THE NATURE OF THEORETICAL HISTORY
AND ITS APPLICATION
IN THE
WORKS OF WILLIAM ROBERTSON

Pauline Moore

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DEDICATION

To the Memory
of
Richard Patrick Boylan
DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I, Pauline Moore, hereby declare that I am the sole author of the entire work entitled The Nature of Theoretical History and its Application in the Works of William Robertson.

Pauline Moore
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ABSTRACT

In the history of historical writing, the eighteenth century is an age of considerable importance, for it was during this time that both the philosophical and the theoretical interpretations were developed. The former, depending in part on modern science, on the belief that society must be interpreted through regular patterns of causes, and that human history was essentially secular, sought to study man through his institutions. Yet, although the philosophes attempted to establish laws through which we could relate the past and the present, they were unable to do so to any considerable extent. With the exception of the Physiocratic school, the French philosophical historians show little evidence of having replaced those very works which they condemned. They made some valuable suggestions as to the manner in which connecting factors should be sought, and they did attempt to work by strict 'scientific' standards. But, as is shown particularly in the work of Voltaire, they depended to a considerable extent on the actions of the individual as cause, and had no developed theory of human nature or of the means by which society in general advanced or changed. Because of this, they were unable to postulate any general laws by which the universal could replace the unique or the 'historical'.

Although theoretical history is also concerned with the study of man and his institutions, and although it is 'philosophical' in this sense, it is nonetheless able to overcome many of those difficulties which the French writers
contended with. This is so because it is based on two principles which conform more closely to the idea of general and universal laws - the heterogeneity of ends and the capacity of man to progress. Such principles, derived from observation of men in various societies and at different ages, fulfilled the demands of the theoretical concept of philosophical history: that it should deal with major issues and work along regular lines. Instead of being concerned with the isolated, therefore, theoretical history is able to deny the validity of unique or 'historical' factors.

Although it may owe much to the works of many earlier writers, such as Machiavelli, Montesquieu, and the commonwealth school, it also goes beyond these. It has absorbed the idea of property/power correlation and that of the necessary limitation of men by the form of society in which they live, and developed these to suggest a stadial progress of human nature which is closely related to the division of land or means of subsistence of any society. Through this it is able to show not only that societies must differ as they change from one type of property to another, and that man's nature is developed or repressed according to the degree to which he is free to express his natural self-interest; but also that each stage of development has characteristics which will be found in all similar stages. It can therefore relate the past to the present in terms of general laws of property division; and at the same time it can also show that each stage of progress expresses a part of the human experience, and that these parts come together in a whole that is human nature.
That diversity could be made into a whole was further demonstrated by the theoretical historians in their belief that man, when left to himself, was able to advance from one stage to the next because of his self-interest. This principle, they felt, though often expressed in ways that might seem irrational, was an integral and permanent feature of human nature and remained so in all ages; and when man was allowed to so act he often achieved considerable ends without having any intention of so doing because of the process of heterogeneity of ends. The economic and political philosophy of the theoretical historians, then, was one of laissez faire, a philosophy which they felt ought to be applied in the study of the modern or more philosophical age as well as in the assessment of the savage and barbarous ones. Man neither thought in rational terms nor acted in a conscious manner, and any degree of the philosophical in his society has been produced through the natural coming together of a multitude of events.

Such an interpretation is of considerable importance, not only because it links all ages of human history through general patterns, but also because it denies those theories which cannot accept all forms of human action. As all development and interaction must be based on a general social level, not on any concept of what society 'ought' to be, so also should we see that all expressions of human nature are valid in that they reflect man's nature, though his actions may not always be beneficial. In particular, the theoretical historians believed that there was considerable merit in the commercial society in particular, and this
because it permitted a greater number of men to become independent and thus free to benefit from, and express, their natural self-interest. Older theories that suggested commerce was detrimental to man were dismissed, and it was felt that if society was maintained in a manner beneficial to all, the commercial state could hardly be seen as denying or perverting man's nature. Furthermore, it was thought that men could correct some of the faults which might exist in the more philosophical state through an awareness that it was in one's own interest to do so; thus, although the theoretical writers do not believe that all wrongs can be rectified, indeed, that we must accept inequities, they emphasise that those that can, are changed through the natural operation of the human mind, not through some process or set of ideas outside the social experience. All correction of faults, when correction was permitted by the tenets of laissez-faire, must be based on what is natural to man, not on what some think he ought to become. Through such means the theoretical philosophy was able also to dismiss many other philosophical and historical theories which had attempted to create general laws through a study that encompassed only a part of man's experience and nature.

The theoretical interpretation had a considerable impact on historical interpretation in the eighteenth and later centuries, and this impact can be traced especially in the works of William Robertson. It is apparent, certainly, that Robertson had accepted the theoretical correlation of property and power, and believed too that man's nature was limited through the misuse or lack of property,
even if he did not always explain the actions of men in terms of 'moral sentiments' as Smith did. Yet although we can trace in his writings some interest in the idea of sta-
dial growth and in the relationship between man's nature and institutions, the greater part of his work shows the application of the theoretical principles to particular historical situations, and uses these principles to chal-
lenge much of the earlier, more ideological, writing.

Like all theoretical writers, Robertson is generally concerned to demonstrate that all developments of men what are seen to be beneficial are not produced intentionally or consciously but are a product of man's nature in his situation and have effects much beyond his own time. As he, like his fellows, had seen that greater freedom developed when land or means of subsistence was distributed more equally, so he also believed that balance between nations resulted from interest and not from generosity or benevo-

lence. Much of his work Charles V, then, is devoted to studying the development of the concept of balance of power in Europe in the sixteenth century, and of indicating how much such a concept was a result of necessity of situation and not of any great disinterested wisdom or the plan of any individual. Since the power of property was the major factor in determining form of rule, the awareness by men that their ends were best served by some regulation of pro-

perty led them to forego their immediate interest, and thus produced or helped to produce a stability which was of con-
siderable benefit. In such a thesis Robertson reveals clearly that ideas as such cannot become a permanent part
of any society's institutions and must always be seen as unique factors. If we are to interpret the past along general lines, he believes, we must rather see that ideas only have effect when institutionalised by property.

Such a philosophy is also the basis of part at least of his study of the Reformation, which he sees as becoming an integral part of the German society in particular only when its philosophy was supported by men of substance. Property and its power then, is a crucial element in his interpretation of societies, and this is even more so in his first work, Scotland. In this book his aim is to study many of the disputed issues of the Scottish past in light of the major principles of the theoretical philosophy, dismissing much of the fabulous and legendary as unphilosophical, and attempting to replace it with the concept that property is the basis of valid government. The unique must give way to the general, and the Scottish traditions interpreted in light of their origins. In particular, this analysis in terms of property also leads Robertson to make some suggestions concerning certain of the constitutional problems of sixteenth-century Scotland. By a comprehensive study he establishes that it is the nobility which possesses the greater part of the land and influence, and the government is thus predominantly aristocratical. This being so, he believes, our assessment of the validity of actions against Queen Mary, for example, must depend in part at least on the degree to which she can be seen as having attempted to usurp powers that the property situation did not grant to the monarchy. This interpretation, he felt, would at least give more gen-
eral explanations for many disputed matters.

Such theories seem philosophical and theoretical, but there are also instances in which the non-philosophical approach is evident and forms an integral part of Robertson's interpretation. This is particularly so in his study of the Reformation. While his assessment of the role of the providential in the history of man is generally influenced by his belief in the existence of general physical laws, he also suggests a manipulation by God of human affairs when such affairs concern the advancement of 'true' religion. Certain matters, he appears to think, are so important and so necessary that the actual coming together of the events producing or encouraging these is directed by providence. Although Robertson also emphasises that all ideas must be institutionalised in property, and although he also explains the events preceding the Reformation entirely within the theoretical laws and the idea of property and power; the role which he gives to the providential does distinguish his work from the general approach of this school.

We may further see in his remarks on government that he does not always appear to believe - as Smith and Millar do - that men can only act as their situation permits. He examines the various elements which comprise the major forms of government - democracy, monarchy, aristocracy - and sees in all three distinctive faults which, though produced by situation, also seem to be permanent characteristics. If man is to develop a system of rule that will bring greater benefits, if he is to maintain traditional 'virtues' in the midst of political morality, then, Robertson believes, these
distinctive faults must be curbed. This, he suggests, can be done by the imposing of restraints from above - as far as the democracy or popular element is concerned - or by creating a sense of office or pride in rank for the other two classes.

Some of Robertson's statements concerning government and morality, then, though based on the belief that property division will determine the nature of rule, also appear to imply that men must go beyond the 'justice' or laws of any society to act through 'benevolence'. This is very much the case when he judges earlier, much more unsettled and violent ages, by the 'timeless' and 'immutable' principles of morality that seem to have been produced by his own age, and which certainly formed little part of the attitudes of men in those ages he discusses. Thus, by applying the ideas of a more philosophical era to less perfect stages, by stating that men should have acted by these same principles, by attempting to judge men in the light of theories of 'virtue' quite foreign to them, he detracts considerably from the force of the theoretical argument, and introduces elements which make part of his work similar to that of the unphilosophical writers he soundly condemned.

This unphilosophical interpretation is also to be seen to a considerable degree in Robertson's first work, Scotland. On the one hand, he seems to adhere to the laws of theoretical history, to the standards of investigation developed by the theoretical school. He makes a considerable effort to relate the major events of the sixteenth century to the ideas of property and power, and to discredit the more ro-
mantic theories of earlier Scottish writers. He shows the distribution of political power in the nation, and reveals at some length the characteristics which such a distribution of property produces: violence, discord, lack of respect for the laws, constant attempts by the nobility to increase its power - factors which are all very natural but which are also unphilosophical in that they inhibit the development of men and of a more perfect form of government. Such qualities, Robertson also shows, must be recognised not only as destructive but simply as reflecting the spirit of the age; they are not values or virtues which should be maintained in all subsequent ages, as earlier writers had implied.

But on the other hand, Robertson's prejudices - against corrupted monarchs, in favour of the Reformation principles - lead him also to present another interpretation of the warlike nobility in this same work. To some extent he does still continue his use of the theoretical concepts in this interpretation, in that he attempts to relate the actions of Queen Mary, and those of the nobility, to the various rights and property which both possessed; yet he also consistently misuses his sources so as to give a distorted impression of the Queen's actions, and is sufficiently vague and imprecise about the nobility and its motives as to suggest that its character is not violent and destructive, but unselfish and beneficial. He depends to a considerable extent on works - such as those of Buchanan - which are extremely biased against the Queen, while stating, in the Dissertations especially, that he is not inter-
ested in making judgments, only in presenting the evidence which will permit the reader to make his own conclusions. Most importantly, his belief that the Reformation had introduced new principles – 'republican' in nature – into the society, which affected the attitudes of the confederate nobility in particular, may be the means by which he seeks to explain the apparent discrepancies between his interpretations of the aristocracy. But he presents no evidence to support his contention that new principles have made the lords more philosophical. While he points out that the nobility, especially the confederate lords, consistently act to maintain 'national' liberties and are otherwise to be seen demonstrating some rather sophisticated beliefs, he fails to make clear that the division of property is such that the 'nation' is little other than the aristocracy, and that the 'national liberties' are rarely more than the prerogatives of the nobles. The contrast which he continually seeks to make between the actions of Queen Mary and those of the nobility is thus based on a very unphilosophical manipulation of material, and does no more than present the old anti-Marian interpretation in a somewhat more 'scientific' guise.

The existence of two concurrent philosophies, or two different sets of influences in one body of work, must necessarily detract from the impact of both; and it is likely that the force of the theoretical ideas in Robertson's writings was considerably undermined by his emphasis on the more traditional moral virtues, on the providential, by his bias and misuse of material. We cannot deny that Robertson
is a theoretical historian, or at least makes use of the theoretical ideas; but he also has other loyalties which prevent him from making any major contribution to the development of the theoretical philosophy.
SECTION I
CHAPTER ONE

THE ELEMENTS OF PHILOSOPHICAL HISTORY

In one sense all history is philosophical in that it is based on a particular attitude concerning the past, present, or future. The meaning of the word 'philosophical' as applied to eighteenth-century historical writing, however, is somewhat more specialised. The philosophical history of the Enlightenment is a study of what are seen as the meaningful factors in human development, a search for the factors which make for the emergence of freedom of mind, an attempt to ascertain the causes of qualitative change in man's social structure. In essence, this form of history examines human institutions in an effort to reveal the spirit of man it its journey through historical time, yet it goes beyond earlier institutional studies where, although the relationship between men and their laws was stressed, there was always an emphasis on the individuality of each society. The philosophical history, in contrast, is much more cosmopolitan, less provincial, more concerned with the universal, with the regular and uniform rather than with the unique. Historical writing to the philosophically inclined did not mean the study of one society or nation from a viewpoint centred within that country's past, for however interesting such inquiry was, it was nonetheless fragmented and disjointed: it revealed

1. See, for instance, Frank E. Manuel, Shapes of Philosophical History (Stanford, 1965).
only the actions of men over a limited period of time and did not seek to establish those general patterns which helped to form a science of humanity. The philosophical historian must be concerned with the universal, must study general history which 'embraces the consideration of the successive progressions of the human race and of the detail of the causes that have contributed to them'.

This dislike of the particular and the isolated in the philosophical attitude is not confined to the span of historical investigation. The new history seeks not only to reject restricted concepts of time but also to deny the validity of studies which present fragments of the past as the whole because of the limitation of their sources to the traditional annals and chronicles. Such works merely continued the older concept of history as a detailing of the actions of rulers, a listing of kings, battles and treaties, and failed to consider the possibility of the importance of factors other than the political. Not only must the philosophical writer extend the scope of his field of study to many ages and many nations, but he must study human society, must concentrate on the actions and achievements of men in general; universal history embraces not only 'the origin, the revolutions of governments' but also 'the progress of languages, of physics, of morals, manners, of sciences and arts'. History en philosophe, then, is in essence social history, a study of human institutions, laws, customs, in-

2. See, for instance, Quesnai, quoted in Ronald L. Meek, The Economics of Physiocracy (Cambridge, Mass., 1963) p. 66.
3. Turgot, Notes on Universal History, Life, p. 175
ventions, commerce, arts, sciences and philosophies, which reveals the social as opposed to the individual achievement, which indicates the causes of human advance and of the emergence of a gentler, more humane society in which the public benefit, rather than the ruler's glory, predominates. By such standards much earlier work must be rejected as being superficial, as Voltaire's criticism of Daniel, for instance, indicates: 'Il devait m'apprendre les droits de la nation, les droits des principaux corps de cette nation, ses lois, ses usages, ses moeurs, et comment ils ont change'.

The philosophical historian does not reject political annals, court gossip or military achievements, but he incorporates such material into his synthesis rather than seeing it as the only acceptable form of history; his scope is wide, his examination more profound than the traditional, because he is interested not in the few but in the many.

History en philosophe, then, was a conscious break with older traditions of historical writing, seeking as it did to expand the scope of historical investigation and sources, to establish the general social achievements of man. It also breaks with this tradition in that the philosophical historian


is not content merely to list events, to suggest that what had occurred can be safely relegated to a dusty tome; on the contrary, he sees it as an integral part of the philosophical approach to comment, to analyse, to point out how the general social forces about which he is writing have emerged with difficulty and are constantly threatened by those 'un-philosophical' factors which have previously limited the growth of man's mind. Hence, the philosophical interpretation is based on an attitude or spirit fundamental to the everyday life of its practitioners, a spirit which was reflective and critical and devoted to the continuation and preservation of those values produced by general human development - tolerance, 'moderation', 'justice', 'rights' for all - a spirit which is an active and aggressive one: 'It will remain the philosopher's duty', Diderot wrote, 'to preach the truth, to sustain it, to promote it, and to illustrate it'.

The new historian makes the past live, because it is the past which reveals to him what man's needs are in the present; so that, far from simply listing dry facts, he seeks to distil from his material a living theory of human nature, to ascertain what men need from their societies in order to be fully themselves. Anti-pyrrhonist, furthermore, he reserves his scepticism for the criticism of earlier historical works, for those philosophies which have failed to really observe

1. There are some variations, however, in the nature of this 'philosophical' spirit - see Appendix A.
man as he is in society. He does not deny the values of informed and intelligent observation, he does deny that man can know nothing of his past, can learn nothing from the study of his own and earlier societies, is unable even to be sure of what he 'knows'. Indeed, on the contrary, he believes that truly 'philosophical' - informed, 'detached', 'scientific' - observation is the basis of those theories of human nature which are in fact the very essence of the philosophical history: 'as the science of man is the only solid foundation for the other sciences, so the only solid foundation we can give to this science itself must be laid on experience and observation.' As well as discarding the obsolete concepts concerning the nature and scope of history, therefore, the modern historian must also discard those philosophies which throw doubt on the possibility of knowledge itself, and must substitute a 'scientific' evaluation, must depend on his awareness of an observed continuity of human experience. 'We must therefore glean up our experiments in this science from a cautious observation of human life', Hume declared:

'and take them as they appear in the common course of the world, by man's behaviour in company, in affairs, and in their pleasures. Where experiments of this kind are judiciously collected and compared, we may hope to establish on them a science, which will not be inferior in certainty, and will be much superior in utility to any other of human comprehension.'

The new history, in short, is wholly concerned with man and with his experience.

Philosophical history, therefore, actively challenges the traditional and the customary, and does so through what it sees as a detached and realistic evaluation untainted by obscurity, by a dependence on older and more limited forms of thought. Its observation of man, of his social institutions, together with its belief in the repressive effects of certain types of institution as revealed by such observation, is given practical expression by the challenge issued to those political and religious doctrines considered inimical to true human development. In such challenges the critical spirit of the philosopher was given added strength by the long-established traditions of radical religious and political thought which provided both method of attack and the illustration of the limitations imposed by a superstitious and uncritical acceptance of what was\textsuperscript{1}. In the battle for the freedom of the human mind, and for a 'moderate' society in which men were governed by 'just' laws, and were no longer at the whim of tyrannous and 'unphilosophical' superiors, it was seen to be of major importance to reveal the basis and development of institutions so that their unphilosophical foundations and spirit were obvious; and in this undertaking the established 'radical' philosophies served the new philosophical spirit very well.

The widening of the scope of historical inquiry was of considerable importance in this undertaking, particularly with regard to religious criticism; and the attempt to challenge the dominant influence of Christianity gained strength from the philosophical effort to consider the history and institutions of all mankind, to show that all religions were a product of their society, that 'morality' was not a prerogative of one religion but was produced by every form of society and must be considered from this viewpoint - an attitude which is seen especially in Voltaire's La Philosophie de l'Histoire. Furthermore, although there was some effort to establish that unintended benefits had resulted from the actions of the established Church\(^1\), most writers sought to point out that its faults were inimical to human growth and to the development of freedom of thought\(^2\). Christianity was merely one religion among many and, if its origins had been pure - and not all agreed with this, attempting to reveal the pagan and unpure elements in its makeup - it had nonetheless lost this original purity, its development and strength being linked to political changes in society. The Church had become, in effect, a political institution, made great by possession of land and the power resulting from this, a greatness augmented by tradition, supported by rulers unaware of their duties to their state,

\(^2\) See, for instance, Voltaire, Dictionnaire, articles 'Lois civiles et ecclésiastiques', 'Papisme', 'Prêtres', in Oeuvres Complètes, XIX, pp. 625-626, XX, pp. 166, 272-273.
and unable either to make religion a part of the state's policy, or to separate church and state entirely. Some writers, such as Robertson, were philosophical while remaining within the Christian tradition, and saw pagan belief and Catholic doctrine as equally inimical, equally against the spirit of true religion; it was not to the principles of Catholicism, he felt, that men owed their freedom from servitude in feudal Europe, nor can we see sophisticated religious belief in the first primitive expressions of worship: 'men, in their savage state, pass their days like the animals around them, without the knowledge or veneration of any superior power.' Others, particularly many of the French authors, were sceptical of any religion based on dogma, on authoritarianism, on a separation of beliefs into those suitable for the mass and those appropriate for the more intellectual; and while the desire to challenge the Europeocentric viewpoint led them to accept the peculiarities of other religions, they were in general convinced

2. Such a position is not unusual, particularly given the diversity of thought among those whom we might consider as 'philosophical' because of their challenge to established and privileged authoritarianism: see, for instance, Bernard Bailyn, The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution (Cambridge, Mass., 1967) and Hazard, op. cit., Part I, Chapter 4. It does create some problems, however, particularly as regards the maintenance of a philosophical causal theory: see below, Chapter V.
that 'true' religion could only be Deistic. Biblical criticism had made them sceptical of human interpolations, scientific observation had made them wary of the claims made by men for intervention and revelation on which so much dogma was based - a wariness, indeed, which is not peculiar to those who refuse to accept either old or new Christianity, for the principles of science were used also by the 'scientific' Christians.

Although there is some difference of opinion concerning the constitution of 'true' religion, then, the philosophical writers are nonetheless equally convinced that it must be based on the principles of natural science, that it must conform to the regular and constant laws which observation has made apparent. It was the aim of 'Philosophy' 'to allay that wonder, which either the unusual or the seemingly disjointed appearances of nature excite', and the study of astronomy and physics revealed that active intervention by God in human affairs was a concept which must either be denied or else very carefully qualified. 'Le monde est arrangé suivant des lois mathématiques', declared Voltaire, and such laws, which established the presence of 'une intelligence', could not be invaded, even by God himself. Other writers, if more reluctant to deny that intervention

2. Hazard, op. cit., Part I, Chapter 5, Part II, Chapter I.
had ever taken place, were nonetheless convinced that it was now no longer necessary - God, one radical writer had stated, 'has already discovered his Mind to Men and made his Meaning manifest'. In the philosophical history, the Supreme Being is limited to first cause, and, having established set laws and regular patterns for the operation of the material world, He no longer has an active, revelatory role to play. Providence as causal explanation, then, must be severely, if not wholly, limited and interpretations which attempt to explain the unusual as an expression of divine action are seen as evidence of an unphilosophical age when men were ignorant of those general laws and series of causes that modern man has been privileged to discover. The particular cannot be explained in a manner which ignores these general and all-embracing laws.

As traditional religions and the unscientific type of 'fact' on which these were based were under constant attack by the philosophical historians, particularly because they continued the limitations of earlier thoughts, so also were authoritarian political theories and forms of government criticised for their emphasis on 'privilege' and on a continued limitation of 'rights'. This is not to say that there is necessarily any uniformity in the philosophical attack, for varying types of government elicited varying reactions and differing demands for reform. In some works,

2. See below, pp. 175-176. See also Hazard, op. cit., Part II, Chapter I.
particularly in the earlier English radical tradition, there is a greater emphasis on the natural quality of men: 'Whoever pretends to be naturally superior to other Men', stated 'Cato', 'claims from Nature what she never gave to any Man'\(^1\), and such a philosophy led to a demand for greater public participation in government, greater emphasis on the capacity of the ordinary man for a share in political life\(^2\). In others, especially where the commonwealth influence is strong, philosophical challenge to traditional forms of government is expressed in the controversy concerning the mixed state and the benefits which this may bring\(^3\). For still others, even though it was accepted that we must often depend on influential and important men where the social structure has established the power of these, there is nonetheless an awareness that it was the historian's duty to point out the dangers of such a system, to indicate that though individual rule could be acceptable and even good\(^4\), it must be directed towards the general social benefit. Though the various authors whom we could describe as philosophical found many types of government to be acceptable, they nonetheless share a common preoccupation. They are concerned that man become more free to be himself rather than be limited by circumstances created or maintained by authoritarianism. If they do not all demand a greater active share in the operations of political life, they

2. Ibid., No. 24, p. 61.
3. See, for instance, Bailyn, op. cit.
4. See below, pp. 27-33.
nonetheless demand a social awareness from those who do possess political authority. Their concerns, therefore, are not utopian or wholly unrealistic; they are able to accept imperfections and discrepancies, they do not expect the end of all injustice, but they do believe that it is possible for the benefits of government to be directed towards the many and not the few. As always, the philosophical writers are concerned with the needs of the many, of the growth of men in general; and, if the study of the past revealed that men search for regularity and order\(^1\), then it was clearly the concern of the philosophic writer to point this out, to establish clearly that nations remain in disorder until 'good' laws are securely established.

The theoretical historians, if more concerned to relate 'equity' and 'justice' to the particular economic level of any society, rather than to indicate that such concepts can be absolutes, nonetheless also support the general philosophical attitude concerning government and its ends; and many of the philosophical values are incorporated into the theoretical 'natural course of things'\(^2\), those factors which are necessary if man's nature is to develop properly. The right to work, to retain the fruits of one's labour, the creation of a more equal distribution of taxes, the reform of law, the full and proper operation of the specifically human qualities, the institution of general, not individual, rights, are the demands of a wide variety of writers who

shared the basic philosophical values. The acceptance of a diversity of talents, distinction of ranks, variations in wealth - 'where would society be if every man laboured only at his own little field'\(^1\) - can hardly be taken as an acceptance of an inequality before the law. Government must seek to end repression of thought, must end torture as a legal weapon\(^2\), must break away from the interference of the church in social and political affairs\(^3\); and even while we can see that each society produces only those laws which it can afford, this fact does not invalidate our observations that only particular sorts of social institutions lead to the development and maintenance of the best aspects of man's nature\(^4\). Whatever sort of government we support, then, it must be one which is aware of these philosophical principles; for the continuation of repressive, limited rule, devoted to special interests, is a form of government which is against the spirit of the age.

The aim of philosophical history, then, is particularly to break down the effect and power of the traditional when tradition is seen to be detrimental to man's development, and to establish also a continuity between past and present by revealing the effects of the former on the latter. Yet this aim cannot really be said to have been fulfilled in the works of a philosophical historian such as Voltaire, because

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1. Turgot, Life, p. 195; see also below, Chapter III.
3. Ibid., passim.
4. See especially Chapter IV below.
his capacity for finding such continuity is affected by his lack of a synthesising thesis, by the continuation in his work (and in that of many other of the philosophes) of the traditional historical fragmentation and periodisation, and by a tendency to separate the past into philosophical and unphilosophical ages. Such characteristics mean that one's understanding of the past, and, hence, one's ability to see it reflected in the present, is rather limited. This fact, indeed, is a major distinguishing factor between the French and the Scottish philosophical history, for, apart from the Physiocrats, the only major French writer who is concerned with man as he has been observed, and not as he 'ought' to be, who explains man's past in terms of regular and primarily 'moral' factors, is Montesquieu.

Montesquieu's two major works, Spirit of the Laws and Considerations are of particular importance in the development of philosophical history - especially that form of it employed by the theoretical writers - because they connect the present of any society to its past in very general terms, and because they trace the extent to which physical situation determines forms of government, forms, which in general are believed to possess constant or regular features. There is not in Montesquieu's work any developed theory of the constant relationship of the parts of any society to its whole, this concept being at the most implicit and certainly not

1. 'Moral' here means 'social' or 'human' institutions, which are to be distinguished from physical causes.
2. See above, p. 6, note 3.
4. See below, Appendix B, pp. 518-525.
traced in any detail. There is, however, a suggestion that all of a society's past helps to form its present nature, and that the physical causes which predominate in the early history of a state have a profound effect on those social institutions which are later the main determinants of human behaviour. Thus, while we cannot state that Montesquieu established a synthesis of the past through revealing constant laws which affect all human action, it is true that he does show that all laws and institutions are a reflection of situation, or physical factors. This is a vital element in the development of a philosophy which sought to show the unity between past and present, and Montesquieu was recognised by the Scottish writers as very much a philosophical author.1

The philosophical desire to establish regularity and uniformity in human history was only to be more thoroughly developed by the theoretical philosophy which is able to give a more profound meaning to the concept of 'philosophical' history by its greater capacity for understanding the past in its own terms. While it is true that the Scottish school does not necessarily find the whole of the past acceptable, per se, true too that its greater capacity for relative assessment barely hides a dislike of the unphilosophical elements of other times, the theoretical historians' employment of all historical facts as meaningful and revealing is

1. See, for instance, Robertson, Charles V, Works, V, p. 515 (Note XXII): 'two talents ... distinguish that illustrious author - industry in tracing all the circumstances of ancient and obscure institutions, and sagacity in penetrating into the causes and principles which contributed to establish them ...'
an integral part of their ability to connect all parts of the past into a whole. Man's nature operates on constant principles, they believed, and he retains certain vital qualities throughout his experience in time; yet, changes produced through variation in economic subsistence over the centuries meant that the more destructive elements of these qualities are moderated, and 'philosophical' changes come into being\(^1\). Human nature, then, is both constant and yet continually changing and refining itself, and all the expressions of this nature, along with the variations in economic basis which produce such changes, are historical facts, which must be taken into account in our interpretation. Most importantly, these facts permit us to see a continuity between one age and another, to relate the particular — each society — to the general — human society — to see, in short, that diversity produces uniformity\(^2\).

Acceptance of all stages of human change, therefore, permitted the theoretical writers to accept all facts, and to relate them to general patterns; hence, the theoretical version of philosophical history does not break up the past into ages which are defined as philosophical or unphilosophical, does not attempt to present history solely as a record of beneficial eras interspersed between detrimental ones. Because of this concept of history as a stadial process, because it is able to account in economic terms for the changes that are seen to occur in man's nature, the theoretical interpretation gives a greater depth to the idea

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1. 'Philosophical' here meaning 'just', 'moderate' etc. See Appendix A.
2. See below, Chapters II – IV.
of institutional or social studies; and the word 'philosophical' as applied to the investigatory techniques that underly this interpretation, means also the capacity to reproduce the process of change and development in one's work so as to enable men to understand other ages, and, through this, to understand their own times. In the theoretical historian's view, to be philosophical, then, is not only to be tolerant and humane; but it also means that one is able to understand the causes of past intolerance and inhumanity as expressed in institutions, to relate these, through the conjectural process, to the general and major causal factor of subsistence, and thereby to produce a wholly new form of historical writing.

Voltaire's inability to find general and interrelated factors is quite in opposition to this synthesising capacity of the theoretical philosophy, and this is expressed in the fact that he cannot accept the totality of human experience and the complexity of human nature. It is true that he denies we can study the past from the point of view of theories which are not based on observation or on the close study of man in many types of social setting; his criticism of Rousseau, for instance, is based on his belief that man's having become more 'philosophical' reveals the development of his nature, not the corruption of it. Yet his own view of human nature and the manner in which it changes is somewhat limited. This is not necessarily to say that this general type of philosophical history considers that man's nature is wholly fixed, that he is seen to have been the

1. See below, pp.80, note 1, 340 ff.
2. Philos. de l'Hist., p. 106.
3. That is, as distinct from the theoretical development of philosophical, or social, history.
same at all times; Voltaire himself, for example, was aware that the progress of the human mind was slow, and that many faculties apparently take time to develop and ripen, so that while he may state that man has always been the same, that all history 'c'est la même pièce qui se joue tous les théâtres avec quelques changements de noms'\textsuperscript{1}, he is really only saying that passions remain constant amidst diverse situations. Nonetheless, such a thesis differs from the theoretical in that it suggests there are merely arrangements of passions which differ in order to produce variations in human history, as opposed to the theoretical belief that passions themselves are dependent on the situation of society; the latter interpretation attempts to establish cause rather than simply to note variations. Voltaire does, indeed, make an effort to bring the past within the understanding of the present by referring to constancies in human nature\textsuperscript{2}; yet his pronouncements on this concept do not go much beyond a recognition of certain consistencies in human feeling, as well as of variations and the variety of causes which have somehow produced the alternation between good and evil in the past. It is not that there is an inability on his part to accept change which distinguishes his work from that of the theoretical historians; it is rather that his limited capacity to establish major causal factors inhibits the establishment of general causal patterns in his interpretation. He cannot go beyond the change which he does see as having occurred.

\textsuperscript{1} Theodore Besterman (ed.) Voltaire's Correspondence, XLI (Genève, 1958) p. 47.
\textsuperscript{2} Philos. de l'Hist., p. 107.
in the past in man's nature and institutions, in order to
discover the constant elements in all change; he can only
suggest some 'meaning' in the very alternation between
superstition and the philosophical eras.

Voltaire's theories of explanation are also limited by
his inability to accept that man is an extraordinary complex
being - he is unable, for instance, to understand the phenom-
emon of Joan of Arc or the apparently contradictory behaviour
of the crusaders - and also his belief that each action has
a direct and limited relationship with its end. To achieve
good, we must have actions which are concerned with general
benefit, and the past dominance in society of war, of the
search for glory and the desire for heroism, coupled with an
indifference to such vital factors as agricultural develop-
ment, has meant the creation of a tradition which is basi-
cally non-productive -- a theme which is seen especially in
Siècle de Louis XIV. If the past is basically unphilosophi-
cal, he implies, it is unlikely that the philosophical can
emerge with ease, and there is little indication in his work
that he sees unplanned benefits eventually emerging from
actions which had an explicit and quite different end in
view.

Certainly it is obvious that Voltaire's use of the idea
of heterogeneity of ends is limited, and, while he may show

1. Essai sur les moeurs ... (Paris, 1963) I, pp. 566,
751-752. However, see Mason, op. cit., pp. 68-74.
2. For the theoretical employment of this concept, see
below, Chapter II.
some tendencies towards using this concept as a causal factor, the very isolation of such instances indicates that the theory of cumulative and unintended effects is not an integral part of his theory of change. The concatenation of events which he sometimes uses as an explanatory factor is never extended to the degree which the theoretical historians employed, nor does Voltaire have any concept of economic and social 'laws' of development which permit the theoretical idea of heterogeneity to be used to show that pattern rather than chance is a basic element in human history. If Voltaire sees that particular factors must occur before there is change - even though this change may be simply the expression of a hitherto dormant 'national spirit' - the special rather than the general causes emphasised in such change means that chance itself is of considerable importance, and the emergence of active and beneficial individuals appears very much dependent on 'accident'. There is no means in Voltaire's theory, by which progress, or advance towards a philosophical society, can be explained in regular or con-

1. See Siècle de Louis XIV (hereafter cited Siècle) Chapter XXXVI, in Oeuvres Historiques (Paris, 1957) p. 1005. See also Voltaire's Lettres sur les Anglais (Cambridge, 1961) No. 9, 'Sur le gouvernement': 'la liberté est née en Angleterre des querelles des tyrans; les barons forcerent Jean sans Terre et Henri III à accorder cette fameuse charte, dont le principal but était à la vérité de mettre les rois dans la dependance des lords mais dans laquelle la reste de la nation fut un peu favorisée, afin que dans l'occasion elle se rangeât du parti de ses pretendus protecteurs. Cette grande charte, qui est regardée comme l'origine sacrée de libertes anglaises, fait bien voir elle même combien peu la liberté était connue.'

sistent terms. If the necessary causes are missing or are interfered with, if there are no prominent individuals, there is little possibility of change or of explaining the causes of any change which does in fact occur.

Voltaire's search for the philosophical or useful truths in prior ages did lead to an emphasis on the importance of studying all types of societies, all types of institutions, yet it also meant a denial of much of what he discovered. The sole factor uniting past and present in his work is the idea of progress, the advance of the beneficial, and this unity is precarious when the search for the philosophical tends to separate past facts into two groups. The theoretical suggestion of laws of similar stages of growth, of similar progress of societies at different moments in time, is not an integral part of Voltaire's work and only rarely does he indicate a belief in such universal laws or truths. Hence, while he may be said to search for laws in the past, he does not find these to exist in any positive sense. Man only learns from the past how much the unphilosophical has dominated, and how much it is necessary to break down religious and political repression before society can become free. There is no understanding in his histories of the ways in which such ideology and beliefs can be seen as an expression of human nature, as related to the economic situation of man, as a necessary part of the growth towards the emergence of the philosophical itself.

While some French writers were able to accept all of the

1. See below, Chapter III.
past, even accepting, as Turgot did, the need to distinguish between the rigid and repetitive patterns typical of nature and the laws that are seen in human society, this approach is not typical of the sort of philosophical history which Voltaire wrote. When there is no constant reference to property as a basis of change, there is a greater dependence on seeing a relationship between cause and discernible effect, on revealing correlation between good actions and beneficial ends: the absence of general and unintended causes precludes the emergence of a theory of unplanned and widespread development. Hence, although there is some indication in Essai sur les Moeurs that trade and manufactures are important to the development of freedom of thought and action, and although the actual progress of these is seen as instinctive rather than conscious, Voltaire cannot really go much beyond this.

The continuation of such beneficial factors in times of chaos is not explained through any theories as to the nature of man or the strength of the trading instinct.

Furthermore, while there is some suggestion in Voltaire's work that commerce and changes in the division of land, for instance, are productive of a spirit of liberty, such factors are not a part of any all-embracing theory as in the theoretical philosophy; the connection between the possession of land or the development of trade, and the emergence of political freedom, is only lightly indicated. Material factors are not seen as leading to changes in human nature or to other,

2. Essay, Works, XXVI, pp. 42-65; see also Sakmann, op. cit., p. 40.
unplanned, changes at a later stage of man's history. There is a suggestion that the arts and a certain 'human' spirit, the capacity to survive and to prosper are important in the renewal and continuation of life¹; and Voltaire also suggests that industry is useful in the development of the philosophical society. But this is not the same as saying that there is a continued interaction between the development of commerce and the emergence of a free society, which is the theoretical position, and one developed in great detail. Thus, the association of wealth and liberty in Voltaire's remarks on the flowering of genius in Italy - merely one of the many suggestions which were to be examined more fully by the theoretical school - is tantalisingly abrupt; in addition, it suggests again that Voltaire's work is one which, however liberal in interesting speculation, is devoid of a basic, interconnecting theory. Although we must be careful, therefore, not to over-emphasise the importance of conscious rational action as causal element in this early type of philosophical writing, it is true to say that explanations of change in work such as Voltaire's are primarily intellectual in nature; as such they differ further from the theoretical which is concerned to show that the intellectual is dependent on the social subsistence level, that planned and conscious action is both limited in its intended effect, and is also an effect rather than a cause of the society in which it is expressed².

1. 'Thoughts on the Panorama of History', in Works, XXX, p. 315.
2. See below, Chapter IV.
Philosophical history of the sort that Voltaire wrote is not thereby dependent on a theory of 'accident', however; he agrees with Gibbon that history revealed 'a system, connexions and consequences, where others can discern only the caprices of fortune'\(^1\), and that there is some pattern in life itself. Yet such agreement did not mean an adherence to a theory in which all past events could be seen as forming a united whole, and his acceptance of this philosophical principle is expressed primarily in the belief that we must interpret the past in a secular, anti-providential, anti-accident fashion. He believed that all events had a cause and are connected in at least broad terms, that nothing is accidental in the sense of being without cause — 'rien ne peut exister sans cause'\(^2\). But, lacking a theory by which he could trace these hidden connections of events, he was driven to interpret the past by a means which to the theoretical writers was merely another form of accident — through seeing the unphilosophical challenged by the emergence of the great man, a thesis which is a fundamental part of the concept that there is a close relationship between cause and end.

In his major historical works, therefore, it is apparent that Voltaire sees fortune has a large part to play in life eventhough this dominance of fate over man is related to the

2. Quoted in Brumfitt, Voltaire Historian, p. 121.
nature of the particular society which he is examining. In his study of the past, with its emphasis on chaos, misery, cruelty and destruction, he sees society to be vulnerable in proportion as beneficial laws and stability are missing. In such a thesis, which is certainly one basic to the theoretical history also, any improvements (whatever may be their cause) mean that society is less likely to be affected by the incidental and accidental. The regularity and order which stabilise the social system limit the possibility of permanent effects resulting from isolated incidents. This philosophy is by no means any explanation of the development of man, or even of the existence of the individuals who make for change, but it does at least reveal that Voltaire's interpretation of human society contains some hope for a better future if past gains are not wiped out.

Furthermore, this philosophy also stresses how much the institutions existing in a society must necessarily play some role in determining the likelihood of successful change, and Voltaire states that 'every man is formed by the age he lives in, and few are there who can rise above the manners of the times'. Yet his position on the role of society in forming the individual is not wholly clear, for he remarks that men have been unable to change the system in which they live, but at the same time he also suggests that those

prominent individuals who possess political acumen can in fact implement major innovations, often in the face of major difficulties. Hence he sees that change may often come about in part because of a social situation which permits the rise and development of a powerful individual, but that primarily it occurs through men who possess qualities that enable them to overcome many obstacles. If so, if this is really what Voltaire means, then it is clear that chance continues to play a role in the evolution of such a situation. And, although Voltaire suggests that we are to study the spirit of an age rather than the actions of individuals, this is mainly a warning against dependence on isolated and unconnected events. Much of his causal theory, then, depends on the great men who can often form the spirit of an age itself by their own actions, an explanation of change which the theoretical history attempts to do away with. They do see that the individual may have considerable importance in particular social stages, but they continually seek to connect the isolated with the general and to show the influence of past ages on the actions of any one man.

This is not to deny, however, that Voltaire does make some attempt to suggest some background in the history of both France and Russia which would explain the existence of

1. Siecle, Oeuvres Historiques, p. 616; see also Essay, Chapter LXVIII, Works, XXVI, p. 34.
2. Sakmann, op. cit., p. 33.
3. See below, pp. 164-165.
certain powers of those individuals whom he considers most thoroughly, Louis XIV and Peter the Great. In France, the monarchy is the long-established form of government and is supported by the national spirit; and in Russia the people are easily manipulated by a powerful ruler because of the primitive state of the society and the traditional authority of the czar. But it is not the existence of such institutions or power in themselves which explains the development of the philosophical society under particular individuals, for it is clear that there have been rulers in the past of both societies who have held similar authority but have nonetheless done little to benefit the state. The limits of any nation, in Voltaire's opinion, can be overcome only by those who are concerned with the positive development of the state, whether from self-interest or love of grandeur, or from more traditionally 'benevolent' motives - an absolute monarch, anxious to do good, succeeds without difficulty in everything he may undertake. Thus it is the nature of the ruler which is of greatest importance, a theory which gives the individual, whether 'good' or 'bad', a great deal of influence on his society.

In Siècle particularly it is apparent that Voltaire sees that the detrimental spirit of earlier ages is closely related to the absence of a strong government, that during the Fronde, for instance, society is marked by flippancy.

2. Siècle, Chapter X, Œuvres Historiques, p. 705.
vulgarity, treason, that this is a period of 'licence effrénée, de troubles, d'iniquites, et même d'impiétes\textsuperscript{1}. It is obvious, also, that as long as the society or individual in power is concerned with the pursuit of a 'glory' that does not involve a material betterment for all, this un-philosophical spirit will continue to erode those useful institutions which do actually exist\textsuperscript{2}. It is only those who have the personality and the talents to rule firmly and to the advantage of the state, who do not permit their individual nature to intrude on the needs of the society, who can be seen as achieving a philosophical development.

That Voltaire considers Louis XIV to be of this nature is suggested not only by his endorsement of the king in all matters but also in his belief that Louis' devotion to amusements never interfered with his performance of his duties\textsuperscript{3}. On the other hand, in clear contrast, he sees Charles XII's actions as fundamentally disadvantageous to the state and this is so because Charles truly belongs to the ranks of those who are concerned with honour and glory and not with the philosophical. The monarch who is no servant to his country is not truly a ruler and this dictum applies equally to the idealistic and the 'good' who lack the authority or qualities necessary to overcome a degraded national spirit. The involvement in war and religious controversy such as the dispute between the emperors and the

\textsuperscript{1} Siècle, Chapter IV, Oeuvres Historiques, p. 656.
\textsuperscript{3} Siècle, Chapter XXV, Oeuvres Historiques, p. 908.
popes, which Voltaire considered exhaustively in the Essay, may have a seeming glory, but this is real only if our standards are based on the unphilosophical. As Voltaire traces the actions of men throughout time he finds predominant a concern for the vainglorious, and although this is not always detrimental if accompanied by other achievements, it is noticeable that those events which make for glory are also the means by which any genuine growth is itself prevented\(^1\). War destroys trade and commerce, inhibits the growth of industry, decimates populations, wastes great sums of money that might well have been applied to some more profitable end; religion interferes with the state's control of its citizens, upsets the flow of money within a nation, denies to the society large numbers of men and women who might otherwise be employed in more beneficial ways and, worst of all, leads to meaningless controversies which are among the most bitter form of war known to men\(^2\). Even war carried out during more philosophical ages such as that of Louis XIV achieves nothing, not even in material terms\(^3\). Peace is always better than glory, a concept which Voltaire promulgated even in his early works\(^4\), and although he occasionally gave value to the idea of honour, this was so only when this term meant something positive, as under Louis XIV. In kings who have no real concern with the benefit of their state, honour and glory are simply the reasons given for indulging the self.

1. 'Thoughts on the Panorama of History', Works, XXX, p. 314.
2. This is a theme to be seen in both Siècle and Charles XII.
3. Siècle, Chapter XXIX, Oeuvres Historiques, p. 978; see also Recapitulation of Essay, Works, XXX, p. 135.
4. See Charles XII, Oeuvres Historiques, p. 272; this does not mean that Voltaire expects war to end, only that it will be less destructive; see Siècle, Chapters XII, XXIX, Oeuvres Historiques, pp. 737, 977, 979.
This is to be seen particularly in the case of Charles XII, none of whose actions appear to Voltaire to have had any lasting merit, certainly none that was of benefit to Sweden. Because of this Charles is contrasted unfavourably with a ruler such as Peter the Great whom we might otherwise have thought of as a personality not likely to gain Voltaire's approval. Charles certainly has many good qualities, a strong sense of honour, rare expressions of cruelty only, an outstanding martial spirit; yet many of his virtues are so excessive and rigid that they are in effect faults, such as the totally unproductive stubbornness that led him to remain in Turkey, an action which did not even lead to individual glory: 'Ses grandes qualities, dont une seule eût pu imm mortaliser un autre prince, ont fait le malheur de son pays.'

The importance of a solid philosophical spirit or of a tendency to act in such a manner as to bring about philosophical ends is nowhere so clearly illustrated as in the careers of both Louis XIV and Peter the Great. As we have seen above, Voltaire believes that the period prior to Louis' effective reign was one of social disorder and this is seen to lead to a situation in which the apparently unimportant or the accidental had a considerable effect, and gave authority to those who lacked the experience to handle it. But under the all-embracing and strong influence of the king whose personality and power combined to produce efficiency and order, the power of incompetent individuals

2. Siècle, Chapter V, Oeuvres Historiques, p. 657.
declined, and the effect of the unexpected was proportionately reduced. The king's individuality was everywhere apparent, from the increase in a truly martial spirit, to the instituting of reforms which affected every aspect of life; and if some of the success which his efforts met with was due to the basic French spirit, it is nonetheless obvious that this spirit itself could only have been regenerated and guided by a man of Louis' distinctive capacities: all these actions needed to be both thought of and carried out. The national spirit could not have been awakened, the nobles could not have become aware of their duties spontaneously; and it is the king himself who initiates or manages the growth of trade, arts, the navy and finance, national buildings and the police, all of which are clearly beneficial to the people.

Such changes are themselves evidence of a true glory, which is genuinely beneficial, and this glory obviously belongs to Louis. Similarly, in Charles XII, it is Peter the Great who receives most of Voltaire's praise, and Peter alone who is believed to have been a man able to achieve a massive re-structuring of the society on philosophical principles. Because the benefit of the czar's actions is for the whole of the society, the uncouth, sometimes cruel Peter is believed to be a monarch who genuinely serves his people. Although Voltaire does not approve of the less pleasant

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1. Siècle, Chapter V, Oeuvres Historiques, p. 652 (in comparison with that of the Fronde).
2. Siècle, Chapter XXIX, Oeuvres Historiques, p. 977.
3. Ibid., Chapters XXIX-XXXII, Oeuvres Historiques, pp. 963-1018.
4. Ibid., Chapter XXIX, Oeuvres Historiques, pp. 979-980.
characteristics of this ruler, and never condones them, he finds that Peter is superior to the more gentle, more seemingly philosophical-mannered Charles: the thorough reform of his society from a barbarian to a more civilised one, the establishment of enlightened institutions, of a system of defence, of arts, the active watchfulness over the church and the limitations imposed on it\(^1\), are the actions of a servant of the people. Even Peter's involvement in war, an institution which Voltaire generally disapproves of, is seen to bring some benefit to the state, unlike the unproductive battles of Charles\(^2\).

This is not indeed to suggest that Voltaire sees the evolution of philosophical society to depend predominantly on a lack of self-interest, or on important individuals possessing 'goodness'. Although his use of theories of self-interest is very limited in comparison with the theoretical history, it is nonetheless obvious that he sees political virtu or skill as necessary and as an integral part of the philosophical society, and also finds that goodness itself is often unproductive. He is thus able to make a clear distinction between those who rule and the means which they can and do use, and the morality of the ordinary citizen. Enlightened ends, he feels, are not necessarily brought about by, or dependent on, those who are themselves philosophical: we must always distinguish between the monarch as a human being, and his actions as a ruler of men. Thus he is able to

\(^1\) Charles XII, Oeuvres Historiques, pp. 68-77, 125-126, 245.
\(^2\) Ibid., Oeuvres Historiques, p. 245.
both criticise Peter the Great for some of his actions, yet also to see that his statecraft was generally beneficial; although he remained savage in the midst of his attempts to civilise his people\(^1\), he is nonetheless entitled to a place alongside other rulers who have achieved much for their societies in the manner which was best suited to this\(^2\). Voltaire indeed wishes that men were different, that they were less prone to violence and superstition, yet he agrees with the position of Machiavelli that we must deal with what is, and establish standards that are in accordance with this. To do so, indeed, is an integral part of the philosophical history.

But at the same time it still remains true that Voltaire's dependence on the individual as explanation for qualitative change in society meant that his version of philosophical history differs substantially from that of the theoretical school. We must distinguish, then, between an acceptance of the philosophical values and of the study of the past through an examination of social institutions, and the particular interpretations and conclusions which separate Voltaire's work from that of the theoretical writers. In one sense, indeed, both are writing philosophical history of a similar nature; yet, as will be shown in the following chapters, the

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1. Charles XII, Oeuvres Historiques, p. 76.
2. See, for instance, Voltaire's assessment of William III and Leopold of Lorraine (Siècle, Chapter XVII, Oeuvres Historiques, pp. 790-791, 808; and of the Duke of Burgundy (Siècle, Chapter XXI, Oeuvres Historiques, p. 852.
theoretical usage of ideas which Voltaire suggested goes far beyond the possibilities of philosophical history as seen and written by him. The Scottish works have a depth which is peculiar to themselves.

This is not to deny that in the French philosophical writing there is some attempt to relate the general and the particular; such efforts can be seen particularly in the belief that providence must be dismissed as a causal factor, in the attempts made to relate specific events to what was known to be regular and constant. Yet at the same time it is undeniable that in much of the French writing there is none of the more profound and detailed study of the past that we see in the theoretical work and little of the intricate connecting of particular facts to general principles of investigation which results from the belief in the dominance of economic factors in human life and progress. With the notable exception of the Physiocratic school, there is no awareness of the concept of stages of development which relates each aspect of the past to a theory of constant human response and to patterns of economic development, thereby uniting the apparently isolated. The French philosophical writers were doubtless influenced by modern ideas of science, by the concept of regular laws, yet there seems to be no profound influence of these on the actual historical writing they produced. In the theoretical work, on the other hand, there is a synthesis of the part and the whole, of the past and the present greater than that which Voltaire could have hoped to accomplish through his more fragmented view; and it is this synthesis which enables theoretical history to accept the totality of human experience and to explain all
of it in terms of general and universal laws.
CHAPTER II

THEORETICAL HISTORY I - THE OPERATION OF HUMAN NATURE

The general philosophical interpretation of the past, however much it attempted to make man the centre of historical investigation, was nonetheless unsuccessful in this aim through its inability to provide an explanation of the means by which man gained control of life. Its emphasis on the role of the unexpected and of the individual in particular, its explicit connecting of acts and ends, its lack of a theory of progress or of an interpretation of man's nature which accounted for consistent advance given certain broad conditions, meant that it still retained some aspects of older philosophies in which the uncertain dominated. It is this particular aspect of the general philosophical writing which the theoretical historians appear to have overcome, and this because of the two major tenets of their philosophy, the inherent capacity of man to progress, and the process of the heterogeneity of ends.1

1. Some suggestions have been made as to the particularly Scottish background of the theoretical history's philosophical basis, and though these suggestions do not explain the development of similar work elsewhere - such as that of Turgot - it is possible that the mingling of disciplines in Scottish education, and the contrast of highland and lowland societies, for instance, may have provided an impetus to comparative studies. See, in general, Duncan Forbes, 'Scientific Whiggism: Adam Smith and John Millar', Cambridge Journal, VII (1954) pp. 643-670; A. L. Macfie, 'The Scottish Tradition in Economic Thought', in his The Individual in Society (London, 1967) pp. 19-41; Ronald L. Meek, 'The Scottish Contribution to Marxist Sociology', in his Economics and Ideology and Other Essays (London, 1967)
'One of the most remarkable differences between man and the other animals', Millar wrote:

'consists in that wonderful capacity for the improvement of his faculties with which he is endowed. Never satisfied with any particular attainment, he is continually impelled by his desires from the pursuit of one object to that of another; and his activity is called forth in the prosecution of the several arts which render his situation more easy and agreeable.' 1

These qualities, which are always expressed in economic terms, and, through this, in particular social achievements, are supplemented and aided by the process of heterogeneity by which particular actions with limited intended ends are believed to achieve also far greater and more profound unintended results. Man's acting as freely as possible in his own interest, which is naturally the manner in which he acts, and expressing his actions in economic terms, automatically produces certain beneficial relationships. Any interference with man's freedoms, with his ordinary advancement of the self, will result in a corresponding limitation of economic and social development - slavery and monopoly, for instance, always interfere with ordinary economic returns from land and industry.2  When he is left alone, the heterogeneous process permits the development of human

pp. 34-50; A. Skinner, 'Economics and History - The Scottish Enlightenment', and 'Economics and the Problem of Method', SJPE, XII (1965) pp. 1-22, 267-280; Peter Stein, 'Law and Society in Eighteenth-Century Scottish Thought', in N. T. Phillipson and R. Mitchison (eds.) Scotland in the Age of Improvement (Edinburgh, 1970) pp. 148-165. For a consideration of the emergence of some aspects of historical thought which may have influenced the theoretical philosophy, see Appendix B.


nature to occur normally. The force of human inherent capacities leads 'imperfect' or 'incomplete' institutions of one age to gradually change, with time, and through man's gradual achieving of stability, into beneficial systems in another age without any conscious action or thought being involved:

'Nations which in later periods of their history, become eminent for (their) wisdom and justice, had, perhaps, in a former age, paroxysms of lawless disorder ... The very policy by which they arrived at their degree of national felicity, was devised as a remedy for outrageous abuse. The establishment of order was dated from the commission of rapes and murders; indignation and private revenge, were the principles on which nations proceeded to the expulsion of tyrants, to the emancipation of mankind, and the full explanation of their political rights.' 1

These two interrelating factors of inherent capacity to progress and the heterogeneity of ends together comprise what the theoretical writers saw as 'the natural course of things', and form the basis of an historical philosophy which emphasises the necessity of an economic and political laissez-faire - a philosophy which differs considerably from earlier philosophical emphasis on individuals and on the obvious connection between actions and ends. 'Man', Smith complained, 'is generally considered by statesmen and projectors as the materials of a sort of political mechanics.' These 'projectors', he felt, 'disturb nature in the course of her operations in human affairs' 2 because they had no knowledge of the basic principles which governed man and

which led to the unaided development of his mind and society. Simple observation of past and present societies, however, indicated that all governmental interference is unnecessary, that 'nature' was in fact simply what man was; and, he decided, 'it requires no more than to let her alone and give her fair play in the pursuit of her ends that she may establish her own designs':

'Little else is requisite to carry a state to the highest degree of opulence from the lowest barbarism, but peace, easy taxes, and a tolerable administration of justice; all the rest being brought about by the natural course of things. All governments which thwart this natural course, which force things into another channel, or which endeavour to arrest the progress of society at a particular point are unnatural, and to support themselves are obliged to be oppressive and tyrannical.' 1

It is 'nature', then, the way in which man acts and the manner in which his mind operates that is the material of the theoretical writers, not the study of abstract ideologies or theories of 'what might have been'; and such a philosophy leads the Scottish historians, particularly Smith in Moral Sentiments2, towards an acceptance of the totality of human life and experience, towards an awareness that each part of the history of man has contributed something towards his development. An understanding of the theoretical beliefs as to the nature of man is therefore of considerable importance; for their ideas as to the operation of the human mind are not only one of the most obvious differences between their historical philosophy and that of earlier schools, but are also fundamental to their major principles of man's capacity to progress, and the heterogeneity of ends.

The theoretical version of the philosophical interpretation of man seeks to clear away the former misconceptions concerning human behaviour, and rather to base all such study on the two inter-connecting principles that are seen as the basis of human life - the capacity to progress and the heterogeneity of ends. Through these factors it hopes to be able to establish that there are no obscurities in our knowledge of man, that we can in fact show 'connexions' and rational sequences in the manner in which man acts, and particularly that all parts of the human experience can be shown to have clear relationships to each other. These relationships reveal that within variations there is a constancy of behaviour, and it is these constant elements in the human mind, as well as the variations which are reflected in them, that the theoretical writers attempt to trace. In man's life, they believe, there are sequences and connections which explain all of his complex behaviour in relatively simple terms.

Smith's philosophy of the human mind - which appears to be the one which underlay the general theoretical approach - reflects his and other theoretical writers' belief that man is not affected by 'philosophical' or rational causes, but is motivated to act through his own interest, and that it is this interest, along with the principle of heterogeneity of ends, which allows him to advance. What he is really showing in Moral Sentiments, therefore, is both the qualities of man and the manner in which they normally develop through time, even though much of his emphasis is on the operations of the mind in the more advanced societies.
In all cases, he sees that it is the natural qualities of man, or the natural relationships produced by his situation, which affect his behaviour; his advances are not based on 'philosophical' factors, but are always based primarily on his desire to advance himself, a desire which is often expressed in most unphilosophical ways. The appearance in society of what are considered philosophical thought and actions, then, must necessarily be heterogenous, produced by the gradual awakening and flowering of the human capacities, which are dependent on improvement in the economic situation. But although certain qualities are dependent upon the emergence of a more secure social system\(^1\), the philosophy of Moral Sentiments reveals the constant and continuing presence of certain factors in the manner in which men act, the manner in which their natural interest is curbed and moderated, and the way in which interest itself leads to a process of constant change. In this way, the aims of theoretical history to remove obscurity, to lessen the importance of the isolated, to show consequences and interconnections between events, to reveal the presence of constant factors, are implemented.

In Smith's thesis, man is motivated neither by reason\(^2\)

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2. MS, p. 470.
nor by utility. The forces which move us can never be only those which are produced by time, as these are, for such a causal explanation would fail to account for the earlier stages of human society and our growth and development from these to something more sophisticated, more truly philosophical. Rather, he believes that man is moved by his passions and learns through his senses, and the extent of his response is never some abstract standard but is guided by that which both society in general and various groups within that society deem to be appropriate. This standard itself is always determined by the economic situation of society, and is made known through the principle of sympathy.

This principle is one which is basic to man, therefore, and it is distinguished by two features: first, it is eminently social in nature, and, secondly, it communicates all forms of passions: 'Sympathy ... may, without much impropriety, be made use of to denote our fellow-feeling with any passion whatever.' Men have a natural concern

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1. MS, pp. 267-268, and see also pp. 21, 129-130, 263. Certain factors may possess qualities of usefulness to us without our being aware of the manner in which this develops; we may have a sense of system, of the appropriateness of things, which is of no real benefit to us, or at least would not be if man were wholly rational; but such factors, by encouraging the development of economic, through political, change, are in fact very useful to human growth, even if we are unaware of this heterogeneous process.

2. See below, Chapter III.

3. MS, p. 5.
with their fellows because of the social grouping of human-kind\(^1\), and desire to gain approval from them of their actions, desire to avoid condemnation, to participate in general social actions:

'Nature, when she formed man for society, endowed him with an original desire to please, and an original aversion to offend his brethren. She taught him to feel pleasure in their favourable, and pain in their unfavourable regard. She rendered their approbation most flattering and most agreeable to him for its own sake; and their disapprobation most mortifying and most offensive.'\(^2\)

The qualities which we ourselves value, furthermore, are always produced by the system in which they are expressed\(^3\), and thus are dependent on basic material factors, not on some abstract standard. There is, for instance, some limitation as to the actual form of sympathy in primitive society in general, where economic circumstances are characterised by insecurity and men are able to be little more than individuals concerned with the self and with what society deems necessary for upholding its standards\(^4\). It is only in the civil society that there are two forms of sympathetic process\(^5\), and even here sympathy can sometimes be seen as a matter of duty, of habit, rather than a spontaneous expression of feeling\(^6\). Nonetheless, the very

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1. MS, pp. 10, 277, 466.
2. Ibid., p. 170.
3. Ibid., p. 296.
4. See Chapter XII.
presence of one form at least in savage society indicates that it is natural to man however much it is dependent on material factors for degree of expression; and, as Smith points out, this principle is seen not only in all ages, but in all types of men - 'the greatest ruffian, the most hardened violater of the laws of society, is not altogether without it'\(^1\) - linking us with each other. We always remain men, capable of feeling, or at the least of trying to blend in with the sentiments of society; and this constancy of response, of our dependence on others, whether we may wish it or not, strengthens the continuity and uniformity of human responses: 'Our continual observations upon the conduct of others insensibly lead us to form to ourselves certain general rules concerning what is fit and proper either to be done or to be avoided.'\(^2\) Sympathy itself, then, is based on a sense of what is appropriate and what deserves merit, and these factors form the moral approbation of all human actions, which is dependent on what any system can afford to make 'moral'.

The social nature of the principle of sympathy is further developed by Smith's concept of the impartial spectator, a concept which also strengthens the idea that sympathy is always what any society can afford, as opposed to being an absolute standard. The principle must always be

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1. *MS*, p. 3.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 224, and see also p. 476. See also Millar, *Hist. View*, IV, p. 246: 'Individuals form their notions of propriety according to a general standard, and fashion their morals in conformity to the prevailing taste of the times.'
more regular and stringent than any individual in the society and thus it exists in its proper relationships and the ends which these bring about even if men may be unable to act according to its demands. Thus the bystander or the impartial spectator will often have a response which is not shared by the persons directly involved:

'we sometimes feel for another, a passion of which he himself seems to be altogether incapable; because, when we put ourselves in his case, that passion arises in our breast from the imagination, though it does not in his from the reality.'

The impartial spectator or bystander or observer who is not involved in any action, who is not personally concerned - and limited by such concern - represents the general level of social awareness, approbation, disapproval and so on. He can never achieve any standard above this norm, and in this sense cannot be considered as an 'ideal', as detached from ordinary standards. To see him in this sense would be to endorse a belief in the possibility of particular 'moral' levels which have no relation to the general social situation, and thereby to ignore Smith's constant emphasis on what is normal or average for any given society or group. The spectator reacts to, sympathises with, all the actions of man which are amenable to the sympathetic process, and stands for the general in any social body. He is always limited by his surroundings, is partial, and is involved in the society itself; he represents and expresses that which 'every human heart is disposed to beat time to, and thereby

1. _MS_, p. 7.
applaud', and also identifies with any resentment 'which the breast of every reasonable man is ready to adopt and sympathize with.'\(^1\) Indeed, it is because of his limitations, his lack of extra sensitivity or perception that the spectator often mistakes particular situations or accepts the non-rational basis of social change. This concept, therefore, is an integral part of Smith's emphasis on the extent of the unphilosophical process in human society, of the irrational manner in which the acceptable standard of any group is determined.

We may also see the social nature of the principle of sympathy in Smith's belief that particular passions may have to be moderated or increased for us, for the impartial spectator, to be able to sympathise with them\(^2\); and thus, the appropriateness of response is determined not by rational thought but by what we have come to find is acceptable. Because of the social rather than the individualistic nature of the capacity of sympathy, we do not enter into all passions equally; and while our sympathy for the social ones is doubled because we identify both with the benefactor and with the recipient, the unsocial passions such as hatred and resentment receive a lower level of response from us - we do not know, and cannot enter into, the precise situation from which they arise.

This splitting, however, is not the result of lack of interest in such situations, but rather of divided loyalties:

1. MS, p. 97.
2. See MS, p. 31: 'the pitch which the spectator can go along with, must lie, it is evident, in a certain mediocrity'.
we see ourselves in both situations and feel both passions, thus our sympathy is with both the person who feels them, and the person who is the object of them\(^1\). Yet this is in fact an advantage to society, even though it is hardly intended as such; for if we cannot share the same heightened passion of either party, then both must be lessened to be accepted by us, and sentiments which we consider as 'philosophical' come into being quite unplanned\(^2\). The principle of sympathy is not a one-way process depending only on the capacity of the spectator to become a part of any situation; and because there cannot always be a precise correspondence of feelings, the person principally concerned is also obliged to participate to an extent beyond the mere expression of his emotional situation\(^3\).

Because of the social nature and heterogeneous effect of this concept of sympathy as it is used to determine the extent of morality or moral sentiments in society, it follows that the idea of 'conscience' in Smith's philosophy cannot be something which is external to the norms of society, just as the spectator himself is never the 'ideal' man. While it is apparent that man may have problems in the actual modification of his passions since these must always appear important to him\(^4\), it is also apparent that the need which we have to gain the approval of others will affect the degree

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1. MS, p. 44.
3. For the variation in the extent of sympathy, see below, Chapter III.
4. MS, p. 221.
of our response to particular situations. We may find it easy to deceive ourselves, but our observations upon the actions of others and our need to be a part of society, will correct such deception; furthermore, the desire which most of us have to actually be what others think us to be also aids in the development of our conscience, which is clearly very much a social institution. While our actions and appearance may deceive even the spectator, then, we ourselves often correct such a situation:

'If the man without should applaud us, either for actions which we have not performed, or for motives which had no influence upon us; the man within can immediately humble that pride and elevation of mind which such groundless acclamations might otherwise occasion, by telling us, that as we know that we do not deserve them, we render ourselves despicable by accepting them.' 2

Conscience, like all of our other moral feelings, is not something which can be dissociated from the norm, but is very much dependent upon society. However much the idea of 'the man within' suggests innate concepts of morality which have little relationship to variations in economic stability, the fact that some members of society do not possess such checks in full, and that these limitations vary according to the standards of society, tends to limit such a theory. The 'general rules of morality':

'are ultimately founded upon experience of what, in particular instances, our moral faculties,

1. MS, pp. 161,164, 176-177, 184,192-194. Some groups in the civil society do not feel obliged to conform to ordinary morality but their moral sentiments are also social, and indeed, often useful: see below, pp. 61-65.
2. MS, p. 186.
our natural sense of merit and propriety, approve or disapprove of. We do not originally approve or condemn particular actions, because, upon examination, they appear to be agreeable or inconsistent with a certain general rule. The general rule, on the contrary, is formed by finding from experience that all actions of a certain kind, or circumstanced in a certain manner, are approved or disapproved of.'

The second major characteristic of the sympathetic process is that it covers all the passions, expresses all sorts of feelings, and because of this it is seen to be of considerable importance in the theoretical interpretation in that it can be used as a consistent factor in the explaining of the entire range of human response to situations. It always remains the means, whether in the earliest or the most sophisticated society, whereby the social experience and level of sentiment is made known to men. To it, benevolence and interest, or the concern for others and that for the self, are equal, in that it communicates both and reflects any changes in social attitudes towards both.

In Smith's opinion, the extent of benevolence is limited in any form of society, nor is it something which is absolutely vital either to man or to the welfare of any system. These are always dependent primarily on economic factors. Nonetheless, it is seen by him to be a highly desirable element, particularly in that man's capacity to feel for others tends to make society more tolerable and more peaceful, and permits the development of the more gentle qualities of human nature. This is not to say

1. MS., pp. 224-225.
2. Ibid., p. 330.
that benevolence is limited to later forms of society, however; even though Smith was aware of the limitations imposed on men in the early stages of society, he believed that benevolence, which is produced by habitual close contact, was produced in all forms of society. The social passions, of love, generosity, charity, kindness and so on, are not produced by rational reflection but are spontaneous productions of social situations, and depend for their emergence on our belief that our feelings are directed towards those who are worthy of them. Benevolence leads us to act spontaneously to produce a particular closeness of relationship that is conducive to happiness and stability:

'All the members of human society stand in need of each other's assistance, and are likewise exposed to mutual injuries. Where the necessary assistance is reciprocally afforded from love, from gratitude, from friendship and esteem, the society flourishes and is happy. All the different members of it are bound together by the agreeable bands of love and affection, and are, as it were, drawn to one common centre of mutual good offices.'

It is true, nonetheless, that the nature and extent of benevolence varies from one form of society to another, and that not only is it limited in societies where men have little real contact with each other, but that, being the result of close contact between men, its expression will necessarily vary with the variations in the components of society. Hence the term benevolence is used to describe the relationships of members of families, those which we have between ourselves.

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1. See below, pp. 82-86.
2. MS, p. 321.
3. Ibid., pp. 52 passim.
4. Ibid., p. 124.
5. See below, pp. 86-88.
and the persons with whom we work, and those, for instance, which are the basis of certain types of society - the kinship system of Scotland, a natural expression of pastoral societies, which Smith sees remains of in his own time, was also a form of benevolence. Furthermore, the nature and extent of benevolence will also change in relation to changes within society. In the civil society, for instance, that closeness which we have come to think of as a natural part of family life, may be affected by the forms of education which separate children and parents and which thus destroy the close contact that leads to this 'benevolence', and the gradual sophistication and greater extent of 'justice' may make kinship benevolence superfluous. Such changes are entirely normal and reflect the stadial and evolutionary nature of this particular passion or sentiment.

As well as emphasising that this quality varies according to the economic basis of society, Smith is also concerned to point out both its unphilosophical or irrational elements, and the heterogeneous or unintended effects which it produces. It is true, he feels, that the social passions are those which easily gain approval from the spectator, and true also that beneficience is most appropriately a response made to similar feelings which have been directed towards ourselves. Even if we do not receive the appro-

1. MS, pp. 326-327.
2. MS, pp. 325-327. However, see Chapter IV below, where there is a consideration of Smith's feelings about the interference with the proper operations of the moral sentiments.
3. See pp. 70-76 below, and also Chapter IV.
4. MS, p. 331.
5. Ibid., pp. 52 passim.
6. Ibid., p. 331.
priate response to our own feelings, the sympathetic process guarantees that this response is nonetheless felt in general, and 'no benevolent man ever lost altogether the fruits of his benevolence.'\(^1\) He also feels, however, that we often have an excess of benevolence towards some persons - those whose wealth and status we respect - and a corresponding decrease in the appropriate sentiments towards those whom we see as inferior to us and to whom we should act kindly and with charity\(^2\). Given the particular character of human nature, however, such 'discrepancies' are entirely natural and indeed, quite without our intending them to do so, tend to establish a social structure which is conducive to stability\(^3\).

Furthermore, the feelings of benevolence which we have towards our own country which lead us to support its aims above those of any other state, are often excessive; certainly they lead us to hold somewhat unphilosophical sentiments concerning the advance of other nations\(^4\). At the same time, however, that he points out how much envy over the material prosperity of other states is both beneath our dignity and shows that we do not see how much it is basically beneficial to ourselves, Smith also indicates that such sentiments are natural and to some degree, even useful:

>'That wisdom which contrived the system of human affections, as well as that of every other part of nature, seems to have judged that the interest

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1. MS, p. 331.
2. Ibid.
3. See below, pp. 60-66.
4. MS, p. 336.
of the great society of mankind would be best promoted by directing the principle attention of each individual to that particular portion of it which was most within the sphere both of his abilities and of his understanding.\textsuperscript{1}

In this statement he re-iterates what is a common theme in all of MS, not only the somewhat automatic, unthinking operations of man and the effectiveness of these because of the interconnection of all parts of nature, but also that those factors which are called by him 'virtues' cover a much wider range of actions than the more traditional concept of 'virtue' ever did. While benevolence itself, therefore, in its expression through the social passions, is clearly identifiable with older forms of 'virtue', some of the ways in which Smith sees it applied especially in modern civilised society are more unusual. He indicated in some detail how much different societies possessed different forms of benevolence and these differences, he believed, were due primarily to the needs produced by each economic form\textsuperscript{1}. When such forms changed gradually, so also did the particular expressions of benevolence. At the same time, however, benevolence is also continued in the more advanced systems, here expressing itself through the factors which have replaced, for instance, the old kinship systems. Hence, while law itself makes men equal, the various ranks and classes within society nonetheless seek to preserve their own position, through their feelings of benevolence or relationship with their own class interests, and the constitution of the society necessarily changes in proportion as they increase or lose their

\textsuperscript{1} MS, p. 337.
power. In all of society, then, we may see that benevolence, like all other passions, is related to all aspects of social life, and that it is particularly strong in such matters where feelings - either for the country at large by the statesman, or by members of any given class - are generally beneficial: we seek to advance our own causes, or those of our country, limited ends, if entirely acceptable ones, and when this ambition is confined within reasonable limits it produces greater ends, the general stability and security of the system. Benevolence, therefore, is not necessarily only an abstract form of friendship or respect, but is also related to our desires for position and status, to our individual and class concerns: in other words, it can also include interest, hence it is not entirely other-related.

In such a process, good can come from lack of the 'philosophical' and through the normal expression of man's nature.

Even without the particular nature of beneficial feelings being extended to matters of interest, it is obvious that Smith's theories consider in great detail the means by which man advances through his own interest. This vital element, which produces greater benefits than men intend, is an integral part of Smith's emphasis on virtues other than the traditional. Yet, this is not to say that interest is unsocial or clearly separated from the contact with men that characterises beneficence. Interest is in fact clearly a social passion in that it is fundamental to the development of society, because it is the most obvious expression

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1. MS, pp. 337-344.
of man's desire to advance himself. In Smith's philosophy, it is apparent, man always gains what he has through action - the most characteristic feature of the human being\(^1\) - and much of this action is automatically and naturally directed towards the benefit of the self:

>'Every man is, no doubt, by nature, first and principally recommended to his own care; and as he is fitter to take care of himself, than of any other person, it is fit and right that it should be so. Every man, therefore, is much more deeply interested in whatever immediately concerns himself, than in what concerns any other man.'\(^2\)

So long as he observes certain rules which assure that self-interest may also be expressed by his fellows, 'in the race for wealth and honours, and preferments, he may run as hard as he can'.\(^3\) This particular passion, it must be stressed, has no connotation of selfishness because it is entirely natural that man ascertain his own needs and wants, and attempt to fulfil these to the greatest extent possible. Indeed, if he lacks this quality he is hardly fit for society, because it is individual actions which make the whole society advance, and because it is through himself that man becomes aware of his fellow men. If his original capacity for serving himself is lacking it is hardly likely that he will be able to play any part, however much it may be the bare mini-

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1. *MS*, p. 154: 'That he may call forth the whole vigour of his soul, and strain every nerve, in order to produce those ends which it is the purpose of his being to advance, Nature has taught him, that neither himself nor mankind can be fully satisfied with his conduct, nor bestow upon it the full measure of applause, unless he has actually produced them.'


3. *MS*, p. 120.
mum, within society proper:

'The man who feels little for his own misfortunes must always feel less for those of other people, and to be less disposed to relieve them. The man who has little resentment for the injuries which are done to himself, must always have less for those which are done to other people, and be less disposed either to protect or to avenge them. A stupid insensibility to the events of human life necessarily extinguishes all that keen and earnest attention to the propriety of our own conduct, which constitutes the real essence of virtue.' 1

For man to exist as a person, as an individual, therefore, he must first be conscious of himself, and self-interest is the means through which this consciousness is developed. Once society is established on certain principles, and even in its most rudimentary stages, the most essential contact between men is not through any highly developed sense of 'virtue' or the love of others, but rather through love of self. Men, all acting on this principle, will at least gain not only the minimum for themselves, but also aid the process through which society develops; and thus self-love is the means by which any group of individuals operates, not so much as a collection of separate persons, but rather as a community:

'Man has almost constant occasion for the help of his brethren, and it is in vain for him to expect it from their benevolence only. He will be more likely to prevail if he can interest their self-love in his favour, and show them that it is for their own advantage to do for him what he requires of them. Whoever offers to another a bargain of any kind, proposes to do this. Give me that which I want, and you shall have this which you want, is the meaning of every such offer; and it is in this manner that we obtain from one another the far greater part of those good offices which we stand in need of.' 2

1. MS, p. 359.
2. WN, p. 18.
The power of self interest comes from the close correlation between the observance of ordinary rules of behaviour and the laws of economic advantage, which means that virtue brings reward in proportion. This relationship, indeed, is not based on anything more than fulfillment of the duties demanded of man by the polished society; for the laws of nature which ascertain that economic activity, properly carried out, is recompensed by achievement of end, is unaffected by what men may feel, or the spirit which actually drives them: 'By pursuing his interest he frequently promotes that of the society more effectually than when he really intends to promote it.'¹ The knave who cultivates the soil will prosper, the good man who is indolent will not; nature has no regard to men, but merely to that which men do². Action rather than ideas will always be of more importance, at least as far as the 'natural course of things' is concerned:

'If we consider the general rules by which external prosperity and adversity are commonly distributed in this life, we shall find, that notwithstanding the disorder in which all things appear to be in this world, yet even here every virtue naturally meets with its proper reward, with the recompence which is most fit to encourage and promote it ... What is the reward most proper for encouraging industry, prudence, and circumspection? - Success in every sort of business. And is it possible that in the whole of life these virtues should fail of attaining it? - Wealth and external honours are their proper recompence, and the recompense which they can seldom fail of acquiring.'³

The most essential factor in any society which lays a

claim to having established the true laws of morality, of simple justice or that limitation of self which permits a proper relationship between interest and prosperity, is that it permits the free and uninterrupted continuation of the natural propensity to barter and to trade, which is the basic support of self-interest and of social advance. From this comes the division of labour, by which commercial society is able, theoretically, to extend the benefits of its experience and knowledge to all members of the society, and thereby create that true equality which makes for a natural justice. As self-interest is spontaneous, so are the advantages which result from its free exercise:

'This division of labour, from which so many advantages are derived, is not originally the effect of any human wisdom, which foresees and intends that general opulence to which it gives occasion. It is the necessary, though very slow and gradual, consequence of a certain propensity in human nature which has in view no such extensive utility.'

Yet, however much any society might have reached this particular stage, and however much its geographic and climatic situation may provide the fundamental means by which it will prosper, the extent of such prosperity cannot be determined by such factors. This must always rather be indicated by any restrictive laws. It is admitted that the strength of the virtue of self-interest will nearly always succeed against either political philosophies or economic theories which are essentially detrimental to it through restricting the natural liberty of man; but the particular

1. WN, I, p. 17.
2. Ibid., p. 24.
rate of development can indeed be affected, which leads Smith to distinguish somewhat between what is natural and what is normal\(^1\).

It is in the nature of man, for instance, that his own passions, his growing awareness of interest, will occasionally lead him into deviations from the natural relationship between liberty and economic return, and such deviations are seen as normal. The acceptance of the complexity of man, and of the ways in which he achieves a form of justice that we ourselves sympathise with is an integral part of the philosophical basis of theoretical history; just as much as interest itself and the effects which it has explains the variations in human behaviour at the same time as it provides a thread of consistency throughout the theoretical interpretation. The particular effects of the dominance of the normal is traced in some detail by Smith and Millar, and what they see led to the general conclusion that Smith had already arrived at in 1755, that

'All systems either of preference or of restraint, therefore, being thus completely taken away, the obvious and simple system of natural liberty establishes itself of its own accord. Every man, as long as he does not violate the laws of justice, is left perfectly free to pursue his own interest his own way, and to bring both his industry and capital into competition with those of any other man, or order of men.' \(^2\)

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2. *WN*, II, p. 208; see also ibid., pp. 3-209 for a consideration of the interference in the natural course of things by ideology, and of the necessity of 'justice', including limitations on such ideology.
Interest is a continuous expression in man's life, and while it is an entirely natural passion, it is always related to the laws of sympathy, both as to its expression and also as to its limitations: because of this, the forms which it may take, in accordance with the changing of society, are always expressed through sympathy, and this process reflects many of the means by which we advance ourselves and society along with us. One of the more interesting of Smith's arguments in this matter is the study which he makes of the personal actions of men resulting from the natural desire which we possess to gain the respect of our fellows, and also to be worthy of this respect, to actually possess the qualities which we appear to have:

'Though it is in order to supply the necessities and conveniences of the body that the advantages of external fortune are originally recommended to us, yet we cannot live long in the world without perceiving that the respect of our equals, our credit and rank in the society we live in, depend very much upon the degree in which we possess, or are supposed to possess, those advantages. The desire of becoming the proper objects of this respect, of deserving and obtaining this credit and rank among our equals, is perhaps the strongest of all our desires; and our anxiety to obtain the advantages of fortune is, accordingly, much more excited and irritated by this desire than by that of supplying all the necessities and conveniences of the body, which are always very easily supplied.'

