Journal of the History of Economic Thought,
Volume 27, Number 1, March 2005

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

CAN JEALOUSY BE REDUCED TO A SCIENCE? POLITICS AND ECONOMICS IN HUME'S *ESSAYS*

BY
ROBERT MANKIN

> "The growth of new desires is undoubtedly an essential condition towards the improvement of society, and every new desire brings new evils in its train"
> Leslie Stephen (*English Thought in the 18th Century*, vol. II, p. 31).

Today we tend to read David Hume's *Essays, Moral, Political and Literary* in the 1777 edition, a two-part collection dating essentially from the early 1740s and then again from the early 1750s, as revised continually by the author until his death in the year of the American Declaration of Independence. Although this is better than reading the essays in anthologies, even the best text that we have ever had (the Liberty Fund's) is a compendious final version rather than a critical edition, one that would lead us not only into what the essays *are* but also what they *were* about. Hume's revisions and afterthoughts are, for the most part, duly noted, but never put into perspective; and his intentions at the outset are underplayed or simply ignored (Hume 1777).[1] Yet it would be a great help to have more clarity on this desire for changes, for it is remarkable in Hume's career. When, very shortly after publication in 1738, he came to feel reservations about the *Treatise of Human Nature*, he simply scrapped it and wrote new versions of his philosophy. With the *Essays*, in contrast, he was more tempted than with any other work published in his lifetime, and more chronically tempted, to revise and adapt his thoughts and then resubmit them to the public. With these labors he was not saving or preparing them for posterity so much as constantly adjusting them to the present as he understood it. This is the kind of evidence that might be cited for a recent claim that the *Essays* are "contemporary history" (Pocock 1999, vol. ii., p.177ff.).

Another problem with that of the Liberty Fund and most other editions, is that the work's larger structural changes are not brought sufficiently to light. At least as early as 1742, there was a volume one and a volume two, but these were later merged so as to emphasize a different gap, which probably corresponded to changes in Hume's thinking

Department of English Studies, University of Paris VII, 10 rue Charles V, 75004 Paris, France.

[1] The gravest single flaw in this edition is the failure to reprint Hume's Preface to the original edition of the *Essays* in 1741, but there are a variety of lacunae. References to the Liberty Fund edition follow its spelling and typography.

ISSN 1042-7716 print; ISSN 1469-9656 online/05/010059-12 © 2005 The History of Economics Society
DOI: 10.1080/09557570500031570

about the present. The 1745 uprising in Scotland showed that North Britain belonged to the modern world. The war of the Austrian succession, by the time it ended with the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle in 1748, had provided a spectacle of unprecedented military spending both for the modern and also for the ancient world (Hume 1777, pp. 282, 289, 338, 358-59). In addition, much of that spending had no significant political effect (p. 339). These were major developments for Hume,[2] and so when he again went to press in 1752, there were not just different volume numbers but different titles. What concerns most readers of this journal is his new version of a volume two, something he chose to call the *Political Discourses.* Yet in present terminology, we sometimes like to say that their being about commerce, money, and interest in the way he conceives of these subjects is precisely why they are not political: Hume is concerned to delimit a new space of reflection that we call economy. But to do so, why does his title not lead obviously in that new direction? On the same grounds we could ask why he deliberately clips off the new direction when it appears in the title of an "author of reputation," Charles Dutot.[3] And if we stay with the word "political," how shall we distinguish the *Political Discourses* of 1752 from the *Essays Moral and Political* of the early 1740s, devoted to subjects such as political parties in general and in Britain, or republican and monarchical forms of government? Do they build on each other as texts? Or do we need to make something of the difference between an essay and a discourse? Samuel Johnson's *Dictionary* (1755) would here yield us the opposition between "a loose sally of the mind" and "a treatise; a dissertation."

"A loose sally of the mind": that definition is not inappropriate for the first two essays in the 1741 volume. "Of the Delicacy of Taste and Passion" was clearly important to the author, and it may even state the terms of his contract with the polite reader, but nowadays we tend to skip over it. This brings the reader to "Of the Liberty of the Press," which all in all is an elliptical and surprisingly critical tack on what in many European minds (and for many of us still) was a signal virtue of eighteenth-century English society. It is only when we arrive at the third essay, with its great programmatic title, that Hume seems to take off: "That Politics may be Reduced to a Science." Here is the stuff of treatises and dissertations, though presented in the form of a fifteen-page essay. We cannot be certain that Hume would ultimately have defended that powerful affirmation[4] but it clearly beckons toward the creation of a discipline—political science. Such claims had already been made by other authors, of course, and

[2] The publication in 1748 of Montesquieu's *De l'Esprit des Loix* was probably more of a confirmation of ideas Hume had been expressing since 1741, than a revelation as such. He admired the work, corresponded with Montesquieu and no doubt was stimulated to continue reflecting on subjects the two authors shared an interest in. The only explicit references to the *Esprit* in the *Essays* are in the discussion of population (1777, pp. 380, 460). The explicit reference to Montesquieu in the *Enquiry Concerning the Principle of Morals* likewise suggests exchange rather than passive influence (1751, pp. 196–97).

