

# Considerations on the German Reception of Scottish Moral Philosophy: C. Garve's Translation Practice of A. Ferguson's *Institutes of Moral Philosophy*

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## ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on the German reception of Scottish moral philosophy in the eighteenth century. In contrast to German moral philosophy, which was combined with either metaphysics or theology, Scottish moral philosophy treated morality with the enquiry of human passion, desire, and feeling. In this context, German philosopher Christian Garve (1742–98) imported Scottish moral philosophy into Germany through his translations. However, the motivation behind Garve's translation activity has seldom been discussed in modern research. This paper considers understanding why and how Garve performed his translation to be indispensable to understanding his conception of morality. Hence, this paper investigates Garve's motive for translating Adam Ferguson's *Institutes of Moral Philosophy*. Garve added to the translation his original comment that emphasized the pursuit of perfection as the main theme of moral philosophy. Garve demonstrated that the only way to achieve perfection was through self-thinking, and the pursuit of virtue was independent of theology since virtue must be something good in itself. This paper concludes that through translation, Garve conceived moral philosophy as a new mindset for the German public to cope with forthcoming economic and social challenges in the age of Enlightenment.

**Keywords:** Christian Garve, Translation, Adam Ferguson, Moral philosophy, Age of Enlightenment

**JEL Classification code :** B12, B31

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## 1. Introduction

This paper focuses on the German reception of Scottish moral philosophy by investigating how Christian Garve (1742–98), an eighteenth-century German philosopher, translated Adam Ferguson's *Institutes of Moral Philosophy (IMP)*, to show that Garve interprets moral philosophy as the pursuit of moral perfection through self-thinking.

Despite his reputation as one of the most prestigious German thinkers, along with Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) in the late eighteenth century, Garve's name has seldom been mentioned in modern research. In contrast to Kant, whose critical philosophy has dominated German academic philosophy, Garve promoted a popular philosophy primarily concerned with the moral improvement of common people. Moreover, Garve was renowned for his importation of the Scottish Enlightenment into Germany. His translated works include Edmund Burke's (1729–97) *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, William Paley's (1743–1805) *The Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy*, and Adam Smith's (1723–90) *The Wealth of Nations*.

Indeed, Garve's contribution to his time as a translator should never be deprecated. In contrast, Germany was much less advanced socially and economically than Britain in the eighteenth century. To catch up with their neighbor, German thinkers attempted to import British ideas and techniques into Germany. However, since the lingua franca of eighteenth-century European academia was still Latin, as it long had been, or French, fashionable especially from the beginning of the eighteenth century, English was less familiar to the Germans. Those who could not read in English, including Kant himself, gained access to British ideas through German translations. To a certain extent, Garve's translation work helped shape the mindset of contemporary and future German thinkers.

Nevertheless, despite his promotion of popular philosophy and his contribution to the German reception of British ideas, Garve's repute faded in the nineteenth century. Previous research has pointed out that this was either due to the attacks of German Romanticism on Garve as Enlightenment thinker (Stolleis, 1972), or to the hasty interpretation of popular philosophy as transcended by Kantian metaphysics in modern research (Zande, 1995). Until the 1970s, Kurt Wölfel published the collected works of Christian Garve that initiated research on how Garve's ideas might have influenced Johann Christoph Friedrich von Schiller (1759–1805) and Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770–1831).

Now, to justly evaluate Garve's thinking, this paper turns to his importation of Scottish moral philosophy into Germany by focusing on the translation of *IMP*. It was the first translation that not only earned Garve fame as a translator of Scottish Enlightenment ideas but also appeared with his original comment. Thus, this paper considers that translation activity should play a crucial role in the formation of

Garve's ideas on moral philosophy, so that it is indispensable to understand his motive for translating and commenting on *IMP*. However, the reason why Garve chose *IMP* and added comment to the translation has hardly ever been explored in research. For example, Oz-Salzberger (1995) examined Garve's translation of *IMP* from the perspective of whether Ferguson's discourse was correctly interpreted, but neither Garve's incentives to translate *IMP* nor his own arguments in the comment received major concern in it. Contrariwise, by focusing on the details of the comment itself, Otsuka (2015) investigated the central features of Garve's moral philosophy and pointed out the influence of Smithian moral philosophy on Garve. This paper agrees to the point that the comment exemplifies Garve's ideas on morality, but meanwhile maintains that such ideas must be examined from the perspective of Garve's motive for translating *IMP*, or in other words, Garve's motive for employing the practice of translation and commentary to elaborate his ideas. Therefore, this paper not only focuses on the comment but also investigates the background of Garve's translation activity and his essays.

In what follows, Chapter 2 will explore the background of how Garve embarked on the translation of *IMP*. Next, Chapters 3 and 4 will examine the main discussion in Garve's comment, and Chapter 5 will consider Garve's methodology of translating and his overall opinion towards Scottish moral philosophy. The final chapter summarizes this paper and provides research prospects.

## 2. The quest for a compendium of moral philosophy

This chapter will outline the background of Garve's translation of the *IMP*. The following discussion will refer to Garve's correspondence and book reviews related to *IMP* before and after the publication of his translation in 1772.

Approximately two years before the publication, Garve succeeded Christian Fürchtegott Gellert (1715–69) to teach philosophy (as adjunct professor) at the University of Leipzig. During this stay in Leipzig an uninterrupted stream of letters was exchanged between Garve and his beloved mother. Garve's first mention of Ferguson appeared in a letter dated 13<sup>th</sup> March 1770, which mentioned a gentleman who thought highly of Garve's recommendation to read Ferguson's *Essay on the History of Civil Society (Essay)*.

One of them is Colonel Clarke, who travels around here and learns from one of my listeners, with whom he dines in the hostel, that I have recommended to him Ferguson's work (a philosophical work about the history of civil society, in English). (Garve, 1830, p.40)

It appears that one of Garve's lecture attenders informed his reference of Ferguson to a Colonel Clarke who, judging from what follows in the letter, was then travelling across the European continent<sup>1</sup>. Garve also came to admire Clarke, especially for his abundant life experience from travel and business. More importantly, when Clarke revealed his plan to sponsor a *Collegium der Moral* 'college of morality', Garve could not agree more, paying tribute to the science of morality that

[a]mong all philosophical sciences, the knowledge of the moral part of man is the most pleasant and the most important for me, in which perhaps I could work with most successes. (Garve, 1830, p.49)

Garve attached great importance to moral science and would not hesitate to make a contribution to it. However, it turns out that no ideal textbook is available.

I plan something important. For I want to read morality but do not know any compendium that would be in accordance with my plan, so I want to draw up a draft for that. (Garve, 1830, pp.56–57)

Garve's complaint was well-founded, since the German curriculum had long been dominated by Wolffian philosophy, characterized by its employment of mathematics in philosophical inquiry<sup>2</sup>. Apparently, this was not what Garve had in mind. He thus decided to compose one by himself, but this seems to have been an arduous mission to him.

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1 According to a footnote added by Garve's publisher (1830), this Colonel Clarke was the father of Henri Jacques Guillaume Clarke (1765–1818), a French general during the Napoleonic period.

In Hayes (1942, p.248), under the entry of Henry James Clarke (the anglicization of Henri Jacques Clarke), Henry was born of Irish parents at Landrecies in (north-eastern) France. The father, Thomas Clarke, was a colonel of Dillon's Regiment.

Dillon's Regiment was one of the major Irish Brigades that fought for the Stuarts in France. Henry's parents moved from Ireland to France probably around the time when James II fled from London to France to ask for military assistance in 1688. For its history, refer to Holohan (1989, pp.135–142).

Judging by the military background of Colonel Clarke and his (probable) attention to the internal affairs of British court, it was no wonder that he took an interest in Ferguson, whose commitment to anti-Jacobitism and the establishment of militia had caused a sensation. Refer to Amo (1993, ch.2).