This is a process which may differ in content according to time or social grouping, but which is always constant in its basic premise. Such a desire is an integral part of the sympathetic process, for, even if sympathy is used more often to transmit suffering rather than joy, it is easier

1. MS, pp. 310-311; see also Millar, Hist. View, IV, p. 274.
for men to sympathise more with fortune, to enter more fully into the sentiments which joy or happiness bring; and it is for this reason that we respect the status, the wealth, and the possessions of others: 'It is because mankind are disposed to sympathize more entirely with our joy than with our sorrow, that we make parade of our riches, and conceal our poverty.' Such need to gain respect or feeling from others is the cause of our desire to advance, to improve our material position, even though such improvement may bring few apparent or even real benefits. While economic factors are always the most profound basis of the state, therefore, and the means by which man's passions are expressed, it is apparent that we must always be aware also of the nature of man which leads us to express our feelings in an economic fashion:

'Nothing is so mortifying as to be obliged to expose our distress to the view of the public, and to feel, that though our situation is open to the eyes of all mankind, no mortal conceives for us the half of what we suffer. Nay, it is chiefly from this regard to the sentiments of mankind, that we pursue riches and avoid poverty.'

In this particular expression of interest, the pursuit of such respect and status has several effects, all

1. MS, p. 70. In this quote, the key word is 'entirely'; man's preference for the feelings produced by security and status is greater than those produced by suffering because of the very fact that through sympathy he feels at least part of what his fellows are experiencing. If there is diversity of sentiment, then the person principally concerned must lessen his response in order for us to enter into it: thus what we sympathise with, in such instances, is less than the actor himself is feeling: see above, p.46 and also MS, p. 22.
2. Ibid., p. 70.
of which lead to the heterogeneous progression of society, assuming the absence of thoroughly inhibiting laws. It is apparent that our very respect for particular customs or ranks leads us to maintain particular divisions which already exist in the society and which have come about through the inequalities of property, the superiority of age or of physical capacity. These divisions are entirely natural to men, the theoretical writers believed, firstly, and most importantly, because they are a response to situation; and secondly, because the theoretical philosophy emphasised that the idea of the natural and continuing equality of men was merely an abstract concept, which bore little relation to observed fact. It failed to take into account man's irrational and non-philosophical nature which accepted and approved of rank and status and discrepancies of wealth. This emphasis on the naturalness of such divisions in life and of man's acceptance of them does not necessarily distinguish the theoretical from general philosophical writers; but it is noticeable that the theoretical capacity to use position and possession as a distinguishing factor of man, as opposed to attempting to suggest that the wisdom and age characteristic of earlier ages was continued in more sophisticated forms of society, is a distinct separation from those political theories which are essentially primitivistic in their desire to retain the concept of superiority of moral faculties as being the basis of political power:

"Nature has wisely judged that the distinction of ranks, the peace and order of society, would rest more securely upon the plain and palpable difference of birth and fortune, than upon the invisible
and often uncertain difference of wisdom and virtue. The undistinguishing eyes of the great mob of mankind can well enough perceive the former: it is with difficulty that the nice discernment of the wise and the virtuous can sometimes distinguish the latter. In the order of all these recommendations, the benevolent wisdom of nature is equally evident.'

By this means, it is apparent, we increase the likelihood of the stability of the society which is certainly a prime consideration for Smith as a man of moderation who is sceptical of the claims of politicians and tolerant of a wide variety of non-'virtuous' behaviour, provided that it does not invade the rights of men. To some degree, Smith indicates that the respect which we show for those in a class above us - our beneficence - encourages certain qualities in this group such as flippancy and ostentation, that it is destructive of one sort of morality which depends on thrift, temperance and hard work. The process of sympathy leads us to tolerate the factors in the behaviour of the rich which, to the philosophical or moral eye, are productive of great inequities: 'Upon this disposition of mankind, to go along with all the passions of the rich and the powerful, is founded the distinction of ranks, and the order of society.' Yet it is also his contention, that not only do we not regard matters from this philosophical viewpoint, being able to tolerate a wide range of behaviour without thereby disturbing the state, but also that there is more than one form of morality in the civil society, and the behaviour of the ordinary man is not in fact affected by his feelings

1. MS, p. 332; see also ibid., p. 125.
2. See below, pp. 69-73.
3. MS, I, p. 73.
concerning those above him. In this distinction, he dismisses once more the traditional attitude towards human behaviour and reveals the variations which the nature of man can successfully accept:

'Two different roads are presented to us, equally leading to the attainment of this so much desired object; the one, by the study of wisdom and the practice of virtue; the other, by the acquisition of wealth and greatness. Two different characters are presented to our emulation; the one of proud ambition and ostentatious avidity; the other, of humble modesty and equitable justice. Two different models, two different pictures are held out to us, according to which we may fashion our own character and behaviour.'

The existence of these two forms of morality is a natural product of the varying situation of different groups within a social system; and while it is obvious that the particular tendencies of the upper class towards vanity and status leads the members of this to act in such a manner as will gain admiration it is also obvious that those of the other classes would come to ruin if they themselves attempted to gain the respect of their fellows in a similar fashion. To some extent, it may appear that Smith here extols more the traditional virtues, of hard work and thrift, per se, and does not explicitly relate these to the economic and social pressures which produced them. Yet, it is also apparent that his respect for such qualities and for the benefits which they do bring, is produced by his awareness

1. MS, pp. 84-85.
2. MS, p. 78; this process is particularly clearly illustrated in the decay of the aristocracy at the time when material goods became much more readily available: see pp. 101-108 below.
3. See MS, p. 86.
that they are natural to a particular group of men at least
and, furthermore, that they are natural in the sense that
they are spontaneously produced. He is not here saying,
therefore, that we must divorce interest from the actual
expression of such traditional qualities; for it is obvious
that, in the theoretical philosophy, these qualities are in
fact produced by interest itself. Our desire for respect,
and also our wish to be in fact truly 'virtuous', that is,
possessing the Smithian virtues, leads us to serve our own
interest.

Here also we see the importance of another virtue par-
ticularly, that of prudence which, like interest, is funda-
damentally concerned with the self; and it can only be the
'most frivolous and superficial of mankind' who are glad
to receive reward where none is due. To really gain the
full benefits of the process of sympathy, therefore, we wish
to possess the qualities which lead others to sympathise
with us: 'Praise and blame express what actually are;
praiseworthiness and blameworthiness what naturally ought to
be the sentiments of other people with regard to our charac-
ter and conduct'. Thus, Nature has 'endowed' man:


not only with a desire of being approved of, but
a desire of being what ought to be approved of;
or of being what he himself approves of in other
men. The first desire could only have made him
wish to appear to be fit for society. The second
was necessary in order to render him anxious to be
really fit. The first could only have prompted
him to the affectation of virtue, and to the con-
cealment of vice. The second was necessary in
order to inspire him with the real love of virtue,
and with the real abhorrence of vice.'

1. MS, p. 174.
2. Though prudence only gains a cool respect, because it
   pertains to the self; see MS, p. 87.
3. Ibid., p. 183.
4. Ibid., p. 170.
The virtue of prudence, therefore, added to that of natural interest, and motivated by the natural desire of man to be in the good opinion of his fellows, leads him to work to gain this respect, a labour which unintentionally, and through the process of heterogeneity, clearly benefits the community:

'In the middling and inferior stations of life, the road to virtue and that to fortune, to such fortune, at least, as men in such stations can reasonably expect to acquire, are, happily, in most cases very nearly the same ... real and solid professional abilities, joined to prudent, just, fir, and temperate conduct, can very seldom fail of success ... Men in the inferior and middling stations of life, besides, can never be great enough to be above the law, which must generally overawe them into some sort of respect for, at least, the more important rules of justice. The success of such people, too, almost always depends upon the favour and good opinion of their neighbours and equals ... In such situations, therefore, we may generally expect a considerable degree of virtue; and, fortunately for the good morals of society, these are the situations of by far the greater part of mankind.'

Again, Smith reveals that sympathy tolerates interest as well as actions concerning others; and the operation of interest and the ends which are produced through this reinforce also the constant thesis of the theoretical writers that men do not achieve the philosophical through conscious or planned action or thought. However irrational men's fancies may be, it is equally unreasonable to expect them to base their actions always on philosophical thought, since this will generally involve a conscious reasoning process as opposed to the more automatic quality of self-interest. It is absurd to hope to change the manner in which men think, completely and thoroughly, especially

1. MS, pp. 86-87.
since much of the irrational is the means by which man progresses; man is motivated by many factors, and while self-interest may nearly always be genuine interest, it is quite possible that none of the factors which happen to be the immediate cause of this may appear at all rational. Here, therefore, we must always distinguish between that which appears chimerical, and that which may have some good resulting from it and which may therefore be conducive to man's progress. There is a particular end, after all, in the love which man has for position and respect and if there is no truth in the belief that a man of superior class has greater security than a poor one, assuming the latter has certain fundamental needs, we are still impelled to act as though this were not so:

'Of such mighty importance does it appear to be, in the imaginations of men, to stand in that situation which sets them most in the view of general sympathy and attention. And thus, place ... is the end of half the labours of human life; and is the cause of all the tumult and bustle, all the rapine and injustice, which avarice and ambition have introduced into this world.' 1

Nonetheless, although certain aspects of such processes may be detrimental, this is mainly so only because they are unchecked; however lacking in rationality, the behaviour of men in this manner is perfectly sound in economic principles. The constant demand for goods and place encourage men to be virtuous while at the same time it makes possible those commodities which establish power among the largest possible number. The principle itself then, can hardly be seen as wrong.

1. MS, p. 80.
It is important to remember, Smith indicates, that however much things may appear wrong to us, it is perhaps a greater wrong to seek a balance for society along planned principles which do not take into account both the inexplicable nature of some actions, and the gradual and slow change which is necessary for that prized stability. The actions of those who had considerable power but paid little attention to the natural rhythms of the system in which they lived he considered as irresponsible, because disruptive of that which represented the real gains of men. Furthermore, they were, in the long run, unnecessary; the natural capacity of man to adapt and to better himself is often sufficient to overcome the inequities and injustices of life, and does so in a natural manner. The power of self-interest is so strong that in many cases it will overcome the immediate disadvantages of particular faults - as it must have done for us to have a present at all - and will generally be able to carry man on through his most difficult times:

'The uniform, constant, and uninterrupted effort of every man to better his condition, the principles from which public and national, as well as private opulence is originally derived, is frequently powerful enough to maintain the natural progress of things towards improvement, in spite both of the extravagance of government, and of the greatest errors of administration.'

Again, this reveals the importance to Smith's theory of the capacity of the natural process to tolerate many factors which did not normally come under the older ideas of virtue, but which did possess the essential meaning of the

1. WN, I, p. 364; see also I, p. 367.
virtu of the Machiavellian/Harringtonian tradition, that of public benefit through a wide variety of means, and, as far as the commonwealth writers were concerned, without either conscious or self-denying action\(^1\).

In his study of the sympathetic process in man, Smith indicated that it was sympathy also which suggested the extent of the actual limitations on man's actions, just as it had determined the means by which we continue the divisions in society and the economic advance. If we are permitted by interest to act for ourselves, we are also necessarily limited in this process by an awareness of the social prohibitions on carrying this to excess, a series of inhibitions which have come about through gradual social development and which have the effect of ascertaining particular economic benefits. Our desire of being accepted by our fellows leads us to limit the excesses of our own interests, so that our need for interaction with others, produced by sympathy itself, helps to produce justice:

'Though it may be true, therefore, that every individual, in his own breast, naturally prefers himself to all mankind, yet he dares not look mankind in the face, and avow that he acts according to this principle ... When he views himself in the light in which he is conscious that others will view him, he sees that to them he is but one of the multitude, in no respect better than any other in it. If he would act so as that the impartial spectator may enter into the principles of his conduct, which is what of all things he has the greatest desire to do, he must upon this, as upon all other occasions, humble the arrogance of his self-love, and bring it down to something which other men can go along with.' \(^2\)

While these limitations might appear to be interest, therefore, they are specifically related to our relationship

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1. See Appendix B.
2. MS, p. 120
with others in society and are not, like interest and prudence, directly concerned with the self. They arise not so much from conscious utilitarian thought but from the need to protect the various rights which man possesses, in his life, in his property and in his social contracts:

'The most sacred laws of justice, therefore, those whose violation seems to call loudest for vengeance and punishment, are the laws which guard the life and person of our neighbour; the next are those which guard his property and possessions; and last of all come those which guard what are called his personal rights, or what is due to him from the promises of others.'

Justice, it is to be noted, does not refer to our actual feelings for others, but our actions towards them, even though the principle upon which justice operates, in part at least, is the feeling of resentment. It is through this feeling that we are motivated to gain revenge on those who have wronged us and it is apparent in Smith's theory that this principle is a natural and certainly a very useful one. While the unsocial passions in particular therefore, have of necessity to be moderated in order to gain sympathy, and this in itself is a beneficial lessening of passions, it is also apparent that we must in fact experience such feelings. Resentment, like interest, is a necessary part of man, and is an entirely valid response, and it is always an integral part of the proposition of the dominance of interest - that a man may run as hard as he please - that 'if he should justle or throw down any of

1. MS, p. 121.
2. Ibid., p. 114: 'The violation of justice is injury: it does real and positive hurt to some particular persons, from motives which are naturally disapproved of'.
them, the indulgence of the spectators is entirely at an end.\footnote{MS, p. 120.} The injured party feels resentment, and society will support him in this feeling: if we are to regain our fellow-feeling with men, then, we must always limit our interest to that which is provided by the law.

As in all other expressions of human response, therefore, we are guided not by the philosophical awareness of end, but of the response which society itself demands. Furthermore, it is true to say that this response is in fact demanded and that, heterogeneously, man creates justice which is of considerable benefit to the stability of the society and hence to the individual himself:

'The moment that injury begins, the moment that mutual resentment and animosity take place, all the bands ... are broken assunder, and the different members of which society consisted, are, as it were, dissipated and scattered abroad by the violence and opposition of their discordant affections ...

Justice is the main pillar that upholds the whole edifice. If it is removed, the great, the immense fabric of human society, that fabric which, to raise and support, seems, in this world, if I may say so, to have been the particular and darling care of nature, must in a moment crumble into atoms.' \footnote{MS, p. 249. Millar, Hist. View, IV, pp. 245-246, 255-256, 274.}

Justice, therefore, is a precise science, and one which we can enforce because of its precision, as we must enforce because of its importance to man. Here, again, Smith, and other theoretical writers, stress that while benevolence is useful, its absence can be tolerated, while the absence of justice will mean the destruction of the society itself. They also indicate in their study of justice that while it is vital it can never be seen to repre-
sent 'equity', or any law which is not appropriate to, or the result of, the existing social circumstances. It is always the laws of man, and never the laws of nature or of what might be the best and most perfect response to individual situation. This particular assessment further reinforces the basic theoretical position, that it is not the individual expression which concerns us, but the general one, that which is necessarily produced by the whole society.

While it is true, then, that the society itself and its situation produces the variations in benevolence in a general sense, it is to the more fundamental manifestations of the social feeling that we must turn if we are to find that which is steady and productive of a modicum of security. It must necessarily embody not the isolated and the conscious denial of self which benevolence itself in extreme instances may do, but the ordinary and usual expression of limitation of interest, and desire for sympathetic interchange. It is only through the inculcation of justice, therefore, that we can establish a particular standard on which we can depend, and it is this which provides for that stability which is of such benefit to society. Duty, the expression of response which we may not actually feel, and justice, are the very mainstay of the civil system:

'It may perhaps be affirmed with reason, that, from prudent and well-directed interpositions of that nature, more diffusive benefit is likely to arise, both to the public and to individuals, than from the warmest occasional ebullitions of tender-hearted and thoughtless generosity. This, at least, is indisputable, that mere generosity without the punctual observance of the rules of justice, is of less consequence to the prosperity
and good order of society, than the latter, though without any considerable share of the former.'

Thus, the ordinary actions of man are not thereby defined as 'virtuous' because 'virtue is excellence, something uncommonly great and beautiful, which rises far above what is vulgar and ordinary'. But at the same time, there is a distinction made between being virtuous in this sense, and practising the various virtues such as those of prudence and justice. Here Smith is distinguishing between the usual and the greater amount of response or appropriate action to situations, and not stating that the virtues of human society are in effect those of traditional concepts of morality. His praise for the most virtuous man:

'who joins, to the most perfect command of his own original and selfish feelings, the most exquisite sensibility both to the original and sympathetic feelings of others. The man who, to all the soft, the amiable, and the gentle virtues, joins all the great, the awful, and the respectable.'

is certainly sincere, and yet at the same time he is aware that this level of behaviour, of sympathetic interchange, is not the norm. It is vastly to the benefit of society if all men acted as the most virtuous did, although if this were the case, we should perhaps be obliged to find a new definition of virtuousness. And we may see at the same time, that prudence, or the most appropriate response that the normal man can give, is also of benefit to soc-

2. Ibid., p. 28.
3. Ibid., p. 214.
iety; so that while the prudent man may not gain approba-
tion or admiration because of the ordinariness of his ac-
tions, it is noticeable that these are nonetheless of con-
siderable public benefit, and support the theoretical be-
lief in the value of the ordinary and steady. Self-command
especially, the moderation of feelings, the steady 'sacri-
ficing the ease and enjoyment of the moment for the probable
expectation of the still greater ease and enjoyment of a
more distant but more lasting period of time', are the
qualities of the prudent man, and those which, in the ad-
vanced society at least, always gain the full approval both
of the spectator and the conscience. These achieve par-
ticular benefit perhaps because they are constant and steady,
and therefore contribute more to society than the isolated
actions of the great individuals:

'the sets a much better example than has frequent-
ly been done by men of much more splendid talents
and virtues - who in all ages, from that of So-
crates and Aristippus down to that of Dr. Swift
and Voltaire, and from that of Philip and Alex-
ander the Great down to that of the great Czar
Peter of Muscovy, have too often distinguished
themselves by the most improper and even insolent
contempt of all the ordinary decorums of life and
conversation, and who have thereby set the most
pernicious example to those who wish to resemble
them, and who too often content themselves with
imitating their follies without even attempting
to attain their perfections.'

Again, Smith reinforces the theoretical belief in the empha-
sis of the whole, and the regular, not the sporadic on which
we can base little; the achievements of society are to be
measured through the norm, and not through those expressions

1. MS, p. 314.
2. Ibid., pp. 313-314.
of interest which may achieve little that is concrete. Individual concerns may be the mark of the early stages of society, but these ought to be something which in the later stages have little long-term effect.

It is noticeable also that justice must necessarily vary with the changing circumstances of man as it always expresses the level of any individual society. Thus, to some degree, that which is seen as 'equity' in one age may eventually become an integral part of social opinion and, later, of the laws of justice itself. Yet, as indicated above, this introduction of new ideas must have necessarily been absorbed gradually, and these must express the feelings of the society itself, and not that of a small group of men. Therefore they no longer possess the characteristic of equity which is something above the norm. Unless justice has these qualities, also, it cannot be related in any sense to the sympathetic process, which demands a response from others, a general level represented by the spectator, and which secures 'justice' particularly because of our desire to gain the respect of our fellow men. We must always guard against those 'writers of jurisprudence'\(^1\), therefore, whose concern with the older sense of 'morality' as something above man which he must attain by extraordinary effort, blinds them to the fact that not only is 'justice' itself distinct from benevolence, but also that it is never gained by any considerable process of conscious or self-denying action. It may involve some limitation of self and some con-

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sideration of others, yet this is in a sense spontaneous and related to the forces of natural reactions of men. At the same time, it does not mean that men go outside of themselves or of what they can afford, because justice is never 'what a good man, from the utmost propriety of feelings and scruples of conscience would be disposed to do', but what 'an upright judge would compel him to perform'. We become aware of what justice comprises through our social processes, through our conscience, through the spectator, through sympathy, and our desire to gain the approval of others; and in no instance do any of these demand more than that which is developed by the social system in which we live.

The concept of human nature which Smith in particular developed stresses especially that man is a social being and thus his standards develop both within a social framework and without his being aware of the process by which his actions achieve greater ends than those he himself intended. The heterogeneous process is spontaneous and is such that it utilises all the variety of human feelings and passions in order to lead men towards a stable and more 'philosophical' society; and the theoretical writers accept a far wider range of causal factors as the basis of the evolution of society than do the general philosophical authors, at the same time as they accept that such factors are rarely rational or consciously 'benevolent' or utilitarian. Their thesis maintains that great changes occur not only unintended, but as a result of human interest, that the means by which society

expresses its sentiments remain uniform throughout time, that change in sentiments is not individualistic and hence is not dependent upon the emergence of the great man or the occurrence of the accidental event.

Such a theory, it is apparent, differs noticeably from that of writers such as Voltaire, who did not undertake to study human nature in such detail or to base its operation on such basic principles as the capacity to progress and the heterogeneity of ends; and it enables the theoretical writers to account for both past and present societies through general laws at the same time as it permits them to account for variations in the expression of passions and moral sentiments. Allied with the theory of the economic basis of social change, which is discussed in the following chapter, this concept of human nature goes far towards fulfilling the aim of the theoretical history to show the sequences and connections by which the experiences of man throughout time are linked together to form a whole.
CHAPTER III

THEORETICAL HISTORY II - THE INTERACTION OF PROPERTY
AND HUMAN NATURE

The second basic thesis of the theoretical philosophy was that man was endowed with certain propensities which needed only the right conditions in order to flourish and develop. This characteristic of the inherent capacity to progress, however, cannot be seen as an indication that the theoretical writers believed in innate qualities, for this is a concept which is contrary to their idea of the gradual development of man. While men are endowed with this capacity, and endowed also with the capacity to make social responses, these do not come into their true or full nature as far as the theoretical philosophy is concerned until man acts within his social setting and throughout historical time. As Smith points out, for example, such passions and principles as conscience, interest, and sympathy all depend on men interacting and responding to particular situations:

'Weare it possible that a human creature could grow up to manhood in some solitary place, without any communication with his own species, he could no more think of his own character, of the propriety or demerit of his own sentiments and conduct, of the beauty or deformity of his own mind, than of the beauty or deformity of his own face. All these are objects which he cannot easily see, which naturally he does not look at, and with regard to which he is provided with no mirror which can present them to his view. Bring him into society, and he is immediately provided with the mirror which he wanted before. It is placed in the countenance and behaviour of those he lives with ...'

1. MS, p. 162
Without the social process, without the development of men along general lines, there can be no true growth of the human being, and certainly at best a very limited expression of his true interest. The potential which we possess, therefore, is certainly dependent upon other factors; or, as Millar puts it, we are originally possessed of, or endowed with, only 'the seeds of improvement', which do not germinate spontaneously. It is only by 'long care and culture', by our being free from the pressures of both physical and social limitations, that these seeds are capable of being brought to maturity; it is only through action and social intercourse at any level that these qualities are expressed at all. They do not come into being full-grown, nor can they be said to exist until men act and react; they will always depend for their expression on the society in which we live, and they can never develop beyond this social level.

This thesis, which states further that only situation - political or profound economic limitations - can thwart man's natural inclination towards liberty, and that if left to himself his desire to truck, barter or trade will lead him to economic and hence social freedom, is based in part on the commonwealth correlation of property and power, on the relationship between economic independence and personal freedom. The theoretical interpretation of man's

2. Ibid., p. 290.
nature and the power of self-interest, however, goes far beyond the commonwealth concepts of the factors which influenced human actions, and leads the Scottish writers to relate the ideas of development of property extension and economic security to the actual emerging of the characteristic human qualities, and to show in detail the importance of property to social evolution and stability. The commonwealth interpretation rests on the more simple proposition that property determines form of state, and that necessity eliminates the individual. In the theoretical interpretation, on the other hand, there is a detailed study in all stages of development, in all types of society, of how the laws which are the basis of human nature prompted man to act and to achieve certain property situations which determine the extent of individualism and dependence in any society, and determine also the extent of the social qualities.1

This interpretation not only shows that property forms determine levels of human behaviour, but also indi-

1. Such study, which considers a much wider variety of social forms than does the commonwealth work, is made possible through the conjectural process, itself an integral part of the theoretical capacity to appreciate the past in its own terms (see above, pp. 16-17). This process was concisely summarised by Stewart in his examination of the development of forms of thought: 'We are under a necessity of supplying the place of fact by conjecture; and when we are unable to ascertain how men have actually conducted themselves upon particular occasions, of considering in what manner they are likely to have proceeded, from the principles of their nature, and the circumstances of their external situation.' (Stewart, Works, X, pp. 33-34). Conjecture is in effect used to supply the 'broken links' in our knowledge of man, to connect the parts in order to form a whole; possessing certain facts gained from observation, we work backwards from the known to what is unknown and attempt to fill in gaps in order to establish new points consonant with the general laws which we have established. See also pp. 340-348 below.
cates how the constant and regular factors that are the characteristics of men are in continual action, and lead gradually, and generally imperceptibly, to other forms of property possession. Hence this explanation emphasises not only 'moral' over physical causes, but also the continual operation of man's qualities, the constant change and adaptation to new forms of property - features which overall do distinguish it from the commonwealth work. The gaining of the necessaries of life and later the conveniences, permits a gradual unwinding, a slow maturing, of the capacities inherent in human nature; as the first are achieved, the second will follow. Men 'feel a gradual increase of their wants and are excited with fresh vigour and activity to search for the means of supplying them. The advancement of the more useful arts is followed by the cultivation of those which are subservient to pleasure and entertainment.'

If we consider that man, in changing, develops these propensities, and particularly if we accept that he is dependent on forms of subsistence and the security which these provide for the level of his achievements, then we must also accept that liberty or freedom to act as we ought, cannot really exist in the most primitive stages and that man's propensities are here limited. Such a view of the past does not necessarily deny the relativism which the theoretical writers attempted to introduce into their work but rather stresses that what they see as the most beneficial expressions of human nature (political, because of

1. See below, pp. 154-161.
economic, independence) take a considerable time to develop. The levels of justice, the degree of sympathy, and even the extent of benevolence must be impaired or affected by economic uncertainty. They do not exist in any 'absolute' or ideal form at any time, and certainly we cannot see the most refined expressions of such qualities at a time when society is either very individualistic or in considerable disorder:

'Many writers appear to take pleasure in remarking that, as the love of liberty is natural to man, it is to be found in the greatest perfection among barbarians, and is apt to be impaired according as people make progress in civilisation and in the arts of life. That mankind, in the state of mere savages, are in great measure unacquainted with government, and unaccustomed to any sort of constraint, is sufficiently evident. But their independence, in that case, is owing to the wretchedness of their circumstances, which afford nothing that can tempt any one man to become subject to another.' 1

The development of the useful and refined arts is a process which is achieved or made possible only upon the establishing of a security of subsistence, an element which is clearly lacking in the savage system: 'A savage finds so much difficulty, and is exposed to so many hardships in procuring even necessaries, that he has no leisure or encouragement to aim at the luxuries and conveniences of life' 2; both climate and his own inexperience will affect his economic security and thereby his levels of social interaction. The natural capacity which man has for sympathy or interaction with his fellows is necessarily affected by the level of social behaviour, and in the early stages of life sympathy is extremely inhibited in its de-

2. Ibid., p. 183.
velopment. Because of the lack of relationships between men in the earliest stages of society where individuals are concerned with showing their strength rather than admitting their weaknesses, the sympathetic process is here limited to the expression of what are known as the 'awful' virtues - self-denial, self-control, 'that command of the passions which subjects all the movements of our nature to what our dignity and honour, and the propriety of our own conduct, require.'\(^1\) Primitive man\(^2\) is only able to express certain sorts of sentiments because the type of life which he leads only calls forth certain capacities and qualities. His subsistence depends upon the availability of game, life itself depends upon skill and endurance, and death at the hands of enemies is meritorious only if great tortures are accepted with that fortitude\(^3\) which is a necessary part of everyday life:

'Every savage undergoes a sort of Spartan discipline, and, by the necessity of his situation, is inured to every sort of hardship. He is in continual danger: he is often exposed to the greatest extremities of hunger, and frequently

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2. The primitive societies on which the theoretical historians based most of their interpretation are primarily those of the German barbarians and the American Indians; these they saw as roughly similar, though not identical, the Germans being thought of as somewhat more advanced: see Robertson, Charles V, Works, V, p. 462 (Note VI). Major sources for the study of the German barbarians appear to be Caesar and Tacitus (ibid., pp. 458-462, Note VI). There was a considerable amount of printed material available on the American Indians, and Robertson sought to supplement this by correspondence with the most 'philosophical' of these authors such as de Pinto, Condamine, and Godin le Jeune (see America, Works, IV, pp. 531, 530-531, Notes XXXIV, XLIV, XLVI) particularly in the form of questionnaires: see, for instance, NLS MSS 3954, ff. 11-16, 17-20, 26-34. See also WN, I, p. 366.
3. Smith, MS, p. 297; 'fortitude' is a passive quality as opposed to 'courage' which is more active, and reflects the limited level of sympathy. See also Lectures, pp. 20-21.
dies of pure want. His circumstances not only habituate him to every sort of distress, but teach him to give way to none of the passions which that distress is apt to excite. He can expect from his countrymen no sympathy or indulgence for such weakness. 1

In such circumstances the form of sympathy that predominates is that where each individual brings his experiences and attitudes to the level of the society and is accepted only if he does this; the more amiable virtues are only brought out in a less repressive atmosphere. 'Before we can feel much for others, we must in some measure be at ease ourselves', Smith believed 2, and the extent of personal security in savage life was small. As a result, men were unable to 'cultivate the feelings of humanity' 3;

'Among civilized nations, the virtues which are founded upon humanity are more cultivated than those which are founded upon self-denial and the command of the passions. Among rude and barbarous nations it is quite otherwise - the virtues of self-denial are more cultivated than those of humanity.' 4

However much any of the more gentle feelings may be present or can even develop in such a system, these cannot be expressed 5. Their development is necessarily limited by social circumstances, and thus they cannot possibly provide the basis of justice or regular law in this system. Lack of indulgence towards others limits the sympathetic process itself and certain interactions, as well as the feelings on which these are based, that are seen as natural by other societies because they can afford them,

1. MS, p. 297.
2. Ibid.
5. Ibid., pp. 298, 300, 302.
are to the savage man both irrelevant and indulgent:

'The weakness of love, which is so much indulged in ages of humanity and politeness, is regarded among savages as the most unpardonable effeminacy. Even after the marriage, the two parties seem to be ashamed of a connection which is founded upon so sordid a necessity. They do not live together: they see one another by stealth only: they both continue to dwell in the houses of their respective fathers, and the open cohabitation of the two sexes, which is permitted without blame in all other countries, is here considered as the most indecent and unmanly sensuality.' 1

Such feelings, furthermore, will be seen in all situations. If there is no affection or respect for women, if the society is predominantly one of the male warrior, then it is apposite that the position of the female is proportionately low and in fact is really that of a slave. Marriage in this system is not so much based on sexual desire (which is inhibited and in any event irregular) 2 but on a need for security which is supplied by the family. 'By living at the head of a numerous family' men 'enjoy a degree of ease, respect, and security, of which they would otherwise be deprived, and have reason, in their old age, to expect the assistance and protection of their posterity.' 3 Although marriage exists, then, it is not one of equals; the wife is a servant, paid for and thought of as property, liable to punishment, even torture in some societies. 4

Such attitudes, however, are neither conscious nor indicative of 'cruelty' but are simply the products of

1. Smith, MS, p. 298.
2. Millar, Origin, p. 18-.
3. Ibid., p. 185.
4. Ibid., p. 197.
society. In a similar fashion we may also see that the position or standing of children in such systems is limited by the economic situation; the greater the difficulty in maintaining life, the more likely it is that whatever 'natural' affection a father may have for his children is thwarted and neglected as are all other emotions of this kind: 'how strongly soever a father may be disposed to promote the happiness of his children, this disposition, in the breast of a savage, is often counteracted by a regard to his own preservation, and smothered by the misery with which he is loaded.'

Savages are moved strongly, but by few things and these concern mainly the individual. They have 'no pursuits but such as were suggested by their most immediate wants', they are 'too little acquainted with the dictates of prudence and sober reflection, to be capable of restraining the irregular sallies of passion.'

Prudence and sober reflection are factors which are the prerogatives of the more civilised states, and the precarious means of subsistence that we see in the first stage of society means also that man's capacity or need for certain institutions is also limited. The absence of fixed goods or property in land, for instance, means that there is no need for the forms of government that we ourselves find necessary to protect established wealth, and which can only develop with a true awareness of property as fixed and personal. Scarcity of goods and general communal possession or usage of these goods which exist are characteristics of

the savage society that have a profound effect on its notions of law. What government there is is based on the authority of age or talents which is the first form of distinction among men and one eminently natural to this particular stage of growth.\(^1\)

In this suggestion the theoretical history emphasises how much 'government' is both a process natural to man and one which develops over a considerable period of time. That form which we see in the savage state, for instance, is clearly rudimentary, perhaps the extension of paternal authority\(^2\), and limited in its responsibilities and powers. It cannot be said to reveal any of the sophistication, any of the ideologies, any of the obviously defined rights and powers that later political theory would claim; while, at the same time, the very existence of these limitations indicates that men have always felt the need for control of some sort. Government and its various forms, therefore, are an expression of need, not the imposition of certain abstract concepts of rights that are seen to be timeless and external to man's situation\(^3\). Such rights are naturally relevant only to the society concerned and exist only insofar as they can be afforded. In the early stages of social life it is to be seen that men automatically and through need surrender small parts of their liberty to those with either superior strength or superior wisdom because this is part of the social process\(^4\).

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3. See below, Chapter VIII.
Indeed, any limitations on men in this stage through government, therefore, cannot be very broad in nature and must relate primarily to external matters rather than to those concerning the society itself. If there is no property to be protected, the laws, such as they are, must apply primarily to individuals. In both the savage and the barbarous society the control over individual members appears to be very limited and all punishment to be appropriate to this although obviously not such as to create what modern man thinks of as stability. For instance, murder which 'ought' to be punished always by death can often be compensated for by money, or through some lesser penalty; and other crimes against men and their freedom are permitted with little restraint. Such laws and customs, Smith believes, although they express the true nature of a precarious society, fall far short of that justice which we ourselves expect and, more importantly, of that which supports the natural course of things:

'In some countries, the rudeness and barbarism of the people hinder the natural sentiments of justice from arriving at that accuracy and precision which, in more civilized nations, they naturally attain to. Their laws are, like their manners, gross, and rude, and undistinguishing.'

The change from one form of society to another comes about spontaneously through interest and is expressed in a more developed attitude towards property and other institutions. In the earliest form of society there was no form of land-holding, and all labour, whether expended on hunting or on the caring for subsistence crops, was communal.

1. Lectures, p. 137.
2. MS, p. 502.
The uncertainty of livelihood and the fluctuation in its procurrence meant that stock or capital in goods could play little part in the savage life although it is to be noticed that even here the division of labour is to be found to some degree. While the description of any society at a particular stage may present a static appearance, therefore, we must always remember that man's capacity to progress, his ever-present self-interest, will provide the means by which this stage is eventually superseded by another. That society which is able to progress beyond the limitations of physical causes and to slowly develop its form of government, its level of social interaction, its means of gaining subsistence will eventually be transformed into another stage, such as one in which herding is the major means of subsistence.

This is not to say, though, that concepts of property are always changed immediately since many customs continue in force long beyond the time that they are fully appropriate to the society, for man's mind works slowly and the period of transition is a long one: 'the acquisition of wealth in herds and flocks, does not immediately give rise to the idea of property in land. The different families of a tribe are accustomed to feed their cattle promiscuously, and have no separate possession or enjoyment of ground employed for that purpose.' Thus the herding community is in effect still one large family, still, to some considerable extent, devoid of any sophisticated notions

of government because there is little need for these. Its members retain the love of virtually unrestricted freedom that characterises the savage state, and their forms of allegiance are personal rather than concerned with any developed concept of state's needs. There is, of course, some variation in behaviour between the two according to the extent to which the barbarians are aware of property as fixed, and yet the theoretical interpretation necessarily stresses also how much the general principles of the herding stage will mean a similarity in behaviour between one form of barbarianism and another. Thus Robertson, in examining the history of the German tribes who were eventually to establish the basic feudal system, saw some resemblance between these Germans and the American Indian; and the similarity between the informal yet strong connections of family or kin in the German tribes, and the Scottish highlanders' system of relationship did not go unnoticed. What could be learnt from contemporary societies as well as from reliable older accounts provided the basis of comparison and of the conclusions concerning the nature of particular stages of growth.

In these types of society, for instance, it was believed that the continuation of family or kinship ties necessarily limited the power of the form of government, and both institutions were created by the existence of moveable as opposed to stable or fixed property. While there were divisions within groups, therefore, each of these coalesced into a single unit and loyalty was given to a leader, sometimes continuously or on isolated occasions, as the individ-
ual chose. The centralisation which did exist, therefore, was that primarily created by the existence of heads of tribes or families, and was not based on the authority of a king: a situation which was to be repeated in the feudal process itself. The kinship system or the tribe provided for its members in such a fashion as to make other more formal institutions unnecessary. Benevolence, or regard for those with whom we have had habitual close contact, for instance, is not only clearly more developed in this stage than in the savage, but is also the means by which wrongs are righted and the micro-community ruled. Only later, with the development of justice as a more impersonal institution does this aspect of benevolence die out. The sympathetic process which has clearly made known the duties of the members of such a system can no longer express that which the society itself does not need.

The third stage of man's progress, in the theoretical interpretation, is that of agricultural production on a consistent level which leads to a more highly developed sense of the nature of property, that is, its being fixed and its being an individual possession:

'The improvement of agriculture, which in most parts of the world has been posterior to the art of taming and rearing cattle, is productive of very important alterations in the state of society ... it obliges men to fix their residence in the neighbourhood of that spot where their labour is chiefly to be employed, and thereby gives rise to property in land, the most valuable and permanent species of wealth.' 1

The communal form of property that we see in the barbaric herding stage and which is a vital part of the development

of man's sense of property, gradually gives way to individual possession, thereby leading to one of the most important stages in the evolution of man and his fundamental characteristics\(^1\). This is so because it is particularly through the concept of property in labour and in land that the major expressions of the laws of economic development are made possible. The freedom which we have as self-interested individuals to both act and to retain the fruits of our labour is the means by which security and hence social stability is made possible on a regular basis. The individual begins to exist or ought to only when his natural interest provides concrete dividends\(^2\).

'Every one', wrote Millar, 'is desirous of employing his own labour for his own advantage, and of having a separate possession which he may enjoy according to his own inclination'\(^3\); and it was only when man was free to do so that the relationship between freedom and economic benefit existed in any meaningful sense and the society prospered through the expression of interest. Labour is in fact the first form of property\(^4\), and as such must always meet with its proper return which is individual benefit. This is a necessary part of the rights of man whether these are original and personal or acquired and real. Both are natural in that they are vital to the proper and most beneficial organization of society even if those rights pertaining to

\(^1\) See Robertson, America, Works, IV, pp. 299, 339.
\(^2\) Origin, pp. 252-253.
\(^3\) Ibid., p. 252.
\(^4\) WN, I, p. 136.
physical freedom may be more obvious than those concerning property which do not develop until the idea of property itself exists.¹

These rights, furthermore, ought to be the inheritance of every man, not just of the few or of the powerful, for society consists of the many and not the few: 'To hurt in any degree the interest of any one order of citizens, for no other purpose but to promote that of some other, is evidently contrary to that justice and equality of treatment which the sovereign owes to all the different orders of his subjects.'² While sophisticated notions of rights and privileges may depend on the actual development of the philosophical society, therefore, the right of self-interest exists always; and while any given form of property may reflect very limited awareness of both personal and property rights and a rudimentary system of property holding, it is nonetheless true that the inhibition of man's natural return for labour will severely affect the actual production and morale of the worker³. The natural course of things is always predominant.

This dictum holds true for the feudal state as well as for the commercial system: 'In the inferior employments, the sweets of labour consist altogether in the recompence of labour. They who are Soonest in a position to enjoy the sweets of it, are likely Soonest to conceive a relish for

¹ Lectures, p. 8; see also William D. Grampp, Economic Liberalism (New York, 1965) II, pp. 21-22.
² WN, II, p. 171; see also ibid., p. 95.
it, and to acquire the early habit of industry.'

Any form of government which denies the worker his natural end thereby reduces his incentive and his interest in working. The natural spirit is dulled, and the inventiveness and interest which might have been produced is irretrievably lost, a process which we can see particularly in slavery both ancient and modern. The laws of economic relationships are always constant and the responses of the American and the Roman slave are fundamentally the same:

'A slave, who receives no wages in return for his labour, can never be supposed to exert much vigour or activity in the exercise of any employment. He obtains a livelihood at any rate; and by his utmost assiduity he is able to procure no more.'

We can also see the same situation, the theoretical writers believe, in the early stages of individual property holding in Europe where a similar monopoly of land by a few leads to the economic dependence of the many, a process in which both economic and personal rights are severely affected and many of the uncertainties of the earliest stages of life are reproduced. While actual form of subsistence may be more certain because of the concrete advances in agriculture and the stability of land possession, the dependence of the ordinary man on the will of his master necessarily inhibits his social responses. Having no security in his own livelihood, he is necessarily vulnerable to those who have stability. Dependence, as Harrington and the commonwealth writers emphasised, limited one's

1. WN, I, p. 137.
2. Ibid., p. 90; see also Millar, Origin, p. 320.
4. Origin, p. 299; see also pp. 302, 317.
freedom of behaviour, a thesis which the theoretical writers adopted and developed in terms of its effects on man's nature. The division of land in the feudal system into large areas controlled by the individual lord, the gradual control by him of all others and the dependence of the economy on the labour of the depressed classes, is, indeed, an entirely normal response, even a natural one given the economic and social development of the occupying society and the particular geographic conditions. Yet, at the same time, this particular expression of man's natural impulses, of interest as yet unrestrained by any advanced concept of justice, clearly interferes with interest, with the natural return of labour, with the usual correlation between work and benefit - at least so far as the labouring classes are concerned. In feudalism the 'most sacred and inviolable' form of property is violated as an integral part of the state's operation. Men are no longer free agents as they once were in the savage and barbarian societies; and yet, while subordination, differences in rank and wealth are a natural expression of development, the degree of subordination in feudalism not only fails to replace a natural freedom with a certain amount of stability but constantly reinforces the debilitating effects of economic and moral dependence:

'persons of low rank, have no opportunity of acquiring an affluent fortune, or of raising themselves to superior stations; and remaining for ages in a state of dependence, they naturally contract such dispositions and habits as are suited to their circumstances.'

If men are forced to work for others and are unable both to choose their own employment and to receive the fruits of this, this denial of the natural rights of men will have obvious effects on the actual productivity of the feudal state itself: 'if great improvements are seldom to be expected from great proprietors, they are least of all to be expected when they employ slaves for their workmen ... A person who can acquire no property, can have no other interest but to eat as much, and to labour as little as possible.' The division of land into large areas is economically unprofitable in that agriculture demands relatively small areas for the best form of cultivation, and demands also free labour. But not only did the feudal system itself destroy the usual return of labour, and the steady progress of agricultural improvement, it also interfered with the natural pattern of advance of economic pursuits which, in Smith's view at least, must mean that the arts of convenience are based on the economic strength of the arts of necessity:

"As subsistence is, in the nature of things, prior to convenience and luxury, so the industry which procures the former, must necessarily be prior to that which ministers to the latter. The cultivation and improvement of the country, therefore, which affords subsistence, must, necessarily, be prior to the increase of the town, which furnishes only the means of convenience and luxury." 2

This interference with the natural course of things affects all the institutions in the society, and limits the growth of men, not only in economic but also in social terms.

If we interpret the feudal system in light of the prin-

2. WN, I, p. 402.
principles which Smith laid down in *Moral Sentiments* it is obvious that there is only one form of morality in the state and it is one which is of general benefit to most of the lords and their families, but only to these. Thrift and prudence, insofar as they might be seen to exist in a system where men attempt to do little and to avoid much, bring no rewards, and the more obviously 'virtuous' system is clearly beneficial only in the commercial society. In feudalism it is the lord who is omnipotent, and who controls the lives not only of the serfs but also of those slightly above them; and such is the nature of man, Smith believes, that this system was one which pleased the lords' sense of superiority as well as providing the labour by which they lived: 'The pride of man makes him love to domineer, and nothing mortifies him so much as to be obliged to condescend to persuade his inferiors. Wherever the law allows it, and the nature of the work can afford it, therefore, he will generally prefer the service of slaves to that of freemen.' The morality of the feudal state is that which is concerned with the gaining of status and respect, and the maintaining of this through means which are not of particular benefit to the economic stability of the society as a whole. The particular nature of man which leads him to desire the respect of his peers, the particular expression of benevolence that concerns a strong interest for class and group position are clearly those which are most dominant here; and although we may assume some similar process of sympathy

1. See above, pp. 60-66.
in the lower classes, despite their situation, the conjectural process is not much used either by Smith or Millar to supplement our guesses: such sympathy, however, would presumably be limited by the depressed state of the working population.

If the lords as dominant members of the society are able to act as they please, they certainly will not need to moderate their feelings or actions in order to gain sympathy because the responses of the remainder of society are irrelevant. They can only be concerned with their own standing vis-a-vis their fellows, and hence any modification of the general chaos and instability can result only from changes in property as they are reflected in the sympathetic process. The form of government as it is, is concerned merely to conserve that power division which exists: 'Civil government, so far as it is instituted for the security of property, is in reality instituted for the defence of the rich against the poor, or of those who have some property against those who have none at all'; and the form of justice that results is that which is determined by the powerful.

While it might be said, then, that the kinship system which we see in feudalism provides certain securities for its members, it does so in terms which are formed by the nature of the situation. Justice is uncertain and individualistic, and those to whom it is applied have little say in its formation. Benevolence is what any society

1. WN, II, p. 236; see also Lectures, p. 15.
2. WN, I, pp. 435-436; similar types of institutions may also be seen in the allodial system: ibid., p. 435.
deems to be so and a relationship brought about by proximity does not necessarily lead to any expression of charity or moderation outside of that imposed by necessity: 'a tenant at will, who possesses land sufficient to maintain his family for little more than a quit-rent, is as dependent upon the proprietor as any servant or retainer whatever, and must obey him with as little reserve.' ¹ Justice, or the laws of society, based as they are on the division of land, will always support the lords' interests:

'Upon the authority which the great proprietors necessarily had in such a state of things over their tenants and retainers, was founded the power of the ancient barons. They necessarily became the judges in peace, and the leaders in war, of all who dwelt upon their estates. They could maintain order and execute the law within their respective demesnes, because each of them could there turn the whole force of all the inhabitants against the injustice of any one. No other person had sufficient authority to do this.' ²

Because of this the greater part of the information we receive concerning the effect of property divisions concerns mainly the upper classes of the feudal system. The condition of women, for instance, through the increase of security, must change from that uncertainty and inferiority which is natural to the savage system, and:

'is naturally improved by every circumstance which tends to create attention to the pleasures of sex, and to increase the value of those occupations which are suited to the female character; by the cultivation of the arts; by the advancement of opulence; by the gradual refinement of taste and manners.' ³

It is only when material security improves that we can expect the sentiments of men to change. For instance, as the

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1. WN, I, p. 435.
2. Ibid.
unfortunate lot of women in earlier systems resulted from the insecurity of subsistence, it is apparent that with the development of agriculture and the greater availability of food there will be a relaxation of the constant pressure to survive, and thus different attitudes towards marriage will emerge. This must be particularly true as far as the lord himself is concerned as he takes no active part in the procurement of subsistence: it is something which is owed to him. The greater personal freedom which some men acquire through this change provides the atmosphere for the unfolding of particular human qualities; and the violence and hatred natural to men are confined to those concerns outside of the domestic where they still continue to be necessary. Hence, in the upper classes we may note a freedom to 'obtain those pleasures to which they are prompted by their natural appetites.'

At the same time, however, these same feelings or passions are also limited by other expressions of the feudal system. The greater the opportunities and the fewer the inhibitions because of the form of subsistence, the greater also are the social restrictions on fulfilling these natural desires. Women become something to be cherished, not despised, and they gain greater status through being increasingly unavailable. Considerations of class, of inter-family disputes, all arising from property distinctions and the idea of property itself, mean a consequent deprivation as considerable in its effects as the restrict-

ions of the savage system: 'The introduction of wealth, and the distinction of ranks with which it is attended, must interrupt the communication of the sexes, and, in many cases, render it difficult for them to gratify their wishes.'\(^1\)

Such restraints, nonetheless, are of benefit; the sentiments of honour which mark feudal chivalry as well as also distinguishing private warfare, led to a respect, to a 'veneration' and an 'utmost purity of manners' which enhanced the value of those who were the objects of them\(^2\). In the feudal system some restraints of the feelings and passions are a reflection of the property basis.

While it is true that the lack of stock in the feudal system limited the capacity for growth\(^3\), and the feudal stage as a whole appears to be a destructive and inhibiting one, it is nonetheless to be established through observation that it itself is a stage in the human development which gives way to another, more sophisticated one, and that this change, expressed through another form of property distribution, is a further expression of the self-interest natural to man. The human process is one which is in constant action even though this may not be apparent at particular times within any one stage. At the same time as the great feudal lords dominate vast areas of land, the forces which will lead to the gradual breakdown of this are already beginning to move, imperceptibly perhaps but nonetheless steadily.

2. Ibid., p. 214.
This change, of course, is not an automatic process; if conditions had not existed that permitted European men to derive benefit from particular changes such as the crusades, the opening up of new trade routes, and so on, it is apparent that feudalism itself would have continued to dominate as long as the division of land remained the same; and it is to be seen in certain of the theoretical works that variations within particular societies are accounted for through the lack of such opportunities or through particular restrictions which limit change itself. On the whole, however, the theoretical concern is mainly with the usual or normal, with showing certain general trends that lead to the fourth stage of man's development.

This is not to deny, of course, that Smith especially is concerned to point out the particular factors characteristic of feudalism itself, as distinct from agricultural societies per se, that lead to deviations from the usual correlation between land and returns for labour. As a part of this investigation of the deviation from the natural course of things he points out that 'if human institutions had never thwarted those natural inclinations'¹, the relationship between town and country would never have been upset. Yet at the same time he indicates that the force of human interest will also be able to overcome such departures from the norm, and it is this process which he traces in some detail. The regeneration of commerce because of the crusades brought about the independence of the Italian

¹. WM, I, pp. 402-403.
cities at least\(^1\), and even those societies which were unable to participate in commerce to this extent nonetheless also developed independent cities that were a check to the power of the feudal lords. Interest unintentionally provides the correction to the distortions of the natural.

In the theoretical viewpoint, the development of commerce in the towns is of particular importance in that it creates a new form of property which is extended to a much wider proportion of the population than the feudal division of land allowed. While men may have been denied the natural rights of the fruits of their labour under the feudal system, those members of the society who have broken away from the land, who form the population of the towns and cities, who establish the trades and arts which provide the luxuries of life, achieve a form of independence through this property and are able to retain all the benefits of it. The division of labour is not possible in agriculture\(^2\), an occupation demanding merely a general knowledge; it is developed to a greater extent only within the arts and leads to a production of goods that maintains an opulence that permeates society. This, in turn, gives an increased security to the general population, thereby affecting their degree of emotional response\(^3\).

When the more natural freedom of man to act is restored,

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1. **WN**, I, pp. 418 ff; Hist. View, II, Chapters VII and VIII. This process was considered in some detail by Robertson in the View: Charles V, Works, V, pp. 65 ff. See below, Chapter VI.


therefore, the heterogeneous process is able to create more considerable benefits, and the laws of economic return are, at least theoretically, once more in operation. By far the most interesting aspect of this change, at least from the viewpoint of relating Moral Sentiments to the Wealth of Nations, is the manner in which the growing wealth of the towns led to the decline in the power of the aristocracy\(^1\). If the feudal lords were once remarkable for their spending within their income\(^2\), this was not the result of any automatic prudence or restraint - qualities which are part of the ordinary morality - but because the goods available were extremely limited. The lords, in accordance with the dictates of feudal policy, spent their wealth in such a manner as to retain their power, on their supporters or on the maintenance of their lands. When the manufactures of the city became available to them, however, they changed from this unconsciously prudent, self-preserving policy and did so because of their very nature. Their desire for the respect of their fellows, for status and position, led them to turn to the new means of demonstrating their wealth and this tendency became a characteristic of such classes. Never having been accustomed to the 'ordinary' virtues concomitant with working for one's livelihood, it was not extraordinary for them to continue their more frivolous life along lines that were to become as much a part of their customs as war and violence had been: 'To improve land with profit, like all other

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2. WN, I, pp. 410, 441.
'commercial projects, requires an exact attention to small savings and small gains, of which a man born to a great fortune, even though naturally frugal, is very seldom capable. The situation of such a person naturally disposes him to attend rather to ornament which pleases his fancy, than to profit for which he has so little occasion. The elegance of his dress, of his equipage, of his house, and household furniture, are objects which from his infancy he has been accustomed to have some anxiety about.' 1

This particular characteristic of the aristocracy led them to search for new capital, to be rid of former encumbrances and duties, even though these were in fact the basis of their long-term power. They began this process by disposing of limited rights and even possessions to those who had formerly been under their control, thereby breaking down that dependence which had had such deleterious effects on the development of man's qualities. The new independence of property possession 2, added to the improvements in agriculture which had taken place, meant a more beneficial operation of the land through the usual relationship of freedom and production 3; and the extension of this particular form of property to a greater number at the same time that a new form of property (goods) was achieving increasing importance, obviously meant a gradual change in the balance, because in the distribution, of property. The constant desire for status and for respect on the part of the lords, a process in which they were once able to indulge without detriment to themselves, was the very means in the emerging commercial state of their downfall. It was a change, above all, the theoretical writers emphasise,

1. WN, I, p. 410; see also II, p. 317. See above, pp.60-66.
3. Ibid., p. 383.
which did not result from plan or foresight, but simply from the combination of interest and the natural expression of benevolence appropriate to this class: 'what all the violence of the feudal institutions could never have effected, the silent and insensible operation of foreign commerce and manufactures gradually brought about.' Lacking that prudence which enables man to look forward, a prudence which is only developed in a society which has a tradition of constant self-control and limitation that is noticeably absent in the feudal state, the limited self-interest of the aristocracy provided the means by which it destroyed itself:

'A revolution of the greatest importance to the public happiness, was in this manner brought about by two different orders of people, who had not the least intention to serve the public. To gratify the most childish vanity was the sole motive of the great proprietors. The merchants and artificers, much less ridiculous, acted merely from a view to their own interest, and in pursuit of their own pedlar principle of turning a penny wherever a penny was to be got. Neither of them had any knowledge or foresight of that great revolution which the folly of the one, and the industry of the other, was gradually bringing about. It is thus that through the greater part of Europe the commerce and manufactures of the cities, instead of being the effect, have been the cause and occasion of the improvement and cultivation of the country. This order, however, being contrary to the natural course of things, is necessarily both slow and uncertain.'

The particular importance of this heterogeneous process is that it achieves the political, because it creates the economic, independence of a greater part of the population. As the theoretical writers point out in their study of the earlier ages of social growth, the degree of freedom

1. WN, I, p. 437.
given to the individual is the means by which his natural self-interest operates, providing that all other factors are equal; and it is noticeable in this interpretation that earlier ages have either had an excess of liberty, or an equal excess of the invasion of true liberty. Both of these limit the development of the society, preventing man from achieving that property on which his personal security and political freedom depends, and thereby limiting the extent to which he can afford the sentiments of humanity. The development of the arts and the possession of land by small property holders, however, necessarily changes this situation through making a measure of independence possible to all. The small landowner is his own master and is able to retain the fruits of his labour. The craftsman possesses property in his trade, and the nature of this is such that the success of his undertaking does not depend so much on the will of the customer because his customers are many and the effects of the will of one are limited. This situation differs from that of the limited feudal society in which the uncertain will of the single lord was the determining force that affected the whole of a man's life. 'Each tradesman or artificer derives his subsistence from the employment, not of one, but of a hundred or a thousand different customers. Though in some measure obliged to them all, therefore, he is not absolutely dependent upon any one of them.'

The breakdown of the feudal system is clearly of the

2. WN, I, p. 438; see also Origin, p. 295.
greatest importance in the theoretical history, for it is
the means by which human nature may come more into its own,
This spirit of liberty, which is natural to man, has been
engendered by the freeing of the mind from the insecurity
and dependence characteristic of feudalism; and is support-
ed by an extension of property to a greater number, prop¬
erty which transfers to other classes a proportionate share
in political power:

'It may in general be observed that, according
as men have made greater progress in commerce
and the arts, the establishment of domestic free-
dom is of greater importance; and that, in opu-
 lent and polished nations, its influence extends
to the great body of the people, who form the
principle part of a community, and whose comfort-
able situation ought never to be overlooked in
the provisions that are made for national happi-
ness and prosperity.' 1

The re-distribution of property arising through commerce
and through the actual changes in land-holding which com-
merce has caused indirectly, have meant that political power
and the nature of the government must change accordingly.
The original alliance with the king that the towns were
obliged to make, gradually gives way to a greater indepen-
dence and to the political power of these towns based on
their wealth 2. And their right to administer the finances
of the state, gained because they represent those who pro-
vide this money, grants to them a considerable authority,
at least in theory. The general pattern may indeed always
be upset by the particular history of a state 3, and the

1. Origin, p. 316.
2. WN, I, p. 424; Origin, pp. 313-314; Hist. View, II,
   pp. 199-205.
3. This variation is traced by Robertson particularly,
   104-163.
emergence of the democratical element is really only the beginning of the history of the modern state; nonetheless, it is a change which is of considerable importance to the development of man's nature.

The emphasis on the unintended or heterogeneous development of modern society is a vital part of the theoretical philosophy particularly because of the role of the unphilosophical in the emergence of what we call enlightened society, and because such an interpretation emphasises the role of interest in the creation and the maintenance of this society. As Smith had pointed out, the morality peculiar to the aristocracy was one which was not economically productive, especially because of the basis of the labour that worked the feudal estates. With the change in property form and holding, however, and in the nature of the government that was based on this, the rights of men were in part at least restored, and a more profitable form of morality was introduced. The merchant, for instance, whose wealth may enable him to buy property from one of the old feudal families, brings with him the qualities which are natural to his business pursuits and applies them to his management of land. He seeks not so much the ephemeral, as the lords did, the beautification of himself or his estate, but its profitable operation; and his interest is of benefit to the society as a whole:

'Merchants are commonly ambitious of becoming country gentlemen, and when they do, they are generally the best of all improvers. A merchant is accustomed to employ his money chiefly in

'profitable projects; whereas a mere country gentleman is accustomed to employ it chiefly in expense. The one often sees his money go from him and return to him again with a profit: the other, when once he parts with it, very seldom expects to see any more of it ... The habits of order, economy and attention, to which mercantile business naturally forms a merchant, render him much fitter to execute, with profit and success, any project of improvement.' 1

With the development of the arts and crafts, with the free ownership of land in the country, maintained by political power, there was an independence that permitted a level of economic production that was formerly impossible and made it easier for man to gain respect and status through possession of material goods. As Smith in particular has indicated, this is not to say that men become more abstractly or ideally 'virtuous' since the values of thrift and so on are related only to the economic advance of the individual and hence of the society. It is rather that the general level of behaviour which is necessary if the middle and lower classes are to advance is such that it heterogeneously produces particular social benefits through the necessary inculcation of prudence, hard work and self-control - qualities which we think of as 'virtues'. Here especially is the 'misguided' desire for status and place the main motive of human actions. Our wish to gain the respect and sympathy of our fellows, our constant desire to be in such a position as will lead man's natural identification with success to endow us with social approval, is the basis of our action. And it is a part of the natural order of things that the ordinary man cannot gain this approval in the manner which

1. WN, I, pp. 432-433.
the upper classes can. If he were so misguided as to attempt this, he would certainly be economically and also socially destroyed; thus it is only through the virtues which are natural to our particular situation that we may in fact attain position, the sympathy of our fellows, the approval of the impartial spectator, and, at the same time, increase the security of our society, a factor which leads to continuing, if unintended, developments. Once property is instituted on a rightful and natural basis, therefore, it will ordinarily lead to a constant increase in wealth and public benefit; a benefit which is achieved through many virtues that would not have been accepted by earlier writers but which is nonetheless real and solid in the view of the theoretical writers. Necessity, they feel, produces greater ends than benevolence.

This is a process which Smith traces in some detail in Wealth of Nations, as an integral part of his belief that the natural course of things will produce a society that is economically flourishing, and that any interference with this process will lead to a perversion of the relationship between freedom and the highest production. There is, he believes, a necessary relationship between the general industry and the capital which employs it and this should not be tampered with in order to favour one segment of the population, either concerning the trade between two or more nations or the domestic economy itself. If this is done there is a denial of the rights of man as severe as that which we have seen to exist in the feudal

system:

'Though ... a landed nation should be able to raise up artificers, manufacturers and merchants of its own, somewhat sooner than it could do by the freedom of trade; a matter, however, which is not a little doubtful; yet it would raise them up, if one may say so, prematurely, and before it was perfectly ripe for them.'

All gains and development ought to be natural and made in proportion to the capacities of the society as it is at any given period. A temporary advantage gained through forcing the rate of growth is not really an advantage at all if we look at it in the philosophical manner, from our awareness, through observation, of the laws which govern all of human society. As man ought to control his present desires for his future interest, so also should any state prevent the passing of laws which tend to upset the natural rhythm and to interfere with its real, steady, and appropriate gains: 'All systems either of preference or of restraint, therefore, being thus completely taken away, the obvious and simple system of natural liberty establishes itself of its own accord.'

The principle of self-interest, it is to be observed, will have an automatic levelling effect on industry within and without the state so that such regulations which are imposed through monopolies, bounties, commercial treaties or whatever, are not only detrimental to the rights of the many and a direct invasion of them, but, quite simply, are also unnecessary. What is good for one will be good for the society providing the true laws of justice exist:

1. WN, II, p. 193; see also ibid., pp. 113, 197.
2. Ibid., p. 208.
private interests and passions of individuals naturally dispose them to turn their stock towards the employments which in ordinary cases are most advantageous to the society. ¹ The same tendency leads man to invest his capital in the most advantageous manner and it will produce an appropriate return not only to himself but also to the population as a whole, a factor which applies also to ordinary labour. Economic 'laws' are valid in all cases:

'The whole of the advantages and disadvantages of the different employments of labour and stock must, in the same neighbourhood, be either perfectly equal or continually tending to equality. If in the same neighbourhood, there was any employment evidently either more or less advantageous than the rest, so many people would crowd into it in the one case, and so many would desert it in the other, that its advantages would soon return to the level of other employments. This at least would be the case, where there was perfect liberty, and where every man was perfectly free both to chuse what occupation he thought proper, and to change it as often as he thought proper.' ²

Similarly, in a society which has been allowed to proceed normally and in that which has made the necessary adjustments through the strength of self-interest, a man will invest his capital first in domestic industry and to his own profit; and in doing so, in advancing his own interest, he must necessarily advance that of the society in general:

'He generally, indeed, neither intends to promote the public interest, nor knows how much he is promoting it. By preferring the support of domestic to that of foreign industry, he intends only his own security; and by directing that interest in such a manner as its produce may be of the greatest value, he intends only his own gain, and he is in this, as in many other cases, led by an invisible hand to promote an end which was no part of his intention.' ⁴

'Wherever capital predominates, industry prevails: wherever revenue, idleness'; thus the productive use and continuance of capital must always advance the society, however automatically. The continuation of the virtue of self-love must encourage the inclination to act, to barter, and through this the division of labour is developed in order to produce those improvements which not only increase the goods of the commercial society but also tend to lower their price in relation to the income of any given labourer: 'It is the natural effect of improvement ... to diminish gradually the real price of almost all manufactures.'

The operation of the natural process of morality common to the ordinary man will mean both public benefit and the achievement of those goals which are dear to the heart of those who desire to be a part of society and to interact with their fellows.

We may also see that, in the theoretical philosophy, the development of commerce as a form of property has considerable effects on the domestic relationships of man, and enables the restrictions on the growth of the sentiments of humanity to be lifted. If men are affected in their family relationships, as well as in those with their fellows, by the repression of natural feelings, it is apparent that the freeing of them from the dependence on the will of others and the restoration of the natural rights will profoundly affect the extent to which they are free to treat their own dependants in a more generous manner.

If Smith has indicated that benevolence comes not so much from natural passions, but from prolonged close contact between particular groups of persons, it is also to be seen that this close contact can only produce what the general level of the society makes possible. If the process of sympathy is limited in its operation, if the concepts of justice are oppressive because of the feudal powers, for instance, if insecurity of position restricts the human responses, then benevolence in the earlier stages of development must necessarily be of a very limited type. It may extend to the identification of dominant groups (such as the nobility) with each other, it may also lead to the extension of favour and rights from the lord to all those who are a part of the kinship system, but it can hardly be seen to operate in the more 'unselfish' aspects. It is only when there is civil freedom, then, and men become individuals, that they are free to act as such, and only then that freedom is extended to all persons in proportion to the degree that situation makes this possible.

As both Smith and Millar indicate in some detail, the general situation of the society will determine the particular laws and customs that affect the role of both women and children, and also of servants. When government gives considerable powers to the husband, father, or master, either directly or because of its lack of control over individuals, those persons under the command of the individual father or master must be dependent on his will and on the favour of others for any moderation of this. If such moderation or intervention is not a part of the normal social
attitude then the position of such persons is little better than that of slaves. It is only with the breakdown of feudalism, the increase of security and the freedom from the arbitrary and capricious will of others that resulted from this, that a greater personal independence could be extended to all members of the community and this could be reflected in the attitude towards women and children. If the condition of women is improved by the greater freedom of the men and the certainty produced by self-interest operating with less restriction, then those freedoms allowed to the upper-class women of the feudal period can be extended to a greater number.

These freedoms, however, will necessarily be of a different kind in keeping with the vast changes in the nature of the state; chivalry, being the product of an earlier form of government, must eventually, if slowly, die out. The increasing importance of the merchant and trading class, to which the militaristic virtues were foreign, led gradually to a change in customs and to the development of those more appropriate to the new class. Security, mobility and independence meant the emergence of trust and peace within the family and in the relationships with others; 'the advancement of people in manufactures and commerce has a natural tendency to remove those circumstances which prevented the free intercourse of the sexes, and contributed to heighten and inflame their passions.'

1. Smith, Lectures, p. 94.
3. Ibid., pp. 218-219.
is in this society, then, that the talents which women do have, the qualities which are distinctively theirs, are valued; this situation marks a very clear distinction between this and earlier societies. In comparison especially with the savage society it is those qualities and talents which are peculiar to women which are respected, and while we may consider the nature of marriage in some earlier ages to have been 'imperfect', 'limited' and not 'fully established', we cannot say the same of the modern form. Because of man's nature, marriage must be something other than a master/servant relationship or a contract between a superior and an inferior; it must be rather a relationship between equals, Millar believes, and one in which the different qualities of the two partners are taken into consideration. Thus it is only in the commercial state which permits a greater emotional, because physical, security that a true appreciation of women as individuals can arise, that marriage can be wholly natural:

'In this situation, the women become, neither the slaves, nor the idols of the other sex, but the friends and companions. The wife obtains that rank and station which appears most agreeable to reason, being suited to her character and talents.'

We may also trace a similar attitude towards the position of children in the commercial society, the paternal authority being reduced within narrower bounds.

Children, Millar believes, have rights like all other mem-

2. Origin, p. 199.
3. Ibid., p. 219.
4. Lectures, p. 91.
bers of society and these rights must be observed. While parents may love their children automatically, while they may have a 'natural affection' and a 'humanity' in regard to them, this should not be exploited to the detriment of the child. As much as men in general have, or ought to have, a freedom from oppression from the sovereign, so also ought children to have the right to love and obey their parents with moderation. As has been indicated above, the situation of earlier societies necessarily had detrimental effects on the nature of the father/child relationship, those children who could not be supported being left to die, and the 'normal' feelings of parents being non-existent or impossible of fulfillment. Only when society is based on more solid principles do the harsh necessities of another stage give way to the 'natural'; the father in more tolerable circumstances is able to be 'himself', to fulfil his natural duties as a parent:

'By living in affluence and security, he is more at leisure to exert the social affections, and to cultivate those arts which tend to soften and humanize the temper. Being often engaged in the business and conversation of the world, and finding, in many cases, the necessity of conforming to the humours of those with whom he converses, he becomes less impatient of contradiction, and less apt to give way to the irregular sallies of passion. His parental affection, though not perhaps more violent, becomes at least more steady and uniform.'

If the feelings which developed in security were more natural than those which existed prior to this, Millar also

2. Ibid., p. 241.
3. Ibid., p. 243.
4. Ibid., p. 230.
5. Ibid., p. 316.
believes that we must also see as 'imperfect' those systems which demanded too great a respect, love and obedience from their children; hence, we must learn that the natural is the moderate, in this case at least. He concedes that it is natural that the earliest form of authority and power is derived from that respect which men give to the experience and knowledge which comes from or is associated with age, and it is natural also that this respect is extended to fathers. Yet it is an attitude which has often been exploited and this exploitation limits the development of the individual, in much the same manner, we may suppose, that the dependence of men in feudalism limits their own growth. Any laws which grant excessive power to parents, then, must be seen as an 'abuse' of the natural, and demand 'correction'. When the commercial society brings security and individuality, this independence will be recognised; and children will no longer need to depend on their parents either emotionally or materially:

'The children, at an early period of life, are obliged to leave their home, in order to be instructed in those trades and professions by which it is proposed they should earn a livelihood, and afterwards to settle in those parts of the country which they find convenient for prosecuting their several employments. By this alteration of circumstances they are emancipated from their father's authority. They are put in a condition to procure a maintenance without having recourse to his bounty, and by their own labour and industry are frequently possessed of opulent fortunes.'

Smith, whose opinions differ in some details from those of Millar, believes that the process of benevolence itself

1. Origin, pp. 230-231; see above, p. 87.
2. Ibid., p. 232.
3. Ibid., p. 241.
4. Ibid., p. 241.
is necessarily affected by the commercial society; so that, far from having too much authority over their children, for instance, modern parents are unconsciously permitting a situation in which the bonds that we have come to think of as natural are being gradually destroyed. The erosion of the ties between parents and children means that contact is maintained only through a rather cool, detached, and 'dutiful' response, and that if we wish to maintain the older, more traditional actions, we must move away from the tradition of educating our children away from their home:

'Do you wish to educate your children to be dutiful to their parents, to be kind and affectionate to their brothers and sisters? put them under necessity of being dutiful children, of being kind affectionate brothers and sisters: educate them in your own house.'

'Respect for you', he believes, 'must always impose a very useful restraint upon their conduct; and respect for them may frequently impose no useless restraint upon your own.'

In this way does Smith point out what is not always obvious in Millar's work, that the advances of the commercial society also bring many problems and can lead to a denial of the nature of things as effectively as earlier stages. Interest is a constant force, and the manner in which it is expressed, its reflection in sympathy and benevolence, for instance, may not always be that which we might wish.

It is typical of Smith's philosophy, and indeed, of the basis of all theoretical history, that the constant principles seen as motivating man's actions are believed to continue into a society where man's nature is more

1. MS, p. 236.
2. Ibid.
fully expressed, and to provide the basis of future change from this. As an integral part of this belief in the constancy of basic principle, there is the recognition that the same denial of the rights of others that we have seen to exist in earlier societies will be continued, and for much the same reasons. Even if the commercial system, the growth of democracy, the re-distribution of property, has meant an increase in the more humane sentiments, this is merely an expression of situation. More 'generous' sentiments are not the result of conscious or self-denying action but of processes which have developed unconsciously and as such have become a part of justice, of what society makes known through sympathy. They are not to be seen as benevolence or charity, upon which we cannot depend, but are formed into laws which we must obey.

Such sentiments, furthermore, do not end our original and most basic passions; the process of self-interest continues to operate though it is restrained by the system of justice that is appropriate to the commercial system. And, because Smith in particular accepts that this interest will often be unjust and that, at the same time we cannot control all expressions of injustice and discrimination, he emphasises in true philosophical fashion that we ought to become aware of the real interest of man which will both leave us free to express our natural desires, and benefit all of society because of the natural course of things. Such a philosophy, it would seem, is not by any means obvious even in the more enlightened society; and prudence is often overruled by the desire for immediate gain. An awareness of our real interest, then, will tend to support
existing justice or lead eventually to more philosophical forms of this.

In Wealth of Nations\(^1\) Smith studies in some detail the various systems of thought and attitudes of men which tend to upset the natural course of things and which are thereby an affront to the philosophical interpretation. Systems which tend to advance the few will necessarily deprive the many, he thought, and although he was tolerant of the Physiocratic theory in some respects\(^2\), he nonetheless was obliged to point out how it and all others like it failed to take into account all parts of the society, and concentrated only on some. Such attitudes, which were seen as more appropriate to earlier, less philosophical ages, did not form a whole that expressed the entirety of man's development. The Physiocratic denial of the benefits of the merchant and manufacturing classes, for instance, ignores the relationship of these to other sections of the community, and the necessary connection between the country and the towns\(^3\). Society must function through the self-interest of all segments so that no group is dependent on another, and revenue will increase naturally in proportion to the labour of all:

'It can never be the interest of the proprietors and cultivators to restrain or to discourage in any respect the industry of merchants, artificers and manufacturers. The greater the

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1. See especially Book IV, II, pp. 3-208.
2. Ibid., p. 189.
3. Although Smith does not explicitly say so, it may be that he is here condemning the physiocratic theory because it appears somewhat primitivistic, too much concerned with the emotional and ideological connotations of 'land' - thrift, hard work, etc.
'liberty which this unproductive class enjoys, the greater will be the competition in all the different trades which compose it, and the cheaper will the other two classes be supplied, both with foreign goods, and with the manufactured produce of their own country.' 1

The same interest not to oppress or interfere is also applicable to the merchants themselves, and that which they themselves seek should also be granted by them to others: a moral which is clearly denied by the theories of those such as the mercantilists and all others which emphasise excessive regulations of trade. In Smith's view, the basic nature of commerce or trade is that it should benefit both parties, not that one shall demand to benefit excessively to the disadvantage of the other. If this should be the case, then the whole will suffer. All philosophies which encourage interference, restriction, and force must deny the natural course of things2. To blockade in order to help a home industry, to buy expensive when buying cheap was possible, invades the proper correlation between industry and capital; to produce for ourselves what we could buy more cheaply elsewhere is a denial of the development of the division of labour3, and indicates a sort of mind which is not appropriate to the needs of commercial trading4.

Further, though we may concede that men naturally, and from benevolence, are opposed to the economic development of a neighbouring state5, we ought to at least

1. WN, II, pp. 189-190.
2. Ibid., I, pp. 515-516; II, p. 190.
3. Ibid., I, p. 480.
4. Ibid., pp. 518-519.
5. Ibid., p. 519.
remember that commerce 'ought naturally to be, among nations as among individuals, a bond of union and friendship'.

Thus, if we cannot hope to change the operation of the human mind we should avoid as much as possible any detrimental consequences of our natural feelings. The same disadvantageous results will come from all such limitations upon the natural flow of goods and services, from bounties, treaties, and so on, and while it may appear that such matters will affect only the few, it is in fact to be seen that in the long run the entire state is injured. Whether a foreign nation is given an advantage in order to encourage its own sales, or whether a nation's merchants are permitted to interfere with the rightful and appropriate flow, it is always the entire society which is affected, especially in the right of men to 'exchange the produce of their labour for what they please'. Not only, therefore, is the economic balance upset, but other factors of life also; to disturb the natural pattern is to disturb the natural operation of rights or freedoms. Man's liberty can be invaded as efficiently by a denial of the laissez-faire operation as if he had been wrongfully imprisoned.

In all disturbances of the natural order, then, there will be a denial of personal rights and also a denial of the true interests of those who perpetrate such invasions. Monopoly will slow down the growth rate, and while as a form of acquired right it may be defensible,

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1. WN, I, p. 519.
2. Ibid., II, p. 53; see also ibid., pp. 8, 10, 11, 159.
3. Lectures, p. 205.
it ought always to give way to the general good - but rarely does. If we have a right to a proper price based on labour, a monopoly will always destroy this: 'The riches of a country consist in the plenty and cheapness of provisions, but their effect is to make every thing dear.'¹

Such restrictions, moreover, affect especially those who can least afford to be limited in their purchasing powers; as it is also the working man who is most affected by the restrictions of institutions such as apprenticeships², or by such factors as the restriction of the free circulation of labour. The property which all men have in the capacity to work is the first form of property and one that ought to be inviolable.

Smith does not believe, however, that simply stating these facts will be sufficient in itself to bring about change. In the first place, of course, he believes that mankind has often progressed in spite of such institutions and regulations, and in the second he feels that we should not appeal to the generosity of those in power but rather to their self-interest. This is a principle integral to the development of the independent society: 'nobody but a beggar chuses to depend chiefly upon the benevolence of his fellow citizens.'³ Moreover, it is to be seen that interest and the inculcation of rights can be successfully combined; if, for instance, it is true that any commercial system depends on the labour of its working classes, then it is obviously in the interest of this society to maintain

1. Lectures, p. 130.
2. WN, I, p. 137.
3. Ibid., p. 18.
the welfare of such classes. A family that is properly cared for through its breadwinner receiving an adequate wage and other securities, not only ascertains the appropriate return for labour but also increases both the capital and the population of the state. The needs of men are simple but they ought always to be certain; when they are a situation is produced which is clearly advantageous to the whole: 'what improves the circumstances of the greater part can never be regarded as an inconvenience to the whole.'

No society can surely be flourishing and happy, of which the far greater part of the members are poor and miserable. It is but equity, besides, that they who feed, cloath, and lodge the whole body of the people, should have such a share of the produce of their own labour as to be themselves tolerably well-fed, cloathed and lodged.

Through a combination of interest and action, the heterogeneous and the deliberate, those benefits which ought to be developed by the commercial society, and which ought to be extended to all in this society, are more likely to become a solid part of the principles of the state. While accepting the constancy and uniformity of man's faults and imperfections, then, the theoretical history also believes that other expressions of man's nature will eventually lead to a more profitable and natural system, even if never a perfect one; and it believes also that while we should let the natural course of things act as it will - 'if a nation could not prosper without the enjoyment of a perfect liberty and perfect justice, there is

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1. WN, I, p. 89; see also Ibid., p. 88, and II, p. 78.
2. Ibid., I, p. 88.
3. Ibid.; see also Origin, pp. 317-321.
not in the world a nation which could ever have prospered — it also believes that interest itself becomes more philosophical and that, in the modern state there are, or ought to be, institutions which enforce this philosophical spirit. This is a view which is most fully developed in the theoretical consideration of the relationship between the constant principles of man's nature and the operation of government.

CHAPTER IV

THEORETICAL HISTORY III

THE MAINTENANCE OF THE PHILOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

The opinion of the theoretical writers concerning the role of government in life is necessarily dependent upon their general philosophy concerning the manner in which man achieves that which is most beneficial to him. As we have seen above, the Scottish interpretation is always limited by the philosophical basis that man is governed by constant laws; and because of this philosophy the emphasis in the study of any part of the human experience is always on that which is natural, which is achieved within the framework of man's situation and through his needs. Inherent in this belief, if not always expressed consciously, is a criticism of all theories which advocate the active and consistent interference by government in man's life, particularly of those ideas which seek to establish 'rights' and feelings which are not a natural expression of men at a particular stage, and seek also the precise observation of these as if men were amenable to continual and rational intervention. For the theoretical writers, the free operation of interest, the freedom of man to act in unphilosophical ways, to search constantly for place and the respect of his fellows, is the only principle of life, the only 'natural course of things', the only way in which balance, if it is to exist and be maintained, will come into being.

1. MS, pp. 263-264.
Furthermore, because of the constancy of the laws natural to human society, this general principle is true both of the domestic and the international balance of power. If the philosophical exists here it is as a result of the gradual development of men; and even the more philosophical society is maintained by those principles natural to man. If in the commercial society, for instance, we see that man is more moderate and humane, he is so because such principles are made a part of the laws of justice which control his actions; and moderation and humanity are continued through interest as they have developed through the heterogeneity of ends and the capacity of man to progress.

In the theoretical view, then, the role of government and the relationship between man and government must be considered in terms of these principles. As has been pointed out above, the factor which most affects the behaviour of men is the desire which they have to gain the approval of their fellows. Our desire to gain place, allied to the operation of benevolence which leads us to feel respect for those above us and to maintain our own privileges, is the basis of the attitude of men towards governmental actions and towards political change in general. These feelings are reflected in the two forms of morality which exist in the civil society, each of which is necessary for the maintenance of stability — even though the morality of the nobility may appear useless, the

1. See below, p. 201.
2. See above, Chapter II.
3. MS, pp. 73-74, 79-80.
parts are always inextricably a whole. As the ordinary man acts in a 'prudent', more traditionally 'virtuous' fashion in order to gain seemingly unphilosophical ends which are nonetheless useful, the more apparently self-interested actions of the aristocracy are also of value to the society. The principle of sympathy for, identification with, those who are above us in rank leads us both to feel much for our superiors\(^1\), and to have the greatest reluctance to act against them\(^2\); and it is not hope for personal benefit, nor a sense of the utility arising from such a situation that is the basis of our feeling. The great may despise us, in accordance with their own sense of superiority, yet it is not this attitude which makes the greatest impression on us: we continue to respond favourably to them as before. It requires a great amount of invasion, oppression and complete indifference to the 'rights' of the ordinary man by those above him before any response is made, and even this response may be painful to the citizen because of the fall from greatness which it involves\(^3\):

'Even when the order of society seems to require that we should oppose them, we can hardly bring ourselves to do it. That kings are the servants of the people, to be obeyed, resisted, deposed, or punished, as the public conveniency may require, is the doctrine of reason and philosophy; but it is not the doctrine of nature ... The strongest motives, the most furious passions, fear, hatred, and resentment, are scarce sufficient to balance this natural disposition to respect them: and their conduct must, either justly or unjustly, have excited the highest degree of all those passions, before the bulk of the people can be brought to

\(^1\) MS, pp. 73-76, 79-80.
\(^2\) Ibid., pp. 74-75.
\(^3\) Ibid., p. 79.
oppose them with violence, or to desire to see them either punished or deposed.'

