

The Gothic origin of modern civility: Mandeville and the Scots on courage*

John P. Wright has lately demonstrated that David Hume's earliest known essay on modern honour was largely constructed with Mandeville's *Origin of honour* in mind.¹ I think this is correct. However, I am less certain about Wright's subsequent move to follow a reading by Ryan Hanley about the corruption of ancient virtues and the invention of new ones in Hume's early and mature thought.² Wright and Hanley assume that what we witness in Hume is an attempt to reconcile the ancient virtues of magnanimity and courage with modern benevolence and humanity. Wright highlights the strong influence of both Shaftesbury and Hutcheson on Hume regarding the idea that genuine virtue needs to be natural: consequently, Hume's sympathies were on the side of the ancients.³ I believe that when we examine these notions in a more extensive Mandevillean context we will reach different conclusions. In order to understand Hume's moral, political and economic principles (and their influence on eighteenth-century Scottish thinking) one must realise why he was specifically on the side of the moderns and why his comments on Shaftesbury, who was perhaps the greatest promoter of the ancients and a crucial example for many Scots, are disparaging.⁴ Thus, I take it that Ryu Susato, who has stated in print that the corruption of ancient virtues was not that great a problem for Hume, is quite correct in his basic account.⁵ Chivalry need not be congratulated, but it needs to be understood as a historical reason why modern manners surpassed the ancient.

I

Let us begin with the context of Mandeville's *Enquiry into the origin of honour, and the usefulness of Christianity in war*, published in 1732, and concentrate on the second half of the title referring to the 'usefulness of Christianity in war', which is often forgotten.⁶ It is worth noting that the contrast

* I would like to thank Remy Debes for his excellent help, Gordon Graham and the participants of "The Scottish Response to Mandeville", The Center for the Study of Philosophy at Princeton Theological Seminary, Spring Conference 2013 for their comments. Many of the ideas developed here originally sprung up almost a decade ago in discussions with Markku Peltonen.

¹ John P. Wright, 'Hume on the origin of "modern honour": a study in Hume's philosophical development', in *Philosophy and religion in Enlightenment Britain. New case studies*, ed. Ruth Savage, Oxford University Press, 2012, p. 187-204.

² Ryan Hanley, 'David Hume and the modern problem of honour', *Modern schoolman*, 84, 2008, p.295-312.

³ On Hume's liking of ancient literature and simultaneous dislike of ancient philosophy, see Peter Loftson, 'Hume and ancient philosophy', *British Journal for the History of Philosophy*, 20, 2012, p.741-772.

⁴ See especially Hume's essays 'Of civil liberty' and 'Rise and progress of arts and sciences'.

⁵ Ryu Susato, 'The idea of chivalry in the Scottish Enlightenment: the case of David Hume', *Hume studies*, 33, 2007, p.155-78. See also Donald T. Siebert, 'Chivalry and romance in the age of Hume', *Eighteenth-century life*, 21, 1997, p.62-79 and Ted Westhusing, 'A beguiling military virtue: honour', *Journal of military ethics*, 2, 2003, p.195-212.

⁶ On this theme, see also, Irwin Priner, 'Mandeville on War', *Mandeville and Augustan Ideas: New Essays*, ed. Charles W. A. Prior, Victoria, BC, 200, pp. 117-140.

between honour and Christianity was intentional on Mandeville's part. Throughout his works he emphasises that the doctrine of Christianity requires self-denial, and in this book his aim was to show that the idea of honour and the modern conception of courage were directly opposite to this.⁷ What is interesting from the perspective of eighteenth-century Scottish thinking is that the introduction of an element of 'usefulness of Christianity in war' was also an intervention on Mandeville's part in an on-going deist debate about Christianity's role in history. Something similar had, of course, been taking place at least since Porphyry's *Adversus Christianus*, who Mandeville had probably read because of his views on medical matters and vegetarian diet.⁸ In the early 1730s, at the time when *Enquiry into the origin of honour* was published, William Dudgeon and Robert Wallace, both of whom played a role in the environment in which Hume grew up, were engaged in this Christian debate in Scotland. Dudgeon was a rather notorious deist living near Chirnside in the borders, an acquaintance of Henry Home, later Lord Kames. It has been emphasised lately that Dudgeon also had an impact on Hume's early intellectual development.⁹ Wallace, a notably Shaftesburian thinker, later became one of Hume's major interlocutors in Edinburgh, especially regarding *Political discourses*. Wallace's relationship with Hume is generally known through the famous debate on the population of ancient and modern worlds, which also involved Montesquieu. It should be underlined, however, that the exchanges between Wallace and Hume were not limited to this particular debate.¹⁰

The argument between Dudgeon and Wallace that was conducted in print in London in 1731-1732 is quite straightforward. Dudgeon reacted to some of Wallace's earlier writings and claimed that the 'zeal of Christians has produced more fatal effects, than any other religious belief'.¹¹ The debate, thus, was precisely about Christianity's role in war. Wallace, in his subsequent reply, addressed Dudgeon and the claims that Christianity had been the source of more mischief than good.¹² Admittedly, bad things had happened and much blood had been spilled in the

⁷ Mandeville consistently advocates the idea of self-denial in Christianity in *Fable of the bees*, *Free thoughts* etc.

⁸ Mandeville's area of medical expertise was the stomach, see especially Francis McKee, 'An anatomy of power: the early works of Bernard Mandeville', unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Glasgow, 1991. Discussions on a vegetarian diet, Pythagoras and Porphyrian ideas of 'barbarity of eating flesh' are also to be found in Mandeville, *The Fable of the Bees, or Private vices, publick benefits*, with a critical, historical and explanatory commentary by F. B. Kaye [1924], Liberty Fund Press, 1988, vol. 1 (*Fable*).