[3] Dutot's *Réflexions politiques sur les finances et le commerce, où l'on examine* . . . (1738) is truncated by Hume into *Reflections politiques* (1777, p. 287), as if politics were in fact the whole story. In the section of Hume's "Early Memoranda" that Mossner dates to ca. 1740, Dutot's title appears once as *Reflexions sur les finances* and twice as *Reflexions politiques*, again suggesting a difficulty (Mossner 1948, nos. 504, 510). Adam Smith (1776, p. 317) did not make the same mistakes.

[4] It is conceivable that he borrows the title from a rather ironic context. In *Gulliver's Travels*, Swift has his narrator playfully suggest that the King of Brobdingnag had not established an absolute monarchy over his subjects on account of "ignorance; by not having reduced politics into a science, as the more acute wits of Europe have done" (Swift 1726, p. 109). Hume knew the book well, so well in fact that he imagined writing a sequel to it (Hume 1932, vol. I, p. 153).

Hume does not so much review the literature on the subject as attempt to conquer doubts about it, including perhaps his own.[5] The tentativeness of the essay genre is no doubt important here as well. The title of the present essay mimes that gesture while turning Hume's likely affirmation into a question: can jealousy be reduced to a science? Curiously, while it would be distressing to see a "concept" of jealousy established in the world of thought, this essay will consider ways in which the answer might be "unfortunately, yes." Yes—because in certain of his writings from the 1740s and '50s, jealousy emerges as a central mediating term in Hume's understanding of law in society, and the term has a greater currency in the period than we might expect. Unfortunately—because to bring out the place of that mediation is perhaps to qualify the end results, the established disciplines that we tend to take for granted today, at least in the way that an archeologist may think differently about a building that stands on foundations none of us in the present suspected.

One justification for an archeological dig lies in the strangeness of the word "jealousy," a strangeness perfectly evident as soon as one begins to study its precise semantics, and which probably goes a long way towards explaining the silence of Hume's commentators. Patently Hume does *not* mean what we think of most commonly by jealousy, that is, a torment associated with love. A massive shift towards that meaning is underway in Hume's day but has not yet abolished other acceptations that are apparent in the *Essays*, and that connect to earlier usage.[6] There may even be a philological point to make here. In the years before writing the *Political Discourses*, Hume reports that he not only recovered his Greek but also that he read "almost all" of ancient literature, Greek and Roman.[7] It is hard to imagine that with such deep contact he would not have drawn on certain classical nuances of language and perception—whence my recourse to archeology—in thinking about situations of social competition and uncertainty in his own time. But it is also clear that this was no erudite invention. Hume's readership could understand his complex use of the word, and something of the same network of ideas could be found in contemporary French. He even turns this understanding into an irony when he notes at one point that his contemporaries "seem to be more possessed with the ancient GREEK spirit of jealous emulation, than actuated by the prudent views of modern politics" (1777, p. 339). This is to fault modernity for not being modern enough.

[5] The skeptical pendant emerges by the twelfth essay, "Of Civil Liberty," which begins with another programmatic thought in a world dominated by Lockean philosophy: we have not yet had experience enough of politics to be able to know what mankind is capable of (1777, p. 87).

[6] Johnson (1755) defines jealousy in terms somewhat like ours: "Suspicion in love. Suspicious fear. Suspicious caution, vigilance or rivalry." But the adjective "jealous" clearly has other nuances: "Suspicious in love. Emulous; full of competition. Zealously cautious against dishonour. Suspiciously vigilant. Suspiciously careful. Suspiciously fearful." The first definition of the verb "suspect," associated with Bacon, makes the process circular: "To imagine with a degree of fear and jealousy what is not known."

