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## Georgic Political Economy: Emergent Forms of Order and Liberal Statecraft in Eighteenth-Century British Poetry

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy degree in English

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## Abstract

Eighteenth-century, British georgic poetry's shift away from its conventional theme of agriculture is often discussed as justifying Britain's commercial imperialism and a broader commitment to progressivist Whig history. I argue that such approaches neglect its participation in the intellectual history of the liberal state itself. Georgics are exemplary texts to read alongside politico-economic treatises like Adam Smith's *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (1776). James Thomson's *The Seasons* (1730) moralizes personal industry and innovation while veering from detailed examples of natural phenomena, to vast ecological networks, to nature's determinative, physical and moral laws. Given georgics' expanding, scientific and economy-adjacent interests, they notably omit the role of government in administering socio-economic order. Such poems indirectly communicate a moral philosophy amenable to the system of natural laws and natural rights in John Locke's *Two Treatises of Government* (1689) which gave rise to economic and political liberalism. In light of the groundbreaking economic science of François Quesnay which Smith influentially revised in his more historically-informed, open-ended analysis, states were increasingly regarded as serving rather than served by their subjects who now best fulfilled their natural law-based obligation to thrive by freely pursuing their rational self-interests.

I provide case studies of georgics that indirectly justify liberalism's own depreciation of the state. These poems primarily undermine a conception of state government as a locus of moral authority and social order by presenting alternative, nominally natural sources of socio-economic stability. William Mason's *The English Garden* (1782) asserts that proprietors possessing enough wealth and taste to landscape their estates in a naturalistic style thereby prove their fitness to participate in liberal government. Scientist-poet Erasmus Darwin's *The Temple of*

*Nature* (1803) rigorously argues for emergent order by presenting a physiological model in which a universal pleasure principle drives all organisms to imitate and synthesize ideas which enable innovation and self-transformation. He defines liberty as immanent to organisms' volitional capacity and locates potential progress in his model's innate operations. In Darwin, as elsewhere, government becomes an imperfect, refinable technology subservient to a nation's economy.

***Keywords***

British Literature, Eighteenth Century, Georgic Poetry, Natural Law, Natural Rights, Property, Political Economy, Natural Philosophy, Gardens, John Locke, James Thomson, François Quesnay, Adam Smith, Horace Walpole, William Mason, Erasmus Darwin

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## Introduction

### *The georgic tradition*

The georgic is an antique, poetic genre fundamentally concerned with the production of order. Both in its classical form and in many of the versions written during its resurgence in eighteenth-century Britain, this production of order primarily appears in terms of humans confronting the problem of food scarcity by understanding and harnessing nature's own productivity through agronomy and farming. Hesiod and Virgil (70 BCE-19 BCE) wrote the exemplary, classical Georgics. Hesiod's *Works and Days*, written at the end of the eighth century BCE, argued for the moral value of industry while also functioning as a guide for managing a thriving *oikos*. The *oikos* was a self-sufficient, productive, social-unit with nominally natural power relations between husbands and wives, parents and children, and masters and servants. The *oikos*'s prosperity depended in part on the farmer's *sophrosyne*, meaning the frugality and efficiency required to free the family from scarcity and to free the proprietor to participate in public politics.

Like Hesiod's poem, Virgil's *Georgics* (29 BCE) venerated toiling farmers and the beauty and utility of nature's physical forces and material resources. Both poems' narrative tension arose from nature's frequent intractability and from economic and political insecurity caused by years of civil war and governments' inability to ensure socio-economic order. Virgil developed Hesiod's less explicit analogy between farmers' technical, though largely manual labor and the georgic poets' own intellectual, literary labor. *Georgics* was the second poem in a triad of literary genres including the pastoral and the epic called the *rota Virgiliana*, which allowed poets to hone their professional skills on subjects of increasing world-historical

importance. These two poems established conventions which would persist through British elaborations of the form. Thus, georgic authors practice a high, literary style by applying it to nominally low subjects, which arguably become ennobled in the process. The poetry makes burdensome manual labor performed on fruitful soil a fit subject for the consideration of the upper ranks of society from whom poets sought approval and patronage. Georgics moralize industry by clothing it in beautiful figures and reiterate the physical control of nature through the poet's own aesthetic, intellectual control. Their content and self-reflexive style both acknowledge the problem of imposing order on nature's infinite variety of finite things.<sup>1</sup>

John Dryden's (1631-1700) translation of *Georgics* in 1697 boosted the standing of a long-neglected genre. Dryden's famous assessment, "The best poem by the best author," was supplemented by Joseph Addison's (1672-1719) prefatory "Essay on Virgil's Georgics," which asserted that the genre's combination of the rustic "science of husbandry" with the "beauties and embellishments of poetry" could reconcile and convey "Precepts of morality" better than natural philosophy, which "puzzles the reader with the intricacy of its notions and the multitude of its disputes."<sup>2</sup> Virgil's discrete gestures to the emperor Octavian prefigured British authors' attempts to have their works reach and resonate with an upper class whose virtuous stewardship of national prosperity they commended. British georgics such as John Philips's *Cyder* (1708) and James Dyer's *The Fleece* (1757) continued to assert the comparable, moral value of agricultural and intellectual cultivation and ultimately suggested that wealthy landowners could prove their own virtue and fitness for political office by supporting land improvement and

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<sup>1</sup> I take the concept that, liberal government notwithstanding, the infinite variety of finite things compels governments to perpetually refine their own control over the socio-economic order's infinite complexity in order to optimize the exploitation of resources and to minimize the risk of social crises. Michael Dillon, *Biopolitics of Security: A political analytic of finitude* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 6-8.

<sup>2</sup> Joseph Addison, *Poems on Several Occasions* (Glasgow: Robert & Andrew Foulis, 1751), 156.



tenant-farmers in addition to the arts and sciences. Even if landowners only improved their estates through picturesque landscaping rather than following practical, agronomic manuals like Stephen Switzer's (1682-1745) *Ichnographia Rustica* (1715-1718), eighteenth-century georgics acclaimed such landowners as guardians of the public good. Both classical and eighteenth-century georgics thus demonstrated concern for rulers' management of the socio-economic order. Such concerns overlap with political economy, a scientific discipline which emerged during the second half of the eighteenth century in rough contemporaneity with the British georgic.

Georgic poems have lent themselves to many critiques addressing topics within the scope of political economy such as land, property rights and labor. For example, one recent thread in scholarship on the British georgic useful for my study, which more narrowly focuses on statecraft, identifies georgics as ideological tools for justifying British imperialism. Karen O'Brien exemplifies such scholarship by arguing that georgics "assumed the burden of securing the aesthetic and moral links between country, city, and empire."<sup>3</sup> O'Brien suggests that British georgics such as James Thomson's (1700-1748) *The Seasons* (1730), a poem which I address in my second chapter, incorporate conventional georgic themes such as agriculture into a wider consideration of the nation's domestic and international commerce. Developing O'Brien's implications, David Armitage supports readings of the imperial georgic in which they influence Britain's self-definition of its national character. This self-definition had been complicated by the 1707 Act of Union in which England united with Scotland and Ireland to form Great Britain. Armitage states that Britain "and the conceptualization of its dependencies was...a shared conception of the British Empire that could describe a community and provide a distinguishable

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<sup>3</sup> Karen O'Brien, "Imperial Georgic, 1660-1789," in *The Country and the City Revisited: England and the Politics of Culture, 1550-1850*, ed. Gerald MacLean (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 161.

character for it.” A page earlier, Armitage describes this character: “In sum, the British Empire was, above all and beyond all other such polities, Protestant, commercial, maritime and free.”<sup>4</sup>

Whereas the imperial georgic may expand its scope outward from the country’s rural labor to the city’s commerce to the empire’s markets and colonies, we can also read in the imperialist pretensions of British georgics an attempt to define the values and commitments which unify and stabilize a nation composed of diverse cultures, religions, and modes of production. The themes of commerce and liberty which often appear in georgics fall within the scope of political economy but also only incompletely reflect political economy’s conception of natural law and natural rights which are at the core of the discipline’s understanding of statecraft. To understand how my study differs from the work of earlier critics requires an initial understanding of the origins of the discipline of political economy, political economy’s self-definition in the long eighteenth century, and finally the state’s role in liberal political economy.

### *Political economy’s contexts*

Because political economy is central to my reading of British georgics, knowing the philosophical domains from which political economy developed will help understand the interests which it shares with georgics but which georgics also may conceal or refigure.<sup>5</sup> In *An*

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<sup>4</sup> David Armitage, *The Ideological Foundations of the British Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 9; 8.

<sup>5</sup> For example, by applying political terminology to natural phenomena. Thomson describes the sun in the following terms:

The vegetable world is also thine,  
Parent of Seasons! who the pomp precede  
That waits thy throne, as though thy vast domain,  
Annual, along the bright ecliptic road  
In world-rejoicing state it moves sublime.

James Thomson, *Summer*, in *The Seasons*, ed. James Sambrook (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1981), 112-116.

*Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* Adam Smith (1723-1790) describes political economy as a subsystem, “a branch of the science of the statesman or legislator” within the larger system of moral philosophy.<sup>6</sup> In the centuries leading up to and including the time of Smith’s writing, moral philosophy was dominated by theories based on natural law.

Philosophers of natural law believed that God created the world including its moral laws, physical laws, matter, and rational humans.<sup>7</sup> Though humans have access to Scripture, natural law assumes that humans may recognize their moral obligations to God and to each other through the rational study of the physical world. Because I primarily address natural law in regard to John Locke’s (1632-1704) moral philosophy, I borrow A. John Simmons summary of Lockean natural law:

- (1) Duties to preserve oneself (i.e., not to kill or endanger oneself)
- (2) Duties to preserve others (when this does not conflict with self-preservation)
- (3) Duties not to “take away the life” of another
- (4) Duties not to do what “tends to destroy” others (by, e.g., interfering with or “impairing” their “liberty, health, limb or goods”)<sup>8</sup>

Nowhere in his writings does Locke explicitly define natural laws, but Simmons’ list demonstrates that they prioritize society’s proliferation and that these obligations require humans not simply to survive but to prosper. Moreover, Locke complicated natural law by claiming that, in addition to reason, God affords humans natural rights which enable them to fulfill their obligations. As I discuss in my first chapter, these natural rights include property rights over not

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<sup>6</sup> Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (Indianapolis: Liberty Classics, 1976), IV.introduction.1.

<sup>7</sup> For example, Samuel Pufendorf (1632-1694) was natural law theorist who wrote *De iure naturae et gentium* (1672) which would influence the philosophical development of liberalism.

<sup>8</sup> A. John Simmons, *The Lockean Theory of Rights* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 60.

only one's own life, liberty, and labor but also over any objects which an individual legitimately appropriates. A person appropriates an object by "mix[ing] his labor with it, and join[ing] to it something that is his own" which thereby establishes a private use right as well as an exclusory right and which prevents others from stealing, damaging, or profiting from that property.<sup>9</sup> The three politico-economic philosophers central to my projects, Locke, François Quesnay (1694-1774), and Smith, each believed that private property rights were necessary for individuals to best exploit their possessions.

Given that natural laws establish obligations which fundamentally necessitate the rational use of resources for the public good as well as natural rights which enable people to fulfill those obligations, political economy addresses the problem of how states also enable their polities to fulfill their obligation to prosper. It will help to introduce some terminology relevant to political economy before further pursuing my argument. I use *state* to refer to a sovereign, political entity holding a monopoly on violence and whose political power enables it to determine the form of its government. *Government* refers to types of regimes such as monarchies and republics in which states invest their power. The activity of *government* is *statecraft*. Through statecraft, governments create and control a variety of *state apparatuses* through which states influence the behaviors of their subjects. I also refer to the whole government itself as a state apparatus or sometimes as a piece of political technology. I use *polity* and *body politic* interchangeably to describe an independent, socio-political population while the concept of the *nation* fuses population, state, and government into a single entity.

My discussion primarily addresses Althusserian ideological state apparatuses (rather than repressive state apparatuses) which influence subject's behavior without immediate recourse to

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<sup>9</sup> John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government and A Letter Concerning Toleration*, ed. Ian Shapiro (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), II.v.27.

state-sanctioned violence.<sup>10</sup> Positive laws, a key example of a state apparatus, differ from natural laws for being made by humans rather than God. In the eyes of the theorists I discuss and because states are subject and subservient to natural laws, states' positive laws aspire to yet imperfectly reflect natural laws. One implication of these imperfections riven through governments and their state apparatuses is that governments are indeed mutable, political technologies open to continuous refinement as well as decadence and delegitimization. Though Quesnay and Smith did not strictly adhere to Locke's theory of the social contract in which collectives form body politics and then states, each philosopher held that states maintained their moral legitimacy to the extent that they adequately helped the nation conform to natural law. Doing so principally meant administering the socio-economic order such that free, rational, self-interested individuals could participate in the national economy and contribute to its collective prosperity. Even though Locke, Quesnay, and Smith did not share a common set of economic theories, they are important to my project for being discursive founders of liberalism in their respective domains of political philosophy, economics, and political economy. To clarify, Quesnay established the first, holistic economic theory called Physiocracy in his *Tableau économique* (1758), while Smith's *Wealth of Nations* established the discipline of political economy. However, all three philosophers address topics pertinent to political economy and ultimately participate in legitimizing liberal political economy.

The emergence of economy and political economy as scientific disciplines points to another important overlap between political economy and the georgic. I noted that my authors, even those preceding the emergence of political economy as a discipline, believed that statecraft should encourage polities' abidance of natural laws by using state apparatuses to reinforce

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<sup>10</sup> Louis Althusser, *On the Reproduction of Capitalism: Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses*, trans. G. M. Goshgarian (New York: Verso, 2014), 75-77.

natural rights. Further, humans discover natural law (and the proper ends of government) by studying nature, which in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries took the form of natural philosophy and which coincided with the scientific revolution. This revolution was spearheaded by Francis Bacon's (1561-1626) empiric method and led to the heroization of Isaac Newton (1642-1727) who exemplified the spirit of English, intellectual progress. Robin Valenza observes that natural philosophers developed increasingly specialized methods and discourses while the fields themselves grew increasingly distinct. She argues that "practitioners across all disciplines...found the process of defining and describing their fields of study to nonexperts both wrenching and difficult. And most struggled to negotiate how print could help them reach targeted audiences of fellow experts at the same time that it could help them gain wider public support for their work."<sup>11</sup> Nevertheless, advancing life sciences, the study of inorganic matter and the earth's moving parts, and social sciences such as economics continued to cross-pollinate and collectively contribute to philosophers' understanding of natural law. The genre of physico-theology emerged as an attempt to reconcile empiric knowledge of physical nature with the Bible's stories and its moral implications. Thomas Burnet's *Telluris Theoria Sacra* (1689) and William Derham's *Physico-theology; or, A Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God, from His Works of Creation* (1713) are some of the more well-known examples of the form and H. Grant Sampson claims to identify at least one hundred examples of a literary form he refers to as the physico-theological epic.<sup>12</sup> *The Seasons* explicitly uses the georgic mode's depictions of nature to produce a physico-theological argument for the benevolence of natural law.

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<sup>11</sup> Robin Valenza, *Literature, Language, and the Rise of the Intellectual Disciplines in Britain, 1680-1820* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 3.

<sup>12</sup> H. Grant Sampson, "The Physico-Theological Epic in the Later Eighteenth Century," *Man and Nature* 2 (1984): 49.

Georgics highlighted and attempted to negotiate these intersecting problems of accessing truth, especially moral truth, in the face of fragmenting fields of knowledge which could themselves problematize humanity's self-understanding. As the eighteenth century progressed, several georgics displaced the standard theme of agricultural, manual labor by devoting more space to communicating the findings of natural philosophy. In addition to *The Seasons*, I discuss Erasmus Darwin's (1731-1802) poems, *The Botanic Garden* (1791) and *The Temple of Nature* (1803) as case studies of such georgics. The subject of labor did not disappear in these poems; instead, authors diffused it throughout their subject matter. Nature itself is described as performing continuous, productive, recycling labor; the natural phenomena which are its "works" provided material for poets to veer into aestheticized, conversable descriptions of the physical processes which contemporary natural philosophers understood to be taking place.<sup>13</sup> Relatedly, British georgics displayed a new regard for the intellectual labor of natural philosophers and also of entrepreneurs who exploited new, scientific and technical knowledges by applying them to technological innovations.<sup>14</sup> *The Botanic Garden* in particular praises several inventors and elaborates the effects of their creations. For example, Darwin devotes a passage to the canal systems of the engineer James Brindley (1716-1772).

We therefore see a similar tendency for organizing knowledge shared by certain georgics and by the natural philosophy which the poetry attempted to convey. The expansion of georgics' content with no restraining, narrative through-line beyond world-historical progress meant that its own, potential excesses and disjointed vignettes could only be contained by, at the level of

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<sup>13</sup> Thomson, *Winter*, 108. Valenza distinguishes between learned discourse which marks specialization and professionalization and conversable discourse meant to interest and teach the fundamentals of science to non-professionals. Valenza, *Literature, Language, and the Rise of the Intellectual Disciplines*, 18-19.

<sup>14</sup> I take this analogy a step further in my fourth chapter in which I argue that the work of beautifying landscape design corresponded with and validated a landowner's participation in government.

style, the imposition of a unifying, literary beauty, and at the higher level of didactic moralization, the assertion that its depicted content is subject to immaterial natural laws. Noel Jackson identifies this tension in Darwin's "philosophical poetry" and points to the evidence of the poems' layers of detailed, explanatory footnotes which dominate the poetry.<sup>15</sup> Kurt Heinzelman also highlights the still-emerging divisions between literary and scientific labor by identifying an epistemic tension between georgics' fictions, signifying the aesthetic pleasures of its literary stylistics and speculations, and facts, signifying its scientific, pragmatic, and moral interests: "Because of the georgic's apparent faith in determinate knowledge as a functional component of its own discourse, some eighteenth-century readers were reluctant to permit georgic writing the dispensation necessary for imaginative or fictional discourse."<sup>16</sup> By comparison with the georgic, natural philosophy seemed to serve and legitimize natural laws; but as we see in the case of Darwin who was both poet and natural philosopher, fields such as his favored physiology seemed to discover new sources of order immanent to the material systems which they studied. Such fields could give additional credibility to natural law but occasionally offered counternarratives that disturbed biblical authority.

British georgics' turn toward science and technology has long been acknowledged by literary critics. Anthony Low partially attributes the genre's success to the period's enthusiasm for discovering new methods for explaining and harnessing nature: "The result of this fruitful combination of poetic vision and new science was what amounts to a georgic revolution in the seventeenth century, a revolution that preceded and was directly responsible for the well-known

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<sup>15</sup> Noel Jackson, "Rhyme and Reason: Erasmus Darwin's Romanticism," *Modern Language Quarterly* 70, no. 2 (June 2009), 171; 181.

<sup>16</sup> Kurt Heinzelman, "Roman Georgic in the Georgian Age: A Theory of Romantic Genre," *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 33, no. 2 (Summer 1991): 192.



Agricultural Revolution of the eighteenth.”<sup>17</sup> Low thus asserts that the georgic’s popularity not only was motivated by an interest in nature’s productive potential but also could itself be productive. Nascent enthusiasm for enlightened agriculture was already in evidence due to the Georgical Committee’s founding in 1664. This group traded essays on and offered prizes for advances in the field of agronomy. From a different perspective, philosophical poetry could be argued by its practitioners to itself contribute to philosophical thought; Darwin argued that philosophy and poetry differed only in the respective strictness or looseness of their analogies. Analogy could access truth because, as Devin Griffiths notes, “For Bacon (and for Darwin), analogy is an attribute of the world, not ascribed to it; it is not applied to nature by the scientists but is “of” the “things” themselves.<sup>18</sup>

Kevis Goodman also addresses the georgic’s connection to increasingly institutionalized science by calling it the poster-poem for scientific and agricultural reform and by its commitment to cultivating order among ideas and things. Georgics frame disruptions and discontinuities caused by encounters with history or with unfamiliar aspects of nature in order to then soothe disturbing feelings through aesthetic mediation and the assertion of encompassing, philosophically-interpreted systems:<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Anthony Low, *The Georgic Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), 119.

<sup>18</sup> Devin Griffiths, *The Age of Analogy: Science and Literature between the Darwins* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2016), 72. See also Gillian Beer, “Plants, Analogy, and Perfection: Loose and Strict Analogies,” in *Marking Time: Romanticism and Evolution*, ed. Joel Faflak (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2018), 29-44.

<sup>19</sup> Goodman emphasizes that Locke’s *An Essay concerning Human Understanding* exhibited an anxiety commonly repeated in georgics that humans’ limited senses may receive excessive and unprocessable information which often arrives distorted. Words “*signify only Men’s peculiar Ideas, and that by a perfectly arbitrary Imposition, is evident, in that they often fail to excite in others (even that use the same Language) the same Ideas, we take them to be the Signs of...*” John Locke, *An Essay concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Peter H. Nidditch (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), III.ii.8.

Within and in part under the influence of georgic, the poetry of the long eighteenth century underwent a process whereby it became conscious of itself as one “sensible path” among others...Such verse inhabits a cultural situation in which it has to define itself not only against an array of prose genres, whose material it often usurps, but also in relation to non-written means of perception and communication, whose several mystiques it often courts.<sup>20</sup>

The georgic presents itself as a literary apparatus among multiple other forms of written, more overtly mechanical, or even, I would argue, politico-economic technologies for teasing order out of complexity. In doing so, it consciously imitates the stricter and narrower, organizing work of natural philosophy firstly by encompassing the subjects of various, philosophical fields within the poetry’s harmonizing and beautifying style. Secondly, georgics move freely between examples of empiric phenomena, references to the ecological system in which given phenomena participate, and mostly importantly, the moral, natural laws which we can consider to be the meaning of that phenomena. For example, Thomson attributes botanic growth to the “Universal Soul / Of heaven and earth”:

By thee the various vegetative tribes,  
 Wrapt in a filmy net and clad with leaves  
 Draw the live ether and imbibe the dew.  
 By thee disposed into congenial soils,  
 Stands each attractive plant, and sucks, and swells  
 The juicy tide, a twining mass of tubes.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Kevis Goodman, *Georgic Modernity and British Romanticism: Poetry and the Mediation of History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 9.

<sup>21</sup> Thomson, *Summer*, 556; 561-566.

Thomson collapses God and Nature into an allegorical, all-comprehending force responsible for the circulation of nutrients presumed to have been drawn from the “live ether” and “the dew” through each plant’s “tubes” and tissues. Several lines later, Thomson amends “Universal Soul” to “the soul of love [which] is sent abroad / Through the vital air.”<sup>22</sup> Notwithstanding his ignorance of photosynthesis and air’s components, he attributes plants’ growth to physical processes which are themselves determined by a higher, poetically-figured, benevolent force.

In Goodman’s terms, the georgic acts as one, self-consciously tropological path for organizing the phenomena organized by the more rigorous path of natural philosophy simultaneously championed by the poetry. Other critics have observed that georgics’ interest in the sciences, especially as performed by British luminaries, went together with Britain’s self-definition as a commercial empire. Alan Bewell observes that the concept of nature offered Romantic and proto-Romantic writers a productive contradiction:

...the British came to see nature as something that stood apart from the modern world...—of mobility, exchange, and transformation—at the same time as they were actively engaged in translating it into the very forms that would allow it to be accessed from a distance, marketed, exchanged, and improved, the very activities that led to its achieving cultural priority in British society.<sup>23</sup>

Bewell argues that nature could be reified into a timeless ideal apposite to natural laws.

Concurrently, nature’s physical materials were not only studied and used to produce natural-philosophical knowledge; they also became resources which could be entered into economic

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<sup>22</sup> Thomson, *Summer*, 582-583.

<sup>23</sup> Alan Bewell, *Natures in Translation: Romanticism and Colonial Natural History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2017), 6.

circuits which themselves could then be studied to discover yet new forms of order.<sup>24</sup> As scholars such as John Barrell, Tim Fulford, and Blanford Parker have shown, the orderly paths represented in georgics helped to naturalize economic liberalism and justify capitalism as it emerged in Britain.<sup>25</sup> Their work confirms the British georgic to be a thoroughly politico-economic genre.

Whereas scholars address georgics' political economy in terms of empire or domestic commerce, I argue that they miss the extent to which georgics may be read as addressing statecraft, though they often do so in an indirect manner. Like the georgic itself, the work of government offers yet another path for organizing the goods and people constituting the socio-economic order. However, concomitant with political and economic liberalism<sup>26</sup>, georgics tended to marginalize the state through their own representations of ecological and commercial economies and thus imply a smaller, regulatory role for the state than it had held in prior centuries. I will briefly address the historical background of the mercantilist political economy which preceded the rise of liberalism before expanding on my argument for the two, broad methods by which georgic marginalized and otherwise delimited states' functions and authority.

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<sup>24</sup> The work of Margaret Schabas grounds the part of my argument linking political economy's commitment to economic liberalism to several, earlier natural philosophic fields:

...until the mid-nineteenth century, economic theorists regarded the phenomena of their discourse as part of the same natural world studied by natural philosophers. Not only were economic phenomena understood mostly by drawing analogies to natural phenomena, but they were also viewed as contiguous with physical nature. Economic discourse was, in short, considered to be part of natural philosophy and not, as we would now deem it, a social or human science. It did not then address an autonomous sphere as it does today.

Her point reinforces the conception I attribute to Locke, Quesnay, and Smith of the state as distinct, political technology which functions as an external influence on the economic domain.

Margaret Schabas, *The Natural Origins of Economics* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2005), 2.

<sup>25</sup> John Barrell, *English Literature in History, 1730-80: An Equal, Wide Survey* (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1983); Tim Fulford, *Landscape, Liberty and Authority: Poetry, Criticism, and Politics from Thomson to Wordsworth* (New York: Cambridge University, 1996); Blanford Parker, *The Triumph of Augustan Poetics: English literary culture from Butler to Johnson* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

<sup>26</sup> Political liberalism generally refers to the assertion of natural rights secured by positive laws whereas economic liberalism is typified by commitment to free trade.

To preview these methods, first, georgics identified what I consider to be alternative sources of order which the poems presented as contributing to socio-economic stability and often anticipated a science-driven progress of opulence. Second, as I have already suggested, georgics often presented governments as, so to speak, political technologies susceptible to improvement, refinement, delegitimization, and, when necessary, abandonment. States remain viable so long as they support the interests and natural rights of their subjects and by extension natural laws. This conception of states as subordinate to markets contrasts with mercantilist political economy which imagined the state as occupying a much more prominent and decisive role in administering the socio-economic order.

Mercantilism refers to the statist economic policy of European countries prior to the gradual adoption of economic and political liberalism. Modern scholars agree that the term mercantilism reflects a shared set of main assumptions and goals in the period, but also uncertainty regarding the effects of policies, the definition of sources of value, or how buyers and sellers agree on prices.<sup>27</sup> Under mercantilist government, states exert external pressure on a discrete, economic sphere comprising the aggregate activities of autonomous, self-interested agents.<sup>28</sup> Mercantilism highlights a distinction between the state and the economic sphere it oversees; markets were viewed as means for strengthening the state as much as the body politics. The rise of a Lockean, natural rights discourse coincided with a reversal in which states serve the economic interests and so also the moral obligations of collectives. Still, Locke's own economic

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<sup>27</sup> Lars Magnusson, "Mercantilism," in *A Companion to the History of Economic Thought* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), 46-60.

<sup>28</sup> Jerome B. Schneewind argues that Locke's definitions of volition and self-interest, which I discuss in chapter one, tend to individuate people as accountable and so also autonomous moral agents. Jerome B. Schneewind, *The Invention of Autonomy: A History of Modern Moral Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 144-146.

theories were roughly consistent with other mercantilists who typically maintained two key assumptions:

1. International trade being zero-sum, states benefit by intervening in international markets using protectionist policies in order to increase the inflow of bullion.
2. Greater material wealth improves the security of both a society and the state itself by stabilizing social order through the prevention of food shortages and by enabling the state to afford traditional expenses like armies.

Istvan Hont's *Jealousy of Trade* describes this competitive approach to international markets as a commercial war between states which weaponize economic activity and trade policies against each other in order to amass resources.<sup>29</sup> Notable English mercantilists included Edward Misselden (1608-1654), Thomas Mun (1571-1641), and Gerard de Malynes (1585–1641). Their debates regarding the inherent value of bullion, the causes of the economic crisis of the 1620s, and the effect of freeing international regulations on the all-important balance of trade demonstrate that even policies like free-trade were not unknown or unappreciated.<sup>30</sup> The land surveyor William Petty (1623-1687) also destabilizes a fixed definition or periodization of mercantilism. Besides being a physician like Locke, Quesnay, and Darwin, helping found the Royal Society, and proposing *laissez-faire* state policy, Petty wrote *Political Arithmetic* (1690), which demonstrated the utility of statistical analysis for studying economic forces. Deemed the

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<sup>29</sup> Istvan Hont, *Jealousy of Trade: International Competition and the Nation-State in Historical Perspective* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005), 5-6.

<sup>30</sup> Terence Hutchison, *Before Adam Smith: The Emergence of Political Economy, 1662-1776* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988), 3-13; Lars Magnusson, "Mercantilism," in *A Companion to the History of Economic Thought*, eds. Warren J. Samuels, Jeff E. Biddle and John B. Davis (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), 51.

founder of political economy by David McNally, Petty foreshadows the rise of econometric analysis and, we may say, the gradual depoliticization of political economy.<sup>31</sup>

This rehearsal of mercantilism demonstrates the extent to which states were assumed to directly influence the economic sphere for the public good while also reinforcing their own power by increasing tax revenues. By contrast, liberal political economy argued for reduced governmental influence and posited that a mixed government such as Britain's would provide the best security for individuals' natural rights. As mentioned, this argument was premised on the belief that, given the liberty to pursue their self-interest, the collective, economic activities of a nation's subjects would likely produce prosperity and achieve a measure of socio-economic stability. Such prosperity helped fulfill natural laws with minimal imposition from a state operating on mercantilist principles and arrogating to itself the moral authority to prescribe economic policies. It remained to various philosophically-inclined authors to argue for the natural laws and rights to which economic and political liberalism were amenable. Of course, georgic authors did not write with the specific intention of justifying proto-capitalism or possessive individualism. Yet, I argue that georgics, often by borrowing from natural philosophy, depicted several sources of order which reinforced economic and political liberalism and thereby undermined governments' prerogative to interfere in the socio-economic order. One example from natural philosophy and one example from the fine arts will demonstrate what I mean by natural, even apolitical sources of order.

Georgics' references to liberty implicitly refer to state-protected natural rights which enable the pursuit of self-interest such as when Thomson writes, "Liberty, abroad / Walks unconfined even to [Happy Britannia's] farthest cots, / And scatters plenty with unsparing

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<sup>31</sup> David McNally, *Political Economy and the Rise of Capitalism: A Reinterpretation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 35.

hand.”<sup>32</sup> However, Thomson was well-versed in Locke and a clear line of influence gives us reason to recognize liberty not simply as a juridico-moral condition granted by God to rational subjects, but to think of liberty in increasingly physiological terms. Locke’s *Essay concerning Human Understanding* describes liberty as a power to make choices based on one’s volition, volition itself considered as a quasi-physiological power of the mind.<sup>33</sup> Darwin’s *Temple of Nature* also offers a physiological account of humanity’s innate hedonism and volition based on his theory that fibrous tissues sensitive to pleasure and pain compose all organisms. The basic capacities of irritation<sup>34</sup> and sensation lead to the higher capacities of volitional preference and selective association in more complex organisms. Crucially for Darwin, the volitional capacity expands as humans learn new ideas, develop new skills, and harness new technologies. In Darwin’s radically materialist conception of life, liberty is immanent to and nothing other than the extent of the volitional capacity which remains continuously interested in finding new means for achieving pleasure:

[Reason] With quick Volitions unfatigued selects  
 Means for some end, and causes of effects;  
 All human science worth the name imparts,  
 And builds on Nature's base the works of Arts.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Thomson, *Summer*, 1443-1445.

<sup>33</sup> “We must remember, that Volition, or Willing, is an act of the Mind directing its thought to the production of any Action, and thereby exerting its power to produce it. To avoid multiplying of words, I would crave leave here, under the word Action, to comprehend the forbearance too of any Action proposed; sitting still, or holding one's peace, when walking or speaking are propos'd, though mere forbearances, requiring as much the determination of the Will, and being often as weighty in their consequences, as the contrary Actions, may, on that consideration, well enough pass for Actions too...” John Locke, *The Clarendon Edition of the Works of John Locke: An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Peter H. Nidditch (Oxford University Press, 1975), II.xxi.28.

<sup>34</sup> Irritation signifies a sensitivity to sensation which causes the different types of fibers composing all organisms to contract and relax.

<sup>35</sup> Erasmus Darwin, *The Temple of Nature*, ed. Martin Priestman, [http://www.rc.umd.edu/editions/darwin\\_temple/](http://www.rc.umd.edu/editions/darwin_temple/), III.407-410.



Because organisms' innate imitative processes allow them to synthesize new ideas and transform the internal and external conditions of their own existence, Darwin's physiology naturalizes the mutual expansions of liberty and technological development. Though elsewhere in the poem Darwin acknowledges that states may repress their subjects through various policies and apparatuses, an individual's liberty does not derive from God-given rights for which states become responsible. Instead liberty is coextensive with individuals' own volitional capacities and the limits imposed by external conditions such as the tools and resources they can access or political constraints on their actions. Like Smith, Darwin believes that liberty expands concurrently with the progress of opulence. The collective progress of a society's volitional capacities is reflected in its stadial mode of production which determines its socio-economic order.<sup>36</sup>

A more abstract, nominally natural order seemed discoverable in the correspondence between the aesthetic beauty of landscapes improved according to naturalistic design principles and the moral beauty and fitness to rule of the estate-owners who oversaw their improvement. William Mason's (1724-1797) georgic poem *The English Garden* (1782) argued for the naturalistic aesthetic which asserted that landscapers should only seek to refine nature's own beauty by harmonizing excessive irregularities or creating them when few interesting features exist. This aesthetic captured by the Hogarthian principle of unity in variety or, in Mason's terms, "Simplicity" contrasted with the highly formal and geometric French gardens which advocates of naturalism disdained for their association with not only arbitrary and unnatural taste

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<sup>36</sup> Darwin, like many of the authors I discuss, posited a version of stadialism, a form of conjectural history popular in the eighteenth century, which asserted that societies pass through predictable modes of subsistence usually beginning with hunting and gathering and concluding with commerce. Stadialism is associated with progressive, Whig history and moral philosophy, because it tends to undermine political absolutism by reading aspects of the socio-economic order including government to be partly determined by the mode of subsistence.

but also arbitrary despotism.<sup>37</sup> Rather than performing farmers' manual labor or the aesthetic labor of poetry, landowners who improved their estates in the naturalistic style demonstrated a disinterested taste heedless of transient, French fashions or the garish excesses and grotesqueries associated with recently popular Chinese gardens. Large, naturalistic landscape gardens conveyed their proprietors' taste and freedom from mercenary interests. The supposed beauty and coherence of their composition announced their owners right to rule. Though naturalistic landscapes implicitly legitimized oligarchy, they also conveyed that fit politicians foster the public good by pursuing benevolent, light-handed government administration.

Whereas the first method by which georgics delimit states' influence over the economy involves defining alternative, natural sources of socio-economic stability, the second method more directly addresses states' durability and functionality. We have already seen Locke's claim that states exist at the will of polities bound by social contracts and persist to the extent that they adequately served the interests of their subjects as defined by natural law. Lacking absolute authority, states may fall due to historical contingencies such as war but also because they lack moral legitimacy and deserve to be dissolved by the body politic. *The Seasons* acknowledges this susceptibility by referring to the rise and decline of nations on the strength of their political leaders. For example, "SOLON the next, who built his Common-Weal / On Equity's wide Base; by *tender* Laws / A lively People curbing..." compares favorably with Julius Caesar whose excessive self-love allowed a proud, Roman republic to transform into a corrupt, vulnerable, and unstable empire.<sup>38</sup> Mason too rests a nation's stability on the virtues of its politicians which he demonstrates in a vignette that sees Alexander the Great grant the humble gardener Abdalonimus the title of king of Sidon. States whose corruption and tyranny disenfranchise subjects, steal

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<sup>37</sup> William Mason, *The English Garden: A Poem in Four Books* (York: A. Ward, 1783), I.1.

<sup>38</sup> Thomson, *Winter*, II.446-448.

their liberty, and prevent labor and commerce from contributing to common prosperity undermine the public good and sow the seeds of their own ruin. By contrast, political and economic liberalism and the ideal of liberty create a challenge for states which Quesnay and Smith recognized. Smith in particular observed that states must do everything possible to ensure the progress of opulence up to and including indirectly influencing their behavior through incentivizing infrastructure and public education. However, in attempting to support an optimal economy, states cannot directly intervene in the economy for fear of disrupting the natural flows of goods which enrich the nation and especially of infringing on subjects' rights. Government must thus be viewed as a political technology as open-ended as the progress of technology itself, one which requires constant elaboration and refinement in order for it to best serve the socio-economic order.

My dissertation attempts to tell a part of the story of political economy's depoliticization. From the perspective of philosophers addressing politico-economic topics, natural laws became the bases for the development of statecraft oriented toward economic and political liberalism. These liberalisms at once proposed that states remained legitimate to the extent that they served the economic interests of their polities and that doing so only required the establishment of state apparatuses sufficient to protect and guide rational economic behavior. British georgics reinforced this post-mercantilist view of statecraft though only rarely by directly addressing British state apparatuses. When they do so, they typically critique only the most egregious institutions needing reform such as the legalized slave trade or the penal system. Instead, georgics increasingly leaned on natural philosophy and the fine arts to support the idea that, given adequate government oversight of liberties, not only stability but progress would ensue from the independent interests of the subjects comprising Britain's vast and complex socio-

economic order. Reading georgics together with politico-economic treatises allows us to see that the georgic's prospective, optimistic discourse of liberty, innovation, and prosperity validated the work of liberal statecraft which proceeded by developing more complex and subtle apparatus for regulating and policing the body politic.

My first chapter addresses Locke, whose influential revision of natural law and liberty threads through the remaining texts. I argue that studies of Locke's labor theory of property have given inadequate attention to volition. Locke's *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* describes volition as a prerequisite for liberty, which also provides him with a mechanism for naturalizing the efficient use of resources. Locke's tacit assumption that appropriation depends on volition demonstrates that he sought a natural mechanism for justifying large wealth gaps and assuages his own anxiety that resources may not always be used to serve the public good. I also observe that recognizing the role of volition in the labor theory strengthens the argument of scholars who side with the workmanship model interpretation of labor theory over those who side with the mixing model interpretation.

Locke's understanding of natural laws and rights provides a foundation for my reading of Thomson's *The Seasons* in my second chapter. I argue that Thomson unfavorably compares the imperfect moral authority of provisional state governments with the immutable and absolute moral authority of natural laws. Rather than expounding on natural laws themselves, he represents their force by analogizing them with the physical laws whose own force are expressed by their effects on a variety of natural phenomena depicted in the poem. Thomson also indirectly describes natural laws by comparing them to timeless virtues which politicians must aspire to embody. Whereas nature's moral and physical laws are eternal and can be difficult to comprehend, he attempts to show that the work of natural philosophy coincides with humanity's

continuously improving ability to provisionally harness and benefit from nature's all-comprehending benevolence. Two allegorical genealogies of technological progress signify the gradual emergence of provisional socio-economic order and prosperity; such development recuperates the cycles of summer growth and winter waste which remind the reader of the impermanence of all natural and artificial things. Finally, I show that Thomson applies his optimistic sense of gradual progress to the work of government, which he conveys to be yet another technology susceptible to improvement and decline. He cites glorious empires that passed like the seasons, because the rulers neglected their natural law-based obligations to prioritize the public good by securing their peoples' liberty. Still, he retains hope that Britain remains a beacon, however imperfect, of liberty and progress.

My third chapter demonstrates that the disciplines of economics and political economy emerge already largely committed to economic liberalism. I first introduce the fundamentals of Quesnay's theory of Physiocracy. I show that while he insisted on free trade, his economic theories were both politico-economic and homeostatic. Because he identifies his economic science as disclosing natural laws, he insists that its maintenance requires the support of an absolutist, monarchic form of government he called legal despotism. In *Le despotisme de la Chine* (1767) he proposes that China's imperial government is the best historical expression of his agriculture-based political economy, which moreover requires a fixed, triadic division of labor between farmers, merchants and artisans, and a land-owning aristocracy. I then show that Smith's revisions of Quesnay's theories of wealth-production and the division of labor produced a much more historically-informed theory of political economy. While the progress of opulence offers boons, it also produces negative unintended consequences. Smith reinforces the narrative I develop of the recognition of state's mutable, technological character by arguing that

governments must develop new apparatuses for managing the consequences which arise as society's enter new, stadial modes of production. Interestingly, we find that the crucial state apparatuses of infrastructure and public education, which Quesnay considered key to legal despotism, also suit Smith's version of modern, commercial liberalism. However, Smith's open-ended political economy acknowledged that governments will need to continuously adapt and grow in response to new unintended consequences incurred by the progress of opulence.

My fourth chapter introduces the practice of naturalistic landscaping with reference to Horace Walpole's (1717-1797) treatise *The History of the Modern Taste in Gardening* (1780). I use his text to demonstrate his assertion that unity in variety is an artistic principle of beauty and pleasure discoverable in nature itself, but which benefits from the improving work of human labor. However, this labor as well as any indication of the land's economic utility requires obfuscation in order to maintain the façade of unity and order. His text also usefully demonstrates that, though lower social orders could develop an appreciative taste, only those with the enormous wealth adequate to landscaping country estates could provide evidence for the virtue connoted by good taste. Mason's georgic, *The English Garden*, reaffirms each of these points but also makes far more explicit Walpole's implication that naturalistic landscaping demonstrates a person's fitness to rule. I make this case with reference to two vignettes in the poem which depict these proprietor-politicians. I also introduce the concept of the georgic garden, which emblemizes the British georgic's decentering of toilsome, manual labor with alternative, pleasurable, often intellectual forms of labor. I close by arguing that Mason uses the classical figure of the *genius loci*, which exhibits passive and active traits, to elaborate the passive and active aspects of both sides of the proprietor-politician. Mason proprietor-politician thereby presents a rough model of both economic and political liberalism in (in)action.

My fifth chapter argues that Darwin's georgic poem, *The Temple of Nature*, locates order in the physiological model he applies to all organic life. The model's two principles, hedonism and imitation, cooperate to explain transformations as small as an organism's integration of a sensation and as large as the evolution from species into another. It also allows him to assert the continuity between humans' acquisition of technical skills and their innovation of technological instruments. Among these instruments, he highlights the particular utility of language for exchanging and developing ideas which together increase the volitional capacity of pleasure-seeking humans. Darwin also employs the figure of the georgic garden to signify the dominion of pleasure which his physiology underwrites. Moreover, the revaluation of pleasure participates in his own revision of georgic poetry. Though his proliferating footnotes strove to explain his poetic figures for scientific ideas, he also considered human reason inadequate to the task of grasping the essential truths regarding the material world. Most importantly, comprehensive understanding of pleasure, which originates organic life and drives its progress, must also be foreclosed and so is properly represented if not mostly strictly understood by means of mythopoeia. Consequently, Darwin authorizes a much larger role in the georgic garden for myth, which he exploits in order to anticipate a future, nigh-Edenic age made glorious by the flourishing of liberty and wealth.

## Chapter 1

### 1 Volition and Appropriation in John Locke's Labor Theory of Property

#### 1.1 *Something that is his own*

My introduction identified thematic overlaps between some eighteenth-century, British, georgic poems and roughly contemporaneous politico-economic theory. Among their shared ideas, the efficient exploitation of natural resources and human labor is particularly important, and poems like James Thomson's *The Seasons* and Erasmus Darwin's *The Botanic Garden* increasingly focused on the potential for natural-philosophical discoveries and technological innovations to improve such exploitation. Various poets and philosophers also questioned pleasure's function in regard to the socio-economic order by, for example, asking if pleasures could be moral ends in themselves or whether pleasure served higher purposes determined by God's moral order. Due in part to eighteenth-century Britain's revolutionary advances in economic theory and the life sciences, and also due in part to its constitutional discomfort with absolute monarchy, georgic poets and political economists took interest in empirically observed forces and systems at least partially attributable to nature and which seemed to contribute to socio-economic stability. The consequence of such interests and approaches was, especially in georgics, to examine almost any factor, whether geographic, physiological, or otherwise that might influence the economy while disregarding or actively seeking to establish limits on a government's moral or pragmatic justifications for intervening in the nation's economic affairs.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> For example, Erasmus Darwin's poem *The Temple of Nature* attributes sympathy, sociability, and various forms of cultural and economic progress to physiological operations innate in complex organisms. Georgics fold human economies into wider ecological and moral systems characterized by order and harmony and which reduce the importance of political bonds and legal institutions.



Georgics thus reflect a native commitment to economic liberalism visible in much early, British politico-economic thought. I therefore begin my project by discussing John Locke's arguments for natural law and natural, property rights in order to ground my later discussions of the imagined importance for socio-economic stability of land, labor, and liberty in georgic poems.

Given these shared interests in extra-governmental sources of socio-economic order, I read Locke as a key voice in this depoliticization of politico-economic topics, because his labor theory of property in *Two Treatises of Government* claims that individuals in the state of nature can appropriate and use material goods without the consent of others by simply mixing their own labor with an object. This theory has given rise to lively debates as to whether Locke makes a convincing, pragmatic argument or one that is coherent in the context of his other beliefs. This is how he describes appropriation:

§ 27. Though the earth, and all inferior creatures, be common to all men, yet every man has a property in his own person: this no body has any right to but himself. The labour of his body, and the work of his hands, we may say, are properly his. Whatsoever then he removes out of the state that nature hath provided, and left it in, he hath mixed his labour with, and joined to it something that is his own, and thereby makes it his property. It being by him removed from the common state nature hath placed it in, it hath by this labour something annexed to it that excludes the common right of other men. For this labour being the unquestionable property of the labourer, no man but he can have a right to what that is once joined to, at least where there is enough, and as good, left in common for others.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government and A Letter Concerning Toleration* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), II.v.27.