⁹ See Paul Russell, *The Riddle of Hume's 'Treatise': skepticism, naturalism and irreligion*, Oxford University Press, 2008.

¹⁰ On the relationships between Hume and Dudgeon and Hume and Wallace, see Mikko Tolonen and James Harris, 'Hume in and out of Scottish context', *Oxford History of Scottish Philosophy*, Oxford University Press, vol. 2, forthcoming.

¹¹ [William Dudgeon], *The necessity of some of the positive institutions of Christianity consider'd. In a letter to the minister of Moffat*, London, 1731, p. 6.

¹² Robert Wallace, *A reply to a letter directed to the minister of Moffat, concerning the positive institutions of Christianity*, London, [1732], p. 12.

name of Christ, but these results could not be attributed to Christianity any more than mischief in countries practising other religions could be seen to lie with their religious doctrines.¹³

Mandeville tied his *Origin of honour* to the same deist conflict in emphasising that it had been the invention of a new code of honour that had a crucial effect on the advancement of modern European societies. His idea was that the basic principle of Christianity regarding self-denial had not caused any harm or good. It was the hypocrisy that Mandeville was revealing in his writings that enabled Christian societies to advance during the modern period, simply because these countries were able to fight wars and the soldiers remained courageous on the basis of artificial principles and not their natural courage. Mandeville's spokesman, Cleomenes, pointed out that the Koran encourages people to fight infidels, yet Christian soldiers were more disciplined than Muslims because of the principle of honour.¹⁴ A prime example of this kind of paradoxical state of hypocrisy among Christians at war was Cromwell's army, in which an 'appearance of religion' was combined with principles that had nothing to do with doctrine of Christ.¹⁵ Mandeville targeted authors who claimed that Christian principles made the best soldiers, his opinion being that Christianity was merely a mask and that the qualities that enabled men to fight were the ones that religion preached against. He thought that Christianity was mainly used politically in war to justify certain means.¹⁶ In his favourite example from the English Civil War, a 'spirit of Christianity' evidently helped to animate the troops while hiding their actual motivation.¹⁷ Hence, there is also a 'political use' for 'clergymen at war', because the fear of an invisible cause is inherent in human nature. Nevertheless, the ability of modern Europeans to fight, remain courageous and defend their countries was based on the modern principle of honour.¹⁸ What is most relevant here, however, is that Mandeville's *Origin of honour* was tied to the debate between Dudgeon and Wallace at the time it took place, which further explains the Scottish interest in Mandeville and the impact his ideas about courage had on eighteenth-century Scottish thinking. This is particularly relevant with regard to Hume, who was clearly reading Mandeville's *Origin of honour* at the time, probably also because it touched upon a deist conflict that involved people of his acquaintance, including Henry Home of Kames.¹⁹

¹³ Wallace, *A reply*, p. 14.

¹⁴ Mandeville, *Enquiry into the origin of honour and usefulness of Christianity in war (Origin of honour)*, London, 1732, p. 134.

¹⁵ Mandeville, *Origin of honour*, p. 162.

¹⁶ Mandeville, *Origin of honour*, p. 235.

¹⁷ Mandeville, *Origin of honour*, p. 238.

¹⁸ Mandeville, *Origin of honour*, p. 240.

¹⁹ For a book-length argument about Mandeville's influence on Hume's early intellectual development, see Tolonen, *Mandeville and Hume: anatomists of civil society*, Voltaire Foundation, Oxford, 2013.

II

A common eighteenth-century historical perspective was that there had been two states of civil society free from barbarity, one in ancient Greece and Rome and the other during modern times, the visible difference being that the political ideal of ancient civility was a republic, whereas modern greatness was largely built on civilised monarchies. Most authors also agreed that the ancients had been remarkably advanced in learning, but the question of civility in manners and politeness was a different matter.²⁰

There is no doubt that Lord Shaftesbury was a fervent apologist for the ancients. As Lawrence Klein has shown, ‘Greeks were, for Shaftesbury, the fundamental datum in the history of politeness: the fountain of all divinity, philosophy and ‘polite learning’; and masters ‘in all Science, Wit, Politeness and Manners’’.²¹ Shaftesbury’s influence on eighteenth-century British philosophy cannot be exaggerated. Joseph Addison, for example, in *Discourse on ancient and modern learning*, did not try to conceal his admiration for the ancients.²² The *Spectator*, in a Shaftesburyan manner, stated that ‘in the First Ages of the World, when the great Souls and Master-Pieces of Human Nature were produced, Men shined by a noble Simplicity of Behaviour, and were Strangers to those little Embellishments which are so fashionable in our present Conversation.’²³ It is reasonable to state that Addison concurred with Shaftesbury’s embracing of classical culture.

Similar ideas were also generally supported among moderate clergymen in eighteenth-century Scotland. The above-mentioned Robert Wallace called upon the authority of Shaftesbury to prove his different points in several of his writings. What lies in the background is a belief in natural human ability for self-governance. Shaftesburyan ideas of autonomy led Wallace to explore the possibilities of citizenship based on education and schooling. The advancement of learning through charity schools among the poor, especially in the Highlands, was thought to be the way to build and reconstruct Scotland upon imagined models of ancient virtues and culture. These ideas were also linked to a ‘scheme for a militia in Britain’.²⁴ The debate on the militia and standing armies had, by Wallace’s time, evolved into a discussion about universal schooling, so that the

²⁰ For an account underlining the role of learning in the ancient and modern debate, see, for example, Jonathan Swift, [The bookseller to the reader] ‘A full and true account of the battle fought last Friday, between the Antient and the Modern books in St. James’s library’, London, 1710, in *A Tale of the tub etc.*, Oxford University Press, 1958, pp. 214-219.

