qualities of men and creates a being completely focused on self-interest. It is perhaps the worst offence to Ferguson to forego completely benevolence and kindness to others.[651] In this condemnation of absolute selfishness, Ferguson is demonstrating that this is how he understands eighteenth-century Epicureanism and his absolute opposition to it. Lisa Hill argued that Ferguson's objections to Epicureanism are in fact a reaction against modern 'liberalism'. Because this Epicreuanism 'celebrated the comforts, political calm and softening manners that progress brought with it', Ferguson feared the effects of Epicureanism on his society and the negative consequences which it brought about for the Roman Republic and instead focused on civic virtue.[652] Here,

[649] *Essay*, 37
[650] Ibid., 18.
[651] Ibid., 19.
[652] Hill, *Passionate Society*, 8. 'Ferguson's objection to the implicit hedonism of early liberalism marks a crucial point in the development of liberal values and sensibilities. Ferguson's was a milieu that celebrated the comforts, political calm and softening manners that progress brought with it. Ferguson resisted what he perceived to be its torpid, Epicurean tendencies, insisting that no society could prosper without civic virtue; neither could it afford to undervalue benevolence and the solitary virtues.' See also Hill, *Passionate Society*, 41

Ferguson not only employed the dichotomy of the Stoics and the Epicureans to understand moral philosophy, or to understand history, but also to understand his contemporary society.

This chapter has attempted to assess Ferguson's relationship to ancient philosophy and has shown that Ferguson has a complex understanding of the ancient schools and their place in his thought. He offered a discussion of ancient philosophy to his students as a tool to teach them about philosophical perspectives. He created a Stoic/Epicurean paradigm to demonstrate the extremes of moral possibilities. He employed this paradigm also to understand history and his contemporary society. This wider view of Ferguson's relationship to ancient philosophy, and Stoicism more specifically, calls into question the claims that have been made by numerous scholars attempting to understand this complicated relationship and demonstrates that Ferguson cannot be seen as the 'Scottish Cato'. A further investigation into Ferguson's moral philosophy will illustrate that Ferguson indeed does not follow the Stoic school, but has a moral philosophy which is unique, creative and important in the context of eighteenth-century Scotland.

IV. Chapter 3: Ferguson's Engagement with Stoicism in his Moral Philosophy

Introduction

The importance of Stoicism for Ferguson's moral philosophy has received much attention from a variety of scholars such as Jane Bush Fagg, David Kettler and Lisa Hill. One significant difference between this study and previous explanations of Ferguson's thought is that close attention has been paid here to Ferguson's own, very specific, understanding of Stoicism. In this chapter, Ferguson's definition of Stoicism will be assessed in relation to his moral philosophy and it is in this way that Ferguson's actual relationship to Stoicism can better be understood. Stoicism is important in Ferguson's political theory and the notion of civic virtue dominates much of Ferguson's thought as has been demonstrated by J.G.A. Pocock and a number of other scholars. Ferguson's moral philosophy is the foundation of his wider philosophy and the question of the influence of Stoic ethics on Ferguson's ideas of morality must be firmly established before proceeding to an evaluation of Ferguson's debt to ancient authors, especially the Stoics.

Ferguson's moral philosophy is central in his four main works: The *Institutes of Moral Philosophy*, *The Essay on the History of Civil Society*, *The History of the Progress and Termination of the Roman Republic*, and the *Principles of Moral and Political Science Vol. 1 and Vol. 2*. Ferguson had specific reasons for writing each book and had a particular readership in mind in each case. The *Institutes* and the *Principles* were produced with the express purpose of instructing his students at the University of Edinburgh.[653] They represented printed versions of his lectures and therefore document what he taught his students.[654] Their purpose was practical: they were to instruct his students about how to live a virtuous life. Religion and jurisprudence dominated these discussions.

In the *Essay*, on the other hand, Ferguson was writing to publish his research about civil society; its history, its foundations, and the proper way to live in a

[653] David Kettler, *The Social and Political Thought of Adam Ferguson*, second edition (New Brunswick and London: Transaction Publishers, 1965, 2005), 7.
[654] David Allan, *Adam Ferguson* (Aberdeen: AHRC University of Aberdeen, 2006).

society. Having civil society as the focus of the book determined how he would present ideas about morality and virtue. In the *Essay* Ferguson approached moral philosophy in a different manner to the way he had done in the lectures, establishing its connections to behaviour in society. Although it did not reflect a change in how he defined morality, the tone of his discussions about it was necessarily different from that in the *Institutes* and the *Principles*. In the *Essay*, Ferguson's readership was intended to be the general public, not his students, and his discussions of morality engaged with wider eighteenth-century debates.[655] In the *History*, on the other hand, the focus was on how morality influenced politics in the Roman republic. Moral philosophy did not dominate Ferguson's *History*, but did play a crucial role in his discussion of historical figures, notably Cato and Caesar, and in his interpretation of historical events.[656]

Ferguson's presentation of moral philosophy changed slightly according to the readers he was addressing and the particular demands of the work in question. Ferguson adapted his presentation according to the role he played: in the case of the lectures, his role was of a teacher of moral philosophy, which in the case of the *History* and the *Essay* his role was that of a participant in Enlightenment discussions concerning history and society, not only morality. Although Ferguson's ideas about the nature of morality, virtue and society are consistent throughout his works, inevitably there are subtle variations of emphasis among them.

One element that remains constant through Ferguson's works is a discussion of Stoic moral philosophy. His engagement with the Stoic school has intrigued scholars and raised many questions about the nature of Ferguson's own philosophy. Before analysing Ferguson's specific relationship to the school, particularly in relation to certain characteristics of his moral philosophy, a history of Stoicism and the role it played in eighteenth-century thought must be explored.

Stoicism itself has a long and distinguished history in European thought and it was particularly crucial for philosophical inquiry throughout the eighteenth century. Stoicism was founded in ancient Greece by Zeno of Citium and Cleanthes

[655] See for instance, *Essay*, 53.
[656] For more information about Ferguson's *History*, see Iain McDaniel, 'Adam Ferguson's "History of the Progress and Termination of the Roman Republic" (1783) and its Place in His Political Thought' (Cambridge Ph.D. Thesis, 2004).

of Assos in the third century B.C.[657] The Stoic school later evolved in Rome under the influence of authors such as Epictetus (55-135 A.D.), Marcus Aurelius (121-180 A.D.) and, to a certain extent, Cicero (106-43 B.C.), and scholars have argued further that Stoicism in this later form was influential in the foundation of the Catholic Church.[658] In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Stoicism again became an influential school of philosophy as thinkers began to reassess morality in the post-Reformation context.

While the Stoic philosophy changed through time, and thinkers focused certain aspects of the philosophy depending on their intellectual context, there are several fundamental elements of Stoicism that ground the philosophy. First, the Stoics maintained a belief in providence, which governed the universe as well as human fate. It was the duty of men to resign themselves to this divine providence and to live within the laws of nature set out by divine providence. An aspect of the providential laws of nature included the fact that humans have the capacity for reason: the element which separates them from other animals. Furthermore, human happiness was only achievable through an acceptance of the role designated by providence and living life according to the laws of nature.[659] Concerning Stoic morality, they argued that benevolence was a central virtue and that to make moral choices, people should always choose what is 'good'. These basic aspects of Stoicism are central to modern formations of the philosophy.

Ingrid Merikoski has argued that in the early modern period, changes in the economy, commerce and religion, following from the Reformation, led to intellectuals searching for a new, practical system of morals which could accommodate these changes within a Christian framework. Thinkers in northern Europe and Scotland, especially, found the answer to these changes in 'Neo-Stoicism'.[660] This form of Neo-Stoicism combined fundamental ancient Stoic and

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[657] Tiziano Dorandi, 'Chronology', in *The Cambridge History of Hellenistic Philosophy*, ed. Keimpe Algra, *et al.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 37-38.
[658] David Allan, *Philosophy and Politics in Later Stuart Scotland: Neo-Stoicism, Culture and Ideology in an Age of Crisis, 1540-1690* (East Linton: Tuckwell Press, 2000).
[659] For Further information on definitions of Stoicism see Ingrid Merikoski, 'Christian Stoicism and Politeness: The Making of the Social Ethics of the Scottish Enlightenment' (University of Edinburgh PhD Thesis, 1999), 52; Keimpe Algra, *et al.*, eds., *The Cambridge History of Hellenistic Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).
[660] Ingrid Merikoski, 'Christian Stoicism and Politeness', 52; *The Cambridge History of Hellenistic Philosophy*, 8.

Christian ideas to 'promote virtue among individuals and order in society'.[661] She argues further that John Calvin (1509-64) and Justus Lipsius (1547-1606) argued that Neo-Stoicism could combine faith and reason 'to encourage obedience and order in society'.[662] Neo-Stoicism took inspiration from both Christian and Stoic ethics. The object of it was to combat the indifference to ethics which these thinkers found in their growing commercial society and to combat either self-interest or indulgence. Neo-Stoicism combined Christian morals and a belief in providence with the Stoic emphasis on reason, duty and practical morality. The Roman Stoics provided the appropriate model because they focused on morality, particularly the concept of virtue, which was useful for everyday-life; maintained providence and order in society; all which could be easily reconciled with Christian morals.[663]

Debates about Neo-Stoicism continued through the sixteenth and into the seventeenth century where thinkers such as Michel de Montaigne (1533-1592), Guillaume Du Vair (1556-1621), and Ben Jonson (1572-1637) continued to formulate their own theories of morals. Neo-Stoicism did not go unchallenged, however, and there was an equally strong growing tradition of Epicureanism and Scepticism which countered the philosophy of the Neo-Stoics.[664] Neo-Stoic proponents found this particular philosophy a plausible solution for 'the search for the best available means to gather elements of knowledge and experience in to a coherent but not restrictive form'.[665] Two influential seventeenth-century thinkers who had a large impact on eighteenth-century Scotland were Hugo Grotius (1583-1645) and Samuel Pufendorf (1632-1694). Their theories of natural law with its increased attention to the concept of duty, which Merikoski identifies as a 'kind of Christian Stoicism', was a foundation for eighteenth-century Scottish moral philosophy.[666] It was Gershom Carmichael (1672-1729) who, in his moral philosophy lectures at the University of Glasgow, first incorporated natural jurisprudence into discussions of moral philosophy.[667] Neo-Stoicism, or Christian

[661] Merikoski, 'Christian Stoicism and Politeness', 8.
[662] Ibid., 11.
[663] Ibid., 49-54.
[664] Ibid., 76-77. See also John Robertson, *The Case for the Enlightenment: Scotland and Naples 1680-1760* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).
[665] Merikoski, 'Christian Stoicism and Politeness', 71.
[666] Ibid., 113-121.
[667] Ibid., 125-126.

Stoicism, was not only important in Scotland, it continued to be explored in Northern Europe, France, and England, but it is the Scottish context which is most important for understanding Ferguson's relationship to Stoicism.

Several scholars have labelled Neo-Stoicism, in the context of the Scottish Enlightenment, as 'Christian Stoicism'.[668] It has been argued that some members of the Scottish Enlightenment, particularly the Moderates of the Scottish Kirk, used notions of Christian Stoicism as a solution to the problems they found in their growing commercial society because it offered a practical, reasoned, orderly system of morals that was in keeping with Presbyterian teachings.[669] The Scottish thinkers, therefore, addressed the problem of maintaining a moral society within an economically prosperous and Protestant community with the same model developed by the Neo-Stoic thinkers in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in Northern Europe. Not all members of the Scottish Enlightenment adopted Christian Stoicism; David Hume in particular countered the usefulness of Stoicism as a system of practical morality with a form of Scepticism.[670] M. A. Stewart has noted that 'Neither tradition survives in a pure form, and it would be misleading to suggest that these labels capture all that was at issue', but it is important to note that the modern proponents of Stoicism, Scepticism and Epicureanism were intentionally using ancient schools, in part, to develop their philosophy.[671]

The Scottish Enlightenment philosopher who is often associated with Christian Stoicism is Francis Hutcheson (1694-1746), lecturer in moral philosophy at Glasgow University.[672] M. A. Stewart has argued that Hutcheson's Christian

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[668] See Ibid.; John Dwyer, *Virtuous Discourse: Sensibility and Community in Late Eighteenth-Century Scotland* (Edinburgh: John Donald Publishers, 1987), Richard B. Sher, *Church and University in the Scottish Enlightenment: The Moderate Literati of Edinburgh* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1985), Lisa Hill *The Passionate Society: The Social, Political and Moral Thought of Adam Ferguson* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2006), Eugene Heath, ed., 'Introduction' to *Adam Ferguson: Selected Philosophical Writings* (Exeter: Imprint Academic, 2007), M.A. Stewart, 'The Stoic legacy in the early Scottish Enlightenment', in *Atoms, Pneuma, and Tranquillity: Epicurean and Stoic Themes in European Thought*, ed. Margaret Osler (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

[669] Merikoski, 'Christian Stoicism and Politeness', 160-203.

[670] See M.A. Stewart, 'The Stoic legacy in the early Scottish Enlightenment', in *Atoms, Pneuma, and Tranquillity: Epicurean and Stoic Themes in European Thought*, ed. Margaret Osler (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

[671] Stewart, 'The Stoic legacy in the early Scottish Enlightenment', 273.

[672] See Merikoski, 'Christian Stoicism and Politeness', Richard B. Sher, *Church and University in the Scottish Enlightenment*, M.A. Stewart, 'The Stoic legacy in the early Scottish Enlightenment',

Stoicism is not an acceptance of all aspects of Stoicism, or that he followed all Stoic principles, but that his approach to the subject of virtue, his stress on the importance of reason in a person's life and arguments for the providential ordering of the world, demonstrate the influence on his thought of both the Stoic and the Christian tradition.[673] Christian Maurer has also demonstrated that Hutcheson used Stoic concepts of natural benevolence in his moral philosophy to disprove the claims of the Epicureans and Augustinians, who argued that people are motivated by self-interest, but further argues that Hutcheson's understanding of the emotions and the passions were markedly different from Stoic Philosophy.[674] James Moore and Michael Silverthorne have recently edited Hutcheson's translation of Marcus Aurelius's *Meditations* in which they clearly differentiate Hutcheson's interpretation of Stoicism based on his moral philosophy from that of Stoic philosophy throughout the translation.[675]

Hutcheson's engagement with Stoic philosophy has been widely studied and the importance of this theme in his work crucially debated. The importance of Hutcheson's relationship with Stoicism remains a crucial question for studies of the Scottish Enlightenment because Hutcheson, an early Scottish Enlightenment figure, has been acknowledged to have influenced many contemporary and later thinkers. While figures such as David Hume disagreed with Hutcheson's incorporation of Stoic principles into his moral philosophy,[676] others found great inspiration in his works and the concepts of Christian Stoicism remained a vital aspect of Scottish Enlightenment thought. Richard Sher's *Church and University in the Scottish Enlightenment* explores the pervasive nature of Christian Stoicism among the Moderate Literati. Scholars have noted that some of these figures include George

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Christian Maurer, 'Hutcheson's Relation to Stoicism in the Light of his Moral Psychology', *The Journal of Scottish Philosophy*, 8 (1) (March, 2010), DOI: 10.3366/E 1479665109000499.