I am particularly interested in his use of the word “something” which appears twice. The first use in the passage’s third sentence ostensibly refers to the labor that innately belongs to individuals and that by being “joined to” an object appropriates it. However, the following sentence suggests that labor bears an additional element which “excludes the common right of other men” to use and benefit from the object.<sup>41</sup> This chapter argues that supplying the concept of volition, which Locke’s *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1689) defines as an act of willing that executes an action, fits within and strengthens a coherent interpretation of the labor theory of property called the workmanship model, an interpretation which I find to be more convincing than its main alternative, the mixing model. Additionally, my reading contributes to my larger argument by providing an example of an author who marginalizes government’s influence over an increasingly autonomous and private, economic domain by offering alternative, nominally apolitical explanations for the national economy’s orderly operation. For Locke, volition is a quasi-physiological attribute of humans which enables them to act in a rational, moral manner. My chapter also shows that volition’s role in the labor theory exposes Locke’s anxiety that wealth may be misused and wasted, which forces him to justify its concentration in the hands of an economic elite based on the assumption that concentration permits its more efficient use. Reading the labor theory of property as implying volition’s role in appropriation frames the hard-to-falsify nature of Locke’s theories of appropriation; one may own something because the act of appropriation depends on the owner’s volitional intent to rationally exploit it in the future. Thus, in defending a natural, common right to appropriation that preempts the need for social contracts and rebuts arbitrary acts of government, Locke’s labor

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<sup>41</sup> Another potential reading could supply natural right for the unspecified “something.” This would not change my fundamental argument that volition remains a necessary component for that natural right to be the “something annexed to” the object.

theory is a de facto, conservative justification for preserving domestic, economic power relations and foreign, colonial expropriation.

I begin by describing the labor theory of property's nominal function as a plank in Locke's rejection of absolute monarchy. Doing so allows me to introduce the assumptions and justifications informing his belief that the labor theory is necessary for enabling humans to fulfill their obligations to the natural laws created by God. I use natural law as a frame for establishing the mutual arguments for the workmanship and mixing interpretations. I propose that the assumptions determining the labor theory favor a reading in which the workmanship model incorporates the mixing model, because the workmanship model better comports with Locke's theory of natural law, while the mixing model remains useful for explaining labor's ability carry and transfer volition as a necessary component in appropriation. Locke's *Essay* claims that we empirically know that volition helps to filter potentially wayward desires so that our actions conform with natural law. Further, the dependence of natural property rights on agents' intent to efficiently exploit property naturalizes calculative rationality, a concept I borrow from Max Weber to signify the mastering and efficient instrumentalization of all available resources; Locke imagined such instrumentalization served the public good as obligated by natural law.<sup>42</sup> Volition therefore offers Locke a quasi-physiological lever which allows him to claim that the uneven

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<sup>42</sup> Max Weber, *Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, eds. Hans H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1946), 139. John Dunn addresses calculative rationality as a means to pursue the moral obligation to pursue goods and moral righteousness:

Although it is true that Locke held a broadly hedonistic theory of the will from 1676 on and that this led him to analyze human obligation as the rationally calculated maximization of individual utility, it is essential to note that he believed that rational men would spend a considerable portion of their time contemplating rewards and punishments of a future state. It is true that he analyses the obligations to temperance or charity as instances of prudently delaying gratification, investments made in search of greater eventual profits.

John Dunn, *The Political Thought of John Locke: An Historical Account of the Argument of the 'Two Treatises of Government'* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 195.

distributions of wealth which universal, equitable property rights tend to cause should also theoretically serve society's interests by improving material conditions for the whole nation. Volition's bearing of reason into the socio-economic order offers Locke comfort in his assumptions that concentrated wealth optimizes prosperity, validates ownership, and satisfies natural laws.

Locke's labor theory functions in support of *Two Treatises*'s broader refutation of Robert Filmer's (1588-1683) defense of royal absolutism in *Patriarcha* (1680). The crux of Filmer's argument relevant to our discussion is that all monarchs descend from Adam and consequently inherit political power over their kingdoms equivalent to Adam's absolute rule over his household.<sup>43</sup> Therefore, subjects only own lands at a monarch's pleasure and have no recourse against arbitrary acts of expropriation. In addition to Locke's counterargument that monarchs instead rule at the pleasure of a body politic formed by a social contract, the labor theory of property argues that property depends neither on a monarch's grant nor even on an agreement between members of a society. Instead, all reasonable people possess a bundle of natural rights which accords them certain freedoms:

§ 87. Man being born, as has been proved, with a title to perfect freedom, and uncontrolled enjoyment of all the rights and privileges of the law of nature, equally with any other man, or number of men in the world, hath by nature a power, not only to

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<sup>43</sup> *Suarez* proceeds, and tells us, That in Process of Time, *Adam* had compleat *Oeconomical* Power. I know not what this compleat *Oeconomical* Power is, nor how, or what it doth really and essentially differ from Political: If *Adam* did, or might exercise the same Jurisdiction, which a King doth now in a Commonwealth, then the Kinds of Power are not distinct; and though they may receive an Accidental Difference by the Amplitude, or Extent of the Bounds of the One beyond the Other; yet since the like Difference is also found in *Political* Estates, It follows that *Oeconomical* and *Political* Power, differ no otherwise, than a Little Commonweal differs from a Great One. Sir Robert Filmer, *Patriarcha; of the Natural Power of Kings. By the Learned Sir Robert Filmer Baronet* (London: Richard Chiswell, 1680), II.2. <https://oll.libertyfund.org/titles/221>. 12/17/2019.

preserve his property, that is, his life, liberty, and estate, against the injuries and attempts of other men. (*Two Treatises*, II.vii.87)

Natural rights are themselves a kind of immaterial property granted by God in part to ensure that people do not impose on each other's obligated self-preservation. Though Locke does not list labor in this passage, my first quote identified labor as another form of personal property over which a person has a natural right and which allows one to appropriate material goods necessary for self-preservation. To better understand how and why Locke proposes his labor theory of property to functions as it does, we must first be familiar with his belief that natural rights are subservient to natural law.

## 1.2 *Natural law and natural rights*

Prior to Locke, moral philosophy of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was dominated by natural law theories still influenced by a legalistic discourse derived from Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274). Natural law was premised on the beliefs that by observing the world human reason could extrapolate God's existence and that both humans and the moral laws which rule them had been made by God.<sup>44</sup> Apropos of legalism, Samuel Pufendorf was much respected by Locke and preceded him in subscribing to voluntarism, the theory that God's willful creation of humans juridically obliges them to follow his laws.<sup>45</sup> In *Essays on the Law of Nature*

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<sup>44</sup> Locke asserted that reason should be able to comprehend and codify the natural laws of morality as it would other demonstrable sciences such as mathematics. Natural laws should be coherent, and demonstrable, because, according to Locke, morals are complex, archetypal, and adequate modes which humans (re)create through their own reasoning. However, Locke does not perform the demonstration himself and ultimately defaults to supplementing human reason with divine revelation to confirm the universal, natural laws which God wills. Knud Haakonssen, *Natural Law and Moral Philosophy: From Grotius to the Scottish Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 37.

<sup>45</sup> Voluntarists like Grotius (1583-1645) and Pufendorf were opposed to intellectualists like Leibniz (1646-1716) who considered reason to be more important than will. However, reason remains crucial for voluntarists, because only reasonable creatures can understand and be subject to laws. Dunn argues that

Locke argues that certain exertions of will can establish persistent influence over a thing or person:

...obligation seems to consist in...the authority and dominion which someone has over another, either by natural right and the right of creation, as when all things are justly subject to that by which they have first been made and also are constantly preserved; or by the right of donation, as when God, to whom all things belong, has transferred part of his dominion to someone and granted the right to give orders to the first-born, for example, and to monarchs...<sup>46</sup>

Locke's quote justifies his voluntarism by referring to the concept of maker's rights borrowed from Francis Bacon, which will be important for understanding volition and the workmanship model of appropriation.<sup>47</sup> Maker's rights are predicated on the Aristotelian idea that knowledge of an object and its powers grants its maker control over that object. Because God creates humans with capacities such as reason and rights, those capacities (and humans themselves) necessarily exist for the purpose of fulfilling God's ends which he defines by creating natural laws. Specifically referring to human reason's purpose in helping people conform to natural law, John Colman writes of Locke's voluntarism:

...all things are designed to fulfil some function and, as man's distinguishing characteristic is his rationality, it follows that his function is to act in accordance with reason. Moreover, besides positive laws which differ from society to society, we believe

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Locke switches from intellectualism to voluntarism and Tully also sees both intellectualism (or "rationalism") and voluntarism to be involved in Locke's use of natural law. Dunn, *The Political Thought of John Locke*, 188; James Tully, *A Discourse on Property: John Locke and his adversaries* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 41.

<sup>46</sup> John Locke, *Locke: Political Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 117-118.

<sup>47</sup> For a fuller discussion of maker's rights, see Antonio Pérez-Ramos, *Francis Bacon's Idea of Science and the Maker's Knowledge Tradition* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988).

there are laws which have validity everywhere; these must constitute the universal law of nature. That men act as if there were no law of nature or disagree as to what the law demands does not cast doubt on its existence, for there are many factors which can hinder the operation of reason in the individual.<sup>48</sup>

Reason serves humans by helping them to decipher natural law, but even if it cannot it still must be employed in following and fulfilling them as best as possible by, for example, contributing to the commonwealth. In light of Locke's voluntarism, we should regard natural rights as powers provisionally "granted" to humans by God as means for following natural laws.<sup>49</sup> Reviewing Locke's conception of natural rights helps to explain that the right to possess property must depend on volition so that the material resources also granted by God can be put to their best uses for the common good.

Pufendorf can again helpfully frame our topic of liberty-granting, natural rights and specifically the right of appropriation.<sup>50</sup> His key natural right (*ius*) of *libertas* establishes a "power over one's own actions," which coincides with a natural law forbidding injuring or restricting another person's actions.<sup>51</sup> According to Pufendorf, I may act freely and unhindered (though am obliged to not harm others) and may even use resources without others' consent. However, *libertas* cannot create private property or prevent others from using those same

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<sup>48</sup> John Colman, *John Locke's Moral Philosophy* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1983), 29.

<sup>49</sup> My claim that Locke subjects natural rights to natural law stakes a position in a long, critical debate as to whether Locke believed that God indeed grants humans natural rights so that they may fulfill the obligations of natural law or whether he approaches Hobbes' position by defining natural rights in a manner which insulates people from social obligations and anticipates a thoroughly individualist, liberal autonomy.

<sup>50</sup> Also, because Locke's definition of liberty takes us into the quasi-physiology of the *Essay* which is better understood in the context of volition.

<sup>51</sup> Haakonssen, *Natural Law and Moral Philosophy*, 40.

resources.<sup>52</sup> Regarding property in goods, Locke's concern is to establish a justification that allows a person a natural use right to property *and also* a natural exclusory right to prevent its expropriation by another person. Further, natural law obliges that appropriation must not infringe on others' equivalent rights to a common pool of resources. Locke considers this exclusory right vital to self-preservation, because haphazard expropriation threatens self-preservation, so his labor theory avoids dependence on social contracts or the tacit consent of others. Locke poses the stakes: "there must of necessity be a means to appropriate them some way or other before they can be of any use, or at all beneficial to any particular man." Therefore, Lockean private property does not depend on a state's positive laws but is instead appropriated by a freely executed act of labor. As the labor theory states, "the labour of his body and the work of his hands, we may say, are properly his," and are therefore already circumscribed by a natural right. When mixing this labor and "something" else with a good, the person's natural right encompasses the good and "excludes the common right of other men" as long as "there is enough, and as good, left in common for others" (*Two Treatises*, II.v.26). This final phrase, known as the enough-and-as-good proviso, reinforces the notion consistent with voluntarism that natural rights operate as accessories to the fulfillment of natural laws and may be negated in part or whole should they fail to serve those laws. Preventing others from surviving by hoarding resources represents such as failure, because there must be "enough" resources left for others to use. However, the labor theory of property not only fosters self-preservation, which in any case is motivated by self-interest, it also compels individuals to put their property to the best possible use for society's collective prosperity, a position supported by Locke's labor theory.

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<sup>52</sup> This is because Pufendorf believed that private property in goods can only exist after social contracts have been formed.



Locke raises two points in the chapter “Of Property” related by their nominal interest in ensuring the efficient use of property for the sake of the public good. Locke supports his labor theory by claiming firstly that a persistent property right in a resource appropriated by a person’s labor is the best way to ensure a person’s optimal contribution to the commonwealth and secondly that wasting a possessed resource invalidates a person’s right to that resource. Two initial quotes reflect that humans are obliged to recognize that God created the world’s resources for the good of all people:

God, who hath given the world to men in common, hath also given them reason to make use of it to the best advantage of life and convenience. The earth, and all that is therein, is given to men for the support and comfort of their being. (*Two Treatises*, II.v.26)

§34. God gave the world to men in common; but since he gave it to them for their benefit, and the greatest conveniences of life they were capable to draw from it, it cannot be supposed he meant it should always remain common and uncultivated. He gave it to the use of the industrious and rational, (and labour was to be his title to it). (*Two Treatises*, II.v.34)

Both quotes use superlatives emphasizing that resources should be maximally exploited by those who appropriate them. “[B]est advantage of life and convenience,” “support and comfort,” and “greatest conveniences of life” insist that humans should not only survive but fully enjoy the world’s potential, material benefits by means of the “industrious and rational labor” that not only grants “title” but improves resources’ ability to satisfy various desires. The words used in the passages’ first sentences closely parallel each other and emphasize that Locke considers that though natural property rights presume a proprietor’s self-serving, calculative rationality in the

good's use, the labor theory of property's higher function ensures that more wealth is produced so that none may be without life's necessities. *Two Treatises* does not define an exact, natural, circulatory mechanism by which redistribution occurs<sup>53</sup>, but Locke is satisfied to emphasize that labor produces such exponential improvements in the total available wealth, such that the poor may nevertheless benefit and account themselves better off than kings in uncivilized lands:

...he who appropriates land to himself by his labour, does not lessen, but increase the common stock of mankind: for the provisions serving to the support of human life, produced by one acre of enclosed and cultivated land, are (to speak much within compass) ten times more than those which are yielded by an acre of land of an equal richness lying waste in common. And therefore he that encloses land, and has a greater plenty of the conveniencies of life from ten acres, than he could have from an hundred left to nature, may truly be said to give ninety acres to mankind. (*Two Treatises*, II.v.37)

The most important of the several points Locke makes in this passage is that land appropriated by rationally employed labor will significantly increase the total available wealth theoretically available to a community. His reference to enclosure indicates that he had in mind an English upper class who had recently benefited from Acts of governments allowing them to incorporate

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<sup>53</sup> Popular consent to the use of money and wage-labor invalidates the as-much-and-as-good proviso, because proprietors can compensate for resource-scarcity by paying laborers with nonperishable money. Moreover, although introducing money allows agents to exchange perishable or improvable goods for potentially limitless sums of durable wealth, I would argue that the waste proviso retains its force for many goods even beyond the institution of money. Several scholars have recognized that Locke was concerned for the circulatory velocity of money, or the rate at which money changes hands during trade, which means that slow-moving money could in some sense be wasted by inadequately facilitating the circulation, incorporation, and optimization of other, improvable goods. Karen Iversen Vaughn, *John Locke: Economist and Social Scientist* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 41; Terence Hutchison, *Before Adam Smith: The Emergence of Political Economy, 1662-1776* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988), 63; Tony Aspromourgos, *On the Origins of Classical Economics: Distribution and value from William Petty to Adam Smith* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 114.

common land into their private property and who had been privately doing so well before.<sup>54</sup> Among enclosure's effects was to force impoverished people off of land and to reduce the opportunities of others to supplement their income by, for example, selling firewood collected from the commons.<sup>55</sup>

Locke supports theoretical appropriation in a state of nature and practical enclosures in seventeenth-century England by raising the specter of waste. The passage states that unappropriated land is necessarily wasted, but also implies that an owner's natural right to appropriated land that remains inadequately exploited may be justifiably nullified and that the land be expropriated. These concerns over utility are reflected in what scholars call Locke's waste or spoliation proviso:

... whatsoever [an owner] tilled and reaped, laid up and made use of, before it spoiled, that was his peculiar right; whatsoever he enclosed, and could feed, and make use of, the cattle and product was also his. But if either the grass of his enclosure rotted on the ground, or the fruit of his planting perished without gathering and laying up; this part of the earth, notwithstanding his enclosure, was still to be looked on as waste, and might be the possession of any other. (*Two Treatises*, II.v.38)

Locke again allows for enclosure which, given the potential for tenants to work the fields in a system of wages and rents, does little to limit the likelihood of massive wealth concentration.

Moreover, the waste proviso justifies expropriation of land in the Americas from native peoples

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<sup>54</sup> According to Rachel Crawford, even by 1550, nearly half of English land had been enclosed. In following centuries, Inclosure Acts facilitated this process which occurred in waves. Charles I would undertake one such effort in the 1630s and two others would take place in the latter half of the eighteenth century. Rachel Crawford, *Poetry, Enclosure, and the Vernacular Landscape, 1700-1830* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 46-48; 11.

<sup>55</sup> E. P. Thompson provides a useful summary of this transition in terms of the relation between common and positive law and the cultural and economic effects of new laws supporting enclosure. E. P. Thompson, *Customs in Common* (Middlesex, Penguin Books, 1993), 97-138.

based on the argument that higher yielding, European farming techniques better satisfy the obligation industriously and rationally to cultivate the land.<sup>56</sup> While Matthew H. Kramer critiques the labor theory of property's philosophical validity as the optimal means for promoting economic efficiency, he notes that "Locke protractedly argued that refinements and transformations induced by toil should receive overwhelming credit for the conveniences that served human wants" and that such credit justified an owner's proprietary use rights.<sup>57</sup> Locke does not always differentiate between increases of wealth based on currently available advantages like economies of scale as opposed to innovative technologies; still, he consistently refers to increased utility, value, and production as outcomes of rational labor.<sup>58</sup> The value added by labor represents a source of socio-economic stability, because quantitative increases of

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<sup>56</sup> Andrew Fitzmaurice presents a version of this position while discussing Locke's justification for colonization. Andrew Fitzmaurice, *Sovereignty, Property and Empire, 1500-2000* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 116. Locke's defends his labor theory of property in part by arguing that it will be improve quality of life through a body politic:

There cannot be a clearer demonstration of any thing, than several nations of the Americans are of this, who are rich in land, and poor in all the comforts of life ; whom nature having furnished as liberally as any other people with the materials of plenty, *i. e.* a fruitful soil, apt to produce in abundance what might serve for food, raiment, and delight ; yet, for want of improving it by labour, have not one-hundredth part of the conveniencies we enjoy: and a king of a large and fruitful territory there feeds, lodges, and is clad worse than a day-labourer in England. (*Two Treatises*, II.v.41)

<sup>57</sup> Matthew H. Kramer, *John Locke and the origins of private property: Philosophical Explorations of Individualism, Community, and Equality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 112.

<sup>58</sup> Locke emphasizes as much in another example:

...for whatever bread is more worth than acorns, wine than water, and cloth or silk than leaves, skins, or moss, that is wholly owing to labour and industry; the one of these being the food and raiment which unassisted nature furnishes us with; the other provisions which our industry and pains prepare for us, which how much they exceed the other in value, when any one hath computed, he will then see how much labour makes the far greatest part of the value of things we enjoy in this world; and the ground which produces the materials is scarce to be reckoned in as any, or, at most but a very small part of it; so little, that even amongst us, land that is left wholly to nature, that hath no improvement of pasturage, tillage, or planting, is called, as indeed it is, waste; and we shall find the benefit of it amount to little more than nothing. (*Two Treatises*, II.v.42)

a society's aggregate wealth and improvements to its general quality of life should limit social unrest otherwise caused by lack of life's necessities.

According to Locke's labor theory of property, labor, which we now know grants property rights due in part to its potential for increasing wealth, nominally appropriates resources by being mixed with an object. As mentioned, critics have argued over the premises which Locke imagined giving appropriative acts their efficacy. I reiterate that supplying Locke's concept of volition for the unspecific "something" that labour "annexe[s]" offers a valid reading of the labor theory of property and supports my claim that Locke deployed quasi-physiological concepts in order to dissociate socio-economic stability from dependence on the state's authority or its policies. Moreover, my reading strengthens the case that Locke considered the workmanship model firmer ground from which to argue than the mixing model.

To preview my rationale for claiming volition's importance for appropriative labor, I argue that mixing remains a valid method for understanding the actual act of appropriation if we understand it to be nested within and operating under the voluntarist principles which accord the workmanship model its higher authority. I borrow Adam S. Seagrave's nesting model which he applies to the more general problem of whether theories of natural rights serve or destabilize natural laws. However, he does not elaborate its potential implications for Locke's labor theory of property which requires a fuller demonstration of the ways in which Lockean, natural, property rights serve the public good. In Seagrave's reading, each human is doubly-owned in a "nested" system of possession, because individuals "make" their own, accountable, personal identity through continuity of consciousness while God makes the material, natural world, its laws, and each human body.<sup>59</sup> Consequently, humans possess a form of maker's rights which

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<sup>59</sup> To explain more fully, Seagrave's joint, "nested" ownership of individuals depends on the workmanship model's basis in maker's rights, which establish an apolitical, juridical obligation of object

weakly reflect the maker's rights of God. Humans' maker's rights allow them the right to make unclaimed goods their property by mixing their labor with them rather than making them, but keeps humans subject to God's own claims over all of his created things. It will be necessary to summarize the workmanship and mixing model's respective claims to understand why the workmanship model is the more reasonable premise on which Locke to base a natural property right.

### 1.3 *The two models*

The workmanship model, first argued by James Tully and usefully elaborated by Gopal Sreenivasan, interprets maker's rights, which are foundational for Locke's voluntarism, as we have seen, as also necessary to establish the efficacy of appropriation.<sup>60</sup> Again, humans are subject to natural law because both are created through the force of God's omnipotent will, which endows him with maker's rights over his creations. Locke refers to workmanship and maker's rights in his *Two Treatises*: "for men being all the workmanship of one omnipotent and infinitely wise Maker; all the servants of one sovereign Master, sent into the world by his order, and about his business; they are his property, whose workmanship they are, made to last during

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to maker. Nested ownership of individuals by both themselves and God supports my contention that volitional liberty operates in Locke's voluntarist, political philosophy by enabling economic agency while correspondingly making agents accountable to natural and political laws. Seagrave addresses the crux of autonomy-with-obligations by first noting that God initially creates humanity *en masse* which comports with Locke's beliefs in divine maker's rights and, indirectly, voluntarism. God's creation and consequent ownership over humans limit their autonomous ability to make, own, and use property including property in their selves, limits codified by God's will in natural laws. God also grants humans volitional liberty and reason, which are prerequisites for extending the limited rights of self-ownership to property, for accessing "the possibility of a demonstrative science of morality," and to ensure a person's accountability to a higher, moral authority whether it be God's law or the state's civil law. S. Adam Seagrave, "Locke on the Law of Nature and Natural Rights," in *A Companion to Locke*, ed. Matthew Stuart (West Sussex: Wiley Blackwell, 2016), 386-389.

<sup>60</sup> Tully, *A Discourse on Property*, 35-8; Gopal Sreenivasan, *The Limits of Lockean Rights in Property* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 69.

his, not another's pleasure..." (*Two Treatises*, II.ii.6). God's willful, *ex nihilo* creation of all things grants him final determination over the means and ends of those creations. The means he creates in humans include volition, liberty, and reason, each of which Locke describes in the *Essay*'s chapter "Of Power." Humans also willfully exert labor, but because they lack God's divine understanding and creative power such labor only grants a limited mastery over objects, which natural law supersedes. For Sreenivasan, rational, willful making slides from divine creation to non-omniscient crafting to a mere mixing that may be achieved by acts as simple as gathering acorns. He notes that Locke blurs making and mixing but argues for making's preeminence by stating that Locke's "making processes can also be identified as mixing processes, but not all mixing processes can be identified as making processes."<sup>61</sup> This reading of mixing as a weaker version of making is reflected in the imperfection of human reason, which necessarily limits the maker's knowledge required to give humans absolute, maker's rights over their property. Crucially, human labor cannot create *ex nihilo*, but only, in addition to appropriation, use their labor to add value. In sum, Locke's voluntarism is supported by his statement that God's will grants Him absolute maker's rights which He exerts by imposing on humans the obligations set by natural laws. Locke's communitarian insistence that physical property's primary function is to serve the public good rather than its owner's interests demonstrate his at least nominal deference to natural law, a deference which comports with an interpretation of his labor theory of property that gives the workmanship model priority over the mixing model.

The mixing model remains important to my argument, however, because its nesting inside the workmanship model provided Locke with a way to describe how the labor that is

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<sup>61</sup> Sreenivasan, *The Limits of Lockean Rights in Property*, 83. See also, Tully, *A Discourse on Property*, 35-8.

added to a good can also add volition. The mixing model interprets the labor of theory somewhat more literally than the workmanship model by arguing that mixing one's innately possessed labor with unclaimed objects encompasses those objects within the domain of one's natural property rights. As my discussion of calculative rationality showed, this interpretation also accepts natural rights' subjection to natural law, but generally credits labor's ability to improve the use-value of resources as justification for their appropriation. A. John Simmons offers a representative defense of the mixing model:

What Locke writes about labor suggests that he thinks of labor as free, intentional, purposive action aimed at satisfying needs or supplying the conveniences of life. To "mix" my labor with an object for Locke is simply for me to make productive use of the object within the scope of my labor's purpose.... I bring (part of) nature within my legitimate sphere of self-government by physically imposing my plan for its useful employment upon it. My plan, which is the product of my mental labor, is "mixed" with the object through the purposive activity that constitutes my physical labor.<sup>62</sup>

Simmons addresses two important points in this quote. The first suggests that labor exploits resources' potential utility either through short-term consumption or by making them longer-term factors of production. Though Simmons attests that "it simply makes no sense to talk of literally mixing labor with nature," we should not discount that we can justifiably read Locke's quotes, cited earlier, as intending to mean that the application of labor to a resource often increases its value and is therefore, as Simmons says, productive.<sup>63</sup> Worthier of examination is another point he suggests with the terms "free, intentional, purposive action aimed at satisfying

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<sup>62</sup> A. John Simmons, *Justification and Legitimacy: Essays on Rights and Obligations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 262.

<sup>63</sup> Simmons, *Justification and Legitimacy*, 261.



needs” and “[m]y plan for its useful employment.” Without quite using the word volition, Simmons’s account of the mixing model supports my argument that in being mixed with an object, labor, as the expression of an agent’s volition, executes and thus validates appropriation. He describes the mixing of labor as a willed act the intent of which does not reside only in the initial, willful, appropriative act, but includes a longer-term intention to exploit one’s goods.

Simmons’s prospective terms like “plan” and “aim” also connote something of a demotion of the improving labor Locke deems necessary in the initial act of appropriation. I note this in order to emphasize the initial, appropriative labor’s coincident, at least as important function of bearing volition. With the example of picking up an acorn, Locke minimizes the need for the initial, appropriative labor to add value to the good relative to the benefits derived from its imagined, future exploitation and particularly relative to resources like land, which provide owners with additional goods and rents for generations. Little effort may go into gathering and consuming goods, but a person may spend an afternoon cordoning off several acres of unclaimed land, thereby appropriate it, and profit from it indefinitely as long, given the spoliatio proviso, as it is efficiently exploited. Though labor’s facilitation of exploitation, production, and improvement remains important for maintaining property rights, the demotion of improving labor required for the appropriating act connotes the importance of the volitional intent, which assures Locke, God, and others of a good’s optimal future use. In the case of any good not more or less immediately consumed by its use, the minimal labor Locke requires for appropriation shows that the initial mixing of labor is more proclamatory and promissory than improving and thus implies that appropriative labor’s significance depends on it performing a message-bearing function. The execution of appropriation in the present relies on a future conditional of anticipated exploitation the default of which would pose challenges for any party

seeking to prosecute an expropriation.<sup>64</sup> Turning to Locke's definition of volition, we see that it serves Locke's argument for the labor theory of property by letting him presume landowners' calculative rationality.

#### 1.4 *Volition, calculative rationality, and liberty*

In Locke's view, volition would beneficially coincide with appropriative labor because he understands volition as a power the operation of which theoretically disciplines the desires that originate the volitions for agents' free actions. This reading of volition's role in appropriation lets us see that Locke can justify a natural right of appropriation by imagining that efficiently exploited property necessarily serves the natural law obliging society's preservation by its ability to increase the commonwealth and to promote socio-economic stability. And again, volition's ability to optimize property's exploitation seems to provide means for Locke to assuage his concern that resources may be wasted due to owners' laxity or their immoral desires. In "Of Power," Locke defines volition as a mental capacity that mediates a desire and an intentional action:

We must remember, that Volition, or Willing, is an act of the Mind directing its thought to the production of any Action, and thereby exerting its power to produce it. To avoid multiplying of words, I would crave leave here, under the word Action, to comprehend the forbearance too of any Action proposed; sitting still, or holding one's peace, when walking or speaking are propos'd, though mere forbearances, requiring as much the

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<sup>64</sup> There seems to be a parallel here with Locke's proposed right of revolution. The social contract reinforced by natural rights grants a body politic the theoretical power to dissolve a tyrannical government (as well as itself), but Locke sets the bar so high as to render the idea all but toothless. On the other hand, having seen his country in the throes of civil war, Locke recognized a need for social stability, which he optimistically hinged on the moral, economic rationality of England's landowning, upper class.

determination of the Will, and being often as weighty in their consequences, as the contrary Actions, may, on that consideration, well enough pass for Actions too.<sup>65</sup>

It is worth emphasizing that volition itself is more active and performative than its name might suggest if we read it as analogous to desire or, a shade more active, intent; we can accurately describe volition as an act of willing necessary to execute a desired, intentional action. Volition is not the physical or mental act itself but is *of* the act and occurs all but contemporaneously with actions such as laboring. Neither is volition the pre-existing desire that volitional actions attempt to satisfy. Rather, for a volitional action to occur, two other conditions must be satisfied: one must be at one's liberty, which I will address shortly, and one must, as Locke terms it here, be able to forebear from performing the action.

Forbearing from executing a desired, considered act also constitutes a volitional action, and though it is not precisely the same as suspension, it gestures toward this additional power that gives volition its moral force. Because volition's power to incite rational, calculated actions depends on suspension, Locke is emphatic in presenting suspension's importance and potential benefits:

This seems to me the source of all liberty; in this seems to consist that, which is (as I think improperly) call'd *Free will*. For during this *suspension* of any desire, before the *will* be determined to action, and the action (which follows that determination) done, we have an opportunity to examine, view, and judge of the good or evil of what we are going to do; and when, upon due *Examination*, we have judg'd, we have done our duty, all that we can or ought to do, in pursuit of our happiness; and 'tis not our fault, but a perfection

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<sup>65</sup> John Locke, *The Clarendon Edition of the Works of John Locke: An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* ed. Peter H. Nidditch (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), II.xxi.28.

of our nature to desire, will, and act according to the last result of a fair *Examination*.

(*Essay*, II.xxi.47)

I will take up liberty's dependence on suspension shortly. Again, to be volitional, an act must also be willfully forborne. Suspension occurs between the initial period during which desire lies dormant and the moment when volition initiates an action. Specifically, suspension willfully executes the action of forbearance, which prevents volition from following through on an active action, so to speak. During the interval of suspension, reason scrutinizes the mind's justifications for the initial desire and the morality of the action's predicted outcomes. Suspension thereby offers agents the possibility of correcting their desires and conforming action and outcomes to the moral obligations predetermined by natural law. Agents act morally and rationally by not transgressing natural laws and by performing, among other things, actions economically favorable to society. The ability to judge and choose one's actions exemplifies the obligatory use of God-given reason.<sup>66</sup> Employing reason should cause morally accountable individuals to choose virtuous actions, which Locke defines as "Actions conformable to God's Will, or to the Rule prescribed by God, which is the true and only measure of Vertue, when Vertue is used to signifie what is in its own nature right and good." (*Essay*, I.iii.18)

Our understanding of suspension's ability to interrupt problematic actions should help to clarify why Locke would rely on volition to burnish people's fundamental right to appropriate desired, unclaimed land by doing little more than proclaiming their intention to do so with a potentially negligible act of labor. Locke views humans as hedonistic creatures whose wills are motivated by desire. A perceived lack of pleasure, often attributable to a physical discomfort or

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<sup>66</sup> Shelley Weinberg notes that suspension serves understanding and desire by attuning the interests of individuals both to moral pleasure and also to the "true good" which essentially means reasoning one's way to Heaven's infinite Good by performing socially beneficent actions.<sup>66</sup>

a missing resource, registers as uneasiness that then motivates desire.<sup>67</sup> Locke's faith in empiricism and natural law inclines him to believe that humans can reason their way from perceptions of pleasure and pain to an understanding of Good, Evil, and their obligations to God. Yet the *Essay* registers Locke's concerns about faulty reason and immoral desires. The vicissitudes of the experiences of pleasure and pain all but ensures desire's moral errancy. Namely, immediate pain causes immediate unease, but absence of the Good and its compensation by a train of moderate, potentially spurious pleasures, does not necessarily cause us the unease that would orient our desire toward the Good if we were to adequately consider the consequences of acting on such desires. One should theoretically derive pleasure from exploiting one's property for the public good by, for example, enclosing land, employing the lower ranks to help maximize harvests, and placing profits back into circulation rather than hoarding them. Though some of these activities may be primarily conducive to personal pleasure, they nevertheless contribute to the commonwealth, and one's ability to reflect on hoarding's long-term disadvantages should reduce desire to pursue irrational and anti-social, economic activities. As Locke says, "by a due consideration and examining any good proposed, it is in our power to raise our desires in a due proportion to the value of that good, whereby in its turn, and place, it may come to work upon the *will*, and be pursued" (*Essay*, II.xxi.46).

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<sup>67</sup> "That *Desire* is a state of uneasiness, everyone who reflects on himself, will quickly find" (*Essay*, II.xxi.32). Beginning with revisions in the *Essay*'s second edition, Locke differentiates desiring from willing, the latter term which he equates with volition, since individuals can will the performance of an action which they do not desire, and because willing is integral to any action, whereas a desire does not necessarily compel action. As Stuart points out, Locke specifies in the second edition that desires are oriented toward things, while volitions are necessary for and part of the performance of actions. Unease may motivate a desire to act in one's self-interest, but volition is necessary for *causing* a willful action to occur and may be thought of as an *intentional doing*. Matthew Stuart, *Locke's Metaphysics* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2013), 458-459. Lowe defends Locke's insertion of volition as a layer in too-simple, intentionalist philosophical accounts of agency, since intention does not convey the necessary contemporaneity of volition with the willed action. E. J. Lowe. *Locke: on Human Understanding* (London, Routledge: 1995), 139-140.

Suspension enables agents to correct their desires prior to performing a volitional act; without the potential for suspension acts may neither be considered volitional nor free. Having largely evacuated the need for appropriating labor to immediately exploit or improve goods and because “Of Property” functions as a general defense of contemporary economic conditions,<sup>68</sup> the inclusion of suspension in volition, as I have noted, reassures Locke that appropriative acts are executed with moral intent and that present landowners persistently effect such intentions.

It behooves me to say more about liberty, because Locke defines it in a tellingly different fashion from Pufendorf’s *libertas*, and because liberty will be a keyword throughout my other chapters. Locke’s liberty resembles Pufendorf’s *libertas* in its general contours by defining the ability to act freely and unhindered by external restrictions. However, the first sentence of Locke’s definition of suspension indicates a quasi-physiological precondition, which also appears in his definition of liberty; Locke calls suspension “the source of all liberty” and liberty’s definition shows us that liberty in fact depends on volition:

...the *Idea of Liberty*, is the *Idea* of a Power in any Agent to do or forbear any particular Action, according to the determination or thought of the mind, whereby either of them is preferr’d to the other; where either of them is not in the Power of the Agent to be produced by him according to his *Volition*, there he is not at *Liberty*, that Agent is under *Necessity*. So that *Liberty* cannot be, where there is no Thought, no Volition, no Will; but there may be Thought, there may be Will, there may be Volition, where there is no *Liberty*. (*Essay*, II.xxi.8)

This definition shows us that volition is necessary though not sufficient for liberty. Conversely, liberty requires volition, because volition involves the capacity to suspend executing an action

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<sup>68</sup> *Two Treatises* offers grounds for dissolving government and society but largely forecloses a body politic’s ability to justify the social and economic costs of revolution.

and therefore cannot itself be under necessity. Locke placing this condition on liberty adds another, quasi-physiological layer to free action which, as we have seen, allows socio-economic stability to emerge from the often-self-interested actions of autonomous individuals.

Additionally, those who lack liberty fundamentally lack the ability to exercise natural rights, while those possessing liberty are morally accountable and obligated by natural law.

To underscore the mixing model's importance, it is again useful to interpret Locke's theory of property rights through and against Pufendorf. To the extent that a person possesses reason ("Thought") and liberty, they are morally accountable agents with powers and rights granted by God for fulfilling natural law. Therefore, volitional acts are themselves either moral or immoral. As we have seen, Locke considers the optimal exploitation of resources for the good of the commonwealth to be a moral act. Yet the appropriative act of labor does not necessarily have to improve or immediately exploit a resource; it must simply carry the volitional intention to do so in order to grant a natural right to exclusive use. Whereas Pufendorf considered personal, natural rights in terms of *libertas*, he differentiated rights such as the right to property which depend on the social contract as belonging to one's dominion (*dominium*). Locke also refers to a person's dominion but describes it in terms of the bundle of natural rights that can be extended to include physical property.<sup>69</sup> Given that labor is required for appropriation, I thus highlight Steven Buckle's argument for the workmanship model:

...Locke's theory does not require, and even can be better stated, without resorting to this (mixing) metaphor. The reason is this: although the idea of extending the *suum* encourages thinking of it as a kind of physical realm, as some sort of special substance, it

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<sup>69</sup> "And hence, subduing or cultivating the earth, and having dominion, we see are joined together." (*Two Treatises*, II.v.35).

is in fact a moral realm: that realm which cannot be encroached upon by others without doing an injury.<sup>70</sup>

First, the term *suum*, derived from natural law philosopher Hugo Grotius, influences Locke's notion of dominion as a sphere or "realm" that includes an individual's belongings such as their person, their rights, and their property. Appropriative labor functions to the extent that the volition executing it expresses the moral desire to exploit the good. Even though the initial appropriative act seems of little significance as an improving act, we can surmise why Locke would not want to separate appropriation from improvement; his provisos guard against abuses of an otherwise largely free right of appropriation. Other acts not involving directly applied labor might announce a moral intent for a resource's use, but the mixing of labor serves the practical function of establishing one's prospective intentions by means of a definite act, often proximate to the act of consumption where applicable, and reasonably expressive of the actual future work required for improvement. The workmanship model incorporates and even requires appropriation to involve labor's mixing with goods, because labor imbues the good with volition's moral valence and thus nominally assures Locke's readers that England's wealth rests in the hands of those who will put it to best use rather than use their power to immiserate the lower orders.

I have reserved discussing Locke's relation to political economy for two related reasons. Firstly, a self-conscious, disciplinary discourse of political economy did not appear until about three-quarters of a century after Locke published his major texts; a reasonably coherent economic science only emerges around 1760s with the French Physiocrats, whom I discuss in

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<sup>70</sup> Steven Buckle, *Natural Law and the Theory of Property: Grotius to Hume* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 174.



my third chapter. In Locke's time, though some thinkers had given thought to free trade and constitutional monarchy's checks on the crown were considered favorably, mercantilist thought remained a powerful influence for justifying various government interventions into foreign and domestic markets for the sake of increasing national prosperity and state revenues. Locke's theories in the *Two Treatises*, among which the labor theory of property is exemplary, were foundational for later thinkers attempting to justify economic and political liberalism. Reading the labor theory of property in conjunction with his descriptions of volition and liberty in *An Essay on Human Understanding* offers insight into the quasi-physiological bases on which Locke could argue that rational, economic behavior tended to satisfy both proprietor's self-interest while also benefitting society by increasing the nation's collective prosperity. Further, while the labor theory of property applies to an all-but-fictional state of nature, natural laws remain in force for national governments and their subjects. Consequently, states tend to govern best largely by codifying and protecting God-granted natural rights which allow people to thrive and which Locke claims people formed social contracts and governments to protect in the first place:

The only way whereby any one divests himself of his natural liberty, and puts on the bonds of civil society, is by agreeing with other men to join and unite into a community, for their comfortable, safe, and peaceable living one amongst another, in a secure enjoyment of their properties, and a greater security against any that are not of it. This any number of men may do, because it injures not the freedom of the rest; they are left as they were in the liberty of the state of nature. (*Two Treatises*, II.viii.95)

This quote as well as any demonstrates Locke's preference for an equitable, communitarian version of liberal government based on his sense that simply allowing rational agents to pursue their economic interests with little fear for interference or injury will foster the public good.

Locke imagines that natural laws determine acceptable forms of socio-economic and socio-political order and that the labor theory serves natural law by facilitating both individual self-preservation and the expansion of collective pools of wealth. My next chapter discusses *The Seasons*, a physico-theological, georgic poem similarly interested in the relation between natural law and socio-economic development. Emblematic of the poem's physico-theology, Thomson expresses enthusiasm for the study of nature's physical laws by natural philosophy which benefits humans by enabling innovative, technological methods for harnessing nature. Consequently, *The Seasons* places greater emphasis on intellectual labor and scientific discovery than do other, contemporary georgics. Thomson compares nature's material recycling with the human capacity for remaking which allows humans to not simply accumulate wealth, but drive gradual, world-historical, technological progress. Thomson's emphasis on the mutability of things created by both "Nature's swift and secret-working hand" and humans distinguishes such objects from nature's immutable laws both physical and moral.<sup>71</sup> Ultimately, Thomson uses his physico-theological distinction between eternal, unchanging laws and material, transient things to critique the state and its apparatuses. In his poem, governments become one refinable technology among the many which contribute to their nation's socio-economic stability. Thus, state apparatuses merge with and participate in the wider, technological progress optimistically envisioned by Thomson, or undermine the industrious efforts of its subjects and sow chaos. But

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<sup>71</sup> James Thomson, *Spring*, in *The Seasons*, ed. James Sambrook (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), 97.

they can never embody the perfection of natural laws and so remain open-ended and perpetually susceptible to refinement.

## Chapter 2

### 2 Natural Law, Economy, and the State in James Thomson's *The Seasons*

*What cannot active government perform, / New-moulding man?*

-James Thomson, *The Seasons*

#### 2.1 *The Seasons: Background and the argument*

James Thomson's georgic poem, *The Seasons* (1730), prefigures an imminent trend in British politico-economic treatises like Smith's *Wealth of Nations* by regarding states and their apparatuses as mutable, historically contingent formations suited to protecting natural, proprietary rights and promoting the commonwealth. Thomson performs this revision in part by hybridizing the georgic with physico-theology in order to frame humanity's gradually improving understanding and utilization of its environment with respect to the moral authority of natural laws.<sup>72</sup> Much recent scholarship on *The Seasons* considers the text's attention to natural philosophy, commerce, and empire, each relevant to my analysis of maturing, British theories of the state's role in political economy.<sup>73</sup> These critics read the poem's representation of nature's

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<sup>72</sup> Useful work including still valuable, older material on *The Seasons* and natural philosophy includes Alan Dugald McKillop, *The Background of Thomson's Seasons* (Hamden: Archon Books, 1961), 1-88; Ralph Cohen, *The Unfolding of The Seasons* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970); Anthony Low, *The Georgic Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), 117-153; Kevis Goodman, *Georgic Modernity and British Romanticism: Poetry and the Mediation of History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 1-66; Frans De Bruyn, "From Georgic Poetry to Statistics and Graphs: Eighteenth-Century Representations and the "State" of British Society," *The Yale Journal of Criticism* 17, no. 1 (2004): 118; Heather Keenleyside, "Personification for the People: On James Thomson's "The Seasons"," *ELH* 76, no. 2 (Summer 2009): 447-472.

<sup>73</sup> Richard Braverman, Tim Fulford, and Blanford Parker read the poem's praises for the fruitful industry and inventive ambition of individuals as laying an ideological foundation for Whiggish capitalism. Suvir Kaul, Karen O'Brien, and Tara Ghoshal Wallace more closely address the state by illuminating Thomson's sometimes shaky commitment to the violent expansion of Britain's commercial empire. Richard Braverman, *Plots and Counterplots: Sexual politics and the body politic in English life, 1660-1730* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 271-304; Tim Fulford, *Landscape, Liberty and Authority: Poetry, Criticism, and Politics from Thomson to Wordsworth* (New York: Cambridge

physical transformations as I do as an allegory for the poem's political economy which comprises its understanding of the relation between human economies and the state apparatuses which affect them. For example, Tim Fulford states that Thomson "encourage[d] readers to approve of legislation to end the man-made oppression of extortion and torture in prison. In this respect Thomson shows himself a reforming Whig, keen to oppose injustices which...he believes to be remediable."<sup>74</sup> I build on these critics but part ways with them by first arguing that the poem distinguishes between the juridico-moral authority of absolute, natural laws on the one hand and the weaker authority of states and state apparatuses on the other hand.<sup>75</sup> The latter section of my chapter argues that the poem claims that states coordinate with and are akin to other, more overtly technological apparatuses participating in a disembedded economy.<sup>76</sup> I borrow the idea of the disembedded economy from Karly Polanyi and use it to signify the emerging idea in the eighteenth century that the economy is not an isolated domain within social life; rather, the economy comprises and is influenced by all aspects of social life such that distinct institutions like governments are understood in term of their subordination to and ability ideally to strengthen the socio-economic order. Thomson indicates this shared capacity for the synergistic improvement of the commonwealth and government when he admires those "who

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University, 1996), 18-37; Blanford Parker, *The Triumph of Augustan Poetics: English literary culture from Butler to Johnson* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 136-172; Suvir Kaul, *Poems of Nation, Anthems of Empire: English Verse in the Long Eighteenth Century* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2000), 131-167; Karen O'Brien, "Imperial georgic, 1660-1789," in *The Country and the City Revisited: England and the Politics of Culture, 1550-1850*, eds. Donna Landry, Gerald MacLean, Joseph P. Ward (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 160-169; Tara Ghoshal Wallace, *Imperial Characters: Home and Periphery in Eighteenth-Century Literature* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2010), 53-65.

<sup>74</sup> Fulford, *Landscape, liberty and authority*, 25-26.

<sup>75</sup> I will generally use *natural laws* to refer to moral laws and *laws of nature* with modifiers like *material* or *physical* to refer to the laws governing material phenomena studied by natural philosophers.