2 According to Beck (1969), the philosophical system of Christian Wolff (1679–1754) had exerted a tremendous influence on the German curriculum of philosophy, since, for example, 'Gottsched, in Leipzig, published his *Fundamental Principles of Philosophy (Erste Gründe der gesamten Weltweisheit, 1733–34)* which became the most popular textbook in Germany' (p.260). Moreover, Wolffianism was widely received at the universities of different religious systems: 'German universities were orthodox Lutheran, Lutheran-Pietist, Calvinist, or Catholic in their orientation. Naturally the penetration of Wolffian ideas was easiest in the Calvinist universities, but in the centers of Pietism where the Thomasian influence was strong, Wolffian philosophy was well represented; and it even spread into the Catholic universities where, by 1770, we are told that it was no longer even resisted' (p.276).

This is a raw idea. The plan is wide-ranging and will not be carried out all at once. But I will come back to it from time to time and see if it can be something that I present to the public in the future. (Garve, 1830, pp.57–58)

Garve anticipated that the realization of this plan would be time-consuming. Indeed, just one month later, Garve expressed frustration at not being able to keep up with his agenda.

That, what I have started now and what I am also working on, the outline of a book on the moral nature of man, is of a scope that is tremendously great, that expands itself as I go one step further, and that sometimes frightens me so much that I would even want to withdraw again. However, even if I get through, this is still far from being published. Should I start with another [work] again? (Garve, 1830, p.72)

Composing a work on the moral nature of man seems to have been an arduous task for Garve. Despite his dismay, Garve did not abandon his ambition all at once. Rather, he accomplished this in a different way by translating an English textbook on morality, namely Ferguson's *IMP*.

The original version was published in 1769. As its full title reveals—*Institutes of Moral Philosophy: For the Use of Students in the College of Edinburgh*—it was primarily prepared by Ferguson for students attending lectures on moral philosophy at the University of Edinburgh. Garve's interest in Ferguson can be considered from two perspectives. First, Ferguson held the Chair of Pneumatics and Moral Philosophy from 1764 and 'embarked on a professorial career that saw him become one of the most influential and popular teachers in Scotland' (Smith, 2019, p.19). Moreover, with the publication of *Essay* in 1767 and *IMP* in 1769, 'Ferguson acquired an international reputation that secured his place as one of the most foremost moral philosophers of the eighteenth century' (Sher, 1985, p.119). Therefore, on account of his established reputation as a moralist at this time, it is unsurprising that Garve believed Ferguson's *IMP* to be ideal for the German reception of Scottish moral philosophy.

Second, German interest in British ideas was evident around the middle of the eighteenth century. Publications of German translations of British works increased in number from the 1750s (Oz-Salzberger, 1995, p.59). The probable reason, as pointed out by Kuehn (1987), lies in a widespread opposition to systematic or rationalistic philosophy in European thought around this time (pp.37–38). Germany was no exception, where scholars, especially those associated with the University of Göttingen, took the lead in communicating British ideas to the German academic world<sup>3</sup>.

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3 The University of Göttingen played a major role in the German Enlightenment movement, primarily due to its close connection with the British crown (Hasek, 1925, pp.60–63).

For this reason, it is no surprise that one of the first reviews of *IMP* appeared in the *Göttingische Gelehrte Anzeigen* (Göttingen Academic Journal, *GGA* below), a journal of book reviews run by the University of Göttingen. The reviewer, Feder<sup>4</sup>, then a professor of philosophy and one of the major contributors to *GGA*, introduced its main contents and called for a German translation of it.

The book could also be used by us for lessons, at least for private lessons. Therefore, we would not be unwilling to see a translation if it were to be undertaken by a man who would have the terms in head. (*GGA*, 1771, p.cxv)

Feder's tone was hardly enthusiastic. Nevertheless, Garve undertook the task. The translation appeared in 1772 under the title *Grundsätze der Moralphilosophie*, which Feder judged to have been translated by someone who had 'the terms in head'.

A book, in which many of the most important philosophical terms are contained, [is] translated by a man who has the terms in head... Such a translation still seems to us to be a commendable work as well as a good self-made book. Enrichment or rectification of the indispensable academic discourse [and] new light for ideas [are] found by the effort to transfer them from one language to another. Whoever knows that agrees with our judgement. However, the translator of Ferguson has enlarged the book by one-third by adding comments. (*GGA*, 1772, pp.860–861)

Feder's words prove the good quality of Garve's translation. Moreover, the appraisal of 'a good self-made book' and the remark that Garve 'has enlarged the book by one-third by adding comments' suggest that Garve had accomplished more than providing a German translation of *IMP*. To a certain extent, Garve produced a quasi-original work. This is understandable since Garve once planned to compose a textbook himself.

This chapter has shown that although Garve first planned to compose a textbook himself, he changed his mind and ended up translating Ferguson's *IMP* in order to import Scottish moral philosophy into Germany. As to whether *IMP* responds perfectly to his ambition, Garve's overall judgement of it will be examined in the next chapter.

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4 Johann Georg Heinrich Feder (1740–1821): The first scholar to make Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations* known in Germany; his detailed reviews (in *GGA*, 10. Mar & 5. Apr 1777) acclaimed it a classic work, superior to previous theories, especially that of Sir James Steuart (1712–80), and emphasized its kinship with physiocracy (*Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie*, 1877, vol. 6, p.596).

Moreover, Feder's conflict with Kant concerning the 1782 review of *Critique of Pure Reason* was considered to have had its root in their respective philosophical stances. Together with Garve, Feder was one of the most prominent advocates of popular philosophy that preferred 'the practicability and applicability of philosophy over the perceived elitism and scholasticism of Wolffianism and, later, ... Kantian philosophy' (*The Dictionary of Eighteenth-Century German Philosophers*, 2010, vol. 1, p.309).

### 3. The practice of translation with commentary

The above chapter investigated the background of Garve's translation of *IMP*. It has been suggested that in order to introduce Scottish moral philosophy to his German readers, Garve initially planned to compose a textbook of morality himself, but eventually decided to translate a textbook of Ferguson's, namely *Institutes of Moral Philosophy*. This chapter will further explore Garve's conception of moral philosophy by first comparing the structure of *IMP* with that of his draft for a self-made textbook and then examining his overall assessment of *IMP*.

#### 3.1. A comparison

*IMP* was not the only one of Ferguson's publications primarily meant to serve as teaching material. Ferguson also published *Analysis of Pneumatics and Moral Philosophy: For the Use of Students in the College of Edinburgh* (1766) and *Principles of Moral and Political Science: Being Chiefly a Retrospect of Lectures Delivered in the College of Edinburgh* (1792). It should be pointed out that they do not necessarily embody Ferguson's conception of morality, but rather demonstrate what is to be taught in the lecture on moral philosophy. It is also not surprising that *IMP* is actually composed in an itemized style. The following chart presents the titles of each part.

Introduction	
Part I.	The natural history of man.
Part II.	Theory of mind.
Part III.	Of the knowledge of God.
Part IV.	Of moral laws, and their most general applications.
Part V.	Of Jurisprudence.
Part VI.	Of Casuistry.
Part VII.	Of Politics.

It appears that the former three parts are concerned with the nature of man and the knowledge of God, while the latter four are concerned with the actual practice of moral rules in specific disciplines. This arrangement of content is justified by Ferguson's definition of moral philosophy.

Moral philosophy is the knowledge of what ought to be, or the application of rules that ought to determine the choice of voluntary agents.

Before we can ascertain rules of morality fitted to any particular nature, the fact relating to that nature should be known.

Before we can ascertain rules of morality for mankind, the history of man's nature, his dispositions, his specific enjoyments and sufferings, his condition and future prospects, should be known.

Pneumatics, or the physical history of mind, is the foundation of moral philosophy. (Ferguson, 1769, pp.9–10)

Thus, according to Ferguson, moral philosophy consists of pneumatics, or the study of human nature, and the moral rules that serve as guides for deciding what to do and what to choose. Ferguson further explains that pneumatics is concerned with both mankind and God.

Pneumatics treat physically of mind or spirit.

This science consists of two parts.

The first treats of man; the second, of God.

