

What Binds Us to Society?
Instinct, Human Nature or Morality?:
Adam Ferguson's Views on Man and Society as Shown
in *Principles of Moral and Political Science* (1792)

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This study examines how Adam Ferguson (1723–1816) attempted to explain how society is established and social ties are created. I believe that this will help us understand the background for exploring the reasons why Ferguson criticized Adam Smith's (1723–1790) idea of “sympathy.”

Ferguson argues that in a nation formed by “the principle of expediency” and even in an empire, men gradually begin to have warm affection for their society and national spirit. But where does such affection or spirit come from? According to Ferguson, it's not out of instinct. Based on this study, my next research task is to clarify the “political” human nature of man as a “gregarious political” animal by examining Ferguson's idea of moral approbation and his progressivism and perfectibilianism.

Keywords: Adam Ferguson, Adam Smith, theory of sympathy, *Principles of Moral and Political Science*, formation of nation, formation of empire, public spirit, notion of friend-enemy, Scottish Enlightenment, perfectibilianism, progressivism, agonistic democracy and pluralism

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Introduction

This study examines how Adam Ferguson (1723–1816) attempted to explain the process by which society was established and social ties were created. This will help us understand the background for why Ferguson criticized Adam Smith's (1723–90) idea of “sympathy.”

Today, we live in a society premised on selfish individuals with a strong sense of entitlement. However, as we saw during the Great East Japan Earthquake disaster, social order can be maintained even in extreme situations because social ties and bonds connect people who help, give in, and encourage each other. But then, why and how are those “bonds” that connect people to society made? In the world in which we live, it is even more important to confront this question to overcome common global issues such as environmental problems. It would be helpful to consider how Ferguson explained this question and how he criticized Smith's idea of “sympathy.”

It is meaningful to consider Ferguson's thoughts about Smith's theory of sympathy because Ferguson, often compared to Smith as one of the “Two Adams in the Scottish Enlightenment,”¹⁾ criticized Smith's idea.

Smith's idea of sympathy has attracted attention in recent years. His *the Theory of Moral Sentiments* is being reconsidered,²⁾ motivated mainly by the following views: (1) the various challenges we face today—economic, social, and educational disparities, climate change issues, diversity and inclusion efforts, and the reality that nuclear weapon states are at war—are the negative effects of a liberal democratic social system that emphasizes free competition; (2) this system's ideological origin lies in the idea of the “invisible hand” of Smith, known as the “father of economics,”; (3) however, Smith is being misunderstood. Rather, Smith's idea that society rooted in horizontal human relationships created by “sympathy” might be more useful in solving our problems; (4) in other words, inspired by Smith's ideas, we may make “sympathy” and even “empathy” or “emotion” a useful conceptual tool for envisioning our social systems.

However, according to Ferguson's argument, society would not improve with Smith's theory of sympathy. The reason individuals help each other, fight together, and are connected to society cannot be explained by Smith's “impartial spectator” or “sympathy.” If Ferguson is correct, the

1) Cf. Mizuta (1981).

2) Many research presentations at the annual conference of International Adam Smith Society held this month (March 2024) in Tokyo were focusing on *the Theory of Moral Sentiments*, rather than *the Wealth of Nations*; in Japan, the publication of books focusing on Smith's idea of sympathy has increased notably in recent years.

problems we confront today cannot be resolved by hints from Smith.

This study examines Ferguson's explanation of why people combine to form societies, have attachments and affections to their societies, and why each person seeks to fulfill their role within society by focusing on Ferguson's *Principles of Moral and Political Science* (1792)³⁾ in two volumes (*Principles I* or *Principles II*), the culmination of Ferguson's moral philosophy.

However, I will not examine Ferguson's criticism of "sympathy" in this study; it will be my next task. Rather, I will clarify the basic and core parts of Ferguson's views of human nature and society to help understand the logical background of Ferguson's criticism of Smith's idea of sympathy.

Ferguson's ideas about the reasons and processes humans form societies can be found in *An Essay on the History of Civil Society* (1766) (*Essay*).⁴⁾ And although *Principles* was hardly examined compared to *Essay*, *Principles* was the culmination of Ferguson's moral philosophy; therefore, it is important to examine it closely.