Such sentiments, however unphilosophical they may be, are in fact the basis of the stability of government since they mean that change is likely to be prompted only when of the greatest necessity. Ordinarily, the division of ranks within society, the benevolence which makes each member of a particular group seek to support the interest of his own, as well as the respect which we have for those above us, are the most stabilising factors in the civil society. The existence of individual or group interest may be thought of as a challenge to the welfare of the whole, but this is so only if we think in 'rational' terms; in reality, this 'unjust' feeling of partiality is not only natural to men in this stage of development but it has a much more philosophical end than we might have thought:

'This partiality ... checks the spirit of innovation. It tends to preserve whatever is the established balance among the different orders and societies into which the state is divided; and while it sometimes appears to obstruct some alterations of government which may be fashionable and popular at the time, it contributes in reality to the stability and permanency of the whole system.'

For Smith, the stability of the state is of major importance and this belief affects the whole of his political philosophy. Benevolence, he feels, is ordinarily sufficient for us both to love our country and to wish for its benefit, and both of these feelings can ordinarily

1. MS, p. 74.
2. Ibid., p. 339.
3. Ibid.
be accommodated by the usual manner in which we express our interest. But on those very rare occasions when it may seem necessary to change the government we must be more careful as to the real nature of our interests, and ascertain whether, under the guise of a truly enlightened public spirit or desire for the welfare of others, men are not attempting to put forward their own very limited pleas for reformation. Smith, it is to be noticed, does not deny the necessity for change, even of planned and conscious change; it is rather that he denies the supposition that claims of others to be working wholly on the behalf of men in general can be taken wholly at face value. Ordinarily, then, we may not need to evaluate our political system consciously and rationally; but it is to be expected that we take advantage of the natural and unplanned philosophical or rational attitudes that have become a part of our mores in order to benefit ourselves:

'in such cases ... it often requires, perhaps, the highest effort of political wisdom to determine when a real patriot ought to support and endeavour to re-establish the authority of the old system, and when he ought to give way to the more daring, but often dangerous, spirit of innovation.'

This particular expression of benevolence - love of country and the desire to be a good citizen - clearly demands some action and some careful consideration of issues; but this is not to say that the introduction of a more

1. MS, pp. 265-266.
2. Ibid., p. 341; 'a certain spirit of system is apt to mix itself with that public spirit which is founded upon the love of humanity'. See also ibid., p. 266 for Smith's opinion on the meaning of public spirit.
3. Ibid., p. 340.
conscious or rational element means that this form of benevolence must be distinguished from other, earlier expressions of this quality. Such action and consideration is still based on interest, on an awareness created by the philosophical society of our real benefits and of the falseness of those doctrines which claim to be able to change all 'wrongs' at one time. If we do accept the need for change, we do so from a more philosophical interest.

This emphasis of the theoretical writers on the general, on the natural, and on the relationship of the parts to the whole is an integral part of their attitude towards government; and because of this they necessarily go far beyond the theories of earlier schools which limit the types of change which the society can absorb. The theoretical historians' study of the development of man has led them to believe that it is through the extension of property to all that greater developments of human nature have come about, and thus that commerce itself cannot be

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1. MS, p. 341. See also Lectures, p. 31. The theoretical position here was summarised by Stewart in his study of the changing patterns of European thought: 'In enlightened ages ... there cannot be a doubt, that political wisdom comes in for its share in the administration of human affairs; and there is reasonable ground for hoping, that its influence will continue to increase, in proportion as the principles of legislation are more generally studied and understood. To suppose the contrary, would reduce us to be mere spectators of the progress and decline of society, and put an end to every species of patriotic exertion.' (Works, I, pp. 191-192. See also ibid., pp. 491-492, and his Lectures on Political Economy, New York, 1968, hereafter cited Lectures, I, p. 48).
seen as necessarily detrimental to man. Furthermore, they also show that in the commercial society the operations of the human mind remain similar, so that if any question of corruption occurs, it must be both recognised and dealt with in a manner appropriate to the age. Because of this we may see that while the theoretical history has certainly learnt much from the commonwealth works, it also goes beyond these to find commerce beneficial and to find also that the correction of the abuses of the commercial system can be achieved with a limited amount of action. The nature of man tends to develop solutions along with changes, whether these be automatic or demand a more conscious expression of the philosophical spirit.

In his consideration of the operation of the modern commercial society Smith concentrated particularly on the limitations of political power and on the invasions of rights which resulted from the discrepancy between apparent and real interest. For the theoretical writers, the evolution of the modern system and the growth of science and philosophy, particularly in the more modern ages, necessarily affected the concepts of law and of 'justice' which governed men, these changes being reflected through

1. See, for instance, Stewart, Lectures, I, p. 35: 'it was the general diffusion of wealth among the lower orders of men which first gave birth to the spirit of independence in Modern Europe, and which has produced under some of its governments ... a more equal diffusion of freedom and of happiness than took place under the most celebrated constitutions of antiquity'. See also Hume, 'Of Commerce', Essays, pp. 259-274.

2. For a brief examination of the commonwealth philosophy, see below, Appendix B.

the sympathetic process. The actual extent of the philosophical nature of society, therefore, is not in itself a denial either of the heterogeneous process (since there is always an awareness of the unintended and natural factors which produced such changes) or of the limitations of benevolence or generosity in human society. The philosophical spirit that does exist has both grown gradually and become a normal part of the human response to situations: we are not motivated consciously by the more rational, this being simply a part of our virtu\(^1\) or of the means by which we maintain the political benefit:

'Philosophy has been constantly advancing in all the departments of science; has been employed in reducing all the works of art, all the appearances of nature, to their principles; and has not neglected to push her researches into political as well as other branches of speculation. The mysteries of government have been more and more unveiled and the circumstances which contribute to the perfection of the social order have been laid open.' \(^2\)

This growth of man is the result of the heterogeneous process, the capacity of man to progress, of the force of the quality of self-interest, which are all expressed in economic terms. The freedom of man in his possession of property has enabled him to expand his mind sufficiently in order to be aware of the dangers of society that he was once completely vulnerable to, at the same time as it has, generally speaking, provided the means by which he and his representatives can maintain their freedom. The spread of wealth and related factors such as the division of labour leads Millar to believe that 'we cannot entertain a doubt

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1. See below, pp. 526-529.
2. Millar, Hist. View, IV, pp. 304-305; see also III, pp. 149-150, 231.
'of their powerful efficacy to propagate corresponding sentiments, of personal independence, and to instil higher notions of general liberty', the truth of which statement he illustrated by the philosophical rejection of the Stewarts by the greater part of the Scots in both 1715 and 1745. Our financial independence which is produced by our possession of property in land, labour, or goods enables us to both develop our minds towards a more philosophical appreciation of life, and to enforce the conclusions which we have reached from this natural philosophical process.

While there is some dependence left in the society, then, particularly among labourers, the greater part of the members of the commercial state is both free and enabled to act together in order to check invasions of liberties. In the view of Millar particularly the traditional basis of political power, property or superior qualities, is supported by man's natural respect for wealth and known as authority. This authority is an expression of an automatic process, of the natural operation of the human mind, and, free from any other limitations imposed by the rights of men, is the foundation of the Tory political theory. Utility, on the other hand, or the scien-

2. Ibid., III, p. 7.
3. Ibid., pp. 114-115, 116-127; see also IV, pp. 128, 137: 'The voice of the mercantile interest never fails to command the attention of government, and when firm and unanimous, is even able to control and direct the deliberations of the national councils.'
4. Ibid., p. 289.
tific examination of the actual basis of much political ideology (and thus, to some degree, the basis of the Whig philosophy) is a natural expression of the more philosophical society, and reflects our capacity to judge independently of the pressures of others. It is more likely, therefore, that utility is the predominating influence in the modern commercial government: 'the diffusion of knowledge tends more and more to encourage and bring forward the principle of utility in all political discussions.'

This is not indeed to say that the philosophical society has become totally practical and is always conscious of the manner in which it acts; 'authority', Millar believes, like Smith, always has a place. It is rather that authority remains the factor that limits 'the rash and visionary projects' that influence men in the modern as well as in older societies, while utility gradually becomes a part of the attitudes of the whole, and thus of the nature of government. The combination of the two is generally of considerable benefit to all, so long as neither element gains the public imagination, so long, in short, as we neither consistently attack every apparent wrong, nor submit ourselves to tyranny and oppression:

'In reality, men, when they come into society, are bound to preserve the natural rights of one another; and, consequently, to establish a government conducive to that end. Good government is necessary to prevent robbery, murder, and oppression; and if a man be supposed to have promised, that he would support or obey a government of an opposite tendency, it would be his

2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
'duty to break such an illegal compact, and to reform such an unjust constitution.' 1

The more philosophical society necessarily differs in several respects from earlier societies and these differences are believed by the theoretical writers to be expressed in all aspects of government. The contents of our moral sentiments naturally change with our situation, and it is a vital part of the philosophical basis of theoretical history that we become aware of this. It is also necessary, particularly as regards the question of conscious behaviour, that we continually relate the natural, heterogeneous development of the philosophical elements in society to the attitudes which the theoretical historians hold concerning duties and responsibilities within the state; and not to think that actions which they see as resulting from an entirely unthinking and spontaneous division of power are an indication of their belief in conscious and genuinely dis-interested action for the benefit of the whole. While the contents of the moral sentiments, of what we think and feel about our fellows may have changed, the means by which we interact, gain the respect of others, and promote our own interest, remain constant. In this at least the theoretical philosophy is able to indicate that all our 'utilitarian' actions are simply a continuation of our usual responses and do not demand a cessation of interest or an increase in benevolence. Virtu, then, or the qualities which maintain society, is in constant evolution, and is always existing; it does not necessarily

1. *Hist. View*, IV, p. 301; this attitude is also to be seen in Hume's essays, 'Of the Original Contract' and 'Of Passive Obedience'. 
disappear with the change in the balance of property\(^1\).

To some degree Smith's interpretation of the modern society is an answer to the problems of some commonwealth writers concerning corruption and invasion of rights, in that the generally philosophical situation which he sees as existing means that unintended events have overcome these very drawbacks of which earlier writers spoke. He has also indicated that if men cannot ordinarily deal with the limitations of their rights, they ought either to accept this, or to see that their failure is an expression of a natural inability to overcome certain factors:

>'In the greatest public as well as private disasters, a wise man ought to consider that he himself, his friends and countrymen, have only been ordered upon the forlorn station of the universe; that had it not been necessary for the good of the whole, they would not have been so ordered; and that it is their duty, not only with humble resignation to submit to this allotment, but to endeavour to embrace it with alacrity and joy.'\(^2\)

Yet he does also consider that in the modern society at least there are, or ought to be, some legal limitations of detrimental effects, and that any existing limitations have evolved through the political division of power and ought to be a part of the executive authority. The restoring of the natural course of things, therefore, through the development of commerce, does not preclude the existence of natural checks on continuing interested actions of men. Indeed, it is an integral part of the 'system of natural liberty'\(^3\) that the executive possess certain duties

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1. See below, Appendix B.
2. MS, p. 347. See also ibid., p. 502.
which are to be carried out on a regular basis and not through erratic benevolence.

While Smith to some degree suggests a state in which the king was limited by the philosophical nature of society and obliged from the same factor to act for the public benefit, thereby apparently dismissing the problems of the commonwealth writers, he does also show some awareness of the problem of corruption. The difference, however, between commonwealth and theoretical writing and ideas is to be seen especially in the manner in which virtu is to be restored, and the relationship between this virtu and the nature of the society itself. For Smith, virtu is the appropriate expression of the moral sentiments, and it is vital that this be restored if it has been upset or overbalanced by the property situation or by man's lack of control:

'In some cases the state of the society necessarily places the greater part of individuals in such situations as naturally form in them, without any attention of government, almost all the abilities and virtues which that state requires, or perhaps can admit of. In other cases the state of the society does not place the greater part of individuals in such situations, and some attention of government is necessary in order to prevent the almost entire corruption and degeneracy of the great body of the people.'

While it may be that the heterogeneous process will

1. WN, II, p. 208; that the king's actions were to be seen as duty is evident from the fact that he was to be paid: ibid., p. 338.
2. Smith does not use this term as such, but it is clear that the proper operations of the moral sentiments are an expression of what earlier writers called virtu.
eventually solve these problems, perhaps if only through the inevitable decline of the state\textsuperscript{1}, it is apparent that Smith believes we must also act as our situation or our more philosophical awareness both permits and directs us to.

Smith's basic position on this issue of the adverse effects of the commercial society, and that of Millar also\textsuperscript{2}, is that man is affected in the active operation of his mind by the debilitating effects of the division of labour, the same factor that has contributed also to the emergence of his real freedoms:

'In the progress of the division of labour, the employment of the far greater part of those who live by labour, that is, of the great body of the people, comes to be confined to a few very simple operations; frequently to one or two. But the understandings of the greater part of men are necessarily formed by their ordinary employments. The man whose whole life is spent in performing a few simple operations, of which the effects too are, perhaps, always the same, or very nearly the same, has no occasion to exert his understanding, or to exercise his invention in finding out expedients for removing difficulties which never occur. He naturally loses, therefore, the habit of such exertion, and generally becomes as stupid and ignorant as it is possible for a human creature to become. The torpor of his mind renders him, not only incapable of relishing or bearing a part in any rational conversation, but of conceiving any generous, noble, or tender sentiment, and consequently of forming any just judgment concerning many even of the ordinary duties of private life. Of the great and extensive interests of his country he is altogether incapable of judging; and unless very particular pains have been taken to render him otherwise, he is equally incapable of defending his country in war. The uniformity of his stationary life naturally corrupts the courage of his mind, and makes him regard with abhorrence the irregular, uncertain,

\textsuperscript{1} Lectures, p. 32
\textsuperscript{2} See also Ferguson, Essay, pp. 214-218; and E. G. West, 'The Political Economy of Alienation: Karl Marx and Adam Smith', OE\textsuperscript{2}, n.s. 21 (1969) pp. 1-23.
'and adventurous life of a soldier. It corrupts even the activity of his body, and renders him incapable of exerting his strength with vigour and perseverance ...' 1

While Millar obviously shares Smith's view on the basic effects of the alienation of the moral sentiments, it is apparent that Smith goes much beyond Millar in his relating the effects of this division of labour on the mind and body to the usual principles which affect the manner in which man acts and is a member of a society. He emphasizes again that man acts through a desire to gain the respect of his fellows, that he achieves his knowledge of the world through the sympathetic process when he points out how we are limited in our understanding and judgment by the narrowing of our horizons: 'happiness and misery, which reside altogether in the mind, must necessarily depend more upon the healthful or unhealthful, the mutilated or entire state of the mind, than upon that of the body.' 2

In the first place, the 'mental mutilation, deformity, and wretchedness' which besets us must necessarily limit our justified self-interest, our major concern to look out for ourselves without which the whole cannot prosper; and without which, indeed, we cannot develop any sense of, or interaction with, others. If we lack the normal responses of revenging or defending ourselves 3, for instance, we are denying the qualities which are a vital part of the social process. Certainly we gain none of that sympathy on which we ordinarily depend. This

1. WN, II, pp. 302-303; see also Hist. View, IV, pp. 145-146, 151-152, 159-160, 186-188.
2. WN, II, p. 308.
3. Ibid.; see also pp. 46-47 above.
ennervation or corruption of our sentiments, therefore, must clearly be detrimental to the society as a whole, quite apart from the effect which it has on the individual. Through sympathy, through ascertaining the social norms, we not only gain approval or disapproval and express this to others, but we also gain knowledge of the ordinary levels of behaviour which affect the position and spirit of the state. Here especially does the true meaning of Smith's concern with the martial spirit become obvious\(^1\), since if we are deprived of approbation and disapproval we are also deprived of the expression of benevolence. We can neither feel much for others, nor can we feel the particular expression of benevolence which naturally leads us to both love our country and wish to defend it\(^2\). If we do not naturally possess such feelings, then, the interest of the society demands that they be created by other means\(^3\).

The existence of a martial spirit, of a desire to act for the welfare of the state both against foreigners and, if necessary, against a standing army, is the means by which Smith believes the problems of the modern army are to be met. And, in relation to the commonwealth problems of the 'militia', the 'standing army' and so on, Smith's consideration of the necessary relation between situation and change is of particular importance to our understanding of the manner in which he overcame the problems posed by the commonwealth philosophy. He states specifically

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that possession of the martial spirit is vital to the commercial society - 'the security of every society must always depend, more or less, upon the martial spirit of the great body of the people' - and at the same time he shows in considerable detail the former relationships between social level and military capacity\(^1\) which existed in other societies and were extended, without much effort (because of the political/economic situation) to the greater part of the inhabitants\(^2\). The conclusions which he draws from this study are both that 'the virtue of courage appears, in all the nations of modern Europe, to have declined in proportion to their advancement in commerce and manufactures\(^3\), and that it would be against the natural rhythm of the commercial society to re-introduce the militia in which all citizens were soldiers rather than craftsmen. In this indeed both Smith and Millar challenge the commonwealth belief in the concept of the militia as being necessary at all times - although such a theory itself is a product of an age in which commerce was not dominant.

In the theoretical viewpoint the force most suited to the modern society is that of the standing army - a term which for them has no automatic meaning of repression - and the militia is seen as 'adverse to the spirit of the times'\(^4\).

The modern system of warfare demands obedience to superiors and familiarity with one's equipment\(^5\), both factors which

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1. WN, II, pp. 303-304.
2. Ibid., pp. 307-308.
3. Hist. View, IV, p. 188.
4. Ibid.
5. WN, II, p. 222; obedience, presumably, may be reinforced by benevolence or our respect for those above us.
cannot easily be provided by the militia. It also demands a professional spirit and competency, and this can be maintained only by the standing or professional army even when it is rarely actively employed in battle.\textsuperscript{1}

Smith also argues against the commonwealth insistence on the importance of the militia when he suggests that a standing army will be as beneficial to the interests of the state as the older form would, particularly in its abilities to meet the pressures which develop in opulent nations.\textsuperscript{2} When there exists a military force which is led by the king and served by the nobility and gentry as officers there is no corruption.\textsuperscript{3} The interests of the principal members of the society are clearly to maintain that society. This presumably is so because a balanced state does exist, and to this extent there is no real conflict between Smith's idea and that of the commonwealth writers; it is rather that the latter were concerned to show that this balance did not exist, and that a nobility without land, and a court in search of power would necessarily act against the interests of the other property-holding members of society.

While Smith concedes the validity of such concerns 'wherever the interest of the general and that of the principal officers are not necessarily connected with the support of the constitution of the state',\textsuperscript{4} he is more interested to show that there are other dangers and that in

\begin{enumerate}
\item WN, II, p. 228.
\item Ibid.
\item Ibid., p. 229.
\item Ibid.
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these situations society benefits by having a strong and efficient army. This can be used to support the established powers against 'every popular discontent', to be, in other words, 'favourable to liberty'. The responsible must be protected from the irrational elements. In this respect the ordinary soldier appears to play only that role which is allotted to him, fighting for the propertied against those who have no such material goods; he is not, as in the commonwealth, fighting for his own and thereby the public benefit, he is fighting as a soldier and not as a citizen. This is entirely appropriate to an age in which men are primarily employed in professions other than that of citizen, a situation which reflects circumstances that the commonwealth theories had not thought possible - that the greater part of the population could pursue its own interests and leave its defence to a professional army.

By such arguments Smith may indeed avoid some of the problems which the commonwealth writers faced, but he nonetheless does establish the modern military system on necessity and thereby does away with the less philosophical belief that the institutions of a society should remain fixed and unchanging. At the same time, however, his own feelings concerning the necessary revival of the martial spirit for those who are presumably no part of the

2. For instance, he does believe that the standing army can successfully incorporate many of the features of the militia and implies that balance and (perhaps) proper moral sentiments of the people will prevent corruption and misuse of this force. See below, pp. 529-530.
professional army demand a close examination. The lack of operation of the moral sentiments in society, he believes, cannot be changed completely by the actions or thought of those who are free since the power of individuals is necessarily limited\(^1\). The spirit itself ought to be restored and men enabled to regain their social feelings; and to some degree he believes that education itself, by exercising the mind, is conducive to the restoration of the sense of self, and thereby to the more normal operation of the senses and the moral processes, a restoration which is of benefit to the state:

'The more they are instructed, the less liable they are to the delusions of enthusiasm and superstition, which, among ignorant nations, frequently occasion the most dreadful disorders. An instructed and intelligent people besides, are always more decent and orderly than an ignorant and stupid one. They feel themselves, each individually, more respectable, and more likely to obtain the respect of their lawful superiors, and they are therefore more disposed to respect those superiors.'\(^2\)

This process of re-education and of restoring the qualities natural to man is also strengthened, in Smith's belief, by the possession of a martial spirit. If a man lacks this, if he is cowardly, then his mind is prevented from expressing those natural sentiments which are vital to him. The renewal of the spirit, therefore, serves the same end as education, in making the ordinary working man a part of society. Smith also believes that it is necessary for men to be able to express their natural patriotism and their benevolence towards their country; for, though this feeling is ordinarily evident in our attitude towards other states and those with whom we may trade\(^3\), there are occas-

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1. *WN*, II, p. 304. However, see below, pp. 150-152.
ions when it may need to be expressed more concretely. If so, then the martial spirit is not extraneous in the state which has a professional army. It may be of use both in supporting this body, and in providing some defence against it if it should be used against the national interests. In such situations an active spirit is an expression of interest and benevolence. In this argument there is certainly no lack of correlation between situation and the sentiments which are natural to man, and in this respect Smith's ideas are consonant with his general philosophy. The only unanswered question is that concerning the means by which this martial spirit is to be restored, and Smith is not explicit on this, perhaps implying that education will also fulfil this purpose.

While we may see in the work of Millar a greater interest in the specifically commonwealth problems of corruption - the standing army, the lack of ministerial responsibility, and so on - it is also evident that his opinion of the operation of government in the modern state goes beyond this. 'We are not ... to dream of perfection in any human workmanship', he believes, and it is evident that he feels it to be a part of the natural course of things not only that there be change but that imperfection is a part of man and his society. Because of this Millar feels that we can have neither an immortal commonwealth nor a balance of power that will prevent such changes.

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3. Ibid., pp. 94-95.
Corruption, in some sense, will always be with us and will not necessarily be eradicated by the constitution, by a separation of powers, or by balance through conflict. We must accept the present and the future, and accept also that man himself will adapt to, and overcome, many of the modern forms of imperfection and injustice.

It is here particularly that the belief of both Smith and Millar in the increasingly philosophical nature of society is of importance as a part of their capacity to accept what social change brings, and here also that the importance of their theories concerning education and the duties of executive power is to be found. As situation affects the nature of earlier constitutions, so also will it affect the means by which current problems are to be dealt with; and the influence of interest, the actions for the king by the ministers within the houses of parliament, and the extension of influence to a great part of the political body is not necessarily disastrous to 'freedom' but can be balanced gradually and naturally. While we may be affected by interest, this, in Millar's opinion does not limit our capacity to act. Our situation in the commercial society is not precisely the same as it was in the earlier systems, for there is both a greater amount of political power and of independence among the commercial class and among others in the society. While dependence is not eradicated by the extension of property to a greater number, therefore, it is of a much milder kind, not one in which man loses his whole sense of being, nor one in which
he is wholly at the mercy of another: \textsuperscript{1} 'the circumstances of a country, highly advanced in commerce and manufactures, are such as, naturally, and without any interposition of government, have a tendency to moderate those great differences of fortune, which, in a rude age, are usually the source of tyranny and oppression.' \textsuperscript{2}

Furthermore, Millar believes, we are so firmly entrenched in our concerns and in the expression of our interest that we are not likely to surrender the benefit of this to the state if the oppression of government becomes obvious to us; this is so because the commercial society is a close one and has the capacity to unite when necessary: 'As the inhabitants multiply from the facility of procuring subsistence, they are collected in large bodies for the convenient exercise of their employments.' \textsuperscript{3} As far as the merchant class is concerned, then, it has not, like the labouring population, lost its capacity to defend itself and its interest; it is rather that this capacity is rarely expressed because there are few reasons for calling it into play:

'If the oppression of government should be carried so far as to aim at the destruction of property, the mercantile people would, probably, be the first to burst the bands of fear, and be actuated by a desperate valour in defence of those objects to which they are so immoderately attached. The effect of great commercial opulence, therefore, is to produce caution and long-suffering under the hand of power, but to ensure ultimately a vigorous opposition to such acts of tyranny as are manifestly subversive of

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\item \textsuperscript{1} Hist. View, IV, pp. 128-129.
\item \textsuperscript{2} Ibid.;
\item \textsuperscript{3} Ibid., pp. 134-135;
\end{itemize}
'the fundamental rights of mankind. This, in reality, seems to point at the due medium of that submission which men owe to their political governors: for nothing is more inconsistent with the happiness of society, than the frequent recurrence of the people to resistance upon slight and trivial grievances; and when there is a real necessity to resist the usurpation of the sovereign, he commonly pulls off the mask in sufficient time to give warning to his subjects, that they may be fully justified for uniting in defence of their privileges.'

While Millar may not be particularly involved with questions of the corruption of the moral sentiments, then, he does reveal in this passage especially how much the constant principle of interest will maintain that which has been achieved, and how much the commercial society necessarily produces defences against corruption that are appropriate to itself. Furthermore, he is sufficiently a disciple of Smith to also support the theory of the need for educating those groups whose capacities have been so severely limited by the division of labour as to impede their ability to act as full members of their society — hence his combination of both interest and the enlightened or philosophical to explain the maintenance of that which has been achieved.

This emphasis on interest in the theoretical work, particularly on real as opposed to apparent interest, is not only an argument which goes much beyond the commonwealth theories, but is also one which reinforces the theoretical historians' belief that all the expressions of human society are appropriate to the level of economic

2. Ibid., pp. 158-160, 309.
security. While it is true that there are many problems in the commercial society, then, it is true also that men have the capacity to overcome many of these and to help maintain a social structure which is seen to have a satisfying role for a greater number. The whole of society is brought within one body in order to benefit equally from the advances which have been made. Those who have been able to express their interest and their moral sentiments without much hindrance use their interest to benefit themselves, and this also benefits others. The spread of philosophical opinions or actions resulting from this freedom will, or ought to, lead to the institutionalisation of those duties by which the more repressed are enabled to develop the moral sentiments necessary for the fuller expression of human nature.

It is natural, then, for men to correct abuses, to attempt to remedy defects in the moral sentiments. Nevertheless, it is also natural that the present society will give way to another, and that we neither can nor should attempt to change this process: 'A fated dissolution ... awaits every state and constitution whatever.' Such change is inevitable because of the unintended effects of our actions, because of man's capacity for change. The principles which have been the basis of human action in past societies will also be the cause of future evolution and progress; and all the parts of human experience are thereby united into a whole. This inevitability men must

1. Smith, Lectures, p. 32
accept and accommodate themselves to; to do so indeed, is to be eminently philosophical, to truly understand the laws which make the human experience of any age a part of universal human nature.
The general theoretical principles of the heterogeneity of ends and of the capacity of men to progress qualitatively through economic change, are the basis of this whole historical philosophy and of the entire theoretical interpretation of the general and particular past of mankind. The understanding of the operation of the human mind, the expression of the two basic laws in economic and thence social terms, and the concurrent denial of the rational or planned nature of change (except when this is a natural part of society) permit the theoretical historians to stress that non-philosophical factors are the predominant causal elements in their philosophy, and that the 'scientific' observation of past and present human societies enables the historian to establish an interpretation which emphasises the impersonal and the unintended.

In particular, the peculiar force of these laws that provide the basis of the theoretical interpretation results from the fact that they tend to eliminate the isolated factors, the individualism and the greater dependence on fortune which are characteristics of the type of philosophical history written by Voltaire. The general patterns of human development which are produced by the varying economic situation of each society, the overwhelming importance of situation to the ripening of human potential, and the theoretical exphasis on the long-term and the unplanned, means that theories of 'accident', of the importance of individuals and of such factors as climate and geography play a very limited role in this historical philosophy.
Though there is some indication in certain of the theoretical works that older ideas of the role of climate continue\(^1\), there is in general a greater concentration on the manner in which men overcome the effects of temperature extremes. The theoretical interpretation does make some concessions as to the effect of physical factors when men are likely to be vulnerable to these, but finds the influence of them to decline in proportion to the extent to which man controls life in general. Dependence on the unpredictable elements of life necessarily predominates when man does not gain his subsistence on a regular basis; as soon as he progresses beyond such an elementary stage, and can establish greater personal security and self-sufficiency, the extent of his subordination to the physical world declines.

It is true, indeed, that particular types of climate will limit men through encouraging disease, through causing vegetation which is difficult to clear, thus preventing emergence of agriculture\(^2\); and the major importance of climate in the earliest form of human society lies in the fact that this element itself often determines the rate of human growth. Climatic factors, then, are really most important in the first ages of man: 'The talents of civilized


2. Ibid., p. 361.
'men are continually exerted in rendering their own condition more comfortable ... But the improvident savage is affected by every circumstance peculiar to his situation.¹ Yet, even in the most primitive stages, we cannot see that climate is the sole causal factor²; thus, though it is true that a cold climate may help develop man through making it necessary for him to develop his qualities in order to survive in a harsh landscape³, moral qualities also enter into our assessment of men in torrid zones⁴. The fact is that variations in society, especially in the more developed institutions characteristic of later stages of development, result from more sophisticated and more complicated factors; men are more profoundly affected by the institutions which have been created in the past at the same time as they achieve a greater stability because of their dependence on such elements as trade and agriculture.

If physical factors do continue to have a place in human society, this can only be a limited one, according to the theoretical writers. Climate as cause is indirect or secondary, and while it may have been the original cause of the emergence of a particular type of social structure, it is no longer the main causal factor, always being limited by 'moral' qualities - human ideas and institutions. In short, as man develops and becomes more involved with, and dependent on, moral causes, the physical basis of society is of less importance: the moral factors lead to the

2. Ibid., p. 362.
3. Ibid., p. 271.
4. Ibid., p. 362.
formation of institutions and customs which have a continuing life of their own. 'Geography', for instance, becomes 'property' in the particular theoretical sense of the term, and this concept itself involves complex social and economic relationships which preclude dependence on anything so variable as climate. Moreover, knowledge and experience in themselves, given physical situations which are not entirely inhibiting, can often achieve considerable ends, so that the members of a more advanced society will apply their inherited skills and enjoy a more productive life than those men of an earlier stage of development who live in the same area.\textsuperscript{1}

Another indication of the lessening importance of physical factors is that while the indirect and secondary influence may continue, men are no longer vulnerable to the adverse effects of this; what might once have been a major causal element gradually becomes no more than a temporary effect when the most dominating circumstances of life are the form of state and the effect of past traditions and customs. This is seen, for instance, even in the theoretical interpretation of particular events as in Robertson's history of European power struggles in the first half of the sixteenth century. While certain climatic curiosities might occur, and may have some effect

\textsuperscript{1} See, for instance, Robertson, America, Works, III, p. 254: 'If another direction were given to the active powers of man in the New World, and his force augmented by exercise, he might acquire a degree of vigour which he does not in his present state possess. The truth of this is confirmed by experience.'
on a particular situation, they do not necessarily have
the capacity to entirely reverse the history of nations:
men are more liable to recover from the unexpected because
they have an established background to fall back on.  

The same restrictions which apply to the role of cli-
mate are also to be applied to that of geography. While
we can see in the theoretical history, as well as in works
such as Spirit of the Laws, that the older correlations be-
tween size of state and form of government continues, this
is by no means a relationship dependent only on physical
factors. First, actual size of any society depends to a
considerable degree on human elements since the state it-
self only comes into being with men. Secondly, these
physical factors have no value in themselves and must be
related to the form of the particular society occupying
the land: there must, in fact, be an interrelationship be-
tween the physical and the moral factors. Thus, for in-
stance, there is a belief that a large area of land, occu-
pied by men at a barbarous level, will generally develop
into a feudal society: large tracts generally mean separate
states and independent rulers, yet this is so only when the
social level is such as to tolerate social interaction, per-
sonal loyalty and the particular means of subsistence ne-
cessary to maintain the feudal state. While the theoreti-
cal belief in common forms of government resulting from
common forms of landholding is necessarily an integral part
of the theoretical philosophy, then, this emphasis on land-

2. See, for instance, Millar, Origin, p. 292.
holding goes far beyond geographic factors: it also includes the moral. Similar large areas inhabited by a savage society, for instance, which is still primarily concerned with the individual and which depends on hunting and fishing for subsistence, do not in themselves produce any form of government of the type that we associate with the feudal state. This being lacking, the two situations are necessarily separated by moral factors. In a like manner we can also see that a small number of people, who are at a civil stage of society, and who live in a relatively narrow territory, are protected because of this by a centralised form of government, itself resulting from the interaction between physical and moral factors. This combination of elements means that they do not develop feudalism, but live under another form of government altogether. ¹ It is observable then, that while mountains may mean freedom, and flat countries result in despotism, this is so not because of any vague, romantic reasons, but because of the influence of the moral on the physical. And, in any event, geography itself does not necessarily form the state even in man's first efforts towards development.

It is also obvious that the national spirit, or the particular social level of any system, is much more vital than actual geographic factors in themselves, since the former is an expression of man's growth and of his capacity to act for himself. As Robertson suggests in America, the actual existence of particular geographic features such

as rivers and good ports is of considerable potential benefit to those states which possess them¹. Yet the key word here is 'potential', for such factors in themselves mean nothing; they do not, for instance, bring about the change from overland to marine commerce which was to have such an effect on human society. The theoretical history is fundamentally concerned, as is philosophical history in general, with the history of the human mind, with that which has led man to be able to make use of these natural facilities. The geographic features are permanent in that they are always in existence; it is not these continuing factors which explain change, therefore, but the changing human process, the advance of man's capacities. This is particularly clearly revealed by Robertson in his summary of the advance in the mind of the European man especially, in America, in Charles V and to some extent in India also. The interaction of the physical and the moral may have helped ascertain particular developments by particular societies in matters such as trade etc., yet these advances in themselves were totally dependent for their actual origins on the desires of men.

As Smith and Millar in particular reveal in their study of the basis of human society, it is the operation of the human mind, the desire to improve one's lot, the irrational and yet productive (because of the heterogeneous process) elements which affect men that are the most basic causal factors in society even though these may be in some degree originally limited by physical factors. Thus, as

¹ America, Works, III, pp. 216-217.
Robertson, for instance, indicates in Charles V, conditions which are abstractly ideal for trade and commerce are of little benefit to men as such. The advance of the English in this particular field was always dependent not only on the moral factors that advanced the society to the commercial stage itself, but also on those moral factors that underlie any political system. While man may continue to be affected by irrational elements, therefore, it is apparent that these will have effect only because they are moral, and the results which they do bring are of a type vastly different from the isolated, limited and obvious results of climate and land formation. The theoretical historians moved away from the obscure and constantly sought to establish the more certain and less sporadic as the basis of the variation and constancy that was human progress, a position which was summarised precisely Millar when he wrote that:

'in the history of the world, we see no regular marks of that secret influence which has been ascribed to the air and climate, but, on the contrary, may commonly explain the great differences in the manners and customs of mankind from other causes, the existence of which is capable of being more clearly ascertained.' 2

Because of the theoretical dependence on general levels of achievement, on the multitude of primarily moral causes which affect man, and on the necessary relationship of all actions to the social process, there is also little emphasis given by this interpretation to the role of individuals or the great man in history. This is not to deny that in

the early stages of life the individual concern with self is not the most distinguishing feature of man, but is rather to indicate that even in the most primitive social gathering any advance is made through what any particular group can achieve, and this advance itself made through the economic changes which have occurred. In no sense can any isolated practice of such economic levels, even if this were possible, lead to the unfolding of human nature on a general level:

'The reality ... of certain establishments at Rome and at Sparta, cannot be disputed: but it is probable, that the government of both these states took its rise from the situation and genius of the people, not from the projects of single men; that the celebrated warrior and statesman, who are considered as the founders of those nations, only acted a superior part among numbers who were disposed to the same institutions; and that they left to posterity a renown, pointing them out as the inventors of many practices which had been already in use, and which helped to form their own manners and genius, as well as those of their countrymen.'

Theoretical writers do not deny, either, that particular forms of government may lead to a concentration of individual or small-group power, as is to be seen in feudalism particularly. This is necessarily produced by the economic situation of the society and is supported by the particular institutions which naturally grow up in such a society, such as individual service and loyalty to one, rather than to the state, and the centralisation of power within miniature states. At the same time, however, it is the entire society which is affected by this process, even

if the effect is detrimental to their evolution. The lords exist as rulers only because of the labour of the serf class and the respect of the lesser lords, the whole of which is produced by the economic nature of the society. The entire feudal system, therefore, is one in which certain individuals can act as they please and can change society to suit their whims, but who must also be limited by this society itself. They are as affected in their manners, their sense of 'rights' and of 'duties', their customs and institutions, as are all those less materially fortunate.

Furthermore, the theoretical history does not deny the achievements of the various individuals who have contributed to social development through inventions, travel, discoveries and similar factors.¹ These achievements and that to which they have led over time - the opening up of new trade routes, for instance, and the breakdown of older forms of property holding - have been of considerable benefit, and yet even these actions are limited. But they point out that while inventions depend for their existence primarily on the individual, the actual usefulness of them and perhaps the basic cause of the invention itself, must necessarily come from the extent to which the society is prepared to accept and use it. There can be no major change or breakthrough outside of the social process itself, in the sense that all discoveries, information gleaned from travel and so on, achieve their fullest meaning only when incorporated into practice and into common usage. Further-

¹. Of particular interest here is Robertson, America, Works, III, pp. 1-59.
more, we may also see that the major benefits of particular innovations often result from the later, unplanned benefit which is gained from them, and this can in no way be connected with the individual originally involved.

The great man, who can change the society, and from whom vast changes come, is more a feature of general philosophical writing which lacks the theory of interconnecting and long-established causal factors to explain profound changes, and which does not so much emphasise the necessary relationship between great men, and the background in which they work. The theoretical writers' position on this is especially clear in the specific rejection by them of the concept of the 'legislator', for, they make clear, any major set of laws, as well as being peculiar to each individual system, must also come from the social experience. As they believe that law itself is the result of the experience and social level of any particular group, so also do they believe that laws cannot be said to exist until they are an integral part of social life. Of the division of classes in India, Millar wrote:

'This division of the people, which goes back into the remotest antiquity, has been ascribed, by historians and political writers, to the positive institution of Brama, the early, and perhaps fabulous legislator of that country; but, in all probability, it arose from that natural separation of the principal professions or employments in the state.'

More specifically, Ferguson mentioned the principle of heterogeneity as forming a necessary part of our interpretation of all customs and institutions, and as being the basis for our critical assessment of earlier accounts

of development of states: 'we are ... to receive, with caution, the traditionary histories of ancient legislators and founders of states. Their names have long been celebrated; their supposed plans have been admired; and what were probably the consequences of an early situation, is, in every instance, considered as an effect of design.'¹

Yet, he believes, with all theoretical historians, that design of this kind is not possible; it suggests conscious planning by an individual which is not to be found in any system, and suggests also a sophisticated philosophy of social needs that really only developed in the enlightened age.

As the theoretical philosophy does not accept the importance of the individual person in any society, so also does it deny the importance, at least in the civil state, of what is described as 'accident', of the isolated and unexpected action. Philosophies which stress this element are generally of a spectacular nature in that they lack a principle of stability, emphasising that man is continually subject to fortune, and that he is constantly tossed about by factors far beyond his control. Such interpretations, whether teleological or not, tend to see man as simply just another factor in a complex world, and fail to establish any basis from which such fluctuations as are experienced can be overcome. The theoretical philosophy itself attempts to break down this interpretation of the past, and it does so through its central features of the capacity of man to

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¹ Ferguson, Essay, p. 123.
progress, and of the heterogeneity of ends especially as expressed through the possession of property in all its various forms.

There is, in particular, an emphasis in the theoretical works that, although in the history of states there may be certain isolated incidents that have a particular effect, this effect is necessarily related to the general level of development of any state and that in the civil society matters which are genuinely unique do not gain any permanent place in the social structure. In Millar's interpretation of the English constitution, for instance, he points out the reasons for the particular degree of political freedom\(^1\) in the society, which is greater than that of other similar European societies, and he also points out how each particular aspect of this freedom becomes an integral part of the social structure. Although he may indicate, therefore, that such processes can sometimes be considered accidental in the sense that they are unique and because we cannot necessarily predict the form changes will take, they can never affect the society profoundly unless they are institutionalised by the tacit acceptance of all members of the society. As the individual man, the legislator, therefore, must always be seen as working within a particular framework, so also must each new event of

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1. This 'freedom' is that which is produced by the best development of the human mind relative to the theoretical limitations; hence, it is not an 'absolute' state of liberty but one always related to and dependent upon the particular economic level, as well as on certain social advances which are at least possible because of this economic situation.
major significance be seen in relation to its effect on an entire system.

In Millar's work this is illustrated in the development of more widespread popular powers through the repeated appearances of the lesser gentry in parliament; had the original appearance of these, resulting as it did from political reasons, been an isolated one, then the uniqueness of the event would have been retained, and the effect on later development of political divisions been very small. The heterogeneous benefit here is dependent on certain consistencies, certain continuations of events. The importance of the institutionalising of events is also to be seen in the benefits achieved from the failure of Henry VIII to consistently use very wide-spread powers which had been granted to him\(^1\), this failure leading such powers to become isolated and unique events which did not form a part of the constitution:

'If these powers had been ascertained, and confirmed by usage, the government of England would have become as absolute as that of France was rendered by Lewis the Eleventh. Fortunately, the English monarch, from the obsequiousness of parliament, had little occasion to exercise this new branch of prerogative; and, as he did not live to reduce it into a system, the constitution, in the reign of his successor, returned into its former channel.' \(^2\)

It is apparent from these instances that the vital elements of 'accident' are those which totally upset any system, and which achieve their effect through being foreign to the social experience. When we establish that particular factors are always relevant to economic levels,

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1. Millar, Hist. View, II, pp. 441-442. See also below, pp. 350-351.
that, apart from the devastating effects of climate and the unexpected on primitive man, we are generally not affected by such isolated matters, then man is seen to achieve a greater stability. He can no longer be profoundly disturbed by life and he is able to control it through the natural expression of his developed qualities.

The fundamental laws of this historical philosophy, based on the 'scientific' observation of man and the collection of data from many forms of society, shift the attention from the physical and the isolated and concentrate it instead on the constant and regular elements that mark human existence. By these means the theoretical writers consider the general rather than the unique at the same time as they relate the unique to the general, thus revealing what they see as the interconnection of all historical facts, and thereby creating a historical philosophy which overcame many of the difficulties faced by earlier writers.
SECTION II
INTRODUCTION

As we have seen in the above chapters, the theoretical philosophy of history went far beyond the general philosophical interpretation through its capacity to connect the past and present, the part and the whole. It also overcame many of the 'faults' of 'unphilosophical' writers through its emphasis on constant and universal explanations and on its denial of the isolated and individual. In both instances, it enabled men to study human nature and society in very general terms, and to overcome the fragmentation, the erratic and disjointed nature of much of the earlier historical work.

Nonetheless, it is important to remember that insofar as we speak of the theoretical 'philosophy', we are talking of a series of ideas which developed over a considerable period of time, and which are not fully expounded in any one work. Furthermore, we should also remember that while it is in the work of Smith in particular that this philosophy as a working hypothesis is most fully developed, the actual application of the concepts basic to such a philosophy to a series of historical situations must necessarily involve certain problems of technique which Smith himself is not obliged to face. Dealing as he does with general ideas, with abstract statements which are illustrated primarily by reference to general rather than specific types of situation, he does not need to continually relate the

1. See also Chapter VIII.
unique to the general as writers such as Millar and Robertson are obliged to. Even though the fundamental laws of the theoretical interpretation provide the basis for relating specific situations to the overall theories of human nature, the study of men and their actions at a particular point in time raises problems for the historian who may have difficulty in seeing how a non-philosophical society may eventually change to a more philosophical one.

This problem is particularly evident in the work of a writer such as Robertson, partly for the reason mentioned above - that the full theoretical philosophy only developed over a period of time and hence was not necessarily the foundation of any given traditionally 'historical' work - but also for other reasons which can be said to affect Robertson particularly. While it is true that he supports many of the theoretical ideas and helped to develop them in detail¹, he was not involved in the evolution of the philosophy on which the theoretical interpretation is based. He is not interested in the operation of the moral sentiments of man, he has little concern, for instance, with the ideas of benevolence and sympathy which Smith had studied so fully. It is rather that he uses the general conclusions concerning the pattern of human development as a partial explanation of those historical situations he considers.

In the second place, the theoretical philosophy itself can hardly be said to be free from certain preconceptions,

¹. See below, Chapter VI.
even if the theoretical writers were not aware of these. Belief in a 'natural course of things', in a mixed form of
government based on the extension of power to the many, in
a particular form of society that is supposed to bring out
what is 'natural' to men - these are all ideas which have
an ideological bias, but one which is obscured by the sup-
position that 'scientific' and 'detached' observation pre-
sented such 'facts' and that human prejudices played little
part in their selection. Such political and social bias is
rarely taken into account by this historical school; and
even though their philosophy contributed greatly to an un-
derstanding of the past in its own terms, it also restrict-
ed men's interpretation of other ages. There is often lit-
tle feeling for the individuality of a society and this
leads, in works such as Robertson's, to a denial of the
value of certain types of society as such - this is par-
icularly the case, for instance, in his evaluation of the
American Indians1.

Furthermore, we can also see in works such as Robert-
son's that the theoretical claim of detachment and scien-
tific evaluation of social values could lead to a continua-
tion of older, less 'philosophical' theories which were
presented - if quite unconsciously - in a 'scientific'
guise. This would appear to be the case in Robertson's
first work, Scotland; and although we may attribute this
in part to the fact that the theoretical philosophy was
not fully developed by 1759 when Scotland was first pub-
lished, the continuation of the basic arguments of the

work through several following editions does suggest that the integral drawbacks of the theoretical concepts were never recognised.

This is not to say, however, that all of the problems which Robertson faced in his interpretation of various societies can be attributed to the incomplete nature of the theoretical philosophy. Again, it is possible that the difficulties of applying it to historical situations as well as its being a piecemeal development, affected the extent to which it was used consistently in any one work; but it is also valid to suggest that certain political and religious prejudices which a writer such as Robertson held, and which formed an integral part of Scottish thought because of earlier historical writings, may have contributed to limit the effect which 'scientific' detachment might have had. While he may have had as a conscious aim the eradication of myths, of legendary histories, for instance, the influence of past works nonetheless affected the degree to which such scientific principles and concepts of investigation as were laid down by the theoretical philosophy were successfully employed. Certainly it is true that not only the Scottish historical tradition but his own religious beliefs affected his philosophy, and his ideas of causation indeed sometimes run counter to the theoretical standard because of his greater concern with the role of providence in human life.

1. See Chapters VII-IX.
2. See Chapter VIII.
3. Ibid.
4. See below, pp. 177-185.
Because of such facts, we must see Robertson as very much an individual, seemingly 'theoretical' in one work, apparently influenced by other traditions in a second, occasionally moved by forces which do not appear to affect writers such as Smith or Millar. Personality, background, the nature of the theoretical history itself, and past interpretations, all contribute to his historical philosophy and combine to make it peculiarly his own. This individualism and the degree to which it led him to depart from the abstract standards of the theoretical work, is the subject of the following chapters.
CHAPTER V

PROVIDENCE AND INTEREST IN THE AFFAIRS OF MEN

The emphasis by the theoretical philosophy, and indeed, by the general philosophical historian, on the need for regular and uniform factors, meant that intervention in human affairs which presupposed a relationship between God and man, rarely formed part of their causal theory. The theoretical historians' insistence on 'Species, or Universals, and Not Individuals'\(^1\), reflected in their dependence on two basic laws or principles, led them always to search for constant and universal cause. The role of the divine in such a philosophy is limited to that of First Cause\(^2\), the Being who has created certain relationships and formulated the 'natural course of things'\(^3\) but who then simply watches men express their nature throughout human time. The theoretical history, in other words, is detached from the concept of a personal and involved God:

>'When by natural principles we are led to advance those ends which a refined and enlightened reason would recommend to us, we are very apt to impute to that reason, as to their efficient cause, the sentiments and actions by which we advance those ends, and to imagine that to be the wisdom of man, which in reality is the wisdom of God.'\(^4\)

Such a statement merely says that we are what we are because the laws which govern our behaviour have been created by God for man, as much as the laws of the universe

2. See Chapter I, pp.
4. Smith, MS, pp. 126-127. See also Stewart, Works, I, pp. 491-492.
itself have been created by God. In this sense these laws are 'natural' laws in that they form a part of our nature and are a means of our expressing those qualities or that potential which is basic to us. It is the 'invisible hand', the heterogeneous process, however, and not intervention, which leads to man's development in society; when we act according to this natural pattern, we act as we were made to. When we deviate from it, although in a manner normal to the human situation, we interfere with the best possible return from the economic and social laws - but we are, in any event, acting always as men and are certainly not controlled in our actions by a watchful providence.

This attributing our nature to God, then, is by no means a denial of the essentially secular nature of theoretical history, and there is not in this interpretation, as there is not in the general philosophical, any explanation which depends on any direct interaction between the natural and the supernatural: men always act on their own level. The laws which guide us we find from within ourselves through the capacities which we have been endowed with: 'the rules which they prescribe are to be regarded as the commands and laws of the Deity, promulgated by those vice-gerents which he has set up within us.' The words 'providence' or 'providential' in such a philosophy mean no more than that the natural course of things is in operation.

1. See above, pp. 92-103.
2. MS, p. 234.
When considering the causes of what might be deemed 'ordinary' events, Robertson appears to adhere to this general theoretical position; his remarks on the camel and quinine as being provided by 'providence' are merely a means of saying that these elements form a part of God's provision for us - they are always discovered by man in an entirely natural fashion. And he is generally careful to relate the beliefs of others in intervention and revelation to the particular level of superstition which we might expect from certain stages of human growth. In his specifically religious work, however, and also in parts of his historical writing, it is to be seen that his ideas of cause do include the concept of an active and interested providence. This is particularly so in the former, where he states that despite the existence of a regular pattern of events and despite also a normal separation by man of the secular and the divine, God can nonetheless still be seen to be very much a part of human affairs: 'Careful observers may often, by the light of reason, form probable conjectures with regard to the plan of God's providence, and can discover a skilful hand directing the revolution of human affairs, and compassing the best ends by the most effectual and surprising means.'

This, indeed, does not say that revelation is a con-

1. Robertson, America, Works, IV, p. 215. See also An Historical Disquisition Concerning ... India (hereafter cited India), Works, II, p. 332.
stant feature of human society; if God is to be seen working in man's life or superintending it, he does so through general laws, and his actions are always in accordance with the general level of achievement of any system, a factor which Robertson sees as an explanation of why the gospels came to be preached at the time they did: 'no perfection of any kind can be attained of a sudden.' But such a philosophy, while clearly adhering to the most general tenets of the theoretical doctrine, nonetheless does suggest that all of the history of man, all the most important events in our past in particular, have been predetermined; if the major changes in the world have been brought about by natural causes, the actual culmination of these natural factors seems to depend on God.

Without such guidance as this, Robertson seems to suggest, there could have been no coming together of a long series of events, and this is an expression of the heterogeneity of ends that certainly differs from the theoretical. Nothing, in the opinion of that philosophy, is inevitable, and there is no sequence or connection of specific causes that must occur, or ought to have come about. We deal only with what is, and we must always keep in mind that if man could not have progressed in spite of various repressive forms of government, the concept of capacity to advance must be limited. What Robertson appears to be saying, on the other hand, is that some events are so vital to

1. Situation, p. 4. See also ibid., p. 9: 'the power of God ... is never exerted but on the most necessary occasions. The Almighty seldom effects by supernatural means, any thing which would have been accomplished by such as are natural.'
man, and so necessary to his development that it is difficult to imagine how we would have survived without them.

In his historical work, for instance, because of the difficulty which he has in explaining the actual emergence of particular individuals, such as Luther, or Francis I, or accounting for the coming together of the events that made the Reformation or led to the downfall of the Roman empire, he does not indicate that man would have continued regardless of the absence of such events but rather emphasises the necessity of these to human development by the action or manipulation of providence. This approach is further to be distinguished from that of the theoretical in that, while Smith and Millar, for instance, do point out that particular or unique factors may lead to the development of peculiarities within any society, they do not insist that these were necessarily any part of the natural course of things. We accept them, and we relate them to the general factors of the given society, but we do not interpret the past in terms of an 'if' philosophy. Though Robertson does not explicitly say 'if it had not been for ...', this is nonetheless an attitude which is implicit in his interpretation of many major causal patterns.

This approach as regards his historical work is to be seen in several instances, the most important of which concern political and religious change. In Charles V, for example, he stated that there were principles in the consti-
tution of Rome which meant that its decline was inevitable, an interpretation which suggests a long series of events, of interconnecting and wholly natural causes which indeed he gives in some detail¹. Yet in America, where he briefly mentions the decline and fall of the Roman empire, he pays little attention to such factors and indeed to the characteristics and situation of the barbarian tribes which he had seen as a necessary explanation in the earlier work², and indicates that these tribes existed in time for one purpose only: the final destruction, the immediate and precipitating cause, at divine instigation, of Rome's collapse. In this work they are the 'barbarous nations' 'which Providence prepared as instruments to overturn the mighty fabric of the Roman power.'³

To some extent, it is possible that such usage of providence is merely one way in which to avoid discussion of a long series of precipitating factors and background causes - although for a historian to use such a particular form of cause instead of another more seemingly 'historical' one does indicate certain prejudices. This, however, can hardly be seen to be the case in other instances of the usage of the providential in Robertson's work. In considering the Reformation in Scotland, for instance, he points out that many factors which contributed to its emergence and growth were of such a nature that we might rather have expected them to be detrimental - the attempts by the French to dominate Scotland, the expulsion by Mary Tudor

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² Ibid., pp. 3-8.
³ America, Works, III, p. 22.
of many of the English Protestant preachers. That these facts were, on the contrary, beneficial to the Scottish Reformation, Robertson believes, is not so much evidence of the operation of the heterogeneity of ends but of a careful manipulation of events from above, which is expressed in natural terms:

'The ambition of the house of Guise, and the bigotry of Mary of England, hastened the subversion of the papal throne in Scotland; and, by a singular disposition of Providence, the persons who opposed the reformation in every other part of Europe with the fiercest zeal, were made instruments for advancing it in that kingdom.'

It is the immediate factors which Robertson seeks to establish as crucial here, and although he does develop the background of pre-Reformation Scotland, he does so in order to point out that even if the new doctrines had already begun to have some effect, it was the impact of the English reformers, the actual presence of these men in the society at this time, which was of greatest importance, a situation brought about by the careful, if unspectacular, intervention of God. Mary Tudor's expelling of the English reformers, then, a result of her own bigotry and repression of 'true' religion, had far greater ends than she herself could have thought of; for these reformers then preached their beliefs with a much greater sense of urgency and thereby affected the progress of the Reformation in their new home: 'What they had seen and felt in England, did not abate the warmth and zeal of their indignation against poverty. Their attacks were bolder and more successful than

2. Ibid.
ever; and their doctrines made a rapid progress among all ranks of men. ¹ If the effects of these actions are explicable in natural terms, such as the value of continuing attacks on the old religious system, the very existence of the particular situation that supplemented these general factors is not; and this same combination of the natural and the divine is to be seen in the case of the actions of Mary of Guise whose own political ambitions and those of her brothers had resulted in the protection of Protestantism because she had thought that such protection would further her own ends. Instead, her aims had led to the greater increase in power of the new doctrines ². Such a causal pattern is certainly explicable within the framework of Robertson's religious philosophy; but it does tend to separate the actions of individual rulers from their past, from that of their society, and to suggest that their personalities and lives had only one end in time - a divinely planned end. Their lives, therefore, seem to be not so much an expression of themselves or their societies and eras, but a means of explaining some event which, it is thought, may well not have occurred otherwise.

It is in his account of the German Reformation that Robertson's usage of this sort of explanation is of particular interest, because it is more fully developed; and it is with this that we will be concerned in the following pages in an effort to connect this particular aspect of Robertson's thought with the usage by him of the concept of

2. Ibid.
property and interest in the evolution of man. It is true that Robertson is intent to interpret the German Reformation in the light of general causes - 'the success of the Reformation was the natural effect of many powerful causes'\(^1\) - yet the words 'natural effect' must be studied carefully. They suggest that the religious changes of the sixteenth century were inevitable, and that it was inevitable also that they should be successful. In short, Robertson seems to be saying that the past history of Germany, as well as particular events of the sixteenth century, which he presents in some considerable detail in Charles V\(^2\), may have been expressed by men, their passions and their interest, and expressed concretely in terms of property - but that all these actions and expressions reflect the hand of God. The powerful causes which produce the Reformation are prepared, he believes, by 'peculiar providence'; they 'conspire happily' towards this particular end\(^3\). 'That wonderful preparation of circumstances', 'that singular combination of causes':

> 'may be considered as no slight proof, that the same hand which planted the Christian religion protected the reformed faith, and reared it, from beginnings extremely feeble to an amazing degree of vigour and maturity.'\(^4\)

Luther himself was 'raised up by Providence to be the author of one of the greatest and most interesting revolutions recorded in history'\(^5\), and the coming together of a vast series of events in Germany's past and present results

\(^{1}\) Charles V, Works, V, p. 274.
\(^{2}\) Ibid., pp. 256-273 especially.
\(^{3}\) Ibid., p. 274.
\(^{4}\) Ibid., pp. 235-236.
\(^{5}\) Ibid., VI, p. 188.
from God's control of the 'caprice of human passions' which are made 'subservient towards the accomplishment of his own purposes.'

This interpretation suggests not only the overwhelming importance of the individual - such as Luther - to the continuation of the general - the Reformation; it also suggests that all events prior to the arrival of Luther, and those that occur during his life, have a very particular rather than a diversified or non-specific end. All the historical factors of this period are already in existence, before they occur, so to speak, at least in the mind of God, a theory which seems eminently teleological.

Furthermore, although such a coming together of events may be seen as an expression of heterogeneity of ends in one fashion, it differs very much from the ordinary theoretical idea of heterogeneity, which does not insist on particular and explicit forms of end. Nor, indeed, does the theoretical philosophy demand that the coming together of events always results in what we might describe as beneficial or 'philosophical' ends; it accepts the emergence of the non-philosophical from the unintended, whereas Robertson always uses Providence to bring events together so as to create a situation which he sees as beneficial to man. The passions and interests of men, in his interpretation, are simply used by God; whereas in the theoretical they do lead to certain ends, but these ends are not planned, or guided towards their actual culmination.

These particular statements of Robertson's concerning providence in effect suggest a greater emphasis on the im-

portance of isolated and 'accidental' factors in human history than the theoretical interpretation normally permits. As we have seen above, the two basic laws of the theoretical philosophy mean an emphasis on the general, on social levels of achievement, not on the accidental or on the actions of the individual - though situations in which the individual, or the isolated action may have some effect are taken into consideration when these reflect the nature of the society. This position is to be seen, for instance, in Millar's own explanation of the emergence of the Reformation and of the varying degrees of success which this met with - an explanation where particular and general causes are combined to suggest the basis for the patterns peculiar to certain states. Millar does indicate that there are certain 'accidental' or individualistic features affecting the rate of advance of the Reformation; the authority of the popes over states which, geographically speaking, were close to Rome, for instance, and the temporal authority of the papacy, were factors often sufficient to check dissent. He concedes also that each state possesses particular patterns within its past, and that these may affect the rate of growth of other more general causal factors - the strength of the pope, for instance, appears to have depended in part on the weaknesses or limitations of individual societies. The particular, in other words, always has a role in the history of specific states.

1. See above, pp. 163-168.
Nonetheless, it is necessary to be aware that, first, these 'accidental' or individualistic features are individual only in relation to the Reformation itself, especially as its growth affects the power of Rome. In at least some of the instances which Millar mentions, the background to the events described as 'unique' reveals that they are not unusual in relation to the history of the nation itself; the dispute between Henry VIII and his wife, for instance, has what we might describe as a past in both Henry's personality and in the attempts which he had made to gain such political power as would necessarily mean that his country would be affected by his own personality. Secondly, it is apparent that Millar always goes beyond these eminently 'historical' or unique elements in order to explain the very general causes which make possible that change in ideas which is characteristic of the Reformation. Such causes necessarily mean that any such change will be gradual and will be successful only because of its becoming an integral part of social patterns. These are what Millar describes as 'fixed' causes\(^1\), and they are the background of any society, always a part of its own general development; in this instance, they explain why some societies are more amenable to the Reformation and others less so\(^2\).

This concentration on general and fixed causes, such as the revival of learning, which are themselves produced by very widespread changes in the economic and political

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2. Ibid., pp. 428-434.
structure of Europe over a period of centuries, means that Millar is not in need of any isolated causal factor, and certainly not one which, like providence, explains the actual coming together of this long series of events. He outlines the background of specific factors, and accepts the ends to which they have led without apparently being obliged to explain why it is that all these economic and social elements combined to produce something quite so 'beneficial' or 'philosophical' as the emergence of 'true' religion. For him, such a factor is superfluous; it is not, however, for Robertson who, though much of his work is devoted to a detailed study of the very same factors that Millar has taken into account¹ and accepts as full explanation, must nonetheless introduce the further element of the providential. By so doing, he indicates his dissatisfaction with the concept that things might possibly have been otherwise in European history - though Millar himself is not concerned with this speculation - and seeks to reinforce that point which seems to be of so much importance to him, that events such as the Reformation were so necessary to man that the use of providence as cause is acceptable.

Robertson's position on this matter is further complicated by the fact that, in the study of the development of the Reformation in Germany, and particularly its institutionalisation in society, he places considerable emphasis on certain factors as cause which tend to undermine his previous emphasis on the providential. He is particularly interested to maintain the idea of the importance of pro-

property as the basis of political power, for instance, and to show that ideas or philosophies in themselves do not achieve permanence, but demand expression in a more concrete form. Such causal explanations in themselves do away with a dependence on the isolated and the individual factor. Thus, although he suggests clearly that Luther was necessary to the Reformation and implies that this would not have developed without the existence of this individual (as opposed to any other single person) he also denies that individuals can maintain such innovations single-handed. Had there been no Luther, there would have been no violence, none of that decisive action that makes for the turn towards positive change; yet Luther's own existence, Robertson seems to be saying, would have been of relatively small importance if this philosophy of change had not become a part of German social mores. If the Reformation in Germany in particular began with the spread of the more liberal ideas that challenged the traditional authority of the church¹, these can only have a limited effect outside the change which they may produce in the minds of others over a considerable period of time:

'They may perhaps gradually, and in a long course of years, undermine and shake an established system of false religion, but there is no instance of their having overturned one. The battery is too feeble to demolish those fabrics which superstition raises on deep foundations and can strengthen with the most consummate art.' ²

The restoration of general and universal principles, destroyed by the corrupting influence of Catholicism, can-

². Ibid., VI, p. 512.
not be permanent without support from another source. However much Robertson may believe, then, that the Reformers were lacking in both power and policy, this is true only of their original steps; their later actions, if we cannot always associate them with policy, are always supported and implemented by men who can be associated with power, and whose presence at this time, if a part of the marvellous combination of causes, can also be explained in terms of the political background of the country. However much Luther was able to break down the absurd, however much the society in general was able to divest itself of its old prejudices under proper guidance, the success so achieved was limited. The very lack of violence and the absence in the early years of the arms needed to maintain changes, indicated that the real battle to make the Reformation a part of life, to remove it from being an isolated and impermanent event, was yet to be fought.

If we consider the particular history of certain key events in the later history of Germany Protestantism we

1. It is Robertson's belief that there is no political element in the Reformation itself. Its emergence and institutionalisation is a part of the growing trend towards civil liberty, and it is, indeed, on this civil liberty and its expression in property that it depends - this is, after all, the manner in which Robertson is trying to show the dominance of natural events. Religion, he believes, does not undermine the state so long as it is founded on proper principles: see Charles V, Works, V, pp. 256-275, 394.

2. Robertson has explained in some detail in the View the forms and nature of the German constitution (Ibid., pp. 146-158).

will see that any changes made in doctrines, or any toleration of religion within the German empire were not the result of tolerance *per se* which did not exist at this time, but were purely political moves, and always related to the balance of property. The very difficulties created by the popes concerning the holding of a council¹, their reluctance to accept doctrinal changes², their distrust of the concept of conciliar power³, and the final results of the Council of Trent make it obvious that the power of the papacy was not to be challenged simply through words: the influence of new ideas, however enlightened, could not break so quickly through generations of prejudice. Furthermore, the advance of the Reformation within Germany at any time can be seen to have always depended on political measures; if the Reformers were to move from the position of dependence they must themselves gain power through 'property' or the state itself must achieve a situation in which the new religion was wholly acceptable. In other words, the former dependence on the will of the emperor⁴ was not transformed into stability through the force of ideas, but was the result of political power matching political power, or of property against property; and we must always distinguish

2. Ibid., pp. 4-5, 133-134.
3. Ibid., pp. 4-5; tyranny and superstition always go together, Robertson believed (Situation, pp. 18-19) and the development of the conciliar is always a sign that the individualism of the ruler is beginning to decline, a theory which we can see especially in his belief in the separation of powers or the cooperation of the various sections of government (see Chapter VI).
then, between the Reformers and those persons or groups which were in a position to effect those gradual changes which helped to maintain religious freedom.

This importance of 'property' is always evident in Robertson's interpretation of the Reformation; and he shows that if Luther's intention was not to destroy but to reform\(^1\), the very nature of the institution which he challenged was civil rather than religious. The simplicity of early Christianity had long disappeared from the Catholic church\(^2\), and the effects its actions had on, and the connections it had with, other countries were expressed primarily in a political sense. The canon law had been used to make the church a part of the feudal society; it had accumulated property, and excused the ecclesiastics from civil control\(^3\). The ecclesiastical courts themselves were a means of breaking down the civil law, invading the natural laws of inheritance, for instance, and using false piety to gain material benefits\(^4\), not even compensating for this by being of any benefit to the oppressed classes in the feudal society\(^5\). The servants of the pope excommunicated those who challenged them, and invaded the rights of others\(^6\); the corruption of their lives\(^7\) revealed the

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1. Charles V, Works, V, pp. 254-256; Luther's success, Robertson believes, was due to his discovery of the central faults of Catholicism around which all its beliefs and practices were centred, not to his political capacity.
3. Ibid., pp. 53-56, 263-264.
4. Ibid., pp. 263-264.
5. Ibid., p. 500 (Note XX).
7. Ibid., pp. 258-261.
depths to which they had sunk and although certain events had tended to limit the church's authority and reputation\(^1\), the effect of such isolated events was necessarily small. The papacy had become a secular power using the trappings of a false religion to increase its political strength; its doctrines might be chimerical, and its theology of the speculative and useless nature that was abhorred by the theoretical writers\(^2\), but its policy was effective. The threat of excommunication was a powerful weapon, and the papacy was not averse to spreading political disturbance:

'There was not a state in Europe which had not been disquieted by their ambition; there was not a throne which they had not shaken, nor a prince who did not tremble at their power.'\(^3\) Nowhere does this appear more true than in Germany, where the inheritance of past political problems continued to undermine all actions\(^4\); it is not on the ideals of Christ that the sixteenth century church is founded, but on the solid possession of property and the power that goes with this.

Robertson believes then, that if Luther's ideas were to have any effect they must be supported by secular authority; and as the response of the established church to his attack was founded on its fear of losing that which

2. Ibid., p. 63: "The presumption of men had added to the simple and instructive doctrines of Christianity the theories of a vain philosophy, that attempted to penetrate into mysteries, and to decide questions which the limited faculties of the human mind are unable to comprehend or to resolve'.
3. Ibid., p. 106.
4. Ibid., pp. 149-150, 265.
had been gained, so also were the reasons of the defenders of his actions strictly, or almost entirely, a-religious. The elector of Saxony, for instance, under whose jurisdiction Luther came, considered the challenge to the church to have considerable potential in the long-continuing political struggle between papacy and princes:

'He secretly encouraged the attempt, and flattered himself, that this dispute among the ecclesiastics themselves might give some check to the exactions of the court of Rome, which the secular princes had long, though without success, been endeavouring to oppose.'

In 1519 the Reformation had only just begun to have an effect; in a few years its efforts to survive and become a legally recognised part of the state meant an involvement in the German constitutional struggles and in the tortuous history of Germany politics. Within the political nature of the society in which the Reformation doctrines existed, the contest is not so much between the papacy and the new church, as between the papacy as a political power, the emperor, and the feudal princes. Not only do we find in this study then, that it is property which is the major or all-important causal factor, but Robertson also stresses that it is not until there is a balance of power and a realisation of true interests among the princes that their own ends can be served.

In the light of this emphasis on property, his teleological examination or presentation is not quite so blatant as we might be led to think; by declaring that it is by political power alone that ideas can be made into institu-

2. Ibid., pp. 241-242.
tions or are enabled to have a long life, he removes from ideas, or the individual presentation of these, the sense of the isolated or the accidental. Such elements become a part of the society and their continuation within social institutions means that they no longer have the quality that distinguishes the accidental from the unexpected. It is true too that by interpreting the reasons for the continuation of Luther's philosophy in terms of political power Robertson also gives credence to his statement that it is through the passions or interests of men that God works: or at least, if we accept that God is involved, it is obviously in a manner which takes advantage of the self-serving desires of the powerful. The elector of Saxony, after all, is not as moved by piety as by the desire to limit the power of Catholicism. By stressing that it is not as a result of religion that men revolt, but because of a long series of injustices in civil society, he establishes that providence makes use of existing factors in order to further its own ends; and by having established a long series of reasons for the outbreak of civil discontent at this time, Robertson can emphasise how very natural and gradual these were.

Yet it could also be said that the words 'preparation of circumstances' tend to cancel out the effect of 'peculiar' providence, and the 'conspiring' of events towards a particular end; such phrases suggest an isolated instance, or the usage of factors which happened to occur as a result of man's long history, at least within Germany, whereas 'preparation of circumstances' implies the creation also
of the long-established 'powerful causes'. Does God or providence rule all of man's life and bring about all his reactions?, we are led to wonder. If so, even these long-established elements are in a sense individual, in that while each of them may represent human passions and interests and each may also be expressed in property terms, they are nonetheless isolated events that are combined over a period of time, as distinct from the less precise and certainly not easily connected factors which make up the progress of men in the theoretical interpretation. Each individual person who has participated in the history of Germany must have a value as great as that of Luther himself, and yet, as we can see, such eminence is granted only to him; it is he alone who is 'raised up' to be the 'author' of a revolution, a distinction which itself separates him from the past of the society. The same separateness or sense of mission is not attributed to those such as Maurice of Saxony or even Charles V who are nonetheless of considerable importance to the history of this time.

Furthermore, if Robertson does mean a 'preparation of circumstances' in this sense, even though he states that God uses man's passions as an instrument of his own will, he is nonetheless distinguishing himself from the theoretical concept of separation of the almighty and of men. Even if we ignore the fact that God must know what man will do at any moment in time, he would appear to have given men 'interest' and 'passions' in order to further his own aims and ends, and not those of men; he is in effect making use of them, sees them as tools to be manipulated even if for
their own good, and to express their full nature. Robertson's belief in providence's continued support of the 'true' religion¹ must necessarily mean a constant connection of God with man as opposed to the theoretical separation of God and the affairs of humanity. While man may seem to struggle towards some unknown end, Robertson suggests, God does not permit him to simply struggle but guarantees, by the usage of revelation or appropriate action or placing of individuals, as well as by the apparent consistent indirect intervention in all factors of life, that he brings certain patterns to a particular end.

These gaps in Robertson's interpretation are to be seen also in his study of the evolution of a balance of power among the members of the German constitution in the first decades of the sixteenth century. Using the general thesis of property and its power, he does point out that the history of Germany provides us with the reasons why the emperor has at least a pretence of claiming certain rights, and why the German princes fail to unite against him: the feudal society with its separation of the powerful into small groups each jealous of their own power and privileges is a natural product of circumstances, and reveals how much situation determines the expression of our interests or passions². The princes do not have the breadth of view that Charles himself does, being marked by a 'spirit of jealousy and division' which prevented them from seeing ahead to the creation of a unity of interest so that

¹ See above, p. 183.
² Charles V, Works, VI, pp. 151, 152, 184, 219.
the real interest of all might be served. When they learn from experience that they cannot act alone, that they must overcome their faults if they are to survive, their decision is expressed in property in the form of a more efficient army, with which they are eventually able to defeat the emperor and establish the Reformation principles as a part of the constitution.

Up to this point, Robertson's assessment of the past and present factors which go to make up the causes of these changes appears to be strictly within the terms of the theoretical philosophy. He has established, especially in the View, the nature of the German constitution as it was when Charles became emperor, and he has shown also how the feudal system limits the operation of the human mind even of those who apparently benefit most from it; he has related the failures of the princes to their situation, and their successes also to situation - even if their changing ideas were in part believed to have been caused by the more humane and enlightened principles of the Reformation doctrines. Interest is uppermost in their minds, and with the combining of their resources which are naturally produced by the feudal state, they create a balance which served their interests, those of society and those of the Reformation.

In the whole of this explanation there is an emphasis on the interests or the passions of men and the expression of these in forms of property. Yet, if we assume that

2. Ibid., p. 206.
Robertson sees providence's working through these passions on a constant and long-term basis in order to provide a means by which the Reformation is to be institutionalised, he would seem to be suggesting that these factors really are just 'caprices', frivolous actions, which need some particular and specific bringing together to make them productive of a more worthy end. If so, interest, even though it may lead to balance of power and to the success of the Reformation, does not do so through the heterogeneity of ends. If we believe that the Reformation succeeded because of particular or unique factors, do we not deny the value of all past actions of even the feudal princes, and select from these only those which are 'crucial'? Do we not thereby deny that these 'vital' elements, such as the princes' capacity to call large armies into action, exist because of hundreds of years of actions? If, further, all the actions of these men during the Reformation, are so important, why are they themselves not considered as necessary as Luther? Also, we may question Robertson's interpretation on a further point here, namely, that if it is the actions of men and the long-established causes which 'happily' conspire to produce a situation favourable to the actions of a man like Luther, why should we not try to relate Luther himself more to his own situation, and why should we not also see that the Reformation itself depends on chance or the fortuitous? Again, the only answer, to the last question at least, is that Robertson believes there must be some particular factor to account for what appears to us to be merely 'fortunate';
and he has clearly revealed that the providential appearance at this point, the 'protection' of the reformed faith from the hostile world, cannot be a matter of chance but one of deliberation and plan.

To some extent, however, the insistence by Robertson that the apparently fortuitous was planned and that it was also expressed through general or natural means, was a way of denying that insignificant causes produced major change: a theme which is common among even the non-teleological writers of other schools. His usage of property and interest in at least a superficially philosophical sense does mean then that on one level he is really challenging the theories of those with whom he appears to have something in common. This is especially necessary to remember in our study of his consideration of the development of a balance of power between the European states in the sixteenth century. In Scotland, he had plainly suggested that this balance was in part created by the very existence of Francis I, and that his appearance at this time was due to providence in much the same fashion as was Luther: 'had not Providence, in pity to mankind, and in order to preserve them from the worst of all evils, universal monarchy, raised up Francis I to defend the liberty of Europe.'

Yet, this assessment is not one which is continued by Robertson within his major study of the balance of power. The fear of 'universal monarchy' had disappeared by the

2. However, his belief in the role of providence in Charles' intentions to create a universal monarchy, was continued in all later editions of Scotland.
time he wrote Charles V, and if the element of providence as cause was by no means absent from this work, the greater part of his explanation of the limitations imposed on Charles is concerned with the limitation of the emperor through the development of a more philosophical society.

His interpretation then in this later work is in strong contrast to his more obviously religious one and is much more in accordance with both his own study of the means by which a modicum of balance evolved between nations and the theoretical belief in the consistent dominance of interest even in the growth and maintenance of the philosophical system. While in his specifically religious writings Robertson could suggest that Christianity and its principles had profoundly affected the nature of the modern state, making 'traditional' virtue a part of modern political principles, and while he never entirely rid himself of the older ideas that duty and conscious action were a part of man's role in the modern society, it is in general true that he does accept a considerable degree of interest as necessary, and that he feels it is necessity rather than generosity which brings about greater stability. Men may combine piety with their political interest, but this combination must always be expressed through property; and if the mind of man unfolded and his talents were expressed in a more obviously enlightened manner, to

1. See above, Chapter IV.
3. See below, Chapters VI and VII.
4. See, for instance, Scotland, Works, I, p. 66.
expect him to restrain himself completely, or to deny the role of the political in the actions of kings, was to deny the self-centredness of the most generous. Self-limitation could exist only when all were obliged to act in accordance with the 'justice' of a developed state, or, as far as relationships between nations were concerned, when equality of power made great changes unlikely. When there are discrepancies in the power of conflicting states, Robertson believed, we do not expect to find that the superior one is motivated by 'moderation'; rather, we both expect and find that the weaker will suffer the full force that its opponent can bring to bear. The change from such inequalities, in the theoretical viewpoint, does not result from the kindness or the benevolence of men, which is always uncertain and continues our dependence upon the whim of others. Rather, it must come about through the increasing parity of property: 'equality of courage and force can alone overawe the injustice of independent nations into some sort of respect for the rights of one another', and it was hoped that, with the development of trade, and the extension of the benefits of the discovery of the new world to all those who lived in it, all nations might become independent of the will of others. Certainly it is obvious that Smith does not feel it a part of the natural sentiments of man to extend 'benevolence' to other nations, and because of

1. See above, Chapter II, and below, pp. 251 ff. However, see also pp. 307-309.
2. See, for instance, Charles V, Works, VI, p. 500.
3. WN, II, p. 141.
4. MS, p. 337.
this fact it is apparent that the capacity to live together will depend on the emergence of a situation of necessity.

This position concerning balance of power was certainly one which Robertson made his own, even though he does not explore the basis of it in the operation of the moral sentiments of men; he is content, as in the greater part of his work, to interpret changes in terms of property and of the eventual institutionalisation of the philosophical. He does not expect, as the other theoretical writers did not, that war will come to an end; to have such hopes would be to deny the nature of man and to ignore the world on which the scientific principles of the theoretical history was based. He felt instead, and this was an opinion shared by his fellow Scots, that many changes produced by man's actions had meant the development of techniques which were more impersonally beneficial, and which distinguished the battles of the ancient from those of the modern world:

'Civilized nations, which take arms upon cool reflections (sic), from motives of policy or prudence, with a view to guard against some distant danger or to prevent some remote contingency, carry on their hostilities with so little rancour or animosity that war among them is disarmed of half its terrors.'

This situation, Robertson believed, was the result, not of conscious 'philosophical' thought, but of a long and gradual process which began in the sixteenth century and which reflects the constant expression of human interest and the operation of the process of heterogeneity of ends. The concept of balance of power at the beginning of this

1. Charles V, Works, V, p. 7; see also WN, II, p. 221.
period was limited in its extent and practiced only by those states which had been forced into it through sheer necessity or situation. The Italian countries which, for numerous reasons, had been the centre of the major battles of Europe for a considerable period were naturally jealous of the transalpine powers and sought to be either entirely rid of their influence, or to play off one against the other. The first aim Robertson finds impracticable, the second much more beneficial for it led these nations to be aware of the outside world and especially to be aware of the potential danger of both Charles and Francis, making them 'careful to preserve the balance even between them, unless when they were seduced to violate this favourite maxim of their policy, by the certain prospect of some great advantage to themselves.' If the pope took the side of the emperor, 'it was equally manifest, that if it became necessary to take a side, the Venetians would, from motives of the same nature, declare for the king of France.'