That part which treats of man, may contain the history of man's nature, and an explanation or theory of the principal phenomena of human life.

That which treats of God, contains the proofs of his existence, attributes, and government.

The history of man contains either such facts as occur on a general view of the species, or such as occur to the individual, in recollecting what passes in his own mind.

The first may be termed, *the history of the species*; the second, that of *the individual*.

In the theory of human nature are solved questions relating to the characters of men, to the nature and future prospects of the human soul. (Ferguson, 1769, pp.10–11; emphasis in original)

Apparently, Parts I, II, and III are ascribed to the study of pneumatics, which, together with the later parts, constitutes the basic structure of *IMP*. The next matter to consider is the structure of Garve's compendium.

In contrast, since his plan is only indicated in a rough draft, the structure of Garve's intended textbook of morality appears rather cursory and sketchy.

The whole has four parts. First, since all our actions result from certain desires [and] every desire arises from a pleasure, I believe that the study of the moral nature of man must begin with the study of his pleasure. The first part deals with the foundation of our pleasure in general, all different types and levels of pleasure, the senses of imagination, reason and heart, and compound pleasure.

We do not evaluate and seek all of these in the same way. Thus, a difference in inclination arises, according to which every man prefers a certain level of



pleasure to others. The character lies in the inclination, if we put together all the inclinations that a person has and look at their proportion. The second part deals with single and compound desires, namely characters. The third part would then talk about actual duties and consider the extent to which they are obtained through the practice of the greatest and highest pleasure of man. In the fourth part, there should be a system of general relationships, following which children and adults, according to the difference in their characters and natural dispositions, can be used to practicing these duties. (Garve, 1830, p.57)

Accordingly, Garve's compendium consists of four parts that investigate the foundation of pleasure, the formation of character, and the practice of duty. Comparing *IMP* with Garve's plan, it is obvious that while the parts concerning pneumatics correspond to the main contents in Garve's plan, those parts on jurisprudence, casuistry, and politics hardly seem to be another point of interest to Garve.

In fact, a similar phenomenon may be observed in Garve's comment on the translation of *IMP*, which centres on the parts on pneumatics, while only referring to the latter parts of *Jurisprudence*, *of Casuistry* and *of Politics* in passing. Oz-Salzberger (1995) ascribed this imbalance to Garve's 'not [being] receptive to the Scottish civic and historical discourses' (p.208). As a counterview, Otsuka (2008) stated that this imbalance should be justified by displaying the features of Garve's moral philosophy (pp.19–22). To a certain extent, their explanations are not mutually exclusive. In either case, the first priority is to understand why Garve chose to translate the *IMP*.

Fortunately, Garve begins the comment with a statement of his motivation:

I have not translated this book because I consider it the first and most excellent morality textbook. I am too unqualified to make this judgement, and I almost think that any textbook can be good for such well-known truths, in accordance with the purpose for which one needs. Instead, I have translated it because I consider it to be the work of a righteous and great man. I believe that it bears the mark of that.

There are books that merely show what the author has learned. Most textbooks are of this type. There are others that display at the same time who he [the author] is, how he thinks by himself, how he feels, and how he wants to behave. The former type of books can teach, but only the latter can form or improve the spirit of the reader. It seems to me that this morality [*IMP*] belongs to this [latter type]. (Garve, 1772, p.287)

Garve confesses that he translated *IMP* because of admiring Ferguson as 'a righteous and great man' and *IMP* as the type of morality that can really 'form or improve the spirit of the reader'.

On the former, it is part of the tradition of acclaiming a professor of moral philosophy by complimenting his personality. For example, referring to William Law, the first professor of moral philosophy at the University of Edinburgh, Sher

(1990) pointed out that, at least during the first quarter of the eighteenth century, a professor of moral philosophy was expected ‘to live his life in accordance with the moral, and presumably also religious, principles he taught’ (p.92). Therefore, it would not be surprising if Law’s successors felt the need to ensure consistency between their private lives and academic careers in teaching moral philosophy.

On the latter, Garve distinguishes between *IMP* and most other books of morality, as noted by a German review of his translation of *IMP*. Published in *Allgemeine deutsche Bibliothek* (General German Library, *AdB* below), the reviewer begins with an overview of the two prevailing methods in the study of morality. One is systematic morality that draws moral rules primarily from the principle of reason, which dominated moral studies in Germany at the time; the other is analytical morality, which dissects particular human affections in a meticulous manner, and which would most likely suppress rather than motivate passion and desire (*AdB*, 1772, pp.319–323). The reviewer considers that *IMP* belongs to neither of these methods, but acclaims that in it,

[a] benevolent soul, the keen friend of society, and the deep-thinking mind seem to be everywhere. If the philosophical part that Ferguson, as it were, arranged in the front as an introduction, were of equal value with the [part of] actual morality, the book would be taken as a whole, indeed [it] would be out of ordinary in our century. (*AdB*, 1772, p.323)

Despite disappointment about Ferguson’s philosophical discourse, the reviewer shares the view that *IMP* is unlike other such works. Moreover, the reviewer’s dissatisfaction is readily comprehensible if we consider that unlike *GGA*, *AdB* strove to be ‘the melting pot of rationalist philosophers arguing in the Leibniz-Wolffian fashion’ (Klemme, 2000, p.viii). Thus, unlike Feder’s reviews in *GGA*, which merely outlined *IMP*, the *AdB* review is dedicated to interpreting its philosophical concepts.

Likewise, Garve does not find the *IMP* to be perfect. After presenting his overall impression of undertaking this translation, Garve points out that there are certain disadvantages in Ferguson’s discourse.

In terms of completeness, the book has some obvious shortcomings. It says very little about freedom. It says nothing about the duties of domestic society. Instead, it has a long introduction that includes almost the entire philosophy. (Garve, 1772, p.288)

For one thing, Garve finds it problematic to provide an introduction covering the whole system of philosophy. He also considers the discussions of freedom and domestic duties missing from *IMP* to be essential for a textbook of morality.

This section compared the structure of *IMP* with Garve’s draft plan and then justified the discrepancy between them by examining Garve’s opening remarks in his comment. Although admiring Ferguson as a moralist and the *IMP* as an effective tool for improving spirit, Garve also pointed out shortcomings in Ferguson’s

discourse. The next section will investigate this point further to approach Garve's conception of moral philosophy.

### 3.2. Freedom, duties, and morality

Before heading into the following section, it is necessary to clarify what this paper intends to demonstrate through analysis of the commentary. Otsuka (2015) pointed out that the independence of human beings in pursuing moral perfection was the essential feature of Garve's moral philosophy. This paper, however, considers this feature as merely one component of what Garve intends to advocate throughout the commentary. As will be shown, Garve's discussion of the concepts of freedom, propensity, public repute, the being of God, and the good of virtue, when taken as a whole, elaborate both the achievability and procedures of man's independent pursuit of virtue by self-thinking.

Pointing out that Ferguson fails to pay sufficient attention to freedom and domestic duties, Garve then develops his own arguments regarding each.

Garve begins his discussion on freedom by considering the difference between man and animal, that is, *Spontaneität* and *Thätigkeit* 'activity'. In the former, Garve plainly states that only man thinks before taking action.

A machine works, because it is pushed that way; an animal acts, because it **feels** the thing that way; man [acts], because he **thinks** about it that way... This is what Basedow says when he calls freedom, the changeability of the will through moral means. (Garve, 1772, p.291; emphasis in original)

From the perspective of spontaneity, Garve interprets freedom as the ability to change one's will by referring to Basedow<sup>5</sup>. On the latter point, Garve maintains that only man is the real author of his action since he is the original source of activity.

