



The Never to Be Forgotten Hutcheson: Excerpts from W.R. Scott

W.R. Scott¹

[LINK TO ABSTRACT](#)

Prefatory Remarks to the W.R. Scott Excerpts

By Daniel B. Klein

In 1787, the principal of the University of Glasgow wrote to Adam Smith to notify him that he had been elected to the honorific position of rector of the University. Smith's letter of reply has been reproduced often in the Smith literature:

I accept with Gratitude and Pleasure the very great honour which the University of Glasgow have done me in electing me for the ensuing year to be the Rector of that illustrious Body. No preferment could have given me so much real satisfaction. No man can owe greater obligations to a Society than I do to the University of Glasgow. They educated me, they sent me to Oxford, soon after my return to Scotland they elected me one of their own members, and afterwards preferred me to another office, to which the abilities and Virtues of the never to be forgotten Dr Hutcheson had given a superior degree of illustration. The period of thirteen years which I spent as a member of that society I remember as by far the most useful, and, therefore, as by far the happiest and most honourable period of my life; and now,

1. Adam Smith Professor of Political Economy (1915-1940), University of Glasgow, Glasgow, U.K. G12 8QQ.

after three and twenty years absence, to be remembered in so very agreeable manner by my old friends and Protectors gives me a heartfelt joy which I cannot easily express to you. (Smith, *Corr.*, 308-309)

The phrase “never to be forgotten” had also been applied to David Hume in an even more famous letter by Smith, when Hume died in 1776 (*Corr.*, 220). The phrase “never to be forgotten” does not appear elsewhere in what we have of Smith’s writings and correspondence. Indeed, Hutcheson and Hume are generally thought to have been the two greatest influences on Smith.

Frances Hutcheson was born in 1694 in the Ulster Scot part of Ireland, of a Scottish Presbyterian family. He went to Scotland to study for six years at the University of Glasgow, Gershom Carmichael being one of his professors. He returned to Ireland in 1717, and then back to Glasgow in 1730 to join the faculty, and remained until his death in 1746.

The excerpts reproduced here are about Hutcheson the man, teacher, mentor, and professor at the University of Glasgow. They are not about Hutcheson’s writings, except in that the author, William R. Scott, expounds on the differences between Hutcheson the writer and Hutcheson the human presence.

Liberty Fund, the publisher and philanthropic organization, has produced four splendid, inexpensive volumes of Hutcheson’s works ([link](#)), and put the works online ([link](#)).

The following excerpts are drawn from William Robert Scott’s book *Frances Hutcheson: His Life, Teaching and Position in the History of Philosophy* (Cambridge University Press, 1900). The text has been retyped (for which we thank Kristen Donahue), preserving Scott’s original reference style. The numbering of the footnotes is ours, as are all brackets and the words enclosed within brackets, but only what is in brackets. We have added information about W.R. Scott, following the excerpts.

[The following is excerpted from Chap. IV, “Hutcheson’s Influence as a Professor,” specifically from 62-70, 74-76.]

About the middle of October [1730] Hutcheson arrived from Dublin, bringing eighteen or twenty of his old pupils with him². Upon October 29th he subscribed the Confession of Faith, and upon the 3rd of November was admitted “in numerum magistrorum³,” being publicly admitted on the 30th. [Robert] Wodrow, whose sympathies were rather with the old school, says he was “well

2. Wodrow’s *Analecta*, IV. P. 185.

3. Glasgow Univ. Records.

spoken of"; and, writing later in December, adds that "he was much commended," especially as he did not frequent taverns, like [Robert] Simson. "That he carried himself gravely" was in part due to grief for the loss of his father and one of his children. His chief friends were the William Anderson already mentioned and John M^cLauren, a minister, whose name is remembered as brother of a celebrated Edinburgh professor, a prominent Glasgow minister, writer of tracts, and as an unsuccessful candidate for the Chair of Divinity. "In party matters," Wodrow adds, "and some politicks, as to smaller matters, it's like[ly] he will be on the side with Mr Dunlop⁴," who was Professor of Greek, and, though far from a young man, was wholly on the side of reform and progress.