[7] His recovery of Greek in the years after the first volume of the *Essays* is important enough to deserve mention in "My Own Life" (1777, p. xxxiv). Referring to his essay on populations in the modern and ancient worlds, he tells Gilbert Minto in 1751 that he had "read over almost all the Classics both Greek and Latin, since I form'd that Plan" (Hume 1932, vol. I, p. 152). To my knowledge, the importance of this revival of learning—a private Renaissance—has never been suitably studied by Hume commentators.

Still we must ask: why jealousy? Even if conflict is remarkably present in Hume's vision of the present, other registers of language were available to describe it. Clearly he chooses not to portray his world in terms that would call to mind a Hobbesian state of nature, any more than he is interested in the Latin *invidia*, or envy, which Hobbes associates with "competition," one of the primary passions of the state of nature (Hobbes 1651, pp. 124–26, 185f.).[8] Nor does Hume invoke the psychology that we know to expect of him. His war of benevolence against self-love is waged in the philosophical works but not here. The same holds for his account of justice (Hayek 1963). Likewise, the *Essays* make no attempt to reflect on the role of pride or vanity, or that traditional economic passion, avarice. As if to acknowledge its irrelevance, the essay he wrote on avarice for the 1741 edition was withdrawn after 1768. And from the start, it had been marginal in its style, belletristic and decorative, rather than analytical.[9] The thematics of jealousy instead provide the means for a displacement, helping Hume to suggest that the economic and everyday contexts of his discourse cannot stand by themselves, but must be placed in a larger frame conditioned by matters of religion and aristocracy.

The religious dimension is familiar to the ear. "For I the Lord thy God am a jealous God," says the King James Bible, to understand which, we need to hear the etymological root of jealousy, the Greek *zēlos* which gives us "zealous" and its Late Latin associations with religious fervor and fanaticism. Here the terms point to a contamination between the religious and the emotional that often takes the form of a dispossession of the self. As a result, though the *Treatise of Human Nature* gives center stage—its middle book—to the passions, and we are told that "reason is and ought only to be the slave of the passions" (Hume 1739–40, p. 415), zeal is actively shunned by Hume. Indeed, even when they are associated with delicacy, powerful emotions are still to be avoided,[10] especially in matters of religion. At best, when it comes to zeal and enthusiasm, Hume is extremely ambivalent, as shown by the ending to the essay about politics reducible to a science, when he calls rather loudly for "ZEAL" against . . . "zeal" (1777, pp. 26–27). It is no wonder the possibility of religious passion—understood as either religious in character or in intensity—never ceased to haunt him. Even in his final work, the short autobiographical account called "My Own Life," the last paragraph jars with the Olympian, third-person placidity of the dying philosopher when it suddenly lashes out against "the rage of both civil and religious factions" and "zealots" (p. xli). Jealousy is, in this context, a marker of religious and psychological danger.

The aristocratic roots of jealousy are also canonical and relate in a different way to zeal. The complexity and nuances of Hume's language[11] can be shown via a passage from the 1757 installment of the *History of England*, on the reign of Charles II. After

[8] Jealousy in Hobbes is closer to our sense of the word. "THE PASSION OF LOVE [. . .], with fear that the love is not mutuall, [is] JEALOUSIE" (p. 124, but cf. pp. 310–11). Envy is briefly mentioned in Hume's *Treatise* (1739–1740, p. 377), and amorous jealousy is described in his essay "Of Polygamy and Divorce" (1742). The language of that essay, and in particular the discussion of the Turkish seraglio, informs most of Adam Smith's uses of the word in the *Lectures on Jurisprudence* (1762–1766, e.g. pp. 151–53). This is not the case for *The Wealth of Nations.*

[9] The weightiest traditional reference to avarice appears elsewhere in the 1741 edition (1777, p. 93).

[10] One or two years later, in the opening essay, "Of the Delicacy of Taste and Passion" (1741).

[11] Edward Gibbon (1776–88, vol. I, p. 525) will follow Hume's semantics, with less equanimity, when he speaks of the Jews as having "a fiercer zeal and a more jealous faith" than the Christians.

alluding to the discredit of the exclusionist party, which had only recently been "so numerous, powerful, and zealous," Hume moves on in the next paragraph to Charles's attempts to reinforce his popularity in the country. His brother, the Duke of York and future James II, is there said "zealously" to oppose his wish to call a Parliament. Although religion is the issue that risks flooding back into the debate, it is clear from Hume's account that the zeal shown by the Whigs and by James is essentially political. And yet there is a marked contrast, a few lines later, when Hume comes to review Charles's behavior in foreign affairs:

> Had the least grain of jealousy or emulation been mixed in the king's character; had he been actuated by that concern for his people's or even for his own honour, which his high station demanded, he would have hazarded many domestic inconveniences rather than allow France to domineer in so haughty a manner as that which at present she assumed in every negotiation [in the Dutch wars] (Hume 1754–62, vol. 6, pp. 441–42).