The man is the real author of what he does. The power to work comes from him. The direction he gives to this power comes from him. (Garve, 1772, p.292)

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5 Johann Bernhard Basedow (1724–90): One of the most famous pedagogues of eighteenth-century Germany; studied philosophy and theology at the University of Leipzig during 1746–48, where he was heavily influenced by Christian August Crusius (1715–75) on biblical criticism and on the relation between philosophy and theology; started a new type of school, the *Philanthropinum* 'school of human love', open to children of different religious denominations in 1774; accepted Crusius' doctrine of probability into his teachings of theology and philosophy against Wolffian mathematical methodology in pursuit of precision in these fields; resonated with Gellert (Garve's mentor at the University of Leipzig) in considering that the aim of moral philosophy was to promote religious tolerance and diversity for the love of mankind (*The Dictionary of Eighteenth-Century German Philosophers*, 2010, vol. 1, pp.59–63).

Indeed, unlike machine or animal, man is the only one that can really decide what to do by his own will. Nevertheless, Garve doubts that man is absolutely independent in making decisions since both feeling and idea are ultimately dependent on something external.

Sensual feelings are direct results of the body structure and the properties of things that affect it. Here, the first link of the chain on which the action of the animal depends is external to the animal. Spiritual ideas are the result of a previous reflection. This reflection is the result of a previous decision [made] to investigate a subject. This decision is the result of new ideas, and so backwards, it seems that I must eventually come up with ideas that are not brought forth by my reflection... Here, the chain is also long ... but it finally ends with a link that lies outside me, namely with the being that has formed my original nature, or with the order and sequence of things according to which I have been formulated. (Garve, 1772, pp.293–294)

Garve argues that the ultimate ends of both sensual feelings and spiritual ideas lie outside man. He then turns to the debate over what should be counted as a virtuous action.

Accordingly, one group of philosophers maintains that only actions driven by the idea of virtue can be counted as truly virtuous. In contrast, another group suggests that man must act virtuously as the real author of his behavior, which means that he must act in an absolutely independent manner. As to a third group that intends to combine these two, Garve considers that such an attempt must end in vain because it is simply impossible to derive independent actions from ideas that presuppose dependency:

For our actions to be **good**, they must have grounds, and thus they must be dependent on the ideas that contain these grounds. (Garve, 1772, p.296; emphasis in original)

Therefore, virtuous actions cannot be absolutely independent, since they must follow certain rules that are fundamentally reducible to things external to man. In any case, the question of whether virtuous actions are independent is unfeasible.

Rather, since man can distinguish between *Tugend* ‘virtue’ and *Glück* ‘happiness’, Garve suggests that it would be better to study the reasons for actions.

The enquiry of the independence of my actions, assuming that it would not be fruitless, serves no more than to elucidate the nature of virtue. However, the enquiry of the reason for my actions serves to help me to the possession of virtue. I do **not** know how **free** I am, but I know how **perfect** I should be. (Garve, 1772, pp.297–298; emphasis in original)

What matters to Garve is not the nature of virtue, but how to acquire it. The significance of the discussion of freedom lies precisely in its leading to the conclusion that virtue can only be pursued through the enquiry of why man acts in a certain way.

In contrast to his elaborate discussion of the concept of freedom, Garve's remark on domestic duties is somewhat brief<sup>6</sup>. Still, he points out that the role played by parents in the moral education of their children is essential. Just as D'Alembert<sup>7</sup> deems morality to be the primary difference between man and animal, Garve considers marriage as another distinction between them.

So far, this chapter has shown that, unlike Ferguson, Garve intended the textbook of moral philosophy to focus on the nature of the human mind and action. He pointed out that freedom and domestic duties received insufficient attention in *IMP* and thus set out to develop his own arguments in the commentary. In the end, Garve demonstrated that the only way to pursue virtue was to understand the mechanisms of human actions. It appears that the commentary itself serves to exemplify Garve's own ideas of morality. The next chapter will further examine this point in order to reveal the central theme of Garve's moral philosophy.

#### 4. Moral philosophy as the pursuit of virtue

The previous chapter investigated whether *IMP* catered to Garve's criteria for a textbook of moral philosophy. Garve judged the lack of attention to freedom and domestic duties to be the main weakness of Ferguson's discourse and set out to expound his own views in the commentary. This chapter will explore the main arguments in Garve's commentary under the themes of human faculties, the being of God, and the inner good of virtue.

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6 Interestingly, Garve expresses the same opinion against Cicero's *De Officiis*. Zande pointed out that 'Garve thought that Cicero had neglected to deal sufficiently with domestic duties, a reproach which he also leveled against another intellectual pedigree, Adam Ferguson' (1998, p.76). Considering that Garve translated Aristotle's *The Nicomachean Ethics* and *Politics*, his emphasis on moral education as the duty of domestic society is possibly influenced by Aristotle's valuing the household as a moral institution.

7 Jean Le Rond d'Alembert (1717–83): French mathematician and philosopher; his epistemology was influenced by the sense-based philosophy of John Locke (1632–1704) and Étienne Bonnot de Condillac (1714–80), which, according to Robertson (2015, p.120), was 'radically different' from Kant's critical philosophy; his co-operation with Denis Diderot (1713–84) in editing the *Encyclopédie* earned him a reputation as an Enlightenment thinker, especially for his modification of Francis Bacon's (1561–1626) tree of knowledge, according to which the discipline of ethics consisted of *Morale Générale*, namely the science of good and bad, of duties, of virtue, etc., and *Morale Particulière*, that is, science of *loix* 'laws' or *jurisprudence naturelle, économique, and politique*; he enjoyed a personal relationship with Prussian King Frederick II and had in fact stayed for three months at Frederick's court in 1764. Refer to J.M. Briggs (1970) "ALEMBERT, JEAN LE ROND D'," in C. Gillispie (ed.) *Dictionary of Scientific Biography*. Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, vol. 1, pp.110–117.

## 4.1. A manual for approaching perfection

Garve devotes 50 pages, more than one-third of the commentary (a total of 134 pages), to addressing concepts concerning the human faculties. Criticizing Ferguson for failing to explain how one can improve oneself, Garve considers it indispensable to provide such an explanation since each faculty contributes to the pursuit of morality.

In the section where the author deals with the faculties of reason, he does the least good for me... As an introduction to morality, it is not interesting enough [and] not shown from the aspect that this knowledge of faculties helps man to improve himself.

Every faculty contributes to the moral perfection of man. We know by ourselves that whenever we do certain things with more courage, or with a higher degree of benevolence, if the sacrifices of temperance become easier to us, our head must be in a different state than usual, and our idea must also have another movement. Still, we are missing a morality in which this state of virtuous man would be portrayed as a whole. (Garve, 1772, pp.306–307)

Garve argues that there is a certain state in which man can act virtuously without much effort. To approach this state, it is essential to determine how each human faculty may contribute to self-improvement. Among the concepts Garve examined, this paper considers propensity and public repute to be the central features of Garve's moral philosophy, so the following section will examine them in detail.

### 4.1.1. Propensity

Approving Ferguson's statement that: 'Propensities have their effect prior to the experience of pleasure or pain', Garve considers propensity to mean neither *Trieb* 'animal instinct', nor *Neigung* 'disposition', which originates from nature or habit (Ferguson, 1769, p.70). Rather, he interprets propensity as something inherent in the soul.

It should designate the types of activity lying in the nature of the soul itself, in so far as they are distinguishable without yet seeing the objects that this activity handles. (Garve, 1772, p.313)

Therefore, the effects of propensity precede the perception of objects. However, Garve subsequently states that propensity is always triggered by external objects, as in the case of animals, and by one's own judgement of whether or not to satisfy certain desires, as in the case of man. Since judgement is easily affected by habit or the way of thinking, man can have much more diversified desires than animals.

In a similar sense, Ferguson distinguishes animal and rational propensities.

The animal propensities are the appetites to food, sleep, and the propagation of the species... The rational propensities are, the care of self-preservation, the affections of parent and child, the affections of the sexes, the affection to society, and the desire to excel. (Ferguson, 1769, p.70)

Ferguson's categorization is based on the difference between the types of activities in each group. However, pointing out that these activities are not mutually exclusive, Garve suggests that the distinction between them lies only in the purpose they have of satisfying desires.

