

interpretation

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REVIEW OF *HUME'S PHILOSOPHICAL POLITICS* BY DUNCAN FORBES

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In the first paragraph of *Hume's Philosophical Politics*, Duncan Forbes describes it as "a study of Hume's thinking on politics in the light of his political intentions and the historical context" (vii).¹ David Hume's political intentions are identified almost at once: "to give the established, Hanoverian, regime a proper intellectual foundation." He undertook and carried out "a program of political education for changed circumstances and new opportunities," in three parts: "a theory of political obligation; a science of politics; and a History of England" (x). The three parts of Forbes's book correspond to the three parts of Hume's program. This review will examine almost exclusively Part I, "The Foundations of Politics." No judgment will be ventured on Parts II and III, except by implication. For example, it would appear that caution in accepting Forbes's use of his wide reading in often obscure sources is called for.

Hume's "theory of political obligation," according to Forbes, can be understood as a transformation of the thought of the "natural law writers" of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Forbes suggests that "the two main currents of advanced speculation in Scotland at that time: natural law teaching, and Newtonian or Baconian experimental science came together, and allied to Hume's religious skepticism, produced his famous 'new scene of thought,' and one aspect of this was a new theory of natural law." (17). The transformation was accomplished by a thoroughgoing secularization. "Natural theology was the indispensable foundation of natural law" (14ff.). "Hume's political philosophy," on the other hand, "is wholly and unambiguously secular" (65).

Forbes can thus display "Hume's political philosophy as a response to the needs of his age and society, as he saw them." This new age was a "post-revolutionary age, in which the challenges and opportunities, the needs and drives of men were predominantly economic, and the old conflicts and loyalties, political, religious and dynastic, outmoded and irrelevant." It needed a "moderate" political philosophy that would conciliate or allay the opposing zeal of Jacobites and Whigs and provide the basis for a "modern, commercial" society. This new age was a "secular," "empirical, scientific . . . age," so it needed a political philosophy "modern in style, . . . informed by the new scientific method and the predominantly secular outlook." Hume's political philosophy fills the bill on both accounts: it gave "new foundations," wholly secular and empirical, to versions of natural law and the contract theory that had been revised "to meet the needs of forward-looking 'moderate men' in a modern progressive society" (91, 96).

The subject of this book, then, is not the expression of Hume's thought on politics in his "historical context" or its application to "his age and society." It is rather Hume as an ideologist or a propagandist or it may be something of each. It

sometimes seems to present Hume's thought as formed by his time. More often perhaps it is seen as fabricated to serve his political purpose.

I

The natural law writers through whom Forbes takes his way to Hume include Hugo Grotius and Samuel Pufendorf, and also Richard Cumberland and J. G. Heineccius, and even George Turnbull and William Cleghorn. He also brings in Hutcheson, the only one acknowledged as a forerunner by Hume himself. (Hutcheson's full-scale treatment of natural law postdates, however, that acknowledgment.) They differed much among themselves, but not in the aspect pertinent to Forbes. They all "claimed to have established a science of law and morality without the aid of revelation, grounded on human nature and the 'nature of things' given to reason and experience." So their thought has been described as "wholly secular, entirely independent of theology and without theological foundations." But Forbes takes care to avoid "the fallacy of premature secularization." Their theories are "empirical" only because " 'experimental' proof of the existence and attributes of God [is] taken for granted" (41ff.). For a "god-given universe, which is an inseparable whole" is presupposed by "all these thinkers" (45).

This interpretation of the natural law writers, so crucial to Forbes's explanation of Hume, will now be considered, with particular reference to Hutcheson and Pufendorf.

