Introduction

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1. Thomas Reid: The Politics of a North Briton

Dugald Stewart's influential depiction of Thomas Reid as a thinker living 'in the obscurity of a learned retirement', distanced from 'the political convulsions which Europe has witnessed for a course of years', has long masked the fact that throughout Reid's career he was deeply engaged with many of the pressing social, economic and political issues that preoccupied his contemporaries across the Atlantic world. While Stewart was understandably anxious to present Reid's philosophical legacy without reference to the political and cultural conflicts in Britain caused by the French Revolution, Stewart's predicament in Edinburgh at the turn of nineteenth century led him to create a portrait of Reid that does not do justice to the full range of Reid's activities or the scope of his intellectual enterprise.¹ For, as Reid's correspondence reveals, he gave serious thought to matters of social and economic policy at various points during his long career, and he was an active participant in both the anti-slavery movement and the meetings held in Glasgow to express support for the early, moderate phase of the French Revolution. Moreover, the papers we publish in this volume cast Reid in a very different light from that found in Stewart's biography because they illustrate how his responses to the political, economic and social problems confronting Britain in the second half of the eighteenth century were informed by the theoretical ideas that he refined and systematised in the classrooms of King's College Aberdeen and the University of Glasgow.

Reid's mature thinking about politics, the economy and society took shape in the distinctive milieu of the north-east of Scotland. As a boy, he experienced at first hand the political and religious divisions that plagued the north-east, as well as Scotland more generally, in the first half of the eighteenth century. His extended family was split between those loyal to the Hanoverian and Presbyterian settlements and those who were Episcopalians with Jacobite sympathies. His mother, Margaret, was the daughter of David Gregory of Kinnairdy and Gregory's second wife, Isabel Gordon. The offspring of Gregory's first wife, Jean Walker

¹ Dugald Stewart, *Account of the Life and Writings of Thomas Reid* (1803), p. 2. On Stewart's *Account* see Paul Wood, 'The Hagiography of Common Sense: Dugald Stewart's *Account of the Life and Writings of Thomas Reid*'.

were, Reid later recalled, ‘torries & Episcopalians’, whereas Isabel and her children ‘were zealous Presbyterians’, like the Reids. The tensions resulting from these conflicting allegiances left a permanent mark on the family and, on occasion, led to somewhat strained relationships between the direct descendants of Gregory’s two wives.² Aberdeen was also still scarred by the Jacobite rising of 1715 when in April 1722 Reid was sent to study at the Aberdeen Grammar School before entering Marischal College the following October. The north-east was a hotbed of Jacobitism, with the Old Pretender, James Francis Edward Stuart, being proclaimed as James III and VIII in Aberdeen on 20 September 1715. The patron of Marischal College, the tenth Earl Marischal, George Keith, was one of the leading supporters of the would-be king, and most of those teaching at Marischal and King’s came out on the side of the Jacobite cause. Once the rebellion was quashed in 1716, the Hanoverian regime moved swiftly to remove those implicated in the abortive rising. Royal Commissions of Visitation, convened in 1716 and 1717, found that eight of the ten members of King’s College and six of the seven members of Marischal were Jacobites. They were all replaced by men loyal to the Hanoverians, and Keith was stripped of his patronage of the college his family had founded.³ The new cadre of regents and professors who lectured at King’s and Marischal after the colleges reopened in 1717 effected significant changes to the curricula, which were to prove beneficial to students such as Reid. Reid’s regent, George Turnbull, began his brief career at Marischal in 1721 and, over the course of the next six years, did much to transform the teaching of the *cursus philosophicus*. Through Turnbull, Reid was introduced to such canonical writers on politics and natural law as Hugo Grotius, Samuel Pufendorf, Richard Cumberland, Thomas Hobbes and John Locke, and probably also the works of James Harrington and Old Whigs such as Robert Molesworth.⁴

² See Reid’s account of his visit in 1736 to his cousin David Gregory, in Reid to James Gregory, 24 August 1787, in Reid, *Correspondence*, pp. 189–90.

³ On the ’15 see Daniel Szechi, *1715: The Great Jacobite Rebellion*. For specific information about Aberdeen, see Alistair Tayler and Henrietta Tayler, *1715: The Story of the Rising*, pp. 52, 128–32; and Kieran German, ‘Jacobite Politics in Aberdeen and the ’15’.

⁴ On Turnbull’s teaching at Marischal College see Paul Wood, *The Aberdeen Enlightenment: The Arts Curriculum in the Eighteenth Century*, pp. 40–49. For the graduation thesis Turnbull published when Reid received his MA in 1726 see George Turnbull, *Education for Life: Correspondence and Writings on Religion and Practical Philosophy*, pp. 59–74. See also George Turnbull, *The Principles of Moral and Christian Philosophy* (1740), vol. I, pp. 226–29, on the ‘science of politics’, and Turnbull’s commentary in Johann Gottlieb Heineccius, *A Methodical System of Universal Law: Or, the Laws of Nature and Nations Deduced from Certain Principles, and Applied to Proper Cases* (1738), for an extended exposition of his political principles; cf. the interpretation in Knud Haakonssen, *Natural Law and Moral Philosophy: From Grotius to the Scottish Enlightenment*, pp. 85–99.

While Reid studied divinity at Marischal from 1726 to 1731, he was exposed to the political realities of Scottish academic life when he participated in the election of the College Rector. During the late 1720s rectorial elections at Marischal were a microcosm of the struggle for power and influence in the political nation at large between two rival factions of Whigs: the Squadrone, led by the first Duke of Montrose, James Graham, and the first Duke of Roxburghe, John Ker, and the Argathelians, led by the second Duke of Argyll, John Campbell, and his brother Archibald, Lord Ilay. After Marischal reopened in 1717, the Squadrone controlled the college. In 1726, however, the party suffered a reverse when the Argathelian Patrick Duff was elected Rector. In 1729 Reid was chosen as a procurator to represent the student ‘nation’ of Angus and he voted for the successful Argathelian candidate, Duff’s cousin, William Duff of Braco.⁵ During the course of the election, Reid met the local clergyman, the Rev. John Bisset, who was appointed by Reid and his fellow procurators to serve as an assessor alongside the new Rector. We do not know what transpired between Reid and Bisset in 1729, but in 1737 they became bitter antagonists when Reid became entangled in the ecclesiastical politics surrounding the issue of church patronage.

We know almost nothing about Reid’s involvement with political and social matters in the years immediately following his departure from divinity school, although a hint of his interest in politics comes in a list of books he apparently wanted to read dating from January 1736, which included the Scottish Catholic historian Thomas Innes’ controversial *A Critical Essay on the Ancient Inhabitants of the Northern Parts of Britain, or Scotland* (1729) and a Tory political pamphlet by the Scottish Scriblerian John Arbuthnot.⁶ Willingly or not, Reid was drawn on to the local political stage the following year, when he was presented to the parish of New Machar by King’s College Aberdeen.⁷ The issue of who had ultimate control over the appointment of parish ministers in Scotland had become a matter of controversy following the passage of the Act of Patronage of 1712, which restored the right of a patron, rather than the congregation, to install a minister. Initially patrons tended to consult with local presbyteries and parishioners in order to avoid undue conflict, but the right of patrons was insisted on by Robert Walpole’s managers of Scotland after 1725, the second Duke of Argyll and

⁵ Roger L. Emerson, *Professors, Patronage and Politics: The Aberdeen Universities in the Eighteenth Century*, pp. 45–51; ‘Minutes of the Rectorial Elections, Marischal College, 1723–1860’, Aberdeen University Library (henceforth AUL), MS M 104, entry for 1 March 1729. The student body at Marischal was divided into four ‘nations’: Angus, Buchan, Mar and Moray.

⁶ Reid, *Correspondence*, p. 325.

⁷ In what follows we draw on Andrew L. Drummond and James Bulloch, *The Scottish Church, 1688–1843: The Age of the Moderates*, pp. 38–44.

Argyll's brother the Earl of Ilay. Their uncompromising stance sparked a conflict within the Kirk which led to the secession of the Rev. Ebenezer Erskine and a number of like-minded ministers opposed to patronage, and to numerous disputed clerical appointments across Scotland.

In the north-east, a dispute took place at New Machar in 1728 when John Bisset was succeeded by Thomas Reay, the choice not of the congregation but of the patron, King's College. Having been installed by a 'riding committee', Reay subsequently did little to win over his parishioners and he was dismissed in September 1736 'for immorality and for deserting his charge'.⁸ Bisset meanwhile had attacked the right of patrons in two pamphlets and, when Reay left the parish in disgrace, Bisset marshalled opposition to the principle of patronage and to the choice of Reid by King's as Reay's replacement. Even though Reid was militantly opposed by the elders of the parish he was ordained as the new minister in May 1737, largely because he had the backing of prominent members of the local social and political elite, as well as of the Aberdeen Town Council. Bisset and his allies in the Popular Party within the Kirk thus suffered a humiliating defeat in this affair, and Bisset's resentment was such that once Reid began to attend the meetings of the Presbytery of Aberdeen in 1737, Bisset absented himself from them for the rest of his life.⁹

Reid had many responsibilities as a parish minister, ranging from preaching and catechising to enforcing discipline among his flock.¹⁰ From the pulpit, he spoke to his parishioners not only about religious themes but also about social and political issues, including vagrancy, the curbing of immorality and, during the '45, their obligation to remain loyal to the Hanoverian state. Within the parish, he was obliged to deal with practical matters such as the policing of sexuality, as well as the management of the poor. Because of the administrative structure of the Church of Scotland, ministers were involved in the affairs of the Kirk more generally through their presbyteries and synods, and, periodically, the General Assembly. Reid was active in the upper tiers of Kirk government, serving a six-month term as the Moderator of the Presbytery of Aberdeen in 1742–43 and of the Synod of Aberdeen which met in October 1743. In addition, he was sent as a representative to the General Assembly in 1738, 1741, 1743, 1745 and 1747. Meetings of the Presbytery usually dealt with relatively mundane managerial problems like assigning substitute preachers to fill in for sick or absent ministers,

⁸ Hew Scott and John Alexander Lamb, *Fasti Ecclesiae Scoticae: The Succession of Ministers in the Church of Scotland from the Reformation*, vol. VIII, p. 66.

⁹ Bisset died in 1756. Our summary of Reid's installation at New Machar is based on the detailed account in Paul Wood, *The Life of Thomas Reid: The Culture of the Mind*.

¹⁰ The following paragraph summarises the extended discussion in Wood, *The Life of Reid*.

whereas the Synod tackled weightier, and occasionally controversial, questions of social and ecclesiastical policy. Reid served on various committees convened by the Synod of Aberdeen, most notably a committee struck in 1749 to consider changes to the Scottish Poor Law. Reid took the lead in drafting a revised set of regulations governing the relief of the poor and the control of vagrants which were favourably received by the Synod, but the proposed reforms were opposed by the landed interest in Aberdeenshire and subsequently shelved as a consequence.¹¹

Over the course of the fourteen years Reid attended the meetings of the Synod he was also called upon to intervene in a number of disputed settlements when the skirmishes over church patronage escalated in the 1740s, and he was expected to implement in his parish the directives passed by the Synod, including those to raise funds to support the Aberdeen Infirmary and the work of the Scottish Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge (SSPCK) in the Highlands and Islands. The latter initiative, taken in 1748, was especially contentious given that the work of the SSPCK to ‘Christianise’ the Highlands was intended to consolidate the power of the Hanoverian–Presbyterian nexus in areas of the north and west of Scotland by rooting out the remaining vestiges of Catholicism, Episcopalianism and Jacobitism. In promoting the SSPCK Reid was thus effectively acting as an agent of the British state, and he likewise acted in this capacity when the Synod declared fast days to mark the suppression of the ’45. On these occasions Reid celebrated the virtues of the Hanoverian regime, and he had earlier gone so far as to declare a fast day in the parish in December 1745 in order to exhort his parishioners to remain steadfast in their loyalty to King George II, the Whig government in London and the Presbyterian settlement in Scotland. Yet even if Reid could on occasion be a defiantly loyal North Briton, he was nevertheless on reasonably friendly terms with those whose allegiances differed from his own, as can be seen in the fact that he was willing to give overnight shelter at the manse in New Machar to the Jacobite Robert Hepburn of Keith during the ’45.¹²

By the time Reid was elected as a regent at King’s College Aberdeen on 25 October 1751, he had gained considerable practical experience in the political and social realms through his activities as a parish minister. Unfortunately, there is no record of what he may have read on politics or public policy during his years at New Machar. However, his first graduation oration, delivered in April 1753, tells us that he based his first set of politics lectures on Xenophon, Plato and Aristotle among the ancients, and, among the moderns, Machiavelli, Harrington,

¹¹ On Reid’s involvement in Poor Law reform see also Alexander Gordon to William Grant, 7 February 1750, and Reid to Alexander Gordon, 7 February 1750, in Reid, *Correspondence*, pp. 6–8.

¹² Reid to John Robison, 12 April 1792, in Reid, *Correspondence*, p. 227.

Hume and, especially, Montesquieu.¹³ Since it is reasonable to assume that he was introduced to the political writings of Xenophon, Plato, Aristotle, Machiavelli and Harrington in the 1720s, while he was a student at Marischal College, it would seem that he probably first read Hume's *Essays, Moral and Political* (1741–42) and Montesquieu's *L'Esprit des loix* (1748) while he lived in New Machar.¹⁴ Reid may well have revised the scope and contents of his politics course after delivering his first oration, because in the spring and summer of 1753 he spearheaded a complete overhaul of the curriculum at King's.¹⁵ Apart from Reid's first graduation oration, little evidence survives regarding his teaching prior to the reform of the curriculum, so we cannot be certain about the extent to which his politics course changed in the wake of the restructuring of the *cursus philosophicus*. What we do know is that, after 1753, students in their fourth and final year covered 'the Philosophy of the Human Mind and the Sciences that depend upon it', including 'Logic, Rhetoric, The Laws of Nature and Nations, Politicks, Oeconomicks, the fine Arts and natural Religion'.¹⁶ In this connection it should be noticed that Reid emphasised the coherence of all branches of philosophy, which was one of his premises for retaining the unitary regenting curriculum; he argued that the feature which made intellectual endeavours into philosophical disciplines, or 'sciences', was a self-conscious dependence upon a common set of 'axioms or common notions' in argumentation, and by this criterion politics was a 'science', he said.¹⁷

As a regent, Reid taught the whole of the three-year philosophy course, which meant that he subsequently lectured on politics on only three occasions, in 1756, 1759 and 1762. However, when switching to Glasgow's specialist professorship in moral philosophy in 1764, he clearly continued where he had left off in Aberdeen. In the more extensive treatment of politics required in his new position, Reid not only developed the substantive themes represented by his earlier reading and teaching, he also set out his 'axiomatic' approach at the very beginning of these lectures, as we see in the manuscripts printed in Part Two of this volume.

Outside of the classroom, Reid commented on legal, social and economic matters in the Aberdeen Philosophical Society or Wise Club (*fl.* 1758–73), of

¹³ Thomas Reid, *Philosophical Orations*, oration I, para. 11; the *Orations* are reproduced in Reid, *University*.

¹⁴ Although it is likely that Reid was introduced to Xenophon by his regent, George Turnbull, a brief set of reading notes from Xenophon's *Oeconomicus* dating from September 1750 survives; see AUL, MS 2131/3/II/4. Presumably by April 1753 Reid had also read Hume's recently published *Political Discourses* (1752).

¹⁵ On these reforms see Wood, *The Aberdeen Enlightenment*, ch. 3.

¹⁶ Anon., *Abstract of Some Statutes and Orders of King's College*, [1754], pp. 13, 19; in Reid, *University*.

¹⁷ See Reid, *Philosophical Orations*, oration II, paras 19–20.

which he was a founder member.¹⁸ The Society is best known as a venue for criticism of the writings of David Hume, thanks to the publications of Reid and his fellow members James Beattie, George Campbell and John Gregory. But the discussions and discourses of the participants in the Wise Club ranged far more widely than is commonly recognised and dealt with topics in literary criticism, rhetoric, the anatomy of human nature, natural history, language, natural philosophy, medicine, morals, mathematics, history, education, politics and political economy.¹⁹ Reid's papers on topical economic and social issues and on the English and Scottish legal systems will be analysed in detail below. Here it should be emphasised that he was not alone in addressing such subjects. During the six years that Reid was active in the Society, Robert Traill discoursed on Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Discours sur l'origine de l'inégalité* (1755), while members also proposed questions on the origin of civil government, the use of agrarian laws to enlarge the population, the national debt, the utilisation of machines and the price of labour, the apparent conflict between slavery and good government, the Poor Law, the relationship between civil and natural law, the state of the British coinage, justice and the courts, and the advantages and disadvantages of commerce.²⁰ Many of these questions – and the conversations they prompted – show that Reid and the early members of the Society were committed to effecting social and economic improvement, be it in Scotland or Britain more generally. Moreover, they shared their commitment to the improving ethos with their patrons in the north-east, notably James Ogilvy, Lord Deskford, who was a significant improver in his own right and who did much to promote the advancement of the Scottish economy through his work on the Board of Trustees for Fisheries, Manufactures and Improvements in Scotland and as a Commissioner for the Forfeited Estates. Reid was also a member of the Gordon's Mill Farming Club (1758–64), a grouping which reflected the preoccupation with agricultural improvement of Reid's patron from the 1730s onwards, Archibald Grant of Monymusk.²¹ Through his participation in these two clubs, Reid was at the heart of the circle of improvers who sought to transform the economic and social conditions of the north-east of Scotland.

¹⁸ On the Society see H. Lewis Ulman (ed.), *Minutes of the Aberdeen Philosophical Society, 1758–1773*.

¹⁹ See Ulman's editorial introduction to *Minutes of the Aberdeen Philosophical Society*, pp. 59–63, and Paul Wood's entry on the Society in the online edition of the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

²⁰ Ulman, *Minutes of the Aberdeen Philosophical Society*, pp. 81, 83, 191–3 (questions 27, 32, 39, 43, 45, 50, 52, 55, 57 and 58).

²¹ J. H. Smith, *The Gordon's Mill Farming Club, 1758–1764*.

In 1762 Reid was introduced through Deskford to another prominent Scottish improver, Henry Home, Lord Kames, who soon became Reid's correspondent, friend and patron. Thanks to the combined political clout of Deskford and Kames, Reid succeeded Adam Smith as the Glasgow Professor of Moral Philosophy in 1764, despite the opposition of the Professor of the Practice of Medicine and lecturer on chemistry, Joseph Black, and the Professor of Law, John Millar, who were both close associates of Smith and powerful figures within the College.²² While maintaining a deferential stance towards his predecessors, Reid's public lectures on moral philosophy differed significantly in terms of content, balance and overall structure from those given by Francis Hutcheson and Smith.²³ Whereas Smith followed the precedent set by previous occupants of the Glasgow chair and covered natural theology, ethics, natural jurisprudence and politics in his course, Reid restructured the moral philosophy curriculum. He adopted a tripartite division in his lectures, which were now organised under the heads of pneumatology, ethics and politics, and spent the bulk of his classroom time anatomising the intellectual and active powers of the human mind.²⁴ Having dealt with the science of the mind and, briefly, natural theology, he turned to what he called 'speculative' and 'practical' ethics, before concluding with lectures on politics, which he likewise divided into two parts. The first focused on 'the various Forms of Government their Causes & Effects', while the second was devoted to 'Police', which he defined as 'those Regulations which are common to Different forms of Government for Promoting Religion Virtue Education, Arts & Sciences Agriculture Trade Manufactures & for Regulating the Arms and Finances of the State and other Objects of that kind which are not essential to the being of a State or Government but conducive to its well being and Security'.²⁵

Reid delivered this course of lectures until he retired from teaching and left the course to his assistant and former student, Archibald Arthur, in 1780. However, nearly all of Reid's lecture notes that have survived from the course stem from his first two years in Glasgow, and it is mainly on this basis that we have made our reconstruction. Despite their often fragmentary character as preserved, the lectures are of central importance for our understanding of Reid as a thinker

²² For the details of Reid's election to the Glasgow chair see Paul Wood, "'The Fittest Man in the Kingdom': Thomas Reid and the Glasgow Chair of Moral Philosophy", pp. 289–91.

²³ In his first lecture at Glasgow Reid paid fulsome tribute to Smith and praised Francis Hutcheson. He also said to his students: 'I shall be much obliged to any of you Gentlemen or to any other, who can furnish me with Notes of his [Smith's] Prelections whether in Morals Jurisprudence, Police or in Rhetorick'; AUL, MS 2131/4/II/9, p. 1 (original pagination).

²⁴ Wood, "'The Fittest Man in the Kingdom'", pp. 279, 280, 285, 286, 292–93; Reid, *Practical Ethics*, pp. 1–16.

²⁵ Reid, *Practical Ethics*, pp. 15–16.

and as a central figure in the Scottish Enlightenment. The lectures provide clear evidence for considerable continuity between Reid's earlier political interests while in Aberdeen and the more elaborate standpoints he developed in Glasgow in the second half of his life. At the same time, the lectures demonstrate a clear systematic intent, and they do in fact offer a framework both for his reading and for, so to speak, all the special topics that he dealt with at greater length in the various discourses and other papers that we present in this volume.

The paucity of documentary evidence makes it impossible to reconstruct the precise development of Reid's political and economic ideas while he lived in the north-east of Scotland. We are better able to map the trajectory of his thinking about politics and economics after his move to Glasgow because most of his surviving manuscripts and correspondence date from after 1764. Furthermore, we can also trace at least some of his reading thanks to the preservation of the 'Professors Receipt Books', which list the books borrowed from the university library by each of the Glasgow professors from 1751 to 1789.²⁶ In general terms, the library records tell us that, of the 615 books (459 titles) Reid took out in the period 1767–89, forty-two (9%) were on history, nineteen (4%) on politics, thirteen (3%) on natural law, seven (2%) on political economy and four (under 1%) on law. These figures roughly correspond to those obtained when we survey the 106 sets of reading notes found among Reid's extant manuscripts. Of these notes, there are four sets (4%) from works on politics, three (3%) from books on history and one each (1%) from writings on natural law and political economy. When compared with his reading in other fields, such as moral philosophy, the natural sciences and mathematics, the numbers for natural law, political economy and law are small. Nevertheless, it is striking that he was better read in politics and history than might otherwise be expected and that his reading of historical works was almost as extensive as that of books on religion or philosophy. Moreover, the chronological pattern of his borrowing is surprising, given that it would be reasonable to assume that the bulk of his reading was prompted by his teaching. In fact, he apparently had little time for reading while he was lecturing, because the majority of the books he borrowed were taken out after he retired from the classroom in the spring of 1780. His borrowings of works on natural law, however, constitute an exception to this pattern, since he borrowed almost all of the natural law books recorded in the 'Professors Receipt Books' before 1780, which suggests that his reading on the subject was primarily related to his teaching. This

²⁶ 'Professors Receipt Book, 1770–[1789]', Glasgow University Library (henceforth GUL), Spec. Coll. MS Lib. (uncatalogued). For a preliminary survey of Reid's reading see Paul Wood, 'A Virtuoso Reader: Thomas Reid and the Practices of Reading in Eighteenth-Century Scotland'. We draw on this study in what follows.

is consonant with the impression that natural law was a subject that Reid first took a serious interest in when he had to meet the requirements of the Glasgow chair.²⁷

The sets of reading notes published in Part One of the present volume well illustrate the range of texts on history, politics and political economy that Reid consulted in Glasgow, as well as the issues that preoccupied him when thinking about these topics. For example, his notes from the founding charter of Pennsylvania and William Penn's pamphlet *The Frame of the Government of the Province of Pennsylvania in America* (1682) dating from 1768 register his view of the growing tensions between Britain and its American colonies precipitated by the Sugar and Stamp Acts of 1764 and 1765. In a letter written to his old friend Andrew Skene in December 1765, Reid commented on the deep division within the merchant community in Glasgow over the hostile American reaction to the Stamp Act but he did not spell out what his own position on the matter was. However, we know from his lectures on practical ethics that he rejected the Lockean premise of the argument that there should be 'no taxation without representation' used by the American colonists to question the legitimacy of the Stamp Act, and his reading notes clearly indicate that he believed both that the British Parliament had authority over the government in Pennsylvania (and, by extension, the other colonies) and that Parliament had a right to levy taxes without consulting the colonists.²⁸ Otherwise there is surprisingly little evidence regarding Reid's reaction to the unfolding situation in the American colonies, apart from a passing reference to the beneficial effect the repeal of the Stamp Act had on trade in Glasgow and a brief paragraph in a letter to Lord Kames dating from the end of February 1778 in which Reid was critical of the conciliatory stance towards the colonists adopted by Lord North in a speech to Parliament earlier that month.²⁹

Reid's remarks suggest that his response to the American Revolution was the same as that of his friends among the Moderates in the Church of Scotland such as Alexander Gerard, who, in a published Fast Day sermon delivered on 26 February 1778, defended 'the generous spirit of British liberty' against those who had used the slogan 'no taxation without representation' in order to foment rebellion in

²⁷ Cf. Reid, *Practical Ethics*, pp. xxxii–xxxiii. One natural law text that Reid borrowed on a number of occasions and in various editions in the late 1760s and through the 1770s was Hugo Grotius's *De jure belli ac pacis libri tres* (1625).

²⁸ See Reid to Andrew Skene, 30 December 1765, in Reid, *Correspondence*, p. 46; Reid, *Practical Ethics*, pp. lxxiii, 158–59, 302–3, n24; see below, pp. 3–5.

²⁹ Reid to David Skene, 25 February 1767, and Reid to Lord Kames, 27 February 1778, in Reid, *Correspondence*, pp. 57, 98 and 291 n. We also know that he intended to read, or perhaps had read, William Barron's *History of the Colonization of the Free States of Antiquity, applied to the Present Contest between Great Britain and her American Colonies* (1777); for evidence, see our textual note to AUL, MS 2131/4/III/13 below, pp. 221–22.

the American colonies. In his sermon Gerard argued that the colonists' objection to the taxes levied by the British government was misplaced because 'taxes are encroachments upon liberty, not by their being imposed upon persons without their own consent, but only ... when they are excessive, or when they are grossly unequal, or when there is no security against their becoming such', and in doing so he echoed the point Reid insisted on in his lectures on practical ethics.³⁰ Moreover, Reid's opposition to the American cause also meant that he was at loggerheads with local evangelical clergymen affiliated to the Popular Party. The evangelicals were bitterly opposed to the policies and politics of the Moderates, with the Popular Party being a powerful force in Glasgow and the west of Scotland for much of the eighteenth century.³¹ Leading figures among the 'high flyers' in the Glasgow area, such as the Rev. William Thom of Govan, urged their parishioners to support the American colonists, with Thom being a particular thorn in the side of Reid and his fellow professors because of his attacks on the teaching and curriculum at Glasgow University published in the 1760s.³² Responses to the American conflict were thus interwoven not only with differences of political principle but also with the divisive ecclesiastical politics which plagued the Kirk throughout the middle decades of the eighteenth century.

Reid's reading notes on Penn's pamphlet also register his fascination with Harringtonian republicanism and with Montesquieu's tripartite classification of the different forms of government.³³ Moreover, Montesquieu's admiration for the British constitution informed Reid's own understanding of the superiority

³⁰ Alexander Gerard, *Liberty the Cloke of Maliciousness, both in the American Rebellion and in the Manners of the Times* (1778), pp. 10, 15. The response of the Moderates to the American conflict is discussed in Richard B. Sher, *Church and University in the Scottish Enlightenment: The Moderate Literati of Edinburgh*, pp. 262–76.

³¹ Reid had little time for the brand of Calvinism championed by the Popular Party. Writing to Andrew Skene, Reid said that 'the common people here [i.e. in Glasgow] have a gloom in their countenance which I am at a loss whether to ascribe to their religion or to the Air and Climate'. He added: 'there is certainly more of religion among the common people in this town than in Aberdeen and although it has a gloomy Enthusiastical Cast, yet I think it makes them tame & sober'; Reid to Skene, 14 November 1764, in Reid, *Correspondence*, p. 38.