This situation of necessity, however, did not extend beyond the borders of the Italian states. The remainder of the European powers acted as though 'they had been single and disjoined', and this lack of policy itself created or aided the conflict which was such a fundamental part of this age. The inexperience or lack of foresight that was eventually to be eradicated can be seen particularly clearly in the fact that the electors of Germany acted as indi-

2. Ibid.
3. Ibid., VI, p. 502.
viduals in 1519, and as individuals concerned only with their own limited interest:

'Their common interest ought naturally to have formed a general combination, in order to disappoint both competitors, and to prevent either of them from obtaining such a pre-eminence in power and dignity, as might prove dangerous to the liberties of Europe. But the ideas with respect to a proper distribution and balance of power were so lately introduced into the system of European policy, that they were not hitherto objects of sufficient attention.' 1

The faults of the existing lack of universal balance are to be seen in the dominance of personality and individualism as major causal factors of many actions and events during the first decades of the century; and this is particularly the case with Henry VIII of England. On occasion, it is to be seen, Henry was capable of discerning the need for decisive action and for limiting his own apparent interests in order to achieve his real ones:

'He was sensible, that if Charles were permitted to add any considerable part of France to the vast dominions of which he was already master, his neighbourhood would be much more formidable to England than that of the ancient French kings; while, at the same time, the proper balance on the continent, to which England owed both its safety and importance, would be entirely lost.' 2

Yet it is also obvious that such discernment was the result of experience and was not naturally a part of Henry's personality. 'His measures seldom resulted from attention to the general welfare, or from a deliberate regard to his own interest, but were dictated by passions which rendered him blind to both' 3; although his situation and his power made

2. Ibid., p. 371.
3. Ibid., p. 229. See also ibid., pp. 280, 289, 358, 424 and VI, pp. 143, 144, 170, 171.
him a natural choice as mediator between the two great powers, he gave way to the immediate and thereby failed to help build the more permanent:

'he was destitute of the penetration, and still more of the temper, which such a delicate function required. Influenced by caprice, by vanity, by resentment, by affection, he was incapable of forming any regular and extensive system of policy or of adhering to it with steadiness.' 1

At the same time as Robertson points out the effects of individualism, however, he also emphasises that the variations in personality and situation of Charles and Francis contributed not only to the existence of conflict, but also in part explained the very development of balance. The nature of a ruler of the lesser calibre such as Henry has considerable effects within his own society but it is not vital to the fate of Europe; this is not the case with regard to the emperor and the king of France. It is true, certainly, that both rarely considered their own true interest, and this is a fact which Robertson is intent to establish:

'If Charles and Francis had been influenced by considerations of interest or prudence alone, this, without doubt, must have been the manner in which they would have reasoned. But the personal animosity which mingled itself in all their quarrels, had grown to be so violent and implacable, that, for the pleasure of gratifying it they disregarded every thing else; and were infinitely more solicitous how to hurt each other than how to secure what would be of advantage to themselves.' 2

He believes nonetheless that the problems created by such animosity are both the result of more general factors and to some extent are solved by similar general factors.

2. Ibid., VI, p. 150.
Although we cannot explain the very nature of personality or give the reasons for it, we are nonetheless able to trace a series of long-established causes which brought about the likelihood of conflict between these two persons and which also limited the effectiveness of this conflict, this limitation itself leading to balance. The heterogeneous process, in the past and even in the present, then, is an element which Robertson sees to be of great value. If he could not fully account for the existence of the somewhat frivolous nature of Francis's character\(^1\), he did believe that it was in part due to the ideas of chivalry, of glory, and honour that were an integral part of the French society at the time and which were the result of the very past of the country. This natural development had also produced the circumstances which both led to Francis being able to challenge Charles, and to limit the effectiveness of Charles's own characteristics. Francis's situation, in fact, made up for his very defects as a ruler:

'His chief advantage ... over the emperor, he derived on this, as on other occasions, from the contiguity of his dominions, as well as from the extent of the royal authority in France, which exempted him from all the delays and disappointments unavoidable wherever popular assemblies provide for the expenses of government by occasional and frugal subsidies.'\(^2\)

If the absolutism of the French kings and the existence of a standing army in this country are factors which are detri-

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1. Charles V, Works, VI, pp. 443-444: 'more enterprising than steady (he) undertook great designs with warmth, but often executed them with remissness'.
2. Ibid., VI, p. 148.
mental to the development of men within the nation\(^1\), it is
evidence of the unpredictability of life and the coming to-
gether of events in an unexpected manner that these same
distinguishing marks enable one man to check the growth of
another on an international level.

Robertson is not able, either, to explain the exist-
ence of the particular personality of Charles V, but he does
see that it is of considerable importance in enabling him
to overcome the situation in which he is placed. His char-
acter is quite different from that of Francis and is so
steady and precise that one is inclined to think of his
measures as a consistent system 'in which all the parts
were arranged, all the effects were foreseen, and even
every accident was provided for.'\(^2\) 'He possessed qualities
so peculiar':

\[\text{\textquoteleft that they strongly mark his character, and not}
\text{\textquoteleft only distinguish him from the princes who were}
\text{\textquoteleft his contemporaries, but account for that superi-
\text{\textquoteleft ority over them which he so long maintained.'}}\]

It is difficult to say whether Charles's situation or
position was a major causal factor in the emergence of his
'nature' or 'bent', but it is obvious to Robertson that his
prudence and determination were the only elements which
could have overcome the fact that he was limited in his
actions by the long-established institutions of the various
states of Spain. This situation Robertson has explained in
considerable detail in the View\(^4\), and thereby relates the

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2. Ibid., VI, p. 489.
3. Ibid., p. 488.
4. Ibid., V, pp. 125-139.
past to the present in such a manner as to eliminate any suggestion that accidental or isolated factors are of importance:

"Though Charles possessed dominions more extensive than any other prince in Europe, and had at this time no other army but that which was employed in Lombardy ... his prerogative in all his different states was so limited, and his subjects, without whose consent he could raise no taxes, discovered such unwillingness to burden themselves with new or extraordinary impositions, that even this small body of troops was in want ..." 1

'From a circumstance that now appears very singular, but arising naturally from the constitution of most European governments in the sixteenth century ... (Charles's) revenues were so limited, that he could not keep on foot his victorious army ...' 2

In his study of the alliances which emerged in Europe during this period, Robertson saw that the most predominant factor was one of interest, arising from the very existence, personality and situation of both Charles and Francis and the effect of these on the fortunes of other nations. The history of Europe at this time, then, is not simply that of two powerful individuals but also of the manner in which other parties act in response to them. These alliances vary with the changing fortunes of the respective contenders for power, and the traditional alliances - themselves once, perhaps, a reflection of interest - give way to the expedient, a feature of political life which Robertson obviously accepts. Conscious planning takes the place of

2. Ibid., p. 374. See also ibid., pp. 280, 345 and VI, p. 351.
the former haphazardness, and if neither Francis nor Charles is motivated by any such philosophical reasoning, this is of no importance since the other European states have responded to their actions by an increasing unity, and have thereby limited the effects of these. Thus if Charles's abilities earn him an increase in status and a greater support from others, this advantage is eliminated when he uses his gains to encroach on the authority of others, thereby causing a re-arrangement of the balance of power.

Furthermore, it is to be seen that not only do such responses by the lesser states automatically check the effects of one individual's actions, but also that they tend to limit the power of the individual himself. Those very qualities or advantages of situation which brought about conflict, and made that animosity between Charles and Francis the centre of European actions for so many years, were cancelled out or limited in their effect by the advantages which the other powers harnessed through experience and interest. One either learns to become involved in alliances, or else remains neutral. Those who do not learn from the past, such as the Duke of Savoy, remain 'a sad monument of the imprudence of weak princes, who, by taking part in the quarrel of mighty neighbours, are crushed and overwhelmed in the shock.'

What Robertson is in effect saying here is that an equality of power and of skills can be developed by circumstances and that this equality comprises a force which can

2. Ibid., p. 79.
be applied impersonally. Although he conceded that 'each state derived some advantage, or was subject to some inconvenience, from its situation or its climate' and that 'each was distinguished by something peculiar in the genius of its people or the constitution of its government', these distinguishing qualities do not inhibit the development of balance of power. Not only are the individual advantages 'counterbalanced by circumstances favourable to others', thereby preventing 'any from attaining such superiority as might have been fatal to all'; but, these advantages are made subservient to a greater end than the immediate benefit of any one group or nation.

Furthermore, the very type of personality useful in a situation of constant balance and changing of alliances is of a sort which is developed by experience and demands no extraordinary qualities. In discussing the personality of Henry VIII, Robertson had pointed out that this monarch had many abilities, but little prudence or foresight; and while it might seem that his passions and enthusiasms were more glorious, it is, Robertson believes, more truly beneficial to possess the more solid virtues. 'A prince of greater art, though with inferior talents' makes more steady and real gains. Such qualities, for instance, distinguished Charles V, though these were limited in their effect by his situation. When, with time and observation, men in general learned to act carefully and with forethought, such

2. Ibid.
3. Ibid., V, p. 229.
characteristics in effect became institutionalised and no longer so 'accidental'. Again, isolated factors are replaced by more lasting ones, and are so through the capacities of men to adapt to their circumstances and situation, through a developing awareness of real interest:

'It was during the reign of Charles V that the ideas on which this system is founded first came to be fully understood. It was then that the maxims by which it has been uniformly maintained since that era were universally adopted.'

Such an argument, it is apparent, is eminently philosophical, primarily for two reasons: in the first place, if Robertson had once seen Francis's existence as providential, his later explanation of Francis's role tends rather to suggest the importance of a long series of causes in the history of many countries, none of which are shown as having been guided by the hand of providence. Men act simply as their circumstances direct, and in the sixteenth century the coming together of innumerable factors has brought about a particular but very 'natural' situation. In the second place, Robertson also points out that it is interest which has led to the change in international policies. Necessity has created the motives, but the solutions are a result of man adapting to his situation; the philosophical, then, is achieved over a considerable period of time, and we must see a vast number of factors making up one whole. The manners of men have changed gradually to form a new situation which is conducive to the continuation of the real interests of all:

'when nations are in a state similar to each other, and keep equal pace in their advances towards refinement, they are not exposed to the calamity of sudden conquests. Their acquisitions of knowledge, their progress in the art of war, their political sagacity and address, are nearly equal. The fate of states in this situation depends not on a single battle. Their internal resources are many and various. Nor are they themselves alone interested in their own safety, or active in their own defence. Other states interpose, and balance any temporary advantage which either party may have acquired.'

CHAPTER VI

INSTITUTIONAL, PARTICULARLY MORAL, VARIATIONS

In the previous chapter we have seen that although Robertson introduces the element of providence as a causal factor, he also concedes that interest is a fundamental part of human nature, and that the balance which is seen to emerge between the European states, for instance, results from the expression of this interest. This acknowledgement of the role of interest, and also of the importance of the unintended effects of human actions, is an integral part of the theme which can be seen throughout all of his works: that man only develops his true nature when he is free from economic dependence on others, and that this economic freedom produces a society in which an unplanned balance between various groups helps maintain the basic human needs of stability and a certain amount of order. Such a thesis is an integral part of the theoretical philosophy, especially in its emphasis on the general development of man and in its belief that we must always relate the capacity of men to express their basic nature to the form of society in which they live.

Yet, side by side with the usage of interest, Robertson introduces other elements besides providence into his philosophy of the factors which do, or should, influence human actions, and certain of these appear to have little in common with the theoretical philosophy. This is not to deny that throughout his historical works
he uses the concepts of similar economic situations producing similar institutions\(^1\), and of stages of development, that he believes each stage necessarily produces particular customs and laws which reflect the form of subsistence which predominates. Furthermore, we cannot deny that he occasionally does interpret men's actions in terms which correspond closely to those employed in *Moral Sentiments*, and does so most explicitly in *Scotland*, which suggests that by 1759 he was both aware of\(^2\) and had accepted at least Smith's ideas of passions, rank, and the sympathetic process. He speaks, for instance, of the identification which the ordinary man has with the sufferings of those above him in terms similar to those used by Smith:

'A woman, young, beautiful, and in distress, is naturally the object of compassion. The comparison of their present misery with their former splendour usually softens us in favour of illustrious sufferers. But the people beheld the deplorable situation of their sovereign with insensibility; and so strong was their persuasion of her guilt, and so great the violence of their indignation, that the sufferings of their queen did not, in any degree, mitigate their resentment, or procure

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1. See, for instance, Charles V, Works, V, pp. 460-462 (Note VI), 504 (Note XXI). This concept of similar institutions is also to be seen in the later editions of *Scotland* (see Works, I, p. 11) although it is absent from the first edition in which the concept of diffusion, or single origin, explains the spread of feudalism. Ordinarily, at least in his later writing, Robertson does not accept diffusion as explanation: see below, Chapter VIII.
2. The first edition of *Scotland* appeared in February 1759, the same year in which MS was published; it is highly probable that Robertson was aware of Smith's ideas previous to their publication, and that the concepts of sympathy etc. are those of Smith rather than Robertson is evident from the full and detailed discussion of them in MS itself: see above, Chapter II especially.
Robertson also considers the operation of other passions, and the relationship of these to the variations in human situation — again, in such a manner as to indicate the influence of Smith's work:

'Resentment is, for obvious and wise reasons, one of the strongest passions in the human mind. The natural demand of this passion is, that the person who feels the injury should himself inflict the vengeance due on that account. The permitting this, however, would have been destructive to society; and punishment would have known no bounds, either in severity or in duration. For this reason, in the very infancy of the social state, the sword was taken out of private hands, and committed to the magistrate.'

Nonetheless, in spite of these instances, it would appear that Robertson's ideas concerning the role of historical writing and the nature of the principles which should motivate men also have a profound effect on his interpretation of human nature; and thus, that the actual acceptance of the concept of stages, of the operations of sympathy, of the variations in men's laws and other institutions which result from this stadial development, does not in itself lead to a consistently relativist interpretation of human actions. In Charles V Robertson stated that the historian gained a 'satisfaction' which was natural to him 'when he contemplates the humanity of

'his countrymen'; in Scotland he had earlier made it clear that the historian could be rightfully indignant — and could express this indignation — when faced with the perversion of basic moral principles. In this work also he had stated with certainty that 'history' possessed a 'dignity', by which he appears to mean not that it reveals the philosophical progress of man but that it should ordinarily discuss only the affairs of men of rank, of 'real' merit and achievement — if occasionally obliged to do otherwise. Such a purpose is hardly philosophical in so far as it ignores both the general and the institutional. More importantly, it is also in Scotland that Robertson made one of his most interesting remarks concerning the nature and purpose of historical writing when, in considering the (to him) inexplicable fact that religious principles and basic political interest combined as causes of the murder of Riccio, he wrote:

"History relates these extravagancies of the human mind, without pretending to justify, or even to account for them; and regulating her own opinions by the eternal and immutable laws of justice and of virtue, points out such inconsistencies, as features of the age which she describes, and records them for the instruction of ages to come."

Such statements, especially the last, are of con-

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1. Works, V, p. 554 (Note XXXII). This is also to be found in the first edition of 1769: I, p. 347.
3. Works, I, p. 246: 'The low birth and indigent condition of this man placed him in a station in which he ought naturally to have remained, unknown to posterity. But what fortune called him to act and to suffer in Scotland, obliges history to descend from its dignity, and to record his adventures.' (1759 ed., I, p. 275).
siderable value because they suggest that Robertson uses his works, and believes that other historians should use theirs, in order to put forward certain basic ideas concerning the purpose of history, concerning acceptable behaviour; to praise particular types of actions, and to condemn others, in short, that he believes history should not only show causes and connections and discuss human institutions¹ (aims very philosophic) but should also make judgments. It should continually evaluate and criticise the past not so much in relative terms as according to 'higher' standards, and for man's instruction.

Again, we should not deny that didacticism is a part of the philosophic spirit², yet this particular usage by Robertson of the past does reveal an interpretation of human nature and a belief in certain constant principles which have little in common with the theoretical ideas. This is so even though we may consider that some of Robertson's attitudes here may in part be attributed to the particular nature of theoretical history itself; its emphasis on philosophical values, on the 'natural course of things', on the relationship between economic situation and the best, most complete, expression of man's nature, does reveal a certain bias. Yet, we must also recognise that the insistence on absolute values and the constant reference which we see in his earlier works especially to a vague 'virtue', 'humanity', 'generosity', 'equity', and 'justice', and the attempt to establish these as basic

¹. See his explicit statements on this in Charles V, Works, V, pp. 11, 551 (Note XXXII).
². See below, Appendix A, pp. 507-510.
to men, without reference to situation or stage of advance\(^1\), indicates that the general tenets of the theoretical interpretation are not the only influence on his work.

However much Robertson may talk, then, of men's notions of property varying 'according to the diversity of their understandings, and the caprice of their passions'\(^2\); of the powers of the human mind developing gradually\(^3\); of the serious mistake men make when they judge and evaluate according to the principles of their own age and not those of the times which they are studying\(^4\), we must assume that such remarks do not reflect a basic and fundamental attitude when he can also refer constantly to 'fundamental principles of justice'\(^5\), to 'laws of humanity'\(^6\), and make such statements as 'integrity ... is the basis of all transactions among men'\(^7\), and 'truth makes an impression nearly the same in every place'\(^8\). This second group of ideas suggests a denial of interest, of relative values, of the very nature of past, 'unphilosophical' societies; and the presence of such attitudes in Robertson's work suggests either a dissatisfaction with the theoretical explanation, or an inability to make it an

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6. Ibid., p. 185.
8. Ibid., p. 537 (Note XXVIII). All statements are to be found in the first editions of the respective works and are continued through subsequent editions.
integral part of his own interpretation or historical philosophy. As in the case of the usage of providence, he may feel that the theoretical does not explain all; or he may continue to be influenced by religious principles, by older, more traditionally moralistic works and feel that the theoretical emphasis on relative values, whatever its limitations, excuses men too much, permits individuals and societies to be accepted too uncritically. The degree to which he uses the concept of stages, of similar situations, of variations, and explains actions in terms of the moral sentiments of men, then, must be measured against the presence in his works of these other attitudes which the theoretical philosophy sought to make redundant. Both philosophies or approaches are used constantly by him, both are continued through edition after edition, and this continuation suggests at least that he did not find unintended benefits and the interest of men incompatible with a belief in established traditions of moral responsibility, duty, and virtue.

The concept of incomplete and imperfect forms of society and government is one which is very much a part of the theoretical philosophy, and Robertson's usage of such phrases and ideas is not in itself any indication

1. That is, works which confine the term 'morality' to purely religious, predominantly Christian, maxims, and do not extend it to political principles also - though this is not to say that Robertson does not accept some maxims of state: see below, pp. 299, 302, 307-308, 313-314.

of lack of adherence to the theoretical beliefs and standards, nor necessarily or invariably a reflection of a belief in some standard of behaviour other than the philosophical values of the theoretical school. It merely reflects the theoretical belief in the slow growth of the human capacities, in the need for particular economic situations to exist in order for men's qualities to ripen. These basic precepts are apparent in all of Robertson's work, both in the form of specific statements, and in his detailed consideration of the development of men in different types of society. In his view, this imperfection and incompleteness is reflected particularly in the dominance of the individual in the pre-commercial societies, in the lack of social unity, of common goals, and common beneficial achievements. In the 'state of nature', or the first stage of human development, he believes, man is really only acting for himself, and is not a part of any system:

'Man existed as an individual before he became the member of a community; and the qualities which belong to him under his former capacity should be known, before we proceed to examine those which arise from the latter relation. This is pecu-

3. This phrase is used explicitly by Robertson - see, for example, Scotland, Works, I, p. 279 and Charles V, Works, V, p. 559 (Note XXXVII) - but he means by this no more than the savage state.
'liarly necessary in investigating the manners of rude nations. Their political union is so incomplete, their civil institutions and regulations so few, so simple, and of such slender authority, that men in this state ought to be viewed rather as independent agents than as members of a regular society. The character of a savage results almost entirely from his sentiments or feelings as an individual, and is but little influenced by his imperfect subjection to government and order.'

In this form of society, the very nature of subsistence - primarily hunting with some limited communal cultivation - must necessarily affect the operation of human ingenuity and the sort of relationships which men have with one another:

'The wants of men, in the original and most simple state of society, are so few, and their desires so limited, that they rest contented with the natural productions of their climate and soil, or with what they can add to these by their own rude industry. They have no superfluities to dispose of, and few necessities that demand a supply.'

This very want of property and of individual ownership in the savage state helps explain the self-centredness of men, whether this is within the community itself or as regards the limited contact which societies like these have with other, similar, ones. With regard to the former situation particularly, it is to be observed that where there is no dependence or material-based distinction between men, there is no reason for dissent (except that resulting from revenge, which, in any event is more a private than a public matter): 'Where the right of separate and exclusive possession is not introduced, the great

1. America, Works, III, p. 249, and see also pp. 351-352.
"object of law and jurisdiction does not exist", a belief which had been clearly stated by Smith. It is this very lack of property which determines, furthermore, the extent of the expression of human nature, and this same lack which, limiting the interaction of men, both helps determine and strengthen the individualism and independence which is so characteristic of the customs and institutions of this stage. In all the institutions of this level of human development, then, we may expect to find a dominance of unrestrained passion, of the superiority of the individual, and a feeling of looseness and impermanence.

The second and third of these characteristics are to be seen especially in the form of government typical of this system, or rather, in the absence of government in any formal sense. The equality of all members of the society, which is an inevitable result of the lack of goods, of conflicting interests, produces only the distinctions of age, wisdom, or courage and these are of use mainly in any dealings with other tribes. The advice

1. America, Works, III, p. 294. Robertson does concede that interest exists, at an intertribal level, but this only affects external policy: ibid., pp. 303-304.
2. See above, pp. 86-88.
4. Ibid., pp. 276, 293, 295, 306, 350, and see above, p. 87. Although Robertson briefly discusses the customs and distinguishing marks of the American Indian in Charles V (Works, V, pp. 460-462, Note VI) he does not specifically mention the distinctions of age and wisdom as characteristics of this stage, as reflecting the lack of property, in either the first or subsequent editions; this, however, may indicate no more than that he was not particularly concerned with this expression of situation, even this stage of development, in this work.
of the elders in most of the American tribes, Robertson believes, is rarely heeded in domestic matters if it interferes with the operation of the basic passions such as revenge. The social union brought about by the demands of the limited 'foreign policy' of this system, has no continuity because of the brevity of intertribal conflict, and thus there is no fixed policy holding the state together - except the implicit one of simple survival which demands no meeting and no discussion. Such circumstances necessarily mean that men 'retain a high idea of equality and independence.'

This individualism and independence, Robertson believes, this concern primarily for the self and the ordinary lack of identification with others, is also to be seen in every other institution or custom found in this sort of social group - a belief which certainly indicates his explicit acceptance of the effect of situation and the necessarily limited expressions of man's nature. One of the most distinguishing characteristics of the savage state, he believed, was the strength of the human passions especially those such as revenge which influenced public policy and intratribal mores. Though Robertson does not consider the operation of revenge in this instance by any

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2. Ibid., p. 280.
3. Ibid., pp. 303-304. See also Charles V, Works, V, p. 462 (Note VI) and see above, p. 215, where Robertson points out how natural this passion and its particular expression in this stage is, but at the same time emphasises that what is natural can also be destructive.
detailed employment of 'moral sentiments' concepts, he shows that it is encouraged by, as it helps maintain, the extremely loose social arrangements of such systems: this type of revenge reveals a lack of consistent policy, an absence of prudence, and a failure to take into account what we might describe as 'real' interest\(^1\). This is especially the case in instances of private revenge where the unity which is produced, however briefly, by affronts from other tribes, is missing\(^2\). This is not to deny that the savage has some concept of blood ties, of family pride, Robertson believes\(^3\), but rather to point out that while there is some social cohesion and benevolence in actions against other groups, there is only a limited benevolence in private revenge\(^4\); thus, the form of government which does exist must be considered as imperfect:

'The first step towards establishing a public jurisdiction has not been taken in those rude societies. The right of revenge is left in private hands. If violence is committed, or blood is shed, the community does not assume the power either of inflicting or of moderating the punishment. It belongs to the family and friends of the person injured or slain to avenge the wrong, or to accept of the reparation offered by the aggressor .... as it is

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2. Ibid., pp. 303-304. See also Charles V, Works, V, p. 71: 'Small tribes or communities, even in their rudest state, may operate in concert, and exert their utmost force. They are excited to act ... by their present feelings.... passions communicate from breast to breast; and all the members of the community ... rush into the field ....' See further, ibid., p. 37, and 1769 ed., I, pp. 43-44, 84.
4. The word 'benevolence' is not used by Robertson, however.
"deemed pusillanimous to suffer an offender to escape with impunity, resentment is implacable and everlasting."

The imperfection of this system, and its necessary restrictions on human feelings, are perhaps seen most clearly in the domestic relationships of the savage, where the limitations of certainty, resulting from the irregular procurement of subsistence, means that affection is proportionately restricted. The relationships between men and women, between parent and child, are thus 'unnatural', and although there is a form of marriage and a mutual rearing of children, as well as established family and blood ties, the position of both women and children is insecure. This fact seems so obvious to Robertson that he has little patience with theories which speculate on the advantages of the more advanced states:

'Whether man has been improved by the progress of arts and civilization in society, is a question which, in the wantonness of disputation, has been agitated among philosophers. That women are indebted to the refinements of polished manners for a happy change in their state, is a point which can admit of no doubt. To despise and to degrade the female sex, is the characteristic of the savage state in every part of the globe. Man, proud of excelling in strength and in courage, the chief marks of pre-eminence among rude people, treats woman, as an inferior, with disdain.'

2. See ibid., pp. 264-265, 291-292. The fact that men are often able to find food without effort - which results in a limitation of their faculties - does not mean that such food is not subject to the vagaries of climate.
4. Ibid., pp. 275-276 - Robertson is obviously referring to Rousseau here. See also above, pp. 82-85.
Women have no real existence in this stage, and live a life little better than slavery, a situation which leads them to destroy their female children in order to spare them from the misery of a similar fate. Such a state of affairs also means that a smaller number of children are born, 'thus the first institution of social life is perverted'. A similar 'perversion' can also be seen, in Robertson's view, in the relationship which exists between parents and those children which they do have; for while marriage does exist - in a sense - and children are looked after by both parents, the bonds between parent and child are broken at an early age. The child is soon forced to become an individual himself, and the attachment of the parent declines in proportion to this independence. Such freedom, furthermore, is encouraged - at least as far as male children are concerned - by the very nature of the society:

'Thus the ideas which seem to be natural to man in his savage state, as they result necessarily from his circumstances and condition in that period of his progress, affect the two capital relations in domestic life. They render the union between husband and wife unequal; they shorten the duration, and weaken the force of the connection between parents and children.'

In a society which cannot afford luxuries, either of subsistence or of feeling, the ability to live as an independent and competent being is uppermost; this principle is reflected, in Robertson's opinion, in all of the tra-

2. Ibid., p. 280.
ditions and customs of the society: such as the killing of
the deformed, the old, and those otherwise unable to fend
for themselves. There is no provision for the maintenance
of others, and where physical strength is needed for sur-
vival, and thus becomes the distinguishing characteristic
of the society, the support of those such as the deformed
is unrealistic. It is only when emphasis is placed on in-
tellectual, rather than on these more basic, qualities
that such persons are seen as having the right to live ---
and such a philosophical development comes only with time.

These qualities of independence and instability which
are so natural to this stage are to some extent seen by
Robertson to have declined in the second form of human so-
ciety; yet he also points out that because man only de-
velops gradually, liberty or love of 'freedom' is to be
found in the barbarian system also. In this stage, the
concept of property is limited or imperfect; and, indeed,
Robertson feels that property can only be completely 'un-
derstood' when it is both fixed and individual. Men have
little inclination to work when they do not gain the fruits
of their labour, and the idle take advantage of communal
property arrangements to avoid labour. The existence in
the barbarian stage of group possession and responsibility

2. Robertson does in fact see considerable similarity be-
tween the American Indian and the German barbarian
tribes (Charles V, Works, V, p. 462 (Note VI) although
he does point out that they are not identical in all
respects.
3. America, Works, IV, p. 299: 'A society, destitute of
the first advantage resulting from social union, was
not formed to prosper. Industry, when not excited by
the idea of property in what was acquired by its own
efforts, made no vigorous exertion.'
thus means that there is no very sophisticated form of society, no 'perfect' institutions. Subsistence is based primarily on herding, which is certainly an advance over the more sporadic and uncertain hunting/minimal agriculture subsistence of the savage; yet men still achieve status through qualities such as courage, and not through wealth, since property is communal and not distinguishing. The free man prizes his freedom, which, however, is not real liberty, but the lack of restraint. A more regular form of subsistence, therefore, does not lead to any considerable change in sentiments, in institutions—particularly when grazing is supplemented by hunting. Rather, it means a continuation of the same sort of manners and attitudes characteristic of the earlier stage: the German barbarians, for instance, were noted for their distrust of, and contempt for, those societies in which a more settled pattern of life was established, and believed that the arts produced 'ennervation' and 'corruption':

'Inured, by the rigour of their climate or the poverty of their soil, to hardships which rendered their bodies firm, and their minds vigorous; accustomed to a course of life which was a continual preparation for action; and disdaining every occupation but that of war or of hunting; they undertook and prosecuted their military enterprises with an ardour and impetuosity, of which men softened by the refinements of more polished times can scarcely form any idea.'

The limitation of wants which checks both the development of mind, and the relationship between one community

2. Ibid., p. 452 (Note II).
3. Ibid., p. 4.
and another - evident in the savage state - exists in the barbarian system also:

'Every little community subsisting on its own domestic stock, and satisfied with it, is either little acquainted with the states around it, or at variance with them. Society and manners must be considerably improved, and many provisions must be made for public order and personal security, before a liberal intercourse can take place between different nations.'

In this state natural independence continues, and men are hardly affected by those qualities which later ages value and describe as civilised. Because of the nature of the barbarian society, its male inhabitants are outstanding only for those virtues which reflect their martial habits: 'force of mind, a sense of personal dignity, gallantry in enterprise, invincible perseverance in execution, contempt of danger and of death' - some of which virtues are also to be found among the American Indians. Such qualities are of the sort which Smith described as necessarily inhibiting the full operation of sympathy, but Robertson does not consider them in such terms, being mainly concerned to point out the characteristics of this stage and the effects of these on those social institutions which do exist. Revenge is still a passion which strongly affects men, both as regards their own honour or that of their

2. Ibid., p. 17.
5. However, see America, Works, III, p. 315: 'in America, where the genius and maxims of war are extremely different, passive fortitude is the quality in highest estimation' - the comparison here is with war in the modern society.
families, and as regards the honour of the tribe. Again, as in the savage society, the disruptive effects of this passion are perhaps greatest within the community itself:

'through fierce barbarians continued to be the sole judges in their own cause, their enmities were implacable and immortal; they set no bounds either to the degree of their vengeance, or to the duration of their resentment.'

The role of the magistrate was thus limited, and this limitation necessarily affected the degree to which men in this stage were aware of the 'real' nature of justice; thus, although Robertson considers the effects of this unrestrained revenge to be less disastrous here than in the feudal society where men rightfully expect more stability, he nonetheless believes that such ferocity is hardly conducive to the emergence of the more philosophical values of human society.

This is not to say that Robertson considers the domestic arrangements of this stage in any great detail, although we may perhaps assume from his correlation of the savage and barbarian states that he thought the position of women and children hardly much improved from that of the most primitive society. Rather, he is more concerned with the warriors, the fighting men, of this system and intent to show how the rudimentary development of property typical of this stage limited the concept of unity.

1. Charles V, Works, V, p. 49. See also ibid., p. 459 (Note VI).
2. Ibid., pp. 459-460 (Note VI); see also above, p. 88 where Smith is shown to have given the same instance of imperfect justice - that murder can be punished by a fine, rather than by death. Although Robertson does not specifically refer to 'incomplete' forms of justice here it is evident, especially in his study of the feudal stage, that he thinks all forms prior to those of the commercial society to be lacking - even this last instance, the modern society, is not completely acceptable to him.
It is true, he feels, that the barbarian society has advanced sufficiently far to possess a larger number of more formal institutions than the savage, and true also that the nature of the distinction among men comes gradually to be measured more in terms of property and goods than in those of physical qualities. But the institutions which do exist generally tend to reflect mainly the continuation of personal freedom, and the lack of an efficient and highly centralised organisation. Bravery still plays an important part, and although the passion of revenge is also directed towards external enemies and there is thus some sense of tribe, some benevolence\(^1\), the services of men are 'purely voluntary', as indeed they continue to be for some time, and 'every individual among the ancient Germans was left at liberty to choose whether he would take part in any military enterprise which was proposed; there seems to have been no obligation to engage in it, imposed on him by public authority.'\(^2\) The major distinction between this type of social interaction and that of the savage state—apart from the fact that there seems to be greater concert in the latter as far as skirmishes against other tribes are concerned - is that the new form of property in goods is used by certain individuals in order to gain adherents\(^3\). This reflects both the rise of individual property and the continued freedom to choose whether one will support a

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1. Charles V, Works, V, pp. 37, 49: however, Robertson does not explicitly use the word 'benevolence' here.
2. Ibid., pp. 10, 459 (Note VI).
3. Ibid., p. 459 (Note VI).
communal undertaking, none at all, or one which appears to benefit one more wealthy or influential individual - for it would seem that the actions of these new groups are not directed towards general benefit or profit. Even in general communal undertakings there is a considerable degree of independence; all the freemen participate in the public meetings and decide on major issues, so that, even though there are 'kings' in this state Robertson is careful to point out that these can by no means be seen as possessing the rights or powers of monarchs of more advanced ages. In short, he feels that the barbarian society possesses such freedom and independence as seem 'scarcely compatible with a state of social union, or with the subordination necessary to maintain it'.

In America Robertson stated that the use of animals as labour and the use of metals to fashion implements were of major importance in the development of man; providence has provided these and when man's nature is capable of

1. Charles V, Works, V, p. 459 (Note VI). See also below, Chapter VIII.
2. Charles V, Works, V, p. 10 - in the edition used, the word 'seat' rather than 'state' is used, but this is a misprint. See also ibid., pp. 458-462 (Note VI) where Robertson discusses the nature of the barbarian institutions in general terms. It should be pointed out that Tacitus's Germania, which is one of the main sources of Robertson's information, reveals a society much more complex and highly organised. However, Robertson does point out that there were variations within the German tribes and that we ought not to build any 'political theory' on their customs which does not take into account the fact that some tribes were 'so much improved, that they began to be corrupted' (ibid., p. 460). This warning is clearly directed against those who saw the ancient Germans as representing true freedom, uncorrupted by property and arts. The essence of this warning, though, is not always heeded by Robertson himself: see below, pp. 359-364.
taking advantage of this provision, the cultivation of the soil is greatly improved and a more advanced stage of society develops: 'this command over the inferior creatures is one of the noblest prerogatives of man, and among the greatest efforts of his wisdom and power'. With the advance of agriculture and the dependence of man on it, the nature of property is better 'understood' and a greater security is achieved - at least in relation to the uncertainty of earlier ages. The communal begins to give way to the individual on a much larger scale, and the limited extent of private ownership in the barbarian system is superseded: 'whoever was able to clear and to cultivate a field was recognized as the proprietor. His industry merited such a recompence'. Men should be able to retain the fruits of their labour, and thereby to fulfill their natural interest, for, as Robertson was to point out in America, where 'the head had no inducement to contrive, nor the hand to labour', there was no prosperity, no developing of the natural talents and ingenuity.

This change in the form of property holding is considered in some detail in Charles V, at least insofar as the European land system is concerned. The first change from the barbarian independence is seen when the German tribes settled in those countries which they had invaded.

2. Charles V, Works, V, p. 457 (Note V) - although he is speaking specifically of America here, Robertson believes that we can say the same of Europe after the barbarian invasions: a 'similar principle' operates.
3. America, Works, IV, p. 299; Robertson further believes that 'from the moment that industry had the certain prospect of a recompence, it advanced with rapid progress' (ibid.).
Each soldier was a freeman and his share of the spoils in land was of the nature known as allodial, being totally and unequivocally his; he was not obliged to perform service for such land, and his independence was still maintained. Eventually, however, the need for self-defence against both the remains of the original population and against later invaders resulted in all landowners banding together for mutual protection. Failure to abide by this agreement of 'tacit consent' resulted in a fine: thus, the first duty of the allodial freeman was to that form of state which existed. This mutual protection, however, did not mean military service, or attendance in the courts of the superior lords, so that we may characterise such a society as one in which the propertied man was still independent, but also one in which he was beginning to be aware of wider duties, even though these necessarily were of benefit to himself as well as to others.

The next stage in the development of land-holding in Europe, Robertson believes, is to be seen in the emergence and nature of the beneficia, land given by kings or chiefs to their followers which replaced the moveable property of earlier ages. Formerly, supporters were remunerated with weapons or similar objects; with the emergence of the beneficia, with this new form of goods, their services to an individual were probably increased, leading

2. Ibid., p. 464 (Note VIII).
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid., p. 465 (Note VIII).
to the division of the society into a collection of more distinctive groups. While Robertson, in a philosophical manner, cautions that 'because there are no records so ancient' we cannot determine 'with absolute precision' if new services were demanded of the retainers\(^1\), he feels it to be probable that this was the case; why, he asks, 'should a king have stripped himself of his domain, if he had not expected that, by parcelling it out, he might acquire a right to services to which he had formerly no title?'\(^2\). With time, the beneficia became hereditary, and the allodial tenures became fiefs\(^3\), and the duties pertaining to them changed to correspond to feudalism, a form of society in which the individual became more prominent, and the development of men in general, checked.

If the allodial distribution of property in Europe had persisted, Robertson believes, the corresponding form of government would have been almost as democratic in its nature as that which we see in the barbarian stage; and, indeed, he does discuss the allodial government as it is to be seen in the history of France. The widespread division of property among the freemen leads to a large measure of equality and to public control of those officials who do exist:

'Under the French monarchs of the first race, the royal prerogative was very inconsiderable. The general assemblies of the nation, which met annually at stated seasons,

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1. Charles V, Works, V, p. 466 (Note VIII); he depends here on the 'proofs and reasonings and conjectures' of Montesquieu and de Mably (ibid., p. 467).
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid., pp. 467-471 (Note VIII).
'extended their authority to every department of government. The power of electing kings, of enacting laws, of redressing grievances, of conferring donations on the prince, of passing judgment in the last resort, with respect to every person and to every cause, resided in this great convention of the nation.'

The king is elected, the laws are universal and general; it is a system which clearly has room for a great deal of individualism still, but one which also has certain benefits because the relationship between property possession and expression of man's best qualities in partial operation. This, at least, is Robertson's belief and the basis of his theories concerning the nature of government in this stage; yet, although he did consider that the allodial system was both popular and beneficial to men he was able to reach such a conclusion through what appears to be a misunderstanding of the very nature of such societies.

While Robertson later made it apparent, then, that the separation of power from property in a state such as Venice meant that a large part of the population was discriminated against, he appears to be unaware that in his discussion of allodial France he is putting forward as universal those rights which belong only to a particular group, thereby establishing an 'ancient constitution', beneficial to all, which was to be destroyed by later monarchs. Here, if the concept of 'ancient constitution' is not used in the most extreme sense, it is nonetheless

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1. Charles V, Works, V, p. 140, and see also pp. 560-566 (Note XXXVIII) and p. 576 (Note XLII).
2. Ibid., p. 143, and see below, pp.322-323.
3. See, for instance, Pocock, op. cit. See also Chapters VIII and IX, below.
exploited in such a manner as to suggest the existence of widespread liberties in an early stage of man's social union. This, however, is a valid implication only if we ignore the fate of the greater part of the population, and this in fact is what Robertson has done. He bases his study only on the freemen and overlooks the fact that there are two very distinct groups in allodial France, as in commercial Venice, and that one of these has no 'rights' at all. Yet, even though he appears to have misused his sources, or, perhaps, has depended on them too much, it is true that his description of the allodial state as it refers to the position of the freeman does not necessarily support any 'political theory' since these freemen appear to possess real political power and a sense of self, both of which are more extensive at this time, Robertson believes, than in the feudal system.

In his consideration of these early forms of social grouping Robertson was not particularly concerned to describe the actions of men in terms of benevolence or sympathy, to go into any detail of the operations of the moral sentiments. Indeed, in both Scotland and Charles V especially, because he had little reason to study either savage or barbarian life, his references to such systems are brief and rare. He does, however, clearly accept the concept of stages and with it the variations in human behaviour which are produced by situation; and this is true also of America.

2. For instance, he refers the reader to Hotman's Franco-galia (ibid., p. 561, Note XXXVIII) though he must have been aware of its particular bias. See also Chapter VIII below, and pp. 277-278.
where, although his dislike of the limitations of primitive life is evident, he nonetheless makes a considerable effort to explain such limitations of the human qualities by relating them to situation, and also points out those values or institutions which are seen to have some merit. Implicitly, if not openly, he accepts the role of self-interest, of individualism, of the selfishness of men, their limited aims, their necessarily imperfect forms of government; and, although there are some instances where we may take issue with his interpretation, we do not find any insistence that men in these stages must act from other, more philosophical, principles.

This is not the case, however, when Robertson comes to consider those societies where fixed property in land is an established feature, and this change in his attitude appears to result particularly from his belief that it is in these very systems that men expect greater returns from society. He speaks, for instance, of 'that security and protection which men expect from entering into civil society', and though he finds principles such as revenge to be natural, he considers it also natural as well as necessary that men devise some limitations on their passions when property becomes more stable. Thus, although he remains concerned to relate situation and custom, and continues to be aware of variations produced by mode of subsistence, there is a

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2. See above, pp. 236-237.
greater tendency in his consideration of these later stages, from feudalism onwards, to introduce more philosophical factors as ones which ought to influence the actions of men. This is particularly the case in both Scotland and Charles V, where dual explanations are in operation - an acceptance of the nature and limits of society resulting from property distribution, and a belief in the need for 'virtue' in order to create or maintain those values which we might describe as philosophical, a 'virtue' which has little in common with the political virtu of other philosophies. There is thus in Robertson's work a complexity of thought and interpretation which does not in general trouble other members of the theoretical school; and the relativism which they at least sought to establish is often missing from his evaluations and leads to considerable problems.

This is not to deny that Robertson continues to stress the basic theoretical idea of the individualistic nature of societies such as the feudal. He believes that the division of property and its becoming both fixed and private leads to a distinction of ranks and to inequality, and believes also that the dependence on material goods is an entirely natural process - even though he does not give the same reasons for its effectiveness that Smith does. And in India in particular he shows that the certainty which knowledge of place induces can be of considerable benefit to the security of that society at least. At the same

1. See below, Appendix B.
2. See below, pp.298ff.
3. See above, pp. 60-66.
time, he thinks it obvious that an imperfect form of this
distinction between men, which emerged when the ordinary
man had no means by which to establish his own inde¬
pendence, is clearly detrimental to the development of both
property and, through this, of human nature. If there is
no clear distinction in Robertson's work between 'natural'
and 'normal' that we see in Smith, this is not to say that
he does not support the theoretical 'natural course of
things' and the conclusions produced by this philosophy. If
property brings power, he believes, it does not automati-
cally bring responsibility, and when men interfere with the
rightful return of labour they will deny others the benefits
which ought to be derived from their work. Thus, as long as
agriculture remains the basis of the feudal state, as long
as land is divided among a few, the benefits of individual
possession must necessarily be limited. The remainder of
society is profoundly affected by this situation as it
lacks both the liberty of earlier ages, and the stability
which should develop in the civil system; society:

'is in its most corrupted state, at that period
when men have lost their original independence
and simplicity of manners, but have not attained

1. Indeed, Robertson's acceptance of the restrictions pla-
ced on men through the Indian caste system should be
seen in relation to one of his reasons for writing this
work - to show that the Indian society was an advanced
one and thus that the Indians themselves should be
treated in a better fashion than hitherto: India,
Works, II, p. 535, and see also Blair Adam Papers,
Robertson's letter of 24 May, 1791, f. 1 (permission
to quote from these papers was not granted). This
support of the caste system, further, cannot be taken
as evidence that similar inhibitions of human poten-
tial are tolerated by Robertson.

2. See above, pp. 96, 102-104.
'that degree of refinement which introduces a sense of decorum and of propriety in conduct, as a restraint on those passions which lead to heinous crimes.'

In the feudal society it is apparent that while men 'ought to have adopted new maxims concerning the redress of injuries, and to have regulated, by general and equal laws, that which they formerly left to be directed by the caprice of private passion', the power and authority of the few great landowners meant that a 'universal anarchy, destructive, in a great measure, of all the advantages which men expect to derive from society, prevailed'. The few control the many, and the dependence of the latter means that if they have any 'rights', these must be limited. That any benefits, in a material sense, which have arisen from property becoming fixed and permanent and private, are a pre-rogative of those who own the land, is a principle believed both natural and just by Robertson; his opposition to the institutions of the feudal system results from the fact that he believes the situation of the greater part of the population prevents the development of a concept of general and extensive rights. Men work the soil and produce food, but because they have no means of enforcing any claim to the benefits of their labour, they cannot be said to have any independence, or to gain the rightful returns from their work.

As far as the privileged group of this society is

2. Ibid., p. 37.
concerned, Robertson does see some signs of social union; they are able to defend the 'state' — though this would seem to be no more than their own interest and power — against external aggression at least. But as far as domestic policy is concerned, the same faults remain that we have seen in the earlier stages of development, with the qualification that such faults are now far more dangerous. The system of kinship which exists in this stage means that each leader or noble has a large number of enthusiastic supporters whom he can depend upon to aid him in his depredations against the authority and property of other nobles:

'It was a point of honour with every man in Europe, during several ages, not to desert the chief on whom he depended, and to stand by those with whom the ties of blood connected him. Whoever then was bold enough to violate the laws, was sure of devoted adherents, willing to abet, and eager to serve him, in whatever manner he required.'

Furthermore, the greater mobility resulting from whatever advances in arms and social organisation existed, the increase in men's capacity to continue fighting over a long period of time, meant that these internal battles were much more dangerous than the foreign 'wars' of the savages and

2. Ibid., p. 37.
3. Robertson does not discuss this relationship explicitly in terms of 'benevolence' but he did go into considerable detail as to its nature and operation in Scotland, (Works, I, pp. 21-22) and states in Charles V (Works, V, pp. 505-506, Note XXI) that the degree of kinship was extensive in Europe and extended beyond actual blood ties. However, this type of relationship between men is to be distinguished from both that between lord and vassal, and those bonds of mutual defence made between different nobles.
the limited skirmishing of the barbarians. Thus it is a characteristic of the feudal state that while defence against external attack is effectively met by the feudal army, this same force, split into many groups each under its respective head, brings chaos to its own country, a situation which is not to be found in earlier forms of society: 'the principles of disorder and corruption are discernible in that constitution under its best and most perfect form'.

The concept of private warfare, of men's right to express the passions which they feel, thus has effects much more damaging than the gratification of revenge in the barbarian and savage states, because there is more to lose both in property and stability. Assassination, wounding, damage to land, constant disorder, became a way of life as a few increasingly powerful men sought to consolidate their property and the distinguishing marks of their power. If it was not the lords alone who fought in such contests, the presence in their armies of either kin or dependents is not necessarily any indication of support freely given and thus of the existence of some other group with power in this society. Although it is likely that most of the kin of the nobility were eager to partake of their battles, it is also true that the laws of the time obliged them to do so: 'if a person refused to take part in the quarrel of his kinsman, and to aid him against his adversary, he was deemed to have renounced all the rights and privileges of kindredship...'.

2. Ibid., p. 505 (Note XXI).
Since kindred also included vassals and other dependents, who were in any event bound to the noble through ties of military duty, the element of choice was clearly limited; and although Robertson considers such restrictions as a natural expression of society at this stage\(^1\), it is apparent that such institutions reflect the dominance of the will of the powerful as much as other legal customs of the time, such as trial by combat.

This same individualism, this same limitation of others, is also traced by Robertson in other of the institutions and customs of the feudal society; he sees, for instance, that the property of the lords led to their gaining control of judicial power, that they were supreme in their own territory: they 'scorned to consider themselves as subjects', they 'aspired openly at being independent' and 'a kingdom considerable in name and in extent, was broken into as many separate principalities as it contained powerful barons'\(^2\). There was no 'common principle of union', no means by which 'common regulations' could be enforced, even if they had developed, a feature of the feudal system which certainly distinguishes it from the barbarian and allodial stages in which all free men operated together - when they so chose - and the decisions that were made were communal and general. But the 'universal laws' of the latter age - if perhaps exaggerated by Robertson - became obsolete when they could not deal with situations which were foreign to them; and in the feudal era the true nature of government - regular and

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2. Ibid., pp. 13-14.
known laws, appropriate punishment, peace — was 'little understood in theory, and less regarded in practice'.

The disorder produced by this situation was also reflected, as we have to some extent seen above, in the inhibition of the ordinary man — 'the people, the most numerous as well as the most useful part of the community, were either reduced to a state of actual servitude, or treated with that same insolence and rigour as if they had been degraded into that wretched condition' — and so great was the insecurity of life that many small freeholders were forced to surrender their property and to become slaves in order to gain a modicum of protection. Certainly, it is true that Robertson did not employ the concept of moral sentiments to any great degree in his study of the effect which the feudal government had on those without rights — he does not consider as much as Smith and Millar do those limitations of human development, the relationship, for instance, between the inhibiting of the mind and the ineffective production — but this is not to say that he was unaware of such relationships and such effects — he points out, for instance, how much commerce later contributed to reusing men from inaction, and that agriculture flourishes when those who work the land can benefit from their labour — and sums up his attitude concerning this stage by stating

3. Ibid., p. 475 (Note IX).
4. Ibid., p. 30.
5. Ibid., p. 35. See below, pp. 253-254.
that 'if men do not enjoy the protection of regular government, together with the expectation of personal security, which naturally flows from it, they never attempt to make progress in science, nor aim at attaining refinement in taste or in manners. Such an opinion holds the essence of the theoretical approach, although it is also to be found in other philosophies. Without security of livelihood, there can be no development of human nature or of man's talents. Without a greater interaction between men, hitherto prohibited by the very independence characteristic of primitive society or by the chaos and restrictions inherent in feudalism, there can be only a limited breaking down of mutual suspicions, both locally and internationally. The more that men co-operate and work with each other, the more they have the opportunity to meet, the greater is their appreciation of the need for and benefit of regularity and order and the more they seek that security which has hitherto been noticeable by its absence.

This interpretation of the feudal society in terms of the individualism which it produced is one which is certainly a part of the theoretical philosophy, and Robertson's emphasis on this aspect of the society, and on the fact that it resulted from the division of property, which is found in the first edition of Scotland, indicates that by 1759 he had accepted this means of looking at the past. Certainly the portrait of society which he presented in his

2. Ibid., p. 66.
first work indicated clearly that repressive feudalism\(^1\) which was little modified by commerce and by the development of more popular political power\(^2\) was particularly conducive to the expression of the will of the nobility. Both general and particular causes - the latter including the misfortunes of the monarchy, and the geographical formation of the country\(^3\) - combined to produce a feudal state with all of the faults ordinarily to be found in this. The nobility is shown to be martial and aggressive\(^4\), and necessarily limited in its aims:

'War was the sole profession of the nobles, and hunting their chief amusement; they divided their time between these: unacquainted with the arts, and unimproved by science, they disdained any employment foreign from military affairs, or which required rather penetration and address than bodily vigour.'

Its sole aim, indeed, appears to be the continuation of its power, and most of its activities are directed towards this; any sporadic attempts made by the monarchy to enforce major change did not result in the institutionalising of any solid gains\(^6\), and it was hardly a characteristic of the nobility to encourage an extension of political power to any other group. The spirit of the age, and the limitations of human nature in general, mean that groups rarely surrender privileges or power, and it is

2. Ibid., pp. 13, 20, 67, and also Works, II, pp. 69, 73.
3. Ibid., Works, I, pp. 24-58, 19-20, respectively.
5. Ibid., p. 111.
6. Ibid., pp. 35-58.
foolish for us to expect otherwise. Robertson clearly stated his belief in the dominance of interest and in the need for general, not isolated, action as the basis of major change when, considering the position of the Catholic church in Reformation Scotland, he pointed out that:

'To abandon usurped power, to renounce lucrative error, are sacrifices, which the virtue of individuals has, on some occasions, offered to truth; but from any society of men no such effort can be expected. The corruptions of a society, recommended by common utility, and justified by universal practice, are viewed by its members without shame or horror; and reformation never proceeds from themselves, but is always forced upon them by some foreign hand.'

At the same time, Robertson also uses the concept of absolute values in both Scotland and Charles V - indeed, this is evident in the above quotation and talks in terms of permanent standards which he expects to see enforced, particularly by individuals of power; and does so even though the nature of the society and the spirit of the age hardly permit the evolution of such sentiments. If it is in Charles V especially that he indicates man must change the basis of his actions in relation to the institution of fixed property - men 'ought to have adopted new maxims' - the very emphasis which he places in Scotland on the continuation of a repressive form of feudalism well into the sixteenth century and even later should have meant that he could hardly expect the emergence of such philosophical actions within the Scottish society. As we will see later,

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4. See below, Chapter VII.
most of Robertson's statements concerning the implementation of 'philosophical' standards and rather ill-defined abstract values apply particularly to the nobles or the monarch in both the feudal or the somewhat more commercialised society, and this in itself seems to indicate a belief in the principle of noblesse oblige which appears to have little in common with interest, with the idea of necessity and balance producing unplanned benefit. When such limitations and restraints are expected of the Scottish feudal aristocracy in particular, it would seem that the martial and selfish spirit of the age, which Robertson has been at such pains to establish, is not considered a sufficient reason for certain types of actions. Interest and passion, apparently, however much they are typical of the age, ought to be modified by conscious restraint, by the practice of more generous sentiments.

It is also in Scotland in particular that Robertson uses ideas of general laws and fundamental principles which seem to have little in common with those of the theoretical and even general philosophical approach; and again, given the nature of the society as he has established it, his insistence on the need for a general expression of such sentiments seems to accept of no variation in sentiments in differing societies. In particular, he appears to have an idea of 'humanity' which exists without regard to changes in human institutions and laws, and which indeed appears to encompass more than the 'philosophical' values even of the

1. For a study of the further complexities in Robertson's attitude towards the Scottish nobility, especially as it was during the mid-sixteenth century, see below, Chapters VIII and IX.
developed society in that it seems to make no provision for the prevalence of interest\textsuperscript{1}. When such a concept is used as the standard against which we should evaluate the rigid feudalism of Scottish society, it seems even less appropriate, particularly in the work of one who also maintains the theoretical ideas of variation and gradual development; and is possibly an indication of how much Robertson's moral attitudes have been produced by an earlier tradition in which relativistic concepts have no place\textsuperscript{2}.

As we have seen above\textsuperscript{3}, Robertson believed that there were 'eternal' and 'immutable' laws of 'justice' and 'virtue' by which 'history' bound herself and by which men's actions were to be evaluated. Such principles, Robertson indicates, ought to be the basis of human action, should form the foundation of the principles of humanity when men are in civil society. As we must moderate our just resentment\textsuperscript{4} so also, apparently, must we become 'humane', 'moderate' and 'tolerant' - or whatever 'humanity' comprises and demands. Robertson's ideas of human nature, at least as it ought to be in the civil state, are not remarkable for their clarity. He indicates that men are capable equally of great crime and of virtue, the one dishonourable and the other a credit to this 'nature' of man\textsuperscript{5}. But if he is just as vague concerning the contents of the 'laws of humanity'\textsuperscript{6},

\begin{enumerate}
\item See below, pp. 337-338.
\item See above, p. 219.
\item See p. 216.
\item See above, p. 215.
\item Scotland, Works, I, pp. 107, 124-125.
\item Ibid., p. 185.
\end{enumerate}
the 'fundamental principles of justice', the 'principles of virtue', the 'great principle of equity', he is very certain that many of the actions and attitudes of men in feudal Scotland were contrary to these basic precepts.

The 'sense of honour' is lost, the 'honour and character of the nation' is marred - by the existence of Bothwell's early success - and men in general show an 'intolerance', show that they are 'strangers ... to the laws of humanity' when parliament refuses freedom of worship and plans a zealous persecution of those practising Catholicism. The actual stating of such ideas shows a lack of relativism, a tendency to evaluate other ages, to make judgments concerning them, according to the principles of our own times. And, when such standards - however uncertain the extent of their demands - are seen as those by which men should have acted, as Robertson implies especially in his remarks on the Scottish nobility and the Scottish kings, he clearly invalidates his former careful emphasis on the spirit of the age, on the limitation of the economic situation of society on the actions of men.

Nonetheless, he is sufficiently much of a theoretical historian to believe that men in general become more free...
and that government loses some of the imperfections which it has in the feudal state when there is a greater interaction between societies\(^1\) and a greater distribution of property as a result of the emergence of commerce. In Scotland he pointed out that the nature of the feudal society was inimical to the development of the commercial system\(^2\), and that the number and power of the towns were limited by the strength of the lords:

>'Wherever numbers of men assemble together, order must be established, and a regular form of government instituted; the authority of the magistrate must be recognised, and his decisions meet (sic) with prompt and full obedience. Laws and subordination take rise in cities .... But under the feudal governments, commerce, the chief means of assembling mankind, was neglected...'

If it was not until Charles V - that is, 1769 - that terms such as man's 'wants and desires'\(^4\) are employed by Robertson and not until then that he goes into some detail concerning the relationship between commerce, the growth of cities, and the extension of freedom to a greater number, it is clear that by 1759 he was aware of this relationship which is a basic part of the theoretical interpretation\(^5\).

The major importance of commerce, Robertson believes, is that it itself forms a new type of property, the benefits of which are extended to a large number of men. These benefits include the development of the human mind because of the greater security which men have, and especially be-

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5. Scotland, Works, I, p. 67; II, p. 73.
cause they are now able to retain the fruits of their labour\(^1\): 'in every state there was formed a new order of citizens, to whom commerce presented itself as their proper object, and opened to them a certain path to wealth and consideration\(^2\). Such consideration or respect - 'dignity' was the word used in the first edition\(^3\) - was also extended to men of the new professions which emerged when the former emphasis on arms as the only 'real' occupation began to decline along with the power of the nobility\(^4\), and this consideration meant that a greater part of the population than hitherto possessed standing, reflected the fact that property meant independence and that one's trade or profession permitted one to be free from the will of others.

More importantly, especially considering the vast number of persons who still worked the land, the spirit of liberty which existed in the towns was also extended to those who had formerly been deprived of a political existence: 'the freedom and independence which one part of the people had obtained by the institution of communities, inspired the other with the most ardent desire of acquiring the same privileges ...'\(^5\). Hitherto totally dependent on the lords, deprived of the benefits of their toil, devoid of any sense of political existence, such persons underwent profound changes when they were able to purchase greater freedom and to institutionalise such freedom through the possession of their land:

1. See above, p. 240.
5. Ibid., p. 34.
'The effects of such a remarkable change in the condition of so great a part of the people, could not fail of being considerable and extensive. The husbandman, master of his own industry, and secure of reaping for himself the fruits of his labour, became the farmer of the same fields where he had formerly been compelled to toil for the benefit of another.'

Although, as indicated above, Robertson does not go into any great detail concerning the operation of the human mind in the feudal stage, or consider the relationship between the limitation of the expression of man's best qualities and the repressive form of subsistence in any detail, there are a few suggestions in his works of these relationships and of the beneficial effects produced by the greater freedom of the early commercial stage. The wealth produced by commerce in Italy, for instance, had meant that the new communities in towns were able to purchase their freedom from those emperors or princes who were the titular heads of such societies, and this practice spread all over Europe much to the benefit of the urban population; a 'great body' became free from both 'servitude' and 'all the arbitrary and grievous impositions to which that wretched condition had subjected them'. This very establishment of independent communities also meant that men were no longer dependent on the great lords of each area for protection, each town now being able to provide its own defence. Both these factors, the existence of towns and of their powers, had a considerable effect on the attitudes and feelings of the population, Robertson believes; men were roused to new concerns.

2. Ibid., pp. 27-28.
3. Ibid., pp. 28-29, 494-497 (Notes XVII-XVIII).
4. Ibid., p. 29.
5. Ibid., pp. 29-30.
and their minds could operate more freely:

'The acquisition of liberty made such a happy change in the condition of all the members of communities, as roused them from that inaction into which they had been sunk by the wretchedness of their former state. The spirit of industry revived; commerce became an object of attention, and began to flourish; population increased; independence was established; and wealth flowed into cities which had long been the seat of poverty and oppression.'

Such increase in the activity of the human mind, such release from mental depression produced by economic suppression, is also to be seen, Robertson believes, in the country areas; when men are able to purchase their own lands and thus to gain the fruits of their labour, they undergo profound changes in spirit. Formerly extremely limited in their rights, deprived of those which we ourselves think of as fundamental and natural\(^2\), sometimes 'debased' to the point of failing to accept of liberty\(^3\), those who were able to buy that which they had once worked for another were inspired to new efforts in much the same manner as the inhabitants of the towns:

'The odious names of master and of slave, the most mortifying and depressing of all distinctions to human nature, were abolished. New prospects opened, and new incitements to ingenuity and enterprise presented themselves to those who were emancipated. The expectation of bettering their fortune, as well as that of raising themselves to a more honourable condition, concurred in calling forth their activity and genius; and a numerous class of men, who formerly had no political existence, and were employed merely as instruments of labour, became useful citizens, and contributed towards augmenting the force or riches of the society which adopted them as members.'

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2. Ibid., pp. 472-476 (Note IX).
3. Ibid., p. 503 (Note XX).
4. Ibid., p. 35; 1769 ed., I, pp. 41-42. See also p. 36.
Such considerations are not very detailed nor, at least in relation to the ideas of Smith, are they very profound; but their presence in Robertson's work at this stage of the development of the theoretical philosophy does at least indicate an acceptance of certain details of the concept of situation and of variations in human behaviour produced by this.

In a similar fashion, we might also point out that Robertson does not go into much detail concerning the operation of such sentiments as 'benevolence' in this early commercial stage, at least as regards domestic relationships. In America he did state very clearly how beneficial 'arts' and 'civilization' were to the state of women, that their standing was improved by the development of 'polished manners'; but as far as the earlier works are concerned, we can only assume that changes in property led to the development of a more perfect form of marriage in relation to that which existed in feudalism. Nor, further, can we see much interest by Robertson in what we might describe as specifically 'social' expressions of sentiments such as benevolence, as opposed to the relationships between men introduced by improved legal systems and by a greater participation in political affairs, although he does make some attempt to indicate certain of the effects produced either by commerce, or by the exposure of men to the more liberal sentiments of other nations. He does, for instance, express the belief that the growth of chivalry was of considerable

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benefit to the order of the new society and, indeed, of later times. Reflecting as it does the decline of the power of the nobility and the corresponding decrease in their martial and aggressive occupations—impatient to ascertain the principles and forms by which judges should regulate their decisions. Such a respect for regularity and certainty, reflected in the revival of Roman law, is in strong contrast to the systems which prevailed in the feudal society, such as trial by combat and by revenge, and is in contrast also to the spirit of the laws of the feudal system—uncertainty, inequality, force, and

2. Ibid., p. 60.
3. Ibid., p. 57.
4. Ibid., p. 56.
5. Ibid., pp. 37-57.
a strong element of chance, all of which contribute little
to the development of stability, personal security and peace
of mind. More general laws, on the other hand, which are
created by the society as a whole, are both more regular
and more equal, and help provide that certainty which men
expect from civil society.

The role of the ordinary man in political affairs, a
result of the extension of property, is seen not only in
the changing nature of the legal system of this society
but in the greater involvement of men in administration.
When the towns gained the right of community, and purchased
their freedom from kings, emperors and princes, they gained
the right of municipal jurisdiction; commerce, therefore,
originally led to the achievement of a certain amount of
control over one's financial affairs, one's defences, one's
independence: 'towns, upon acquiring the right of community,
became so many little republics, governed by known and
equal laws'. Such powers were soon extended, again, pri-
marily as a result of commerce, or rather, of the wealth
which it produced:

'as soon as they were enfranchised, and formed
into bodies corporate, (towns) became legal and
independent members of the constitution, and
acquired all the rights essential to freemen.
Amongst these, the most valuable was the privi-
lege of a decisive voice in enacting public
laws and granting national subsidies. It was
natural for cities, accustomed to a form of muni-
cipal government, according to which no regu-
lation could be established within the community,
and no money could be raised but by their own
consent, to claim this privilege. The wealth,
the power, and consideration, which they ac-

'quired on recovering their liberty, added weight to their claim...'

The extension of national political authority to the more popular part of the society is thus both entirely natural and, although by no means without serious drawbacks\(^2\), on the whole beneficial - at least in relation to the former severity of the feudal stage. As the rights which men have acquired through commerce, and the emotional fulfillment which they have achieved through the same means, are so fundamental to the development of man, it is of the greatest importance that such advances be institutionalised in political authority, that the interests of this part of the population be safeguarded by the maintenance of the more liberal principles:

'As soon as the representatives of communities gained any degree of credit and influence in the legislature, the spirit of laws became different from what it had formerly been; it flowed from new principles; it was directed towards new objects; equality, order, the public good, and the redress of grievances, were phrases and ideas brought into use, and which grew to be familiar in the statutes and jurisprudence of the European nations. Almost all the efforts in favour of liberty, in every country of Europe, have been made by this new power in the legislature. In proportion as it rose to consideration and influence, the severity of the aristocratical spirit decreased; and the privileges of the people became gradually more extensive, as the ancient and exorbitant jurisdiction of the nobles was abridged.'

Such a state is far from perfect, but the growth of the human capacities which it permits to a greater part of the inhabitants means that it must be seen as a considerable

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\(^1\) Charles V, Works, V, pp. 31-32.
\(^2\) See below, Chapter VII.
\(^3\) Charles V, Works, V, p. 33.
improvement on the feudal system, and considerably closer to the theoretical concept of more 'perfect' government.

Robertson's interpretation of the breakdown of the feudal stage and of the development of commerce is quite similar to the description given by Smith many years later, though he is not concerned, for instance, with the problem of whether it is more 'natural' for freedom to take its rise in the cities rather than in the country. Even though there is little emphasis by him on the operation of the moral sentiments of men, it is always evident that there is an acceptance of the relationship between liberty and production and the awakening of the mind, of the relationship between the form of subsistence and all the customs and institutions of the society.

We may further see that Robertson points out how the changes in property distribution and in the resulting customs were unintended, and often had greater benefits than men living during such changes would have thought possible. It is evident too, in Robertson's interpretation, that one of the most important changes of all, the gaining of freedom and community status by the cities, often resulted from the 'generosity or facility' of princes, who in many instances were more motivated by present needs than by the thought of future inconveniences resulting from loss of such

1. See above, p. 102.
2. 'Unintended' in the sense that major causal factors such as commerce were an integral part of the history of the European states - for instance, the rise of commerce was closely connected to the involvement of various nations in the Crusades (Charles V, Works, V, pp. 19-26) - and were not thought of consciously as a means of extending property to a greater number.
'The great barons imitated the example of their monarch, and granted like immunities to the towns within their territories. They had wasted such great sums in their expeditions to the Holy Land, that they were eager to lay hold on this new expedient for raising money, by the sale of those charters of liberty. Though the institution of communities was as repugnant to their maxims of policy as it was adverse to their power, they disregarded remote consequences in order to obtain present relief.'

Heterogeneous or unintended benefit clearly emerges from the limited interest of certain men, the philosophical arises from unphilosophical actions.

In his study of this form of property change, then, Robertson recognises the prevalence of interest and accepts man's natural concern with material betterment and with the political power resulting from this. In Charles V especially, and in Scotland to a lesser degree, there is no suggestion that the vast number of interconnecting causes which produced the change from one form of property to another result from anything other than the actions of men over a period of several hundred years. Nor, at least on one level, does Robertson indicate that the customs and institutions of men in this society will express any sentiments other than what the new economic situation can tolerate. Yet at the same time we should also recognise that in Charles V in particular, and to some extent in


2. That is, unless we are to believe that providence has manipulated all these changes in order to create a social system, and bring about an advance in science (Charles V, Works, V, pp. 61-65) which is later to 'cause' the Reformation: see above, pp. 177-184, 187-193. Robertson, however, does not explicitly mention providence as a causal factor, introducing this concept only in his actual study of the Reformation.
Scotland also, there is the same insistence by Robertson on certain values - at least in societies where commerce is soundly established - that we have seen advocated above; and though we may concede that the commercial system has produced customs which appear to be more 'philosophical', more conducive to the expression of man's better qualities, this is hardly the same as suggesting that the existence of such philosophical sentiments should mean the end of interest, or that men should act according to the principles of 'humanity' and 'equity'.

It is also true that many of Robertson's statements regarding these ideal foundations of action apply particularly to individuals of rank and power; but he also indicates that as the expectation of order, security, and regularity in this stage is greater than that expected in the feudal, so also must the virtue and restraint of men in general be greater. Thus he praises Andrea Doria for his virtue and his magnanimity, and clearly approves of what he interprets as the extension of this virtue and lack of self-interest to Doria's 'countrymen' as a whole:

'The influence of Doria's virtue and example communicated itself to his countrymen; the factions which had long torn and ruined the state seemed to be forgotten; prudent precautions were taken to prevent their reviving .... Doria .... preserved a great ascendant over the councils of

1. As Scotland is mainly concerned with feudalism, it is only the actions of the somewhat more advanced English nation, especially those of Queen Elizabeth, which can be seen as instances of virtue or lack of it in the commercial state: see Chapter VII.
3. See Chapter VII.
'the republic, which owed its being to his generosity. The authority which he possessed was more flattering, as well as more satisfactory, than that derived from sovereignty; a dominion founded in love and in gratitude; and upheld by veneration for his virtues, not by the dread of his power.'

This happy state of things, however - as Robertson concedes - lasted less than twenty years, which suggests that even institutionalised 'virtue' and 'magnanimity' and 'generosity' are not necessarily permanently or consistently maintained. In view of this, it is difficult to see how there can be any expectation on Robertson's part that men can live outside the spirit of their age, and to enforce qualities which are somewhat foreign to it. That he does have such expectations will be shown at some length in the following chapter when we consider his attitude towards government and towards those who possess political power.

The greater part of Robertson's work did not discuss any society much beyond the sixteenth century, or at least did not do so in any detail; and although he does mention the beneficial changes which have occurred in Scotland with the breakdown of the aristocratic power, particularly since the Union of 1707, he has no call to go into any consideration of the benefits or drawbacks of the relatively modern state. For this reason many of the problems which pre-occu-

2. Ibid., VI, pp. 232-240.
3. It is worth noting, however, that Robertson does not appear to expect a monarch such as James I of Scotland to have been successful in implementing concepts which reflected a more advanced society than his own (Scotland, Works, I, pp. 39-40) - presumably because the balance of power was against him.
plied Smith and Millar, particularly the perversion of the moral sentiments which occurred in the industrial system, are ones which hardly present themselves. This is not to say, however, that he was unaware of the complexities of life in the more modern societies, that he believed these societies automatically produced benefits, that the improvements which they had achieved over earlier ages had resulted from the conscious philosophical actions of men rather than from circumstances, that they were free from all inequities. Perhaps his very insistence on the need for virtue, for 'humanity', for 'equity' in the preceding stage indicated his belief that such qualities are ones difficult to enforce or to institutionalise; and certainly he was aware, despite the many discrepancies in his writings, that interest was always to be seen in human life, and that it was often limited in its aims and not necessarily beneficial. A greater distribution of property did not in itself bring an end to the individualism of earlier ages, nor was Robertson ever definite as to the degree of philosophical values that could be made a part of the normal standards and laws of the society, or the amount of 'virtue' that the individual could be expected to practice. Certainly he does not appear to believe in the perfection of any form of government, nor does he feel that the very existence of various conflicting interests in government will suffice to

1. See above, Chapter IV.
2. See, for instance, his remarks on the nature of war in the modern state as compared with that of the savage society: America, Works, III, p. 315, and see also above, pp. 201-202, 229 note 5.
3. See below, Chapter VII.
maintain or create a society which has few profound problems. Although Robertson's references to struggles between parts of constitutions are primarily to sixteenth-century systems and thus show little of his opinion concerning government in modern societies, he reveals no belief in conflict being a guarantee of the unintended and unplanned benefit of men.\(^1\)

On the whole, there is little expectation by him that government can eradicate the injustices and inequities which arise in modern society, and which result from the expression of a limited interest. Thus, although he intends in India to at least set forth the problems created by the existence of company rule\(^2\), though he indicated that monopolies were at the least 'rapacious'\(^3\) and ordinarily detrimental to proper growth\(^4\); though he felt especially that the rule of a state by a company creates many of the problems faced by earlier societies\(^5\), he does not thereby expect that the simple pointing out of such problems will lead to any reforms, or that men will necessarily change with the growth of more philosophical values: after all, the very existence of such 'inequities' in modern times indicates the constancy of interest in the more philosophical age, and indicates also that governments do not take those measures necessary to check interest's invasion of the rights of others.

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1. In this opinion he is to be contrasted with those such as Machiavelli and, to some degree, Harrington, who either saw conflict as a vital part of the state or thought it relatively harmless: see Appendix B.


4. America, Works, IV, pp. 224-226

5. Ibid., p. 221.
It is in America particularly that Robertson considered the effects of situation on the nature of men in the modern society, and brought the concept of relationship between occupation and maturity of thought to its logical conclusion. As he had pointed out in some detail the dominance of superstition and 'incomplete' ideas of the deity which prevailed in the primitive society\(^1\) - thus reinforcing the belief that man's mind only matures with time - so he also suggested that time alone is not the only factor determining the rate of human progress. If the savage is necessarily limited by the form of subsistence of his society, and his emotional and social responses are affected by the degree of insecurity which exists, this situation is continued, Robertson believes, in all societies in which similar inequities in the distribution of land or restraints on subsistence are found. Thus, even though a society may have advanced to a relatively sophisticated level, the amount of time which its individual members may spend in obtaining a livelihood will affect the extent to which they are able to partake of the benefits which they have produced. In the modern state, in which distribution of property has at least meant a greater equality, there are nonetheless large numbers who do not gain any benefit from such changes; it is on their labour that the state is raised to a flourishing condition, but this leads to an improvement only of the situation of others, not of themselves.

\(^1\) America, Works, III, pp. 329-341.
As we have seen above, Smith went into considerable detail concerning this problem, and suggested many ways by which the detrimental effects of it might be overcome by permitting the natural course of things to operate, by permitting, for instance, that the property which men had in their labour be restored to them. Robertson, however, is not especially concerned with the solution of the problem, but only to point it out and to indicate that as long as such conditions exist, the lower classes - those without leisure and education - of an otherwise healthy state must be seen to have advanced not much beyond the state of savage life. In the first place, their domestic relationships must be in some fashion similar to those of men in the early stages of development, and the passions of love and sexual feeling must be restricted by the pressures imposed by the need to gain subsistence:

'Among persons of inferior order, who are doomed by their condition to incessant toil, the dominion of this passion is less violent; their solicitude to procure subsistence, and to provide for the first demand of nature, leaves little leisure for attending to its second call.'

In the second place, he believes that these restrictions on the minds of men will produce limitations as to the intellectual or reasoning capacity of the ordinary man, a factor, indeed, which will prevent his forming a real part of the society - although Robertson does not interpret these limitations in terms of the perversion of the moral senti-

1. See above, Chapter III.
ments as Smith did\(^1\). Again, he is primarily concerned not so much to rectify this situation as he is to emphasise that in religious matters at least those who we might describe as the lower orders or lesser ranks must be content to be instructed, as opposed to participating fully in the discussion of matters of doctrine. The enthusiasm of the modern age, which resembles the limited understanding and superstition of the savage state, is not conducive to the development of rational thought, or philosophical principles:

'Whoever has had any opportunity of examining into the religious opinions of persons in the inferior ranks of life, even in the most enlightened and civilized nations, will find that their system of belief is derived from instruction, not discovered by inquiry. That numerous part of the human species whose lot is labour, whose principal and almost sole occupation is to secure subsistence, views the arrangements and operations of nature with little reflection, and has neither leisure nor capacity for entering into that path of refined and intricate speculation which conducts to the knowledge of the principles of natural religion.'\(^2\)

Although such ideas in general may have first been suggested by Smith\(^3\), and although writers such as he and Ferguson develop these much more fully than Robertson, it is nonetheless true that this same scepticism concerning the

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1. See above, pp. 140ff. See also America, Works, III, p. 304 for a rather odd usage by Robertson of the idea of the effect of the division of labour or the variety of occupation in the polished societies. In general, though, he is not concerned with the detrimental effects of men being obliged to follow one rather mind-limiting occupation, a fact which further emphasises that his endorsement of the caste system in India results from his desire to show the Indians as civilized and thus worthy of better treatment than that enforced by company rule: see above, note 1.


3. That is, in his 1748 lecture, the contents of which are uncertain: see Stewart, Works, p. 68, and Ronald L. Meek, 'Smith, Turgot, and the "Four Stages" Theory', Hist. Pol. Econ., 3 (1971) pp. 9-27. Otherwise, these ideas are not much considered by Smith until Wealth of Nations in 1776.
capacities of the ordinary man is to be seen quite early in Robertson's life and forms the basis of many of his actions within the General Assembly. His belief that the Presbyterian system was egalitarian meant only that all men were entitled to the same beliefs and principles of dogma; such egalitarianism did not presuppose the end of administrative authority, nor did it suggest that all men possessed an equal capacity to partake of the decision-making process. The General Assembly was meant to govern, and this government was necessary to its continuation and to that of the Church. Thus, although part of Robertson's attitude on the question of the 'call' was based on his belief that the law of the land must be respected and that the few could not go against what he saw as the interests of the many, his opposition to popular choice of ministers also forms a part of his opinion on this matter: he did not feel that the ordinary parishioner had the capacity to judge the qualities needed in a minister, and was much too liable to be swayed by superficial talents and characteristics. This attitude was summed up by Gleig in his account of Robertson's life:

'It did not appear to him, that the people at large are competent judges of those qualities which a minister should possess in order to be a useful teacher of the truth as it is in Jesus, or of the precepts of a sound morality. He more than suspected, that if the candidates for churches were taught to consider their success in obtaining a settlement as depending upon a popu-

1. See below, p.274. See also America, Works, IV, p. 338.  
2. See below, pp. 274-275.
'lar election, many of them would be tempted to adopt a manner of preaching calculated rather to please the people than to promote their edification.' 1

The whole of man's life, Robertson suggests in the above instances, is determined by his situation; and our emotional development and intellectual maturity depends on the extent to which the economic structure of society gives us the leisure necessary to develop those capacities which could be described as philosophical. The developed capacities of man, the advances made unintended over a period of many hundreds of years, are perhaps to be seen most fully in the commercial society; but the existence in this stage of a considerable number of men who are limited by the economic and social structure indicates that even this stage is far from 'perfection'.

Although we might consider that Robertson's scattered remarks on men in the modern society are 'philosophical' not only in that they indicate some awareness of the problems of this age but also in that they accept the existence and probable continuation of such imperfections as pointed out above, one is also led to wonder at his lack of involvement in the philosophical suggestions to help rectify the situation of those without property, or the benefit of the property which they have in their labour, and of those whose moral sentiments appear to be perverted2. This disinterest is especially noticeable when one considers his belief in the need for active 'virtue' and 'humanity' from

2. See above, Chapters III and IV.
those who were prominent in their societies. Although he did support the repeal of restrictions against Catholics in Scotland, his preference for the 'public good' rather than his own 'private sentiments' led him to change his mind; the civil disorder caused by the granting of such a measure would have been more inimical than the continuation of the existing inequalities. In part, Robertson's attitude as concerns this issue may have been formed by the philosophical belief that the individual could not carry out major changes against the spirit of the society; but his toleration of the bias of the average man in this matter as in few others also leads us to think that he was not particularly at pains to help alleviate the very conditions which deprived men of emotional and intellectual development. His involvement in matters philosophical is mainly confined to intellectual discussion, to the maintenance of that supposed detachment or refusal to publicly reveal passion which is one of the characteristics of the Scottish philosophical spirit; and although he seeks to influence others and desires that men live by certain values which are seen as beneficial to all, he offers no suggestions as to how these are to be made an integral part of any society.

More importantly, what is of especial interest in re-

1. See below, Chapter VII.
2. See Appendix A, p. 508.
3. Ibid.
4. Stewart, Robertson, pp. 189-190.
5. See Appendix A, pp. 515-516.
6. Ibid., pp. 508-509.
7. See below, Chapter VII.
lation to Robertson's acceptance of the imperfections of modern society is that if 'justice', 'equity' and 'humanity' are not to be found there, then they are, more obviously than ever, absolute concepts which cannot be institutionalised in human society. This is not to deny that in reality such principles are those of Robertson's own time, however much he thought of them as fundamental, as 'eternal' and 'immutable'; nor can we deny that he felt man had on rare occasions managed to embody some of these principles in his institutions - he believes, for instance, that canon law, being founded on Roman law, was 'consonant to the great principles of equity'¹. But, as will be shown in some detail in the following chapter, the attempt to introduce such concepts of perfection into human institutions and actions leaves the reader uncertain both as to the content of such principles and the extent to which men can in fact enforce them, especially in opposition to the spirit of their age; and also leaves the reader feeling that the combination of the ideas of stages, variations in human capacities, and relativistic values, with these 'moral' precepts, is not a particularly happy one, and presents certain problems to Robertson which, as an historian, he seems unable to solve satisfactorily.

CHAPTER VII

MAN AND GOVERNMENT

Our understanding as to Robertson's opinion as to the best form of government - that which limits human imperfections and develops the best qualities of man - and the manner in which this is developed and maintained, rests on both his overall attitude to particular forms of rule which he discusses in some detail, and on the scattered remarks which he makes about other types of political administration. While he has no such detailed theory as to the relation between the moral sentiments of men, and the form of government under which they live as we see in Smith, for instance, nor any 'philosophical' considerations on 'authority' and 'necessity' such as those put forward by Millar\(^1\), it is nonetheless true that he does correlate human development with commerce and a more balanced distribution of power within states, and that he feels government must have as its fixed objective the benefit of all men - ideas which are clearly a basic part of the theoretical philosophy\(^2\): 'the arrangements of civil government are made, not for the few, but for the many' he wrote in \textit{India}\(^3\); and while it is true that there are special reasons for his endorsement of the rigid caste system in that country\(^4\), this fact in itself does not invalidate a thesis which he made a consistent part of his life and his

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1. See above, Chapter IV.
2. See Chapters III and IV, and pp. 252-259.
works.