One way in which Forbes supports his interpretation of the natural law writers is to attribute to them a kind of crypto-stoicism. For example, what Pufendorf "means by saying that man has a 'sociable nature,' " from which "all his rights and obligations are derived," including his "right to self-preservation"— what Pufendorf "means by saying man has a 'sociable nature' " is (not what he says he means but) that man has "the ability to see that he is not made to live for himself alone but for God and society."² The "official . . . starting-point" of Pufendorf's theory is the "empirical" one of "self-love." But the *real* starting-point is the universal society of rationals. As a part of this society man has duties to its other members, to God and fellow-men, and consequently to himself "to improve [himself] in every way the better to fulfill God's laws and the laws of society." Pufendorf's "official" theory seems to have deceived those of his time "who criticized the attempt to derive natural law from the principle of sociability." They overlooked what Forbes sees, and understood "social necessity" too narrowly, for "there is also the society of men *qua* rational creatures," a society that is "not only compelled by earthly needs, but by God's will" (50ff.).

Now it is indeed true that the surface of Pufendorf's teaching is not completely serene. On the one hand, he teaches that the basis of natural law is the combination in man's nature of a virtually irresistible desire for self-preservation, extreme need of the help of his fellows and great power to help them, and a strong propensity to hurt his fellows and great ability to do so. So to be safe he must be

sociable. The fundamental law of nature commands sociality; all the others are corollaries: the duties of man toward God, toward himself, toward other men.³ On the other hand, we find the knowledge of man's duty drawn from "other fountains." For a man "observes that he did not come into being from himself, but that he owes his origin to a more sublime cause; that he has been endowed with more noble faculties than he observes in the animal world about him; and finally, that he was born not for himself, but as a part of mankind, towards whom he is obliged to bear himself in a sociable manner." He "will recognize that he is subjected to the sovereignty of God, and that in return for the gifts granted him, he is under obligation both to publish abroad the majesty of God, and to show himself sociable towards other men." The preservation of one's life is then seen to be a duty, for "when a man neglects his own care, he works an injury, not, indeed, on himself, but on God . . . and the human race."⁴

It seems that Forbes deals with the paradox presented by the alternative foundations of natural law found in Pufendorf's writings by assuming that Pufendorf was unaware of the paradox; that he was so in the grip of theological presuppositions that what in his order of argument comes first must depend on what comes later. On the contrary, simple docility under Pufendorf's lead is enough to resolve the paradox. It is, Pufendorf writes, an essential duty that one rightly hold and make a part of oneself certain sentiments that have to do with one's duty. The first of these concerns God as creator and ruler of the universe.⁵ The "logical truth" of such sentiments is not what requires that they be held.⁶ Their basis is their contribution to sociality. The second account of the source of natural law (the stoic theory) is made up of or is based on such sentiments. And of course the law of sociality imposes on writers such as Pufendorf the duty to promote them.⁷

It is worth noting that when Pufendorf meets the critics of the derivation of natural law from sociality he does not invoke the "universal society of rationals." He sticks to his guns, and forthrightly declares, "the nature of that 'uprightness and innocence of manners which should be observed . . . ' without consideration of its relation to other men, I have not been able to comprehend."⁸

The stoic view is imputed to Hutcheson with even less support in the texts than is found in Pufendorf. For instance Forbes writes, "When Hutcheson and the natural law theorists stressed the fact that man was a social being they had in mind his membership of the 'one great society' . . . of all rational beings as such, a society which included God" (51). The words "one great society" are Hutcheson's, but they refer (as Forbes guilelessly lets us know) to the "one great society of *mankind*" [emphasis supplied] (51). What Forbes says that Hutcheson had in mind is not what Hutcheson wrote.

Forbes does attempt to assemble the stoic theory from scattered elements of Hutcheson's thought. The paragraph that follows, whose content and context indicate Hutcheson as its subject, illustrates Forbes's method of proof, and his manner of exposition as well:

As in the teaching of Shaftesbury and the Stoics, human nature is a “system” or “moral constitution” because it is an inseparable part of the whole system of rational beings, which includes God. A science of law and morality independent of revelation meant one based on principles of human nature which include an ability to recognize and acknowledge God’s government of the kingdom of rational beings which is as common to the human species as living in society, the use of speech or the sexual instinct (Hutcheson, *System*, I. 36). And the senses and feelings and propensities from which rights and obligations and justice are derived are dispositions and determinations that have been, or are capable of being, approved by reason or conscience, which means that they have been commanded by God: they are propensities which are seen by reason to make for the good of the whole system, or at least do nothing to hurt it. They are derived from our “social constitution” in that sense, that is, our membership of the community of rational beings as such (48ff.).