David Kettler (2005), Yasuo Amoh (1993), and Craig Smith (2019) previously conducted important research. They discussed Ferguson's view of social formation in *Principles* but did not examine this issue as their main theme. Jack Russel Weinstein (2009) compared arguments of Ferguson and Smith on sympathy, but mainly examined *Essay*. This study was inspired by previous research and attempted to investigate this issue in more detail. I expect this study would help explore what Ferguson was trying to offer as an alternative to Smith's theory of sympathy.

Therefore, this study examines the purpose and significance of *Principles*, explores Ferguson's view of society and how Ferguson explains the formation of "national" or "public spirit."

Chapter 1: Significance of *Principles of Moral and Political Science* (1792)

Ferguson gained fame in Western countries through his *Essay*. However, *Essay* did not culminate in Ferguson's career. Unlike his other works, *Essay* was written as an "essay."⁵⁾ Ferguson

3) Ferguson (1975). On the inside cover of the Vol. 1. of this book, it is written as follow: *Principles of moral and political science; being chiefly a retrospect of lectures delivered in the college of Edinburgh*, By Adam Ferguson, LL.D. & F.R.S.E., LATE PROFESSOR OF MORAL PHILOSOPHY, In two volumes. 1792: Vol 1.

4) Cf. Aoki (2010), Chapter 1.

5) Craig Smith argued that *Essay* was so different from Ferguson's other works because it was an "essay" and did not provide a systematic argument. (Smith (2019), p. 4); Cf. Pocock (2009), p. 330: "He [Ferguson] resembled Smith and Millar in employing the history of society as an organising principle within a scheme of moral philosophy; but his moral philosophy was not organised as jurisprudence and it is difficult to read the *Essay on the History of Civil Society* as issuing like Millar's *Origin of Ranks* from a series of university lectures. It is a consciously crafted literary text, and the genre to which it belongs is

peppered the book with interesting themes but did not discuss them systematically. While writing this book, Ferguson desired further research. He was also inspired by Adam Smith and others' research results, which were subsequently published. Therefore, *Essay* was not Ferguson's culmination; after writing this book, Ferguson found a new starting point.

After *Essay*, Ferguson published two books: *The History of the Progress and Termination of the Roman Republic* (1783) (*Rome*) and *Principles*. What motivated him to write these two books?

Rome attempted to discover the causes of corruption and the collapse of the Roman Republic. Ferguson was motivated to write this book to search for answers to the following questions in Roman history: "Why did Rome's political system change from republic to empire?" "When virtuous nations become rich and prosperous, do they have no choice but to corrupt and decline?" "What can we do to prevent corruption?" This is the issue of "wealth and virtue" in Ferguson, also discussed in *Essay*. Ferguson found hints to this question in the history of the Roman Republic. Ferguson is said to be included in the genealogy of classical republicanism, which idealizes a republic in which virtuous citizens shoulder public role.

The latter, *Principles*, was Ferguson's final major work. This study focuses on this book. Ferguson's book on moral philosophy, published before this book, was *Institutes of Moral Philosophy* (1768)⁶⁾ (*Institutes*), written as a textbook for students taking moral philosophy lectures at Edinburgh University. It contained an outline of the lectures. However, *Principles* is not a textbook, although it includes the contents of the moral philosophy course that Ferguson taught for many years. As Amoh points out, Ferguson, by writing, this book, finally tackled issues of moral philosophy that he had left unresolved until then.⁷⁾

A glance at the titles of the *Institutes*, written in 1768, and *Principles*, written 24 years later, reveals several differences and peculiarities. Here, three points should be highlighted.

First, the word "science" in the title of "Principles of Moral and Political Science" is singular. In other words, it is not "moral and political sciences" or "moral science and political science," it is "moral and political science" or "moral politics." Published by Ferguson as a culmination, this book attempts to integrate moral science and political science into one academic discipline.

that of the moral essay. Ferguson's moral philosophy, furthermore, was highly individual, different enough from that of Edinburgh Moderates or Glasgow professors to make David Hume more than doubtful whether it ought to be published, though he rejoiced in its success when it was."

6) On the inside cover of the book, it says as follow: *Institutes of Moral Philosophy: For the Use of Students in the College of Edinburgh*, By Adam Ferguson, LL.D.

7) Amoh (1993), p. 305.