Hutcheson's first step was to discipline his class, "by keeping the students to rules, catalogues, exact hours &c. wherein there is certainly a very great decay⁵," and then to organize the class work. This was altogether a new departure, as, under the Regent system, much time was spent in elementary work. Hutcheson, instead of confining himself to an oral commentary in Latin upon some scholastic textbook, inaugurated a new method of lecturing in English, and he covered the whole field of "Natural Religion, Morals, Jurisprudence, and Government," in the five daily lectures he gave each week⁶. At first, he taught Pufendorf and the "*Compend*" of his predecessor [Gershom] Carmichael⁷, but later, he delivered written lectures with many digressions and additions, which were substantially the same as the *System of Moral Philosophy*, edited after his death by [William] Leechman, and which varied little from year to year⁸. On three days each week he co-operated with his friend [Alexander] Dunlop by lecturing upon ancient ethics, thereby fostering the renaissance of the study of Greek which both had at heart, besides following the Shaftesbury precept of inculcating the excellence of the moral systems of the ancients. Though these lectures were useful to the students, they were far from gaining the approval of Hutcheson's opponents, and it is probably this side of his work that called forth the elephantine satire of Witherspoon—"Recommending virtue from the authority and examples of the heathen is not only highly proper, because they were highly virtuous, but has this manifest advantage attending it, that it is a proper way of reasoning to two quite opposite kinds of persons... It is well known there are multitudes in our islands who reckon Socrates and Plato to have been greater men than the Apostles.... Therefore let religion be constantly and uniformly called virtue, and let the heathen philosophers be set up as the great patterns and promoters of it⁹."

4. Wodrow's *Analecta*, IV. Pp. 190-1.

5. *Ibid.*

6. Leechman's *Life of Hutcheson*, p. xxxvi.

7. Wodrow's *Analecta* IV. P. 185.

8. Leechman's *Life*, p. xxxiv.

Hutcheson also held private classes, like most of the other professors, which were largely attended by “tradesmen and youths from the town”; and, on Sundays, he gave lectures on the evidences of Christianity, and, either upon Sunday night or Monday morning, he examined his class very closely on the Sermon as well as his own lecture¹⁰. These Sunday lectures followed Grotius *De Veritate Religionis Christianae*, but the subject was treated both popularly and with eloquence, so that, as no fee was charged, there was always a very large outside audience¹¹.

Not only was the lecturing in English a new departure, but Hutcheson’s whole manner was a revelation to the students. He was in the habit of walking up and down “the arena of the room” as he spoke. “Since his elocution was good and his voice and manner pleasing, he raised the attention of his hearers at all times, and, when the subject led him to enforce his moral duties and virtues, he displayed a fervent and persuasive eloquence which was irresistible¹².” Leechman, who was later his colleague and biographer, mentions that “his happy talent of speaking with ease, with propriety and spirit, rendered him one of the most masterly and engaging teachers that has appeared in our age¹³.” He did not confine himself to the mere teaching of Philosophy, but aimed at making his students moral men, in other words his work included more of the act than the science of Ethics. Here he proved himself the disciple of Shaftesbury in his enthusiasm for virtue, which led him into frequent bursts of eloquence, in praise of all that was noble and beautiful in a rightly ordered life. Thus he dealt diffusively “upon such moral considerations as are suitable to touch the heart and raise a relish for virtue,” for he regarded the “culture of the heart as a main end of all moral instruction¹⁴.” Such lectures constituted a revolution in academic teaching. In his popular mode of expression, brightening his argument with the graces of oratory, and joining to the knowledge of the Professor the fervour of the preacher. The freshness of his thought, its departure from the usual academic spirit, his eloquence and earnestness all tend to justify the wonderful hold he had upon the minds of young men. But it needed something more to explain his remarkable personal influence, and here the keynote will be found in the fact that he was a Professor-preacher, intertwining, in a double expression, two different gospels, one the claim for modern spirit, for light and culture, the enthusiasm for Benevolence and Beauty; and the other, of an artistic nature, in so far as he endeavoured to mould the plastic youth minds around him into so many living realizations of his ethical ideal. Further, in his