Gathering a clear and precise meaning from Forbes is not easy. But it appears that, at least insofar as the passage represents Hutcheson, it says nothing significant that is correct.

Hutcheson does not teach that “human nature is a ‘system’ . . . because it is an inseparable part of the whole system of rational beings.” Human nature is what it is because it is created by God; it is a God-made system. But this is not to say that it is a part of a system including God. Moreover, it can be known to be a system without knowing that it is God-made. The inward sense that governs the system of human nature is discovered by observation and experience and is felt and heeded by the irreligious.⁹

Hutcheson does not teach that the “principles of human nature include an ability to recognize and acknowledge God’s government.” In the cited passage Hutcheson does teach that (not merely an ability to believe but) a belief (not in God but) in “Deity” which may be “one or more” beings, governing the created universe, which includes rational beings *except* for God, is that common among mankind.¹⁰ (What he writes elsewhere casts doubt on the assertion, however.¹¹) But that is not to say that knowledge of human nature or a science of morality based on human nature is either logically dependent on or temporally posterior to that belief. Indeed, in the cited passage the knowledge of human nature is said to be one of the sources of the belief.

From the third sentence one may gather that, for Hutcheson, to say “The moral sense approves” is identical with saying “God commands.” But Hutcheson scrupulously distinguishes the two propositions. He is so far from teaching that the authority of the moral sense is acknowledged because it is viewed as the medium of God’s commands that he teaches that the justification of God’s commands is that the moral sense approves of submitting to them.¹²

Hutcheson does not teach that the morally approved propensities are those that make for the good of the community of rational beings as such. He teaches that the disposition that “naturally gains the highest moral approbation, is the calm, stable, universal good-will to all, or the most extensive benevolence.”¹³ The object of this benevolence is primarily mankind. However, there are also obligations to

the lower animals as they are capable of feeling pleasure and pain.¹⁴ That is, the “system” includes nonrational beings. And it does not include God: “We never speak of benevolence toward God; as that word carries with it some supposal of indigence, or want of good, in the object.”¹⁵

It would be possible but wearying to multiply examples of Forbes ignoring and distorting Hutcheson's plain teaching. Revision of such a scale might be defensible if it were needed to resolve contradictions, but Forbes points to none. If it could be shown, for instance, that Hutcheson's doctrine becomes intelligible only by importing into it the stoic “society of rational beings,” then one might infer that it is a silent premise, suppressed for some reason that is hard to guess. But Forbes attempts no such showing. The closest he comes is to deny, without explanation, what Hutcheson asserts: that is, to refuse to take him seriously as a philosopher. He knows what “Hutcheson and the natural law theorists . . . had in mind,” whatever they thought they had in mind. This is called “avoiding the fallacy of premature secularization.”

Hume does, of course, differ from Pufendorf and Hutcheson, for example, in a way in which they do not differ from one another. The difference might be expressed by saying that Hume was secular. But the difference does not concern theology as the “indispensable foundation” of natural law. Perhaps its character will emerge from the consideration of two more of Forbes's arguments to show that the natural law teaching was based on theology.

“If natural jurisprudence had really been divorced from theology,” Forbes writes, “there would not have been all the trouble and misunderstanding caused by the problem of moral obligation, nor the controversy over Grotius's notorious definition” (42). The reference is to the dispute over the thesis that natural law would still be law in the true sense were God's existence or providence denied.