³² On the Popular Party's support for the American colonists see Robert Kent Donovan, 'The Popular Party of the Church of Scotland and the American Revolution', and Jonathan M. Yeager, *Enlightened Evangelicalism: The Life and Thought of John Erskine*, ch. 7. For the Rev. William Thom, see Robert Kent Donovan, 'Evangelical Civic Humanism in Glasgow: The American War Sermons of William Thom', and Richard B. Sher, 'Commerce, Religion and the Enlightenment in Eighteenth-Century Glasgow', pp. 342–45.

³³ Reid's study of various republican governments (as well as his obsessive eye for detail) is in evidence in his brief, undated set of notes from Gasparo Contareni's *De magistratibus & republica Venetorum libri quinque* (1592); see below, p. 19.

of the British political system, as can be seen in Reid's lectures on politics.³⁴ Reid's conviction that Britain was the only nation to enjoy true liberty meant that he was especially receptive to the message of another continental admirer of the British constitution, the Genevan politician and theorist Jean Louis De Lolme, whose analysis of the balanced structure of the English system followed that of Montesquieu. The three sets of notes from De Lolme's *The Constitution of England* (1775) transcribed in Part One show that Reid studied closely De Lolme's explanation of how the constitutional checks and balances between the interests of the crown, the nobility and the people served as the ground for English liberty, as well as De Lolme's specific historical claim that the introduction of the feudal system by William the Conqueror eventually led to the emergence of political liberty in England because feudalism united the nobles and people against the King.³⁵ Other delineations of the feudal system appear among Reid's reading notes, most notably the accounts of feudalism found in George Lyttelton's *The History of the Life of King Henry the Second* (1767–71) and William Robertson's *The History of the Reign of the Emperor Charles V* (1769). Around the time that Reid took his notes from Lyttelton and Robertson in the late summer of 1769, he was also reading a number of works dealing with British history, including Hume's *History of England*, Robertson's *History of Scotland*, and *A General History of England* (1747–55) written by the nonjuror and Jacobite Thomas Carte. Why he was doing so remains unclear. But it is significant that he was immersing himself in some of the key texts in the emerging genre of philosophical history, and his study of these historians strongly suggests that he shared their interests.³⁶ Moreover, his engagement with history points to the fact that his anatomy of the mind was firmly grounded on an empirical foundation derived from his extensive reading in history, natural history and the literature on travel.³⁷ The same can also be said of his science of politics.

Reid's reading notes from books on political economy illustrate important facets of his thinking on the subject. First, his notes from Sir James Steuart's *The*

³⁴ See p. 51, and Reid, *Philosophical Orations*, oration. I, para. 11, where Reid tells his audience that Montesquieu 'is especially worthy of being called a Briton because he has taught us very fortunate people, who are blessed with a political state excelling all other political states, whether revealed by history or painted by the imagination, to know and to appreciate these good things of ours'.

³⁵ See pp. 16–18. De Lolme's work was first published in French in 1771. The 1775 English edition incorporated various textual changes and three new chapters; see David Lieberman's introduction to Jean Louis De Lolme, *The Constitution of England; or, an Account of the English Government*, p. xx.

³⁶ On Thomas Carte as a historian see Paul Kléber Monod, 'Thomas Carte, the Druids and British National Identity'. Carte's interest in the development of political institutions, religion, manners and customs was characteristic of the genre of philosophical history.

³⁷ Wood, 'A Virtuoso Reader', pp. 59, 60.

Principles of Money Applied to the Present State of the Coin of Bengal (1772) reflect his curiosity about coinage, which is first mentioned in a letter to Lord Kames dating from December 1762. Reid there told Kames that he had ‘met lately with a manuscript Table of Scotch money, shewing the proportion of a pound scotch to a pound weight of Silver ever since the twelfth [*sic*] Century’, and suggested that if such a table had not already been published it would be worth doing so ‘in the transactions of some of your learned Societies’.³⁸ In addition Reid investigated the history of English coinage from the time of the Norman Conquest to the reign of Elizabeth I, as can be seen in his notes from Martin Folkes’s *A Table of English Silver Coins from the Norman Conquest to the Present Time* (1745).³⁹ It is also the nature of money that is the subject of the only surviving evidence of Reid’s engagement with Smith’s *Wealth of Nations*, namely, some brief paraphrases from Smith’s discussion of the subject.⁴⁰ Thus, although his undated paper on the state of coinage in Britain delivered to the Glasgow Literary Society (to be discussed below) was undoubtedly prompted by the widespread concern in the 1770s with the problem of the shortage and debasement of small copper and silver coin, the paper was also rooted in his long-standing historical interest in such matters.⁴¹

Secondly, Reid’s notes from Steuart’s *The Principles of Money* register his high regard for Steuart as a political economist. A few months after the publication in early 1767 of Steuart’s magnum opus, *An Inquiry into the Principles of Political Oeconomy*, Reid wrote to David Skene, ‘I have gone over Sir James Stewart’s great Book of Political Oeconomy, wherein I think there is a great deal of good Materials; carelessly put together indeed; but I think it contains more sound principles concerning Commerce & Police than any book we have yet had’.⁴² Beyond this general assessment, we unfortunately do not know the specifics of what Reid made of Steuart’s *Inquiry* because either he did not take reading notes when he first encountered the work or his notes have not survived. We therefore have no indication of how Reid viewed the details of Steuart’s account of the three primary sectors of the economy (agriculture, trade and manufactures), money,

³⁸ Reid to Kames, 29 December 1762, in Reid, *Correspondence*, p. 22. Earlier in the month, Reid and his fellow members of the Aberdeen Philosophical Society discussed a question proposed by Thomas Gordon, ‘Whether the current coin of the nation ought not to be debased by alloy or raised in its value so as there shall be no profit made by exporting it?’; Ulman, *Minutes of the Aberdeen Philosophical Society*, pp. 112–13, 193.

³⁹ See p. 20.

⁴⁰ See p. 65.

⁴¹ For Reid’s paper, see pp. lxxxi–lxxxiv and 96–106.

⁴² Reid to David Skene, 14 September 1767, in Reid, *Correspondence*, p. 60.

credit or taxation, even though it is reasonable to assume that Reid took on board some of Steuart's ideas when considering these subjects.

A third point that emerges from Reid's reading notes is his fascination with political arithmetic and the use of quantitative reasoning in economics. As a natural philosopher Reid adopted a rigorously quantitative approach to the study of the material world, and a similar impetus to reduce economic phenomena to 'number, weight, and measure' is in evidence in his writings on political economy.⁴³ While any discussion of coinage might be said to have an inescapable quantitative dimension, the same does not hold true of the analysis of the economy in much of the literature published in the eighteenth century. Hence Reid's brief note on Ange Goudar's estimate of the physical size and population of France is best seen as symptomatic of his broader interest in the field of political arithmetic, which was defined by Charles Davenant as 'the art of reasoning by figures, upon things relating to government'. According to Davenant, political arithmetic encompassed the study of revenue, trade and population, and these topics, coupled with a quantitative approach to their investigation, figure prominently in Reid's extant writings.⁴⁴ For instance, his paper 'Whether By proper Laws the number of Births in every parish might not be doubled, or at least greatly increased?' is a clear example of the genre of political arithmetic, insofar as it takes up the issue of population and utilises the work of Edmond Halley and the Comte de Buffon on bills of mortality in order to calculate the 'normal' rate of population growth.⁴⁵ In the lectures on 'oeconomical (household) jurisprudence', Reid sets the population issue in the context of the 'oeconomy of nature' and the discussion of polygamous versus monogamous marriage. Also there, he was interested in

⁴³ On Reid as a natural philosopher see Paul Wood, 'Thomas Reid and the Culture of Science'; see also Wood's forthcoming edition of Reid's manuscripts on natural philosophy, *Thomas Reid on Mathematics and Natural Philosophy*. One of the earliest exponents of political arithmetic, Sir William Petty, wrote that in studying the economy 'I have taken the course (as a Specimen of the Political Arithmetick I have long aimed at) to express my self in Terms of *Number, Weight, or Measure*; to use only Arguments of Sense, and to consider only such Causes, as have visible Foundations in Nature'; see Petty's preface to his *Political Arithmetick* (1690) in Petty, *The Economic Writings*, vol. I, p. 244. See also Julian Hoppitt, 'Political Arithmetic in Eighteenth-Century England', and Joanna Innes, *Inferior Politics: Social Problems and Social Policies in Eighteenth-Century Britain*, ch. 4.

⁴⁴ Charles Davenant, 'Discourses on the Public Revenues, and on the Trade of England', in Davenant, *The Political and Commercial Works* (1771), vol. I, p. 128. Compare with John Arbuthnot, 'An Essay on the Usefulness of Mathematical Learning', in George A. Aitken, *The Life and Works of John Arbuthnot*, pp. 421–22, where Arbuthnot affirms that political arithmetic 'is the true political knowledge' (p. 422).

⁴⁵ See pp. 88–92. The use of bills of mortality to calculate population was closely associated with the work of the founders of political arithmetic in seventeenth-century England, John Graunt, Sir William Petty, Gregory King and Edmond Halley.

comparative demographic facts, drawing on Montesquieu, as well as Engelbert Kaempfer's account of Japan.⁴⁶

Reid's interest in the widely debated problem of the national debt also manifests his predilection for quantitative analysis. His surviving lecture notes tell us, for example, that he was familiar with Andrew Hooke's *An Essay on the National Debt, and National Capital*, wherein Hooke proclaimed that 'Political Arithmetic is not barely a speculative Amusement, as 'tis generally esteemed, but, when rightly apply'd, has a better Claim to be rank'd among the Sciences than many other Branches of Literature thus dignify'd', and went so far as to assert that the method he had followed in calculating the size of the national debt in relation to the wealth of the nation was 'perfectly *Newtonian*'.⁴⁷ We do not know what Reid made of these claims, but he was evidently impressed enough with the overall argument of Hooke's *Essay* to recommend it to his students. Reid also read two subsequent and highly important exercises in political arithmetic by Richard Price dealing with the national debt and related issues, *Observations on Reversionary Payments* (1771) and *An Appeal to the Public, on the Subject of the National Debt* (1772). Writing to Price in 1772 or 1773, Reid said that the *Observations* was 'a Work ... I value highly' and noted that 'I have not yet had leisure to examine your Sentiments upon the National Debt, with the Attention I would wish'. Nevertheless, the latter book prompted the comment that the British government 'may receive great aid in the Matter from those who have entered most deeply into the Science of Numbers' and he observed that 'it is much to the Honour of Science, & ought to draw more Respect to it than it commonly meets with in this Age of Dissipation that even the most abstract parts of it are found of so great utility in the affairs of Life'.⁴⁸ Reid's comments give us some sense of why he regarded political arithmetic as a valuable branch of the science of politics, namely because it provided the kind of quantitative and hence objective factual knowledge that could be used as the basis for the formulation of sound economic and social policies. And in thinking this, Reid gave expression to the 'quantifying spirit' that gave rise to the increasing use of mathematical methods

⁴⁶ See Reid, *Practical Ethics*, Sections VI and XIV, especially pp. 69 and 116–26 and the references in notes 11–12, p. 270. For the demographic details, see p. 125; cf. Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws* (1748), book XVI, ch. 4, and Engelbert Kaempfer, *Histoire naturelle, civile, et ecclesiastique du Japon* (1732), vol. I, p. 308. See also the further discussion below, pp. lxix–lxxvii.

⁴⁷ For the reference to Hooke, see p. 62; Andrew Hooke, *An Essay on the National Debt, and National Capital: Or, the Account Truly Stated, Debtor and Creditor* (1751), pp. viii (of the Preface), and p. 52.

⁴⁸ Reid to Price, [1772/73], in Reid, *Correspondence*, pp. 63–64.

in order to understand and control the economy and society more generally during the Enlightenment.⁴⁹

Like King's and Marischal, the College in Glasgow boasted a professorial club, the Glasgow Literary Society, founded in January 1752. Following Reid's move to Glasgow in the summer of 1764, he was elected as a member of the Literary Society on 9 November, having been nominated at the first meeting of the session the previous week.⁵⁰ Whereas the Wise Club was made up of a relatively homogeneous and harmonious group of men linked to Lord Deskford, the Literary Society was a far more volatile body, whose members were divided by university politics and the politics of the nation at large.⁵¹ Given that Reid was a leading figure in the College faction opposed to the policies of the Principal, William Leechman, he was inevitably drawn into conflict with some of his fellow members of the Society, most notably in the 1770s, when the faculty was at war over the issue of the administration of the University accounts. The minutes of the Society are missing for the period February 1773 to November 1776, which suggests that meetings were either suspended or especially fractious, and there were further skirmishes in late December 1778 and early January 1779, when a heated dispute arose over whether to adjourn the Society over the New Year period. Reid and three of his colleagues formally dissented from the majority decision to do so, and they met independently on 1 January 1779 to hear a paper by the College librarian (and later Reid's assistant and successor), Archibald Arthur, on 'the dispersion at Babel'. At the following meeting, on 8 January, involving the whole of the group, there was a disagreement over who should take the chair as president, with Arthur squaring off against the Humanist William Richardson over who should do so. After a lengthy and acrimonious intervention by the Professor of Natural Philosophy, John Anderson, who was allied with both Reid and Arthur, the meeting finally proceeded and there were no serious disruptions within the Society from then onwards.⁵² Moreover, despite the fact that Anderson and Reid were close friends until their relationship cooled in the 1780s, they also fell out at the Society, as did Reid and John Millar, who, as mentioned earlier, opposed Reid's appointment to Glasgow and held different philosophical views,

⁴⁹ Reid's view of the practical utility of mathematics was much the same as that of his teacher Colin Maclaurin; see Judith V. Grabner, 'Maclaurin and Newton: The Newtonian Style and the Authority of Mathematics'. For the broader European context see especially Frängsmyr et al. (eds), *The Quantifying Spirit in the Eighteenth Century*.

⁵⁰ 'Laws of the Literary Society in Glasgow College', GUL, MS Murray 505, p. 16.

⁵¹ On the Glasgow Literary Society and Reid's involvement in it, see Paul Wood, 'Thomas Reid, Natural Philosopher: A Study of Science and Philosophy in the Scottish Enlightenment', pp. 175–87, 385–87; see also Kathleen Holcomb, 'Thomas Reid in the Glasgow Literary Society'.

⁵² 'Laws of the Literary Society in Glasgow College', GUL, MS Murray 505, pp. 76–77.

but who was broadly in the same party political camp as Reid.⁵³ The meetings of the Glasgow Literary Society were thus highly politicised and often contentious, unlike those of the Wise Club, and there was far less consensus among the members about the social, political and economic topics that Reid addressed in his contributions to the Society.

In the years immediately after Reid's retirement from teaching in 1780, his energies were largely taken up with the composition of his two volumes of *Essays*. Nevertheless, we know from the Professors Receipt Books that he read more widely than he was previously able to do and his borrowings increased through the 1780s over what they had been in the previous decade, to reach a maximum of sixty-six titles in 1787.⁵⁴ In the years 1780–89, he borrowed some fifteen books on history, nine on politics and three each on political economy and law.⁵⁵ The history titles are drawn from a mix of genres, although he continued to be interested in philosophical history and took out works by his Glasgow colleague John Millar, Voltaire, Adam Ferguson and Gilbert Stuart. His reading in politics was decidedly Whiggish in orientation, for it included a striking number of works on republicanism, *An Essay on the Right of Property in Land* (1781) by his former student and successor as regent at King's William Ogilvie, the collected political works of Andrew Fletcher of Saltoun and Francis Blackburne's *Memoirs of Thomas Hollis, Esq.* (1780).⁵⁶ His correspondence also tells us that in 1793 he read Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792), which he recommended to Dugald Stewart with the comment, 'I think a Professor of Morals may find some things worthy of his attention, mixed, perhaps, with other things which he may not approve of'.⁵⁷ Of the trio of books on political economy, two were notable works by Scots, *An Historical and Chronological Deduction of the Origin of Commerce* (1764), by the Aberdeen-born Adam Anderson, and John Campbell's *Political Survey of Britain* (1774), while the books on law were a miscellany that included Gabriel Bonnot de Mably's *Le Droit public de l'Europe, fondé sur les traités* (1746).

⁵³ For an example of a heated exchange between Reid and Anderson, see Wood, 'A Virtuoso Reader', pp. 47–48. On Millar's likely opposition to Reid's appointment, see Paul Wood, "'The fittest Man in the Kingdom'", p. 291. On the philosophical differences, see Knud Haakonssen, *Natural Law and Moral Philosophy*, pp. 180–81. On the Society disputes between Reid and Millar, see John Craig, 'Account of the Life and Writings of John Millar, Esq.', in John Millar, *The Origin and Distinction of Ranks: Or, an Inquiry into the Circumstances which Give Rise to Influence and Authority, in the Different Members of Society* (1806), pp. lxi–lxii.

⁵⁴ Wood, 'A Virtuoso Reader', p. 55.

⁵⁵ 'Professors Receipt Book, 1770–[1789]'.

⁵⁶ See also Reid to William Ogilvie, 7 April 1789, in Reid, *Correspondence*, p. 204.

⁵⁷ Reid to Stewart, 21 January 1793, in Reid, *Correspondence*, pp. 231–32.

Following his retirement from the classroom, Reid was heavily involved in various local philanthropic enterprises. In the summer of 1786, for example, he helped to manage subscriptions collected at Glasgow's Tontine coffee house for a proposed monument to honour the Dissenter and noted prison reformer John Howard. Reid himself contributed two guineas to the fund (which was one of the largest amounts subscribed in Glasgow), but the scheme proved to be an abortive one because Howard personally intervened to put a stop to it.⁵⁸ Significantly, one of the other subscribers who also contributed two guineas was David Dale, the Glasgow merchant and founder of New Lanark (1784), who was active in some of the other philanthropic projects that Reid participated in.⁵⁹ The following year, Reid was appointed to the managing committee of the charity that promoted the construction of the Royal Infirmary, which gained its royal charter in December 1791 and eventually opened its doors to the sick poor in 1794. Reid served the Infirmary in a number of different official roles; he personally donated £100 to the institution and visited the wards, where he also gave small amounts of money to needy patients.⁶⁰ In promoting the Royal Infirmary Reid worked closely with his University colleague, the Professor of Logic and Rhetoric George Jardine, and, periodically, with Dale, who, like Reid, supported the Infirmary from the outset.⁶¹ In 1790, Reid was a founding member and the first President of the Glasgow Society of the Sons of Ministers of the Church of Scotland, a body intended to provide financial relief to the sons of clergymen in need.⁶² And in the same year a Humane Society was established in Glasgow for the treatment of those 'drowned, or otherwise suffocated'. Both Reid and Dale were involved in the Society, as was their mutual friend, the University Lecturer on Materia Medica and later Chemistry, Dr Robert Cleghorn. Reid was, for a time, one of the Directors.⁶³

At the national level, Reid was a supporter of the campaign to abolish slavery. Reid affirmed in his Glasgow lectures on practical ethics the principle that there is a 'Natural Equality of Men' and that 'None <are> naturally born to be

⁵⁸ Reid to the Committee of the Subscribers to the Design of Erecting a Statue to Mr Howard, 28 August 1786, in Reid, *Correspondence*, pp. 186–87 and 304n.

⁵⁹ On Dale and New Lanark, see Ian Donnachie and George Hewitt, *Historic New Lanark: The Dale and Owen Industrial Community since 1785*.

⁶⁰ Wood, 'Thomas Reid, Natural Philosopher', pp. 188–89.

⁶¹ On the early history of the Royal Infirmary, see Moses Steven Buchanan, *History of the Glasgow Royal Infirmary, from its Commencement in 1787, to the Present Time* (1832).

⁶² Martin J. Clelland, *Historical Sketch of the Glasgow Society of the Sons of Ministers of the Church of Scotland, Instituted Anno 1790*, pp. 31, 99; see also John M'Caul to Thomas Reid, 24 July 1792, in Reid, *Correspondence*, p. 230.

⁶³ Wood, 'Thomas Reid, Natural Philosopher', p. 188

slaves'.⁶⁴ Presumably he had said much the same thing in his lectures at King's College; among the first cohort of students he taught there was the abolitionist the Rev. James Ramsay, who later published *An Essay on the Treatment and Conversion of African Slaves in the British Sugar Colonies* (1784) and various pamphlets related to the anti-slavery campaign. Although no letters between the two apparently survive, we know that they kept in touch, for in 1785 Reid sent Ramsay a presentation copy of his *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man*.⁶⁵ Reid thus had personal contact with those leading the fight against slavery in England, and there is little doubt that he welcomed the formation of the London Abolition Committee and similar groups elsewhere in 1787 and 1788. The London Committee and its affiliates circulated petitions opposing the slave trade in most major urban centres in Britain, including Glasgow, and duly presented them to Parliament. We do not know if Reid signed the Glasgow petition, but he was a signatory of one forwarded by the University to the Commons in the spring of 1788. He reported to his kinsman Dr James Gregory that 'Our University has sent a petition to the House of Commons, in favour of the African slaves' and expressed the hope that 'yours [i.e. Edinburgh] will not be the last in this humane design; and that the Clergy of Scotland will likewise join in it'.⁶⁶ Even though there was widespread popular support for the abolitionists' cause, William Wilberforce's efforts in the House of Commons to pass legislation banning the slave trade failed in 1789, and, despite attempts to revive the legislation in the years that followed, it was not until 1807 that slavery was finally outlawed. Nevertheless, Reid and his colleagues at the University of Glasgow continued to back abolitionism by awarding Wilberforce an honorary LLD in 1791 and again petitioning Parliament in 1792 to legislate against slavery.⁶⁷

When writing to James Gregory about the anti-slavery initiatives in Scotland in 1788, Reid quipped that 'I comfort my grey hairs with the thoughts that the world is growing better, having long resolved to resist the common sentiment of old age, that it is always growing worse'.⁶⁸ His optimism was soon to be sorely tested by the onset of the French Revolution. Reid was closely connected personally

⁶⁴ Reid, *Practical Ethics*, p. 46. Reid deals at some length with slavery as an issue in moral and legal theory in the lectures on 'domestic oeconomy'; see Reid, *Practical Ethics*, pp. 71 and 132–35, and, for the intellectual context, the notes pp. 241–43 and 275–77.

⁶⁵ Reid to John Bell, 27 June 1785, in Reid, *Correspondence*, p. 177.

⁶⁶ Reid to Gregory, [late February 1788], in Reid, *Correspondence*, p. 197, 307n. At the meeting of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland held in May 1788, a resolution condemning the slave trade was passed, although the Assembly voted against petitioning Parliament; see the *Scots Magazine* 50 (1788), pp. 305–6.

⁶⁷ Wood, 'Thomas Reid, Natural Philosopher', p. 190, and the references cited there.

⁶⁸ Reid to Gregory, [late February 1788], in Reid, *Correspondence*, p. 197.

and politically to those who initially welcomed the events of 1789, the most prominent being Richard Price. Reid's correspondence with Price began in the early 1770s and, notwithstanding their differences over the American conflict, the two men clearly had great respect for one another. Reid sent presentation copies of his two *Essays* to Price, while Price reciprocated by sending Reid a copy of his controversial tract, *A Discourse on the Love of Our Country* (1789).⁶⁹ Reid would have been sympathetic to Price's comparison between the Glorious Revolution and the events unfolding in France, although he would have rejected the parallel drawn in the *Discourse* between the Revolution of 1688–89 and the American War of Independence.⁷⁰ Reid probably also read Edmund Burke's riposte to Price, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790), given that Burke had served a term as Rector at the University of Glasgow from 1783 to 1785 and prior to 1789 had, like Reid, been affiliated to the Foxite Whigs. We have indirect evidence on what he would have made of Burke's *Reflections* in a letter later written by his old Aberdeen friend William Ogilvie to James Mackintosh. Mackintosh's *Vindiciae Gallicae: A Defence of the French Revolution and its English Admirers* (1791) was widely regarded in Whig circles as being one of the most cogent answers to Burke to appear in the heated public debate sparked by the publication of the *Reflections*. Reid apparently regarded the *Vindiciae Gallicae* in this light, for Ogilvie reported to Mackintosh that Reid had read the work and 'was struck with admiration on reading that Essay, and used frequently to speak of it as one of the most ingenious works of the kind that he had ever met with'.⁷¹ In the tumultuous years after 1789, then, Reid remained true to the Whig principles that he shared with Price and Mackintosh and from which Burke had lapsed.

In Glasgow, Reid was known to be one of a phalanx of Foxite Whigs at the University that included his colleagues John Anderson, Robert Cleghorn,

⁶⁹ Reid to John Bell, 27 June 1785 and 21 February 1788, in Reid, *Correspondence*, pp. 177, 195; Price to [James Wodrow], 20 January 1790, in Price, *The Correspondence of Richard Price*, vol. III, pp. 269–71. Price also refers favourably to Reid's *An Inquiry into the Human Mind, on the Principles of Common Sense* (1764) and *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man* (1785) in the third edition of *A Review of the Principal Questions in Morals* (1787); see Price, *A Review*, pp. 279–82.

⁷⁰ Richard Price, *A Discourse on the Love of our Country* (1789), in Price, *Political Writings*, pp. 195–96.

⁷¹ The undated text of Ogilvie's letter to Mackintosh (which Mackintosh apparently received in 1805) is transcribed in *Memoirs of the Life of the Right Honourable Sir James Mackintosh*, vol. I, pp. 380–81. Ogilvie was told about Reid's enthusiasm for the *Vindiciae Gallicae* by Reid's daughter Martha, who cared for her father after the death of her mother in April 1792. Cf. James Mackintosh, *Vindiciae Gallicae. Defence of the French Revolution and its English Admirers, against the Accusations of the Right Hon. Edmund Burke* (1791), in Mackintosh, *Vindiciae Gallicae and other Writings on the French Revolution*; and Knud Haakonssen, *Natural Law and Moral Philosophy*, ch. 8.

George Jardine and John Millar and his son James.⁷² All of these men were early supporters of the French Revolution, and they were joined, at least initially, by Reid's assistant, Archibald Arthur.⁷³ Millar, Jardine and Reid subsequently became members of the Glasgow Friends of Liberty, which met in 1791 to commemorate the storming of the Bastille on 14 July 1789. Reid agreed to act as a steward at their celebratory dinner on the condition that 'no unfavourable Reflection direct or oblique either on the Constitution or present Administration, of Great Britain was to be heard', and his name was used in newspaper announcements of the meeting. As he told an unidentified Catholic correspondent, in doing so he 'meant nothing more, than to own my self not ashamed to be thought a friend to the French Revolution, & thought no Mortal needed to take offence at this'. But such was the temper of the times that he 'received an Anonymous letter in a feigned hand professing friendship, and great Surprize *that my Name should appear at the bottom of an Advertisement calling together a set of political Madmen and Blackguards; and acquainting me that the time is fast approaching when I and some of my brethren will repent the steps we have taken*'.⁷⁴ Reid was not intimidated by the threatening letter and attended the meeting which, *inter alia*, toasted the King and royal family of Britain, as well as the French National Assembly, and expressed the hope that 'the free constitution of Great Britain and Ireland flourish and prosper to the latest posterity'.⁷⁵ Nor did Reid waver in his support for the Revolution. In 1792 he contributed to a subscription fund launched in Glasgow to support the French National Assembly, much to the horror of James Beattie's friend Robert Arbuthnot, who wrote to Beattie in August 1792, 'Were you not sorry when you heard that your worthy and venerable friend, Dr. Reid, was so weak as to remit money to the National Assembly?'⁷⁶ In reply, Beattie commented darkly that 'I am not greatly surprised at what you tell me of our friend at Glasgow. He is very much a man of speculation, and I believe not a little of a republican. In matters of science he is extremely acute, but knows not much of the world; and though well acquainted with man's general nature, sees but a little way into the characters of individuals'. And, after recounting an anecdote to illustrate Reid's obsession with the details of Harrington's *Oceana*, he observed

⁷² Bob Harris, *The Scottish People and the French Revolution*, p. 25.