Second, related to the first point, the title indicates that politics and morality are equal themes for Ferguson. He appealed that moral and political sciences should not be differentiated. In *Rome*, Ferguson proposed republican ideas, and in *Principles*, he took a traditional approach since ancient Greece that links morality and politics. Unlike Adam Smith (1723–1790), known as the “father of economics,” Ferguson positioned himself within the traditional academic lineage. However, this is not to say that Ferguson did not have a new perspective on society or that a new science did not emerge from Ferguson’s moral philosophy. We should be cautious about saying that Smith created a new science, whereas Ferguson did not. Ferguson is also known as the “father of sociology.”

Third, whereas the *Institutes* deals with the “philosophy” of morality, *Principles* deals with the “science” of morality and politics. This reflects Ferguson’s academic attitude of analyzing moral and political issues as “science” using philosophical and empirical methods. In other words, we find Ferguson’s desire to bridge normative and empirical analyses.

In the “Preface” to *Principles*, Ferguson argues that “Most subjects in nature” should be considered from two aspects. The first is the “actual state,” merely describing and listing facts. The second is “strengths and weaknesses,” objects of estimation or the contempt of praise or censure. Furthermore, when we finally turn to “humans” and consider what they have done and what state humans are in, it is clear that human nature is a subject of history and physical science. Human nature, defined in terms of the different standards of right and wrong to which humans are susceptible, has become a subject of discipline and moral science.⁸⁾

When we consider how humans should be, we must know what they are. In other words, before analyzing humans through moral science, we must study them through history. Ferguson says,

In treating of Man as a subject of history, we collect facts and endeavour to conceive their nature as it actually is, or has actually been, apart from any notion of ideal perfection or defect. In treating of him as a subject of moral science, we endeavour to understand what he ought to be; without being limited, in our conception, to the measure of attainment or failure, exhibited

8) *Principles* I, p. 1: “Most subjects in nature may be considered under two aspects; under that of their actual state, and under that of a specific excellence, or defect, of which they are susceptible. Under the first, they are subjects of mere description, or statement of fact. Under the second, they are objects of estimation or contempt, of praise or censure. In respect to what men have actually done or exhibited, human nature is a subject of history and physical science: Considered in respect to the different measures of good and evil, of which men are susceptible, the same nature is a subject of discipline and moral science.”

in the case of any particular person or society of men.

(*Principles* I, pp. 1–2)

As the study of human nature may refer to the actual state, or to the improveable capacity, of man, it is evident, that, the subjects being connected, we cannot proceed in the second, but upon the foundations which are laid in the first. Our knowledge of what any nature ought to be, must be derived from our knowledge of its faculties and powers; and the attainment to be aimed at must be of the kind which these faculties and powers are fitted to produce.

(*Principles* I, p. 5)

We can think about how things should be after learning the facts. In the section above, Ferguson continues to explain with examples that you cannot expect a horse to fly as high as a hawk, and a hawk to run as powerfully as a horse. Thus, he declares that “Principles of Moral Politics” aims to perform empirical and normative analyses when considering how humans should be.

Based on these arguments, in the next chapter, I confirm Ferguson’s view of humans and society as stated in *Principles*.

Chapter 2: Ferguson’s views of humans and society

Section 1: How people are classified among all existing things

First, we examine how humans are positioned within Ferguson’s moral philosophy. Ferguson shows how humans can be classified in the world or nature.⁹⁾ According to Ferguson, humans are gregarious. Furthermore, gregarious animals are classified into “merely gregarious animals” and

9) We find the process of Ferguson’s argument leading up to the classification of man as social animal in *Principles* I, Part 1 “On the Facts, or the Most General Aspects of Human Nature and Condition,” Chapter 1. Ferguson begins his argument as follows: “It is a maxim in the science of mechanics, that matter is equally inert, whether in motion or at rest; that, having no principle of change in itself, it resists every change imprest; and that, upon this principle of mere resistance, by which a body, being impelled, impels in the opposite direction, depend all the phenomena of mechanism in the action and reaction of bodies” (*Principles* I, p. 11); This observation applies equally to the vegetable and animal kingdom. In the organization of a plant, the root, the stem, the foliage, the flower, and the seed, are combined into a system. The first is fitted to penetrate the soil; the others to ascend in the atmosphere; and, as if stript of their gravitation or weight, press away from the earth in an opposite direction; and are all of them fitted to draw nutritive substance from the mass that surrounds them, whether soil, air, or light” (*Principles* I, p. 13); Yasuo Amoh’s explanation of Ferguson’s classification of existence in this world is helpful (Amoh (1993), pp. 307–10).