Now that thesis itself, which was Grotius's and Hutcheson's, seems precisely to divorce natural law and theology. As for those who disputed it, differing in what Forbes seems to think is the direction of religious orthodoxy (45)—although it is away from Thomas Aquinas and toward Thomas Hobbes—perhaps the weightiest was Pufendorf. He said, Forbes reports, that to turn the dictates of reason making for sociability into “laws which oblige as doctors' orders do not, one must presuppose a God who governs all things by his providence, who has enjoined us mortals to observe [them] as laws, for law presupposes a superior” (42). A careful examination of what Pufendorf wrote on this subject, however, casts a light on it different from what Forbes wishes.

Pufendorf observes that men cannot be restrained to follow the rules of sociability that are the laws of nature, despite their manifest usefulness, except by an enforcing power. He offers that observation as evidence that without having come from God the rules would not have the force (*vis*) of law. And he infers from the same observation that it must always be maintained that they do come from God.¹⁶ That is, a rule has the “force of law” if it has teeth in it. And it is a rule of sociability that the rules of sociability should be esteemed divine commands.

Pufendorf goes on to say that the divine obligation of natural law can be proven by reason. The premise of the argument he makes is that God is the maker and ruler of the universe. Wise men have plainly shown that, he writes, and it is not doubted by any pious man.¹⁷ He does not say that it is not doubted by any wise man. Indeed, if, as Pufendorf teaches, to assert the eternity of the universe is to deny the existence of God, some of those Pufendorf seems to think wise did doubt the premise.¹⁸

As if to convince those unsure of the premise, Pufendorf tries to make it clear that “a social life has been enjoined upon men by the authority of God.” The first reason he gives is, “because the human race cannot exist in safety if this belief be not firmly established.”¹⁹ The argument is parallel to that in another place: wise men have most clearly demonstrated the existence of a first cause. But some people may not grasp that most clear demonstration. Their atheism is refuted by consideration of the bad influence of atheism.²⁰ This must be meant to be a more conclusive proof than the most clear demonstration. Throughout Pufendorf’s treatment of natural theology in his writings on natural law, the decisive arguments are those based on moral consequences.

It appears that for Pufendorf natural theology was not the necessary philosophical premise of natural law — its “indispensable ground” in Forbes’s sense. Religion, however, “a serious belief . . . in the Divine Being and His providence,” whether natural or revealed, whether “harmful to the welfare of [men’s] souls” or not, is an essential support of natural law.²¹ That may be the reason that Pufendorf can state that “by agreement (*ex consensu*) of all wise men,” God made man to serve him.²²

Forbes appears to believe that the “profoundly pious” character of Hutcheson’s philosophy is manifested by the fact that “final causes [are] written into the experimental method as a matter of course.” The experimental method in Hutcheson’s hands has as its object “to discover God’s purpose for man by examining the several powers or faculties of human nature as constituting a ‘system,’ that is, a hierarchy, or microcosm” (45ff.). Forbes’s apparent assumption is that the function of a natural thing can be discovered only on the premise that the function was imposed by the will of a divine maker. That the Hutchesonians did not share the assumption is indicated by Forbes’s own report that a disciple of Hutcheson points to Cicero’s *De Finibus* as an example of the proper method of inquiry into human nature: “all the speakers in it agree that the natural end for which man is made can only be inferred from the consideration of his natural faculties and dispositions as they make one whole” (48). But the speakers in *De Finibus* include an Epicurean. Forbes simply disregards or denies certain Hutchesonian distinctions. It is one thing to “observe the office or end of each part” of human nature, in the way that one observes the office or end of a part of the body. It is another “to conclude . . . what is the course of Action for which it appears to be intended by its great Author,” which requires in addition to knowledge of “the design of the whole,” evidence of God’s existence.²³