What distinguishes the Duke of York's zeal from his royal brother's (lack of) jealousy is a matter of station. Zeal operates in political space as a kind of ordinary strife but jealousy occurs at another level. Whether in the works of Niccolò Machiavelli, Gibbon, or Hume, "the jealousy and cruelty of princes" (Hume 1751, pp. 180–81) is commonly supposed to be their medium, the condition by which leaders keep power. In addition, the philological doubling of "jealousy or emulation" takes us back once more to the Greek *zēlos* as well as to the Latin *aemulatio*, into which it translates (along with *invidia*). One is jealous when involved in a struggle with equals or out of a desire to imitate them—and this the Greeks found ennobling. That is why haughty princes vie with one another, just as political parties like the exclusionists do with their rivals. Another possibility involves conflict with those who are not, but who one fears might become, equals or even prove to be superiors. That sense of mutuality can be endangered and even lost when a subject must defend his own position, as in the stock eighteenth-century phrase "the jealousy of freedom," which we often gloss, reductively, as proud independence (Gibbon 1776–1788, vol. I, p. 87).[12] This context can be summed up by saying that jealousy serves as the marker of eminent social relations, and raises questions about the conservation, or the possession, of power.

These appropriations of canonical meanings of the word appear to facilitate Hume's rethinking of key questions in this period of his career, and in the *Essays.* In particular, one must be struck by the singularly limpid perception of European demographics that he sets forth in the 1751 volume and that underpins the analysis. Despite a series of major wars, the frontiers of European nations have barely changed in the last two hundred years (1777, p. 273). However, the states defined by those frontiers have undergone significant domestic changes. They are more populous (pp. 452ff.), powerful (p. 273) and "civilized" (p. 278). All of these changes are tied to one of the most conspicuous misjudgments in Hume's entire opus, when he asserts, at the very opening of the *Political Discourses* (on the fourth page of

[12] Compare Henry Fielding's statement in "An Enquiry into the Causes of the Increase in Robbers" (1751) that Britain was "a nation so jealous of all her liberties, that from the slightest cause, and often without any cause at all" people were "always murmuring at our superiors" (quoted in Greene 1998, p. 212).

the 1751 volume, p. 256n.), that half of the inhabitants of "most parts of Europe" live in cities. England would not be predominantly urban until 1851; France not until the 1930s.[13] Hume is far from the mark but trying very hard to understand and to ground new expressions of *social* power, the multiplied centers of power that we associate with the term "civil society." Cities are places of commerce, manufacture, and politeness. Places where people live together, trade, and converse are opposed by definition to the idea of social or civil war. At the same time, the rise of cities provides an alternative to the traditional ideas of a single metropolitan center of political action.

I will try to suggest that jealousy comes into play as the passion of a provincial or polycentric world where commerce, manufacture, and politeness are present but not settled, powerful but not undisputed—and perhaps could not be otherwise. Indeed, as Hume observes in 1741, commerce is not even the exclusive attribute of free societies, and so jealousy will arise between different models of society as well (1777, pp. 92–93).[14] This observation leads beyond existing notions of the balance of power, as one finds them in Daniel Defoe or Charles Davenant, because the origins of all favorable development are ascribed to one system only, the republican (pp. 117, 125). It is thus not surprising that there is something self-consciously innovative in Hume's presentation of jealousy. To begin with, the word itself is never so present in his vocabulary at any other period although, strikingly, his more conventional philosophical work from the same period does not employ the word with any regularity.[15] When we look into the *Essays* themselves, the first occurrences of the word, in "Of the Liberty of the Press" (from the 1741 edition), are all italicized by the author, to increase their prominence. The last occurrences of the word, chronologically speaking, are virtually Hume's last word in the essay genre. These come in the short "Of the Jealousy of Trade," which was one of two late texts added to the *Essays* in 1758, long after the volumes had been completed. (And it was at this point that the title *Political Discourses* disappeared in favor of a "Part II.") To speak of contemporary history, whether in politics, morals, or economic life, Hume apparently finds it more useful to think of a socialized affect like jealousy than a conceptual enigma (or battleground) like freedom. We have already seen that jealousy proposes a variety of different ideas about the self and its capacities for possession and dispossession. In addition, the latter amount to a newly dynamic view of property and a would-be departure from Locke: a labor theory cannot account for every form of spiritual possession.