²¹ Lawrence Klein, ‘Liberty, manners and politeness in early eighteenth-century England’, *Historical journal*, 32, 1989, p. 599. See also Klein *Shaftesbury and the culture of politeness: moral discourse and cultural politics in early eighteenth-century England*, Cambridge University Press, 1994, pp. 199-206.

²² Joseph Addison, ‘A discourse on ancient and modern learning’, in *Works*, 6 vols., London, 1911, vol. 5, pp. 214-227.

²³ *The Spectator*, no. 249, 5 vols., ed. Donald F. Bond, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965, vol. 2, p. 467.

²⁴ University of Edinburgh, Laing manuscripts, la.II.620(6). On Wallace and the militia issue, see Robertson, *The Scottish Enlightenment and the militia issue*, John Donald Publishers, Edinburgh, 1985, pp. 87-88.

question now was how to train able-bodied males to carry arms from the age of 12.²⁵ It is not difficult to see how this kind of thinking used ancient examples for inspiration.

The emphasis placed on the Greek origin of learning and “real” politeness might resemble a common eighteenth-century perspective. The prevalence of ancient Greek manners and courage was a shared aspect among moralists trying to link politeness to virtue. Bernard Mandeville, David Hume and some other authors, on the other hand, thought that manners were principally dependent upon political principles, customs and the fashion of the times. They argued that the most important features of politeness were of modern origin. These theorists had no intention of making a close causal link between the causes of knowledge and politeness, although they were not, of course, trying to deny that learning was an important part of polite education.

By the 1730s, Mandeville’s polemics with Shaftesbury had evolved considerably since he first engaged with him in this manner in 1723.²⁶ Mandeville’s idea of honour as ‘a Principle of Courage’ is vital to his distinction between ancient and modern culture. He explained that ‘all ages and most Countries have produced Men of Virtue and Bravery’, but this modern ‘Term of Art’ was something that ‘the Ancients knew Nothing of; nor can you with Ten Words, in either *Greek* or *Latin*, express the entire Idea which is annex’d to the Word Honour when it signifies a Principle’.²⁷ Honour (in this sense), the binding principle of modern society, did not exist in the ancient world. Moral virtues and the principle of self-denial did. In Mandeville’s system, ‘what we call Prowess or natural Courage in Creatures, is nothing but the Effect of Anger’.²⁸ Moreover, there is ‘a great Difference between’ natural ‘and *artificial* Courage’.²⁹

It is a commonplace that a soldier ‘should Fight undauntedly and obstinately’. It is somewhat more difficult to reason how men could be polite without losing their undaunted courage when it is based on anger. According to Mandeville, the ambiguity between natural courage and good manners never vanished from the Greek world. Grecian politicians used all the known arts ‘to raise and keep up’ the spirits of the soldiers ‘and their Hatred to their Enemies’. However, ‘it is the easiest Thing in the World to make’ a man ‘hate’ someone ‘with all his Heart’, but a far more difficult task ‘to make’ him ‘sincerely love his Neighbour’.³⁰ Consequently, Mandeville added, the

²⁵ University of Edinburgh, Laing manuscripts, la.II.620(6).

²⁶ See also, Mandeville, *Free thoughts*, 1720, p. 360, where Mandeville is quoting Shaftesbury in a positive manner as an authority supporting his own case.

²⁷ Mandeville, *Origin of honour*, 1732, p. 15.

²⁸ Mandeville, *Fable*, p. 205.

²⁹ Mandeville, (*Part II*), *The Fable of the bees, or Private vices, publick benefits*, with a commentary critical, historical and explanatory by F. B. Kaye [1924], Liberty Fund Press, vol. 2, p. 86. For an interpretation of Mandeville’s *Fable* and *Part II* as intellectually and physically different works, see Tolonen, *Mandeville and Hume: anatomists of civil society*, pp. 41-146.

³⁰ Mandeville, *Origin of honour*, p. 135.

Greek nations, lacking the principle of honour and modern politeness, were only able to support territories of very limited size. Athens did not merit inclusion in Mandeville's list of flourishing nations, compared to modern Europe. The example of Sparta, on the other hand, showed that once an ancient state faced continuous offences, it soon lost all the signs of good manners. In general, the nature of a citizen living in one of the small, ancient states was not polite: it was simple and warlike.

In all ages, Mandeville argued, courage (whether natural or artificial) had always been the chief virtue of soldiers. The significant differences between different ages were constituted by the principles that men followed. To be a man of modern honour, it is not enough to be 'brave in War'. One 'must bear no Affront without resenting it, not refuse a Challenge, if it be sent to him in a proper Manner by a Man of Honour'.³¹ Mandeville had 'no doubt, but the Signification of the Word Honour is entirely Gothick, and sprung up in some of the most *ignorant* Ages of Christianity'.³² 'Honour' was first invented in the age of chivalry, because 'all other Ties' had 'prov'd ineffectual' to make men keep their promises 'and the Christian Religion itself was often found insufficient for that Purpose'.³³

Modern honour was originally regarded as a political principle. When men are taught to worship themselves and to cultivate their pride they are more easily governed. Politicians did not have to depend solely on the patriotism of their citizens. Mandeville was not attempting to deny the importance of loyalty to king and country, but he wanted to highlight its capricious nature when not supported with the principle of honour. He spelled it out that 'the Love of one's Country is natural; and very bad Men may feel it as warm about them, as very good Men; and it is a Principle, which a Man may as sincerely act from, who Fights against his King, as he who Fights for him'.³⁴ In contrast, when depending on honour, 'a good Politician may add to, or take from the Principle of Honour, what Virtue or Qualification he pleases'.³⁵ This explained why modern gentlemen were much easier to control than knights-errant, and particularly the ancient citizen-soldiers.