Forbes does offer excerpts from Hume's correspondence with Hutcheson to support his reading of the latter. Most to the point is this: "I cannot agree to your sense of *Natural*. 'Tis founded on final Causes; which is a consideration that appears to me pretty uncertain and philosophical. For pray, what is the End of Man? Is he created for Happiness or for Virtue? For this life or the next? For himself or his Maker? Your definition of *Natural* depends upon solving these questions, which are endless and quite wide of my Purpose. I have never call'd Justice un-natural but only artificial" (59). The last-quoted sentence indicates that the "sense of natural" that Hume cannot accept was used by Hutcheson in criticizing Hume's theory of justice as an artificial virtue in Book III of the *Treatise of Human Nature*, a manuscript of which Hume had sent to him for comment. (It seems likely that the last paragraph of Book III, Part II, Section I was added in response to Hutcheson's remark.) Precisely what "sense of natural" Hutcheson had employed in his letter we cannot learn from Hume's letter. In any event, Hume is not objecting to Hutcheson's use of the word anywhere else. In Hutcheson's published writings he would find it used to mean "independent on custom and education," that is, nearly in Hume's sense.²⁴

The implication of Hume's words in the letter is that Hutcheson would agree that "final causes" are "unphilosophical." Hume did, after all, recognize him as one of a company of philosophers whose progenitor was Bacon and which included Locke.²⁵ That would not necessarily be inconsistent with the fact that Hutcheson does indeed concern himself with what he calls "final causes." At the conclusion of both the *Inquiry concerning Beauty* and the *Inquiry concerning Virtue* he gives reasons why the Author of nature, out of his goodness, may have constituted human nature as it is. But this is not to say that "final causes [are] written into the experimental method as a matter of course" (46). It is rather that final causes are superadded to the results obtained by the "experimental method." As Hutcheson puts it in his discussion of the final causes of the moral sense, "It has often been taken for granted in these Papers, 'That the Deity is morally good;' tho' the Reasoning is not at all built upon this Supposition."²⁶

Hutcheson's speculations on final causes are a kind of anthropocentric theodicy: a way of confirming a conviction that nature and its maker display goodwill toward men. They thus nourish piety, an important practical corroboration of the moral sense.²⁷ Moreover, the principal final cause proposed by Hutcheson for the moral sense inclining us to benevolent actions is that in that way our sense of morality and our concern for our own happiness do not counteract one another.²⁸ Thus Hutcheson's argument teaches that virtue and interest harmonize, which is another practical corroboration of the moral sense.

At least in part, it seems, Hutcheson propounded final causes because, as Forbes put it, he "made it his task to 'preach' morality" (56). It is a task that Forbes understands Hume to have declined to take up. He cites a letter to Hutcheson where Hume replies to a criticism of deficient "warmth in the cause of virtue" in the manuscript of Book III of the *Treatise* by distinguishing the "anatomist" of human

nature from its “painter,” and declaring “I imagine it impossible to conjoin the two views” (60). Forbes does not note Hume’s conclusion: “I intend to make a new trial, if it be possible, to make the moralist and the metaphysician agree a little better.”²⁹ Presumably the last few pages of Book III were tacked on (to what an “anatomist” would have found a satisfactory ending) as a result of that attempt. Here, as in the mature restatement of his moral teaching, Hume tries to show that happiness is best attained by the practice of virtue.³⁰ So Hume does not abandon altogether the calling of the “preacher” of morality. He places no reliance whatever, of course, on religious considerations in these passages. In that respect the contrast with Hutcheson is sharp, and Hume is indeed “secular.”

II

Hume’s “modern theory of natural law,” according to Forbes, issued from his discovery that “a genuine experimental philosophy . . . involved a conscious separation or bracketing off of the natural from the supernatural” (59). Leaving aside “the whole question of what exactly Hume’s religious belief, or lack of it, amounted to,” Forbes declares: “What is clear is that for Hume the unquestioned alliance of Christianity and/or natural religion and the experimental method would not do: a properly conceived experimental method ruled out of any science of man and morals what he came to describe as the ‘religious hypothesis’ ” (61). Hume is represented here as a methodological agnostic along the lines of a contemporary social scientist, rather than the philosopher who so painstakingly rebutted the argument from design in the *Dialogues*. Or perhaps Forbes is implying that Hume’s religious skepticism was a priori or dogmatic, which would be consonant with the view of Hume as the ideologist of a secular age.