When we move beyond formal signs, the situation becomes complex in a different way. In relation to jealousy, the *Essays* might be summarized as containing two very general arguments that run in opposing directions and have different valences. On the one hand, jealousy describes conflicts in politics (especially in relation to party or faction) that have an ugly side that we can now describe as involving the wrong kind of zeal, verging on fanaticism. The "problem" is that even the wrong kind of

[13] Rule (1992, pp. 311f.) provides a reasoned interpretation of English demographics in the period.

[14] He picks out "the great jealousy entertained of late" towards France as a singular contemporary phenomenon. The essay in which this passage occurs, "Of Civil Liberty" (1741), along with "Of the Rise and Progress of the Arts and Sciences" (1742), may provide the thematic matrix for much of the *Political Discourses* of ten years later.

[15] There may be only one occurrence of the word in the *Enquiry concerning the Principle of Morals* (1751), cited above.

zeal is not altogether negative. Hume views these conflicts as debilitating, unavoidable *and* positive, at least for the present, because they are productive of British liberty. On the other hand, in economic life, jealousy names a general climate that we might liken to isolationism,[16] and that Hume flatly condemns. In attempting to promote my own interests, my jealousy does more harm to me than to the other, or else it puts us on the same plane. Yet Hume's condemnation is paradoxical, too, since this "narrow and malignant opinion" (1777, p. 328) is, for reasons I will come to, curiously benign. At another point he calls jealousy in regard to economic life a form of "ignorance" (p. 308), which is a useful slur since he wishes to convince his readers that such feelings are perfectly avoidable. For that reason, it would not do to treat jealousy as fanaticism: it is easier to educate people out of ignorance and parochial "opinion[s]" than out of fanaticism.

Jealousy is thus split in two. We had better be willing to suffer with it on one side and we would do well to wish it away on the other. But there appears to be no fundamental antagonism between the political and economic spheres, since jealousy is linked in both cases to a possibility of balance. On the one hand, jealousy promotes political liberty through a balance of powers; on the other, it specifically hampers a more dynamic view of the balance of trade that Hume associates with the possibility of modern economic improvement. Although the outcome is different on each of my two hands, the connections with the idea of balance again show that jealousy is being considered as a social marker rather than simply a selfish emotion. So it tends, one might say asymptotically, not even to be a vice; or if it is a vice, we cannot altogether deplore it.[17]

Economic discourse has been considered as a transvaluation of the role of avarice in society, and a great deal of attention has been focused (by Hume, among others) on the role of luxury in transforming society. By comparison, jealousy is less stubbornly material, so that it seems to acquire the status of a *trompe-l'œil.* This direction becomes evident when, in "Of the Jealousy of Trade" (1758), Hume makes a bold and paradoxical claim about imports and "our imitation of foreigners." He says:

> Notwithstanding the advanced state of our manufactures, we daily adopt, in every art, the inventions and improvements of our neighbours. The commodity is first imported from abroad, to our great discontent, while we imagine that it drains us of our money: Afterwards, the art itself is gradually imported, to our visible advantage: Yet we continue still to repine, that our neighbours should possess any art, industry and invention; forgetting that, had they not first instructed us, we should have been at present barbarians; and did they not still continue their instructions, the arts must fall into a state of languor, and lose that emulation and novelty, which contribute so much to their advancement (1777, pp. 328–29).

[16] Rather than mercantilism or protectionism, because the model can be applied to individuals within a country as well as between countries.

[17] Cp. "And indeed it seems upon any system of morality, little less than a contradiction in terms, to talk of a vice, which is in general beneficial to society" (1777, p. 280). He may not escape the point of his own gibe at Mandeville.

The process of economic improvement turns out to be the unfolding of Hume's intricate sense of possession and dispossession. Earlier in the 1752 volume he had observed that foreign trade has an essential role to play in bringing about domestic improvement (1777, pp. 263–64).[18] The passage cited here enters a further claim. It suggests that there is a necessary fiction in economic growth, or that an economy (even in an "advanced state") always develops dishonestly. When discoveries come from elsewhere, the local economic players naturally attempt to appropriate the techniques involved. But more significantly, they seek also to obtain the moral property of their use. The self is not content to rely on its own selfish horizons: it draws its substance from outside relations. Yet even as these techniques bring about further progress and exchange with the outside, the players lament that they must grow on the basis of things that are not exclusively of their own conception. Our jealousy thus seems to care little for progress made or for the material prosperity the new techniques engender—even as it accompanies every step forward in our improvement. This is the downside of the beneficent process of exchange, its unhappy consciousness.