[672] Merikoski, 'Christian Stoicism and Politeness', 160-203.

[672] See M.A. Stewart, 'The Stoic legacy in the early Scottish Enlightenment'.

[673] Ibid., 290-291.

[674] Christian Maurer, 'Hutcheson's Relation to Stoicism in the Light of his Moral Psychology', 36-47. For more on the difference between the Stoics, Epicureans and Augustinians, see John Robertson, *The Case for the Enlightenment* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2005).

[675] James Moore and Michael Silverthorne, 'Introduction' to *The Meditations of the Emperor Marcus Aurelius* translated by Francis Hutcheson and James Moor (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2008). See also M.A. Stewart, 'The Stoic legacy in the early Scottish Enlightenment'.

[676] M.A. Stewart, 'The Stoic legacy in the early Scottish Enlightenment', 290.

Turnbull, Hugh Blair, William Robertson and Adam Ferguson.[677] Adam Ferguson's connection to Christian Stoicism and the influence of Stoicism on his thought has followed from these intellectual trends.

To get to the bottom of Ferguson's notions of Stoicism, modern commentators have attempted to identify which Stoic authors influenced Ferguson. The approach to Ferguson's relationship to the Stoic School has changed as scholarship of both ancient philosophy and of the eighteenth century has evolved. For instance, in David Kettler's and Jane Bush Fagg's works, there is no recognition that 'Stoicism' as a school itself might have changed over time. In these studies of Ferguson's work and his relationship to Stoicism, the school is presented as broadly unchanging. This overgeneralisation might help to explain the reason why David Kettler found it difficult to reconcile Ferguson's ideas with those of any of the Stoics.

In more recent scholarship, it has been asserted that there is in fact a great difference between Greek and Roman Stoicism and that this difference is reflected in Ferguson's thought. It has been acknowledged that Ferguson's 'Stoicism' is more reminiscent of the Roman Stoics than of the Greeks, as Lisa Hill has argued.[678] This reflects the understanding of the opinions of Stoicism in the eighteenth century, as well as specifying Ferguson's sources for Stoicism: Ferguson read Epictetus, Marcus Aurelius and Cicero, who incidentally was not a Stoic, but wrote about Stoic philosophy. This line of thought maintains the conclusions reached by those scholars analysing the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth-century developments in approaches to the Stoic school. Ferguson was also significantly influenced by Francis Hutcheson's concept of Stoicism. Contrary to Hill's view, there was no one, pervasive, understanding of Stoicism in the eighteenth century, and Ferguson's personal use of Stoicism therefore needs to be better understood. Each thinker who engaged with Stoic philosophy adopted aspects which he found most useful and appropriate to suit his moral philosophy, as has been demonstrated with Francis Hutcheson. In the same fashion, Ferguson took from Stoicism, using the methods of

[677] See Richard B. Sher, *Church and University in the Scottish Enlightenment: The Moderate Literati of Edinburgh;* Merikoski, 'Christian Stoicism and Politeness'; M.A. Stewart, 'The Stoic legacy in the early Scottish Enlightenment'; Alexander Broadie, *The Scottish Enlightenment: The Historical Age of the Historical Nation* (Edinburgh: Birlinn Ltd., 2001).
[678] Lisa Hill *The Passionate Society*, 37.

the modern eclectics, what he found most accurate and useful for discussing moral philosophy.

Ferguson's repeated use of Stoic sources and other similarities of his philosophy to Stoicism have led authors since the eighteenth century to interpret him as a Stoic. Adam Ferguson dealt openly with the eighteenth-century perceptions of his identity as a Stoic in the Introduction to his *Principles of Moral and Political Science*. Ferguson's commentators have sought to demonstrate that he in fact sees himself as a Stoic, but this interpretation does not follow from what he actually wrote. Ferguson clearly rejects any such interpretation: 'The Author, in some of the statements which follow, may be thought partial to the Stoic philosophy; but is not conscious of having warped the truth to suit with any system whatever.'[679] Ferguson goes on to write that his ideas were created in the search for truth and that, when he read the Stoic view of human life as a 'game', it only supported the opinions he had formed by looking at the world with his own eyes. The fact that he agrees with Stoicism on some points only serves to increase his confidence in his ideas, even at the risk of his own reputation, since 'the name of this sect has become, in the gentility of modern times, proverbial for stupidity'.[680] He goes on to prove that Stoicism actually remains a valid philosophy when based on Cicero's having adopted Stoic ethics to teach his son in his *De Officiis* and on the idea that the best parts of Roman law were founded on it as well. Furthermore, some of his near contemporaries have adopted Stoic philosophy, including Lord Shaftesbury, Montesquieu and Francis Hutcheson to name but a few. He concludes this section with the admonition that one of the things everyone learns as a youth is 'neither to admire nor to contemn what they do not know'.[681]

Several conclusions can be drawn from this passage. First, Ferguson accepts that his philosophy included aspects that resemble Stoicism, but denies that he is trying to be a Stoic in the strictest sense. He privileges Stoicism and thinks that it is worthy of emulation – in both its ancient and modern forms. Second, by having this discussion in the introduction to his work Ferguson shows that he is aware that his contemporaries might classify his philosophy as 'Stoic' and he argues against this

[679] *P.I.*, 7.
[680] Ibid., 7.
[681] Ibid., 8.

interpretation. Third, Ferguson recognises the conflicted nature of eighteenth-century Stoicism and indicates his intention to resolve it for himself. He knows that there are a variety of claims about Stoicism and he identifies himself as someone who finds truth in their ideas, but does not adopt the philosophy without reservation. Ferguson intentionally hopes to distance himself from the label of 'Stoic' and declares that he does not subscribe to it uncritically. This further demonstrates Ferguson's implementation of eclectic methodology and furthers his commitment to anti-sectarianism. Ferguson formulated philosophical principles based on experience and concluded and observed that Stoic philosophy ultimately reflected some of his ideas. This is a critical point because this is how Ferguson perceives his own ideas: he sees himself as an independent thinker who could critically analyse Stoic philosophy, which is indicative of Ferguson's overall methodology and approach to his ancient and modern sources. Moreover, this stance echoes the position of the Ancients in the Quarrel because Ferguson establishes the role of ancient philosophy in his modern thought; he maintains the importance of this ancient school, but does not do so without having first established its value through reason and experience.

In the chapter that follows, Ferguson's definition of Stoicism will be analysed. Identifying the key Stoic concepts Ferguson himself discussed will allow for a better understanding of his conception of their philosophy. From this foundation, Ferguson's moral philosophy and his philosophical principles will be compared to those he claimed to be Stoic, so that Ferguson's ideas can be set apart or paralleled with those of the Stoics. This chapter will answer the question: would Ferguson think of himself as a Stoic philosopher, based on his own definition of Stoicism?

1.1 Ferguson's Definition of Stoicism

Adam Ferguson's concept of Stoicism was based on his sources, both ancient and modern, and his relationship to the school was affected by his overall approach to philosophy. Because Ferguson's understanding of the Stoic school was original, to understand his engagement with it, and how he understood the Stoic school, this must first be considered. Ferguson focused mainly on Stoic ethics, ignoring metaphysics and their discussions of logic. This is due in part to the nature of the curriculum at the university, where he did not teach metaphysics, but ethics, and it is also due to his personal approach to philosophy, in the study of which he did not include discussions of metaphysics or logic in any great detail.

First, according to Ferguson, the Stoics believe in providence created by God to promote His goodness and justice and which affects all rational creatures. They believe that there is a wide variety of sources for individual moral choice, but that it is the freedom of having a choice rather than the result of that choice that leads to happiness. To make proper choices people rely on their concept of right and wrong, and this is the most fundamental consideration in making a moral choice. According to Ferguson, the Stoics believe that what is good and right is virtuous and that what is wrong and evil is vicious. They promote the goals of excellence and honour as the most appropriate for human beings rather than the attainment of pleasure and ease. They maintain that the good personal qualities of wisdom, benevolence and courage, are equally good for society in general. All can possess these virtues, despite their circumstances, and these virtues further lead to personal happiness. They also believe that people should be content in their station in life, which was dictated by God's providence, and should not wish for things which are beyond their control. Because people both live in the universe created by God and the society of men, they should always act for the good of mankind which in turn produces the most happiness attainable by an individual. The possession and maintenance of these qualities leads to the perfection that should be the aim for everyone, although it can never be fully achieved.[682]

[682] This discussion is based on Ferguson's definition of Stoicism found in the *History*, 179-180.

With this definition of Stoicism, it is clear that Ferguson narrows his focus to a consideration that is limited to ethics. Due to Ferguson's various intentions, depending on which readership he is addressing, his engagement with Stoicism reflected his practical objectives. The particular topics he addressed in his works, he examined in a characteristically Fergusonian, practical way. Ferguson referred to Stoic philosophy and Stoic thinkers repeatedly throughout his texts, but his direct engagement with the school varied to a greater or lesser extent. In some instances Ferguson assesses Stoic ideas, either agreeing with them or being critical of them. In others, Ferguson uses Stoic authors to support his already determined position, and thus relies on their authority to give weight to or support for his philosophical propositions. And finally, in some instances, he simply uses them as examples to help prove his point. This engagement with Stoic philosophy, as with ancient philosophy in general, illustrates his didactic approach. In Ferguson's moral philosophy there are several opportunities to assess and engage with Stoic philosophy: virtue, the passions, moral choice, happiness, and religion. A detailed analysis of these topics will demonstrate Ferguson's use of and relationship to Stoic philosophy.

1.2 Virtue

Defining virtue is one of the fundamental tasks of the moral philosopher and a crucial one for Ferguson. Ferguson is most concerned with a practical moral philosophy that helps guide people in making correct moral choices. The underlying theme of Ferguson's moral philosophy, especially that seen in the *Institutes* and the *Principles*, is how we can determine what is the guiding factor that helps people make their choices in a life filled with a variety of conflicting demands. When considering the nature of virtue, Ferguson does not neglect the question of choice. On this topic Ferguson relies heavily on Stoic authors. Stoic virtue was discussed

extensively in the eighteenth century by Ferguson and many others[683] and a broader understanding of Stoicism has affected several of the scholars writing on Ferguson, who understand his thought through other ancient or modern concepts of the school.[684] Although Ferguson referred to Stoic authors on numerous occasions, he did not simply adopt their ideas. He only incorporated Stoic authors because they happened to agree with his ideas.

According to Ferguson, the Stoics held that the virtues of wisdom, benevolence and courage were beneficial both for individuals as well as for society as a whole and that public and private good converged. All people can possess these virtues, despite differences in fortune or the influence of other people and once these virtues are realised people will only experience 'satisfaction and joy'. Stoics believe that people should perform the duties assigned to them as beings created by God, as members of society, and in their particular station in life, and so ultimately 'act for the good of mankind'. Performing this part will lead them to true happiness.[685]

Ferguson sees that the most important virtues for the Stoics are benevolence, wisdom and courage. More specifically Ferguson believes that virtue consists of the qualities of probity, wisdom, temperance and fortitude and 'These personal qualities constituted the virtue or excellency of a man; and are in fact his state of greatest enjoyment or least suffering.'[686] Ferguson concludes that benevolence is actually the most important of all qualities and it is therefore the true foundation of virtue. Because Ferguson is also concerned not just with moral choice, but also the moral choice made within a society, benevolence as a virtue is most important because it is for the greatest good of the individual as well as for society as a whole.

Ferguson maintains that the four main virtues of wisdom or prudence, justice or probity, temperance and fortitude are the foundation of beneficence and the ultimate virtues that people should follow.[687] This is the quality which guides people in performing tasks that are to the benefit of themselves and for the greater good of humanity, for individuals or groups: 'The greatest good competent to man's

[683] See for instance, *The Meditations of the Emperor Marcus Aurelius* translated by Francis Hutcheson and James Moor, ed. James Moore and Michael Silverthorne (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2008)., bk. III, art. 5, 42.
[684] Kettler, *Ferguson*, 142-143; Hill, *Passionate Society*, 38.
[685] *History*, 179-180.
[686] *Institutes*, 156.
[687] Ibid., 243-244.

nature, is the love of mankind'. The end result of the love of mankind is that the good of the individual is the same as the good of the whole; that 'in the works of God the whole is preserved by that which constitutes the good of the part, and that there is no happiness of the part consistent with what is hurtful to the whole'; that the best thing a benevolent person can do for another is to 'promote disinterestedness and candour'; and 'That things are to be estimated, independently of opinion, or temporary fashion, by their tendency to the good of mankind.'[688] Ferguson maintains that beneficence is the highest good for the individual and for society as a whole. [689] It gives people the most satisfaction and happiness in both their personal and public life: 'The mere attempts of a virtuous man to serve his friend, or his country, is an object of moral esteem; not only where he may have failed in his purpose, but even where the event may have been calamitous to himself, or to others.'[690]

A danger exists in the idea that beneficence is the most important quality because it might be misconstrued as meaning that benevolence results in self-denial and obligation, which will cause pain to the benevolent person when giving pleasure to another. Also, if someone demonstrates kindness to another, this may form some system of obligation where the good deeds would have to be repaid.[691] Ferguson argues that this is not the case at all and again uses Stoic writings to support his argument.[692] Ferguson, citing Antoninus, believes that benevolent actions benefit both parties. It is pleasurable for both to give and receive – these are the effects of beneficence. Also, because virtue is a natural quality of the human mind, benevolence is also natural. Ferguson, therefore, removes the obligation to repay benevolence because it is as natural as breathing.[693]

Although this definition of virtue embraces some of the same elements as that of the Stoics, Ferguson does not concede that this is a purely Stoic definition of virtue. These virtues have been presented by many other thinkers as the most important one: 'This division is so natural, that it has always presented itself when

[688] *Institutes*, 171-172.
[689] *P.II.*, 111.
[690] Ibid., 120.
[691] Ibid., 90
[692] Ibid., 90
[693] Ibid., 91.

we have treated of the felicity or excellence competent to man's nature.'[694] Therefore, Ferguson is not adopting what he considers to be the Stoic concept of the principal virtues, he is purporting to adopt what he has determined to be the best virtues independently. By incorporating Stoic notions of virtue that match his own, Ferguson is not simply adopting their system, but relying on their authority to support his general point. Moreover, Ferguson believes that people cannot argue with his concept of virtue:

> The value of virtue, as we have endeavoured to define it, will not be questioned: For who can doubt the value of a wisdom, which cannot err; of a temper, which is ever joyful and serene, in its exertions for the good of mankind; of a temperance, which no allurement of false pleasure can mislead; or, of a fortitude, which no difficulty or danger can embarrass or appal? This, we may be told, is first to imagine perfect happiness, and then to give it the name of virtue; whilst the whole is ideal, and never realized in the case of any human creature.[695]

This concept of virtue embodies the best qualities that people can possess. This is also connected to his concept of human universals which he learned from those taking the position of the Ancients in the Quarrel. Although it may be an ideal that all people cannot attain, it is the goal that people should attempt to achieve if they want to be happy.