Forbes does not, it turns out, leave the question of Hume’s religious belief quite in suspense. His “political philosophy was not complete without [the scrutiny of the religious hypothesis], in so far as it was designed to take the place of the contract theory which rested on the religious hypothesis in the final analysis” (65ff.). In effect, the *Dialogues on Natural Religion* are the invisible but essential pillars of the essay *Of the Original Contract*. And the attack on the contract theory was essential, of course, for Hume to carry out his political enterprise of moderation and conciliation.

Forbes explains: “The contract theory which Hume attacked rested on some supernatural sanction. . . . The obligation to keep faith, according to the ‘fashionable’ systems, would hold even if there were no such thing as society in Hume’s sense at all. Therefore political obedience rests on the promise, because the promise carries the higher, and ultimately divine, sanction” (67). But that can hardly be true of all of the proponents of the social contract theory. Forbes himself remarks that Hobbes proceeded on an “atheistic hypothesis” (68). As for Hutcheson, he writes, “The reasons. . . which shew the necessity of a social life, shew also the necessity of contracts, and the obligation of faithfully observing them.” Moreover, “infidelity. . . offends. . . against a strong moral feeling in our hearts.”³¹

Pufendorf states that "whenever any men enter into any agreements, the social nature of man requires that they be faithfully observed. For if an agreement lacks this guarantee, much the largest part of the advantage which accrues to mankind from the mutual interchange of duties would be lost."³² Forbes supports his misunderstanding only by fragments of texts, themselves misread, and of course by his conviction that he knows in advance what the thinkers of a certain era think.

Forbes does not observe that in *Of the Original Contract*, an essay in which Hume's intention to allay the strife of Whigs and Tories is foremost, he bases his refutation of the divine right theory on the "religious hypothesis." ("That the Deity is the ultimate author of all government, will never be denied by any, who admit a general providence," it begins.³³) Now if he had thought that the opposing theory had rested on a similar basis he presumably would have argued against it in the same manner; but he does not. Hume's abstention from making an ex hypothesi theological argument against the social contract theory may reflect his awareness that it does not need to be "secularized."

III

Hume's own theory of political obligation is, according to Forbes, a device to encourage political moderation in Britain. His "doctrine of resistance bears down . . . on Whig theory" and on "Jacobite practice" (93). But it is, Forbes finds, essentially defective. Hume's "experimentally established modern principles" justify the results of the Revolution of 1688 on the basis of "time and custom"; but they cannot justify the Revolution itself. Resistance to government is warranted only in the most extreme case — in the case of a Nero. But James II was no Nero (96). Hume tries to escape from his dilemma by "twisting and turning," but "the plain fact seems to be that although Hume can defend, quite unambiguously and consistently with his general principles, the present establishment, he cannot unambiguously and consistently defend those who brought it about" (100). Hume is a propagandist, but an unsuccessful one.

The fatal flaw, however, is in Forbes's understanding of Hume. He makes much of certain uncompromising antiresistance declarations without considering their context. He refers, for example, to Hume's "insistence that any infringement of the bond of allegiance must be 'the last refuge in desperate cases, when the public is in the highest danger, from violence and tyranny' (*Passive Obedience . . .*)" (100). In the cited essay, however, Hume is offering his opinion on a matter where, he says, difference of opinion is legitimate and where exaggeration in the public teaching of the duty of obedience is called for. Again: Forbes writes that Hume "insisted" that resistance "could be justified only in cases of 'egregious' tyranny, like that of Nero. (*Treatise*, Book III, Part II, Section IX . . .)" (92). In the cited passage, however, egregious tyranny refers to the misgovernment that contractarians would regard as deserving resistance — and Hume professes agreement with them. Nero is an example of an oppression so enormous that it would be intolerable to even the most extreme preacher of passive obedience — which Hume is not.