⁷³ William Richardson, 'An Account of some Particulars in the Life and Character of the Author', in Archibald Arthur, *Discourses on Theological and Literary Subjects* (1803), pp. 512–14. Richardson almost certainly exaggerates the rapidity with which Arthur (and Reid) became disillusioned with the course of the French Revolution.

⁷⁴ Reid to ?, [July/August 1791], in Reid, *Correspondence*, p. 224.

⁷⁵ See the report of the meeting in the *Edinburgh Evening Courant*, no. 11,415, 16 July 1791.

⁷⁶ Henry W. Meikle, *Scotland and the French Revolution*, p. 75, n3; Margaret Forbes, *Beattie and His Friends*, p. 272.

that ‘I am told that republican (I should rather say *levelling*) principles are very prevalent in the College of Glasgow’.⁷⁷

By mid-1793 Reid and his colleagues were the target of more than the private criticism of erstwhile friends and associates. In August and September of that year the *Glasgow Courier* printed a series of letters by ‘Asmodeus’ which attacked the ‘democrats’ in Glasgow and its University for being sympathetic to the French cause and for espousing republicanism. At one point Asmodeus remarked that ‘Beings of my order, Mr. Editor, are incapable of procreating flesh and blood; but were I a mortal and a father, I would certainly prefer finishing my son’s education at a brothel, to a school where his political principles were likely to be contaminated’, and ‘Asmodeus’ complained bitterly about ‘the glaring impropriety of employing men of Republican principles as teachers in the seminaries of this kingdom’. At the end of the series, Asmodeus cast generalities aside and singled out Millar and Anderson in particular as being guilty of ‘impertinence and folly’.⁷⁸ It is in this context that Reid’s discourse to the Glasgow Literary Society on 28 November 1794, ‘Some Thoughts on the Utopian System’, must be read.⁷⁹ We will be discussing the argument of this discourse below, but we want here briefly to consider the significance of the textual changes made to the paper when it was repackaged for publication in the *Glasgow Courier* on 18 December 1794 under the title ‘On the Dangers of Political Innovation’, since this sheds further light on the historical circumstances in which Reid’s discourse was composed.

According to Henry Meikle, who was unaware of the much larger manuscript from which the published paper was cut, the article constitutes a political volte-face. Reid, Meikle writes, ‘bowed to the storm’ of the reaction in Britain to the Terror and the increasingly violent course the Revolution in France had taken after the execution of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette in 1793.⁸⁰ Meikle’s interpretation is, however, problematic for a number of reasons. First, we cannot be certain about the extent to which Reid was involved in the publication of the article. Both the *Glasgow Courier* and Reid’s colleague William Richardson, writing ten years later, maintained that the text was published with Reid’s consent. While this may be true, it is also misleading. Insofar as Richardson was not

⁷⁷ Beattie to Arbuthnot, [c. 10 August 1792], in Beattie, *The Correspondence of James Beattie*, vol. IV, p. 174.

⁷⁸ Anon., *Asmodeus; or, Strictures on the Glasgow Democrats. In a Series of Letters, Several of which were Lately Published in the Glasgow Courier* (1793), pp. 3, 4, 24; on p. 24 ‘Asmodeus’ also refers to a number of specific individuals who cannot be readily identified.

⁷⁹ ‘Minutes of the College Literary Society, 1790–99’, GUL, MS Gen. 4, p. 8.

⁸⁰ Meikle, *Scotland and the French Revolution*, pp. 155–56.

a member of Reid's immediate political or social circle, there are good grounds to doubt his motives, not least because in making the statement he was attempting to conceal the degree to which Reid and his anointed successor, Archibald Arthur, welcomed the French Revolution in its initial moderate, reformist phase.⁸¹ While it is likely that Reid gave his permission for excerpts from his discourse to appear in print, we simply do not know who was responsible for choosing those excerpts or who gave them their politically charged title. Secondly, as indicated, Meikle did not know of and had not read the whole of Reid's discourse from which the article was excerpted. If he had, he would have seen that the published text was carefully crafted to advance the political agenda of the *Glasgow Courier*. When the *Courier* first appeared, in September 1792, it self-consciously maintained a neutral political stance and included articles sympathetic to reformist causes as well as others critical of such causes, for example calls for the abolition of the slave trade. Yet by late 1792 its political posture had altered dramatically, for the paper was now militantly opposed not only to the French Revolution but also to the reformist politics it had earlier countenanced.⁸² Reid's warning in the article against revolutionary action and his remarks on peaceful reform could be seen as signalling a political change of heart, and one that was consistent with the shifting politics of the *Glasgow Courier*. However, when these passages are read in the context of Reid's discourse as a whole, we see that his political principles remained the same until the end of his long life. What had changed were the historical circumstances he was confronted with. We will return to this point below.

2. Reid's Glasgow Lectures on Politics

Reid lectured on politics both in Aberdeen and Glasgow, but the surviving record of his teaching of the subject at King's College is very limited. The main source is the brief discussion in each of the orations that he delivered at the graduation of his class. As we mentioned above, we have evidence of some of his reading, and we can trace elements of his early teaching in the surviving notes from

⁸¹ Richardson, 'An Account', in Arthur, *Discourses*, pp. 514n, 518. Earlier printed versions of the paper do not bear the title given by Richardson: 'Observations on the Danger of Political Innovation, from a Discourse delivered on the 28th November 1794, before the Literary Society in Glasgow College, by Dr. Reid, and published by his consent'. Compare *Glasgow Courier*, 18 December 1794, and [Robert Cleghorn], *Sketch of the Late Thomas Reid, D.D. Professor of Moral Philosophy in the University of Glasgow* (1796), p. 9. As we have seen, Robert Cleghorn was one of Reid's closest political associates; he was also Reid's personal physician during his final illness.

⁸² Harris, *Scottish People*, pp. 51–53.

his Glasgow lectures, mainly specific topics and authors but also method of presentation. In his Aberdeen period, he was particularly inclined to arrange his material in sequences of ‘principles’ or ‘axioms’, and some of the papers thus arranged are among the notes for his Glasgow lectures.⁸³ However, while we have such evidence of continuity in the development of Reid’s teaching of politics, the bulk of the surviving material and its arrangement stems from his time in Glasgow. What we present in this volume is, therefore, a reconstruction of his teaching in Glasgow, where politics formed part of his course in moral philosophy from when he started lecturing in the academic year 1764–65 until his retirement from the classroom in the early summer of 1780. What we can reconstruct is his initial course, for nearly all the surviving notes are from 1765 and 1766, with only a few later items. If this was a book about Reid, rather than one presenting his own writing, we could have incorporated material from the fairly copious student notes that have survived, some of which stem from later years in his teaching career.⁸⁴ However, this would present issues of interpretation and editorial procedure foreign to the Edinburgh Edition of Reid’s own work. In effect, then, the lectures in this volume represent Reid’s teaching in the first two years of his tenure at Glasgow. They must, therefore, be seen in the context of his overall teaching at the University but, at the same time, they provide a systematic framework both for his reading, the evidence of which we print in Part One, and for the particular topics discussed in the discourses and other essay-style papers that we print in Part Three. It is a remarkable fact that Reid’s students had at least some introduction to all the topics that he elaborated in the more advanced papers for his colleagues and peers.⁸⁵ The modern reader can now follow the same paths.

The lectures on politics formed the final section of Reid’s general course on moral philosophy. As we have explained in greater detail elsewhere, Reid’s course

⁸³ See note 23/11 to the lectures, p. 160, for an explanation of Reid’s ‘axiomatic’ method. For Reid’s teaching of politics at Aberdeen, see Wood, *The Aberdeen Enlightenment*, pp. 34–35, 46–47, 66–68.

⁸⁴ Of the known surviving sets of student notes from Reid’s lectures, those most directly relevant to an understanding of his teaching of politics are:

Robert Jack. ‘Dr. Reid’s Lectures, 1774–1776’, GUL, MSS Gen. 116–18.

George Baird. ‘Notes from the Lectures of Dr. Thomas Reid, 1779–1780’. 8 vols. Mitchell Library, Glasgow, MS A104929.

For a complete list of the sets of student lecture notes see Kurtis G. Kitagawa, ‘Not Without the Highest Justice: The Origins and Development of Thomas Reid’s Political Thought’, pp. 378–79. Kitagawa makes extensive use of the student notes.

⁸⁵ For some evidence of Reid’s student audience, see Haakonssen’s Introduction to Reid, *Practical Ethics*, pp. xxvii–xxx.

had three parts: pneumatology, practical ethics and politics.⁸⁶ Of these, pneumatology was by far the most extensive, reflecting Reid's primary concern with the philosophy of mind in the widest sense. The final monuments to this part of Reid's teaching endeavour were his *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man* (1785) and *Essays on the Active Powers of Man* (1788), which he composed on the basis of his lectures and the papers given to the Aberdeen Philosophical Society and the Glasgow Literary Society. The two other parts he left unpublished, but practical ethics, which was largely a course on natural jurisprudence, has been reconstructed in an earlier volume of the Edinburgh Edition, and politics follows in Part Two of the present volume. Reid's lectures began around 10 October and finished in late May or early June. In 1764–65, the first part, pneumatology, ended around the beginning of March; practical ethics ran until the middle of April; and politics ended the course on 17 May. In later years, he added material and appears not to have completed the course until the beginning of June.⁸⁷ In the approximately five weeks available for politics, Reid would have given around twenty-five lectures. In his 'Heads of Lectures on Politicks' at the beginning of the sequence of manuscripts there are in fact twenty-five 'Heads', but the available material does not allow us to infer that he devoted one lecture to each topic.

The 'Heads' show that Reid devised his lectures on politics as a systematic introduction to the subject. The arrangement was very much his own, and there is here a clear difference between politics and natural jurisprudence. The latter was a subject that had become a well-defined academic discipline during the preceding century, and as part of this development it had acquired a rich textbook literature that, so to speak, codified the subject.⁸⁸ In his lectures on natural jurisprudence Reid largely followed the pattern that had been laid down by Samuel Pufendorf and adapted by Francis Hutcheson.⁸⁹ With politics it was very different. The idea of a 'science of politics' was, of course, a leading topic of debate in the Enlightenment, not least in Scotland once Hume began to publish, and this debate was reflected in many ways also in academic teaching, not least in lectures on natural jurisprudence, as we see also in the case of Reid. However, it would be a long

⁸⁶ See Introduction to Reid, *Practical Ethics*, pp. xxx–xxxii and liv–lvi; Wood, "The Fittest Man in the Kingdom", pp. 292–93.

⁸⁷ For evidence of Reid's teaching schedule, see the Introduction to Reid, *Practical Ethics*, pp. xxvi–xxvii and lxxvii (n195), where the uncertainty concerning the dates is explained.

⁸⁸ See Haakonssen, 'Enlightenment and the Ubiquity of Natural Law'; Haakonssen, 'Natural Jurisprudence and the Theory of Justice'; Haakonssen, 'Natural Jurisprudence and the Identity of the Scottish Enlightenment'.

⁸⁹ The discovery of this use of the natural law systematic was in fact an important guide to the reconstruction of the lectures in the Edinburgh Edition of *Practical Ethics*.

time before politics acquired a commonly accepted identity so as to become a standardised academic discipline with its own textbooks. Reid was therefore more or less left to his own devices in constructing his course, and his arrangement is best seen as a contribution to the wider debate about the identity of politics as one of the moral sciences.

At the most basic level Reid characterised his subject as both a ‘science’ and an ‘art’. As such, it has to be understood in terms of two fundamental distinctions that he draws repeatedly. One is between ‘political jurisprudence’ and ‘politics’; the other is the subdivision of ‘politics’ into ‘the Constitution of a State’ and ‘police’.⁹⁰ The former distinction may sound very much like modern philosophy’s separation of normative and scientific disciplines, but this is deceptive. Political jurisprudence was part of what Reid called ‘practical ethics’, a discipline that considered agency, or ‘praxis’, in three different forms, in accordance with the Pufendorffian scheme. The first was the isolated individual in abstraction from social relations, that is, in the ‘state of nature’; the second was the person in interaction with others in familial, productive and social life; and the third was the agent in the relations of political life, including the collective agency of political society. In each of these categories agency was analysed in terms of the offices or roles that the acting persons had, where ‘office’ meant the duties and rights that pertained to a given role, though, in the parlance of the time, the Latin *officium* was often rendered as ‘duty’. ‘Duty’ thus became an ambiguous word, referring both to the wider ‘office’ and to the particular duties that were part of an office. Accordingly, in one’s ‘office’ as a natural human being one had duties to oneself (self-preservation, self-development, et al.); in the wide variety of social offices (spouse, parent, employer, neighbour, etc.) one had duties to others; and, finally, there were duties within states between rulers and ruled, and externally between states; this was political jurisprudence, which included the law of nations.

The discipline of practical ethics provided a comprehensive catalogue of humanity’s many offices and in this way it gave guidance for how we should behave. However, it is misleading to see this as normative in the sense of modern moral philosophy. When Reid deals with moral obligation, it is as part of his ‘theory of the mind’; that is, it is an explanation of how the human mind functions when it binds the person to be obliged, and it is therefore more like what today is called moral psychology. But the duties of our offices that make up practical ethics are not derived from one or more prescriptive rules or laws of ethics, such as a Kantian imperative or a utilitarian maximisation calculus. Reid himself characterised practical ethics as a classificatory discipline that mapped the offices

⁹⁰ For the subdivision of ‘politics’, see pp. 22, 25–26, 54–55.

of life, and the aim was to do this so that people could understand their roles and by understanding them perform them. This applied also to politics:

What more can be desired in order to the greatest happiness of Society, than that its Members, in their several Departments, should go on to old Age in the Way they ought to go? ... The Materials [i.e. the Members] of the Political Fabrick must be formed to fit the places for which they are destined.⁹¹

In other words, there was an underlying assumption of the objective rightness of the duties of our offices. The closest we come to an analogy with a meta-ethical argument in the modern sense is that the objective system of the moral world is providentially arranged just like the objective structure of the physical world.⁹² In that sense one can say that our duties and rights are derived from the overall happiness or goodness that is the ultimate goal of the Creation.

It was political jurisprudence as part of practical ethics in this meaning that formed the defining *contrast* to the art or science of politics in Reid's thought. Basically politics had as its object the provision of the means for the fulfilment of the duties specified in political jurisprudence. Considered as a science, politics made this provision by explaining the institutions that were suited to make different kinds of societies internally and externally secure (i.e. forms of government and the actions of government), and analysing the practical means of making life within such societies as good – 'happy' – for the conduct of human offices as possible (social and political economy). Considered as an art, politics was the actual practice of participating in the political process informed by the science.

With this structure of providing means to presupposed ends, Reid's notion of politics might be considered closer to certain modern forms of normative moral and political reasoning than the *prima facie* 'normative' discipline of political jurisprudence (and practical ethics in general). However, despite his insistence upon the importance of keeping political jurisprudence and politics apart, he himself described the most important part of political science as the specification of the 'end' of government, namely 'the good and happiness of the Governed'. It is also in these terms that we can make sense of why Reid himself had problems keeping the two disciplines separate in practice, as he indeed acknowledged. In fact, he found it so problematic that he apparently moved material between the two parts of his lectures.

⁹¹ See p. 144; and see Reid, *Active Powers*, pp. 281–82.

⁹² For this common mode of reasoning, see J. B. Schneewind, 'The Divine Corporation and the History of Ethics'.

The source of the problem is that our offices in life often have so many constituent parts that it is difficult to distinguish the offices from the means of fulfilling them. Consequently, the same act of government may be evaluated either in terms of justice or in terms of police: ‘The same Question may be considered either in a political or in a Moral Light<.> Instance Toleration of those who are not of the established Religion’ (26). The example that Reid hints at is that of the Dissenters from the Church of England after the Restoration in 1660, who might be tolerated as a matter of their right to a free conscience, or as a prudent policy to maintain civic peace. Another example of this problem arises over laws that provide for the punishment of children for the crimes of their parents; such laws ‘are either unjust, or they are to be considered as acts of police, and not of jurisprudence, and are intended as an expedient to deter parents more effectually from the commission of the crime’.⁹³ It is especially problematic for Reid’s distinction between political jurisprudence and politics that the political means to the fulfilment of our offices may be *constitutive* of a certain office in such a way that they must be presupposed for that office’s normative status. Thus, in the case of the ‘office’ of being a party to a commercial contract, the person concerned needs a proper understanding of the price of the things that are the object of the contract; this requires a measure of value, which entails money or the like; and that again presupposes government policy on monetary matters. In short, Reid is well aware of the difficulties in maintaining a clear distinction between political jurisprudence and politics, and we are going to return to these problems. Nonetheless, his basic intention is clear. Political jurisprudence, as a part of practical ethics, analyses and systematises the common offices of life with their rights and duties, while politics is the science that explains the means to secure the fulfilment of those offices and the art that shows how to implement those means.

Politics itself is divided into constitutional theory, broadly conceived, and the making of policy (social, economic, educational, foreign, military, etc.), which in the language of the time was called ‘police’.⁹⁴ This division, which is basic to Reid’s lectures on politics, is an echo of the traditional Aristotelian distinction between living and living well:

The chief ends of Political Society Security from forreign Enemies and the maintenance of Peace and justice among the Subjects, these Ends are to be attained by a proper form and Model of Government. But there are also Sub-ordinate ends of Political Society the attainment of which tho not necessary to

⁹³ Reid, *Active Powers*, p. 71. This remark is made in the context of a different discussion.

⁹⁴ We return to the concept of police below, pp. liii–liv.

the being or continuance of it may yet conduce greatly to its well being and Prosperity. The proper means of Promoting these are likewise an object of the Science of Politicks. (55)

Constitutional theory addresses two problems:

First a Constitution or form of Government being given to point out the Natural Effects and Consequences of that Constitution whether for Instance it will be lasting or of short duration, whether powerfull against forreign Enemies or weak and Easy to be conquered, whether internally quiet and peaceable or turbulent and Seditious, whether the Subjects will be oppressed or enjoy the common Rights and Liberties which mankind are entitled to. (54)

What Reid had in mind was an analysis of historically given constitutions, and he covered this topic through an extensive discussion of the British constitution and a less extensive one of the French. But before doing so, he took a different approach to forms of government. Instead of starting from *de facto* governments, he proposed to ask how government should be formed in order to secure the fundamental ends of political governance:

The second Problem is, having given the End for which a Constitution of Government is intended, to point out that Constitution or Model of Government which will most effectually promote and secure this end. It is very obvious that the End of Government ought to be the good and happiness of the Governed. And therefore every Form or Model of Government if we judge of it by the moral Standart is to be more or less approved of according as it tends more or less to promote this end. (54–55)

At first sight, this might seem to be an endorsement of an imagined ideal society as the measure of a good constitution. But both the phrase ‘most effectually promote’ and Reid’s actual practice in the lectures show otherwise. The speculative constitution on which he spent the most time and obviously was most taken with was that of James Harrington’s *Oceana*. Yet Harrington’s imagined republic was not Reid’s morally ideal society. For *Oceana* was based upon private property in land, which Reid considered to be, in purely moral terms, the main source of corruption in a society. In his view, corruption could be avoided only in the entirely propertyless Utopia of Thomas More. Nevertheless, Reid admired Harrington’s *Oceana*, because it was the means that would ‘most effectually promote’ the ends of political government, or at least one such aim, namely a certain basic degree of equality among citizens that would come about by the redistribution of land and open rotating access to public offices. How this squares with his endorsement of

a Whig idea of the existing British constitution remains to be seen. First we must sort out the idea of political science upon which Reid based his political views. In the lectures, as these have been preserved, this is somewhat sketchily drawn up, but it is possible to suggest the general line of argument.

As we have seen, politics is an explanatory science that inquires, on the one hand, ‘what are the Causes that produce such or such Events in Society; or on the other hand what are the Effects and consequences that follow from such or Such Constitutions?’ (71–72). As with all systematic thought, according to Reid, such an inquiry must operate with certain basic principles:

Every Science must be grounded on certain principles & if Politicks can be at all reduced to a Science, as I doubt not but it may, there must be certain first Principles from which all our Reasonings in Politicks are deduced as there are certain first Principles or Axioms in Mathematicks upon which all our Reasonings in Mathematicks are built, and as there are in Morals certain first Principles, as we have had occasion to shew, upon which our Reasoning in the Science of Morals are built. (26–27)

These principles are assumptions about the general features of human nature and human interaction without which it is impossible to recognise life-forms as human. Reid lists a dozen such principles in his lectures, but makes it quite clear that the list is not exhaustive. The principles are common empirical observations about humanity and the field is open to discovery and revision in light of experience. Hence he cannot mean that politics should be an axiomatic *system*, and we must in fact understand the formalistic language of axioms and deductions rather loosely. As Reid says elsewhere, reasoning in politics is probabilistic (and often analogical). What he means by a ‘science’ of politics is perhaps best shown through his rejection of two imagined objections to such a project. The first objection is to the effect that explanations of human behaviour presuppose a necessary connection between motives and actions, something that Reid, as a libertarian of the will, rejected. He puts this objection aside by suggesting that it is equally destructive for a determinist idea of political science. Since we can never be certain that we know all of the motives for human behaviour, we cannot be certain that we have the right causes to explain the behaviour that we are investigating. Our uncertainty in reasoning about human matters is the same whether we see the uncertainty as metaphysical (i.e., as a matter of the free will) or as epistemic (i.e., as a matter of ignorance about human motivation). As Reid observes: ‘the uncertainty of the Event to us will be the same when it proceeds from causes or motives that are unknown as when the motives do not necessarily produce the Action’ (28).

However, the issue of freedom versus determinism is in fact irrelevant to the possibility of political science, for this is based upon the above-mentioned common assumptions about how people in general act, not upon causal inferences about individuals and their particular actions. In this way Reid meets the second objection to the possibility of a science of politics, namely that political phenomena are so dependent upon the particular character of political agents that general propositions are impossible. To the contrary, he suggests:

we may form much more certain conclusions with regard to the conduct of a body of Men united in political Society than with respect to the conduct of an individual.... It is from this Uniformity of Character in a Multitude of Men notwithstanding of the Diversity of the Individuals of which it is composed, that all General Principles in Politicks are derived. (30)

It is not surprising that Reid at the end of these arguments refers to Hume's essay 'That Politics May Be Reduced to a Science'. Evidently they had much the same idea of what such a science should look like, and both set aside the metaphysical issue of determinism or libertarianism as irrelevant in this connection. But despite these notable similarities, the two thinkers drew very different inferences from their political science when it came to the practice of politics. Hume's (considered) political stance has felicitously been characterised as 'sceptical Whiggism',⁹⁵ but while Reid certainly was a Whig, his position might better be described as moral Whiggism.

As a science that explains how certain means lead to certain ends, politics is also, as we have mentioned, a practice or an 'art' of how to do things. In keeping with tradition, Reid invokes the analogy between the human and the political body in order to compare politics to medicine:

Politicks has a like Relation to States & to Government as the Science of Medicine has to the human Body, and the Politician is the State Physician. He knows wherein the Sound & healthfull Constitution of the State consists. When any disorder appears in it he can judge by the Symptoms what is the cause of that disorder and he knows what are the Remedies and can pre(s)cribe for them with great probability of Success. (26)

In the lectures, Reid gives a sketch of one sound constitution, the imaginary one of Harrington's Oceana, and a health report on actually existing constitutions,

⁹⁵ See Duncan Forbes, *Hume's Philosophical Politics*, ch. 5.

mainly that of Great Britain, a report that is deeply influenced by Montesquieu and weaves together explanation of function and diagnosis of disorder.⁹⁶

Reid belonged squarely in the tradition of Commonwealthmen that he had first encountered in the classroom of George Turnbull in the 1720s.⁹⁷ It is, however, remarkable that he kept this particular republican faith for the duration of his long life. Reid was certainly aware of, and contributed to, the new Scottish discourse on the history and theory of civil society and its development of political economy, just as he took seriously the natural jurisprudence of duties and rights. In the end, however, these lines of thought had to be made compatible with his republican values. This is clearly reflected in his academic tuition, where we find extensive analyses of Harrington. The immediately most striking feature of Reid's lectures on Harrington is his fascination with the baroque labyrinth of rules and regulations in Oceana, and one cannot help but get the feeling that this may have been a pedagogical device for stirring the imagination of his young listeners, to whom the Harringtonian world of rotating offices, balloting and associated ceremonial must have been very odd. However, when read against the background of Reid's ideas on the social formation of character, it seems obvious that he was trying to convey some basic moral and political principles, especially the importance of institutional machinery as the framework for politics, the republican principle of the non-hereditary nature of political authority, the principle of a minimal equality among participants in the political process and – Harrington's most original contribution to political theory, in Reid's opinion – the close link between property and political power. Indeed, for such a government as that of Oceana to last, it would have to make high moral demands:

Requires the preservation of Morals. the Suppression of Luxury. The inspiring the people with a Spirit of Liberty⟨,⟩ of Zeal for the Government⟨,⟩ of Moderation in the Use of Riches⟨,⟩ of Respect to the Laws & Magistrates. (42)

This point is significant for it also indicates just how qualified Reid's appreciation of Harrington was. Reid did not think that Oceana in fact would meet these demands, and for two reasons. First, he did not think that Harrington had established that there was always a clear connection between property and power, so that curbing the inequality of ownership through an agrarian law might not bring about

⁹⁶ There is a heading for More's Utopia in the lectures (p. 43) but no notes have survived. Presumably Reid gave his students a shorter version of the analysis he presented in his Utopia discourse to the Glasgow Literary Society many years later (see pp. 134–54).

⁹⁷ See p. xvi above. For the Commonwealth tradition, see the classic treatments in Caroline Robbins, *The Eighteenth-Century Commonwealthman*, and J. G. A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment*, part 3. For the presence of the tradition in Aberdeen, see the references in note 4 above.

the desired reform of political morality. More especially, Harrington had lived too soon to know that there were forms of property other than real estate that were intertwined with politics in ways unimaginable in his time. Reid was, of course, thinking of the moneyed interest that the growth of commercial society had created. Secondly, Reid questioned whether Oceana did enough to provide moral education for its citizens. Implicit in these criticisms is a much more fundamental rejection of Harrington. The old English republican had devised an institutional machinery that took for granted that humanity was morally flawed and had to be contained by rules and regulations that balanced interests. This was precisely what Hume liked about him. In contrast, Reid thought of humanity as morally perfectible and therefore considered political government to be a prime means in the open-ended process of moral training. The implication was that the basis for political legitimacy was morality, not property, and more particularly equal opportunity for moral betterment. This implication was drawn most explicitly in Reid's last political statement, his paper on the Utopian system delivered to the Glasgow Literary Society. But it is also clearly behind the way in which he dealt with Harrington in his lectures in the 1760s. This is not to say that Reid was disingenuous in his praise of Harrington, for the latter's ideas had a pedagogical role:

If the Oceana of Mr Harrington is considered in itself onely, or if it were once established in a Nation sufficiently enlightned, & not prejudiced against this or in favours of another form of Government. I conceive it to be the best model of Republican Government that has ever been proposed. (43)

The principles of Harrington are excellent, but in reality nations are not enlightened and without parochial prejudices. They need moral education. What is more, actual nations already have a constitution, and here Harrington can be used as a diagnostic tool.

However, Reid's *medico-politicus* needed further tools for his state doctoring. Reid went on to explain the constitutional contrast to Oceana, namely pure monarchy. This was clearly a shorter section in the course of lectures than that devoted to Harrington. It was substantially based upon Montesquieu's account of monarchy, using France as the main historical manifestation of this form of government. In the manner of Montesquieu, Reid explained the importance of rule by means of law and institutions, the symbolic politics in the role of the absolute monarch, the central role of a hereditary nobility in Court culture, the desire for military glory, the emphasis on culture and learning and the lack of emphasis on commerce. However, what interested him most of all was Montesquieu's mode of explaining the differences between the three basic forms of government – republic, monarchy and despotism – in terms of their different

‘principles’ – respectively, virtue, honour and fear. Reid understood this as an interaction between the principle that dominated in a people and the principle by which government was conducted:

every Government that is secure and lasting must be in some degree adapted to the principles by which human creatures are commonly influenced in their conduct, so there are some Governments that are more adapted to one principle of human Nature others to another. That Principle which is peculiarly adapted to the Nature of the Government will always be cherished by that ‘government’ and the natural tendency of the Government will be to mould Men into that Character and temper which agrees best with the Nature of the Government. On the other hand the More that Principle, that temper and Character prevails which is suited to the Nature of the Government, the more smoothly & easily will the wheels of Government move. (45–46)

Using this framework derived from Montesquieu, Reid honed his tools for the analysis of Britain that was to come.