From this position, that the virtues which Ferguson singles out are natural, that they are the most proper and appropriate, that people throughout time have acknowledged their intrinsic values, Ferguson concluded that virtue itself is natural and intrinsically valuable. Man, who is an intelligent being created by God, is best when he is virtuous and a virtuous man is also best liked in society.[696] People who exhibit virtuous qualities are best suited to join others in society as well as take their place in the world created by God. These virtuous people lead the kind of life most admired by others.[697] When people act virtuously they are liked by others because they exhibit the good qualities which people appreciate most.

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[694] *Institutes*, 242.
[695] *P.II.*, 70.
[696] Ibid., 45-46.
[697] Ibid., 366.

Moreover, Ferguson believes, like the Stoics, that virtuous behaviour breeds virtue; that if a person acts virtuously then others will be affected by that behaviour. Furthermore, any person acting in a pleasant way, exhibiting qualities that demonstrate personal virtue will have a positive affect on others. Ferguson again draws on the authority of the Stoics to support his view:[698]

> Virtue is so far from being valuable, merely on account of its external effects, that the greatest and most beneficial effect it can produce is the communication and propagation of virtue itself; "You will serve your country more," says Epictetus, "by raising the souls, than by enlarging the habitations of your fellow citizens."[699] And this is the greatest benefit which any man can receive from his virtuous neighbour, that he become, like him, wise, courageous, temperate, beneficent, and just.[700]

Here, Ferguson suggests that the Stoics were correct, by accepting when Epictetus' claim that the greatest gift that a person can give to another is promoting and diffusing virtue.

Yet Ferguson does not agree with all Stoic conceptions of virtue. Although Ferguson finds that wisdom is an important quality for the acquisition of virtue,[701] he is critical of philosophers, who base their definition of virtue on having already achieved a state of virtue, who separate everything that could be considered good or virtuous into the category of 'wisdom' and all vice and evil into the category of 'folly'. Ferguson is not specific as to which philosophers he is referring, but it is probably the Stoics, who he describes as placing importance on wisdom.[702] Ferguson believes that it is far too limiting to confine all morality to this construction because it fails to allow for progress towards the improvement and enjoyment of benevolence. Also, wisdom is not a quality which leads to affection, a fundamental quality for a happy human life. Ferguson believes that benevolence

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[698] Ibid., 75-76.
[699] Ferguson makes this same statement in the *Essay*, translated slightly differently: 'You will confer the greatest benefit on your city', says Epictetus, 'not by raising the roofs, but by exalting the souls of your fellow-citizens; for it is better that the great souls should live in small habitations, than that abject slaves should burrow in great houses.' *Essay*, 56-57.
[700] *P.II.*, 153.
[701] See Kettler, *Ferguson*, 144-148.
[702] *P.I.*, 130.

must exist so that people can use their wisdom to improve themselves, but not that it is a quality which will sufficiently equip people to live in society:

> Philosophers have thought, that every subject of commendation, to which human nature is competent; every virtue and every constituent of happiness, might be comprised under the title of *wisdom*, or the excellence of intelligent being; that, on the contrary every subject of dispraise or contempt, every vice and every character of misery, might be comprised under the title of *folly*: But, it is not necessary, nor perhaps even expedient, thus to force the attributes of human nature, under single appellations, however comprehensive or general. Although it is both wise and profitable to love our fellow creatures, we can no more become affectionate to our friend, in the mere search of wisdom, than we can in search of our interest. Our constitution must have the ingredient of benevolence, in order that a mind well informed may improve upon this principle of nature, and learn to direct it aright.[703]

Wisdom is important for virtue, but it does not lead to the proper human affections that breed true virtue. Wisdom alone, as well as the knowledge of nature, is important, but is not the source of virtue. Here, Ferguson disputes the Stoic proposition that wisdom exists independently of benevolence.

External Actions

Another topic on which Ferguson and the Stoics seem to hold similar ideas is that of the judgement of external actions. Ferguson thinks that virtue is a quality of the mind and can exist only in the individual. He believes that the perception of virtue should not only depend on either external circumstances or external conditions. People know what is right and wrong by 'observation and experience' and accordingly make their choices. It is not the effect of that choice which should be judged, but the choice itself. This judgement should be true for the individual: the individual should be happy with the choice itself, not the success or failure of it.[704] Ferguson found similar ideas in Stoic philosophy:

[703] *P.II.*, 40-41.
[704] Ibid., 156-157.

> They allow, that in the nature of things there are many grounds upon which we prefer or reject objects that present themselves to us, but that the choice which we make, not the event of our efforts, decides our happiness or our misery; that right and wrong are the most important and the only grounds upon which we can at all times safely proceed in our choice, and that, in comparison to this difference, everything else is of no account; that a just man will ever act as if there was nothing good but what is right, and nothing evil but what is wrong…[705]

In Ferguson's account, when the Stoics discuss moral choice, they recognise that it is the choice rather than the effect of that choice that leads to happiness and that when making these choices a person invokes his concept of right and wrong to assess whether to choose good over evil.

For Ferguson too, external action is important notably for both moral choice and moral approbation, but virtue, being a quality of the mind, is not dependent on external actions.[706] Ferguson believes that the means of action are more important than the ends because he believes that virtue originates in the mind and that people do not necessarily have control over the outcome of their good intentions. Thus, Ferguson believes that external circumstances, actions or effects should not constitute the criteria to judge morality.[707]

Although the similarities of Ferguson's position to that of the Stoics has led scholars to conclude that he adopted Stoic ideas, Ferguson rejects some fundamental aspects of Stoic ethics. In looking at Ferguson's ideas about Stoicism it is clear that he diverges from them in several instances. First, he denies the importance of wisdom in defining moral choices – he believes that affection for others should be the determining factor. He also does not believe that all external situations are the same; that situations do not determine a person's happiness and virtue. The question

[705] *History*, 179-180.
[706] 'The law of external action is so essential to morality, that men very frequently confine the whole of morality to this law. But virtue is in reality a qualification of the mind; although the term equivalent to *virtue*, in every language, implies all the required effects and appearances of this qualification. Its constituents are, Disposition, Skill, Application, and Force. Corresponding to the number of these constituents, virtue has been divided into the four capital branches, called the *cardinal Virtues*. These are, *Justice* or *Probity*, *Prudence*, *Temperance*, and *Fortitude.* Justice or probity is the regard shown to the rights and happiness of mankind.' *Institutes*, 242. See also *P.II.* 36-37.
[707] Lisa Hill finds that Ferguson's only rejection of Stoicism comes in his denial that all external circumstances are equal. Hill, *The Passionate Society*, 96.

of whether Ferguson's concept of virtue is indebted to that of the Stoics is not quickly resolved. By carefully examining his actual words, however, Ferguson's departure from their position emerges. Certainly he is writing a definition of virtue which he thinks conforms to what is natural. He is not, however, merely following in the steps of the Stoics, but has independently developed this position and only uses the authority of the Stoics for support. Virtue is the topic in which Ferguson most clearly resembles the Stoics because he is using ideas and terms similar to theirs, and uses Stoic authors to bolster his positions.

1.3 The Passions and the Nature of Pleasure

Ferguson believes that the passions are a result of man's natural instinct for self-preservation and from which man's concepts of pain and pleasure originate through experience.[708] From this starting point, man then decides how to fulfil this basic need of survival through choice[709] and eventually man developed arts and sciences, industry and production.[710] Man learns to make these choices according to experience and observation. Man learns to distinguish between good and evil from his appetites and pleasures.[711]

For Ferguson, it is necessary to formulate a rule to guide the understanding of the passions. It therefore is necessary to 'judge of what is admirable in the capacities of men, or fortunate in the application of their faculties, before we venture to pass a judgement on this branch of their merits, or pretend to measure the degree of respect they may claim by their different attainments.'[712] For rational creatures, the powers of intelligence help them to decide between pain and pleasure as well as to recognise excellence and defects in others which together help guide moral choices.[713]

[708] *P.I.*, 15.
[709] Ibid., 122.
[710] Ibid., 122.
[711] Ibid., 123.
[712] *Essay*, 30.
[713] *P.II.*, 22.

People begin their assessment of pleasure and pain by a combination of their intelligence and their physical senses. Although people begin life only with the basic instincts of self-preservation and a natural instinct to be in society, they eventually use their experiences and reason to evaluate their experiences.[714] People then fulfil their appetites based on the experience and observation they have acquired by combining the use of their senses and reason, and here Ferguson further continues to incorporate the experimental method into his moral philosophy: 'A discernment acquired by experience, becomes a faculty of his mind; and the inferences of thought are sometimes not to be distinguished from the perceptions of sense.'[715] It is from this basic starting point that men decide their ideas of good and bad, right and wrong.

For Ferguson, pleasure should not be substituted for happiness because this results in mere sensuality and, eventually, a corruption of virtue. Pleasure, however, is not intrinsically evil or vicious and there are many pleasurable activities which are virtuous. As long as pleasure is not the ultimate goal, but an effect of an activity, then that is a good pleasure.[716] Pleasure is 'enjoyment considered abstractly'[717] and there are both animal and intellectual pleasures.[718] Ferguson however maintains that animal enjoyments must be 'subordinate' to intellectual enjoyments.[719]

Ferguson's conception of the passions can further clarify his relationship to the Stoic school. Ferguson assesses the problematic nature of the passions in relation to 'the schools of antient philosophy'. When discussing the term 'passion', Ferguson writes, this usually refers to extremes of emotion and thus people are 'commonly admonished to beware its effects'.[720] The ancient schools prohibited the passions for this reason and also because the passions did not fit in with the concept of perfection based on the elevated quality of wisdom:

> This character consisted in the choice of virtue, considered as the sole good; and in the rejection of vice, as the sole evil. A good

[714] *Essay*, 16.
[715] Ibid., 30.
[716] 'Pleasure is a term too vague to be substituted for happiness. This substitution has a tendency to vindicate indiscriminate voluptuousness, if not to encourage sensuality, the sort of pleasure with which men are soonest acquainted.' *Institutes*, 160-161.
[717] *Institutes*, 147-148.
[718] Ibid., 147-149.
[719] Ibid., 151-152.
[720] *P.II.*, 58.

> consisting in choice alone, and therefore ever present to the wise who has made that choice, is an object of uniform satisfaction, not of fluctuating emotion to joy from grief, or from hope to fear. The question was not, how far this state of the affections was realized in any instance, but how far it was a fit model of perfection, to which the efforts of men should be directed.[721]

This description of the Stoics' assessment of the passions is consistent with Ferguson's concept of Stoic virtue, as we have seen in the previous section. For Ferguson, the Stoics forbid the passions as an excess of emotions and therefore expect that people, in attempting to reach perfection through the use of wisdom, will make choices about the passions based on this ideal.[722] Because virtue is a matter of choosing right over wrong, the same rule applies to the passions. The Stoics believed that self-control was the best means to reject the passions.

Ferguson also believes that it is right to have self-control over animal pleasures, and it is the quality of temperance that should guide these choices.[723] This consideration is connected to Ferguson's concept of virtue. Virtuous people will realise that excesses of pleasure and sensuality lead to actions and choices that have little value. This is also connected to his consideration of the importance of choice in people's lives.[724] Because man is 'voluntary in every choice, and is the master of his own actions',[725] control over the passions is a matter of informed choice. Ferguson believes that moral questions are left to the individual to decide and those who have grasped his definition of virtue will realise that there are higher pursuits than mere pleasures.[726]

Controlling the passions based on a concept of virtue and vice alone is not, however, how Ferguson understands the true role of passions in human life: simple self-control is not enough to determine this moral choice. It is through a combination of temperance and choices informed by observation that people should decide how to follow their passions. Significantly, Ferguson does not believe that all passions are equally vicious: there are vices much worse than sensuality.

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[721] *P.I.*, 129-130.
[722] According to Kettler, the Stoics believe 'The exercise of reason, therefore, and the conquest of all passions by reason are seen as the apex of human activity.' Kettler, *Ferguson*, 142-143.
[723] *P.II.* 67
[724] See *P.I.*, 52.
[725] *P.I.*, 130.
[726] Ibid.

> We err, in deriving the corruptions, which are imputed to great cities and courts, from the love of pleasure, and from the profusion of wealth, with which the love of pleasure is gratified. The mere voluptuary is innocent, compared to those who are deeply infected with malice, envy, and pride; a generation of evils begot upon emulation, competition, or the apprehension of comparative advantages, whether precedence, titles, or wealth.[727]

In addition, a total denial of pleasure and acceptance of physical pain can be taken to negative extremes. Ferguson sees this as a folly of ancient customs,[728] in which he notes the problem of extreme self-denial and acceptance of pain. Ferguson holds that moderation in all things is the best policy. Since he believes that there should not be excesses of virtue and vice, he therefore maintains that there should be moderation in relation to passion. Ferguson does not deny that some pleasure is necessary for human life. Ferguson distinguishes the types of pleasure which should be chosen and therefore does not believe that all pleasure should be shunned. Although this position of moderation in relation to the passions can be recognised as a Stoic position, for Ferguson there remains an important distinction. He maintains that the Stoics 'proscribed' the passions as they were not an acceptable means to perfection, but Ferguson does not hold this view.

Ferguson believes that certain kinds of passions are not only acceptable, but vital for human happiness. Some pleasures and appetites nevertheless are better than others. Ferguson knows that the sensual pleasures are gratifying to people but he believes that business, or the duties which people ought to follow actually create more pleasure than fleeting sensual pleasures. Ferguson believes that it is activity combined with experience that guides the choices among pleasures. If people follow the proper path of an active life and a virtuous mind then the passions are not a problem: 'Sensuality is easily overcome by any of the habits of pursuit which usually engage an active mind.'[729] Moderation of the passions occurs naturally as we pursue an active life. In order to understand this relationship between activity and the passions we must first look at Ferguson's concept of activity itself as this is a central element of his overall moral philosophy.

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[727] *P.II.*, 77.
[728] *Essay*, 50
[729] *Essay*, 46.

Activity, Society and the Passions

Ferguson solves one problem of the passions by noting that 'affections, and active engagements' decrease sensual pleasures in the light of proper enjoyment.[730] The question of activity is central to Ferguson's concept of human nature as well as in all aspects of human life and morality.[731] It is part of man's nature to be active as both an animal and an intelligent being[732] and Ferguson related virtue to activity and happiness. He argued that all circumstances demonstrate the active part that man plays in the natural world, and man has of necessity to discover the laws of nature to fulfil this active role, which in turn determines the role which people play in society.[733] People must actively engage with other members of their society in order to be happy because that is their natural role.[734]

Ferguson notes the importance which the Stoics placed on the concept of action.[735] Ferguson writes of the Stoics that 'virtue was supposed to consist in the affectionate performance of every good office towards their fellow creatures, and in full resignation to providence for every thing independent of their own choice'.[736] Furthermore, they 'recommended an active part in all the concerns of our fellow-creatures, and the steady exertion of a mind benevolent, courageous, and temperate…. For himself, the cares and attentions which his object required, were his pleasures; and the continued exertion of a beneficent affection, his welfare and his prosperity.'[737] According to Ferguson, the Stoics maintained that to be virtuous, people should actively attempt to be benevolent and care for others by performing the duties assigned to them by providence through their station in life. Furthermore, the fulfilment of benevolent actions and the performance of duties led this benevolence and activity to the greatest pleasures that people can achieve.