Moreover, it seems that every object of an animal's propensity can also be the object of a rational propensity. It is only in the type of desire that there is a distinction... By animal propensities, man only wants to enjoy things and forgets himself. Through rational propensities, he wants to enjoy himself and his perfection, and thinks about things because they deliver to him or hinder from him such enjoyment. (Garve, 1772, p.316)

Garve considers that animal propensity is the desire to enjoy the object itself, while the rational one is the desire to enjoy oneself and think about the object. He then points out that only the desire for perfection can be a rational propensity in a real sense.

Under the latter, only the desire for perfection seems to me to be an entirely pure rational desire, because it rises completely in man himself. However, it never really exists as unmixed but always mingles with the sensual impression of some object, an impression that is quite different from the perfection that produces or carries it. (Garve, 1772, pp.317–318)

Even if the desire for perfection is the very rational desire to be pursued, it is mixed with a sensual feeling that is entirely different from perfection itself. Garve then discusses how one can purify it by again probing into the distinction between man and animal. Only man will eventually arrive at the point of being aware of his real value.

A being was set initially and for a long time in motion entirely by this difference. However, in the end, even if late or only occasionally, it becomes aware that it itself and its action have more value than all the things that it seeks or procures through its action. (Garve, 1772, pp.323–324)

Starting from a mixed desire of the object and perfection, though, a certain being will finally become aware that the true value lies in itself rather than in the object. It is precisely this feature that sets man apart from animal.

Such a being is man. Providence (it seems to me) always leads every living thing to perfection in the same way, through the exercise of its powers. [It leads] animals by occupying it with food, mates, and youngling. [It leads] man by making him a farmer, artist, and regent. (Garve, 1772, p.324)

Thus, it is in the nature of the soul that man is destined to pursue perfection. Through his discussion of propensity, Garve intends to demonstrate that the desire of perfection is in human nature and that an incessant pursuit of it is essential for man to realize his own value.

#### 4.1.2. Public repute

Public repute serves as a tool to pursue perfection. Ferguson explains this as a type of sanction against action.

These sanctions include the influence of prevailing opinions and examples, together with the commendations and censures men bestow on the actions that please or offend them. (Ferguson, 1769, p.238)

Accordingly, the sanctions of public repute include opinions, examples, commendations, and censures. Garve considers the opinions and examples in Ferguson's definition as concerning action in general, while the commendations and censures are directed against particular actions. He further explained how they affect actions through mutual imitation.

On the one hand, by imitation, we adopt the opinions and customs that everyone around us has, imperceptibly and without knowing it ourselves. On the other hand, by the desire of honour, we strive for what others commend and hold back from what they censure. (Garve, 1772, pp.343–344)

Thus, opinions and customs are influential in that men compare their behaviors with each other, whether consciously or not. However, considering that, in this sense, public repute is susceptible to abuse and corruption, there is doubt about whether it can be trusted as a sanction of virtue. To remove such suspicion, Garve sets out to demonstrate that, in fact, public repute, expressed as *Was werden die Leute sagen?* 'What will people say?', has been applied since ancient times to enforce the fulfilment of obligations and penalize unjust acts. More importantly, public repute makes one aware of the distinction between right and wrong.



This distinction must lie in the nature of every man if it is not a chimaera. Every man must be able to find himself. However, the way to this is long. (Garve, 1772, p.345)

This sense of right and wrong must be inherent to human nature. Therefore, the next question is how to identify it. Garve suggests that the steps towards it start from perceiving pleasure and pain, and end at considering what kind of actions promote the maintenance of the whole society.

Now, he must consider the results and the causes of the actions that he has hitherto observed. He must feel that the state of his soul in which he does righteous deeds most effortlessly and most frequently is also the state of perfection and happiness. (Garve, 1772, p.346)

The ultimate step is to understand why man acts in a certain way so as to discern the inherent sense of right and wrong in oneself. Although these steps appear to be attainable, Garve points out that they are no longer taken by his contemporaries.

He already has words in the language, opinions in the talks of his parents and friends, and rules observed in their conduct. These can teach him the concepts of **right** and **wrong** before he could develop them from his feelings by himself. (Garve, 1772, p.347; emphasis in original)

Garve criticizes his contemporaries for not exploring the grounds of actions themselves, but instead simply following readymade rules. Even though one can still be honest and benevolent simply by following these rules if they are drafted in a fair and reasonable way in a civilized land, Garve suggests that a transition is needed if one wants to be virtuous.

To be virtuous, man needs to determine the origin of those concepts and the reasons for establishing those rules in his own nature. [If] man discovers them [the rules] there [in others], he [can] transfer this initially artificial inclination, if I may say so, the inclination towards virtue, into a natural one, by linking them [the rules] with the basic inclinations that are always present in our nature. However, even then, this public repute will be a good and frequently required means of sustaining these concepts. (Garve, 1772, p.348)

Again, Garve emphasizes that the rules and concepts to be complied with must be linked to one's own nature, and public repute guides the process of building one's own rules and concepts.

This section examined Garve's discussion of propensity and public repute in detail. Garve considered the propensity towards perfection to be rooted in human nature, and argued that in order to approach it, man must learn to establish his own rules and concepts under the guidance of public repute. It appears that Garve's

conception of moral philosophy could be defined as the pursuit of perfection through self-thinking. For further evidence, the next section will examine Garve's comment on how the concept of God should relate to morality.

## 4.2. On the being of God

Ferguson begins Part III of *IMP, of the Knowledge of God*, with a statement claiming the universality of belief in the existence of God and then differentiates between believing in the existence of God and believing that Homer authored the *Iliad*.

The belief of the existence of God has been universal.

...

This belief does not imply any adequate notion of the Supreme Being. Men, for the most part, have entertained notions on this subject, unworthy even of human reason.

But the belief that an artist, or author, exists, is consistent with mean and improper notions of his capacity and intentions.

The belief that Homer composed the *Iliad*, is compatible with inadequate notions of that poet's genius. (Ferguson, 1769, pp.121–122)

According to Ferguson's discourse, to believe that God actually exists cannot presuppose any notions of God since that would be unworthy of human reason, while to believe that Homer actually composed *Iliad* would rather diminish his genius. In the comment, though, Garve interprets Ferguson's opinion into that since to believe that Homer composed *Iliad* is to look down upon the poet's genius, no one can have proper notions of God (Garve, 1772, p.357). Recognizing a difference between belief in God and belief in Homer's existence, Garve sets out to further analyze how one is distinct from the other. He points out that at least one knows that Homer had once lived, and the fact that Homer composed the *Iliad* should in no way degrade Homer's genius but rather reflects one of his capacities. However, concerning God, Garve states that

about God, we have 1) no more than the idea of regarding him as the most perfect being. The concept of his existence is identical to the concept of a certain perfection. 2) We know that he should exist from no other reason than that we need the most perfect being to explain things. We accept his existence for no reason as soon as we take away from [him] the highest good and the highest reason. (Garve, 1772, pp.357–358)

Hence, nothing about God's existence is known. There is only the idea of God as the perfect being, which is necessary to explain the origin of everything. Nevertheless, Garve still suggests that the question of whether God exists can be further dissected.

It seems to me that if it is traced back to the first basic concepts from which it originated, the question **is there a god?** is none other than this: Is thinking the foundation of all movements, or is movement the foundation of thinking? Are the mechanical forces the source of the spiritual or spiritual forces the source of the physical? (Garve, 1772, p.358; emphasis in original)

In other words, the question of whether God exists is the question of whether thinking produces movement or the other way around. Garve then discusses how atheists and deists ponder this question. According to the former, everything can be explained as being formed by the movement of matter. Concerning the latter, Garve argues that if thinking is not matter, it is necessary to explain why it comes to be so different from matter.

If, on the other hand, living and thinking belong to a separate class of being, it is incomprehensible how the rest of matter was formed as such that it was necessary and desirable to the being that is completely different from matter, unless a similar spirit, something convenient for life and thinking, prescribed this form to matter. (Garve, 1772, p.361)

If thinking is not matter but being, certain spirits are required to transmute one to another. These spirits are what Garve names God.