The point that the idea of modern honour arose only after the fall of the Roman Empire is relevant to our understanding of Mandeville's thought. Only when men were following the principles of honour did they start paying close attention to their outward expressions. Manners started to soften, but this did not mean that courage was lost. Modern 'soldiers are made by Discipline. To make them proud of their Profession, and inspire them with the Love of Glory, are

³¹ On Mandeville and duelling, civility and honour, see Markku Peltonen, *The Duel in early modern England: civility, politeness and honour*, Cambridge University Press, 2003, p. 263-302.

³² Mandeville, *Origin of honour*, p. 15. Emphasis added.

³³ Mandeville, *Origin of honour*, pp. 29-30.

³⁴ Mandeville, *Origin of honour*, p. 177.

³⁵ Mandeville, *Origin of honour*, p. 141.

the surest Arts to make them valiant'.³⁶ Thus, as Mandeville stated, 'the most civiliz'd Fellows make the best Soldiers'.³⁷ The inflexible strain of self-denial enhanced bravery in soldiers in the Greek world. Original courage was based on anger and hatred rather than pride and self-esteem. Then, in the eighteenth century, natural courage was substituted altogether with artificial policy, and bravery was 'aim'd at by the Height of Politeness and a perpetual Attachment to the Principle of Modern Honour'.³⁸ With good reason it had to be acknowledged that these customs were of 'gothic extraction'.

Another important point that Mandeville was underlining was that people laughed at the age of chivalry, yet they followed the very same customs. On the one hand, the gap between Gothic and present was not as large as people thought, and on the other, the breach between Ancient and modern Europe was much wider than people commonly wanted to believe. This was true not only of the principles of honour and duelling, but also regarding more casual aspects of politeness. What was the difference between Gothic gallantry and modern politeness? Manners and customs had refined. 'Flattery' had become 'less bare-faced, and the Design of it upon Man's Pride is better disguis'd than it was formerly.'³⁹

III

One of the most conspicuous features of David Hume's thoughts on civil society is his horror of the natural violence that is inherent in human nature and a particular feature of Scotland's martial heritage.⁴⁰ Throughout his works he advocates the notion that artificial virtues replace initial bravery and simple honesty when a society advances from a small, uncultivated beginning towards civility. Much of this discussion is directly related to the problem of unruliness in Scotland in general, and particularly in the Highlands.

This ties in with the most relevant developments in Scottish historiography at the time and particularly with Thomas Innes, who in 1729 provided the basis for questioning different aspects of earlier interpretations of Scotland's past.⁴¹ Innes did more than destroy the myths

³⁶ Mandeville, *Origin of honour*, p. 134.

³⁷ Mandeville, *Origin of honour*, p. 149.

³⁸ Mandeville, *Origin of honour*, p. 232.

³⁹ Mandeville, *Part II*, p. 152.

⁴⁰ On Hume's later critical views on martial societies, see also Jacqueline Taylor, 'Hume on the importance of humanity', *Revue internationale de philosophie*, forthcoming, 2013. I am grateful to Jackie Taylor for allowing me to read this article before its publication.

⁴¹ Thomas Innes, *A Critical Essay on the Ancient Inhabitants of the Northern Parts of Britain or Scotland. Containing an Account of the Romans, of the Britains betwixt the Walls, of the Caledonians or Picts, and particularly of the Scots. With an Appendix of ancient manuscript pieces*, 2 vols., London, 1729. On Innes, see Colin Kidd, *Subverting Scotland's*

surrounding the unbroken ancient chain of succession of Scottish kings and Buchanite interpretations of the role of Scottish people, and what became clear is that the historical divisions between Scots, Picts, Scythians, Britons and Saxons – or even the Highlands and the Lowlands to some extent – did not exist in any real, categorical sense. All the people populating Northern Britain were of the same mixed descent, and it was, indeed, originally ‘the rudest perhaps of all the European nations, the most necessitous, the most turbulent, the most ferocious, and the most unsettled’, as Hume depicts it in his criticism of Ossian poetry.⁴² There was no praiseworthy ancestry in Scotland showing how the flame of ancient Greek learning was carried from one generation to the next in the Athens of the North. Scotland’s possible future greatness rested on the idea that all culture is artificial to a certain extent, an amalgam of abrupt transformations and not an expression of what is truly original. Throughout Hume’s philosophical prose are unflattering references to Scythians scalping their enemies as Scottish ancestors, and even the violent nature of Scottish women are put under scrutiny.⁴³

This, of course, should be seen in relation to the ideas that republican political thinkers entertained about courage and bravery in their fear of commerce and femininity throughout the early modern period, which was particularly apparent in Scottish authors from George Buchanan to Patrick Abercromby and his *Martial achievements of the Scots nation* (1711, 1715). Hume’s solution to this problem was the one Mandeville had provided some years earlier. He denied outright that femininity would cause any problems with regard to the nation’s ability to wage war if courage were based on pride instead of natural ferocity and anger. Just as it is an artificial way of controlling passions through custom in the case of pacifying the mind with harmonious music and different strands of polite education, it is also possible to maintain the courage of a soldier through discipline and by teaching him to hold his musket according to the etiquette.

First, however, one has to accept that most natural qualities in human nature are a hindrance to sociability instead of something that needs to be preserved. Sparta and its natural courage was the anathema of modern civility. The same is true of the martial character of the people of Northern Britain. Once a viable explanation of why men need not cultivate their naturally warlike

Past: Scottish Whig Historians and the Creation of an Anglo-British Identity 1689-1830, Cambridge University Press, 1993, pp. 101-107.

⁴² National Library of Scotland (NLS), Ms. 23159 f. 17, David Hume, ‘Of the Poems of Ossian’.