Despotism with its ‘principle’ of fear was easily dismissed for its arbitrariness, lack of institutional structure and dependence upon one person, who was himself at the mercy of the uncontrolled power inherent in the government, a kind of many-layered mutual fear. The ‘principle’ of republican government, virtue, is stated in terms that clearly foreshadow the paper on the Utopian system, namely the key concepts of liberty and the common good:

in a Republic the great End of the Government is the common good of the Whole and the Preservation of civil Liberty. That Spirit therefore in the Subjects which is best adapted to this form of Government is the Love of their Constitution and the love of Liberty and of the Laws; this the true Spirit of a free Government and while this Spirit prevails the Government will be well administered and powerfull against its Enemies. &c Sparta. Athens. Rome. (46)

Against the background of these two forms of government and their principles, despotical fear and republican virtue, Reid states his view of monarchy and its guiding principle of honour. It is a remarkable exercise. Reid begins in the mode of Montesquieu by seeing honour as an *Ersatz* morality in the upper social ranks, a replacement of virtue and a moral shallowness that ultimately is self-interested. However, he then broadens his target from honour to politeness. While acknowledging that ‘nothing tends more to promote peace harmony and good will in Society than a polite and obliging behaviour in men towards one another’, he insists that ‘this amiable Quality does not always proceed from the principles

of true Virtue & humanity; it is often the offspring of Vanity and the desire of Esteem' (47). It seems that Reid was here criticising something much wider than the morals of the nobility in a monarchy, such as France. It is in fact difficult not to read these remarks as strictures upon the pervasive cultivation of politeness as the preeminent social virtue among the Enlightenment intelligentsia.⁹⁸

Having presented the pure constitutional types with some remarks on their historical approximations, Reid turned to the mixed constitution of Great Britain, which seems to be the topic to which he devoted the most time in the lectures. He gave a detailed factual account of how the main parts of the political system functioned, in which he paid special attention to Scotland. To some extent influenced by Montesquieu's discussion in *L'Esprit des loix* and drawing on his knowledge of British constitutional history, Reid combined different lines of analysis.⁹⁹ First, there is the ancient idea of the mixed constitution of King, lords and commons. Secondly, there is the division into separate functions for the three constituent parts of the sovereign power: the judicial, the legislative and the executive. The latter, the functional analysis, was the vehicle for much of the explanation of how institutions functioned, while the former, the mixed constitution, was the framework for considering the political process. In keeping with the terms in which Hume in particular had analysed the British constitution in the wake of the Glorious Revolution, Reid dealt with the balance of powers between Crown and subjects, and with the changing balance among the latter, between nobility and commons as matters of their respective 'interests'. He subscribed to the common view that the interest of the nobility, hence of the House of Lords, was dwindling in importance, so that the real constitutional balancing act was that of the Crown versus the House of Commons. In this, again following a general trend in the debate, Reid saw the growth of commerce and with it the emergence of a new factor, that of the financial sector or the 'moneyed interest', as of great importance.¹⁰⁰ All of this then provided the framework for his analysis of the changing system of parties and factions.

⁹⁸ It is not difficult to imagine what Reid thought of Bernard Mandeville's suggestion that 'public virtue' originates in 'private vice', but as a matter of fact he only ever mentions Mandeville once in his published works (*Active Powers*, p. 353) and rarely in the manuscripts. Reid would have appreciated Rousseau's indictment of the shallowness of modern *mores*, but his main interest in Rousseau was elsewhere, as we shall see in our discussion of the paper on the Utopian system (p. xcix).

⁹⁹ Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws*, book XI, ch. 6.

¹⁰⁰ In *Active Powers* Reid offered a brief analysis of the desire for money as an 'acquired desire', as distinct from natural desires. He condemned the former as 'not only useless, but hurtful and even disgraceful' (p. 105). However, since he took this desire to be very strictly for money for its own sake, not as a means to anything else, it is not obvious that he intended a total rejection of the capitalist mentality. Contrast Giovanni Grandi, 'Hume and Reid on Political Economy'.

In his discussion of the role of parties, Reid was taking up one of the key factors in English and subsequently British politics of the preceding century, and here his factual analysis shaded over into ideological argument and critique. This was a debate in which sectional interests dogmatically were taken to mean a denial of the public interest, so that parties identified through their interests were seen as ‘factions’ dangerous to the common weal. This highly loaded language was applied to the binary power situation that was emerging with the diminishing significance of the Lords. The problem that the political debate had to come to terms with was that the two supposedly contrary interests, that of the ‘Court’ and that of the ‘Country’ as represented in the Commons, in fact were intertwined and mutually dependent and were becoming more so for every year of increasing commercial and military ambition. The result was a hybrid government establishment, and this was cultivated and maintained by the party that historically was identified with the cause of the Commons, the Whigs, especially under the leadership of the long-serving first minister, Robert Walpole. One effect of this was a political battle about the identity of Whiggism and about the true interest of ‘the Country’, in which traditional Commonwealthmen carried the radical flag; another was the alienation from the political mainstream of a fringe of Tories concerned about the erosion of their traditional role of supporting the Crown on the basis of the power of the nobility. In this situation one of the great political operators of the time emerged to prominence, namely Henry St John, Lord Bolingbroke, on whom Reid spent some time in the lectures.

In the 1730s Bolingbroke tried to fuse the more or less radical Whigs and the renegade Tories into a new party based on his idea of the true Country interest,¹⁰¹ which for him encompassed subscription to the Revolution principles of 1688, ancient constitutionalism, (quasi-Harringtonian) ideals of land ownership and political authority. But, first and foremost, the Country interest was defined by its sharp opposition to the ‘Court’, that is, the establishment Whigs in government. They were seen to stand for the ‘corruption’ of British politics by their creation of the new system of deficit financing of large government, including military adventures overseas, the consequent dominance of the ‘moneyed interest’ and the Crown’s control over Parliament through the disposal of offices. Part of this political rhetoric was the opposition between ‘party’ and ‘faction’, the former being defined by the pursuit of the ‘common good’, the latter by that of sectional interests. However, part of Bolingbroke’s story was that parties had mostly been transient formations to meet particular political crises, and only factionalism had given them life beyond this. This was the case with the Tory and the Whig parties,

¹⁰¹ Henry St John, Viscount Bolingbroke, *Dissertation upon Parties* (1734).

which were now irrelevant. The drift of this argument was that a party that had a grip on the truly common good was a party of the whole country and thus not a party, except to the extent that it was resisted by a cabal of ‘Court’ interests, that is, a faction.

This debate about parties was primarily an English debate. In Scotland it developed somewhat differently and Reid explained this to his students by reference to a pamphlet by the Edinburgh philosopher William Cleghorn (50). Much like Bolingbroke and many others, Cleghorn made the point that a party that has the universal common good of the community as its aim is one to end all parties, and he maintained that the Whigs were precisely such a party. But in Scotland the Jacobites had, of course, retained a continuous influence until the debacle of the insurrection in 1745, and the important party division was therefore Whig versus Jacobite, not Whig versus Tory. This was again closely connected with associations of political and religious ‘parties’ that were different from those in England. Here the notes indicate that Reid went through all the main groups and their political associations of the seventeenth century, ending by pointing out that since the revolution of 1688, it was ‘Torry & Jacobite & High Church’ on one side and ‘Anticourtier, Whig Revolutioner Low Church or Dissenter’ on the other; while in Scotland it was ‘Jacobite & Episcopalian’ versus ‘Revolutioner & Presbyterian’, where ‘Revolutioner’ meant people maintaining the principles of the constitutional settlement after 1688.

Finally, Reid refers to Hume’s contribution to this debate (50). Hume had analysed party politics in the *Essays*, especially in ‘Of Parties in General’, ‘Of the Parties of Great Britain’, and ‘Of the Coalition of Parties’. Here one of Hume’s central points was a rejection of Bolingbroke’s whole idea of a politics beyond parties. In view of human fallibility, it was an illusion to think of a public interest that could set aside the pursuit of particular interests; the public interest was the balancing of particular interests and it was futile, if not dangerous, to attempt any calibration of the relative worth of the latter. Accordingly, like it or not, parties were for Hume integral to the British political system, and the task of the science of politics was to explain why they came about and how they functioned.

Reid’s own attitude to the complicated constitutional situation in Britain is relatively clear from his lecture notes. He agreed with Hume that it was in ‘the Nature of the Constitution’ that parties arose, and that for two reasons. First, there were people who sought the public interest but they would have different ideas of what it was; secondly, there would be people who would look after themselves by seeking office and benefits from government. These two factors led to the ‘Country’ and ‘Court’ parties, by which Reid presumably simply meant governed and government. Parties arising for other reasons were ‘accidental’, that is to say,

they arose due to special historical circumstances. The same applied to alliances between parties, especially between political and religious groups. It is in this connection that he lists all the parties, political and religious, English and Scottish, of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries: all of these groupings were products of historical accident. In addition to the natural parties of governors and governed, there were factions: ‘Jacobites a Faction Revolutioners Not so’. The reason would seem to be that Jacobites rejected the constitution, whereas ‘Revolutioners’ upheld the principles of the constitution (49–50).

Reid told his students that the British constitution ‘is more admirably fitted for preserving the liberty of the Subject than any other form of government that ever existed, or even any model that ever was proposed even the Oceana itself’. It was integral to this liberty that ‘there is no Restraint upon a calm and candid Philosophical Discussion of the Principles of our happy Constitution, nor even on pointing out the Defects and weak sides of it that those who have it in their Power may apply the proper Remedies’ (51–52).

This was just as well, for the professor was in fact very critical of that constitution. Although he thought that the formation of two parties was a natural effect of the constitution, he clearly saw this as problematic. Keeping the balance of the constitution was, he said, ‘a ticklish thing’, and what he meant was that the power of the Crown was an unstable factor. It depended upon the personal ability of the King, his longevity, his personal connections to other monarchs, the civil list at his disposal; in short, the reasons traditionally marshalled by British republicans of the Commonwealth tradition. To these considerations Reid added one more: ‘The House of Commons may be weakened by the Inequality of the Representative’ (49). So already in his lectures in the mid-1760s Reid seems to have expressed himself in favour of electoral reform. In addition to the ‘ticklish thing’ of maintaining its balance, the constitution fostered a corrupt electoral system due to the influence of the Court – this was standard Commonwealth fare. Last but not least, ‘The British Constitution has a tendency to a Corruption of Morals & seems to have no sufficient provision against that’. He details this with an extraordinary indictment of British public culture: the corroding example of Court culture and of political fraud, the proliferation of oaths, ‘the Profanation of the Sacrament’ by its being made a requirement by the 1673 Test Act for holding public office, the degeneration of free speech to ‘Libertinism’, the contempt for religion and clergy, the growth of city living, the commercialisation of all aspects of life.¹⁰² How can all of this be checked, he asked? Would proper Church discip-

¹⁰² In keeping with republican tradition, Reid thought of rural life as the best nursery for good morals in the general population. At the same time, he kept a long distance from Rousseau’s rejection

line serve like the censorial power of the ancient republics? Could the clergy be trusted with such power in view of the tendency to corruption in both the Church of England and that of Scotland? What he wished was to see rural life encouraged and made free and independent (presumably of remaining feudal restrictions), for that form of life ‘tends to preserve the Morals of a People’. Clearly Reid was here combining traditional Commonwealth criticism of commercial society as it was developing in Britain with the moral (and religious) criticism that characterised his consideration of the Utopian system many years later. Just as he rejected the moral standing of politeness, as we have seen, so with modern sociability. Unless these sentiments arose from a sense of duty, they were just emotive states. Or, as he put it when criticising Hume in *Essays on the Active Powers*,

Good breeding is a very amiable quality; and even if I knew that [a] man had no other motive to it but its pleasure or utility to himself and others, I should like it still, but I would not in that case call it a moral virtue.¹⁰³

Having dealt with constitutional theory and practice in the first part of his lectures on politics, Reid turned in the second part to a wide range of subjects that in the language of the time was called ‘police’, and which had been thus labelled in the lectures of Reid’s predecessor, Adam Smith, as well as by himself once, in the general introduction to the whole of his course on moral philosophy.¹⁰⁴ However, it is worth noting that in the politics lectures themselves Reid never used this or any other unitary title for this part of his course. The topics dealt with were united purely by functional considerations; they were the functions of government that were ‘secondary’ and ‘subordinate’ to the ‘primary’ and ‘principal’ ends of internal and external security. As we have mentioned, these ‘secondary and Subordinate Ends of Political Society are whatever may render the Society more happy and flourishing’ (65). It would therefore be a mistake to think that there necessarily is some sort of systematic coherence in the subjects. Reid did not seem to think of them as forming a scientific discipline, and, as he pointed out, ‘I cannot pretend to enumerate all these [subordinate ends] far less to insist upon them’ (55). We may extend this consideration even further. When Reid had discussed the first three policy areas – population, national virtue and learning – and turned to the areas that his contemporaries (and he on a few

of civilisation; see p. 51.

¹⁰³ Reid, *Active Powers*, p. 305.

¹⁰⁴ See Reid, *Practical Ethics*, p. 16, and see also p. 95; Adam Smith, *Lectures on Jurisprudence*, (A) i.3–4 and vi.1–171, (B) 5, 203–307 and 326–33. For an overview of eighteenth-century ideas of ‘police’, see L. J. Hume, *Bentham and Bureaucracy*, ch. 2.

occasions elsewhere) called political economy, he never gave them such a title. While he clearly thought that national riches, commerce, money, interest, trade, banking, credit et al. were related subjects, we have no solid reason to believe that he saw them as making up a coherent science with a common set of principles. This is not to say that, according to Reid, we could not – or should not – think systematically about each of them in the same way as we could think about any other subject matter. But there is at least no clear evidence to suggest that Reid saw political economy as a particular discipline. In fact, he said, these subjects formed a field that ‘is indeed so copious a Subject and has been so little handled in a Systematical way that it is difficult to reduce it in to method’. However, in order ‘to prevent Embarrassment’, he had at any rate ‘endeavoured to give a Distinct notion of what is understood by Riches’ (65–66). With this particular subject he did indeed proceed in his quasi-axiomatic manner, which, as we mentioned, seems to have appealed to him mainly in his Aberdeen years. In trying to imagine Reid’s perspective on these questions of the coherence of his subject and the way to analyse it, we have to remember that even as Reid began his lectures in Glasgow, it would be two years before the publication of Sir James Steuart’s *An Inquiry into the Principles of Political Oeconomy* and eleven years before Smith’s *Wealth of Nations*, and while there was plenty of writing on political economy, as Reid was well aware, it is understandable that he was missing something that was ‘in a Systematical way’.¹⁰⁵

The first of Reid’s subordinate policy subjects in the lectures, population, was one he had dealt with a few years earlier in a paper to the Aberdeen Wise Club, ‘Whether By proper Laws the number of Births in every parish might not be doubled, or at least greatly increased?’ This discussion goes far beyond the lecture notes, and we refer to our analysis of the paper and its context in the next section of the Introduction.¹⁰⁶ The second subject, national virtue, was, he said, to be understood in the present context not as a matter of moral perfection and of religion, but as a purely political matter of ‘how far Virtue is necessary or conducive towards making men good citizens or good Members of a State’ (56). Here Reid returned to Montesquieu’s triad of fear in despotism, honour in monarchy, and virtue in republican government, specifying what he himself meant by the last:

¹⁰⁵ Even while singing the praises of Steuart’s *Inquiry* a few months after its appearance in 1767, Reid complained of its lack of organisation; see his letter to David Skene, quoted p. xxvii above. Concerning Reid as a pioneer in lecturing on political economy, see Nagao, ‘The Political Economy of Thomas Reid’, pp. 23ff.

¹⁰⁶ See pp. lxix–lxxvii and Reid’s paper on pp. 88–92.

The means of promoting and preserving Virtue in a State

- 1 Good Education. Publick Schools properly endowed and provided.
- 2 Execution of the Laws against Vice and Immorality.
- 3 Zeal & Strictness of Life in the Ministers of Religion & Magistrates
- 4 Care of the Army and Navy. (57)

In other words, he here dealt with topics that were related to his criticism of contemporary Britain and were later spelled out in his Utopia paper, except that the list includes military training as part of civic education. The martial side of traditional republicanism is otherwise virtually absent from Reid's work.

In the surviving manuscripts, there are no notes on the third topic of Reid's lectures on policy matters, namely learning. He combines it with 'arts' and with 'knowledge', and it is clearly different from 'education'. He also suggests, like Hume, that learning, in contrast to commerce, may be encouraged under monarchical government. So we may guess that he told his students about the civic importance of philosophy, literature and the arts, in the wide meaning of these terms that was common in the eighteenth century.

Turning to Reid's substantial series of lectures on topics in political economy, we note how he compensated for the lack of systematic treatments that he perceived in the existing literature by employing some basic organising principles to create an elementary systematics for his students. He adopted Aristotelian concepts to distinguish: first, between natural and artificial riches; secondly, between natural and artificial 'traffick' (exchange); thirdly, by implication, between natural and artificial markets; and fourthly, between natural and artificial value (59, 66–67, 72, 74). This is the basis for a four-stage theory of the emergence of commerce which he sketched in the lectures and later elaborated in the preamble to his discourse on interest.¹⁰⁷ This extended use of the natural–artificial distinction inevitably reminds the reader of Reid's well-known criticism of Hume's theory of justice as an artificial virtue, a matter we return to shortly.¹⁰⁸ There are in fact connections of interest, for all the distinctions mentioned have reference to the intentionality with which human behaviour is taking place; in the case of economic behaviour, the relevant intentions concern the satisfaction of our desires. Natural riches are the things that the natural world spontaneously provides for the satisfaction of humanity's needs to live and pursue ('increase') its happiness, in other words food, shelter, materials for tools and so on. 'But the far greatest part of what

¹⁰⁷ See pp. 66–67, 117–25. The four-stage structure is more explicit in the lectures, but the discourse adds more detail.

¹⁰⁸ See Reid, *Active Powers*, pp. 301–28.

may be called Riches is produced by human Labour & Industry', in other words by intentional exertions on the materials provided by nature (57). Since humans in general cannot satisfy their own needs individually, exchange ('bargain') of the riches produced by labour is always a feature of human life, and as long as such exchange is for the sake of the person's own needs, it is natural. When the exchange is aimed at using goods as the means of acquiring other goods, then they are 'commodities' and the transaction is 'artificial', that is, 'commerce' (66–67). This leads to Reid's concept of value. If we imagine individuals living in an 'un-social State' without any exchange with others, then things would have value only in terms of the desires of each individual. This is radically different in all social states, where there is exchange. When the goods being exchanged are considered to be the equivalent of the means of maintaining the labourer who produces such goods, then the value is 'natural' (72–74).¹⁰⁹ Natural value is distinguished from 'market value', which represents yet another shift in intentionality, namely one in which the intentions of those involved interfere with each other, so that the outcome, market value, is divorced from any specific human intention. Market value becomes the price of things, and price is the ever-shifting balance between the desires of buyers and sellers. Reid sees this process of commercialisation of society as happening in four steps:

The Steps by which Artificial Traffick or the Profession of Merchants is introduced into Society. 1 Labour assorted into particular Trades and Arts which are made distinct Professions. As Shoe makers Weavers Taylors Blacksmiths farmers and the like<.> The Advantage of this to Society<.> 2 Markets or Fairs for the Sale of those several Commodities. 3 Merchants who buy at one Market and carry to another<.> 4 Manufacturers who hire artificers to work for them. The last state most favourable to Commerce<.> it multiplies professions, makes men more dexterous and Skillful in their several Professions more laborious and produces better commodities. Gives rise to the Invention of Machines, & the multiplication of them by which more work is done with the same Quantity of Labour<.>¹¹⁰

Elsewhere in the lectures, as we have seen, he acknowledged the importance of the emergence of a capitalist class of financiers and investors, the 'moneyed

¹⁰⁹ It is clear that Reid includes in the maintenance of the labourer those who are dependent upon him: family and servants.

¹¹⁰ See p. 67. In the lecture on price from 25 March 1765, Reid stressed the surplus productivity associated with the first step here, the division of labour; see pp. 70–71.

interest', within commercial society, something that he later spelled out in his paper on interest (128–29).

Reid's stadial account of the development of commerce has some similarities with that of Adam Smith in his lectures at Glasgow and, later, in *The Wealth of Nations* (1776). It was part of what Smith called 'the natural course of things'.¹¹¹ Both Reid and Smith formulated their accounts of commerce within the framework provided by one of their main natural law sources, Pufendorf.¹¹² This is underlined by the fact that they both first dealt with the subject as part of the theory of contract in their lectures on natural jurisprudence and then moved it to their lectures on 'police'.¹¹³ Natural-law theorists analysed social life in general by means of the concept of contracts, and this included economic phenomena. However, early modern natural law was by no means a unitary doctrine, and there were as many ideas of contractualist explanation as of natural law. So although Reid, like many other Enlightenment thinkers, made use of natural law's topics and their systematic arrangement, one cannot infer from this that he shared the philosophical ideas of the natural-law author in question.¹¹⁴ The stadial theory of commerce is an interesting case in point. For Pufendorf, all social relations were analysed in terms of the fulfilment of obligations to a superior. To show this, he put forward a series of states of nature, ranging from the completely abstract pre-moral and isolated human being whose humanity consisted in nothing more than the capacity for obligation to natural law, through the (also abstract) state of the individual among other individuals, to the pre-civil state and, finally, the state of nature among civil states.¹¹⁵ These states of nature are not a sequence in either a temporal or a logical sense, but overlapping ways of describing human nature and human relations. The conditions thus described include the pre-civil practice

¹¹¹ See Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (1776), book III, ch. 1, section 8 (p. 380).

¹¹² In this connection Reid's other main reference, Hutcheson, plays no obvious role.

¹¹³ In Reid's case, he seems to have moved his actual notes from the natural jurisprudence of contract to the later lectures. See note 69/21, pp. 187–88, for our explanation of this situation. In the case of Smith, the earliest record of his lectures, from around 1753–55, shows that he dealt with value and price in the mode of natural jurisprudence as part of contract, but in the extensive notes of his lectures in 1762–63 and (probably) 1763–64, the economic material that eventually was developed into *The Wealth of Nations*, constituted nearly all of 'police'. see Smith, 'The Anderson Notes', pp. 469–70; Smith, *Lectures on Jurisprudence*, (A) vi.7–171 and (B) 205–70.

¹¹⁴ See references in note 88 above.

¹¹⁵ See Haakonssen, 'Natural Law and Personhood: Samuel Pufendorf on Social Explanation'; Fiammetta Palladini, 'Pufendorf Disciple of Hobbes. The Nature of Man and the State of Nature: The Doctrine of *socialitas*'. For some of the several formulations of Pufendorf's complex ideas of the state of nature, see Pufendorf, *The Law of Nature and Nations* (1672), II.1–2 and VII.1.

of being under obligations, to the family, clan or tribal leader. One of the many sources of conflict and, consequently, of the need for obeisance to authority is commercial exchange, and it is due to the inefficiency of the pre-civil authorities that the sovereign political state is necessary in order to secure peace, including commerce. In other words, in Pufendorf's theory the focus is on the creation of political obligation through contract, and to the extent that this is successful, the variety of cultural exertions that humanity is capable of, including commerce, will flourish.¹¹⁶ The drift of important strands in the Enlightenment's political theory was to intertwine these two lines of argument by setting the contract aside, so that political obligation became a result of the historical development of social, including commercial, relations. The most famous version of this transformation of the natural-law account – specifically of the inversion of Pufendorf's intentions – is the four-stage theory of Adam Smith, which Smith had developed in his lectures at Glasgow during the 1750s and '60s. But neither in this nor in any other regard do we have any hard evidence that Reid had access to notes from his predecessor's lectures, although he had welcomed such information, as we mentioned above.¹¹⁷ What Reid did have access to was the pioneering formulation of the four socio-economic stages by Lord Kames (Henry Home) in the second edition of his *Essays on the Principles of Morality and Natural Religion* (1758) and, especially, his *Historical Law-Tracts* (1758).¹¹⁸ More generally this type of analysis was in the air, as we see from John Dalrymple's *General History of Feudal Property in Great Britain* (1757), the (posthumously published) work of Turgot and other French suggestions.¹¹⁹

However, these recent and contemporary theories were concerned with the history of property, especially landed property, and how it related to the history

¹¹⁶ For a different view, see Istvan Hont, *Jealousy of Trade*, ch. 1. On obligation in Pufendorf, see Ian Hunter, *Rival Enlightenments*, pp. 154–63. For passages in Pufendorf that could be used in stadial accounts, see especially Pufendorf, *Law of Nature*, IV.4, V.1 and VII.1.

¹¹⁷ See p. xxii, note 23, above. Surviving student notes from Smith's lectures were not published until the 1890s; further ones were so in the 1960s. They are now to be found in Smith, *Lectures on Jurisprudence*.

¹¹⁸ Home, *Essays on the Principles of Morality and Natural Religion* [1751], third edition (1779), pp. 47–48; Home, *Historical Law-Tracts* (1758), pp. 77–80 (note), 92–93 and tract III, *passim*.

¹¹⁹ John Dalrymple, *An Essay Towards a General History of Feudal Property in Great Britain* (1757), pp. 86–88. In contrast to Kames and Smith, Dalrymple does not mention commerce as a distinct fourth stage. What he has to say about commerce as an activity is to do with the hindrances in feudal law to commerce in land, which is also the main emphasis in Kames' discussion. For Turgot, see the manuscripts translated in Ronald L. Meek (ed.), *Turgot on Progress, Sociology and Economics*. For a comprehensive overview, see Ronald L. Meek, *Social Science and the Ignoble Savage*, chs 3–4.

of political authority. In fact Kames – let alone Dalrymple – did not have a great deal to say about commerce as such. In contrast, Reid's stadial theory had its origins within contract theory, for his focus was on exchange; it is a stadial theory of commerce. Reid's concern was to show that the profound changes in values between societies at different stages were compatible with a basic morality that was universal to humanity, in fact the common moral sense of humanity. The point of his stadial theory was that the universality of morality was underlined by its discernible presence across the deep differences between social stages. We see this dramatically argued in the preamble to his paper on the taking of interest on money, where he insists that the diametrically opposed attitudes to this practice in different stages of the history of social living shows 'no change in mens moral Sentiments in Ancient and in modern times' (125). The implication is that there are basic moral sentiments that remain constant underneath the more superficial sentiments that shift with time and circumstance.

This is the deepest reason for his insistence upon the need for a theory of natural value, despite the problems in such an idea. The natural value of commodities in exchange is 'that which enables those that produce them by their Labour to purchase all the Conveniencies and Accommodations of Life which labourers of that kind are by the Customs & Opinions of the Countrey entitled to' (59). However, this is obviously a standard that varies considerably across time and from society to society, as Reid explains at length. Nevertheless, it is a guide to values that are invariable, namely humanity's sense of injustice. The science of politics and economics will explain how things are valued in given societies, and this will inform our common sense of right and wrong:

When ... we here enquire into the natural Measure of the Price of things in Society it is that we may be able to determine more justly the limits of right and wrong in those Contracts wherein a price or Value is put upon things. It can admit of no doubt, that a Man taking advantage of the Ignorance or Necessity of another may take an unreasonable or exorbitant Price and thereby Injure his Neighbor; even the civil Laws of all Nations suppose this and allow redress for such injuries. But it is impossible to determine when we injure others in this way without knowing upon what principles the Natural and Reasonable Price depends & how it is measured.