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[730] *Institutes*, 153.
[731] Hill also notes that Ferguson places importance on activity: 'Activity is praised above all, especially in the form of "ambition" and competition.' Hill, *Passionate Society*, 95.
[732] *Institutes*, 150. See also *P.I.*, 12, 14; *P.II.*, 54-55.
[733] *P.II.*, 59-60.
[734] Ibid.
[735] Hill, *Passionate Society*, 37-38.
[736] *P.II.*, 4.
[737] Ibid., 5.

According to Ferguson, one of the fundamental characteristics of man is his natural instinct to live in society. Because it is so vital to man's existence and subsistence, there are obviously moral consequences to living in society. Yet, man's association with others goes far beyond mere necessity and involves the relations between men and women and families; and such activities as friendship; citizenship; concern for others, and sympathy and humanity.[738]

Being in society obliges men to be active and have concerns for that society; public justice and public disorder are matters of interest to every person's concept of good and evil.[739] Notions of good and evil that an individual would want for himself are applied to others in his society and from this he learns to differentiate between social and selfish desires.[740] Ferguson also equates the natural place of man in society with virtue. From his definition of virtue, that beneficence and the greatest good for the greatest number of people are the highest good, Ferguson concludes that the proper role of people in society is necessarily virtuous. People act best when acting in society virtuously; others reward them for it and, better still, learn to emulate it. This is Ferguson's ideal concept of human virtue even though people did not always follow this model.

Ferguson also argued that in 'rude ages' morality was determined by external signs and therefore virtue became a practice of self-denial, controlling the passions and withholding their positive effects on other members of society.[741] This idea of morality is unsatisfying to the 'inquisitive mind' because virtue should be upheld since it is good. The means by which it is determined is through the system of rewards and punishments in society, with the end result that virtue is acknowledged as being good for both the individual and society.[742]

Ferguson's concept of civic virtue, derives from this observation, but this concept of social activity and responsibility extends beyond the realm of the political into purely moral considerations. In relation to Stoic ideas, we have seen that Ferguson believes that the Stoics advocate active participation in society which

[738] *P.I.*, 125
[739] Ibid., 123.
[740] Ibid., 124.
[741] Ibid., 308.
[742] Ibid., 308.

obviously includes the practice of beneficence towards others. Ferguson therefore links activity, society and benevolence as follows:

> Benevolence is an active principle, and an agreeable state of the mind, rendering the presence and welfare of other men an occasion of pleasure, and fitting the individual to his relation in fraternity of natures like his own. The pleasures of society are the exercises of a social nature. They mix with the functions of animal life, and are, in reality, the principal cause of many enjoyments which are supposed to result from the gratifications of sense. The pleasures of the table, for instance, are more those of society than of gratified appetite. Whence it is else that the meal, when taken alone is a mere supply of necessity; but in company, and in the gaiety of sociable intercourse, is of so much consideration among the enjoyments of life?[743]

Furthermore, Ferguson links the ideas of activity, society and pleasure joined together as the building blocks of affection.

Ferguson believes that there is a hierarchy of pleasures. Although sensual pleasures have their place in people's live, these pleasures are best taken in moderation. Moreover, these pleasures are not as satisfying as others. Ferguson notes: 'It has been well observed, that every exercise of the human faculties, into which malice or fear do not enter as motives, and every exercise which is not carried to some pernicious extreme of fatigue, is in its own nature agreeable.'[744] Ferguson believes that people can only truly be happy when they are active members of society because this kind of activity is itself pleasurable.

People need to be employed, but there are a variety of means to do this: 'To be employed is agreeable; but employments differ no less than sensations. The employments of a mind and benevolent affection are placid and happy. Those of a rancorous and malicious temper are convulsive and wretched.'[745] For Ferguson, however, it is not any activity that produces actual happiness, but 'business' that works in relation to a person's duties:

> The distinction between business and amusement is perhaps not easily settled, or consists intirely in this, that business is prescribed by some consideration of interest or duty; and amusement is taken up, in the beginning at least, without any such serious concern.[746]

[743] *P.II.*, 14-15.
[744] Ibid., 12.
[745] Ibid., 14.
[746] Ibid., 88.

We can therefore derive Ferguson's main points about the relationship between virtue, happiness, pleasure and activity. Ferguson believes that, 'It is a wretched opinion, that happiness consists in a freedom from trouble, or in having nothing to do'. As a result of holding such a view, people will neglect the true sources of their enjoyments: their duties and their active engagements. From this neglect people actually complain more because life becomes a 'burden'. Therefore, 'By preferring amusement to business, they reject what is fitted to occupy them, and search in vain for something else to remove their languor'. Furthermore, people are mistaken when they believe that 'beneficence is an effort in self-denial, or that we lay our fellow creatures under great obligations by the kindness we do them'. As happiness is caused by virtue and the performance of both active business and duties, it is a mistake to believe that we should chose anything other than these things as a source of pleasure. People often make this mistake: 'The vulgar, as well as the learned, have their paradoxes: They frequently prefer interest, fame, and power, to acknowledged happiness'. Worst of all people rely on what is out of their control for happiness, such as 'the imputation of worth, to worth itself'. In regards to the passions, Ferguson argued that 'It is wretched to have an opinion of good in things which we might forgo with indifference, or of evil in things which we might endure with patience'. External circumstances should not affect people's opinions of other's happiness and pleasure. The effects of fortune and the external conditions in which people live do not determine their happiness.[747] Thus, we can trace Ferguson's notions of activity and pleasure to his wider definitions of virtue and happiness. Ferguson believes that actively engaging in the correct passions leads to happiness. Activity is also related to happiness and enjoyment. Man is not happy when he is at rest or without something to do; he is only happy when actively engaged.[748]

Ferguson believes that the Stoics want to deny all pleasures by controlling the passions with reason. Ferguson, on the other hand, does not believe that self-control through reason is enough of a guiding principle to help people make choices

[747] *Institutes*, 166-168.
[748] Ibid., 131-132.

about which passions to follow. Instead, Ferguson finds that it is temperance and affection that should help guide people in making their choices. Furthermore, the Stoics wanted to forbid all passions while Ferguson found that the pleasures of an active role in society lead to the best kind of pleasure.

Ferguson has a wide-ranging understanding of the passions. He also concedes that his interpretation may be misleading: 'The division of our appetites into benevolent and selfish, has probably, in some degree, helped to mislead our apprehension on the subject of personal enjoyment and private good; and our zeal to prove that virtue is disinterested, has not greatly promoted the cause'. Although some believe that pleasure comes from fulfilling selfish desires and that benevolence only benefits the receiver. In fact, 'the gratification of every desire is a personal enjoyment, and its value being proportioned to the particular quality or force of the sentiment, it may happen that the same person may reap a greater advantage from the good fortune he has procured to another, than from that he has obtained for himself'. Ultimately the pleasure received from benevolent actions incurs more happiness than any other pleasure.[749]

Ferguson interprets the Stoic philosopher Epictetus as supporting this position: 'And this, according to Epictetus, was the blessing of God conferred on man: *That whoever knew, and chose, his true good, could not be hindered or disappointed*.' Ferguson believes that this 'true good' is making correct choices based on affection and virtue: 'It appears, upon the whole, that just opinion, benevolent affections, and serious engagements, are the preferable enjoyments of human nature.'[750] Again, virtue and pleasure are connected.[751] Furthermore, Ferguson is concerned with helping to guide people in their moral choices. With regard to the passions, Ferguson does not believe that it is reason alone which can guide people in choosing one pleasure over another, rather it is temperance and affection. Moreover, because he believes that there are some pleasures which are better than others, people should follow their active engagements and live a virtuous life in order to experience the most pleasure. People will discover that these methods result in the most pleasure through their own experience and observation.

[749] *Essay*, 55.
[750] *Institutes*, 153-155.
[751] *P.II.*, 57-58.

There are more elements that need to be considered when assessing moral choice including the definitions of moral approbation, moral excellence, and good and evil. With these considerations in mind people will be more equipped to make better moral choices. These notions as well will be assessed in relation to Stoic ideas on these topics.

1.4 Moral Choice: or How Should One Make Moral Judgements?

Ferguson believed that beneficence was the key to a moral life; that people should act with the good of others in mind at all times. This should be the driving force behind people's actions. Ferguson, however, was not unaware that individuals have needs as well and it is in the discussion of the passions and pleasure that Ferguson addresses this issue. He believed that there are many passions to be chosen from but that benevolence and activity lead to the greatest satisfaction. Although Ferguson set this out as his basic idea of morality, he acknowledged that this conclusion is not necessarily easy to reach for all people. Due to the large number of options available to people, both physical and intellectual, Ferguson believed that one of his main duties to his readers was to demonstrate how to make the best moral choices. With this task in mind, Ferguson sets out to define the methods of moral choice under the heading of moral approbation. Ferguson wants to set out moral laws by which people can apprehend the nature of the choices presented to them and thus proceed from an informed position. With regard to this, Ferguson lays out distinctions of good and evil as well as the means of determining the difference between moral excellence and defects, a topic also raised by Stoic authors.[752] When looking at these topics in relation to Ferguson's engagement with the Stoics, it becomes clear that Ferguson's ideas on these topics again do not completely align with that philosophy. It is important to look first at Ferguson's general ideas of moral approbation before discussing his ideas on good and evil and moral excellence in greater detail.

[752] Kettler, *Ferguson*, 142-143.

Moral approbation

The relationship between reason and choice was one which was important to ancient and moderns thinkers, not merely to Adam Ferguson. Ferguson states that 'The term equivalent to *wisdom*, among the antients, was employed by them to comprehend every article of praise, and enabled them also to comprise the laws of morality in the single recommendation of this quality.' Here, it seems that the 'antients' to whom he refers are the Stoics. Ferguson claims that the Stoics believed that wisdom was the guiding principle behind moral choice. Ferguson does not agree with this assessment. He believes that following wisdom alone is too limited because it 'substitutes a prudent choice of our interests for what ought to be a matter of affection, and the effusion of a benevolent heart'. Prudence may be a quality of the understanding and intellect, but virtue is not; virtue 'includes, as a preferable consideration, the energy and direction of an amiable and happy disposition'. Ferguson believes that in order to make good choices people must have a combination of both good judgement and affection.[753]

Moral approbation is 'the judgement formed of characters and actions, as being excellent or just'. Determining 'excellence or defect in ourselves, is accompanied with elation of mind, shame, and remorse; in others, with complacency, veneration, love, pity, indignation, and scorn.'[754] Unlike other judgements, which may relate to physical objects or circumstances, questions of morals relate to more emotional and analytical considerations. Furthermore, probity is the most important characteristic of moral approbation and an essential element of virtue.[755]

Moral approbation is determined by the 'law of estimation' and 'According to this law, men refer the qualities and exertions of their own nature, together with many other particulars, to the opposite predicaments of excellency and defect.'[756] There is, however, no 'instinctive or invariable rule' by which people chose what is excellent. People's judgements are determined by their affections and desires.[757]

[753] *P.II.*, 109.
[754] *Institutes*, 107-108.
[755] Ibid., 111.
[756] Ibid., 112-113.
[757] Ibid., 114-115.

For moral approbation more generally people judge external actions based on their perceived influence on the general good or on other individuals, that is, by their effect.[758] External actions, however, must always be considered in relation to the judgement behind the action. External actions on their own, without a greater consideration of motivation, are mere physical behaviours, but, if an action proceeds from an evil motive, for example, that action should be forbidden.[759] Conversely, 'The law which requires the love of mankind, supported by wisdom, courage, and temperance, likewise requires every external action that is suited to this affection, and to these qualifications. The law that prohibits malice, remissness, cowardice, or intemperance, prohibits likewise every external effect of these characters.'[760] External actions are therefore, 'like mechanical causes of any other sort', produce effects, but a moral judgement cannot be made on these actions until the emotion or thought which produced it is known.[761] Moral distinctions, therefore, are decided by each person, which demonstrate Ferguson's rational and eclectic model of philosophy that leaves the choice up to the individual person. Although people may have different ideas about morality, in reality, virtue is the excellence which people will recognise as the foundation of moral approbation.[762]

Ferguson held that what helps guide moral approbation is not reason or beneficence alone, but a moral sense or an innate sense which guides people in their choice of right and wrong.[763] He argued that for men 'over and above the powers cognitive and active, the Maker has given a power judicative, respecting the merit or demerit of character, and approving or disapproving even the dispositions, from which the moral conduct proceeds.'[764] Since this sense is part of man's nature, it is 'nugatory' to debate the nature or definition of it because there is no real means to

[758] *Essay*, 41.
[759] *Institutes*, 176-177.
[760] Ibid., 176-177.
[761] *P.II.*, 165.
[762] Ibid., 134.
[763] Hill, *Passionate Society*, 77. Lisa Hill notes that 'Notwithstanding the Stoic precedent, Ferguson must have been impressed by Francis Hutcheson's earlier attempt to account for every human drive and passion in terms of a benign master plan geared towards human happiness.' Hill discusses the influence of Hutcheson's ideas throughout her *Passionate Society* and find similarities between him and Ferguson.
[764] *P.II.*, 127.

prove its existence.[765] The law of moral sense is similar to other laws of nature which have no explainable origins, like gravity or electricity, but are known facts and are ultimately useful and good.[766]

The Stoics, on the other hand, do not believe in a moral sense. They believe that it is through wisdom that people make choices not through an innate moral sense. This is another example of how Ferguson's philosophy differs from that of the Stoics.

Ferguson believed that the ability to distinguish between excellence and defect was an essential faculty of intelligent beings. It was important to individuals because they are concerned with the nature of good and evil. Moreover, because people were created by God, who also has this faculty, people will want to attempt to emulate this aspect to become more like the divine creator.[767] The reason that the difference between excellence and defect exists is because it results from a choice of the individual based on their experiences and observations of a variety of subjects and occasions.[768] Although Ferguson differs from the Stoics in his assessment of moral approbation, he continued to use their examples in his conception of moral philosophy more generally:

> A person of an affectionate mind, possessed of a maxim, That he himself, as an individual, is no more than a part of the whole that demands his regard, has found, in that principle, a sufficient foundation for all the virtues; for a contempt of animal pleasures, that would supplant his principal enjoyment; for an equal contempt of danger or pain, that come to stop his pursuits of public good. "A vehement and steady affection magnifies its object, and lessens every difficulty or danger that stands in the way." "Ask those who have been in love," says Epictetus, "they will know that I speak truth."[769]

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[765]'If *moral sense*, therefore, be no more than a figurative expression, by which to distinguish the discernment of right and wrong, admitting this to be an ultimate fact in the constitution of our nature; it may appear nugatory to dispute about words, or to require any other form of expression than is fit to point out that fact in question. And if this fact, though no way susceptible of explanation or proof, being uniform to a great extent in the operations or nature, is itself a law, not a phenomenon; it may no doubt serve as a principle of science, to account for appearances that result from itself, and to direct the practice or arts throughout the departments in which it prevails.' Ibid., 128.