<sup>76</sup> I find persuasive Karl Polanyi's idea of a disembedded economy, meaning the belief that the economy is not one, largely isolated sector of social life but instead encompasses and mutually influences all other domains of life. Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2001), 71-75.

toiled / Through long successive ages to build up / A labouring plan of state” (*Winter*, 960-62).<sup>77</sup>

Throughout, I show that *The Seasons* uses the georgic mode to liken the imperfection and provisionality of state apparatuses such as positive laws not only to other products of human labor but also to the transient, natural phenomena Thomson often calls *works*. In terms of the state’s role in the intellectual history of theories of political economy, the poem curtails the moral authority of states and refigures them as imperfect, refinable apparatuses for supporting science-driven, economic prosperity.

Thomson’s progressive education and his desire for literary recognition informed his use of a georgic mode whose own popularity had been on the rise for nearly three decades.<sup>78</sup> John Dryden’s celebrated translation of Virgil’s *Georgics* (1697) was supplemented by Joseph Addison’s appended “Essay on the Georgics” and preceded John Philips’s *Cyder* (1708), Stephen Duck’s grimmer “The Thresher’s Labour” (1730), and James Dyer’s *The Fleece* (1757). These latter poems each address a single, English, rural industry; though the poems depict contemporary forms of work and even, as *The Fleece* does with the textile trade, reconcile themselves to the benefits of industries that would reshape England’s land and economy, they

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<sup>77</sup> All references to Thomson’s *The Seasons* are taken from James Thomson, *The Seasons*, ed. James Sambrook (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981).

<sup>78</sup> A brief glance at Thomson’s educational background in natural and moral philosophy contextualizes *The Seasons*’ physico-theological argument that humans must leverage imperfect knowledge to better understand and cooperate with nature’s moral laws. Reflecting the Scottish Enlightenment’s influence on the University of Edinburgh’s progressive Arts curriculum, Thomson would have read Locke’s *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, likely read an early version of stadial history in Pufendorf’s *De iure naturae et gentium* (1672) and encountered Newtonian natural philosophy in Robert Stewart’s fourth-year course, Natural Philosophy and Ethics. From the perspective of moral philosophy, such texts exposed Thomson to a liberal version of natural law more invested in natural, proprietary rights different from earlier natural law theories, which were more invested in social obligations. For Pufendorf’s influence on the Scottish Enlightenment, see Colin Kidd, *Subverting Scotland’s Past: Scottish whig historians and the creation of an Anglo-British identity, 1689-c. 1830* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 110-111; Frank Palmeri, *State of Nature, Stages of Society: Enlightenment Conjectural History and Modern Social Discourse* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016), 27-29. For Robert Stewart’s progressivism and curriculum see James Sambrook, *James Thomson 1700-1748: A Life* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 12-14.

exhibit nostalgia and do not take as broad and optimistic account as *The Seasons* does of the various scientific discoveries and technological improvements which Thomson valorizes. *The Seasons* therefore reduces agriculture's conventional prominence in georgic poetry and presents a more capacious view of the philosophical influences and material objects affecting Britain's political economy. Thomson insists that "the gift of Industry" provides "whatever / Exalts, embellishes, and renders life / Delightful" (*Autumn*, 141-143). He particularly attributes Britain's prosperity to the intellectual work of natural philosophy as a preliminary to technological innovation. I show that *The Seasons* expands the georgic's scope by folding admiration for the work that drives scientific discovery into its claim that the public good depends on innovative exploitation of resources by a government-supported, economic sector.

*The Seasons* uses physico-theological argumentation to distinguish the absolute and immutable moral authority of natural law from the imperfect moral authority of states and their apparatuses which the poem implicitly compares, as it does with the transient works of humans, with its own mutable, physical works. From this premise, the poem argues that studying the fixed, physical laws of nature which regulate phenomena can help lead moral philosophers to better grasp the similarly fixed, natural laws which regulate morality.<sup>79</sup> Physico-theology sets the poem's moral table with regard to political economy by establishing that nature's moral laws are reflected in its physical laws, that physical laws determine nature's diverse, material economies, and finally, that statecraft should support the rational instrumentalization of those material economies by free and happy individuals. For example, Thomson presents a long

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<sup>79</sup> Describing physico-theology, Jonathan Israel states that "regularity, purposeful intricacy, and coherence of the universe, held Newton, are in themselves proof of supernatural agency in its design" and thus also seemed to illuminate the moral, benevolent character of that design. Jonathan Israel, *Enlightenment Contested: Philosophy, Modernity, and the Emancipation of Man, 1670 – 1752* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 207.

passage on the sun and its productive influence on a variety of systems including the “planetary train,” “[t]he vegetable world,” “the surface of the enlivened earth,” and the “unfruitful rock” (Summer, 104; 112; 130; 140). The passage merges the georgic themes of nature and the sun’s own potential to remake physical nature. It announces its physico-theological significance by claiming that in the sun “Shines out thy Maker” and concludes with the physico-theological commonplace that the natural world provides evidence of God’s existence: “To me be Nature’s volume broad displayed, / And to peruse its all-instructing page” (Summer, 192-193). *The Seasons*’ hybridization of georgic poetry with physico-theology makes the poem a case study for my larger story of the British georgic’s mediation of nascent, politico-economic ideas which include a liberalist statecraft predicated on natural, proprietary rights and a disembedded economy served by rather than serving a sacrosanct state.

I first show that the poem represents natural law’s absolute, moral authority by means of two heuristics. In the first heuristic, Thomson distinguishes absolute, natural law from its provisional expressions in phenomena, actions, or institutions first by indirectly describing morality in terms of timeless virtues and secondly by analogizing the universal force of moral laws to the force of physical laws. Thomson favors the virtue love, which he uses to convey natural law’s absolute righteousness and to deny the existence of disorder. He owes his portrayal of love in part to the optimistic, moral philosophy of Anthony Ashley Cooper, Third Earl of Shaftesbury (1671-1713). Shaftesbury’s sense of the world’s “moral beauty” uses the rhetoric of aesthetics to reflect the virtuous order, consistency, and continuity of nature’s laws. *The Seasons*’ shares his confidence that God’s infusive love harmonizes nature’s transient particulars into a perfect whole.<sup>80</sup> For Thomson, love epitomizes the benevolence of Creation’s natural

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<sup>80</sup> The generous Ashley thine, the friend of man,  
Who scanned his nature with a brother’s eye,



laws, invokes without defining the blurry relation between moral laws and phenomena like gravity, and can characterize individual acts of sensibility or sociability. Shifting to the second heuristic, I show the poem using physical laws to represent the moral authority of natural laws. *The Seasons* represents the universal force of both types of fixed law by dressing world-spanning examples of physical phenomena with signifiers of imperial authority and power. Imagery relating seasonal weather patterns to distant, extreme climates conveys not only the sublime force of physical and moral laws, but also their preeminence over any of humanity's transient works.

In the chapter's second section, I show that *The Seasons* expands the georgic's esteem for labor to include the intellectual work which supports commerce and technological innovation before addressing government itself as a mutable, political technology. This shift reinforces the poem's claim that a body politic's moral well-being is indexed by the dynamism of its economy rather than being a function of the state's irreproachability. The poem sketches natural material works which are at once the source of and analogize human discoveries and innovations. Two genealogies of technology in the poem promote the moral and material benefits of mixing scientific progress, industrious labor, and sociable commerce. In this context, state apparatuses are themselves refinable, politico-economic technologies meant to help individuals fulfill the natural law which we saw Locke describe as obliging the community's collective thriving.<sup>81</sup> Finally, the poem's account of failed polities show that states are not discrete, transcendent

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His weakness prompt to shade, to raise his aim,  
To touch the finer movements of the mind,  
And with the moral beauty charm the heart. (*Summer*, 1555)

<sup>81</sup> "God, who hath given the world to men in common, hath also given them reason to make use of it to the best advantage of life and convenience. The earth, and all that is therein, is given to men for the support and comfort of their being." John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government and A Letter Concerning Toleration* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), II.v.26.

entities, but are themselves composite apparatuses capable of dysfunction, delegitimization, and replacement. Thomson cites Britain's slavery and jail systems as institutions presently afflicting the moral standing of government. Yet he remains optimistic that a Britain made to flourish by the synergy of its scientists, industries, and government will be able to amend these severe, socio-political defects.

## 2.2 *Physico-theology and the gap between nature's laws and human knowledge*

Following some unremarkable juvenilia submitted to the *Edinburgh Miscellany*, Thomson published *Winter* (1726), the poem that would lead to *The Seasons*, one year after moving to London. A financially secure group of local Scots Whigs supported Thomson with positive literary reviews and with recommendations for tutoring positions. David Mallet (1705-1765), a soon to be popular Scottish poet and dramatist, arranged the selling of *Winter* to John Millan for three pounds.<sup>82</sup> In a letter to his friend William Cranstoun, Thomson says that a poem, now lost, by Reverend Robert Riccaltoun "first put the design (for *Winter*) into my head."<sup>83</sup> Thomson envisions Cranstoun as a *penseroso* figure, "wandering, philosophical, and pensive...while deep, divine Contemplation, the genius of the place, prompts each swelling awful thought."<sup>84</sup> *Winter's* blank verse is less obviously georgic than other sections; though optimistic, its tone is closer to Duck's resignation than to Philips's exuberant, convivial swains and so may reflect a struggling artist's uncertainty and homesickness.<sup>85</sup> James Sambrook states

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<sup>82</sup> Sambrook, *James Thomson*, 37.

<sup>83</sup> Sambrook, *James Thomson*, 17.

<sup>84</sup> James Thomson, *James Thomson, 1700-1748. Letters and Documents*, ed. Alan Dugald McKillop (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1958) 16.

<sup>85</sup> McKillop shows that Thomson's argument shares ground not only with other contemporary approaches to physico-theology but also builds its optimistic theodicy on other well-known intertexts such as *The Book of Job* and *Paradise Lost*. McKillop, *The Background of Thomson's Seasons*, 7-9.

that *Winter* “foreshadows Thomson’s later concern with political issues, but *Winter* as a whole is mostly in keeping with its devotional conclusion. Its logic is summed up in one of its invocations.”<sup>86</sup> Sambrook then quotes Thomson:

Nature! great Parent! whose directing Hand  
Rolls round the Seasons of the changeful Year,  
How mighty! how majestic are thy Works!  
With what a pleasing Dread they swell the Soul,  
That sees, astonish’d! and, astonish’d sings! (*Winter*, 106-110)

These lines evoke physico-theology’s faith in Creation’s benevolence signified by nature’s “majestic” sublimity.<sup>87</sup> A calm rationalization of winter’s value as a cleansing precursor to nature’s bountiful renewal sets an optimistic tone that reached new heights in Thomson’s subsequent writing of *Summer*, *Spring*, and *Autumn*. The completed cycle, fully revised and published under subscription in 1730, runs from *Spring* to *Winter* and concludes with *A Hymn*.

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, physico-theological texts deriving from the natural law tradition of moral philosophy presumed to reconcile Christianity’s biblically revealed, moral principles with knowledge derived from empiric, experimental, natural philosophy. Stephen Gaukroger calls physico-theology an innovative, yet rear-guard formation that responded to rising regard for English, philosophic heroes in Francis Bacon, John Locke,

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<sup>86</sup> Sambrook, *James Thomson*, 36.

<sup>87</sup> Whereas Sambrook notes that conventional georgic imagery and themes related to rural labor emerged in later-written seasons, Juan Christian Pellicer argues that the georgic genre which so well served materialist, physico-theological ponderings was central as early as the 1726 *Winter*. Sambrook, *James Thomson*, 72; Juan Christian Pellicer, “Georgic and Pastoral,” in *The Oxford History of Classical Reception in English Literature: Volume 3 (1660-1790)*, ed. David Hopkins and Charles Martindale (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 312.

and Isaac Newton.<sup>88</sup> Crucially for my argument, *The Seasons* recognizes physico-theology's distinction between Creation's immutable laws and the imperfect knowledge systems describing the natural phenomena determined by those laws. The difference is highlighted in comparing God's perfect, creative *logos* to humans' limited abilities:

This infancy of being, cannot prove  
The final issue of the works of God,  
By boundless love and perfect wisdom formed,  
And ever rising with the rising mind. (*Summer*, 1802-1804)

“Boundless love,” “perfect wisdom,” and “ever rising” signify the gap between the absolute potency of the moral and physical laws produced by God's will and the human incapacity to comprehend, act, or create in full accord with those laws. “This infancy of being, cannot prove” describes philosophy's ignorance of the laws which give Creation its perfect, ineffable harmony.

Key to physico-theology, natural philosophy's discoveries were thought to imperfectly reach across the gap between empiric experience and moral laws by reading the former as proof of the latter's perfect, enduring righteousness. Colin MacLaurin (1698-1746), a Newtonian professor at the University of Glasgow, stated that “natural philosophy, is subservient to purposes of a higher kind, and is chiefly to be valued as it lays a sure foundation for natural religion and moral philosophy, by leading us, in a satisfactory manner, to the knowledge of the author and governor of the universe.”<sup>89</sup> Thomas Burnet's early example of physico-theology, *Telluris Theoria Sacra*, attempted to reconcile contemporary geology with biblical history.

William Derham published his 1711 and 1712 Boyle Lectures as *Physico-theology; or, A*

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<sup>88</sup> Stephen Gaukroger, *The Collapse of Mechanism and the Rise of Sensibility: Science and the Shaping of Modernity, 1680-1760* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2010), 1-7.

<sup>89</sup> Qtd. In Israel, *Enlightenment Contested*, 201.

*Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God, from His Works of Creation* (1713). He tells readers that “nothing tended more to cultivate Religion and Piety in a Man’s Mind, than a thorough Skill in Philosophy.”<sup>90</sup> H. Grant Sampson classifies a set of literary texts from the eighteenth century which share such assumptions and methods as physico-theological epics. Like contemporary georgics, “they are moral and didactic” and present observed patterns of phenomena and bountiful, renewing resources as evidence of nature’s benevolent, ordering principles.<sup>91</sup> As an example, Alexander Pope’s *An Essay on Man* (1733-1734) urges, “Go, wondrous creature! Mount where science guides.” Stating his goal to be “vindicat[ing] the ways of God to man,” Pope accords with *The Seasons* by accepting Creation’s absolute righteousness and assigning perceptions of disorder and evil to the limits of human reason.<sup>92</sup> A 1743 letter from Thomson to his beloved Elizabeth Young suggests that despite incomplete knowledge, observers of nature can sense the perfect order which God instills in Creation:

But what ought to settle our Hearts into perfect Peace, and joyful Serenity, is, the Consideration that Infinite Wisdom and Goodness, who made and rules all, does [*and deleted*] cannot but do every Thing for the best. His Works are continually going on from Excellence to Excellence, from Bliss to Bliss, and will thro’ eternal Ages ever be disclosing new Scenes of inexhaustible Wisdom and Goodness. There is no real Evil in the whole general System of Things; it is only our Ignorance that makes it appear so.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Wiliam Derham, *Physico-theology; or, A Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God, from His Works of Creation* (London: Printed for W. and J. Innys, at the Prince’s-Arms the West End of St. Paul’s, 1714), 4.

<sup>91</sup> H. Grant Sampson. “The Physico-Theological Epic in the Later Eighteenth Century,” *Man and Nature* (1984): 50; 51.

<sup>92</sup> Alexander Pope, *An Essay on Man*, ed. Maynard Mack (London: Methuen, 1950), II.19; I.16.

<sup>93</sup> Thomson, *Letters and Documents*, 170.

“Infinite Wisdom and Goodness, who made and rules all” insists that God invests his perfect benevolence not only in natural laws, but also in physical laws and phenomena. Nature proves its inherent morality by offering renewing bounties and rewarding communal, georgic industry with prosperity. Though humans may be “astonish’d” and befuddled by empiric phenomena, natural philosophy can reinforce the surmise that nature’s complexity and affordances depend on a fixed system of orderly rules wrought by an omnipotent, benevolent God.

*Autumn* and *Winter* trust that laws regulate nature and admit the difficulty humans face attempting to understand those laws. In *Autumn*, Thomson apostrophizes: “O Nature! All-sufficient! over all / Enrich me with the knowledge of thy works; ... Show me; their motions, periods, and their laws” (*Autumn*, 1352-1353; 1356-1357). Earlier, he describes the poem’s broader, philosophical program:

...I solitary court

The inspiring breeze, and meditate the book

Of Nature, ever open, aiming thence

Warm from the heart to learn the moral song. (*Autumn*, 669-672)

Nature’s material, didactic book offers fragments of knowledge for refinement into more complex, contingent theories. Thomson presumes that this practice, which Courtney Weiss Smith calls empiricist devotion, instills moral sensibility even in those who simply contemplate nature’s harmonious elements and thereby perform an alternative, georgic, intellectual labor. *Winter* expands on this personal thought process, which first uses empiric knowledge to extrapolate the existence of physical laws, before making an analogical leap to supreme, moral laws:<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> According to Smith, the eighteenth-century georgic frames the discovery of order and regularity in nature as a basis for analogizing physical and moral laws, which supports my argument for the poem’s

Hence larger Prospects of the beauteous Whole  
 Would, gradual, open on our opening Minds;  
 And each diffusive Harmony unite,  
 In full Perfection, to th' astonish'd Eye.  
 Then would we try to scan the *moral World*,  
 Which, tho' to us it seems embroil'd, moves on  
 In higher Order; fitted, and impell'd  
 By WISDOM's finest Hand, and issuing all  
 In *general Good*. (*Winter*, 579-587)

The “scan [of] the *moral World*” suggests that natural law’s contours can be discerned by observing natural phenomena, while “WISDOM’s finest Hand,” which “issu[es] all / In *general Good*,” grants those laws determinative power over nature’s physical laws. In Thomson’s transition from phenomena to morality, the credulous impression of a theoretical “Whole” compensates the limited utility of vision with a more vague and diffuse moral harmony attributable to the Whole’s subjection to moral laws. Reflecting philosophy’s uncertainties, “each diffusive Harmony unite” leans on an aesthetic ideal of holism to convey that moral laws reconcile seemingly haphazard or disorderly phenomena.

### 2.3 *The virtue of love*

Rather than engaging in theological niceties or rigorous, moral philosophy, one of the two ways the poem conveys the absolute, moral authority of natural laws is to present them as

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distinction between the moral authority of fixed laws and the contingent, imperfect morality of transient works. Courtney Weiss Smith, *Empiricist Devotions: Science, Religion, and Poetry in Early Eighteenth-Century England* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2017), 187-188.

evocative, gnomic virtues. *The Seasons* principally describes its sense of nature's consistent, moral orderliness in terms of the world-infusing virtue of love. For example, "the soul of love is sent abroad / Warm through the vital air, and on the heart / Harmonious seizes" (*Spring*, 582-584).<sup>95</sup> Moral laws precipitate God's originary love throughout the poem's georgic array of mutable, material works. Thus, love operates in the poem as a subjective affect capable of guiding perception and action as well as, more speculatively, an intrinsic quality instilled in things by God which gives them purpose and order. That order depends on physical laws reflecting and serving natural law. Looking ahead to Thomson's second heuristic for representing natural law, he often uses an allegorized version of love to liken morality's juridical authority to the world-shaping force of physical laws. Love supports the comparison by presenting God's love not only as the archetypal virtue, but also as the first principle dictating Creation's physical laws that regulate phenomena.<sup>96</sup> The poem's closing *Hymn* summarizes each season; referring to God, it states that "Forth in the pleasing Spring / Thy beauty walks, thy tenderness and love" (*Hymn*, 3-4). As we will see, the line recalls Shaftesbury's idea that spring's characteristic creativity pleases us, because its harmonic beauty can be recognized as indicating the galvanizing, moral beauty of God's benevolence. It also echoes an earlier, more majestic passage on the relation between ordering principles and empiricist devotions:

Hail, Source of Being! Universal Soul

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<sup>95</sup> McKillop makes the point, which I address at greater length below, that the poem represents its physico-theology less in terms of philosophical arguments than in presenting poetically mediated, visual phenomena. I highlight that Thomson's correlation of nature's subjective beauty with the virtue instilled in it by the act of Creation shows aesthetic holism to be a sign of moral beauty and, further, the determinative force of nature's moral laws. McKillop, *The Background of Thomson's Seasons*, 70.

<sup>96</sup> Thomson also refers to the supreme and absolute perfection of love with passages such as the following: "Perfect esteem enlivened by desire / Ineffable and sympathy of soul..."; "...matchless joys of virtuous love..."; "...gentle spirits fly / To scenes where love and bliss immortal reign..." (*Spring*, 1121-1122; 1165; 1176).



Of heaven and earth! Essential Presence, hail!

To thee I bend the knee; to thee my thoughts

Continual climb, who with a master-hand

Hast the great whole into perfection touched. (*Spring*, 556-560)

The Miltonic “Essential Presence” suggests that God’s “master-hand” infuses Creation with his perfect, moral laws, which reiterates Thomson’s sense of God as the originary, georgic maker.

The gap between the humble subject’s climbing thought (“ever rising with the rising mind”) and the infinite, eternal Source reinforces the omnipotence of God whose harmonizing “perfection” can only be imperfectly manifested in isolated works of nature or humans. Since physico-theology must reconcile the limitations of natural philosophy with the certain existence of Christianity’s moral norms, the robust trope of love betokens natural law’s righteous authority. Even during *Winter*, the poem’s season of deformation, loss, and death, “Virtue sole survives-- / Immortal, never failing friend of man, / His guide to happiness on high” (*Winter*, 1039-1041). Love emblemizes the poem’s faith that God’s benevolence determines a natural order and, by extension, the material goods which support creaturely life. Humans manifest and recirculate love by performing virtuous actions that tend to improve the commonwealth.

God’s love funds an affective economy of pleasure in which people who do not directly benefit from nature’s abundance may still appreciate that natural law’s moral consistency and coherence transcend confusing, sometimes painful experience. Thomson claims that properly contemplating Creation confers a calm, humbling gratification by affectively attuning subjects to the existence of nature’s benevolent, moral order:

What is this mighty breath, ye curious, say,

That in a powerful language, felt, not heard,

Instructs the fowls of heaven, and through their breast

These arts of love diffuses? What, but God?

Inspiring God! Who boundless spirit all

And unremitting energy, pervades,

Adjusts, sustains, and agitates the whole.

He ceaseless works alone, and yet alone

Seems not to work; with such perfection framed

Is this complex, stupendous scheme of things.

But, though concealed, to every pure eye

The informing Author in his works appears:

Chief, lovely Spring, in thee and thy soft scenes

The smiling God is seen—while water, earth,

And air attest his bounty, which exalts

The brute-creation to this finer thought,

And annual melts their undesigning hearts

Profusely thus in tenderness and joy. (*Spring*, 849-866)

The ineffably large and small scales of natural phenomena obstruct vision and intellection, which means that nature's intrinsic, absolute virtue must be intuited or extrapolated, and part of the ideological work performed by Thomson's poem is to rationalize the experiences of pain and difficult work as serving natural law's higher, benevolent ends.<sup>97</sup> The example of birds shows

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<sup>97</sup> Kevis Goodman's superb reading of *The Seasons* addresses the uses and limits of subjective observation and natural philosophy. From the perspective of political economy (and the deformed record of lost polities recycled by the earth), subjects register encounters with material history as an affective disturbance. Dimly aware of the predation, exploitation, and violence mingled with civilization, history requires aesthetic mediation, namely the work of many georgic poems, that depict civilizing labor as beneficially mixed with or even an extension of natural forces. Analogizing history with natural

even non-rational creatures taking pleasure in a sense of having been put in their right place by the “informing Author.” Patricia Meyer Spacks’s observation that Thomson’s “Retreat from Vision” in his later poem *The Castle of Indolence* (1748) bears on *The Seasons*, because, for lack of rigorous understanding, morality is often perceived through sensibility and expressed through personal industry.<sup>98</sup> While moralizing labor and innovation remain central to the poem’s argument, the idyllic, loco-descriptive scenes in which Thomson personally appears model a comparatively passive, contemplative, mental activity. Humans may appreciate nature’s material bounty, but the passage also indicates that God’s love may be pleasurable recognized in and as a vague sense of ecological harmony which a familiarity with natural philosophy can deepen. By contrast with effortful, enterprising virtue, a disinterested appreciation for the moral beauty of nature’s harmony can demonstrate a person’s liberal benevolence and subjection to nature’s benign jurisdiction.

The poem supports its use of virtuous love to analogize the link between abstruse, moral laws with pleasurable experience by citing Shaftesbury, whose *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times* (1711) Thomson ordered in 1737. Shaftesbury’s optimistic, moral philosophy claimed that polite and sensible enjoyment of agreeable discourse and well-formed objects reflects an instinctive, though educable experience of moral beauty. Thomson’s invocation of Shaftesbury reinforces my point that the poem substitutes the harmonizing virtues of love and

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philosophy, Goodman shows that Thomson adopted Locke’s claim that God limits humans’ senses in order to suit them to productively interacting with their environment. Supposing that more powerful eyesight, for example, would produce an unpleasant, debilitating overload of informational noise, Thomson argues that the limits God sets on human knowledge demonstrate how God’s moral benevolence comprehensively determines human experience. Goodman, *Georgic Modernity and British Romanticism*, 3-9; 55-56.

<sup>98</sup> Patricia Meyer Spacks, *The Poetry of Vision: Five Eighteenth-Century Poets* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967), 48. Personal industry in a Lockean sense meaning those voluntary actions for which an individual can be held morally responsible.

benevolence for explications of God's moral laws.<sup>99</sup> Thomson's advice to appreciate lived experience despite incompletely understanding that experience softens morality's rigid, legalistic force; love and optimism do the ideological work of attempting to console bereft individuals who face pain, hardship, and loss with a dim sense that all things happen for reasons determined by God. The pleasures of consensus and formal harmony derive from the intrinsic, moral beauty of the concord and benevolence God "diffuses" into nature through its moral and physical laws.<sup>100</sup> Aesthetic appreciation for people and things sparks affective warmth, greater sociability, and ultimately leads to a more intricate and stable economy of love:

The generous Ashley thine, the friend of man,  
 Who scanned his nature with a brother's eye,  
 His weakness prompt to shade, to raise his aim,  
 To touch the finer movements of the mind,  
 And with the moral beauty charm the heart. (*Summer*, 1551-1555)

The "finer movements of the mind" let individuals express their latent sociability and neighborly care through their actions. Love, nature's highest virtue and the essence of natural law itself, informs not only physical laws and nature's fecundity, but also the moral beauty in acts and works contributing to intellectual refinement, creativity, and social harmony. With respect to

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<sup>99</sup> Robert Inglesfield notes Shaftesbury's influence on the poem's argument that the contemplation of nature elicits feelings of social sympathy and benevolence, which influence social exchange, self-improvement, collective gain. People cultivate an internal moral harmony, which encourages them to work toward bettering the socio-political order. Robert Inglesfield, "Thomson and Shaftesbury," in *James Thomson: Essays for the Tercentenary*, ed. Richard Terry (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2000), 87. Shaftesbury's essay *An Inquiry Concerning Virtue* "argued that goodness and virtue had real foundations in the nature of the human self and in its relation to a morally designed universe and that virtue was its own reward since its practice conduced to human happiness." "Introduction," in Anthony Ashley Cooper, Third Earl of Shaftesbury, *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times*, ed. Lawrence E. Klein (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), x.

<sup>100</sup> "...the beautiful, the fair, the comely, were never in the matter but in the art and design, never in the body itself but in the form or forming power." Shaftesbury, *The Moralists, a Philosophical Rhapsody*, in *Characteristics*, 322.

political economy, Shaftesbury's ideal, virtuous politician possesses a disinterested, benevolent desire for the public good. Such a politician mixes agreeable sociability, a disinterested desire for the common good, and oversees the benefits of a Whig history in which agents can pursue pleasure without fearing government oppression. Philip Connell sees the poem reinforcing its Shaftesburian strain by emphatically embracing Newtonian physico-theology. Connell states, "the whig principles of limited monarchy and ministerial government were increasingly amenable to justification in terms derived from the language of popular Newtonianism."<sup>101</sup>

Newton's work had been embraced by and could seem to support the Hanoverian succession and the Court Whigs, the latter from which Thomson increasingly tried to distance himself by revisions that celebrated the virtue of long, aristocratic land tenures. Creation's morality lacks a positive, oppositional evil, but instead entails a slow, civilizing progress, which for Thomson includes the advance of philosophical knowledge and the growth of prosperous, body politics supported by inexact but nonetheless well-meaning statecraft.

#### 2.4 *Physical laws analogized with natural laws*

The second heuristic Thomson uses to signify the absolute authority of nature's moral laws involves comparing their jurisdiction to the universal force of physical laws. Jonathan Israel notes Newton's assertion that gravity, one of *The Seasons*' examples of a physical force, and the laws of motion prove the existence of a "general providence" in which God's constant, compassionate, intervention keeps the universe from collapsing into chaos.<sup>102</sup> The example of gravity demonstrates that just as the poem is neither willing nor able to define moral laws, *The*

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<sup>101</sup> Philip Connell, *Secular Chains: Poetry and the Politics of Religion from Milton to Pope* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 191.

<sup>102</sup> Jonathan Israel, *Enlightenment Contested*, 212.

*Seasons* also does not define physical laws. Instead, it indirectly affirms the power of physical laws over phenomena by attaching figurative, political motifs to those laws. To avoid confusion, though I argue that the poem presents politico-economic apparatuses as mutable, transient, and imperfect, it uses the rhetoric of sovereignty to underline the moral distinction between those apparatuses and natural law's absolute and enduring jurisdiction. Physical laws' causative relation over phenomena also implies that physical and moral laws share a similarly immutable power. While *Spring* emphasizes the moral principle of love by emphasizing various kinds of intercourse, exchange, and creativity, *Summer* and *Winter* exemplify the force and even the violence of physical laws which can deform and destroy transient things. Further, though spring and fall are the planting and harvesting seasons, the complete, seasonal cycle signals the shift from the Golden Age's relative stasis and easy virtue into fluid time, history, and political and socio-economic change.

Thomson uses political motifs like dominion, command, power, and violence to describe the material effects caused by physical laws and so also, indirectly, moral laws. The heat and light from the remote, sublime, and magisterial sun instantiates the world-shaping power of physical laws. However, we should again note that Thomson explicitly attributes the sun's physical eminence to God's moral design. The lines "O Sun! / Soul of surrounding worlds! In whom best seen / Shines out thy Maker" repeat the soul motif which *Spring* also associated with love (*Summer*, 94-96). Here, "soul" provides the metaphorical vehicle for the sun's material presence, because its enlivening powers more or less directly determine the form of all things. The sun plays an able scion to its own Creator by not only superintending earthly developments but also by stabilizing the solar system "with a chain indissoluble bound" (*Summer*, 98). In terms of specific, physical laws, the sun's "chain" represents the "secret, strong, attractive force"

of gravity, the quintessential force, visible in its effects, that seemed to philosophers like Newton and physico-theological poets like Thomson to prove God's existence. While gravity literally holds bodies in proximity, "attractive" also connotes God's foundational love, which organizes and harmonizes each new thing appearing on earth through fixed physical laws. Thus, "secret, strong, attractive force" also seems to prefigure other causal, physical chains in which the sun's heat and light influence phenomena.

In an epic catalogue of precious stones<sup>103</sup>, Thomson imagines that "the unfruitful rock, impregnated by thee, / In dark retirement forms the lucid stone" via light's penetration and infusion of the earth (*Summer*, 140-141). At the time, natural philosophers pondered whether minerals' growth indicated shared organic characteristics with vegetative growth. The mineralogy passage uses the central figure of the sun to expand the georgic mode's topical range into natural philosophy as well as socio-economics. Thomson poetically describes stones to engage readers then seeks to deepen their appreciation with contextualizing reference to Newtonian colorimetry; having preceded the catalogue with a claim for the benefits of mining, wealth, and trade, the passage recasts pragmatic, commercial topics in the light of aesthetic, disinterested appreciation for physical forces' mysterious formation of material phenomena. Though the passage instructs, it also frames the reader's uncertainty in the face of the ineffable complexity of both geology and commerce, which serves Thomson by inclining readers to adopt his tranquil optimism regarding history's progress.

The following apostrophe reinforces life's dependence on the sun:

Informer of the planetary train!

Without whose quickening glance their cumbrous orbs

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<sup>103</sup> Thomson, *Summer*, 140-159.

Were brute, unlovely mass, inert and dead,  
 And not, as now, the green abodes of life!  
 How many forms of being wait on thee,  
 Inhaling spirit, from the unfettered mind,  
 By thee sublimed down to the daily race,  
 The mixing myriads of the setting beam! (*Summer*, 104-111)

Again, Thomson emphasizes the capacity of the sun's heat and light to give form and beauty to an otherwise chaotic mix of elements. Moreover, the following passage uses overtly political language to characterize the sun:

The vegetable world is also thine,  
 Parent of Seasons! who the pomp precede  
 That waits thy throne, as though thy vast domain,  
 Annual, along the bright ecliptic road  
 In world-rejoicing state it moves sublime.  
 Meantime the expecting nations, circled gay  
 With all the various tribes of foodful earth,  
 Implore thy bounty, or send grateful up  
 A common hymn... (*Summer*, 112-120)

Thomson represents the sun's manifestation of physical laws through heat and light as the generosity of a benevolent despot while also conveying the world's dependence on and supplication to its power. Time and space blur as he reconfigures the successive year as the "vast domain" upon which the sun enjoys a constant, imperious triumph. Elsewhere, *Summer* portrays the death and destruction due to solar or human empire, but motifs of exchange and



communion predominate here. Consistent with his extensive personification throughout the poem, Thomson uses “nations” and “tribes” for most any category of living beings, which emphasizes their common animation, transience, and dependence on the sun.<sup>104</sup> The “gay” and “grateful” beings also highlight the sun’s starring role in engineering the aforementioned economy of pleasure. Indeed, “world-rejoicing state” serves as a concise vision statement for righteous politico-economic institutions. The sun’s “state” trades on the physico-theological idea and georgic aspiration of world order by fusing the images of an omnipotent, benevolent autocrat with the material goods that proliferate due to the physical effects of the sun’s presence. In short, the “boundless majesty” of the “powerful king of day” epitomizes the universal force of physical and so also moral laws by enabling and regulating various, natural and nature-adjacent economies (*Summer*, 87; 81).

Thomson’s fantasias on extreme temperatures develop his sun-as-benevolent-despot trope by incorporating the sun’s capacity for violence alongside its generosity. The *Seasons’* closing *Hymn* indicates that the sun correlates with love and creativity in *Spring* and with material bounty in *Autumn*. Whereas sunny growing and harvesting seasons seem to provide straightforward evidence of a natural order based on God’s bountiful love, harsh, destructive weather, as well as other catastrophic phenomena, might temporarily challenge his physio-theological optimism. At *Summer’s* start, spring gives way to the sun’s “hot dominion” where he “mounts his throne” each morning to subject common Creation to its “All-conquering heat.”

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<sup>104</sup> Heather Keenleyside’s study of Thomson’s use of personification and other metaphorically enlivening language makes the claim that his participles and descriptives blur persons and things. Keenleyside argues that extensive personification “associate(s) the instability of persons or things with issues of agency or animation.” Her work supports my own by highlighting the extent to which Thomson presents all phenomena to be, in my terms, mutable, in flux, and part of contingently harmonic economies. Moreover, and where my emphasis differs from Keenleyside’s, these commonalities distinguish the mutability of personified things and multiply-determined, human subjects from the fixed, natural laws that are the direct products of God’s love. Keenleyside, “Personification for the People,” 448.

(*Summer*, 8; 639). The motif of the sun's sovereignty over varied phenomena and places signifies the consistency of physical laws which are themselves attributable to the higher order of benevolent, moral laws. Thus, Thomson states that "far as the ranging eye / Can sweep, a dazzling deluge reigns; and all / From pole to pole is undistinguished blaze" (*Summer*, 434-436). *Summer's* sun compels recognition of the power God exerts through nature's physical forces:

...glory in the Summer-month,  
 With light and heat refulgent. Then thy sun  
 Shoots full perfection through the swelling year:  
 And oft thy voice in dreadful thunder speaks... (*Hymn*, 8-11)

In practice, "glory" can amount to punishing heat which withers plants, parches landscapes, and forces those who can to seek shade.<sup>105</sup> Though Thomson optimistically observes that the sun lends Creation its own "perfection," empiric experience shows that the lavish heat and light of high summer in Britain can reach destructive extremes. While the heat may cause temporary discomfort or even poor harvests for local farmers, Thomson invokes Africa to signify sublime, even horrific excesses. Only the Nile can invigorate the "life-deserted sand" of the "joyless desert" (*Summer*, 818; 819). Yet even then, the sun's intensity strips African peoples of their virtue, since fertile areas produce without effort and encourage luxury without discipline:

The parent Sun himself  
 Seems over this world of slaves to tyrannize...  
 Love dwells not there...  
 The very brute creation there  
 [The sun's] rage partakes, and burns with horrid fire. (*Summer*, 890-898)

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<sup>105</sup> Scenes of refuge from hot or cold weather often become for those so-sheltered compensatory opportunities for contemplating the relationship between phenomena and nature's ordering principles.

Rather than signifying God's neglect, absent Love here reflects a collective fault of Africa's inhabitants. Thomson seems to argue that, though they need not labor for their daily bread made "wasteful" by its own excess, neither do they cultivate discipline or stem the corruption of their moral sensibility by bending their labor toward any civilizing works. Despite and sometimes even because of Africa's overwhelming richness in resources, its nations fail to manage their wealth through private industriousness or with the aid of wise government. Such misuse justifies African wealth's appropriation by nations more capable of exploiting its potential benefits.<sup>106</sup>

Whereas summer's heat benefits living things until it reaches challenging extremes, Thomson defines *Winter* as the season of deformation, erasure, and uncertainty. *The Seasons'* revisions of the 1726 *Winter* keep its somber tone and remind readers of mortality and transience. More so than *Summer*, *Winter* foregrounds images of entropy to figure the georgic themes of uncertainty and constant, needful remaking as characteristic of both natural and human works.<sup>107</sup> For Thomson, winter's elemental chaos ultimately signifies the earth's annual repotentialization and the possibility of gradual, if inconsistent, socio-economic progress. On the other hand, and more imminently, harsh weather threatens catastrophic losses which must be endured with resignation and optimism.

Thomson represents winter's landscape-deforming power a bit more diffusely by focusing on the effects of meteorological conditions as opposed to directly attributing them to an

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<sup>106</sup> Several critics have argued for the imperialistic inclinations of British georgics. For example, Jill H. Casid describes a material and linguistic process of georgic colonization: "The idea of colony as plantation and the plantation as farm mythicized empire as anticonquest by making empire as rooted and natural as rural England was supposed to be." Georgic literature therefore serves as a supplementary technology for justifying violent resource extraction. Jill H. Casid, *Sowing Empire: Landscape and Colonization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), 14.

<sup>107</sup> Ronald Paulson argues that georgics present artifice as a necessary, constant, compensatory work which attempts to heal the sorrow incited by the natural world's cycles of loss. Ronald Paulson, *Breaking and Remaking: Aesthetic Practice in England, 1700-1820* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1989), 55-60.

emblematic, sovereign sun as *Summer* does. Ralph Cohen's landmark study, *The Unfolding of the Seasons*, identifies deformation, *Winter's* central motif, as prerequisite to *Spring's* renewal and creativity.<sup>108</sup> Above all, Thomson's images of cold-induced congelation signify the deformation and reversion of matter into a state susceptible to remaking and reuse. When "the whitening shower descends" and snows blanket all things in a common "winter-robe of purest white," field labor ceases and animals only unwillingly venture out of shelter for food (*Winter*, 229; 233). Still, metaphors for political power persist and allude to physical laws' authority in scenes where phenomena are transformed into indiscernible wholes:

Nature's King, who oft

Amid tempestuous darkness dwells alone,

And on the wings of the careening wind

Walks dreadfully serene, commands a calm;

Then straight air, sea, and earth are hushed at once. (*Winter*, 197-201)

The passage is organized around the motif of a sole patriarch capable of sovereign decision-making. By bringing together "air, sea, and earth" in euphonic stillness, it also exemplifies *Winter's* motifs of de- and reformation which often involve the merging, condensation, or binding of previously more distinct phenomena or objects. Most obviously, condensation occurs in the freezing of water into snow or ice, but as Thomson develops his weather imagery, snowstorms cover landscapes, reduce the mobility and productivity of persons and things, and produce a broad, visual uniformity that challenges analytic comprehension. The work of physical laws during *Winter* figuratively underscores the gap between those laws and interpretation of the phenomena they regulate.

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<sup>108</sup> Ralph Cohen, *The Unfolding of the Seasons* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970), 262-4.

Though Thomson also describes winter storms in violent terms, the canto's figures for violence are often more subdued than in *Summer*. Instead, Thomson focuses on winter's threats to life as continuous with its threats to acts of interpretation and use. However, he also uses *Winter* to show that its deformations and dangers are recuperated by dependable, seasonal cycles of growth. Winter's own exigencies can be hard to see past, which makes Thomson's reassuring, physico-theological poem all the more necessary for drawing people through the hard times to the good ones he insists will follow. Here again, natural processes analogize politico-economic cycles of decline which are recuperated in a general, science-driven trajectory of progress. He observes that the cold seems to impose a general tranquility on all things despite describing conditions which can easily become lethal for exposed, living beings. Thus, like extreme heat, images of extreme cold summon the thought of common mortality and the transience of all things.

The snow's monochromatic unity becomes *Winter's* main, visual metaphor for deformation first in its effect of blurring earth and sky while falling and then in its ability to smoothen and hide terrain. Whereas Thomson speaks of the summer sun's rage and glory, winter's blizzards present a softer though no less oppressive violence. He signals this oppression with motifs of restraint and bondage applicable to freezing weather. For example, "clouds, / Slow-meeting, mingle into solid gloom" (*Winter*, 203-203). In its "capacious womb / A vapoury deluge lies, to snow congealed" prior to the "gathered storm" (*Winter*, 225-226; 228). Running waters are "by the breath of heaven / Cemented firm; till, seized from shore to shore, / The whole imprisoned river growls below," an image prefiguring the problem of carceral oppression which he addresses elsewhere in the poem in terms of tyrannous state apparatuses (*Winter*, 729-731). After a snowfall, Thomson emphasizes the landscape's uniformity and inutility: "Earth's

universal face, deep-hid and chill, / Is one wild dazzling waste, that buries wide, / The works of man” (*Winter*, 238-240). Though we might think of destructive violence in terms of the rendering of a whole into parts, *Winter* also conveys violence as the merging of previously fashioned, distinguishable parts into a weakly differentiated mass due to the power of nature’s physical laws. Thomson insists that we view such troublesome masses as matrices which enable future growth. Again, he uses nature’s work to figure the potential for georgic remaking which underwrites his physico-theological optimism.

Thomson uses winter, perhaps the least characteristically georgic season, to represent the conventionally georgic themes of uncertainty, transience, and mutability in order to direct our attention to the moral priority of natural laws over our own flawed perceptions and plans. Though these themes are present in Virgil’s *Georgics*, *The Seasons* repurposes them in part to advance public conversability in natural philosophy, though at the very least to provoke wonder and admiration for nature’s physical laws within the poem’s physico-theological context. The *Hymn* reminds us that *Winter*’s snowscapes imply that subjection to nature’s laws will always supersede understanding them. He addresses the “varied God” in nature to frame an incomprehensible magnitude:

In Winter awful thou! with clouds and storms  
 Around thee thrown, tempest o’er tempest rolled,  
 Majestic darkness! On the whirlwind’s wing  
 Riding sublime, thou bidst the world adore,  
 And humblest nature with the northern blast. (*Hymn*, 16-20)

This précis of winter highlights matter’s violent and tempestuous mixing rather than the resulting “trackless plain” or “formless wild,” but “awful,” “darkness,” and “sublime” underline the

poverty of our comprehension in the face of nature's physical power (*Winter*, 281; 283). The ensuing parable of the frozen man expresses the poem's broader physico-theological reasoning with regards to ineffable nature. In short, a blizzard entraps a swain travelling home from work. It renders his surroundings increasing unfamiliar, slows his pace, and ultimately incorporates him into the landscape by freezing him to death, a "bleaching" and "stiffened corse" (*Winter*, 321, 320). *Summer* contains an analogous parable in which lightning suddenly and seemingly purposelessly yields an innocent maiden into a "blackened corse" while her lover's "marble" astonishment mimics her immobility (*Summer*, 1216; 1220). Both stories didactically present faith in the higher, all-reconciling order of natural law as the resolution to stories that foreground uncertainty and loss. Particularly in the frozen man's story, physical nature poses itself as an intractable enigma whose incomprehensibility is replicated by the reader's desire to reconcile the man's apparently arbitrary death with a satisfying, natural order. The story upholds classic, georgic values, including accepting uncertainty, subjecting one's self to nature's fixed laws, and recognizing, in contrast with those laws, the transience of all earthly things as one struggles to exploit them through one's labor. The following sections demonstrate that Thomson leverages the georgic theme of remaking to recuperate and capitalize on mutability and transience. Having seen that the deformations caused by winter constitute a dependable prelude to the warmer seasons, Thomson presents the imperfection of philosophical knowledge and refinable technologies as justifications for their gradual progress and exploitation in the service of natural laws. Similarly, because state apparatuses are also the work of human artifice, they too are susceptible to improvement, a process which Thomson describes in terms of matching their operations to the moral ideals established by great, classical politicians.

## 2.5 *Human labor and technological progress*

Natural law's consistency alleviates *Winter*'s seemingly bleak chaos by assuring readers that all things adhere to a well-regulated order. Spring must follow winter, but within the context of *Winter* itself the mutability and instability of phenomena represented by snowscapes also signify restored potential and opportunity for improvement. Thomson revalues mutability with reference to three domains whose respective susceptibilities to remaking give him grounds for optimism: seasonal cycles and recurring bounties, labor and technological progress, and statecraft. I have dealt with the first of these above in terms of nature's de- and reformations. Snow refashions the landscape into what Thomson repeatedly refers to as "waste," by which he means potentially arable land that is presently uncultivated. *Winter* frames the wisdom in recognizing that snow-covered fields imply the possibility of future crops and bespeaks largely stable growing, human-assisted cycles. In this and the following subsection, I take up the second and third of these domains which reinforce the poem's position distinguishing the weaker moral authority of states and state apparatuses from the true and absolute moral authority of nature's laws.