It is for this reason that when it comes to the basic economic issues of value and price in commercial society, 'It is difficult ... to separate the Provinces of Morals and Politicks' (71–72).

We may further illuminate the relationship between these two 'Provinces' by considering it in light of the later paper on the Utopian system, in which Reid

imagined the abolition of private property. This would remove the source of conflicting interests which was the basis for artificial exchange, the commodification of humanity's riches, market value and everything that followed from this. If we place this Utopian economy in the scheme of economic ideas outlined above, we see that it would rest on the natural value of labour and on natural exchange and consequently be stable and open to control by government. As we will explain when analysing Reid's discourse on the Utopian system (xcix), this control would consist of the moral assessment of the contribution of each labourer to the common good. This is the important point for comparison between the economy of Utopia and the market economy of commercial society. The latter cuts the direct link between, on the one hand, intentional behaviour and, on the other, social and economic outcome, typically market price, which is the unintended outcome of the behaviour of individuals acting on their separate intentions. The problem is that such market phenomena as prices are difficult to accommodate within Reid's moral theory. Unless an action sprang from a regard for its inherent moral value and hence was done as a duty, it had no moral value.

This was at the heart of his criticism of Hume, who, in Reid's eyes, had divorced justice from any genuine moral motive. According to Hume, the rules of justice had come about unintentionally and were then maintained for non-moral reasons of expediency that, so Reid believed, Hume mistook for moral reasons – an artificial construct of mere utility. The parallel between justice understood in this way and the economic market would seem to imply that market behaviour and its results would constitute an amoral sphere in human life, an unintended outcome of sundry non-moral motives. However, we do not find that Reid drew this inference. On the one hand, he was clearly unnerved by several aspects of the modern market economy, as can be seen in the strictures upon contemporary Britain that he put forward in his lectures and in his Utopia discourse, where he would indeed draw out the full political consequences of his moral theory, which amounted to the rejection of commercial society. However, as we shall see, this was a purely philosophical thought experiment explicitly abstracted from the political realities of the day. On the other hand, Reid clearly saw the benefits of the emerging capitalist economy and endorsed its main instruments, including paper money, credit, interest and banking, as we see in both the lectures and the discourses. When he did address the question of how the utility of this political economy is related to morals, he dealt with individual intentional actions, namely the taking of interest on money, which he suggested was not injurious in commercial society, in contrast to pre-commercial society. He did not explain whether and how the market could be subject to moral judgement, or whether it was simply a matter of utility and thus, in his eyes, amoral.

However, irrespective of Reid's Utopian moral perspective, his task in the lectures was to explain the principles of the economy as it was, and this would in any case be relevant also for Utopia, for although it had abolished domestic commerce, it would have to take part in external trade in the international marketplace. In fact, much of Reid's account of commerce was concerned with foreign trade, where his mercantilist approach could be taken without regard to his concern about commercial society as a domestic political culture. Reid accordingly gave a general account of the main topics in political economy that followed upon his four-stage explanation of commercial society: price, money, credit, banking and so on. On some of these topics the discourses provide fuller and more detailed ideas, and much of our analysis of them is to be found in the next section. Here we shall note that on the points where we can check, the lectures give evidence of a strong continuity in Reid's economic views. The ideas of riches, money, credit and trade that we find in the paper on credit from the Aberdonian period (1761) are present in the Glasgow lectures. The theory of price that is applied in the paper on the warehousing of grain and in the paper on taking interest on money (both 1778) is clearly and in some respects more systematically outlined in the lectures. As we have seen, in the latter Reid explains the various factors that might influence market price to deviate from the natural price, such as the psychology of market operators (expectations, hopes and fears, etc.), physical facilities (storage), alternative resources, and political interference in the form of taxes and other impositions. Whenever there is 'artificial traffick', fluctuations of market prices will occur, and this necessitates the use of a common and stable measure of value.

In order to serve as a common measure of value for the purpose of facilitating the exchange of goods, a substance has to have some inherent value that is readily recognised. Traditionally gold and silver had been accepted as having such value, owing to their relative scarcity and durability, as well as the value added through the labour of mining and refining them, plus the fact that their quality was ascertainable. When the security of quality is reinforced through stamping and coining, we have money. The implications of this dual view of money as at once the facilitator of the exchange of commodities and itself a commodity of inherent value were drawn out with some force in Reid's lectures. First, the value of money could not be a matter of the caprice of political rulers, whether in the form of legislation fixing the value or in the form of debasement of the coin. Nor could money function properly if its value was not protected against the interference of private individuals (clipping, washing, etc.) and special measures had to be taken to deal with the diminution by wear and tear, which was the subject of one of Reid's papers in the Glasgow Literary Society. In an argument similar to one that

was stated in much greater detail by Adam Smith,¹²⁰ Reid maintained that money, as itself a commodity among many others and subject to trade, could not be the same as the riches of a nation, as mercantilist theory would have it. Consequently national wealth was not protected by prohibitions on the export of bullion, nor was there any point in trying to keep money in the country by minting it out of base metals that nobody abroad would want.

Reid also told his students not to believe in the quantity theory of money that had recently been stated by, among others, Hume. This was the idea that there is a direct relationship between the quantity of money and the prices of commodities, so that an increase in the supply of money leads to a similar increase in prices. In the very brief surviving lecture notes, the reasons for this rejection are not indicated, but they are in the Aberdonian discussion paper on credit (63–64 and 80–81). There the argument is admittedly not entirely clear because Reid seems to have taken the quantity theory of money to be an implication of the mercantilist equation of wealth and money. Nevertheless, his rejection of this composite idea did fall into two more or less distinct parts: first, the suggestion that wealth – both individual and national – consists of much more than money; and secondly, the suggestion that there are other determinants of price than money, such as (other) commodities that are available for consumption and exchange. In the lectures, the idea of wealth as money and the quantity theory of money are clearly distinguished, so presumably the reason for rejecting the latter remained something like the plurality and complexity of the determinants of price.

The quantity theory of money was associated with critical concern about paper money, or credit, on the part of several of Reid's contemporaries, notably Hume. The core of the concern was that if the quantity of money determined prices and costs, then the growth of the money supply by means of paper credit would drive up price inflation. Reid, however, argued that paper money was simply an extension of metallic money, and since the latter had no direct correlation with price, nor did the former. In this regard the lectures give a briefer version of the argument in the paper on credit.

The remaining topics in Reid's plan of lectures are so briefly indicated in the surviving notes that any attempt at analysis would be purely speculative. What is more, the available discourses and other manuscripts do not provide any clues as to what he may have said in the remainder of his course. Barring new discoveries of manuscripts, we shall never know from his own pen what Reid thought about overseas trade and colonies; army, navy and militia; the raising of public revenue; and associated issues.

¹²⁰ Smith, *Lectures on Jurisprudence*, (A) vi.127–71, (B) 244–70; Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, IV.i.

3. Reid's Discourses and Papers on Political Economy, Police and the Law

With the exception of two papers on aspects of the law and one on political theory, Reid's discourses and contributions to the Aberdeen Philosophical Society (Wise Club) and the Glasgow Literary Society all addressed topical social, economic or political questions. Reid's manuscript on paper credit is a case in point. Against the backdrop of continuing anxiety about the level of the national debt and a brief crisis in public finance precipitated by fears of a war with Spain, both John Gregory and David Skene proposed questions on economic matters that were taken up in meetings of the Wise Club in early 1761.¹²¹ Skene's question, 'Whether Paper Credit be beneficial to a Nation or not', was discussed in his absence on 24 February 1761. Because Reid had recently been elected President of the Club, it fell to him to draw up an abstract of the conversation that had taken place.¹²² The manuscript transcribed below (79–83) does not appear to be a copy of Reid's abstract, but rather a draft of his contribution to the discussion.¹²³ Precisely why Skene came up with this question remains something of a mystery. We know from his surviving papers that he was interested in the debate between David Hume and Robert Wallace over the economic benefits of banks and paper credit and it may be that he was also aware of the controversy that occurred in 1759 and 1760 in Ireland over this issue.¹²⁴ The republication of an edition of John Law's *Money and Trade Considered: With a Proposal for Supplying the Nation with Money* (1705) by the Foulis Press in 1760 might also have triggered

¹²¹ On the financial crisis of 1761 see Hoppit, 'Financial Crises in Eighteenth-Century England', pp. 45, 48–49. Gregory posed the question, 'What are the Natural Consequences of high national Debt & whether upon the whole it be a benefite to a Nation or not?', which was addressed by the Wise Club on 13 January 1761; see Ulman, *Minutes of the Aberdeen Philosophical Society*, pp. 99, 192.

¹²² Ulman, *Minutes of the Aberdeen Philosophical Society*, pp. 99, 100, 192. A similar question had been debated in the Select Society of Edinburgh three times in 1755 and once in 1759: 'Whether the Numbers of Banks now in Scotland be useful to the trade of the Country? And Whether paper credit be advantageous to a nation?' Skene and his fellow members of the Wise Club probably knew about these discussions through Lord Deskford, who became a member of the Select Society in 1755.

¹²³ Another version of Reid's manuscript in a different hand survives among David Skene's papers. Comparison between the two versions indicates that AUL, MS 2131/2/II/16 is a preliminary draft of a text that Reid most likely read to the Wise Club. See David Skene, 'Notes of Discourses in the Philosophical Society of Aberdeen', AUL, MS 540, fols 28r–29r.

¹²⁴ David Skene, 'Extracts from Mr Wallace's Characteristics of the present Political State of Great Britain', in Skene, 'Literary Essays', AUL, MS 475, pp. 89–96; the 'Extracts' are undated. Skene's summary of the views of Hume and Wallace is noticed by Hont, *Jealousy of Trade*, p. 279. Searching Eighteenth Century Collections Online for works published in 1760 using the keyword 'credit' yields a number of Irish pamphlets on the subject of banks and paper credit.

the question.¹²⁵ Whatever the motivation, Skene's question prompted Reid to summarise his thoughts regarding the long-standing dispute concerning the use of paper instruments of credit.

Reid's manuscript incorporates a number of ideas that he presumably put forward in his lectures on political economy at King's College and that he subsequently developed in Glasgow. First, the manuscript shows that Reid recognised the important role played by credit in the economies of commercial societies. Social and economic historians have recently begun to explore the ways in which credit functioned during the early modern period.¹²⁶ Unfortunately, less attention has been paid to how credit was theorised in the writings of political economists and other commentators in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and it is difficult within the present framework to assess whether or not Reid's analysis of how credit arises in tandem with exchange and facilitates economic growth was in any way distinctive. Earlier authors cited elsewhere by Reid such as Charles Davenant likened credit to a 'huge engine' driving trade and filling the coffers of government with much-needed revenue, while at the same time emphasising the fickle nature of both public and private credit.¹²⁷ Reid's remarks in this manuscript register these common perceptions of the centrality and caprice of credit, but he seems to go beyond such standard views in emphasising that credit, like commerce, is a 'necessary Consequence' of the formation of human societies.¹²⁸

Secondly, in acknowledging the pivotal role of credit in our social and economic relations, Reid followed John Law, George Berkeley and Robert Wallace in highlighting the benefits of the circulation of paper instruments of credit, including the use of paper money. Law, for example, had argued for the superiority of paper money over silver coin as a medium of exchange and insisted that economic prosperity in Scotland depended upon the stimulus provided by the utilisation of paper money.¹²⁹ Berkeley likewise promoted the advantages to be gained by the employment of paper credit and echoed Law in holding that 'paper hath in many

¹²⁵ Philip Gaskell, *A Bibliography of the Foulis Press*, p. 237. The Foulis Press had already published an edition of this title in 1750.

¹²⁶ See, for example, Julian Hoppit, 'Attitudes to Credit in Britain, 1680–1790'; Craig Muldrew, *The Economy of Obligation: The Culture of Credit and Social Relations in Early Modern England*; Margot C. Finn, *The Character of Credit: Personal Debt in English Culture, 1740–1914*; Carl Wennerlind, *Casualties of Credit: The English Financial Revolution, 1620–1720*.

¹²⁷ Davenant, 'Discourses on the Public Revenues', in Davenant, *The Political and Commercial Works*, vol. I, p. 151; compare Daniel Defoe, *An Essay upon Publick Credit*, third edition (1710), especially p. 6.

¹²⁸ See below, especially p. 82.

¹²⁹ [John Law], *Money and Trade Considered* (1705), pp. 84–110.

respects the advantage above coin, as being of more dispatch in payments, more easily transferred, preserved, and recovered when lost'.¹³⁰ Wallace for his part did not dwell on such practical considerations. Instead, he focused on the benefits to the nation of using paper money and affirmed that 'there is an absolute necessity for Paper-credit' because once 'a spirit of industry is ... raised, it may require a larger circulation of specie to support it, than the gold or silver in the country can supply'.¹³¹ In agreeing with Law, Berkeley and Wallace, Reid was implicitly positioning himself in the debate over the merits of paper credit that played out in Scotland following the publication of Hume's *Political Discourses* in 1752. In his essays 'Of Money' and 'Of the Balance of Trade' Hume questioned whether the use of paper credit was as advantageous as its advocates had made out. According to Hume a reliance on paper credit undermines the economic competitiveness of a nation by driving up the cost of provisions and labour, erodes the foundations of the economy by preventing the accumulation of bullion and enslaves a country to the vagaries of public and private credit.¹³² Hume's criticisms were subsequently restated in a more polemical form in an anonymous pamphlet published in 1755 variously attributed to Hume's friend Patrick Murray, fifth Lord Elibank, and to another Scot, Alexander Montgomerie, tenth Earl of Eglinton.¹³³ The author blamed the stagnation of trade and manufactures and the slow pace of agricultural improvement in Scotland on the use of bank notes, which, he said, had 'sunk the intrinsic value of our money, and introduced all the real inconveniencies of plenty of money, without the smallest advantage to any individual but the bankers themselves'. Relying on Hume's 'maxim' that 'the price of labour and commodities is always regulated by the quantity of money circulating in a state', the author contended that paper money had inflated wages and food prices and thereby caused the decline of trade because Scottish goods were too expensive. He concluded that the only Scots who were untouched by the deterioration of the economy were the bankers responsible for issuing the notes, and he therefore called for the regulation of banks and asked 'the landed gentlemen, farmers, and manufacturers' of Scotland to refuse to accept or circulate paper money.¹³⁴

¹³⁰ George Berkeley, *The Querist* (1735–37 and 1750), in *The Works of George Berkeley, Bishop of Cloyne*, vol. VI, p. 123 (query 226).

¹³¹ [Robert Wallace], *Characteristics of the Present Political State of Great Britain*, second edition (1758), p. 30.

¹³² Hume, *Essays Moral, Political and Literary*, pp. 284–85, 316–20.

¹³³ Anon., *Essays. I, On the Public Debt. II, On Paper-Money, Banking, &c. III, On Frugality* (1755). Elibank publicly disowned the essays on paper money and frugality in the 'Advertisement' to Murray, *Thoughts on Money, Circulation and Paper Currency* (1758).

¹³⁴ Anon., *Essays*, pp. 20, 21, 23, 26.

Reid's reply to the arguments of Hume and his fellow critics of paper credit is the third noteworthy feature of this manuscript. For Reid's defence of paper credit rests on his rejection of what has become known as the quantity theory of money, and this manuscript contains the earliest statement of Reid's objections to one of the 'False Notions concerning Money' that he later attacked in his Glasgow lectures on politics (63–64). The origins of the quantity theory of money can be traced back to the sixteenth-century writings of Jean Bodin and Bernardo Davanzati, but it is more closely associated with the work of Locke, Montesquieu and Hume.¹³⁵ Given the pervasive influence of Montesquieu on Reid's political thought, it is not surprising that Reid's formulation of the basic principle of the quantity theory – the 'Maxim' that 'the Money that circulates is the representative of all the Commodities of a Nation and is equal to them in value' – is taken from Montesquieu's *L'Esprit des loix*.¹³⁶ Although Reid's initial formulation of the theory was less clear than one could have wanted, his counterargument that there is no strict linear relationship between money and prices is simple and to the point, and his examples also illustrate his view that the wealth of a nation (or an individual) ought not to be equated with the amount of bullion held.¹³⁷ And in denying that paper credit functions exactly like specie in raising prices, Reid echoed Wallace's response to Hume that prices rise because of the increase in trade prompted by the circulation of paper money rather than the stimulus of the paper money itself and that the benefits of greater trade outweigh the disadvantage of higher prices.¹³⁸

The fourth and final aspect of Reid's manuscript to be noted is his view on how the 'Spirit of Trade' transforms society.¹³⁹ Reid's remarks suggest that he was thinking of this transformation within the framework of a stadial history of society, as this history was being developed on the basis of figures such as Pufendorf and Montesquieu. Moreover, the claim that commerce 'seems to alter the very Nature of right and wrong' (82), as instanced in attitudes towards usury,

¹³⁵ For the history of the theory see Hugo Hegeland, *The Quantity Theory of Money: A Critical Study of Its Historical Development and Interpretation and a Restatement*.

¹³⁶ See p. 80; compare Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws*, book IV, ch. 22 (p. 399). See also John Locke, *Some Considerations* (1696), in Locke, *Locke on Money*, pp. 264–66, and David Hume, 'Of Money', in Hume, *Essays Moral, Political and Literary*, p. 290.

¹³⁷ Below, pp. 80–81. Sir James Steuart likewise rejected the quantity theory of money; see Steuart, *An Inquiry* (1767), vol. I, pp. 394–414, and Skinner, 'Money and Prices: A Critique of the Quantity Theory'. Concerning the problem with Reid's formulation, see note 80/27, p. 190, to the 1761 paper and note 64/2, p. 183, to the lectures.

¹³⁸ See p. 81; compare Wallace, *Characteristics*, pp. 29–31. Wallace does not, however, make the point that the creation of paper credit also creates an equivalent level of debt.

¹³⁹ See pp. 79–80, 82–83.

is striking, not least because it prefigures the argument of his discourse on usury given to the Glasgow Literary Society in March 1778 (117–34). We will return to both of these issues in greater detail below.

Towards the end of Reid's year-long term as President of the Wise Club, a meeting convened on 24 November 1761 at which the group addressed a question posed by Thomas Gordon, 'Whether Slavery be in all cases inconsistent with good Government?' During the course of the conversation, a further question arose which was reserved for a future gathering, namely 'What are the best expedients for preventing an extravagant rise of servants wages, and for obliging them to bestow their labour, when agriculture and manufactures require it?' This question was subsequently discussed on 12 January 1762, with Reid as the outgoing President asked to draw up an abstract. This abstract was eventually read on 9 February, and the paper was 'appointed to be recorded when he found it convenient'.¹⁴⁰ There is no evidence in the Club's minutes that he ever did so. The manuscript dealing with this question that is transcribed in Part Three (83–86) may be Reid's abstract, but we incline to the view that Reid used the manuscript as the basis for his oral contribution to the discussion that took place at the January meeting.

Part of Gordon's abstract of the conversation prompted by his question on slavery survives. It shows that the members of the Wise Club apparently all agreed that 'slavery is now justly exploded in all European governments', and that they specifically endorsed Montesquieu's condemnation of slavery in *L'Esprit des loix*.¹⁴¹ But even though slavery had disappeared in Europe, there was still the need for the 'inferior laborious services of society [to] be performed' and this meant that the work previously done by slaves was now done by individuals whose services were secured through 'voluntary contract'. The sense of the meeting was that this situation could be exploited by both labourers and masters, with labour in the mid-eighteenth century holding the upper hand. The view was expressed that 'the servile part are presently the objects of just complaint, having by a certain management got their wages extravagantly augmented, while their petulance & negligence is arrived at a greater height than it was ever known before'.¹⁴² The members noted that there was a shortage of agricultural labour because labourers

¹⁴⁰ Ulman, *Minutes of the Aberdeen Philosophical Society*, pp. 106, 107, 108, 193.

¹⁴¹ Gordon, 'Questions Discussed by the Aberdeen Philosophical Society', AUL, MS 3107/2/4, p. 119. The meeting did, however, recognise that a form of public servitude would be an appropriate punishment for criminal offences (pp. 119–20), an idea still endorsed thirty years later by Reid in his paper on the Utopian system; see p. 148.

¹⁴² Gordon, 'Questions Discussed by the Aberdeen Philosophical Society', AUL, MS 3107/2/4, f. 121.

were being drawn to the towns by the high wages paid in manufactures, and that the current wage levels in manufacturing were having an adverse effect on commerce because the goods produced were too expensive to compete in markets elsewhere. Consequently, ‘most people of public spirit’ recognised the need for laws regulating wages, and it was thus felt appropriate that the Club should reflect further on the question that they had been led briefly to consider.¹⁴³

This discussion in the Wise Club points to the serious problems affecting the Scottish economy in the early 1760s. As the members suggested, there was in fact a labour shortage in the agricultural sector, which led not only to wage demands that employers found excessive but also to militancy and occasional violence among farm workers.¹⁴⁴ Wages were also on the rise in manufacturing. At the beginning of the decade there were not enough workers to meet demand and those in work organised themselves into unions to hold out for better wages. As a result, Scottish goods were relatively expensive and hence uncompetitive in overseas markets.¹⁴⁵ Exasperated by the behaviour of the labouring classes, farmers, land owners and manufacturers turned to the law to keep wages in check. In Scotland the Commissioners of Supply (a body made up primarily of Justices of the Peace and men of landed property) had the power to set wages and the duration of contracts, and they were increasingly drawn into the struggle between workers and employers.¹⁴⁶ Moreover, the issue of escalating wage demands attracted attention in the popular press, in part because reports appeared in the *Scots Magazine* and other prints of meetings held by members of the landed interest in Stirlingshire and elsewhere to come up with a set of regulations that would govern the wages of labouring servants throughout Scotland.¹⁴⁷ Nor were Aberdeen and the north-east immune to this contest between labourers and their employers, as can be seen in a memorial prepared in 1762 by the woollen manufacturers of Aberdeen in which they attacked the ‘Cabals and Societys’ of workers that pushed for unreasonably high wages and whose protection made their members ‘lazy and indolent & indifferent about their work’.¹⁴⁸ Reid’s manuscript on servants’ wages thus needs to be read in the context of the earlier conversation on the topic in the Wise Club, as well as the general economic climate in Scotland *circa* 1760.

¹⁴³ Gordon, ‘Questions Discussed by the Aberdeen Philosophical Society’, AUL, MS 3107/2/4, f. 122.

¹⁴⁴ Christopher A. Whatley, *Scottish Society, 1707–1830: Beyond Jacobitism, Towards Industrialisation*, pp. 210–11; Malcolm Gray, ‘The Social Impact of Agrarian Change in the Rural Lowlands’, pp. 57–62.

¹⁴⁵ Whatley, *Scottish Society*, pp. 82–85.

¹⁴⁶ Whatley, *Scottish Society*, pp. 147, 210–11.

¹⁴⁷ *Scots Magazine* 22 (1760), pp. 445, 551, 646; *Edinburgh Magazine* 4 (1760), pp. 441–42.

¹⁴⁸ Quoted in Whatley, *Scottish Society*, p. 84.

Reid's analysis rests on two basic principles, one explicitly stated and one assumed but not articulated in the text. The first principle, which he formulates at the outset, is that prices (and hence wages) are a function of supply and demand. Here Reid may be indebted to Pufendorf and other writers in the natural-law tradition. The second principle, which remains unstated, is that the economy needs to be managed by government. There is no suggestion that Reid or any of his colleagues in the Wise Club questioned this assumption, which was a commonplace prior to the publication of Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations* in 1776. Nor did they apparently have any reservations about recommending that the wages of servants and labourers should ideally be kept low as a matter of sound economic policy or 'police', as opposed, for example, to Hume's position that high wages served as an incentive for the industriousness of workers.¹⁴⁹ As for Reid's analysis itself, his overall argument is largely unremarkable, apart from his suggestion that the army should be disbanded in times of peace so that the soldiers could be employed as servants, and his endorsement of the view previously expressed in the Club that criminals could be punished by being put into servitude.¹⁵⁰

An engagement with matters of police is also in the foreground of Reid's paper on the question he posed for discussion by the Wise Club, 'Whether by the encouragement of proper laws the number of births in Great Britain might not be nearly doubled, or at least greatly increased?'¹⁵¹ The manuscript transcribed in Part Three (which Reid prepared for the meeting held on 8 June 1762) is best understood in relation to a number of different but overlapping contexts. The first is the development of political arithmetic during the course of the eighteenth century.¹⁵² As we have noted above, Reid's penchant for quantitative reasoning in the natural sciences manifested itself in his interest in the writings of earlier political arithmeticians such as William Petty, who led the way in attempting to provide reliable numerical estimates of the size of the population of major urban centres such as London on the basis of parish bills of mortality. The ground-breaking work of Petty and his friend John Graunt in turn provided the inspiration for Edmond Halley's influential study of the bills of mortality

¹⁴⁹ Hume, 'Of Commerce', in Hume, *Essays Moral, Political and Literary*, pp. 265–66; A. W. Coats, 'Changing Attitudes to Labour in the Mid-Eighteenth Century', pp. 39–40; M. G. Marshall, 'Scottish Economic Thought and the High Wage Economy: Hume, Smith and McCulloch on Wages and Work Motivation', pp. 312–15; Ann Firth, 'Moral Supervision and Autonomous Social Order: Wages and Consumption in Eighteenth-Century Economic Thought'.

¹⁵⁰ See pp. 85, 86.

¹⁵¹ Ulman, *Minutes of the Aberdeen Philosophical Society*, pp. 110, 193. Reid's wording of the question in his manuscript differs from that in the minutes of the Society.

¹⁵² The link between political arithmetic and demography is emphasised in Andrea A. Rusnock, 'Biopolitics: Political Arithmetic in the Enlightenment'.

for the city of Breslau (now known as Wrocław), which he used to calculate the life expectancy of different age groups within the population in order to determine prices for life insurance.¹⁵³ The researches of Petty, Graunt and Halley subsequently gave rise to the quantitative analyses of the population carried out on the continent by such figures as Leibniz, Johann Peter Süssmilch and Buffon, as well as to Robert Wallace's actuarial scheme for the Fund for the Widows and Children of the Ministers of the Church of Scotland established by an Act of Parliament in 1744 and the Rev. Alexander Webster's Scottish census of 1755.¹⁵⁴ South of the Tweed, political arithmeticians were hampered by the unreliability of the bills of mortality and the repeated failure of efforts to improve the recording of population data.¹⁵⁵ Nevertheless, the debate over the size of the population in England initiated by the clergyman William Brakenridge and carried out in the pages of the *Philosophical Transactions* in the years 1755–57 showed that the research programme initiated by Petty, Graunt and Halley was still ongoing. As a regular reader of the *Philosophical Transactions*, Reid was undoubtedly familiar with the details of this debate.¹⁵⁶

The second context for Reid's paper is mercantilism. Political arithmeticians were typically motivated to study demography because they shared the mercantilist belief that the wealth and power of a nation rested on a sizeable and growing population. More people meant more hands to work, a larger military and increased government revenues through taxation. Petty, for example, affirmed that 'Fewness of people, is real poverty; and a Nation wherein are Eight Millions of people, are more than twice as rich as the same scope of Land wherein are but

¹⁵³ Edmond Halley, 'An Estimate of the Degrees of the Mortality of Mankind, Drawn from the Curious Tables of the Births and Funerals at the City of Breslaw; with an Attempt to Ascertain the Price of Annuities upon Lives' (1693); Halley, 'Some Further Considerations on the Breslaw Bills of Mortality' (1693). On the pioneering work of Petty, Graunt and Halley see, for example, James Bonar, *Theories of Population from Raleigh to Arthur Young*, pp. 67–120; Terence Hutchison, *Before Adam Smith: The Emergence of Political Economy, 1662–1776*, pp. 42–46.