This can be seen, for instance, in his reasons for the limitation of the popular element in the administration of the Presbyterian church, which are based not only on his distrust of what we might call the 'lower classes'\(^1\) on his belief that they are unable to make 'philosophical' decisions because of the limitation of their situation\(^2\), but also on the fact that the law pertaining to the 'call' is the law of the land, and one which is beneficial to society as a whole:

' "Dissatisfied with the system adopted by his predecessors, and convinced that the more free any constitution is, the greater is the danger of violating its fundamental laws, his vigorous and enlightened mind suggested to him the necessity of opposing more decisive measures to these growing disorders, and of maintaining the authority of the Church by enforcing the submission of all its members." '

The few, from misguided motives, cannot go against what Robertson thought of as the will of the many, nor can they be allowed to go against that which is established. The interests of the whole, which the law protected, must be maintained. Such beliefs are especially clearly expressed in the statement of the Moderate party on the 'call', a statement to which Robertson contributed:

' "we conceive this sentence of the Commission to be inconsistent with the nature and first principles of society. When men are considered as

1. By this term is meant all those who earn their living by labour, including those of the very lowest ranks whose status is little better than that of slave or serf (Charles V, Works, V, p.391); and those who practise the 'meane[r] professions (Scotland, Works, I, p. 43) also fall into this category: roughly, men without background in jobs without 'dignity'.
2. See above, pp. 266-270.
3. Quoted in Stewart, Robertson, p. 183.
'individuals, we acknowledge that they have no guide but their own understanding, and no judge but their own conscience. But we hold it for an undeniable principle, that as members of society, they are bound in many instances to follow the judgments of the society...no sooner is...(any public) regulation enacted, than private judgment is so far superseded, that even they who disapprove it, are, notwithstanding, bound to obey it.... They who maintain that...disobedience deserves no censure, maintain in effect, that there should be no such thing as government and order. They deny those first principles by which men are united in society; and endeavour to establish such maxims as will justify not only licentiousness in ecclesiastical, but rebellion and disorder in civil government.... We allow to the right of private judgment all the extent and obligation that reason or religion requires; but we can never admit, that any man's private judgment gives him a right to disturb, with impunity, all public order."

This belief in the importance of a system which permits the greater part of the society to either express the better of the human qualities or at least to have the benefit of regular law, leads Robertson to consistently adversely criticise those forms of government in which such benefits do not exist. Again, we should realise that such criticism in itself is not contrary to the theoretical philosophy, which constantly spoke in terms of 'incomplete' and 'imperfect' laws and institutions, while at the same time maintaining that situation enforced certain limitations; and, on one level at least, we can see much of Robertson's philosophy of government in these terms. But it is also true, as indicated above, that many of the remarks which he makes are based on concepts which are quite different from the theoretical ideas, and that some of his criticism of rulers and

governments is thus not so much concerned with situation and its limitations as with some rather nebulous concepts of 'equitable' and 'humane' standards which men have failed to enforce - regardless of whether such concepts even existed in the period he is discussing.

These limitations in Robertson's interpretation are not especially obvious, however, until his study of the feudal society: here, his belief that property in land brings greater responsibilities\(^1\) demands that he comment on the dearth of responsible attitudes. His remarks on the pre-feudal stages then are confined primarily to the pointing out of the inhibitions naturally imposed on men by such systems, and the necessary predominance of a non-productive independence in societies where there is little reason for domestic government and order to develop. Man in the savage state, he had suggested, was not only dependent on situation, but was restricted by his very lack of material goods and absence of 'wants' and 'desires' from developing a constant need for general rules and laws. Although there was some form of unity in this system, and even some sense of 'benevolence', these pertained mainly to external matters, and men were brought together generally for purposes of defence or aggressive attacks on other tribes\(^2\). The sense of property which they have is one which is based on community, as opposed to individual, possession; and, again, the infringement of such 'territory' could only be by another tribe, for one's fellows cannot trespass on that which is

\(^1\) See above, pp. 238, 241.
\(^2\) See above, pp. 222-223.
the property of all\(^1\).

Not only is there a limitation of man's feelings in such a social structure, then; but there is also a limitation of the means by which a 'more perfect' government is called into existence. This, Robertson believes, is also the case in the barbarian stage where, although there is a greater interaction between men as far as what we might call 'domestic' matters are concerned - that is, those pertaining to internal matters - most councils concern external policy. As a result, again, of lack of wants and desires, the system of government is limited in its operations, and men retain a considerable amount of independence. Thus, although they possess certain qualities which Robertson finds worthy of approval, they are limited by their situation from developing formal institutions of any depth and permanence\(^2\).

It is not until his consideration of the allodial type of government, therefore, that Robertson finds domestic institutions resulting from the development of private property, institutions which he can see as indicative of the growth of internal government. Thus, although it is true that he was misled or confused as to the actual nature of this particular state of property holding, even though he suggests that the freemen are the greater part of the population\(^3\), his opinions concerning its benefit to men - which is contrasted with the repression of the feudal stage - are of value in helping us determine his feelings as to the

1. See above, pp. 221-222.
2. See above, pp. 231-232.
basic purpose of social order.

The allodial society of France, Robertson believed, lived under a predominantly democratic government; the king is limited, the rights of the lords are clearly defined, the warriors or fighting men of property participate in all major decisions, refuse to pay taxes, and elect the king. The early monarchs of France:

'ascended the throne not by any hereditary right, but in consequence of the election of their subjects. The effect of this election was not to invest them with absolute power. Whatever related to the general welfare of the nation was submitted to public deliberation, and determined by the suffrage of the people...'

Such a government, Robertson believes, is not necessarily wild or enthusiastic; although it permits the propertied man a considerable amount of power it has a place also for other ranks and is thus a mixed form which limits the excesses of the crown - or rather, helps check the natural tendency of monarchs to encroach on the power of others. It is, he believes - somewhat unphilosophically - an 'ancient constitution', for not only is it the first of the French constitutions or distributions of power but has qualities which ought to be permanently maintained. Thus he supports its apparent 'revival' and basically does not accept the development of other 'constitutions' - in part because he feels these are based not so much on a re-

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2. Ibid., p. 561 (Note XXXVIII).
3. Ibid., pp. 79-86, 498 (Note XIX).
4. Ibid., p. 567 (Note XXXIX).
5. See below, p. 359, note 4.
distribution of property as on the employment of 'corrupt' tactics by the monarchy\(^1\). Liberty, it seems, comes not so much from conflict with kings as from keeping them very firmly in control\(^2\); and if the nature of this 'liberty' is unclear, if Robertson here is both misinformed and most unphilosophical, he has at least indicated that he finds some benefit, some development of man, in this 'mixed' form of government. Representation, order, the regular administration of laws\(^3\) - these seem to be factors which he considers as vital.

Even if we cannot be quite sure as to the content of that 'liberty' which Robertson finds in the allodial type of government, it is obvious in his consideration of the feudal society that he finds no widespread liberty whatsoever. To some extent, indeed, he considers this stage of man's development as somewhat unnatural; for, in the first place he believed that the dependence of men on their superiors affected the rate of growth and expression of the sentiments natural to men\(^4\), and secondly, and more importantly here, he also believed that such limitations in fact created an inhibition of man's nature more serious than the excessive freedom of the barbarian age. The development of the true nature of property in feudalism meant that men, in theory, were in a position to advance; yet, the restriction of this private and fixed property to a few gives these a monopoly of its benefits. In such a system, govern-

\(^1\) Charles V, Works, V, pp. 79-86.
\(^2\) See below, pp. 298-317, and Chapter IX.
\(^3\) Charles V, Works, V, pp. 498-499 (Note XIX).
\(^4\) See above, pp. 238-249, 252-255.
ment cannot come into itself, and its purposes:

'to maintain the order and tranquillity of so-
ociety by the regular execution of known laws;
to inflict vengeance on crimes destructive of
the peace and safety of individuals, by a pro-
secution carried on in the name and by the
authority of the community; to consider the
punishment of criminals as a public example to
deter others from violating the laws ...'

cannot be fulfilled. Civil government, Robertson here es-
establishes, not only should have fixed and clear duties
which maintain established freedoms, but should be for
the many rather than for the few: an attitude which he
appears to hold consistently. Thus, although the feudal
society has a form of civil government, it is one which
lacks the characteristics and qualities that are essential
to men, and must be seen as imperfect; and however much he
believes the feudal aristocracy in France to be useful in-
sofar as it provides some check to the ambitions of the
crown, he also believes that it has destroyed the univer-
sal laws of the allodial stage and made men dependent on
a more chaotic, more uncertain form of rule:

'In a kingdom broken into so many indepen-
baronies, hardly any common principle of union
remained; and the general assembly, in its delib-
erations, could scarcely consider the nation as
forming one body, or establish common regulations
to be of equal force in every part.'

Robertson appears to believe then, that it is only
when there is a greater extension of private property, and
a political system which recognises this property and man's
right to the fruits of his labour, to peace, to regular

2. See above, Chapter VI.
enforcement of universal laws, that freedom to develop can be said to exist. Ordinarily, this combination of factors is to be found only in the commercial states, where new forms of property and the means of continuing or maintaining the power resulting from possession of this property theoretically lead to greater freedom for men to be themselves. Nonetheless, Robertson makes it quite clear that the very existence of commerce and of the institutions appropriate to the commercial society do not necessarily mean that the benefits which ought to result in fact do so, nor that the full advantages of civil government are consistently enforced. Not only is it true that even in the modern society there are many who are unable to take advantage of the more philosophical institutions which have emerged; but it is also true that human passions and what we might call limited interest still continue to operate in the early forms of commercial society and to interfere with the emergence of peace and stability. True interest, 'equity', 'justice', 'humanity' are not consistent features of these times; and, he indicated, they will have to emerge and become a part of the actions of men, a part of the principles of government even, before the individualism more appropriate to earlier ages is lessened, and men are able to fully profit from the benefits which commerce offers.

The manner in which this advance was to come about, however, was never very clearly defined by Robertson, nor

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1. See above, pp. 252-255.
2. See, for instance, America, Works, III, p. 352.
did he believe that it is only in the commercial state that there must be a limitation of the self - there are many instances in Scotland in particular where he suggests that the 'laws of humanity' and the 'principles of justice' ought to have a place, although it might seem to the reader that the feudal society has even less chance than later forms of rule of securing or developing general freedoms by such means. Certainly it is true that Robertson does not believe the best interests of all can be either developed or maintained in any society which is under a single or 'pure' form of government, because of the faults which he apparently considers inherent in the various groups or individuals which comprise these. His attitude, therefore, to the democracy, the aristocracy, and the monarchy, is necessarily closely related not only to a certain scepticism about mankind in general, but also to his feelings concerning the 'people', the nobles, and kings - feelings which seem to be fairly consistent.

We might think such consistency of opinion to be produced by a belief that the development of more sophisticated societies does not necessarily mean an end of certain 'natural' attitudes acquired by men, by various groups - a belief which in itself is not contrary to the theoretical opinions. There is much emphasis, after all, in both *Moral Sentiments* and *Wealth of Nations* on the various forms of morality in society, and on the unphilosophical means by which the stability of government can be maintained. It is also a part

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1. See above, pp. 216-218; see also below, pp. 299-303.
2. See above, Chapters III and IV.
of the theoretical philosophy that either possession or lack of property necessarily affects the extent to which men have any feelings for each other or for other classes as well as determining the degree to which they are capable of participating in government. To some degree, indeed, many of Robertson's remarks concerning the 'people' and other groups are based on his acceptance of the variation in situation peculiar to stages of growth; yet we should also be aware that he is often little concerned with the type of argument which Smith used, with the degrees of 'benevolence' produced by distribution of property, and that often his feelings towards various classes are not based on such principles or on an acceptance of differing moral standards. In many instances, too, although his attitudes seem founded on the idea that class or rank may limit men, they have also an overtone of personal feeling which appears removed from the theoretical detachment; and this factor, added to the problem of disentangling Robertson's beliefs as to the nature and expression of virtue in society, means that his idea of what government is and what it should be, is rather complex.

This is not to deny, however, that he is willing to grant the extraordinary individual all the merit which his actions may deserve, providing that any such man from the lesser ranks steers clear of political matters; thus he acknowledges the bravery and perseverance of both those with some 'background' and those with none at all when their courage is employed in activities such as exploration, in

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1. See above, Chapters III and VI.
extending the power of their country. But he is also careful to point out their faults, and, in particular, to emphasise that men of mean rank are often destructive because they lack the restraints which are necessary for solid gains, because they are often motivated mainly by interest rather than by any more prudent considerations. Lack of property, he seems to be saying, means lack of discipline, lack of certain 'basic' qualities such as humanity; this in itself is not a contradiction of the theoretical approach.

We should also remember that many of the instances in which a dislike of class, or a distrust of characteristics associated with a particular class or calling, can at least be related to some concrete concept of division of power in the respective society under discussion, of the education necessary for the fulfillment of certain offices in the feudal and commercial states, for instance. Thus, many of Robertson's remarks against individuals or types were directed to 'courtiers' who flatter kings but fail to advise them wisely, to those 'favourites' of monarchs whom he sees as usurping positions of advice and trust which they are incapable of fulfilling. Insofar as it can be established that such offices, in both the feudal and the more commercial societies, are properly the prerogative of the nobility, Robertson's criticism might be seen as having a valid basis in the property division of the society. Certainly this would seem to be the case as regards the re-

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2. Ibid., pp. 8, 33-34, 74-75, 81, 96-97, 100.
3. Ibid., III, p. 181.
4. See, for instance, Charles V, Works, V, pp. 204-205.
tinue of James III of Scotland; not only are their pro-
fessions 'mean' but they are also in strong contrast to
the military activities of the Scottish lords:

'Under the feudal governments, the nobles were
not only the king's ministers, and possessed of
all the great offices of power or of trust; they
were likewise his companions and favourites, and
hardly any but them approached his person, or
were intitled to his regard. But James, who both
feared and hated his nobles, kept them at an un-
usual distance, and bestowed every mark of confi-
dence and affection upon a few mean persons, of
professions so dishonourable, as ought to have
rendered them unworthy of his presence.'

It is true, certainly, that musicians and fencing in-
structors probably had little knowledge of affairs of state,
and little experience of government: these, after all, come
with office and education; and to this extent Robertson's
attitude is perhaps justified, as is part at least of his
attitude towards the unfortunate Riccio. What does seem
unphilosophical, non-theoretical, however - though not there-
by unusual among the Edinburgh **literati** - is Robertson's
belief that the affairs and actions of men of low rank are
not really a part of 'history'; that, indeed, we should
hardly concern ourselves with the doings and fate of such
persons. As we have seen above, he felt that the study of
men of such 'low birth' and 'indigent condition' as Riccio
was ordinarily outside the scope of historical inquiry, that
'naturally' we would not be concerned with their affairs.
It is only the fact that Riccio plays what is basically a
passive role in the affairs of Queen Mary and her advi-
sers that has brought him to our notice; and even then,

1. *Scotland, Works, I*, p. 43, and see also *ibid.*, p. 45.
'history' is obliged to 'descend from its dignity' in order to consider him.\(^1\)

Again, we might argue that however unfortunate his choice of phrase, it might be possible to accept Robertson's view if he is really saying that feudal history is concerned primarily with the nobility and the monarchy, and that the appearance of individuals such as Riccio are basically isolated or accidental. But it is not clear that this is in fact all that is being suggested; and, in any event, what is it about Riccio that should force 'history' to stoop so low when the attitudes and exploits of the Scottish aristocracy are hardly dignified or free from a chaotic self-interest?\(^2\)

Further, it is obvious from Robertson's emphasis on the role of favourites in the relationship between kings and nobles in feudal Scotland, that the existence of such personages - often mean in spirit rather than class - can hardly be seen as incidental to the history of the nation. They ought then to be taken seriously, and Robertson's reluctance to do so not only suggests a rather personal concern with status and class, possibly with independence and a free spirit\(^3\), but suggests also a break with the aims of philosophical history. The emphasis on the actions of kings and lords as the 'real' material of history seems a clear denial of that aim expressed by all philosophical historians: to show how institutions reflect the spirit of men in various ages, to move

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1. See above, p. 216.
2. Though, perhaps Riccio is to be contrasted with the unselfish confederates, the scheming 'courtier' against the noble 'country' men: see Chapter IX.
4. See below, Appendix A, pp. 503-505.
away from the emphasis on the 'important' individual. It hardly seems philosophical to dismiss so summarily those who wander onto the stage of 'history', to state that, although Queen Mary proceeded 'with the utmost rigour of law' against the murderers of her favourite, Riccio, 'in praise of her clemency, it must be observed, that only two persons, and these of no considerable rank, suffered for this crime'.

This attitude appears even more unphilosophical when we consider how much Robertson emphasised that Bothwell should have been brought to justice for his role in the murder of the Queen's husband, Darnley; the murder of a king, even one so unworthy, is a far more serious matter. Possibly this discrepancy may be explained by the fact that Robertson has entered into the spirit of the times about which he is writing; but though this would reveal a laudable concern with variation and with relative values, his failure to take the opportunity to refer here to those timeless and immutable principles of justice and equity suggests again that these principles are not for the likes of Riccio, and, further, that Robertson has some personal bias against such as he.

For whatever reason - theoretical ideas of limited capacity, unphilosophical prejudice, or a combination of the two - Robertson's low opinion of the people is reflected particularly in his ideas as to their capacity for participation in government, ecclesiastical or civil, in the feudal

2. Ibid., pp. 308-312. In this matter, of course, Robertson was concerned to show both Bothwell and the Queen as flouting the law of the land, and invading the interest of the nation: see below, Chapter IX.
or the commercial state\textsuperscript{1}, in his belief especially that they ordinarily have a limited ability to maintain, or even create, order. For him, democracy is a form of government in which the distinctions of rank that exist have little of 'authority'\textsuperscript{2} and where the masses abuse the sovereign power. Wild and enthusiastic ideas seem to be more likely here than in any other type of rule, and this is certainly the case in the sixteenth-century European commercial states. In an age when philosophical attitudes were limited, the people in general are marked by violence and by lack of control, and, Robertson believes, if popular movements have one outstanding characteristic, it is that they are nearly always without positive leadership and are directed solely by passion\textsuperscript{3}. This is to be seen especially in the Reformation period in Germany, he feels, when the revolt of the peasants, emanating from civil, not religious, causes, was both disorganised and brutal:

'Wherever they came they plundered the monasteries, wasted the lands of their superiors, razed their castles, and massacred without mercy all persons of noble birth, who were so unhappy as to fall into their hands.'\textsuperscript{4}

While Robertson is able to see the economic and social reasons for such actions\textsuperscript{5}, he nonetheless finds them par-

\textsuperscript{1} See above, pp. 241-245, 267-270. Robertson's attitude towards the ordinary man - at least those who were of the protestant party - seems to be more benevolent in Scotland. Even though there is some difficulty for the reader in ascertaining precisely who the 'nation' is in this work, it is clear that the man without property seems more 'martial' more interested in liberty than we might ordinarily have thought likely: see below, Chapters VIII and IX.

\textsuperscript{2} See above, p. 136.

\textsuperscript{3} America, Works, IV, p. 339.

\textsuperscript{4} Charles V, Works, V, p. 393.

\textsuperscript{5} Ibid., pp. 391-392.
particularly disturbing in that they are based on the concept of total equality, a concept with which he does not agree. The necessity of the distinction of ranks, which reflects the evolution of man through stages, and the unplanned, entirely natural, distribution of property in the civil society, cannot be denied; and the refusal, in other political writings, to accept this form of inequality, is felt by Robertson to be an advocacy of a return to the 'state of nature', or the earliest stage of human society. This belief, is obvious, for instance, in his assessment of the Anabaptist group which was prepared to 'level every distinction among mankind, and, by abolishing property, to reduce them to their natural state of equality, in which all should receive their subsistence from one common stock'.

Such extravagant theories, which reveal no knowledge of the nature of man, lead to nothing but the worst excesses - as the subsequent history of the Anabaptist movement itself reveals. Further, in economic terms, such 'wild notions' are detrimental to true growth in that the establishing of a communal form of property fails to excite men's interests and limits the development produced by the secure holding of private land. The 'levelling genius of fanaticism' is inimical to the growth of human nature.

Where there is no control of the ordinary man by those whom we might describe as his 'betters' or, as Robertson puts it, his 'superiors', the effects of their enthusiastic

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2. Ibid., p. 397. See also America, Works, IV, p. 342.
3. Ibid., pp. 343, 399. See above, p. 233.
actions are likely to be disastrous; and, Robertson believes, this is also clearly illustrated in the Reformation era: 'wherever reformation was sudden, and carried on by the people without authority from their rulers, or in opposition to it, the rupture was violent and total'. Again, this is not to say that the actions of the people are without foundation, that they invariably act mindlessly, without proper cause: Robertson does recognise the genuine grievances of many of the popular movements of sixteenth-century Europe in particular, where the dominance of the aristocracy had created a society heavily weighted against the emergence of 'rights' and 'freedoms' for the ordinary man. The protests of the German peasants appeared to him, in part at least, to be 'extremely reasonable', and, in describing the Castilian junta of 1521 he wrote of the 'commons' that:

'they aimed at obtaining redress of their political grievances, and an establishment of public liberty on a secure basis; objects worthy of all the zeal which they discovered in contending for them.'

The actions of the populace in Toledo to protect their constitutional freedoms, the spirit of the Florentines in ignoring the Treaty of Barcelona - these also have certain admirable traits, and indicate a love of 'liberty' which is supposedly a characteristic of the people. But, believes Robertson, the love of liberty is not paired with a capacity for achieving it without some help, nor, most important, is liberty a total freedom from restraint.

3. Ibid., p. 308.
4. Ibid., p. 304.
5. Ibid., pp. 449-450.
The intentions of the masses, then, may be good and their aims reasonable, yet both are very often expressed in a rash and misguided fashion which prevents their goals from being achieved. The reason for this, in Robertson's opinion, is that a lack of ability to lead, to organise, to enforce order, will result in chaos, and it is obvious to him that this lack exists. If Florence, for instance, is an established, commercially successful state, its form of government - a 'democratical republic' - produced nothing but 'popular turbulence'\(^1\). Thus, although we may admire the vigour of the Florentines, we ought to realise nonetheless that their society was founded on wrong principles, and that any attempt to revive such 'turbulence' was misguided. To replace Cosimo de Medici's somewhat tyrannical form of rule may have been a laudable intention, but it was also 'imprudent'\(^2\); the Florentines' lack of political experience, their need for prudent alliances in the midst of the war for territorial expansion, meant that the 'ancient popular government'\(^3\) was less suited to their present needs than the efficient Medici system, and once again, they lost their freedom\(^4\). 'All popular associations', Robertson concluded, are incapable 'either of carrying on war or of making peace'\(^5\); and, in some instances, they appear to be incapable of anything positive and constructive - as witness Robertson's remarks on the German peasant associations during the Reformation: 'being

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2. Ibid., p. 450.
3. Ibid., p. 425.
4. Ibid., p. 450, VI, pp. 81, 82.
5. Ibid., V, p. 323. See also Robertson's remarks on the rule of Cola di Rienzo, ibid., pp. 108-109.
'led by persons of the lowest rank, without skill in war, or knowledge of what was necessary for accomplishing their designs, all their exploits were distinguished only by a brutal and unmeaning fury'.

The fact is that whether popular 'associations' are formal governments or merely assemblies of persons with a common purpose, the same characteristics will pervade them and lead both to be equally unproductive. In the history of the Spanish attempts to either maintain or to increase popular powers, for instance, all the experience of the Cortes seems to have had little effect on those who are there represented. The achievements of the Cortes, which include the institutionalising of considerable popular 'rights' over many centuries seem to have no influence on any group which is composed mainly of one class and which has no self-restraint or organising capacity. For instance, the Germanada of Valencia, intent to 'restore men to some degree of their original equality'—itself a bad sign as far as Robertson is concerned— is governed not by men of administrative experience but by a group of 'low mechanics':

'who acquired the confidence of an enraged multitude, chiefly by the fierceness of their zeal, and the extravagance of their proceedings. Among such men, the laws introduced in civilized nations, in order to restrain or moderate the violence of war were unknown or despised; and they ran into the wildest excesses of cruelty and outrage.'

Yet, even associations which possess some organisation and a clear plan of action may fail to achieve their purpose if

2. Ibid., p. 329.
3. Ibid.
they are composed primarily of the popular class. The Castilian junta, for instance, which had generally been marked by good motives and a sound policy, did not achieve its objectives; and although Robertson does not go into any detail concerning the decline of this organisation, he does believe that its failure points out the consistent and inherent weaknesses of similar groups:

'This sudden dissolution of a confederacy, formed not upon slight disgusts or upon trifling motives, into which the whole body of the people had entered, and which had been allowed time to acquire a considerable degree of order and consistence, by establishing a regular plan of government, is the strongest proof either of the inability of its leaders or of some secret discord reigning among its members.'

While it is to be seen, then, that it is nearly always men of the lower classes who are behind the desire to establish democracies based purely on equality of position, it is equally obvious, Robertson believes, not only that such types of government are destructive of any stability which might hitherto have been achieved, but also that they are rarely successful in achieving their own ends. While he may appear to approve of the strongly democratical element in the allodial rule of France, he seems to care little for that form of democracy produced by the more modern states. In these, the society is characterised by a lack of regard for any stable tradition, by an insistence on 'rights' without a recognition of the responsibility which these bring; and it is manipulated by the sort of person for whom he had faint regard, whose credulity, vulnerability to passion, lack of background he condemned at every

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1. However, see Charles V, Works, V, p. 322.
2. Ibid., p. 326.
opportunity, and whom he felt to be lacking in the ability to appreciate the true principles of government - order and regularity especially. However much such limitations were produced by the economic situation of the society, Robertson felt, however much they were a result of the lowly position of men within a relatively advanced system, it was nonetheless a general principle that those of little education and background, and thereby, of little of the necessary experience, were 'ill qualified' to 'enter into any disquisition concerning the principles of civil policy' and were certainly as ill-equipped to rule other men as they should be ruled.

It is only in rare instances, Robertson believed, that men from this social position have had the genuine ability to govern well; and in one of the few cases when he thinks this situation to have occurred, the society in question was not fully a democracy. Furthermore, although this instance - the rule of Andrea Doria in Genoa - may be seen as an isolated case of a man from the popular segment of society governing wisely, it is apparent that Doria's success depends upon qualities which are quite uncharacteristic of his class - at least as Robertson interprets the distinguishing features of the 'lower ranks'. His restraint and prudence, his moderation and calm - very philosophic traits, these means that he has overcome the disadvantages of his background through losing the very qualities of this; thus, he is neither truly representative of the 'people' nor is

1. America, Works, IV, p. 40. See also ibid., III, p. 114.
2. See below, Appendix A, pp. 505-509, 515-516.
the society in which he institutes some stability truly a democracy\(^1\).

In both the society which is fully a democracy and that in which the democratic element is strong, then, it is apparent that there is a certain amount of disorder and imperfection resulting from the very nature of the men who comprise this form of government or this segment of political power. Yet Robertson is by no means clear as to the manner in which this situation will be improved, even if he indicates that much of the confusion and tumult to be found in the democratic element of a commercial society - such as Spain - results from a lack of balance of power within the state. But is such a situation to be resolved by a change in the distribution of power - we cannot, after all, forget the praise which Robertson bestowed on the alodial system - or are men to exercise a greater virtue and self-restraint within the existing inequities?

While Robertson points out the turbulence, the lack of toleration and of humanity characteristic of the ordinary man - particularly in the less philosophical ages\(^2\) - and while he indicates, for example, that the 'people' of sixteenth century Scotland are at the least violent and impetuous\(^3\), he appears to be concerned not so much with the

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3. Scotland, Works, I, pp. 137, 144. The difficulty of ascertaining Robertson's opinion as to the role of virtue, self-denial etc. as far as the Scottish people of this time are concerned, is complicated by the fact that, although they appear to have little political power, it is necessary for him to imply that they are intelligent, freedom-loving, martial, and that these qualities are reflected in the influential will of the 'nation': see Chapter IX.
development of virtue as far as they are concerned, but rather with the beneficent exercise of restraint by the leaders of the congregation, who are mostly members of the nobility or else individuals of some authority and power, such as Knox. Although particular reasons led Robertson to emphasise that much of the excessive violence of the Reformation period in Scotland resulted from love of civil liberty rather than from religious principles\(^1\), and although he tends to excuse much of the disorder of this age because men had finally become free to express more 'liberal' sentiments after generations of repression and unphilosophical thought, he does not indicate that these same liberal sentiments suddenly make men \textit{in general} more capable of humanity or of 'equity'\(^2\). As in his discussion of the German Reformation peasant revolts, he suggests that the ordinary man needs leaders to guide him, to moderate the extremes of his passions; and it is clear that he does not believe men of this class, without property, can develop that sense of discipline, of duty and responsibility, which he expects both monarchy and nobility to possess\(^3\). The limited political experience of this ordinary man, his lack of background, both mean, as far as Robertson is concerned, that his excesses are to be moderated primarily by restraint from above rather than from any self-imposed limitation: 'amidst these irregular proceedings, a circumstance which does honour to the conduct and humanity of the leaders of the leaders of the

\(^1\) See below, Chapter IX.
\(^2\) However, see below pp. 410, 411, 413.
\(^3\) See below, pp. 298-317, 321-327.
'congregation deserves notice. They so far restrained the rage of their followers, and were able so to temper their heat and zeal, that few of the Roman catholics were exposed to any personal insult, and not a single man suffered death'.

This concept of regulation from above, in order to ameliorate the effects of situation or limitation of the mind, is not perhaps wholly dissimilar to the theoretical belief concerning the role of government in modern society; yet there is a difference, in that Robertson is not really attempting to establish a means by which men may be restored to the proper operation of the moral sentiments. Furthermore, as will be shown below, the nature of the restraints to be imposed does not appear to be one which has much room for self-interest, and seems to be composed of those vague but timeless values which Robertson holds so dear. In addition, if, despite the growth of commerce, the extension of property to a greater number, the emergence of 'mixed' governments, some men remain limited by their situation, Robertson has no suggestions as to how the resultant problems might be overcome, how virtue might be made a part of the mores of the deprived class. He can only emphasise that for the good of the rest of society - perhaps, indirectly, for the betterment of the repressed also - we must continue to depend on the experience and sense of duty of the more fortunate. By making and living out such a suggestion, he fails to see that these 'laws'

2. See above, Chapter IV.
of 'justice' and 'equity' are peculiarly selective, the pre-rogatives of a ruling class, how they are at best natural only to a part of any population: in short, how very much they are a product of human society.

It is not until we study Robertson's ideas concerning the nature of the monarchy and kings, of aristocracy and nobles, that the problems resulting from his attempt to combine the theoretical emphasis on property with a belief in the need for the enforcing of 'philosophical' principles in both the feudal and commercial societies really become obvious. His low opinion of the 'people' in general, especially of their capacity for orderly rule, his belief that the dignity of history demands that it concern itself primarily with the actions of men of merit and rank, lead him to emphasise both the nature of these two ranks as it is to be seen in actual fact, and to make several interesting remarks concerning the more ideal or more virtuous nature of them both.

Even though it is obvious - to Robertson, to those who read him - that a king may be limited in his powers because of the division of property within his own state, may be further limited in the extent and nature of his actions by the spirit of his times, and may also find that his plans are affected by the increase of the balance of power between states\(^1\), Robertson suggests that a monarch should nonetheless both limit his interest and attempt to act according to

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1. See above, Chapter V.
principles of humanity and justice. Such principles, as has been suggested above, are not only vague, but would also appear to be more philosophical in nature than the very societies in which Robertson suggests they be applied; so that, however much a belief in the need for such principles is based on a concept of *noblesse oblige*, such ideas in themselves appear to deny the variations in human sentiments, and to demand a degree of self-control on the part of kings which is not only foreign to them, but which their own society and circumstances hardly encourage.

To this extent, it would seem that Robertson is ignoring the basic tenets of the theoretical philosophy, although it is true that he does on occasion clearly state that interest forms a part of political morality, and that this morality necessarily differs from his ideal: 'the maxims of policy, often little consonant to those of morality, may, perhaps, justify this conduct', he wrote of Queen Elizabeth's foreign - Scottish - policy. Nonetheless, such a statement also says that there is only one form of 'ethical' morality, valid at all times; and this attitude is constantly reinforced by Robertson's emphasis on the 'laws of humanity', the 'principles of justice': political morality, he suggests, is not really acceptable even within the society in which its particular forms have developed, and the historian should not make the mistake of accepting such 'temporary' principles in favour of the timeless ones. It is this idea which lies behind his criticism of the Queen Regent's going back

2. That is, Mary of Guise, Queen Mary's mother.
on a promise she had made, at a time - 1559 - when, if the division of power in Scotland was in favour of the nobles, the principles governing the actions of men were hardly such as could be called philosophical:

'notwithstanding this solemn promise, the queen ... proceeded to call to trial the persons who had been summoned; and upon their non-appearance, the rigour of justice took place, and they were pronounced outlaws. By this ignoble artifice, so incompatible with regal dignity, and so inconsistent with that integrity which should prevail in all transactions between sovereigns and their subjects, the queen forfeited the esteem and confidence of the whole nation.'

This stand on the necessity of the enforcement of the 'eternal' and the 'immutable' is thus to be seen in a discussion of the monarchy in the feudal society, and it would appear that Robertson's position here is one which is not based entirely on the necessary restraint which a monarch should exercise because of the limited power of his office in this type of society. His attitude is also based on a belief that changes may be attempted - whatever the distribution of power - if they are based on or embody those principles which Robertson himself finds acceptable. Thus, although he indicated that James I of Scotland acted slowly and by legal means, his going against the spirit of his times, against the existing possession of power by the nobility, is not in itself reprehensible. Indeed, it is a policy highly acceptable because it is founded on and

1. Scotland, Works, I, p. 136. This statement is of particular interest in that it does not allow to the monarch that political morality which the nobility can be seen to express (ibid., p. 348) as part of the spirit of the age, in that it demands a concept of office hardly compatible with the times, and because it gives the 'nation' philosophical attitudes and an extent of political power which in reality do not exist: see below, pp. 304ff, and Chapter IX.
seeks to inculcate enlightened and philosophical principles:

'It was the misfortune of James, that his maxims and manners were too refined for the age in which he lived .... had he reigned in a kingdom more civilized; his love of peace, of justice, and of elegance, would have rendered his schemes successful; and, instead of perishing, because he had attempted too much, a grateful people would have applauded and seconded his efforts to reform and approve (sic) them.

If this is the basis of Robertson's opinions, then it is possible that his opposition to certain actions of Mary Queen of Scots results not only from his belief that a monarch with limited power should restrict the scope of her actions and should not invade the property balance, but also that her actions were of such a nature as to encourage the domination of political interest in the regal policy. Her duplicity in actually serving the cause of the Catholic church while pretending to support the Protestants, for instance, he finds most unacceptable - although, again, his strictures hardly take into account the spirit of the age:

'This part of her conduct does little honour to Mary's integrity: and, though justified by the example of princes, who often reckon falsehood and deceit among the necessary arts of government, and even authorised by the pernicious casuistry of the Roman church, which transfers breach of faith to heretics from the list of crimes to that of duties; such dissimulation, however, must be numbered among those blemishes which never stain a truly great and generous character.'

As Robertson expects philosophical principles to both emerge and be enacted by monarchs in a rigidly feudal society, so he also expects similar principles to form the basis of the conduct of rulers in somewhat more advanced

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1. Scotland, Works, I, pp. 39-40. 'Improve' rather than 'approve' would be more appropriate here.
2. Ibid., p. 294, and see also Ibid., p. 299.
systems. In his consideration of Queen Elizabeth of England, for instance, he does concede that there is such a thing as an interest which is both 'prudent' and 'laudable', and that the interest that is expressed throughout her reign pertains both to herself and the English nation. Yet, as has been indicated above, he is also at pains to point out that interest in general is not necessarily acceptable, that most of Elizabeth's actions are marked by 'artifice', by 'political motives', and, on one occasion at least, are devoid of that 'decency' which we might expect one ruler to show another. On the whole Robertson makes it quite clear that Elizabeth should have put aside such unphilosophical principles, should have been both 'just' and 'generous', should have permitted 'virtue' to have overcome 'interest'. Even though he may recognise that Elizabeth's actions are prompted by the spirit of her age, and, indeed, are supported in most instances by the English parliament - which is described as devoid of both 'justice' and 'humanity' in some instances - he does not appear to believe that kings should be vulnerable to this type of spirit of the times. They should rather go outside

of, and beyond, their age, and act in accordance with principles which are more 'permanent'.

Such a concept in itself is clearly devoid of the relativism which the theoretical history attempted to introduce; and Robertson's insistence on a similar set of principles of behaviour for both the feudal and the commercial states is a further illustration of his capacity to ignore the great differences between such societies, the variation in the power possessed by monarchs in these stages of human progress, the extent to which it was possible for monarchs to institute such principles at the same time as maintaining their power in societies which which were not founded on such concepts of responsibility and humanity.

Part of Robertson's problem concerning his interpretation of the nature of 'monarchy' - in whatever age - and of those who held this office, results from his rather obscure ideas as to the actual basis of monarchical power. He does concede that, even in the feudal state in which the aristocracy is the most dominant force, both the nobles and the people in general have some duties to the crown; yet it is never very clear, especially in Scotland, just how much these duties, this 'loyalty', reflect the monarch's possession of property. Given the aristocratical superiority, and the difficulty which the monarch has had, over many hundreds of years, in enforcing even his legitimate will - that is, the laws of the land - and given also the uncertainty of the extent of the Scottish crown's power in the mid-sixteenth
century\(^1\), it would appear that these vague duties, and this sense of loyalty are based on some feeling or respect for the monarch who performs his duties well, and do not reflect the existence of regal property\(^2\). If so, then the crown's position seems to be a very uncertain one, lacking in security.

Indeed, this is obviously the impression which Robertson wishes to give of the monarch's relationship vis-à-vis both the aristocracy and the population in general. Though the king may have offices to dispose of, both these and the choice of those to fulfill them, are limited, and he cannot use this sort of property to gain power, except in a very restricted degree; for though the nobles may have a desire to win recognition from him, they both use such offices to aggrandise themselves, and are basically independent of the crown's will in any event. As far as the population in general is concerned, Robertson also sees that the relationship between it and the monarch is based not so much on property and the authority derived from this, but on the 'affection' and 'love' which subjects ordinarily have for their kings. Although, in part, such sentiments may appear to be based, perhaps unconsciously, on that wealth and rank with which men sympathise\(^3\); and although Robertson explicitly states that subjects - by which he means the 'people' - are ordinarily extremely tolerant 'unless their jealousy be raised by

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1. See below, Chapter IX. This uncertainty, in Scotland, results mainly from Robertson's unwillingness to cede the Scottish monarchs much legitimate power.
3. Ibid., pp. 329-330. Again, the concept of sympathy is not one which Robertson explicitly employs here.
'repeated injuries', thereby endorsing the theoretical concept of man's tendency to respect, somewhat blindly, those above him, it is nonetheless true that he himself implies that this love and affection reflects not the material wealth of the crown, but is rather a reward for virtuous behaviour:

'Mary conducted herself with so much moderation and deference to the sentiments of the nation, as could not fail of gaining the affection of her subjects, the firmest foundation of a prince's power, and the only genuine source of his happiness and glory.'

In most of Scotland, and primarily for ideological reasons, Robertson suggested that this rightful behaviour did not necessarily indicate any adherence by the monarch to those eternal laws which he introduced as a basis of conduct, but was simply the observance of the 'wishes' of the 'nation'. But when the components of the 'nation' are unclear, the rights and duties and powers of the parliament uncertain, and the desires of the nobility often unphilosophical, the demand for such steadiness, such concern for others, seems excessive especially in view of the chaotic and repressive nature of the society in general. Even though Robertson's theories here may simply reflect his belief that the lords' possession of power permitted them to act as they chose,

1. Scotland, Works, I, p. 253, and see also p. 256; it is true, however, that such statements imply a popular patience which only an unworthy ruler would abuse.  
2. Ibid., p. 210. See also 1759 ed., I, pp. 232, 283, and above, Chapters III and IV.  
4. See below, Chapter IX.  
6. See below, Chapters VIII and IX.
while the monarchy's relative lack of position and authority demanded that it act according to the limitations imposed by the nobility, it should be noted not only that such expectations refuse the crown the right to attempt to change the balance of power in a society where there is little stability, but also seek to establish timeless and permanent values in a state where they are particularly inappropriate. It is not by any means true of the feudal state, for instance, that the prince's power is most firmly based on the 'affection' of his subjects; and, indeed, one might say that the usage by Robertson of a similar concept in his remarks on Andrea Doria and the commercial state of Genoa suggests that he inserts such maxims without much regard to the different natures of the societies concerned, and with the apparent aim of stressing the need to limit the crown, or the executive authority, in every form of government, regardless of the degree of philosophical principles exercised by other members of that government.

At the same time we can also suggest that, though the above remarks suggest Robertson's adherence to an interpretation of the past hardly consistent with the theoretical, his very emphasis on the duty of subjects is a means of stating that monarchs have similar duties to their people; that, above all, they should not act as individuals but as men possessing certain responsibilities. Again, it is true that the insistence on such attitudes in ages when they could hardly be expected to have developed reflects

a refusal on Robertson's part to be limited by the theoretical concept of variations in man's sentiments and institutions. Yet, although we should always keep these limitations of Robertson's interpretation in mind, we can nonetheless find in his statements concerning the principles which ought to be the basis of policy, the restrictions which should have been applied to monarchs in all ages, a very clear idea of his attitude concerning the nature of monarchy.

What Robertson appears to be suggesting as a means of limiting the effects of regal individuality and personality, is a concept of 'office' of kingship which would inculcate certain ideas of duty and responsibility. We have seen above\(^1\) that he appears to accept few of the expressions of kingly interest, whether in the feudal or the commercial stage, however natural such interest may be; and, with some qualifications which reveal that he is not politically unsophisticated, he continues this attitude in Charles V. In this work he appears to accept a limited amount of interest and royal political sagacity - perhaps because in this work, as opposed to Scotland, he is less concerned to show interest as a reflection of scheming monarchical tactics\(^2\). He suggests, for instance, that it would have been an idea 'too refined' for Charles V not to have made use of the advantage which he gained by his capture of the king of France, and to have attempted to achieve his aims

\(^{1}\) See pp. 300-303.

\(^{2}\) See especially Chapter IX.
solely through other means: 'such an exertion of generosity is not perhaps to be expected in the conduct of political affairs'\(^1\). He also suggests that a certain amount of what we might call politic action is in fact necessary in government, and that a king such as Francis I, though possessed of many valuable qualities, nevertheless could not really benefit his people because he lacked a useful degree of cunning and duplicity\(^2\) - a theory which is quite consistent with that of Voltaire\(^3\), and which appears to recognise the existence and even usefulness of unphilosophical actions in a true Machiavellian style\(^4\).

Yet Robertson is also careful to point out in *Charles V*, as in *Scotland*, that situation, circumstances, or prevailing political philosophies are not in themselves a sufficient excuse for many of the actions of kings, particularly when these actions are based on immoral or selfish precepts. As he does not accept the duplicity of Queen Mary in her supposed support of the Presbyterian church\(^5\), so also does he insist that however much Charles V's actions, his 'insidious and fraudulent policy', result from his personality and power - themselves produced by situation - such factors cannot 'serve as a justification'\(^6\). Men must at all times accept responsibility for their decisions, and be judged by them, however much these

3. See above, pp. 28-33.
5. See above, p. 301.
decisions are produced by necessity, and however much the concept of such responsibility is foreign to the times. Great ambitions must give way to more philosophical goals.

Robertson further suggested that, in order to establish an 'office' of kingship, monarchs should attempt to make trust and integrity the basis of their policies, that they should always act in an open manner, and should let their subjects feel that they can be depended upon to carry out their promises. This point, which he had made in his first work¹, is one which is made often in Charles V; lies, duplicity, breaches of contract, the breaking of oaths, the ignoring the provisions of treaties - all these are pernicious, Robertson feels, because honour and trust should replace disorder and suspicion and underhandedness. They are particularly damaging, he believes, insofar as they prevent the emergence of the more philosophical qualities, or the regular usage of them, because it is only the employment of honour and trust which can guarantee that promises made between the rulers of states will be carried out. For instance, Francis I's refusal to honour the treaty under which he was released by the emperor - which refusal was based on Charles' 'dishonourable arts' and 'unprincely-rigour'² - is not approved of by Robertson, circumstances notwithstanding:

'By this disingenuous artifice, for which even the treatment that he had met with was no apology, Francis endeavoured to satisfy his honour and conscience in signing the treaty, and to

1. See above, pp. 299-302.
'provide at the same time a pretext on which to break it.'

In another instance, this time concerning the Treaty of Cambray, Robertson suggests that the French king had never intended to respect the obligations involved, and that he substituted specious legal arguments for what was a moral duty, however unpleasant:

'Francis seems to have thought that, by employing an artifice unworthy of a king, destructive of public faith, and of the mutual confidence on which all transactions between nations are founded, he was released from any obligation to perform the most solemn promises,' or to adhere to the most sacred engagements.'

Such remarks doubtless form an integral part of the belief held by Robertson that 'integrity' is 'the basis of all transactions among men'; and, although it is apparent to us that the many instances of duplicity and breach of promise in sixteenth-century European politics reveal such ideas as 'honour' to have been foreign to the political precepts of the time, and that Robertson's introduction of them denies the very nature of the society, it is clear that he feels such restraints should have been imposed on princes then, and ought to be in the future. His acceptance of a limited interest, of the need which rulers have to exercise some political sagacity, his recognition of the 'mutual jealousy' of kings which leads them to use those 'honourable spies', ambassadors, in order to keep watch on each other -- indeed, his awareness of the scheming, desire for power and greater aggrandisement which

2. Ibid., VI, p. 17. Such dissimulation differs from that sagacity which Robertson seems to find acceptable, and which he believes Francis I lacked.
3. Ibid., V, p. 401.
typify most of the actions within and between states at
most stages, still does not lead him to accept such philo-
sophies in themselves. Certain ethical standards, he
feels, must be maintained in spite of everything, an atti-
tude which may be laudable in theory, but which is perhaps
less so when it leads the historian to go against his own
principle of interpreting the past in its own terms, and
to insist that what perhaps should be, already was.

This insistence by Robertson on the need for particu-
lar standards of behaviour leads him to suggest that the
quality which should characterise the office of monarchy
is that which he calls 'dignity', a term which embraces a
number of virtues. These, he believes, should form the
basis of a sovereign's actions, should help us determine
whether any given individual acts in a manner 'worthy' or
'unworthy' of his position. Having stated that there are
certain principles which we might expect rulers to possess-
decency, integrity, truthfulness - he believes that the
absence of these shows a lack of that moral superiority
which is one of the real benefits of the monarchy, and
encourages a domination of passion rather than restraint.
This idea he put forward in Scotland, and maintained through-
out his works; and although this idealistic 'character' of
kings seem, like the 'martial spirit' of the feudal aris-
tocracy, to be peculiar to one age, Robertson sees no rea-
son why such a concept cannot be used to evaluate the acts
of all kings at all times.

That he himself applies this universal standard in his
work is quite obvious. He speaks, for instance, of James II of Scotland's murder of the earl of Douglas as 'so unworthy of a king', even though he condemns Douglas's 'credulity', and, more important, even though he has established in some detail the disorder and violence which was typical of early feudal Scotland. He mentions also the mixture of 'caprice' and 'principle' which characterised Henry VIII, and which led to 'the passions of the man' being 'an overmatch for the maxims of the king'. He feels that the 'artifice' of the Queen Regent, Mary of Guise, was 'incompatible with regal dignity', that the dissimulation of Queen Mary was similarly reprehensible, and that the licentiousness of her husband, Darnley - even taking into account the 'manners of that age' - 'little suited the dignity of a king'. While seeing little good in Louis XI of France in general, he feels that he outdid himself in his attempts to gain Burgundy, when he 'exhibited such scenes of treachery, falsehood, and cruelty' as leads Robertson to describe his conduct as 'unworthy of a great monarch', and to be contrasted with the qualities of a ruler such as Cosimo I de Medici, whose 'generosity' and 'virtue' gave him an 'ascendant over the affections ... of his countrymen' which was sufficient to make him the effective head of a turbu-

2. Ibid., p. 69.
3. Ibid., p. 136. See above, p. 300.
6. Charles V, Works, V, pp. 90-91. Considering that his opinion of Louis is extremely low, it is likely that the reference to 'great monarch' here is to an ideal, rather than being the standard of the king's other actions against which those concerning Burgundy are to be compared.
lent republic\(^1\) — a foundation of power which, as we have seen, Robertson prefers to the actual possession of property\(^2\). 'Decency', 'humanity', the treating of a fellow-monarch according to his station, also form a part of this 'dignity', Robertson suggests, and for this reason he finds little to approve in Charles V's actions against Francis I: 'instead of displaying the sentiments becoming a great prince, Charles ... seems to have acted with the mercenary art of a corsair, who, by the rigorous usage of his prisoners, endeavours to draw from them a higher price for their ransom'\(^3\).

The emperor's actions, in this instance, are marked by 'indecency', 'avarice', and 'ambition', all of which are in direct contrast to that 'humanity' and 'generosity' and 'sympathy' which should rather have been the principles that moved him\(^4\).

This is not to say that the demand for 'dignity', for a king to act in a manner worthy of his station, must also mean an end to that degree of political skill which had been deemed acceptable by Robertson. Dignity, indeed, demands some sagacity, and those who are limited by a 'timid moderation' do not act for the benefit of their people. It is on these grounds that Robertson is often obliged to give considerable credit to Charles V, who had the capacity of choosing those who served him with great skill, the talent of 'knowing men and adapting their talents to the various departments which he allotted to them'\(^5\), a 'science' which

2. See above, pp. 304-306.
4. Ibid., p. 393.
5. Ibid., VI, p. 489.
of all others, is 'of greatest importance to a monarch'. Similarly, he finds much to fault in the temperament of Francis I who, though his faults were often overlooked by his own subjects, had many defects as a ruler. The historian, judging, cannot be so benevolent as the French people seem to have been; and, although Robertson points out that Francis possessed 'dignity without pride', an 'affability free from meanness', and a 'courtesy exempt from deceit', that he was 'humane, beneficent, generous', such characteristics should rather be those of 'men' than kings. They are by no means the only qualities which a ruler should possess. Francis is too easily deceived, too liable to trust worthless favourites, so that, although 'too generous himself to oppress his people', his failure to check his courtiers 'emboldened them to venture upon many acts of oppression'. Impetuous, and motivated by the spirit of chivalry, he lacks that perseverance, that coolness and inflexibility which characterised Charles V, and which are vital to the achievement of one's objectives:

'Francis took his resolutions suddenly, prosecuted them at first with warmth, and pushed them into execution with a most adventurous courage; but being destitute of the perseverance necessary to surmount difficulties, he often abandoned his designs, or relaxed the vigour of pursuit, from impatience, and sometimes from levity.'

2. Ibid., p. 248
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
7. Ibid., p. 290.
8. Ibid., p. 233.
9. Ibid., VI, pp. 246-247. See also above, pp. 308-310.
At the same time, it is apparent that although a ruler such as Charles V earns Robertson's praise for his possession of those very qualities which Francis I lacks, he is also thought to be excessively 'political'¹, and, by his denial of the virtues of 'humanity' and 'generosity', of 'decency' and 'sympathy', he is seen by Robertson to have substituted the passions of the man for the moderation that should form part of the office of kingship. This is not to deny that, on occasion, Robertson attempted to separate the moral and political qualities of great men in an explicit manner; this is the case, for instance, in his assessment of Maurice of Saxony whom he feels often acted against 'the most powerful principles which ought to influence human actions'², who denied many of the bonds which might be described as 'natural' to man³. Yet, by stating that Maurice's nature, the character of his actions, are contrary to 'virtue' but not to 'kingship', he implies that they are acceptable, even though they go far beyond those qualities which make for political sagacity:

'If his exorbitant ambition, his profound dissimulation, and his unwarrantable usurpation of his kinsman's honours and dominions, exclude him from being praised as a virtuous man, his prudence in concerting his measures, his vigour in executing them, and the uniform success with which they were attended, entitled him to the appellation of a great prince.'⁴

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1. See above, pp. 308-309.
3. Ibid., pp. 218-219; 'natural' is used here in the sense that it is usual - in Robertson's opinion - for a man to support his religion, his family, and to abstain from invading the property and titles of one's relatives.
Such separation of qualities, however, does not form a consistent part of Robertson's attitudes, in that, while he is able to see both faults and values in other rulers, he believes that 'virtue' or rather vague principles of 'humanity' etc. should be allied to one's capacity to govern men, to act for the benefit of one's state, and that these together make for 'dignity'. Thus, while Robertson may have little sympathy with the facility and naivité of Francis I, who permitted Charles to impose on his good nature and take advantage of his love for 'glory', he does not believe that great kings should exercise such cunning and deceit, should take such advantage of the foibles of others in order to advance their own ends:

'Of all the transactions in the emperor's life, this, without doubt, reflects the greatest dishonour on his reputation. Though Charles was not extremely scrupulous, at other times, about the means which he employed for accomplishing his ends, and was not always observant of the strict precepts of veracity and honour, he had hitherto maintained some regard for the maxims of that less precise and rigid morality by which monarchs think themselves entitled to regulate their conduct. But on this occasion, the scheme that he formed of deceiving a generous and open-hearted prince, the illiberal and mean artifices by which he carried it on, the insensibility with which he received all the marks of his friendship, as well as the ingratitude with which he requited them, are all equally unbecoming the dignity of his character, and inconsistent with the grandeur of his views.'

The ideal ruler, whose individual personality has become absorbed in the concept of office, would thus appear to be one who manages to combine the 'good' of his society and the welfare of his subjects, with the precepts of both

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1. Charles V, Works, VI, pp. 103-104. See also ibid., pp. 99-100 for Robertson's assessment of Francis's response to Charles's request that he go through France to reach the Netherlands.
'humanity' and 'justice'; who does not invade the 'rights' of his people, however much he possesses the property and power to do so, or however much his subjects seem willing to surrender permanent benefit for temporary gain. He must be concerned with the 'happiness' of his subjects in general, and careful of the independence of the nobility, which care is rewarded by the 'duty' and 'affection' of the lords. He must exercise sufficient political skill in order to gain his ends, but must ascertain that his ends are acceptable to his subjects and to a rather rigorous morality, that his political sagacity is not excessive. In his dealings with his fellow monarchs, he must combine politics and ethics, achieving benefits which are measured in terms of property and power by means which do not deny humanity, respect, moderation, and decency. Such expectations are considerable, and might well be thought so even in Robertson's own time when the greater extent of philosophical principles at least made such theories more likely to achieve realisation. Though we must remember that Robertson's interpretation of monarchies and kings is, in part at least, intended to show that single forms of government have many faults, it is true that his insistence on certain principles as the basis of rulers' actions, in the feudal as well as in the more advanced societies, denies the acceptance of 'imperfection', as well as of variation, denies, in short, the very essence of theoretical history.

1. See below, pp. 334, 335-336.
2. See below, pp. 324, 334-336.
3. See above, p. 303, and below, p. 337.
4. See above, pp. 303-304.
Robertson is not quite so insistent on the need for establishing an 'office', or a series of principles, by which the individualistic tendencies of this group could be submerged and ameliorated; and the reasons for this variation in his attitude to kings and nobles result in part from the dual attitude which he has towards the nobility in his first work, Scotland\(^1\). On the one hand, the Scottish aristocracy is presented as selfish and violent; but, insofar as certain members of this body, at least in the mid-sixteenth century, are seen as checking the actions of the sovereign power, and as attempting to preserve what are described as the 'liberties' of the 'nation', their actions are necessarily interpreted as beneficial. They are shown as being motivated by love of country, and as desirous of maintaining its independence, in contrast to those monarchs whose selfishness and concern for limited ends, leads them to ally with foreign powers whose aim is merely to either use the Scots for their own ends, or to destroy their 'ancient constitution'\(^2\). They are brave, generous, and 'martial' - qualities arising, to be sure, from their situation\(^3\) - values which are seen as preferable to both the excessive political scheming of the crown, and to the timid and inactive spirit of the Catholic clergy\(^4\). Committed, to some degree at least, to such an interpretation, Robertson found little reason to criticise the aristocratical spirit, and implicitly gave his support to it.

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1. See below, Chapters VIII and IX.
2. See Chapter IX.
3. Robertson is not always careful to emphasise the relationship between spirit and property, however - see below, Chapter IX.
This emphasis - and not only in Scotland - on the particular qualities of the nobility as being beneficial, tends to limit the degree to which Robertson sees these distinguishing features as a sign of irresponsibility, of a selfish desire for glory that in reality is of little benefit to the state. Although, on occasion, he points out that the spirit of chivalry can lead to impractical actions, and that, for instance, we can hardly approve of the destruction of the greater part of the Scottish nobility in the battle of Flodden - 'a brave nobility chose rather to die than to desert their sovereign' - he also appears to approve of their preoccupation with war, per se. This is to be seen, for instance, in his remarks on the French nobility of the sixteenth century, and though the destruction of much of their power meant that they had little opportunity for other types of employment, Robertson does not criticise their martial activities as he does, on some occasions, criticise the chivalrous and martial spirit of their king, Francis I.

It is also to be seen, especially in Scotland, that Robertson presents the nobility as a group which is willing to work with the crown and to express its loyalty and devotion, an attitude which is contrasted with that of the crown, especially in the person of Queen Mary: 'from all corners of the kingdom, the nobles crowded to testify their duty and affection to their sovereign, and studied by every

1. However, see Chapter VIII, pp. 374-378, 382-401.
'art to wipe out the memory of past misconduct, and to lay in a stock of future merit'. Similarly, we are also presented with a contrast between the actions of the nobility of fifteenth-century France, and the more politic, cunning, and self-serving efforts of the crown during the same period, when Robertson goes into some detail concerning the respective natures of these two forces. Most of the great families of France, he states, lost power and property during the long period of war with the English—during which they had distinguished themselves: 'a generous nobility courted every station where danger appeared, or honour could be gained'. But, instead of being rewarded for such patriotism, they were meanly repaid by Charles VII and Louis XI, who made every effort to repress them, to strip them of their privileges, and to take away the few remnants of power which they possessed, in order to aggrandise not the nation, but themselves. As in Scotland, an open and benevolent spirit and patriotism is contrasted with a selfish and narrow scheming.

Although Robertson concedes that the martial spirit of the nobility is reduced in some of the commercial states, he points out that this body can also bring benefit to its country in systems other than the feudal. We can see in the case of Venice, for instance, that the aristocratic spirit—presumably based on a sense of privilege—has developed an organisation of resources, and a centralisation of power, which are of considerable value to the encourage-

3. Ibid., pp. 82–83.
ment and maintenance of commerce:

"By these unintermitted exertions of wisdom and valour, the Venetians enlarged the dominions of their commonwealth, until it became the most considerable power in Italy; while their extensive commerce, the useful and curious manufactures which they carried on, together with the large share which they had acquired of the lucrative commerce with the East, rendered Venice the most opulent state in Europe."

It is also to be observed that the benefits of this commerce are not restricted to the aristocracy itself, but bring wealth and status to the society in general - at least in relation to other countries; thus, although we may think of the aristocratic spirit as one which naturally inhibits and seeks to limit other classes, it is by no means wholly repressive.

Nonetheless, although there is a strong effort made by Robertson, particularly in Scotland, to show that the aristocracy of both feudal and commercial stages is capable of actions which are beneficial, it is also clear that he feels there are grave faults in this body, and that those faults are as detrimental to society as those of the monarchs and of the 'people' in general. As we have seen above, he believes that the emergence of property in land demands an increase in responsibility and in awareness of the true nature of government, but that it is the nature of the predominantly aristocratic feudal society to prevent the emergence of such sentiments. The institutions of this society favour one group only, the rest of the population is enslaved or otherwise denied the benefits of its labour,

2. See above, pp. 238-260.
and the qualities most beneficial to men have little chance of developing. Even though Robertson appears to believe that there is a greater popular participation in government in Scotland during this stage than is ordinarily the case, he finds that the limitation of commerce must necessarily check the growth of general political freedom in this society as in any other; so that, despite his endorsement of the nobility on the one hand, he is well aware, on the other, of the disastrous effects which they have had, particularly between the union of the crowns and of the kingdoms:

'The extensive rights vested in a feudal chief became in their hands dreadful instruments of oppression, and the military ideas on which these rights were founded being gradually lost or disregarded, nothing remained to correct or to mitigate the rigour with which they were exercised.'

In a similar fashion, he also points out that although the commercial state of Venice was economically flourishing, such financial security tended to obscure many of the faults of this state's political system; thus, although we may find useful institutions or policies in Venice as in Scotland, we should also look more closely at the actual division of political power in the former nation. When we do, Robertson feels, we find that although it is superficially equitable, its 'equity' depends on limiting the right to political participation. As an institution, the Venetian government is essentially as repressive as the ordinary feudal state because it does not extend 'rights' to all members of the society:

'If we view the Venetian government as calculated for the order of nobles alone, its institutions may be pronounced excellent; the deliberative, legislative, and executive powers, are so admirably distributed and adjusted, that it must be regarded as a perfect model of political wisdom. But if we consider it as formed for a numerous body of people subject to its jurisdiction, it will appear a rigid and partial aristocracy, which lodges all power in the hands of a few members of the community, while it degrades and oppresses the rest.'

Aristocratic repression, particularly in the feudal state, must necessarily be directed against the major part of the population; and, indeed, such inhibition of men's nature is also to be seen as a characteristic of the nobility in later stages of development. In feudal society, it is apparent that the 'people', having no property and themselves being the possessions of the lords, are hardly in a position to challenge the actions of their masters. Even in a society such as Scotland, where there is a more appreciable degree of freedom, the extent to which the activities of the nobility actually benefit other segments of the society as well, is rather difficult to determine - though Robertson seems to believe that there is some unplanned, or heterogeneous benefit to be found in actions which have a selfish and limited aim: 'the spirit which some of them discovered ... leaves little room to doubt, that ambition or resentment were the real motives of their conduct; and that, on many occasions, while they were pursuing ends just and necessary, they were actuated by principles and passions altogether unjustifiable.'

1. Charles V, Works, V, p. 113; by this statement, Robertson challenges the idea that we see in several works (e.g., Machiavelli, The Discourses, Harmondsworth, 1970, pp. 119-120) that those excluded from the Venetian government should accept this situation, because it was formed before their arrival.

Ordinarily, even heterogeneous benefit is limited; and it is to be seen in many instances that the aristocratic belief in its capacity to check the crown by force means that it will endeavour to limit the power of any other group in society, by refusing to support it, by checking those efforts which it makes to gain, or to resurrect, power. In the history of many of the Spanish states, for instance, we can see that any threats to the aristocratic power, any possibility of the limitation of the nobles's privileges - which is produced by the continual demands of the popular part of the constitution for more power - are always met with violence. The lords felt it was more appropriate to their status, or pride, to ally with the crown against the people, and more likely that they could check one individual than to take on an entire class, alone: 'their pride and dignity were less hurt by suffering the prince to possess an extensive prerogative than by admitting the high pretensions of the people'.

Some of the faults of the aristocracy, resulting as they do from a belief in their superiority, from past political power which has inculcated ideas of grandeur and pride, would seem to be reduced in their effect only when government becomes somewhat more balanced, when the individualism so typical of the nobles, is limited by circumstances. This is the case, for example, in Scotland, where with the development of commerce, and the Union of

1707, the powers of the lords were broken and the greater part of the population was able to come into its own. But such considerable changes do not always occur, and to counteract aristocratical inequities - even in the feudal society, where repression is 'natural' - Robertson suggests that men should have a regard to certain principles of justice, certain virtues, such as humanity. Although his insistence on these is by no means as strong in this instance as in the case of the monarchy, and his acceptance of interest and of the actual nature of the nobility is thus somewhat greater, it is still true that he believes virtue ought to guide lords as well as kings.

This virtue, this adherence to the laws of humanity and justice and other qualities which can hardly be seen as forming a natural part of the rigidly aristocratic society of sixteenth-century Scotland, is the standard by which Robertson judges of the actions of many of the nobility, as it is the standard by which he believes they ought to have lived. If he demands that princes act at all times, in all ages, without regard to the nature of the society in which they live, according to principles which may collectively be described as 'dignity', so he also suggests that much the same types of limitations form the nobles's ideas of behaviour suitable to their rank. That pride, which can be so destructive, may be used more positively, Robertson thinks, may lead them not to act as individuals or as the ordinary man does, but to go beyond this. Background, political

experience, knowledge of the sort of behaviour necessary for the maintenance of some order in the state — all factors produced by their very position in society — should lead the aristocracy to impose restraints on its members that will curb their natural tendency towards rash and thoughtless excesses. If they demand the enforcement of their traditional right to particular offices, Robertson implies, then they must reveal the qualities fundamental to the proper fulfillment of such offices.

That this 'background', representing experience and privilege, both of which should have brought about more philosophical attitudes, is important to Robertson's idea of the nature of the nobility, can be seen from the fact that he believes those raised to aristocratic standing from another class are likely to retain their original qualities — he speaks, for instance, of Arran, James VI's favourite, as retaining 'the meanness suitable to his primitive indigence'. Further, in his consideration of the nature of Queen Mary's English gaolers, he distinguishes between various ranks of nobility; and, though he qualifies his description of Paulet by conceding that he at least had 'honour and integrity', he believes both Paulet and Drury are characterised by 'severe vigilance', by rigour and harshness, even brutality — all to be expected from those 'of an inferior rank'. Such men are to be contrasted with a great lord such as Shrewsbury, whose behaviour towards Queen Mary was based on 'gentleness and

2. Ibid., p. 488.
3. Ibid., p. 525.
4. Ibid., p. 488.
'respect', on 'humanity', befitting a man of his quality\(^1\).

Although Robertson accepts the dominance of interest among the Scottish nobility\(^2\) and is able to see that men will combine a love of wealth with a zeal for liberty\(^3\), he nonetheless does demand some observation of the laws of 'honour' and 'humanity' in the midst of chaos and disorder. It is for this reason that he makes the statement which is perhaps the most clear expression of his belief in the need for an office, based on pride and rank, to limit the aristocracy, when, in discussing the reasons which certain of the lords had for murdering Riccio, he remarks that these reasons 'inspired them with thoughts of vengeance, in no wise suitable to justice, to humanity, or to their own dignity'\(^4\). Dignity, pride, superiority - all these should be maintained, should lead the aristocrat to set an example to his inferiors, should restrain him from succumbing to his lowly passions, and thereby create peace and stability\(^5\).

As will be apparent from the nature of the feudal society\(^6\), and especially that of sixteenth-century Scotland, such expectations as Robertson expresses appear to be rather unrealistic. He has, after all, gone to considerable pains not only to show the type of institutions and customs in Scotland during the reign of Queen Mary, but also to establish that passions, such as revenge, still affect men almost as strongly as in the most primitive stages of human development however much this ought not to be the case\(^7\). To

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2. Ibid., p. 217.
3. Ibid., p. 214.
4. Ibid., p. 271.
5. Such qualities are particularly valued by Robertson, and many of his friends: see Appendix A, pp. 506-507.
6. See above, pp. 238-260, and also Chapter VIII.
7. See above, pp. 215, 246-247, 251.
attempt to make the denial of these natural responses a part of the 'humanity', 'justice' and self-discipline of the feudal noble, is to expect such a degree of philosophical restraint as is hardly to be found even in the more modern society -- certainly neither Smith nor Millar ever believed that men should surrender all thoughts of passions such as vengeance, even if they agreed that a certain moderation of the more unsocial ones was necessary.

From this consideration of Robertson's thoughts concerning the various groups and ranks which constitute society, and particularly from the study of the principles which he feels should guide nobles and, especially, monarchs, it would seem that he is not always closely bound by the concepts which are the basis of theoretical history. His tendency to evaluate other ages by ideas more common to his own, his suggestion that certain concepts existed in both feudal and commercial societies by which those in power should have regulated their actions, is a clear denial of the variation within different stages of development, of the relativism which he is elsewhere intent to establish. We may conclude from this, perhaps, that he is attempting to anticipate the eventual development of unplanned and unintended benefits; and that, although he often shows an awareness of the slow growth of the philosophical, and accepts that men's actions may have greater benefits only later in their history¹, there are some situations where he seems unable to wait for such bene-

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1. See, for instance, Charles V, Works, VI, p. 509.
fits to emerge.

It must be conceded that Robertson's attitude may partially result from his refusal to accept the actual morality of other ages, and that he may feel one endorses unacceptable standards by passing over the actions of rulers in silence. Certainly, the didactic element in the philosophic spirit\(^1\), which in Robertson's work is often transformed into advice to kings, may be seen in his thoughts on government. We may go further than this, however, to suggest that Robertson is lacking in that detachment which Smith at least possessed, and is unable to accept the totality of human experience, unable also to accept all of the variations in human behaviour and moral standards. He is, in other words, much more closely involved with the historical events which he is describing and, perhaps entering too much into the spirit of the age, refuses to accept the 'inequities' which he sees, cannot absorb them as a part of the 'natural course of things'. For a more detached, more truly objective writer such as Smith, 'systems of positive law ... can never be regarded as accurate systems of the rules of natural justice';\(^2\) but Robertson seeks always to make 'natural justice' the guide of men in the most unphilosophical of times.

This sort of attitude we have seen to some degree in Robertson's usage of Providence as a causal factor, and it was suggested that he could not accept that certain events

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1. See below, Appendix A.
2. Smith, MS, p. 502. See also above, pp. 31-32, 139.
might not have occurred, or might have been expressed in other, less beneficial ways had it not been for the wise intervention of God\textsuperscript{1}. It was particularly noticeable that the providential was employed only to explain the emergence of what Robertson saw as useful or philosophical ends; the manipulation of the natural, the intervention by divine forces, can never be seen in other instances. Thus, while Robertson's remarks on the nature of government, on the various elements of which it is composed, do not involve Providence as a causal factor, we can see in many of his statements a similar inability to accept the nature, the imperfections, of the past which is expressed in the refusal to give a value to institutions because they are an integral expression of stages in man's development. It is rather as though Robertson is denying the validity of those actions and customs which benefit some at the expense of others, or which show that corruption or an excess of political sagacity can be profitable. History may be obliged to record such actions 'for the instruction of ages to come',\textsuperscript{2}; but this 'instruction' is not merely a philosophical awareness of the nature of institutions of other ages if 'history' regulates her opinions of such institutions by 'the eternal and immutable laws of justice'.\textsuperscript{3}

Nonetheless, such considerations should not lead us to ignore those ideas concerning the nature of government which Robertson does put forward, since these are, after all, an

\begin{enumerate}
\item See above, pp. 178-179.
\item Scotland, Works, I, p. 277.
\item Ibid.
\end{enumerate}
important part of his historical philosophy. His evaluation of the qualities or distinguishing characteristics of those who comprise the three fundamental elements of the forms of governments indicates that he has reservations about all three. In each instance, he has suggested, there are particular faults which demand restraint, which should either be imposed from above or should emerge as a result of the awareness of the behaviour appropriate to office or rank. When such restraints are not imposed, then disorder and chaos follow; thus, while it is true that Robertson's attitude towards the lower classes is based on his belief that they are especially prone to civil disturbance, it is also a fact that he feels all institutions in which there are few checks or balances tend to produce similar instances of instability. In the English American colonies, for instance, he observed that when men are not motivated to work steadily, and with perseverance, when they prefer to gain easy wealth rather than to establish proper foundations for regular economic growth, there can be no true development, no emergence of good laws and stability; and that many of the colonists were men of noble family suggests that concepts of 'duty' and 'rank' count for little when the attractions of wealth present themselves, that men of this class are as prone to violence and disorder as those of the lower ranks.

2. Ibid. It is worth noting that Robertson here expects all men, whatever their class, to act by that morality which Smith saw as peculiar to the middling and lower ranks - but he himself does not make this point explicitly, or suggest that variation in situation must lead to a change in moral sentiments.
We may observe further, from the nature of the League of Schmalkalde which was composed of the German Protestant princes, that those of the higher ranks of society permit individual gain, limited interest, and personality to triumph in the midst of difficulties which one might have thought to be sufficiently great to develop a sense of unity. The most basic fault of the League, failure to establish a central leadership of its army, is on general principle 'always of fatal consequence in the operations of war'; and if there is a general tendency, in 'all great associations or bodies of men', to be 'slow, and dilatory and undecisive in their deliberations', then the Protestant princes must be as vulnerable as lesser men. Certainly, the confusion and disorder which flourished in the League until the rise of Maurice of Saxony, reveals clearly that lack of organisation and the inability to mobilise one's resources are failings which are not peculiar to the lower ranks. When added to the other faults of both lords and kings, such instances reinforce Robertson's belief, that no social division or group, no single part of the society, has the restraint, order and constancy necessary to establish and maintain a form of government which could bring benefit to all.

Some limitation of the selfish characteristics of men would therefore seem to be appropriate, Robertson believes, and, indeed, to be necessary if the real interests of the members of societies are to predominate. To some degree, he

1. Charles V, Works, VI, p. 211.
2. Ibid., p. 193. See also p. 212.
3. Though Robertson does not use the phrase 'true interest' often, the occasions on which he does show that he sees it as meaning possession of sufficient political sagacity to maintain a certain stability (Charles V, Works, VI, pp. 520-521) or the use of one's power to benefit the whole society (ibid., V, pp. 82-83).
sees this restriction of apparent interest, of temporary
gain, to be achieved through the actions of kings and the
nobility - when they act according to philosophical prin-
ciples - and through the imposing of restraints on the people.
But he also appears to believe that other limitations are
valuable, especially those which arise from a greater dis-
tribution of property, and from a balance of powers. As a
greater security and order can be achieved on an inter-
national level by the limitation of the interest of any one
state, so also can we see that it is to the advantage of
all the members of any constitution to limit their desires
and their more destructive characteristics in order to
create a system which is more beneficial than any single or
pure form of government.

This is not to say that any balance which exists in the
various European systems must necessarily be the result of
virtue, or that it demands an end to the particular dis-
tinguishing characteristics of the various classes. On
some occasions, Robertson's timeless virtues are replaced
by an acceptance of enlightened self-interest whereby one
surrenders one thing in order to gain another; and he be-
lieves that qualities such as pride and jealousy of rank,
which mark the aristocracy, can provide a means of checking
monarchical power:

'The maxims of Turkish policy do not authorize
any of those institutions, which, in other
countries limit the exercise or moderate the
rigour of monarchical power; they admit neither
of any great court with constitutional and per-
manent jurisdiction to interpose, both in en-
acting laws, and in superintending the execution
of them; nor of a body of hereditary nobles,
'whose sense of their own pre-eminence, whose consciousness of what is due to their rank and character, whose jealousy of their privileges, circumscribe the authority of the prince, and serve not only as a barrier against the excesses of his caprice, but stand as an intermediate order between him and the people.'

Whether arising from traditional virtue, from pride, jealousy of rank, or from some surrender of limited interest, it is apparent that unless there is some limitation of self, or some institutionalisation of balance, there will be little chance of the society as a whole being able to prosper. Certainly it is clear, Robertson believes, that whatever advantages men may have secured by the development of trade and commerce, these are always vulnerable to erosion either through the faults of various groups or through limited interest. He shows, for instance, how, in fifteenth-century France, Louis XI managed to extend his power through purchasing the authority of the national assembly:

'By exerting all his power and address in influencing the election of representatives, by bribing or overawing the members, and by various changes which he artfully made in the form of their deliberation, Louis acquired such entire direction of these assemblies, that, from being the vigilant guardians of the privileges and property of the people, he rendered them tamely subservient towards promoting the most odious measures of his reign.'

We may also see, Robertson thought, than when the jealousy of place and position typical of the nobility, is used unwisely and without reflection, it can lead to the nobility being corrupted by a monarch who has the skill to divide society. This is particularly evident in the history of the

2. Ibid., p. 85, and see also ibid., VI, p. 511, and Scotland, Works, II, pp. 68-72.
various Spanish kingdoms during the reign of Charles V, when the cities as well as the nobility failed to present a united front to the crown. The belief of the Castilian nobility that it could more easily check the monarchical power than popular rights led to its being corrupted by Charles to the extent of granting him a subsidy 'in contempt not only of the sentiments of the nation, but of the ancient forms of the constitution.' This, and similar actions eventually led to the destruction by the emperor, not only of the democratic, but also the aristocratic, element - a clear instance of the domination of temporary interest, of passions and pride limiting the awareness of real interest:

'the imprudent zeal with which the Castilian nobles had supported the regal prerogative, in opposition to the claims of the commons, during the commotions in the year one thousand five hundred and twenty-one, proved at last fatal to their own body. By enabling Charles to depress one of the orders in the state they destroyed that balance to which the constitution owed its security, and put it in his power, or in that of his successors, to humble the other, and to strip it gradually of its most valuable privileges.'

Furthermore, being themselves depressed and subjected, the Castilians were only too ready to aid the suppression of other kingdoms, so that eventually all were affected by the same lack of balance, all became subject to the crown's will:

'The will of the sovereign became the supreme law in all the kingdoms of Spain; and princes who were not checked in forming their plans by the jealousy of the people, nor controlled in executing

1. See above, p. 324.
3. Ibid., VI, p. 92.
'them by the power of the nobles, could both aim at great objects, and call forth the whole strength of the monarchy in order to attain them.'

Thus, despite his demand for standards which express and reflect perfection and timeless moral values, Robertson also accepts other forms of limitation of men's actions which either take the form of interest, or are an expression of characteristics which he otherwise shows as being detrimental. Although he believes that government should have a dignity, though he feels some forms approach nearer to perfection than do others, he does not really expect to find any society in which there are no problems of rule: these, after all, will arise from the very nature of man. He does suggest that greater benefits will emerge from the very introduction of commerce, that men will become more enlightened and more free of their passions, a point which he illustrates explicitly in Scotland:

'As the nobles were deprived of power, the people acquired liberty. Exempted from burdens to which they were formerly subject, screened from oppression to which they had been long exposed, and adopted into a constitution whose genius and laws were more liberal than their own, they have extended their commerce, refined their manners, made improvements in the elegances of life, and cultivated the arts and sciences.'

Yet, although he felt the government most likely to permit men to develop their best qualities emerged from the commercial system, his awareness of the problems of men in his own times, of the conflict between various groups in the commercial societies of mid-sixteenth century Europe, of the continuation of apparent interest to the detriment of

real growth, meant that he did not see an end to conflict and dissent. His studies of modern commercial Spain—that is, Spain of the eighteenth century—showed him that the institution of beneficial principles of government by no means meant a cessation of selfish interest, and a predominance of virtue. Though the attempt to revive trade, to encourage commerce, both in Spain and its colonies, was a policy which became a monarch concerned with the well-being of his subjects¹, though these efforts were supported by the 'sentiments and spirit' of the people², the continuing interest of men restricts the extent of the benefits which we might expect to emerge³. Indeed, although Robertson obviously disapproves of this interest, he sees it as something to be expected, especially because there are some severe restrictions on the free operation of trade: 'the vigilance and ingenuity of private interest discover means of effecting (private gain), which public wisdom cannot foresee, nor public authority prevent'⁴. Yet, however natural, such interest goes against the duty which men owe to their country and their ruler, and leads them to ignore those controls on behaviour which are necessary in the developed society⁵.

2. Ibid., p. 242.
3. Ibid., p. 243. These restrictions are of a nature which Smith would consider an interference with the laissez-faire pattern, an instance of government upsetting the natural course of things. Although Robertson does not consider them in these terms, he may see that man's interest here is natural because these restrictions are an interference with his benefit, even if it is limited—but, as in many other instances, he does not employ the terminology of Smith in his discussion of such matters.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid., p. 244. See also Works, III, p. 352—'interestedness' in the modern state leads men to be solely concerned with the self.
Interest and virtue, then, continue to do battle. Yet, so much does Robertson fluctuate in his ideas, veering uncertainly between acceptance of what is, and the desire to see perfect equity, perfect government, that we can make no definitive statement, establish no final conclusion, as to whether the principles of theoretical history supersede the moral attitudes of other times, other historical interpretations; we can only point out that in his own times he sought constantly for instances of virtue, and was greatly reassured to find them:

'even in situations so trying to human frailty, there are instances of virtue that remains unseduced. In the year 1772 the Marquis de Croix finished the term of his viceroyalty in New Spain with unsuspected integrity; and instead of bringing home exorbitant wealth, returned with the admiration and applause of a grateful people, whom his government had rendered happy.'

Other forces than the theoretical have moulded Robertson's ideas, and though he himself is able to accept the combination of relativism and absolute values, the acceptance by him of the latter and his insistence on forming them into a pattern by which men live, and making them an integral part of his historical analysis, must necessarily mean that he cannot be seen as a full member of the theoretical school. Such duality of interpretation is a consistent feature of his writing, as will be seen in greater detail in the following chapters where we will study some of the elements which may have contributed towards the development of his historical approach, and examine the extent to which they permit him to support or reject certain basic principles of the theoretical interpretation.

