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The Scottish critics of Hume and Smith: Maclaine, Reid and Ferguson

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Introduction

James Moore studied at Toronto, where he took his MA, and subsequently at the LSE, where he was supervised by Michael Oakeshott, of whom he remains a critical admirer. Following early teaching positions in the United States, he moved back to Canada to teach at Concordia University, Montreal, where he is now Distinguished Professor Emeritus. He has held numerous visiting positions, within Canada and beyond, at Manchester and Edinburgh in the United Kingdom, at Gröningen in the Netherlands, at the Australian National University in Canberra, and most recently at the Princeton Theological Seminary. He has also long been involved in the Conference for the Study of Political Thought alongside John Pocock, Melvin Richter and Gordon Schochet, defending a historical approach to the subject against the legions of North American Straussians. He is best known for his studies of the moral and political philosophy of the Scottish Enlightenment, the subject of his paper to the seminar. But these cannot be fully appreciated unless set within the much broader framework of his interest in the intellectual consequences of the Reformation.

Earlier than most, Moore recognised the significance of the Protestants' adoption of Natural Law as the framework of their moral philosophy, in both the Lutheran and the Calvinist traditions. Calvin, he argues, emphasised that it was for the Christian magistrate to enforce the dogmas of the true church. Extrapolating from this, the resistance theorists added that the right of removing the sinful (heterodox) magistrate lay in the people, as bearers of *imperium*. It was against this tradition of Calvinist jurisprudence that there developed the liberal Protestant tradition of most interest to Moore. Initiated by Grotius, who wished to uphold the jurisdiction of the civil powers over the church, this rival tradition was reinforced in the seventeenth century by Socinian theology. Its political implications were developed in England by the Levellers and later by Locke, as advocates not of popular sovereignty but of the 'supremacy of the people', understood as the right of the people to give consent, and to judge the magistracy. Similarly liberal, even Socinian tendencies were to be found among Dutch, Swiss and Irish Protestants of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, where the adoption of a broadly Grotian understanding of Natural Law would provide a framework for subsequent Enlightenment thinking in these countries and others connected with them. (It was precisely against such liberal moral theology, Moore would add, that Rousseau reacted when he renewed the case for popular sovereignty.)

If this is the central thread of Moore's investigation of post-Reformation Natural Law, he has complemented it with studies both of the Lutheran jurisprudence of Pufendorf, as underwriting the rights of princes in matters ecclesiastical within the German Empire after the Peace of Westphalia, and also of the more orthodoxly Calvinist 'Reformed

Scholasticism' of the first Glasgow Professor of Moral Philosophy, Gershom Carmichael. The principal focus of his recent work, however, has been the liberal Irish Presbyterian and successor to Carmichael at Glasgow, Francis Hutcheson. Moore has edited several of Hutcheson's works for the Liberty Fund Series of Classics in Natural Law, including his inaugural oration on natural sociability, and his introduction and notes to a translation of Marcus Aurelius; an edition of Hutcheson's correspondence is forthcoming. Preceding these was a series of articles interpreting Hutcheson as driven by his opposition to Mandeville and adherence to a version of Stoicism. Moore maintains that the obligation to teach Natural Law at Glasgow required Hutcheson to develop a 'system' of philosophy rather different from that of his earlier, Dublin writings; it also exposed Hutcheson to charges of heterodoxy from the Calvinist clergy. While Hutcheson may never have finalised his new system, his success in facing down the orthodox was, Moore argues, a key contribution to the opening of Scotland to wider, European currents of thought, and hence to the Scottish Enlightenment.

The transforming impact of Moore's scholarship has been most obvious, however, in his distinctive analysis of the relationship between Hutcheson and the young David Hume. The standard interpretation, expounded by Norman Kemp Smith and revised by David Norton, suggested a large measure of agreement, even discipleship, on Hume's part. Moore argues to the contrary, on the basis of evidence both circumstantial and textual. In his view the disagreement was profound: Hume's apparently deferential remarks in letters to Hutcheson belied a desire to make philosophical mischief at the older man's expense, and Hutcheson's later intervention to block Hume's candidacy for the professorship of moral philosophy at Edinburgh in 1745 was unsurprising and, in its own terms, justified. For Hume was a sceptic not only in relation to the understanding but also in morals: against Hutcheson's (and Shaftesbury's) neo-Stoicism he pitted an Epicurean account of the formation of morals, emphasising the artificiality of the justice which sustained society. Hume's inspirations were the Calvinist sceptic Bayle, and Bayle's follower Mandeville, on whose intuitions Hume would, however, impose a much higher degree of philosophic coherence.

Moore's interpretation of the Hutcheson-Hume relationship has been strenuously contested by Norton; more temperate in their disagreement have been Knud Haakonssen and James Harris. Whether or not the interpretation stands in every detail, its effect has been to prise open the presumed philosophical coherence of the 'Scottish Enlightenment', and to expose the extent to which Hume and, in many respects, Adam Smith differed from their Stoic (and still Christian) contemporaries, in philosophy, morals, politics and religion. Among the scholars indebted to Moore are both Istvan Hont and John Robertson. But the existence of a gulf between Hume, Smith and their contemporaries is now widely accepted: it has become almost commonplace to hold that the 'mainstream' of the Scottish Enlightenment was Christian, with the implication that Hume and Smith may be relegated to its margins.

It is this issue which Moore's paper to the seminar promises to address. A contrary hypothesis would be that Hume's moral philosophy in particular remained central to Scottish Enlightenment thinking, as a persistent provocation to which others, notably Thomas Reid and Adam Ferguson, were obliged to respond. How far this is true Moore will test by reference to the criticisms of Reid, Ferguson and the hitherto overlooked Archibald Maclaine. In so doing he will explore some of the early moves in the development of utilitarian thinking, linking the Scots to their English successors.

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