¹⁵⁴ Charles Emil Stangeland, *Pre-Malthusian Doctrines of Population*, pp. 206–9, 213–23; Mary Pickard Winsor, 'Robert Wallace: Predecessor of Malthus and Pioneering Actuary', pp. 215–24; *Scottish Population Statistics: Including Webster's Analysis of Population, 1755*, edited by James Gray Kyd. The Widows' Fund was initially proposed in 1742 and a revised version of the scheme was adopted by the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland in 1743. For the 1744 Act see 17 George II c. 11. On Colin Maclaurin's role in the establishment of the Widows' Fund, see Grabner, 'Maclaurin and Newton', pp. 155–58, and the references cited there.

¹⁵⁵ D. V. Glass, *Numbering the People: The Eighteenth-Century Population Controversy and the Development of Census and Vital Statistics in Britain*, pp. 15–21.

¹⁵⁶ See D. V. Glass, *The Population Controversy*, which reprints the relevant articles from the *Philosophical Transactions* by Brakenridge and his critics.

Four'.¹⁵⁷ Halley likewise believed that a nation should support a large population. He observed that his data showed that a shortage of subsistence limited the number of marriages, which, in turn, lowered the birth rate. He found this aspect of the story told by the bills of mortality especially problematic because he maintained that 'the Strength and Glory of a King' rests on 'the multitude of his Subjects'. Halley therefore suggested that 'Celibacy ought to be discouraged', laws put in place to promote large families and 'effectual Care' taken 'to provide for the Subsistence of the Poor, by finding them Employments, whereby they may earn their Bread, without being chargeable to the Publick'.¹⁵⁸ Similar mercantilist schemes to manage the size of the population were proposed in Britain during the first six decades of the eighteenth century, notably by Josiah Tucker, whose writings Reid read. In *The Elements of Commerce, and Theory of Taxes* (1755), Tucker outlined a system of police which, he argued, would stimulate population growth. First and foremost, Tucker urged the government to pass laws that would encourage marriage across the social ranks. Furthermore, he recommended that legal measures be taken to facilitate the immigration of 'wealthy and industrious Foreigners'. He also thought that laws should be put in place to 'promote Industry and discourage Vice' because for him a greater degree of industriousness and the improvement of morals in society would both contribute to an increase in population. Lastly, he emphasised that his set of recommendations were all interconnected, since they reflected the fact that 'the several Parts of the great Commercial System ... mutually support and strengthen each other ... inasmuch as populous[n]ess hath a natural Tendency to promote Industry and good morals, – and these in their Turn as naturally create Populousness'.¹⁵⁹

In Scotland, the mercantilist point that 'every state is rich and powerful, in proportion to the number and industry of its inhabitants' prompted the author of the anonymous *Essays* published in the same year as Tucker's *Elements* to propose an experiment whereby a tax would be levied in Aberdeen and the shire in order to raise a fund of £1500, which would then be used to provide £50 to 'thirty young industrious farmers, or tradesmen, in different parishes' to enable them to marry. If this experiment continued for three years, the author was confident that after twelve years there would be an additional thousand hands available for work in the area, which meant that labour costs would fall and the production of

¹⁵⁷ Sir William Petty, *A Treatise of Taxes & Contributions* (1696), in Petty, *Economic Writings*, vol. I, p. 34.

¹⁵⁸ Halley, 'Some Further Considerations', p. 656.

¹⁵⁹ Josiah Tucker, *The Elements of Commerce, and Theory of Taxes* (1755), pp. 16–40, quotes from pp. 30, 40. On Tucker's *Elements* see George Shelton, *Dean Tucker and Eighteenth-Century Economic and Political Thought*, ch. 6.

commodities would increase. And if the proposal were to be applied throughout Britain, the author predicted that the nation would ‘very soon become the richest, happiest, and most powerful state in *Europe*’ thanks to the improvements in commerce and manufactures and the greater military might brought about by the ‘swarm of people’ that ‘marriage, under these encouragements, would necessarily produce’.¹⁶⁰

A third context for Reid’s manuscript is Christian apologetics. The interaction of demography and the defence of Christianity can be seen clearly in John Graunt’s *Natural and Political Observations ... upon the Bills of Mortality* (1662). In his discussion of the London bills of mortality Graunt addressed the question of how long it would take for the number of inhabitants of London to double, and affirmed that the population would do so in seven or, if there were an outbreak of the plague, eight years. On the basis of this estimate, he inferred that

According to this proportion, one couple, viz. *Adam* and *Eve*, doubling themselves every 64 years of the 5610 years, which is the *Age* of the World according to the *Scriptures*, shall produce far more People than are now in it. Wherefore the World is not above 100 thousand years older, as some vainly imagine, nor above what the *Scripture* makes it.¹⁶¹

A similar defence of the veracity of Scripture based on an estimate of the rate at which the human population grows is to be found in Matthew Hale’s *The Primitive Origination of Mankind* (1677). Building on the work of Graunt, Hale contended that notwithstanding a number of significant ‘checks’ or ‘correctives’ affecting the size of human populations, the natural rate of population growth was such that the earth would be completely overstocked if the world were truly eternal. Moreover, Hale asserted that both the operation of the ‘checks’ on population growth and the roughly equal number of males to females found in the human species were evidence of ‘the wise Providence of God’.¹⁶² These points were later taken up by John Arbuthnot and William Derham in their highly influential formulations of the argument for design. Arbuthnot’s argument rested on two demographic facts. First, he said there was ‘an exact Balance ... maintained, between the Numbers of Men and Women’. For him, this was significant because mortality rates for males were greater than those for females. However, having examined the records

¹⁶⁰ Anon., *Essays*, pp. 28–30, quotes from pp. 28, 30.

¹⁶¹ John Graunt, *Natural and Political Observations ... upon the Bills of Morality* (1662), in Petty, *The Economic Writings of Sir William Petty*, vol. II, p. 388. Graunt’s figure for the age of the world was taken from the work of the Dutch scholar Joseph Justus Scaliger.

¹⁶² Sir Matthew Hale, *The Primitive Origination of Mankind, Considered and Examined according to the Light of Nature* (1677), pp. 203–40; for his use of Graunt see pp. 205–6, 213.

of christenings in London he pointed to a second fact, namely that more males were born annually than females. According to Arbuthnot, these facts were clear evidence of the Divine hand at work in human affairs, insofar as God evidently wanted to guarantee an equal number of males and females for the purpose of reproduction. And to reinforce his argument, Arbuthnot invoked the calculus of probabilities to show that the probability of both facts was extremely low, which he took as proof that these two features of human populations were the products of design rather than chance.¹⁶³ In his enormously popular *Physico-Theology*, first published in 1713, Derham drew on Graunt and Arbuthnot to assert that the ratio between males and females illustrates God's providential design.¹⁶⁴ Moreover, he generalised Hale's claim that there are various 'checks' on the growth of the human population in affirming that God manages the numbers of each animal species to ensure that a balance in nature is maintained so that overpopulation does not occur.¹⁶⁵ Demography and natural theology thus became intertwined during the course of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.

Lastly, Reid's paper on increasing the birth rate in Britain needs to be read in the context of the general debate over whether the ancient or the modern world was more populous.¹⁶⁶ In the *Lettres persanes* (1721) Montesquieu reiterated the view initially put forward by the peripatetic Dutch scholar Isaac Vossius that since classical antiquity the earth had become progressively more depopulated. Through the epistolary exchanges of the characters Rica (who first raises the issue) and Usbek, Montesquieu suggested that the human population had shrunk during the course of history due to such physical causes as pestilence, disease and periodic geological catastrophes, as well as moral causes like changes in divorce law, the acceptance of polygamy, the enslavement of African blacks, the spread of Islam and Christianity, political institutions, colonisation and the manners and customs of the various peoples across the globe.¹⁶⁷ Montesquieu later returned to the topic in *L'Esprit des loix*, where he enumerated some of the same physical and moral causes in explaining the depopulation of Europe and advised that European states needed to adopt legislation that would promote population

¹⁶³ John Arbuthnot, 'An Argument for Divine Providence, Taken from the Constant Regularity Observ'd in the Births of Both Sexes' (1710–12).

¹⁶⁴ William Derham, *Physico-Theology: Or, a Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God, from his Works of Creation* (1732), pp. 175n–76n. Arbuthnot's paper was also used in another important natural theology text of the period, Bernard Nieuwentyt's *The Religious Philosopher: Or, the Right Use of Contemplating the Works of the Creator* (1718–19), vol. I, pp. 318–25.

¹⁶⁵ Derham, *Physico-Theology*, pp. 168–71, 177–79.

¹⁶⁶ On this debate, see Sylvana Tomaselli, 'Moral Philosophy and Population Questions in Eighteenth-Century Europe' and F. G. Whelan, 'Population and Ideology in the Enlightenment'.

¹⁶⁷ Montesquieu, *Persian Letters*, pp. 148–66 (letters 108–18).

growth.¹⁶⁸ Famously, Hume was not persuaded by Montesquieu's reading of the demographic history of humankind. In 'Of the Populousness of Ancient Nations' (1752), Hume dismissed out of hand the 'extravagancies of VOSSIUS' and used Montesquieu's claim that in the eighteenth century 'the earth support[ed] barely a fiftieth part of the population that it had in Caesar's day' as a starting point for a detailed reconsideration of the question.¹⁶⁹ While recognising that '*particular physical causes*' like venereal disease and smallpox were relevant to his inquiry, Hume nevertheless focused on the role played by moral causes in determining the size of human populations and emphasised that 'if every thing else be equal, it seems natural to expect, that, wherever there are most happiness and virtue, and the wisest institutions, there will also be [the] most people'.¹⁷⁰ For Hume, there was no doubt that the moderns were superior to the ancients measured according to these criteria, not least because the moderns enjoyed all of the advantages resulting from greater individual liberty, political stability, polished manners and the progress of trade, manufactures and industry. He therefore concluded that since the evidence for the size of the population in classical antiquity was unreliable, it was far more reasonable to think that the numbers of humankind had in fact increased rather than declined. But Hume was quickly challenged by his colleague in the Philosophical Society of Edinburgh, Robert Wallace, whose *A Dissertation on the Numbers of Mankind* (1753) defended the view that depopulation had taken place since classical times.¹⁷¹ Although Wallace agreed with Hume that moral causes were paramount in setting population levels, he put forward a diametrically opposed assessment of the respective merits of the ancient and modern worlds. He maintained that the simplicity of taste and manners that characterised life in the ancient Mediterranean world, including Greece and Italy, especially prior to the conquests by Rome, was conducive to population growth, whereas the luxury and corruption which he thought disfigured life in modern European societies led to moral and physical corruption and hence to a gradual decline in the numbers of humankind.¹⁷²

These various debates and discussions had already been in the background of Reid's lectures on police; in his manuscript on population they are registered

¹⁶⁸ Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws*, book XXIII.

¹⁶⁹ Montesquieu, *Persian Letters*, p. 150; Hume, *Essays Moral, Political and Literary*, p. 380.

¹⁷⁰ Hume, *Essays Moral, Political and Literary*, pp. 379, 382.

¹⁷¹ Wallace had earlier read a paper on the population of ancient Greece and Rome in the Philosophical Society; see Winsor, 'Robert Wallace', pp. 217–18.

¹⁷² See Robert Wallace, *A Dissertation on the Numbers of Mankind in Ancient and Modern Times* (1753), pp. 32–79, for evidence of the superior populations of the ancient world, followed by extensive analyses of the physical and moral causes of this situation, beginning with an overview, pp. 79–83.

in full. His starting point is the mercantilist belief that the power and wealth of a nation are related to the size of its population, with the rider that the 'number of hands' must be 'properly directed' (89). Consequently, the management of the population was for him, as for the mercantilists, an important aspect of police and, especially, the promulgation of laws to promote marriage.¹⁷³ Echoing Halley, Tucker and many others, Reid called for legislation that would enhance the attractions of the marital state by rewarding and supporting procreation and by punishing those who remained single or who indulged in extramarital sex. He nevertheless struck a new note in his treatment of this issue, in that he indicated that different policies must be adopted to encourage marriage in the upper and lower ranks of society. Among the wealthy, Reid saw luxury as the main obstacle to marriage and he therefore suggested that unmarried men in the upper ranks of society be taxed and excluded from public office.¹⁷⁴ However, Reid thought that marriage rates in the upper ranks were less significant than those among the poorer sort because the wealthy 'do not make the twentieth part of a State', whereas 'the poor people who must beget labouring hands ... are most wanted and make ... 19/20 parts of the whole'.¹⁷⁵ Hence his proposals for the promotion of marriage among the labouring poor were more elaborate than those he outlined regarding the better sort. And it is here that we see his experience in administering poor relief at New Machar surface, insofar as he recommends that a 'publick fund' be established to assist the poor and that the decisions about those eligible for support be made by 'The Overseers of the Parish or a Jury'. This aspect of his scheme was clearly modelled on the administrative structure of the old Scottish Poor Law. Furthermore, his first-hand knowledge of how the Poor Law was applied in practice undoubtedly led him to state that the labouring poor ought to have a legal right to support, because poor relief in eighteenth-century Scotland was commonly perceived to be a matter of individual Christian charity rather than a social relationship involving rights and duties set by law.¹⁷⁶

Reid's paper also displays his mathematical turn of mind and his engagement with political arithmetic. In the eighteenth century, disputes in demography were extremely difficult to resolve due to the unreliability of the available data and the

¹⁷³ Compare Reid's Glasgow lectures on politics, p. 55. Presumably Reid also touched on the question of population in his politics lectures at King's College.

¹⁷⁴ See p. 89. Compare Tucker, *The Elements*, p. 17; Josiah Tucker, *A Brief Essay on the Advantages and Disadvantages which Respectively Attend France and Great Britain, with Regard to Trade*, third edition (1753), pp. 127–32.

¹⁷⁵ See p. 90; compare Wallace, *Characteristics*, p. 121, on the importance of the lower orders. Reid elsewhere in this manuscript (p. 91) suggests that luxury also affects the lower ranks of society.

¹⁷⁶ See p. 90; Rosalind Mitchison, *The Old Poor Law in Scotland: The Experience of Poverty, 1574–1845*, pp. 46–48.

fact that there were no standardised procedures used to calculate population size or growth. His observation that ‘it would be of use have some standard by which we might Judge whether a State is upon the increase or decrease in population’ was thus an apposite one regarding contemporary population estimates as well as the debate over the numbers of humankind in the ancient and modern worlds.¹⁷⁷ Moreover, his attempt to provide a measure for population change not only points to his familiarity with the work of political arithmeticians like Halley and Buffon but also reflects the principle he enunciated in his ‘Essay on Quantity’ that quantitative reasoning can be utilised legitimately only in fields where the objects of study can be measured with precision. Thus, even though populations were ‘capable of More and Less’ and hence potentially susceptible to quantitative analysis, he evidently felt that the lack of an agreed measure of changes in population size was a problem in political arithmetic that needed to be rectified.¹⁷⁸

Lastly, Reid’s discussion of what he calls ‘the rate of the natural increase of Mankind’ and the ‘impediments which check and restrain the natural inclination of mankind to pair’ reveals his indebtedness to those writers whose interest in demography was framed by their religious concerns. Given that the human population would double naturally in the space of twenty-five years, Reid recognised that there must be some limits on population growth in order to prevent the overpopulation of the earth.¹⁷⁹ His use of the terms ‘check’ and ‘restraint’ follows the language employed by Hale and Derham in their analyses of the factors which controlled the numerical increase of humankind and his remarks on the natural limit on the fertility of the earth in the last paragraph of the manuscript suggest that he knew Robert Wallace’s critique of utopian thinking in Wallace’s recently published *Various Prospects of Mankind, Nature and Providence*.¹⁸⁰ Moreover, the phrase ‘the Proportion of Males & females’ in Reid’s concluding paragraph implies a familiarity with John Arbuthnot’s paper

¹⁷⁷ See p. 91. Both Hume and Wallace recognised that such problems bedevilled the debate over whether the earth was more densely populated in classical antiquity or in the modern era.

¹⁷⁸ Thomas Reid, ‘An Essay on Quantity; Occasioned by Reading a Treatise, in which Simple and Compound Ratio’s Are Applied to Virtue and Merit’ (1748), pp. 505–20 (quote at pp. 512–13). A critical edition of this text will appear in the Edinburgh Edition *Thomas Reid on Mathematics and Natural Philosophy*.

¹⁷⁹ Estimates of the rate of natural population growth varied widely in the eighteenth century. Reid seems to have taken his figure of twenty-five years from Benjamin Franklin; see Franklin’s *The Interest of Great Britain Considered ... To which are Added, Observations Concerning the Increase of Mankind, Peopling of Countries, &c.* (1760), pp. 23, 56. It is possible but not likely that Reid took the figure from Ezra Stiles’ *Discourse on the Christian Union* (1761), which discussed population growth in the American colonies.

¹⁸⁰ Robert Wallace, *Various Prospects of Mankind, Nature and Providence* (1761), esp. pp. 115–16, 122.

in the *Philosophical Transactions* discussed above, while his assertion that ‘the Intention of Providence must be that Mankind should never exceed’ a set number of people shows that he believed that the facts of human demography illustrated God’s wise providential governance of the natural order. Like other works on population written in the period, Reid’s manuscript thus blends together natural theology with political arithmetic and police.

As we have already noted, Reid’s papers on aspects of the law are somewhat anomalous with respect to his other contributions to the Wise Club analysed above because the questions that inspired them were not prompted by topical issues in mid-eighteenth-century Britain. The question ‘Whether the determination by unanimity or a majority in Juries is most equitable?’ was proposed by David Skene and discussed by the Club on 9 March 1762.¹⁸¹ As was customary in the Society, Skene recorded the conversation and prepared the abstract for the question. Reid’s manuscript, therefore, must have been written for another purpose and most likely served as the basis for his own contribution to the discussion on 9 March.¹⁸² What is immediately striking about his response to the question is that it is framed in terms of an explicit contrast between the jury systems used in England and Scotland, with Reid admitting at the outset that ‘I know not Whether my Judgment in this Question be in any degree influenced by an attachment to the Laws of my Country’.¹⁸³ His preference for the Scottish system was echoed by all of the other members of the Club present and his arguments against the English system were basically the same as those of his colleagues, although many of the details found in the manuscript were probably unique to Reid.¹⁸⁴ His point that a collective decision is commonly regarded as being more trustworthy than one taken by an individual was apparently not raised or addressed at the meeting, but we note that it fits into his general theory of reasoning that he elaborated in *Essays on the Intellectual Powers*. The deliberation of a jury is a form of probable, as distinct from demonstrative, reasoning and, more particularly, reasoning from testimony.¹⁸⁵ Reid seems not to have considered a problem that provoked some disagreement, namely whether it was equitable to have criminal cases involving capital punishment decided by a simple majority, as was the practice in Scotland.

¹⁸¹ Ulman, *Minutes of the Aberdeen Philosophical Society*, pp. 108, 193.

¹⁸² For Skene’s abstract see Skene, ‘Literary Essays’, AUL, MS 475, pp. 17–22 (pagination in the original).

¹⁸³ See p. 86. Adam Smith made a similar contrast between English and Scottish juries and expressed a strong preference for the latter. See Smith, *Lectures on Jurisprudence*, (A) v.37–41 and (B) 73–74.

¹⁸⁴ Compare Skene, ‘Literary Essays’, pp. 17–19.

¹⁸⁵ Reid, *Intellectual Powers*, pp. 555–62, especially 557–58; cf. Reid, *Inquiry*, pp. 190–95.

At least one member of the Society insisted that in such cases there should be a greater majority than one, even though most of his colleagues thought that a simple majority decision was acceptable.¹⁸⁶ Unfortunately, we do not know what Reid's view of this issue was, nor do we know whether he believed that the Scottish legal system was in need of reform as one or more of his fellow members of the Club evidently did.

Alexander Gerard's question 'Whether it be best that Courts of Law and Courts of Equity were different, or that the same court had the power of determining either according to law or equity as circumstances require?' generated a prolonged conversation within the Aberdeen Philosophical Society that continued over meetings held on 25 January and 8 and 22 February 1763.¹⁸⁷ No other question addressed by the Society led to such a lengthy discussion, although it is not clear why it did so. Gerard's question may have originated in his reading of Francis Bacon, for in *De augmentis scientiarum* (1623) Bacon stated that courts of law should be sharply distinguished from courts of equity on the ground that 'if there be a mixture of jurisdictions, the distinction of cases will not be retained, but discretion will in the end supersede the law'.¹⁸⁸ The issue was of some moment in the English legal system since the Court of Chancery dealt exclusively with matters of equity, whereas other courts were taken up with the common law. In Scotland, there was no such separation. The Court of Session was a court of both law and equity, and this mixing of jurisdictions was defended by Lord Kames in his *Principles of Equity*, first published in 1760.¹⁸⁹ Thus Gerard's question, like the one posed by Skene, highlighted the differences between the English and Scottish legal systems and, in doing so, invited the members of the Society to judge which of the two systems was preferable.

Even though Reid was present at the meeting of the Wise Club held on 25 January 1763, he may well have contributed little to the initial discussion of Gerard's question because his manuscript dealing with the question is dated February 1763 (92). The manuscript indicates that he was not interested in the kinds of technical legal details which preoccupied Kames, which suggests that his reflections had their origins in domains like politics and practical ethics rather

¹⁸⁶ Skene, 'Literary Essays', p. 21.

¹⁸⁷ Ulman, *Minutes of the Aberdeen Philosophical Society*, pp. 114, 115, 193.

¹⁸⁸ Francis Bacon, *The Philosophical Works of Francis Bacon Baron of Verulam, Viscount St. Albans, and Lord High Chancellor of England*, p. 620.

¹⁸⁹ On the Court of Session see, for example, Andrew McDouall, *An Institute of the Laws of Scotland in Civil Rights: With Observations upon the Agreement or Diversity between them and the Laws of England* (1751–52), vol. II, pp. 516–17; Henry Home, Lord Kames, *Principles of Equity* (1760), pp. xiii–xvi. Cf. David M. Walker, 'Equity in Scots Law', and Ian Simpson Ross, *Lord Kames and the Scotland of his Day*, ch. 12.

than the law. Instead, he was more concerned with clarifying the different senses in which justice and equity can be said to be in conflict, and with the related constitutional issue of the relationship between the courts and the legislature. The first sense he identified is where a court makes a decision, based on the principles of equity, which contradicts ‘the meaning and intention of the Law’. He maintained that such decisions transcend the limitations on the power of the courts because the power to alter the laws of the land rests solely with the legislature. Clearly he was worried that decisions of this sort subverted the proper constitutional relationship between the legal and legislative arms of ‘a free Government’ like that of Britain (93). Secondly, he believed that where the law is silent it is legitimate for both higher and lower courts to make judgements based on the principles of equity, on the ground that judgements of this type are no more than ‘Supplements to the Law’ (93–94). Thirdly, he also granted that courts should be able to make decisions ‘which are grounded upon the reason and intendment of the Law although not within or contrary to the letter of it’. Here he acknowledged that interpretation is needed to apply general statements like those of the law to specific actions. And for Reid, the interpretive gap between the general and the particular can be bridged only by considering the intentions of human agents and by invoking considerations of equity. This point led him to reflect on the common law courts of England, which he criticised for their legal ‘Chicanery’ and for an unwarranted degree of power lodged with juries precisely because the judgements of these courts were not governed by the principles of equity (94–95). It followed that, for Reid, the legal system in Scotland was superior to that in England since the Scottish Court of Session combined justice and equity within its jurisdiction.

Reid’s papers on the law are historically significant not so much for the details of the arguments found therein but for their defence of the merits of the Scottish legal system. It has been suggested that there was wide recognition in the eighteenth century of the need for Scottish law and legal institutions to be modernised in order to keep pace with the social, political and economic changes brought about by the Union of 1707.¹⁹⁰ Reid’s patriotic defence of the Scottish jury system and the hybrid nature of the Court of Session would thus seem to put him at odds with the majority of Scots jurists in the period, including his patron and friend Lord Kames. Nevertheless, we believe that Reid (like Kames) is best described as a ‘North Briton’ in the eighteenth-century sense of that term.¹⁹¹ Scottish Whigs, such as Reid, welcomed the Parliamentary Union because the political and economic assimilation of Scotland within the new British polity

¹⁹⁰ Colin Kidd, *Union and Unionisms: Political Thought in Scotland, 1500–2000*, pp. 178–90.

¹⁹¹ Cf. Colin Kidd, ‘North Britishness and the Nature of Eighteenth-Century British Patriotisms’.

brought with it the advantages of the mixed English constitution and a more advanced commercial economy. Reid's paeans on the virtues of the British constitution speak to the common perception among his Scottish contemporaries that it was thanks to the Union that the Scots enjoyed the benefits of English liberties, as well as the material prosperity fostered by the gradual disappearance of the last remnants of outmoded Scottish feudal institutions. But even though Reid and his fellow Scottish Whigs were 'Anglocentric' and assimilationist in outlook, they also stoutly defended the distinctiveness of the Church of Scotland in its Presbyterian guise, and were sympathetic to traditional cultural forms like Scots vernacular poetry even while they endeavoured to eliminate Scotticisms from their prose.¹⁹² On the evidence of Reid's papers on the law, it appears that he viewed the Scottish legal system as a constitutive part of the North British identity insofar as that system, like the Kirk, was guaranteed its distinctiveness by the Union settlement.¹⁹³ Paradoxically, he can thus be seen as a legal nationalist before legal nationalism.¹⁹⁴

During Reid's thirty-two years as a member of the Glasgow Literary Society, we know that he gave at least twenty discourses and handled eleven discussion questions. Of these, one discourse and six questions dealt with political, economic and social topics.¹⁹⁵ Unfortunately, the papers Reid prepared to open the discussion of the questions 'What are the most proper Means to be used by a State in order to prevent the necessaries of life from rising to too high a price' and 'Whether Paper Credit is beneficial or hurtful to a trading Nation' have not survived.¹⁹⁶ The former question, which he addressed on 30 January 1767, was most likely prompted by the spike in food prices in 1765–66, which led to serious rioting in Glasgow in 1767.¹⁹⁷ The latter question, which he had already discussed in the Wise Club in 1761, was the basis for a conversation in the Literary Society which took place on 1 May 1767, just as it was taken up in his lectures on police at the time (67–68). Given his onerous college duties, it is conceivable that he returned to this question in order to save preparation time, although it is also possible that he believed the

¹⁹² See Kidd, 'North Britishness', pp. 365–66.

¹⁹³ The same can be said for the Scottish university system.

¹⁹⁴ Compare Kidd, *Union and Unionisms*, pp. 173–78.

¹⁹⁵ See the list in Appendix III of Wood, 'Thomas Reid, Natural Philosopher', to which must be added a question on paper credit from 1767.

¹⁹⁶ 'Laws of the Literary Society in Glasgow College', GUL, MS Murray 505, pp. 20–21, 23. Reid's paper on the question discussed 1 April 1768, 'Whether the Supposition of a tacit Contract at the beginning of Societies is well founded', is reproduced in Reid, *Practical Ethics*, pp. 136–43.

¹⁹⁷ A. J. S. Gibson and T. C. Smout, *Prices, Food and Wages in Scotland, 1550–1780*, p. 173; Whatley, *Scottish Society*, p. 207.

issue was still pertinent in the aftermath of the international banking crisis that had occurred in 1763.¹⁹⁸

Reid subsequently addressed monetary matters in his undated paper on the question ‘What are the bad consequences of the Diminution of our Coin by wearing? and what the means of preventing those Consequences?’ The state of both silver and gold coin was a matter of widespread concern in Britain from the late 1750s onwards, since much of the coinage in circulation was below its regulation weight or otherwise adulterated.¹⁹⁹ A limited number of new silver coins – shillings and sixpence pieces – had been minted for the Bank of England in 1757–58 for private distribution, but otherwise little new silver coin was issued by the Mint. By the early 1770s there was such a shortage that some commentators likened the situation to the dark years of the early 1690s, when silver coin was in such a perilous state that the English government had to undertake a complete recoinage.²⁰⁰ Moreover, figures such as Matthew Boulton attributed the financial crisis affecting banks and private credit that occurred in 1772 in part to the corrupt state of the gold coin.²⁰¹ Parliament responded by passing three pieces of legislation: ‘An Act for the better preventing the counterfeiting, clipping, and other diminishing the Gold Coin in this Kingdom’ in 1773, followed by ‘An Act to prohibit the Importation of light Silver Coin, of this Realm’ and ‘An Act for applying a certain Sum of Money, for calling in, and recoinage, the deficient Gold Coin of this Realm’ in 1774.²⁰² Since the minutes of the Glasgow Literary Society

¹⁹⁸ Hoppit, ‘Financial Crises’, pp. 49–50.