“gregarious political animals.” Regarding “merely gregarious animals,” Ferguson says as follows:

Such are many of the birds that flock and of the pasturing quadrupeds that herd, together, as the deer, the horse, the cow, the sheep, the goat; which, though they do no more than merely pasture together, are not to be kept assunder without restraint or violence. Such are termed merely gregarious. *(Principles I, p. 21)*

Therefore, humans cannot be classified as gregarious. Regarding humans categorized as “politically gregarious animals,” Ferguson argues as follows:

Others are observed to combine their labours for a common purpose; to distribute their tasks, and assign to different members of the community, the parts which they are required to perform; such, among the quadrupeds, is the beaver; and, among the insects, where examples of this sort are most frequent, the ant, the wasp, the bee, and many others. These, in the translation of an elegant title bestowed upon them by Aristotle, may be termed the gregarious and political.

Under this last designation, we are surely authorised by the fact to comprehend the species of man. Wherever there is a plurality of men, there is also a society; and, in society, there is a distribution of parts and a co-operation of many, to some common purpose or end.

(Principles I, p. 21)

Merely gregarious animals, such as birds and sheep, flock together to protect themselves from violence or oppression. However, “gregarious and political animals” such as the beaver are “political” because each animal plays some role and cooperates for a common purpose. This also applies to humans. In “a place where more than one person gathers, –society–, people share roles and cooperate for a common purpose. This is the meaning of “political” in Ferguson’s context. Ferguson places himself in the genealogy of thought, starting with Aristotle, who views a human as a political animal.¹⁰⁾

10) Aristotle (1908), Book 1, p. 28: “Hence it is evident that the state is a creation of nature, and that humans are by nature a political animal”.

Section 2: The reason and significance of Ferguson exploring the characteristics of human society

In “Section 3: Of the Principles of Society in Human Nature” of Chapter 1 in Part 1, Ferguson explains the reasons for exploring the principles of society as follows:

The general combination of parts in the system of nature; the mutual subserviency of different orders of being on this globe; the natural attachment of individuals, in every species of living creature, to some others of their kind, and the frequency of gregarious and political assemblage in the description of different animals, must greatly facilitate the admission of society as a part in the destination of man; or indeed, joined to the fact that men are actually found in society, render argument on the subject of his qualification for such a state entirely superfluous.

The purpose of what follows on this subject, therefore, is rather to specify the character of human society, than to evince its reality, as the state or condition in which man is destined to act.

In a mixed scene of benevolence and malice, it is indeed of importance to determine how far man is, by his nature, limited to one or to the other; or how far he is equally susceptible of either; and deeply concerned in the one, as a good which he ought to chuse, and in the other, as an evil which he ought to avoid. *(Principles I, p. 26)*

These appearances highly merit our attention; they serve to characterise the species to which we belong, and the scenes in which we ourselves are destined to act; they may be collected from any of the transactions of men, whether in co-operation or opposition; the first, in the case of families, tribes, companies, nations, and empires; the second, in the rivalship or competition of parties, whether single men or communities. *(Principles I, p. 27)*

From these passages, it is clear that Ferguson does not see any significance in analyzing society based on the nature or social contract theory. Moreover, the more important point here is that he does not aim to examine the current state of society but to explore its characteristics. There are two reasons for this finding.

Ferguson wanted to clarify the characteristics of society because humans are destined to act in society. He wanted to know society so that he could understand humans. Second, given that benevolence and malice are intermingled within humans and society, Ferguson wanted to analyze

cases in which one acts (1) for oneself as a selfish being, (2) as an altruistic being for others, and (3) for society as a social being. Ferguson used social analysis to understand people.

As I have discussed,¹¹⁾ Ferguson recognized human selfishness and altruism, friendship and hostility, and cooperation and conflict as human nature. He does not assign superiority or inferiority as values or moral dimensions. He stated that for the healthy development of humans and society, it is important that each contradictory nature be displayed in a well-balanced manner without being suppressed. As society expands and becomes more civilized, the balance between benevolence and malice changes and the targets of benevolence and malice also change. Therefore, Ferguson must state here that the reason he explores the characteristics of society is to explore human nature.