The spirit, which should build a human body, must have the entire material world under its control. The spirit, which would give an atom its direction, must have previously ordered the direction of all other atoms in accordance with the first one.

I can therefore only imagine a single active spiritual power, which is the foundation of all life of an individual being and the foundation of all order in matter that is part of the support and expression of life.

It is this power that we call God. (Garve, 1772, p.365; emphasis in original)

The existence of God as an active spiritual power is necessary to explain the conversion between thinking and matter, which can in turn explain the origin of everything.

Next, Garve turns to Ferguson's statement that '[t]he notion of a plurality of gods is a corruption' (1769, p.127). Garve understands that the error of polytheism lies in its failure to realize that the world is, in fact, united as an intact whole. In other words, there can be only one God since there is only one world. Moreover, the condition that God is the sole creator of the world is a prerequisite for the concept of God as the most perfect being.

However, if they recognized God as the common creator and governor of all connections among all things ... they would have to accept him without any imperfection because in these connections, no evil, no disorder can be discerned any more. (Garve, 1772, p.370)

If God is to be admitted, he must be the perfect being without blame for any evil or disorder. But, then how do we justify the existence of evils?

Ferguson categorizes evils into physical and moral, suggesting that they contribute to man's activity and improvement.

The first subject of complaint is termed *physical evil*; the second, *moral*.

His complaints of physical evil are not symptoms of absolute evil in nature, but the symptoms of an active nature in himself properly placed, and having proper excitements to exert its power.

...

Or, in other words, a being that perceived no evil, or had no want, could have no principle of activity.

...

Complaints of moral evil are the symptoms of a progressive or improving nature.

A being that perceived no moral evil, or no defect, could have no principle of improvement. (Ferguson, 1769, pp.130–132; emphasis in original)

Ferguson does not consider evils in either category to be absolute in nature. Rather, they are indispensable in guaranteeing the active and progressive nature of man. Garve approves this view. In the former, he interprets that

I am suffering. That means, I become aware of a state of another thing that is combined with me [and] displeases me, perhaps extremely displeases me. However, my own state does not really change. I feel pain not because I get worse, but because I believe that something outside me gets worse. (Garve, 1772, pp.375–376)

Apparently, Garve agrees with Ferguson on the effect of evil in facilitating man's activity. He interprets physical evil, as shown by the sentence 'I am suffering', as in fact a change caused by the external surroundings, and hence not an absolute evil.

For the latter, Garve also considers that moral evil is not absolute, even in the case of murder.

**Judging by its result**, it is nothing worse than the death of a person... **Judging by its cause**, it is a state of hatred, malevolence, vindictiveness, in a word, the state of an **imperfect spirit**. However, [it is] not [a state] of an **absolutely imperfect** [spirit] because this very person still has many ideas that are correct, many inclinations that are good [and] many activities that are noble. So [it is] only [a state] of a less **perfect** [spirit]. (Garve, 1772, pp.377–378; emphasis in original)

Garve argues that at worst, the evil of murder is caused by a less perfect spirit rather than an absolutely imperfect one, since even in a murderer, there are still good and noble inclinations to be found. This kind of thinking stems from Garve's conception of moral perfection as a *Leiter der Geister* 'ladder of spirit', leading from evil towards virtue.

Vice means only an unusually smaller degree of moral perfection, just as virtue means an unusually larger [one]. But who can deny that every spirit must first go up the lower stairs before it can move up to the higher [ones]? (Garve, 1772, p.378)

Garve justifies evil as a minor perfection. In order to approach moral perfection, going through the lower stairs on the ladder, namely vice or evil, to the upper stairs, namely moral perfection or virtue, is unavoidable.

This section presented Garve's comment on how to interpret the being of God. He demonstrated that the existence of God, or a certain spiritual power, was beyond doubt since it was required to transform matter to spirit. Recognizing God as the sole perfect being, Garve justified evils as a preparatory stage to be experienced before reaching moral perfection. The next section will further examine Garve's interpretation of the nature of moral perfection.

### 4.3. The inner good of virtue

The distinction between good and evil has long served as a major discussion among ancient philosophers. In Chapter II of *IMP, of Good and Evil*, Ferguson refers to their respective definitions of what good is.

Socrates always stated it in the strongest terms.

According to him, *they who prayed for riches, long life, &c. seemed to desire a throw of the dice, or the chance of a battle.*

The Peripatetics classed every thing that was by its nature, or use, desirable, under the general predicament of *good*.

And every thing, by its nature or abuse, to be shunned, under the opposite predicament of *evil*.

The Stoics maintained, that nothing was to be classed under the predicament of *good*, but what was at all times invariably to be chosen.

That nothing was to be classed under the predicament of *evil*, but what was at all times invariably to be shunned, or rejected:

...

The Epicureans substituted the term *pleasure* for *good*; intimating, that whatever was pleasant was therefore good. (Ferguson, 1769, pp.143–144; emphasis in original)

Accordingly, the Peripatetics interpret good and evil as attributes of things. The Stoics consider good to be something to be chosen invariably, and evil something to be avoided unvaryingly. The Epicureans believe that good means pleasure.

Overall, Garve approves Ferguson's explanation of this differentiation. He especially appreciates Ferguson's discourse on Stoics (Garve, 1772, p.379). Still, Garve discusses this topic from the perspective of human nature. Since what matters most to man is either his feeling or action, it would be better to consider what good is from these two perspectives.

Everything that matters to man is his **suffering** or **doing**, his feelings, or his actions... If anything, be it the nature of man himself [or] the nature and things outside him, is called **good**, as long as the cause lies in them, his **feelings** are **pleasant**, and his **actions** are **perfect**. (Garve, 1772, p.379; emphasis in original)

Whatever is to be called good must engender pleasant feelings or perfect actions. However, the question then arises of whether feeling and action are decided by the individual or by the external world. Garve points out that the answer to this question can justly differentiate the Peripatetics from the Stoics.

The Peripatetics hold that the external world is to blame for producing unpleasant feelings or imperfect actions.

If it were just in the nature of certain incidents, whether they force a malicious action out of us, as if they should arouse an undesirable feeling in us, then the Peripatetics would be absolutely right. There would be an evil besides vice as well. (Garve, 1772, p.381)

On the contrary, the Stoics maintain that it is the nature of the human soul that is to blame.

On the other hand, it would just as much depend on the nature of the soul, what impressions things should make upon it, depending on how it should act against them [impressions]. Therefore, the Stoics would be right without exception. There would be no good, but virtue. (Garve, 1772, p.381)

Indeed, both stances appear plausible. Garve also acknowledges that there are certain incidents and states of the soul that always bring about the same feeling or action. In order to decide which stance holds more ground, Garve raises two further questions:

1) Which of the two final ends, feeling and action to which everything is united, is the highest ultimate goal; 2) whether the nature of the soul has more power to change feelings and to turn pain into pleasure, or whether the nature of the incident has greater power to change actions and to render the virtuous vicious. (Garve, 1772, p.382)

In answering the former question, the Stoics posit action as the ultimate goal, with feeling as a by-product depending on physical condition. As for the latter, the Stoics consider both physical and spiritual factors as important in affecting feeling and action. However, it is a fact that virtuous people have more control over their own conditions. They can even modify the external world instead of being passively affected by it. Garve thus judges that: 'I believe the Stoics answered that justly' (1772, p.384). Virtue, rather than any other property, is more qualified to be identified as good since it always has the same effects, that is, of relieving pain and leading to pleasure.

However, the Stoics' perception of virtue is not without weakness. Garve points out that they regard virtue to be a gift from God. For them, it cannot be taught and thus, how close a man can approach it rests with providence. Garve argues instead that virtue can be pursued by anyone. As to whether the pursuit of virtue requires motivation, Garve turns to the Epicureans.

Despite speaking highly of Epicurus as honest and impartial, bearing the marks of an independent thinker, Garve judges it problematic to treat pleasure as the sole motive for pursuing virtue.