¹⁹⁹ On the state of the British coinage, see John Craig, *The Mint: A History of the London Mint from A.D. 287 to 1948*, ch. 14; Albert Feavearyear, *The Pound Sterling: A History of English Money*, pp. 168–72; Thomas J. Sargent and François R. Velde, *The Big Problem of Small Change*, pp. 299–301; George Selgin, *Good Money: Birmingham Button Makers, the Royal Mint, and the Beginnings of Modern Coinage, 1775–1821*, ch. 1.

²⁰⁰ Craig, *The Mint*, p. 246; [William Beldam], *Considerations on Money, Bullion and Foreign Exchanges; Being an Enquiry into the Present State of the British Coinage; Particularly with Regard to the Scarcity of Silver Money* (1772), pp. iii, v; Anon., *A Letter to the Members in Parliament, on the Present State of the Coinage: With Proposals for the Better Regulation thereof* (1771). On the recoinage of the mid-1690s, see Ming-Hsun Li, *The Great Recoinage of 1696 to 1699*.

²⁰¹ Craig, *The Mint*, p. 242. On the financial crisis of 1772, see Hoppit, ‘Financial Crises’, pp. 45, 51–54.

²⁰² 13 George III c. 71, ‘An Act for the better preventing the counterfeiting, clipping, and other diminishing the Gold Coin in this Kingdom’; 14 George III c. 42, ‘An Act to prohibit the Importation of light Silver Coin, of this Realm, from Foreign Countries, into Great Britain or Ireland; and to restrain the Tender thereof beyond a certain Sum’; and 14 George III c. 70, ‘An Act for applying a certain Sum of Money, for calling in, and recoinage, the deficient Gold Coin of this Realm; and for regulating the Manner of receiving the same at the Bank of England; and of taking, there, on Account of the Deficiency of the said Coin, and making Satisfaction for the same; and for authorising all Persons to cut and deface all Gold Coin, that shall not be allowed to be current by his Majesty’s Proclamation’, in Owen Ruffhead, *Statutes at Large* (1786), vol. VIII, pp. 261, 347–48, 364. See also

are almost entirely missing for the period February 1771 to May 1775, we cannot be certain about the dating of Reid's manuscript on light coin. However, we think that the paper dates from the early 1770s, and was most likely prompted by the widespread anxiety about the debased nature of British coinage and by the discussions in Parliament surrounding the three Acts.²⁰³ The fact that Reid repeatedly refers to Sir James Steuart's extended treatment of money and coin in *An Inquiry into the Principles of Political Oeconomy* but not to Adam Smith's analysis of the subject in the *Wealth of Nations* also strongly suggests that the paper was written after 1767 but before 1776. Our dating of the paper is also influenced by the fact that Reid had addressed this topic and made substantially the same points in his undergraduate lectures, at least by 1765–66.²⁰⁴ In addition, his reading of Steuart's *The Principles of Money* in May 1773 points to a renewed interest in coinage in the early 1770s. Given the historical context and the evidence provided by both the text itself and his reading notes, we conclude that Reid's manuscript was most probably composed in 1772 or 1773, or perhaps 1774 at the latest.

In the lengthy 'Preamble' to his paper, Reid recapitulates the basic elements of the theory of money that he outlined in his politics lectures in order to make one main point, namely that in order to facilitate commerce modern European states had all opted to employ gold or silver coins whose face value was guaranteed by a 'publick Stamp' which vouched for both the weight and the fineness of the metal.²⁰⁵ However, in doing so, they faced two practical problems: deterring the unscrupulous from tampering with the coinage and preventing coins from wearing through use. And, as Reid noted, neither problem had been solved by the British government or any other European state. Of these two problems, he clearly regarded the loss of weight over time as the more serious one because metal coin inevitably wears and the resultant circulation of light coin was detrimental to the economy in a number of ways. As mentioned above, the matter of worn coin had recently been explored by Sir James Steuart, but Reid went far beyond Steuart in his detailed discussion of the deleterious economic consequences of a debased coinage.²⁰⁶ Perhaps the most striking feature of Reid's discussion is his

the 1774 Parliamentary report on the state of the gold coin in William Cobbett and T. C. Hansard, *Cobbett's Parliamentary History of England, from the Earliest Period to the Year 1803. From which Last-Mentioned Epoch it is Continued Downwards in the Work Entitled, 'The Parliamentary Debates'* (1806–20), vol. XVII, pp. 1327–30.

²⁰³ The extant minutes of the Glasgow Literary Society while Reid was a member cover the periods November 1764 to January 1771, November 1771, February 1773, November 1776 to May 1779 and November 1794 to April 1800.

²⁰⁴ See pp. 63–64.

²⁰⁵ See pp. 96–101.

²⁰⁶ See pp. 101–3; compare Steuart, *An Inquiry*, vol. I, pp. 540, 553–7.

assertion that once it becomes public knowledge that the coins in circulation are under-weight, the debasement of a nation's coinage 'has a tendency to go on with an accelerated Motion, like a Stone going down hill'.²⁰⁷ Reid thus agreed with those who maintained that Britain faced an economic crisis because the coin was in the same debased state as it had been prior to the Great Recoinage of 1696, although the remedy he proposed to avoid such a crisis was radically different from what the English government had undertaken some eighty years earlier.

The most novel aspect of Reid's paper on coinage is his proposal that over the long term the British government should abandon the attempt to guarantee the weight of the silver coin in circulation because the problems associated with trying to do so were insuperable. However, as a first step towards this long-term solution he suggested that Parliament should pass a law requiring that 'in all time to come no man shall be obliged to take money in payment that is deficient in weight'.²⁰⁸ Even though such a law would have meant that the exchange of silver money would entail weighing the coin used, he believed that people would become adept at assessing the weight of coin and that light coin would inevitably find its way back to the Mint to be recoinage because it would otherwise be refused in cash transactions. Moreover, he argued that if such a law were to be passed, it would reduce the price of an ounce of silver bullion to make it equivalent to that of an ounce of silver coin, which was not the case by the early 1770s. In doing so, the law would indirectly ensure that there was a regular supply of silver to the Mint and that the coin in circulation was of the correct weight. Consequently, money in Britain would genuinely be 'a proper Measure of the price of things', whereas in its current debased state it was not.²⁰⁹ The primary ends of 'coinage by tale' – guaranteed fineness and weight – would thus be achieved by the expedient of a simple piece of legislation, while a costly wholesale recoinage like that previously undertaken would, according to Reid, be avoided. And given that he thought that the clipping of coin in the late seventeenth century and the Great Recoinage of 1696 had both contributed to the high level of public debt in Britain, his scheme had much to recommend it, because it avoided significant public expenditure and remedied the problem of debased coin.²¹⁰ Reid's proposed response to the coinage crisis was, however, at odds with the recommendations of prominent political

²⁰⁷ See p. 103.

²⁰⁸ See p. 103. Reid here echoes John Locke's *Further Considerations concerning Raising the Value of Money* (1691), in Locke, *Locke on Money*, vol. II, pp. 418–19.

²⁰⁹ See p. 105.

²¹⁰ See p. 106. The one problem he saw with his scheme was that debtors would find their debts increased by 5%, and he suggested that they be protected in the legislation on coinage that he envisaged; see p. 106.

economists like Steuart and the views of MPs. For in 1773–74, legislation passed by Parliament initiated a recoinage of gold coin in order to combat clipping but signally failed to address the decrepit state of silver coinage in the realm.

The problems of police related to the regulation of food prices that Reid addressed in 1767 were thrown into even sharper relief when climbing grain prices, lower wages and food shortages caused widespread hardship and renewed social unrest in Scotland in the period 1771–73. The new Corn Law passed in 1773 did nothing to solve the problem of providing subsistence for the labouring poor. If anything, the law made matters worse in Scotland because it allowed the importation of oats and oatmeal only at a price that was higher than it had been under the previous Corn Law.²¹¹ Merchants in Glasgow were heavily involved in the lobbying of MPs that took place when the new legislation was passed in 1773, and they were again active in 1777 when a bill was proposed to regulate the import and export of corn in Scotland.²¹² On 8 April 1777 the MP for Ayrshire, Sir Adam Fergusson, moved to table a bill that would amend the 1773 Corn Law as it applied to Scotland. At the request of Parliament, Fergusson, along with the Lord Advocate, Henry Dundas, and the MP for the Glasgow Burghs, Lord Frederick Campbell, drafted a bill which was given a first reading in the Commons on 16 April and a second on 28 April. The draft legislation was then printed on 1 May and circulated among the counties and burghs of Scotland for comment; it was resolved to delay further discussion of it until the next session of Parliament.²¹³ Before the draft had been printed, news of the proposed legislation reached Glasgow, where the Lord Provost called a meeting of ‘the merchants, traders, and principal manufacturers’ of the city. The group met on 25 April to voice their opposition to Fergusson’s bill, which they feared would lead to higher grain prices.²¹⁴ A committee was struck to muster support for the position taken by the Glasgow merchants, and the committee members issued a *Memorial for the Merchants, Traders and Manufacturers of Glasgow*, dated 2 May 1777, summarising

²¹¹ Gibson and Smout, *Prices, Food and Wages*, pp. 173–74; Whatley, *Scottish Society*, pp. 208–10. The price for oats was set at sixteen shillings per quarter; see 13 George III c. 43.

²¹² On the lobbying of the Glasgow merchants in 1773 and 1777, see Bob Harris, ‘Parliamentary Legislation, Lobbying and the Press in Eighteenth-Century Scotland’, pp. 85–87.

²¹³ *Scots Magazine* 39 (1777), pp. 569–75, at p. 569; Harris, ‘Parliamentary Legislation’, p. 86; Julian Hoppit (ed.), *Failed Legislation, 1660–1800: Extracted from the Commons and Lords Journals*, pp. 444–45 (reference number 118.038). For the draft bill see ‘A Bill to Amend and Render more Effectual so much of Two Acts, Made in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Years of the Reign of His Present Majesty, as Relates to the Regulating the Importation and Exportation of Corn, in that Part of Great Britain called Scotland’, in Sheila Lambert (ed.), *House of Commons Sessional Papers of the Eighteenth Century*, vol. XXVIII, pp. 88–101.

²¹⁴ Implicitly, the Glasgow merchants were worried by the possibility of further food riots.

their objections to the draft legislation. Copies of the *Memorial* were forwarded to various Scottish newspapers for publication and to a committee of the Convention of Royal Burghs, which ordered that the *Memorial* be printed and sent to all of the Scottish MPs, the royal burghs and the manufacturing towns of Scotland.²¹⁵

The Glasgow *Memorial* proved to be highly controversial because it criticised Fergusson's bill for favouring the landed interest in Edinburgh and the east of Scotland on the grounds that the bill vested the power of regulating the corn trade in the Court of Session and Court of Exchequer, as had been the case prior to 1773, and used the price of corn and oatmeal in Edinburgh as the standard for the rest of Scotland, even though prices were typically lower in Edinburgh than elsewhere. Furthermore, the authors of the *Memorial* objected to the fact that the bill set too high a price threshold for the importation of oatmeal and urged that it was in the interest of the nation to allow 'the free importation of provisions, or at a low limited price', since this would ensure a plentiful supply of cheap food and allow 'manufactures [to] flourish'.²¹⁶ A flurry of pamphlets responding to the *Memorial* appeared and the landed interest held a series of meetings in November and December 1777 in Banffshire, Ayrshire and Edinburgh.²¹⁷ Because lower grain prices were the likely result of freer trade, landowners vigorously attacked the position articulated by the Glasgow merchants, as well as sections of the 1773 Corn Law. For example, a committee drawn from an informal group of representatives from most of the counties in Scotland that met in Edinburgh in November 1777 took aim at the Law and declared that 'the warehousing of either grain or meal for re-exportation is highly prejudicial to the true interest of this country, and to the exportation of the native produce: [and] That as the warehousing of oatmeal never hath been allowed, it ought not to be agreed to;

²¹⁵ *Scots Magazine* 39 (1777), pp. 569–73. For the Glasgow *Memorial*, see also the 3 July 1777 issue of the *Weekly Magazine, or Edinburgh Amusement* 37 (1777), pp. 1–5. The argument of the *Memorial* regarding the 1773 Corn Law is couched in the language of 'North Britishness' explored by Kidd in his article with that title. The position taken by the Glasgow merchants was endorsed by 'W.C.' in 'A Peep at the Corn Bill', which appeared in the 29 May 1777 issue of the *Weekly Magazine, or Edinburgh Amusement* 36 (1777), pp. 293–94.

²¹⁶ *Scots Magazine* 39 (1777), pp. 572–73. The argument made by the Glasgow merchants that manufactures flourish when food prices are low was challenged by Sir James Steuart; see Steuart, *An Inquiry into the Principles of Political Oeconomy* (ed. Andrew Skinner), vol. I, pp. lii–lv, and vol. II, pp. 737–38. Steuart maintained that high food prices promoted industriousness and hence stimulated both agriculture and manufactures.

²¹⁷ *Scots Magazine* 40 (1778), pp. 6–8. For examples of the pamphlets critical of the Glasgow *Memorial*, see anon., *Considerations on our Corn-Laws and the Bill Proposed to Amend them* (1777); anon., *Corn-Bill Hints, in Answer to the Memorial for the Merchants, Traders and Manufacturers of the City of Glasgow* (1777); and anon., *Essay on the Corn Laws ...* (1777).

and the warehousing of other grain ought to be prevented if possible'.²¹⁸ The landowners were thus not merely opposed to the relaxation of restrictions on the grain trade, for they now wanted the repeal of the provisions in the 1773 Corn Law which permitted the warehousing of grains other than oats. This new challenge to the Glasgow merchants was particularly unwelcome because their commercial prospects were already grim due to the American War. Consequently, they began a subscription in early December to fight Fergusson's bill, and the counties of Argyll and Dumbarton, along with several burghs and towns, rallied behind them. In the end, the intense lobbying by the Glasgow merchants succeeded in killing the bill, for it did not resurface in the Commons before Parliament was prorogued by George III in early June 1778.²¹⁹

Reid's paper on the question 'Whether the Storing or Warehousing foreign Grain or Meal for reexportation be highly prejudicial to the interest of this Country and whether it ought to be prevented if possible', which he 'illustrated' at the meeting of the Glasgow Literary Society held on 30 January 1778, defends both the warehousing provisions in the 1773 Corn Law and the position taken in the Glasgow *Memorial* regarding the grain trade.²²⁰ As Reid reported to Lord Kames in late February, his paper focused on 'a Clause of the last Corn Act about Warehousing Grain, a Clause which some meetings of the Landed Gentlemen have resolved to be prejudicial to the Country, I think unjustly'.²²¹ Significantly, Reid's colleague John Millar had already read a discourse to the Society 'On the Expediency of restraining the importation of foreign Grain or bestowing a bounty upon the exportation of what is produced at home' in November 1777.²²² Hence it is unclear whether Reid thought that his paper simply supplemented what Millar had to say on the topic, or whether he set out to challenge the argument that Millar

²¹⁸ See the report in the *Scots Magazine* 40 (1778), p. 8. A committee comprised of landowners and Justices of the Peace in Banffshire expressed the same view in that issue (p. 7).

²¹⁹ *Scots Magazine* 40 (1778), p. 8.

²²⁰ 'Laws of the Literary Society in Glasgow College', GUL, MS Murray 505, pp. 62–63. For the warehousing provisions, see 13 George III c. 43, 'An Act to Regulate the Importation and Exportation of Corn', in Ruffhead, *Statutes at Large*, vol. VIII, pp. 222–28 (at p. 223). For another perspective on the context for Reid's paper see Hont, *Jealousy of Trade*, pp. 403–19. Reid's paper is noted on p. 412, n58.

²²¹ Reid to Lord Kames, 27 February 1778, in Reid, *Correspondence*, p. 97.

²²² 'Laws of the Literary Society in Glasgow College', GUL, MS Murray 505, pp. 57–58. The wording of the title of Millar's discourse suggests that he followed Adam Smith in recommending that all restrictions on the import and export of corn be removed, just as he followed Smith's general argument for commercial liberty. See John Millar, *An Historical View of the English Government* (1787), vol. IV, pp. 713–18. For Smith's analysis see his 'Digression concerning the Corn Trade and Corn Laws', in Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, IV.v.b.

had presented in his discourse. Nevertheless, Reid's opposition to the views expressed by the spokesmen for the landed interest is abundantly clear.

Three aspects of Reid's argument are of interest. First, Reid takes from earlier mercantilist writers their emphasis on the economic benefits of the 'carrying trade', that is, the import of goods to either a home or a foreign port that are subsequently exported to other markets. Among the writers that Reid cites on commerce, William Petty was the first to focus on the carrying trade as a means to enrich the nation. In his *Political Arithmetick*, he maintained that the prosperity of the Dutch was due to their success in the fishing and shipping sectors, which had turned them into 'the Factors, and Carriers for the whole World of Trade'. The dominance of the Dutch in shipping and trade had benefited the United Provinces because 'Husbandmen, Seamen, Soldiers, Artizans and Merchants, are the very Pillars of any Common-Wealth' and, in his view, every sailor is 'not only a Navigator, but a Merchant, and also a Soldier'. Consequently, the cultivation of trade, and especially the carrying trade, by the Dutch increased their power as well as their wealth, insofar as 'the Labour of Seamen, and Freight of Ships, is always of the nature of an Exported Commodity, the overplus whereof, above what is Imported, brings home mony, &c'.²²³ The benefits of 'Trading and Huxtering from Port to Port' were similarly extolled in the mercantilist text *Britannia Languens*, said to be written by the Whig apologist William Petyt. Like Petty, the author of *Britannia Languens* pointed to the success of the Dutch in the carriage of goods and the 'Trade from Port to Port' as a model for the English to follow, and said of the carrying trade that it will 'cause a great *Navigation*, and also bring in very much *Treasure*, and therefore if it be added to the Trade of *Exportation*, must render a Nation the Miracle of Riches and Power'.²²⁴

The importance of the carrying trade was also highlighted in a work Reid recommended to his students, Matthew Decker's *An Essay on the Causes of the Decline of the Foreign Trade*. Decker was highly critical of Britain's complex system of taxes, duties and bounties in the *Essay*, and insisted that Britain needed to create free ports in which the removal of elaborate customs regulations would allow trade to flourish. Such ports would, he maintained, stimulate the growth of the carrying trade, which in turn would strengthen the nation by increasing the number of sailors and create more employment for those in jobs ancillary to

²²³ Petty, *Political Arithmetick*, in Petty, *Economic Writings*, vol. I, pp. 258–60.

²²⁴ [William Petyt], *Britannia Languens: Or, a Discourse of Trade ...* (1689), p. 34. Pages 34–46 of the text are taken up with a lengthy discussion of the carrying trade and how England would benefit from emulating the Dutch.

this branch of trade, like ‘Watermen, Carmen, Porters, Coopers, Packers, &c.’²²⁵ Significantly, Decker emphasised that Britain could expand its carrying trade by creating public warehouses for the import and export of corn. ‘By encouraging our Navigation’, he wrote, ‘the more of the Carrying-Trade must we get [and] ... the Importation of Corn upon Speculation for better Markets, and its Re-exportation when the Markets are advanced, must give constant Employment to a vast number of Ships’.²²⁶ Reid’s enumeration of the advantages gained by the carrying trade in grain was thus rooted in mercantilist political economy and, even though he agreed with Adam Smith’s positive assessment of the carrying trade in grain in the *Wealth of Nations*, he did so for reasons that differed from Smith’s.²²⁷

Moreover, Reid’s defence of the warehousing of grain for import and export is a variation on earlier mercantilist schemes for the creation of public granaries. Petty had briefly mentioned the economic advantages of ‘publick store-houses’ for corn and other commodities in his *Political Arithmetick*.²²⁸ However, at the beginning of the eighteenth century John Law advanced a detailed plan for the establishment of a Council of Trade in Scotland that would oversee the economic improvement of the nation. As part of this plan, Law suggested that the Council be given the power ‘to build and erect granarys for the well-keeping stores and quantities of corn in all such places of this kingdom, as they shall judge necessary’.²²⁹ According to Law, the construction of public storehouses for grain would contribute to the economic well-being of Scotland because they would help to avoid fluctuations between the ‘extream cheapness’ of provisions and the ‘extream dearth of grain’; they would also serve to raise the price of corn and thereby provide additional revenue for ‘the owners of land, and raisers of corn’.²³⁰ Because Scotland was ‘more subject to uncertain seasons’ than ‘any [other] country in Christendom’, he urged that such granaries be built, especially given ‘the many and destructive famines this nation hath been exposed unto’ in the past. The warehousing of corn would, he believed, put an end to the kind

²²⁵ [Sir Matthew Decker], *An Essay on the Causes of the Decline of the Foreign Trade, Consequently of the Value of the Lands of Britain, and on the Means to Restore both*, second edition (1750), pp. 19, 107–8.

²²⁶ [Decker], *An Essay*, p. 170.

²²⁷ See pp. 112–13. Compare Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, IV.v.b.41–42. Smith’s view of the carrying trade in general was more qualified than Reid’s; see Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, II.v.30–35. In paragraph 35 Smith attacked the mercantilists for confusing cause and effect, writing that ‘the carrying trade is the natural effect and symptom of great national wealth: but it does not seem to be the natural cause of it’.

²²⁸ Petty, *Political Arithmetick*, in Petty, *Economic Writings*, vol. I, pp. 274–75.

²²⁹ John Law, *Proposals and Reasons for Constituting a Council of Trade in Scotland* (1751), p. 24.

²³⁰ Law, *Proposals and Reasons*, pp. 24, 61, 80–81.

of catastrophic food shortages that had afflicted Scotland in the 1690s and, in addition, would allow the Scots to establish a grain trade to rival that of the Dutch. Law proclaimed that once the warehouses were in operation, Scotland ‘may be easily brought into a condition of being one of the greatest store-houses for grain of all the countrys in the northern-world’ and promised that considerable wealth would be generated by the import and export of corn at advantageous prices.²³¹

As mentioned above, another proposal for the creation of public granaries was floated by Matthew Decker. Decker maintained that Britain’s trade would benefit by the removal of the bounties on the export of corn and the formation of companies in each county in order ‘to erect Magazines of Corn’. The advantages of these storehouses would be five-fold. First, they would foster the growth of the grain trade in Britain. Decker viewed this branch of commerce as ‘a solid Trade’ that was profitable in and of itself, and one that had the added advantages of stimulating the growth of manufactures (by keeping subsistence and labour costs low) and of fuelling the growth of the shipping industry.²³² Secondly, by keeping the cost of labour down the granaries would ensure that the working poor were kept in more regular work, while the expansion of trade more generally would create more jobs. Thirdly, the provision of food in times of scarcity would prevent widespread mortality and thereby help to increase the population. Fourthly, as we have already seen, he claimed that a flourishing carrying trade in corn would generate considerable wealth. Lastly, he asserted that the four economic consequences of ‘erecting Publick Magazines of Corn’ he enumerated would in turn lead to an increase in the value of land, which would further benefit the nation.²³³ The warehousing of grain was thus a vital element in Decker’s plan to encourage the recovery of Britain’s foreign trade, because he saw the county corn warehouses as an engine of economic prosperity.

Reid knew the details of Decker’s plan and he was probably also acquainted with Sir James Steuart’s proposal for the establishment of a privately operated ‘Meal-bank’ in Lanarkshire. Writing under the pseudonym of ‘Robert Frame, Writer in Dalserf’, Steuart broached the idea in his *Considerations on the Interest of the County of Lanark*, wherein he considered the economic state of Lanarkshire in relation to the rapid growth of trade and manufactures in Glasgow. His rationale for creating a storehouse for meal was rooted in his diagnosis of the problems associated with the way in which the Glasgow food markets were run, and especially with the manner in which the corporate privileges of groups such as the

²³¹ Law, *Proposals and Reasons*, pp. 81–88, 137–40.

²³² [Decker], *An Essay*, pp. 168–70.

²³³ [Decker], *An Essay*, pp. 171–72.

‘Butchers, Bakers, Poulterers, [and] Herb-merchants’ in the city had limited the supply of food from the outlying countryside.²³⁴ The one exception he noted was the provision of oatmeal, for there was already a market to which anyone from the country could bring their meal to sell. However, the existence of this ‘free’ market could not be turned to advantage because there were no large private granaries in the west of Scotland like there were in East Lothian and the north and, in addition, farmers were forced to feed their cattle with straw in the winter rather than hay, so that there was little or no corn available early in the season. Furthermore, he remarked that ‘the commons who live in towns; and who are instructed, by example, to consider riot and disorder as very noble exertions of liberty; deter the merchant from embarking in the corn-trade’.²³⁵ These factors, combined with the poor road system and the inclement weather in the region, led to periodic and unpredictable shortages which drove food prices up. In order to combat the wildly fluctuating prices of grain, Steuart proposed that a company be formed to operate a ‘Meal-bank’, which would ensure that prices would remain reasonably steady due to the fact that there would be a reliable and properly managed source of oatmeal.²³⁶ That Reid likewise highlighted the problem of fluctuating grain prices and held that it was an economic and social phenomenon that ought ‘by all means that human Wisdom can devise to be prevented or lessened as much as possible’ attests to his indebtedness to the writings of Steuart, as well as to those of Law before him, and we can therefore see his defence of the warehousing provisions in the 1773 Corn Law as being rooted in the granary schemes of his predecessors (108). For Reid, maintaining the price of subsistence at a relatively uniform level through the use of grain stores was a key component of effective police.²³⁷

A third point relates to the question which Reid raises at the beginning and the very end of his paper but does not address directly: whether or not a lower average price for corn and oatmeal benefited the nation.²³⁸ The pamphlet war over Sir Adam Ferguson’s draft bill reflected the two sides of the debate, with the Glasgow merchants holding to the commonplace that lower subsistence costs

²³⁴ [Sir James Steuart], *Considerations on the Interest of the County of Lanark* (1769), p. 60.

²³⁵ [Steuart], *Considerations*, pp. 64–66.

²³⁶ [Steuart], *Considerations*, pp. 65–72. Steuart suggested that if his proposal was found impractical, at the very least the Glasgow city fathers needed to collaborate with the landed interest in regulating the markets in Lanarkshire so that the supply of oat meal was as uniform as possible.

²³⁷ It should be emphasised that Reid did not think that specific grain prices should be set by law, but rather that the fluctuations in price should be minimised. In his paper on usury, Reid states: ‘There appears no reason therefore for fixing a Rate of Interest by Law which is to regulate the Money Market, any more than for fixing by Law the price of Beef or Grain or any other Commodity’ (130). Reid was thus to some extent willing to let the market set food prices.