⁴³ David Hume, *An Enquiry concerning the principles of morals*, ed. Tom L. Beauchamp, Oxford University Press, 2000, sect. 7, ‘Of Qualities immediately Agreeable to Ourselves’, 7.14 (SBN 254), p. 62; Hume, *Essays: moral, political and literary*, ed. Eugene F. Miller, Liberty Fund Press, 1987, ‘Of love and marriage’, pp. 558-559 [When I have considered it necessary to modify the use of this standard edition of Hume’s *Essays* below, I refer to the original edition]. In a letter to William Robertson Hume reflects upon Mary Queen of Scots (whom many took to be the epitome of Scottishness), calling her ‘undoubtedly a violent woman at all times’. Hume to William Robertson, Feb. or March 1759, *Hume Letters*, ed. J. Y. T. Greig, Oxford University Press, 1932, p. 299.

character was given, the problem of femininity regarding the nation's ability to fight disappeared. This is a core element in Hume's philosophy that could be described as elitist because it does not concern uniform moral principles applied to society at large. Hume's thinking, in line with the principles of court civility, was based on the idea that hierarchy and example eventually make lower ranks imitate *le beau monde*. Manners in this larger sense facilitate the much-needed transformation from barbarity to civility. After spending time in France in the 1730s, Hume believed that politeness as an external custom (similar to justice) could be implemented throughout the whole of society so that even lowly porters would be courteous towards each other.⁴⁴ The problem with the Highlands was that they needed to be brought under governmental control so that the civilising process could begin and a centrally imposed hierarchy and ranking system would filter down to the people.

Hume mentions the historical change regarding courage and honour in his essay 'Chivalry and modern honour', which pre-dates the *Treatise*. The only way of attaining the position of a governor in a state of barbarity was by force. According to Hume, this was why 'in all rude Ages' and 'in the infancy of every State' courage 'or Warlike Bravery' was 'alwise the most admir'd Virtue'.⁴⁵ Another notion that Hume shared with Mandeville was that natural courage is not indispensable for society. As Mandeville points out, 'Human Wisdom is the Child of Time' and political 'Inventions' such as virtue, honour and 'politeness' are 'the joint Labour of Many' and 'not the Contrivance of one Man, nor could it have been the Business of a few Years'.⁴⁶ One characteristic of a polite age is that 'courage' is no longer the principle source of merit as governors introduce various precepts that will heap praise and advantage on the subjects who attain these qualities. As Mandeville put it, in a state of civility 'natural courage' is substituted with 'artificial' bravery, which in modern Europe is 'aim'd at by the Height of Politeness and a perpetual Attachment to the Principle of Modern Honour'.⁴⁷ David Hume agreed. 'Warlike bravery' can be contested with 'conduct or policy', although this is 'never apprehended, until the Age has from long Experience become considerably refin'd'.⁴⁸ Like Mandeville, Hume proved his point about the prevalence of natural courage in the early stages of human societies through the historical introduction of honour and gallantry.

Hume also analysed the role of courage and its connection to civility in the ancient world in his published essays. His point was that the relative power of the ancient city-states was

⁴⁴ See Mikko Tolonen, 'Politeness, Paris and the Treatise', *Hume studies*, 34, 2008, p.21-42.

⁴⁵ Hume, 'Essay on chivalry and modern honour', NLS, Ms. 23159. A modern edition of Hume's essay on modern honour correcting Mossner's whimsicalities pointed out earlier by M. A. Stewart, edited by John P. Wright, is published in *Philosophy and Religion in Enlightenment Britain. New case studies*, ed. Ruth Savage, Oxford University Press, 2012.

⁴⁶ Mandeville, *Origin of honour*, 1732, pp. 40-41.

⁴⁷ Mandeville, *Origin of honour*, 1732, p. 232.

⁴⁸ Hume, 'Essay on chivalry and modern honour', NLS, Ms. 23159.

more the exception than the rule in history. Whatever limited success they had they owed to the small size of their states and their archaic lifestyle, both of which encouraged warlike bravery. Thus, the ancient politicians had never managed to substitute natural courage with artificial principles, which had substantially demarcated the nature of their civility. This, in turn, explains why the ancient model never ranked highly by Hume's standards.

What is striking about Hume's treatment of ancient courage is that the target of his criticism is ancient civility in general. The foundational problem with politeness and courage was thought to be that once passions start to multiply and to enlarge, without some artificial principle built on human nature men become feeble and cowardly. Effeminacy, luxury and refinement seem to be a problem from this perspective because they corrupt the original manly qualities. When men lose their rough edges, which they may do particularly in female company, they simultaneously lose their natural quality of warlike bravery. Hence, the ancient states had to rely on self-denial, and to discourage commerce between the sexes. The fear of losing their ability to fight also explains the nature of their civility. Whatever 'refinement and civility' the 'ancients' had, they 'owed' it 'all' to 'books and study'. In contrast, modern politeness was 'learned from company', not books.⁴⁹ By the same token, citizen-soldiers in ancient Greece were not polite, whereas present-day soldiers were inclined 'to pleasure and gallantry' and 'acquire good breeding and an openness of behaviour'.⁵⁰ The artificial turn that manners took during the age of chivalry, particularly through the invention of the principle of honour, explains why this modern development was possible in Europe.

When artificial courage based on the principle of honour substituted warlike bravery, courage and politeness were likewise coupled and became a habitual part of civility. Meanwhile, trade and commerce could also flourish. Hume wrote that even though 'the want of trade and manufactures, among a free and very martial people, may *sometimes* have no other effect than to render the public more powerful, it is certain, that, in the common course of human affairs, it will have a quite contrary tendency'.⁵¹ Plainly, Hume was promoting commerce and trade, but before a nation could turn civil and commercial, courage as a general quality had to be secured. Gallantry and duelling, the main outcomes of the 'new scheme of manners' that Hume introduced before writing his *Treatise*, were a crucial part of Europe's historical development.