It is perhaps possible to teach man all of his duties in this way, but it is impossible to warm him up, to elevate his soul so that it is necessary [for him] to the exercise of these duties. (Garve, 1772, p.388)

Instead, Garve believes that since virtue must be good by itself, it must be pursued for its own good.

If virtue is not something good by itself, without the external effects that it has, then my own nature is indifferent to me. However, how is it with a being that feels? So, I do not possess my own nature. I am not a being of my own. There is only matter [and] the origin of all things lies in the movement. **There is no god or future.** (Garve, 1772, pp.397–398; emphasis in original)

If man is merely moved by the pursuit of desire, that is, by the external world, then he is indifferent to his own nature. In this regard, Garve stresses that virtue must be good by its own nature. He further asserts that virtue renders any external motivation, including rewards in the afterlife, as unnecessary.

The system of the inner goodness of virtue appeared to be dangerous to religion because one believed that it made rewards unnecessary. But tell me, what should these rewards be that one promises for virtue in future life... [I]f these rewards consist in a greater expansion of our effectiveness, they are new opportunities provided for taking actions. If it is a higher position that should be entrusted to us, now something good must really lie in the action itself. Hence, it [good] must also lie in the good actions that we perform here. Therefore, virtue must be chosen for its own sake, because only virtue can be the reward of virtue. (Garve, 1772, p.400)

Here, Garve clarifies his point that the pursuit of virtue does not require external motive. Virtue must be good by itself, and thus virtue is the reward for pursuing virtue<sup>8</sup>.

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8 According to Oz-Salzberger (1995, p.201), Garve admitted that by accepting ‘the Stoic concept of virtue as the only complete good’, he could ‘be seen as contradicting Christian ethics’. Garve confessed being theologially attacked for his ‘emphasis on the autonomous standing of virtue’ in the comment on *IMP*. Likewise, Otsuka (2015, p.68) suggested that Garve’s admiration of the Stoic conception of virtue as spiritually mature primarily stemmed from Garve’s emphasis on the initiative and independence of human action.



This section examined Garve's discussion of the inner good of virtue. Garve indicated that the pursuit of virtue was independent of external motivations, including afterlife rewards, since virtue must be something good in itself. Throughout this chapter, it appears that Garve intended to emancipate morality from the shackles of both metaphysics and theology by emphasizing that virtue should be pursued for its own good and could be pursued through independent thinking. To discuss how this view relates to Garve's thinking overall, the next chapter will further investigate his intentions for practicing commentary and for choosing to translate Ferguson's work.

## 5. The independent pursuit of morality

The previous chapter examined Garve's main discussion in his comment on Ferguson's discourse. It appears that Garve emphasized the independent pursuit of virtue. Now, this chapter will examine the reason for Garve's commentary on his translation and then consider Garve's motive for choosing Ferguson's moral philosophy to translate by reviewing his overall judgement of the Scottish moralists.

### 5.1. The *commentirende* method

In addition to the translation, his original comment constitutes the focus of Garve's translation activity. Unsurprisingly, the translation of *IMP* is not the only one of Garve's works to appear with a lengthy commentary, but it was the first. Others include, for example, Cicero's *De Officiis* and Aristotle's *The Nicomachean Ethics*. Apart from translation, Garve also practiced commentary in his essays. For example, one chapter of the essay *Ueber das Daseyn Gottes* (On the Being of God) is devoted to discussing David Hume's (1711–76) *Dialogues concerning Natural Religion*. Garve also reviewed Baruch De Spinoza's (1632–77) *Ethics* and Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's (1729–81) *Laokoön*.

To Garve, this practice of commentary is deliberate. In fact, he clarifies his intention in *Einige Beobachtungen über die Kunst zu denken* (Some Observations on the Art of Thinking, hereinafter *Observations*; 1796). Zande (1995) considered *Observations* to represent Garve's methodology of thinking, calling it 'a model of popular philosophy' (p.428). Waszek (2007) pointed out that it provided a justification for Garve's commentaries on his translations (pp.59–60). The following discussion will first briefly introduce the structure of *Observations* and then focus specifically on Garve's practice of commenting.

*Observations* appears in Garve's anthology *Versuche über verschiedene Gegenstände aus der Moral, der Litteratur und dem gesellschaftlichen Leben* (Exploration on Different Subjects from Morality, Literature and Social Life). Garve arranges *Observations* in two parts. The first half focuses on the action of thinking in a general sense and the second half presents six different methods of thinking that are applied by thinkers.

In the former, Garve first analyzes the obstacles to thinking and then discusses the faculties required to improve thinking skills, such as a vivid imagination, a good memory, and a strong will to remain focused on one subject at a time.

In the latter, Garve starts by stating that there is one type of thinking that is decided by the nature of the subject matter, and another that is dependent upon the mindset of man. Garve points to the difference between thinking in mathematics and in philosophy as a prime example of the former. For the latter, Garve classifies six distinct methods of thinking: systematic, Socratic, historical, disproving, commentary, and observational.

The commentary method directly concerns Garve's translation practice. Stating that it is a natural course to begin one's own thinking by commenting on others' ideas, Garve then draws an analogy between children's acquisition of knowledge from lessons and the accumulation of truths in the history of mankind. Garve understands that the process of interpreting others' ideas is a precursor to the transition from learning to self-thinking.

They generally made the transition from learning to self-thinking through interpretation—I want to say, through development and discussion of those older ideas, through which, on the one hand, the gaps that still needed filling in became visible to them, and on the other, the thread to which they could tie their own conclusions was given. (Garve, 1796, p.384)

Garve understands that interpreting classical works can facilitate the transition from learning to self-thinking. He then points out how ancient thinkers, such as Plato, Xenophon, and Aristotle, commented on others' works, and how the Renaissance revived the tradition of interpreting classics.

When, after a long age of uncertainty and barbarism, our ancestors suddenly beheld with admiration the light of knowledge and taste that had already existed in ancient times, they completely abandoned self-thinking for a while and dealt almost alone with the interpretation of Greek and Roman memorials, in which they believed that all useful knowledge was noted down. (Garve, 1796, p.385)

While appreciating the efforts made by his predecessors to interpret ancient thought, Garve suggests that it is time to resume self-thinking, regardless of the difficulty.

Men find it difficult to move to self-thinking. They must be drawn to that, as if gradually. One of the most convenient ways to connect oneself with others' ideas, to separate them from each other to the smallest pieces, to give an account of the content of the sentences, as well as the words and phrases with which they [ideas] have been expressed, and with a gaze directed at the **subject matter**, to explore what has been said and written about it. (Garve, 1796, p.386; emphasis in original)

In developing self-thinking skills, Garve believes that others' ideas play a significant role. It is through rethinking what others have thought that one arrives at one's own ideas.

In order for the connection with others' ideas to truly contribute to developing the skill of thinking, Garve points out certain rules to be followed. First, a subservient or fetishistic attitude towards a certain work or writer must be avoided; second, the act of commenting should not be equal to mere confirmation of certain historical facts or appraisal of the writer's linguistic style; third, although the practice of paraphrasing is conducive to the skill of expressing, it is ineffective in improving thinking skills. The ideal method of commenting would be, as Garve depicts it, that the practice itself enables an imaginary change of position between the writer and the reader.

However, there is a fourth way to comment, in which the interpreter sets himself in the place of the writer, whose fire kindles his own [fire], and thinks together with him [the writer]. He [the interpreter] will then not only penetrate deeper into the meaning of individual ideas, because he, as it were, invents them all over again by himself, but also grasps the interrelation of the whole [idea], because this interrelation has its origin in the nature of **things** [and] can only be properly perceived by the reader who observes the subject matter more than the words of the writer. (Garve, 1796, pp.391–392; emphasis in original)

Thus, by rethinking the writer's argument in one's own mind, the reader/commentator is able to delve deeper into the subject matter, which in turn enhances thinking skills. Finally, while concluding this part of the discussion, Garve again advocates that one must be a good reader in order to be a good writer since: 'the human mind is made in such a way that it is primarily other people's thoughts, in social interaction or book-reading, that awaken his thoughts' (Garve, 1796, p.393).