Regarding the second domain of labor and technological progress, Thomson signals the potential for innovation by analogizing the annual, creative work of Nature's Hand with not only the manual but also the intellectual labor of humans. He builds on the georgic's convention of framing itself as an emblematic work of intellectual labor capable of bearing a didactic message proclaiming the value of intellectual labor in general. Poetry promotes natural philosophy by aestheticizing and disseminating its ideas to cultivate its audience's appreciation for and interest in science's potential benefits. In this case the georgic uses physico-theology to promote and limn the moral value of natural philosophy: "Tutored by thee, hence Poetry exalts / Her voice to



ages; and informs the page / With music, image, sentiment, and thought” (*Summer*, 1753-1755).

Thomson closes *Summer* by celebrating philosophy’s value as a tool for the mutual development of technology and the public good: “With thee, serene Philosophy, with thee, / And thy bright garland, let me crown my song!” (*Summer*, 1730-1731). Even more explicitly, philosophy “The height of science and virtue gains” (*Summer*, 1741). He then asserts the practical benefits of philosophy with a few elementary examples of technological progress:

Without thee, what were unenlightened man?  
 A savage, roaming through the woods and wilds  
 In quest of prey; and with the unfashioned fur  
 Rough-clad; devoid of every finer art  
 And elegance of life. Nor happiness  
 Domestic, mixed of tenderness and care,  
 Nor moral excellence, nor social bliss,  
 Nor guardian law were his; nor various skill  
 To turn the furrow, or to guide the tool  
 Mechanic; nor the heaven-conducted prow  
 Of Navigation bold, that fearless braves  
 The burning line or dares the wintry pole,  
 Mother severe of infinite delights. (*Summer*, 1758-1772)

Of note, Thomson places positive, “guardian law” between the list of moral virtues and the list of technical, instrument-mediated practices whose presentation in terms of their lack (“nor”) almost suggests that they wait in the wings to be called forth by human creativity. I will shortly address positive laws and statecraft at greater length, but here Thomson presents them as a security

system which removes people from the state of nature and opens to them civilizing society's potential, material benefits. Plowing nods to the poem's georgic heritage while the plow is an insistently forward-looking and imperializing image which connotes economic growth and the expansion of territory, markets, and political power. Though the poem elsewhere admits some ambivalence toward Britain's militaristic empire, its description of celestial navigation optimistically connotes that innovation and commerce aid a general trajectory of world-historical progress.

The accumulating fruits of manual and intellectual labor are emphasized in another, far more elaborate, though again allegorical genealogy of technological innovation. Instead of "serene Philosophy," the more virtue-tinged theme of Industry organizes the following passages:

These are thy blessings, Industry, rough power!

Whom labour still attends, and sweat and pain;

Yet the kind source of every gentle art

And all the soft civility of life ... (*Autumn*, 43-64)

"Industry" enfolds the ideas that labor can express personal virtue and that it contributes to the public good by accumulating wealth and transforming modes of production. Thomson's allegory again begins with a dire state of nature wherein humanity's capacity for industry remains unavailing without the state's security apparatuses. Nature forecasts the gifts humans give themselves through their hard work; natural laws oblige industry in part by confronting humans with material challenges such as scarcity to initially compel survival-driven, human labor and which gradually inculcates an appreciation for the moral and material benefits of creative, manual and intellectual efforts. Thomson stresses human labor's world-transforming potential by expounding on the unpleasantness of the state of nature:

Raiser of human kind! by Nature cast  
 Naked and helpless out amid the woods  
 And wilds to rude inclement elements;  
 With various seeds of art deep in the mind  
 Implanted, and profusely poured around  
 Materials infinite; but idle all,  
 Still unexerted, in the unconscious breast  
 Slept the lethargic powers:

....

and thus his days

Rolled heavy, dark, and unenjoyed along—  
 A waste of time! till Industry approached,  
 And roused him from his miserable sloth;  
 His faculties unfolded; pointed out  
 Where lavish Nature the directing hand  
 Of Art demanded... (*Autumn*, 47-54; 70-76)

The passage continues to destabilize the distinction between natural phenomena which prefigure and prompt human labor and that labor's creative, yet artificial productions. Whereas personification figures nature as capable of artifice and technological creativity, "seeds of art deep in the mind / Implanted" uses agricultural language to paint humans, themselves having been "cast" like seed, as an extension of nature (*Autumn*, 50-51; 47). Though Thomson correlates natural and human works based on their common transience and mutability, only humans (and God) truly possess the potential for innovation and the ability to significantly alter

the conditions of their own, collective existence. Industry, as positive laws and agriculture had done in the previous passage, divides the period Thomson describes as “waste,” a spatially-inflected term denoting untapped potential, from the period when humans can substantively change their socio-economic forms of life. By contrasting industry with “sloth,” Thomson emphasizes that humans’ considered, intentional labor “unfold[s]” latent skills and apparatuses the innate virtues of which are proven by their ability to increase quality of life.

In the passage’s following lines, Thomson most clearly argues his politico-economic vision of a fruitful, orderly community. He first lists an emblematic series of early, technological innovations beginning with “chip[ping] the wood, and hew[ing] the stone” (*Autumn*, 82). “[G]lossy silk” and “the generous glass” precede civilizing societies “advancing bolder...to pomp, to pleasure, elegance, grace” (*Autumn*, 86; 88; 91-92). Following these signifiers of “high ambition” via creative artifice, Thomson devotes a stanza to the emergence of the “public,” meaning a legislated body politic, then “Society,” meaning civic life, and then “Commerce” (*Autumn*, 97; 113; 118). This allegorical chronology imagines adequate, positive laws, here idealized as “holy guardian laws,” to be a precondition for the socio-economic health attested to by urban growth and modern commodities (*Autumn*, 101).<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> In a third example of civilizational progress, Thomson admires Peter the Great’s ability to make statecraft secondary and subservient to the modernity and prosperity of Russia’s economy:

...behold the matchless prince!  
 Who left his native throne, where reigned till then  
 A mighty shadow of unreal power;  
 Who greatly spurned the slothful pomp of courts;  
 And roaming every land, in every port  
 His sceptre laid aside, with glorious hand  
 Unwearied plying the mechanic tool,  
 Gathered the seeds of trade, of useful arts,  
 Of civil wisdom, and of martial skill. (*Winter*, 963-971)

Thomson freely diagnoses the illegitimacy of the Russian state, which had become “unreal” by devolving into tyranny and “slothful” corruption, a potential dislocated critique of Court Whigs. Peter models the benefits not only of governments prioritizing domestic commerce, but also of Britain’s maritime imperialism. He embodies in his person the state’s capacity to use its resources and institutions to

## 2.6 *Statecraft*

Within the third domain of statecraft, the *Season's* broad scope for mutable works includes socio-political entities and institutions such as the state, its governmental regime, and state apparatuses. Thomson's georgic theme of mutability applies to these entities insofar as they vary in their ability to serve their function of supporting the public good and can be perpetually remade and refined. The poem proposes that a state composed of state apparatuses and institutions can serve a moral function by meshing with and supporting its body politic's material and moral commonwealth. For example, the questions of what positive laws can and should do overlap with the problem intrinsic to natural law of knowing how best to fulfill moral obligations. A gap will necessarily exist between natural law's ideals and state apparatuses' ability to facilitate a body politic's fulfillment of those ideals. This gap potentially impairs states' moral authority. In theory, states whose institutions allow tyranny or despoil their subjects become illegitimate and, according to Locke, may be dissolved and reformed.<sup>110</sup> In practice, though, many factors, environmental and otherwise, can help or harm a body politic, *The Seasons* shows that weak institutions can lead to insupportable conditions that invite civil war, revolution, rioting, and other forms of social turmoil. Conversely, Thomson cites Britain as

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facilitate the importation of foreign, raw goods, techniques, and technologies. Given its foundation of a uniquely stable, liberty-vaunting, mixed government, Britain flourishes and satisfies natural laws by absorbing the best, global affordances which are otherwise not being optimized, as in the case of Africa's seemingly wasted wealth.

<sup>110</sup> There is therefore, secondly, another way whereby governments are dissolved, and that is, when the legislative, or the prince, either of them, act contrary to their trust:

First, the legislative acts against the trust reposed in them, when they endeavour to invade the property of the subject, and to make themselves, or any part of the community, masters, or arbitrary disposers of the lives, liberties, or fortunes of the people. John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government and A Letter Concerning Toleration* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), II.xix.226.

an example showing that reasonable laws and an industrious, thriving polity mutually reinforce each other. Thomson alludes to this agreeable, contemporary condition in his allegorical example when, laws having “Unit(ed) all, / Society grew numerous, high, polite, / And happy” (*Autumn*, 111-113).

Thomson predicates a body politic’s economic vitality and long-term viability on the ability of state apparatuses to function to proper, moral effect. Instead of presenting a philosophical theory of the state, *The Seasons* invokes moral ideals which state apparatuses should aspire to embody. *Winter*’s harsh weather inclines him to the indoor work of contemplating these ideals in light of classical philosopher-politicians who seem to originate and emblemize them. Some, like “happy, mild, and firm” Timoleon, model personal virtues, but others like “Just” Aristides typify moral ideals to be enshrined in positive laws.<sup>111</sup> *Summer* compares English “statesmen” and “patriots” to their Greek and Roman progenitors (*Summer*, 1487-1488). Solon is the most important Greek in this series of parallel lives which conceives Britain’s mixed government to be the modern champion of republican ideals:

Solon the next, who built his commonweal  
 On equity’s wide base; by tender laws  
 A lively people curbing; yet undamped  
 Preserving still that quick, peculiar fire,  
 Whence in the laurelled field of finer arts,

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<sup>111</sup> The poverty or incorruptibility of Cimon, Agis, Fabricius, and Cincinnatus show that moderation and personal economy befit politicians. The emphasis condemns Robert Walpole’s self-dealing, Whig administration from the perspective of an opposing faction of dutiful, patriotic Country Whigs. Moreover, though Thomson expresses a measure of pride in Britain’s global sphere of influence, Timoleon, for example, defended Greek liberty against the encroachments of the Persian Empire. Elsewhere in the poem Thomson exhibits anxiety regarding the violence Britain exports around the world in the form of warfare and slavery.

And of bold freedom, they unequalled shone,

The pride of smiling Greece and human-kind. (*Winter*, 446-452)

Looking ahead to a comparable Roman we see “Servius, the king who laid the solid base / On which o’er the earth the vast republic spread” (*Winter*, 504-505). In both cases, Thomson presents moral laws as the foundation or “wide base” for a flourishing body politic. Values such as justice frame states’ proper functions of protecting its subjects from various injuries; the “equity” of such laws unify and help direct the creative energies of a free people who share the material benefits of their collective, philosophic and commercial collaboration. The “finer arts” signify the multiple forms of culture-refining, intellectual work which ornament leisure and luxury while “laurelled” again points back to poetry, an emblematic art which reflexively promotes the value of such intellectual work. In this respect, poems such as *The Seasons* are not state apparatuses, yet they do serve as political instruments for being able to reflect on the universal ideals and specific socio-political and socio-economic conditions. *The Seasons* critiques state-sanctioned institutions, but these are largely overwhelmed by Thomson’s assurances to his readers that the country’s enlightened industry and centers of knowledge production indicate happy prospects for the future of “Britannia’s weal” (*Spring*, 930).

Again, Thomson’s account of positive laws enmeshes the state’s securitizing apparatuses and the economy in part by asserting that morally deficient laws which fail to protect common interests destabilize a body politic while well-crafted, well-enforced laws can promote innovation and prosperity. Thomson’s admiration for incorruptible Greeks acknowledges the threats of venality and expropriation, essentially two forms of state-sponsored thievery, as hallmarks of tyrannous government. His repeated phrase “guardian laws” in *Summer* and

*Autumn* indicates the paramount function of positive laws to protect persons and property. A stanza acclaiming British liberty identifies property rights as a fundamental object of laws:

Happy Britannia! where the Queen of Arts,  
 Inspiring vigour, Liberty, abroad  
 Walks unconfined even to thy farthest cots,  
 And scatters plenty with unsparing hand.

....

Thy country teems with wealth;  
 And Property assures it to the swain,

Pleased and unwearied in his guarded toil. (*Summer*, 1442-1445; 1454-1456)

The poem invokes liberty and freedom in a variety of figurative, ecological contexts<sup>112</sup>, but this passage's politico-economic context clearly argues that common prosperity depends on legally securing private property from unjust and arbitrary appropriation. Thus, "guarded toil" echoes the essential function and purpose of "guardian laws." Laws guard property by protecting both the negative right of a freedom *from* injury in one's property and the positive right of freedom *to* make use of one's property according to one's will. The latter, positive right ensures individuals can enjoy rewards derived from their own industry; freedom of property facilitates its commercial circulation and distribution. "Teems" connotes that, beyond immediate, personal consumption, goods fed into markets may yield greater benefits for society through their circulation and redistribution rather than simply being wasted in satisfying the vices of oligarchs.

Liberty is one of the poem's many flexible words for drawing associations among ecological and political economies. Thomson uses a variety of natural phenomena such as birds,

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<sup>112</sup> For example, "By Nature's swift and secret-working hand, / The garden glows, and fills the liberal air / With lavish fragrance" (*Spring*, 97-99).



bees, rivers, and wind to figure liberty and freely circulating things such as the contrapuntal images of people and goods passing into and through cities. These economic flows are the desired outcome of the “guardian laws” formed by the “patriot-council” who “by thousands drew, / From twining woody haunts...aspiring sons” to the city to merge their works in “the general good” (*Autumn*, 101; 99; 115-117; 97). *Autumn*’s stanza on commerce cites the “groves of masts” on the Thames to signify economic flows and exchanges that yield the “busy merchant” and the “big warehouse” (*Autumn*, 124; 119). States which adequately protect their subjects’ economic interests with laws girding natural property rights and preventing corruption are rewarded with happy and prosperous populaces.

## 2.7 *State apparatuses and the life spans of polities*

Thomson reinforces the notion that governments are complex, imperfect, but improvable political technologies by providing examples of nations that lived and died on the strength of their state apparatuses. The slow advance of civilization through technological progress involves contributions from innumerable societies that have completed their own life cycles. Continuing the passage quoted earlier on the progress of the “general Good,” Thomson predicates polities’ sustainability on the moral quality of their political institutions:

The sage Historic Muse

Should next conduct us thro’ the Deeps of Time:

Show us how Empire grew, declin’d, and fell,

In scatter’d States; what makes the Nations smile,

Improves their soil, and gives them double Suns;

And why they pine beneath the brightest Skies,

In Nature's richest Lap. (*Winter*, 587-509)

*The Seasons* adapts the opening lines of Virgil's *Georgics* announcing his theme to be the agricultural techniques and technologies which enable collective prosperity.<sup>113</sup> Thomson takes a wider view of the intellectual work which causes modern polities to enjoy liberty and wealth. The sun, sky, and soil imply the informed, efficient use of natural resources, but the poem's references to empires here and elsewhere reiterate that their socio-economic stability depend on the moral quality of their statecraft. Thomson claims Rome's decline to have begun when its dictatorial phase displaced its republican values and institutions. He offers ambivalent admiration for the "awful virtue" displayed by Brutus in defending the nation against caesarism (*Winter*, 525).

Closer to home Thomson reflects on British, socio-political institutions both stabilizing and faulty. He diffuses disapproval of Prime Minister Robert Walpole and the Court Whig party throughout the poem. For example, Tim Fulford notes that later editions of the poem added dedications to anti-Walpolean statesmen like George Bubb Dodington (1691-1762). The poem leverages the georgics' conventional reverence for land and property rights into a partisan preference for long-established, landholding families over persons raised by commercial success which constitutes a tension with his poem's more progressive inclinations.<sup>114</sup> He represents his own patrons as disinterested, uncorruptible stewards of the nation's land. Indeed, their improvement, aesthetic or practical, of their estates and their employment of tenants demonstrate their competence for statecraft. John Barrell notes that *The Seasons*' implicit political economy continued the ennobling of republican, civic humanism which in Thomson's time was based on

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<sup>113</sup> "What tickles the corn to laugh out loud, and by what star / to steer the plough, and how to train the vine to elms, / Good management of flocks and herds..." Virgil, *Georgics*, trans. Peter Fallon (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 1-2.

<sup>114</sup> Fulford, *Landscape, Liberty and Authority*, 29-31.

aristocratic virtue and right to rule on land ownership, a topic which I take up in my fourth chapter on landscaping: “The owner of fixed property, even when conscious (according to some theorists) of consulting only his own interests, would also necessarily be consulting the true, the permanent interests of the country in which his family had a permanent stake.”<sup>115</sup> Owning an estate justifies proprietors holding state offices which allow them to shape laws capable of protecting land, virtue, and the nation’s economic prospects.

Thomson reserves his strongest criticism for Britain’s slavery and jail systems, which exemplify tyrannous state apparatuses in need of reform. Slavery being the grosser outrage, these immoral institutions both hold people in bondage and so, as Locke would say, injure their natural rights to liberty. Whereas *Spring* couches the concept of slavery in images of caged birds “by tyrant man / Inhuman caught,” *Summer*’s slave ships, which draw the “direful shark” by their gruesome, “rank” conditions, are meant to scandalize and elicit sympathy from the reader (*Spring*, 703-704; *Summer*, 1015; 1016).<sup>116</sup> Thomson paints the shark as nature’s avenging tool when it in “one death involves / Tyrants and slaves” on the Middle Passage (*Summer*, 1022-1023; 1017).

The jail reform passage’s closing lines underscore my argument that Thomson presents positive laws as political technologies that vary in their adherence to natural law’s absolute, moral authority:

...in this rank age,

Much is the patriot’s weeding hand required.

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<sup>115</sup> John Barrell, *The Birth of Pandora and the Division of Knowledge* (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1992), 51.

<sup>116</sup> Fulford expresses skepticism at Thomson’s pathetic scenes. He uses the example of *Winter*’s frozen man to argue that Thomson exploits images of suffering less to inspire empathy and social change than to recommend reliance on benevolent social systems and Providence. Fulford, *Landscape, Liberty and Authority*, 26-27.

The toils of law—what dark insidious men  
 Have cumbrous added to perplex the truth  
 And lengthen simple justice into trade—  
 How glorious were the day that saw these broke,  
 And every man within the reach of right! (*Winter*, 382-388)

The first two lines use the conceit of the farmer-politician to portray the state, the purported sanctuary of moral “truth,” as an inadequately maintained and overgrown plot. The “cumbrous” laws imply chains consistent with the passage’s bondage theme. Preceding lines establish that the carceral apparatus exemplifies injustice and immorality by describing its imposition by “little tyrants.” State officials who unjustly steal from, torture, and kill the imprisoned show the “land of liberty” to be a distant ideal due to its present oppression of its citizens (*Winter*, 367; 365).

Thomson indicates that Britain’s jail system is tarnished by, among other outrages, permitting the use of arbitrary force in punishments. Like slavery, jails mistreat individuals by committing immoral, disproportionate injuries against their persons not only by means of inordinate prison terms, but in the use of corporal punishment and other tortures. Though Britain’s government and the intellectual and commercial industry of its people remain sources of pride for Thomson, motifs of tyranny, oppression, burdens, and bondage signify misguided state apparatuses which fail by far to meet natural law’s standards and weaken the state’s moral legitimacy.

Thomson’s politico-economic ideas must be understood within a physico-theological context that finds the poem less interested in specific state apparatuses than in the need for a variety of interweaving, human and non-human economies to operate in accord with nature’s moral laws. Such economies exemplify various contributors to socio-economic order irrespective of states’ political powers. The study of natural phenomena by natural philosophers

also thickens our understanding of moral philosophy, the field of thought from which political economy developed, and so also our understanding of the proper ends of state apparatuses. Moreover, natural philosophy enables innovation in the largely private, socio-economic sphere the security of which eighteenth-century political economists increasingly identified as the primary object of positive laws. The state protects industry and commerce by ensuring that its own apparatuses aspire to immutable, moral ideals like justice and all-important liberty, necessities for collective prosperity. *The Seasons* also represents state institutions and positive law as only imperfectly capable of embodying economy-adjacent, moral ideals and cites historical polities that failed partly due to inadequately moral statecraft. Ultimately, *The Seasons* denies states the possibility of having absolute, moral authority while granting, even anticipating, the perpetual refinement of their apparatuses. Beyond protecting property rights and other, vaguer liberties, Thomson gives few impressions of what state apparatuses should look like and instead offers counterexamples which figure tyranny. Yet emphasizing positive laws' securitizing function and tying them to the community's economic health opens the door for expanding state powers in the name of the public good. This chapter has thus read Thomson as anticipating political economists in the following decades who also found in ostensibly natural systems justifications for economic liberalism. They too viewed the state to be subservient to the national economy but therefore also required the state to expand its power by developing new apparatuses responsive to and capable of subtly influencing an increasingly complex socio-economic order.

My next chapter reads texts by François Quesnay and Adam Smith, two early political economists whose respective thought exhibit varying degrees of materialism by arguing that the operations of a society's economic system precede and determine the form of its government.

Quesnay attempts to reconcile his transhistorical, sociological model of agricultural production and circulation with French monarchical absolutism. Smith writes in part to correct Quesnay and to advance political economy as a historically sensitive subsystem for studying government within his larger, comprehensive project on moral philosophy. Though he argues that specific state apparatuses emerge in response to concomitant modes of subsistence, he agrees with Quesnay in justifying a state whose securitizing and economy-supporting functions entail not only its continuous refinement, but also its expanded potential for subjectivizing a body politic.

## Chapter 3

### 3 Repetition and Difference: Adam Smith's Historicizing Revision of François Quesnay's Political Economy

#### 3.1 *Economic Laws and political economy*

James Thomson's *The Seasons* decentered the georgic mode's focus on agriculture in favor of alternative forms of labor such as the work of natural philosophy. Natural philosophy's study of nature helps society understand and instrumentalize nature, the latter achieved in part by developing new means for controlling and harvesting nature's goods. *The Seasons* presents technical and technological innovation as almost natural extensions of nature's own creative potential. Yet the poem also conceals the role of state apparatuses that support and direct individuals who may otherwise seem autonomously productive, creative, and self-organizing. This chapter on the intellectual history of political economy informs my larger discussion of representations of the state and statecraft in British georgic poetry. Foundational treatises on political economy by François Quesnay, the founder of the first, economic science known as Physiocracy, and Adam Smith (1723-1790) show that Smith rejected Quesnay's earlier argument that a nation's economic health solely depends on its consistency with an ideal, timeless, economic model. Smith's revisions of Quesnay's core, economic concepts guided his own historical analysis of economic development. I argue that while Smith retained Quesnay's point that a state must expand and refine its power in order to support its national economy, his reinterpretations of Quesnay's theories of wealth creation and of the division of labor caused Smith both to redefine the origins of state apparatuses and to justify their indirect, though still

great influence over the socio-economic lives and liberties of its subjects.<sup>117</sup> Unpacking this claim requires an initial understanding of one area of agreement and one area of disagreement between the authors.

Both writers depicted social systems in which a socio-economic base gives rise to a superstructural government capable of and obliged to support the base's economic productivity. That is, a responsible state serves its body politic in part by overseeing material prosperity by means of various state apparatuses. A key distinction between Quesnay and Smith bears on their ideas about the sources of modern nations' wealth and that wealth's relation to innovations in subsistence modes and statecraft.<sup>118</sup> For Quesnay, fixed natural laws prescribe an agriculture-based, free market economy that must be governed by a centralized, absolutist regime called legal despotism. David McNally argues that in Quesnay's political economy, "the fundamental precondition of stable economic reproduction...is that the state establish social arrangements

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<sup>117</sup> To review some relevant terms, I use *state* to refer to a sovereign, political entity holding a monopoly on violence and whose political power enables it to determine its nation's form of government. *Government* refers to types of regimes such as monarchies and republics in which state power is invested. The activity of *government* is *statecraft*. Through statecraft, governments create and control a variety of *state apparatuses* through which states exert their political power to influence the behaviors of their subjects. I also refer to the whole government itself as a state apparatus or sometimes as a piece of political technology. I use *polity* and *body politic* interchangeably to describe an independent, socio-political population while the idea of the *nation* fuses population and government into a single entity. My discussion almost solely addresses Althusserian ideological state apparatuses, (rather than repressive state apparatuses) which influence subjects' behavior without immediate recourse to state-sanctioned violence. The state apparatuses that I most frequently refer to in this chapter include positive laws, physical infrastructure, and public education systems. Louis Althusser, *On the Reproduction of Capitalism: Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses*, trans. G. M. Goshgarian (New York: Verso, 2014), 75-77.

<sup>118</sup> Though Quesnay and Smith are both sensitive to economic history, except where noted, my discussions of their analyses and recommendations for state apparatuses address a European modernity largely characterized by international commerce, which allows nations to avoid relying solely on food produced internally. My discussion of stadialism below further explains modernity as a function of subsistence modes. Moreover, with regard to Smith in particular, the georgic poems I discuss participate in a self-consciously modern, nationalist, and progressivist discourse in which the British state enshrines the liberty which enables private innovation and economic prosperity.



which specifically favour a capitalist organization of agriculture.”<sup>119</sup> Quesnay attributed modern, socio-economic stability to a natural and immutable social composition of three groups defined by their types of labor. He believed that only harvesting the earth creates wealth, and he distinguished productive farmers from the other two groups whom he deemed sterile non-producers.<sup>120</sup> The first sterile group comprised artisans who merely altered goods and merchants who aided economic circulation. The second sterile group were landowners who collected rents and filled bureaucratic roles. Fundamentally, Quesnay described a fixed division of labor without naming it as such. By contrast, Smith’s *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* redefined wealth creation to include manufacturing and trade.<sup>121</sup> Expanded opportunities for wealth production effected his revision of the division of labor, which he understood to be an open-ended process of technical and technological<sup>122</sup> innovation capable of gradually changing a nation’s mode of subsistence, its primary sources of wealth, and enabled more flexibility in government. In short, Quesnay’s division of labor secures a largely unchanging socio-economic order, whereas Smith’s division of labor enables complex, synergistic forms of politico-economic growth and innovation. Not only did Smith surpass Quesnay’s narrow, economic analysis, but he tried to make his political economy accountable to a wider and more historically-informed range of human experience.

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<sup>119</sup> David McNally, *Political Economy and the Rise of Capitalism: A Reinterpretation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 120.

<sup>120</sup> Quesnay considered mining and other forms of resource extraction to also be productive but also that their returns were negligible compared to agriculture.

<sup>121</sup> Where *Wealth of Nations* addresses the history of political economy, his only other, published work, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759) argues that interpersonal sympathy influences our theories of justice and morality. Hereafter, *WN* and *TMS*.

<sup>122</sup> I use *technical* to describe practices whereas *technological* describes apparatuses that enable or support practices.

The arguments of Smith and Quesnay are important to my study of British georgics for asserting that socio-economic stability and the potential for progress derive from apparently natural, self-interested processes of production and circulation, an assertion which georgics like *The Seasons* and Darwin's *Temple of Nature* reiterate by describing ecological and physiological economies. Smith and Quesnay influentially regarded the economy as an autonomous domain of social practice which governments support rather than exploit as part of their stewardship of their nations' collective interests.

For some initial context on Smith's relationship with Quesnay, Smith traveled in France during the 1760s, met leading *philosophes* and politicians, and was so impressed by Quesnay's innovative theories as to intend *WN*'s dedication for him. Most importantly, *WN*'s Book IV, Chapter IX, "Of the agricultural Systems, or of those Systems of political Oeconomy, which represent the Produce of Land, as either the sole or the principal Source of the Revenue and Wealth of every Country," describes and responds to Quesnay's economic analysis. Quesnay's influence on Smith has been noted in work by Donald Winch, Istvan Hont, Tony Aspromorgous, and Laurent Dobuzinskis, but, with some notable exceptions, their work mainly focuses on Smith's revisions of Quesnay's economic analysis rather than on those revisions' effect on Smith's correlative revisions of political economy.<sup>123</sup> Donald Winch reads Smith as a

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<sup>123</sup> For example, Donald Winch and Laurent Dobuzinskis both address Smith's development of Quesnay's belief in the variable productivity of different forms of labor. Donald Winch, *Riches and Poverty: An intellectual history of political economy in Britain, 1750-1834* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 78; Laurent Dobuzinskis, "Adam Smith and French Political Economy: Parallels and Differences," in *Propriety and Prosperity: New Studies on the Philosophy of Adam Smith*, eds. David F. Hardwick and Leslie Marsh (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 60-61; 64-65. Tony Aspromorgous observes a similarity in Quesnay's and Smith's theories of wealth. "The key substantive point in relation to the conceptualization of political economy is that Quesnay, like Smith, centres the new economic science on the growth of 'wealth' in the sense of the flow of annual or national product." Though Aspromorgous questions whether Quesnay or even Smith have left behind mercantilism or whether Smith is truly liberal, he highlights the increased significance which Quesnay and then Smith attribute to circulation, or more precisely velocity, as a factor in producing wealth. Tony Aspromorgous, *The Science of Wealth: Adam Smith and the framing of political economy* (London: Routledge, 2009), 41.

continuation of Lockean “liberal individualism” and argues that Smith’s theories on morality and jurisprudence cohere with Smith’s other writings:

As the upholder of a system of natural liberty within which individuals possess certain natural rights and pursue selfish ends of an economic character, Smith occupies a crucial role in this tradition. He is the first major economic spokesman for an emerging capitalist order within which a distinctive set of economic or property relationships – mediated by impersonal market mechanisms – was becoming firmly established.<sup>124</sup>

The phrase “emerging capitalist order” includes the state apparatuses that enable and stabilize the socio-economic order by securing “economic or property relationship(s)” and which I explicate below. In *Jealousy of Trade*, Hont makes the useful point that Smith followed Quesnay in thinking that national economies benefit from state-regulated, free trade, but then went beyond Quesnay to argue that long-term, urban-driven prosperity led to the expansion of liberty in Europe. Hont emphasizes that Smith imagined that “[a]n ill-considered economic reform in favor of restructuring European agriculture could damage not only the urban economy but with it Europe’s hard-earned liberty as well.”<sup>125</sup> I expand on Hont’s point by showing, for example, that in Smith’s political economy property rights do not derive from timeless natural law, as John Locke and Quesnay believed, but instead are historically contingent, state apparatuses which only come into being as positive laws when prerequisite levels of economic progress are reached.

Therefore, I also follow scholarship addressing Smith’s analysis of governments developing new state apparatuses in response to shifting, stadial conditions.<sup>126</sup> For example, in

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<sup>124</sup> Donald Winch, *Adam Smith’s Politics: An Essay in Historiographic Revision* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 13-14.

<sup>125</sup> Istvan Hont, *Jealousy of Trade: International Competition and the Nation-State in Historical Perspective* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of the Harvard University Press, 2005), 109.

<sup>126</sup> Following the appearance of the Glasgow Edition of Smith’s works in 1976, Ronald Meek published an essay emphasizing Smith’s stadial theory of history that leaned toward economic determinism and

*Adam Smith's Moral Philosophy: A Historical and Contemporary Perspective on Markets, Law, Ethics, and Culture* Jerry Evensky says, "in the opening pages of the *WN*, Smith is making explicit that essential connection in his simultaneous, evolving system: the constitution of social and political institutions, the progress of opulence, and the human prospect are interdependent."<sup>127</sup> Smith's key concept of the progress of opulence refers to gradual, socio-economic developments and even stadial shifts caused by the division of labor's accumulating, positive, economic effects. Evensky highlights Smith's belief that analyzing historical examples of waxing and waning nations illuminates trends that show predictable, cooperative development between nations' economies and their governments. Smith's revisions of Quesnay's theories regarding wealth creation and divisions of labor led him to justify an ostensibly more liberal government than Quesnay's legal despotism. However, Smith's revisions also led him to reason that governments must support economic development by crafting new, more complex and powerful apparatuses to nominally expand liberty and free enterprise, but which also increase the state's influence over the body politic.<sup>128</sup>

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Meek's own materialist historiography. Notably, the concepts of property and property laws have no operative meaning or use prior to a culture's development of pasturage. Ronald L. Meek, *Smith, Marx, & After: Ten Essays in the Development of Economic Thought* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1977), 18-32. Frank Palmeri usefully reviews European precedents for the Scottish Enlightenment's reception of stadial theory in Frank Palmeri, *State of Nature, Stages of Society: Enlightenment Conjectural History and Modern Social Discourse* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016), 27-58.

<sup>127</sup> Jerry Evensky, *Adam Smith's Moral Philosophy: A Historical and Contemporary Perspective on Markets, Law, Ethics, and Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 112.

<sup>128</sup> As my Introduction mentioned, my thinking on the relation between the progress of opulence and the open-ended expansion and refinement of state apparatuses has been informed by the work of Michael Dillon. In his elaboration of Walter Benjamin's theory of sovereignty, he argues that the world presents itself to sovereigns as an infinite number of finite things which require an infinitely large and interminable effort of government to prevent their entropic descent into disorder. In our slightly modified terms, political economists recognize the existence of the world's various, material economies as capable of being instrumentalized by humans' commercial economy. While liberal states must avoid direct, socio-economic regulation, Quesnay's and especially Smith's require that modern, liberal governments create and continuously refine state apparatuses in order to administer and optimize the commercial economy. Doing so reflects the state's need to continuously expand its power and influence to answer the challenge posed by the simple existence of infinite, not-yet-optimized, thingly resources including humans.

I begin discussing Quesnay by contextualizing his analytical method with reference to his medical training. I refer to his most famous text, the *Tableau économique* to present his key, economic theories and to set up a reading of *Le Despotisme de la Chine*, a text which presents China as the nearest, historical expression of his model of political economy. Quesnay's political economy, unlike Smith's, devalued entrepreneurial innovation, while promoting stability via personal industriousness and, above all, encouraging the productive, agricultural sector. *Le Despotisme de la Chine* shows that Quesnay's prescriptive, economic principles which seemed to disclose natural laws also seemed to justify legal despotism's paternalist statecraft. The text's examples of Chinese statecraft demonstrate the characteristic inflexibility of Quesnay's political economy in which the attributed nature of wealth creation and the division of labor do not drive progress but instead predetermine subjects' functions within a fixed socio-economic order. His laudatory analysis of China's bureaucracy, its infrastructure, and its public education system help frame the similarities and differences between Quesnay's and Smith's approaches to modern statecraft. Specifically, each author favors state apparatuses oriented toward economic liberalism, but Smith's economic analysis justifies a far more open-ended statecraft that allows states' more sophisticated means for influencing subjects' lives.

I then argue that Smith's revisions of Quesnay's political economy led him to propose that governments develop positive laws and other state apparatuses concurrently with the progress of opulence while rejecting Quesnay's statecraft based on his narrower, economic analysis of natural law. However, Smith and Quesnay agreed on several socio-economic or economy-adjacent domains which modern governments should indirectly regulate. Therefore, a

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Michael Dillon, *Biopolitics of Security: A political analytic of finitude* (New York: Routledge, 2015) 6-16.

study of Smith's revisions of Quesnay's economic theories followed by an analysis of those revisions' effects on Smith's theory of statecraft show him favoring greater regulatory creep within purportedly liberal governments. I start by defining key economic concepts in *WN* that differ from their precursors in Quesnay's economic model. First, *WN* rejects Quesnay's claim that only farmers harvesting land produce wealth; instead, it argues that the labor of artisans and merchants can also increase the value of wealth and thereby have greater influence on a nation's prosperity.<sup>129</sup> Second, I show that Smith's definition of the division of labor offers new and alternative ways for nations to produce wealth, which underscores my main distinction between Quesnay's fixed socio-economic order and Smith's open-ended version.<sup>130</sup> Smith's division of labor also justified expanded state administration by problematizing laborers as complicated agents rather than fungible parts of a timeless socio-economic order. Workers seemed more complicated not only due to their more dynamic labor, but also for being susceptible to the division of labor's unintended, negative effects; these effects include injuries to workers' rationality through enforced deskilling or weakening their socialization-based, moral sympathy. Unintended consequences were important to Smith, because while entrepreneurs divide labor to increase profits, the cumulative effects of individuals attempting to improve their stock can also unintentionally transform broad economic and political conditions. Thus, the progress of opulence and the expansion of liberty-securing state apparatuses seemed to proceed as

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<sup>129</sup> Both Quesnay and Smith hold essentially materialist perspectives on wealth, but we will see that Smith's labor-command theory of value shifts away from Quesnay's simpler belief that wealth's value is a simple reflection of material quantities and towards the belief that value is determined by its cost of production itself measured as in labors hours standardized against the cost of corn. Laurent Dobunzinskis, "Adam Smith and French Political Economy," 64-65.

<sup>130</sup> This distinction is replicated between more conventional British georgics such as John Dyer's *The Fleece* which focuses on a single, rural industry and more innovative georgics like Thomson's *The Seasons*, which directly cites the intellectual labor of natural philosophy for supporting new, technological means for instrumentalizing nature.

predictable, but unintended consequences of the division of labor. Having shown that the division of labor and the progress of opulence epitomize the historical sensitivity of Smith's economic analysis, I conclude by showing that these revisions color his understanding of infrastructure and education, two public works previewed in *Le Despotisme de la Chine*. Such state apparatuses compensate for the open-ended, unintended consequences of the progress of opulence.

These contemporary, politico-economic texts which reduce the significance of states to support systems for national economies reflect and justify British georgics' own tendency to disregard all but the most flagrantly oppressive example of statecraft and state apparatuses in these poems' otherwise wide range of topics. Georgics valorize capable, skillful agents who remain blurrily responsible to and influenced by various physical and moral systems beyond the scope of human comprehension. Both georgics and economically liberal political economy ultimately obfuscate state apparatuses' influence on the socio-economic order.<sup>131</sup> We may even say that georgics aspire to see the world like the modern, liberal state recommended by Smith, since georgics encourage their publics to perceive human and non-human economies to be freely, creatively mingling rather than frame this complexity as a carefully administered liberty. Quesnay's and Smith's political economies addressed how nations can protect subjects' liberties, foster their industry and virtue, and help them and their communities prosper. In sum, reading politico-economic texts illuminates poets' direct or indirect participation in debates regarding

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<sup>131</sup> The discovery of economic analysis and the economy's eventual disembedding concurrent with the rise of political and economic liberalism tended to marginalize the influence of the state and disavow its extensive, regulatory functions. As Bernard Harcourt states, "the naturalness of the market depoliticizes the distributional outcomes..." and "[t]he idea of natural order, in effect, masks the state's role..." Bernard E. Harcourt, *The Illusion of Markets: Punishment and the Myth of Natural Order* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012), 32. For disembedding as the subjection of all social, cultural, and political systems to market rationality, see Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2001), 75.

statecraft; meanwhile, georgics remind us that much of the useful, economic innovation and liberties praised by *WN* depend on understanding and engaging with the broader, ecological systems that the poems exuberantly represent.

### 3.2 *Quesnay's agrarian economy and his vision of Chinese statecraft*

I begin with Quesnay's economic analysis, because its revision in *WN* forms Smith's basis for his own theories of statecraft. Quesnay paved the way for Smith's more elastic and historically-informed political economy by introducing the first, holistic model of economic production and circulation in his famous *Tableau économique*. A brief review of the *Tableau*'s concepts of wealth production and the division of labor will demonstrate the key point that Quesnay, and to a lesser extent Smith, believed that economic theory illuminates natural law and so also determines the socio-economic order and the functions of government. Further, many scholars have noted a core contradiction in Physiocracy, essentially a tension in Quesnay's attempt to use a truly avant-garde, if misguided theory of liberal economics as a basis for a feudal socio-political system.<sup>132</sup> To put it another way, Quesnay's political ideology of centralized paternalism is incompatible with and drags on the potentially progressive, dynamic aspects of his liberal, economic policy.

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<sup>132</sup> For example, Elizabeth Fox-Genovese's major study observes that Quesnay's economic liberalism was incompatible with his feudal, socio-political structure, because the former insisted on individualism and the pursuit of self-interest while the latter's system of rights and obligations restrained individual desires by prioritizing the collective's specific organization and perpetuation. Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, *The Origins of Physiocracy: Economic Revolution and Social Order in Eighteenth-Century France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1976), 57; 244.



I advance criticism on Quesnay by tying together three threads in the scholarship: the ability of materialist<sup>133</sup>, economic analysis to express fixed, natural laws; the requisite, triadic division of labor that defines the socio-economic order; and specific examples of state apparatuses. These three threads showcase the prescriptive rigidity of Quesnay's political economy as a foundation for my ensuing discussion of Smith's more flexible, nuanced version.<sup>134</sup> I place particular emphasis on the point, largely neglected by scholars, that Quesnay's social triad informed Smith's own, crucial theory of the division of labor and its subsequent importance in his theory of statecraft. For Quesnay, natural laws defined the fixed division of labor and so also the specific state apparatuses that promote industrious workers, free trade, and the socio-economic order's reproduction. Then, *Le Despotisme de la Chine*

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<sup>133</sup> Here I mean that Quesnay thinks of economies both commercial and ecological in physical terms. It is also the case, as I mentioned earlier, that Quesnay understands the socio-economic order (base) to precede and determine a society's government (superstructure).

<sup>134</sup> Margaret Schabas and Lorraine Daston have been crucial for my understanding of the relation between eighteenth-century economic analysis and natural law. Schabas's work describes how early, economic theorists including the Physiocrats understood economic production and circulation in physical, materialist terms as opposed to the abstract, numerical models in current use among economists. Analyses like Quesnay's were often developed by association with other, ecological systems that natural philosophers contemporaneously explored with new fervor and depth. Physiocracy especially demonstrates how such interpretations could derive apparent lessons from natural economies that seemed to justify socio-economic homeostasis. Margaret Schabas, *The Natural Origins of Economics* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2005), 2-4. Lorraine Daston's work addresses the point made in my last chapter that the study of physical nature by natural philosophers could produce physical laws of nature that could successively inform moral philosophers' knowledge of moral, natural laws. Daston observes that jurisprudential language migrated from Roman and ecclesiastical, canon law to provide a grammar for organizing knowledge of the order discovered in physical systems which manifested the moral order of the universe. Lorraine Daston and Michael Stolleis, "Introduction: Nature, Law and Natural Law in Early Modern Europe," in *Natural Law and Laws of Nature in Early Modern Europe: Jurisprudence, Theology, Moral and Natural Philosophy*, eds. Lorraine Daston and Michael Stolleis (Burlington: Ashgate, 2008), 2-3, 12. Regarding the socio-economic order, Liana Vardi has produced the most complete and informative account of the intersecting and at times conflicting philosophical contexts that led Quesnay to mix relatively conservative, *ancien régime* political philosophy with an innovative, economic science that arrived at an abstract, circulation model from materialist, agrarian premises. Liana Vardi, *The Physiocrats and the World of the Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

exemplifies the proper, state apparatuses of legal despotism, a regime justified by the natural laws disclosed by the *Tableau*'s economic analysis.

Quesnay's thought both borrows and departs from contemporary ideas about economic topics and political philosophy. As my Introduction discussed, eighteenth-century French political economy operated on mercantilist principles. Mercantilists generally thought that a state should support its nation's commonwealth by means of domestic interventions such as price regulation and international protectionism in order to amass material wealth, ideally in precious metals, in the zero-sum balance of international trade.<sup>135</sup> Direct government regulation of the national economy comported with French political philosophy which, as McNally points out, recognized the nation as the king's household.<sup>136</sup> Before Quesnay, Jean Bodin's *Six livres de la république* (1576) and Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet's *Politique tirée de l'Écriture sainte* (1709) had both influentially defended royal absolutism. Nominal restraints of the crown by councilors, by the 13 *parlements*<sup>137</sup>, and by the Church did not fuel the same politico-philosophical reckoning as had England's mixed government in terms of rights, obligations, and checks and balances. Seventeenth-century France's overlapping legacies of mercantilism and monarchical absolutism led to decades of government interventions in the national economy that regularly produced food crises and would lead to the scapegoating of Finance Minister Jean-Baptiste Colbert (1619-1683). Colbert's many successful policies would nevertheless be decried as excessively

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<sup>135</sup> For a recent account of the complex and often conflicting ideas grouped under the name mercantilism, see Lars Magnusson, *The Political Economy of Mercantilism* (London: Routledge, 2015).

<sup>136</sup> Referring to Quesnay's description of the *Tableau* as a book of household accounts, McNally states that "[w]ith this expression, Quesnay indicates that, for all his analytic innovations, his enterprise remains curiously within the traditional discourse of political economy which conceptualized the economy from the standpoint of—and as an extension of—the royal household." McNally, *Political Economy and the Rise of Capitalism*, 115-116.

<sup>137</sup> Provincial courts possessing the right to remonstrate against the king's decrees.

protectionist by Quesnay and others favoring comparatively *laissez-faire* policies.<sup>138</sup>

Additionally, Bourbon monarchs entered several wars which they supported by the short-sighted, venal selling of inheritable, annuity-bearing offices and thus monstrously expanded the national debt. Lewis Gwynne observes that the crown eventually sold away much of its political power.<sup>139</sup> Quesnay feared that these activities fed limited, partisan interests and hurt the commonwealth; unenlightened kings, tax-farmers, and licensed, corporate monopolies collectively choked the *net produit*<sup>140</sup> and state revenues. Quesnay sought to mitigate these prosperity-sapping practices by prioritizing free, domestic and international circulation of goods over balance of trade, which would additionally weaken the balance of trade's legitimization of expensive, colony-protecting wars.<sup>141</sup>

Quesnay's initial success as a physician led him to eventually head an influential group known either as the *Économistes* or the Physiocrats (meaning *rule of nature*) who shared his politico-economic beliefs. Living at Versailles as the king's physician, he was a favorite of Louis XV's mistress, Madame de Pompadour and convinced other influential nobles and administrators to spread and implement his ideas. One of his closest adherents, Victor de Riqueti, marquis de Mirabeau (1715-1789) promoted physiocratic ideas in the popular *L'ami des hommes : ou, Traité de la population* (1759). Perhaps most notably, Anne Robert Jacques Turgot (1727-1781) became Controller-General of Finances from 1774 to 1776 and was able to partially deregulate the grain trade before a series of bad harvests and criticism from Ferdinando

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<sup>138</sup> Max Beer, *An Inquiry into Physiocracy* (London: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd., 1966), 39-45.

<sup>139</sup> Gwynne, Lewis, *France 1715-1804: Power and the People* (Harlow: Pearson Longman, 2004), 15.