9. Witherspoon’s *Works*, 2nd Edition, p. 17.

10. Wodrow’s *Analecta* IV. P. 185.

11. Carlyle’s *Autobiography*, p. 70.

12. *Ibid.*

13. Leechman’s *Life of Hutcheson*, pp. xxx, xxxi.

14. *Ibid.*

lectures on the State (which gave Adam Smith an interest in Political Economy), he always insisted “with the greatest strength of argument and earnestness of persuasion” upon the then burning question of civil and religious liberty; and as most young men are Idealists, if not Radicals, in politics, one can readily credit Leechman’s statement that “few, if any, of his pupils, ever left him without favourable notions of that side of the question which he espoused and defended¹⁵.”

It will have been seen that Hutcheson’s influence as an author was felt to a large degree outside the university, and that this influence was but a faint reflex of his own personal magnetism inside the class-room. He felt that his life-work lay in the moulding of young men’s characters, and mere academic teaching was always secondary to this. “What he thought, he loved; and what he taught, he was”—indeed, one might add, what he loved, he tried not merely to teach but to *make* his students¹⁶.

This side of Hutcheson’s life-work suggests the reflection of the diversity of the world’s monuments to great men—for, without doubt, Hutcheson was a great teacher, and that in the most important and difficult sphere, the university. Possibly it would have been almost better had “he scorned the untruth of leaving books behind” him, for his works give little clue to the force of speech that gave a new horizon to the Glasgow students of his day. Such notice as he has received depends upon his positive contributions to philosophy, drawn from these very works, and yet with him theory was always secondary to practice. He was in no sense a system-builder, but rather a teacher who *preached* Philosophy, to whom a positive system was little more than a text, and, it will be seen, these texts were drawn from different sources and not always quite consistently. And while those who have come after him have given him false honour for the discovery of a “moral sense” which was not his but Shaftesbury’s, or for the foundation of a “school” which involves a historical anachronism—his life, wherein lay his power, has been overlooked, and one is inclined to charge his contemporaries with lack of taste when they speak, as one man, of his personal charm, his earnest power of conviction, and remarkable or “irresistible” oratory. Still even here, on looking deeper, there is found a strange historical compensation; and that too the stranger, because it has worked unconsciously or automatically. While posterity has neglected Hutcheson’s true claim to fame, and left him without a real monument, all the time, history, tradition, or chance has given him the monument he himself would have chosen, for the didactic element in his teaching has become and remained a characteristic of the Chairs of Moral Philosophy in the Scottish universities—a feature found nowhere else—and continues a dominant influence

15. Leechman’s *Life of Hutcheson*, p. xxxvi.

16. Martineau, *Types of Ethical Theory*, II. p. 524.

down to the present day. In all other universities, where Philosophy is taught as an Arts subject (as apart from Theology) Mental and Moral Philosophy are on an exact footing of equality; in Scotland, on the other hand, there is a tradition, now, perhaps, half obliterated by time and progress, yet still very prevalent, especially outside the universities, that there should be a difference between the teaching of the two Chairs. Mental Philosophy is more precise and scientific, while Moral Philosophy is wider in its scope, more didactic, and supposed to exert an actual ethical influence—the force of this belief is still to be noticed in the preference of Theological students for Moral Philosophy. It is little curious to think that in the long range of Scottish Professors of Moral Philosophy, after Hutcheson, however far many of them may have diverged from his system and beliefs, all have been, more or less, according to their characters and surroundings, influenced, in the form of teaching, by the lost lectures delivered over a hundred and fifty years ago at Glasgow¹⁷.