## 5.2. Morality as the pursuit of perfection

The above section investigated Garve's purpose in practicing commenting, and showed that the commentary method was meant to improve self-thinking. Now, to further consider the reason why self-thinking matters so much to Garve, this section will approach Garve's motive for translating Ferguson's moral philosophy instead of other works by examining Garve's essay *Uebersicht der vornehmsten Principien der Sittenlehre* (Overview of the most distinguished principles of moral philosophy, henceforth *Overview*; 1798), which records his overall opinion of British moral philosophy.

*Overview* first appeared as an appendix to Garve's translation of Aristotle's *The Nicomachean Ethics* and was later published as an independent work. It is worth noting that Garve dedicated this work to Kant, and more than half of it was to

address Kant's moral theory. The difference between their respective philosophical stances stands out in this essay<sup>9</sup>.

Garve starts his discussion by stating that, in a general sense, the English base morality upon feeling, while the majority of Germans derives morality primarily from reason.

Some of our newer philosophers, especially the English, intended to base morality all alone upon feeling and the ability to feel. Others, among whom there are most German philosophers, have derived morality entirely from understanding and reason. **A system** [of] the Leibniz-Wolffian has sought to unite both by establishing **perfection** as the ultimate end of man and [by] making the clause **-Strive for your perfection!** the principle of morality. (Garve, 1798, p.149; emphasis in original)

In Garve's categories, the English moral system is based upon feeling, while the German is derived from reason, and the Leibniz-Wolffian system seeks to combine them by positing the pursuit of perfection as the tenet of morality.

Next, Garve discusses the moral system based on feeling by examining the *Selbstliebe* 'self-love' system and pointing out its ambiguity. He differentiates self-love directed towards mere sensual enjoyment, from that towards the true perfection of man.

This is fundamentally different from the happiness system. It only becomes doubtful, due to both the ambiguity of the word self-love and the unsettled concepts of most of those philosophers (French philosophers), whether it should be the epicurean system that decides self-love only as the love for sensual pleasure, or [it should be] in a real sense the happiness system that attends to the health, the prosperity, and the ever-increasing perfection of the whole person, mentally and physically, and thus provides self-love with a target of much greater scope. (Garve, 1798, p.150)

Accordingly, there is epicurean self-love, which seeks mere sensual pleasure, and another self-love which belongs to the system of *Glückseligkeit* 'happiness'. As exemplars, Garve invokes Claude Adrien Helvétius (1715–71) and Prussian King Frederick II (1712–86): The former derives nearly all, including talent, wit, and virtue, from sensual love; the latter defends self-love as love for one's real happiness. To ascertain which stance is taken by Garve, his subsequent assessments of Francis Hutcheson (1694–1746), and Ferguson are to be examined.

Classifying Hutcheson among the epicurean philosophers, along with Helvétius, Garve points out that Hutcheson applies moral sense as an elemental

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<sup>9</sup> For example, Garve judges Smith's theory of sympathy to be absurd and points out that fundamentally, the impartial spectator in his theory of sympathy plays the same role as *der Gesetzgeber* 'the lawgiver' in Kant's moral theory (Garve, 1798, pp.160–166).

force to explain all phenomena of human nature, a practice that is also carried out by subsequent Scottish moralists.

He is the first among the Scottish philosophers, especially at the two universities, Edinburgh and Glasgow, to have developed the habit of immediately assuming a primordial force for every phenomenon of human nature that is striking and cannot be explained directly at first glance... But in fact, it really means as much as renouncing the investigation of all principles if one directly attaches a first cause to a special effect and names this after that. (Garve, 1798, p.154)

In this way, Garve criticizes Hutcheson for simply designating a sole concept to explain all phenomena, thereby excusing himself from examining all other conceivable concepts. Garve also considers both Thomas Reid's (1710–96) theory of common sense and Smith's principle of exchange to be of an identical nature to Hutcheson's theory of moral sense.

Certainly, Garve denies the existence of a particular moral sense in human nature. To begin with, he argues that the object of sense must be simple and particular, while that of morality is comprehensive and universal. Man can indeed sense pleasure, but no sense can tell whether such pleasure is moral. Next, Garve points out that if man could instinctively tell right from wrong and virtue from vice, he would not need to resort to experience to guide moral behavior. He states ironically that otherwise, the most virtuous man would be in the most embarrassing situation to learn what his duty is. Lastly, Garve still finds it problematic to put morality on par with sense. He understands that a well-developed reason is a prerequisite for moral actions, and thus moral sense is improbable if reason is defective.

In contrast to his critique of Hutcheson, Garve's view of another Scottish moralist, namely Ferguson, appears laudatory.

He is not a mere philosopher of sentiment, but he regards man as created primarily for society and identifies most duties in patriotic acts and in the activity of promoting the welfare of humans and citizens in the true ancient Roman and British sense. (Garve, 1798, p.158)

Garve admires Ferguson as a philosopher who not only recognizes the importance of feeling but also concerns himself with the actual practice of morality. Ferguson's moral system, which relates man's true happiness to the pursuit of perfection, appeals to Garve in particular.

Ferguson's system is fundamentally truly stoic, free from strictness, overstatement, and paradox, and brings back its essential subject matter, which is that man can only find happiness in the ever-increasing perfection of his whole nature, and that only through an uninterrupted sequence of benevolent and patriotic acts, carried out with prudence and courage, can he increase this perfection throughout the whole life. (Garve, 1798, p.158)

Garve esteems Ferguson's moral philosophy as truly stoic, since it posits that true happiness can only be obtained through a lifelong pursuit of perfection. At this point, it is more than obvious that Garve sides with Ferguson primarily because his moral philosophy holds the pursuit of perfection as the ultimate end of morality.

This chapter has discussed Garve's intentions for practicing commentary and for choosing to translate Ferguson's moral philosophy. Garve practiced commentary to develop the skill of thinking. His preference for Ferguson over other Scottish moralists reflects his conception of moral philosophy as the pursuit of perfecting one's nature. It appears that for Garve, self-thinking is a prerequisite for the pursuit of perfection, which explains why Garve's comment on *IMP* emphasizes both of them.

## 6. Conclusion

This paper has investigated Garve's primary motive for translating Ferguson's *IMP*. Though initially planning to compose a compendium of morality, Garve ended up translating the recently published *IMP*, and, probably in order to follow his original plan, added a lengthy commentary which details his own position on what moral philosophy should be about. In a sense, Garve filled in the structure of *IMP* with his own concept of moral philosophy. His discussions of moral perfection, the being of God, and the inner good of virtue, appear to be intended as a guide to self-thinking for his readers. In the last chapter, this paper has shown that Garve primarily applied the method of commenting in order 'to wake up the more indolent reason of his readers and to bring their power to think into motion, which continues only for a while when the first-hand impact has ceased'<sup>10</sup>. More importantly, Ferguson was chosen from among the other Scottish moralists precisely because Garve understood the main theme of Ferguson's moral philosophy to be the pursuit of perfection.

Garve states near the end of his commentary that:

But I know it is much easier to express thoughts that one has had in oneself more perfectly than [to express] those that one gets from others. In the former case, the idea and the expression arise at the same time. They form each other and, therefore, also have the most meticulous match. In the latter case, the idea is already there, and words are to be found for them. Man must form the expression by himself in accordance with the idea [and therefore] this match is always an inadequate one. (Garve, 1772, p.420)

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<sup>10</sup> Wölfel (1985, p.xvii). Here, Wölfel referred to the last paragraph of Garve's comment on Lessing's *Laokoön*. For the original text, see *Allgemeine deutsche Bibliothek*, 1769, 9.1: 328–358.

Again, he seeks to persuade his readers to acquire ideas through self-thinking. It is more than obvious that self-thinking and the pursuit of perfection constitute the central theme in Garve's commentary on *IMP*, and in Garve's conception of moral philosophy more generally. Understanding why Garve felt the need to import such a moral philosophy into Germany will be the next task.

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