Nevertheless, to the extent that economic development remains associated with improvement and happiness, we must consider jealousy as relatively indifferent in itself, a conspicuous mediation in social life but not a final concern. As such, jealousy takes its place alongside other metaphors of transparent liquidity in Hume's economic writing, such as water and especially money, that "oil which renders the motion of the wheels [of trade] more smooth and easy" (1777, p. 281). In theory, such forces never need to be controlled but always adjust themselves to their environment. As in the case of money as well, those adjustments are almost invisible. Hume acknowledges the differential changes that occur when money enters a country, but at the same time he argues that the snowballing rate of changes makes them virtually instantaneous. The same narrative logic describes how jealousy produces "great discontent" along with improvement, and even prompts us to "repine," the more prosperous we become. Jealousy then functions as a kind of rhetorical and emotional oil that eases the way to the dispossession of self in the name of improvement, even as money is the oil that facilitates the exchange of goods and services. The analogy with money also implies that jealousy leaves us free to shift our attention to the management of other factors, which are the real questions: "men and commodities" (p. 293) in the case of money, and socialization and balance in the case of jealousy. The virtue, and also the modernity, of this oil are evident if one considers Hume's account of how societies have developed through history by way of "stops" and "interruptions" rather than continuous growth (e.g., pp. 118–20): jealousy is a means of development in the present.

But the analogy between jealousy and money also implies that its mediation may be something less than transparent, and can in fact be an obstacle. For Hume's contention that "money is not, properly speaking, one of the subjects of commerce" (1777, p. 281) need not be read as a simple affirmation. Money is indifferent, he says, and even changes in its supply provide only temporary advantages to trading partners. But

[18] Defoe had already recognized that "most of our great Advances in Arts, in Trade, in Government and in almost all great Things, we are now Masters of, and in which we so much exceed all our Neighbouring Nations, are really founded upon the Inventions of others." But Defoe believed in the transfer of skills. Once the English learned, they became the acknowledged Masters for others (Defoe 1728, pp. 182f.).

his account also suggests that those temporary advantages will occur almost constantly. In spite of its indifference, Hume will thus recommend that money be manipulated by the magistrate rather than left to nature (p. 288). And even more blatantly, he is ill at ease with the fact that money is necessarily displaced, dispossessed of its role as a medium, by paper (pp. 284f.). In other words, mediation functions *via* obstacles as well as in spite of them. Money, as William Petty might have put it, is an oil that costs money.

Here, too, there is a clear symmetry with jealousy. By the end of the passage quoted above, jealousy moves from being simply a form of resentful indifference, like sand in the wheels of trade, to discovering itself in a positive role, in the form of that "emulation" that keeps us active in the game. In fact, the terms of Hume's description show that it applies to economic activity at its broadest: these inventions are adopted "daily," in "every" art, providing a constant contact with the present ("novelty"). It becomes obvious that "our neighbors" are not only inhabitants of foreign countries but fellow citizens as well, anyone outside the domestic setting of the *oikos.* Jealousy thus provides a spur of benign malignancy that allows for all development, whether material or social.

This view could make for an enlightened dimension to the story I've been telling. Jealousy is a basic ingredient in the psychology of economic and social life, based on each person's understanding of society more than on the objects *per se* that economic life would allow him or her to acquire. If jealousy is also a kind of ignorance needing to be coaxed into understanding, the implication is that our various economies are bound to become more and more refined. Enlightened jealousy would thus represent a sublimation of jealousy by itself, and one may conjecture that Hume likewise wished to achieve a secularization of religious zeal through social jealousy, in order to make such emotions safe for civil society. Indeed, that is what we mean by the civilizing process, which is the play of mediations in the person rather than in e.g., luxury goods. As early as 1763, Adam Smith would begin to shape this story into a vision of "free trade," with jealousy as a variable.[19] But I have called all of this an enlightened dimension rather than an enlightened ending to the story, because there seem to be other, dark questions that inhabit the same space.