Forbes's use of texts is extraordinarily careless sometimes. For example, he records that Hume wrote that in the disputes between the Stuarts and their opponents, "the views of the royalists 'ought to have appeared more solid, more safe and more legal' " (266). The words in Hume are preceded by these: "perhaps, according to the established maxims of lawyers and politicians."³⁴ Another instance: Forbes quotes Hume as saying that "in the general distribution of power among the several members of a constitution, there can seldom be admitted any other question than, *What is usual?*" In the next paragraph, he forgets the "seldom" (271).

One twist or turn that Forbes finds unavailing is Hume's contention that in a mixed constitution, and in the British constitution in particular, resistance may sometimes be lawful precisely in order to maintain the form of government as mixed. Forbes wonders how Hume can "make use of this piece of Whig lore," since he thought that "when we bind ourselves to a particular . . . form of government" "we expressly renounce" consideration of "the advantages or disadvantages of a particular type of government" (98). Forbes's perplexity is obviously based on some confusion that we need not stop to explore. It may lead him to attribute to Hume a disingenuous pronouncement that the reign of James II constituted "such enormous tyranny as may justly provoke rebellion" (100), whereas Hume's point in the cited passage is that in a limited monarchy "imprudence and indiscretion" "may justly provoke rebellion."³⁵

In any event, Hume does not say "that our allegiance to particular governments . . . is not based on considerations of interest, whether *public* or private, *at all*" [emphasis supplied] (98). He does say (what Forbes quotes but seems to give no weight to) that "true philosophy . . . teaches us to regard the controversies in politics as . . . entirely subordinate to the interests of peace and liberty."³⁶ And the decisive reason for stressing present possession as giving title to govern is the public interest in political stability.³⁷

This is not to deny the paradoxical character of Hume's teaching on these subjects. (For Hume could also write that "a regard to liberty . . . ought commonly to be subordinated to a reverence to established government."³⁸ It possesses a certain internal tension. But Forbes slackens the tension by his one-sidedness, and does little or nothing to account for the paradox. Or rather, we are led to conclude that it is one of the logical irregularities a hard-working publicist falls into when, for example, he attempts "the application of a theory of political obligation designed for a post-revolutionary establishment" to the events of another time (264).

IV

What Hume wrote on politics did undoubtedly aim to instill moderation, foster conciliation, and in his own time and place to fortify the Protestant establishment. The question arises, Why were Hume's politics what they were, rather

than one of the other kinds of politics that might have seemed just as suited to his age — those of Johnson, perhaps, or of Paine? Except for an occasional personal reference — Hume was a Scotsman, Hume was cosmopolitan — Forbes does not try to tell us. It is clear, however, that the answer, “Hume was a philosopher,” is ruled out. Hume's philosophy cannot be treated as a cause of his politics, for his philosophy is treated as a consequence of his politics.

By this definition of the so-called philosopher as an ideologist or propagandist, Forbes hopes to make him “relevant to us” (viii). One wonders how. A propagandist might find a description of how an old-time propagandist pulled off his tricks useful; but Forbes's book is too prolix, obscure, and expensive to serve that purpose well. An antiquarian might find such a study, if not exactly relevant, at least entertaining. But Forbes's reports on so-called philosophy are not reliable. Idle curiosity does not seem to supply a sufficient motive to read carefully. The book is a specimen of the depredations of historicism on scholarship and an illustration of how historicism can rob the study of a philosopher of relevance.

¹Duncan Forbes, *Hume's Philosophical Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975).

²Samuel Pufendorf, *De jure naturae et gentium libri octo*, 1688 (rpt. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1934), Bk. II, Ch. III, Sec. 16.