[766] *P.II.*, 128.

[767] Ibid., 129.

[768] Ibid., 129-130.

[769]*Essay*, 41.

Here again Ferguson cited Epictetus to support his conclusions, rather than adopting Stoic thought.

Another method by which people create their moral judgements is through the law of estimation. This law is natural and is understood without any explanation and its application is similar to that of a natural law when analysing the 'judgement of manners'. This law can 'enable the moralist, in particular instances, to ascertain what is good for mankind; and to form a regular system of moral estimation and precept, throughout all the subdivisions of *law*, of *manners*, or political *institutions*.'[770] Although this law is central to people's concept of moral judgement there are no specific rules which determine its definition. A system of morals will therefore proceed from any foundation of morality which the person chooses: 'This standard, it is the object of moral philosophy to ascertain, and to apply, in estimating the reason of different men, their sympathies and their antipathies, the good or the evil they incur in every act of the mind, and in every instance throughout the conduct of life.'[771]

To help make these difficult distinctions, Ferguson believes that looking at merit and demerit will lead to the proper discernment of actions. For Ferguson, '*Merit* is the presence of that quality which, whatever it be, is the object of moral approbation; *demerit*, on the contrary, is the absence of such quality; or the presence of any quality which is the object of disapprobation.'[772] These concepts are then understood under the heading of moral excellence or defect.

Ferguson has a very different conception to the Stoics of how to make moral choices. Ferguson noted that the Stoics want wisdom to be the basis of moral choices, but Ferguson knew that this is insufficient for people who are not dedicated to philosophy to follow. Instead, Ferguson believed that moral choices should be made by experience and sentiment. This basic definition of moral approbation can also be seen in Ferguson's discussions of moral excellence and good and evil when demonstrating guiding principles for his readers.

[770] *P.II.*, 129.
[771] *P.I.*, 160-161.
[772] *P.II.*, 159.

Moral excellence

According to Ferguson, the Stoics believed that the concept of excellence and defects 'not only led to much nobler ends, but which were of much greater power in commanding the human will; the love of pleasure was grovelling and vile, was the source of dissipation and of sloth; the love of excellence and honour was aspiring and noble, and led to the greatest exertions and the highest attainments of our nature.'[773] Thus, for the Stoics, attempting to attain the qualities seen as excellent, rather than attaining pleasures of a different nature, results in a person leading a better and happier life. Ferguson agrees with this concept that excellence demonstrates good qualities.

Ferguson believes that excellence is the result of people exhibiting the personal qualities of virtue.[774] Furthermore, Ferguson believes that these qualities are naturally the best guide to attaining and judging excellence. It is providence which has 'intended' that people know 'that this distinction, which is the source of elevation, integrity and goodness, in the mind of man, should be the guide, by which he is most securely led to the highest enjoyments, to which his nature is competent. The excellence and beauty he admires may become an attribute of his own mind; and, whether in reflection or action, constitute the most agreeable state of his nature.' [775] This concept of excellence is the best for rational creatures that hold these virtuous qualities in mind. When others are observed, without the knowledge of their inner virtuous qualities, those who are perceived as the best will all exhibit wisdom, courage, temperance and benevolence and these people are those who accept 'the providence and moral government of God, or to settle religion itself on its best foundations of integrity and goodness'.[776]

One difficulty arising from following the excellence in others is that people can be easily led in the wrong direction by having an incorrect concept of what should be esteemed. Because acceptance of the passions is both an individual choice and susceptible to individual interpretation of the correct path, people can be misled. The acceptance of passions is related to the estimation of others. Whether

[773] *History,*179-180.
[774] *Institutes,* 156.
[775] *P.II.*, 45.
[776] Ibid., 45-46.

people want to emulate others or live by their example, the path that the people who are esteemed lead can be easily followed. This can be a problem when, for example, the person who is esteemed wants wealth rather than virtue. The passions of greed and ambition can have some of the worst effects and Ferguson is concerned with making sure that people do not value wealth over other considerations.[777] Moral estimation is incredibly important when people judge the conduct of others, but it can also be misunderstood. Sometimes, people can think that to combine passions, such as 'pride, vanity, emulation, magnanimity, or elevation of mind', with the judgement of excellence can have various consequences. The desire to excel is a natural and 'powerful motive to action', but only leads to excellence when properly applied.[778] The 'Theory of Emulation' also has specifically important connotations for questions concerning following the passions.[779]

It is in the realm of moral excellence that Ferguson agrees with the Stoics. They both argue that people should strive for personal excellence because that is the only way in which they can strive for perfection. The attainment of personal excellence is a function of a virtuous person attempting to reach perfection. Ferguson, however, disagrees with the Stoics in their assessment of moral approbation. The Stoics maintain that it is through wisdom and reason alone that moral choices are made, while Ferguson argued that moral sense and sentiment are central for making moral choices.

Good versus Evil: the Ultimate Moral Judgement

Obviously, when considering questions of morality and virtue the distinctions and explanations of good and evil are a central theme and this is true for Ferguson.[780] As in so much of Ferguson's works, he discusses the Stoic concepts of good and evil in some detail.

[777] *P.I.*, 150.
[778] Ibid .,125.
[779] *Institutes*, 101.
[780] *P.I.*, 157-158.

According to Ferguson, the Stoic definition of good and evil exists only in relation to moral choice. What is good is what should be chosen, while what is evil is what should be avoided:

> The Stoics maintained, that nothing was to be classed under the predicament of *good*, but what was at all times invariably to be chosen. That nothing was to be classed under the predicament of *evil*, but was at all times invariable to be shunned, or rejected: That to all that good which ought at any time to be rejected, or that evil which ought any time to be chose, was not only absurd in terms, but tended to weaken the resolution with which a man ought always to make his choice.[781]

Ferguson therefore argued that the Stoics believed that good and evil were again understood by reason alone. Ferguson, on the other hand, had a broader concept of how to make the distinction between good and evil. For Ferguson, things can be good or evil, but they can also be indifferent.[782] The distinctions of good and evil are not so strong for Ferguson as they are for the Stoics and Ferguson's notions of good and evil are related to his ideas about the passions rather than to rational virtue. For Ferguson:

> Good and evil imply enjoyment and suffering, consequently have an exclusive reference to sentient and intelligent beings. The supposed cause of enjoyment is an object of desire. The supposed cause of suffering is an object of aversion. What is not supposed to be the cause of either is indifferent.[783]

According to Ferguson, defining the distinctions of good and evil is crucial in establishing moral philosophy. Furthermore, he states that the ancient philosophers argued among each other about the distinctions of good and evil, thereby drawing inspiration from Cicero's *De Finibus*.[784]

Ferguson believes that the search for good and evil is one of the most important and natural pursuits that humans have attempted: 'Men are deeply concerned to ascertain, and to apply the distinction of good and evil; and in this have a progress no less than in the pursuits of physical knowledge, or the practice of

[781] *Institutes*, 143-144.
[782] Ibid., 161.
[783] Ibid., 141-142.
[784] Ibid.

arts'.[785] In all nations at all times people have attempted to discern right from wrong, although people have different opinions of what constitutes these definitions.[786] This distinction of good and evil has been addressed by people who consider questions of morality and who are 'qualified' by knowing the difference between reason and folly, who do not follow superstitious passions, and who know man's place in nature.[787] It is not only philosophers who consider questions of moral good and evil, it is an activity taken up by all people and this discernment is a fundamental element of human nature. Furthermore, because men exist together in a society, they observe the qualities of good and evil in the behaviour of others. The assessment of these qualities is dependent on the individual because there are a variety of considerations and it is then demonstrated in moral approbation, estimation, honour, love, hate, etc. The consideration of good and evil helps determine how people judge the world at large and inform moral choice and judgement of the actions of others. It also affects people's manners and the perception of the esteem or contempt experienced by the observer.[788]

Good and evil are founded in the experience of 'enjoyment or suffering' because at the most basic level people perceive what is good as what is enjoyable and leads to happiness, while evil is what causes pain and misery.[789] Therefore, good and evil are related to the passions because it is through fundamental experiences with suffering that people are able to define what is good and bad. Furthermore, good and evil, like virtue, is a quality of the mind. Notions of good exist for each person as an idea, a judgement which they place on what they observe and experience. Therefore, like most of Ferguson's morality, these judgements should not be based on external circumstances:

> The difference of moral good and evil cannot be ascertained in the description of mere external actions. Actions materially the same are in one case morally good, in another case morally evil. Men are not universally agreed concerning the actions which they require or prohibit in any case whatever.[790]

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[785] *P.I.*, 300.
[786] Ibid., 301-302.
[787] 'To know himself, and his place in the system of nature, is the specific lot and prerogative of man.' *P.I.*, 306.
[788] Ibid., 158
[789] *P.II.*, 3.
[790] *Institutes*, 178.

Good or evil is determined by the particular circumstances of an action and by the people who both participate in and observe the actions.[791] Moral good and evil only exist in the mind of both the person who is observing and the person observed when making a moral judgement. The merit of the action which is under assessment demonstrates the qualities of mind behind that action which proves the excellence or defect of those qualities.[792] This understanding of good and evil eventually becomes part of the moral sentiment which allows people to make moral choices.[793]

The distinction between good and evil exists in the mind and thus the moral judgements of people's actions cannot be determined by external actions. The problem with this is that people cannot judge others without taking their motivations into consideration.[794] This is one of the great questions of moral philosophy and had been debated by ancient thinkers.[795] Notions of good and evil are dependent on the circumstances in which the individual develops his moral approbation:

> The distinction of good and evil originates in the sensibility of intelligent beings to the circumstances in which they are placed, or to the qualities of their own nature. But the application of this distinction, and the course of life to proceed from it will, depend on the associations men have formed, and even on the epithets of good and evil, they are used to bestow on the subjects that occur to their choice. They covet what is reputed profitable, beautiful, or honourable, and shun what is reputed pernicious, vile or disgraceful.[796]

Ferguson is taking a position similar to what he claimed the Stoics to believe. He too finds that people choose what is good and avoid what is bad, but it is clear the foundation for this position is quite different from that in Stoicism. The Stoics put their focus on the origin of choice on reason and wisdom. In this case, Ferguson is resting the choices that people make on both their personal qualities and their judgements based on their experience in their circumstances and their moral sentiment. People do not decide what is good based on a purely rational

[791] Ibid., 179-180.
[792] *P.II.*, 159-160.
[793] Ibid., 160.
[794] Ibid., 165-166.
[795] Ibid., 126.
[796] Ibid., 126-127.

consideration, but on personal considerations made through their lives based on their varied experiences.

This notion that morality is dependent on independent perspectives can cause problems, however, when these choices are based on a wrong conception:

> Where wealth is conceived as honourable, poverty as shameful, the very desire of excellence, or ambition itself, will take the direction of avarice. Where merit is limited to arbitrary forms of behaviour, virtue itself will become a principle of formality or superstitious observance.[797]

When people misunderstand what should be the basis of good and evil, they build their whole systems of judgement on false pretences and do not have the best conception of morality. For Ferguson, there is no one definition of good and evil, it is left to individual understanding based on experience, observation, and personality:

> To whatever object we incline, or however we may have classed individual things in our conception of what is good or evil, it is proper to remember in this place, that every effort of the mind is also individual and particular, relating to an object in some particular and individual situation. The object is either agreeable and desired, or disagreeable and avoided. It is secure in possession, or precarious and imminent; hence our active dispositions are either the joy of the successful, the grief of the disappointed, the hope of those who have good in prospect, the fear of those to whom evil is imminent, or who are threatened with the privation of good. Thus, every sentiment of the feeling mind is particular; and the term, affection, which is neither the joy of the successful, the grief of the disappointed, the hope of those to whom success appears probable, nor the fear of those who distrust an event, is a mere abstraction, no where existing in nature; but convenient, like other abstractions, in the statement of a subject, as a matter of discussion or argument.[798]

Ferguson would claim that his standards of beneficence and virtue, of the considerations about playing an active role in society, would guide people to the best understanding of good and evil. Because Ferguson does not attempt to prescribe this choice, however, but only sets out certain questions about it, he leaves the interpretation to the individual person.

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[797] *P.I.*, 127.
[798] Ibid., 127-128.

Lisa Hill is correct when she argued that neither Ferguson nor the Stoics defined good and evil as existing in complete opposition.[799] From the analysis here, however, it is also evident that Ferguson has a very different concept from that of the Stoics. Ferguson himself believes that the Stoics would use reason to make moral judgements about good and evil. Although Ferguson acknowledges the importance of an intelligent nature, reason alone cannot make these judgements; it is instead dependent on personal qualities and personal experiences. There is no absolute answer to what is good or evil because this judgment is completely dependent upon an individual's personal circumstances and one that is based on sentiment and observation rather than wisdom. Ferguson did not want to dictate a code of conduct of good and evil to his students, because he was attempting to leave the choice up to them. Ferguson did not believe that moral distinctions were completely arbitrary or that they were completely relative to the person. According to Ferguson the virtues of benevolence, fortitude, temperance and prudence are natural, and anyone who thought at all about morality would know that those were the best qualities in people, based on reasoned and emotional considerations, and then their moral choices would be similarly determined by this basic concept of virtue. Moreover, people have an innate moral sense which helps them to formulate moral judgements, judgements which conform to this definition of virtue. Ferguson therefore did not need to dictate to his students or readers what moral choices to make or how to determine good and evil. The natural knowledge of virtue and the inborn moral sense are all people need to make proper choices and although there are certain pitfalls to this arrangement, i.e., that people could mistakenly follow the wrong model or make mistakes in their judgement, it is his role to instruct them about this basic foundation to prevent them from making bad choices.

In this section on moral choice, we have seen that Ferguson takes into consideration moral approbation, moral excellence and definitions of good and evil when helping people make their judgements. In all of these areas Ferguson has addressed Stoic thinking. In relation to moral approbation, Ferguson has disagreed with the Stoic school that the source of individual choice is wisdom, while he finds that it is experience and sentiment which should guide moral choices. He makes

[799] Hill, *Passionate Society*, 204-205.

similar claims when he discusses the definitions of good and evil. Therefore, in this case, Ferguson cannot be seen as following the Stoic school as there are clear differences between their ideas and his. He uses them as examples, in these instances to argue against them. In relation to moral excellence, Ferguson uses them as an example of a school which also believes that the pursuit of excellence is a guiding principle for moral choices.