CHAPTER VIII

THE SCIENTIFIC INTERPRETATION OF HISTORY

The employment of more than one type of interpretation, the vulnerability to multiple influences, is to be seen especially in Robertson's ideas about the nature and purpose of history, and particularly in his interpretation of the Scottish past. Yet, to some extent he appears to conform to the philosophical approach to the study of the past, and, indeed, when he has no special bias, his attitudes are consonant with the theoretical. The two laws of man's capacity to progress, and the heterogeneity of ends, which help determine the theoretical position on the role of climate, the individual, and the accidental in history, are also the basis of the theoretical assessment of historical evidence and of its criticism of other theories which do not take into account the complexities of human nature and the variations in human society. Such standards Robertson appears to welcome.

We must always extend to our study of history, the theoretical writers believed, those principles which are vital to the development of true science, whether pertaining to man or to nature:

'The objects of science, and of all the steady judgments of the understanding, must be permanent, unchangeable, always existent, and liable neither to generation nor corruption, nor alteration of any kind. Such are the species or specific essences of things. Man is perpetually

1. See below, Chapter IX.
2. See above, pp. 154-168.
'changing every particle of his body; and every thought of his mind is in continual flux and succession. But humanity, or human nature, is always existent, is always the same, is never generated, and is never corrupted.'

We must not only study constancies and uniformities, but must do so in a detached manner, replacing intuition and specious supposition with general principles, in true scientific fashion. Ordinarily, Ferguson believed, the 'natural historian' concedes 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':

'It is only in what relates to himself, and in matters the most important, and the most easily known, that he substitutes hypothesis instead of reality, and confounds the provinces of imagination and reason, of poetry and science.'

In the attempt made to undermine the influence of past and present unphilosophical writers, the theoretical technique of the conjectural process was particularly valuable. As we have seen above, this process was used to supply probabilities which would fill up the gaps in our knowledge of the past, was a means of connecting the parts in order to form a whole. Based as it is on observation, and on a belief in the existence of the two basic laws of the theoretical philosophy - which establish a uniformity of response to various economic situations - this process permits the his-

2. Ferguson, Essay, p. 2. This statement should not be seen as suggesting that theoretical history does not speculate as to the past; any condemnation of hypothesis, indeed, of conjecture, refers solely to that based on un-scientific principles, not to the process itself.
3. See p. 80, note 1.
torian to make general hypotheses concerning societies other than his own. He is thereby enabled to avoid the extremes of speculation in his consideration of the nature of other stages and the sort of institutions which might exist in these, and is less prone to interpret the past in terms peculiar to his own times and to indulge in fanciful theories which are not based on observation. He is not obliged to depend on myth or legend, as other writers often are, and when he makes use of such material, he does so not indiscriminately but rather with regard to the information which it gives us about the institutions and customs of other ages.

This usage of the past, the combination of 'poetry' and 'science', is seen, for instance, in Robertson's acceptance of Homer as an historical source: 'the only poet to whom history ventures to appeal, and who, by his scrupulous accuracy in describing the manners and arts of early ages, merits this distinction'. The theoretical writers's awareness of the variations and also the constancies in human societies, their capacity to separate valid from specious sources, their employment of conjecture to limit the possible causes of events and to extend our knowledge of the past, permit them to be eminently philosophical in their work, to interpret prior ages in their own terms. And, although it is true that this

1. America, Works, III, p. 10. See also Ferguson, Essay, pp. 74-81, especially p. 77: 'It were absurd to quote the fable of the Iliad or the Odyssey ... 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 .... In this manner fiction may be admitted to vouch for the genius of nations, while history has nothing to offer that is intitled to credit.'
ideal is by no means always fulfilled in practice, it does reflect the theoretical history's 'scientific' attempt to move away from all previous classifying of events into the natural and the artificial, the philosophical and the un-philosophical, to accept all the institutions of each age and every stage because these were a part of the whole - the history of mankind.

Nonetheless, while the theoretical writers believed it to be unphilosophical to use the standards of one's own time in the evaluation of other eras, they felt that it fell within the range of the philosophical historian's duties to both point out and criticise unphilosophical ideas and approaches to the study of the past, especially those to be found in their own times. Such a process, after all, helped to reinforce our awareness of the gradual evolution of human society and thought, of the length of time which it had taken for the scientific approach to be adopted and for man's mind to develop. 'How slow is the progress of reason and of civil order!' lamented Robertson, who continually berated 'historians' for not being concerned with the general and the illuminating:

'it is a cruel mortification, in searching for what is instructive in the history of past times, to find that the exploits of conquerors who have desolated the earth, and the freaks of tyrants who have rendered nations unhappy, are recorded with minute and often disgusting accuracy, while the discovery of useful arts, and the progress of the most beneficial branches of commerce, are passed

1. See above, Chapters V-VII, and below, Chapter IX.
2. See Chapter I.
3. See especially Chapters II and III.
'over in silence, and suffered to sink into oblivion.'

This attitude is especially evident in Robertson's own usage of conjecture and in his criticism of the misapplication of this process. While, on occasion, he may seem to be saying that conjecture should be applied to the study only of those ages and events which occurred before written history, while at times he appears to have little desire to use it at all, it is evident not only from his adoption of the concept of stages and variations, but also from more specific instances, that he finds it valuable—providing that certain standards are maintained in its application.

Essentially, Robertson thought there were several forms of conjecture: 'probable'; that which is based on insufficient evidence; that based on complete absence of material; that which should not interest the historian at all because it concerns 'events' which 'might have occurred' but never did; that based on what we might describe as

1. India, Works, II, p. 367. See also Charles V, Works, V, pp. 61-65, 536 (Note XXVIII) and America, Works, III, pp. 20-21, 243.
5. Ibid., p. 247. Although Robertson believes that the study of the institutions of primitive people is of considerable value because it 'tended to complete our knowledge of the human species', he felt that many 'philosophers' had failed to approach this study in the proper spirit, had indulged in unregulated conjecture, and 'began to erect systems, when they should have been searching for facts on which to establish their foundations' (ibid.).
6. Ibid., pp. 10, 19.
7. Scotland, Works, I, p. 149: 'into this boundless field of fancy and conjecture, the historian must make no excursions; to relate real occurrences, and to explain their real causes and effects, is his peculiar and only province'. But, see above, p. 179.
common sense; and the sort of speculation which is especially meaningless or irrelevant because it is impossible to prove or disprove and adds little to our knowledge were we able to authenticate it. His ideas concerning conjecture, therefore, are a basic part of his attitudes pertaining to the subject matter of history and the sort of problems to which the modern scientific historian should confine himself. Yet, although in these specific instances he shows some scepticism about the nature of the technique, he nonetheless insists that it must always be employed according to scientific principles. As we must always establish our theories concerning more important matters on a wide variety of solid sources, so we must at least attempt to weed out unphilosophical types of conjecture which consider less relevant inquiries - such as the origin of the American Indians:

‘When an investigation is, from its nature, so intricate and obscure that it is impossible to arrive at conclusions which are certain, there may be some merit in pointing out such as are probable.’

In his consideration of this particular problem, Robertson attempted to apply the general principles of the theoretical philosophy in order to show that the unscientific approach of other 'philosophers' led them to substi-

2. Ibid., p. 230.
3. See especially pp. 2-6, 78ff, and also Appendix A, pp. 509-517.
5. Ibid., p. 243.
tute unconnected or unique facts for evidence. These so-called facts could be related to no overall concept of human nature and development, and could be easily overturned by the theoretical standards, especially those pertaining to the diffusion of culture. The theoretical historians explicitly deny the possibility of such diffusion though this concept had once been a common explanation of similarities of behaviour. Such a theory, they felt, continues the interpretation of the past as a unique process, in which whole institutions were isolated from their past - here, by being transferred en masse to other societies. As far as they were concerned, the idea of similarity of stages of development was a more general explanation of the existence of similar institutions; and, if any society did in fact adopt any invention or custom from another, it must itself have reached the same stage and be aware of the merit of those institutions which it takes over: otherwise, it would never have seen the need for them: 'any singular practice of one country ... is seldom transferred to another, till the way be prepared by the introduction of similar circumstances'.

Likewise, there is also criticism in the theoretical works of that form of conjecture which attempts to use the diffusion of culture idea to explain many considerable and profound changes. This criticism is based not only on a refusal to recognise this form of change in general, but also on the belief that such theories are often constructed from

1. Ferguson, Essay, p. 169. See also ibid., pp. 170-171.
very limited evidence. The theoretical writers felt that if this concept was to be accepted, even partially, it must be able to account for a wide range of social institutions; it cannot be suggested as the cause of isolated customs if it does not take into account the particular nature of the respective society.

All conclusions concerning resemblances between institutions, therefore, must be supported by detailed and comprehensive evidence, and must also be based on an understanding of the gradual development of society. And all theories that suggest the wholesale transfer of cultures must be measured against the belief that the rise and decline of societies have 'in some respects, a resemblance to each other, which independent of imitation, is naturally productive of similar manners and customs'\(^1\). Claims which rested upon 'no better foundation than the casual resemblance of some customs, or the supposed affinity between a few words'\(^2\), therefore, Robertson believed, could hardly be taken seriously as explanations of the European origin of the Americans; he condemned them as 'frivolous' and 'uncertain', and stated that if men lived in a similar type of society and under a similar climate, 'they must feel the same wants, and exert the same endeavours to supply them. The same objects will allure, the same passions will animate them, and the same ideas and sentiments will arise in their minds'\(^3\).

Robertson feels that it is only when truly individual or singular institutions can be found both in America and

\begin{enumerate}
\item Millar, Origin, p. 283.
\item America, Works, III, pp. 229-230.
\item Ibid., pp. 230-231.
\end{enumerate}
in the older society which claims to have peopled it, institutions which cannot be accounted for by the concept of general uniformities in similar social stages, that we might concede that a direct relationship exists:

'There are, it is true, among every people, some customs, which, as they do not flow from any natural want or desire peculiar to their situation, may be denominated usages of arbitrary institution. If, between two nations settled in remote parts of the earth, a perfect agreement with respect to any of these should be discovered, one might be led to suspect that they were connected by some affinity.'

But, he believes, this is rarely the case; and certainly, such correspondence occurs so rarely, 'that no theory concerning the population of the New World ought to be founded upon them.'

Robertson also uses the general principles of theoretical history to invalidate other theories concerning the origin of the American Indians. He believes, for instance, that no people has ever lost 'the necessary arts of life' - that is, the use of metals and tools once these have become an integral part of their life. Because of this fact he feels that we can be sure the progenitors of the Indians were extremely primitive, as many of their descendants had still not developed such basic equipment. Certainly, such a fact enables us to deny those theories which suggest some of the most sophisticated nations of the old world to have established colonies in the new. The fine arts can decline, and men may cease to cultivate land

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2. Ibid., p. 232.
3. Ibid., p. 233.
4. Ibid., p. 229.
5. Ibid., p. 231. See also Charles V, Works, V, p. 9.
when their society is greatly disrupted\(^1\) - but they do not forget how to cultivate. Similarly, Robertson believes, we cannot expect that men from the civilised southern nations of the old world were the ancestors of the modern American savage; the former were aware of the use of domestic animals, the latter were not, and:

> 'Whenever any people have experienced the advantages which men enjoy, by their dominion over the inferior animals, they can neither subsist without the nourishment which these afford, nor carry on any considerable operation independent of their ministry and labour.'\(^2\)

The faults of these and other unreasonable conjectures must be made obvious; and, if the historian is so inclined, he may substitute other conjectures\(^3\) which are at least more philosophical in that they distinguish between what is probable and what is clearly impossible. Such, for instance, is the motivation behind Robertson's own speculations concerning the issue of the peopling of the new world; by eliminating those nations which could not have done so\(^4\), and, by observation, restricting the number of those which might have been able to, he puts forward some suggestions which he considered to be based on general principles, and which were partially supported by contemporaneous scientific investigations\(^5\).

The conjectural process depends then, as does theoretical history in general, on regular patterns of explanation which are based on the two fundamental laws of the heterogeneity of ends and of man's capacity to progress. This

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3. Ibid., pp. 239, 243.
4. Ibid., pp. 231-235.
belief in similarities and uniformities resulting from the broad correlation of situation permits the Scottish historians to continually emphasise the relationships which are to be found between societies separated by great periods of time\(^1\) while it also permits them to use the history of one country in a particular stage - such as feudalism - to make some general conclusions regarding the institutions of other like systems. This point, for instance, is often made by Robertson in his study of the development of laws and of the distribution of political power in medieval and also in Renaissance Europe, and forms a part of his effort to break down that acceptance of individual characteristics, that national pride, that belief in peculiar institutions, which he sees as inimical to a true historical understanding of the past:

"The state of government, in all the nations of Europe, having been nearly the same during several ages, nothing can tend more to illustrate the progress of the English constitution, than a careful inquiry into the laws and customs of the kingdoms on the continent. This source of information has been too much neglected by the English antiquaries and lawyers. Filled with admiration of that happy constitution now established in Great Britain, they have been more attentive to its forms and principles than to the condition and ideas of remote times, which, in almost every particular, differ from the present. While engaged in perusing the laws, charters, and early historians, of the continental kingdoms, I have often been led to think that an attempt to illustrate the progress of English jurisprudence and policy, by a comparison with those of other kingdoms in a similar situation, would be of great utility, and might throw much light on some points which are now obscure, and decide others which have been long controverted."\(^2\)

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\(^1\) See above, Chapters III and VI.
\(^2\) Charles V, Works, V, p. 586 (Note XLV); see also ibid., p. 566 (Note XXXVII). Millar's Historical View seems to fulfill Robertson's suggestion - see, for instance, I, p. 376.
This emphasis on similarities, even within institutions, does not lead the theoretical historians to ignore those variations which do exist, however. We can often distinguish particular causal factors within the history of nations in a similar state which account for distinctive features in these societies. It is because of this fact, indeed, that Robertson goes into some considerable detail concerning the variations in the respective powers held by members of the constitutions of the different European states at the beginning of the sixteenth century:

'as the institutions and events, which I have endeavoured to illustrate, formed the people of Europe to resemble each other, and conducted them from barbarism to refinement, in the same path, and by nearly equal steps; there were other circumstances which occasioned a difference in their political establishments, and gave rise to those peculiar modes of government which have produced such variety in the character and genius of nations.

It is no less necessary to become acquainted with the latter than to have contemplated the former. Without a distinct knowledge of the peculiar form and genius of civil government in each state, a great part of its transactions must appear altogether mysterious and inexplicable.'

The limitations which the theoretical historians impose on their acceptance of such peculiarities, however, are those dictated by the general principles of the theoretical approach. Firstly, they believe that any unique features or institutions of a society must be unique only in the sense of not being typical or general; one cannot accept whatever individual features the English constitution may possess, therefore, if these are represented as having existed since time immemorial, or at the least as having de-

2. For further remarks on the theoretical attitude towards concepts such as 'ancient constitution', see below, pp. 356-359.
veloped in ages when the economic and social situation of men simply could not allow of such development. Such individual characteristics - or this explanation of them - are fanciful, not truly historical, insofar as they are accounted for in terms or concepts which are inappropriate to the era in which they are considered to have emerged. While it may be true, then, Millar points out, that there are particular limitations on the crown in the English constitution, these have emerged over a period of several hundred years, and generally without conscious planning. Such distinctive features cannot be explained by the arbitrary statement that they always existed, always had the same form:

'Accurate limitations of power, and a regular system of subordination, the fruit of experience and foresight, cannot be expected to characterize the institutions of a simple people; who are usually guided by their feelings more than by reflection, and who attend more to the immediate effects of any measure, than to its remote consequences.'

The truly unique or distinguishing characteristic, therefore, must conform to the theoretical standards by reflecting the nature of the age in which it has emerged - that is, if it is limited in its effects to a particular period of the society's history (if it has a permanent place in the social institutions, it must necessarily change somewhat over many ages). Such restrictions are observed, for instance, in Robertson's account of the reasons for the slow development of commerce in England during a period when most other European states had begun to expand their trade.

1. For Millar's assessment of the two main views or interpretations of the English constitution, see Hist. View, I, pp. 207-208.
2. Ibid., pp. 253-254.
and their manufactures. Under Saxon rule, the various kingdoms were constantly at war with each other, and subject to external attack; when the country was finally united under one monarch, the Norman invasion took place. When Saxon and Norman finally formed one people, the whole of the new nation then became involved in a series of wars in and with France, which were then followed by the Wars of the Roses. All these particular factors thus produced a situation which prevented the development of man's trading instincts:

'Thus, besides the common obstructions of commerce occasioned by the nature of the feudal government, and the state of manners during the middle ages, its progress in England was retarded by peculiar causes. Such a succession of events adverse to the commercial spirit, was sufficient to have checked its growth, although every other circumstance had favoured it.'

The theoretical philosophy, furthermore, also developed other rules concerning the validity of the explanations of peculiar or individual characteristics of societies. As a second general principle, therefore, we should point out that, although it accepted that such characteristics, which later form an integral part of the society, may have developed over a relatively short period, this development must not be seen as conscious or planned, but as being formed and shaped by circumstances which men necessarily had to adapt to. Such a thesis, which is one which Millar emphasised in the Historical View, denies the probability of conscious, consistent rational thought and action, even in a more philosophical age. By so doing, it reinforces the

2. Ibid.
theoretical belief in the constancy of human nature at the same time as it shows that the unplanned and unintended may have an effect on society even within a relatively short period of time of the original, limited, action. The uniqueness of the institution or characteristic under discussion, therefore, is not denied; but it is also shown to reflect constant and common human responses. This, for example, is shown by Millar's remarks on conflict between 'court' and 'country' in the seventeenth century, which conflict was productive of some profound changes in the English constitution:

'We are not...to imagine that, from the beginning to the end of this contest, the same line of conduct was invariably pursued by either of the parties. They were sometimes actuated by the feelings of the moment; changed their ground according to alteration of times and circumstances; and varied their measures, according to the character and views of those individuals by whom they were occasionally directed.'

Thirdly, and as a part of the theoretical attack on the usage of the individual and isolated factor as explanation, there is always a demand that features which are peculiar to any society, and form an integral part of them, must have both their origin and their continuation accounted for. This is done by Millar, for example, in his examination of the differences between the power of the French and the English monarchs; while Louis XI was able to continue the changes in the constitution which had been made by Charles VII, and to make these very much a part of his power, the same type of privileges did not become a part of the English monarchy's

1. These terms indicate, roughly, those who supported the crown, and those who supported that part of parliament whose policies were directed against the crown's claims.
rights under the Tudors. Among the reasons which Millar gives for this are both that Henry VIII lacked the perseverance which Louis possessed, and that the English parliament tended to support his actions to the extent that he was not obliged to exercise his claim to certain legislative powers. Thus, he had 'little occasion to exercise this new branch of prerogative; and, as he did not live to reduce it into a system, the constitution, in the reign of his successor, returned into its former channel'.

This same insistence on the need to explain the continuation of a characteristic which has been originally produced by particular circumstances, is also seen in the study which Robertson made of the various European constitutions, and especially in his study of the German system of government. Originally, he pointed out, all the member states of the empire were subject to feudal restrictions, and owed homage to the emperor; and, although there was a considerable amount of independence within these states, as far as the ruling bodies were concerned, matters which concerned all were the prerogative of the emperor. There was thus a mixture of feudal restrictions and political freedom, which mixture was partially continued into the modern society - even though the actual property basis of the emperor's feudal powers had disappeared. His 'rights' had formed a part of the nature of the constitution, and were still a part of this though no longer based on land or power: 'thus an opposition was established between the genius of the government,

2. Ibid., pp. 146-153.
'and the forms of administration in the German empire'.
It is by techniques such as that which Robertson employs here that the theoretical history can accept the individuality of any custom or institution, at the same time as it goes beyond an unphilosophical insistence on the 'unique' or isolated through establishing the means by which the individual element becomes institutionalised in the society.

It is also as a result of their dependence on the two basic laws of the capacity to progress and the heterogeneity of ends - especially on the concept of social variations in different stages which is an integral part of these - that the theoretical historians attempt to introduce relative values into their works and to insist that these become a part of the historian's technique. Although, as we have seen, Robertson does not by any means always adhere to such standards, there are still many remarks in his works which indicate that, in theory, he accepted them. Furthermore, it is also apparent from his remarks on 'antiquarians', 'philologists', 'etymologists' and 'lawyers' that he felt the absence of a capacity to examine the past according to the values which existed in prior ages was an indication of an unphilosophical spirit, which should be constantly pointed out and criticised. To do so did not mean that one endorsed the unphilosophical spirit of other ages and events, but rather that one sought to understand the spirit of an age, and this was possible only if one refrained from im-

posing the concepts of a more advanced time on ages when the social structure permitted only relatively unsophisticated institutions and attitudes. Thus, for example, although it is apparent from his discussion of the crusades that Robertson sees these as a sign of enthusiasm, of unscientific credulity, and characterises them as a 'wild enterprize', he believes that if we are to gain some idea of the circumstances which led to such actions, we must turn to the works of the contemporaneous writers:

'The histories of the crusades, written by modern authors, who are apt to substitute the ideas and maxims of their own age in the place of those which influenced the persons whose actions they attempt to relate, convey a very imperfect notion of the spirit at that time predominant in Europe. The original historians, who were animated themselves with the same passions which possessed their contemporaries, exhibit to us a more striking picture of the times and manners which they describe.'

Similar criticism is also directed towards those who, because of political pressure, or because they judge past institutions by those which exist in their own times, are unable to reveal the development of the political systems under which they live, and to relate the different stages of it to the economic situations of past ages. Such persons ignore the unplanned and unintended character of institutional development, and often presuppose rational and philosophical action to have occurred in ages when this was not possible. Again, the basic principles of the theoretical philosophy are the foundation of the Scottish writers's

4. Ibid., pp. 326, 549 (Note XXXI). See also Millar, Origin, p. 269, note *.
5. See above, p. 351.
criticism of other historical interpretations. Some, such as Millar, are scrupulous in pointing out the faults of all sides in such disputes, and indicate that while the claims of the monarchical supporters for an original 'absolute monarchy', for instance, have no basis in the distribution of property and power in early society, so also must we discredit those who defend the 'rights of the people', because they presuppose a complete and fully organised government to have existed in a remote period:

'In their endeavours to prove the independent authority of the ancient national council, they were induced to believe, that, from the beginning, it had been modelled upon the same plan as at present, and that it was originally composed of the nobility, the knights of shires, and the representatives of boroughs.'

It is noticeable, on the contrary, that Robertson is primarily concerned in his criticism of such ideas, to castigate the supporters of monarchical claims. This tendency, although compensated for to some extent by his consideration of the gradual development of popular political power in European governments, does reflect his constant concern with the absolutist tendencies of kings. It also suggests a disposition to obscure the faults or unsubstantiated theories of other members of constitutions, and, on occasion, to present as 'virtues' those qualities which are simply a reflection of a particular age, a certain division of power. This is illustrated, for instance, in his study of the nature of the French constitution. Yet, although such bias must necessarily affect the extent to which

2. See above, pp. 299-303, 334-336.
3. See especially Chapter IX.
4. Charles V, Works, V, p. 499 (Note XIX), and see also above, pp. 235-237, 277-279.
he is able to apply the theoretical standards, it is none-
theless true that Robertson does support the principle of
relative evaluation when this is useful to his purpose.

His statements concerning the mistakes made by the French
pro-monarchical writers, for instance, are very similar to
those of Millar\textsuperscript{1}, in that they criticise the refusal or in-
ability of such authors to relate all institutions to the
division of property:

'Nothing is more common among antiquaries, and there is not a more copious source of error, than to decide concerning the institutions and manners of past ages, by the forms and ideas which prevail in their own times. The French lawyers in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, having found their sovereigns in possession of absolute power, seem to think it a duty incumbent on them to maintain, that such unbounded authority belonged to the crown in every period of their monarchy .... It is impossible, however, to con-
ceive two states of civil society more unlike to each other than that of the French nation under Clovis and that under Lewis XV.'

The general theoretical position on such non-relative
concepts as 'ancient constitutions' thus depends on the
idea of particular stages producing particular forms of
government. Sophisticated theories concerning the 'rights'
of men could be valid only in relation to the nature of the
society in which such theories developed. No 'rights' can
be seen to exist, nor privileges of king, lords, or commons
develop unless each particular group holds political power
over a considerable period of time. All forms of govern-
ment, Millar had stated, were 'a kind of natural growth, produced by the peculiar situation and circumstances of the society', thus they were neither produced in 'inappropriate'

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1. Origin, pp. 269-270, Note *.
circumstances, nor were they ever created consciously, especially not by individuals. Again, the theoretical insistence that single and isolated factors must become an integral part of society if they are to have a consistent effect\(^1\), and that individuals such as the 'legislator' cannot create an entire system\(^2\), form a part of the denial of the validity of concepts such as 'ancient constitutions', and of all others which fail to take the gradual development of man, and the general and social nature of causes into account - 'no constitution is formed by concert, no government is copied from a plan'\(^3\).

We cannot deny, however, that Robertson occasionally departs from this relativist position and clearly suggests that some societies do have, or have had, an 'ancient constitution'\(^4\). This has been seen to some degree in his dis-

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1. See above, pp. 165-168.
2. See above, pp. 164-165.
4. By the word 'constitution', Robertson ordinarily does not mean a specific document which embodies 'timeless' rights, but rather a collection of laws and customs which reflect the spirit and decisions of previous ages, and which are relevant to the present age. On occasion, he also means by 'constitution' the distribution of power among the various parts or components of a form of government, or these parts themselves - for instance, the king and nobles are the feudal constitution. We should also be aware that Robertson often used the word 'ancient' loosely, and that its meaning can be very vague: see for instance below, pp. 379-382, and Scotland, Works, I, pp. 36, 47, 107, 227, 236, 305, 365. It may also mean 'originally, 'well-established', or 'several hundred years' - see ibid., pp. 61, 63, 76, 99, 108, 110, 126, 135, 159, 183, 184, 185, 191, 213, 263, 282, 387, 455. The word can further be used to mean 'of some duration' or 'many years' - see ibid., pp. 239, 240, and Charles V, Works, V, p. 101, and even 'a few years' - Scotland, Works, I, p. 472. Nonetheless, although this imprecision is to be seen in Robertson's reference to various ancient constitutions - ibid., pp. 179, 210, and Charles V, Works, V, pp. 139, 143, 490 (Note XVI), 549 (Note XXXI), 567 (Note XXXIX) - he does not give this phrase the connotation of 'beyond the mists of time'. Though his 'ancient constitutions' are open to criticism - especially as to the sources on which they are based - they are at least situated in recorded history.
ussion of allodial, and later, institutions in France\(^1\), and it is evident also in his consideration of the Spanish form of government in *Charles V*. In his study of the various Spanish states, Robertson was able to relate many of the changes which had taken place in government to the constant laws of property/power correlation; and thus, insofar as his belief in the existence of particular rights is supported by the theoretical principles\(^2\), his arguments differ from those of the unphilosophical Spanish historians\(^3\).

But there are some instances when he appears to have been influenced by these same writers, and although this may result from the difficulty of working in another language and on unfamiliar institutions, it is also possible that his preference for 'mixed government'\(^4\) led him to make some unfounded conclusions.

In particular, there is some uncertainty in his work as to the nature of the Spanish constitutions prior to the invasions of the Moors; his words - 'the customs introduced by the Vandals and Goths'\(^5\) - might imply the existence of an allodial system, a supposition which is supported by his belief that after the defeat of the Moors a 'considerable part of the people' wished for the government of old to be re-established, indeed, were 'eager to resume' their former institutions\(^6\). But, if this is the case, when we take into

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3. See especially Ralph E. Giesey, *If Not, Not. The Oath of the Aragonese and the Legendary Laws of Sobrarbe* (Princeton, 1968); many of the histories which were used by Robertson, and many of the ideas which he absorbed uncritically, are discussed in this work.
consideration Robertson's own belief that trades were only learnt from the Moors themselves\(^1\), and that the towns only developed during the period of occupation\(^2\) and gained political power after it\(^3\), then it is difficult to see how popular power could have been an integral part of the various constitutions from the beginning.

If, on the other hand, we accept that by 'Gothic' institutions Robertson means feudalism - which idea is supported by his usage of the word 'nobles' in his summary of the Spanish response to the Moorish invasion\(^4\) - then it would seem unlikely that a considerable part of the population would have been so eager to have the old institutions and powers restored - unless by 'considerable' Robertson means 'the wealthy'. This confusion is also to be seen in other instances -for example, concerning the actions of the independent nobles, Robertson applies the legend of one of the Spanish states to the actions of the whole country\(^5\), and further suggests that this nobility is motivated by the desire of 'rescuing their country from oppression'\(^6\) which seems a very philosophic aim in the early middle ages\(^7\). In other matters also Robertson is either confused or prefers to endorse theories which are favourable to 'ancient constitution' ideologies or to the 'rights' of the 'people'; he implies that the king of Aragon was still elected in rela-

\(^1\) Charles V, Works, V, p. 134.
\(^2\) Ibid., pp. 133-134.
\(^3\) Ibid., p. 557 (Note XXXV).
\(^4\) Ibid., p. 123. It is possible, though, that Robertson has made the mistake of applying the terms peculiar to later ages to a less developed form of property division: see above, pp. 345-346, and below, pp. 363-364.
\(^6\) Charles V, Works, V, p. 123.
\(^7\) See especially Chapter IX below.
tively recent times\(^1\), a claim which even the Spanish historians did not make, created a new form of the traditional oath of Aragon which limited the king\(^2\), confused one law with another, and customary with statute law, and established rights for the **cortes** which did not exist\(^3\). Perhaps the multiplicity of sources and the confused Spanish historiographical traditions led him astray; but, if so, they led him always to favour the more popular element.

The theoretical emphasis on the need for relative standards is also to be seen in the belief that we should carefully distinguish between the institutions of one society and those of another, entirely different, stage. Although we may have a tendency to believe that similar names and titles represent similar achievements and values, a tendency encouraged by our respect for the European classical ages\(^4\), the describing of primitive societies as 'republics', for

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4. Robertson valued many of the institutions of Greece and Rome, especially the Roman system of law (Charles V, *Works*, V, pp. 54-56) and republican political ideas: see *Ibid.*, p. 269, and *Scotland, Works*, I, p. 141. But his belief in the gradual development of commerce, and the extension of its benefits to a greater number of men in the modern society, led him to appreciate the achievements of more recent times also, especially the greater security, stability, and lack of violence that emerged from the balance of powers. Ferguson distinguishes between the artistic and political achievements of the ancient states, and their lack of those attitudes and institutions which modern men consider necessary: see *Essay*, pp. 200,203. He further insists that whatever we may think of the most notable customs of these older systems, we must always remember that they were very different from our own —we are frequently to forget the general terms that are employed, in order to collect the real manners of an age' (*ibid.*, p. 79 and see also pp. 79-80).
instance, suggests the existence of sophisticated ideas in a very early stage, and implies that the principle of progression and gradual development is not a valid measure of change:

'we may incline to believe, that mankind, in their simplest state, are on the eve of erecting republics. Their love of equality, their habit of assembling in public councils, and their zeal for the tribe to which they belong, are qualifications that fit them to act under that species of government; and they seem to have but a few steps to make, in order to reach its establishment....

But these steps are far from being so easily made, as they appear on a slight or transient view. The resolution of chusing, from among their equals, the magistrate to whom they give from thenceforward a right to controul their own actions, is far from the thoughts of simple men; and no eloquence, perhaps, could make them adopt this measure, or give them any sense of its use.'

We must be careful, in other words, not to distort the characteristics of other ages and to suggest that 'advanced' ideas and 'more perfect' institutions can develop without a particular property base and without the social grouping of men that this suggests. We must not blend the 'refined ideas of modern policy' with our reasonings concerning 'ancient transactions'², Robertson believed, although he himself occasionally implied that primitive societies had the titles or institutions of other, more advanced, ones³. In Scotland, for instance, he had originally spoken of the European barbarians in such a manner as to imply that they possessed institutions which are peculiarly feudal; he mentions that the invaded states were 'cantoned out among powerful barons' who were followed by their 'vassals'⁴, words which in later

editions are replaced by 'chiefs' and 'dependents' respectively. But such specific instances are rare in his works, and although it is probable that he owes later illustrations of this point to Ferguson, it is nonetheless apparent that he ordinarily seeks to emphasise the precise nature and limitations of each society and of the institutions within it.

Although there are certain discrepancies in Robertson's work, then, which arise from the multiplicity of influences that form his attitudes towards the past, his adherence to some of the techniques of the theoretical philosophy indicates that on one level he is concerned with the universal, with regular patterns of explanation, with interpretations which fulfill the requirements demanded by the concept of variations in human institutions. If he speaks of 'ancient constitutions', if he may feel that history should reveal truth and teach wisdom, that it must regulate its opinions by eternal and immutable laws, he also stresses that its subject matter must be philosophical, must concern human institutions and societies and their development over time; that it must be concerned not with the trivial and the ephemeral, but with events which have a lasting effect on men, with the connections between past and present, with causes

2. See, for instance, America, Works, III, pp. 350-351, 553 (Note XCIII).
3. However, see below, Chapter IX.
4. Scotland, Works, I, p. 1; the content and nature of both 'truth' and 'wisdom' are not defined.
5. See above, p. 216.
as well as effects\textsuperscript{1} - aims which are consonant with both
the general philosophical approach\textsuperscript{2} and with the theoretical
concepts\textsuperscript{3}.

As we have seen above, Robertson did not accept much of
what is described as conjecture because it was concerned with
speculation based on false premises or limited observation,
or with abstruse, 'curious' problems and with what 'might
have happened'; such speculations add little of real value
to man's knowledge about himself and his gradual development.
Similarly, he rejects throughout his works the greater part
of the concerns of those whom he described as 'antiquaries',
'lawyers', and 'philologists'. Their standards, he thought,
were intolerable\textsuperscript{4}, their subject matter was generally irrele-
vant; and while he praises the efforts of those collectors
such as the 'industrious Muratori'	extsuperscript{5}, whose works are of con-
siderable value in that they aid in the making of general
inquiries\textsuperscript{6}; while he feels that detailed studies on minute
points are not wholly without value\textsuperscript{7}, he is obliged to re-
ject most such compilations because they reveal no under-
standing of human evolution or of the scientific basis on
which all our researches into the past must be established:

'Several Scottish antiquaries, under the influence

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{1} Charles V, Works, V, p. 18, Scotland, Works, I, p. 65.
\item \textsuperscript{2} See above, Chapter I.
\item \textsuperscript{3} See above, Chapters II and III, and Appendix A, below.
\item \textsuperscript{4} Scotland, Works, I, p. 255: 'to believe implicitly what-
\emph{ever} they find in an ancient paper, is a folly to which,
in every age, antiquarians are extremely prone'.
\item \textsuperscript{5} India, Works, II, p. 408.
\item \textsuperscript{6} See, for instance, Charles V, Works, V, p. 457 (Note V).
\item \textsuperscript{7} Robertson is particularly dependent on Muratori for facts
which illustrate the general statements and theories of
the theoretical philosophy.
\item \textsuperscript{7} Ibid., p. 512 (Note XXI).
\end{itemize}
'of that pious credulity which disposes men to assent, without hesitation, to whatever they deem for the honour of their native country, contend zealously, that the Regiam Majestatem is a production prior to the treatise of Glanville; and have brought themselves to believe, that a nation in a superior state of improvement borrowed its laws and institutions from one considerably less advanced in its political progress.'

The true historian, he believed, could not be concerned with the legendary, the mythical, or the fabulous, except insofar as these reveal useful details concerning a particular stage of human development. As he separates the essential and the meaningful from the trivial, so also must he separate the improbable from the possible, must examine his sources carefully to see that they conform to the theoretical standard of what is truly reflective of past ages. Such an approach, although by no means always employed by Robertson himself, is nonetheless one which often permits him to reveal the flaws in historical arguments, and to replace these with an evaluation of particular problems based on an awareness of what we can reasonably expect particular ages to produce in the way of institutions.

This attitude is of considerable value in Robertson's first work, Scotland, in which he attempts to disentangle the meaningful and important events of his country's past from the legend, tradition, and ideology which surrounded them; and although there are serious faults in this book, though there are occasions where his lack of precise definitions and his use of innuendo rather than of clear state-

2. See above, p. 341.
ment tends to continue the very type of misunderstanding and falsification that he condemned, his relating all national characteristics and customs to property division does permit a more 'philosophical' explanation of certain issues.

The idea that the past is to be interpreted through regular causal patterns, and according to the general characteristics typical of certain stages of development, is of particular value in Robertson's consideration of, or reference to, some problems which had profoundly affected the nature of Scottish historical philosophy. Such, for instance, is the question of 'independence': freedom from dependence on, or subjection to, external powers. As discussed by earlier writers, this issue was an extremely complex one because it involved not only religious and political independence, but also the spirit of the Scottish society, the extent of certain virtuous qualities - courage, simplicity, love of freedom - in the Scottish character. The religious aspects of this matter, the connection between the Scottish denial of episcopal power as ever having been an integral part of their religion, and their belief that they traditionally limited the power of their kings¹,

¹. The English works which attacked the Scottish 'presbyterian' stand on episcopalianism (especially William Lloyd, Historical Account of Church Government, London, 1677, and Edward Stillingfleet, Origines Britannicae, London, 1685) attempted to deny Scotland's freedom from external religious control, and to deny also that bishops were not a normal part of Scottish church administration - which had been stated by Fordun and Major, among others. As part of their argument they had also challenged the antiquity of the Scottish nation and the long list of kings which illustrated that antiquity, as it illustrated also an ancient freedom and independence. Such challenges were bound to anger a nation constantly on the defensive concerning its independence in both religious and political affairs.
need not concern us here. It is sufficient to point out that while many authors are pro-monarchist and others apparently in favour of what Nicolson described as 'the People's Claim of Right',\(^1\) most attempt to establish an ancient and independent monarchy and to create an illustrious past which does credit to their country.

The arrogant claim of the English down the centuries, that Scotland was subject to the English crown, was met with angry rejoinders which were supported by the fantastic and the factual\(^2\). Originally, the Scots, like all European nations, had a version of the Trojan legend, which situated their origins in Greece, and which created a monarchy in the remote past — so remote, indeed, that Innes remarked with some asperity that 'the more they were ignorant of what passed before their own time, the more they were inclined to run up their antiquities to incredible heights: nay, some even before the creation of the world'.\(^3\)

Long before the English were a nation, went the Scottish rejoinder, Scotland was both free and ruled by free kings. The Scottish line descended from one Gaythelos, Fordun declared\(^4\), and was established some hundreds of years before

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3. Ibid., p. iii.
4. The original work is Johannis de Fordun, *Chronica Gentis Scotorum*, the edition used here is *John of Fordun's Chronicle of the Scottish Nation* (Edinburgh, 1872), I, pp. i-iv.
Christ, a boast which no other modern state could match.

To the English challenge concerning the existence of Scotland as both separate and ancient, Fordun replied with damming, if wholly spurious, evidence. There was, he said, a long line of kings traced from Greece, through Egypt, to Spain and Ireland, and thence to Scotland: a claim which certainly overshadowed any which the English could produce. Furthermore, Ireland had not been granted to the Scots by a strange, supposedly English, king, as Geoffrey of Monmouth had declared; the territory was obtained through the consent of the contemporaneous inhabitants, wrote Fordun, or else because the Scots had defeated the indigenous population - a somewhat more satisfactory interpretation because it emphasised military prowess. In very remote times, then, no Scottish possession resulted from the favour of the English, and it was also apparent from many other circumstances that Scotland itself was always free, was not the property of some other state which could claim duties. As a final blow, Fordun does not hesitate to point out that Julius Caesar overcame the Britons, but was sufficiently aware of the Scots's (deserved) reputation as warriors to press for conciliation rather than battle; and that, although the Scots preferred peace, they would never consent to be as slaves. The implication was obvious.

Not all the Scottish writers maintained the belief in a Greek and Egyptian background to the national past, both

1. The main English sources are Geoffrey of Monmouth, Historia Regum Britanniae, and Ralph Higden, Polychronica.
4. Ibid., pp. xiv-xv.
Major, and Buchanan after him, declining to follow Fordun in this; but they did assert the ancient existence of the Scottish monarchy, for a long line of kings meant an equally long national existence, and thus independence; and independence meant freedom and implied bravery and lack of 'corruption':

'The chief reason of their maintaining, with so much concern, the antiquity of their settlement and monarchy in Britain in the Scottish line is, that their modern historians ground their chief title to the most ancient monarchy of Europe, as well as their claim to all the warlike actions performed by the ancient inhabitants of the North of Britain against the Romans and provincial Britons, wholly upon their descent from these Scots that came from Ireland.  

The English challenge, in whatever century it was made, had to be met; and if this was not done in a philosophical manner, the claim itself was not philosophical but political, and unrelated to any concept of property division and the institutions peculiar to this. The charge that Scotland was the vassal of the English crown was based on homage done by Scottish kings for territory held in England, and thus was not only false but damaging to Scottish pride: 'it is a thing unheard of, and among the Scots simply inconceivable', Major declared, 'that a Scot at peace in his own kingdom ever recognised as his temporal superior either the English king or any one else'.  

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2. Ibid., I, pp. 70-74, 115, 121, 218.
3. Innes, op.cit., I, p. 175.
wars of independence, or, at least, was pointing out that such treason was unusual; but, quite apart from this, the claim of feudal homage for land held in one country could hardly be taken to mean that Scotland itself was a fief. William the Conqueror, Boece stated, had given part of Northumberland to Malcolm Canmore on the usual feudal basis, and this, all Scottish writers concluded, was the only form of such relationship between England and Scotland. Any suggestion of loss of freedom, of being bound to another state, was strongly resented, always denied.

While it was not only on matters of independence that many of the controversies rested, the renewal of old arguments and the voluminous output of apparently defamatory material by the English meant that independence was a constant issue. It is indeed, highly likely that the difficulties of union and the degrading treatment which the Scots met with even after the Union had been in operation for some time made ancient independence a 'problem' long beyond the time when historical awareness engendered by Innes's work showed that much of the legend surrounding this issue to be unacceptable. Thus, even if the ancient kings were reluctantly surrendered, the emphasis on past bravery, on the spartan, martial spirit, was maintained. The Scots, Major could write in the early sixteenth century, had always

3. See, for instance, the connection made between the union and independence in Abercromby, op.cit., I, p.117, II, p. 509, and in James Anderson, An Historical Essay Shewing that the Crown and Kingdom of Scotland is Imperial and Independent (Edinburgh, 1705) p. 280.
cherished their freedom:

'for eighteen hundred and fifty years the Scots have kept foot in Britain, and at this present day are no less strong, no less given to war, than they ever were, ready to risk life itself for their country's independence, and counting death for their country an honourable thing.' 1

Some two hundred years later, the same return to an implied challenge of this characteristic could also be found - the association between simplicity, militancy, and virtue had become ingrained: 'the Homage was due for Cumberland, etc.', Abercromby wrote tersely, 'and if perform'd, what wonder?' 2 The Scots, he reiterated, having established a spirit of liberty, which was very evident in their history, continued this spirit even in the present since it was an integral part of their nature:

'the Scotland has been overrun, yet such has been the invincible Aversion of its Inhabitants, to Slavery; and they have been in all Ages so obstinately Tenacious of their independent Freedom, that, in a proper Sense, it cannot be said to have been Conquer'd; since always, and that in a short time, deliver'd both from home-bred Tyranny and foreign Power.' 3

The poverty of the country, he pointed out, was one of the reasons which enabled the Scots to remain free - they had no reason for becoming corrupted. The English, on the other hand, had become used to easy living, and because of this were unable to maintain their fighting spirit 4. This emphasis on tenacity, hardihood, courage, and the fierce desire for freedom (a part of the tradition of many nations) is also seen in Major's work, in which it is pointed out that

1. Major, op.cit., p. 41.
3. Ibid., p. 160.
4. Ibid., p. 365.
a nobility of virtue was more important than that nobility created by men\(^1\), and that this virtue was established on a simple life; there is a correlation between hard work and the capacity to meet all problems with courage\(^2\), a belief that luxury leads to vice, to loss of the martial spirit, to wrong views of government, and that such luxury is especially damaging when it affects the court\(^3\).

There is thus a long tradition in Scottish historical writing of political independence, an independence which is thought to be reflected in the possession by the Scots of certain qualities of hardiness, courage, strength of mind and simplicity. Judged by the theoretical philosophy and the techniques which it developed, such works have two main faults; in the first place, the tendency to value such qualities, especially in connection with the martial ardour of the Scots, denies both the beneficial effect of other 'virtues' and the usefulness of other professions than the militaristic. It continues the emphasis placed by many earlier political writers on the importance of the citizen as soldier, and suggests that only one profession is meritorious; thus, by implication, if not more explicitly, it denies the values of commerce and trade, and the related emergence of other occupations which do not demand the same virtues\(^4\).

Secondly, insofar as these qualities of simplicity and

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1. Major, op.cit., p. 46: 'there is absolutely no true nobility but virtue and evidence of virtue. That which is commonly called nobility is naught but a windy thing of human devising'.
2. Ibid., pp. 48-49, 155.
3. Ibid., pp. 55, 182, 183-186; the further north one went, Major believed, the better men were able to fight and the more freedom was likely to be found: a fairly common expression of theories which believed climate to be of considerable importance - Ibid., pp. 48-49,181,240,295.
4. See below, Appendix B, p. 530.
courage are thought of as reflecting 'virtuous' and permanently necessary behaviour, rather than a particular stage of society, insofar as they are seen as evidence of conscious denial of self and of aware devotion to the country, they suggest the existence of philosophical and unselfish considerations in an age when these were unlikely to develop. On both counts - the creation of a past, the insistence on a virtuousness which seems distinct from political virtu - such works must be seen as contrary to the theoretical ideas, and as expressions of those unphilosophical investigations which writers such as Robertson sought to discredit.

Robertson is not concerned with the question of the independence of the early Scottish church from either Roman or English control, nor is he specifically interested in remarking on the nature of this institution, although he does make some isolated remarks on the purity of primitive Christianity, and goes into some detail concerning the corruption of pre-Reformation religion. Furthermore, he is able to separate the question of secular independence into two distinct sections, namely the degree to which the Scots were dependent on external powers, and the relating of particular qualities to a certain stage of development which permits a considerable amount of freedom to one segment of the society; and to discuss both these questions, at least to some extent, in terms of the theoretical principles.

1. See below, Chapter IX.
2. See Appendix B, pp. 526-529.
Although he believes that the question of independence was now 'a matter of mere curiosity', he accepts that it was originally 'a question of much importance'. Because of this fact he does seek to discredit the English claims to sovereignty over Scotland, but not through the usage of the legendary and the fabulous. It is true that on many occasions he does refer to 'ancient kings and heroes' of Scotland, to 'an ancient race of monarchs', to the 'ancient and legal' limits of the royal prerogative, an 'ancient kingdom', and 'the legal and ancient government' of the Scottish kings - all of which might suggest some belief in the long list of monarchs which the earlier historians had been at such pains to establish. Yet, although we may criticise Robertson's vague employment of the word 'ancient' here, as elsewhere, such phrases as those cited must be limited in their effect when we take into account his insistence at the very beginning of Scotland that the early ages of the nation's history are dark and fabulous, that:

‘Nations, as well as men, arrive at maturity by degrees, and the events, which happened during their infancy or early youth, cannot be re-collected, and deserve not to be remembered. The gross ignorance which anciently covered all the north of Europe, the continual migrations of its inhabitants, and the frequent and destructive revolutions which these occasioned, render it impossible to give any authentic account of the origin of the different kingdoms now established there. Every thing beyond that short period to which well-attested annals reach, is obscure;

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2. Ibid., p. 305 - this reference, however, may simply be a paraphrase of sixteenth-century opinion: see also ibid., p. 339.
4. Ibid., p. 230.
5. Ibid., pp. 107, 236.
'an immense space is left for invention to occupy; each nation, with a vanity inseparable from human nature, hath filled that void with events calculated to display its own antiquity and lustre. History, which ought to record truth and to teach wisdom, often sets out with retailing fictions and absurdities.

The Scots carry their pretensions to antiquity as high as any of their neighbours. Relying upon uncertain legends, and the traditions of their bards, still more uncertain, they reckon up a series of kings several ages before the birth of Christ; and give a particular detail of the occurrences which happened in their reigns. But with regard to the Scots, as well as the other northern nations, we receive the earliest accounts on which we can depend, not from their own, but from the Roman authors.'

This statement, which emphasises both the gradual development of man and his mind, and the falsifications of those earlier works which sought to establish sophisticated kingdoms in the early ages of man's history, is supported by other remarks which Robertson makes. Particularly valuable among these, because of its stressing the theoretical ideas of the need to explain through institutions and through general ideas, rather than by the unphilosophical employment of isolated and disconnected factors, is his statement on the Scots and the Picts, which is intended to undermine any theory of the extremely ancient origin of the former people.

The Scots, he declares:

'who are not mentioned by any Roman author before the end of the fourth century, were probably a colony of the Celts or Gauls; their affinity to whom appears from their language, their manners, and religious rites; circumstances more decisive with regard to the origin of nations, than either fabulous traditions, or the tales of ill-informed and credulous annalists.'

In addition, Robertson also criticises the work of For-dun, Major, and Boece - 'the former a succinct and dry

2. Ibid., pp. 2-3, and see also p. 21.
3. Ibid., p. 4.
'writer, the latter a copious and florid one, and both equally credulous' – and, finally, Buchanan: 'if his accuracy and impartiality had been, in any degree, equal to the elegance of his taste, and to the purity and vigour of his style, his history might be placed on a level with the most admired compositions of the ancients. But instead of rejecting the improbable tales of Chronicle writers, he was at the utmost pains to adorn them, and hath clothed, with all the beauties and graces of fiction, those legends, which, formerly had only its wildness and extravagance.'

Thus, he concludes, the first period of Scottish history, during which the monarchy began to evolve, 'is the region of pure fable and conjecture, and ought to be totally neglected, or abandoned to the industry and credulity of antiquaries.' If the Scottish kings are ancient, they are neither so old as antiquaries believe, nor are their rights and powers, or those of the societies in which they lived, either highly developed, but must reflect the same limitations as those to be found in the tribes from which they appear to have progressed.

Through this dismissal of the legendary, Robertson is left free to deny the English claims to superiority by examining them in the light of the nature of feudal society. Although a king might owe homage to another, as an individual possessor of land or as a vassal, he believes, this is by no means the same as saying that Scotland itself was a fief of the English crown. The feudal duties which he concedes the Scottish kings owed, pertained not to any part of

2. Ibid. For other remarks on legend in Scottish and other history, see ibid., pp. 9-10, and Works, II, p. 16.
3. Ibid., I, p. 4.
the independent state of Scotland but to territories which formed a part of England, and were 'in no wise derogatory from their royal dignity':

'Nothing is more suitable to feudal ideas, than that the same person should be both a lord and a vassal, independent in one capacity, and dependent in another. The crown of England was, without doubt, imperial and independent, though the princes who wore it were, for many ages, the vassals of the kings of France; and, in consequence of their possessions in that kingdom, bound to perform all the services which a feudal sovereign has a title to exact. The same was the condition of the monarchs of Scotland; free and independent as kings of their own country, but, as possessing English territories, vassals to the king of England.'

Such an interpretation is philosophical in the theoretical sense of using one's knowledge of the nature of a society at a given stage to erode the 'facts' on which claims such as those made by the English were based. It is not from any peculiarities in English feudalism that the attempts later made to annex Scotland to the English crown were made, for the kings were originally 'satisfied with their legal and uncontroverted rights', and were 'neither capable, nor had any thoughts of usurping more'. It was only political interest, the love of power, the desire to take advantage of misfortunes suffered by the Scots, that later led to those claims which Robertson considers as preposterous and 'ill-founded'.

The one major objection which we could put forward to Robertson's consideration of this problem of independence, is that although he is careful to employ the theoretical type of explanation in his specific statements, he does not

2. Ibid., p. 7.
3. Ibid., pp. 7-10.
explicitly deny other 'legendary' factors which earlier Scottish authors employed in their attempt to establish an ancient and sophisticated freedom from control by England. In particular, we should condemn his further vague usage of the word 'ancient' as it is applied to the concept of an 'ancient alliance' which the Scots were supposed to have made with the French. In the Scottish historical tradition, as far back as Fordun, this alliance forms an integral part of the question of independence, and it is as vulnerable to philosophical criticism as the argument of the ancient monarchy and state of Scotland.

The basis of the argument was, that if it could be shown—as most writers believed possible—that an alliance had been made between Achaius, king of Scotland, and the emperor Charlemagne, this would be considerable proof of Scotland's long-standing freedom and independence. This was especially so, they thought, as the alliance was not between an inferior and a superior power, but between equals. A ruler of such outstanding capacities as Charlemagne, possessed of legendary authority and status, must have indeed respected the power and standing of the Scots if he had asked for their assistance against mutual enemies.1. Like other aspects of the independence question, the 'alliance' was a matter hotly debated over many centuries, and productive of a large number

1. Abercromby, op. cit., I, p. 83. See also Walter Goodall, An Introduction to the History and Antiquities of Scotland (London, 1769)p. 221: 'The Scotch historians derive an argument, in favour of the antiquity of their country, from the league which the emperor Charles the Great is said to have entered into with Achaius king of Scotland; and they infer, that the Scots must have been, at that time, a very eminent and illustrious nation, when so great an emperor was desirous of their friendship'.
of works of varying merit. It will suffice here to point out that the issue was one which still engaged the Scots well into the eighteenth century, a reflection of the strength of the unphilosophical type of history and particularly of the fact that 'scientific' principles of historical investigation could not necessarily limit Scottish pride in supposed ancient glories: 'even at this day', wrote Dalrymple in 1773, 'I hardly venture to express any doubts as to the historical evidence of that alliance'.

For this reason alone, it is perhaps unfortunate that Robertson does not discuss the issue, however briefly; more importantly, however, and although we should always recollect that he made several remarks on legendary histories, the several references which he also makes to an 'ancient' relationship between France and Scotland must create further doubt as to his whole-hearted allegiance to the principles of theoretical history. He mentions that the French are the 'ancient allies' of the Scots, and refers to the 'ancient

1. Sir David Dalrymple, Remarks on the History of Scotland (Edinburgh, 1773, hereafter cited Remarks) p. 1. For a sample of the works referring to, or discussing at some length, this issue, see the following: (Sir Robert Sibbald) An Answer to the Second Letter to the Right Reverend, the Lord Bishop of Carlisle (Edinburgh, 1704); Abercromby, op.cit., I, pp. 110-111; Robert Keith, The History of the Affairs of Church and State in Scotland ... (Edinburgh, 1734, hereafter cited History) p. 443; Memoirs Concerning the Ancient Alliance Between the French and Scots ... (printed in Tracts Illustrative of the Traditionary and Historical Antiquities of Scotland, Edinburgh, 1836). Most of the Scottish works avoid discussing the issue in terms which the theoretical historians found acceptable, and some of them - such as that of Sibbald - are mainly a response to English works and concerned to maintain Scottish pride and antiquity: see Dalrymple's remarks on Sibbald, Remarks, pp. 31-32. Only Dalrymple himself makes an effort to disentangle myth and history: see ibid., pp. 13-14, and below, p. 381.

2. Scotland, Works, I, pp. 70, 204, 385, 400.
'alliance of France and Scotland', and the 'ancient confederacy of the two kingdoms'. Even in Charles V, a work in which Scottish history is rarely discussed, the same terminology is employed when he mentions that Francis I's daughter is married to James V of Scotland, 'a monarch descended from a race of princes, the most ancient and faithful allies of the French crown'. These continual, if imprecise references - we do not know, after all, what 'ancient' and 'alliance' mean in these contexts - suggest that Robertson was willing to take advantage of whatever implications such concepts might have had for the reader of his own time, while otherwise insisting on the obscurity of early annals, and on the need to see the early ages of Scottish history as relatively unsophisticated. He may thereby be supporting Scottish pride, which is partially based on pure legend, while ordinarily basing his interpretation on scientific principles - notwithstanding his later statements on such 'pious credulity' and his general tendency not to appear too Scottish. Certainly he makes no effort to state precisely what this union or alliance might mean, although other writers whom he himself would probably consider as antiquarians, had suggested on reasonable grounds that the alliance had really only begun in the thirteenth century; and Dalrymple had thought that the embassy of Charlemagne's time was simply of a religious nature, that an alliance would only have begun 'when the two nations saw that mutual aid was necessary, and could be

2. Ibid., p. 189.
'afforded', that is, in the time of William the Lyon. Such gaps in Robertson's work are by no means any indication of the denial of the theoretical position; but it is perhaps not going too far if we see them as a failure on his part to live up to the high standards which both he and other theoretical writers constantly insisted on, a failure which helps support those same unphilosophical attitudes which he ordinarily claimed to oppose.

Nonetheless, Robertson's interpretation of the feudal Scottish society ordinarily permits him not only to deny the validity of the English claims to sovereignty in terms which emphasise general patterns of property/power divisions, but also allows him to reveal the extent to which the early Scottish historical writing gives a very limited idea of the real nature of feudalism. As far as the suggestion by these earlier writers that particular virtues characterise the Scots is concerned, Robertson is able to use the theoretical concept of particular stages producing certain characteristics in order to undermine any suggestion that these virtues are something other than qualities peculiar to a certain division of property. Although, again, there are some serious discrepancies in his work here, especially in his interpretation of the nature of the Scottish feudal society, it is nonetheless possible to see that in Scotland Robertson does make an attempt to reveal not only the causes and effects of feudalism in general, but the effects of the dominance of the nobility in particular.

2. See below, Chapter IX.
While we may regard *Scotland* as to some degree a rebuttal of the above-mentioned implications of earlier histories, we should also see Robertson's interpretation of the nature of the aristocracy in this work as a deliberate attempt to use the theoretical philosophy to replace those theories of cause which emphasise benevolent, philosophical, and planned actions by men, especially by men living in a violent age. In the following pages, then, we will not only be examining Robertson's implicit denial of earlier works, especially as regards the idea of 'independence', but we will also be examining further his own philosophy of cause, and the degree of his acceptance of variation in social standards - in other words, extending the study made above of his use of theoretical ideas and the extent to which these conflict with other influences.

Throughout *Scotland* Robertson emphasises that the division of property which is characteristic of the feudal stage has two major effects. In the first place, the virtual monopoly of property by the nobility grants them considerable political power and limits the development both of other forms of property and of a more general participation in government; and, in the second instance, this monopoly of power by a few, and the subsequent limitation of the progress of the remainder of the society means that the social system as a whole is characterised by violence and disorder. *Scotland* is not only a feudal country, and one which continues to be so in the sixteenth century, it is pointed out; but the country is also one in which pecu-
liar features have strengthened that already great power which the feudal aristocracy possesses. If in the European states the number of the lords encouraged warfare among them, which was detrimental to their interests as a whole, the smaller number of nobles in Scotland meant that even in the midst of faction they remained aware of their basic aims - to limit the power of the crown, and to increase their own:

'When nobles are numerous, their operations nearly resemble those of the people; they are roused only by what they feel, not by what they apprehend; and submit to many arbitrary and oppressive acts, before they take arms against their sovereign. A small body, on the contrary, is more sensible, and more impatient; quick in discerning, and prompt in repelling danger; all its motions are as sudden as those of the other are slow.'

In addition, while it is true that the vassals of the nobility in Europe were considered as their kindred and thus obliged to fight their battles, and while there is no reason to suppose any great reluctance on their part to do so, Robertson believes that the Scottish clan system was both more widespread and a more fully developed form of unity, creating bonds which were even warmer than those which existed in the European feudal structure: 'men willingly followed a leader, whom they regarded both as the superior of their lands, and the chief of their blood, and served him not only with the fidelity of vassals, but with the affection of friends.' Although, in this instance, Robertson does not speak specifically of benevolence and

1. See above, pp. 238-260.
3. See above, pp. 242-244.
of its role in men's lives, it is apparent that he feels
the existence of an emotional relationship, rather than one
based on duty, to be of considerable benefit to the strength
of the Scottish aristocracy:

"Such a confederacy might be overcome, it could
not be broken; and no change of manners, or of
government, has been able, in some parts of the
kingdom, to dissolve associations which are foun-
ded upon prejudices so natural to the human mind. How
formidable were nobles at the head of follow-
ers, who, counting that cause just and honourable
which their chief approved, rushed into the field
at his command, ever ready to sacrifice their lives
in defence of his person or of his fame; against
such men a king contended with great disadvantage;
and that cold service which money purchases, or
authority extorts, was not an equal match for
their ardour and zeal." 1

Such intangible sources of power are reinforced not
only by the lords's possession of property but by their con-
tinual increase in this at a time when most European so-
cieties witnessed a gradual growth in the power and rights
of towns and communities, the increase in monarchical au-
thority, and the final collapse of the nobility in France 2.
In addition to the entailing of their original estates and
the obtaining possession of the major national offices, the
Scottish nobles constantly encroached on the royal estates.
A relatively normal procedure in most feudal countries, this
practice was made easier in Scotland by the particular cir-
cumstances of domestic history, and was perpetuated by the
violence of feudalism itself.

The weakness of the Scottish crown, Robertson feels,

1. Scotland, Works, I, pp. 21-22. Robertson does not con-
sider that the strength of the clanship system in his
own time might well depend on the fact that new customs,
new forms of government, had not really penetrated the
highland society.
2. See above, Chapter VI.
was due especially to a long succession of minorities, many of which were caused directly by the aristocracy\(^1\), and all of which were characterised by corruption and misrule. If the regents themselves were not venal, they were incapable of firm government, and in both cases the crown lands were encroached upon, allowing the lords to add to their own property and thereby to increase the number of their vassals. Furthermore, during the minorities, the revenues of the crown were distributed in a manner which did not make either for increase or for a proper return of outlay: they were employed either as a gift from the king's minister, or else they were usurped by the nobility. In the former case, any duty or service performed as payment would benefit only the immediate recipient, and would be of no advantage to the monarchy; and in the latter, the revenues enriched only the individual who had possession of them\(^2\). Since there was no taxation in the feudal state, there were, in any event, few enough means by which any individual monarch could restore those revenues which had been dissipated during his minority, so that each such event seriously threatened the stability and power of the crown.

The Scottish monarchy, therefore, was predominantly characterised by a lack of steady growth, for, in addition to the ordinary limitations imposed by feudalism - restricted jurisdiction, small revenues - the prevalence of factors such as minorities meant that the king was always in an uncertain position, not only in relation to the nobility, but

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1. That of James II, for instance, resulted from the murder of his father by the nobility: Scotland, Works, I, pp. 39-40.
2. Ibid., pp. 24-29.
in his possession of power *per se*. The respect on which obedience is based could not be maintained without power, revenue, or 'authority'; and none of the changes made by any of the individual monarchs prior to the reign of Queen Mary were successfully institutionalised.

This dominance of the lords affected not only the strength of the monarchy but also the extent to which other forms of property could emerge. As Robertson was to show in some detail in *Charles V*, feudalism proper ordinarily limits the development of the greater part of the population\(^1\); and while the rather isolated development of the Scottish feudal system did not lead to the existence of a serf class\(^2\), Robertson felt that there was a very limited amount of commerce, and a consequent limitation of the growth of townships in Scotland. The absence of both these elements permitted a maintenance of aristocratical power which limited popular participation in social and governmental business as effectively as the institution of repressive forms of labour had in Europe\(^3\). Furthermore, even though commerce appears to have increased somewhat in the centuries prior to the Reformation era, and though townships became more powerful and boroughs gained a place in Parliament\(^4\), the continued and increasing power of the nobility generally limited the effective power of Parliament itself. Thus, Robertson points out, while it may appear strange that such a limited monarchy as that of Scotland had such considerable power in, and influence on, Parliament, it is to be seen

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1. See above, Chapter VI.
that the nobility easily ignored the proceedings of this institution. Although the Catholic church and the ecclesiastic lords generally supported the crown\(^1\), and though the monarchy influenced legislation through its control of the Lords of the Articles\(^2\), Parliament can by no means be thought of as an effective extension of the monarchical powers\(^3\), nor of those of the boroughs.

The great nobles, and even the lesser barons, therefore have the balance of power, and, expressing this through their acts rather than through the laws, are able to ignore those proceedings of Parliament which do not conform to their idea of what should be. Formal institutions such as this, then, Robertson concedes, do not really reflect the basic nature of a feudal aristocracy\(^4\); and it is only when one is able to turn the aggressive spirit of the lords against themselves that it is possible to check them\(^5\) — such limitations cannot ordinarily be effected by an institution which is peripheral to the society. Hence, although by the Reformation era the actual components of the Parliament reflect some increase in popular power, the actual powers of this institution are less important — especially in the matter of ratification of certain constitutional issues\(^6\) — than the extent to which the nobility participates in, and accepts, and helps enforce, Parliamentary action.

2. Ibid., p. 63.
3. Ibid., pp. 61-62.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid., p. 42.
6. See below, Chapter IX.
This particular division of property and the dominance of an oppressive nobility is further emphasised by the continual remarks of Robertson on the spirit of the Scottish nation in the feudal stage. Although he is rarely precise as to the actual powers of the various political elements in the state, and often tends to suggest both the existence of a conscious self-denial by a 'nation' and a considerable influence on events by popular sentiments\(^1\) - both of which imply support of the implications of earlier writers - he also consistently points out the prevalence of violence, aggressiveness, and destructiveness in all elements of the society. Such features or characteristics, he indicates, must necessarily limit the degree of interest which the nobility has in the benefit of the whole country, as well as repress the development of philosophical sentiments in this aristocracy.

This turbulence and anarchy are particularly obvious in the nobility, for the lords, especially the more powerful nobles, are interested only in maintaining and increasing their already considerable power\(^2\). As a natural result of the limited concerns of any feudal age, they respect only the active and aggressive occupations of war and hunting\(^3\), and this, Robertson believes, leads them to be contemptuous of those such as the clergy whom they see as leading 'soft' and corrupt lives\(^4\), and to despise all other

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1. See below, Chapter IX.
3. Ibid., pp. 30, 36.
professions than those pertaining to the martial arts:

'War was the sole profession of the nobles, and hunting their chief amusement; they divided their time between these: unacquainted with the arts, and unimproved by science, they disdained any employment foreign from military affairs, or which required rather penetration and address than bodily vigour.'

The dominance of military activity, the prevalence of a bold and aggressive spirit, Robertson thus indicates, reflects only the nature of feudalism; such qualities cannot be seen as being those which 'ought' to be found in all societies, nor do they necessarily reveal any concern with a truly national freedom and independence.

Furthermore, we may also see that the lords have little respect for law and for a regular form of government, that they are characterised by an 'anarchy' and 'independence', and that they express their feelings of resentment and their desire for revenge quite openly and without restraint; certainly they have little conscious concern with the effects of such sentiments on society as a whole, and merely act as their political and property dominance permits them to.

This turbulent spirit is indeed wholly natural to the feudal society; yet, though productive of a 'fierce courage' that may occasionally be beneficial, it also has other, more detrimental effects: it means that the weak are vulnerable and at the mercy of the strong, that the king cannot depend on the lords or work with them to effect change, and thus

2. However, see below, Chapter IX.
4. Ibid., pp. 86-87, 277.
5. Ibid., p. 30.
6. Ibid., p. 37.
7. Ibid., p. 39.
that there is little stability or unity in the society as a whole.

Robertson also believes that we may see this same spirit in the rest of the population, although in this instance it is not a result of general property possession or of widespread political power. Rather, this tumultuousness\(^1\) of the 'people' is apparently produced by the disorder and self-interest of the lords; so that, while the ordinary man is free from certain of the repressive institutions characteristic of European feudalism, he is not thereby more developed, more inclined to stability. Such features cannot be found in a state where there is both an 'imperfect' system, and understanding, of law, and little respect by men's superiors or betters for that law which does exist: 'the state of order and tranquillity was not natural to the feudal aristocracy';\(^2\) The Scots, in general, Robertson feels, can be described as 'warlike and factious';\(^3\) as 'fierce and turbulent';\(^4\) as 'eager and impatient';\(^5\) and although all these qualities reflect an eminently natural stage of man's development, they must necessarily mean that the society in which they are expressed is characterised by violence and instability, by sudden and abrupt change rather than by more peaceful and orderly action:\(^7\)

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2. Ibid., p. 217.
3. Ibid., pp. 103, 325.
4. Ibid., pp. 107, 436.
5. Ibid., p. 133; they are also described as 'high-spirited', ibid., pp. 77, 100.
7. Ibid., p. 465.
spirit of any government can only be what the nature of the society permits.¹

This emphasis by Robertson on the nature of the components of the Scottish feudal society is of considerable importance in his attempt to use the theoretical approach in order to challenge earlier interpretations of the past. By continually relating particular characteristics and attitudes to the existing division of property, he denies the acceptability of the earlier tendency towards implying that aggressiveness, the warlike spirit, were values which should be cherished at all times, and that they were values which also reflect a purity, or freedom from corruption which is lost in later systems. This is not to deny that Robertson occasionally appears proud of the factiousness, the independence, the sensitivity, fierce courage and unpolished manners of the Scots; he states that impatience is a national trait², he feels, with some seeming pride, that the military virtues have always been a part of the Scottish character³, and in such instances he appears to value the warlike spirit in itself and for the traditional implications which it carries. But at the same time he is also concerned to reveal that such characteristics are produced by a particular social structure, and that the prevalence of the martial spirit, for instance, is neither necessarily beneficial to society, nor an indication of a 'free' state, if 'free' is taken to mean political and

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2. Ibid., p. 157.
3. Ibid., p. 433. See also Ibid., p. 118 - the 'manly and determined boldness natural to a free people'.
personal benefit for all the population. The nobles's contempt for the inactivity of the clergy, for example, does not reveal a concern for a fully national freedom but merely shows that the lords are a true product of their age: they act as they must. Even the sensitivity to insult, the desire to maintain national pride, must, at best, be seen as an indication of rash and impolitic behaviour: 'their promptness to revenge the least appearance of national injury, dissipated in a moment, the wise and pacific resolutions which they had so lately formed'. In such instances, the love of 'freedom' and 'independence' reflects a lack of capacity to see ahead, and the 'real' or more permanent interests of the nobility, not to mention the rest of society, are not served; such a spirit can thus hardly be seen as meritorious, even though we may find it understandable.

This refusal by Robertson to praise and respect blind impetuosity, and his concern to reveal it as inimical to the real interests of all, implicitly challenges the value placed on such qualities and action by earlier writers. In itself, this is a philosophical approach, and it is one which is constantly reinforced by his statements concerning other questions of 'independence'. In these, as in earlier instances, he relates the actions and motives of various parts of the Scottish feudal society to the spirit which is produced by the division of property; and by so doing he is able to show, in part at least, that the love of personal

2. Ibid., p. 76.
3. See, for instance, ibid., pp. 95-97.
independence, the desire to maintain power, and the lack of respect for laws and other institutions, characteristic of the nobility in particular, rarely make for a truly beneficial concern for the well-being of the entire society. Thus, as he shows the Scots in general, the nobility especially, as destructive of themselves, as revealing no profound concern for real advancement because of their 'generous' and rash actions, so he also shows an even more insidious quality in the response of the lords to certain other situations.

In questions of 'freedom' and independence from external authority, for instance, Robertson shows that the Scottish nobility by no means acted invariably for the best interest of the whole society, and, indeed, he again suggests that their limited concerns were far from benefitting even themselves. The nobles's agreeing to permit Edward I of England to adjudicate in the Baliol/Bruce controversy, for example, was a decision which Robertson describes as 'well nigh ... fatal to the independence of Scotland', and their subsequent actions in this matter reveal a lack of true love of country:

"As it was vain to pronounce a sentence which he had not power to execute, Edward demanded possession of the kingdom, that he might be able to deliver it to him whose right should be found preferable; and such was the pusillanimity of the nobles, and the impatient ambition of the competitors, that both assented to this strange demand.... Edward finding Baliol the most ob-

2. It should be pointed out, however, that earlier authors, such as Fordun, had also criticised the actions of the lords in this matter.
'sequious and the least formidable of the two competitors, soon after gave judgment in his favour. Baliol once more professed himself the vassal of England, and submitted to every condition which the sovereign whom he had now acknowledged was pleased to prescribe.'

The 'ancient liberties and independence' of Scotland were thus sacrificed to personal gain, to a mean-spirited desire on the part of the lords for individual benefit, factors which clearly reveal the nature of the feudal aristocracy as one far removed from any philosophical concerns. This 'pusillanimity', this 'baseness', moreover, though eventually replaced on this occasion by the more active and martial spirit also characteristic of the lords\(^2\), can hardly be seen as benefitting even the nobility itself; thus, as rashness and impetuosity are fundamentally unproductive, so also is selfishness.

Nor, furthermore, does Robertson see that the eventual re-emergence of the active spirit is any indication of a conscious self-denial on the part of the nobles; it is simply a reflection of the age, of the qualities which mark a feudal society. In short, even though the lords may be seen as acting for the 'nation', their own predominance in the society means that their actions are basically for themselves rather than for the welfare or advancement of any other group. Indeed, Robertson believes, there are many instances in which they appear to show less concern with the independence of the society, with the threat of external aggression, than with their constant desire to limit

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other political bodies, especially the crown. During the reign of James III, for instance, there was an incident when, in the midst of a threat from English troops, many of the nobility were motivated to action by their desire to regain their traditional position and offices, rather than by love of country. Such an aim in itself Robertson does not find reprehensible - especially in view of his sentiments concerning those unfit to hold positions of authority and responsibility, and in view of the fact that James III's minions were eminently unfit\(^1\). But he does show too that even a 'generous' and 'active' spirit, itself often suspect, can be mixed with less 'meritorious' motives\(^2\).

This selfishness or limited interest of the Scottish nobles which Robertson is at some pains to establish, and to relate to the division of property in the society, is a quality hardly stressed by earlier writers whose works were more concerned with superficial actions, and not with the real effects and meaning of the warlike nature of feudalism. By emphasising both the limitations of the feudal stage, and the necessarily individualistic and unphilosophical motives of those who possessed great political power, Robertson is able to show that certain prized qualities are in reality detrimental - however natural they may be - and especially to show that in all issues, such as 'independence', we must carefully examine the real motives and effects of men's actions.

Furthermore, because he is especially interested to demonstrate the true nature of the feudal society, he goes

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1. See above, pp. 283-287.
2. Scotland, Works, I, p. 44. See also ibid., pp. 79-82.
beyond such controversial issues as independence which are always loaded with emotional overtones, and attempts to show that a feudal aristocracy can be ruthless and selfish on a purely domestic level. It is for this reason in particular that he is concerned in Scotland to demonstrate the response of the nobility in general to the needs of the reformed church; for this response, he suggests, is such as to refute all claims that the lords are unselfish and self-denying, and reveals clearly that they are, on the contrary, unconcerned with the maintenance of what Robertson sees as a philosophical institution.

The constant refusal of all the nobility to support the Reformation by giving the clergy appropriate financial aid, and to strengthen the spirit of change by institutionalising this change through political power, indicates to Robertson that very limited interests lay behind much of the aristocracy's domestic policy. One such refusal might indicate a temporary inability to appreciate or respect the position of the church; but when such actions were made into a consistent attitude there could be no question of lack of intent. All their refusals to make an adequate provision are an expression of their very nature, so that their religious feelings must be seen as less important than their position as aristocrats. And while they may have expressed opposition to Catholicism before the Reformation, before 1560, their main interest is rather in the wealth and power which is a part of the old religion:
'They hoped to shake off the yoke of ecclesiastical dominion, which they had long felt to be oppressive, and which they now discovered to be unchristian. They expected to recover possession of the church revenues, which they were now taught to consider as alienations made by their ancestors, with a profusion no less undiscerning than unbounded. They flattered themselves, that a check would be given to the pride and luxury of the clergy, who would be obliged, henceforward, to confine themselves within the sphere peculiar to their sacred character.'

The nobility, concerned with greater wealth and power, intent on changing the political structure to their even greater advantage, has little interest in the morality of the priests. Rather, since the church itself is among the feudal landlords, it is apparent that the confiscating of its estates must limit any tendency which this institution might have to maintain interests different from those of the aristocracy as a secular body, and as a group devoted to the limitation of the crown.

In such a situation, any real gains made by the reformed church can only result from particular and isolated circumstances, which can hardly be predicted, and can arise only from any need which the aristocracy may have to accommodate any other group. Normally, their interests are confined to their own gains; and while they are very eager to dispose of the Catholic clergy, they refuse to hand over the land and the wealth thus gained in order to support the protestants:

'The vigorous zeal of the parliament overturned in a few days the ancient system of religion, which had been established so many ages. In reforming the doctrine and discipline of the church, the nobles kept pace with the ardour and expectations even of Knox himself. But their proceedings, with respect to these, were not more

'rapid and impetuous, than they were slow and dilatory when they entered on the consideration of ecclesiastical revenues.'

These 'early symptoms of selfishness and avarice' soon became permanent. Each time the clergy, with increasingly greater need, applied for relief, they received little support from those very men, who, in 1560, had appeared to be fighting for religion alone. That Robertson believes such a secular attitude is fundamental to the nobles seems clear, not only from his statement that they 'held fast the prey which they had seized', but also because he believes that they were more intent to maintain the existing political structure than to make room for a more egalitarian one. This can be seen in many instances, especially in the inclination of those nobles who had been involved in the Ruthven Raid to prefer an alliance with the crown to the fulfillment of the obligations which they had incurred to the church on this occasion. To have acted in accordance with their agreement would have involved, perhaps, the making over of power to a body which might become stronger; thus, to regroup the original constitution of the state appeared much the safer policy. And, if Robertson has indicated that the crown is not to be trusted, his attitude towards this affair as well as towards others implies that a similar assessment can be made of the aristocracy:

'The confederate nobles had all along affected to be considered as guardians of all the privileges and discipline of the church. In all their manifestos they had declared their resolution

2. Ibid., pp. 159, 186, 262, 298-299, 345, 391.
3. See above, Chapters VI and VII.
'to restore these, and by that popular pretence had gained many friends. It was now natural to expect some fruit of these promises, and some returns of gratitude towards many of the most eminent preachers who had suffered in their cause, and who demanded the repeal of the laws passed the preceding year. The king, however, was resolute to maintain these laws in full authority; and as the nobles were extremely solicitous not to disgust him, by insisting on any disagreeable request, the claims of the church in this, as well as in many other instances, were sacrificed to the interests of the laity.'

This explanation by Robertson of the qualities of the feudal society, the emphasis which he places on the real nature of the feudal state, does not necessarily mean a denial of the occurrence of benefits in this stage of man's development. Nonetheless, the reader does gain the impression that however natural and typical the aggressive and selfish spirit of this age is, neither it nor the actions resulting from its predominance gain Robertson's approval. To some degree, indeed, this lack of approbation is based on Robertson's somewhat unrealistic standards, yet his evaluation of this stage of development is also one which is very much a part of the theoretical interpretation. Because it reflects self-interest, in a society where peace is not natural, the martial spirit cannot form the basis of a new spirit or type of society. It is productive of isolated actions which rarely bring about permanent, beneficial, change, which cannot be institutionalised. In particular, Robertson believes the aristocratic love of independence, which reveals both imprudence and

2. However, many of the 'achievements' of the Scottish feudal system are granted such status at the expense of Robertson's adherence to the theoretical viewpoint: see below, Chapter IX.
3. See above, Chapters VI and VII.
selfishness, does not necessarily mean either a conscious denial of the nobility's ambitions, or a love for the true independence of the whole society. It is rather an automatic response of a group which possesses considerable political power, to situations which it sees as threatening to its position; at most, it is an expression of political virtu 1 designed solely to continue the existing predominance of aristocratic power, and cannot be seen as a philosophical extension of 'rights' to those who have little part in the operation of government.

1. See below, Appendix B.
CHAPTER IX

THE DOMINANCE OF THE UNPHILOSOPHICAL

The interpretation of the Scottish feudal society that is shown in the preceding chapter indicates that Robertson endorsed the theoretical approach to an examination of the history of a particular society, and that he was able to use general and universal concepts to undermine the more romantic, vague, and idealistic interpretations of earlier ages. At the same time, however, it must also be pointed out that Robertson's approach to certain problems of Scottish history leads him to diverge from the basic theoretical attitude, and on occasion he uses arguments and makes implications which are more typical of those 'unphilosophical' writers whose work he explicitly challenges. In particular, his desire to reveal the dangers of unchecked monarchical government\(^1\), and, especially, to emphasise that the Scottish 'nation' was threatened by the actions of Queen Mary, means that his work often depends at best upon vague and imprecise statements, particularly concerning the nature of aristocratic opposition to the crown. At worst, he seems to follow the virulent bias of writers such as Buchanan to such an extent as to ignore those standards of historical research and analysis which he is otherwise intent to maintain.

This is not to say, however, that Robertson's own

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1. See above, Chapter VII.
work is always blatantly biased, for in many instances
his examination of the actions of Queen Mary is based on
his idea of the nature of the feudal state. As such, it
is a direct contrast to the writing of those such as
Buchanan whose work is much more obviously motivated by
ideological bias. Buchanan, for instance, used his main
work, The History of Scotland, to prove that the Scottish
monarchs had always been subject to clearly defined limi-
tations of power, and that the failure to observe these
limitations resulted in a valid deprivation of authority.1
'The nation of the Scots', he wrote, 'being at first free,
by the common suffrage of the people set up kings over them,
conditionally, that, if need were, they might take away the
government by the same suffrages that gave it. The prin-
ciples of this law remain to this day ...'2 Such sentiments,
indicative of an adherence to an 'ancient constitution',
are thought of by Robertson as unphilosophical3, as instan-
tces of an interpretation which the theoretical philosophy
cannot accept.