The permanence of such an ideal is a most remarkable testimony to Hutcheson's influence, which would, possibly, only have endured in the conservative atmosphere of a university—one could scarcely mention a single maxim in a state-craft of the same date that remains a motive force in modern politics. This may in part be explained by the fact that, at this time, politics were governed, in a large degree, by the two Stuart rebellions (these nearly coinciding with Hutcheson's whole connection with Glasgow), which were unsuccessful; whereas Hutcheson's teaching was one element in a change—almost an academic revolution—which was so successful that antecedent conditions are of merely historical interest.

The power of this tradition of Hutcheson's methods naturally raises the question of the value of his educational aspirations; for it would appear that the Scottish universities are beginning to emerge from the influence of this ideal of last century. Owing to the empiricism of universities even yet, it is exceedingly difficult to give any definite answer. Is the ideal of a university to turn out morally good men, or intellectually strong men or is one a consequence of the other? Hutcheson's whole life was an eloquent defence of the first alternative, and, if modern higher education is to contain any didactic elements, these find a place most readily in the teaching of Moral Philosophy. Upon the other hand, it must be remembered, that since Hutcheson's day Modern Philosophy has been practically reborn, and that the limited time at the Professor's disposal, as well as the more minute analysis and greater technicality of the more important systems, practically

17. A recent instance of Hutcheson's enduring influence in Scotland may be noted in the tribute to his memory by Prof. James Seth in his Inaugural Lecture, Oct. 21, 1898, *The Scottish Contribution to Moral Philosophy*, pp. 7-17.

force the teacher to recognize, that entering upon didactic details is liable to involve a certain superficiality of treatment, and that, if “the heart is cultivated,” the head is likely to suffer. It will be seen, too, in the sequel that Hutcheson had certain ecclesiastical ends in view, and this throws some light upon the difficulty. In that contemplation of the wise, in the heavens, teaching such as Hutcheson’s would find its fittest place as an adjunct to the Theological School or College, where its eloquence and earnestness would be both of moral and educational value, while the more scientific exposition of the subject would be the proper care of the Arts Chair. At the same time, whatever may be the opinion formed upon methods of teaching Moral Philosophy, there can be little doubt that it is to Hutcheson’s, and the general acceptance of it, under different modifications, as applies to different subjects, that Scotland owes the peculiar clearness and finish of generality of the university lectures, which distinguish them from the professorial or tutorial teaching of other universities; and it was thus peculiarly appropriate that Hutcheson’s arrival at Glasgow almost coincided with the conversion of the “regents” into professors, for it was the standard he set as a lecturer, that made the paper change a really effective one.

Quite apart from Hutcheson’s activity in the class-room was another and even more important side of his work in the university or rather in the College. Complaints had often been made of the aloofness of the professors¹⁸. Hutcheson immediately set himself to remedy this. “He did not confine himself to the pupils immediately under his care, but laid himself out to be useful to the students of all the different faculties, whenever any opportunity offered: and he was especially solicitous to be serviceable to the students of Divinity, endeavoring, among other important instructions, to give them just notions of the main design of preaching¹⁹.” Not only did he take an active interest in the students, but he met them outside the class-room in a friendly spirit. His kindness of heart and freedom from false pride is shown by an anecdote of [Alexander] Carlyle, who was a student of Divinity in 1743-4. “Not long afterwards,” he writes, “I had certain proof of the candour and gentleness of this eminent Professor; for, when I had delivered a discourse in the Divinity Hall, it happened to please the Professor (Leechman) so much that Hutcheson wished to see it. When he read it he returned it with unqualified applause, though it contained some things which a jealous mind might have interpreted as an attack upon his favorite doctrine²⁰.” It was not only by advice and conversation that he aided students, but also, having since his father’s death a considerable private income, by more material help; to some

18. *A short account of the late Treatment of the Students of the University of Glasgow*, Dublin, 1722.

19. Leechman’s *Life of Hutcheson*, p. xxxviii.

20. Carlyle’s *Autobiography*, p. 101.

students who needed it, he gave money delicately, and admitted many others to his classes without requiring the usual fees²¹.