<sup>140</sup> Essentially the net, domestic product, the exact, annual reproduction of which crucially enables the reproduction of the socio-economic order. Its perfect reproduction is one of the primary objects of Quesnay's political economy.

<sup>141</sup> Istvan Hont uses the term jealousy of trade to describe the mercantilist pursuit of national self-interest via international, zero-sum commercial competition as a continuation of war by other means. Hont, *Jealousy of Trade: International Competition and the Nation-State in Historical Perspective*, 5-6.

Galiani (1728-1787) and the statesman Jacques Necker (1732-1804) effectively ended popular engagement with physiocratic thought. In addition to the *Tableau*, Quesnay left several texts attempting to explain his economic and socio-political theories, including four articles written for the *Encyclopédie*.

His article “Evidence” usefully demonstrates that not only physiocratic, political economy’s materialism but also its holism and inflexibility derived in part from Quesnay’s medical training. “Evidence” reflects a fundamentally Lockean epistemology; for example, it distinguishes objective, primary qualities from subjective, secondary qualities as Locke defines them in *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*.<sup>142</sup> “Evidence” rejects entirely deductive, system-based thought in favor of a mix of Lockean empiricism and educated hypothesizing, though Smith nevertheless criticized Quesnay as a dogmatic “man of system.”<sup>143</sup> Quesnay’s background in iatrophysical medicine guided his wish to minimize the use of analogy and imagination for understanding any set of complex, enmeshed systems; it informed his general research method, which proposed that measurable, empiric experiments should enable the theorization of larger systems susceptible to abstraction, numerical modelling, and ultimately predictability and fixed principles.<sup>144</sup> Empiric study should then also be capable of arriving at a

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<sup>142</sup> John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Peter H. Nidditch (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), II.viii.9-10.

<sup>143</sup> “The man of system, on the contrary, is apt to be very wise in his own conceit; and is often so enamoured with the supposed beauty of his ideal plan of government, that he cannot suffer the smallest deviation from any part of it. He goes on to establish it completely and in all its parts, without any regard either to the great interests, or to the strong prejudices which may oppose it.” Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, eds. D. D. Raphael and A. L. Macfie (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1984), VI.ii.2.17. Deborah Redman observes that Locke’s “historical, plain method” for implementing political economy derives its empiricism-based pragmatism from his own background in medicine. Deborah Redman, *The Rise of Political Economy as a Science: Methodology and the Classical Economists* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1997), 67.

<sup>144</sup> Iatrophysical medicine understood physiology in mechanical, physics-based terms. “L’évidence résulte nécessairement de l’observation intime de nos propres sensations... Ainsi j’entens par évidence, une certitude à laquelle il nous est aussi impossible de nous refuser, qu’il nous est impossible d’ignorer nos sensations actuelles.” (Evidence necessarily results from the close observation of our own

holistic, political economy that, like a human body, reacts with reasonable predictability to regulative interventions ranging from slight and corrective to injuriously heavy-handed. Supporting my view that “Evidence” validates the connection between Quesnay’s medical training and his political economy, Jessica Rifkin, Margaret Schabas, and Liana Vardi each note that Quesnay’s materialist conception of bodily health determined his emphasis on the (re)production and circulation of wealth through the body politic. For example, Schabas states that “[h]is discernment of the circulation of goods between three sectors—the landowners, the artisans, and the farmers—was directly inspired by his knowledge of human physiology.”<sup>145</sup> “Evidence” ultimately argues for translating empiric information into operable knowledge of nature and its physical laws, a method extensible to economic analysis and policy-making. The article’s empiric epistemology grounded in his medical training helps us see that later texts like the *Tableau* and *Le Despotisme de la Chine* would rely on methods described in “Evidence” to elevate to the status of natural law their claims regarding wealth’s physicality, the socio-economic triad, and the necessity of legal despotism.

Following methods described in “Evidence,” Quesnay presented his innovative, economic theories in three, increasingly annotated editions of his *Tableau économique*; the text’s

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sensations... Thus I mean by evidence, a certain which is as impossible for us to refuse as it is to ignore our immediate sensations.) “EVIDENCE,” in *Encyclopédie, ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers, etc.*, eds. Denis Diderot and Jean le Rond d’Alembert eds. Robert Morrissey and Glenn Roe (University of Chicago: ARTFL Encyclopédie Project (Autumn 2017 Edition)), <http://encyclopedia.uchicago.edu/>. Regarding the *Tableau*, Philippe Steiner calls Quesnay’s extrapolation from bits of hard evidence to an ideal, national system “quantitative empiricism.” Philippe Steiner, “Physiocracy and French Pre-Classical Political Economy,” in *A Companion to the History of Economic Thought*, eds. Warren J. Samuels, Jeff E. Biddle, and John B. Davis (Malden: Blackwell, 2003), 68. Vardi notes the importance for Quesnay and for Enlightenment political economists more broadly to discover regularities in socio-economic systems that allow governments to eliminate uncertainty and chance when implementing policies. Vardi, *The Physiocrats and the World of the Enlightenment*, 57.

<sup>145</sup> Margaret Schabas, *The Natural Origins of Economics*, 46-47. Jessica Riskin “The ‘Spirit of System’ and the Fortunes of Physiocracy,” in *Oeconomies in the Age of Newton*, ed. Margaret Schabas and Neil De Marchi (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 43; Vardi, *The Physiocrats and the World of the Enlightenment*, 29-39.

centerpiece, zig-zagging chart represents the annual circulation of France's wealth through the social triad. Despite its notorious complexity, he insisted that any reasonable person studying his ideas would reach an epiphany, discover their self-evidentiary truth, and acknowledge Physiocracy as the expression of natural laws. According to Yves Charbit, the chart mixed the empirical and the ideal:

On the one hand, in keeping with his contemporaries' enthusiasm for agriculture, and like the thinkers of the agronomic school, he bases his analysis on solid empirical evidence supplied by a network of correspondents. On the other hand, the diagram of the *Tableau économique* contains purely theoretical numbers, which purport to illustrate the annual flows of exchanges between social groups.<sup>146</sup>

In addition to explaining farming's reproduction of wealth and the socio-economic triad, the text insists on certain, progressive policies perhaps the most crucial of which was the need for free trade among French counties and ideally with other nations. While the idea of free trade did not originate with Physiocracy, Quesnay and Smith gave it firmer theoretical ground than it had had from less systematic, mercantilist thinkers.<sup>147</sup> In Quesnay's opinion, free trade ensured that grain, the most vital commodity, would approach the *bon prix*, a point of equilibrium reflecting the balanced interests of buyers and sellers and thus the grain's true value. Ideally grain would be both abundant and maintain a high enough price that people would be fed, and enough money

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<sup>146</sup> Yves Charbit and Arundhati Virmani, "The Political Failure of an Economic Theory: Physiocracy," *Population* 57, no. 6 (2002): 862.

<sup>147</sup> For example, Terence Hutchison highlights Charles Davenant (1656-1714) as an early economic theorist who advocated domestic, free trade and even prefigured Adam Smith's argument that a nation benefits by granting its subjects liberty to pursue self-interested, economic practices. Terence Hutchison, *Before Adam Smith: The Emergence of Political Economy, 1662-1776* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988), 49-51.

would eventually circulate back to the farmers for them to afford the next year's supplies.<sup>148</sup> Free trade would also prevent individuals from hoarding grain during low-price periods, allow surpluses to be sold to grain-poor regions, and generally discourage selling practices that might have immediate, self-serving benefits but would have cascading, negative consequences for farmers' supplies of money and seed in following years. The *Tableau*'s progressive, free-market model of domestic circulation nevertheless betrays its conservative tendencies, because this system, attributed to fixed, natural laws, works to annually reproduce the socio-economic triad by also reproducing the same amount of consumable resources year to year. In addition to Quesnay's almost fanatically conservative fixation on land as not only the source of wealth but also of political power, we should note that he presented even the progressive aspects of his economic analysis as natural laws which justify his fundamentally conservative argument for maintaining the socio-economic order and absolutist government.

Quesnay's innovative, circulatory model originates in his conservative theories of wealth production and labor's division into the three socio-economic groups.<sup>149</sup> Given that each group must consume a fixed amount of resources to reproduce itself, Quesnay claimed that only nature's productive powers can replace consumed wealth. His *Encyclopédie* article "Fermiers" defines the productive group:

[Fermiers] sont ceux qui afferment & font valoir les biens des campagnes, & qui procurent les richesses & les ressources les plus essentielles pour le soutien de l'état ;

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<sup>148</sup> Foucault provides an example of Physiocracy proposing a new state apparatus in the form of a law prohibiting hoarding. The law nominally fosters an ostensibly liberal, free market that will produce the desired mix of high abundance and high prices. The law epitomizes the paradox of regulated freedom. Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the College de France, 1977-1978*, trans. Graham Burchell (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 37.

<sup>149</sup> His definition of wealth retains mercantilism's, material-based, almost empiric commitment to physical goods, though he regarded bullion as valuable to the extent that it facilitates circulation rather than being worth stockpiling for its own sake.

ainsi l'emploi du fermier est un objet très-important dans le royaume, & mérite une grande attention de la part-du gouvernement.<sup>150</sup>

([Farmers] are those who lease and make yield the goods of the fields and who procure the most essential riches and resources for the support of the state; thus, the farmer's employment is a very important subject in the kingdom and deserves much of the government's attention.)

However, Physiocracy gave multiple reasons for proscribing improvements to farmers' financial situations. Most importantly, farmers must turn over the entire *net produit* to the landowners from whom they rent land. One of the *Tableau*'s objects was ensuring that each year's optimal, *net produit* reaches landowners who can then guide adequate *avances annuelles* (annual costs) back into the farmer's hands at the beginning of the circulatory process. Additionally, Quesnay accounted for France's middling agricultural output, aimed for exact reproduction, and largely ignored potential increases in efficiency or production arising from technological innovation.<sup>151</sup>

A glimpse at the sterile group of artisans and merchants underscores how Quesnay's definition of wealth creation justified his fixed, labor-based socio-economic order. Quesnay insisted that applying labor to pre-existing resources does not increase their value regardless of time or effort spent. He thus implied that, strictly understood, labor neither creates wealth nor adds value, though it can cause the earth to produce wealth in greater quantities. Yet artisans and merchants remain necessary, because artisans furnish the means of production while merchants

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<sup>150</sup> "Fermiers," in *Encyclopédie, ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers, etc.*, eds. Denis Diderot and Jean le Rond d'Alembert eds. Robert Morrissey and Glenn Roe (University of Chicago: ARTFL Encyclopédie Project (Autumn 2017 Edition)), <http://encyclopedia.uchicago.edu/>.

<sup>151</sup> Quesnay's neglect of technological progress reasonably reflected the recent history of French agriculture; lacking England's Agricultural Revolution, the traditional open-field system of two fields planted and one left fallow remained largely unchanged from the early modern period until the nineteenth century. For a summary of the French agrarian culture of the period, see William Beik, *A Social and Cultural History of Early Modern France* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 43-63.



who circulate goods enable markets to achieve the *bon prix*. However, due in part to their proximity to luxury goods and merchants' tendency to impede the economy by hoarding, overcharging, and otherwise bleeding the *net produit*, Quesnay considered them to be a persistent threat to the economy's smooth operation.

Quesnay argued that natural laws disclosed by his economic analysis justify sterile landowners' economic and political powers. By assigning his economic theories the status of natural laws, he gave a new, enlightened sheen to an ultimately conservative respect for landownership concomitant with *ancien régime* feudalism. Fox-Genovese makes a similar point by asserting that Physiocracy posed itself as a unitary, social science, but was ultimately grounded in Quesnay's respect for private property.<sup>152</sup> His economic justifications laundered a feudal ideology granting a landowning aristocracy perpetual right to rule. He asserted that proprietors retain absolute power over both the *net produit* and state offices, because their families had provided the *avances primitives*, the initial, financial outlays, which allowed farms to be established in the first place. As sole owners of France's capital, proprietors bear almost the whole tax burden and initiate the yearly reproduction cycle by redistributing the *avances annuelles* to the other two groups. Quesnay's outsize esteem for the ruling class is exemplified by the simple fact that the *avances primitives*, no matter their size, cannot countenance absolute and permanent control over their capital *and* the entire *net produit* of others' labor. His desire to maintain a traditional, aristocratic class that uniquely enjoys a variety of material luxuries and political privileges is a symptom of his politico-economic conservatism.

Recognizing the importance Quesnay attributed to property rights as an aspect of land ownership brings us closer to understanding the determinative relationship between his

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<sup>152</sup> Fox-Genovese, *The Origins of Physiocracy*, 47.

innovative, economic analysis and his preference for legal despotism as a positive, political support system for natural law. Though Quesnay's opinion of land ownership diverged from Locke's labor theory of property, Quesnay shared Locke's belief that exclusionary property rights are a key natural right deriving from and serving the natural law that societies should prosper.<sup>153</sup> Physiocracy fulfills natural law by encouraging the optimal exploitation of stock which means that, as Catherine Larrère summarizes in *L'Invention de l'économie au XVIIIe siècle: du droit naturel à la physiocratie*, states must secure landowners' property rights as a prerequisite to individuals pursuing their economic self-interest.<sup>154</sup> Property rights permit owners the free and rational use of their wealth which the *Tableau* conveniently models. Given that state apparatuses must secure the rights necessary for economic production and distribution, they also must avoid impeding these flows by, for example, fixing prices and thereby meddling with the *bon prix* and *net produit*. Again, on one hand, Quesnay's economic analysis defended progressive, even liberalist positions such as free trade and strong property rights. On the other hand, these natural rights belong solely to an economically and politically empowered minority whose high social standing derived from a feudal social order which Quesnay refashioned as enlightened Physiocracy. He wrote *Le Despotisme de la Chine* as proof of physiocratic, political

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<sup>153</sup> As my Introduction addresses, exclusionary property rights exclude others from injuring individuals with respect to their possessions. Locke's labor theory of property asserts that mixing one's labor with unclaimed resources appropriates and grants one property rights to those resources irrespective of the pre-existence of a social contract.

<sup>154</sup> "L'optimisation de la jouissance se réalise dans la relation qui situe l'individu dans l'ordre naturel, qui est relation, d'intérêt commun, entre l'un et le tout ; le droit naturel, droit à la jouissance, s'y développe et s'y renforce sous la forme de la propriété... Mais, en se faisant de la sorte science de la jouissance, la physiocratie entretient un rapport problématique avec l'objectif politique de la modernité, la sûreté." (The optimization of pleasure occurs in the relation which locates the individual in the natural order, in the relation of the common interest between the one and the whole; the natural right, the right to pleasure, develops and strengthens in the form of property... But in making itself a kind of science of pleasure, Physiocracy maintains a problematic relation with the political goal of modernity, security.) Catherine Larrère, *L'Invention de l'économie au XVIIIe siècle : du droit naturel à la physiocratie* (Paris : Presses Universitaires de France, 1992), 13.

economy's real-world viability and to provide specific examples of statecraft carrying out legal despotism with reasonable accuracy. The durability and continuity of China's agrarian economy and absolutist government seemed to him to validate his claim that his economic analysis had indeed disclosed natural laws which China had implemented through its state-sanctioned system of moral philosophy.

My study of *Le Despotisme de la Chine* benefits from recent, critical interest in the text as an example of non-European influence on Enlightenment thought.<sup>155</sup> My claim that the text usefully demonstrates a homeostatic, socio-economic order sustained by legal despotism is supported by Stefan Jacobsen Gaarsmand's observation that "Quesnay's Chinese ideal contained an economic equilibrium that secures the stability of agricultural production as well as a perpetual and stable order of government."<sup>156</sup> My analysis differs from scholars who focus on Quesnay's uncertain absorption of Eastern ideas by instead using *Le Despotisme de la Chine* to identify specific state apparatuses required to stabilize the socio-economic order based on a fixed division of labor and ordained by natural laws.<sup>157</sup> Though Quesnay participates in a wider European process of orientalizing, and though he invokes China in the service of his own arguments, he demonstrates a largely tolerant understanding of Chinese political economy by

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<sup>155</sup> Important studies that specifically address China include John M. Hobson, *The Eastern Origins of Western Civilization* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004) and David E. Mungello, *The Great Encounter of China and the West, 1500-1800* (Plymouth: Rowman & Littlefield, 2009).

<sup>156</sup> Stefan Gaarsmand Jacobsen, "Physiocracy and the Chinese model: Enlightened lessons from China's political economy?," in *Thoughts on economic development in China*, eds. Ma Ying and Hans-Michael Trautwein (New York: Routledge, 2013), 28.

<sup>157</sup> Hobson outlines examples of Quesnay's ideas which China's historical and philosophical precedents seemed to support:

The significance of his ideas, derived from China, was at least twofold: first, he saw in agriculture a crucial source of wealth (which became an important idea in the British agricultural revolution). Secondly, and more importantly, he believed that agriculture could only be fully exploited when producers were freed from the arbitrary interventions of the state. Only then could the 'natural laws' of the market prevail (as the Chinese had long realized).

Hobson, *The Eastern Origins of Western Civilization*, 196.

accommodating and accepting Confucianism as an alternative moral philosophy capable of cultivating proper, socio-economic order.

Quesnay published *Le Despotisme de la Chine* in *Ephémérides du citoyen* (1767–72, 1774–76), a physiocratic journal Joseph A. Schumpeter deems both “the first genuine history of economics” and filled with propaganda.<sup>158</sup> *Despotisme* recalls other statecraft manuals such as Machiavelli’s *Discourses on Livy* (1531) and François Fenelon’s *Les aventures de Télémaque* (1699), which use history and legend to convey political philosophy and policies. Quesnay’s text relied on often second-hand reports by Christian missionaries to produce a synthetic, quasi-historical account of Chinese political economy. He can be critical of his sources, speculating on the conditions, limitations, and prejudices that would cause missionaries and merchants to produce uncharitable accounts. Quesnay devotes many pages to correcting Montesquieu (1689–1755) whose writing, according to Hyobom B. Pak, symptomatized increasing Sinophobia in the European Enlightenment and not only “misrepresented the philosophical foundations of Chinese government, but also conveniently selected many sources of dubious origin to vilify the whole fabric of the Chinese body politic as a prototype of despotism.”<sup>159</sup> Quesnay was more sanguine than many *philosophes* and perceived that China’s apparently successful, agrarian economy headed by an absolute monarch harmonized with and verified his own beliefs in the universality of the natural laws he had identified.

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<sup>158</sup> Joseph A. Schumpeter, *History of Economic Analysis* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 219. The scholarly edition of *La Despotisme de la Chine* read here is compiled from two manuscripts and differs in the ordering of certain chapters from the published version. As elsewhere, translations are my own.

<sup>159</sup> Hyobom B. Pak, *China and the West: Myths and Realities in History* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1974), 57. European impressions of Chinese political economy produced a wide spectrum of approval and disapproval. The East could be at once a scapegoat for Western cultural anxieties and a compelling, commodity market. Western explorers transmitted records of experiences and ideas which would influence natural history and comparative ethnography and thereby provide a resonant antitype against which Europe’s supposedly more virtuous and just societies could be measured.

Quesnay's approval of Chinese political economy rested on his sense that the country's philosophers had come reasonably close to discovering universal, moral principles consistent with fixed, natural laws. These principles originated with Confucius (551 - 479 BCE), whose ideas China's educational system transformed into dogma that would inform its social order for centuries. An unpublished chapter on Confucius's life all but attributes two millennia of Chinese achievements to his moral philosophy.<sup>160</sup> Introducing the section "Maxims," Quesnay stresses that Confucianism's consistency with natural law enabled China's well-regulated political economy. He states that "[o]n verra par là que la raison est de tous les tems de tous les pais" (Quesnay, 1067; We will thereby see that reason applies at all times and in all countries). Both Confucian, moral philosophy and Quesnay's economic analysis called for paternalist governments with enough influence to harmonize the socio-economic order with natural law, an influence channeled through the educational systems I discuss below. Rather than directly prescribing China's economy, the maxims assert that the poorest citizen may possess princely virtue and insist on industriousness, humility, and the subjection of all people to paternalist Confucianism.

Though a plowman may be as virtuous as the emperor, national stability depends on all state officials embodying the Confucian virtues consistent with natural law. Though natural laws reign supreme, in practice and like all legal despots, China's emperor concentrates sovereign legal power in his or her person as the political analogue to a paternal head of household. By

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<sup>160</sup> "Il a pourtant l'avantage sur eux que sa gloire n'a fait qu'augmenter avec le nombre des années, et qu'elle subsiste encore en entiere dans le plus grand empire du monde qui lui attribue sa durée et sa splendeur." (However, he has the edge over [Greek philosophers] that his glory only increased with the number of years and that it survives whole in the world's greatest empire which credits him with its duration and its prosperity.) All further references are taken from François Quesnay, *Œuvres économiques complètes de François Quesnay et autres textes*, eds. Christine Théré, Loïc Charles and Jean-Claude Perrot (Paris : Institut national d'études démographiques, 2005), 1062.

educating and advising the emperor, mandarins check absolute, imperial power in part by fostering compassion and responsibility for China's people; emperors too must be subject to natural law to avoid arbitrary despotism. Thus, the reciprocal bonds of paternal care and familial esteem on a national scale should foment ideological consensus regarding the public good.<sup>161</sup>

While sovereignty belongs solely to the emperor, the Chinese state's political power diffuses through its bureaucracy of fourteen thousand mandarins who administer national stability. A series of competitive exams open to all men tests rote knowledge of Confucianism and distributes high scorers throughout the bureaucratic and court systems. Again, this system reflects Quesnay's preference for meticulously reproducing a nation's socio-economic composition. This supposedly meritocratic system answers France's own problem of monarchs funding expensive, often unavailing wars by selling titles, annuities, and state offices to, worst of all, *nouveau riche* merchants. Such people bleed France by contributing to the national debt, by tax-farming, and by keeping more qualified people out of office. Instead, mandarins seemed to epitomize morality and Quesnay lengthily details the internal oversight designed to minimize corruption and ensure their accountability to natural laws. Each must be impartial and fungible. For example, mandarins must move away from their home provinces and recuse themselves from working with or on cases involving family members. Aggrieved parties may appeal up the command chain to the emperor, and abuses of offices are publicized and punished.

The mandarin's internal rigor authorizes them to enforce the positive laws that protect the nation and let it prosper. "Maxims" establishes that Chinese culture is founded on moral

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<sup>161</sup> Deriving political paternalism from an apparently timeless household paternalism allowed Quesnay to naturalize both by describing both as reflecting natural laws and to consequently reject the social contract. Smith similarly conjectured that the first governments arose more or less organically by patterning themselves on the paternal family structure. Thus, he too dismissed the idea of government-originating, social contracts.

principles demanding deference to authority. The section “Positive Legislation” clarifies that this morality of subjection and submission directly informed China’s codified laws:

Pour ce qui est des lois, elles sont toutes fondées sur les principes de morale que l’on a vus ; car, comme on l’a déjà dit, la morale et la politique ne forment à la Chine qu’une même science, et dans cet empire, toutes les lois positives ne tendent qu’à maintenir la forme du gouvernement ... (Quesnay, 1083)

(Regarding laws, they are all based on the moral principles that we saw; because, as we already said, morality and policy form but one science in China, and in this empire, all positive laws only aim to preserve the government’s form ... )

The text’s “Introduction” states that a nation’s positive laws must not contradict natural laws nor impede the economy’s natural productivity and circulation (Quesnay, 1015-1017). Predictably, positive laws protecting natural, property rights are especially important.<sup>162</sup> Property laws exemplify Quesnay’s and Smith’s desire for commutative justice, an approach to jurisprudence based on fair contracts and exchange and one which provides for exclusionary ownership rights that ban expropriation of, injury to, or other parties profiting from another person’s possessions. By contrast with commutative justice, distributive justice seeks specific, socio-economic outcomes, invites direct, state intervention in the economy, and may redistribute wealth. By minimizing state-directed economic intervention and redistribution, China’s quasi-liberal positive laws based on commutative justice help perpetuate an economic and political status quo.

Though Quesnay does not seem to want positive laws to endlessly proliferate, states’ responsibility for the public good require them to subjectivize their polities.<sup>163</sup> This key point is

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<sup>162</sup> “La propriété des biens est très assurée à la Chine...” (Quesnay, 1078; The property of goods is very secure in China...).

<sup>163</sup> I adapt my use of subjectivization from Jacques Ranciere’s essay, “Politics, Identification, and Subjectivization,” which states that “subjectivization is the formation of a one that is not a self but is the

supported by Larrère's argument that Physiocracy created an interminable balancing act by desiring to maximize subjects' natural right to pursue their self-interest (and thus maximize net productivity) while minimizing the regulatory, state apparatuses needed for securing their ability to do so.<sup>164</sup> Positive laws and other state apparatuses proliferate due to liberal governments' interminable need to more effectively shunt economic flows into their optimal, supposedly natural channels. As "Evidence" shows, Quesnay preferred predictable, often simple policies and institutions. For example, he proposed a single flat tax on the landowners' *net produit* to rid France of its complex, corrupt tax system.<sup>165</sup> Still, Quesnay and Smith recognized that commutative justice-based laws alone cannot induce a nation's economic agents to perform to the *Tableau's* standards. *Le Despotisme de la Chine's* discussion of infrastructure demonstrates that states can continuously reshape physical, public space to optimize socio-economic behavior.

Quesnay valued infrastructure that incentivizes efficient production and circulation. In concert with public education, infrastructure can continuously encourage people to be rational, productive subjects. Maintaining and improving a nation's physical environment requires significant public spending to endlessly refine the city-walls, roads, canals, and bridges that

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relation of a self to an other." Ranciere means for subjectivization to be an emancipatory process wherein a state's marginalized, unequal people force themselves to be recognized by the state as equal, participatory subjects. I somewhat perversely adopt the Physiocratic and/or liberal state's point of view by using subjectivization to mean a state's attempts to use its power to close the gap between excluded selves and the other. In this case, each "self" is a member of the population and the "other" is the ideal, national subject who embodies natural laws by recognizing and pursuing their economic self-interest with exactitude. Incidentally, these self-interested actions also serve the nation's presumed, collective, self-interest in its own reproduction. Subjectivizing state apparatuses proliferate, because this gap between real selves and ideal subjects can never be closed. Jacques Ranciere, "Politics, Identification, and Subjectivization," *October* 61 (Summer 1992), 60.

<sup>164</sup> Charles Gide and Charles Rist note Physiocracy's related contradiction that maximizing the polity's rights simultaneously required maximizing state power by granting despots absolute, political authority. Charles Gide and Charles Rist, *A History of Economic Doctrines: From the Time of the Physiocrats to the Present Day* (London: Charles G Harrap & Co. Ltd., 1961), 52.

<sup>165</sup> Hutchison identifies the single tax and laissez-faire trade as "the two overriding policy doctrines of Quesnay and the physiocrats..." Hutchison, *Before Adam Smith*, 280.



determine ease of access and transport, incentivize self-serving uses of public space, and add to the commonwealth.<sup>166</sup> Infrastructure creates material conditions that do not compel but subjectivize individuals by incentivizing, disincentivizing, and thus indirectly guiding their economic activities. *Le Despotisme de la Chine* gives several, admiring examples of Chinese infrastructure. For example, terracing increases the space available for farming. For commercial traffic, Quesnay approves China's grand highways and artificial canals. Deemed more efficient than roads, canals simplify transport and aid irrigation.<sup>167</sup> Proper infrastructure eases the circulation of goods between town and country and within market towns. Foucault supports my point that the physiocratic state purports to maximize liberty and the pursuit of self-interest by minimizing state apparatuses that intrude on socio-economic life while expanding its influence over the environments in which this collective activity takes place: "the market town became the model of state intervention in men's lives" and connotes the body-level discipline of physical space that subjects individuals to a common, state-sanctioned, and (according to Quesnay) natural, market rationality.<sup>168</sup> In Quesnay's telling, urban markets provide a communal space where free, self-interested individuals produce the economic equilibrium of the *bon prix*. However, free trade between the town and the country ultimately maintains a fixed division of labor between each sector's workers. Because only the country creates wealth, farmers must stay

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<sup>166</sup> Mirabeau refers to "l'entretien et l'amélioration, qui ne peuvent jamais être trop forts, & dont les dépenses peuvent être immenses..." (...upkeep and improvement, which can never be too great and whose costs can be immense...) Qtd. in Yves Citton, *Portrait de l'économiste en physiocrate : critique littéraire de l'économie politique* (Paris : L'Harmattan, 2000), 292. Brian Larkin confirms my point that infrastructure exerts state power over individuals by influencing their economic desires and behavior. For example, "[roads and railways] form us as subjects not just on a technopolitical level but also through this mobilization of affect and the senses of desire, pride, and frustration, feelings which can be deeply political." Larkin, Brian, "The Politics and Poetics of Infrastructure," *The Annual Review of Anthropology* 42. (2013): 331-3.

<sup>167</sup> Schabas argues that Quesnay's economic ideas relied on medical analogies such as fluid circulation indicating a body politic's economic health. Margaret Schabas, *The Natural Origins of Economics*, 45-46.

<sup>168</sup> Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, 338.

on the farms and continuously produce without profiting while their harvests must be able to reach the two sterile, urban groups.<sup>169</sup> Circulatory infrastructure epitomizes the distinction between Quesnay's homeostatic political economy and Smith's more historically literate analysis that recognizes value in urbanization. As we will see, Smith appreciates circulatory infrastructure, because trade between town and country expands net prosperity and drives the progress of opulence rather than simply transferring wealth from one area to another.

*Le Despotisme de la Chine*'s detailing of the relation between China's Confucian morality and state apparatuses demonstrates Quesnay's belief that states must habituate their subjects to following natural laws. A life-long educational system and positive laws enforced by an intensively internally-regulated bureaucracy offer a state powerful, refinable apparatuses for maintaining the socio-economic order. Once a nation discovers natural laws and the triadic, socio-economic order, political economy's burden shifts to continuously refining these state apparatuses to best manage and reproduce the polity. A final example of public works shows public education to be a particularly powerful apparatus for offering states strong, persistent influence over subjects' economic interests and behaviors.

Whereas law enforcement is largely a *post hoc* solution to already broken laws, public education precludes transgressions by pre-conditioning and guiding individuals' behavior. Public education ideally enables states to train individuals to pursue the public good by recognizing its identity with their own interests. Quesnay initially highlights the importance of despots' education, because they hold absolute, political power, and nations' welfare depends on their rulers' commitment to natural laws. Though positive laws do not bind Chinese emperors,

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<sup>169</sup> Because farmers give the entire, *net produit* to the landowning class at the end of the annual cycle. Quesnay views any private enterprise on the part of farmer to be so minimally profitable as to have a negligible effect on the socio-economic order and in any case is likely to be sterile.

they still must subject themselves to a Confucian morality of submission and humility before nature's higher law.<sup>170</sup> Mandarins prevent China from slipping into arbitrary despotism by conducting each emperor's early education then counselling him during adulthood. Beyond the emperor, Quesnay approves of all Chinese cities and towns having mandarin teachers available to instruct children in basic literacy before introducing them to Confucian texts. The most successful students, often those whose families can afford private tutors, may advance to the colleges and attempt the qualifying tests for government service. To ensure the polity's ideological conformity, public education relies on repetition and memorization of a curriculum standardized and disseminated from the capital in Peking. Though the education of China's lower, social orders rarely advances to the intensive study required of applicants to the mandarin, all adults continue to receive regular indoctrination in moral principles and positive laws. Communities convene to hear mandarins reiterate Confucian values in semi-monthly, state-sanctioned, public speeches. Peking also distributes a similarly themed, national gazette. In addition to expounding virtues and vices, the gazette summarizes recent, governmental activity such as new legislation and cites mandarins discharged for corruption.

### 3.3 *Adam Smith and the open-ended power of liberal states*

Smith's rethinking of wealth creation and the division of labor led Smith to reject legal despotism while retaining some of Physiocracy's progressive aspects such as property rights, free trade, and minimal, direct state intervention in the national economy. Smith agreed that states must develop apparatuses to secure subjects' liberties while granting that these apparatuses

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<sup>170</sup> The second maxim states that "[u]n Prince est sans conseils lorsqu'il a trop d'esprit et qu'il dit son sentiment le premier." (A Prince is without councilors when he has too much spirit and says his first opinion.) Italics in original. Quesnay, *Œuvres économiques complètes*, 1068.

must gradually increase their influence over subjects' lives in response to the progress of opulence's negative, unintended consequences. The progress of opulence, a concept indicative of Smith's historicizing political economy, established an alternative rationale for his materialist point of agreement with Quesnay that a nation's economy determines the functions of its state apparatuses. For Quesnay, natural laws prescribe an agricultural economy supported by legal despotism. Smith's study of the progress of opulence, an idea reliant on his innovative theories of wealth creation and the division of labor, led him to argue that many state apparatuses, including many rights, only emerge under specific, contingent economic circumstances. Two consequences of Smith's revisions of political economy for the relationship between liberty and statecraft are significant. First, unlike Quesnay, Smith considered many rights and liberties to entirely depend on innovations first in the economic sector and then in statecraft. Second, not only does the progress of opulence validate a variety of valid regimes, but his analysis of unintended consequences led him to argue that the state apparatuses within those regimes must be dynamic and adaptable to nations' economic needs. Therefore, my discussion of Smith's revision of Quesnay lets us see that when a georgic poet like James Thomson refers to British liberty, liberty demands contextualization both in terms of extant, subjectivizing technologies of government and even more fundamentally on the processual division of labor driving economic innovation and the progress of opulence.

For us to understand Smith's revision of the concept of wealth creation, we must remember that Quesnay had defined wealth in radically materialist terms as a resource originally produced by nature and which humans simply husband into being. To the extent that Quesnay considered wealth in terms of value, he thought of wealth's value somewhat circularly in terms of its costs of production. That is, he accounted for wealth's value as the amount of wealth

necessary to replace that which is consumed by laborers in the course of its annual reproduction. Smith rejected Quesnay's premise that only agriculture creates wealth: Smith states as much when he says of Physiocracy that the "capital error of this system, however, seems to lie in its representing the class of artificers, manufacturers and merchants, as altogether barren and unproductive."<sup>171</sup> Instead, Smith proposes that Quesnay's sterile laborers do indeed create wealth, because their labor time has inherent value which can be added to goods to increase their value. Book I, Chapter 5 of *WN* explains Smith's labor-command theory of value:

The value of any commodity, therefore, to the person who possesses it...is equal to the quantity of labour which it enables him to purchase or command. Labour, therefore, is the real measure of the exchangeable value of all commodities...What everything is really worth to the man who has acquired it, and who wants to dispose of it or exchange it for something else, is the toil and trouble which it can save to himself, and which it can impose upon other people...[Commodities] contain the value of a certain quantity of labour which we exchange for what is supposed at the time to contain the value of an equal quantity. (Smith, I.v.1-2)

Smith deduces the existence of this additional form of wealth-creating value, meaning labor, by using an elementary version of supply and demand to show that objects' prices can vary principally due to labor inputs but also because of buyers' interests; still, *mutatis mutandis*, an object's price reflects the value of the labor time invested in other objects which the initial object can purchase in exchange.<sup>172</sup> Thus, *WN* rejects Quesnay's purely material concept of wealth and

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<sup>171</sup> All further references taken from Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, eds. R. H. Campbell and A. S. Skinner (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1981), IV.ix.29. Laurent Dobuzinskis refers to this as a cost of production model. Laurent Dobuzinskis, "Adam Smith and French Political Economy," 65.

<sup>172</sup> Dobuzinskis notes that Smith considered that, given free markets, corn would be the most likely commodity to remain near its true value and thus could most consistently measure the value of labor time.

instead defines it in terms of the effect of multiple types of labor on its variable value. Smith's labor-command theory of value means that "after the division of labour has once thoroughly taken place" individuals are less likely to be able to satisfy their needs and wants by their own work; in fact, the labor-command theory's premise that any labor can increase wealth's value enables the division of labor to not only to increase the gross national product but also to drive the progress of opulence which allows individuals to access more goods and services than they could themselves produce (Smith, I.v.1).

Though he did not name it as such, Quesnay's political economy depends on a fixed division of labor among the groups of the socio-economic triad.<sup>173</sup> He denied that any modern, technical or technological innovation among sterile or non-sterile workers could significantly affect wealth production or alter the socio-economic order or the need for legal despotism. For Smith, the division of labor instead refers to breaking a single, complex task into multiple, simpler tasks.<sup>174</sup> This change of production methods answers an entrepreneur's desire to

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This assertion by Smith may reflect lingering materialism in his conception of wealth. Dobuzinkis, "Adam Smith and French Political Economy," 64. Schabas supports this point by arguing that Smith holds in tension his labor command theory with the sense of embodied wealth, which Schabas attributes to Smith's tendency, symptomatic of his age, to still think of commercial economy through analogies with physical, ecological economies. Schabas, *The Natural Origins of Economics*, 83-88.

<sup>173</sup> The triad itself reflects the broad division. We can further divide the less favored, sterile group into merchants and artisans and then into specific jobs. My overriding point is that, because of agriculture's sole productivity, because each triadic, group plays a vital role in the *Tableau*, and because Quesnay all but disregarded the potential for change via innovation, there is little room for significant variation within the socio-economic order.

<sup>174</sup> Smith seems to regard the distinction between town and country, an echo of Quesnay's division between sterile, urban and productive, rural workers, as one of the most basic and fundamental divisions of labor. In *WN* Book III "Of the different Progress of Opulence in different Nations," Smith takes a more balanced view of the benefits from each side of a simple, geographic division of labor. "The great commerce of every civilized society, is that carried on between the inhabitants of the town and those of the country.... The gains of both are mutual and reciprocal, and the division of labour is in this, as in all other cases, advantageous to all the different persons employed in the various occupations into which it is subdivided" (Smith, III.i.1).

increase profits by improving the rate of production relative to any additional costs of production.<sup>175</sup> Smith identifies three advantages of the division of labor:

This great increase of the quantity of work which, in consequence of the division of labour, the same number of people are capable of performing, is owing to three different circumstances; first, to the increase of dexterity in every particular workman; secondly, to the saving of the time which is commonly lost in passing from one species of work to another; and lastly, to the invention of a great number of machines which facilitate and abridge labour, and enable one man to do the work of many. (Smith, , I.i.5)

Of course, for the division of labor to increase prosperity, Smith must first assume that manufacturing produces wealth. In the paragraph preceding this quote, Smith emphasizes that manufacturing is far more susceptible to and benefits from the division of labor than does agriculture, which is limited by its seasonal nature and likelihood that individuals often perform multiple, discrete daily tasks. His first two “circumstances” that improve the “quantity of work” denote technical changes to manual practices which thereby become more efficient. Such changes can increase wealth, but the third circumstance involves technological innovations in production processes which accrue over time to cause significant, socio-economic developments. The division of labor by technical and especially technological improvements typifies the difference between Quesnay’s and Smith’s economic theory; Quesnay sees almost no room for socio-economic change, whereas Smith sees the division of labor not as a fixed distinction between groups performing different types of labor but instead as the inherent potential to improve the manner and speed of productive processes. Smith’s division of labor allows

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<sup>175</sup> Added costs of production would likely involve adding either more laborers or new instruments to the process.

economic sectors to gradually transform, though changes to production methods also have a range of unintended consequences for individual workers and for statecraft.

In addition to task-specific, profit-motivated increases in efficiency, divisions of labor produce various positive and negative effects that Smith called unintended consequences which become predictable given retrospective analysis. Unintended consequences embody Smith's claim that the progress of opulence proceeds due to the aggregate effects of many people pursuing personal economic interests rather than widely coordinated, technological innovation intended to produce major socio-economic changes. Smith thought that the division of labor unintentionally impedes individuals from developing new physical and cognitive abilities by requiring them to perform repetitive, low skill jobs which may leave a person "mutilated and deformed in his mind, as another is in his body, who is either deprived of some of his most essential members, or has lost use of them" (Smith, V.i.f.60). The division of labor deskills individuals, limits their educational needs and socialization, and generally reduces the complexity of their life experience. *TMS* argues that individuals develop morality by taking an innate pleasure in sympathizing with other people's emotions, desiring social approval, and eventually accepting moral norms. Therefore, divisions of labor also unintentionally lead to moral decadence typified by a lack of social sympathy, selfishness, and corruption. Immoral individuals may over-value luxury goods and fund gaudier but less profitable and less socially advantageous business. The constant threat of public immorality requires compensatory, instructive, state-run institutions.

The division of labor's positive, unintended consequences generate the economic dynamism and political mutability comprising the progress of opulence. For example, as a nation urbanizes, and its individuals develop new, more efficient methods for creating wealth



outside of the agricultural sector, such individuals unintentionally drive the stadial transition from the third, agricultural mode to the fourth, commercial mode. Increases in urbanization, manufacturing, and trade correlate with such progress. *WN* proposes that investments in manufacturing are only somewhat less profitable than investments in agriculture which benefit from the aid of organic growth; therefore, profit-seekers confronted with a saturated agricultural sector optimize their revenues by investing in manufacturing and then in trade. Further, because the division of labor benefits manufacturing more than the other two sectors, a nation can ultimately offset a land-poor or otherwise weak agricultural sector by adequately funding manufacturing and trade. Whereas Physiocracy depends on maintaining equilibrium between the sterile town and the productive country, Smith's progress of opulence allows the town to displace the country in terms of net production.

Smith's innovative theory of the progress of opulence involved the claim that major socio-economic changes caused by private enterprise required states to develop responsive state apparatuses including rights-protecting, positive laws. Quesnay attributed a modern, agrarian society's stability to legal despotism's compliance with fixed natural laws including respect for natural rights. A key difference between Smith's historico-materialist political economy and Physiocracy is that Smith portrayed many rights as both organically and technologically latent. By organically latent, I mean that Smith reads European history as showing that specific state apparatuses emerge predictably and in concert with each stadial age. By technologically latent, I mean that the existence of state apparatuses depends not only on initial economic innovations, but also on governments' legislation and establishment of requisite, auxiliary institutions. Crucially, Smith regarded many of the rights that georgic poets evoke with the term Liberty not

as natural rights derived from natural laws but as rights that only exist due, first, to prerequisite, stadial conditions, and second, by coming into being through their creation as positive laws.

I reinforce this distinction between Quesnay and Smith first by showing that Smith understood justice not merely as an effect of social sympathy but also as determined by the progress of opulence. Then I turn to Smith's proposals for the influential state apparatuses suited to stadialism's fourth, commercial age.

Smith claimed that societies and their governments recognize new liberties as they transition into each new stadial age rather than believing, as Locke and Quesnay did, that such liberties derive from timeless, God-given, natural laws. We have insight into this branch of Smith's moral philosophy thanks to two sets of class notes taken by his students, which are now compiled as *Lectures on Jurisprudence*.<sup>176</sup> For Smith, jurisprudence fundamentally concerned codifying varieties of injury as positive laws along with plans for redress should such laws be transgressed.<sup>177</sup> As *LJ(B)* states, "The object of Justice is the security from injury, and it is the foundation of civil government."<sup>178</sup> Governments expand and develop new state apparatuses, in part because subjects of successive, stadial ages recognize new forms of injury to persons and things. However, Smith did not entirely deny the existence of natural rights. *LJ* distinguishes between natural rights which exist independently of the progress of opulence and adventitious

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<sup>176</sup> Hereafter *LJ*, *LJ(A)*, and *LJ(B)*. The notes comprising *LJ(B)* were discovered first and cover more lecture material but in less depth. The notes in *LJ(A)* come from an earlier year (1762-1763), are more detailed, but cut off before the end of the lecture series. Smith's jurisprudential lectures sequentially covered the three areas of private, domestic, and public jurisprudence until the school year of 1763-4 when the order was reversed. We know this because the notes of *LJ(B)* were taken during the year when Smith adopted the new approach.

<sup>177</sup> "Smith's entire system of jurisprudence is thus structured around the question of "in how many ways a man may be injured."" Michael Frazer, *The Enlightenment of Sympathy: Justice and the Moral Sentiments in the Eighteenth Century and Today* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 105

<sup>178</sup> Adam Smith, *Lectures on Jurisprudence*, eds. R. L. Meek, D. D. Raphael, and P. G. Stein (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1982), 4.

rights which emerge as nations enter new, stadial modes. For example, in the domain of private jurisprudence, a natural right disallows others from physically harming a person's body regardless of the stadial age, though such natural rights still require complementary, positive legislation for courts to mete out justice. By comparison, because the concept of property does not emerge until a society reaches the second stadial age of shepherding, neither do the adventitious, property rights that emerge contemporaneously with property itself. Adventitious rights originate in and through contingent historico-economic circumstances and are codified, refined, and enforced by positive legislation and court systems. The emergence and malleability of adventitious rights exemplify Smith's view of statecraft as capable of dynamic compensatory responses to the progress of opulence's unintended consequences.

That Smith accepted various regimes as viable means for supporting national economies further demonstrates that he viewed government as a far more adaptable and dynamic, political technology than had Quesnay. Whereas Quesnay only accepted the absolute monarchy of legal despotism, *LJ* finds history validating three main types of regimes: monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy. Each has disadvantages, and Smith suggested that mixed government may best serve modern commercial states by offsetting each type's potential weaknesses. Dividing governmental powers may mitigate the threats posed by arbitrary monarchs or excessively self-interested and corrupt, aristocratic republics. For example, a mixed government can assign taxation and legislation to parliament while granting law enforcement powers to an independent judiciary.<sup>179</sup> Dividing political power reduces the potential for its abuse, better secures the rights

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<sup>179</sup> Knud Haakonssen emphasizes the particular importance of an independent judiciary as well as a well-educated populace in order to reserve strong checks on mixed governments. Knud Haakonssen, *The Science of a Legislator: The Natural Jurisprudence of David Hume and Adam Smith* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 131-132.

of its subjects, while potentially strengthening the state by creating a denser network of interdependent, state apparatuses.<sup>180</sup>

To reemphasize, Quesnay and Smith both viewed governments as mutable, political technologies that serve their subjects by crafting securitizing and economy-supporting, state apparatuses. Crucially, Quesnay and Smith also shared the liberal, economic theory that minimizing impediments to free trade facilitates wealth creation. Therefore, like Quesnay, Smith preferred commutative justice, because redressing injuries to legally protected rights allows for more precise punishment and recompense than distributive justice's redistribution of goods.<sup>181</sup> Though redistribution has merits such as directly reducing poverty, Smith regarded its methods and outcomes as imprecise and therefore unreliably just.<sup>182</sup> Further, direct, economic regulation via subsidies, price ceilings and restricting access to domestic and foreign markets risks preventing goods from settling at their fair and proper prices. Instead, reasonably free markets should naturally redistribute wealth and reduce the wealth gaps that may otherwise lead to

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<sup>180</sup> Regarding the potential for administrative creep, Susan E. Gallagher cites Smith's tentative concern that governments and their state apparatuses may outgrow the proportions best suited to fulfilling political economy's two "objects" and the state's responsibility for securing justice. Given the broad viability in government types, Smith appears less concerned with the problem of whether governments may accrue too much power or influence than with whether governments' own efficiency or corruption impede the efficiency of their economies. "However, having broadcast this warning against runaway government spending, Smith proceeded to note" with almost incredible optimism "that such 'violent and forced' encroachment on the productivity of society is extremely out of the ordinary." Susan E. Gallagher, *The Rule of the Rich?: Adam Smith's Argument Against Political Power* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998), 95.