In the place of these theories, Robertson attempts to
substitute an examination of Queen Mary's actions, of the
rights of the crown, which is more in accordance with what
we know to be the type of society in which she lived, and
with the powers which she possessed in this. Thus he does
not, for instance, wholeheartedly endorse the concept of

1. See especially H. R. Trevor-Roper, George Buchanan and
the Ancient Scottish Constitution (EHR Supplement, No.
2. Buchanan, History, III, p. 329: these words are a para-
phrase of a speech supposedly given by Morton.
the subject's right to resistance, as Buchanan had; it was, he thought, a doctrine 'so just in its own nature, but so delicate in its application to particular cases'\(^1\). Instead, he examines these 'particular cases', and in these studies he is concerned not so much to establish the actual legality of aristocratic procedure - because this often involves, in earlier works, a dependence on supposed long-established 'rights' - as he is to show that strictly illegal actions are often necessary, and that they acquire a form of ratification or validity through expressing national sentiments. With respect to the major instance of resistance to regal authority, for example - the deposition of Queen Mary in 1567 - he does not so much attempt to show that the confederate lords acted within the law as to point out that the action of the confederates appeared both 'wise' and 'just' to a 'great part of the nation'\(^2\). The issue of resistance for him is therefore reduced to determining the extent to which Queen Mary can be seen as intending to invade or ignore the aristocratic powers and rights, and endangering the reformed religion, the security of the state, and the traditional 'liberties' and independence of the 'nation'. This investigation seems to depend very much on the theoretical correlation of property and power in that it relates the monarch's and the nobles's rights and powers to the division of property.

Nonetheless, the use of the word 'issue' is misleading

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if it suggests that Robertson's opinions concerning the Queen's actions were both limited to one specific section of Scotland, and took the form only of explicit and fully documented statements. On the contrary, his interpretation of Mary's undertakings is to be seen throughout the work, and, more importantly, is often expressed in indirect ways - particularly through contrasting her behaviour with that of certain of the confederate lords whose religious principles appear to make them more 'philosophical' than we might have thought a feudal nobility could be. Thus, although there is some uncertainty in Robertson's mind as to whether the confederate lords possessed the right to act on behalf of the whole nobility or parliament in deposing the Queen in 1567, his assessment of her attitude at this time and in earlier years is used to show that some such action as deposition was necessary in order to maintain the established aristocratic dominance in the state. In such a situation, his concern to show Mary as irresponsible, as acting 'unconstitutionally', assumes an even greater importance; for, if he can establish these factors, he is able to give some measure of credibility to the claim that deposition was a matter of 'necessity'. Furthermore, this emphasis on the 'invasion' of 'rights' also suggests that certain responses of the confederate lords were also 'right' or 'just' insofar as they were an attempt to retain established property and offices, to secure these for the men entitled to hold them. This combination of 'necessity' and 'justice', depending as it does on the idea of property/power correlation, does away with the need to establish a false 'ancient
constitution'.

It is Robertson's belief, expressed throughout Scotland, that Queen Mary had always shown herself as predominantly concerned for her own advancement, and that she had little regard for the laws of the state or the wishes of the population in general. This he reveals in a number of ways. Her original response to the created religious situation in Scotland in 1560 was one of moderation and tolerance, he felt, but he also points out that this acceptance was not the result of any respect which the Queen had for the new Protestant doctrines. Her aim from the first, he believes, was to give the appearance of toleration while hiding an intention to act for the advancement of Catholicism when the opportunity arose. She is not therefore to be seen as opposed to violence and faction, but rather as quite capable of resorting to expediency and deviousness when these were imposed by circumstances:

'the princes of Lorrain ... the French officers, too ... dissuaded Mary from all violent measures; and, by representing the power and number of the protestants to be irresistible, determined her to court them by every art; and rather to employ the leading men of that party as ministers, than to provoke them, by a fruitless opposition, to become her enemies.'

The appointing of the Protestant lords to her council, the refusal to become more involved in the obvious efforts of the more influential Catholics in Scotland to gain political power, are not to be seen either as acceptable political sagacity, or as indicative of a desire for national peace,

2. Ibid., pp. 207, 211.
but rather as resulting from a secret policy of individual interest and from a particular aversion for the house of Hamilton. The Queen, Robertson believes, was merely waiting for an opportune moment, and when this came her true intentions were revealed - to gain power at the expense of the 'established' religion:

"Amidst all her other cares, Mary was ever solicitous to promote the interest of that religion which she professed. The re-establishment of the Romish doctrine seems to have been her favourite passion; and though the design was concealed with care and conducted with caution, she pursued it with a persevering zeal."

This, Robertson suggests, we can see in many ways: a refusal to even listen to the Protestant preachers\(^2\), the reintroduction of the ecclesiastical courts\(^3\), and, most of all, her connections with the papacy and with the 'holy league' for the extirpation of the reformed faith\(^4\). She had accepted aid from the pope, she clearly wished to marry a Catholic, and it was obvious that such a policy boded little good for the Protestant faith, or for the stability of the predominantly Protestant country. Many of these actions were obviously against the law, and although Robertson expressed some uncertainty about the validity of the statutes concerning the reformed faith, he at no time believed that the Queen was free to go against the general spirit of the nation, which he himself saw as very much in favour of the new system.

In this last instance in particular - the legal validity

\(^{1}\) Scotland, Works, I, p. 292. See also ibid., p. 268.
\(^{2}\) Ibid., p. 241.
\(^{3}\) Ibid., p. 299.
\(^{4}\) Ibid., pp. 266, 268, 292.
of the new religion - Robertson's attitude is based primarily on two factors: firstly, that the nobility has the dominance in the society, secondly, that there are occasions on which changes should be both made and enforced if they are beneficial and especially if they reflect a national mood. Throughout Scotland, as we have seen above¹, he has emphasised that the lords do in fact possess the greater part of the political authority, and he stresses that the feudal state is always aristocratical in nature - certainly this is believed to be particularly true of Scotland. Furthermore, he believes that by the 1560 agreements between the 'nation' and the Queen, the aristocratical dominance in Scotland was not only legally recognised but had become total: 'that limited prerogative, which the crown had hitherto possessed, was almost entirely annihilated; and the aristocratical power, which always predominated in the Scottish government, became supreme and incontrollable'². Even more important, in Robertson's opinion, is the fact that by this 1560 agreement, the 'sovereign authority' is transferred from the crown 'wholly into the hands of the congregation'³. Although he refers to the whole of the nobility in the same context, and may mean to imply that the Reformation principles were supported by the greater part of the lords, he firmly establishes that it is those who do support the Reformation who are the recognised and legal leaders of the country. By so doing he lays a firm

¹. See Chapter VIII.
³. Ibid.
foundation for some acceptance of the confederate lords's actions in later years against the Queen - they represent that religion and that desire for religious freedom which is characteristic of the society\(^1\), and they are the constituted authority.

This aristocratic dominance does not lead Robertson to state that the Protestant religion was thereby legally established, in the sense of being ratified by the monarchical power; his adherence to the theoretical standards is certainly such as to lead him to distinguish between the ideal and the actual. He states quite clearly that the congregation-dominated Parliament of 1560 was only to 'examine the points in difference, and to represent their sense of them to the king and queen'\(^2\), though he is aware that 'the controversies in religion being left to the consideration of parliament, the protestants might reckon upon obtaining whatever decision was most favourable to the opinions which they professed'\(^3\). He further explicitly concedes that any action of the Parliament of 1560 concerning the establishment of the Protestant religion was illegal, according to the provisions of the agreement made between Queen Mary and her subjects\(^4\) - a point which he makes again later\(^5\). But, at the same time, he also uses the argument of 'necessity' in order to support the effective establishment of the new doctrine at this time, an argument which is implicitly supported by his belief that

such action is in accord with the spirit of the whole society:

'By these proceedings, it must ... be confessed, that the parliament, or rather the nation, violated the last article in the treaty of Edinburgh, and even exceeded the powers which belong to subjects. But when once men have been accustomed to break through the common boundaries of subjection, and their minds are inflamed with the passions which civil war inspires, it is mere pedantry or ignorance to measure their conduct by those rules, which can be applied only where government is in a state of order and tranquillity. A nation, when obliged to employ such extraordinary efforts in defence of its liberties, avails itself of every thing which can promote this great end; and the necessity of the case, as well as the importance of the object, justify any departure from the common and established rules of the constitution.'

Such a relativistic viewpoint is rather rare in Scotland, and clearly is employed only upon occasions where it is seen as useful. In this instance, Robertson's statements against the tumultuous actions typical of the feudal society are forgotten, and the strictly unconstitutional actions of the 'nation', however representative of the feudal disrespect for law, are presented as both 'philosophical' in nature and as indicative of the spirit of another, less philosophical age. The Reformation, he suggests, has introduced new principles into the state, or, at the least, supports new political ideas which had already begun to develop - ideas which challenge the existing monarchical invasion of the nation's 'liberties'. Yet, however much this may have been the case, there is no attempt by Robertson to explain how

2. See below, pp. 431-433.
4. See below, pp. 413-414.
these sentiments of 'liberty' managed to co-exist with the prevailing aristocratical dominance, nor to reveal the degree to which such 'freedoms' promote genuinely national benefits. This vagueness, this respect for illegal action when it seems to benefit a particular cause, would seem to be a misuse of the theoretical emphasis on consistency of interpretation and on the need to use precise and universally valid arguments. These statements of Robertson really have one main purpose, to show the mistakes of Queen Mary, the invasions which she made into national religious freedoms, the tendency which she had to go against popular sentiments - all factors which suggest that she was not concerned with the maintenance of supposedly existing national liberties. The fact that the Queen was often acting entirely within her legal powers - if against the popular spirit - is rarely brought out; and she is presented predominantly as motivated by selfish interest.

The necessity of establishing such a background is seen in particular in Robertson's attempt to show that these religious problems are of fundamental importance in any assessment of the Queen's capacity as a ruler; for, if only indirectly, unfavourable assessments mean support for the actions of the confederate lords. For instance, he suggests that it is the Queen's bias and intolerance, her intention to extirpate Protestantism, which are the major causes of her difficulties as a ruler; that her desire to support Catholicism eventually led her to choose ministers who would accede to her wishes in this regard, and to attack those lords who would not. Her joining the holy alliance,
therefore, is not so much detrimental to her real interests and to those of the nation because it represents an alliance with external powers, and one inimical to national freedoms; rather, the profound effect such a course had on her position - 'to this fatal resolution may be imputed all the subsequent calamities of Mary's life' — results from the fact that it led her to turn permanently from Moray to whom, Robertson felt, she owed her previous success in government. The issue is not so much one of intolerance, but rather of the extent to which certain types of actions, including the above example, reflect the political immaturity of the Queen which must necessarily be detrimental to the interests of the whole.

In itself, an emphasis on the individualistic interest of the Queen does not contravene the theoretical concern with general causes. Indeed, particularly in conjunction with a similar emphasis on the mixed motives of the confederate lords, it is a means of pointing out the spirit of a society at a given stage of development. Nonetheless, even though Robertson does indicate certain of the discrepancies of motive of the Protestants, he also states that these same confederate lords act according to liberal principles and from a concern for a 'nation' - attitudes, he makes clear, which are in direct contrast to those of many of the Scottish monarchs. This is especially to be seen in his correlation of the Protestant doctrines and the love of

2. See below, pp. 422-426.
4. Ibid., pp. 141-142, 154.
'republican principles', and his belief that all those who supported the change in religion supported also a form of political authority which can be considered as 'philosophical' in that it was more 'perfect', more conducive to general 'freedom'.

-Men became more acquainted with the Greek and Roman authors, who described exquisite models of free government, far superior to the inaccurate and oppressive system established by the feudal law; and produced such illustrious examples of public virtue, as wonderfully suited both the circumstances and spirit of that age.... The most ardent love of liberty accompanied the protestant religion throughout all its progress; and wherever it was embraced, it roused an independent spirit, which rendered men attentive to their privileges as subjects, and jealous of the incroachments of their sovereigns.'

This statement is of considerable interest for many reasons. In the first place, although the usage of the word 'inaccurate' to describe a particular form of government is not contrary to the theoretical approach, it is somewhat misleading for Robertson to imply that there was such a clear distinction between the confederate lords and the typical feudal aristocracy. In the second place, the term 'public virtue' lacks precision; and while Robertson may mean here no more than a true virtu or concern for 'country' which does not preclude interest, he has as yet made no attempt to show that any instance of virtue could benefit any other group than the nobility. Thirdly, both the 'circumstances and spirit' of the feudal society, especially one which is so obviously aristocratic as is Scot-

1. See above, Chapter VI, pp. 252-255.
3. That is, as opposed to other situations: see above, Chapter VII, pp. 321-323.
4. See below, Appendix B, pp. 527-529.
land, have not hitherto been shown by Robertson to be anything other than selfish, as tending to increase the aristocratic dominance.

Even more interesting, especially insofar as these sentiments are contrasted with those of the Scottish monarchs, is Robertson's suggestion not only that 'republican' principles influenced the nobility - he gives no instance of its surrendering its authority in order to establish a more balanced form of government - but that the nobility had previously been hesitant and backward in asserting its 'rights' and 'privileges'. At the same time, therefore, as he points out that the 'Scottish barons' were 'naturally free and bold', or, in other words, acted according to the feudal spirit, he suggests that they have been repressed in the expression of their political 'rights', and that all their actions against the crown must be seen as evidence not of feudal 'tumultuousness', but of 'republican' sentiments. If such statements do not explicitly support deposition, they contribute to the creation of a general indictment of Queen Mary's reign, this being always starkly contrasted with the aristocratical unselfishness, 'public virtue', and apparent, though unillustrated, adherence to 'republican' sentiments. Once again, vagueness and lack of precision are employed in order to make implications which seem untheoretical, and this obscurity is very much to be contrasted with Robertson's ordinarily explicit and detailed examination of the limits of monarchical power and the ignoring of these by the Scottish kings. Certainly, Mary's alliance with Rome is seen as evidence of her willingness to act
against the 'independence' of the 'nation', and this ques-
tion of independence and thereby of 'national liberties' is
also raised by Robertson's discussion of the relationship
which Mary and also her mother had with France.

Despite Robertson's implication that there was an 'an-
cient alliance' with France, there is considerable emphasis
in his work that Scotland's relationships with this country
were always uneasy, and that the relationship which existed
between the Scottish kings and the French monarchy was often
one detrimental to the 'national' interest. In such a sit-
uation, he further believes, there is often a clear con-
trast to be seen between the actions of the nobility in re-
sponse to what is seen as the French attempt to dominate
the 'nation', and those tendencies of either regents or
monarchs to make selfish, if temporary, gains at the ex-
 pense of the national interest. The duke of Albany, for
instance, who was the regent for James V, 'acted, on some
occasions, rather like a viceroy of the French king, than
the governor of Scotland'.


2. Ibid.

A similar contrast is also to be seen, Robertson feels,
between the attempts made by the Queen Regent, Mary of
Guise, to give certain 'traditional' offices to the French, and the indignant refusal of the 'nobility' to tolerate this invasion of 'national' liberties. Like Albany, the Regent was influenced by the French interest\(^1\), but in this instance, as in the earlier case, the nobility — and indeed, Robertson implies, the nation as a whole — strongly protested against such action: 'it was with the highest indignation that the Scots beheld offices of the greatest eminence and authority dealt out amongst strangers':

'By these promotions, they conceived the queen to have offered an insult both to their understandings and to their courage; to the former, by supposing them unfit for those stations which their ancestors had filled with so much dignity; to the latter, by imagining that they were tame enough not to complain of an affront, which, in no former age, would have been tolerated with impunity.'\(^2\)

Again, as in an earlier instance\(^3\), Robertson appears to be tolerant of the violent spirit of the aristocracy, although he does relate this particular expression of it to the rights which the nobility held and cannot thereby be seen to blindly support the tumultuous spirit \textit{per se}.

This invasion of the national independence is continued, Robertson believes, by another act of the Regent's — the attempt to impose a tax in order to support a body of French troops, which was ostensibly to defend the border areas but in reality was to serve the aims of the French king\(^4\). In this particular instance, Robertson's interpr—

\(^{1}\) Scotland, Works, I, p. 95.
\(^{2}\) Ibid., p. 117.
\(^{3}\) See above, p. 410.
\(^{4}\) Scotland, Works, I, pp. 117-118.
tation of the nobility's refusal to accept such a situation appears in part to be based on the theoretical concept of the nature of the feudal state, in that he points out that taxes were virtually unknown in this type of society, and could thus be seen as contrary to the nature of the state: 'A fixed tax upon land, which the growing expense of government hath introduced into almost every part of Europe, was unknown at that time, and seemed altogether inconsistent with the genius of feudal policy.'\(^1\) This, together with his earlier emphasis on the role of the nobility as the feudal army\(^2\), which is again mentioned here, permits Robertson to interpret the lords' response primarily in terms of the theoretical correlation of property and power. Certainly, insofar as he indicates that the nobility's reaction is an automatic response to an attempted invasion of their rights he is able to go beyond Buchanan's more commonwealth emphasis on the introduction of a mercenary or standing army, the illegality of which is not related to the nature of the society\(^3\). Nonetheless, it is true that Robertson himself does contrast the 'independence' of the feudal army with the French 'mercenary' forces, and, furthermore, while stating that it is the whole of the nobility which protests this invasion of 'rights', he also states that 'the Scots' were motivated to act against this violation. This would appear to be a vague usage of terms which tends to imply a wider response to a situation that

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appears to affect only one part of the society\(^1\).

In addition, one might also be inclined to suppose that the usage of such words as 'generous' and 'brave' to describe the nobility suggests that a self-denying spirit is the motive of their actions. These words can perhaps be seen simply as an indication of the 'spirit' of the feudal nobility, a thesis which is to some extent supported by Robertson's employment of the words 'manly and determined boldness which is natural to a free people in a martial age', but they may also carry implications contrary to the emphasis which Robertson has hitherto placed on the very limited aims of the nobility. Here in particular Robertson's lack of precision can be contrasted with the more specific statements of writers such as Andrew Fletcher, who distinguishes much more clearly between the motives of the great lords - who had no intention of supporting the 'publick liberty' - and the lesser barons who act for their own benefit which is also that of the nation: 'was it to be supposed, that mercenaries would fight more bravely for the defence of other men's fortunes, than the possessors could do for themselves or their own'?\(^2\). Though Robertson does

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2. The Political Works of Andrew Fletcher, Esq. (London, 1732) p. 23. Ordinarily, however, Fletcher must be considered as a commonwealth writer who is generally intent to establish a constant correlation between 'freedom' and hard work, discipline, limitation of luxuries, etc., and who does not accept that changes in society always demand changes in manners. As such, he is one of those authors whose work Robertson condemned - though see also Scotland, Works, II, p. 79.
point out that it is the lesser barons who protest to the Regent, he suggests that both they and the great lords are influenced by sentiments other than purely selfish ones, sentiments which are to be contrasted with those of the Guise family. The 'freedoms' and 'independence' of the 'Scots' are challenged by the Regent and bravely defended by a selfless nobility.

What Robertson sees as a tendency of the Scottish monarchs to endanger the independence of the society through being vulnerable to external, particularly French, influence is also illustrated, he believes, in Queen Mary's reign. Her education in France, for instance, he sees as being the cause of many of her later difficulties, in part because it created her dependence on her uncles, but especially because it exposed her to a system of government where monarchical power was predominant and which was thus contrary to the spirit of the Scottish constitution¹: 'by her education in that court, one of the politest but most corrupted in Europe, she acquired every accomplishment that could add to her charms as a woman, and contracted many of those prejudices which occasioned her misfortunes as a queen'². Similar sentiments had indeed been expressed by Buchanan, who believed that the influence of political ideas opposite to those predominant in Scotland could seriously disrupt the operation of the state and the relationship between the crown and other political groups³. The ideas of

2. Ibid., p. 97.
the French monarchs, in particular, he had felt, were such as to deny the very rights of other parts of the society, and these ideas had been impressed upon both the Queen Regent and Queen Mary herself, who had been educated in a court 'where lawful dominion was interpreted to be unbecoming and below the dignity of princes, as if their liberty consisted in the slavery of others'. Yet, although it is possible that Robertson may have been influenced by Buchanan's philosophy, it is also true that certain of his arguments concerning royal invasions of traditional rights, or the alienation of the national interest to external forces, are based on his belief in the limited power of the crown and on the legal dominance of the lords. Queen Mary's imposition of an 'unusual tax' and her demand of a loan from 'the citizens of Edinburgh' in order to pay her army, for instance, are 'unprecedented' actions and ones which are contrary to the feudal spirit.

More importantly, in his consideration of the agreement made between Queen Mary and the French crown, and of the marriage articles insisted upon by the Scottish representatives, Robertson contrasts the concern of the latter

2. Buchanan, for instance, states that Mary attempted to introduce a personal guard composed of mercenaries, which was against the tradition of the nation (History, III, p. 148). This statement is supported by Robertson in a manner which ignores the complexity and disorder of the feudal state, which he is otherwise intent to establish: see Scotland, Works, I, p. 323, and see also ibid., p. 39.
4. Ibid., p. 122. Robertson does not believe that the Queen was culpable in this instance, but he does feel that this incident reveals her as susceptible to French influence and as lacking in political sagacity.
for the 'liberty and independence of the nation' with the duplicity and corruption of the French court which had no scruples about invading the rights of the 'nation'. Yet, while he may be entirely correct as to the factual basis of his argument, and in his implication that the Queen might not confer the kingdom outside the nation, the manner in which Robertson does distinguish between the free-spirited 'Scots' and the perfidious French rests not so much on the theoretical argument as on a less 'philosophical' approach. He speaks, for instance, of the 'public choice' of representatives to the Queen's marriage, of the representation of the 'whole body of the nation', thereby contrasting the oppressive French monarchy with the apparently less rigid Scottish state. He contrasts, furthermore, not only the representatives' concern for the national freedoms with the French attempt to invade these, but the Parliament's 'laudable concern for the dignity and interest of their sovereign' with the French exploitation of the youth and inexperience of the Scottish queen. By these means, he not only suggests a truly national participation in such important matters, but also fails to point out the likelihood of the Parliament or nobles being motivated not so much by a concern for the Queen, as by pride in the 'tumultuous' feudal spirit which would not care to have foreigners dictate to the 'nation'. In such instances, the solid material dominance of the nobility - or even of the

Parliament, assuming it to be composed mainly of the nobles - does not appear to him to be sufficient explanation. He must rather emphasise a love of freedom, a philosophical concern of a 'nation' with certain 'rights' and 'dignities', the existence of which, in a chaotic feudal society, he does not undertake to explain. It is sufficient for him that this selflessness be contrasted with the inexperience of the Queen, and with the cunning of the French who have, and continue to have, considerable influence over her.1

Robertson's evaluation of Queen Mary's capacities as a ruler, and also his contrasting of her with certain of the confederate lords, is further to be seen in his study of her actions vis-à-vis those of Moray. The latter is generally portrayed as being concerned with the well-being of the country - a 'country' greater than the nobility - and as lacking in the political duplicity of the Queen. He is presented as unworldly, detached, and clever - though not so clever as to be cunning - and as a man whose qualities represent the best of the feudal spirit. Originally the Prior of St. Andrews, he becomes disgusted with 'the indolence and retirement of a monastic life'2 - an attitude typical of the feudal nobility3 - and reveals talents which are eminently suited to the age:

'The scene in which he appeared required talents of different kinds: military virtue, and political

1. See, for instance, Scotland, Works, I, p. 495, and also Appendix XLVI, ibid., II, pp. 257-259 which indicates that a similar arrangement with France was considered by Queen Mary, and at a time when she must be held responsible for her actions.
2. Ibid., I, p. 138.
'discernment, were equally necessary in order to rend him illustrious. These he possessed in an eminent degree. To the most unquestionable personal bravery, he added great skill in the art of war, and in every enterprise his arms were crowned with success. His sagacity and penetration in civil affairs enabled him, amidst the reeling and turbulence of factions, to hold a prosperous course.'

In the years prior to Mary's effective rule, Moray had been doing his utmost, Robertson believes, both to keep peace within the country and to prevent Scotland's association with France from becoming even stronger. He supported the Queen Regent until he felt that her attempts on national liberties released him from this obligation to work for reform through legal channels: 'the earl of Argyll and the prior of St. Andrew's instantly deserted a court where faith and honour seemed to them to be no longer regarded'. He was willing to take the responsibility of governing the country after the Regent's death, and when Mary did return he gave her his full support. Not only is he seen as tolerant enough to uphold her right to hold mass in the chapel at Holyrood, but his support of her attempts to govern is entirely disinterested - he had no legal claim to the throne, Robertson points out, and thus cannot have been acting for himself. He was, in short, concerned to maintain the Queen in her lawful position, and the break with Knox which this attitude occasioned is seen, by Robertson, as 'a strong proof of

1. Scotland, Works, I, p. 138, and see also ibid., pp. 171, 211, 224.
2. Ibid., p. 138.
3. Ibid., p. 140.
4. See, for instance, ibid., pp. 219-225.
5. Ibid., p. 206.
6. Ibid., p. 153, and see also Works, II, pp. 82-83.
'Murray's sincere attachment to the queen'.

This dutiful service, however, is poorly rewarded by Queen Mary, who early appears to have favoured those nobles, such as Bothwell, who were opposed to Moray, and who made every effort to undermine his power and influence, even though this had been employed on her behalf. In particular, Robertson is intent to reveal Moray as opposed to the French and, thereby, to many of the policies of the Queen, because of his desire to maintain the nation's independence: 'a disinterested passion for the liberty of his country prompted him to oppose the pernicious system which the princes of Lorain had obliged the queen-mother to pursue'. His alliance with England, in particular, is devoid of self-interest, and results from his desire to maintain civil and religious freedoms. Thus, although Robertson is ordinarily critical of any relationship of the nobility with external powers, his support of the interest of the Protestants, his belief in the superior political authority of the nobility in general, leads him to see that there could be potential benefits from the relationship between the confederates and Queen Elizabeth. As far as Moray in particular is concerned, this relationship appears to reflect his interest in the

2. Ibid., p. 250.
3. Ibid., pp. 250-251, 256-260.
4. Ibid., p. 256. Moray and his supporters were eventually obliged to leave the kingdom.
5. Ibid., p. 394.
6. Ibid., p. 251. Robertson does concede there is an element of personal vengeance in Moray's opposition to the Queen's marrying Darnley, but this reluctance to elevate an enemy to the throne is not unusual.
7. See above, pp. 394-395.
8. Scotland, Works, I, pp. 163, 170, 175, 176, 188.
security of the nation, and it is this factor, along with a wish to limit the growth of Catholicism, which motivates him to oppose Queen Mary's marriage with Darnley:

'He had always openly preferred a confederacy with England, before the ancient alliance with France. By his means, chiefly, this change in the system of national politics had been brought about. A league with England had been established; and he could not think of sacrificing, to a rash and youthful passion, an alliance of so much utility to the kingdom; and which he and the other nobles were bound, by every obligation, to maintain.'

Political wisdom is here contrasted with lack of experience, as a love of freedom, especially religious, is contrasted with Queen Mary's desire to re-introduce Catholicism in opposition to the desires of the nation. This is not to deny that Robertson points out that Moray and his party were 'duped' by Elizabeth with regard to her response to Mary's plan of marrying Darnley, but he does suggest that Moray had acted in good faith and from acceptable motives: at the worst he is guilty of stupidity, and this is a failing which is rarely to be seen in his other actions.

The main criticism which Robertson makes of Moray is that he is excessively ambitious, and yet this is a point which he does not make in his consideration of Moray in relation to the Queen, nor one which he illustrates at any length; thus, although he may appear to concede the validity of those claims made by other writers who felt that Moray had some specific interest in defying Mary's authority, he openly denies this both in the main text of Scotland and in

his study of the murder of Darnley. He does not bring out the role which Moray played in the murder of Riccio, suggesting rather that he benefited from this through chance than participation, and he finds no reason to believe that Moray could have profited from the death of Darnley. In addition, though he points out that Moray refused to grant necessary financial aid to the reformed church, was often harsh and severe, and on occasion betrayed trust, he finds his administrative capacities sufficiently great, and his moderation sufficiently unusual in the violent feudal society for many of his faults to be overlooked. Above all, his concern for the country and his acceptable political sagacity is seen by Robertson to make an effective contrast with the ineptness and the repeated instances of invasions of freedom that mark the character and behaviour of the Queen.

Queen Mary's interest in her own ends, her lack of concern with national 'rights' is further seen, in Robertson's opinion, in her attempt to deprive the nobility of many of its traditional offices - a procedure which had many prece-

4. *Scotland, Works*, I, pp. 214-217. See also *ibid.*, p. 152, where Robertson suggests that perhaps Moray is only superficially concerned for religious freedom: 'his boldness in defence of the reformation, together with the decency, and even severity, of his manners, secured him the reputation of being sincerely attached to religion, without which it was impossible in that age to gain an ascendant over mankind'.
5. *Ibid.*, pp. 276, 394; his condemnation of Moray in the latter instance is made in the same terms by which he evaluates other actions of those whose class and background should have instilled certain principles into them: 'he deceived and betrayed Norfolk with a baseness unworthy of a man of honour'. See above, pp. 326-327.
dents, as Robertson also shows, but which never became a part of the crown's legal prerogative. While it is true that Robertson's contempt for those men of other classes who attempt to take the place of the nobles may reflect the influence of commonwealth, and other, ideas, it is also true that his attitude in part results from his adherence to the theoretical property/power relationship. The nobility, he felt, had held the major national offices for a considerable period of time, and their political power, their position in society, demanded that this situation be continued. In particular, as traditional counsellors to the crown, they held a position which only those with experience and power could fill properly; for this reason, if for no other, it was imprudent as well as illegal for the monarchy to attempt to supplant them either by men with no administrative experience, or by those who had no knowledge of national affairs. As it was a mistake for James III to have men of low birth as his companions, so also was it a mistake for the Queen Regent to grant 'several offices of trust and dignity' to foreigners:

'a step which, both from the inability of strangers

4. Scotland, Works, I, pp. 43, 159; although, in this second reference Robertson appears to be paraphrasing a sixteenth-century statement, he also seems to endorse the conclusions reached by it.
'to discharge these offices with propriety, and from the envy which their preferment excites among the natives, is never attended with good consequences.'

Similarly, Queen Mary's appointment of Riccio - a man of low birth and a foreigner as well - to a position of responsibility and power, was, at best, a mistake of great magnitude: 'it was with the utmost indignation that the nobles beheld the power, it was with the utmost difficulty that they tolerated the arrogance, of this unworthy minion.'

Even if the damage resulting from such appointments is only to aristocratic pride or to administrative efficiency, pride is an important part of the nobility's spirit, and efficiency was at a premium in the feudal state. At the very least, Queen Mary and her predecessors appear irresponsible, and, insofar as they seek to invade the established balance of power, they must be considered as acting against the law.

At the same time, however, Robertson also appears to evaluate the nobility's response to certain of these actions in terms which have little to do with the theoretical ideas. As we have seen above, he suggests that the lords proceeded against the Queen Regent from a love of 'national' liberties, and on this and other occasions his usage of the word 'Scots' when he really only means the nobility implies a national concern for, and interest in, certain unspecified rights, which would presuppose the existence of a society much more developed than the rigidly feudal state which he ordinarily emphasises. As regards the influence of these

2. Ibid., pp. 246-247.
3. See above, p. 416, and see also below, p. 436.
'courtiers' or favourites in particular, and the nobility's more philosophical reaction to their power, we may refer especially to Robertson's remarks on James VI's companions. The power of these 'irritated the impatient spirit of the Scottish nobles, who resolved to tolerate no longer the insolence of the two minions, or to stand by, while their presumption and inexperience ruined both the king and the kingdom'. The suggestion that the lords were concerned for James is unsubstantiated, and the implication that they were also concerned for the kingdom suggests a rather unselfish interest in the welfare of a society beyond that of the aristocratic territories and powers. Such actions seem both conscious, planned, and also self-denying, and are thus to be contrasted with the frivolity and immaturity of the king, and with the corruption of the court and the concern of these 'minions' with purely selfish ends.

It is true, certainly, that Robertson does attempt to establish the existence of certain traditional rights belonging to the nobility, and to show how the invasion of these by the monarchy reflected a lack of concern with the maintenance of a rightfully established power. As such, this would appear to be an interpretation which adheres to theoretical standards, and thus the addition of these elements of 'unselfishness', of devotion to a general interest, can only

2. This is true also of Buchanan (History, II, pp. 301, 305, and III, pp. 81, 167-169) who does not attempt to suggest that the lords were possessed of any unselfish spirit, but rather points out simply that it was unwise, and a break with tradition, to choose 'mean persons' as counsel to the crown.
detract from the emphasis on the spirit of the feudal society. Certainly, even though Robertson can find few instances of Queen Mary being led to unconstitutional acts by the influence of those such as Riccio, his condemnation of her choice of counsel from among the nobility is also based in part on a rather idealistic interpretation of the character of those, such as Moray, whom he feels she ought to have preferred. Again, while his criticism of her choice may be justified, and may indeed reveal that there is a certain lack of political sagacity in her behaviour which helps contribute to the 'necessity' of her deposition, the addition to such an assessment of ideas such as the nobles's concern for the nation, reinforces the reader's sense of monarchical irresponsibility at the same time as it leads the more discerning to feel that Robertson fails to maintain his attack on the unphilosophical approach.

This discrepancy, this division in his interpretation, which we have seen in many other instances, is brought out in two ways in particular. Firstly, Robertson does not always make it clear that the 'martial', 'aggressive', and 'tumultuous' spirit of the Scottish population in general, and of the nobles in particular, simply reflects one of the stages of social development, and, further, is not necessarily beneficial to the society in which it is found. Secondly, and more to the point in relation to the immediately preceding pages of this work, his vagueness concerning the meaning of 'Scots' and of 'nation' leads him to imply that

1. See above, pp. 389-401.
certain actions against internal and external threats to the country are met either by the whole population, or else by a selfless nobility which is acting consciously for the benefit of the entire population.

In some references, it is apparent that by 'Scots' or 'whole nation' Robertson does mean the entire number of inhabitants\(^1\), although by this usage he may imply a popular possession of power or influence which is not necessarily valid considering the aristocratical dominance\(^2\). He may also be suggesting the existence of the power of popular sentiment or feeling, even though this does not appear to be supported by the possession of property. This would seem to be the case, for instance, in his emphasis on the need the crown has to maintain the generally tolerant disposition of the ordinary man\(^3\): 'Mary conducted herself with so much moderation and deference to the sentiments of the nation, as could not fail of gaining the affection of her subjects, the firmest foundation of a prince's power, and the only genuine source of his happiness and glory'.\(^4\) Further, in some cases, his usage of the word 'Scots' or 'nation' in contexts where

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3. Ibid., I, p. 253: 'the queen gained wonderfully upon the people, who, unless their jealousy be raised by repeated injuries, are always ready to view the actions of their sovereign with an indulgent eye'. See also *ibid.*, pp. 210, 230, 257.
4. Ibid., p. 208. See also above, pp. 304-305.
it would appear he is really referring to the nobility\textsuperscript{1}, implies both a public concern with national honour - which implication is not supported by any references - and a constant, active participation in affairs of state by the people.

In some instances Robertson may mean by 'Scots' the aristocracy and its supporters, particularly when these together form the feudal army\textsuperscript{2}. This usage, although also imprecise and often supplemented by implications of widespread freedoms\textsuperscript{3}, is perhaps more suitable than the first when it is applied in appropriate situations. Furthermore, Robertson may also use the word 'Scots' to mean simply the nobility\textsuperscript{4}, and by the word 'nation' cover anything from the nobles alone to at most the Parliament - even though he may often suggest, without concrete evidence, that this Parliament represents the society as a whole or that it represents a body of opinion which is not predominantly aristocratic\textsuperscript{5}. This intermingling of meanings is especially detrimental to his own historical stature when he implies there exists a national 'interest' which the lords are concerned to maintain, without identifying this 'interest' and relating it either to the political constituency of the nation or to the rights of all the 'Scots'\textsuperscript{6}. As in similar instances of obscurity and lack of precision, the result is the continua-

\textsuperscript{1} Scotland, Works, I, p. 118, and see also ibid., p. 364.
\textsuperscript{2} See, for instance, ibid., pp. 57, 76 ('Scottish nation').
\textsuperscript{3} Ibid., p. 120.
\textsuperscript{4} See, for example, ibid., pp. 117, 247.
\textsuperscript{5} See especially ibid., pp. 121, 187, and also pp. 125, 257, 309.
\textsuperscript{6} See, for instance, ibid., p. 48.
tion of the use of unphilosophical techniques through the adding of what are basically unnecessary details to the theoretical explanation. This mistake in approach becomes particularly obvious when we examine the actual powers of the various members of the 'nation' and attempt to relate these to Robertson's concepts of 'national' interests and freedoms.

Even if one accepts Robertson's belief that the Reformation made certain of the nobility more moderate and more philosophical, one cannot easily ignore either his belief in the mixed motives of many of the confederate lords\(^1\), or his general assessment of the feudal society in which the power of the Parliament to enforce changes which recalcitrant lords are opposed to is severely limited. Both these factors suggest the existence of at least a certain amount of what we might describe as unphilosophical action or spirit in the feudal society. Yet, in many instances of his consideration of the motives behind Parliamentary action during the Reformation era\(^2\), Robertson suggests the existence not only of a general national freedom of spirit, which seems most unfeudal, but especially of an aristocratical 'public spirit'\(^3\), which obscures the fact that the Scottish Parliament is predominantly aristocratical, and that the aristocracy's actions are mainly directed towards its own benefit. In particular, he rarely distinguishes carefully between the rights of Parliament - even supposing this to have been a

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2. By 'parliament' here Robertson generally means those held by the confederate party.
body much more widely 'national' in character than it was — and those of the lords, at the same time as he implies that a 'national' Parliament is keen to maintain both national 'liberties' and 'independence' and those of the aristocracy: a situation which we might consider likely only if the national freedoms and those of the lords were basically one and the same. This fundamental point, however, is one which Robertson does not make explicitly at any time, however much he may have implied it by his study of the division of power in the society. By failing to make this distinction he is able to contrast further the selfishness and limiting repression of monarchical rule with the generous and 'republican' sentiments of a Protestant nobility.

The rights of the Parliament/aristocracy as mentioned by Robertson appear to include the following (although he himself is rarely explicit as to whether these claimed 'rights' were valid): freedom from taxation or other such impositions; the right to declare peace and war in conjunction with the monarch, and, incidentally, to constitute the only legal army in the state — the Queen Regent, for instance, was seen as invading the liberties of the nation/aristocracy by her fortification of Leith and by her employment of foreign troops. There are several mentions also of the right to counsel the prince and the right, as part of this counsel,
to interfere when the monarch acts against the 'ancient laws' and 'ancient constitution'. This appears to be wholly an aristocratic privilege, as is that of holding the traditional offices of the nation. The nobles/Parliament also appeared to have believed they alone could set the monetary standard — presumably as a part of their ratification of all laws. The confederate lords also claimed the right to practice the religion which was considered to be that of the nation, and although Robertson does not concede that they possessed this power legally, he believes that their dominance in the society enabled them to rightfully establish the Protestant religion. He does state, however, that Parliament was able to interfere with the succession of the monarchy — which fact may lend some authority and support to the Queen's deposition and the coronation of James VI — and that Parliament alone could grant the Crown Matrimonial.

All of these rights belong to the nobility as members of Parliament, and many of them appear to be privileges or prerogatives of the aristocracy as a separate power. Insofar as he has established the dominance of the lords, Robertson may be quite justified in assigning these offices and powers to them, and certainly he appears to be dependent on the theoretical correlation of property and power in so doing.

2. Ibid., pp. 117, 159, 181. See above, pp.427-430.
4. Ibid., p. 179.
5. See above, pp. 409-410.
7. Ibid., pp. 123, 125, 231, 257, 269.
Our disagreement with his discussion of the nature of the role of Parliament and the aristocracy, therefore, rests not so much on the type of authority which they claimed, but rather with the manner in which the claim is expressed. For instance, Robertson does not believe that the Parliament will always endorse the real interest of the nation, but yet he does suggest that in all instances in which the confederate lords held a Parliament, and where the Protestant factor was necessarily dominant, the real interest of the nation—that is, the whole of the society—was maintained. This he emphasises without specifically distinguishing that the interest of the 'nation' or 'Scots' must often simply be that of the lords, and thus that they are hardly motivated by unselfish reasons.

This emphasis on love of widespread liberty by the aristocracy is made, for instance, when Robertson points out that the attempts made by the Queen Regent to invade the national freedoms were always met with prompt action from the confederate lords and implies that this action was on behalf of all members of the society and resulted from a 'public spirit':

'Upon their arrival at Edinburgh, they once more represented to (the Queen Regent) the dangers arising from the increase of the French troops, the fortifying of Leith, and her other measures, which they conceived to be destructive to the peace and liberty of the kingdom; and in this address they spoke in a firmer tone, and avowed, more openly than ever, their resolution of proceeding to the utmost extremities, in order to put a stop to such dangerous encroachments.'

2. Ibid., pp. 117-118, 154.
3. Ibid., pp. 154, 156, 157.
When these actions continued, the confederate lords did not hesitate to act with firmness in defence of the national liberties, and proceeded against the Regent by calling a Parliament. In this instance, it is obvious that it is the confederate lords who are most inclined to direct action, and they also who call the Parliament composed primarily of their supporters - an action which, strictly speaking, is illegal in that only the monarch had the right to convene this body. The Parliament itself, as a body separate from the nobility, could not, and did not, act with such purpose and singlemindedness: a fact which reflects the strength of the feudal aristocracy.

Yet, although Robertson points out the nobles's power in this instance in such a fashion as to reinforce the sense of their effectually being the nation, he indicates that they acted for the 'kingdom' and its 'liberties': 'the lords of the congregation thought it incumbent on them... to inquire into the male-administration of the queen regent, and to preserve their country from being enslaved or conquered, by depriving her of the power to execute such a pernicious scheme.'

This is again the case in 1560 when Queen Mary was still in France and the Parliament which then met was given constitutional validity by arrangement with her. It is the confederate lords who in effect call this meeting in that

2. See above pp. 384, 388.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid., p. 180.
they organise the administrative procedures necessary to bring together and organise the various members of this institution. It is these same lords who dominate the actual proceedings of the Parliament which ratifies the rights of the nation/aristocracy and proceeds to go beyond its constituted authority. A third instance of the confederate lords's domination of Parliament is to be seen in that held in December 1567. This was legally convened, insofar as the Regent Moray possessed the authority to do so, but it was used merely to ratify the actions of a small number of the confederates, which actions had been carried out during the year and at a time when these lords were very much in a minority:

'The parliament granted every thing the confederates could demand, either for the safety of their own persons, or the security of that form of government which they had established in the kingdom.'

From these three instances it would seem apparent that Robertson's emphasis on the 'nation' and the 'Scots' as suggestive of a more popular form of government than a rigid feudal aristocracy, is misleading. Not only does the confederate nobility dominate these Parliaments, as the nobility in general dominates all Parliaments, but - for whatever reason - the confederates appear to act as they please and to use the Parliament only to give an air of constitutionality to their proceedings. This point, in fact, is one which Robertson himself does make: 'that they might not seem to depart from the established forms of the constitu-

1. See above, pp. 409-410.
3. Ibid., p. 345.
tion, for which, even amidst their most violent operations, men always retain the greatest reverence, they assembled all the peers, barons, and representatives of boroughs, who adhered to their party.¹

Yet at no time does Robertson see this characteristic as evidence of a feudal arrogance and as a contempt for the legal and established power.² Rather, he appears to support all the steps of the confederates because he sees them as representing a national spirit, as acting in a manner conducive to the development of freedom. Indeed, he endorses the very feudal spirit which underlies certain of the lords's proceedings because it represents not only a love of liberty but an impatience with the niceties so typical of later - perhaps more corrupted - forms of society. Here the contrast is not so much between feudal lack of sophistication and a more philosophical age, but between a 'manly' boldness, a 'masculine and undaunted spirit',³ and a more (unnecessarily?) elaborate system:

'This assembly proceeded to decide with no less dispatch than unanimity. Strangers to those forms which protract business; unacquainted with the arts which make a figure in debate; and much more fitted for action than discourse; a warlike people always hasten to a conclusion, and bring their deliberations to the shortest issue.'⁴

Furthermore, although Robertson does point out the instances where there is a discrepancy between the 'constitutional' power of the nobility and the authority which they assumed⁵, he does not appear to challenge any 'illegal'

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2. See above, pp. 388, 390.
4. Ibid., p. 158, and see also Ibid., p. 182.
5. Ibid., pp. 157, 187.
changes in themselves. In the first place, he suggests that the lords have the right to institutionalise 'national' sentiments and their own claims, because they in fact have the power to do so. This is true not only of the peers, but also of the gentry; for, even though the lesser barons may only make a rare appearance in Parliament because they are entitled to representation, their occasional physical presence there or in some such equivalent, is entirely valid. Indeed, the sporadic nature of the gentry's direct participation reflects their love of liberty and their public spirit, as it brings into relief the immense power which the nobility can muster when necessary. Thus, although the lords may on occasion agree to have their 'rights' and privileges ratified, and their grievances 'redressed' as a matter of 'favour' and 'indulgence' rather than of 'right and privilege', this merely reflects their desire for peace and freedom. It cannot be seen as an indication of their dependence upon the crown.

2. Ibid., p. 182: 'The lesser barons, though possessed of a right to be present, either in person or by their representatives, seldom exercised it'. By making this point Robertson also challenges those earlier histories which believed the confederate parliaments to contain men not entitled to participation, and thereby to be invalid. For a consideration of this controversy, see James Anderson, Collections Relating to the History of Mary Queen of Scotland (Edinburgh, 1727-1728) I, pp. xxii-xlvi.
3. See below, p. 442. Robertson does make the point, though (Scotland, Works, I, p. 182) that the lesser barons had often felt the peers to dominate the Parliament, and that this was one reason why they had long kept away and had taken little interest in national affairs - an instance of the split in 'national' interests, of the nature of the feudal aristocracy which he emphasised when it served his point.
4. Ibid., PP. 179, 231.
Secondly, Robertson believes that the power of the lords is further reflected in the traditions and precedents of Scottish constitutional history, so that certain actions of the confederate lords also have the authority of tradition behind them. They are, in effect, authorised by customary law - although Robertson does not explicitly use this term - as well as directly by possession of property. This view is especially to be seen in his consideration of the deposition of the Queen Regent:

"Violent as this action may appear, there wanted not principles in the constitution, nor precedents in the history of Scotland, to justify and authorise it. Under the aristocratical form of government established among the Scots, the power of the sovereign was extremely limited. The more considerable nobles were themselves petty princes, possessing extensive jurisdictions, almost independent of the crown, and followed by numerous vassals, who, in every contest, espoused their chieftain's quarrel, in opposition to the king. Hence the many instances of the impotence of regal authority, which are to be found in the Scottish history. In every age, the nobles not only claimed, but exercised, the right of controlling the king. Jealous of their privileges, and ever ready to take the field in defence of them, every error in administration was observed, every encroachments(sic) upon the rights of the aristocracy excited indignation, and no prince ever ventured to transgress the boundaries which the law had prescribed to prerogative, without meeting resistance, which shook or overturned his throne."

This instance is of particular importance, not so much in relation to the Queen Regent but in relation to the question of the deposition of Queen Mary. Although Robertson was careful not to commit himself to an explicit statement on this matter, it would seem clear that he supports the

deposition of the Regent on grounds of the 'spirit of the constitution' and the 'example' of the past - both of which reflect the distribution of property in the society\(^1\); and that, as the reasons for this action differ little from those advanced by the confederate lords in 1567, and the aristocratic dominance is even greater at this time, he may be tacitly giving recognition to this action - even though he may see it as illegal because only a few nobles took part on this occasion. Certainly, it is true that in both instances the individualism, the selfishness, and illegal actions of the crown are contrasted with the public spirit of the nobility; the lords react swiftly in defence of the national liberties, and a martial Parliament endorses their acts in favour of freedom:

'in extraordinary conjunctures, when the struggle for liberty was violent, and the spirit of opposition to the crown rose to an height, the burgesses and lesser barons were roused from their inactivity, and stood forth to vindicate the rights of their country. The turbulent reign of James III. affords examples in proof of this observation. The public indignation against the rash designs of that weak and ill-advised prince, brought into parliament, besides the greater nobles and prelates, a considerable number of the lesser barons.

The same causes occasioned the unusual confluence of all orders of men to the parliament, which met on the first of August. The universal passion for liberty, civil and religious, which had seized the nation, suffered few persons to remain unconcerned spectators of an assembly whose acts were likely to prove decisive with respect to both.' 2

It is true that Robertson's previous emphasis on the

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chaotic and individualistic nature of feudalism tends to offset his remarks on the 'nation', on the actions of the lords and Parliament, on the 'love of liberty'. It is true also that he does not appear to endorse certain implications of some earlier writers concerning the role of particular groups within a society: for instance, although he suggests the lesser barons to be concerned with a freedom which goes beyond their own rights, he does not elevate this body to the role of a balancing power between lords and monarch\(^1\). Nonetheless, we must also concede that his lack of precision in the use of certain terms and concepts, the clear statements concerning a conscious denial of limited aims, is all evidence which reveal that he is unhistorical according to theoretical standards. Such 'techniques' permit the 'scientific' evaluation of institutions and political power to be replaced by obscure intimations of 'rights' and of a 'spirit', the true nature of which are not defined, and the existence of which in Robertson's work detracts considerably from its claim to be 'philosophical'.

Perhaps nowhere is this conflict in Robertson's thought and approach so clearly illustrated as in his study of the death of Queen Mary's husband, Darnley, and of the so-called Casket Letters. In writing this Dissertation, Robertson had one specific aim, to marshall the evidence pertaining to an extremely controversial issue, and to do so in a 'scientific' manner that would enable the reader to form his own conclusions:

'It is not my intention to engage in all the controversies to which the murder of King Henry, or the letters from queen Mary to Bothwell, have given rise; far less to appear as an adversary to any particular author, who hath treated of them. To repeat, and to expose all the ill-founded assertions, with regard to these points, which have flowed from inattention, from prejudice, from partiality, from malevolence, and from dishonesty, would be no less irksome to myself, than unacceptable to most of my readers. All I propose is, to assist others in forming some judgment concerning the facts in dispute, by stating the proofs produced on each side, with as much gravity as the case will admit, and with the same attention and impartiality which I have endeavoured to exercise in examining other controverted points in the Scottish history.'

Such an aim appears to conform to the theoretical philosophy, especially in its emphasis upon impartiality and its dissociation from the unphilosophically vituperative, biased, and unsubstantiated discussions typical of much earlier writing. Certainly it is one which suggests that the new app-

2. Dissertation, p. 80. This is an eminently 'philosophical' approach insofar as Robertson specifically avoided not only a detailed discussion of these 'unphilosophical' works but also refused to become openly or publicly involved in the contemporary expression of the Marian controversy: see below, Appendix A, pp. 515-516.
roach to historical interpretation was to be favourably contrasted with those which had hitherto characterised any 'discussion' of the issues, an implication borne out by an examination not only of the sixteenth and seventeenth century works, but also of those written in the first half of the eighteenth century. Although Anderson had deemed it vital that:

'all faithful Historians and Publishers of Historical Transactions, ought in matters of Fact to lay aside all partiall Regard to Religion, Country, Interest, Prepossessions, Parties, or Other Views: and pay their intire Devotion to the Altar of Truth'

his plea went largely unheeded; indeed, impressive though it may seem, coming as it did in the midst of a period of rabid disagreement, it was unheeded by Anderson himself. His belief that 'Notwithstanding All Art and Opposition Whatsoever, TRUTH Will At Length Prevail' apparently led him to practise some 'opposition' himself and to omit certain valuable papers which showed Queen Mary in a more favourable light. Such an approach, however, was typical of much eighteenth-century work as it was of earlier writing; and in the early decades of the century in particular, a notable disinterest in careful research, and an almost complete lack of moderation or objectivity was characteristic. The positive assertion that the Queen was either completely guilty or wholly innocent

1. The best collections of works on the Marian controversy are Samuel Jebb, De Vita et Rebus Gestis... Mariae Scotorum Regnae (London, 1725) and the supposedly Whig answer to this 'pro-monarchy' work, James Anderson, Collections relating to the History of Mary Queen of Scotland (Edinburgh, 1727-1728) hereafter cited Collections.
3. Ibid.
of the charges made against her was an acceptable basis
for interpreting the whole series of events that comprised
the Reformation era; and the immense popularity of the
writings of Buchanan, given authority by his position in
the reformed church and his closeness to the scenes which
he described\(^1\), lent an air of authenticity to the 'repub-
lican' interpretation\(^2\). A hundred and twenty five years
had convinced many Scots not only that the constitution
had been as Buchanan described it but also that Queen Mary
was certainly capable of the most illegal and violent acts;
the verdict of 'guilty' was by far the more common one, and
had indeed become established tradition.

Because of this, those few who attempted to challenge
the basis of De Jure Regni Apud Scotos or the arguments put
forward in Buchanan's History and suchlike works, found them-
selves in a difficult position. They were aware of the
false basis of much of the writing of Buchanan, among others,
aware also of the distortion of facts which had enabled him
to portray the Queen as a scheming Jezabel who was only too
typical of the woman ruler\(^3\). They knew, further, that the

\(^1\) On some occasions Robertson attempted to undermine the
authority of Buchanan by pointing out that he was, in
fact, at some remove from the centre of affairs during
\(^2\) See, for instance, Nicolson, op.cit.,p. 13: 'we ought
to acknowledge that he always writes with such an Air
of Eloquence and learning that 'tis hard to contradict
even where we cannot believe him'.
\(^3\) For Buchanan's remarks, which refer to earlier queens,
see History,II, pp. 265-266, III, p. 72. Buchanan felt
that by the time of Queen Mary's rule, the Scots had
become more accustomed to female monarchs (ibid.,III,
p.166) - though this does not mean that he thought the
Queen was capable, or that women generally made good
rulers. For Robertson's opinion on these sentiments,
see Scotland, Works, I,p.141, note n.
need of Queen Mary's sixteenth century supporters, in particular, to respond to the monarchomachi propaganda with strength and little subtlety, had led them to make rash statements unsupported by research, to present their own case 'lamely and with some Confusion'. Yet, at the same time, the pro-Marian writers realised that if their own works were to have a hearing, were to make an impact on readers inclined to the opposite viewpoint, they would need to appear as definitive as Buchanan's History, as unabashedly triumphant as his Detection, if not so crude — and as unyielding as Lesly's Defence. This unpleasant fact, indeed, was not necessarily made explicit. David Crawfurd, for instance, stated that his aim was only 'to do Justice to oppress'd Truth and Right':

'to do Servise in my humble Station, to the Crown and to my Country, and, if possible, disabuse those who have hitherto, for the Life of Queen Mary, and an account of the Troubles during her Reign, unhappily consulted an History, which ought no more to be credited than the Life of the Royal Martyr Charles the 1st, if written by Cook, Ireton, or Bradshaw.'

Nonetheless, his edition of the Memoirs is sufficient witness to the meeting of falsification with a like distortion of material, so that the air of authenticity in Buchanan is challenged by the authoritative statements of the Memoirs, and Crawfurd's complete vindication of the Queen is opposed

4. Later writers, such as Keith, Goodall, and Robertson were presumably aware of such falsification but failed to point it out: possibly because the original manuscript was equally caustic towards Moray and Queen Mary.
to the republicans's enthusiastic condemnation of her.

This continuation of earlier approaches, of uncompromising and outspoken adherence to one of two views, could only mean the perpetuation of those attitudes inimical to the development of an interest in research, of those techniques which the theoretical historians in particular felt to be fundamental. The aggressive defence of one's own view, the attack of all others, was a feature of most works, for in an issue of such importance there could be no room for subtleties: the Queen was either a martyr or a whore, Moray the Godly Regent or a scheming politician, and to have suggested a mean between these would have been to pass unnoticed. This is not to deny that there were studies which attempted to modify the influence of these attitudes, which suggested there were faults in both - Keith's work\(^1\) and even that of Innes\(^2\), show that it was not impossible to write in a more detached fashion, to depend on research rather than polemic. Yet, prior to the development of the theoretical philosophy, this type of study had gained little ground, while the unphilosophical, particularly that which was anti-Marian, had become respectable with time. Indeed, the very continuation of opposition to Queen Mary, to the Stuarts\(^3\)

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1. The History of the Affairs of Church and State in Scotland (Edinburgh,1734).
2. See Innes, op.cit., I, pp. 322-323; the Marian controversy itself, however, was peripheral to Innes' main purpose.
3. See especially Walter Goodall, An Examination of the Letters, said to be Written by Mary Queen of Scots... (Edinburgh,1754) I, pp. v-vii. He mentions that in about 1718 a society was formed in Edinburgh 'whose profess'd purpose was to decry the character' of Queen Mary, and it would appear that this society came into being because of the 1715 rebellion, and was a forerunner of the Revolution Club.
well into the middle of the eighteenth century, and its expression in distinctly unphilosophical terms\(^1\), encouraged the perpetuation of disputation and controversy; and to those not imbued with the philosophical detachment and moderation\(^2\), scepticism could be a means of hiding a disinclination for research\(^3\), and 'objectivity' be a refusal to consider the issues in any depth. 'Moderation', declared Goodall:

'is certainly an amiable, decent, comely, well bred gentlewoman: No man in his senses ever denied it: But there are courtesans too, who stride about in the very same dress, and impose upon the unwary. One who in a disputed point betwixt facts, or characters in history, tells truth moderately, that is mincingly, differs but in a small degree from him who tells lies moderately.'\(^4\)

In general, then, although we can consider work such as that of Goodall to represent some improvement in, or development of, historical techniques, there does not seem to be any profound change in the attitudes of controversialists between the sixteenth and the mid-eighteenth centuries. Impassioned declarations were the order of the day, and a lack of heat, an emphasis on replacing fury with a more dispassionate view, instituted some doubts as to one's

2. See below, Appendix A.
3. Goodall, op. cit., I, p. 28.
4. Ibid., p. 63, also pp. 59-61. This dislike of detachment, which he equated with a lack of true historical fervour, appears to have been a consistent attitude of Goodall's, as Dalrymple's letter to Walpole (Walpole, Correspondence, XV, p. 28) suggests: 'Some days ago Goodall told Mr Robertson that he would expose him for his ignorance in the history of Queen Mary. "Why do (you) speak so harshly of me?" said Mr Robertson; "I am sure I have spoken of the Queen with moderation." "Moderation," cried Goodall with great heat, "I always detested moderation; did you never see the book that I published against moderation?"'.
manly spirit. It is this type of approach which Robertson ostensibly sought to discredit, and against which, therefore, many of his remarks and especially his opening statement in the Dissertation, should be viewed. The philosophical writers's expressed aim was to strip away polemic and to expose much earlier work as sheer bombast; yet, we should be aware that their refusal to engage openly in a heated exchange, or to specifically list the arguments and attack the philosophy of any particular author or view\(^1\), does not mean that they refused to come to any conclusions concerning the murder of Darnley and the role which Queen Mary played in this. While a writer such as Tytler\(^2\) may have hoped to be thought philosophical by stating that the whole controversy was nothing more than 'a piece of fashionable entertainment'\(^3\), those, such as Robertson, who were more truly philosophical, believed that one should give the matter serious study, should replace the rancorous exchange of unexamined 'facts' with what purported to be an objective presentation of thoroughly researched material\(^4\). Impartiality, they felt, did not mean

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1. See below, Appendix A, pp. 515-517.
3. Ibid., p. vii.
4. See also Goodall, *Examination*, pp.xiii-xiv. Goodall stressed that 'scepticism', which he felt had marked Bayle's consideration of the matter, was a luxury which the Scots could not afford, and that although the vast amount of material which it was necessary to study might be conducive to an 'historical Pyrrhonism' (ibid., p.27) this must be rejected. His approach, however, must none-theless be distinguished from that of the philosophical writers; although they also warn that we must avoid being either sceptical or credulous (see, for instance, Robertson, *India, Works*, II, p. 537, Note I) they refuse to be obviously or openly 'concerned', always insisting on moderation and a seeming detachment: see Appendix A, pp. 515-517.
disinterest\(^1\), and Robertson in particular believed the issue was an important one\(^2\) and that the historian should make some decision regarding it:

'The decision of many controverted facts in history, is a matter rather of curiosity than of use. They stand detached; and whatever we determine with regard to them, the fabric of the story remains untouched. But the fact under dispute in this place is a fundamental and essential one, and according to the opinion which an historian adopts with regard to it, he must vary and dispose the whole of his subsequent narration.'\(^3\)

Robertson's objections as listed above, therefore, are only to undignified controversy and to the unphilosophical approach which such controversy encouraged; as a historian, especially as one influenced by the growing concern for dispassionate research and presentation, which was fundamental to the theoretical philosophy, he felt himself obliged to make some conclusions concerning the issue, and, above all, to make these an integral part of his interpretation of the whole period\(^4\). That he has done so, indeed, is apparent not

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2. See the Preface to the first edition of *Scotland*, in *Works*, I, p. ii.
4. This decision of Robertson's to relate the material in the *Dissertation* to the main body of the text, to base the interpretation of many points in *Scotland* on the conclusions which he himself had reached in the *Dissertation*, was one of the means by which he sought to introduce the philosophical standards into the Marian controversy. He felt that the letters had been given too much importance in many prior works, and that they should be seen simply as one aspect of a much larger issue - the nature of the Scottish feudal government, the character and actions of the Queen throughout her reign. Others also felt that there should be a move away from the view that if the Queen had written the letters, she must be considered guilty of adultery and murder, or that if they were forged she must also be innocent of
only from his implicit support of the actions of the con-
federate lords, and from the interpretation which he makes
of Moray in particular, but also from remarks which he makes
concerning the authenticity of the Casket Letters\(^1\). Yet,
despite its emphasis on impartiality as well as on the need
to relate these issues to a wider theme, the philosophical
interpretation does not necessarily overcome bias, nor bring
the distortion of evidence to an end. The extent to which
Robertson, in both the Dissertations and Scotland proper, em-


(continuation)

\(^1\) any of the charges which had been levelled against
her during her entire reign: see Campbell's letter to
Hume (via Sir Alexander Dick) in Mrs Atholl Forbes (ed.)
Curiosities of a Scots Charta Chest... (Edinburgh, 1897),
p. 190, and Hume's response - 'I agree with Mr Campbell,
that the Charge against Queen Mary is far from resting
solely on the Letters: Her public Conduct was so mon-
strously imprudent, in a multitude of Particulars, that
we must conclude, that nothing but Guilt could lead a
Woman of common Sense & common Honour into it. Yet it
is material to examine the authenticity of the Letters;
both, because, if genuine, they fix her Character be-
yond Controversy, and if forg'd, they determine that
of her Adversary's(sic), particularly the Earl of Murray,
whom otherwise I shou'd incline to think, as the Age
went, not a very bad man.' (Klibansky and Mossner, op.
cit., p. 59). Nonetheless, the emphasis on the letters
continued, as is to be seen not only in Goodall's
Examination and Tytler's Enquiry, but in the very de-
tailed Mary Queen of Scots Vindicated by John Whitaker,
first published in 1787, enlarged and corrected edi-
tion published in London, 1790. This work in particular
was very critical of many of the philosophical writers,
including Robertson, and often with good reason. For
Robertson's response - though this is rather to open
and public criticism than the content of it - see be-
low, Appendix A, p. 516.

\(^1\) Scotland, Works, I, pp. 302, 319, 345, 371: we should, how-
ever, distinguish between the authenticity of the
letters - that is, their being written by the Queen -
and the degree to which they reveal her participation
in Darnley's murder. See below, pp. 476-480.
given good reasons why the historian should make some assessment of the issues in the Marian controversy, and incorporate this into his work as a whole, the very existence of the examination of the Queen’s character which we find in Scotland means that the hypothetical reader must have already been influenced to some degree about the conclusions which he will draw from the Dissertation, and cannot himself by wholly impartial. More importantly, the actual employment of certain sources and the presentation of some material in Scotland itself, which is used to lay the foundation for further study in the Dissertation, is by no means invariably in accordance with Robertson’s professed standards.

This all too common separation between theory and practice is evident especially in the study which is made by Robertson of the Queen’s personal relationships; and, though we cannot deny that some of his statements seem to be factually correct, and are unexceptionable, others appear to be based on unphilosophical sources and to carry either subtle or more obvious implications which are not always substantiated — yet which are used by Robertson to establish the ‘probability’1 of the Queen’s being involved in her husband’s murder.

Two individuals especially are studied by Robertson in his examination of the nature of the Queen’s personal life, her second husband, Darnley, and her third, Bothwell. His opinion of Darnley can hardly be considered favourable2,

and this evaluation\(^1\) must necessarily affect his attitude towards the Queen, who was originally infatuated. In particular, Robertson felt her to have made an unwise choice in selecting Darnley as her husband, not only because of the danger to the nation's 'liberties' and to the Protestant religion which this marriage represented, but also because Darnley lacked the qualities which one might expect a monarch to possess:

'Darnly was not superior to his father in understanding, and all his passions were still more impetuous. To these he added that insolence, which the advantage of external form, when accompanied with no quality more valuable, is apt to inspire. Intoxicated with the queen's favour, he began already to assume the haughtiness of a king, and to put on that imperious air which majesty itself can scarce render tolerable.'\(^2\)

The Queen's choice, therefore, reflects not only an indifference to the needs of the nation\(^3\) but also reveals her as rash and impulsive - particularly so when we contrast her action in this instance with the prudence and disinterest of Moray\(^4\) - and as inclined to invade the

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1. Apart from Buchanan himself, whose attachment to the Lennox family may explain his bias, there were few writers who presented Darnley in a favourable light, and Darnley the loving husband (Buchanan, Detection, pp. 9, 38), the simple but innocent youth (Ibid., pp. 27, 46 and History, III, pp. 189-190, 192-193, 331) had become, by the mid-eighteenth century Darnley the vicious and selfish lover of power - see especially Keith, op. cit., p. 328, Robertson, Scotland, Works, I, pp. 281-282. Yet, the Casket Letters reveal him to be the character presented by Buchanan (see Thomas Robertson, The History of Mary Queen of Scots, Edinburgh, 1793, pp. 221-224), but this discrepancy is not pointed out by (William) Robertson, nor seen by him to challenge the authenticity of the letters.


3. Robertson does state, however, that the Queen professed an intention of asking the consent of her subjects to the marriage: Ibid., p. 249.

4. See above, pp. 422-426.
rights and powers of others in order to satisfy Darnley's excessive craving for power and honours. Thus, although Robertson is less definite than Buchanan concerning the role of the 'nation' in approving the Queen's choice of spouse, he believed that Parliament alone had the power and authority to elevate Darnley to the office and rights of king:

'Whether she had any right to choose a husband without consent of parliament, was, in that age, a matter of some dispute; that she had no right to confer upon him, by her private authority, the title and dignity of king, or by a simple proclamation to raise her husband to be master of her people, seems to be beyond all doubt. Francis II. indeed, bore the same title. It was not, however, the gift of the queen, but of the nation; and the consent of parliament was obtained, before he ventured to assume it.'

That the Queen 'substituted a proclamation' in place of 'an act of parliament' by granting Darnley the title of king, indicates to Robertson both her disregard of the prerogatives of Parliament and her obsession with an individual whose own personal limitations could benefit neither her nor her country. Yet, it is worth pointing out that

1. In considering an earlier instance, Buchanan had suggested that the nation should participate in such decisions: 'for it was looked upon as far more just, than an husband should be chosen for the young lady, than that she should chuse an husband for herself, and a king for the whole land' (History, II, p. 43). That Darnley was an unpopular choice was also pointed out by Buchanan, Detection, p. 39. He does not suggest, however, that lack of approval from the 'nation'—by which he may mean no more than the Parliament or the nobility alone—will affect the marriage, but rather implies that when the spouse is to be considered as a co-ruler, the 'nation' should have some say in the matter. This point is made more clearly by Robertson.

2. Scotland, Works, I, p. 257, and see also ibid., p. 249.

3. Ibid., p. 257.
while it may have been 'an unprecedented stretch of power', for Queen Mary to have ignored the Parliament in this matter, the title of 'king' itself seems to have carried no powers, and the Queen refused to grant her husband the more influential Crown Matrimonial, alleging 'that this gift was beyond her power, and that the authority of parliament must be interposed to bestow it'. These facts, together with her refusal to grant even the title of 'king' to Bothwell, suggest some reluctance on the Queen's part to constantly invade 'national' liberties. Yet Robertson does not emphasise this aspect of the Queen's attitude, nor that the agreement of certain of the lords to 'procure' the Crown Matrimonial for Darnley and to extend the traditional prerogatives pertaining to this, seems to be at least an invasion of custom, and at best a manipulation of Parliament for rather selfish ends.

The emphasis which Robertson places on Darnley's ex-

2. Ibid., p. 123. Here Robertson mentions that the Scottish Parliamentary deputies had the authority to give the title King of Scotland to the dauphin, but that this was only 'honorary' and carried no 'solid privileges and power'.
3. Ibid., pp. 123, and 123 note q (see Buchanan, History, III, pp. 171-172 in relation to Robertson's discussion here) and Scotland, p. 269.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid., pp. 273-274.
6. Ibid., p. 124, note q (from p. 123).
7. The confederate lords who made this arrangement with Darnley - Morton, Ruthven, Lindsay, and Maitland - presumably had no intention of actually fulfilling their part of the bargain, yet the arrangement itself does suggest a willingness on their part to use this institution in a manner hardly conducive to the national interest. It also reinforces a point which Robertson does not care to make here, namely that the aristocracy obviously felt the Parliament to be a part of its rights and privileges and not an independent body representing the needs of a greater part of the population.
tremely unpleasant nature suggests that he has a certain sympathy for the Queen in her predicament, and this sympathy appears to be reflected in many of his statements concerning her response to Darnley's behaviour:

'She had placed her love on a very unworthy object, who requited it with ingratitude, and treated her with neglect, with insolence, and with brutality.'

Yet, although Robertson may in fact have genuinely felt such sentiments, his commiseration with her lot is not profound and fundamentally serves to establish a basis for suggesting the true nature of her relationship with the man who was to become her third husband, Bothwell; thus, after summarising the Queen's reaction to her discovery of Darnley's character, he adds:

'In this situation, the attention and complaisance of a man who had vindicated her authority and protected her person, who had entered into all her views, who soothed all her passions, who watched and improved every opportunity of insinuating his design and recommending his passion, could hardly fail of making an impression on a heart of such a frame as Mary's.'

Darnley's fall, therefore, appears to be concurrent with, though not the result of, the rise of Bothwell, who is perhaps the more important of the two as far as Robertson's examination is concerned. Yet, although he is careful to show how much Darnley's actions were sufficient reason in themselves to alienate the Queen, his statements concerning

2. Ibid., p. 286. The reference to brutality probably is to the circumstances surrounding the murder of Riccio: 'Though Mary was now in the sixth month of her pregnancy, and though Rizio might have been seized elsewhere without any difficulty, the king pitched upon this place, that he might enjoy the malicious pleasure of reproaching Rizio with his crimes before the queen's face' (ibid., p. 273).
3. Ibid., p. 286.
the influence which Bothwell had over her are sufficiently confused to also suggest that Bothwell had long had a place in her affections. This 'fact' by no means makes his consideration of Darnley's character superfluous, but it may be one means - often expressed unphilosophically - by which Robertson implies both the Queen's tendency towards depending upon self-serving favourites, and, more importantly, the degree of credibility which we can attribute to those who charge her with participation in Darnley's murder.

In his consideration of the events of 1566 after the murder of Riccio, Robertson states that 'about this time a new favourite grew into great credit with the queen, and soon gained an ascendant over her heart...'¹. Coming as it does immediately after a detailed delineation of Darnley's faults, this remark does suggest that Bothwell replaced the king in Queen Mary's favour; and the remainder of the statement - that this ascendant 'encouraged his enterprising genius to form designs that proved fatal to himself, and the occasion of all Mary's subsequent misfortunes'² - indicates that it is only when Bothwell observes Darnley's fall from grace that he begins to think of murdering him and marrying the Queen. To some degree, especially in conjunction with the remark quoted above³, this passage links the fortunes, and actions, of Mary and Bothwell - which may have been Robertson's intention. Certainly it is to be ob-

². Ibid.
³. See above, p. 457.
served in the Dissertation that he finds it difficult to consider the guilt or innocence of one without reference to that of the other. Yet we may also see this statement as a contradiction of many other implications concerning the relationship between the two which Robertson has made, and these, along with an examination of his ideas on other controversial points, suggest that his seemingly philosophical or detached work is, in reality, heavily biased.

In the first place, Robertson has earlier indicated — indeed, does so also in this same summary of Bothwell's character and ambitions — that he had long been an assiduous supporter of the crown. He had faithfully served the Queen Regent, and had not only been part of Queen Mary's retinue in France but one of her most dependable servants since her return to Scotland — some six years prior to the death of Riccio: 'from that period, every step of his conduct towards Mary was remarkably dutiful; and, amidst all the shiftings of faction, we scarcely ever find him holding any course which could be offensive to her.' Robertson has further shown that the Queen began to depend on Bothwell's support of her long before her marriage to Darnley — though he does not suggest there was any illicit relationship detrimental to Darnley's conjugal and other interests because of this — and has indicated that the Queen's attitude to Bothwell obviously differs from that to the disinterested

2. See above, Chapter VIII, and below, Appendix A, pp. 515-517.
4. Ibid., pp. 163, 282.
5. Ibid., p. 283.
Moray. No sentence of outlawry is passed upon Bothwell for his failure to appear at the trial arranged by Moray in 1565\(^1\), though Moray and his supporters were shown no such leniency in a similar situation: 'upon his (Moray's) non-appearance, the rigour of justice took place, and he was declared an outlaw'\(^2\); as soon as this sentence was passed Bothwell was permitted to return to the country\(^3\).

These facts - or rather, the particular juxtaposition of them by Robertson - suggests not only that someone who is opposed to Moray must differ in character from him, but also that Bothwell had clearly gained the Queen's favour before 1566. In fact, this latter point is one which was intentionally established by Robertson - whatever the conclusion he may expect his readers to draw from it - for he omits certain salient details concerning the Queen's 'preference' for Bothwell and her efforts to limit Moray's influence. Thus, he not only says that 'when Murray's proceedings with regard to her marriage gave umbrage to the queen, she recalled Bothwell from that banishment into which she had been obliged with reluctance to drive him'\(^4\), but he also fails to point out that Moray had been involved in the events which had led to Bothwell's earlier departure from Scotland. In fact, Moray was not so much concerned, in these situations, with an impartial justice, but rather with a concern for his own safety and advancement.

Furthermore, Robertson's emphasis on 'Murray's proceedings with regard to (the Queen's) marriage' and on the 'um-

\(^{1}\) Scotland, Works, I, pp. 250-251.
\(^{2}\) Ibid., p. 257.
\(^{3}\) Ibid., pp. 257-258.
\(^{4}\) Ibid., p. 283.
brage' which the Queen is supposed to have felt, suggest a rather petulant response by her to Moray's justifiable efforts to prevent her marriage to Darnley, and ignores the possibility that the Queen recalled Bothwell in order to assist her during the chaotic period of the Chaseabout Raid. Finally, it is worth pointing out that, although Robertson says that Bothwell was the 'chief instrument of recovering (the Queen's) liberty' after the murder of Riccio¹, and that he 'served her, on that occasion, with so much fidelity and success, as made the deepest impression on her mind, and greatly increased the confidence which she had hitherto placed in him'², he put the matter in rather another light somewhat earlier in Scotland. In this previous consideration he had indicated - though without naming any sources - that Bothwell and the other lords who had been at Holyrood at the time of the murder, 'were alarmed at the uproar, and filled with the utmost terror on their own account'³, and, further, that Bothwell had fled with the Queen and Darnley. The only instance of service which he performed at the time was to use his followers, after the escape, in order to allow the Queen 'to set the power of the conspirators at defiance'⁴. It was in fact Darnley who was the means by which the Queen 'recovered' her 'liberty'⁵.

These discrepancies suggest, at best, an uncritical usage by Robertson of his sources, which can hardly be seen as part of the theoretical ideal. Certainly it is evident

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2. Ibid.
3. Ibid., p. 274.
4. Ibid., p. 275.
5. Ibid.
that he seems unsure of the interpretation which he wishes to put forward as to the role which Bothwell had played in Scottish history from the end of the 1550's, in that, while he clearly believes him to have been extremely ambitious, and thus capable of any action, including the murder of Darnley, he seems uncertain as to when this ambition had become directed towards the specific end of obtaining the crown. If, as he implies, this may not have been until after Riccio's death, then we are justified in assuming that whatever aims Bothwell may have had prior to this event, these must have been vague, and that any implications which Robertson wished to make concerning Bothwell's service to the Queen are perhaps unjustified.

These factors, however, do not seem to enter into Robertson's study of Bothwell's actions, even though some of his remarks (whatever other inferences we may draw from them)

1. Scotland, Works, I, p. 282: 'Even in that turbulent age, when so many vast projects were laid open to an aspiring mind, and invited it to action, no man's ambition was more daring than Bothwell's, or had recourse to bolder or more singular expedients for obtaining power'. See also Ibid., note h, which was not in the first edition, and may have been added to give some weight to these ideas of Robertson, since they do not seem to be supported by his own statements; even here, though, it is worth noting that the reference which he quotes suggests no more than that Bothwell was intent on establishing himself despite the opposition of the confederates, which opposition - a conflict of interest - Robertson himself refers to (Ibid., p. 283).

2. Dissertation, pp. 82-83.

3. Scotland, Works, I, p. 283 (this statement refers to the period just after Riccio's death): 'By complaisance and assiduity he confirmed and fortified these dispositions of the queen in his favour, and insensibly paved the way towards that vast project, which his immoderate ambition had perhaps already conceived...' (my italics). See also Ibid., p. 299.
suggest that Bothwell was lacking in political sagacity.
His support of the Queen Regent, for instance, is believed by Robertson to have been complete: 'he, though an avowed protestant, adhered to the queen regent, and acted with vigour on her side.' While this support is clearly related to a disinterest in popular freedoms, to be contrasted with the attitude of the confederate lords, its 'vigour' appears to be limited by what Robertson himself pointed out, that although Bothwell 'openly favoured' the cause of the Regent, he did not bring his followers into the field as active support, and merely 'resided at his own house'. Such an attitude indicates a strong desire to alienate both major parties - or so it would seem. Yet, even assuming that Bothwell faithfully served both the Regent and Queen Mary, such unusual constancy of purpose in itself indicates no more than loyalty to the crown, however misguided, and certainly reveals a complete absence of ambition given the increasing power of the confederate party. This view is surely supported by Robertson's suggestion that it was not until 1566 - and perhaps not even then - that Bothwell began to direct his thoughts towards becoming king. Thus, the only conclusion which we can make from these remarks is that the Queen was inclined to favour Bothwell - prior to 1566

2. *Ibid.* Bothwell would thus appear to be in opposition to almost the entire nobility, and to its 'disinterested' concern for general rights: 'almost every person of distinction in the kingdom, whether papist or protestant, had joined the congregation in opposing the dangerous encroachments of the French upon the liberties of the nation'. This would suggest either excessive confidence or a complete ignorance of political reality.
and Riccio's death - and perhaps was excessively dependent on him. Bothwell himself appears to have little interest in the Queen, at least as a means of gaining any power beyond certain offices and honours, and shows little inclination to cultivate any.

It is only after Riccio's death that certain of the Queen's actions - as presented by Robertson - suggest that her dependence on Bothwell turns into infatuation, and that Bothwell's ambition becomes more obvious. Certainly it is true that Robertson does make some effort to discredit earlier, unphilosophical, views - especially those of Knox and Buchanan - which specifically mention instances of the Queen's infatuation and Bothwell's 'love'\(^1\) prior to this time. His own uncertainty as to the date of Bothwell's deliberately forming his 'vast project'\(^2\) leads him to be critical of those who assume it without proper evidence\(^3\):

'Together with this ascendant over her councils, Bothwell, if we may believe the contemporary historians, acquired no less sway over her heart. But at what precise time this ambitious lord first allowed the sentiments of a lover to occupy the place of that duty and respect which a subject

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2. Scotland, Works, I, p. 283, and see also ibid., p. 299.
3. See Buchanan, History, III, pp. 189-190, and his Detection, pp. 6-9. Robertson also gives little credence to Buchanan's statement that the Queen had adulterous relations with Riccio (see History,III, p. 181) both because Randolph ('a man abundantly ready to mention and to aggravate Mary's faults') makes no such suggestion, and because the Queen appeared happy with Darnley and had a child by him: 'it appears almost impossible that the queen, unless we suppose her to have been a woman utterly abandoned, could carry on any criminal intrigue with Rizio' (Scotland, Works, I, p. 272, note n).
'owes his sovereign; or when Mary, instead of gratitude for his faithful services, felt a passion of another nature rising in her bosom, is no easy matter to determine. Such delicate transitions of passion can be discerned only by those who are admitted near the persons of the parties, and who can view the secret workings of the heart with calm and acute observation. Neither Knox nor Buchanan enjoyed these advantages. Their humble station allowed them only a distant access to the queen and her favourite. And the ardour of their zeal, as well as the violence of their prejudices, rendered their opinions rash, precipitate, and inaccurate. It is by the effects of this reciprocal passion, rather than by their accounts of it, that subsequent historians can judge of its reality.'