Section 3: Human nature that forms society: Natural affection seen in parent-child and family attachment

After declaring the significance of clarifying the characteristics of society, Ferguson argues that the “family” is the “basic form of society” as follows:

Families may be considered as the elementary forms of society or establishments the most indispensably necessary to the existence and preservation of the kind. As families may exist apart, and without any necessary communication of one group with another, so they still continue to be formed, in whatever numbers mankind may be leagued into larger communities: They are the nurseries of men; the basis of empires, as well as of nations and tribes; and the compartments of which the greatest fabrics of political establishment are composed: So that, however little we may need information on the subject of family connections, it is material to have in our view the principles on which they are formed, as the constituents of a social character, indelible in every age and in every state of society, whether voluntary or forced. *(Principles I, p. 27)*

Family is the foundation of human society: it is the place in which human beings are raised and essential for the survival of the human species. Furthermore, as human societies develop into political establishments, the family remains the most basic and universal foundation. Therefore, according to Ferguson, to treat various types of human society, it is essential to understand how

11) Aoki (2010), Chapter 5; Aoki (2018).

the family, the smallest and fundamental community that forms the essence of human society, is established. In other words, unless we consider the smallest community, the family, as the starting point, it is impossible to explain the principle by which various communities are formed and expanded into nations and empires. Ferguson is again Aristotelian in this view and approach.

Now, we consider how Ferguson explained the principle unique to humans, different from other animals, and that binds people together in the family community.¹²⁾ Ferguson argued that, unlike other animals, humans have a permanent bisexual union. However, the strong “natural attachment between parents and children” is more important in forming human families. Ferguson explained why humans have this nature as follows:

That the birth of a human is more painful and hazardous; that the state of their infancy is more helpless, and of longer duration, than is exemplified in the case of any other species, may be ranked with the apparent comparative defects of their animal nature:

But this circumstance, we may venture to affirm, like many others of his seeming defects, is of a piece with that superior destination, which remains to be fulfilled in the subsequent history of mankind. *(Principles I, p. 28)*

If, in this relation, the period of anxiety, on the part of his parent, and of dependence or weakness, on the part of the young, be prolonged beyond the time that is usual in the case of other animals, these seeming disadvantages are more than compensated in the pleasure which a parent enjoys from the continuation of his cares, and in the effect of dependence, which is the germ of that social connection, which man is destined to have with his kind, in a much higher form than is known in any other species of animals. *(Principles I, p. 29)*

In summary, the fact that humans depend on their parents for a longer period compared to any other animal and that parents care for their children for a longer period is a defect as an animal. However, the joy that parents experience in raising their children is irreplaceable. Additionally, children have stronger attachments to their parents than other animals. Ferguson states that strong natural attachment between parents and children and the strong ties seen in families are characteristics and advantages of humans and that these are “the germs of that social connection.”

12) As Amoh also explains, Ferguson argues the sexual instinct as the most basic principle for the formation of a family, but he does not treat it as important, saying that it is merely an “opportunity for bonding” (Cf. *Principles I*, p. 27; Amoh (1993), p. 308).

Next, we examine how Ferguson explains that strong family ties give rise to communities that are more than just families.

Before the force of the first family affection is spent, relations multiply, and instinctive attachments grow into habits. Brothers and sisters come to cooperate in the same cause together; and a third generation sometimes appears before the second or third are separated from the original stock; collaterals grow up together, still apprised of their relation, and, even when separated, are taught to regard consanguinity as a bond of connection, which extends beyond the limits of acquaintance or personal intercourse of any sort.

It is thus that the supposed descendants of a race are multiplied into a tribe, in which many families are included, adopting some common point of honour, or some common cause, in which the kindred partake.

Under this denomination of a tribe or clan, numbers of men are leagued together, and often endeared by the experience of affection, fidelity, and courage; while they mutually support and are supported, or run the career of fortune together. *(Principles I, p. 30)*

According to Ferguson, familial attachments do not disappear when children grow up and become independent from their parents. The number of relatives increases as the children form new families. Instinctual family attachment grows and becomes a habit, and familial attachment spreads. They are taught that blood ties are the strongest bonds.

As these blood relations expand, “tribes” and “clans” are born. What binds tribes together is the “clan spirit,”¹³⁾ an expanded version of the “natural affection” that binds families together.

Section 4: Ferguson’s argument: “making friends is not antisocial”

However, as the scale of communities increases, it is natural for the kinship among community members to diminish. Therefore, how did Ferguson explain that large-scale communities could be established where many people were no longer related by blood relations?