<sup>181</sup> Property rights, whether constituted by natural law or by the progress of opulence, exemplify Smith's agreement with Quesnay that a government should only directly interfere in its subjects' lives when personal or collective security is threatened. Again, the meaning of threat or injury varies for each writer and for Smith can vary throughout a society's duration.

<sup>182</sup> Michael Frazer's study relates TMS's theories of moral sympathy with states' problem of establishing fair, politico-economic, jurisprudence. Alluding to Smith's preference for commutative justice, he also notes that Smith thought that policies based on the correction of harm tend to be more accurate than policies which try to impose good. Frazer, *The Enlightenment of Sympathy*, 105. Winch notes that distributive justice is not only faced with the problem of how much redistribution is necessary to achieve the public good, but that such redistribution in the name of benevolence easily turns into unjust injury of those whose property the state expropriates. Winch, *Riches and Poverty*, 97-101.

oligarchy and political corruption. However, I showed with *Le Despotisme de la Chine* that Quesnay meant for states to retain considerable influence over their national economies. Revisiting the two types of public works addressed earlier, “those for facilitating the commerce of the society, and those for promoting the instruction of the people,” in *WN* will demonstrate Smith’s agreement that states should only indirectly support the economy (Smith, V.i.c.2). However, his recommendations for infrastructure and public education did not simply echo Quesnay’s interest in conforming subjects’ beliefs and practices to natural law. Instead, Smith required states to account for the progress of opulence’s negative, unintended consequences so that subjects could take full advantage of modernity’s unfolding economic opportunities.

Again, infrastructure enables a state to indirectly influence its subjects by shaping the environments where wealth is created, circulated, and exchanged. Both large and small infrastructural projects typify the progress of opulence’s endless stream of potential opportunities and challenges. In addition to its need for upkeep, infrastructure is similarly susceptible to technological innovations that improve quality of life and wealth creation. Even though *WN* preceded the Industrial Revolution, Smith saw the fourth stadial age of commerce affording more opportunities for urban development as manufacturing and trade outstripped rural agriculture and the agricultural revolution and enclosure guided people from the country into cities.

Smith largely agreed with Quesnay that state support for commerce requires taxes and publicly-funded labor to build, maintain, and improve highways, bridges, canals, and so forth. Both authors identified infrastructure as a worthwhile task suited to states, because the initial investment and upkeep of projects tend to exceed the financial means of most individuals and, if able, repay costs slowly. While states must undertake large projects like highways, *WN* argues that bureaucrats of centralized states like France and China who oversee smaller, local projects

like roads often fail to do so with adequate care and efficiency (Smith, V.i.d.16-17). Instead, the text recommends that provincial administrators should handle construction and maintenance by means of local tax collection and tolls; the interested parties served tend to be local, and decentering responsibility away from state officials and toward local markets reduces the potential for corruption.

Quesnay and Smith agreed on the necessity of public education, but its *raison d'être* for Smith dramatically shifts due to his regard for the division of labor's negative, unintended consequences. Whereas Quesnay's homeostatic political economy required *Tableau*-enlightened subjects to be reproduced *ad infinitum*, Smith's commercial age sees the division of labor aggressively expanding and continuously deskilling and desocializing subjects as capital flows toward urban, manufacturing enterprises.<sup>183</sup> Over time, the aggregated, rational decisions of profit-seekers produce negative, unintended consequences which can destabilize a nation by corroding workers' intelligence and morality. To compensate for these negative consequences, Smith recommended that states fund and run educational institutions for both children and adults in order to maintain a high degree of corrective influence over its subjects throughout their lives.

Smith initially argues for public education's cost-effectiveness; he states that "[t]he institutions for the education of the youth may, [like other public works], furnish a revenue sufficient for defraying their own expence" (Smith, V.i.f.1). States must ensure that individuals can contribute to society by managing vulnerable groups; children from the lowest orders must at

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<sup>183</sup> "The man whose whole life is spent performing a few simple operations, of which the effects too are, perhaps, always the same, or very nearly the same, has no occasion to exert his understanding, or to exercise his invention in finding out expedients for removing difficulties which never occur. He naturally loses, therefore, the habit of such exertion, and generally becomes as stupid and ignorant as it is possible for a human creature to become. The torpor of his mind renders him, not only incapable of relishing or bearing a part in any rational conversation, but of conceiving any generous, noble, or tender sentiment, and consequently of forming any just judgment concerning many even of the ordinary duties of private life" (Smith, V.i.f.50).

least learn to “read, write, and account ... [f]or a very small expence the publick can facilitate, can encourage, and can even impose upon almost the whole body of the people, the necessity of acquiring those most essential parts of education” (Smith, V.i.f.54). The public dissemination of common systems of measurement has been regarded by many authors as an effective subjectivizing technique for naturalizing calculative rationality and liberal economy.<sup>184</sup> By comparison, the well-off typically can afford private tutors, attend public schools and universities, and generally acquire a high level of educational, cultural capital for their families. In addition to incentivizing study with small prizes, Smith recommends testing and credentialing as barriers to entering trades.

As most non-aristocratic individuals become adults, narrow working conditions enforced by the division of labor impede personal growth. Consequently, Smith devotes a section of *WN* to compensatory state apparatuses for adult education to correct subjects’ deteriorating intelligence and morals. He proposes programs partly designed to foster industriousness and critical thought and partly to suppress the superstitions to which he thinks small minds are susceptible.<sup>185</sup> The first branch of his agenda reiterates the professionalizing education available to younger people:

[T]he study of science and philosophy, which the state might render almost universal among all people of middling or more than middling rank and fortune; (not by giving

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<sup>184</sup> For example, Andre Gorz argues that the ability to “*measure, calculate, and plan*” naturalizes an economic rationality that compels individuals to reckon all time in terms of potential “working time...” Leisure time becomes an effect of time not spent working or saved due to efficiencies implemented during the hours of labor. Andre Gorz, *Critique of Economic Reason*, trans. Gillian Handyside and Chris Turner (London: Verso, 1989), 3. See also, James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 25-33.

<sup>185</sup> With respect to European religion, he appreciates Christianity’s history of instilling some virtue and order in society, but its tendency to sow superstition and sectarianism reduces its utility and ultimately makes it unwelcome.

salaries to teachers in order to make them negligent and idle,) but by instituting some sort of probation, even in the higher and more difficult sciences, to be undergone by every person before he was permitted to exercise any liberal profession, or before he could be received as a candidate for an honourable office of trust or profit. (Smith, V.i.g.14)

Such programs train and credential individuals who aspire to both public and private positions of power. Smith also expects such education to produce positive, downstream results in social morality: “Science is the great antidote to the poison of enthusiasm and superstition; and where all the superior ranks of people were secured from it, the inferior ranks could not be much exposed to it” (Smith, V.i.g.15). The second branch of Smith’s agenda for adult education involves state-sponsored, cultural programs. The state encourages all subjects to engage with various fine arts at and compete for prizes at public exhibitions; Smith expects these events to be agreeable experiences of creativity and liberty. “[T]he frequency and gaiety of public diversions” permits therapeutic, behavior management which enlivens and exercises minds stultified by religion and simple, repetitive work.

Public education’s many moving parts make it a strong example of a dynamic and refinable, state apparatus proper to modern, liberal states. By accounting for both children and adults, the system can influence subjects throughout their lifespans. Multiple schools and credentialing systems can standardize the basic knowledge required to sell one’s labor and buy commodities while also channeling subjects into economic sectors and jobs. Smith’s and even Quesnay’s economic liberalism led them to insist that state apparatuses should not unduly regulate or artificially restrict the socio-economic flows understood by analogy with other, physiological or ecological systems. To recall Larrère, liberal states’ apparatuses must not impede individuals’ economic pursuit of self-interest and pleasure, but as my next chapter



shows, what counts as artificial regulation and intervention becomes a question of perspective and a government's ability to conceal its own labor.

Adam Smith's division of labor and progress of opulence reflect a view of a socio-economic order susceptible to innovation and broad transformation, a view reflected by British georgics which attribute stability and prosperity to advances in the sciences harnessed by private industry. *The Seasons's* genealogies of technology addressed in my second chapter anticipate and exemplify Smith's progress of opulence and his mention of the "gift of Industry" suggests the individual work ethic and creativity which drive the division of labor.<sup>186</sup> Looking ahead, Erasmus Darwin will echo *TMS* by arguing that humans innately take pleasure in imitating one another. Imitation fuels the innovative syntheses of ideas which can be implemented through practical technological innovations which further expand individuals' capacities for pleasure and liberty.

My next chapter addressing gardening texts by Horace Walpole and George Mason introduces my conceit of the georgic garden. In light of British georgics' expanding, disciplinary interests and especially their thematic shift away from hard, manual labor, gardens sometimes replace farms as sites for didactic instruction, representing physical and intellectual labor, and addressing socio-economic order through a self-reflexive deployment of aesthetic, literary beauty; Mason's Preface even announces his poem's use of the georgic mode. Most importantly, I read the georgic garden as signifying a nation governed according to economic and political liberalism. While Walpole and Mason admire a naturalistic garden's landscaping, their flora, and their other physical elements, the texts acknowledge that a garden's ideal, aesthetic harmony requires gardeners' careful and constant influence but whose extensive interventions should be

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<sup>186</sup> James Thomson, *Autumn*, in *The Seasons*, ed. James Sambrook (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), 141.

well disguised. The georgic gardener-as-politician must exert control over the garden's organic economy to maximize the potential pleasure it can give.

## Chapter 4

### 4 Naturalistic Landscaping, Georgic Gardens, and the Proprietor-Politician

*Gardening and architecture owe as much to the nobility and to men of fortune as to the professors.*

-Horace Walpole, *The History of the Modern Taste in Gardening*

#### 4.1 Gentleman gardeners

In this chapter I argue that texts by Horace Walpole and William Mason, which dictate a style of landscape garden<sup>187</sup> design, also imply that privately owned land and the free and rational enjoyment of property rights are linchpins of a liberal, plutocratic, political economy.<sup>188</sup> In *The History of the Modern Taste in Gardening*, Walpole identifies this gardening style as a new, English discovery; because he claims its aesthetic principles reflect an idealized form of nature's own, creative principles, scholars describe this style as naturalism.<sup>189</sup> The naturalistic style is also the theme of Mason's georgic poem, *The English Garden*, which epitomizes my

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<sup>187</sup> Interchangeable with landscape park or English garden.

<sup>188</sup> By property rights more generally, I allude to the Lockean ideas that natural rights are granted by natural laws irrespective of government, that such rights inalienably belong to individuals, and that these rights are most fundamentally concerned with sole enjoyment and non-injury of one's property in one's person and goods. The last chapter showed that Adam Smith disagreed that property rights were natural rights, but the overriding point is that the liberal government described in this chapter nominally prioritizes equal rights for individuals.

<sup>189</sup> In perhaps the text's most famous quote, Walpole states that William Kent (1685-1748), who exemplifies the naturalistic style, "leaped the fence, and saw that all nature was a garden." Walpole conversely implies that nature's own principles of composition must be brought into the literal garden where elements will be composed to their best and most pleasing effect. All references to Walpole's essay on gardening are taken from Horace Walpole, *The History of the Modern Taste in Gardening* (New York: Ursus Press, 1995), 43.

concept of the georgic garden.<sup>190</sup> This concept, which I will also apply to poems by Erasmus Darwin in the next chapter, draws on the georgic's traditional self-presentation as a didactic, aesthetic space comparable to a farm that receives the author's labor.<sup>191</sup> Georgics teach the importance of studying and respecting nature's physical and moral laws while also emphasizing the virtue of personal industriousness. Similarly, georgic gardens are literary spaces dominated by images of ecological economies that humans try to understand and instrumentalize. Georgic gardens appear in poetic texts continuing the trend in Thomson's *The Seasons* of decentering the georgic's traditional topics of farming and manual labor; georgic gardens depict well-managed, often enclosed spaces in which beautifying natural resources convey the mutual importance of liberty and pleasure. By subtly championing land ownership and exclusory, property rights, georgic gardens symbolize a sovereign, British nation; national prosperity depends on its government's commitment to liberal, natural law-based rights and its ruling class's commitment to "Th' appropriate bounds of Pleasure, and of Use" in its own, private works that signify its fitness to rule (Mason, II.160). The various natural and social economies depicted in georgic gardens convey moral principles that enable the public good and that governments must enshrine into law.

Given that georgics' interest in the relation between labor, material nature, and nature's moral laws connotes political economy, studying the use of the georgic mode in gardening texts lets us see how the discourse of naturalism props a plutocratic government favoring economic

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<sup>190</sup> All references to Mason's poem are taken from William Mason, *The English Garden: A Poem in Four Books* (York: A. Ward, 1783).

<sup>191</sup> In the eighteenth century, the concept of the three sister arts reinforced this alignment of poetry and gardening which, with painting, shared a basis in imaginative, representational practice. To clarify, the georgic garden is a space described by the poem, but the georgic mode's convention of figuring itself as a cultivated space also allows the poem itself to become yet another figural iteration of the georgic garden.

and political liberalism.<sup>192</sup> Texts advocating naturalism sublimate the material fact of wealth into the discourse of taste, which then justifies liberal, plutocratic government. As John Barrell argues, “The main point...is to show how a correct taste, here especially for landscape and landscape art was used in this period as a means of legitimating political authority, particularly but not exclusively within the terms of the discourse of civic humanism.”<sup>193</sup> In showing the importance of land beautification and property rights to the georgic garden, I thus use the georgic garden and the proprietor-political correspondence to argue that Mason’s and to a lesser extent Walpole’s texts compare the work of naturalistic garden design to the managerial work of liberal statecraft including its centering of property rights. Mason asserts that proprietors of naturalistic gardens possess “plain Integrity, Contempt for gold, / Disdain of slav’ry, [and] liberal Awe of rule / Which fixt the rights of People, Peers, and Prince” (Mason, IV.683-685). I build on prior chapters which argued that the innately politico-economic, georgic mode obfuscates the role of statecraft; the georgic garden helps us to unpack these texts’ sublimation of plutocratic liberalism into naturalism by framing the moments when politico-economic topics and figures for administration appear. Whereas Walpole establishes correspondences between naturalism’s aesthetic principles and proprietors’ reverence for British liberty, two of Mason’s key vignettes analogize garden owners with politicians. Ultimately, the georgic garden shows us that these texts cite naturalistic landscaping as evidence of proprietors’ right to rule by moralizing the proper uses of land while presenting property rights as a synecdoche for the other bundle of liberties that governments must secure.

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<sup>192</sup> Economic liberalism refers to a preference for free market trade and the perception of a disembedded economy. Political liberalism refers to a legal system which tends to grant subjects equal rights that prioritize individual freedom from unjust acts or injuries from other individuals or from the government.

<sup>193</sup> John Barrell, *The Birth of Pandora and the Division of Knowledge* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1992), 41.

My critique takes place within a larger conversation regarding the ideological work performed by European gardening styles. John Hunt Dixon's and Ronald Paulson's foundational studies argue that eighteenth-century England's shift from emblematic to expressive landscaping styles reflected a shift in their representational method and so also the qualifications for appreciating them.<sup>194</sup> Emblematic gardens' compositions of flora, architecture, and sculpture had fixed, allegorical meanings and retained more of the geometric elements popular in French, Italian, and Dutch formal gardens.<sup>195</sup> Expressive naturalism displaced fixed, allegorical interpretation based on claims in texts such as Thomas Whately's *Observations on Modern Gardening* (1770) that non-narrative designs would be more pleasing to those with objectively, morally correct tastes, because such designs better reflect nature's own, timeless, creative style. Stephen Bending later argues that expressivism reinforces the ideological work of emblematism by replacing, for example, busts of politicians with landscapes that are instead "about nature" and are still interpreted through a "set of conventions" fixed in texts like Walpole's essay and Mason's poem, which associate taste with virtues corresponding to liberalist, Whig government.<sup>196</sup>

I begin with Walpole's *The History of the Modern Taste in Gardening*. I use this manifesto for naturalistic landscaping to establish its design principles and then to show that he

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<sup>194</sup> John Dixon Hunt, *Emblem and Expressionism in the Eighteenth-Century Landscape Garden*, "Eighteenth-Century Studies" 4, no. 3 (Spring, 1971): 294-5; Ronald Paulson, *Emblem and Expression: Meaning in English Art of the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975), 19-22.

<sup>195</sup> William Kent filled the gardens at Stowe with classical statuary and busts of figures which, despite his identification with naturalism by Walpole, often required intimate knowledge to understand their significance and which also required spectators to occupy proper viewing positions signaled by paths and benches to appreciate a series of linked, statement-making scenes. Paulson compares the emblematic garden to a text; Stowe's Elysian Fields constituted a massive "verbal construct" in which a set sequence of viewpoints produced a narrative. Ronald Paulson, *Emblem and Expression*, 24.

<sup>196</sup> Stephen Bending, "Re-reading the Eighteenth-Century English Landscape Garden," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 55, no. 3 (Summer 1992): 379-389.

attributes those principles to quasi-physiological, aesthetic sensibilities. Whereas *The Seasons*'s physico-theological argument uses depictions of nature's physical laws to assert the force of moral laws, Walpole uses aesthetic sensibility, meaning a proper taste for naturalism, to index a person's morality. Walpole conveys that virtue is the subjective expression of an individual's commitment to political justice and liberty. He establishes this relation by giving counterexamples of tasteless French and Chinese gardens whose forms he blames on the immorality of the rich and powerful persons commissioning them. The implication of their arbitrary and illiberal political power contrasts with English plutocrats whose tasteful, naturalist estates base their right to rule on their virtuous sensibility. Walpole's naturalistic aesthetics normalize plutocratic liberalism by analogizing land owner's proper use of their land with government's respect for property rights. Walpole forecasts the analogy between the improving proprietor and the politician made more explicit in Mason's vignettes.

Turning to Mason, I establish that Mason's georgic poem shares Walpole's commitment to naturalism with examples in which Mason oscillates between material details and general principles both moral and aesthetic. I then explicate the concept of the georgic garden by showing that Mason's *English Garden* recognizes its accountability to a wider world of labor, commerce, and political history. In addition to passages telling its elite audience to balance land's pragmatic and entertaining uses, many of the other evocations of politico-economic topics occur in the poem's two main parables. The first concerns Alexander the Great having overthrown Sidon's Persian despot and crowning the humble, industrious Abdalonimus, whose lengthily-described garden sanctuary signifies his virtue. The second parable concerns the English aristocrat Alcander who has built an exemplary naturalistic estate. He shelters and falls in love with Nerina, a refugee of the American Revolution who soon dies. We learn that she had

been betrothed to Alcander's other guest, Cleon, who had saved her father's life, has been commending Alcander's design choices during his stay, and consoles Alcander after Nerina's death. As Alcander recovers, he demonstrates his ability to manage his passions by tastefully adding to his estate. The Abdalonimus and Alcander parables convey that proprietors who creatively express their good taste possess the civic virtues necessary for governing. Though Abdalonimus is not initially wealthy, his humility demonstrates the disinterest that naturalism conveys to be the subjective, moral complement to liberalism's equitable respect for personal rights.

Finally, I use Mason's references to the *genius loci*<sup>197</sup> -- in his telling a guardian spirit for naturalism -- to elaborate the proprietor-politician relation established in the parables. I show that Mason delineates both active and passive aspects of each Genius, a duality which he invites us to map onto characteristics of both proprietors and liberal governments and which reinforces their interdependence. Recognizing naturalism's support for plutocratic, liberal political economy is an important addendum to the work of scholars like Terry Eagleton, who argue that in the eighteenth century taste and manners diffuse laws and moral prescriptions into aesthetics and sensibility. Eagleton claims that people increasingly found themselves "free, equal, autonomous human subjects, obeying no laws but those they give to themselves...an entirely new human subject -- one which, like the work of art itself, discovers the law in the depths of its

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<sup>197</sup> A figure from classical mythology, *genius loci* is a watchful spirit who protects a specific place. Alexander Pope (1688-1744) notably uses the trope in *Epistle IV* of his *Moral Essays*:

Consult the genius of the place in all;  
That tells the waters or to rise, or fall;  
Or helps th' ambitious hill the heav'ns to scale,  
Or scoops in circling theatres the vale;

Alexander Pope, *Epistles to Several Persons: Moral Essays*, ed. Frederick Wilse Bateson (London: Methuen, 1951), 57-60.



own free identity.”<sup>198</sup> However, Eagleton’s argument for an increasingly democratized access to taste disregards the extent to which the upper class’s ability to not simply appreciate beauty but to create it from their own stocks of wealth proves that private land use was not only a vital object of government protection but lent governments and politicians their moral authority.

#### 4.2 *Modern tastes, timeless virtues*

Known for authoring *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) and for being the son of Prime Minister Sir Robert Walpole (1676-1745), Horace Walpole first presented *The History of the Modern Taste in Gardening* in his *Anecdotes of Painting in England* (1780).<sup>199</sup> He self-published this four-volume collection at Strawberry Hill Press, an imprint named after the Gothic Revival home he commissioned at Twickenham. The text participates in an eighteenth-century subgenre of manuals instructing the rich to improve their large, rural estates. Improvement could mean either techniques to increase agricultural production or landscaping practices thought to beautify the property in part by concealing reminders of the manual labor improvement required. Whereas manuals like Stephen Switzer’s *Ichnographia Rustica* (1741-1742) or Henry Home, Lord Kames’s *Gentleman Farmer* (1776) borrowed a georgic register to affirm that agricultural improvement signified civic virtue and even gave the land a sort of pragmatic beauty for its contributions to the commonwealth, Walpole’s essay argues for a similar link between proprietors’ efforts at naturalistic beautification and personal morality. Despite Walpole’s claim that “it is not my business to lay down rules for gardens, but to give the history of them,” the essay’s aesthetic theory presents tasteful landscaping as “opulence of a free country” as well as

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<sup>198</sup> Terry Eagleton, *The Ideology of the Aesthetic* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), 19.

<sup>199</sup> John Dixon Hunt notes, “Walpole’s essay was probably written during the 1750s and 1760s...” John Dixon Hunt, “Introduction,” in Walpole, *The History of the Modern Taste in Gardening*, 5.

proof of the civic virtues needed to administer the laws which enable that opulence (Walpole, 51; 58).

First comparing Walpole's prose and Mason's stated purpose for using georgic poetry allows us to recognize the association between naturalistic landscaping and liberalism. In short, Walpole's essay implies that the British aristocracy's execution and patronizing of arts such as naturalistic landscaping conclusively proves the moral superiority of British government while Mason emphasizes the potential for creativity and satisfaction which Britain's constitutionally protected rights and liberties afford its subjects. Walpole specifically attempts to close debate over taste by claiming that naturalism's timeless style emerged as gardeners shed past mistakes to finally mimic nature's own, ideal forms. His wit and high-minded yet dilettantish blurring of learned and conversable discourse interpellates a ruling class while disseminating naturalism to a wider public.<sup>200</sup> The essay's inclusion in the *Anecdotes of Painting* suggests that Walpole's subject was meant for non-aristocratic connoisseurs with disposable income.<sup>201</sup> Yet Walpole's primary addressees possess an inherited right to improvable lands; the text's emphasis on heritable property rights to estates implies that such rights metonymize the physical property itself, which stays in the hands of an elite ruling class, and thus also imply low social mobility. The prose identifies and speaks to a class of improvers about their corresponding obligations to

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<sup>200</sup> To the extent that Walpole advocates the naturalistic method of landscaping, only those rich enough to afford estates suitable to such landscaping would recognize themselves as the texts' primary addressees. Robin Vivenza cites John Barrell's discussion of Adam Smith's division of labor to differentiate learned and conversable groups by differentiating those who practice a discipline from those who merely think or talk about it. Crucially, Walpole's essay confronts the possibility of lower ranks obtaining the tastes proper to a ruling "first rank" by presenting active improvement through naturalistic landscaping as the *sine qua non* of civic virtue and a capacity to govern Britain. Robin Valenza, *Literature, Language, and the Rise of the Intellectual Disciplines in Britain, 1680-1820* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 18.

<sup>201</sup> "The public examines and reasons on their works, and spectators by degrees become judges. Nor are persons of the first rank meer patrons...Gardening and architecture owe as much to the nobility and to men of fortune as to the professors" (Walpole, 59).

beautify England and oversee its freedom.<sup>202</sup> Using a different style to convey a similar message, Mason's Preface announces his intent to use the georgic mode to wash readers in the beauty attending both poetry and gardening in the service of his moralization of the government's defense of "BRITISH FREEDOM" (Mason, v-vii; IV.687). Framing his text as a "Didactic Poem, of which the Georgics of Virgil afford so perfect an example," assumes the educated audience traditionally addressed by georgics.<sup>203</sup> The georgic mode holds in tension its didactic assertion of fixed, moral laws of nature with earthier, subjective, detailed images of the world's infinite variety of things which call for political economy. Supported by the notion of cross-pollinating sister arts<sup>204</sup>, he also compares the aesthetic experience of reading his georgic poem with naturalistic landscaping and thereby poses both reading and gardening as appreciative *and* creative activities.<sup>205</sup> Yet although middling classes might be able to read the poem in an associative, writerly fashion and even possess taste and civic virtue, they lack the wealth and

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<sup>202</sup> Peter De Bolla supports this point when he says that a cultural discourse of visibility emerged in the 1760s, which encouraged connoisseurs to identify their own sensible taste as a sign that they should occupy an elevated, social position. Walpole recognized liberal, Whig, political economy as participating in commerce-driven progress; however, his essay's wide, naturalistic, landscape prospects use the conservative, pictorial regime of self-identification to fix the improver's place in history as a member of a ruling class free from economic productivity and free to manage England's symbolico-material and political liberty. Peter De Bolla, *The Education of the Eye: Painting, Landscape, and Architecture in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 9-10; 17; 108-112.

<sup>203</sup> Since their inception, georgic authors understood themselves to be addressing a leisure class who controlled land and were educated to appreciate the juxtaposition of the poetry's high style with its earthy content. Mason, "Preface," in *The English Garden*, v.

<sup>204</sup> Eighteenth-century writers acknowledged the interdisciplinary influences between painting, gardening and poetry. For example, naturalism's advocates cite Italian painters like Nicolas Poussin (1594-1665) for having produced landscapes that more or less previewed naturalism's design principles. Desirable traits such as wide, deep, prospective views composed of tiers drawing the eye from the bottom to the top of the painting also influenced loco-descriptive poems. The poems could then have new images created to be inset into the poem as Thomson had done with *The Seasons*.

<sup>205</sup> "This matter (of selecting the georgic mode) once determined, I did not hesitate as to my choice between blank verse and rhyme, because it clearly appeared, that numbers of the most varied kind were most proper to illustrate a subject *whose every charm springs from variety*, and which, painting nature as *scorning control*, should employ a versification for that end as unfettered as Nature itself. Art at the same time, in rural improvement, pervading the province of Nature, unseen, and unfelt, seemed to bear a striking analogy to that species of verse..." Mason, "Preface," in *The English Garden*, vii-viii.

property rights that allow for the landscape park's creation and that ultimately legitimize political participation.<sup>206</sup>

Walpole argues for naturalism by tracking three, related trends in gardening which are useful for us to note because they ground naturalism's evocation of liberty in histories of material practices dependent on wealth and ownership. These three trends include the erasure of pragmatic, economy- or labor-evincing elements from pleasure gardens, a cultural-geographic progress, and stylistic shifts. The first track distinguishes practical kitchen gardens -- which clearly display their affiliations with manual labor, economy, and care and which thereby differ in their purpose and appearance -- from the wide lawns, wandering paths, and sprinkled copses of entertaining, landscape parks.<sup>207</sup> Walpole notes "how naturally and insensibly the idea of a kitchen-garden slid into that which has for so many ages been...distinguished by the name of a pleasure-garden" (Walpole, 24). He begins with legendary, practical gardens in the *hortus conclusus* tradition.<sup>208</sup> Walpole cites and dismisses Eden's garden "prototype" ("it does not belong to the present discussion") because naturalism does not love a wall, and because it was too obviously practical for being filled with "every tree that was pleasant to the sight and good

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<sup>206</sup> Barthes's concept of an open, writerly text comports especially well with the georgic mode's thematization of care, labor, seemingly infinite, ecological variety, and continuous production. "...the writerly text is *ourselves writing*, before the infinite play of the world (the world as function) is traversed, intersected, stopped, plasticized by some singular system (Ideology, Genus, Criticism) which reduces the plurality of entrances, the opening of network, the infinity of languages." Ultimately, the British georgic presumes its themes to be contained and determined by natural law, but the text and the garden are both experienced from a subject's necessarily limited, incomplete point of view. Roland Barthes, *S/Z*, trans. Richard Miller (New York: Blackwell, 2002), 5.

<sup>207</sup> For clarity, pleasure gardens are also purposefully useful in that they please and provide moral edification; yet, in addition to the differences above, they do not produce material wealth intended to satisfy subsistence needs.

<sup>208</sup> The long-standing, Western concept of the *hortus conclusus* with walls, flora, and a water source fits the OED's definition of the garden as "[a] piece of ground, usually enclosed, where flowers, fruit, or vegetables are cultivated. In later use chiefly (esp. Brit.): a piece of ground adjoining a building (esp. a private property), often with grass, flowers, trees, etc., and generally used for recreation." *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. "garden," accessed November 01, 2018, <http://www.oed.com.proxy1.lib.uwo.ca/view/Entry/76724?rskey=8w9Y0c&result=1&isAdvanced=false>.

for food” (Walpole, 17; 18). Other examples such as the garden of Alcinous, the hanging gardens of Babylon, and both rural and urban Roman gardens repeat Eden’s aesthetic sins by being mixed-use gardens and having defensive walls which disrupt scenic continuity and disagreeably recall utility and economy.<sup>209</sup> However, some Roman villas and later, geometric European gardens, such as the seventeenth-century *jardin à la française*, expelled elements suggesting use-value. Naturalism develops the premise of gardens-for-useless-beauty’s-sake by insisting that its own design principles could provide lasting, disinterested aesthetic pleasure and by obscuring even the labor required to refine landscape’s own distinct qualities.

Cultural-geographic and stylistic trends together led to the discovery and gradual implementation of naturalistic designs suited to England’s free soil. In terms of geography, the shedding of tasteless styles occurred along a roughly occidental path from the aforementioned gardens in the current Middle East, to Greece and Rome, to early modern developments in Italy, the Netherlands, and France, before England’s discovery of a timeless style. Stylistically, Walpole disdains designs in which elements tend to be geometric and abstract or excessively irregular and novel. These approaches may overlap and each answer what he considers to be unhealthy or immoral preferences for artifice rather than for nature’s own tendencies towards irregularity and asymmetry. The gardens of Andre Le Notre (1613-1700) at Versailles typified the abstract style of French formal gardens. Walpole finds the geometric style not only to raise unwelcome, socio-political associations with France’s arbitrary and absolutist government but also to contaminate English’s own practices; he thus disdains formal gardens’ right angles, symmetrical parterres, and lined paths. Ornamental topiaries, fountains, and excessive statues and buildings reinforce his sense of French artificiality. Walpole also rejects England’s fondness

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<sup>209</sup> “Gardening was probably one of the first arts that succeeded to that of building houses, and naturally attended property and individual possession.” (Walpole, 17)

for novelty, which he associates with Chinese influence. Elements such as an “artificial perpendicular rock” or a “mæandring bridge” feed a misguided taste for surprising forms or juxtapositions that artificially heighten a viewer’s interest.<sup>210</sup> Unlike unnatural, French and Chinese styles, naturalism prefers smooth curves and borders blurred, serrated, or otherwise made irregular. Carefully employed asymmetry and gradual transitions between colors ensure a coherent aesthetic capture by the idea of unity in variety. Though nature may elsewhere be sublime, rugged, or barren, naturalism’s modest variety and timeless beauty continuously please viewers, whereas novel, exaggerated, and overwrought elements lose their power to hold a viewer’s interest. By explicating the three tracks, Walpole asserts naturalism’s timeless ability to satisfy viewers’ disinterested, aesthetic sensibilities.

Walpole based the aesthetics of naturalistic beauty on a quasi-physiological theory of intellectual pleasure which seemed to prove that tasteful landscaping principles required moral sensibility for their discovery and appreciation. On this topic he borrows significantly from John Locke and Joseph Addison in that his essay’s defense of naturalism attributes the ability to perceive visual beauty to a person’s righteousness, civic virtue, and commitment to liberal principles.<sup>211</sup> Both Addison and Walpole absorbed Lockean epistemology and thought that

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<sup>210</sup> “[Chinese gardens] are as whimsically irregular as European gardens are formally uniform, and unvaried—but with regard to nature, it seems as much avoided, as in the squares and oblongs and strait lines of our ancestors. . . . In short, this pretty gaudy scene is the work of caprice and whim; and when we reflect on their buildings, presents no image but that of insubstantial tawdriness.” (Walpole, 38-39)

<sup>211</sup> We have seen that John Locke and Adam Smith oriented their liberal, political economy theories regarding property rights and liberty around the concept of pleasure. For instance, Locke describes liberty as the volitional choice of a rational, moral preference that pleases the individual and benefits both herself and society. Smith argues that the experience of sympathizing with and being thought worthy of merit by other people instinctively causes pleasure and so will lead people to act according to moral norms. Marion Harney’s *Place-Making for the Imagination: Horace Walpole and Strawberry Hill* shows the similarity of Joseph Addison’s “On the Pleasures of the Imagination” *Spectator* essays (1711-1712) to Walpole’s text. For example, “The literary concept of painting scenes in narrative together with gardening practices first delineated by Addison were to become an important part of Pope’s poetics and Walpole’s philosophy.” *Spectator* 414 cites landscaping to prove naturalism’s superiority to blatantly

associative pleasure arises in conjunction with the transitions from objective, primary sensations to subjective, secondary sensations and then to a network of contingent, personal associations.<sup>212</sup> Reason compares new perceptions with its pre-existing ideas as a prelude to developing and refining complex ideas. Pleasure arises when reason discovers identity, affinity, and difference between new images and accepted ideas. Though Paul Guyer claims that Addison did not ground his aesthetic theories in morality, Addison nevertheless suggests that the pleasure in reasoning exists to pursue timeless principles:<sup>213</sup>

The *final cause*, probably, of annexing pleasure to this operation of the mind was to quicken and encourage us in our searches after truth, since the distinguishing one thing from another, and the right discerning betwixt our ideas, depends wholly upon our comparing them together, and observing the congruity or disagreement that appears among the several works of Nature.<sup>214</sup>

Addison's belief that pleasure serves the search for truth echoes natural law's premise that human reason can derive moral principles from the empiric study of physical nature, though he admits that scenic pleasures of the imagination do not themselves produce original, innovative understanding. Walpole's pleasures of the prospective imagination are not themselves innately instructive, but rather index people's civic virtue by resonating with their own moral beauty.<sup>215</sup>

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artificial designs for pleasing viewers. Marion Harney, *Place-Making for the Imagination: Horace Walpole and Strawberry Hill* (London: Routledge, 2013), 40.

<sup>212</sup> Addison distinguishes between "...primary pleasures of the imagination, which entirely proceed from such objects as are before our eyes; and...secondary pleasures of the imagination which flow from the ideas of visible objects, when the objects are not actually before the eye, but are called up into our memories." However, he is more optimistic about association and its ability to give pleasure than Locke, who thought that association can easily misguide reason and inhibit truth-seeking. Joseph Addison and Richard Steele, *The Spectator Vol. IV*, ed. Donald F. Bond (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), 411.

<sup>213</sup> Paul Guyer, *A History of Modern Aesthetics Volume I: The Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 70.

<sup>214</sup> Addison and Steele, *Spectator*, 416.

<sup>215</sup> Walpole's position aligns with Anthony Ashley-Cooper, third Earl of Shaftesbury's (1671-1713) sense that aesthetic taste reflected moral beauty and that even apparatuses like governments were aesthetic and

Naturalism's design principles are superior to other styles because they provide enduring, visual interest as opposed to the artificial and distasteful forms found rejected by modern English taste. Conversely, an object or form's ability to give consistent pleasure indicates that it is consistent with nature and possesses moral truth.

While Addison provided Walpole with naturalism's aesthetic theory, William Hogarth's *Analysis of Beauty* (1753) more clearly explicates its visual design principles.<sup>216</sup> Walpole's landscape design principles such as curved lines, variety, and simplicity echo topics in Hogarth's text. For example, Hogarth prefigures Walpole's preference for moderate, respectable irregularity in "Of Simplicity, or Distinctness": "[W]hen variety is join'd to (simplicity), then it pleases because it enhances the pleasure of variety, by giving the eye the power of enjoying it with ease."<sup>217</sup> Moderate variety in shapes, colors, and chiaroscuro offer many objects for the

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therefore potentially morally beautiful objects. Though my project only occasionally touches on Shaftesbury, his claim for a nation's government as an aesthetic object has obvious similarities with my own claim that the georgic garden is a figure for the nation:

There are several ways in which we can take our bearings in these proposals for rural and extensive gardening and see their connections with the georgic tradition in seventeenth-century England. ... We can look at actual estate layouts of the period, and we can consult a somewhat opaque pronouncement by the third Earl of Shaftesbury, whose genius presides over much more of this material than is generally accepted today (not least because of his strong determination that English art should discover its own taste and style).

What is relevant here are the gardening consequences of Shaftesbury's notion set out in *The Moralists* that each natural thing has an inherent character; we may have lost sight of these qualities, but Shaftesbury nonetheless argues that inherent perfections or characters can be relearned – perhaps by seeing them refined and reasserted in the artificial world of a garden where man has cultivated the nascent taxonomy of natural forms.

John Dixon Hunt, "'Gard'ning can Speak Proper English,'" *Culture and Cultivation in Early Modern England*, eds. Michael Leslie and Timothy Raylor (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1992), 201-205.

<sup>216</sup> Walpole's "Account of William Hogarth, and Catalogue of his Prints" in *Anecdotes of Painting in England* establishes his familiarity with Hogarth's work; he admits to possessing perhaps the largest collection of prints in England. Horace Walpole, *Anecdotes of painting in England; with some account of the principal artists; and incidental notes on other arts; collected by the late Mr. George Vertue; and now digested and published from his original Mss. by Mr. Horace Walpole. To which is added The History of the Modern Taste in Gardening. Volume the Fourth and last* (Strawberry-Hill: Thomas Kirgate, 1771), 80, *Eighteenth Century Collections Online*.

<sup>217</sup> William Hogarth, *The Analysis of Beauty* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 21.



cognitive free play that Walpole associates with imaginative pleasure. Hogarth goes on to say that “The shapes and colors of plants, flowers, leaves, . . . seem of little other intended use than that of entertaining the eye with the pleasure of variety” and “I mean here, and everywhere indeed, a composed variety; for variety uncomposed, and without degree is confusion and deformity.”<sup>218</sup> Transitions from ground cover, to shrubs, to large trees and mixing species of shrubs and flowers create subtle gradations of color and light and achieve Walpole’s desired smoothness and harmony. Borders should be irregular or blurred, and asymmetric curves should replace straight lines to create visual interest. Walpole cites Milton’s “prophetic eye of taste” which saw that Eden possessed these agreeable, naturalistic characteristics:<sup>219</sup>

--from the sapphire fount the crisped brooks,  
 Rolling on orient pearl and sands of gold,  
 With mazy error under pendent shades  
 Ran nectar, visiting each plant, and fed  
 Flow’rs worthy of Paradise, which not *nice art*  
 In beds and curious knots, but *nature* boon  
 Pour’d forth profuse on hill and dale and plain,  
 Both where the morning sun first warmly smote  
 The *open field*, and where the unpierc’d shade  
 Imbrown’d the noon-tide bow’rs. — *Thus was this place*  
*A happy rural seat of various view.* (Walpole, 30-31)

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<sup>218</sup> Hogarth, *The Analysis of Beauty*, 17.

<sup>219</sup> Walpole invokes Milton in order to borrow the authority of his voice, not just as a preeminent, creative, English Genius but as the poet of a distinctly English, political liberty.

Emphasizing Walpole's preference for "*nature*" rather than "*nice art*," the passage includes key, naturalistic elements; flowers are grouped in irregular, "curious knots," and the "mazy" streams exhibit "freedom of pencil" (Walpole, 30). Of William Kent's designs, Walpole praises "the beauty of the gentle swell, or concave swoop" and states that the "gentle stream was taught to serpentine seemingly at its pleasure" and that "borders were smoothed, but preserved their waving irregularity" (Walpole, 43; 45). Walpole suggests that smooth curves and irregular borders connote viewers' civic virtue and commitment to political liberty; his pictorial references to "freedom" of design, the "*open field*," and the free pencils of both the landscaper and Milton imply that the personal motive to improve property originates from liberalism itself.<sup>220</sup>

Walpole conveys that a naturalistic beautification signifies a proprietor's capacity for government administration by arguing that such improvements reflect personal virtues corresponding with an individual's ability to be consistently disinterested, fair, and just rather than being arbitrary, capricious, and mercenary. He makes this point by attributing tasteless landscaping in China and France to the debased virtues of the ruling elite and by implication their larger political systems.<sup>221</sup> The Chinese taste for novel, whimsical, and grotesque forms such as those in the imperial gardens show that the gardens' "pomp," "caprice and whim" and "unsubstantial[ity]" connote the despotism of China's government, which corrodes its rulers' valuation of liberty and taste for beauty (Walpole, 25; 39). Similarly, fecklessness affects Chinese and French aristocrats and causes an immoderate "pursuit of variety" (Walpole, 54).

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<sup>220</sup> While Annie Richardson argues that Hogarth implied an amoral aesthetic theory in which beauty inherently attracts a pleasure-driven eye, Walpole considers that landscapes reflect the moral dispositions of proprietors. Annie Richardson, "From the Moral Mound to the Material Maze: Hogarth's *Analysis of Beauty*," in *Luxury in the Eighteenth Century: Debates, Desires and Delectable Goods*, eds. Maxine Berg and Elizabeth Eger (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 122-125.

<sup>221</sup> "...the Chinese have passed to one extremity of absurdity, as the French and all antiquity had advanced to the other, both being equally remote from nature..." (Walpole, 40).

Arbitrary political power and the excessive pursuit of self-interest by elites loom behind these improper foreign tastes; such problems also threaten the virtue and taste of English persons whose wealth enables retirement on secluded estates. Great wealth and rural seats may lead proprietors to quell the potential tedium of country life with visual extravagance. Walpole states, “A modern French writer has in a very affected phrase given an account of this, I will call it, distemper. He says, *l’ennui du beau amene le gout [sic] du singulier.*”<sup>222</sup> The French quote implies that isolation can produce peculiar, immoderate, self-serving, and anti-social tastes. Whether caused the corruption, love of luxury, or boredom, *le gout du singulier* contrasts with naturalism’s simplicity and timelessness. However, proprietors insulated by wealth and distance from commercial centers may also theoretically be less involved in mercenary, self-interested business and should therefore be freer to take a general interest in overseeing public liberty and the commonwealth. Retired land owners on estates with wide, open prospects secured by property laws at once exemplify happy, private citizens and symbolize a well-governed nation in harmony with natural laws.

Liberty depends on the existence of a wealthy, virtuous, administrative class. The essay’s first words avow the importance of land ownership: “Gardening was probably one of the first arts that succeeded to that of building houses, and naturally attended property and individual possession” (Walpole, 17). Walpole presents the garden as relieving economic care and permitting moral stability. The garden’s development into naturalistic landscapes enjoyed by the first rank represents the expansion of rights to the wider, British polity: “Truth...will probably

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<sup>222</sup> (Distaste for the beautiful leads to the taste for the singular), (Walpole, 54). The quote is of unknown provenance. We can speculate whether Walpole might mean for *distemper* to connote “[d]erangement, disturbance, or disorder (esp. in a state or body politic).” *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. “distemper,” accessed October 30, 2018, <http://www.oed.com.proxy1.lib.uwo.ca/view/Entry/55608?rskey=IiSTsR&result=1&isAdvanced=false>.

not carry our style of garden into general use on the continent. The expence is only suited to the opulence of a free country where emulation reigns among many independent particulars” (Walpole, 58). Having seen unity in variety as an aesthetic principle, here it suggests that an individual’s enjoyment of their personal wealth is a function of the government-protected rights which belong to each English citizen, though in practice the public might only avail itself of bare, personal rights such as *habeas corpus* rather than enjoying possession of landed property. The taste and virtues necessary for creating landscape parks’ open fields contrast with the caprice and arbitrariness signified by artificial gardens’ “geometry of power”; moreover, English gardens signify their proprietors’ ability to protect the public’s rights through the managerial work of government.<sup>223</sup> Similarly, Walpole identifies naturalism as a distinctly English rather than British style of gardening. He seems to suggest that England plays a structurally similar role in the British Empire as estate-owning plutocrats do in England’s socio-economic order. Though other countries and territories nominally benefit from exposure to British markets and rule, England alone embodies the unifying principle of freedom and can maintain stability amid the cultural variety of the larger empire.

#### 4.3 *Garden management*

Where Walpole’s essay implies a correspondence between moral requirements for the work of improving proprietors and the work of statecraft, Mason’s didactic vignettes draw a direct analogy. Mason’s poem is the work of a somewhat reclusive, Cambridge-educated, Whig clergyman. Sharing Walpole’s dilettantish interests in the sister arts, Mason also collaborated with Walpole on *An Heroic Epistle to Sir William Chambers* (1773), a satirical poem rebuking

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<sup>223</sup> Tom Williamson, *Polite Landscapes: Gardens and Society in Eighteenth-Century England* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 29.