In his essay 'Of refinement in the arts' (originally entitled 'Of luxury'), Hume tells his audience what 'distinguishes a civilized age from times of barbarity and ignorance'. The token of a civilized age is the 'conspicuous' character of 'humanity', which can only come about after 'the

⁴⁹ Hume, 'Of national characters', in *Essays*, p. 199.

⁵⁰ Hume, 'Of national characters', in *Essays*, p. 199.

⁵¹ Hume, 'Of commerce', in *Essays*, p. 260.

tempers of men are softened as well as their knowledge improved'.⁵² How could men have 'softened' their 'tempers' without losing the ability to wage war, which never really happened in Athens or Rome? The answer is plain: because of the principle of honour. According to Hume, 'we do not 'need' to 'fear'... 'that men, by losing their ferocity, will lose their martial spirit, or become less undaunted and vigorous in defence of their country or their liberty'. Once 'anger, which is said' by some 'to be the whetstone of courage, loses somewhat of its asperity, by politeness and refinement; a sense of honour, which is a stronger, more constant, and more governable principle, acquires fresh vigour by that elevation of genius which arises from knowledge and a good education'.⁵³ Thus, in a civilized age, knowledge, politeness and humanity refine hand in hand in a positive circle, but it is the principle of honour that renders this possible. By and large, it is the artificial principles that facilitate the 'intercourse of minds'.⁵⁴

Hume also draws attention to a detailed analysis of 'ideas of chivalry' in his *History of England*.⁵⁵ Quite evidently, liberty and independence were not the attributes he thought of as the causes of civility or politeness. Anglo-Saxon society was based on independence and natural courage, which to Hume meant that it could not support a regular government: this was only possible in England following the introduction of chivalric principles after the Norman Conquest, and the principles that men followed started to change. In short, 'the conquest put the people in a situation of receiving slowly, from abroad, the rudiments of science and cultivation, and of correcting their rough and licentious manners'.⁵⁶

A causal condition for this progress of civility and arts was that natural courage was not a distinguishing characteristic of the Normans. Nevertheless, they did not fall short in military spirit. In fact, the 'Normans' were 'distinguished by valour among all the European nations' and at the time of the Conquest 'attained to the highest pitch of military glory'.⁵⁷ With the new chivalric inventions 'a military spirit', which was not based on the love of liberty, 'had universally diffused itself throughout Europe'.⁵⁸ The whole ethos of the Normans was crucially different from that of the Anglo-Saxons. Their modus operandi was 'to outshine each other by reputation of strength and prowess'. It was this cultivation of the passion, which Mandeville called self-liking, that gave the Normans 'their genius for chivalry' and 'their readiness to embark in any dangerous enterprise, how

⁵² Hume, 'Of refinement in the arts', in *Essays*, p. 274.

⁵³ Hume, 'Of refinement in the arts', in *Essays*, p. 274.

⁵⁴ Hume, 'Of the rise and progress of arts and sciences', in *Essays*, p. 132.

⁵⁵ Hume, *History of England*, ed. William B. Todd, 6 vols., Liberty Fund Press, 1983, vol. 1, p. 487.

⁵⁶ Hume, *History*, vol. 1, p. 185.

⁵⁷ Hume, *History*, vol. 1, p. 148.

⁵⁸ Hume, *History*, vol. 1, p. 149.

little soever interested in its failure or success'.⁵⁹ It also created a positive circle of refinement, and 'the more grandeur there appeared in the attempt, the more it suited their romantic spirit'.⁶⁰ It was also plain to see that 'these bold warriors, who despised real dangers, were very subject to the dread of imaginary ones'.⁶¹ Thus, they were more governable than the stubborn Anglo-Saxon warriors.

A central feature of Norman customs was 'the practice' of 'single combat' that 'was employed by most nations on the continent as a remedy against false evidence'. Judicial duel was an 'absurd' custom. Nevertheless, it was 'rather an improvement on the methods of trial, which had formerly been practised among those barbarous nations, and which still prevailed among the Anglo-Saxons'.⁶² 'Trial by single combat', a 'regular part of jurisprudence', was always 'conducted with all the order, method, devotion, and solemnity imaginable'.⁶³ By and large, all 'the ideas of chivalry', which produced 'martial pride and a sense of honour', in Hume's opinion, 'seem to have been imported by the Normans: No traces of those fantastic notions are to be found among the plain and rustic Saxons'.⁶⁴ It was the 'ideas of chivalry' that 'infected the writings, conversation, and behaviour of men, during some ages; and even after they were in a great measure, banished by the revival of learning they left modern *gallantry* and the *point of honour*, which still maintain their influence, and are the genuine offspring of those ancient affectations'.⁶⁵

In this context of Hume's own works it is possible to detect an argumentative change in his essay 'Rise and progress of arts and sciences' between the first and the second part. In the form of *in utramque partem*, the first half shows the relevance of republican principles to civility, whereas the second half emphasises the eventual superiority of modern, civilised monarchies and manners.⁶⁶

Various institutions played a crucial role in Hume's thinking, mainly because of the way in which the principle of association of ideas functioned in his science of man. This is clearly implied in his essay on 'Modern honour', in which gallantry and honour constitute an interlinked institutional pair, a moral cause, which partly explains the modern development of politeness. The very title is illuminating, revealing that Hume was aware of the theoretical disputes of his time. His choice not to treat honour in general and to specifically set out to discuss 'modern honour' was a significant one. In clearly distinguishing the modern from the ancient Hume was setting himself

⁵⁹ Hume, *History*, vol. 1, p. 149-150.

⁶⁰ Hume, *History*, vol. 1, p. 150.

⁶¹ Hume, *History*, vol. 1, p. 154.

⁶² Hume, *History*, vol. 1, p. 180, see also, p. 411.

⁶³ Hume, *History*, vol. 1, p. 486.