According to Ferguson, as gregarious animals, humans are endowed with “the love of company” as a behavioral principle. They avoid isolation and seek companionship regardless of their interests. He states as follows:

13) *Principles I, p. 31.*

The love of company is a principle common to man with all the gregarious animals. So far, it is merely instinctive, and gratified indiscriminately in the presence of a fellow-creature of the same species. Animals, endowed with this instinct, will force their way through every impediment to join the herd they affect; but, beyond the mere concourse of numbers, rarely appear to have any selection or choice.

With man, the fact is different: He is ever disposed to select his company, and to shun, as well as to embrace, an acquaintance. The characters of men are unequal; and the choice of one frequently implies the rejection of another. But, to select a companion, or a friend, is not to be unsociable: It is to affect society, but to know the distinction of good and evil in this important connection. (*Principles* I, p. 32)

Ferguson's important point is that as we choose our friends, we also choose who is not, and that person is rejected or excluded. Notably, Ferguson emphasizes that choosing friends is an exclusive act. He teaches us that choosing friends is not an antisocial act and that choosing one's companions is similar to loving one's society and knowing right and wrong in this vital connection.

Ferguson's argument was surprising. Making friends is assumed to be a social act. However, Ferguson seems persuasive, and objects to the idea that making friends is unsociable. Furthermore, Ferguson's argument reminds me of Carl Schmitt's concept of friend-enemy, that the essence of politics and democracy is to draw a line between allies and enemies and to determine who is an ally and who is an enemy.¹⁴⁾

Section 5: Conflict strengthens bonds between people

Next, Ferguson argues that separation/discord/conflict strengthened the bonds between people in forming human societies. Ferguson describes the cause of discord and conflict among people as follows:

As men have a greater extent and variety of concerns, whether mistaken or real, in which their pursuits may interfere; so they have more frequent occasions of strife than are incident to individuals of any other species of gregarious animals. What we term reason in man, or intelligence so imperfect as his, is more liable than instinct to err, and mistake its objects. Hence, offences are taken and given, and minds of men alienated from one another, upon

14) Schmitt (2007); Kalyvas and Katznelson (2008) is an article that relates the ideas of Ferguson and Schmitt through the concepts of pluralism and friend-enemy.

imaginary, as well as upon real grounds of dislike.

(Principles I, p. 32)

What Ferguson states here is that: (1) people's interests are more diverse than those of other gregarious animals; (2) human intelligence is imperfect and fallible; (3) due to the combination of (1) and (2), humans have far more "occasions of strife" than other gregarious animals. In other words, humans have more opportunities than other gregarious animals to make friends and strengthen ties.

Ferguson goes on to argue that humans divide into groups and prefer conflict.

Mere estrangement approaches to jealousy; and humans do not desire to associate with persons entirely unknown. Hence, the species is never observed to act in one, but in manifold troops and companies; and, although without any physical bar to prevent their union, are still observed, under the notion of independence and freedom, to affect separation.

(Principles I, pp. 32–3)

According to Ferguson, humans are wary of strangers because they do not know them. Therefore, even without a need to fight, they prefer to form their groups under freedom and independence. He describes the effects of such a separate and conflicting human nature as follows:

Hence the multiplicity of hordes in barbarous ages: But, in human nature, separation itself has an effect in straitening the bands of society; for the members of each separate nation feel their connection the more, that the name of fellow-countryman stands in contradistinction to that of an alien.

(Principles I, p. 33)

According to Ferguson, it is human nature to prefer separation; therefore, as they repeat separation, the size of social groups decreases, and their cohesiveness increases proportionately. How does Ferguson view a world that has been fragmented into various groups? Consider the following passage.

In this divided state of the world, incompatible interests are formed, or, at least, apprehended; and the members of different societies are engaged on opposite sides; affection to one society becomes animosity to another; and they are not always to be reckoned of the most sociable disposition who equally sawn upon all. Indifference, more than candour, is likely

to produce the appearance of impartiality, when the cause of our friend, or our country, is at stake. *(Principles I, p. 33)*

Ferguson also argues that acting as if there are no friends or enemies is contrary to human nature and creates indifference rather than equality, which is important. This issue is relevant today, recalling Wiesel's famous speeches.¹⁵⁾

Section 6: How is a nation established?