1.5 Happiness

When Ferguson discusses happiness he engages with Stoic thought more explicitly than with other topics. Craig Smith discusses the importance of choice in Ferguson's moral philosophy: 'Having made a practical judgement as to the superiority of serious "business" as an area for the exercise of man's active nature, Ferguson then returns to the well-known Stoic theme of the identity of happiness and virtue.'[800] Happiness lies in active virtue and virtue itself is therefore active. From this 'we see a typically Stoic argument that activity and the true happiness it brings are to be found in the exercise of virtue'.[801] Here, Smith claims that Ferguson's idea of happiness follows from that of the Stoics. Ferguson focuses on the definition of Stoic happiness in great detail and believes that their view of happiness is that it is synonymous with virtue. Ferguson sees the relevant question of happiness in relation to external circumstances and regards future successes as central to the Stoic idea of happiness. According to Ferguson, the Stoics believed that 'As a material on which virtue may operate; as an instrument of beneficence; as a stake, for which men are to play, and become gainers or losers for themselves or others in the game of human life'. Under these circumstances, possessions are useful. Although possessions have their uses in people's lives, with the correct understanding of their purpose, they should not determine personal happiness. Hence, 'they would not prostitute the denomination of good to any thing that was not virtue; nor permit any thing to be called evil that was not vice; and would not

[800] Craig Smith , 'Ferguson and the Active Genius of Mankind' in *Adam Ferguson: History, Progress and Human Nature*, ed. Eugene Heath and Vincenzo Merolle (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2008), 163.
[801] *Ibid.*

have a man set his heart, or rely for happiness, upon any thing beyond his own province of responsibility or conduct'. For the Stoics, people should not consider external circumstances that are not under their personal control as a source of happiness: 'In this manner they strove to cultivate an elevation of mind which would not owe its good to any contingent circumstance, nor any will but its own'. They believe that a person's individual happiness should not be affected by 'fortune' or result from the opinions of others. For the Stoics, all that people need to do to be happy is to be virtuous: 'They would not be in fear of any adversity which could not hinder their acting a virtuous part; nor be flattered with a prosperity which could add nothing to the merit of a virtuous life'.[802] Ultimately, a virtuous life is the key to happiness, no other consideration matters.

Ferguson goes further in his discussion of Stoic happiness and analyses Epictetus's views on the role of choice and the fact that happiness should only be considered when in relation to personal power:

> Epictetus seems to rest the foundations of virtue and happiness on the proper discernment and choice of objects, which are in our own power, in contradiction to the things which are not in our power. Among the things in our own power, he reckons "our opinions, our pursuits, our desires, and aversions; and, in a word, whatever are our own actions." Among the things not in our own power, he reckons "body, property, reputation, command, and, in a word, whatever are not our own actions." Attachment to the first, and indifference to the second, are, according to him, the essence of wisdom and happiness. It is surely happy for any one to be conscious that the best things are in his own power.[803]

Ferguson claims that Epictetus believes that in order to be happy people should only choose what is under their control, not what is a result of luck or the influence of others. For Epictetus, these things are qualities of the mind.

Ferguson found that this position was highly problematic for people attempting to find for themselves a means to reconcile happiness and pleasure because, 'in this, the vulgar are frequently deceived; and recur to fortune, as more in their power, than the attainments of a happy mind.'[804] People generally look for happiness in external circumstances because that is what they believe they have

[802] *P.II.*, 80.
[803] Ibid., 73-74.
[804] Ibid., 73-74.

control over and place a high value on them rather than elevated personal qualities and contentment and hence this approach to perfection is unattainable: 'This may well be considered as a degree of perfection, far raised above the ordinary state of human nature: It is, nevertheless, that, for which it was given, a noble idea, upon which the ingenuous mind cannot too nearly form itself.'[805] Although this system is what should guide people towards perfection, Ferguson realised that this is not accessible to most people. As one of Ferguson's main goals is to create a practical moral system, he then proposes a solution to this problem:

> To this ground of distinction, which is laid by Epictetus, we may subjoin another, relating to the same subjects; but taken from a different consideration of them, that is, from the consideration of their value, whether real or supposed, which is in some instances *absolute,* in other instances merely *comparative.* Among things of absolute value, are to be reckoned chiefly the habits of a *virtuous* life, *intelligence, benevolence, temperance,* and *fortitude*; or, in short, the *good qualities* which form the best condition of human nature; and which they, who possess them, enjoy the more that others partake of the same blessings. Among advantages merely *comparative,* on the contrary, we may reckon *precedence*, and *superiority*, whether of *riches* or *power*; and, in a word, all the circumstances, in respect to which the *elevation* of one is *depression* to another.[806]

Ferguson's solution was to conceive of the means of happiness differently from the Stoics. Ferguson believed in assigning a higher value to moral considerations, or qualities of the mind, and comparative values to other considerations, such as those which are not under a person's control, but are the result of external conditions. When he uses the word 'comparative', he means that these things are not the same for every person; that these are the aspects of people's lives which are unequal. Wealth or power is something which is not held equally by all people. To be happy people need to place less emphasis on external considerations and more on virtuous characteristics. Ferguson therefore is not following the Stoic school at all because their philosophy was not a sufficient guide for most people to live their lives properly and thus he created his own system which would lead people to a virtuous and happy life.

[805] Ibid., 82, 86.
[806] Ibid., 74-75.

From these considerations of Ferguson's response to Stoic ideas we can see the influence of their thought on him more fully. First, Ferguson believes that happiness, like virtue, exists in the mind and is not dependent on external considerations. To be happy, people should assess their virtuous qualities and try to see those things as the basis of happiness.[807]

Ultimately, Ferguson thinks that happiness is based on benevolence because the greatest good for any man is the love of mankind and will ultimately bring him the most happiness of any endeavour:

> If we are, therefore, to contract our description of happiness, or reduce it to a point, around which the most valuable qualities of human nature are likely to be collected, we may venture to select that of goodness, or benevolence, as the most likely to serve our purpose; and, by way of principal or fundamental law of moral wisdom, may assume, that the greatest good incident to human nature is the love of mankind.[808]

Ferguson maintains that 'It appears, that the definitions of virtue and of happiness are the same; and it follows, that happiness is a personal quality, not an attribute of external condition. Mere life constitutes neither happiness nor misery, but is the supposition on which men are susceptible of either.'[809] Ferguson believes that happiness, like virtue is a quality of the mind and that happiness is only the result of 'his enjoyments are habitual, lasting, and conceived to be secure.'[810] Ferguson continued:

> To the second proposition, then, we may subjoin, as its application and its comment, That happiness is constituted in the mind, by the continued habits of wisdom, benevolence, fortitude, and temperance: And the reader may be addressed, nearly in the same terms which the emperor Antoninus addressed to himself; "If you discharge your present duty with diligence, resolution, and benignity, without any bye views; if you adhere to this, without any farther desires or aversions; completely satisfied in discharging your present offices, according to nature, and in the heroic sincerity of all your professions, you will live happily. Now, your doing this none can hinder."[811]

[807] Ibid., 57.
[808] *P.II.*, 110.
[809] *Institutes*, 159.
[810] *P.II.*, 63.
[811] Ibid., 67-68.

Here, Ferguson equates happiness with virtue and then calls on the authority of Marcus Aurelius, who believes that happiness consists in performing duties. This question of a person performing duties has been widely discussed in the commentary on Ferguson's thought. Lisa Hill and David Kettler believe that Ferguson's use of the word 'duty' is the same as the use made of it by the Stoics.[812] Because the Stoics place a strong emphasis on the performance of a person's duties required of them in their station and Ferguson often uses the term 'duty', commentators have seen this as evidence of Ferguson's acceptance of Stoic ideas.[813] Although this question of duty is evidently important to the Stoics, Ferguson does not conceive duties as being limited to the obligations created by a person's station.

Ferguson, however, does not use 'duty' in the same way that the Stoics conceived of it. The Stoics think of duties as actions, obligations, prescriptions, but Ferguson here uses the word duty in reference to morality alone as an example of the choice to perform virtuous acts. For Ferguson:

> A law of duty is an expression of what a person ought to do from choice; and in doing which, he is said to have merit; or in doing the contrary, to have demerit. The first application of the fundamental law of morality is prohibitory, forbidding the commission of wrongs. The second is positive, requiring every external effect of virtue, or of good-will to mankind. But acts of good-will or beneficence cannot be extorted by force….The object of morality, in what relates to the duties of men, is the virtue of those who act.[814]

Because beneficence is composed of these four aspects, and beneficence is the basis of morality, it is people's duty to pursue these virtues.[815] The 'habits of wisdom, benevolence, fortitude, and temperance' are not restricted to those in any particular station; they are the components of a virtuous mind which could be attainable by all people. Thus, when Ferguson asserts that the 'reader may be addressed, nearly in the same terms which the emperor Antoninus addressed to himself', he is not

[812] Hill, *Passionate Society*, 96; Kettler, *Ferguson*, 142-144.
[813] Hill, *Passionate* Society, 38.
[814] *Institutes*, 234-235.
[815] Ibid., 243-244. 'Those affects of justice what mere innocence implies, are required under the sanction of compulsory law. Those that constitute beneficence, are required under the sanctions of duty only.'

claiming that his readers should do exactly what Antoninus prescribed, but what Ferguson is prescribing: that is, virtue, not social obligation.

Ferguson later used Marcus Aurelius to support this position: 'Antoninus was happy, not wearing the purple, nor in possessing the throne of Caesar; but in the attainments of a steady and beneficent mind. In these he was no man's rival, and was ready to share every blessing, even with those who attempted to supplant him in the empire.'[816] Here, he uses Marcus Aurelius as an example of a virtuous man who prefers virtue to material or social gain. Marcus Aurelius did not care if he was emperor, but only cared about his virtuous mind. Virtue is therefore more important for happiness than any other quality:

> If a mind, benevolent, wise, and courageous, have the highest enjoyments and least suffering, this alone is to be accounted happy. These qualities contain in themselves the use and the value for which they are desirable. Men who have them not, may entertain different opinions concerning them; but they who have them, must know that they are happy. They are to be chosen in preference to pleasure of any other kind, and at the hazard of any suffering, from which they are not exempt. This is what Epictetus and Antoninus meant, by saying, "That virtue is the sole good." Unhappy is he who understands their meaning, and yet can treat it with scorn.[817]

Here, Ferguson again calls upon the Stoics in support of his position that true happiness is the result of virtue. The virtuous person will know that this is the true path to happiness. Others, who do not yet possess the highest of virtuous qualities, misapprehend the true nature of happiness.

Ferguson maintains that 'It is happy to value personal qualities above every other consideration.'[818] Ferguson finds that this idea is crucial to man's overall happiness and that it occurs in Stoic writings:

> It is happy to rely only on what is in our own power, to value the engagements of a worthy and strenuous mind as our sole good, and the debasement of a malicious and cowardly nature as our sole evil. It is happy to have continually in view, that we are members of society, and of the community of mankind; that we are the instruments in the hand of God for the good of his creatures; that if we are ill members of society, or unwilling instruments in the hands of God, we do our utmost to counteract our nature, to quit

[816] *P.II.*, 77.
[817] *Institutes*, 158-159.
[818] Ibid., 168.

> our stations, and to undo ourselves. *I am in the station which God has assigned me*, says Epictetus. With this reflection, a man may be happy in every station; without it, he cannot be happy in any. Is not the appointment of God sufficient to outweigh every other consideration? This rendered the condition of a slave agreeable to Epictetus, and that of a monarch to Antoninus. This consideration renders any situation agreeable to a rational nature, which delights not in partial interests, but in universal good. Whoever possesses good personal qualities, holds them in dependence only upon God: but the circumstances in which men are placed; the policy or government of their country; their education, knowledge, and habits, - have great influence in forming their characters.[819]

Unlike the Stoics, here Ferguson acknowledges that it is not simply fulfilling the expectations of the station that people are placed in by God, which creates good personal qualities, but the specific and individual circumstances in which they live that has a great effect on their morals and happiness. He also thinks that this way of thinking about happiness is in fact the best definition of it, but also finds that it only removes the idea of chance from a person's mind.[820] Ferguson, like Epictetus, believes that it is right only to rely on what is in people's own power for happiness and furthermore they should not be concerned with what will happen in the future; actions and duties in the present should not be determined by considerations of a future condition.[821]

People have a misconception that they can live without present happiness because they will be able to be happy in the future, but things that come in the future are not the actual things that make people happy. Ferguson argues that a person's happiness should not be dependent on possessions or comparisons with what others possess. Furthermore, as we have seen, external situations and circumstances should have no real effect on personal happiness: 'The Stoics, proceeding upon one or other of these maxims, limited the appellation of good to virtue, that of evil to vice alone.'[822]

From this starting point, the Stoics advanced a 'famous paradox' which stated that '*that pain is no evil*, and the gift *of fortune indifferent*'. Ferguson interprets this as meaning that pain should not be avoided, that what is not under the

[819] *Institutes,* 169-170.
[820] *P.II.*, 68.
[821] Ibid., 82.
[822] Ibid., 78-79.

control of the individual has no affect on virtue, and that this is a 'consolation' to people who experience pain or work in harsh external circumstances:[823]

> [I]f men were to form their opinions, not on the evidence of fact, but on the grounds of experience; nothing can be more evident, than that a conception of happiness, in things out of our own power, or in things of which others are in haste to prevent our enjoyment, by stepping before us must be attended with fruitless longings, heart burnings, jealousy and malice. But, if such be the nature of good, relating to us, philosophers, it will be said, may dispose of names as they may think proper, and all any gift of fortune indifferent; but they themselves will not be the less desirous to possess it. Nor can man be required to have any other conception of good and evil, than what the real aspect of things in nature serves to suggest.[824]

Ferguson asks if people's happiness is dependent upon their fortune or their external circumstances. He claims that it is not, basing on considerations of 'fact and experience':

> Let the fact therefore decide! Are men happy or miserable, in the precise degree of their good or ill fortune; or of their precedence to others? If so, fortune and precedence are the sole good. But, if men are found equally happy, or equally miserable, under great varieties of rank and fortune, it is evident that the measure of happiness or misery is not to be taken from thence; and that a wise man will not adopt an opinion, nor countenance a form of expression, at once inexpedient and contrary to fact.[825]

People can be happy or miserable in any circumstance. They have different ideas of what makes them happy. He believes there is no standard for judging individual happiness, only the knowledge of good and evil can influence people's choices.[826] For Ferguson, happiness is intrinsically related to virtue. Some people would argue that a man is happy when his desires are fulfilled, but Ferguson believes that people should not be seen as happy because of this gratification, but unhappy for having the desire in the first place.[827]

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[823] Ibid., 80.
[824] Ibid., 78.
[825] Ibid., 78-79.
[826] Ibid., 83.
[827] *Institutes*, 157.