One can readily understand that he had a warm corner in his heart for students who had come like himself from Ireland, especially as some of these were relatives of his friends. These Irish students, so far from home—as far in time, then, as the American student in Europe is now—were subject to many temptations. A moderator of Synod of Ulster and graduate of Glasgow University sums up their position as follows: “They are left with little check or controul over them; they seldom brought letters of introduction; they had no acquaintance, and they kept almost entirely to themselves; even, in the Divinity Hall, they generally sat, in a back place, by themselves, and formed little acquaintance with the other students. Besides what they did there was unknown to their parents and guardians here; and, from what I have heard, I have no doubt that many of them fall into practices very dangerous to them²².” Many of the Professors used to dread the high spirits of the Irish students, who, less under restraint than the rest, seemed to have endeavored to shock the sober people of Glasgow. Reid always spoke of them as “the wild Irish teagues.” Hutcheson himself complains that “our countrymen very generally have such an affection of being men and gentlemen immediately and of despising everything in Scotland, that they neglect a great deal of good, wise instruction they might have here. I am truly mortified with a vanity and foppery prevailing among our countrymen, beyond what I see in others; and a sauntering forsooth which makes them incapable of any hearty drudgery at books. We have five or six young gentlemen, from Edinburgh, men of fortune and fine genius, at my class, and studying law. Our Irishmen thought them poor book-worms; and indeed they dreaded contracting acquaintance with Blackwood²³ and Haliday²⁴ in particular.”

Hutcheson acted as a banker, friend and guardian to all these youths, encouraging one or admonishing another. [...]

[...]

It will have been seen from Hutcheson’s efforts in this single instance that he was not merely a brilliant, enthusiastic lecturer, but the earnest and far-seeing friend of the student outside the class-room. Either side of his character would have won him the respect, which the Scotch student always yields unsparingly to his Professor, but both together made him venerated by the young men throughout the University. The ideal of life he showed them was such that “they panted to

21. Leechman’s *Life of Hutcheson*, p. xxvi.

22. *Christian Moderator*, II, p. 264.

23. Sir John Blackwood of Ballyleady, Co. Down.

24. A son of Haliday, a non-subscribing minister in Belfast, who had been senior colleague of Drennan, Hutcheson’s assistant in Dublin, to whom this letter is written.

be what they beheld²⁵.” “He spread such an ardour of knowledge,” Leechman says, “and such a spirit of enquiry everywhere around him, that the conversation of the students at their social walks and visits turned upon subjects of learning and taste, and contributed greatly to carry them forward in the most valuable pursuits²⁶.” When the impression he made was so powerful, it is little wonder that “students, advanced in years and knowledge,” paid him the remarkable tribute of attending his lectures four, five, or even six sessions²⁷.” Adam Smith, who attended his class in 1740, spoke of him as “the never to be forgotten Hutcheson.” Dugald Stewart sums up the impression of his work in the following passage: “Those who have derived their knowledge of Dr Hutcheson solely from his publications may perhaps be inclined to dispute the propriety of the epithet ‘eloquent,’ when applied to any of his compositions; more particularly when applied to the *System of Moral Philosophy*, which was published after his death, as the substance of his lectured in the University of Glasgow. His talents, however, as a public speaker must have been of a far higher order than what he has displayed as a writer; all his pupils whom I have happened to meet with (some of them, certainly, very competent judges) having agreed exactly with each other in their accounts of the extraordinary impression which they [i.e., Hutcheson’s talents] made on the minds of his hearers. I have mentioned, in the text, Mr. Smith as one of his warmest admirers; and to *his* name I shall take this opportunity of adding those of the late Earl of Selkirk, the late Lord President Miller, the late Dr Archibald Maclaine, the very learned and judicious translator of *Mosheim’s Ecclesiastical History*. My father²⁸, too, who had attended Dr Hutcheson’s Lectures, never spoke of them without much sensibility... His great and deserved fame in this country rests now chiefly on the traditionary history of his academical lectures, which appear to have contributed very powerfully to diffuse in Scotland that taste for analytical discussion and that spirit of liberal enquiry, to which the world is indebted for some of the most valuable productions of the eighteenth century²⁹.” Ramsay of Ochertyre says that “long after his death I have heard orthodox useful ministers, who spoke of their old Professor with enthusiastic veneration³⁰.” A more powerful testimony than any of these occurs in a tract, written as late as 1772—thirty-six years after Hutcheson’s death—expressly to discredit the methods of teaching at Glasgow. Amidst universal censure the writer is constrained to speak in high terms of “this illustrious teacher of morality, himself a