Chambers's welcoming *Dissertation on Oriental Gardening* (1772). Mason's dramatic tragedies *Elfrida* (1752) and *Caractacus* (1759) received moderate praise and like his juvenilia exhibit the classicism permeating *The English Garden*. The poem's four books, written between 1772 and 1782, are written in georgics' characteristically hybrid style of history, parable, allegory, biography, scenic descriptions, fragments of gardening instructions, fragments of aesthetic theory, elegy, odes, and ekphrasis on painting. The Preface to the poem's corrected edition of 1783 announces his intention to adapt the georgic mode to an innovative, poetic defense of naturalistic gardening. Mason tells readers that his poem, like the naturalistic garden, uses beautiful content to convey moral principles while also insinuating the georgic garden's symbolization of a nation whose laws and officers manifest those principles. Compared with Walpole's essay, the poem explicitly argues that proprietors who beautify their gardens in the naturalistic style thereby demonstrate a civic virtue that suits them for liberal government.

A few examples evince *The English Garden's* agreement with Walpole's essay in advocating naturalism. The following quote shows that Mason argues by giving detailed examples of naturalism's aesthetic principles rather than by narrating the history of their discovery; in one passage he figures their implementation by narrating an imaginary person's walk through a sequence of improved prospects.<sup>224</sup> The preceding stanza establishes Mason's

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<sup>224</sup> In the Abdalonimus parable, Mason details scenery visible along the path Alexander takes into Abdalonimus's grove:

A pathway brown  
Led thro' the pass, meeting a fretful brook,  
...  
From the flower'd verge  
Of this clear rill now stray'd the devious path,  
...  
Now, to the left, the path ascending pierc'd  
A smaller sylvan theatre, yet deck'd  
With more majestic foliage. (Mason, II.504-505; II.513-5.14; II.526-528)

familiarity with landscape's painterly optics by highlighting the placement of this stanza's flora in the low, foregrounded third of the three, conventional, color-differentiated tiers:<sup>225</sup>

Where'er thou wind'st  
 That path, take heed between the scene and eye,  
 TO vary and to mix the chosen greens.  
 Here for a while with cedar or with larch,  
 That from the ground spread their close texture, hide  
 The view entire. Then o'er some lowly tuft,  
 Where rose and woodbine bloom, permit its charms  
 To burst upon the sight; now thro' a copse  
 Of beech, that rear their smooth and stately trunks,  
 Admit it partially, and half exclude,  
 And half reveal its graces; in this path,  
 How long soe'er the wanderer roves, each step  
 Shall wake fresh beauties; each short point present  
 A different picture, new, and yet the same. (Mason, I.204-215)

Mason presents the landscape—and ultimately Britain—as a carefully, though not too obviously composed space designed for occupants' enjoyment. A winding path's perspectival discontinuity creates visual interest for viewers walking along it. The path is also more interesting to look at from a hilltop than from a straight, tree-lined alley would be due to the

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<sup>225</sup> John Barrell, *The Idea of Landscape and the Sense of Place 1730-1840: An Approach to the Poetry of John Clare* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 6-9.

innate pleasure of curves, and because paths guide the eye through the landscape.<sup>226</sup> The third line paraphrases naturalism's principle of unity in variety. Sightlines are interrupted by the path, by artfully placed shrubs and clumps of trees and a gently rolling terrain that together repeat the path's sinuous line of beauty. Mason augments the passage's naturalistic beauty with the poetic beauty of blank verse while moving between abstract, design principles and detailed examples.

*The English Garden* begins its first and last books by apostrophizing naturalism's timeless principle: Simplicity. Like Walpole's core principle of unity in variety, Simplicity invites difference and complexity; yet, in doing so it excludes highly irregular, deviant, and overwrought garden elements that would disturb holistic visual harmony.<sup>227</sup> The poem opens by describing Simplicity as an authoritative moral standard for judging landscaping, georgic poetry, and by extension the georgic garden's liberal political economy:

TO thee, divine SIMPLICITY! to thee,  
 Best arbitress of what is good and fair,  
 This verse belongs. O, as it freely flows,  
 Give it thy powers of pleasing; else in vain  
 It strives to teach the rules, from Nature drawn,  
 Of import high to those whose taste would add  
 To Nature's careless graces (Mason, I.1-7)

Mason presents his poem's own georgic method of beauty serving didacticism as an instance of the principled subordination of pleasure to practical purposes that will inform estate

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<sup>226</sup> The hilltop views associated with many loco-descriptive poems demonstrate the prospective eye, which we have seen in *The Seasons* and which sublimates both epistemological and imperial urges to comprehend and control the material world and its peoples.

<sup>227</sup> To foreshadow my point, though the passage defends tasteful naturalism against tasteless artifice, it also represents a preference for liberalist policies to the exclusion of mercantilist interventionism and the violence of repressive state apparatuses.

improvement. “Good and fair” play on the idea of pleasure’s proper uses and “bounds” in the sense that pleasure itself can be a useful, even pedagogical tool for cultivating taste given that beauty can index the righteousness of a thing and its maker.<sup>228</sup> Book Four’s apostrophe rejects the “foreign” and the “false” in “Art’s domain” to indict the shifting fashions that Walpole had associated with French venality and inconstant virtue (Mason, IV.4; IV.2).<sup>229</sup> The apostrophe to Simplicity also forecasts the poem’s address to and instruction of an elite audience by implicitly framing the reader as a witness to the poet’s own invocation.<sup>230</sup> The passage goes on to specify that while it may teach tasteful appreciation, it interpellates its primary, elite audience by identifying subjects wealthy enough to beautify their estates by “add[ing] / To Nature’s careless graces.”

Naturalism’s aesthetic principles of simplicity and unity in variety describe a method within a narrow, artistic field for imposing order on nature. The naturalistic aesthetic sublimates plutocrats’ moral obligations to impose order across politico-economic domains in a world whose complexity and challenges Mason’s poem illustrates in greater detail than does Walpole’s essay. Georgics readily admit that scarcity and care guide humans to study the challenges and opportunities of their natural environment. The georgic garden and the well-governed British

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<sup>228</sup> Elsewhere, Mason’s reinforces this tenet of propriety though with a more plainly economic meaning. “But chief consult him ere thou dar’st decide / Th’ appropriate bounds of pleasure, and of Use” (II.159-160). The subordination of pleasure to use means that a land’s economic uses should be prioritized but also that in georgic poetry and gardening the pleasure of the beautiful can serve use and itself become useful by directing attention toward or signifying moral principles. Mason’s theory of the georgic suggests that poetic beauty and ornament offer a sort of superficial pleasure analogous to artifice or novelty in landscaping, but which acquires moral validity to the extent that it serves the poem’s didactic message.

<sup>229</sup> “If I smile at such visions, still one must be glad that in the whirl of fashions, beneficence should have its turn in vogue; and though the French treat the virtues like every thing else, but as an object of mode, it is to be hoped that they too will, every now and then, come into fashion again.” (Walpole, 41)

<sup>230</sup> Jonathan Culler argues that poetic apostrophe stages the poet’s visionary voice and teases readers’ awareness of their own, spectatorial presence. Jonathan Culler, *The Pursuit of Signs: Semiotics, literature, deconstruction* (London: Routledge, 2001), 156-157.



nation it represents are, in my project's language, apparatuses which regulate the world for the purpose of helping individuals to freely and rationally pursue pleasure. In the georgic garden's case, the study, appreciation, and naturalistic replication of nature's aesthetic beauty serves an end similar to the study of physical nature in *The Seasons*; such studies cultivate the moral principles that legitimize states which unify the nation by equitably enforcing private rights. From the perspective of variety and particularity, the study of nature, whether with an eye toward aesthetic or physical rules, gives individuals methods for better instrumentalizing otherwise scarce material resources. Regarding the poem's central theme of landscaping, material nature determines the local conditions and limitations which would-be improvers must negotiate, organize, and harmonize to create landscape parks. For example, English gardens require adequate water sources that must not form a contrived, artificial, "stiff unlink'd chain / Of flat canals" (Mason, III.425-426). Mason emphasizes landscaping's deference to nature in terms of proprietors' negotiation of contingent, material conditions in addition to naturalistic principles:

Learn that, whene'er in some sublime scene  
 Imperial Nature of her headlong floods  
 Permits our imitation, she herself  
 Prepares their reservoir; conceal'd perchance  
 In neighb'ring hills, where first it well behoves  
 Our toil to search... (Mason, III.438-443)

By "Permit[ting the] imitation of "Imperial Nature," Mason claims that nature itself authorizes naturalism's imposition on nature to better control it and connotes a similar authorization for England's control and exploitation of the British Empire. More narrowly, the passage insists that proprietors reproduce nature's best likeness with the resources afforded.

Elsewhere, Mason cites different climates and anticipates hardiness zones to exemplify a more general condition limiting plant selection. Nature differentiates indigenous plants apt to thrive in English gardens from plants requiring careful oversight:

Nor will [Art], scorning truth and taste, devote

To strange, and alien soils, her seedling stems;

...

From Nature's laws

[Art] draws her own; Nature and she are one.

...

Nor will [Art's] prudence, when intent to form

One perfect whole, on feeble aid depend,

And give exotic wonders to our gaze.

She knows and therefore fears the faithless train:

...

Warn'd by his error, let the Planter slight

These shiv'ring rarities (III.226-227; III.230-132; III.240-243; III.287-288)

Mason reinforces the idea that English gardens' design principles are subject to and conditioned by nature's physical laws. Chauvinist tropes emphasize that exotic species may be hard to integrate into the garden's unity given that their visual interest relies on a potentially disconcerting novelty. More fundamentally, England's climate simply prevents Mediterranean and Indian "Aliens" from surviving without recourse to greenhouses (Mason, III.286). The use of opportune waterways and appropriate flora exemplify attention to harmonizing local, ecological conditions via general design principles. Poetically oscillating between abstract

principles and concrete details, Mason conveys that the georgic garden signifies an apparatus that is itself created in harmony with nature's law and diffuses that harmony among the various elements within the space that it organizes and unifies.

Complementing naturalism's negotiation of local, ecological conditions, *The English Garden* acknowledges politico-economic topics such as pragmatism, commerce, and labor. Such topics appear in Mason's moralizing statements about pleasure and use and in the Abdalonimus and Alcander vignettes; they are important for my argument because the georgic garden analogizes these worldly objects of liberal, political economy with the material objects transformed by naturalistic beautification. Mason takes a sober, practical tone early in the poem by establishing unpleasant work to be the universal lot of "Industrious man, by heav'n's first law ordain'd / To earn his food by labour" (Mason, I.105-106). Gardening for pleasure can only occur when the more pressing needs of subsistence have become a remote concern; meantime, pragmatism and "use" must be prioritized over pleasure as in georgic poetry. Mason warns proprietors to beware of "Th' appropriate bounds of Pleasure, and of Use; / For Pleasure, lawless robber, oft invades / Her neighbour's right" (Mason, II.160-162). The line tropes on property rights to warn against not only a corrupt taste for unnatural gardening styles but also the more general love of luxury that would sacrifice farmland and the public good to personal pleasure.<sup>231</sup>

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<sup>231</sup> Mason describes an Elizabethan aristocracy's unwelcome taste for pomp, fashion, and excessive refinement, which inspired the production of artificial and unappealing landscapes:

Not but the mode of that romantic age,  
 The age of tourneys, triumphs, and quaint masques,  
 Glar'd with fantastic pageantry, which dimm'd  
 The sober eye of truth, and dazzled ev'n  
 The Sage himself; witness his high-arch'd hedge,  
 In pillar'd state by carpentry upborn,  
 With colour'd mirrors deck'd, and prison'd birds. (Mason, I.422-428)

In addition to citing rural land's economic utility as farmland and an economic, pleasure-giving utility as naturalistic landscape, the poem also refers to manual labor and trade networks that enlarge the commonwealth and influence the socio-economic order. For example, Mason recognizes that garden improvement directed by rich owners requires the manual labor of the lower ranks. He acknowledges the work of the "plodding hind" and the meager "Cot" where "Penury and Toil within reside" (Mason, II.400; II.406; II.409). Later, Mason presents Alcander as the creative designer of an arguably overwrought estate, but there again we see "hinds, / Call'd to the task, their willing axes wield" (Mason, IV.639-640). The appearance of human capital managed by Alcander and the background upheavals of the American Revolutionary War indicate a larger socio-economic order beyond the story's three dignified, lead characters.<sup>232</sup> In the Abdalonimus story devoted to "To Commerce and to Care," Mason establishes the setting to be a major trade port that will contrast with the discovery of Abdalonimus's humble home:

...[the sun's] slaunting beams  
 Shot to the strand, and purpled all the main,  
 Where Commerce saw her Sidon's freighted wealth,  
 With languid streamers, and with folded sails,  
 Float in a lake of gold. The wind was hush'd... (Mason, II.488-492)

This parable of moral government starts by recognizing Sidon's status as an important, economic nexus in a wider network of international trade. The scene's calm weather and the unfilled sails suggest that tyranny and war have arrested the port's usual business. Abdalonimus's contentment and his carefully tended garden sanctuary insulate him from the city's profiteers.

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<sup>232</sup> Again, the upheavals signify the imperfection in nature's beauty; Mason's georgic insists that naturalism should be able to control these aberrations and implies that proprietor-politics should also be able to manage the global, socio-political instabilities arising in the course of Britain's imperial project.

Though he is not wealthy, his retirement and his humble work ethic designate his ability to oversee the legally protected liberties that allow a society to prosper. The pleasure he takes in his sanctuary, which Alexander admiringly reiterates, signals that property rights are among the most important of these liberties.

#### 4.4 *Two faces of the genius*

The georgic garden's liberal political economy implies that property rights are the basis for socio-economic stability and are therefore a crucial object for government oversight. The texts rarely refer to property rights; instead, the texts address them indirectly by referring to freedom and liberty in aesthetic or broad political contexts in addition to the central thematic of private land use. For example, Walpole describes naturalism's "freedom of pencil" and the "[f]reedom...given to the form of trees" and Mason refers to his poem's "freely flow[ing]," blank verse as means for matching superficial beauty of aesthetic creations to the moral beauty of nature's principles (Walpole, 30; 45; Mason, I.2). These contrast naturalism's affiliations with disinterested taste and political liberty with French formal gardens' geometry of arbitrary political power. Mason invokes past and present political history to champion a liberal, rights-oriented concept of freedom. He identifies "Liberty and Peace" as a nation's "best blessings" and on multiple occasions contrasts his positive visions of Britain's political freedom with examples of tyranny, violence and slavery (Mason, II.602). For example, he calls the "freeborn" "sons of Albion" the inheritors of Greek liberty and unfavorably compares Rome ("While Rome was free") with the modern papal state subjected to "slavish superstition" (Mason, I.51; I.50; I.61; I.62). He reproaches Charles II for having been an "abject tool to France, / C[o]me back to smile his subjects into slaves" (Mason, I.468-469). By contrast, he praises the British

government's respect for natural rights while hinting at the risk of backsliding with his brief, sympathetic gesture to the Thirteen Colonies in the Alcander parable. Mason's georgic garden figures this relation between liberal political economy, property rights, and rights in general as the basis for individual and collective prosperity:

Each plant that springs  
 Holds, like the people of some free-born state,  
 Its rights fair franchis'd; rooted to a spot  
 It yet has claim to air; from liberal heav'n  
 It yet has claim to sunshine, and to showers;  
 Air, showers, and sunshine are its liberty. (Mason, III.179-184)

In this allegory, the garden represents England and the plants England's rights-bearing citizens. The plant's figurative property rights give way to a larger bundle of rights. The allegory implies that individuals have a right to life-sustaining resources; more cynically, individuals may claim a proprietary right to enjoy resources should they be able to appropriate or "claim" them in the first place. For many English people, being "rooted to a spot" refers to their inclusion in a national identity that grants them legal protections as well as referring to their inclusion in a proto-capitalist, socio-economic order rather than guaranteeing their ownership of a homestead. Yet, even prior to possession of any material property, the passage figures natural rights, whether to property, to non-injury, or otherwise, as themselves a type of permanent property. Security against physical injury may be a more fundamental natural right, but property rights become a sort of archetypal right that a person innately "Holds," because the poem's liberalist version of natural law regards natural rights *in toto* as fixed possessions which enable the enjoyment of one's life, health, and liberty, as well as possessions. In a poem about land use, the ability to

properly employ and enjoy beautified land takes on heightened significance to become the emblematic object of governmental protection while also providing a figure for the correct performance of that oversight.

Given the centrality of property rights and especially land ownership to the georgic garden's liberal, political economy, Mason's use of the *genius loci* provides a heuristic for understanding his analogy of naturalistic landscaping with liberal government. Mason invokes multiple Geniuses; most guard famous or privately-owned plots of land while one guards the whole of England. In each case, the Genius is a withdrawn, watchful steward who only emerges in order to inflict mostly undefined retribution against transgressors who misuse the land including betrayals of its naturalistic aesthetic. Thus, each Genius possesses both a passive, non-interventionist aspect and an active, interventionist aspect. Moreover, Mason associates Geniuses with both gentleman gardeners and politicians; because the Abdalonimus and Alcander stories frame gardening and governing as comparable, even interdependent roles, applying the Genius's passive-active duality to each of these two roles clarifies *The English Garden's* sense of plutocratic liberalism.

Mason's longest passage on a local Genius describes it as ensuring that improvements to its local plot of land comport with naturalism. He applies explicitly political terms to the Genius, which gives naturalism's aesthetic principles a juridical, moralizing cast:

Him then, that sov'reign Genius, Monarch sole  
 Who, from creation's primal day, derives  
 His right divine to this his rural throne,  
 Approach with meet obeisance; at his feet  
 Let our aw'd art fall prostrate.

...Yet to those

Who do him loyal service, who revere

His dignity, nor aim, with rebel arms,

At lawless usurpation, is he found

Patient and placable... (Mason, II.110-114; II.119-122)

Each Genius tends to be grand, stately, retiring, and “Awfull still” in “his shadowy pomp” (Mason, II.137; II.155). Beyond their phantasmatic character, Geniuses remain withdrawn unless enforcing aesthetic laws. As a “sylvan Despot,” the Genius even blurs between figuring a political personage and figuratively embodying the law itself. Given the Genius’s typical passivity, its character models a liberalist approach to implementing and enforcing laws, which is to say that the state largely restricts its direct interventions into the socio-economic order to preventing and punishing injuries to personal rights.

Due to their attachment to local plots of land, Mason’s Geniuses are most immediately affiliated with estate owners whose wealth, civic virtue, and taste should incline them to estate improvement. Walpole and Mason contrast naturalism’s simple, mimetic refinements with artifice and intervention. Naturalistic landscaping reflects a proprietor’s humble compliance with the Genius’s prescriptions as opposed to chasing self-gratifying novelty or fleeting fashion by imposing peculiar ideas and forms on the land they share with its Genius. Naturalistic improvement adapts itself to each new landscape, which it simply refines rather than actively imposing artificial designs. As mentioned, Abdalonimus carries out the naturalistic aesthetic, and Alcander’s emotional rebalancing turns on his recovered interest in competent estate improvement. Further, Geniuses’ tendency to be withdrawn correlates with land owners’ retirement from the worlds of venal commerce and fashion. Financial security and retirement are



the best means to cultivate disinterest and to prevent one's morals from being corrupted by profit-seeking or the desire to impress others with ornamental displays of wealth, though Abdalanimus achieves as much with his remarkable example of a simple life of seclusion and toil. Problematically for plutocracy, the lower ranks may acquire both taste and civic virtue. Still, the best evidence of civic virtue is not tasteful appreciation, but instead submitting to Geniuses' intentions for their land's best use. Taken further, civic virtue fundamentally depends on the transmission and inheritance of aristocratic wealth which functions like a passively acquired birthright.

Correlative with Geniuses' tendency to be withdrawn, politicians govern best by only directly interceding in the nation's domestic affairs to correct clear disruptions of a natural order in which socio-economic divisions are maintained and individuals are free to pursue their self-interest.<sup>233</sup> Mason shares Adam Smith's preference for liberal markets and states but speaks less directly about institutional or repressive state apparatuses than do Thomson or Darwin. Repressive state apparatuses must be restrained and kept inoperative unless needed to restore order and defend liberties. Geniuses' usual restraint not only implies which citizens should govern but that they should govern according to a liberal, political economy prioritizing natural rights and commutative justice.<sup>234</sup> By prioritize, I mean that liberal government prevents the

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<sup>233</sup> For example, I read the following passage on gardening methods as applicable to broader, economic administration. The following lines threaten a vengeful Genius's appearance should the recommended methods not be followed:

But learn to rein,  
O Youth! whose skill essays the arduous task  
That skill within the limit she allows.  
Great Nature scorns controul:

...  
'tis thine alone

To mend, not change her features. (Mason, II.71-7)

<sup>234</sup> As discussed in the last chapter, commutative justice focuses on defining rights and redressing transgression rather than trying to achieve distributive justice by actively attempting to redistribute

infringement of private citizens' rights by both other citizens and the state itself. My last chapter showed that nations can assert their commitment to economic and political liberalism as long as institutional state apparatuses' use soft power to subjectivize their nation's public rather than engaging in interventionist protectionism or flagrantly turning repressive state apparatuses against private citizens. The cessation of trade in Sidon due to the political violence caused by Persian tyrant Azemilcus and by the conquering Alexander provides a counterexample to peaceful liberalism's positive, economic effects. By contrast, Abdalonimus imposes neither on nature's beauty nor on society. He demonstrates his fitness to rule by secluding himself in his remote garden sanctuary and by letting nature, or perhaps the local Genius, the "Parent of good," direct his toil (Mason, II.557).

Turning to Geniuses' active characteristics, Mason warns that Geniuses react to landscapers overtly tampering with natural beauty with vaguely defined violence:

But dare with caution else expect, bold man  
 The injur'd Genius of the place to rise  
 In self-defence, and, like some giant fiend  
 That frowns in Gothic story, swift destroy,  
 By night, the puny labours of thy day. (Mason, I.83-87)

As I noted, Mason's Geniuses barely demonstrate an active, non-punitive aspect. Rather, as a source to be consulted, Geniuses embody natural laws like simplicity and unity in variety, which regulate people's creative activities while remaining a benign, enabling factor. However, Geniuses, when required, actively respond to transgressions of their principles with sublime, overwhelming violence. Again, Mason does not specify the form of this violence, but his

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resources. Commutative justice is therefore comparatively non-interventionist and was considered to be a more precise form of justice by political philosophers such as Adam Smith.

Orientalist characterizations of the Genius trope on conventional associations of despotic, arbitrary power to evoke the sublime, moral force of the natural laws that condition aesthetic principles<sup>235</sup> and that justify the wielding of repressive state apparatuses by legitimate governments.<sup>236</sup> Local Geniuses' own retribution may simply be the glaring, tasteless unsightliness that unnatural, formal, and arbitrary landscapes force on viewers' sensibilities. Thus, Geniuses' violence would not only respond to but coincides with the violence of false aesthetics; we can then extrapolate the moral force or justice of the acts which Geniuses' retributive violence represents.

Proprietors actively demonstrate their fitness to govern not by imitating Geniuses' active interventions, but by freely improving their estates within the bounds of naturalistic principles. Though improvement possesses a passive aspect in that proprietors subject themselves to naturalism's tenets, here the demonstrated will to improve is the significant side of the same coin. Active improvement of estates is crucial for Mason, because unlike taste alone, improvement evinces regard for the proper, virtuous uses of wealth. By themselves, taste and land ownership remain inert credentials that merely enable civic virtue; instead, taste should motivate the wealthy to improve their estates, rather than remaining the barely engaged appreciation described by Addison. The improving proprietor organizes the technical knowledge, material resources, and manual labor required to make a pleasing, orderly landscape.

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<sup>235</sup> Referring to the mind's fitness for perceiving aesthetic beauty and recognizing truth and moral principles in nature's material face.

<sup>236</sup> Mason invokes oriental despots to evoke sublime power:

They of Ind,  
The Tartar tyrants, Tamerlane's proud race,  
Or they in Persia thron'd, who shake the rod  
Of power o'er myriads of enervate slaves,  
Expect not humbler homage to their pride  
Than does this sylvan Despot. (Mason, II.114-119)

The georgic garden frames English gardens' aesthetic pleasure and aesthetic pleasure more generally as an aneconomic form of use encompassed by and subservient to practical, instrumental use. The proprietor's improvement tropes on the economic activity of other industrious private citizens; however, while evincing proprietor's managerial capacity as other labor might, beautification is the expensive, disinterested creation of the aneconomic pleasure offered by these apparatuses, which in turn uniquely enables proprietors to prove their capacity to govern.

Both Abdalonimus's and Alcander's beautification efforts exemplify active proprietors' virtuous taste, work ethic, and land management. For example, Mason designates Abdalonimus as "the man of toil" (Mason, IV.674). His rulership is "doubly dear / By birth and virtue"; he possesses the right to rule by passive, dynastic inheritance, but also because his demonstrated "virtue," meaning the physical labor invested in his garden, validates that right. Alexander crowns him because Abdalonimus's humble retirement, benevolence, and soft, naturalistic touch in his gardening evince qualities necessary for stewarding commercial Sidon into a new period of "Liberty and Peace" (Mason, II.602). In the Alcander parable, Alcander channels his grief for Nerina into modest, tasteful "sylvan arts" (Mason, IV.642). When "Alcander's taste / Disdains to trick with emblematic toys / The place," the poem attributes his restrained approach to improvement to a correlative self-management and sense of aristocratic responsibility.

Finally, Geniuses' stewardship and potential for vengeance illustrate two, active modes of liberal government. The first mode, subtler and exemplary of liberalism in general, relates to Geniuses' embodying naturalism's principles given that Geniuses oversee, enforce, and ultimately epitomize their force and truth. Naturalism's principles provide for modest refinements that optimize landscapes. Similarly, liberal, positive laws create the conditions that

foster national prosperity by maximizing the freedoms and protecting the rights of profit-seeking subjects. Though Mason's Geniuses do not themselves act in ways that satisfyingly correspond with legislation or establishing and running institutional state apparatuses, to the extent that they embody naturalism's nomic force, naturalism's advocates nevertheless acknowledge that its method includes artificially manipulating an environment. That is, proprietors' transformations of their estates signify the administrative conditioning of the vast domain of the nation's disembedded economy by means of laws and other state apparatuses; naturalism sublimates nature's moral laws while liberal government codifies them to encourage acceptable, socio-economic activity and to define disorderly activities that require corrective intervention. By contrast with Geniuses' embodiment of light-handed, liberal stewardship, their sublime, "swift destroy[ing]" retributions confirm through the threat of righteous violence the moral authority investing naturalism's aesthetic principles. Such violence has a clearer analogy in the repressive state mechanisms that Mason illustrates in his parables. Violence appears most visibly when Alexander enters Abdalonimus's sanctuary. The great conqueror ends the permanent state of emergency installed by the Persian, arbitrary despotism by crowning Abdalonimus and so validating the proprietor-politician analogy. Moreover, the crowning by Alexander demonstrates violence to be a founding element of even legitimate states, and while the laws administered by proprietor-politicians maintain states' legitimacy, the state violence figured by avenging Geniuses remains a latent, potential force for re-imposing order.

In figuring the Genius as naturalism's guardian spirit, Mason's descriptions of the managerial aspects of landscaping convey various aspects of liberal political economy. He also conveys virtues such as an equitable, disinterested taste for what is morally and aesthetically good as suiting a person for government. Naturalistic beautification is excellent evidence of the

civic humanism proper to politicians obliged to protect natural law-based liberties with the apparatuses of a lean government. The pleasing beauty of Mason's naturalistic georgic garden figures the socio-political unity and the common prosperity achieved through good policy. By comparison, as we shall see, Darwin's georgic gardens also thematically re-center pleasure in the georgic mode, but his poems instead adopt a scientific approach to argue that human's desire for pleasure cooperates with the expansion of a liberty understood as cognitive capacity to drive technological progress. Darwin's poems, like Locke's philosophy, present a physiological theory of liberty, but one which implies an evolutionary continuum between vegetables, animals, humans, and human's technological productions. Rather than discussing landscaping, Darwin's georgic gardens more closely follow *The Seasons* by arguing that the study of nature teaches us the benefits of pursuing a sympathy-moderated hedonism while also offering resources to pursue a technologically-driven progress of opulence. As with Smith, Darwin imagines a synergistic expansion of human liberty and prosperity which annuls the most intrusive and violent apparatuses of government. Darwin's incomplete *Progress of Society* forecasts the destiny of the georgic garden's described in *Economy of Vegetation* and *Temple of Nature* such that bio-technological evolution leads to a cosmopolitan world ruled by nature's all-comprehending, pleasure principle.

## Chapter 5

### 5 “Perhaps all the productions of nature are in their progress to greater perfection!”: The Pleasures of Physiology and Mythopoeia in Erasmus Darwin’s Georgic Gardens

#### 5.1 *Darwin’s origins*

The major poems of Erasmus Darwin continue the trend in georgics such as Thomson’s *The Seasons* and Mason’s *The English Garden* of displacing images of agricultural labor to instead emphasize intellectual labor and the discoveries of natural philosophy, which enable humans to better control nature. I argue that Darwin’s poems, like Thomson’s and Mason’s, do the ideological work of naturalizing liberal, political economy primarily through an analysis of the physiology presented in *The Temple of Nature* and with reference to his *The Loves of the Plants* (1789) and *The Economy of Vegetation* (1791) which he compiled together with *Loves* in *The Botanic Garden*. While Darwin’s poems employ Mason’s motif of georgic gardens, Darwin is closer to Thomson in their shared desire to popularize the sciences. Relative to earlier chapters, I spend less time discussing states, state apparatuses, and political economy because Darwin deploys georgic gardens to reorient the georgic around physiological pleasure and liberty. Rather than the tasteful, aesthetic pleasure of Mason’s georgic, English gardens, Darwin’s georgic gardens tend to be botanic and thus reflect science’s role in understanding and encouraging physiology’s contributions to individual and collective development.

I argue that Darwin’s physiological theories of volition and association refute the idea that liberty derives from an abstract, natural law that would precede and determine nature’s physical being. Nor does liberty derive from government, though governments may limit it with

state apparatuses. Liberty is a physiological effect of individual and collective evolution and is indexed by the strength of an individual's volitional capacity. John Locke, François Quesnay, and Adam Smith each address the state's politico-economic problem of enabling its subjects to freely pursue rational self-interest, securing their personal rights, and minimizing undue government interventions. Darwinian physiology fuses pleasure, volition, and a broadly interpreted labor into a hedonistic ethic moderated by social sympathy and the cooperative exchange and development of ideas. Pleasure motivates organisms to associate, cooperate, complicate, and hybridize and thus accounts for sexual reproduction, evolution, technological progress, language, and Darwin's own literary experiments.

Amanda Jo Goldstein states in *Sweet Science: Romantic Materialism and the New Logics of Life*, "Romantic, revisionary poetic sciences...challenged emergent life-scientific and aesthetic protocols to understand 'raw' sensation itself as susceptible and generative of social and rhetorical transformation..."<sup>237</sup> I begin by delving deeply into Darwin's fourfold sensorium, a flexible physiological model that helps him to explain the life processes of all organisms. I dwell on Darwin's understanding of sensory pleasure and volition at greater length than many critics who discuss his physiology, because these attributes of organisms are linchpins for his justification for reprioritizing pleasure and mythopoeia in the context of the georgic mode.<sup>238</sup>

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<sup>237</sup> Amanda Jo Goldstein, *Sweet Science: Romantic Materialism and the New Logics of Life* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2017), 8.

<sup>238</sup> Some older authors whose work on Darwin's physiological model include James Venable Logan, *The Poetry and Aesthetics of Erasmus Darwin* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1972), 21-47; Maureen McNeil, *Under the banner of science: Erasmus Darwin and his age* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987), 87-107. For more recent work, see C. U. M. Smith, "All from Fibres: Erasmus Darwin's Evolutionary Psychobiology," in *The Genius of Erasmus Darwin*, eds. C. U. M. Smith and Robert Arnott (Burlington: Ashgate, 2005), 133-140; Patricia Fara, *Erasmus Darwin: sex, science, and serendipity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 230-243; Catherine Packham, *Eighteenth-Century Vitalism: Bodies, Culture, Politics* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 152; Janelle A. Schwartz, *Worm Work: Recasting Romanticism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012), 40; 48-49; Martin Priestman, *The Poetry of Erasmus Darwin: Enlightened Spaces, Romantic Times* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2013), 123-138.



His physiological model also allowed him to compare lifeforms, recognize evolutionary continuities, and claim that universal self-interest innately causes individual organisms to transform themselves through engagement with their environment. I then emphasize two, crucial principles which determine the sensorium's methods for integrating and instrumentalizing information drawn from its environment. The principle of pleasure, poeticized by Darwin as passions and tastes, motivate the sensorium and are volition's main interest. Consequently, in a variation of the georgic mode previewed in Mason's poem, pleasure displaces manual labor as the georgic's central thematic. Underwritten by the sensorium, Darwin's botanic, georgic gardens establish a universal ethic of hedonism. The second principle, imitation, broadly characterizes the operations of the sensorium and provides a basis for organisms' ability to develop their own capacities by integrating sensations, forming innovative, synthetic ideas, and executing volitional actions. Imitation enables organisms to transform themselves and to participate in wider transformations of collective species-life through both organic and inorganic means.

The philosophy of technology has been helpful to my understanding of the ways in which Darwinian physiology implies that organic self-transformation forecasts humanity's technological progress. As Arthur Bradley begins *Originary Technicity*, "In the beginning, [life] was already a machine."<sup>239</sup> He observes that despite the long history of philosophers attempting to distinguish technology from nature, others have argued that nature demonstrates mechanistic qualities or that organisms instinctively create and manipulate technological objects.

Technology may naturally emerge from the desires and capacities of living beings, develop in a

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<sup>239</sup> Arthur Bradley, *Originary Technicity: The Theory of Technology from Marx to Derrida* (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 1.

quasi-deterministic fashion adjudicated by physical laws, and play a significant role in transforming human societies and their environments.

Alan Bewell connotes the significance of Darwin's physiology-based version of originary technicity for liberal, political economy by stating that Darwin's botanic gardens "were more prospective than retrospective in character, less about the discovery of a lost order of nature than about making something new."<sup>240</sup> I identify his fourfold sensorium as expressing originary technicity, because Darwin presents technological innovation as logically continuous with the sensorium's internal developments caused by imitation and volitional synthesis. Originary technicity usefully frames Darwin's prospective optimism for a peaceful, prosperous future if we recognize that volition expands liberty by expanding its own techn(ological) means for pursuing pleasure.<sup>241</sup> For example, Darwin states, "Thy potent acts, VOLITION, still attend / The means of pleasure to secure the end."<sup>242</sup> While association empowers volition, Darwin's footnote to these lines adds that "it is the greater energy and activity of the power of volition, that marks mankind, and has given them the empire of the world" (III.435n). An organism's volitional labor may directly alter the capacities of its own sensorium by training or learning technical

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<sup>240</sup> Alan Bewell, "Erasmus Darwin's Cosmopolitan Nature," *ELH* 76 (2009): 33. Darwin identifies liberty, freedom of thought and action, and creativity as co-implicated, improvable capacities immanent and unique to each individual. For Darwin, liberty does not exist apart from an organism's operable capacities for sensation, volition, association, and the various, external means that collectively enable it to interact with its environment. Though political government is largely peripheral to this chapter due to Darwin's attribution of liberty to physiology, to the extent that all life and all of life's creations are apparatuses, states and state apparatuses are tools which may enhance or restrict individuals' capacities.

<sup>241</sup> I often refer to Darwin's imagined continuity between organic techniques and inorganic technologies as techn(ological) progress. I distinguish the technical which refers to techniques or skills that are internal to an organism from technological which refers to crafted instruments external to an organism. In the course of my discussion, we will see that Darwin's theories of the sensorium and evolutionary progress convey that technological developments are a natural extension of and coordinate with the technical developments in individual organisms or across a species.

<sup>242</sup> Erasmus Darwin, *The Temple of Nature*, ed. Martin Priestman, [http://www.rc.umd.edu/editions/darwin\\_temple/](http://www.rc.umd.edu/editions/darwin_temple/), III.435. All further references to Darwin's *The Temple of Nature* are taken from this edition.

processes. It also may indirectly alter its own capacities by crafting tools and environments for its own use.

Having argued volition and association to be the aspects of the sensorium which truly free humanity's creativity, I address language as a particularly significant innovation emerging at the blurry juncture of internal, skill-based technique and external, instrumental technology. I emphasize human language's technological characteristics such as its being a mutable apparatus exterior to any, single individual which suits it for exchange, education, philosophical inquiry, and mythopoeia.<sup>243</sup> Scholars of Romantic life sciences have noted Darwin's recognition of evolutionary epigenesis, or the passing on to genetic inheritors characteristics obtained during life.<sup>244</sup> Language offers a powerful means for transmitting information; each of Darwin's poems establishes its own botanic, georgic garden to be a site for readers' education. Dahlia Porter observes that by writing *Temple of Nature*, Darwin recognized that his distinction between loose and strict analogies, his heuristic for distinguishing beautiful poetic language and more precise, philosophical language, was collapsing:

the work of containment and differentiation performed by Darwin's verse-note composite is continually unraveled by the composite form itself...In registering the divisions that would become the foundation of disciplinary separation in the structure of

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<sup>243</sup> The defining feature of technological innovation is the exteriorization of a conceived idea or plan into the physical form of a durable apparatus separate from its creator. "The whole of our evolution has been oriented towards placing outside ourselves what in the rest of the animal world is achieved inside by species adaptation." Andre Leroi-Gourhan, *Gesture and Speech*, trans. Anna Bostock Berger (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1993), 235.

<sup>244</sup> In addition to Goldstein's book, see also, Denise Gigante, *Life: Organic Form and Romanticism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009) and Helmut Müller-Sievers, *Self-Generation: Biology, Literature, Philosophy around 1800* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997).

the text, Darwin allowed this boundary to be transgressed over and over, always reconstituting itself only to be dismantled.<sup>245</sup>

Porter's use of "allowed" connotes that Darwin's agency in maintaining the "boundary" was itself compromised by the proliferating syntheses of his loose and strict analogies which we see in his overdetermined figures such as the garden itself. The sensorium comprehends both loose and strict analogies under its more general practice of imitation and, even more fundamentally, executes both in the service of pleasure. Here again, Darwin elevates beauty and pleasure from their conventional, subsidiary role in the georgic, a change reflected by the prominence he gives to his own mythopoeic, loose analogies. Having shown that imitative ideation and language are inadequate to defining the essential qualities of life-originating pleasure, I observe that pleasure exceeds understanding, and pushes organisms to exceed themselves through self-transformation. Consequently, Darwin uses his loose, allegorical "machinery" and especially his retrospective and prospective, botanic, georgic gardens to demonstrate how myth is an appropriate vehicle for performatively eliciting pleasure and signifying the excessive, originary technicity of physiological pleasure.<sup>246</sup> Addressing four ways in which the trope of botanic gardens influenced his poetry, I conclude by noting that a mythic, georgic garden functions as a prospective myth representing the coming Age of Philosophy whose details remain uncertain, but which promises the continued, general expansion of pleasure and liberty.

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<sup>245</sup> Dahlia Porter, *Science, Form, and the Problem of Induction in British Romanticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 102.

<sup>246</sup> Darwin's refers to his myths and loose allegories as his "machinery" in *Temple's* Preface. "In the Eleusinian mysteries the philosophy of the works of Nature, with the origin and progress of society, are believed to have been taught by allegoric scenery explained by the Hierophant to the initiated, which gave rise to the machinery of the following Poem." (ii)

## 5.2 *Pleasure, imitation, and volition in the sensorium*

Darwin's medical career informed the majority of his writing as well as his interest in the botanic garden. Darwin received his medical training at the Edinburgh Medical School and, like Quesnay, theorized a hedonistic morality based on materialist physiology. At Edinburgh, in addition to a two-year course in moral philosophy, Darwin learned the popular theories of John Brown (1735-1788), who thought that bodies enjoy and benefit from regular stimulation while avoiding excessive inputs.<sup>247</sup> Building upon Brown's ideas, Darwin crafted his own, unique theory of physiology by integrating Albrecht von Haller's (1708-1777) theory that all living organisms are composed of a variety of sensitive, contractile fibers. Darwin presents his physiological theories of animal economies and vegetable economies in the treatises *Zoonomia; or the Laws of Organic Life* (1794) and *Phytologia; or, The Philosophy of Agriculture and Gardening* (1800) respectively. His attempts to popularize botany among women by writing the whimsical yet densely foot-noted *Loves of the Plants* aroused his own enthusiasm for writing poetry in no small part because the poem itself was widely popular. His appreciation for poetry's beauty and didactic potential grew, and his *Botanic Garden* was also well-received for many years, though his attempt to condense his physiological theories into *Temple of Nature* met with less success in part due to its radical, evolutionary implications. *Temple of Nature* argues that all organisms from the first "gluten-threads" to contemporary humans respond to and engage with their environments through a tactile sensibility based on the contractions and relaxations of different types of fibers composing tissues and organs.<sup>248</sup>

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<sup>247</sup> Richard Olson, *Scottish Philosophy and British Physics 1750-1880: A Study in the Foundations of the Victorian Scientific Style* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975), 13.

<sup>248</sup> Erasmus Darwin, *The Economy of Vegetation*, in *The Botanic Garden* (London: J. Johnson, 1791), I.401n.

Before starting these works, Darwin had already established a successful medical practice in Lichfield where he arrived soon after finishing his formal education. Here, Darwin grew attracted to Anna Seward, who would encourage him to cultivate a botanic garden, would write his first biography, and from whom he would crib lines of poetry.<sup>249</sup> He also founded the Lichfield Botanical Society and published a multi-volume translation of the botanic taxonomies of Carl Linnaeus (1707-1778), which became the subject for his first, long poem *The Loves of the Plants*. *Loves of the Plants* thematizes erotic pleasure, sexual reproduction, and taxonomic variety by narrating the playful courtship of men and women whose groupings Darwin based on the counts of stamens and pistils of diverse flower species. The later, *Economy of Vegetation* purports to describe “the physiology of Plants...and the operation of the Elements as far as they may be supposed to affect the growth of Vegetables”; in fact, the “operation” takes over the poem and shows the garden to be a figurative setting for allegorizing natural forces and heroizing scientists and inventors.<sup>250</sup> Though Janet Browne asserts that *Loves* initiates Darwin’s poetic career as the “equivalent of a genre painter or, more appropriately, a landscape gardener,” *The Botanic Garden*’s Preface announces its georgic agenda of making literary beauty serve philosophical instruction by stating Darwin’s famous aim “to inlist Imagination under the Banner of Science.”<sup>251</sup> He attests science’s value by appending enormous sets of footnotes, sometimes doubly layered, to each poem in order to explain the poetic figures in up-to-date, academic detail.

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<sup>249</sup> Desmond King-Hele, *Erasmus Darwin: A Life of Unequalled Achievement* (London: Giles de la Mare, 1999), 177.

<sup>250</sup> Erasmus Darwin, *The Botanic Garden* (London: J. Johnson, 1791), v.

<sup>251</sup> Janet Browne, “Botany for Gentlemen: Erasmus Darwin and ‘The Loves of the Plants,’” *Isis* 80, no. 4 (December, 1989): 616; Darwin, *The Botanic Garden*, v.

Darwin's final poem, *The Temple of Nature*, claims that the level of development of organisms' pleasure-oriented, physiological constitutions determines their freedom of action. His description of volitional liberty as an improvable, physiological capacity contrasts with much of the moral philosophy I have addressed in earlier chapters. For example, Locke argued that fixed, moral laws and subsidiary, natural rights together enjoin and support socio-economic prosperity by offering individuals various liberties such as the right to own property. Locke's own quasi-physiological theory of volition related to his theory of natural rights insofar as possessing volition identified a person as rational, answerable to natural law, and deserving of rights. By contrast, Darwin presents liberty as identical with and operating through an organism's ability to willfully manipulate its environment.<sup>252</sup> In short, Darwin thought that pleasure motivates organisms to engage with their environment, which adds to their cognitive and motor capacities and thus expands their volitional freedom of action.

*The Temple of Nature's* third canto, "The Progress of Mind," describes Darwin's physiological model based on combinations of sensitive, contractile fibers. He organizes his model around a fourfold sensorium with tiers designating physical capacities. The sensorium proposes to explain the behavior of all organisms, the potential for simple organisms to develop higher, cognitive processes such as rational judgment and creativity over long spans of time, and ultimately humanity's technologically complex, socio-economic orders. The four capacities of the sensorium are as follows:

1. Irritation: the internal, involuntary reaction of fibers to external stimulation.
2. Sensation: the retention of ideas which coincide with perceptions of pleasure or displeasure caused by stimuli.

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<sup>252</sup> My first chapter explicates the dependence of Locke's labor theory of natural property rights on his theory of volition.

3. Volition: a motivating desire to act or not act for the purpose of experiencing the pleasure or to avoiding the pain of various sensations and experiences.

4. Association: groups sensations into complex ideas and memories.

Haptic irritation enables simple organisms' automatic, life-sustaining processes and enables sensation and voluntary action in more complex organisms. A complex organism's recognition of pleasurable sensations encourages its engagement with its environment, leads to organisms' self-transformation through learning and repetition, and anticipates individual and collective development. That the higher, creative capacities of volition and association enable voluntary pleasure-seeking, as we shall see, explains how Darwin's revision of the georgic mode prioritizes pleasure, scientific education, and mythopoeia.

Each capacity of the sensorium represents a range of physical processes which occur in and through the sensitive, excitable fibers constituting an organism's parts. For example, nervous fibers differ from muscular fibers though they may cooperate. External stimulation causes chains of fibers to contract. In complex animal economies, such contractions first affect superficial, irritable fibers before travelling through fibrous networks to reach nerves in the brain. Brain fibers retain stimuli as sensations which form mutable ideas through contingent associations with other sensations. Volition manipulates ideas by recalling them, forming associations, or deploying them as motivations for world-engaging actions.

Darwinian physiology fuses the concepts of pleasure and utility which are the cornerstones of the georgic mode. Whereas *The Seasons's* physico-theological method of argument sought to prove the validity of nature's moral laws by reconciling empiric, natural philosophy with scripture, Darwin asserts that a hedonistic ethic encouraging self-empowerment and self-transformation is immanent in the sensorium's operations. Darwin attributes organic



life's individual and collective progress to the physiological principle that complex organism's involuntary reactions to stimuli can produce sensations that are pleasurable, edifying, and instill a volitional desire for their repetition:

...young SENSATION permeates the brain;

Through each new sense the keen emotions dart,

Flush the young cheek, and swell the throbbing heart.