Ferguson believes that there are certain things that produce misery and Ferguson attempts to dispel them. People should not have expectations of human nature that are too high or too low as both will prevent them from fulfilling their best potential and run the risk of encouraging inactivity. People should not expect to find good qualities in other men, but should just have the goodness in themselves. Happiness does not come from a lack of concerns and an abundance of free time, of neglecting duty and activity, nor of preferring pleasure and amusement to fulfilling the 'duties of our station'. People are unhappy who think that beneficence requires self-denial or obligation. People should prefer happiness to everything else.[828] But happiness is not easily found and people often make mistakes:

> The vulgar, as well as the learned, have their paradoxes: They frequently prefer interest, fame, and power, to acknowledged happiness. They prefer considerations, or the imputation of worth, to worth itself. It is wretched to rely for happiness on what we cannot command. It is wretched to have an opinion of good in things which we might forego with indifference, or of evil in things which we might endure with patience. It is an error to employ terms of admiration or contempt loosely, and without attention to their proper meaning.[829]

Happiness should be understood as being related to activity. It is not dependent on a future state, it is not gained by reaching goals, and it is the pursuit of these goals that make him happy.[830] Even the rich and ambitious see this as their means to happiness, rather than free time or attainment of property; it is the activity that makes them happy rather than the leisure time they have.[831]

Ferguson's notions of happiness are therefore similar to Stoic ideas of happiness. It is clear that when Ferguson thinks about the nature of happiness he finds that the Stoics have a mostly correct understanding. They are right in thinking that real happiness is the result of virtue, that they are both personal qualities of the mind, and that the fulfilment of a virtuous mind leads to the most steady and long-lasting happiness. Also, the Stoics note that happiness is not reliant upon any external situation or future position. Happiness does not result from property or position, either in the present or in the future. Ferguson argued, on the other hand,

[828] *Institutes*, 165-168.
[829] Ibid., 165-168.
[830] *P.I.*, 185-186.
[831] Ibid., 186.

that the Stoic definition of happiness is insufficient for the majority of people. Because the Stoics focus on a perfection of character as their guiding principle, people may attempt to reach that perfection, although they can never fully attain it. Unfortunately, most people cannot follow this kind of perfection and Ferguson sets out to create a notion of happiness which can be understood and achieved more easily. Ferguson believes that assigning a value to certain things, placing a higher value on moral considerations, and a comparative value on external things, will eventually show people that they should be more concerned with virtue and benevolence than any external circumstance. Ferguson is more realistic than he thinks the Stoics were: he recognises that external needs are important to people. Although he believes that these external cares and the cares of future attainments do not realise true happiness, he knows that people believe that they are important. In his pedagogical role, therefore, he provides the correct way of thinking to redirect the emphasis people place on the main concerns of their life. Ferguson does not dismiss day-to-day life, as he would claim the Stoics do, but attempts to instruct people on how to best live their lives in the modern world. It is clear that Ferguson, while perhaps using some Stoic examples to prove his points about happiness, does not see this philosophy as adequately guiding people in their moral choices.

1.6 Religion and the Role of Providence

For Ferguson one of the most important factors in a person's life is providence and the role of religion and God and this is also something which the Stoics discuss. Authors writing about Ferguson have also made this connection. Lisa Hill finds that 'Ferguson's theology is noteworthy in the sense that it is a well developed blending of Stoic and Christian thought, but it offers few critical or groundbreaking insights such as Hume advanced.'[832] According to David Kettler, 'of all the non-theological Western schools of moral philosophy, the one which has most systematically taught the duty of joyously acquiescing in the divinely established order is the Stoic.'[833]

Lisa Hill interprets this as a sign of Ferguson's Christian Stoicism. Hill believes that although Ferguson's thought can be seen as secular there is a strong

[832] Hill, *Passionate Society*, 52.
[833] Kettler, *Ferguson*, 141.

religious character to it. She argues that Ferguson united religion and science through God's will as found in the laws of both scientific and human nature and through the agency of divine providence.[834] She notes that Ferguson only discusses Christianity and Christian ideas when they coincide with those of the Stoic's 'natural religion'. As evidence of this she cites Ferguson's participation in several discussions that are similar to both Stoicism and Christianity. Hill cites his belief in benevolent providence, the limits of human control over external circumstances, 'objective ethical standards', and that benevolence is the best virtue as well as the greatest good for both individuals and others. She finds that the one exception to the rule is a belief in free will which she traces to Cicero and Christianity, rather than the Stoics.[835]

Ferguson indeed addressed the Stoic notion of religion in his texts. Ferguson wrote that the Stoics:

> considered the deity as the intelligent principle of existence and of order in the universe, from whom all intelligence proceeds, and to whom all intelligence will return; whose power is the irresistible energy of goodness and wisdom, ever present and ever active; bestowing on man the faculty of intelligence, and the freedom of choice, that he may learn, in acting for the general good, to imitate the divine nature; and that, in respect to events independent of his will, he may acquiesce in the determinations of providence. "How great is the privilege of man," says Antoninus, "to have it in his power to do what God will approve, and to receive with complacency whatever God shall ordain."[836]

The Stoics, according to Ferguson, believed that the 'deity' was the intelligent designer who gifted mankind with intelligence and who is both good and wise. Ferguson maintains that the Stoics believed that people have free will, given by God, when performing their actions so that they can attempt to be as wise,

[834] Hill, *Passionate Society*, 36-37, 43-44.
[835] Hill, *Passionate Society*, 50. 'Ferguson leaves no doubt that he finds little attraction in Christian practices and doctrine except where they coincide with Stoic natural religion. Ferguson indicates his commitment to the following coincidental tenets: the existence of a benevolent "Providence"; the limited extent of human control over events; the reality of objective ethical standards; the priority of the public over private good and a commitment to the supreme value of benevolence. The most conspicuous exception to the general rule is Ferguson's embrace of the Ciceronian/Christian doctrine of free will which is underplayed (and seemingly absent) in the teachings of Stoicism.'
[836] *P.II.*, 4.

benevolent and good as God. As far as external circumstances are concerned the Stoics believed that people should be resigned to the will of providence.

Ferguson argued strongly for the existence of a benevolent, wise and just God who created all in existence and whose existence can be known through the discovery of natural laws.[837] Ferguson maintained that the belief in God is 'universal': 'The cavils of sceptics do not derogate from the universality of this belief, no more than like cavils derogate from the universality of the perception men have of the existence of matter; for this likewise has been questioned.'[838] He believes that religion is itself a fundamental characteristic of humanity and notes: 'No tribe is so brutish, says Cicero, as not to know that there is a God, although they may not know what conception to form of his character.'[839] It is natural for all peoples to have some sense of religion[840] and he believes that this is easily explicable:

> In the nature of man, there is a perception of causes from the appearance of effects, and of design from the concurrence of means to an end…But natural perceptions are the foundations of all our knowledge. This is the foundation of what we know from sensation, from testimony, and from interpretation. In any of these cases, we can assign no reason for our belief, but that we are so disposed by our nature.[841]

Because people can see a design in the natural world, because they can understand the laws which it follows, this proves that there must be a designer of that system of nature.[842] This is true for the entirety of the universe, whether it be the design of individual organs, or the processes by which a variety of elements work together, all of the elements were created to fill their purpose. From this understanding, that God created existence, men therefore understand that they should act in the place that God has designed for them. Man is 'enabled to become a conscious and a willing instrument in the hand of his Maker for the completion of his work'.[843] Ferguson is

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[837] *Institutes*, 126-129.
[838] *Institutes*, 121-122.
[839] *P.I.*, 163.
[840] Ibid., 164.
[841] *Institutes*,123-125.
[842] *P.I.*, 164.
[843] Ibid., 166-167.

therefore following in the tradition of Boyle and Newton who argued along similar lines.

Ferguson believed that this knowledge can have an effect on morality. He states that some believe that what God has determined as being right or wrong should be followed as the sole guide to making moral choices.[844] People search for a higher standard to determine what is right in order to know that God exists and through His will is known by the observation of his 'works' which are the absolute proof of His existence.[845] This is not an end point, but a starting point. People can aim to reach the perfection of God in their lives, however, they are not expected to attain it already, 'it may be considered as one of the rude materials on which he himself is to exert his talent for art and improvement.'[846] Although people have mistaken the true nature of God in the past, particularly in the practice of polytheism, if they understand this conception of God and recognise the truth of providence, then they will be able to improve themselves because they have the correct understanding of God.[847]

Ferguson believed that piety is natural to human nature and argued that it is the basis of religion:

> This affection [piety] constitutes religion in the human mind, and has its external expressions and effects also. It is naturally expressed in terms, and in rites of adoration. "What else can I, says Epictetus, a lame old man do, but sing hymns to God. If I were a nightingale, I would act the part of a nightingale: If I were a swan, the part of a swan. But since I am a reasonable creature, it is my duty to praise God. This is my business, *I do it*. Nor will I ever defer this post as long as it is vouchsafed me; and I exhort you to join in the same song."[848]

This sentiment which Epictetus has expressed, of the necessity and duty of piety to God, has far greater reaching consequences for Ferguson. It is this love of God and the expression of that love that leads men to behave for the greater good of those others who have been created by the same being and who are connected with them

[844] Ibid., 166.
[845] Ibid., 166-167.
[846] *P.I.*, 167.
[847] Ibid., 168.
[848] *P.II.*, 359-360

in the world.[849] Ferguson, therefore, has similar ideas to those he claims the Stoics believe about the topic of religion generally. It is under the topic of providence that Ferguson's theology and Stoicism are most important.[850]

According to Ferguson, the Stoics 'maintained the reality of providence, and of common interest of goodness and of justice, for which providence was exerted, and in which all rational creatures were deeply concerned'.[851] Ferguson referred to Epictetus to demonstrate that the knowledge of providence is related to virtue. He states:

> If man be a worthy actor in this order of things, the scene is prepared for the part it behoves him to act: And from his case, as well as from the general aspect of things, we may venture to conclude with Epictetus, that to those who are qualified with intelligence and a grateful mind, every circumstance or event in the order of nature may serve to manifest, and to extol the supreme wisdom and goodness of God.[852]

Ferguson openly agrees with Epictetus in regard to the fact that to know God one must have both knowledge of natural philosophy and possess a 'grateful mind'.[853] He believes that men acting their part in a world, that was set up by God, are aware of their part, and will see the goodness of providence in their lives.

Ferguson has his own concerns about providence and aims to prove its existence in the face of opposition. Ferguson found the need to demonstrate that choice is possible, even in a world where God's providence determines, at the very least, the station in which men are born. In his understanding of providence Ferguson must allow for moral choice. He believes that this is a Stoic conception as well, but he is not attempting to prove that in his specific discussions about providence. Although he mentioned that the Stoics believe in free will, Ferguson is not following them on this point, but argues that humans have a will that determines choice, not by necessity, but because of being an active, rational creature.[854] Since the notion of providence would claim that God has predetermined all events and

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[849] Ibid., 360.
[850] Hill, *Passionate Society*, 56.
[851] *History*,179-180.
[852] *P.I.*, 187.
[853] Ibid., 313. Two things are required, says Epictetus, to raise the mind into a just sense of divine providence, - attention to the course of nature, and a grateful mind.
[854] Ibid., 153.

actions, Ferguson raises the question of how humans can believe that they have any freedom of choice if their choices seem to be predetermined. Ferguson believes that people cannot actually know what providence has or is, but, because it was created by God, it is inherently perfect. Furthermore, because intelligence was a quality bestowed on men, it is obvious the choice is a function of that intelligence.[855] Although God has given men freedom of choice and thought, He controls the outcome, so that, for example, evil does not take over the world.[856] Ferguson goes on to argue that:

> To have moral agents in nature, the choice of their actions must be free; or at most, subject to a discipline that may furnish the mind with sufficient occasion of observation and experience, to correct its own errors, and to reform what is wrong in its dispositions or actions. The question, therefore, respecting the wisdom and goodness of Providence, is How far such a moral discipline is perceivable in the present order of things? Is there enough, in this order, to lead intelligence in the discernment of good and evil? Are the admonitions, on the side of morality, sufficient to point out the choice, and to with the affections? To this questions we may safely answer in the affirmative.[857]

Ferguson believed that moral actions can only be determined by their will. For Ferguson, 'man is his own master'.[858] The effects of this control that people have over their own will are left to the individual and can be either positive or negative.[859]

According to Ferguson, the 'philosopher' acknowledges his station and sees that he is both part of his immediate human community, but also that his station is within the entire universe created and governed by God.[860] Ferguson goes on to write that existing in this station of a man in the general community of the Godly universe will lead people to act for the benefit of all mankind and claims that this idea is not only found in moral philosophy generally, but also in the natural philosophy of Newton, as follows:

> "If I have done a good office," says the emperor Aurelius, "let me not forget that this itself is my good; and let me never cease to do such things." In recognizing his station, he does not limit his view

[855] Ibid., 154.
[856] Ibid., 154-155.
[857] Ibid., 182-183.
[858] Ibid., 131.
[859] Ibid., 131.
[860] Ibid., 312.; *Essay*, 54.

> to any particular division of mankind; but considers himself as a part in the great system of nature, excellent in being fitted to his place, and happy in the contributing to the general good. "Whatever is agreeable to thee, shall also be agreeable to me, O beautiful order of nature! Whatever thy seasons bring, shall be fruit, neither too early nor too late for me." Such sentiments of sublime religion, may be justly considered as the highest attainment of created intelligence. Its foundations are laid in the genuine lessons whether of physical or moral science; and are to be met with in the concluding observations of Newton's Principia, no less than in the remains of Socrates or Epictetus, [or] of Marcus Aurelius. In the one, is the suggestion of final causes, or of an arrangement in the works of nature, for which mechanism alone will not account. In other words, it is the resort of minds devoted to the government of wisdom and the sentiments of benevolence, and who receive, with some degree of a congenial spirit, the indications of supreme intelligence and goodness, as they are perceived to operate in the great system of the world.[861]

This quote is telling of Ferguson's views of Stoicism. First, when a philosopher considers his position in the world, he will come to the conclusion that he is in the world created by God and thus both a citizen of the race of men and all things created by God. From there he makes recourse to a Stoic thinker not as the origin of this idea, but as someone who exemplifies Ferguson's ideas. Marcus Aurelius acknowledged that he should act for the benefit of all, as he himself is part of the 'great system of nature'. This realisation is not limited to the Stoics because it is actually a function of natural religion and can be learned from considerations of both natural and moral philosophy. Even when discussing which moral philosophers have conceived this theory, Ferguson includes Socrates, not just the Stoics, as well as Newton as representative natural philosophers. This conclusion would be reached by all, including himself, who look for answers about the constituent parts of the universe. Even though Ferguson acknowledges that the Stoics participated in the discourse about providence, they are only a part of his discussion, not even the main focus of it.