25. Leechman, *Life of Hutcheson*, p. xxxiii.

26. *Ibid.*, p. xxxvii.

27. *Ibid.*, p. xxxiii.

28. Dr Matthew Stewart, Professor of Mathematics at Edinburgh.

29. Smith’s Works, Ed. Stewart, v. pp. 523-5, Note B.

30. *Scotland and Scotsmen*, I. p. 276.

perfect and ready master of Greek and Latin. He introduced or revived a high taste for Classical learning in this place, and, while he lived, he kept it alive. If ever a professor had the art of communicating knowledge and of raising an esteem and desire of it in the minds of his scholars; if ever one had the magical power to inspire the noblest sentiments and to warm the hearts of youth with an admiration and love of virtue; if ever one had the art to create an esteem for Liberty and contempt for tyranny and tyrants, he was the man! What a pity was it, that, for three or four months a year, such superior talents should have been thrown away on metaphysical and fruitless disputations! When these were got over, how delightful and edifying it was to hear him³¹!”

[The following is excerpted from Chap. VIII, “Hellenic and Philanthropic Ideals,” specifically from 146-48.]

The whole tenour of Hutcheson’s life produces a vivid impression of the power of his personality. He was one of the rare spirits who exercise a gracious influence over those they meet. His ideal of life was high and his exposition of it, alike by word and deed, made both friends and students desirous of following his example. In Scotland he introduced—or rather revived—a spirit of culture and broadmindedness, and at the same time his own character was a living exemplar of lofty aims and noble aspirations. Therefore it is, that a distinct and definite influence is traceable to his personal magnetism, beyond that of most other thinkers and writers. The word that was spoken and, at the same time, *lived*, was the true vehicle in which he clothed his ideal; and, to this, his writings were of merely secondary importance. What he wrote seems to have an accidental character. All his works are mere *obiter dicta*, some “hastily written and published without his knowledge,” and others—such as the *System and Compendium Logicae*—he does not appear to have considered worthy of publication. With him Philosophy was essentially *living* and organic, it was an enthusiasm for the ideal, and as such was always active expression and endeavor, always free and fresh, and not to be stereotyped in the printed book. In fact, he shared with Shaftesbury the Stoic conception of Philosophy as the “Art of Life”; and under the analogy of the arts, which so powerfully dominated the outlook of both, Hutcheson recognized that Philosophy, being an art, cannot be taught, and all that can be done is to show right examples. Just as Esthetic culture grows out of the study of masterpieces, so he endeavoured to “teach morality,” by exhibiting a gallery of the world’s heroes, giving in place of a metaphysic of ethics, a cult of hero-worship. In this his quick

31. *The Defects of an University Education*, London, 1772, p. 9.

sympathy with what was noble made his subject near and living, while his eloquence fired the imagination of all who came in contact with him. Thus he understood teaching—partly, from his general position, as culture by familiarity with the most perfect originals; partly, perhaps, through a personal peculiarity, he needed an actual audience. The “reading public” was too vague and also too cold to fire his enthusiasm as a writer, and, therefore, from all that one can gather, his books are merely skeleton outlines of his real teaching. It was the power of this personal teaching that made his fame in Scotland, and that left permanent traces upon the education and thought of the country. Such an influence is difficult, if not impossible, to deal with. It remains apart from the books written by the man who exerts it; from contemporary evidence it is recognized as real at the time, yet in looking back from an interval it will be found to have been absorbed and assimilated, so that but few instances of its existence can be isolated and exhibited. How this influence operated, and how Hutcheson himself so lived to make his life his strongest argument, may perhaps be faintly gathered from the account already given of the main facts of his various activities; and it is to be regretted that the information available still leaves the data all too scanty.