The first begins by having a Mandevillian resonance, though as the epigraph from Leslie Stephen suggests, it corresponds to a widespread, familiar idea. One might say that the creative use that Hume's analysis makes of the idea of jealousy amounts to his inventing a new desire, a new source of motivation. Jealousy the vice may be transformed into jealousy the tractable psychological impulse and fed into the machine of social relation. As we all pursue our jealous thoughts we will insensibly come to emulate each other. And the machine will work better and better—every day, in every art, and between every set of neighbors, rich or poor (Marshall 2000). However (and here we leave Bernard Mandeville), when you socialize an emotion that in theory seemed designed to preserve the prerogatives of the self by means of hostility, there is a danger that conflict may also be generalized. We could call this a state of "possessive individualism" (Hobbes 1651, pp. 37–39, 188) but it seems

[19] "In general we may observe that these jealousies and prohibitions are most hurtfull to the richest nations" (Smith 1762–1766, pp. 392, 512).

that the individual is himself[20] made polemical by Hume's narrative of how the self grows into its social role through a process involving something like abandon. The most serious consequence here is that if the jealousy of trade is finally an illusion of vice, the jealousy of freedom may be no more than a borderline virtue, a somewhat outrageous claim made for freedom. And just as the jealousy of freedom begins to seem like a limited, factious, or isolated state, so it will be evident that the dangerous potentialities of the self have not been transferred into a safer social sphere when European economies play into the jealousies expressed by eighteenth-century warfare. Gibbon may have thought the wars of modern Europe were but "temperate and undecisive contests" (Gibbon 1776–1788, vol. II, p. 513). But that is not the way Hume saw the war of the Austrian Succession. Here were neighboring civil societies that, along with balance, were increasingly capable of mobilizing the resources of the social order in favor of military conflict.

Although this danger to civil societies arises from new phenomena, Hume attempts to understand it with an old language. To recall how complex Hume's sense of freedom, and its limitations, was, it may help to consider a line from Tacitus[21] that he introduces twice into the *Essays*. The first time, apropos of despotic power, he quotes the Latin *Habet subjectos tanquam suos; viles, ut alienos*, and then renders it as: "He governs the subjects with full authority, as if they were his own; and with negligence or tyranny, as belonging to another." This is followed immediately by a drastic judgment: "A people governed after such a manner, are slaves in the full and proper sense of the word" (1777, p. 117). Hume's vision of slavery hinges on how one understands the matter of possession implied by "suos" and "alienos"—and in fact Tacitus himself is clearly highlighting problems of self-possession, political alienation, and social violence during the reign of Galba. Hume may well seem benign in comparison, even if the reference to Tacitus leads into the question of freedom. The second time he cites the Latin, his subject is not domestic but international politics, the customary jealousies of France, Britain, and her allies. The grammatical subject of the citation changes from singular to plural, from the absolute ruler to the parties in conflict:

> we are so declared in our opposition to FRENCH power, and so alert in defence of our allies, that they always reckon upon our force as upon their own; and expecting to carry on war at our expence, refuse all reasonable terms of accommodation. *Habent subjectos, tanquam suos; viles, ut alienos.* All the world knows, that the factious vote of the House of Commons, in the beginning of the last parliament, with the professed humour of the nation, made the queen of HUNGARY inflexible in her terms, and prevented that agreement with PRUSSIA, which would immediately have restored the general tranquillity of EUROPE (p. 339).

War is prolonged in this case, not by the actions of the absolute ruler alone, but in part by a Parliamentary system and popular opinion; the sense of slavery is derived from individual countries measuring one another, threatening to enslave each other

[20] The sentence would have to be written differently for "herself."

[21] In Tacitus's *Histories*, Book I, paragraph 37, the line reads "nunc et subjectos nos habuit tanquam suos et viles ut alienos." Hume slightly misquotes the remark.

and themselves. The result, Hume argued, was not only war on an unprecedented scale, but war that had lost its motivations, something like war for war's sake.

In light of these political, social, and economic dangers, where does Hume leave the modern subject or citizen? Perhaps we need to consider this question in a more narrowly philosophical vein, with jealousy as a skeptical emotion, combining affirmation and doubt, a lucid role for the self and the need for society. The interest of this philosophical perspective would lie in the way that jealousy again serves as a bridge, or mediator, between possibilities. Several times in this presentation, I have identified the place of such mediations by using an image that becomes important in Hume's discussion of public credit, when he rejects Jean-François Melon's notion that the management of such debt can be safe, because "it is like transferring money from the right hand to the left; which leaves the person neither richer nor poorer than before" (1777, p. 356). Hume, as it were, admits the expression "on the one hand" and "on the other hand," but in the case of public credit he expresses his skepticism about the chances of transfer between them. It is on the very same grounds, it seems to me, that he argues for a vision of balance. Only his argument may come to rely on something like an infinite regression of balances, so that it becomes difficult to determine what really founds the sense of stability. Liberty arises as the middle product of factional or institutional jealousies that compromise liberty. Economic progress is based on jealousy that refuses it, unless jealousy undoes itself to stimulate progress. The worlds of politics and economics are ignorant of each other's conditions, though they invoke the same ideal of balance. It is therefore not obvious that one side can correct or "save" the other.