From pain and pleasure quick VOLITIONS rise,

Lift the strong arm, or point the inquiring eyes... (I.270-274)

The quote captures the transition from pleasurable sensations both involuntary, physical reactions like blushing and the voluntary, pleasure-seeking actions such as looking at an interesting object. John Brown's physiological theory adopted by Darwin posited that organisms enjoy moderate amounts of stimulation and particularly stimuli which satisfy their innate, self-preserving desires. For example, animals typically appreciate warmth and diet-appropriate food that generates pleasurable sensations and reinforces their volitional desires. *Temple of Nature* calls such desires passions and tastes.

Passion designates an organism's volitional desire for a sensation or object. Passions vary from simple, animalistic urges to volitions refined by complex, associative comparisons. Darwin cites two basic desires: "in wild groups tumultuous Passions stand, and Lust and Hunger head the Motley band" (III.155). Though Lust and Hunger suggest uncivility, *Temple of Nature* and *Loves of the Plants* enthusiastically view sex as an efficient and pleasurable means for creative reproduction and reflect his more general view that pleasure benefits from innovation. The sensorium's pragmatic hedonism regards passions to be virtuous to the extent that they keep

organisms happy, healthy, and productive.<sup>253</sup> Similarly, “TASTE impassion’d” keeps the associative, appreciation of aesthetic objects grounded in bodily pleasure and utility (III.246). Darwin’s theory of taste differs from the version described in my last chapter as a disinterested appreciation for the timeless beauty of objects like naturalistic landscapes. Rather than defining taste as a calm, aesthetic appreciation which disregards objects’ appeals to sensory, appetitive desires, Darwin insists that tastes for abstract, formal beauty remain inseparable from artworks’ associations with familiar, sensory pleasures. For example, Darwin cites William Hogarth’s claim that humans find curves aesthetically pleasing, because a mature sensorium retains the infant’s pleasing memories of feeling for its mothers’ breasts with fingertips and lips:

As the pure language of the Sight commands  
 The clear ideas furnish'd by the hands;  
 Beauty's fine forms attract our wondering eyes,  
 And soft alarms the pausing heart surprise.  
 Warm from its cell the tender infant born  
 Feels the cold chill of Life's aerial morn;  
 Seeks with spread hands the bosoms velvet orbs,  
 With closing lips the milky fount absorbs;  
 ...  
 And learns erelong, the perfect form confess'd,  
 IDEAL BEAUTY from its Mother's breast. (III.163-176)

Infants quickly learn to desire soft and warm sensations because, though not necessarily useful, such sensations are comfortable. Darwin suggests that the “clear[est] ideas” are not those

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<sup>253</sup> “Sweet Hope delights him, frowning Fear alarms,  
 And Vice and Virtue court him to their arms.” (III.443-444)

formed by associative, intellectual labor, but are instead the tactile sensations which often involuntarily define a person's passions and tastes. Thus, "IDEAL BEAUTY" is better understood as an analogy for "clear ideas" than as connoting the appeal of abstract artworks. Though Darwin insists that the capacity for sensation requires an advanced nervous system, an impersonal, automated form of self-interest must also motivate vegetable economies to survive by a series of involuntary, mechanistic contractions. Again, in animal economies this automatic, physiological process that converts irritation into passions naturalizes an acquisitive hedonism causing organisms to desire certain sensations and to develop higher facilitative capacities for pursuing those sensations.

The arousal of pleasure depends on a series of imitative operations occurring through the sensorium's capacities. Darwin presents imitation as one of the sensorium's overarching principles (along with pleasure and self-transformation) though he does not include it as one of the four capacities. Involuntary, imitative contractions underpin the sensorium's dynamism by predicating techn(olog)ical innovation on pleasurable, edifying iteration. Irritative contraction, the most basic form of physiological imitation, enables the more complex, volitional forms of iteration. In a footnote to *Temple of Nature*, Darwin highlights the educational effect of the sensorium's imitative operations on organisms' skill-development; he then elaborates that irritated fibers imitate stimuli to produce sensations and ideas:

The origin of this propensity to imitation has not been deduced from any known principle; when any action presents itself to the view of a child, as of whetting a knife, or threading a needle; the parts of this action in respect of time, motion, figure, are imitated by parts of the retina of his eye; to perform this action therefore with his hands is easier to him than to invent any new action; because it consists in repeating with another set of

fibres, viz. with the moving muscles, what he had just performed by some parts of the retina; just as in dancing we transfer the times of the motions from the actions of the auditory nerves to the muscles of the limbs. Imitation therefore consists of repetition, which is the easiest kind of animal action; as the ideas or motions become presently associated together; which adds to the facility of their production; as shown in *Zoonomia*, Vol. I. Sect. XXII. 2.

It should be added, that as our ideas when we perceive external objects, are believed to consist in the actions of the immediate organs of sense in consequence of the stimulus of those objects; so when we think of external objects, our ideas are believed to consist in the repetitions of the actions of the immediate organs of sense, excited by the other sensorial powers of volition, sensation, or association. (III.309n)

Imitation or “repetition, which is the easiest kind of animal action,” originates in irritation’s, involuntary, mimetic archiving of responses to stimuli, and characterizes many operations of both vegetable and animal economies. The final sentence asserts that recalling ideas reproduces the chain of imitative contractions originally caused by objects’ stimulating qualities. The first paragraph demonstrates that the sensorium’s tendency to learn about its environment through imitation causes the self-transformation of organisms which instinctively develop knowledge and skills. Further, pleasurable imitation encourages organisms to adopt, engrain, and elaborate the qualities and capacities of other organisms in progressive networks of individual and collective development.

Imitation can be novel or repetitive and each may improve the sensorium’s capacities.

Novel experiences are stimulating,<sup>254</sup> and certain experiences whose interest may fade with

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<sup>254</sup> Irritability provides for the possibility that experiences may be too stimulating and therefore serves as the first line of defense for helping organisms to self-regulate by managing inputs.

familiarity stimulate an organism only for being novel. “[T]he novelty of our ideas is generally attended with pleasurable sensation” and pleasurable experiences instill neophilic “Curiosity” in immature organisms, which inspires further engagement with their environment (III.145n).

Pleasurable novelty encourages organisms to integrate new sensations and ideas. These additions usefully transform the organism’s associative network by increasing the resources available to volition.

Organisms enact a second-order mode of imitation by simply recalling retained ideas or by repeating gestures and actions. (“Imitation therefore consists of repetition, which is the easiest kind of animal action...”) For example, recalling an idea requires an organism to will neural fibers to execute a unique set of physical contractions. Repeating such processes increases their familiarity, and though familiarity may decrease any pleasure owing to novelty, the act may itself still involve innately pleasurable sensations. Most importantly, possessing a skill facilitates the acquisition and refinement of associated skills. This iterative model of self-improvement applies to cognition as well as motor skills and tool manipulation.

Darwin’s theory of imitative sympathy reduces the sensorium’s potential for becoming too hedonistically self-serving. *Temple of Nature* notes Adam Smith’s description of sympathy in his *Theory of Moral Sentiments* as a process by which innately self-interested individuals recognize that their own interests coincide with those of other people:

From our aptitude to imitation arises what is generally understood by the word sympathy, so well explained by Dr. Smith of Glasgow. Thus the appearance of a cheerful countenance gives us pleasure, and of a melancholy one makes us sorrowful. Yawning, and sometimes vomiting, are thus propagated by sympathy; and some people of delicate fibres, at the presence of a spectacle of misery, have felt pain in the same parts of their

bodies, that were diseased or mangled in the object they saw.

The effect of this powerful agent in the moral world, is the foundation of all our intellectual sympathies with the pains and pleasures of others, and is in consequence the source of all our virtues. For in what consists our sympathy with the miseries or with the joys of our fellow creatures, but in an involuntary excitation of ideas in some measure similar or imitative of those which we believe to exist in the minds of the persons whom we commiserate or congratulate! (I.466n)

Both Darwin and Smith claim that involuntary, sympathetic imitation forms and maintains social affinity networks. Sympathy operates on the principle that humans innately enjoy imitating each other's emotions even when displeasure is displayed. For Smith, sympathy socializes individuals by gradually inducting them into a shared morality which values justice and merit.<sup>255</sup> Darwinian sympathy denotes a similarly pleasurable process but attributes it to the sensorium's series of imitative functions. The sensorium's ethic of future-oriented, techn(olog)ical progress casts sympathy as one affect-oriented mode for encouraging people to engage with their milieu; it uses innately individualistic pleasure to draw curious individuals together and integrates them into cooperative, productive collectives.<sup>256</sup>

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<sup>255</sup> Socialization is achieved by a series of sympathetic imitations of other people's emotions as Smith describes in the following passage:

When the original passions of the person principally concerned are in perfect concord with the sympathetic emotions of the spectator, they necessarily appear to this last just and proper, and suitable to their objects; and, on the contrary, when upon bringing the case home to himself, he finds that they do not coincide with what he feels, they necessarily appear to him unjust and improper, and unsuitable to the causes which excite them.

Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, eds. D.D. Raphael and A. L. Macfie (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1984), I.i.3.I.

<sup>256</sup> Pleasure is innately individualistic, because it manifests in one's own body, and because Darwin characterizes pleasure, (or self-interest in vegetable economies), as each organism's motive force.

Further, sympathy proves poetically evocative through its correlation with love and so also through love's analogization with a variety of organic and inorganic, attractive forces.<sup>257</sup>

*Temple of Nature* introduces Love and Sympathy in Canto I, uses them to organize Cantos II and III respectively, and sees them culminate in the social harmony of Canto IV's "Of Good and Evil":

FIRST, if you can, celestial Guide! disclose  
 From what fair fountain mortal life arose,  
 Whence the fine nerve to move and feel assign'd,  
 Contractile fibre, and ethereal mind:

How Love and Sympathy the bosom warm,  
 Allure with pleasure, and with pain alarm,  
 With soft affections weave the social plan,  
 And charm the listening Savage into Man. (I.215-222)

Each stanza and most of the lines parallel one another by aligning a cause with an effect. The first stanza connects the earliest, oceanic appearance of "contractile fibre[s]" to their evolution into the brain's ineffable structures. The second stanza imagines that the basic, pain-pleasure sensitivity of irritative fibers will eventually cause humans to form civil, productive societies. Sympathy's short- and long-term effects demonstrate that one's knowledge acquisition and creativity are not simply self-serving but facilitate broader human-nature or human-human rapprochement. Sympathy encourages individuals to recognize the value of other people's

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<sup>257</sup> Immortal Love, or Eros, indicates any attractive force, including the poorly understood concept of gravity, which Darwin speculated would produce cycles of Big Crunches and Bangs. Darwin suggests four examples: "Press drop to drop, to atom atom bind, / Link sex to sex, or rivet mind to mind" (I.25-6).

experiences both affective and skill-oriented. Sympathetic, social engagement remains pleasure-oriented for each party while reducing people’s potential to treat each other as instruments for satisfying their own volitions.

Association and volition help us to understand how the largely imitative integration of sensations can foster innovative ideas and works. The sensorium integrates imitative sensations into associative, ideational networks; in a footnote referencing David Hume (1711-1776), Darwin identifies the main, associative relations between ideas as “contiguity, causation, and resemblance,” and he speculates that a person’s tendency to privilege one type of relation may correlate with an inclination for certain vocations.<sup>258</sup> The mind’s tendency to privilege a single, associative relation and for forming inaccurate associations based on contingencies like temporal proximity demonstrate the sensorium’s inadequacy for discovering Truth. Still, association and volition together constantly reorganize and refine mimetic ideas of the world.

Though association ranks higher among the sensorium’s tiers, volition judges, organizes, and executes associated ideas to facilitate its pursuit of pleasure. Crucially, Darwin argues that reason and liberty improve in concert with volition. Volition is empowered to the extent that sensation provides it with ideas provisionally organized by association:

Whence REASON'S empire o'er the world presides,  
 And man from brute, and man from man divides;  
 Compares and measures by imagined lines  
 Ellipses, circles, tangents, angles, sines;

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<sup>258</sup> “Those who have connected a great class of ideas of resemblances, possess the source of the ornaments of poetry and oratory, and of all rational analogy. While those who have connected great classes of ideas of causation, are furnished with the powers of producing effects. These are the men of active wisdom who lead armies to victory, and kingdoms to prosperity; or discover and improve the sciences which meliorate and adorn the condition of humanity.” (IV.299n)



Repeats with nice libration, and decrees  
 In what each differs, and in what agrees;  
 With quick Volitions unfatigued selects  
 Means for some end, and causes of effects;  
 All human science worth the name imparts,  
 And builds on Nature's base the works of Arts. (III.401-410)

Volition reasons by willfully recalling ideas for comparison and differentiation, processes Darwin likens to spatial measurement. Volition's identification of related "causes and effects" serves its primary function of acquiring means for achieving pleasure. "REASON'S empire" signifies volition's tendency to annex as much information about the world as possible. In addition to synthesizing new ideas, volition exteriorizes its ideational plans into new, durable objects by executing skillful actions. In a quote evoking originary technicity, volition's intrinsic operations improve organic life via inorganic means by "build[ing] on Nature's base the works of Arts." Darwin elsewhere notes that human artifice replicates the sensorium's own basic tendency to imitate nature. From the "Muse of Mimicry" derive "The sculptor's statue, and the poet's song, / The painter's landscape, and the builder's plan, / And IMITATION marks the mind of Man." "Marks" collapses the notions that involuntary contractions impress mimetic sensations on the mind and that imitation characteristically precedes innovation and creative production. Artworks and other durable, exteriorized apparatuses offer archives of knowledge useful for educating individuals and accelerating collective progress; but it is malleable language that stands above other technologies for its malleability and as a vehicle for easing the imitation of ideas.

Language replicates the sensorium's own dynamism and is a useful apparatus for developing and exchanging ideas. For example, "Association's mystic power combines / Internal passions with external signs" (III.355-356). The quote highlights a person's ability to use their own ideas and linguistic tools to manipulate each other. Darwin conveys human language to be an elaboration of the various gestures and utterances observable throughout the animal kingdom:<sup>259</sup>

From these dumb gestures first the exchange began  
 Of viewless thought in bird, and beast, and man;  
 ...  
 Thus the first LANGUAGE, when we frown'd or smiled,  
 Rose from the cradle, Imitation's child;  
 Next to each thought associate sound accords,  
 And forms the dulcet symphony of words... (III.357-9; III.363-366)

Calling language "Imitation's child" uses the metaphor of individual maturation to suggest the evolutionary continuity among species as well as the progression from "Savage-Man" to civility. Darwin again observes that innovatively producing words involves the ineffable step of matching ideas to sounds, though most of a person's language acquisition occurs through the "exchange"

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<sup>259</sup> Thus jealous quails or village-cocks inspect  
 Each other's necks with stiffen'd plumes erect;  
 Smit with the wordless eloquence, they know  
 The rival passion of the threatening foe.  
 So when the famish'd wolves at midnight howl,  
 Fell serpents hiss, or fierce hyenas growl;  
 Indignant Lions rear their bristling mail,  
 And lash their sides with undulating tail.  
 Or when the Savage-Man with clenched fist  
 Parades, the scowling champion of the list;  
 With brandish'd arms, and eyes that roll to know  
 Where first to fix the meditated blow... (III.343-354)

or sympathetic imitation of other people's speech. The actions and emotions of other people become "natural signs" which cause infants to sense that visible things might signify deeper, perhaps inaccessible meaning whether they be person's ideas or an object's inner workings.

According to its preface, *The Botanic Garden* seeks to "inlist Imagination under the banner of Science; and to lead her votaries from the looser analogies, which dress out the imagery of poetry, to the stricter ones which form the ratiocination of philosophy."<sup>260</sup>

Association forms analogical relations between distinct ideas sharing similarities; language exteriorizes these analogies to facilitate their development and to better or understanding of the world. Devin Griffith's explains Darwin's theory of analogy's educational potential by noting that "[f]or [Francis] Bacon, (and for Darwin), analogy is an attribute of the world, not ascribed to it; it is not applied to nature by the scientists but is "of" the "things" themselves."<sup>261</sup> Griffith's point is that the sensorium can empirically access bits of truth, because sensations capture imperfect information about a natural world whose unity manifests as a network of analogies immanent among its parts. As language more accurately describes an idea, its analogies become stricter. On one hand, neither ideas nor language's analogies can ever be identical with the things which they describe. By consequence, truths regarding the absolute origins, causes, or essences of all things are permanently foreclosed. On the other hand, the sensorium's innate, imitative and innovative functions compel humanity's collective, language-assisted search for truth.

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<sup>260</sup> Erasmus Darwin, *The Botanic Garden* (London: J. Johnson, 1791), v.

<sup>261</sup> Devin Griffiths, *The Age of Analogy: Science and Literature between the Darwins* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2016), 72.

### 5.3 *Mythopoeia and georgic gardens*

Darwin distinguishes between loose and strict analogies in order to show their productive cooperation in his own georgic works. Darwin's "Banner of science" and his compulsive outstripping of his own poetry with explanatory notes imply the precedence of science's strict, didactic analogies. However, the loose analogies correlated with poetic beauty and the strict analogies correlated with rigorous, scientific discovery and innovation cooperate in serving the universal pursuit of pleasure. The following quote suggests that loose analogies, being imprecise associations which bear poetic beauty, are more suited to giving immediate pleasure:

Call'd by thy voice Resemblance next describes  
 Her sister-thoughts in lucid trains or tribes;  
 Whence pleased Imagination oft combines  
 By loose analogies her fair designs... (IV.305-309)

I noted that resemblance is one of the three main types of association. By contrast, relations of contiguity are more apt for working towards philosophy's strict analogies. Resemblance forges more tenuous associations but rewards creators and readers by allowing greater, volitional free play among ideas. Since language's loose analogies are better tools for conveying beauty rather than approaching truth, they are more plastic and susceptible to imaginative revision than strict analogies. Still, loose analogies can be useful propaedeutics for engaging readers and guiding them toward the stricter analogies just as Darwin's poetry directs readers to his footnotes and on again to his treatises.

Recognizing that Darwin regards myth as a type of loose analogy helps to explain his poetry's use of the georgic garden as its master-myth. Myths may be as influential as religious stories or as trifling as juvenile similes. He rejects treating popular, received, moralizing myths

with unquestioning reverence, because shared incuriosity may incite stultifying and potentially volatile, public superstition.<sup>262</sup> His use of larger organizing myths like the georgic garden and smaller myths like *Economy of Vegetation's* gnomes and nymphs exemplify the beautiful figures which georgics conventionally subordinate to their nominally more important moral message of labor's virtue. His syncretic mythopoeia takes advantage of loose analogy's ability to both please and inform; it also refurbishes received myths as vehicles for his innovative scientific content and, I argue, revises the georgic mode in which they appear by contributing to the reevaluation of pleasure also found in his discussion of the sensorium.<sup>263</sup> As an example of Darwin's playful repurposing of myths, he organizes *Economy of Vegetation's* four cantos according to Rosicrucianism's four elements of water, earth, air, and fire, which he then associates with gnomes, sylphs, and other fantastic creatures.<sup>264</sup> He also mixes his own references to biblical stories with earlier classical imagery, which he then argues depends on even earlier Egyptian legends. Comparable to strict analogies leading to even stricter analogies, myths are continuously preceded by other myths.<sup>265</sup> Martin Priestman's analysis of Darwin's

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<sup>262</sup> Darwin loathed superstition and regarding printing and literature as its remedies. For example, "...the curst spells of Superstition blind, / And fix her fetters on the tortured mind..." (IV.83-84). Darwin saw the first-hand results of persecutorial superstition when reactionary Birmingham rioters targeted the members of the progressive Lunar Society to which belonged.

<sup>263</sup> Darwin's machinery reflects wider contemporary interest in comparative histories of religion. Major examples include Joseph Spence's *Polymetis* (1747), David Hume's *The Natural History of Religion* (1757), Richard Payne Knight's infamous *A Discourse on The Worship of Priapus* (1786), and Volney's *Les Ruines, ou méditations sur les révolutions des empires* (1791).

<sup>264</sup> Darwin adopted Rosicrucianism, because he imagined it to exemplify euhemerism, the belief that mythic stories originate in a kernel of truth and are elaborated over time to potentially include supernatural elements. Darwin states that "[t]he Rosicrucian doctrine of Gnomes, Sylphs, Nymphs, and Salamanders, was thought to afford a proper machinery for a Botanic poem; as it is probable, that they were originally the names of hieroglyphic figures for representing the elements." Darwin thus seems to be led more to adopt his structure due to the perceived beauty and order of the four, allegorized elements than any commitment to their function as a strict analogy for understanding physical laws. Darwin, *The Botanic Garden*, vii. Martin Priestman similarly argues that Darwin's Preface to *Temple* demonstrates knowledge and practice of euhemerism. Priestman, *The Poetry of Erasmus Darwin*, 185.

<sup>265</sup> Recognizing that both myths and ideas are forms of loose analogies, tracking myths backwards into prehistory would arrive at something like pre-literate or even pre-imagistic, mythic ideas. My blurring of

spatial poetics argues that this regression of myths correlates with simplification, flattening, and reliance on education by means of images typified by as yet illegible Egyptian hieroglyphics.<sup>266</sup> To his compelling argument I would add that this regression leads back to an originary, founding pleasure only understandable as and through mythopoeia. Thus, Darwin's philosophical reevaluation and own georgic demonstration of mythopoeia sought to justify the continuous remaking of myths which are beautiful and pleasurable to the extent that they retain a kernel of immutable truth.

Life's innovative, originary technicity and its anticipated volitional expansion entail that the myths which infinitely regress into the past must also serve to figure a conjectural future typified by wide-spread liberty and pleasure amid humanity. Darwin judges myth to be the appropriate mode for signifying pleasure's innate, ineffable, and creative excess as it appears in his works at life's origin and humanity's future. Pleasure must be understood through myth, because knowledge of the sensorium at once tells us that pleasure originates and motivates<sup>267</sup> all life while imperfect understanding also forecloses any strict understanding of that origin's essential Nature. Darwin collapses in the single emblem of the georgic garden mythopoeia's importance and his assertion that pleasure sits at the beginning and end of all things. An exploration of four ways (botanic) gardens inform Darwin's revision of the georgic will help to show that the georgic garden's associations with pleasure and volition imply humanity's nigh-utopian future to resemble cosmopolitan, liberal political economy.

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terms is meant to reassert that Darwin regarded the imitative sensorium as possessing "clear ideas" of its own passions but not of the objects inspiring them (III.164).

<sup>266</sup> Dahlia Porter similarly argues that the Egyptian hieroglyph "maps a direct corridor from scientific knowledge to poetry." Porter, *Science, Form, and the Problem of Induction in British Romanticism*, 104.

<sup>267</sup> Pleasure strictly originates all life due to the pleasure Darwin associates with procreation but also more loosely as the motive force of organic life's originary technicity.

Firstly, as I mentioned, Darwin's personal experiences with botanic gardens inclined him to associate them with bodily well-being, education, and creativity. In the centuries leading up to and including Darwin's own, botanic gardens providing medical palliatives grew to include domestic and foreign plants and so also became a resource for studying plant physiology.<sup>268</sup> Darwin's own botanic studies led him to attribute his sensorium model to both vegetable and animal economies; Molly Maureen Mahood observes that Darwin's interest in botanic garden reflects his desire to forge tenuous, taxonomic analogies between species, a desire that extended to myths as he wrote each poem.<sup>269</sup> Beyond being a site for scientific inquiry and knowledge production, the plants in botanic gardens physically demonstrate creativity through their own reproduction and potential for hybridization. Plants' demonstrated capacity for sensory irritability and their photosynthetic capacity discovered by Darwin's associate Joseph Priestley (1733-1804) suggested to Darwin that plants share with more complex organisms basic forms of involuntary imitation. Their vegetable economies seemed to serve what might reasonably be analogized as an unwitting self-interest consistent with Darwin's concept of originary pleasure.

Secondly, I highlight two effects of Darwin's foregrounding of botanic gardens on his use of georgic mode. I have already addressed mythopoeia's greater prominence as a co-effect of pleasure's own revaluation. Here I address the botanic garden's influence on his revaluation of pleasure and its incitement of the paratexts whose strict analogies support that revaluation.

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<sup>268</sup> In order to evoke the ways in which plants' irreducible materiality at once encouraged their taxonomic arrangement by botanists to confirm nature's grand order yet still resisted and disturbed easy, epistemic systematization, Theresa M. Kelley invites us to "[i]magine live plants and dried plants crossing the globe, some sent in or with letters and across seas, sinking with ships that sink," and also to "[i]magine now their current arrangement in cabinets of natural history museums...as specimens associated with orders, genera, and species, along with whatever else might illustrate their traits..." Theresa M. Kelley, *Clandestine Marriage: Botany & Romantic Culture* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press), 1.

<sup>269</sup> Molly Maureen Mahood, *The Poet as Botanist* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 70-77, 60.

Patricia Fara and Alan Bewell both suggest that Darwin's poetry applies older literary styles to new objects. According to Bewell, "Darwin adopted a dated poetic style in order to present a thoroughly modern conception of a natural world that was undergoing ceaseless change and transformation and was inescapably bound up with global commerce, industry and consumption."<sup>270</sup> The topics of Darwin's poems do indeed reflect contemporary natural philosophy; yet floral taxonomy, recent technology harnessing nature's physical laws, and the pleasure-driven sensorium are consistent with georgics' long-standing interest in instructing readers about the operations of nature and the practical implications and uses of such knowledge.<sup>271</sup> Fara's and Bewell's descriptions of Darwin's applying an older literary style to new objects miss the extent to which his topics cause him to emphasize or deemphasize the georgic mode's conventional themes and formal aspects.

Though Darwin's scientific topics are modern, they fundamentally revise the georgic mode by reprioritizing its standard hierarchy in which beauty and pleasure are subservient to utility, labor, and economic rationality. *Loves of the Plants* is the least georgic of Darwin's three major poems, yet it establishes that pleasure, the scientific instruction, and mythopoeia would marginalize the virtue georgics traditionally attribute to toilsome, manual labor. Priestman and Griffiths both support this point by considering *Loves of the Plants* to be markedly pastoral; its

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<sup>270</sup> Alan Bewell, *Natures in Translation: Romanticism and Colonial Natural History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press), 54. Romantics "regarded [Darwin] not so much as an individually poor writer, but more as their chosen representative of an outdated poetic movement... Darwin insisted that poets should versify only what they see in front of them... In contrast, the Romantics deliberately turned their gaze inwards, emphasizing the importance of imagination and self-reflection." Fara, *Erasmus Darwin: sex, science, and serendipity*, 44-45.

<sup>271</sup> *The Seasons* exemplifies this latter development, though it also appears in other poems of varying popularity such as Richard Savage's *London and Bristol Delineated* (1744), John Dyer's *The Fleece*, and George Cockings' *Arts, Manufactures, and Commerce* (1769). To some extent, Darwin synthesizes Thomson's georgic centering intellectual over manual, agricultural labor with Mason's georgic which also displaced farm and toil by pleasure gardens and the design theory involved in their making.



tone and content are comic, and extrapolating stories from its vignettes of socializing and courtship inclines a reader to imagine marriages and procreation.<sup>272</sup> Though pain and death appear in the poem when Darwin mentions the healing properties of specific plants, *Loves* implies that plants transcend death and their own species' physiology through procreation. The internal, life-sustaining processes of vegetable (and animal) economies are strictly understood as labor. However, Darwin's predicates these happy processes on a universal, physiological, pleasure principle emblemized by the joyful atmosphere infusing the botanic garden where they take place. This dissociation of labor from desperation contributes to a georgic mode in which pleasure rather than labor becomes the principle ethic.

A panoply of paratextual notes reinforce the role of georgic gardens as sites of instruction which return the reader to the topic of hedonism by detailing the physiological production of pleasure. Again, *Loves of the Plants*, the Preface to *Botanic Garden*, and *Temple of Nature*'s frame story all announce to readers that they employ garden settings to facilitate the reader's education in botany, physiology, or otherwise. The gardens' flora may themselves be the objects of scientific inquiry or the garden may simply be a conducive setting for instruction. Each poem acknowledges its garden to be the place where a Botanic Muse (*Loves*), Botanic Goddess (*Economy*), or Muse (*Temple*) will offer scientific knowledge directly to readers or through a proxy student. Noel Jackson entertains the popular idea that "Darwin's philosophical poetry...is a mere prop to the serious and entertaining matter of his scientific notes," but grants that Darwin believed that poetry is not "subordinate to philosophical ratiocination but [is] its unlikely ground." Jackson claims that the disjunction between science and mythopoeia in Darwin's "philosophic poetry" prevented modes such as the physico-theological epic and the

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<sup>272</sup> Priestman, *The Poetry of Erasmus Darwin*, 50; Griffiths, *The Age of Analogy*, 62.

georgic from being viable vehicles for Romantic poetry.<sup>273</sup> Darwin repeatedly prompts readers to refer to his poems' notes, to his other treatises, and other authors' treatises; all use strict analogies to complicate the reader's understanding of the subject matter.<sup>274</sup> Still, the sensorium's imperfect tools ensure that a thorough understanding of pleasure will forever exceed the explanatory abilities of natural philosophers. Nevertheless, volition will compel them to try while philosopher-poets continuously rewrite the myths which lead to para- and intertexts' ever-expanding matrix of strict analogies.

Thirdly, the figure of the botanic garden traverses his major poems, but *Temple of Nature* best demonstrates how the garden-as-myth symbolizes life's pleasure-driven excess. The georgic garden is an emblematic myth loosely analogizing these stricter, though still relatively loose analogies.<sup>275</sup> My discussion of retrospective and prospective mythopoeia helps us to better understand *Temple's* mythopoeic treatment of the garden of Eden. Having shown that Darwin's prominent use of myth correlates with his prioritization of pleasure in life and literature, his master myth of the botanic, georgic garden signifies that pleasure drives organisms' techn(ological) transformation via their various, natural, self-educating processes. Recall that *Temple's* narrative involves initiation into hidden knowledge of life's origins and operations by means of the sensorium. Canto I informs the reader that the temple where the educational rites

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<sup>273</sup> Noel Jackson, "Rhyme and Reason: Erasmus Darwin's Romanticism," *Modern Language Quarterly* 70, no. 2 (2009): 181; 182. On the physico-theological epic of which *The Seasons* is an example, see H. Grant Sampson, "The Physico-Theological Epic in the Later Eighteenth Century," *Canadian Society for Eighteenth Century Studies* 2 (1984): 49-60. Percy Shelley's (1792-1822) *Queen Mab; A Philosophical Poem; With Notes* (1813) represents a late, quixotic effort to revive the style, but he did not use it again, and the poem had an unfortunate afterlife for being used in court as evidence of Shelley's atheism.

<sup>274</sup> Similarly, he interleaves *Loves's* four cantos with Socratic discourses between the characters Poet and Bookseller, who dictate Darwin's aesthetic theory of poetry, painting, and music. These discourses restate his argument that the pleasurable ideas obtained during relaxed, fantasizing reveries may be useful adjuncts to scientific inquiry, but they are also self-justifying in their beauty.

<sup>275</sup> Relatively loose compared to those in *Temple's* notes.

takes place has been built over the remains of Eden in Syria.<sup>276</sup> A credulous, in Darwin's terms superstitious reader of the Bible would understand Eden to be humanity's absolute origin, God having created Adam and placed him in the garden. A reading of *Temple* disrupts the ability to view Eden as a potentially instructive myth, because knowledge of the sensorium involves understanding that the subtitled *Origin of Society* is itself a false starting point and in fact depends on an evolutionary process beginning long before the appearance of any humans. Darwin suggests that the attempt to learn about *any* origin not only depends on imperfect though refinable analogies, but that we will necessarily be led back through a series of prior, perhaps unexpected causes just as human life depends on earlier, organic evolutions and even the first "Organic forms...kindled into life" arose emerged from the "elemental strife" of inorganic, marine material (I.4; I.3). Similarly, Darwin's retrospective mythography iterates that investigating past knowledges for truth also confronts one with a regressing series of earlier, loose, mythic analogies. Locating his own mythic garden of Eden in a geographically identifiable space, Darwin registers Eden as an attractive, but false, mythic origin; the myth necessarily points to the existence of time and things existing prior to itself precise knowledge of which remains inaccessible. Despite Eden being a false origin, which the poem depicts as a wasteland, the poem's picturesque imagery still associates an Eden-as-mythic-garden with pleasure and beauty:

Four sparkling currents lav'd with wandering tides

Their velvet avenues, and flowery sides;

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<sup>276</sup> Darwin notifies us that his identification of Eden's location in this "cradle of the World" follows Lord Monboddo's (1714-1799) philological and Jacob Bryant's (1715-1804) mythological studies (I.36). Their work and Monboddo's foundational, evolutionary theories, which particularly influenced Darwin, invite the reader to consider multiple, earlier origins for human society. Bryant's work argued for the influence of the Egyptians on the Greeks; Darwin's accepted this argument and took it as encouragement for forming his own, playful, syncretic myths.

On sun-bright lawns unclad the Graces stray'd,

And guiltless Cupids haunted every glade... (I.37-40)

Darwin even deploys tropes of naturalistic landscaping such as the sinuous rivers and mixed light effects of sunny lawns and shady glades. His georgic Eden suggests that, though life's origination in and through pleasure<sup>277</sup> may only be understood indirectly through imperfect, mythic analogies, life's propensity for producing beautiful, mythopoeic figures validates humanity's commitment to that pleasure.

The temple figures Darwin's prospective myth of the georgic garden, a revision that indicates his own reevaluation of modern mythopoeia. In the narrative, though the first Eden has been obscured by the sands of time, the temple that replaces it miraculously extends far into the earth and to the sky such that, as Priestman notes, "the more we look at it, the more it takes up the whole of space, above and below ground" (I.69n). The temple need not strictly iterate the conventional elements of Eden's garden as long as it still offers a site for intellectual discovery and innovation and conveys pleasure's importance to life's innate creativity. The poem concludes with the instructor lifting the "mystic veil" from the Goddess Nature to reveal "TRUTH DIVINE" (IV.522; IV.524). No text follows the unveiling; Darwin leaves the reader to reckon and synthesize the poem's matrix of loose and strict analogies. The poem seems to suggest that the reader, having been transformed by the text, return to its beginning and generate yet more associations. However, this conclusion also functions as an absence or an ineffable excess into which prospective mythopoeia signified by the georgic edifice must continue to project itself. Though this future remains uncertain, the poem insists that techn(ological) progress entails pleasure, and the "trembling awe" with which the novitiate discerns this lesson

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<sup>277</sup> In the sense that pleasure tends to drive and attend the reproductive, sexual act as well as being a motive force for other types of creative work.

conveys that the future promises the health and happiness characteristic of botanic, georgic gardens (IV.522). Moreover, the reader recognizes that such boons will be enjoyed in the real world to the extent that socio-political institutions restrain the potentially anti-social, even illiberal tendencies which commercialist hedonism can invite. However, this effect caused by, among other things, new, industrial manufacture, and a concomitant encounter with plutocracy are recuperated as necessary steps in Darwin's anticipated advance of civilization.

Finally, my fourth chapter argued that the georgic garden represented a nation governed according to liberal, political economy; this signification continues to be true for Darwin's gardens though his gardens largely do so by addressing liberty and pleasure in terms of natural philosophy rather than landscaping. Darwin's botanic, georgic gardens differ from William Mason's naturalistic, georgic gardens primarily because Darwin bases his sanguine prospects for English political economy on the sensorium's pleasure principle and the promise for driving techn(ological) progress. Mason's *English Garden* conveys the idea that plutocrats' performance of naturalistic landscaping demonstrates their civic virtue and respect for property rights as a synecdoche for rights in general. The poem's aesthetic appreciation for tasteful naturalism masks its claim for the massive wealth gaps exemplified by plutocrats' landscaped estates. Mason deems such estates necessary in part to enable the landscaping that seemingly uniquely demonstrates a person's subjection to nature's aesthetic and moral principles, their civic virtue, and the managerial skills required to perform the functions of liberal government. By contrast, Darwin deploys mythic, georgic gardens to describe distant, sometimes obscure, physiological causes and the socio-economic effects which they anticipate. For example, the comparatively contemporary, if fantastic garden settings of *Loves of the Plants* and *Temple of Nature* respectively describe botany and organic physiology. These evolutionarily retrospective themes

instruct readers in the variable operations of a common, pleasure-driven physiological model that accounts for organic life's hedonistic ethic and its originary technicity. Supplemented by sympathy, the imitative, autodidactic sensorium anticipates volitional improvements to humanity's collective quality of life.<sup>278</sup>

The georgic garden in *Temple* appears on the cusp of the fourth ("Commerce") and fifth ("Philosophy") ages described in Darwin's unfinished poem, *The Progress of Society*;<sup>279</sup> again, the mythic temple which replaces Eden's earlier georgic garden projects itself through physical space as an analogy for liberty and pleasure expanding in concert with techn(olog)ical progress. Darwin's schema of human progress in stadial terms reinforces his radical materialism.<sup>280</sup> Each stadial age reflects humanity's greater control over nature as an effect of their growing internal and external capacities; as food becomes more dependable, the sciences advance, education spreads, and apparatuses which contribute to pleasure are invented and exchanged. As I have said, this physiological model defines liberty in terms of the volitional capacity unique and immanent to individuals. State apparatuses may protect or restrict individuals' ability to pursue their volitional desires, but neither states' positive laws nor natural

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<sup>278</sup> Recall that as more sensations, ideas, and associations become available to individuals, their volitional capacities also tend to develop. The empowerment of volition increases the ability to reason, sort ideas and form innovative associations, select appropriate sources of pleasure, and organize better means for achieving those pleasures.

<sup>279</sup> Darwin abandoned a late poem titled *The Progress of Society* perhaps partly due to the chilling effect of the Birmingham riots that affected his associates, but also because Richard Payne Knight had recently published the similar *The Progress of Civil Society* (1796). Further, Darwin considered that a rigorous description of the origins and operations of life would provide a firmer foundation for explaining that the origins of society must be understood with references to the origins of life itself. Still, the outline and fragments of the unfinished poem offer useful insight into the politico-economic values represented in his other work. Darwin's five, stadial ages are "Hunting," "Pasturage," "Agriculture," "Commerce," and "Philosophy." Erasmus Darwin, *The Progress of Society*, ed. Martin Priestman, [https://www.rc.umd.edu/editions/darwin\\_temple/progress/progress.html](https://www.rc.umd.edu/editions/darwin_temple/progress/progress.html).

<sup>280</sup> Materialism here refers to his belief that all physiological processes including thought involve physical movement, which also informed his belief that a society's collective quality of life is determined by its technological progress and by its mode of subsistence in particular.

laws originate or grant liberty by means of a common bundle of rights. Instead, the Age of Commerce's profusion of wealth and ideas effects a transformation in the socio-economic order entailing a general but unevenly distributed improvement in a society's aggregate, volitional capacities. *Temple of Nature's* narrator anticipates the fifth Age of Philosophy that Darwin outlined in *Progress of Society*:

Four past eventful Ages then recite,  
 And give the fifth, new-born of Time, to light;  
 The silken tissue of their joys disclose,  
 Swell with deep chords the murmur of their woes... (I.9-12)

The fifth age, uncertain in its details, must be depicted in prospective myth; it will be joyful, but these visions can only be "tissue" comparable to other, loosely analogical, veiling myths.<sup>281</sup>

Though the Age of Philosophy assures a general improvement of quality of life over the fourth age, the fifth age's indistinct "woes" convey that it will not be utopic. Darwin's outline of the fifth age seems to attribute progress to a collective expansion of volition rather than any major, technological innovation or stadial change to subsistence modes. *Progress of Society* implies but avoids detailing technological and economic improvements with the phrases "Elements subdued" and "Every man under his fig tree."<sup>282</sup> The latter assertion signifies a crucial transition from the extreme exploitation characterizing the Age of Commerce, when "gold triumphant rules the world enslaved," which I take to signify Darwin's distaste for a plutocracy founded on extreme wealth gaps and exploited, lower orders. In the transition to the Age of Philosophy, either enough wealth has been created for each person to possess property or for a voluntary or

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<sup>281</sup> "Tissue" and "chords" also trope on the idea that pleasure and pain only occur in and through nervous fibers.

<sup>282</sup> Darwin, *The Progress of Society*, Canto IV. Age of Philosophy.

involuntary redistribution of wealth to have occurred. Darwin does not say which, but his optimistic theories would seem to favor the idea that technological progress has eased individuals' ability to acquire enough wealth to support themselves. Still, the majority of the notes suggest that society's general increase of happiness owes to a collective expansion of volition suggested by the Age's first, central concept of "Liberty." From this new liberty which necessarily reflects the expansion of society's collective, volitional capacities derives other boons such as "Philosophy," "Science," "Peace," "Swords turned to Plough," and some lingering "Ruins of superstition" the last of which again suggests that utopia has not been achieved.

Having said that the georgic garden represents prosperous and well-governed, liberal nations, Darwin invites us to extrapolate that the benefits England best enjoys will gradually spread to other parts of the world. Organic life's techn(olog)ical progress thus far seemed to him to offer hope for continued improvement into the future. Moreover, good-will amongst societies should continue to expand in circles of sympathy forerun by the expansion of markets to produce the global cosmopolitan signified by the fifth age's "No [war]" and "Moral World."<sup>283</sup> The broadening of social networks, industrialization's potential to increase time for leisure and intellectual labor, and the expansion of liberty complement one another and offer hope that originary technicity only accelerates in rewarding earth's good and happy people with liberty and with new and greater pleasures.

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<sup>283</sup> I borrow the term circles of sympathy from Fonna Forman-Barzilai. Fonna Forman-Barzilai, *Adam Smith and the Circles of Sympathy: Cosmopolitanism and Moral Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press). Darwin, *The Progress of Society*, Canto IV. Age of Philosophy.



## Conclusion

Common wisdom has the georgic all but vanishing from Britain's literary scene by the nineteenth century. The poetic mode's veneration of both manual, agricultural labor and intellectual, scientific labor became increasingly unfashionable for being inadequately poetic. In part, the mode seemed incompatible with the Romantic ideology's valuation of the author's subjective, imaginative genius. In a canonical example, though several poems in *Lyrical Ballads* (1798) focused on the experiences of various folk from the lower orders, Wordsworth's own intellectual labor superseded and left little room for the details of their rural labor. *Lyrical Ballads* reflected and amplified the georgic's traditional investment in demonstrating authors' literary skills, which were employed in depicting a more idyllic nature; to the extent that poets analyzed nature's works, their investigations seemed to enable the poet's synthesis with nature through subjective, literary production.

Further, as Noel Jackson discusses with regard to Erasmus Darwin's later poems, philosophic poetry's blocks of prosaic notes formally exhibited the impropriety of poeticizing new sciences' increasingly technical understandings of nature.<sup>284</sup> Similarly, Mary Poovey's work shows the georgic to be one among a variety of writing modes which not only addressed economic topics but which collectively developed standards for differentiating fictional and factual knowledges.<sup>285</sup> The rise of the fact as the dominant episteme for defining truthful, practical knowledges and the fact's co-emergence with seemingly self-evidentiary techniques of

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<sup>284</sup> Noel Jackson, "Rhyme and Reason: Erasmus Darwin's Romanticism," *Modern Language Quarterly* 70, no. 2 (June 2009): 171.

<sup>285</sup> Mary Poovey, *A History of the Modern Fact: Problems of Knowledge in the Science of Wealth and Society* (Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press, 1998), 1-7.

counting and measurement allowed statistical sciences such as economics to accrue privilege among the social sciences and become a crucial element for informing statecraft.

Calling William Cowper's *The Task* (1785) one of the last georgics, Ted Underwood argues that "Cowper finally succeeds in blurring the boundary between work and nature so fully as to create an intermediate category...a kind of work that can be made to seem genteel."<sup>286</sup> I would argue for an alternate, bi-polar version of this blurring in which natural philosophers investigated nature's own workings, and politico-economic theorists were redefining humans' work in terms of humans' own nature. Georgics aestheticized the various ecological and physiological circulatory systems being discovered by experimental natural philosophers. Such systems were alternately described in detail then broadly attributed to the sublime and ineffable management of Nature's Hand. On the other hand, emergent social sciences drew on nature's physical systems and the laws governing them for analogies for the operations of socio-economic flows. Gradual improvement in the understanding of economic forces lent new significance to labor, property, property rights, and liberty, even when thinkers such as Adam Smith recognized some of these categories to have been socially constructed according to the needs of contingent economic circumstances. Nevertheless, Locke convincingly presented property rights as a central concern of liberal statecraft by arguing them to be necessary for fulfilling the natural laws obliging the reproduction of societies. Underwritten by personal volition and liberty, property rights could seem to serve both rational self-interests and each individual's obligation to promote a communitarian good. Many literary authors were at pains to show that concentrations of wealth in land could benefit the socio-economic order.

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<sup>286</sup> Ted Underwood, *The Work of the Sun: Literature, Science, and Political Economy, 1760-1860* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 89.

Through stylistics such as extensive loco-description, georgics such as *The Seasons*, *Windsor Forest*, and *The English Garden* contributed to shifting the mode's focus from agricultural labor to the great estates owned by oligarchs. By sacralizing property, georgics reinforced the significance of liberty, which emerges from a common self-interest increasingly understood in physiological terms, but which also depends on a well-run, securitizing government. Georgic poems patriotically admired the mixed government of Britain's constitutional monarchy and invoked the virtues of classical politicians in order to warn against corruption's threat to modern states' legitimacy and to the public good. The poems deployed the images of landscape park to signify the liberty nominally shared by the British polity, and they thereby interpellated a financial and political elite who seemed to be the stewards though also the primary beneficiaries of Britain's political economy. While georgics proclaimed British freedom, their nods to commerce connoted the various state apparatuses required to facilitate a domestic economy supported by maritime empire. Smith's *Wealth of Nations* offered a sense of how ideological state apparatuses tend to proliferate alongside the progress of opulence then enjoyed by Britain. His emphasis on public education as the antidote to proto-capitalism's corrosion of individuals' intelligence and civic virtues demonstrated a commitment to a biopolitical which enables a stable, economic and political elite to continue profiting from the nation's stock of land and labor. Reading early politico-economic texts allows us to better understand the theories of liberty and statecraft which are often only fleeting glimpsed in georgic poetry.

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