Though Hutcheson’s literary expression of his views was altogether secondary to the purely personal one, still it exerted a considerable power outside the more favoured circle that he addressed by word of mouth—just as the sermons of a great preacher carry weight primarily as delivered, with all the power of oratory and religious accessories of time and place, and secondarily as printed in book form. Such a comparison too may be less inapt, when it is remembered that Hutcheson was, before all else, a preacher of morals, or as he himself would have said, of philosophy. This aspect of his character forces a comparison, or rather a contrast, between his writings and those of his greater contemporary, Butler. Hutcheson, nominally a professor, was in reality a preacher in the University; and it was in this character that his influence was most widely felt; while that of his books was of less importance. Butler, on the other hand, though a preacher by profession, has exerted a vastly greater power by his writings than by his *Sermons* as actually delivered—Hutcheson’s influence in fact passed directly into men; Butler’s remained in his books.

[The following is excerpted from “Conclusion,” pp. 285-88.]

Hutcheson’s strength lay in his personality. He was a preacher, not a system builder. His personal magnetism and method of lecturing were his main influences. The first brought him his audience, the second taught it. Shaftesbury had enlightened the Upper Classes in England; through Hutcheson the same

movement extended from the University to the masses. Thus Philosophy was brought home to the people and formed a part of the culture of every educated man. That Hutcheson was a Philosopher of the Enlightenment constitutes his chief claim upon posterity. This single title unites his liberalizing influence in the University, his efforts towards a higher standard of culture amongst the clergy, and his eclectically popular type of thought. These characteristics centre round and gain impetus from the magnetism of his character and fascinating personality. He not only popularized Philosophy but made it attractive—indeed to the stern Calvinistic spirit of his time it appeared that he made right living too alluring and that rectitude manifesting itself “in a lovely form” was a dangerous concession to human weakness. But the popularization of abstract thought by an uninteresting person is far from stimulating. Research, however rude or repellant in expression, possesses a certain charm as bringing with it contact with the library or laboratory. The writer, in this case, holds the reader at his mercy, and the latter must bear with vices of style as the price to be paid for the fruition of the discoveries they record. The lecturer or writer, who endeavours to popularize his subject, occupies a totally different position. The bait he must offer to attract an audience is to be interesting. All contemporary evidence points to the fact that Hutcheson succeeded in this, both personally and as a lecturer. So much so indeed that he impressed his ideal of the teaching of Moral Philosophy upon the Scottish Universities and, strange to say, it has persisted almost down to the present.

The didactic element in Hutcheson’s lectures cannot be too strongly insisted upon. His aim was not to give his students a system of morality which would bear the searchlight of keen logical scrutiny, but rather to saturate them with a code of ethics, by which they could live—or, if need be, die by. In his own words he aimed at “touching the heart” and raising “an enthusiasm for the cause of virtue.” Thus he never intended, in all probability, to systematise his indebtedness to his predecessors, in fact his borrowings were rather texts adopted for special occasions³². He was the sworn foe of every degraded or degrading estimate of human nature, and, like any man of generous and impulsive temperament, seeing a wrong done to humanity, he snatched at the first weapon that came to his hand. So, when Mandeville obliterated the line dividing right from wrong, he caught at the Platonic and Stoic arguments as well as the vague Hellenic impressions of Shaftesbury. To expect consistency under these conditions is to misconceive the circumstances and the man. Enthusiasm sweeps beyond the bounds of the logical syllogism, and enthusiasm was Hutcheson’s goal. If the expression may be used,

32. It has been shown that Leechman actually endeavoured to supply a methodology for Eclectic procedure in his Synod Sermon. If he was indebted to Hutcheson for material, the sentence quoted (p. 87) would constitute Hutcheson’s own justification of his method.

he was an *artistic* lecturer, whose whole attention was concentrated upon the result, not upon the logical steps by which it was attained. In fine, to repeat a word used by Shaftesbury, he was primarily a “maker” of moral men, not a constructive thinker.