However much his approach here may seem to conform to the theoretical philosophy, we should point out that the consideration which Robertson makes of the more explicit relationship between the Queen and Bothwell is not more philosophical than that of the sixteenth-century writers; and, indeed, that in the main example which he gives, his source would appear to be Buchanan, whose 'zeal' and 'prejudice' are not here mentioned. This example - the 'Jedburgh incident' - is used by Robertson not only to indicate Bothwell's crass desire to put himself in the limelight but also to imply that shortly after Riccio's death the Queen had become devoted to the ambitious lord to the extent of interrupting the court session being held at Jedburgh in order to ascertain that Bothwell, injured in a

1. Scotland, Works, I, pp. 285-286. The last sentence of the statement, however, is not only dependent on a circuitous argument, but beside the point: the issue is not so much the existence of a 'reciprocal' passion as the time of its development.

2. Ibid., p. 288. Though Robertson says here that 'the queen's favour' had enabled Bothwell to hold the tripartite wardenship of the marches alone, the fact is rather that Bothwell was the Lieutenant-General in charge of these wardens (Register of the Privy Council of Scotland, I - Edinburgh, 1877 - p. 383) and the Queen made no special arrangement in his case.
skirmish, was in no danger. 'Mary', he wrote, 'instantly flew thither(to Hermitage Castle), with an impatience which has been considered as marking the anxiety of a lover, but little suited the dignity of a queen'. This would appear dependent on Buchanan's statement, that the Queen 'flew' to Melrose and thence to Jedburgh, despite bad conditions and the danger of robbers, not to mention the inclement season. Certainly, Robertson appears to be aware of some errors in Buchanan's work: he leaves out the reference to Melrose since he was aware that the Queen was already there, in Jedburgh, and instead of saying that this journey took place in 'the depth of winter', as Buchanan did - intending, presumably to reinforce the idea that Mary's passion knew no bounds - he substitutes the phrase, 'the season of the year was far advanced'. This, however, is not much better than Buchanan's effort, even though we might accept that he means autumn was 'far advanced'. He does not query the assertion that the middle of October was 'the depth of winter', nor does he point out that, far from rushing instantly to Hermitage, the Queen apparently waited for a week before visiting Bothwell.

Robertson's evaluation of this incident appears to be detached, in that he does not himself explicitly state that the Queen was Bothwell's mistress, only that it would seem this would be the case. Yet, not only does he state in the

2. Buchanan, History, III, pp. 189-190. See also his Detectioun, pp. 9-10.
following passage that Mary suffered 'anguish of mind' on Bothwell's account, but suggests that only romantic interest would have prompted her to make such a difficult journey:

'As there is no further evidence with respect to the motives of this extraordinary journey, the reader must judge what degree of credit is due to Knox and Buchanan, who ascribe it to the queen's love of Bothwell.'

This statement not only suggests that the evidence which we have does reveal 'love' to have been the cause, and ignores the possibility that the Queen wished to ascertain the health of Bothwell as one of her most constant and trustworthy supporters; but, by failing to examine the nature of the 'evidence' put forward by Buchanan and Knox, gives credence to their biased interpretation.

It is really only in his study of the period immediately following Darnley's death that Robertson sets out material that is somewhat more convincing, at least insofar as it suggests a prior attachment of the Queen to Bothwell: her reluctance to have him tried for murder, the further privileges and honours which she bestowed upon him, the haste of the trial itself, and, particularly, her continued attachment to Bothwell despite his 'guilt' and, later, his depa-
ture from the country. Yet it should be pointed out that even much of this 'evidence' is far from being objective; to mention but a few instances, Robertson does not refer to the section in Keith's _Church and State_ where the whole of Lennox's correspondence was published, and Mary's reasons for postponing the trial were mentioned; although he says that Lennox had asked for the trial to be held earlier, he also states that 'it was of great importance to hurry over the trial, while nothing more than general suspicions and uncertain surmises could be produced', and that 'no person appeared as an accuser, not a single witness was examined, nor any evidence produced against (Bothwell)'). Yet, if Lennox had wished the trial to be earlier it seems misleading for Robertson to suggest that it was brought on so soon solely for nefarious reasons, nor can we suppose that if Lennox himself had been in possession of any evidence in the February that this would have become merely a 'general suspicion' or 'uncertain surmise' by April. Though Robertson states that Lennox was afraid to come to the hearing because he lacked the support of his vassals - a point which he emphasises by indicating the large number of men who escor-

4. Ibid., p. 308.
5. Ibid., p. 311.
6. Ibid., p. 309. Robertson also mentions that Lennox had many enemies and few friends in Scotland (ibid.), a factor which contributed to his fear of attending the trial of Bothwell; but, again, it is unlikely that this situation would have been changed by the postponing of the trial, and it was naturally one long evident to Lennox himself.
Bothwell— we cannot imagine either that Lennox expected Bothwell's supporters not to accompany him at any later date, or that he himself would have been able to 'recover his ascendant' over his own vassals in even a few months when their independence had been established during his several years' absence. The existence of such problems is no indication of the Queen's love for Bothwell.

There is, further, no mention by Robertson that the decision of the peers concerning Bothwell's participation in the murder of Darnley was rather one of 'not proven' than the 'not guilty' which he himself mentions, nor does he openly state that his conclusions concerning the procedure of the trial were based not on the original records—which were missing— but on Buchanan's Detectioun, which was hardly an unbiased source. Finally, though Robertson refers to a letter written by Throkmorton to support his belief in the Queen's continuing 'love' for Bothwell, he does not mention in Scotland itself the reason which was given by Throkmorton for the Queen's obstinacy: that she pregnant by Bothwell and did not wish the child to be illegitimate. This attitude itself does not imply 'love', at least at that time.

1. Scotland, Works, I, p. 310. See ibid., p. 250, where Robertson points out that the presence of large numbers of Moray's supporters at the intended place of Bothwell's trial in 1565 inhibited him from appearing. He does not here criticise Moray on this account.
2. Ibid., p. 311.
4. Robertson also refers in the Dissertation (p. 99) to Herries's saying in the December 15, 1567 Parliament, that the Queen was attached to Bothwell; this, however, refers only to the period of her first imprisonment, not to her attitude in December, several months later, and, assuming Herries's statement to be correct, the Queen's stand was presumably based on the same factor mentioned by Throkmorton.
In the Dissertation itself, Robertson considers that much of the evidence concerning the participation or indirect involvement of the Queen in Darnley's murder must be considered circumstantial, though he does not believe that such evidence is necessarily unsatisfactory:

'Some crimes...are of such a nature, that they hardly admit of a positive or direct proof. Deeds of darkness can seldom be brought perfectly to light. Where persons are accused, not of being principals, but only of being accesaries (sic) in the commission of a crime; not of having perpetrated it themselves, but only of giving consent to the commission of it by others; the proof becomes still more difficult; and unless when some accomplice betrays the secret, a proof by circumstances or presumptive evidence is all that can be attained. Even in judicial trials, such evidence is sometimes held to be sufficient for condemning criminals. The degree of conviction which such evidence carries along with it, is often not inferior to that which arises from positive testimony; and a concurring series of circumstances satisfies the understanding no less than the express declaration of witnesses.'

Much of this type of evidence, however, as presented by Robertson, seems to be rather unsatisfactory - the 'strong suspicion' of 'some of her subjects', the 'sentiments of foreigners'\(^2\), and, particularly, his remark that 'many of her nobles accused her of that crime, and a great part of the nation, by supporting them, seems to have allowed the accusation to be well founded'\(^3\). Whatever we may think of the suspicions and sentiments of Scots and foreigners, we cannot assume these persons to have necessarily been unbiased, although Robertson implicitly suggests they were. Nor, furthermore, do the accusations of many of the nobles carry any weight in themselves in that the lords in ques-

2. Ibid., p. 90, and see also pp. 92-94.
3. Ibid., p. 90.
tion had long been opposed to the Queen for religious and political reasons, and their supporters may have acted for these same reasons also\textsuperscript{1}.

Furthermore, it must be stressed that Robertson himself does not accept this sort of evidence in other circumstances, particularly when these concern individuals whom he does not believe to have been involved in Darnley's murder. He refuses to grant any credit to Lesly's similar charge against Moray, because 'the assertion of a man so heated with faction as Lesley, unless it were supported by proper evidence, is of little weight'\textsuperscript{2}. This statement might be acceptable were it not for the fact that many of those who charged the Queen produced no evidence of their 'belief', and the evidence of the confederate lords, even as discussed by Robertson, is far from satisfactory.

Robertson also states that the belief of Huntly and Argyll in Moray's and Maitland's involvement in the murder 'is nothing more than the private opinion or personal affirmation of these two noblemen'\textsuperscript{3}, who were not only 'the leaders of that party opposite to Murray' and thus 'animated with all the rage of faction', but also Moray's 'personal enemies'\textsuperscript{4}. While it is true that some of the reasons for Robertson's refusal to give credence to this particular charge seem quite reasonable - 'because Murray proposed to obtain for the queen a divorce from her husband with her own consent, it does not follow that therefore he committed

\textsuperscript{1} Scotland, Works, I, pp. 329-330.
\textsuperscript{2} Dissertation, p. 85.
\textsuperscript{3} Ibid., p. 86.
\textsuperscript{4} Ibid.
the murder without her knowledge\(^1\) — we must again point out that some of the 'evidence' which he accepts against the Queen is also 'private opinion' or 'personal affirmation', and that the confederate lords must certainly be considered as her 'personal enemies'. In addition, we can see that Robertson finds no reason not to accept Lesly's assertions — even if they have no more weight than those against Moray — when these are directed against an individual such as Bothwell\(^2\), and accepts also the fact that they are reinforced by 'all the contemporary historians'.\(^3\) Truth, it would seem, is simply a constant reiteration of personal beliefs.

These accusations against both Queen Mary and Bothwell, which themselves form a part of the circumstantial evidence as well as giving strength to other material of the same nature, are supplemented by Robertson's restatement of those 'facts' which he gave in Scotland, to which a few more details are added\(^4\). This double employment of 'proofs' which have been shown to be unsatisfactory, must necessarily reinforce the impression which the reader has gained of Queen Mary; and even though the Dissertation was intended as a setting out of the evidence on which attitudes taken in Scotland were based, much of the material of the History itself is used as evidence in the Dissertation.\(^5\) Yet, this is not

\[\begin{align*}
1. & \text{Dissertation, p. 86.} \\
2. & \text{Ibid., p. 84.} \\
3. & \text{Ibid.} \\
4. & \text{Ibid., pp. 91-99.} \\
5. & \text{See, for instance, ibid., p. 92.}
\end{align*}\]
to deny that this circumstantial evidence reveals at least that the Queen was either attached to, or under the influence of, Bothwell⁠¹, and certainly Bothwell himself appears to have acted in a manner which indicates not only ambition² but probable involvement in Barnley's death³. As far as the Queen is concerned, however, such evidence suggests rashness, impetuosity, and a lack of discernment; it does not justifiably lead one to conclude that she was even indirectly involved in her husband's murder, and Robertson appears to acknowledge this by one of the conclusions which he suggests at the end of the dissertation⁴:

'that Bothwell, prompted by his ambition or love, encouraged by the queen's known aversion to her husband, and presuming on her attachment to himself, struck the blow without having concerted with her the manner or circumstances of perpetrating that crime.... By this verdict, Mary is not pronounced guilty of having contrived the murder of her husband, or even of having previously given her consent to his death; but she is not acquitted of having discovered her approbation of the deed, by her behaviour towards him who was the author of it.'

Although Robertson puts forward this suggestion or interpretation of all the evidence which he presents in the Dissertation, it is nonetheless evident that he himself does

2. Although Robertson appeared to concede that Bothwell had loved the Queen (Scotland, Works, I, pp. 285-286) he does not seem to have been satisfied with the evidence which suggested this and generally refers only to Bothwell's love of ambition, of power: see the above quotation, and also Scotland, Works, I, p. 299, and Dissertation, p. 82.
3. This conclusion rests not so much on the material put forward by Robertson concerning Bothwell's actions before Barnley's murder (Dissertation, pp. 81-84) but rather on Bothwell's actions afterwards: Scotland, Works, I, pp. 315-321.
4. This conclusion is suggested by Robertson after his consideration not only of the circumstantial but also the positive evidence: see the following pages.
not find it very plausible. This is to be seen early in his summary of the nature of the breach between the Queen and her husband, where he emphasises that their differences seemed irreconcilable, and concluded:

'Had Henry died a natural death at this juncture, it must have been considered as a very fortunate event to the queen, and as a seasonable deliverance from a husband who had become altogether odious to her. Now, as Henry was murdered a few weeks afterwards, and as nothing had happened to render the queen's aversion to him less violent, the opinion of those who consider Mary as the author of an event which was manifestly so agreeable to her, will appear perhaps to some of our readers to be neither unnatural nor over refined.'

Furthermore, Robertson seems no less firm in his conviction of the Queen's being 'art and part' of the murder when he puts forward as 'positive' evidence - that which is other than circumstantial - statements and implications which in fact not only reveal at most that the Queen was infatuated with Bothwell, but which seem to differ little from the circumstantial evidence which formed the first part of the Dissertation.

To some extent, the dubious value of this material is recognised by Robertson himself, although this does not prevent him from at least mentioning it. This is very much the case with 'the depositions of some persons who were employed in committing the murder'. In fact, Robertson only refers to one of these at any length - that of Bothwell's servant, 'French Paris' - and, though believing it to be genuine,

2. Ibid., p. 91.
3. Ibid., p. 100.
4. Ibid. The depositions are 'remarkable for a simplicity and naivete which it is almost impossible to imitate; they abound with a number of minute facts and particularities, which the most dexterous forger could not have easily assembled and connected together with any appearance of probability'.
dismisses it because 'some of the most material facts' there mentioned 'rest upon his (Paris's) single testimony'. But there is not a single instance given of these 'material facts' by Robertson, although he had provided ample illustrations of the circumstantial evidence; and, furthermore, he fails to state why this vital evidence is so conclusive. At the same time, therefore, he denies the reader a chance to ascertain the value of this testimony while using it to show that there is in fact 'positive' proof of the Queen's involvement in the murder.

In this instance, as in many others, Robertson, while appearing intent to examine all evidence carefully and to present the most philosophical assessment of it, is in reality glossing over many faults and failing to point out many weaknesses. It was clear from the confessions of some of those who were executed for complicity in the murder that they believed the Queen was not guilty, and they had said so quite explicitly; and, further, of Paris's two depositions, only one includes a charge against the Queen. In fact, if Paris had been such a vital witness, as anti-Marian writers claimed, it is difficult to see why he was not produced before the English commission, and why it was, too, that the only statements he made were shortly before his execution which took place some two years after Darnley's death.

2. See, for instance, Goodall, Examination, II, p. 359.
3. For Robertson's qualifying remarks as to the two depositions of Paris - though these remarks are not particularly searching - see Dissertation, p. 100. See also his statements on similar issues, where he appears more discriminating: Scotland, Works, I, pp. 482, 514, 515.
However unsatisfactory this instance of positive proof is, Robertson's discussion of the Casket Letters is even more so. Though it is not the intention here to consider all the points which Robertson made concerning these, and though his remarks on certain peripheral points seem to be quite solid, it is nonetheless of some value to discuss some of the remarks which he makes as to the authenticity of these letters. It is especially necessary — considering the emphasis which Robertson placed on these as being positive proof — to point out that his main interest appears to be not so much their content, but whether they were in fact written by the Queen; and to point out also that some of the 'facts' which he cites as 'external' evidence are as dubious as those which he felt constituted circumstantial proof. This is especially the case in his statement that 'Murray, and the nobles who adhered to him, affirm upon their word and honour, that the letters were written with the queen's own hand, with which they were well acquainted.' However well acquainted they were with Mary's handwriting, this familiarity in itself is not a reasonable basis for assuming that they were being truthful — they were, after all, very much opposed to the Queen and had every reason to act against her. Robertson also appears to be uncritical of the opinion

1. Robertson seems to accept the confederate lords's statements as to the circumstances by which the Casket Letters came into their hands (Scotland, Works, I, pp. 332-333) but he does not accept a similar instance though it is no more improbable: Ibid., p. 508.
expressed by certain of the English commissioners, that the letters were genuine - that is, written by the Queen - which opinion was based on the 'fact' that the letters 'discourse of some things, which were unknown to any other than to herself and Bothwell'. Such an assessment surely leaves unanswered the pertinent question, on whom did the commissioners depend for information concerning the validity of these facts? - facts which, apparently, only the Queen and Bothwell were aware of in the first place.

That Robertson seems primarily concerned with the authenticity of these letters is especially evident in some extraordinary statements which he makes concerning the conclusions which we may draw from them. Thus, although he has indicated that they reveal positive proof of the Queen's being an accessory to the murder, he believes the 'internal' evidence shows no such thing; and, furthermore, that this absence of clear and decisive proof is a factor which helps establish their authenticity:

'Whenever a paper is forged with a particular intention, the eagerness of the forger to establish the point in view, his solicitude to cut off all doubts and cavils, and to avoid any appearance of uncertainty, seldom fail of prompting him to use expressions the most explicit and full to his purpose.... No maxims (sic) seems to be more certain than this, that a forger is often apt to prove too much, but seldom falls into the error of proving too little. The point which the queen's enemies had to establish was, "that as the earl of Bothwell was the chief executor of the horrible and unworthy murder perpetrated, & c. so was she of the fore-knowledge, council, devise, persuader, and commander of the said murder to be done."... But of this there are only imperfect hints, obscure intimations, and dark expressions in the letters, which, however

2. Ibid.
'convincing evidence they might furnish if found in real letters, bear no resemblance to that glare and superfluity of evidence which forgeries commonly contain.'

To summarise Robertson's argument here, he seems to be saying that the letters are genuine, that is, they were written by the Queen; that they are genuine because they are vague and imprecise concerning her role in Darnley's death - 'however convincing evidence they might furnish if found in real letters' - and that the Queen was an accessory to the murder because the letters do not definitely state that she was. This claim of authenticity is to some degree supported by Robertson's consideration of the letters in the pages following this statement, although Whitaker and many others challenged Robertson on these points. For instance, he does not appear to give much credence to the belief that the circumstantial material which he sees as demonstrating the validity of the letters could have been written down and used by forgers to create convincing details; this is so even though he points out that Lennox's servant was well aware of all these 'facts': 'the king repeated to him every night whatever had passed through the day between her majesty and him; and ... the account given of these conversations in the first letter is nearly the same with what the king communicated to him.'

1. Dissertation, pp. 110-111. See also Robertson's remarks concerning forgery, ibid., p. 100.
2. Ibid., pp. 111-125.
3. Ibid., p. 120, and see also p. 100.
5. Dissertation, p. 112 (incorrectly printed p. 120). However, see ibid., p. 113: 'If we shall still think it probable to suppose that so many real circumstances were artfully introduced into the letters by the forgers, in order to give an air of authenticity to their production ...'.

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Dissertation, pp. 110-111. See also Robertson's remarks concerning forgery, ibid., p. 100.
2. Ibid., pp. 111-125.
3. Ibid., p. 120, and see also p. 100.
5. Dissertation, p. 112 (incorrectly printed p. 120). However, see ibid., p. 113: 'If we shall still think it probable to suppose that so many real circumstances were artfully introduced into the letters by the forgers, in order to give an air of authenticity to their production ...'.
However, the question of the Queen's writing these letters is not in itself of major importance here. Assuming that she did, we should consider precisely what they - as illustrated by Robertson - reveal her to have thought or done, and what value we can attach to Robertson's other evidence concerning her guilt which is apparently based on these documents. In the first place, Robertson, assuming authenticity, mentions the 'fondest expressions of her love to Bothwell', and mentions also that the letters written prior to the death of Darnley 'excite something more than a suspicion that their familiarity had been extremely criminal'. Secondly, and more importantly, in view of Robertson's rather non-committal attitude here, he mentions that we can see in the early letters 'some dark expressions' which the Queen's 'enemies employed to prove that she was no stranger to the schemes which were formed against her husband's life'. The 'imperfect hints' and 'obscure intimations' which had hitherto seemed so conclusive, do suggest a close relationship between the Queen and Bothwell; but these hints, however, are so 'dark' as to suggest very little more, and Robertson's simply listing a few instances without going into any details concerning them and their possible relationship to subsequent events, can hardly support his claim that they are proof positive.

Since the evidence which Robertson has given seems primarily circumstantial - however much this may be a part of

2. Ibid., p. 127.
his plan to present the relevant material with brevity\(^1\) - the question arises as to the value which we can place on other testimony which says that the letters indicate the Queen's complicity. If, as Robertson believed, the letters which he worked from and on which he based his conclusions, were the same as those found by the confederates and seen by Norfolk and Cecil among others\(^2\), how do we explain the certainty, the positive belief expressed by some of these, not so much that the letters were written by the Queen but that they obviously showed her to have taken some part in her husband's murder. The bias of the confederates, of the Scottish and English privy councils and parliaments, is understandable, and they may well have taken hints and intimations as the most solid proof. Yet Robertson explicitly wrote that the letters 'seem to have made such an impression on the duke of Norfolk' that he wrote of the 'matter' being 'as detestable and manifest... as, for ought we can perceive, it seemeth here to us'\(^3\). If Norfolk was referring to the Queen's guilt concerning Darnley's death, he seems to have been easily swayed, or else, the letters which he saw differ from those copies used by Robertson. Much the same may be said of the letter written by Cecil\(^4\), indeed, of all the evidence which Robertson gives; and this, particularly in conjunction with his own assessment of the nature of the evidence produced by the Casket Letters, must lead us to question both his detachment and his technique.

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2. Ibid., pp. 101-106.
3. Ibid., pp. 101-102.
4. Ibid., p. 103.
It is true that Robertson's emphasis on the circumstantial evidence, and on the incorporation into Scotland of his own sentiments, was a welcome break with the tradition which had mainly considered the evidence of the Casket Letters and had done so in no particularly philosophical fashion. Yet we must also conclude, from the above examination, not only that Robertson found the letters to be valuable as positive proof because of his unphilosophical bias and willingness to be convinced, but that the standards even of the circumstantial evidence are by no means always high. His capacity for detachment and for detailed analysis of pertinent material seems limited in this case, which in effect means that a great part of Scotland demonstrates no advance in scholarship over the unphilosophical works. As on occasion Robertson can show a real detachment from—perhaps because of a lack of interest in—controversial issues, it is reasonable to assume that on the central issue of the deposition of Queen Mary and the constitutional problems pertinent to this, his standards were made subservient to ideological considerations.

Certainly, this is not to deny that the theoretical approach itself was based on a belief in the value of a certain form of government, nor that much of Scotland can be seen to reflect those approaches and attitudes which are an integral part of the theoretical philosophy. But, as

1. This is especially evident in the second of the two conclusions which he makes from all the evidence: see Dissertation, p. 131.
2. See Robertson's consideration of the Babington Plot—an issue peripheral to the question of Queen Mary's character and actions as ruler of Scotland: Scotland, Works, I, pp. 505-517.
3. See above, Chapter VIII.
the presentation of the confederate lords as primarily concerned for the welfare of a 'nation', for the 'liberties' of the 'Scots', is superfluous to, and detracts from, the theoretical correlation of property and power, so also do the lack of precision, the misrepresentation of facts, the vague innuendo, found in Scotland and in the Dissertation reveal a bias which undermines the real achievements of the theoretical forms of investigation and analysis. Above all, the presence of these elements in Robertson's work reveals the continuation of those same approaches which he specifically condemned and planned to discredit, and shows that the avowedly philosophical contained some very unphilosophical features.
What, then, are we to make of Robertson? Perhaps we can begin by stating again that he is not to be seen as a particularly original thinker. As far as it is possible to determine, the basic ideas of theoretical history - stages/variations, the capacity of man to progress, the heterogeneity of ends - were developed primarily by Smith, or, at the very least, were suggested by him. Certainly, the circumstantial evidence concerning this is rather sketchy, and depends mainly on conjecture as to the content of the 1748 lectures, which conjecture is based on Smith's 1755 statement. It does appear from this statement, however, that Smith clearly felt it necessary to establish a claim to certain ideas which he felt other persons were planning to use, and which he himself did not develop until he wrote Moral Sentiments and Wealth of Nations. There is no evidence that this claim to 'ownership' or to originality was seriously challenged.

It is difficult also to determine with any precision who Smith had in mind as planning to make use of 'his' ideas. It has been suggested that he was referring specifically to Robertson, and he apparently believed that the View of Charles V had been prompted by his theories. This may well be so,

and it may also be true that Smith's claim was prompted by Robertson's 1755 sermon, Situation. However, we should not overlook the fact that Robertson was already writing Scotland by 1755, and Smith may have been instigated to act by what he had heard about this work. Though there are some suggestions of the relationship between situation and manners in the sermon, this relationship is much more obvious in Scotland itself—even if muted by the presence of other influences.

More direct evidence as to Smith's originality and to the likelihood of Robertson's borrowing from him, is to be found in Robertson's own work, especially when we compare it with the theoretical philosophy, with the very detailed study of man's nature, the operation of the moral sentiments in particular, that is to be found in Smith. In the first place, there is an almost complete absence from Robertson's works of any profound theory of human nature. He does, indeed, make certain remarks concerning the 'moral sentiments' of men, and these statements do not appear totally incongruous in their context. Yet it is also noticeable that they are isolated, that they are more illustrations of some point which Robertson wishes to make, or somewhat random comments

1. Meek, op.cit., pp. 21-22; Meek also mentions Kames's use of these concepts and suggests that Smith may have been referring to him (ibid.). We should not overlook the fact that there are many Indications of the basic theoretical ideas in Hume's Treatise which was published long before Smith's lectures, and also in the historical essays published in the early 1750's. The first may have influenced Smith, the latter may owe something to him; but in any event, Smith appears to have been always on good terms with Hume.

3. See above, Chapters II-IV.
on the way men act and respond. In other words, they reveal not only that Robertson has no fully thought out theory as to the manner in which men act and why they do so, but that such a theory really forms no fundamental part of his work. Such abstract ideas are quite foreign to his aims, which are mainly to discuss certain periods of history, to study situations and 'problems' - albeit within a theoretical framework. Possibly he was motivated to add theoretical concepts to his planned history of Scotland by Smith's ideas - we cannot tell. But while theoretical ideas of stages, of variations in man's sentiments, of the relationship between situation and institutions, provide a scientific structure which sets limitations and boundaries to his writing, they can do no more than this. In such works, there is no room for, no great need of, a theory of Moral Sentiments.

However, as was pointed out above, the very fact of writing 'history' as opposed to what we might call philosophy or even historical philosophy, does not necessarily mean that one need introduce other elements, other ideas of cause, into one's work. Millar's Historical View is an excellent instance of the consistent application of theoretical ideas to the study of the history of one country, and it differs very much from Robertson's writing. The employment of the providential, the introduction of moral standards which have little relationship to the economic and social situation of various societies: such factors are opposed to the theoretical concept of general,

1. See above, p. 170.
universal, and all-explaining laws, and are explanations which Millar has no need of.

This duality of interpretation - variations and absolutes, economic limitations and rigid moral standards, providence and the natural course of things - runs throughout Robertson's work¹. On the one hand, there is an acceptance of interest and imperfection, of passions and violence and other unphilosophical expressions produced by situation; on the other, factious nobles are reproved for not having philosophical notions, techniques and standards of investigation are set up and others judged by them, only to be thrown aside by 'scientific' studies which are little more than thinly disguised party pamphlets². Past, unphilosophical works are examined mercilessly, and their implications apparently rejected, sacrificed to the demands of objectivity; legend and party apologetics are exposed to the glare of the moderate, detached, and, above all, scientific, examination not only of the past but of works about the past. Yet, party emerges again: not so much the republican or the mixed government bias of the theoretical philosophy³, the belief in the benefits to be derived from the commercial society in which a greater distribution of property in goods gave greater freedom to men - though this 'best' form of government idea is certainly one which Robertson adheres to⁴. Rather, Robertson goes much further than such preferences to attack kings - and especially those of Scotland - for their cunning, their du-

1. See especially Chapters V-IX.
2. See Chapter IX.
4. See Chapters VI and VII.
plicity, their employment of corruption - such corruption being very much a cause, rather than an effect, of social disorder\(^1\). True, he has some harsh remarks to make of the nobility and the people\(^2\), but it is the monarchy which he most dislikes, the king unchecked by office, not limited by a jealousy peculiar to the nobility, who earns his most bitter remarks. Again, this is especially the case in Scotland - the same work in which his professed aim was to show how much party prejudices had affected men of his own time, how the biased histories of other ages had distorted those issues which he himself would put into proper perspective, in true scientific fashion.

As can be seen especially from Chapter IX, this aim has hardly been fulfilled. True, Robertson has pointed out the property situation in Scotland, the dominance of the nobility, their extensive rights and the invasions of these by the monarchy; but while we may welcome his study of the division of power and the relationship between this and the spirit and institutions of the society, we must remember that many of his remarks on the crown especially are motivated by prejudice. The sources which Robertson uses, his manipulation of facts, the omission of salient material, the emphasis on the 'virtue' of the aristocracy, his approval of the martial spirit which makes them devoted to the service of the 'nation', all help him to present a scientific conclusion which supports the prejudices of a particular party.

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1. See above, Chapter VII and also below, Appendix B, pp. 527-529.
2. See above, Chapter VII.
The existence of this dual interpretation, as well as of this distorted employment of the theoretical techniques, the continuation of both these elements in all of the editions of his works, indicates that they are basic to Robertson's historical philosophy. Perhaps we might suggest, then, that the moral attitudes which he puts forward, the element of the providential, the inability to accept the conclusions of the theoretical philosophy in full, all indicate that he was primarily an historian in another tradition. That, although he employs the theoretical concepts to advantage, and does so in all of his writings, he does not permit this new interpretation to interfere with some very fundamental attitudes. This is not to deny that he is an assiduous researcher\(^1\), that, when he is dealing with events which do not hold great importance for him, he is very much the philosophical historian, refusing to accept of the providential - because such casual usage, as well as being unscientific, offends the dignity of God - interpreting the past in its own terms, emphasising the importance of the property/power ideas, making use of the concept of stages and institutional variations. But, for the other theoretical historians, the new theories of the nature of man, the stadial progress of human society, the heterogeneity of ends, the constant emphasis on moral rather than physical causes, the standards of research, the techniques which evolved from the basic premises of the theoretical philosophy - all these superseded other forms of

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interpretation, made them unable to mingle the old with the new. Perhaps Robertson's ability to take the ideas of others and make them his own\textsuperscript{1}, has permitted him to make use of this new philosophy. But it does not appear to be something which has become so much a part of himself that it leads him to surrender other ideas, and perhaps we might be expecting too much by thinking that it should have done so.

This is so for two reasons especially. In the first place, Robertson is rather rigid, not a particularly flexible person; the picking up of new ideas does not lead him to dislodge others better established, even though the two may contradict each other. He, especially, seems very insistent on the need to give no public sign of reaction to criticism\textsuperscript{2} — partly, no doubt, for the reasons mentioned below, that one should not fight the unphilosophical with their own miserable weapons, but also one might think, because he is determined to 'save face'. The reasons for this are by no means clear, but are possibly closely connected with his desire to be independent, to be the slave of no man, at the call of no-one\textsuperscript{3}.

This inflexibility is also expressed in other ways, especially in a desire to control matters, to be at the centre of things, so that his attitude seems often to be one of benevolent paternalism. He is willing, in the General Assembly, to conciliate, compromise, even give up his own ideas, but always so long as it is he who controls the discussion and makes the compromises\textsuperscript{4}. He seems desirous of

\begin{itemize}
\item[2.] See below, Appendix A, pp. 515-517.
\item[3.] See below, Appendix A, pp. 504-505.
\item[4.] Stewart, Robertson, pp. 185, 194.
\end{itemize}
seeing the American colonies develop, of their being free 'to buy and sell and trade where and with whom they please' but 'not just now'. One must regret that 'prosperous and growing states should be checked in their career', but, 'as a subject of Great Britain', Robertson declared that he 'must wish that their dependence on it should continue'.

Most importantly, in relation to his historical approach, this desire to be authoritative, this fear to be exposed to criticism, leads him to be hesitant about presenting his work if he feels it cannot be definitive. This attitude is seen very clearly in his refusal to publish what he had written of the history of the American colonies with the rest of America: 'it is lucky that my American History was not finished before (the outbreak of war)', he wrote, for 'how many plausible theories that I should have been entitled to form, are contradicted by what has now happened!' We might justifiably be led to wonder how much it is a part of the historian's duty to make predictions concerning the future of any country, though, if we granted him this privilege, we might accept Robertson's reasons for not doing so: 'it is impossible ... to venture any speculation concerning them while the contest between us remains undecided. Instead of a History, one could write only the conjecture or factious pamphlet of the day'. But at the same time, it is difficult to see why present uncertainty should make a study of the

1. Stewart, Robertson, p. 160.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid., pp. 160-161.
5. BM Add. MSS 35,350 f.60,r/v.
past superfluous: 'inquiries and speculations concerning their ancient forms of policy and laws, which exist no longer, cannot be interesting'. Because a new 'order of things' must arise, it does not follow that the old is irrelevant, merely to be studied by the antiquarian: unless one had hoped to use the old in order to predict the new, expecting a regular and steady course of affairs which would come to a fairly obvious end. If so, then it must be conceded that Robertson's approach is not very philosophical, nor can such attitudes be particularly useful to the historian who must accept all, and at most distinguish between 'natural' and 'normal' as Smith did.

In the second place, we must also remember that Robertson is after all a man of religion, who participated fully in the General Assembly - even as a young unknown - and who, though apparently liberal, had very fixed ideas about God, 'true' religion, the social duty of men, about moral standards and the role which the minister should play in society as leader of his flock. That his religious principles had a profound effect on his historical philosophy is evident. It may, perhaps, not be going too far to suggest that his Presbyterian egalitarianism - if qualified - influenced his attitude towards monarchs; certainly it is obvious that his distrust of Catholicism, especially that form of it which he believed existed in pre-Reformation Europe, led him to believe that Catholic monarchs were especially dangerous: their actions were influenced not even

1. Preface to America, Works, III, p. i.
3. See Appendix A, and also above, pp. 266-270, 274-275.
by that less rigid form of morality which princes lived by, but rather by the precepts of the church\(^1\). His criticism of Queen Mary, of Mary of Guise, is based not only on their being vulnerable to influence, but on the fact that their religious beliefs led them to prefer policies which were beneficial to the church or to other Catholic nations, policies which were detrimental to Scotland, to the rights and liberties of the nation, to civil and religious freedom.

It is true also that the element of the providential in Robertson's work results from his religious beliefs, which, if somewhat more scientific than most\(^2\), nonetheless reserve a place for divine intervention in matters of great importance\(^3\); and it is surely his religious background and profession that established his basic moral precepts and made them such an integral part of his work. Others might be able to keep religion in its 'place', might judge that one form was better than another because it conformed to the principles of science; but, though Robertson criticises the enthusiastic and the unphilosophical, and always challenges the miraculous—especially in Catholicism—the 'place' of true religion, he finds, is well to the fore. It is not something extraneous, as far as he is concerned, not a part-time influence, not merely another institution or expression of social variations, not peculiar to one form of economic development or government: but something by which men ought to regulate their lives.

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2. See above, pp. 8-11, 177-178.
How much, then, does this conformity to older ideas of morality limit Robertson's capacity to interpret the past as a theoretical historian? We must point out that his religious precepts and moral standards, if consistent, if forming part of his basic philosophy, nonetheless are interwoven with the theoretical ideas; that he shows in great detail the social, economic and political factors which contributed to the development of the Reformation in Germany¹ and, to a lesser degree, in Scotland; that he seeks to separate religious and civil issues - if only to demonstrate that the Reformation was not itself the cause of civil disturbances. Thus, although we find the introduction of the providential in the discussion of Luther's influence and importance to be rather extraneous; though we ourselves may not feel obliged to see heterogeneous benefit resulting from divine intervention in the emergence of the Reformation in Scotland², we may concede that the element of social and economic causes is at least an improvement over those works which see only God as cause and relegate institutions to, at most, a peripheral position.

Yet, at the same time, we cannot deny that much of Robertson's work reads like 'theoretical history for the minister' - even though there are not many instances in which man's evil is shown as being punished, of kings suffering unpleasant fates through their denial of true virtue. Those who are good, are praised - though virtue here must be its own reward - and the evil deeds of the cunning

¹. See above, Chapter V.
². See above, pp. 180-182 especially.
though not exactly suffered in silence, must at least be accepted, if deplored. One may record them for the instruction of ages to come, but these ages are often unimpressed - which detracts not from the fact that one must point a moral. But, as suggested above, the presence of two opposed attitudes in one philosophy detracts considerably from at least one. The precepts of true Christianity, in this instance, at least had the advantage over theoretical history in that they were well-established; and the new historical theories were surely ill-served, were robbed of some of their force, by sharing the limelight with some well-tried truisms. Much the same can be said of the inclusion of prejudiced material, of unphilosophical attitudes along with the theoretical ideas of property and power, especially in Scotland. If Robertson's works were well received, those who most praised them did so in terms which show no great interest in, or awareness of, the theoretical concepts or interpretation: the respect accorded Scotland, for instance, is based on its scientific presentation of anti-Marian sentiments. Indeed, Robertson is lauded for his fairness, criticised even for being too lenient with Queen Mary. But what of the nature of feudal society, the institutions produced by economic circumstances? Perhaps Robertson's friends and acquaintances were rather unappreciative and undiscerning; but it may also be that when the martial spirit of the aristocracy was considered as something other than an expression

1. See Chapters VI, VII, and IX.
of the nature of the times and became a value in itself, when it supported republican sentiments and challenged the monarchy, when it was seen as having helped to at least establish the Protestant religion, if it did not maintain it—possibly all these factors obscured the impact which this work might otherwise have made.

As for Charles V, especially the View: true, Smith felt that Robertson had taken his theories and written them up in some detail, so there is some recognition of what he was about. We must also concede that the View is interesting, is very detailed, and rearranges a great deal of familiar material into new patterns: the importance of commerce, the effect which forms of government have on man, the development of freedom, physical and 'moral' are points made, and made well enough. But again, how much does the remainder of Charles V— even, one might say, parts of Sections II and III of the View— which meanders through countless battles and conflicts between personalities, which praises the democratic society of allodial France and condemns the corruption of kings—how much do all these factors distract the reader from the ideas of stadial development, of the relationship between situation and nature of society? How much did the usage of the providential, the rising up of Luther, the careful manipulation of natural events by a divine hand, the direct forcing of these to a definite end—interpretations which may have been only too familiar—bury the idea of balance of power, domination of interest, the unplanned

1. However, see The Scots Magazine, XXI (1759) pp. 78-81, 126-132.
development of more philosophical sentiments in war, in society in general?\footnote{See above, Chapter V especially.} The reader may see only that kings are corrupt, that monarchs and nobles should act according to standards, which, if unrealistic as far as earlier ages were concerned, were doubtless familiar to him. Perhaps this hypothetical reader, like Robertson himself, was only too well versed in the evil intentions of rulers, and thus not inclined, also like Robertson, to see that perhaps even 'corruption' might eventually be absorbed into the principles of government, or at least, never permitted to go too far: as Smith and Millar believed. If so, his ideas were only to be reinforced, and the acceptance of the 'natural course of things', the separation between action and direct end, the somewhat more detached, more relaxed, more objective attitude of Smith could not make any impression on him. Again, we cannot really tell if this was the case; but, this detachment, if more easily induced by a work which does not deal with specific ages and problems\footnote{See above, pp. 170-171.}, does not push forward historical personalities and well-known events and subject them to a close scrutiny, is something basic to the theoretical approach.

Certainly, we must again emphasise the faults of the theoretical philosophy, its particular political prejudices or preferences; we must emphasise also that it was didactic in its approach to the past, no mere commentary on events, no listing simply of what happened and when\footnote{See above, Chapters I-IV, and also Appendix A, below.}. But its faults and its insistence on spreading the gospel of science, do
not mar the impact of the basic laws, the stadial development of society, etc. Nor, more importantly, do they prevent the theoretical writers from standing back to look at the past, from being at a remove from the inevitable inequities of the present and future. They are not obliged to right wrongs retrospectively, much less make the customs of another time reprehensible - detrimental to man's development, demonstrative of unphilosophical ages - yes, but not wrong. Robertson, however, though didactic, though sharing some of the theoretical hopes and aims, though by no means averse to pointing out the faults of other, less perfect, systems and times, is essentially didactic in the wrong fashion.

By the time America was published, in 1777, Robertson had lost whatever opportunities he might have had - were he another sort of person - to make a great contribution to the theoretical history. He is as assiduous as ever in this his last major work; his 'Notes and Illustrations' are copious\(^1\), his Books IV and VII deal with man in the earliest and somewhat more developed stage in accordance with the theoretical philosophy; he carefully relates man's nature to situation, his institutions to his form of subsistence\(^2\); he as carefully qualifies the effect of climate and geography\(^3\), and makes some remarks on diffusion, unphilosophical writers, false types of conjecture, the need for relative assessment of social institutions\(^4\) which are all in line with the theoretical standards and techniques. He even throws in a few 'economic' statements which show that he has read the Wealth of

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1. See below, Appendix A.
2. See Chapters VI and VII.
4. See Chapter VIII.
Nations. But he also uses the Marquis de Croix as an instance of virtue amidst corruption, points out that men have a duty to their sovereign and their country which should limit their interest, and feels that 'interestedness' itself, in the modern state, resembles the individualism of the savage society in that it refers everything to a man himself rather than to his society in general. Thus in this as in his earlier works, he is intent to continue the employment of two opposed interpretations, variations and absolutes, the theoretical and the traditionally moralistic; and, apart from Millar's Historical View, this is the last in a long series of works which together make up the theoretical philosophy. Between 1759 and 1769 - the dates of his first works - the field was wide open; but the opportunity could not be taken. Robertson was what he was, and he could be no other.

Perhaps his works are too detailed, perhaps he undertook too much in the sense that he was so intent to be philosophical and universal that he attempted to bring together too great a part of the history of too many countries to be able to make a few outstanding points. We might also grant that much of his work - when not concerned with the theoretical ideas of stages and variations, property and power - seems very much in the vein of much earlier historical writing: kings and battles and politics, albeit arranged in a more scientific fashion. But, these are really minor points. The

2. Ibid., pp. 250-251.
3. Ibid., p. 244.
4. Ibid., III, p. 353.
most fundamental reason why Robertson made no original contribution to theoretical history is that, not only was he a man who depended more on the ideas of others - if capable enough of putting them into practice - than on any theories which he himself formulated, but that he came to historical writing loaded down with the past, his country's, his own, and was never able to shake it off, perhaps had no desire to. To some extent, indeed, his works do form part of the theoretical philosophy because of their very detail; but his is not the outstanding contribution, the radical innovation, and in many instances his writing must be seen as having done a great disservice to the development of the new philosophy.
APPENDIX A

FURTHER MEANINGS OF THE WORD 'PHILOSOPHICAL'

Possession of what is described as a 'philosophical' spirit or attitude which determines the type of history that one writes marks many French and Scottish historical writers of the mid-eighteenth century. The word 'philosophical' refers not only to social or institutional history, but also to the society in which the philosophical writers either lived or hoped to live, and to the manner in which they acted in everyday life; hence, it necessarily varies in meaning according to the nature of that society or the attitudes which characterise the historians's approach to particular problems.

There are, nonetheless, certain distinctions to be drawn between the nature and expression of this spirit in France and in Scotland, distinctions which are also to be seen in greater detail and depth in the variation between the work of Voltaire, for instance, and that of the theoretical school in general. For the French writers, especially those such as Voltaire, the tolerance, desire for 'equity', for the inculcation of 'rights' which rep-

1. We cannot explain the actual existence of any type of history solely through a consideration of the nature of the society in which the respective authors lived. This appendix is only concerned to point out some of the nuances of the word 'philosophical' and to suggest some of the possible reasons for the variations in the spirit which underlay the general philosophical history and theoretical history.

2. See above, Chapter I, pp. 13-17 especially.
resented a philosophical society, were aims rather than achievements of the age in which they lived - even though they did see great improvements in their own era. There is in their work, then, a greater urgency than in the theoretical, a greater sense of the need for change and action, for outspoken and 'extreme' thought in the effort to rid the society of all things unphilosophical, and to establish what is seen to be beneficial as soon as possible. Persecution, intolerance and repression were a part of their everyday life, and they were more sceptical than were the Scottish writers of the possibility of the beneficial emerging without direct action. Hence, calm and moderation are not characteristics of Voltaire's nature or work, nor, indeed, of those of many other French anti-establishment writers of approximately the same period, and to this extent they differ noticeably from the theoretical historians. The traditions and institutions against which the French philosophical writers worked certainly included the government of their day, and this is hardly the case with the greater part of the Scots.

Nonetheless, it is rather difficult to ascertain the extent to which the nature of one's society determines the limitations or nature of one's historical interpretation. That there is a distinction between theoretical and general philosophical history is evident, but the causes of this difference are somewhat less so. It is possible, for instance, that the dominance of the monarchy in France assisted in the creation of Voltaire's philosophy of
change, particularly his emphasis on the individual. Although he does show some belief in the possibility of the philosophical gradually being diffused throughout society, he is generally more concerned with the need for positive action in order to bring this desirable state of affairs somewhat closer to reality. Thus, the greater emphasis on both the individual and on the correlation between action and end in his work may result from the dominance of the individual in his own society. At the same time, however, we should remember that the nature of the society itself is not really a sufficiently comprehensive factor to account wholly for the existence of such philosophies. The emergence by 1750 of the Physiocratic doctrines, which closely resemble those of the theoretical school in their concept of the general economic basis of social institutions and of the unintended results of actions, demonstrates that social limitations as such are not a full explanation of the emergence of the nature of historical theories - even though one might argue that writers such as Turgot were a new generation, less affected by past repression, more influenced by the positive and beneficial changes within the society.

As far as the Scottish writers are concerned, it is possible that the social structure of their country influenced both the development of the concept of stages of economic growth1, and influenced also the meaning of 'philosophical' as used by them in describing their attitude towards life in general. Appreciable changes

1. See above, p. 36, note 1.
from the seventeenth-century political and economic structure, Millar believed, had permitted the growth of sentiments which could be described as philosophical, had made it possible for a greater part of the population to achieve material security and a degree of political power, such improvements being reflected in the laws and in a greater stability in the society, in a decrease in rabid and extremist political opinion, in repression and violence. Such factors, perhaps, led to the degree of freedom to develop one's potential that was to be found in some parts of mid-eighteenth century Scottish society; and certainly it is true that there was a considerable degree of what we might call social mobility - at least as far as the 'middling ranks' were concerned - and this permitted those of talent to achieve considerable success.

Robertson's own career, for instance, illustrates this situation very clearly. Born in 1721 into a milieu which produced a considerable proportion of those who were to contribute to the Scottish enlightenment, he advanced rapidly within his profession, being given valuable benefices and eventually becoming Moderator of the General

Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Scotland\footnote{1}. He was also Principal of the University of Edinburgh and an extremely successful author, his works bringing him both social standing and advancement at home and honours from abroad\footnote{2}.

It is also noticeable as a result of this mobility, and as a result also of the interest of various members of the upper classes in men's ideas and talents rather than their origins, that there was an easy association, in Edinburgh society at least, between the titled and the intellectual\footnote{3}. We find also that this relationship, which particularly suited many of the literati's ideas of their own independence\footnote{4}, permitted them to maintain their principles, to refuse to be pressured by the important, to treat with them as equals and not as inferiors. Again, this is clearly illustrated by Robertson's attitudes. Although he showed no hesitation in asking for favours, nor in taking them, he did not feel that such actions compromised him in his official capacity. They were rather a part of normal administrative procedure\footnote{5}, on occasion they

\footnotesize{1. Stewart, Robertson, pp. 126, 178 ff., especially p.186.  
2. Ibid., pp. 112-119, 159, 177, 231.  
3. See Emerson, op. cit.  
simply reflected friendship or acquaintance\textsuperscript{1}, and in either case Robertson did not feel that one should sacrifice one's principles or be dictated to on matters of policy, particularly in religious matters: "Great men in office were always ready to countenance him, to cooperate with him, and to avail themselves of his aid. But he judged for himself, and scorned to be their slave, or to submit to receive their instructions." \textsuperscript{2}

This philosophical form of society - which itself separates the Scots from the French writers - may well have demonstrated to the theoretical historians the values of greater economic independence, of a less rigid class structure, of the freedom which some men had to express themselves and to be independent of the will of others. Certainly it is possible that the manners and institutions of their times, which were manifestly so beneficial to themselves, led them to feel that this type of society was basic to the development of human nature; and possible also that, together with the evidence of other stages of development, the existence of such moeurs helped in the creation of the basic concepts of theoretical history.

How much this was in fact the case is, of course, something which we can by no means determine. All we can say with certainty is that although the theoretical writers may not have continually and specifically related their own attitudes to the system in which they lived, they did

\textsuperscript{1} See, for instance, BM Add. MSS 35,350, ff. 58-60,62-63.
\textsuperscript{2} Stewart, Robertson, p. 193. See also Carlyle, Anecdotes, p. 117.
believe that they themselves were philosophical. By this they meant in particular that their attitudes were those such as were produced by an awareness of scientific principles, by more 'liberal' attitudes concerning the nature and purpose of government; and this, together with their more stable society meant that they were sufficiently secure, sufficiently sure of themselves and of their own worth, of the value of those principles which they cherished, not to be obliged to continually act or to demand action as the French writers were. The very existence, then, of a society in which there was a greater tolerance, a greater freedom, permitted them to be philosophical in another sense: they were allowed to be moderate, to be calm and detached, to remove themselves from the passions and enthusiasms typical of a less enlightened age or of a more repressed society. Though there were occasions on which in fact they were far from being at a distance from the concerns which stirred others, and though by moderation they did not mean that one should not feel anger, should not be moved by one's passions, they thought it particularly unphilosophical to express such sentiments openly.

'I am sensible', wrote Hume, 'that nothing can be more unphilosophical than to be positive or dogmatical on any subject',\(^1\), and this was an opinion shared by the greater part of the theoretical school. Many of them were whigs, but not blatantly so; Robertson, for instance,

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loyal to the Hanoverians, refusing to support the Stuarts, thought of himself as a 'moderate' whig\(^1\), and that a good thing was hardly improved by a too enthusiastic advocacy of it\(^2\). Utility might be increasing, but authority still had a place, and the philosophical man accepted this\(^3\). Many were also religious, but refused thereby to countenance enthusiasm or fanaticism; not only must faith be philosophical - that is, consonant with scientific principles\(^4\) - but those who were too positive about it\(^5\), or who espoused faiths which were extremist, reflective of another age, or destructive of general growth, must be checked whenever possible\(^6\). Ideally, however, differences of opinion should be resolved with moderation, and the philosophical approach characterises Robertson's actions as Moderator in particular - "mild, rational, and conciliating"\(^7\), free from passion, detached from controversy.

To be philosophical in this sense, however, was not

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4. See above, Chapter I, pp. 7-10.
7. Stewart, Robertson, p. 195.
to be passive; rather, the theoretical writers believed that the moderation, tolerance and detachment which they valued should characterise not only their lives, but also their work. Thus, though in their greater calm, their acceptance of the existing government, their satisfaction with many of the achievements of their society, they are generally to be distinguished from the French writers, they are as didactic, as intent to stimulate thought, as the philosophes. This, of course, is not to say that they believed great changes could be made within a relatively short period, even in a philosophical system - Robertson, for instance, though believing a more enlightened society was ready to extend greater toleration to Catholics\(^1\), did not attempt to force the issue when he saw that it was unacceptable: 'While I thought a repeal of the penal statutes would produce good effects, I supported it openly; when I foresaw bad consequences from persisting in a measure which I had warmly approved, I preferred the public good to my own private sentiments.'\(^2\). Though such intolerance itself is unphilosophical, though Robertson was not generally inclined to accept the opinions of the ordinary man, he was aware also that the individual could not achieve much against such odds.

Though the Scots' moderation, their dread of appearing too concerned, too involved may mean that they seem less aggressive, less persistent than many of the French, then, we should not let appearances confuse or mislead us. In

\[\text{\footnotesize{Stewart, Robertson, p. 187.}}\]
\[\text{\footnotesize{Ibid., p. 191.}}\]
reality they felt with Diderot that the philosopher must always point out false systems of thought, must seek to correct wrongs, must inculcate a greater awareness in men of how much they were limited by repressive ideas. Though it is true that they also sought to make moderation more widespread, and that in this they differ somewhat from many of the philosophers, it is obvious that they used their works as did the French, to bring the philosophical a little closer to all men. This is particularly the case with writers such as Robertson who studied specific societies and were at some pains to emphasise how much the passions typical of other ages distorted the 'truth' and continued to disturb men even in the present. Such an attitude, for instance, is to be seen in the reasons he gave in Scotland for his detailed and widely illustrated examination of the reign of Queen Mary; and it is found also in similar works, such as Kames' Essays where the intention is expressly stated to 'raise a Spirit' among the Scots which would lead them to examine their past critically: 'being seriously convinced, that nothing will more contribute than this Study, to eradicate a Set of Opinions, which, by Intervals, have disquieted this Island for a Century and a Half.' Though the theoretical writers believed it philosophical to interpret the past in its own terms, then, they did not believe such an approach included toleration of or the

2. Scotland, Works, I, pp. i-II.
3. Kames, Essays Upon Several Subjects Concerning British Antiquities (Edinburgh, 1747) page first.
continuation of foolish or dangerous opinions. One
must, indeed, criticise 'moderately'; but moderation it-
self was not to be seen as a hindrance to investigation
and evaluation, but was rather the principle on which
such procedures must be based.

This attempt to make men philosophical, to use the
critical study of the past in order to reveal the mistakes
and prejudices that interfered with the growth of en-
lightened thought, is given a further dimension in
Robertson's work by his remarks concerning the role of the
historian and the standards which he should set himself.
Though on some occasions his ideas seem devoid of that
relativism demanded by the theoretical approach, we can
nonetheless find in his writings a consistent attempt to
stress the values of the philosophical or social/institu-
tional history, and an equally consistent criticism of
those who either failed to write such history or who did so
imperfectly.

True history, he felt, was universal in its extent,
insofar as it should take account of common rather than
peculiar characteristics of societies, should emphasise
the importance of laws and institutions, should seek to
point out connecting factors rather than simply to list
facts chronologically; and he was quick to praise those who

4. Scotland, Works, I, p. 65. See also above, Chapter
   VIII, and pp. 2-6, 154-168.
5. Charles V, Works, V, pp. 515(Note XXII) and 551(Note
   XXXII).
6. Ibid., p. 18.
wrote in such a fashion, and equally quick to criticise those whose historical philosophy was sadly devoid of such foundations. Daniel, for instance, though a writer 'of considerable name', was hardly to be taken seriously because the nature of his work was hardly philosophical: 'no great stress ought to be laid on an omission in a superficial author, whose treatise, though dignified with the name of history, contains only such an account of the ceremonial of Charles's election, as is usually published in Germany on like occasions.'

He was critical also of the ridiculous causes advanced by many 'historians', of the continual employment by them of superficial reasons as explanations of events which either had more profound causes or were to be accounted for by very simple and straightforward means. The emphasis on passions and poison as a cause of death he rejected in no uncertain terms - 'The historians of all nations discover an amazing credulity with respect to rumours of this kind, which are so well calculated to please the love of the marvellous which is natural to all, that in every age they have been swallowed without examination, and believed contrary to reason' - and he had little patience with other such theories. The usage of such 'facts', indeed, especially when they reflected earlier, unphilosophical ages, made him particularly wary of 'contemporary' historians, and although he accepted this type of work if

it was valuable in showing the spirit of an age, he generally preferred to use other sources. Only if such writings conformed to the standards which he had set did he find the 'contemporary' historian to be not only 'authentic' but reliable. This is the case, for instance, with the work of Paolo Sarpi, historian of the Council of Trent:

'He has exposed the intrigues and artifices by which it was conducted with a freedom and severity which have given a deep wound to the credit of the council. He has described its deliberations, and explained its decrees, with such perspicuity and depth of thought, with such various erudition and such force of reason, as have justly entitled his work to be placed among the most admired historical compositions."

This 'philosophical' approach is particularly to be seen in Robertson's comments on research and on sources, comments which are based on his belief that those who attempted to establish a new philosophy, a new interpretation, must list the works they had consulted, must study all available material; for only by so doing could they both avoid, and show others that they had avoided, the unfounded speculation, the fanciful conjecture, which their works aimed to supersede. Thus, although he found Voltaire's work, including the Essai, to be 'instructive and agreeable', the absence of authorities in his history meant that one 'could not, with propinquity, appeal to his authority in confirmation of any doubtful or unknown fact':

'The longer I reflect on the nature of historical composition, the more I am convinced that this

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1. See America, Works, III, p. 556(Note XCVII).
2. However, see above, pp. 235-237, 277-279, 359-362.
4. See above, Chapter VIII.
'scrupulous accuracy is necessary. The historian who records the events of his own time, is credited in proportion to the opinion which the public entertains with respect to his means of information and his veracity. He who delineates the transactions of a remote period, has no title to claim assent, unless he produces evidence in proof of his assertions. Without this he may write an amusing tale, but cannot be said to have composed an authentic history.'

The historian, he believed further, should think of himself as giving information under oath, and certainly he was scrupulous in checking the references given by others. Of course, this is not to deny that his actual employment of sources is often far from satisfactory, but it is nonetheless true that he always listed his authorities in great detail, that he attached copious Proofs and Notes and Illustrations of points in the text to the end of his works, that, on occasion, when discussing controversial issues, he lists alternative, less 'biased' sources, and that when he clearly differs from established opinion he refers also to those works which express the same sentiments as himself in order to show that he has good reason for his opinion.

Furthermore, his emphasis on the importance of using all available material - a result of his belief that one's work must reveal the whole, not simply isolated fragments, of any issue - led him not only to complain of those who refused the historian access to papers, but to collect all

1. America, Works, III, pp. xi-xii.
2. BM Add. MSS 34,886, f. 118.
3. Ibid., ff. 63, 118.
5. Scotland, Works, I, pp. 266, note k, 296, note y, 300, note m, II, pp. 102-104.
7. See Ibid., pp. v-vi.
possible information and to read it assiduously\(^1\), always. His reputation as a tireless investigator was one which he prided himself on, and his correspondence, the acknowledgments listed in his works, and the copious notes which are to be found in all of his writings\(^2\), at least support his claim to thoroughness. His search for information was, in fact, constant, for the revised as well as for the original work\(^3\); and his efforts to cover universal and general problems and topics meant a series of requests for papers, books, and other material from his friends, acquaintances, and publisher\(^4\). Research he found boring at times, often tiring,

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1. See, for instance, the list of Spanish books and manuscripts which he consulted for America: Works, III, pp. xvii-xxxii.

2. Scotland, Works, I, pp. 16, note e; 33, note p; 63, note n; 176, note b; 225, note k; 254, note i; Works, II, pp. 51-53, note a. Charles V, Works, V, pp. 112, note a; 183, note g; 242, note i\(^*\); Works, VI, pp. 191, note a; 211, note y\(^*\); 438, note x.

3. BM Add. MSS 34,886, f.164; 35,350, f.73. NLS MSS 1036, f.6.

4. For Charles V, see the Preface of the original edition; and see also NLS MSS 1005, f.6; BM Add. MSS 35,350, f. 58, and 38,200, f. 296; Bodleian MSS, Montagu, d.9, f. 1. The Preface to Scotland (Works, I, pp. ii-iv) lists some of Robertson's sources of information, and the appendices in that work testify to his thoroughness — though he was criticised for not examining material pertinent to the Marian controversy and to Queen Mary's reign in general which was available in the Scots College, Paris: Klibansky and Mossner, op.cit., p. 50, note 5. For America, see Preface, Works, III, pp. ii-xiv. See also NLS MSS 948, no. 5, f.1; 1036, f.106; 3942, f. 22: of special interest are the questionnaires which Robertson sent to those persons who had first-hand knowledge of the culture of the American Indians — see above, p. 83, note 2. See further, BM Add. MSS 34,886, f. 99; 35,350, ff. 6061, 62, 66-67, 68; 35,511, f. 21; 35,534, ff. 123-124, 126. BM Egerton MSS, 2182, f. 39. Bodleian MSS, Montagu, d.9, especially the letter from Robertson to Strahan, August 7, 1771, f.1, and that to Cadell, September 6th, 1771, f.1. Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Breer Collection MSS, 107, f. l. Yale University, Trumbull Collection, letter of Trumbull to William Smith, July 19th, 1773. For India, see BM Add. MSS 40,856, f.80.
but it was vital if one was to maintain the dignity of history, to discredit those who continued the unphilosophical; and his praise of Gibbon was in part based on that writer's 'industry of research' 'without which no man deserves the name of an historian'. Such sentiments led him not only to continually revise his work, but also to criticise those who, though famous, lacked all the 'great qualities of an historian', whose work could never lead to 'truth' because based on no 'patient industry'.

In most cases criticism by Robertson of the writings of other historians was expressed moderately, was free from unphilosophical heat and passion, and depended for its effect on revealing the lack of acceptable standards in these respective works. This, indeed, is not to say that neither Robertson nor other of the Edinburgh literati were never provoked or angered by criticism of their own histories, for in many instances they obviously were; it is rather that their philosophical attempts to encourage a greater detachment prevented them from making any public response to such criticism. Thus, the particular connotation of 'philosophical' as seeming detached, as refusing to be too obviously affected guides their approach in their work as well as in their everyday life. 'O! I am happy', wrote Hume:

'in my Resolution never to answer to any of these People on any Occasion. For if I had

1. BM Add. MSS 34,886, f. 117. See also America, Works, III, p. 557 (Note XCVII).
4. See above, pp. 505-507.
'ever been weak enough to have made any Reply to any Remarker, my Silence on this Occasion would have been taken for a Conviction of Guilt. And how could I have reply'd? I think it would scarce have been becoming to have spoke calmly to this Imputation: And had I answer'd a Fool according to his Folly, I must have justly pass'd for a Man of as base a Mind & low an Education as the Person, who cou'd handle an intricate historical Question in such a manner.'

This attitude is very much one which Robertson held, and he had early established a 'fixed maxim of making no reply' which he ordinarily maintained; that is to say, he generally refused to make any public acknowledgement of criticisms or of mistakes, to become involved in controversial issues, although in private he could rage with a certain amount of heat. To Hardwicke he wrote:

'I flatter myself that Your Lordship thinks more kindly of me than to suppose that I will enter into any of those angry controversies, which bigots and party writers have carried on about the disputed events in Queen Mary's reign.'

and he made similar remarks also to Gibbon. He did accept that he had made mistakes, but usually he inserted his corrections without comment. On those occasions when he explicitly referred to an error he appears to have done so both because the issue was important or 'philosophical'

2. BM Add. MSS 34,886, f. 164.
3. Ibid.; Robertson was referring particularly to Whitaker, Mary Queen of Scots Vindicated (see above, p. 452, note 4). See also 'Preface to the Eleventh Edition' of Scotland, Works, I, p. vii.
4. Gibbon, Misc. Works, p. 380, and see also Robertson's letter to the same concerning the need for detachment, ibid., p. 295.
and because he had been corrected by an author whom he respected. Only rarely, as in his response to the 'weak and credulous bigot' Clavigero, did he reply openly and in detail, and this because of his philosophical belief in the importance of basing one's work on solid authorities and of reassuring one's readers that one had done so:

'When an author is conscious of having exerted industry in research, and impartiality in decision, he may, without presumption, claim what praise is due to these qualities, and he cannot be insensible to any accusation that tends to weaken the force of his claim. A feeling of this kind has induced me to examine such strictures of M. Clavigero on my History of America as merited any attention, especially as these are made by one who seemed to possess the means of obtaining accurate information, and to shew that the greater part of them is destitute of any just foundation.'

Even in such instances, however, his public attitude remained one of a truly philosophical superiority; and though this calm may not have been as extensive as the theoretical historians wished, they themselves made every effort to rectify this situation as their historical work similarly sought to replace less enlightened interpretations of men and their societies.

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2. NLS MSS 1006, f. 106.
4. America, Works, III, p. xiv, and see ibid., Works, IV, pp. 411-413 (Note LX).
APPENDIX B
SOME PROBABLE INFLUENCES ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF THEORETICAL HISTORY

As has been indicated above, the theoretical historians stress especially that society is dependent upon mainly moral as opposed to physical factors, and that the variations in form of subsistence will affect the nature of societies, an interpretation of the past which is of particular importance in that it deals with man as he has been observed in time. Unlike many earlier historical philosophies it is not concerned with man as he 'ought' to be since it holds that he can at all times act only as his society deems; and because of this we must remember that any works which may have influenced the Scottish school would necessarily have been concerned with a similar interpretation of man, and with the explaining of his past in terms of regular and primarily moral factors.

This, it appears, is the case with Montesquieu's major writings, Considerations and Spirit of the Laws¹; in both these works there is an emphasis that we must study what is, not what we might prefer to see, since it is imperfect man who forms the basis of our study - 'A fine thing to see a historian judge of that which men have done by that which they ought to have done; by this mode of reasoning we should have no more history.'² Perfection, he believed, 'can have no relation to the universality of men or things'³, and though philosophical or religious systems might be based on

3. Ibid., p. 32.
the concept of an absolute good or on an unvarying form of
government, such theories had little relation to reality.

In his earlier writings, and especially in his study
of Rome's rise and fall - Considerations - Montesquieu
emphasises two major factors; one is the actual or real
nature of man, the other is the constant relationship be-
tween a society's past and its present. It is always man's
actions which constitute the major causal factor in any
society, he believed, and if these actions are brought to-
gether to form a definite pattern, the effect of past
causes will certainly partially determine the present and
future of any state. Change, in other words, is gradual,
and actions are not simply an expression of present inter-
est but must always be related to past influences. Rome,
for instance, which was based on 'civic' qualities, on a
care for the benefit and welfare of the state was
possessed of excellent institutions where balance or con-
lict-based compromise produced beneficial ends. Yet,
this society declined in proportion to the denial of the
basis of the original system, in proportion to the
Romans' 'violation of their moral customs' which were the
foundation of their laws. Through such an interpre-
tation Montesquieu is able to suggest that cumulative
factors, as opposed to direct and immediate ones, are the
causes of the decline of the Roman republic. Human greed
and lack of foresight expressed over a considerable period
of time have destroyed those qualities which made the

2. Ibid., pp. 83, 85, 103.
3. Ibid., p. 86.
Romans great. A change of this nature cannot be attributed to individual actions, or at least, not directly so, for a powerful political system of such magnitude could only collapse because many, generally impersonal, factors exerted a considerable pressure on its foundations over a considerable period of time: 'we must not blame it on the ambition of certain individuals; we must blame it on man—a being whose greed for power keeps increasing the more he has of it, and who desires all only because he already possesses much.'

The emphasis of Considerations on the nature of law rather than on conscious actions by men, on the relating of the parts of any society to its total experience, on tracing causes back to past general patterns, on man acting as man will, are all features which are central to the most important of Montesquieu's works, Spirit of the Laws—and, indeed, to the theoretical philosophy itself. In this influential work, there is no sense of similarity of behaviour in similar stages of development, nor is there any explicit suggestion that human society evolves through constant patterns of action because of the nature of man. The concept of constancy and uniformity which we find here comes rather from Montesquieu's belief that similar effects will result from like geographical situations, and that there is a constant relationship between the original impersonal physical factors and the later moral, but also impersonal ones which maintain what has resulted from

situation. For instance, while it is possible to see that certain sections of *Spirit of the Laws* which deal with the history of France are in part a response by him to the *thèse royale*, they are primarily a long and careful explanation in philosophical terms of the French origins, of the growth and development of the 'German' system of property and government from alodial tenure to feudalism proper and the breakdown of monarchical power. They consider in detail the nature of the relationship between the society and its laws during these gradual changes, and reveal especially how need and situation will produce particular results, how one stage must give way to another because of the force of the changing spirit of the society. The sense of the gradual growth of government and of the laws which are appropriate to this which is to be seen in this study must have been of considerable importance to the theoretical concept of stages of development and also of the relationship between any society and its institutions. This is so even though there is not in this or in any other work of Montesquieu any profound theory of the heterogeneity of ends; the importance of his work in relation to later philosophy of history lies

1. However, see above, pp. 154-161 for the theoretical consideration of the respective importance of physical and moral factors.


3. Robertson perhaps may have drawn on Montesquieu for his interpretation of the development of the feudal society, and certainly he acknowledged *Spirit of the Laws* as a valuable source for the study of changes in forms of property holding: Charles V, *Works*, V, pp. 463-472 (Note VIII).
rather in his understanding of the complexity of human history, and the intermingling of all parts of it to create a whole, especially with regard to individual societies:

'(Laws) should be in relation to the climate of each country, to the quality of its soil, to its situation and extent, to the principal occupation of the natives, whether husbandmen, huntsmen, or shepherds: they should have relation to the degree of liberty which the constitution will bear; to the religion of the inhabitants, to their inclinations, riches, numbers, commerce, manners, and customs. In fine, they have relations to each other, as also to their origin, to the intent of the legislator, and to the order of things on which they are established; in all of which different lights they ought to be considered.'

Furthermore, as a part of this belief in the necessarily secular or material basis of all societies, and in the variations in their laws, he states that what any government does in order to maintain itself must often be separated from the more traditional precepts of morality. In order to continue that which has been achieved by political means we must deny those philosophies that stress virtues rather than civic concerns; and in Considerations, for instance, he accepts the actions of the Romans as necessarily expressing the needs of their society, and believes that the lack of the traditional virtues in this was irrelevant to the

1. SL, I, pp. 6-7. It has been suggested that Montesquieu's reference to 'husbandman, huntsmen, or shepherds' here indicates some idea of stages of development (Ronald Meek, 'Smith, Turgot, and the "Four Stages" Theory', Hist.Pol.Econ., 3 (1971) p. 27, note 40); if so, this was only to be developed by the theoretical historians. For Montesquieu's ideas of the relationship between laws and climate, see SL, I, pp. 221-270, between laws and 'soil', ibid., pp. 271-291. See also ibid., pp. 292-373, and II, pp. 1-80.
welfare of the state. Men are mainly motivated by selfish factors, by human faults such as avarice, but the presence of these is not necessarily detrimental — an idea which certainly forms part of the theoretical interpretation, especially of the heterogeneity of ends. His analysis of government was always based on an acceptance of political expediency — unless this was contrary to the spirit of any particular form — and while he has some concern with the precepts of morality within societies, he includes within this the maxims of government; hence, when he talks of moral rules, these are those actions or proceedings which are necessary for continuation of the state.

In *Spirit of the Laws* in particular Montesquieu reveals that most societies are beneficial to man (he does feel that the despotic state inhibits human development) and that apparent imperfections are nonetheless an integral part of any system, and thus are not destructive in themselves. Because men are capable of adapting to that form of government in which they have been educated, and are not in constant conflict with its principles, the mixture of 'good' and 'bad' forms a whole that supports the national aims: 'Lycurgus, by blending theft with the spirit of justice,

2. See, for instance, *ibid.*, p. 124 where Montesquieu points out that slave owners acted from 'avarice and weakness of character' in releasing their 'possessions', an interpretation which is similar to the theoretical explanation of the breakdown of the feudal system and the freeing of the serf class: see above, pp. 105-106.
4. Such an interpretation differs somewhat from the theoretical which, although it finds unity and integrity within any society or stage of development, and accepts all of the past, nonetheless believes that some forms of government are 'imperfect' and inhibiting: see particularly Chapters III, VI and VII above.
'the hardest servitude with excess of liberty, the most rigid sentiments with the greatest moderation, gave stability to his city.'1 'The characters of the several nations', he stated further, 'are formed of virtues and vices, of good and bad qualities',2 and:

'all political are not all moral viges; and... all moral are not political vices.'

It is apparent that there are certain similarities between Montesquieu's work and that of the theoretical historians, particularly in the acceptance of what is, of man's nature, of the necessary difference between one society and another, and in the emphasis on institutional study. But we should also be aware that there are very considerable differences also, that, for instance, there is little acceptance by Montesquieu of concepts such as 'interest'3 which, in the theoretical writing was an explanation of constancy in human nature, and of the actual advance of men—the capacity to progress through seemingly 'unphilosophical' means. Because Montesquieu considers rather the very general connections between past and present, because his idea of variation and of the constancy within this is limited to certain forms of government and not applied to a study of the gradual development of man, because he has no theory of several distinct stages, he cannot put forward any consistent theory as to the benefits which may

1. SL, I, p. 35.
2. Ibid., p. 296.
3. Ibid., p. 297.
4. Ibid., pp. 23-24; in the monarchical system, where 'it is extremely difficult for the people to be virtuous', the 'principle' of 'honour' means that every person has a particular interest which contributes to the welfare of the state. Interest, however, is limited to this form.
be derived unintended and over a period of time, by man acting as his nature, as his interest, determines.

While the theoretical writers may have been stimulated by Montesquieu's work, it is also to be seen that they went far beyond it, not only through their ideas concerning man's nature and the process by which his interest resulted in unplanned beneficial ends, but also because of the emphasis which they place on economic factors as determining stages of development. This theory of property, which is so vital to their interpretation\(^1\), probably derives from the works of James Harrington and those described as commonwealthmen\(^2\) which can be seen as forming part of the interpretation of the past which emphasised that man, not fortune, was the centre of life and that men are able to overcome the disorder and chaos once thought of as inevitable in proportion as their institutions permit them to absorb or dismiss the forces of fate and instability. This interpretation, for instance, is certainly to be found in the works of Machiavelli, particularly the Discourses\(^3\), which were a major influence on the commonwealth philosophy. Machiavelli depends on the concept of the cumu-

\(^1\) See above, Chapters III, VI and VII.


lative power of institutions and thereby indicates that many of the actions of men in society are not the result of conscious or self-denying principles; he also believes that the virtù of the republican state - that is, the means by which society is continued - is not composed of the traditional, primarily Christian, values but depends on qualities which are an integral part of the society and is the means by which chance or fortune is both limited in extent and lessened in its effect.

As far as Harrington in particular was concerned, however, there was still too much power given to fortune in Machiavelli's ideas, and he himself sought to limit its role by his theory of property. For him, and for the other commonwealthmen, personal property in land grants political power and the particular distribution of this property determines the form of government. When a large number holds such property, then government is composed of three factors and, with the support of stabilising principles, former instability ceases. The independent man - he who holds some

1. For instance, Machiavelli believed that the Roman republic was maintained by conflict and dissent: Discourses, p. 113.
2. The republican virtù consists of such qualities as strength, purpose, militancy, astuteness, patriotism, and self-discipline, and these are a natural part of that form of government in which the main profession is that of citizen, the involved and martial defender of the republic. This emphasis on political rather than religious maxims is also very much a part of The Prince.
3. See, for instance, Cato's Letters, No. 84 (in Jacobson, op. cit., p. 211): 'It is most certain, that the first Principle of all Power is Property; and every Man will have his Share of it in Proportion as he enjoys Property'.
4. See Oceana, p. 33. These principles are a part of Harrington's concept of balance in government, and are the means by which change will end and the commonwealth made 'immortal'.

property - is free from subjection to the will of another and acts as he must in order to guarantee the freedom that is essential to him. These actions remove from the state the threat of fluctuation and civil disorder that has previously plagued it - at least, this is so in Oceana.

In such an interpretation, individual qualities of men tend to be irrelevant, and with the emergence of the mixed or balanced state, virtu, or the public good, is produced automatically; the decisions of the greater part must necessarily be reflective of the needs of the society:

'if reason be nothing but interest, and the interest of mankind be the right interest, then the reason of mankind must be the right reason; if the interest of popular government come nearest unto the reason of mankind, then the reason of popular government must come the nearest unto right reason.'

Harrington's contention is not that private vices make for public good but rather that the citizen is obliged to act politically through the force of property in such a manner as to produce public benefit. The proper operation of all the parts of the balanced government must necessarily deny both fortune and the selfishness which is a part of man, an idea which was certainly valuable in the development of the concept of impersonal forces as predominant in human history. The power of property overrides the effects of

1. See Oceana, p. 33. It is likely that the theoretical emphasis on the independence of man, and the consequent proper operation of his moral sentiments, results from the commonwealth correlation of freedom and the maintenance of virtu. See Chapters III and IV.

2. Such action takes place not only in government but also in the militia, an army composed of free men, all property holders, who defend the state. This army is to be contrasted with the standing army typical of the corrupted society. See below, p. 530.

3. Oceana, pp. 22-23.
personality:

'The nature of orders in a Common-wealth rightly instituted being void of all Jealousie, because let the parties which she embraceth be what they will, her orders are such, as they neither would resist if they could, nor could if they would.'

Harrington's idea of property was taken somewhat further by later commonwealth writers who not only accepted that change is a constant feature of society, that there is no 'immortal commonwealth', but that such changes as did occur resulted not so much from conscious and aware action, but rather from the cumulative effects of many past actions. Such a theory eliminates individual responsibility and emphasises the importance of general and impersonal factors: 'land is the true centre of power, and ... the balance of dominion changes with the balance of property'; and however much the commonwealth writers may not have cared for many of the changes which had occurred, they did not attempt to account for these in terms of persons or ideologies, for only change in property could be seen as the cause of corruption.

Nonetheless, although there is an acceptance of the actual existence of change in these works, this is not to say that the situation of imbalance was tolerated. Should the ordinary correlation between property and power have

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3. See particularly Andrew Fletcher, Political Works, p. 6: 'tis worth observation, that though this change was fatal to their liberty, yet it was not introduced by the contrivance of ill-designing men; nor were the mischievous consequences perceived, unless perhaps by a few wise men, who, if they saw it, wanted power to prevent it.' See also Republican Tracts, p. 81.
been upset, there will be disorder in the state and the ends of government cannot be brought about, for the factors which made for virtu or public benefit in one system are no longer applicable in the new arrangement of power. The spirit of men has changed along with the form of government, and political principles exist which are unfamiliar and conducive to the dominance of selfish and destructive interest; thus, although it is accepted that such interest, that corruption, or the lack of proper relationships, is an effect, not a cause, there is also an emphasis in the commonwealth writing that the balance must be restored.

The standing army, which replaced the militia, the prevalence of pensions and places, the 'courtier' who acts for the monarch and against the 'country' are all expressions of corruption which has replaced the traditional virtu and interfered with the 'proper' operation of the state.

It is this insistence on constant correlation, on the need to return to a particular system, which especially distinguishes the commonwealth from the theoretical work. This is not to deny that there is some acceptance of interest in the former, that one's desire for position and place can be absorbed into the structure of government; nor is it to deny that the concept of virtu is akin to the idea of moral sentiments, that the 'meanness of spirit' in the corrupted state has some resemblance to the lack of spirit

1. Republican Tracts, pp. 145-146.
2. Fletcher, Political Works, p. 344.
3. Ibid., pp. 338-339.
of the labouring man in the commercial society\(^1\): in both instances men are unable to act fully as citizens. However, as the commonwealth theory could not accept the destruction of certain institutions and precepts it appears much more rigid and inflexible than the theoretical. The militia can never be replaced by the standing army as a part of the natural course of things, the free property holder must always be a martial citizen first, rather than being a professional man who leaves matters of defence to those who are employed by the state specifically for this purpose. Lacking a concept of stages of development and of the variations in laws and other institutions which is a fundamental part of this, the commonwealth philosophy must necessarily insist on the return to the first principles of government, must seek to make permanent those institutions and qualities which the theoretical writers rather saw as peculiar to one of the many stages of man's evolution. For them, the standing army was a natural part of the commercial system, and the continuation of interest was the means by which corruption would be checked;\(^2\) each form of society adapts itself naturally and automatically to its situation, and always by means which are a reflection of its situation.

What really distinguishes the theoretical from the commonwealth writers, therefore, is that the former accept all of man's experience and history, and the latter reject certain developments which they do not believe can

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1. See above, Chapter IV, pp. 140-148.
2. Ibid., pp. 133-139, 149-151.
be tolerated by the laws of property/power correlation. If they accept the existence of changes in the balance of property, they do not thereby accept all forms of property, and this is so, fundamentally, because they do not have any theory of human nature which allows them to see that 'good' can result from the continuing, if varying, expression of interest.

While the theoretical writers may well have been influenced by Montesquieu's philosophy of the connections between past and present, and by the commonwealth concept of property determining both political power distribution and the form of government; if they absorbed from both theories the belief that impersonal forces rather than individuals are the basic causes of change; they also went far beyond any of the implications of these earlier works, and combined the theory of the determining force of property, and the acceptance of all of man's actions with their own philosophy of human nature and of the natural course of things to produce a new, and extremely influential, philosophy of history.
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

**MANUSCRIPTS**

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<tr>
<td>BM Add.</td>
<td>British Museum Additional MSS</td>
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<td>EUL</td>
<td>Edinburgh University Library MSS</td>
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<td>NLS</td>
<td>National Library of Scotland MSS</td>
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<td>CJEPS</td>
<td>Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science</td>
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<td>History of Political Economy</td>
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<td>JEH</td>
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