⁶⁴ Hume, *History*, vol. 1, p. 486.

⁶⁵ Hume, *History*, vol. 1, p.487.

⁶⁶ There are also dozens of variants between the first printing and later editions of this essay, which are poorly recorded in modern editions of Hume's essays.

apart from theorists (Shaftesbury in particular) who claimed that the contemporary idea of civility originated from ancient times, and that the ideals of honour and politeness should be modelled on Greek or Roman examples. Thus, the pivotal aspect of Hume's essay is this break between ancient and modern culture, namely that gallantry and duelling are modern concepts. What has gone missing, however, is that originally the idea of this complementary pair was also the main argument put forward in the 'Rise and progress' essay. When one understands this one can also see some of the consistency in Hume's political argumentation.

In 1742, Hume started to consider why the moderns were more polite than the ancients, writing in 'Rise and progress' that 'modern Notions of *Gallantry* and *Honour*, the natural Product of Courts and Monarchies, will probably be assign'd as the Causes of this Refinement'.⁶⁷ He continues, stressing that 'No one denies these Inventions [in plural] to be modern', but 'some of the most zealous partisans of the Ancients, have asserted them to be foppish and ridiculous, and a Reproach, rather than an Honour to the present Age. It may here be proper to examine this Question, with regard both to Gallantry and Honour. We shall begin with Gallantry'.⁶⁸ Hume omitted the reference to the institution of honour in the 1770 edition, which makes it quite difficult to grasp his original argument.

Of course, what does become apparent from the variant readings is that the essay before 1770 touched upon honour and duelling. However, when his remarks about honour are presented so as to separate it from gallantry, they imply an utterly negative approach to modern honour, which might have been the message that he wanted to send out later, but which was contrary to his original intention. Understandably, he did not wish to present himself as an apologist for duelling, but what is easily missed is that, at least until 1770, he regarded gallantry and honour as a complementary pair, a moral cause that could be historically accounted for. As anyone who is familiar with Hume's editing of his own works knows, this was not the first time he softened the sharp edge of his arguments. Yet, it seems that he rarely changed his views over time: he only changed the form in which he set out his arguments.

IV

⁶⁷ Hume, 'Of the rise and progress of arts and sciences', in *Essays, Moral and political*, 2nd edition, corrected, Edinburgh, 1742, p. 87.

⁶⁸ Hume, 'Of the rise and progress of arts and sciences', in *Essays, Moral and political*, 2nd edition, corrected, Edinburgh, 1742, p. 87.

John Millar's main purpose in the *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks* was to address the dichotomy between ancient and modern civility. In his view, the question about civility culminated in the seeming antithesis between courage and politeness.

Millar presents it as self-evident that some kind of courage and military skill are indispensable for countries at war.⁶⁹ Historical examples prove that 'warlike nations' have generally been 'addicted to martial exercises'.⁷⁰ Thus, how could men love their neighbours without losing their capacity for war? Mandeville had argued that the genealogy of modern honour was the reason why the countries of Europe at that time were polite compared to the ancient city-states, and that soldiers had not lost their courage.

Millar underlined the same points about the ancient republics as Mandeville did in his *Origin of Honour*. First and most importantly, the 'Greeks, notwithstanding their learning and good sense, were remarkably deficient in delicacy and politeness'.⁷¹ Second, 'a good illustration' of this was specifically 'the military character in ancient Greece, considered with respect to politeness, and compared with the same character in modern times'. Millar maintained that 'in ancient Greece' the soldiers 'were no less remarkable for rusticity and ill manners, than in the modern nations of Europe they are distinguished by politeness and good-breeding'. Moreover, modern 'soldiers' are 'men of the world', who 'usually' have 'such manners as are formed by company and conversation'.⁷² This was not the case in ancient Greece, where patriotism and self-denial were the only principles to enhance courage. The ancients had no notion of the modern principle of honour. The ancient states were 'engaged in violent struggles with the petty states around them', which meant that the citizens 'were obliged to hold an intimate correspondence'. This was the reason why they 'acquired a high sense of public interest'.⁷³ These principles did not suit large modern societies. 'Most of the ancient republics with which we are acquainted appear to have owed their liberty to the narrowness of their territories. From the small number of people, and from the close intercourse among all the individuals in the same community, they imbibed a spirit of freedom even before they had made considerable progress in arts'.⁷⁴

In contrast with the ancient states, Millar wrote, 'the modern nations of Europe'... 'have been much distinguished' by 'the high notions of military honor, and the romantic love and gallantry' that were originally of Gothic origin.⁷⁵ It had been characteristic for a chivalric knight 'to

⁶⁹ John Millar, *Observations concerning the Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, Basil, 1793, pp. 31-32.

⁷⁰ Millar, *Observations*, p. 71.

⁷¹ Millar, *Observations*, p. 93.

⁷² Millar, *Observations*, p. 93.

⁷³ Millar, *Observations*, p. 191.

⁷⁴ Millar, *Observations*, p. 230.