This very weakness of thought, when compared with the greater systems, was precisely his strength in his own day when reinforced by a personal charm and moral earnestness, such as his. Neither the time nor the country was ripe for a thoroughly consistent and coherent system. If this statement be questioned, it is only necessary to refer to the chilling reception given to Hume’s *Treatise*, even after the way had been prepared by Hutcheson. Just as Shaftesbury’s mission was to make Art indigenous in England, so it was Hutcheson’s to make Philosophy indigenous in Scotland. How much greater success attended his efforts as compared with those of Shaftesbury may be gathered from a comparison of modern British Art and Philosophy. Thus, in fact, Hutcheson is a prominent figure in the renaissance of speculative enquiry in Scotland; and, to his honour be it recorded, that this “taste,” which does not appear in his list of senses, has remained more permanent than any of the others—it has even been asserted to be “natural” to the Scottish character³³.

To foster the taste for Philosophy was Hutcheson’s main work. It would be unreasonable to expect that he also created a Philosophy. On the contrary, he did something better under the peculiar circumstances. By compiling an anthology of the “golden thoughts,” both of ancient and modern Philosophy, he left his successors a legacy, which contained much that was best in past thought, and thereby forced them to enter upon their work in continuity with ancient speculation. Indeed, instead of starting the new impetus of thought in Scotland, as has been too often represented, upon a provincial basis, his aim was exactly the opposite; and, as a matter of fact, solely through his exertions and his eclectic teaching, the material he provided was more cosmopolitan than the similar work undertaken later in Germany and France—or indeed than any other last century [i.e. the eighteenth century].

When thoroughly realized, this achievement is a greater one than any of those with which Hutcheson’s name is generally associated. He possessed unique gifts—not those of a system builder—which made a fresh departure in British thought possible. For this he prepared the way. He gathered very many seeds, from practically unknown granaries of thought, and sowed them broadcast, only caring that they should germinate and that the crop should be luxuriant. To winnow the harvest and divide the wheat from the tares, the useful from the merely ornamental, was the work he bequeathed to his successors.

33. Mackintosh *Dissertation*, p. 207, note.

About the Author

William R. Scott (1868-1940) earned his M.A. at Trinity College, Dublin and D.Phil at St. Andrews. He taught at St. Andrews beginning 1896 and from 1900 to 1915 as Lecturer in Political Economy, and then moved to Glasgow to become the Adam Smith Professor of Political Economy (1915-1940). In 1940 J.H. Clapham (*Economic Journal* 50: 347-51) wrote: "By the quite unexpected death of W. R. Scott in his seventy-second year, the Royal Economic Society loses an Ex-President and a Vice-President, the Economic History Society its President, Glasgow the Adam Smith Professor, the British Academy its Treasurer, several other societies a high and valued officer, and his friends one whose sheer goodness and integrity of character were as conspicuous as his learning, his industry and his public spirit. ... Scott wrote the most massive book of research in economic history of our time. ... the three big, packed volumes of *The Constitution and Finance of English, Scottish and Irish Joint-Stock Companies to 1720* (1910-12). Manuscripts of all sorts and widely scattered, a most impressive multitude of pamphlets and early newspapers, with all the usual historians' sources, were used ... His *Adam Smith as Student and Professor* (1937) contained ... biographical detail of many sorts, with new evidence on the growth of Smith's thought ... I have spoken of his modesty and his goodness. To watch Scott at work with some difficult character was a lesson in patience and applied morality ... He was deeply affectionate; had the strongest family feeling and for many years a home life that was above every other thing to him."

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