³Pufendorf, *De jure*, Bk. II, Ch. III, Sec. 15; *De officio hominis et civis juxta legem naturalem libri duo*, 1682 (rpt. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1927), Ch. III, Sec. 7.

⁴Samuel Pufendorf, *De jure*, trans. C. H. and W. A. Oldfather (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1934), Bk. II, Ch. IV, Secs. 5, 6, 16.

⁵Pufendorf, *De jure*, Bk. II, Ch. IV, Secs. 2, 3.

⁶Pufendorf, *De jure*, Bk. IV, Ch. I, Sec. 8.

⁷Cf. Pufendorf, *De jure*, Bk. IV, Ch. I, Sec. 16.

⁸Pufendorf, *De jure*, Preface, p. ix (Oldfather translation).

⁹Francis Hutcheson, *An Inquiry concerning the Original of our Ideas of Virtue or Moral Good*, in *British Moralists*, ed. L. A. Selby-Bigge (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1897), p. 101.

¹⁰Francis Hutcheson, *A System of Moral Philosophy* (Glasgow, 1755), Bk. I, Ch. I, Sec. xii.

¹¹Francis Hutcheson, *Inquiry concerning Moral Good*, in Selby-Bigge, p. 82.

¹²Francis Hutcheson, *System*, Bk. I, Ch. III, Sec. vi; *An Essay on the Nature and Conduct of the Passions with Illustrations on the Moral Sense*, 3rd ed. (London, 1742), pp. 230-31.

¹³Hutcheson, *System*, Bk. I, Ch. IV, Sec. x.

¹⁴Hutcheson, *System*, Bk. II, Ch. VI, Secs. iii, iv (e.g., p. 314).

¹⁵Hutcheson, *System*, Bk. I, Ch. IV, Sec. x.

¹⁶Pufendorf, *De jure*, Book II, Ch. III, Secs. 19, 20.

¹⁷Pufendorf, *De jure*, Bk. II, Ch. III, Sec. 20.

¹⁸Pufendorf, *De officio*, Ch. IV, Sec. 3.

¹⁹Pufendorf, *De jure* (Oldfather translation).

²⁰Pufendorf, *De officio*, Ch. I, Sec. 4.

²¹Pufendorf, *De jure*, Bk. II, Ch. IV, Sec. 3 (Oldfather translation).

²²Pufendorf, *De jure*, Bk. II, Ch. IV, Sec. 16. Thanks to Gerald L. Evans, Professor of English, Marietta College, for his help with the reading of Pufendorf's text.

²³Hutcheson, *A System*, preface by William Leechman, pp. xiv ff.

²⁴Hutcheson, *Inquiry concerning Moral Good*, p. 143.

²⁵David Hume, *Treatise of Human Nature* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1888), p. xxi.

²⁶Hutcheson, *Inquiry concerning Moral Good*, p. 187.

²⁷Hutcheson, *System*, Bk. I, Ch. IV, Sec. xiii.

²⁸Hutcheson, *Inquiry concerning Moral Good*, p. 186.

²⁹David Hume, *Essays, Moral, Political and Literary*, ed. T. G. Green and T. H. Grose (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1882), I. p. 78.

³⁰David Hume, *Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals* (LaSalle, Ill.: Open Court, 1947), Sec. IX, Pt. II.

³¹Hutcheson, *A System*. Bk. II, Ch. IX, Sec. i.

³²Pufendorf, *De jure*, Bk. III, Ch. IV, Sec. 2 (Oldfather translation).

³³Hume, *Essays*, I, p. 444.

³⁴David Hume, "Of the Coalition of Parties," *Essays*, I, p. 469.

³⁵David Hume, "Of Passive Obedience," *Essays*, I, p. 463.

³⁶Hume, *Treatise*, Bk. III, Ch. II, Sec. X, p. 562.

³⁷Hume, *Treatise*, p. 557.

³⁸David Hume, *History of England* (Philadelphia: E. Littell, 1828), Ch. LXXI, Sec. IV, p. 428.