⁷⁵ Millar, *Observations*, p. 69.

behave with frankness and humanity even to an enemy, with modesty and politeness to all'.⁷⁶ Crucially, 'the situation of mankind in those periods had also a manifest tendency to heighten and improve the passion between the sexes'.⁷⁷ Politeness and courage were coupled. Ever since the age of chivalry they progressed hand in hand in Western Europe. In this genealogy of European civility, the Renaissance 'revival of letters' allowed 'some relaxation' of 'the Gothic institutions and manners'. The softening of manners did not turn gentlemen into cowards however, Italy notwithstanding, for 'the decay of the military spirit among the Italians was manifest from their disuse of duelling' and 'from their substituting in place of it the more artful but cowardly practice of poisoning'.⁷⁸ Nevertheless, Italy was an exception, and 'in the other countries of Europe, the manners introduced by chivalry were more firmly rooted, and acquiring stability from custom, may still be observed to have a good deal of influence upon the taste and sentiments even of the present age'.⁷⁹ At the same time, the conceptual pair for modern honour, gallantry, is underlined as equally important.⁸⁰

Adam Ferguson, with his republican tendencies, is a case apart from Mandeville and Hume.⁸¹ Ferguson maintained that the most important factor for the perpetuity of civil society was to cultivate the virtuous qualities of citizenship.⁸² He admired ancient republics. 'To the ancient Greek, or the Roman, the individual was nothing, and the public every thing. To the modern, in too many nations of Europe, the individual is every thing, and the public nothing'.⁸³ It is safe to say that his outlook was critical of the Mandevillian analysis of modern civility and politeness. Ferguson avowed that 'the love of society, friendship, and public affection, penetration, eloquence, and courage' are 'original properties' of 'human species', 'not the subsequent effects of device or invention'.⁸⁴ However, he agreed with Mandeville's definition of politeness and its Gothic origin.

⁷⁶ Millar, *Observations*, p. 72.

⁷⁷ Millar, *Observations*, p. 73.

⁷⁸ Millar, *Observations*, p. 81. It is noteworthy that David Hume made a similar remark about modern Italy. He wrote, 'as the old Romans, by applying themselves solely to war, were almost the only uncivilized people that ever possessed military discipline; so the modern Italians are the only civilized people, among Europeans, that ever wanted courage and a martial spirit. Those who would ascribe this effeminacy of the Italians to their luxury, or politeness, or application to the arts, need but consider the French and English, whose bravery is as uncontested, as their love for the arts, and their assiduity in commerce. The Italian historians give us a more satisfactory reason for this degeneracy of their countrymen. They shew us how the sword was dropped at once by all the Italian sovereigns'. Hume, 'Of refinement in arts', *Essays*, p. 275.

⁷⁹ Millar, *Observations*, p. p. 82.

⁸⁰ Millar, *Observations*, p. 82-3.

⁸¹ On Adam Ferguson and war, see Craig Smith, 'We have mingled politeness with the use of the sword': nature and civilisation in Adam Ferguson's philosophy of war', forthcoming, *European Legacy*, 18, 2013. On Ferguson and his place in the Scottish Enlightenment, see also Iain McDaniel, *Adam Ferguson in the Scottish Enlightenment: The Roman Past and Europe's Future*, Harvard University Press, 2013.

⁸² Adam Ferguson, *An essay on the history of civil society*, ed. Duncan Forbes, Edinburgh University Press, 1966, p. 56, 59, 94, 136 and 225.

⁸³ Ferguson, *Essay on the history of civil society*, p. 56.

⁸⁴ Ferguson, *Essay on the history of civil society*, p. 94.

The Greeks had ‘no forms of expression, to mark a ceremonious and guarded respect’. Meanwhile, ‘quarrelling had no rules but the immediate dictates of passion, which ended in words of reproach, in violence, and blows’. According to Ferguson, it was equally true that ‘the ancient nations have but a sorry plea for esteem with the inhabitants of modern Europe, who profess to carry the civilities of peace into the practice of war’.⁸⁵ His memorable phrase states that ‘we have mingled politeness with the use of the sword’.⁸⁶ According to Ferguson, ‘this is, perhaps, the principal characteristic, on which, among modern nations, we bestow the epithets of *civilized* or of *polished*’ and ‘it was found in early periods of our history, and distinguished, perhaps, more than at present, the manners of ages otherwise rude and undisciplined.’⁸⁷

This refers, of course, to Gothic times. Characteristic of ‘the system of chivalry’ were ‘a marvellous respect and veneration to the fair sex’, the ‘supposed junction of the heroic and sanctified character’ and the ‘formalities of the duel’. When ‘these different principles’ were ‘combined together’, they ‘served as the foundation of a system’ in which ‘the warlike and gentle were united together.’⁸⁸ Ferguson maintained that ‘whatever was the origin of notions, often so lofty and so ridiculous, we cannot doubt’ the ‘lasting effects’ of these chivalric principles ‘on our manners.’ Duelling or ‘the point of honour’ and ‘the prevalence of gallantry in our conversations’ are ‘undoubtedly remains of this antiquated system: and chivalry, uniting with the genius of our policy, has probably suggested those peculiarities in the law of nations, by which modern states are distinguished from the ancient’. Even when he did not agree, he acknowledged that ‘if our rule in measuring degrees of politeness and civilization is to be taken from hence, or from the advancement of commercial arts, we shall be found to have greatly excelled any of the celebrated nations of antiquity’.⁸⁹

In conclusion, we may remark that, Gilbert Stuart had several prominent Scottish and Mandevillean examples to follow in 1778 when he extolled

The spirit of humanity, which distinguishes modern times in the periods of war, as well as of peace; the gallantry which prevails in our conversations and private intercourse; on our theatres, and in our public assemblies and amusements; the point of honour which corrects the violence of the passions, by improving our delicacy, and the sense of propriety and decorum; and which by teaching us to consider the importance of others, makes us value our own; these circumstances arose out of chivalry, and discriminate the modern from the ancient world.⁹⁰

⁸⁵ Ferguson, *Essay on the history of civil society*, p. 198.

⁸⁶ Ferguson, *Essay on the history of civil society*, p. 199.

⁸⁷ Ferguson, *Essay on the history of civil society*, p. 200.

⁸⁸ Ferguson, *Essay on the history of civil society*, p. 201.

⁸⁹ Ferguson, *Essay on the history of civil society*, p. 203.

⁹⁰ Gilbert Stuart, *A View of Society in Europe, in its progress from rudeness to refinement: or inquiries concerning the history of law, government and manners*, Dublin, 1778, p. 70.