Next, Ferguson attempts to explain how nations were born. We examine the following passage:

Even here, however, what seems to divide the species tends also to unite them in leagues more extensive than they would otherwise form. Hence, the coalition of families, tribes, and extensive tracts of country, into nations, under political establishments, that combine the strength and the resources of many for common protection and safety.

(Principles I, p. 33)

The argument in the previous Section 5 was that because it is human nature to separate, various small groups are formed; consequently, the cohesiveness of each group becomes stronger. However, Ferguson argues that conflict connects social groups and aggregates them into larger social groups. As observed in this study, even without conflict, families have been created through natural affection, and society as a kinship community has expanded. People with different interests form different social groups. However, there was no reason for multiple communities to join. As conflict intensifies, it unites people, and the combined communities form larger communities. Thus, the nation was established. A nation is the product of conflict. A nation's political system provides the requirements for its defense and security. We will examine the next passage.

The love of company is gratified in the resorts of a few; and predilection ever implies acquaintance and esteem: But national establishments far exceed these bounds; and comprehend, in the same state or community, persons far removed from one another, and mutually unknown.

Nations are formed upon a principle of expediency, and to obtain security against foreign

15) Wiesel (1999).

enemies, or domestic disorders:

(*Principles I*, pp. 33–4)

Affection for one's group was strengthened by the small size of the group and the fact that the members knew each other. However, the circumstances surrounding the establishment of these nations were completely different. Strangers in faraway places believe it is better to join other groups, form a country to protect their safety and form a government based on the "principle of expediency."¹⁶⁾

Notably, Ferguson states that the formation of a country differs from the formation of a society smaller than a country and is formed for practicality rather than affection. Therefore, do people not influence their country? What emotions do people experience?

Section 7: Although nations are formed by combining communities for convenience, affection for these communities naturally arises

Ferguson argues that affection naturally arises even in nations founded on convenience.

But, notwithstanding this origin, the name of a country ever carries an object of the warmest affection; hence, the ardent enthusiasm with which the good citizen sacrifices, to a public cause, every personal consideration of ease, profit, or safety. (*Principles I*, p. 34)

In other words, a nation is created by people coming together for convenience, but people develop affection and passion for their country and contribute to public affairs. I will consider the reasons for these findings in Section 9.

Section 8: Establishment of an empire

How did Ferguson explain the establishment of a society larger than a nation? Let us examine how Ferguson discussed the establishment of the "empire."

According to Ferguson, people living far apart have different languages and lifestyles, no vested interests, and a practical incentive to form an empire. People are tied to empires not because of the "will of the people" or "national interest" but because of someone's "power" or "the ambition of the

16) Although Ferguson is often Aristotelian, his ideas about the formation of nations is different from Aristotle's. Aristotle said that a nation, like a family or other communities, is a type of community that is established naturally, and he did not say that it is formed out of convenience (Cf. Aristotle (1908), Book 1, pp. 24–30).

sovereign.”

The progress of national enlargement, by increase of people or successive annexations of territory, is not restricted within any special limits. Ambition often leads the growing state to extend its dimensions far beyond any real advantage: And, in the result of war, communities, once proud of their separate establishments and the lustre of their history, are made to discontinue their own institutions, and to receive the laws, by which they are governed, from abroad.

When provinces, remote from one another, without any national intercourse, participation of language, manners, or interest, are reduced to acknowledge a common head, or to join in their contributions to enrich a common master; the associating principle, in such examples, if we must call it by that name, is force, or rather the ambition of sovereigns, than the will of the people, or even the interests of state. Upon this principle, the inhabitants of cities and territories, unknown to one another, become fellow subjects, and owe their connection to the force by which they were subdued, and by which they are kept in subjection: But this force itself was the combination of numbers employed in conquest.

The conquered become an accession to empire, in which nations are absorbed, or changed into provinces that have no feeling of attachment, nor even community of interest. But, if empires thus extend beyond the limits to which the social affections of man have reached, these affections nevertheless continue to subsist in different divisions of the largest dominion. They subsist in the family, in the neighbourhood, in the select company of acquaintance, and in the attachment of friends. There even arises, in the largest empires, a national spirit, with which the subject cordially serves his sovereign, and contends for the honour and safety of his country. (*Principles* I, pp. 34–5)

Ferguson’s explanation that “humans do not desire to associate with entire persons unknown” (*Principles* I, p. 32) no longer applies to forming empires. In an empire, people who are unfamiliar with one another become fellow subjects. “Force or rather the ambition of sovereigns” unites them.