The Stoics believe that all people are born into their station in life. They believe that people can be happy in whatever is their station. According to Ferguson, people can improve their situation, both personally and physically. This

[861] *P.I.*, 312-313.

contradicts the Stoic view of providence because the Stoics see positions in life as being fixed and Ferguson does not. Ferguson's point about people being happy in their station is related to the moral problems of emulation and ambition, whereas people seem unhappy with their lives because they observe that other people's lives are externally better than theirs. Ferguson believed that people's happiness is not related to their external circumstances, although that is what they may believe, and also that, while their station is dictated by providence, there is the possibility for improvement. Because this station in life is not actually productive of either happiness or virtue the knowledge that providence has destined a particular place in the world for any individual does not need to limit him to that place.

Ultimately, Ferguson's concepts of religion are related to all of his other ideas about the constituents of morality. Ferguson believed that men are created by God and are given the 'gifts of intelligence and free will, a personage and character to be ascribed to himself. In respect to either, he is distinguished in nothing so much as in this power and disposition to perceive, with delight, an intelligent and beneficent Author in the system of things around him'. When man looks at the world, he cannot help but see the work of God and this 'admiration' of God's world means that men are fit to engage in the 'godlike principles of beneficence and wisdom'. Men are part of the world that God has designed, where providence exists, and where men are meant to act. This world can be difficult to comprehend and men may turn to a passive rather than active life.[862] Thus, man, because he is living in the world of God, and attempts to emulate the godlike virtues of beneficence and wisdom, is basically good. Man's desire and active engagement in the greater good of his fellow men also is a 'pious resignation to the will of God; or, at most in perfect good will to mankind, in every instance in which the active power of an individual can apply.'[863] When man acts for the good of others 'there occurs, an occasion to practice and promote that mutual affection, fidelity, justice, and humanity, which in fact are a common blessing to mankind; insomuch, that for him to adopt and to communicate the effect of these characters, is to act for the good of his fellow-creatures; and, so far he becomes an able and [willing instrument] in the

[862] *P.II.*, 34-35.
[863] Ibid., 35.

hand of God for the beneficent ends of his providence.'[864] Here, Ferguson is connecting the ideas of providence and virtue. The origin of virtue comes from the emulation of God and the knowledge that behaving virtuously benefits society and aids in God's providence. Ferguson's ideas about religion are connected, but not dependent on Stoic principles.

It is also important that Ferguson argued that the laws of nature could prove the existence of God and in discovering the laws of nature God's design is known. This concept draws equally upon the Stoics and upon natural philosophers. Robert Boyle and Isaac Newton both promoted a natural philosophy which implemented a mechanistic method that proved God's design,[865] Epictetus also argued that understanding natural laws led to a greater understanding of God's laws and Ferguson drew from both of these examples.

1.7 Conclusion

Ferguson's engagement with Stoicism is not straightforward and he has several methods for dealing with Stoic authors. In some cases, Ferguson discusses Stoic ideas, in others he merely uses them as examples in his broader argument. At specific instances he is critical of Stoic philosophy and attempts his own answers to their questions. Ferguson did not simply adopt Stoic philosophy and he was often very critical of many of their ideas.

The discussion in this chapter has been limited to an assessment of Ferguson's relationship to the Stoic school, demonstrating his specific engagement with and reaction to this one school, yet Ferguson's relationship with Stoicism is also connected to his understanding of the history of philosophy and his eighteenth-century methodology more broadly. Ferguson's historicism resulting from the Ancients and Moderns debate, Ferguson's use of natural law and natural religion in relation to morality following from the experimental method, and Ferguson's eclectic method can all be traced throughout his engagement with Stoicism.

[864] Ibid., 35.
[865] Lisa Downing, 'Robert Boyle' in *Blackwell's Companion to Early Modern Philosophy*, edited by Steven Nadler (Malden and Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2002, 2008), 348.

Ferguson does not follow the philosophy of the Stoics, but uses them as a source when they agree with his ideas. Ferguson's concept of moral philosophy remains central in all his works. While it may appear that Ferguson adopted Stoic ideas in his philosophy, in fact he was adapting Stoic philosophy so that it complied with his ideas. Ferguson's conclusions were often different from those of the Stoics, with happiness being the main exception, and his use of them in his philosophy mirrors the use of them in his lectures. Ferguson needs to have evidence for his philosophical principles. Following from the experimental method, which relies on experience and observation as evidence, as well as the methods of the modern eclectics, who promote the use of analytical reason to assess evidence, Ferguson uses Stoic philosophy as his empirical evidence when explaining his philosophy. Moving beyond his observations of human nature and behaviour and the nature of morality, the Stoics provide a well-established source of evidence which supports and legitimises Ferguson's thought. This is not to say that Ferguson is uncritical of them, but it does not account for the presence of Stoic ideas in his writings.

V. Conclusion

As we have seen, many scholars who have written about Adam Ferguson have focused on his use of elements of Stoic philosophy. Several, particularly Jane Bush Fagg, Lisa Hill, David Kettler and Vincenzo Merolle, in attempting to understand and clarify Ferguson's relationship to Stoicism have concluded that Ferguson no more than echoed Stoic morality. They claimed that he adopted major elements of their philosophy into his own. This stance is untenable and represents an oversimplification of Ferguson's complex relationship with ancient philosophy. The question of Ferguson's engagement with his ancient sources, his approach to ancient philosophy and his supposed adherence to Stoicism thus remained unresolved. Nevertheless, this study is crucial not only to Ferguson scholarship, but also to our understanding of the role of Stoicism in the Enlightenment.

In the Introduction to his *Principles of Moral and Political Science*, Ferguson stated:

> The Author, in some of the statements which follow, may be thought partial to the Stoic philosophy; but is not conscious of having warped the truth to suit with any system whatever. His notions were taken up, where certainly Truth might be learned, however little it were formed into system by those from whom it was collected.[866]

This is perhaps the most telling statement in Ferguson's work that helps us understand his methods. Ferguson informs his readers what his priorities, methods and intentions were when writing his philosophy. Ferguson did not want to be perceived as following any school, especially the Stoics, but was concerned about 'Truth'. Although Ferguson was aware he was being closely associated with Stoicism, he denies that he changed his way of thinking to fit the philosophy of that specific school.

This statement also speaks to Ferguson's overall methodology, as this thesis has attempted to establish. Ferguson's methods are connected to wider intellectual and cultural trends across Europe in the eighteenth century. Following from the Quarrel between the Ancients and Moderns, not only did new techniques of historicism and hermeneutics develop, but also a widespread anti-sectarian

[866] *P.I., 7.*

sentiment and an aversion toward being perceived as following a particular system of philosophy. To achieve a non- sectarian philosophy, one method that emerged was that of the modern eclectics. The eclectics appealed to a combination of reason, observation and experience to find true philosophical principles. They relied on the 'experimental' methods to aid them in choosing the evidence for their philosophy and in avoiding and combating sectarianism. While Ferguson was not a self-conscious eclectic, he did participate in this movement. As can be seen in the quote above, Ferguson did not want to be seen as a sectarian adopting the thought of others; he was attempting to establish a true philosophy in which he drew selectively on the thought of both ancient and modern authors according to their value as evidence for his ideas. Understanding Ferguson's context and methods as well as accepting his words, should help us to begin to cast doubt on the assumption that he adopted Stoic philosophy, successfully or not.

When investigating Ferguson's recourse to ancient philosophy in his lectures and printed material, what also becomes apparent is his didactic purposes in discussing ancient schools. Ferguson was a lecturer of moral philosophy and as a result he presented the ancient schools of philosophy to his students in order to display the principles of their moral philosophical systems. This was a tool used to teach his students, and a common practice in the eighteenth century. When Ferguson demonstrated moral principles to his students in this fashion, he was not suggesting that this was his philosophy, but that these ancient principles constitute the foundation of modern philosophy. Because Ferguson's *Institutes* and *Principles* were printed editions of these lecture notes, his repeated appeal to these ancient schools and their ideas therefore plays a prominent role in his discussions of philosophy, and consequently have influenced later interpretations of Ferguson's work. By carefully examining Ferguson's texts and the context in which he wrote, as well as considering his philosophical goals, it becomes clear, however, that Ferguson did not merely adopt any of these ancient philosophies, but rather used them as examples for his students as part of his educational programme and in accordance with eighteenth-century pedagogical practices.

The further analysis of Ferguson's engagement with Stoic philosophy, investigating specific aspects of moral philosophy, reveals Ferguson's true

relationship to Stoicism. Ferguson believed that the Stoics had some valid principles in their philosophy, but he was critical of others. There is no occasion in which Ferguson adopted Stoic principles without his having already conducted a close and detached analysis of their thought. Ferguson may have used Stoic ideas as supporting evidence, but it was to support ideas he had formed independently of the school. Ferguson argued that their concept of virtue was the best among the ancient schools, not because it was they that argued it, but because it was natural to human beings and therefore must be universal. He often criticised Stoic philosophy, however, because he believed that it did not actually solve the problem of how to live a moral life in his society. Ferguson presented his students with a practical moral philosophy that could guide them in making moral choices in their modern commercial society and therefore taught them principles which he believed would help them do so. When Ferguson invoked the Stoic authors, it was not to follow their thought, but to present his students with what he believed was a good example of moral thought, or at least a close approximation. Ferguson was not dependent upon Stoic thought, but produced his own philosophy.

The notion of Ferguson's Stoicism therefore does not seem to be substantiated by his own writings. While Ferguson's debt to the Stoic school is undeniable, he was not trying to re-write Stoic philosophy, but wanted to develop a unique philosophy based on a consciously anti-sectarian commitment to experience, observation and what he considered to be the truth.

One issue that this consideration raises is the usefulness of the label 'Stoic' for understanding and explaining the thought of the eighteenth century. The questions that have preoccupied scholars range from whether Ferguson was a Greek or Roman Stoics, did he favour early, middle or late Stoicism, and which Enlightenment version did he follow? Scholars dispute which version of Stoicism Ferguson followed before they accept that he was a Stoic in the first place. It can be argued that classifying Ferguson as some kind of Stoic has hindered progress in the study of his actual moral philosophy because trying to interpret Ferguson's works as Stoic has led scholars to view his ideas as derivative, or eclectic (in the negative sense), so that he is seen as unsystematic or incoherent, and his writing as a 'patchwork'. Thinking of Ferguson as a Stoic is not only inaccurate, but it can be

argued that it misrepresents the important character and intention of his very modern system of thought.

Questioning the usefulness of labelling Ferguson a Stoic has wider implications for scholarship on the importance of the intellectual heritage of classical antiquity in the eighteenth century. The use of a label is, in one way, an intellectual short-cut. Labels can also help organise our understanding of an individual thinker. In recent scholarship, terms such as 'Stoicism' or 'Epicureanism' have been used as a convenient way of understanding the thought of eighteenth century thinkers, or placing them in context.

For example, James Moore and Michael Silverthorne have recently published Francis Hutcheson's translation of Marcus Aurelius's *Meditations* and in the Introduction give a detailed analysis of the role of Stoicism in early Scottish Enlightenment thought.[867] John Robertson[868] has explained Enlightenment thought through the debates about ancient schools, particularly the role of Epicureanism. While he has made a very convincing argument, in the light of this new interpretation of Ferguson's works, the entire discussion about the influence of ancient philosophy needs to be re-examined. Stoicism for Ferguson was not as influential as has been assumed by previous scholars. The notion of Enlightenment Stoicism itself needs to be better understood before interpretations of its influence on specific thinkers can be accurately assessed. Epicureanism in the Enlightenment equally needs to be re-evaluated. What Epicureanism meant in the eighteenth century and how it was understood by individual thinkers need further investigation to determine accurately the influence it had on the wider thought of the Enlightenment. Neven Leddy and Avi Lifschitz have published a collected volume of essays reinterpreting the role of Epicureanism and the engagement with it by individual eighteenth-century thinkers, which is a solid beginning to this kind of new study of the reception of ancient philosophy in the Enlightenment.[869]

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[867] James Moore and Michael Silverthorne, 'Introduction' to *The Meditations of the Emperor Marcus Aurelius*, translated by Francis Hutcheson and James Moor, ed. James Moore and Michael Silverthorne (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2008).
[868] John Robertson, *The Case for the Enlightenment* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2005).
[869] Neven Leddy and Avi S. Lifschitz, eds., *Epicurus in the Enlightenment* (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2009).

The use of labels, however, becomes problematic if it conceals more than it reveals about a given thinker's writings. If it is acknowledged that the use of the term Stoicism in the past is problematic and can produce a biased interpretation of a thinker's ideas, the question arises: why do scholars perpetuate this practice? The application of the labels 'Stoic' and 'Epicurean' to the thought of those writing in the eighteenth century creates more problems than it solves and is not a useful way to enhance our understanding of the philosophical positions and goals of these writers. As we pursue research into the eighteenth century, these labels will continue to impede our understanding if they bias the interpretation of an individual thinker's writing.

One of the implications of this study and the revised interpretation of Ferguson's relationship to Stoicism and ancient philosophy in general is that more research needs to be done on Ferguson's moral philosophy. Many scholars have called attention to the importance of moral philosophy in Ferguson's thought, but these studies have often been flawed because they have relied on the assumption that Ferguson was, at heart, a Stoic. Further research on Ferguson's personal contribution to eighteenth-century moral philosophy is needed. In addition, Ferguson is representative of many of the trends in eighteenth-century thought and a closer examination of his writings can lead to a greater understanding of Enlightenment philosophy. One issue which has been greatly understudied is Ferguson's relationship to natural religion. From the discussion of Ferguson's concepts of providence and religion in this dissertation, the influence of eighteenth-century ideas about natural religion were readily apparent, particularly the parallels to Robert Boyle, but these have not been researched in great detail. While some scholars have categorised Ferguson as a 'Christian Stoic',[870] it seems that a closer examination of Ferguson's relationship to eighteenth-century ideas of natural religion might bring to light more interesting interpretations of his thought. Ferguson's connection to the natural law tradition may also shed some light on his philosophy and is also a subject which is highly neglected. Connections between the

[870] See Lisa Hill, *The Passionate Society: The Social, Political and Moral Thought of Adam Ferguson* (Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Springer, 2006); Richard B. Sher, *Church and University in the Scottish Enlightenment: The Moderate Literati of Edinburgh* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1985).

discipline of natural law and the methods of the modern eclectics have been drawn by such thinkers as T. J. Hochstrasser,[871] with insightful conclusions which advance research into the intellectual history of the Enlightenment. Judging by Ferguson's footnotes and references, he had carefully read numerous thinkers who wrote about natural law, and further investigation into this connection may produce fruitful results, particularly when thinking about Ferguson's method in relationship to eclecticism.

The purpose of this dissertation, however, has been to show that a new interpretation of Ferguson's thought and its relationship to ancient philosophy, Stoicism in particular, is needed, as well as a reassessment of the role of classical antiquity in the eighteenth-century more generally. The label of 'Stoic' should no longer apply to Ferguson's moral philosophy and a more nuanced interpretation of his work needs to be undertaken as here. This study has begun this new understanding of both Ferguson's thought and the place of ancient philosophy in the Enlightenment.

[871] T.J. Hochstrasser, *Natural Law Theories in the Early Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

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