At the beginning of this paper, I referred to what the *Essays* are about as opposed to what they were about, and this opposition may be considered as a final, difficult mediation. As readers we may come to feel that the role of mediations overshadows that of the laws that Hume enunciates—or appears to enunciate. The *Discourses* are indeed essays, not demonstrations. And they would go on to be incorporated, in 1758, into a single volume in which Hume gathered much of his writing on morals, religion, and philosophy. The *Essays and Treatises on Several Subjects* were meant to be read and taken together. Such transformations show us that Hume knew very well that he was writing in time and that certain aspects of the realities described had little chance of lasting beyond the present. It is relatively easy to overlook this obvious aspect of the *Essays*, to the extent that Hume himself must have been surprised to see that the present lasted from the early 1740s at least through the 1760s and perhaps even into the early 1770s. Temporal instability is famously clear in his analysis of public credit, and it had already surfaced for related but also different reasons in his call for a "euthanasia" of the British constitution (1777, p. 53), a call that J. M. Keynes would continue to make (1936, pp. 375–76). Pending such historical consummations, the present involves social actors in jealousies.

REFERENCES

Defoe, D. (1728) A Plan of the English Commerce, in: John McVeagh (Ed.) *Political and Economic Writings of Daniel Defoe*, *Vol. 7* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2000).

Gibbon, E. (1776–1788) *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, David Womersley (Ed.), 3 vols. (London: Penguin, 1994).

Greene, J. P. (1998) Empire and Identity from the Glorious Revolution to the American Revolution, in: P. J. Marshall (Ed.) *The Oxford History of the British Empire: The Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

Hayek, F. A. (1963) The Legal and Political Philosophy of David Hume, in: V. C. Chappell (Ed.) *Hume* (London, Macmillan).

Hobbes, T. (1651) *Leviathan*, C.B. Macpherson (Ed.) (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968).

Hume, D. (1740) *A Treatise of Human Nature*, L. A. Selby-Bigge and P. H. Nidditch (Eds) (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978).

Hume, D. (1751) *Enquiries concerning Human Understanding and concerning the Principles of Morals*, L. A. Selby-Bigge and P. H. Nidditch (Eds) 3rd edition (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1975).

Hume, D. (1762) *The History of England*, six vols (Indianapolis, IN: Liberty Fund, 1983).

Hume, D. (1777) *Essays Moral, Political, and Literary*, E. F. Miller (Ed.) 2nd edition (Indianapolis, IN: Liberty Fund, 1987).

Hume, D. (1932) *The Letters of David Hume*, two vols, J. Y. T. Greig (Ed.) (Oxford: Clarendon Press).

Johnson, S. (1755) *Dictionary of the English Language*, A. Chalmers (Ed.) (London: Studio Editions, 1994).

Keynes, J. M. (1936) *General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money* (London: Macmillan, 1973).

Marshall, M. G. (2000) Luxury, Economic Development and Work Motivation: David Hume, Adam Smith and J. R. McCulloch, *History of Political Economy*, 32 (3), pp. 631–48.

Mossner, E. (1948) Hume's Early Memoranda, 1729–1740: The Complete Text, *Journal of the History of Ideas*, IX, pp. 492–518.

Pocock, J. G. A. (1999) *Barbarism and Religion*, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

Rule, J. (1992) *The Vital Century: England's Developing Economy 1714–1815* (London: Longman).

Smith, A. (1762–1766) *Lectures on Jurisprudence*, R. L. Meek, D. D. Raphael and P. G. Stein (Eds) (Indianapolis, IN: Liberty Fund, 1982).

Smith, A. (1776) *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, two vols, R. H. Campbell and A. S. Skinner (Eds) (Indianapolis, IN: Liberty Fund, 1981).

Stephen, L. (1876) *English Thought in the 18th Century*, 2 vols. (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1962).

Swift, J. (1726) *Gulliver's Travels and Other Writings*, L. Landa (Ed.) (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1960).