Section 9: From social attachment to national spirit and public spirit

According to Ferguson, as the scale of a society increases, the degree to which it is established by external, rather than internal, triggers also increases. For example, the establishment and continuation of a family are supported by family love, and that of a tribe is supported by the “clan

spirit.” However, states were established and continued to exist to obtain and maintain security (the principle of expediency). Empires are established and continue to exist because of the ambitions and powers of their conquerors. However, does this mean that such nations and empires have no internal support and are unstable because of several uncertain factors that prevent them from continuing to exist? Ferguson explains that this is not true:

But, notwithstanding this origin, the name of a country ever carries an object of the warmest affection; hence, the ardent enthusiasm with which the good citizen sacrifices, to a public cause, every personal consideration of ease, profit, or safety. (*Principles I, p. 34*)

According to Ferguson, once a nation is established, its members become passionate enough to sacrifice their interests for the nation’s cause, just as they would fight for their families and allies.

He also speaks of the “greatest empire,” an empire that grew beyond the reach of people’s social attachments.

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Therefore, Ferguson explains that a “national spirit” arises in empires and nations.

Section 10: But how and why is national spirit born?

However, according to Ferguson, this “national spirit,” unlike the familial attachment that underpins a kinship society, does not spring from instinct. How did this spirit emerge in nations and empires? The following passage provides hints for this:

The mind of man has a fellow-feeling with what befalls a fellow creature, which is so much conceived as an appurtenance of human nature, as, in common language, to be called humanity, and considered as a characteristic of the species. Under the effects of this disposition, even to be a stranger is a recommendation, and a ground of regard.

Much remains to be observed on this subject, that cannot be classed with the appurtenances of mere animal nature. Where man rises above this predicament, his destination to range with a system, and make a part in a comprehensive order of things, becomes still more conspicuous. His understanding is a power of comprehension, qualifying him to perceive, and to estimate the bearings of a whole, through all its parts, to some common end, or beneficial effect; and his moral judgements give sanction to the propriety of his own character or action, in the society of his fellow creatures. The great distinction of right and wrong, of virtue and vice, on which men experience such extremes of complacency or indignation, of esteem or contempt, is formed on the dictates of a social disposition, which receives, with favour and love, what constitutes the good of mankind, or rejects, with disapprobation and abhorrence, what is of a contrary nature. *(Principles I, p. 35)*

According to Ferguson, the national spirit of an empire is not rooted in human instincts. However, Ferguson states that people acquire this spirit naturally since they are moral beings destined to progress and attain perfection. I expect to examine this assumption in a future study. The sources of national and public spirit will also be revealed by demonstrating the relationship between perfectibilianism, progressivism, and moral approbation in Ferguson's thought.

Conclusion

This study traces Ferguson's argument regarding the factors that bind people to smaller communities, such as families and tribes, and larger societies, such as nations and empires. According to Ferguson's classification, gregarious animals, including humans, are instinctively associated with society. However, in a more detailed classification, humans are politically gregarious animals differentiated from mere gregarious animals. Human beings are "political" because they play their role in society and collaborate with others to achieve common goals. Humans have more diverse interests than other animals, so they have more opportunities for conflict.

In addition, humans naturally cooperate with others and separate from others. Due to their separate and confrontational nature, humans are divided into small groups that exclude nonfriends. However, fraternity and brotherhood are also strengthened within these groups.

Nevertheless, as conflicts intensify, groups form alliances to ensure their safety, and society will grow. Therefore, a nation is born. A nation is a society established for security purposes based on the principle of expedience.

An empire is a society built upon the ambitions and powers of the sovereign. Strangers, physically far apart and with different languages and cultures, became members of the empire regardless of their will.

However, Ferguson argues that in a nation, and even in an empire, humans gradually develop a warm affection for their society and become willing to contribute to society with a national spirit.

Then where does this affection or spirit originate? Ferguson stated that this is not out of instinct as a gregarious animal. Since man is a gregarious political animal, we find its source in their “political” human nature. My next research would be to find out Ferguson’s “progressivist” and “perfectibilianist” aspects and how they relate to his ideas of moral approbation.

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