²³⁸ See pp. 107, 117.

meant lower wages and hence more competitive prices for commodities. As the authors of the Glasgow *Memorial* put it, ‘whenever provisions are plenty [*sic*] and cheap, manufactures flourish: Whenever they are scarce and dear, manufactures decay. And the true cause of the present flourishing state of manufactures, in every part of Britain, is the plenty and cheaper price of provisions, with which the kingdom has been blessed for these two last years’.²³⁹ That is, they maintained that the 1773 Corn Law, and especially its provisions for the warehousing of grain, had had a positive impact on the British economy. On the other side, the landed interest contended that, in general, higher food prices would stimulate production in the agricultural sector and thereby ensure that there was enough corn and other grains to feed the population.²⁴⁰ While agreeing that higher subsistence prices were not necessarily detrimental to the economic well-being of the nation, the anonymous author of *Corn-Bill Hints* justified his position in different terms, arguing that ‘with regard to the flourishing of manufactures, provisions may be too cheap, as well as too dear. Low prices infallibly produce, among the inferior ranks of people, habits of idleness and debauchery; high prices as certainly promote the contrary ones of industry and temperance’.²⁴¹ Citing writings by Sir William Temple, David Hume and Arthur Young, the pamphleteer asserted that ‘the rate of the prices of provisions, most favourable for a place of trade and manufactures, is one approaching rather towards what the workman will call dear, and not fluctuating, but accompanied with a considerable degree of uniformity’.²⁴²

The broad theoretical debate over food prices to which the author of *Corn-Bill Hints* alludes was also bound up with the dispute among political economists over the question of wages, which Reid had earlier addressed in the Aberdeen Philosophical Society and to which he returned in his paper on the 1773 Corn Law. On the one hand, there were those such as Decker who linked the cost of subsistence to wage levels and who believed that low prices for both food and labour were beneficial for the economy.²⁴³ On the other, many mercantilist commentators followed Sir William Temple in insisting that wages should be kept low even if food prices were relatively high because this would promote

²³⁹ See the version of the Glasgow *Memorial* in the *Scots Magazine* 39 (1777), p. 572.

²⁴⁰ For this argument see especially the anonymous *Essay on the Corn Laws*, cited in note 217, especially pp. 22–24.

²⁴¹ Anon., *Corn-Bill Hints*, cited above note 217, p. 3.

²⁴² Anon., *Corn-Bill Hints*, p. 4. The author referred to Temple’s *Observations upon the United Provinces of the Netherlands*, Hume’s essay ‘Of Taxes’ and Young’s tours of England and Wales.

²⁴³ Decker, *An Essay*, p. 170. In the context of the debate over Fergusson’s Corn Bill, the claim that the price of subsistence regulated wages was made in ‘A Peep at the Corn Bill’, p. 294 (see note 215).

industry and frugality among the labouring poor.²⁴⁴ These arguments were, in turn, opposed by a minority of writers, such as Hume, Wallace and Smith, who suggested that high wages rather than want were a more effective spur to labour.²⁴⁵ Reid occupied something of a middle ground between these last two positions, for while he agreed that ‘there is no Spur to Labour equal to Necessity’ and that ‘the wages of Labour *ought* to be such as makes it necessary for the bulk of Labouring people to labour not for a few years onely but for Life’, he also stated that ‘it is most for the benefite of the Country that the wages of meer Labour should never be below necessary Subsistence, & on the other hand that it should not be a great deal above it’.²⁴⁶ Yet he was far more worried by wages that were below what he called ‘necessary Subsistence’ since they led to ‘misery & depopulation’, whereas ‘High wages of Labour tends to promote population among the Labouring people, which multiplies the Labouring hands, and if the Number of Labouring hands be increased while the demand for Labour continues the same their Wages will soon fall to a Moderate Subsistence’ (114). Moreover, he also echoed Steuart and Smith in denying that wages were invariably linked to the price of subsistence, and in doing so rejected the formulaic claim of Decker and many others that economic competitiveness rested on the interlocking pillars of low food prices and low wages.²⁴⁷ Consequently, Reid believed that wages had to be managed so that they were neither too low to cause genuine hardship among the working poor nor too high to serve as an effective spur to labour. For Reid, then, effective police for the labouring poor had to minimise fluctuations in the price of grain and control wages in order to avoid the extremes of indigence and excess. He thus agreed with both the landed and commercial interests that some form of control over wages and the cost of food was necessary, and he rejected the radical argument put forward in Smith’s *Wealth of Nations* that such controls ought to be removed from the marketplace on the ground that ‘famine has never arisen from any other cause but the violence of government attempting, by improper means, to remedy the inconveniences of a dearth’.²⁴⁸ Reid may have been willing to accept specific aspects of Smith’s analysis of the Corn Laws but he by no means wholly endorsed Smith’s trust in the market.

²⁴⁴ Sir William Temple, *Observations upon the United Provinces of the Netherlands* (1673), p. 109.

²⁴⁵ Hume, ‘Of Commerce’, in Hume, *Essays Moral, Political and Literary*, p. 265; Wallace, *A Dissertation*, p. 160; Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, I.viii.44–48. Hume was, however, not entirely consistent since he also believed that necessity is a spur to industry.

²⁴⁶ See pp. 113, 114 (emphasis added).

²⁴⁷ See p. 115; compare Steuart, *An Inquiry* (1767), vol. II, pp. 503, 509, and note 232 (p. lxxxix) above; Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, I.viii.29–34, 52–56.

²⁴⁸ Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, IV.v.b.5. On Smith’s view see Hont, *Jealousy of Trade*, pp. 412–19.

Not long after Reid read his paper on the warehousing of grain to the Glasgow Literary Society, he introduced a ‘voluntary’ question, ‘Whether is it proper that the interest of money should be regulated by law in cases where the parties have contracted’, at a meeting held on 20 March 1778.²⁴⁹ Like his previous paper, Reid’s text addressed legislation that had been brought before the House of Commons, namely a bill to regulate usury and the sale of annuities. The bill was given first and second readings in the Commons in May 1777, but was then abandoned. Eventually a revised bill dealing specifically with annuities passed into law in 1777 as ‘An Act for Registering the Grants of Life Annuities; and for the Better Protection of Infants against such Grants’.²⁵⁰ During the course of the eighteenth century, taking out a life annuity became a common stratagem used by those in debt to raise money. The Parliamentary committee initially struck to consider the question of usury and annuities recognised this widespread practice and stated that ‘the Purchase of Annuities for the Life of the Grantor, being generally intended as a loan of Money, ought to be regulated’ by the law governing interest rates.²⁵¹ Moreover, according to one pamphleteer, the trade in annuities in London had recently become the most profitable way to avoid the legal restrictions on the rate of interest charged on loans, which had been set at 5% in the reign of Queen Anne.²⁵² Given that life annuities involved a contract between a borrower and a lender typically involving an interest rate in excess of that specified by law, the common use of, and the lively trade in, annuities thus had a direct bearing on the general problem of usury as Reid would have understood it in 1777.

The most striking feature of Reid’s paper is the lengthy preamble tracing the ‘revolution’ that had taken place in attitudes towards commerce in general and to money lending in particular. Reid had already pointed to the broad outlines of his historical narrative in his reflections on paper credit given to the Wise Club in 1761, wherein he suggested that ‘Usury may very justly be prohibited by Law in a Nation that has no trade and as justly permitted in a Trading Nation’.²⁵³ His preamble can thus be seen as giving voice to ideas that he had developed over the

²⁴⁹ ‘Laws of the Literary Society in Glasgow College’, GUL, MS Murray 505, pp. 66–67.

²⁵⁰ Hoppit, *Failed Legislation*, pp. 444–45 (reference 118.042); 17 George III c. 26, ‘An Act for Registering the Grants of Life Annuities; and for the Better Protection of Infants against such Grants’, in Ruffhead, *Statutes at Large*, vol. VIII, pp. 505–6.

²⁵¹ Anon., *Report from the Committee Appointed to Take into Consideration the Laws now in Being against Usury, and the Present Practice of Purchasing Annuities for the Life of the Grantor* (1777), p. 11.

²⁵² Anon., *Reflections on Usury: Containing an Account of those Usurious Contracts, Carried on under the Mode of Undervalued Annuities: To which is Added the Substance of the Bill now before the House to Prevent Them; with Cursory Observations on it* (1777), pp. 12–19.

²⁵³ See pp. 82–83.

course of roughly twenty years and which grew out of his reading of Aristotle, the modern natural lawyers and the stadial historians of the eighteenth century. For his earlier comments on usury were rooted in Aristotle's distinction between the 'natural art of acquisition' found in the lives of shepherds and hunters, and the 'art of wealth-getting' associated with 'exchange and retail trade'. In the former art, 'industry springs up of itself' and exchanges for the necessities of life take place by barter, whereas in the latter art money is used to facilitate commercial transactions between individuals and nations for food and other commodities. Moreover, according to Aristotle the 'unnatural' art of wealth-getting gave rise to usury, which is 'the most hated sort' of exchange 'by which men gain from one another'.²⁵⁴ The natural lawyers from Grotius onwards elaborated on Aristotle's depiction of the different 'modes of life' and 'modes of subsistence' in connection with their ideas of pre-political forms of life and their search for an account of property and of political obligation. These ideas were gradually transformed in the eighteenth century to theories of socio-economic stages of civilisation and, as we explain in connection with Reid's lectures (lv–lix), we may see him as one of the contributors to this considerable conversion of ideas from one purpose to another. It is very likely that Pufendorf was particularly on Reid's mind, as he was for so many other Scottish thinkers at the time. Despite his deep philosophical differences with Pufendorf, Reid organised his lectures on natural jurisprudence along lines laid down by the Saxon, and some of his key ideas in economics were formulated within this framework. In the present context, Reid would have been particularly interested to note Pufendorf's point that as society changed, the perception of the moral standing of money lending shifted. Of the Old Testament prohibition of lending money at interest among the Jews, Pufendorf claimed that the Jewish nation condemned usury because 'that Nation had then a more plain Way of Trading, which consisted in Pasture and Husbandry, or Manufactures; *Merchandise* was simple and moderate, the Secrets of Trade and Navigation being not known to them; and in such a State no one borrows, but when he is pressed with Necessity'. In such a pre-commercial society, usury was seen as oppressive and hence forbidden, even though the lending of money to other trading peoples was permitted. By contrast, in the modern commercial world of most European states, Pufendorf thought that 'Money is borrowed for other Ends', such as the accumulation of personal wealth, which meant that charging interest for a loan was entirely justifiable in moral terms.²⁵⁵ Although the overall point of Pufendorf's own discussion was the question of the authority of natural law and positive law

²⁵⁴ Aristotle, *Politics*, 1256a–1258b, in Aristotle, *The Complete Works*.

²⁵⁵ See Pufendorf, *Law of Nature*, V.7.viii–xii (quotations from section ix).

in the matter of usury, he thus formulated an idea that was to interest Reid and other Enlightenment thinkers for their purposes, namely that changing economic circumstances had altered not only the uses to which money was put but also the moral perception of loans made at interest.

Reid wove together threads from the narrative created by Aristotle and Pufendorf in his brief history of attitudes towards usury. Following Pufendorf, he saw the advent of commerce in modern Europe as producing ‘a great Revolution in the Sentiments of Men with regard to buying & Selling borrowing & lending’ (124). Whereas Cicero and the ancient moralists had all condemned ‘the Retailing bussiness ... as vile & odious because ... men cannot deal without lying and falsehood’, Reid said that the commercial revolution in Europe had led to a rejection of the traditional view, with ‘the Retailer’ now seen as ‘a very usefull and necessary member in the Commercial System’, who ‘may be as honest a Man as the Merchant or any other Citizen’ (124). Similarly, the ancients and the moderns had opposing views of the legitimacy of charging interest on money loans. Echoing Pufendorf, Reid claimed that in societies without commerce, individuals borrowed money only out of necessity. Because there was little or no credit in such societies, loans were typically made on the basis of ‘Friendship or Compassion’ or the receipt of a ‘pledge’ as a guarantee. Charity was thus the norm, although Reid acknowledged that there were those who loaned money at interest and who thus had ‘great opportunities of oppressing the poor’. And it was these money lenders who elicited condemnation for their practices and prompted the belief that interest charged on loans was morally reprehensible (123–24).

In commercial societies, on the other hand, money was regarded as a commodity like any other, and usury was no longer equated with the charging of interest. Rather, it was generally recognised that a ‘reasonable’ rate of interest on a loan was equivalent to ‘the price paid for the Use of Money’, whereas usury came to be understood as the demand for ‘exorbitant & excessive’ interest. Reid also maintained that borrowing in commercial societies was not solely a function of necessity, for the rise of commerce had spawned a multiplicity of uses for money and had removed the stigma attached to securing a loan. According to Reid, in commercial societies loans were thought to generate public and private benefits, on the grounds that they ‘[put] it in the Power of the borrower to enlarge his Traffick, to encourage industry, and give bread to the Poor, at the same time that he profits both the Lender and himself’.²⁵⁶ Consequently, the ‘lending money upon Interest’ was no longer viewed as being intrinsically immoral among modern commercial nations, even though the practice had been closely associated with

²⁵⁶ See p. 125.

‘the oppression of the Poor’ in the non-commercial societies of the past. But this apparent ‘revolution’ in our moral sentiments did not involve the replacement of one moral standard with another. He insisted that even in commercial societies pawnbrokers were condemned for their exploitation of the poor, which for him illustrated the uniformity of the principles of practical morality among human-kind. Furthermore, he contended that our familiarity with commercial life had enabled us to draw the proper moral distinction between usury and interest that had previously been obscured among peoples whose non-commercial mode of living precluded their making this distinction. On Reid’s reading of history, then, commerce had promoted the refinement rather than the fundamental transformation of our moral sentiments.²⁵⁷

As Reid himself indicated, his historical preamble might have struck his listeners as being tangential to the question of the legal regulation of interest rates (125). However, the distinction he drew in the preamble between usury and interest was central to the argument of the second part of his paper, which, in the context of contemporary discussions of these matters, was a radical one. For what Reid’s historical analysis implied was that the law setting the maximum rate of interest passed in the reign of Queen Anne had its conceptual origin in a pre-commercial past and thus reflected the confusion of usury and interest characteristic of non-commercial societies (133). He maintained that the poor ought still to be protected from usurers such as pawnbrokers and, while he recognised the practical difficulties in formulating a distinction at law between those who borrowed out of necessity and those who did not, he suggested that impoverished individuals ‘who borrow upon a Pledge’ deserved the protection of legislation specifying the legal rate of interest. That is, usury was in his view immoral and should therefore be curbed by law (126–28). But when it came to transactions in a commercial society such as Britain between lenders and borrowers who were equals, he held that the market should be left to itself to set interest rates because the mechanism of the marketplace established the ‘just’ price for the use of money. Money, he emphasised, was a commodity and, as such, its price (interest) was a function of supply and demand.²⁵⁸ Consequently, he argued that the law then in force governing the rate of interest was either unnecessary

²⁵⁷ See p. 125. In a debate in the *Weekly Magazine, or Edinburgh Amusement* in the spring of 1772, George Hay had argued in very similar historical terms to distinguish usury from interest, but he suggested the exposure to risk and the loss of opportunity on the part of the lender as the justification for the taking of interest. Hay also supported having a legally fixed rate of interest. Hay collected the whole debate in his *Letters on Usury and Interest* (1774); cf. Mark Goldie, ‘The Scottish Catholic Enlightenment’. We have found no indication that Reid was aware of Hay’s work.

²⁵⁸ See p. 130. Reid’s view of interest was taken over from Locke.

or, more importantly, unjust because it favoured either the borrower or the lender (131–33). Reid's position regarding interest rates set by law was thus far more 'liberal' than that of Adam Smith, for example, who did not question the propriety of the legislative regulation of the rate of interest.²⁵⁹

A decade later, the radical nature of Reid's treatment of usury and interest was not lost on members of the Bentham circle in London. Following the publication of Jeremy Bentham's *Defence of Usury* in 1787, James Gregory forwarded a copy of Reid's paper to the barrister George Wilson, who in turn sent the manuscript on to his friend Bentham. Although the characteristic tone of metropolitan condescension colours Wilson's assessment of the paper, he grudgingly admitted that, for all of its faults, Reid's analysis of usury displayed 'a great effort of liberality & good sense'. For his part, Reid displayed greater generosity in his endorsement of Bentham's work. But he remained convinced that 'when the Buyers are the many, the Poor, & the Simple, [and] the Sellers few rich & cunning, the former may need the Aid of the Magistrate to prevent their being oppressed by the latter', and he also preferred his own account of the history of attitudes towards usury in his preamble to that found in Bentham's *Defence*.²⁶⁰ Bentham was evidently aware of Reid's assessment of the *Defence*, for in an unpublished preface drafted for the second edition of the work, published in 1790, Bentham acknowledged Reid's criticisms and noted that 'the only ground on which he differs from me is that of the origination of the prejudice [against usury], of which his paper gives as might be expected an account more ecclesiastical than mine'. Nevertheless, the draft preface shows that he had hoped to publish either the complete text of Reid's discourse or excerpts from it, although his plan did not come to fruition, for reasons which remain unclear.²⁶¹ We see, then, that Bentham was not the only major thinker in late-eighteenth-century Britain to question the need for legal restrictions on interest rates, and our publication of Reid's paper thus brings to light a highly significant contribution to the early modern debate on usury that deserves to figure in future histories of the subject.

²⁵⁹ Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, II.iv.14–17.

²⁶⁰ George Wilson (quoting Reid) to Jeremy Bentham, [4 December 1788], in Reid, *Correspondence*, pp. 201–3. For Bentham's history of the concept of usury see letter 10 in Jeremy Bentham, *Defence of Usury; Shewing the Impolicy of the Present Legal Restraints on the Terms of Pecuniary Bargains* (1787), pp. 94–109. In his commonly used *Jeremy Bentham's Economic Writings*, the editor, Werner Stark, suggested that Reid's paper was not to be found (vol. I, p. 28n). In fact it came to light only in 1980 as a donation to Aberdeen University Library. A critical edition of Bentham's work is scheduled to appear in M. Quinn (ed.), *Writings on Political Economy: I* (Oxford, Clarendon Press).

²⁶¹ Jeremy Bentham, 'To Dr Smith' [1790], in *The Correspondence of Adam Smith*, p. 402.

Because the minutes of the Glasgow Literary Society covering the period November 1779 to May 1794 are no longer extant, we do not know if Reid formally discussed any political, social or economic topics in the Society during this time and there are no surviving manuscripts that suggest that he did so. However, one of his last contributions to the proceedings of the Society was his penultimate discourse, ‘Some Thoughts on the Utopian System’, which he read at the meeting held on 28 November 1794.²⁶²

‘Some Thoughts on the Utopian System’ is an intriguing document that can be read in several different lights, some of which we indicate here. As we have seen above (xxxiii–xxxvii), the paper was clearly meant as Reid’s response to the British and especially the Scottish debate about the French Revolution and the way this debate had developed over the course of events until late 1794. At the same time, the paper drew on ideas that Reid had held as fundamental for most, probably all, of his life as a philosophical thinker, not only about politics but also about morals.²⁶³ The paper is in that sense something of an intellectual testament. A closer look at the paper therefore serves to draw together leading themes not only in the papers of the present volume, but in the Reidian *oeuvre* as a whole.

The theme that structures the argument of the paper is the opposition between two societal models, the ‘system of private property’ and the ‘utopian system’. In the latter there is no private property; everything is owned and administered by the state. Reid’s critical analysis aims to show that (nearly) all moral and political corruption in actually existing societies, especially those of modern commercial society, arises from private ownership. And the suggested remedy is the imaginary Utopia that Reid goes on to elaborate in some detail. Private property is an expression of the ‘Desire for Distinction and Preeminence’, which, after the pursuit of subsistence, is the most basic of human desires. Private property rests on acquisitiveness and self-interest, which entails competition, inequality and dependence. This is the bane of the common good as a moral motive, and it makes people blind to the basic moral equality of all human beings. For these reasons private property also corrupts politics, for it leads people to pass off the interests of their particular section of society as the public interest and to use political power and the law as means to institutionalise this deception.

The key to the Utopian system is that it offers a replacement for private property as the means to satisfy the human need for distinction, and this replacement

²⁶² ‘Minutes of the College Literary Society, 1790–99’, GUL, MS Gen.4, p. 8; notwithstanding the title of the manuscript, this set of minutes begins on 7 November 1794. Reid’s final discourse, which was on muscular motion, was given on 4 December 1795 (p. 34).

²⁶³ For an earlier attempt by one of us to read the paper in the light of Reid’s lectures on natural jurisprudence, see Haakonssen, *Natural Law and Moral Philosophy*, pp. 216–20.

is the possibility of moral pre-eminence in the community. Once private property is abolished and replaced by public ownership, people's productive capacity is in the service of the common wealth. This again means that individual effort is marked not by acquisitions but by the recognition offered by others, and Utopia organises this into a system of public honours that is undergirded by state allowances of the conveniences and luxuries of life: 'Servants, Horses, Chariots, Houses and Furniture' (147). Both in its psychology of mutual recognition and in its moderate embrace of the good things in life, Reid's Utopia is the exact opposite of Rousseau's primitivism, and Reid had in fact never been sparing in his criticism of the Genevan.²⁶⁴ Reid had a vision of moral progress and suggested an arrangement that was meant to lead people into the practice of their other-regarding potential, but in order for this to work Utopia had to make sure that people appreciate that moral recognition is something worth having. This is achieved primarily by moral education aimed at the formation of good characters and the suppression of bad, self-interested tendencies. Such education has to be universal in the community, for moral abilities are neither hereditary nor preserved by social class. The implication is that moral achievement is a matter of personal effort, and Reid thought that such efforts were so varied that Utopia would have 'a much greater variety of Ranks than in any other' system (146–47). In other words, our natural equality is the basis for social inequality in Utopia as well as in the 'system of private property', but inequality in the former is both an expression of and a spur to moral betterment. Reid does, however, recognise that some individuals are beyond the reach of moral education and the social control of communal recognition. Such people are subject to punishment and forced labour for the public.²⁶⁵ Making society into one coherent system requires supervision and the keeping of records for each individual's moral effort in contributing to the common weal. The result is,

that in this System, the State is burthened with a load of Work, additional to the common cares of Government, too great to be well accomplished. The Education of all the Youth of both Sexes, The Oversight of all the labouring hands, The collecting, storing and dispensing the Produce of their Labour: The publick Registers that must be kept of the Merits & Demerits of every

²⁶⁴ In his lectures on the culture of the mind, Reid treated his students to some severe criticism of Rousseau's *Discourse on Inequality* (1755); see Reid, *Logic, Rhetoric, and the Fine Arts*, pp. 42–45, 72, and 81; see also his *Inquiry*, pp. 201–2 and his *Practical Ethics*, p. 148. Cf. Peter Diamond, *Common Sense and Improvement*, pp. 354–55, and J. C. Stewart-Robertson, 'Reid's Anatomy of Culture: A Scottish Response to the Eloquent Jean-Jacques'.

²⁶⁵ Cf. the apprehension about servants and manual labour debated in the Aberdeen Philosophical Society in 1762 and discussed by us on pp. lxvii–lxix.

Individual, & of every Step of his advancement in Honour and Rank. The Regulations for conferring Degrees with Justice & Impartiality, and the Management of the trading Stock of the Nation, these things, without doubt, will require much Attention & Fidelity, and many hands. (149)

In all three branches of government, however, the absence of private property, the abolition of domestic private business and the employment by all in the public service will mean a drastic reduction in the tasks that they currently have. Taxation, customs and excise will all disappear; so too will business regulations, property law and associated law suits; and much else.

If taken at face value, Reid's *Utopia* is a radical work within its genre in the eighteenth century; few others proposed the outright abolition of private property.²⁶⁶ Reid himself signalled the radicalism, not only by his invocation of Thomas More's work as his guiding light, but also by his frank declaration that his sketch was purely speculative. In fact, already in his Aberdeen oration from 1762, he used More's *Utopia* and Harrington's *Oceana* as examples of the usage of the word 'idea' to refer 'to fruit of the human mind which ... never existed in reality'.²⁶⁷ It is on the same note that he concludes 'Some Thoughts'. However, pure speculation was of the greatest importance in Reid's eyes. In order properly to appreciate his intentions in writing and delivering his paper, it may be useful to relate it to some particular themes in his work in general.

Perhaps most fundamental is the idea of humanity's educability, both individually and collectively. It runs as a red thread through Reid's work that while the human mind has been naturally endowed with intellectual and active powers, these powers need to be cultivated through education; that this can be done more or less well; and that there are objective measures for the right or wrong exercise of the powers of the mind, namely the extent to which they rely upon the principles of reasoning – 'common notions', 'axioms' – that make up humanity's common sense. The education of the individual is a matter of social interaction, and there is therefore an interchange between individual and collective development, which Reid tended to see in perfectibilist terms, though ever so cautiously. In this regard, his *Utopia* is simply an extension of his common sense moral theory and the associated moral progressivism.

In this connection we may see the Utopian system as Reid's response to Harringtonian republicanism, as he understood it. Harrington is not mentioned in the *Utopia* paper, but Reid had concluded his lectures on Harrington with

²⁶⁶ Cf. Gregory Claeys (ed.), *Utopias of the British Enlightenment*, p. xxv. For a thorough historical typology of ideal societies, see J. C. Davis, *Utopia and the Ideal Society*, ch. 1.

²⁶⁷ Reid, *Philosophical Orations*, oration IV, para. 29.

two criticisms directly relevant to the argument in ‘Some Thoughts’. First, Harrington was concerned only with the regulation of landed property, but in the commercial society that Britain in the meantime had become it was other forms of property that endangered ‘that Equality among the Citizens which a Republick seems to require’. Secondly, Reid ‘doubted whether there is in this Model sufficient provision for preserving that degree of Morals and publick Virtue which is necessary in a Commonwealth’ (43, 44). By abolishing private property, replacing the market (the heart of a commercial society) with public provisioning and turning society into a school for virtue, Utopia prevented these problems. At the same time, Utopia’s bureaucratic-administrative state – to use a later terminology – would seem to satisfy Reid’s obsession with regulatory machinery in the same way that Harrington’s labyrinthine Oceana obviously did, as we see in the lectures on politics (38–41). Read in the context of Reid’s political economy in the lectures on police, the Utopian system is clearly mercantilism taken to its logical conclusion, where the concessions to the historical reality of the exchange of goods can be ignored because such exchange has been replaced by the exchange of moral goods.

Perhaps a greater conundrum is the relationship between Utopia and the thought of Montesquieu, ‘the greatest political Writer that either ancient or modern times have produced’, who was ‘French by nationality’ but nevertheless ‘British by nature and enthusiasm’ because of his appreciation of the modern British polity.²⁶⁸ It is obvious, however, that in Utopia there is no political process, and certainly not of the British sort. Adversarial politics is premised upon the reality of human fallibility; in Utopia this has been replaced by administration of the sort that is implied by the possibility of moral objectivity. Reid himself of course always emphasised our fallibility, and even in Utopia there is some provision for human error. But for him the concept of being wrong implied the concept of being right, so to speak. The adversarial politics of uncertainty that he found institutionalised in Hanoverian Britain, and which Whig thinkers and Montesquieu had theorised as a system of balances, could be made morally intelligible only if one could specify what it would mean to say that a community *was* morally certain. Utopia was the place where such certainty was as great as might be humanly possible, and the idea of it served to put into perspective what actual politics was – or ought to be – about. It is here that Reid most fundamentally differs from Hume. For Hume, the fallibility of adversarial politics was not a matter of uncertainty about the right moral answers; it was a matter of living with each other without having to ask such questions. Accordingly, when Hume allowed himself a flight of utopian fantasy, it

²⁶⁸ See p. 51; and Reid, *Philosophical Orations*, oration I, para. 11.

was inspired by Harrington and had the basic point of suggesting an institutional machinery that made the moral virtue of individuals as irrelevant as possible for the peaceful functioning of society.²⁶⁹

It is worth remembering these basic differences when considering the position of Reid's Utopia paper within his work as a whole. Hume and Reid may seem remarkably similar in their conception of a science of politics. According to both of them such a science is probabilistic and based upon very general features of humanity, something that Reid had stressed in his lectures and repeats at the end of 'Some Thoughts' as one of the reasons why a utopian scheme could not simply be introduced. One had to take into account the uncertainty of how actual people as a matter of fact behave in any given society at a particular time, and this was not a matter that politics as a science could explain with accuracy and politics as an art control with certainty. However, exactly for that reason the political theorist had to step outside of the science of politics in order to think with certainty, as Reid did in the Utopia paper. In this regard the paper is a piece of moral philosophy, or political jurisprudence as he would call it. But insofar as it provides common notions with which to think about actual political action, the paper is part of the science of politics that he presented to his students. The work is therefore at the core of Reid's approach to politics as an art and a science.

²⁶⁹ See Hume, 'Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth', in *Essays, Moral, Political and Literary*, pp. 512–29.