

Institution: University of St Andrews



Unit of Assessment: 32 – Philosophy

Title of case study: History of Philosophy in the Public Sphere



1. Summary of the impact

Researchers in the history of philosophy at the University of St Andrews have brought their findings into public discourse both within Scotland and beyond. St Andrews philosophers have particular expertise in the tradition of Scottish philosophy, and in finding a place for that tradition in the Scotland of today. They also show the continuing vitality and relevance of the thought of major figures from beyond Scotland, such as Thomas Aquinas and Immanuel Kant. Through media outlets, continuing discussions with audiences outwith the academic world, and relationships with contemporary artists, philosophers at St Andrews are involved in on-going conversation with the larger community about what the philosophical tradition has to offer us in today's world.

2. Underpinning research

Professor John Haldane, a researcher at the University of St Andrews since 1983, has explored aspects of medieval aesthetics, ethics, philosophy of mind, metaphysics and religion, and published widely since the late 1980s in these areas. In addition, he has built on the work of earlier generations of philosophers in developing a philosophical approach that synthesises ideas and arguments of Aquinas with the methods and achievements of analytical philosophy, which he termed 'Analytical Thomism'. This has been taken up and is the subject of print and online encyclopaedia entries, internet discussions, as well as academic publications, e.g. *Analytical Thomism: Traditions in Dialogue* (Ashgate 2006). Haldane's principal writings relevant to this research are (with JJC. Smart) *Atheism and Theism* (2nd Edition, Blackwell, 2003), *Faithful Reason* (Routledge, 2004) [1], and *Reasonable Faith* (Routledge, 2010) [2], in all of which the broad Analytical Thomist approach is developed. Haldane has also pursued research on Reid and his contemporaries, producing four edited journal special issues including co-edited issues of the *Philosophical Quarterly* (2002) and of the *Monist* (2006).

Hume and the Scottish Enlightenment more generally are the principal subjects of recent research by **James Harris**, Reader, in post since 2004. In a series of articles published in journals and edited collections, Harris has explored the contexts for the philosophical projects of eighteenth-century Scots, examining in particular the role played by theological concepts in the period's moral philosophy [3], and the ways in which key figures of the Scottish Enlightenment engaged with and adapted ideas derived from the philosophical schools of Ancient Greece and Rome (Stoicism and Epicureanism in particular). He has been developing a comprehensive interpretation of the intellectual biography of David Hume, an interpretation that explores the origins of Hume's philosophical thought, and is able to make sense of the fact that Hume made significant contributions, not only to philosophy, but also to political theory, political economy, and political history [e.g., 4]. Harris has also prepared new editions of texts that, while influential in the eighteenth century, have since been neglected by historians of philosophy.

Craig Smith (Lecturer, 2007 – December 2012) specializes in eighteenth-century Scottish thought, in particular Adam Smith and Adam Ferguson. His main focus has been on the methodology of the

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'science of man' in the Scottish Enlightenment. In a series of articles he has explored the implications of the Scottish focus on unintended consequences for the theoretical consideration of social, political and economic phenomena. [5] Perhaps the most famous iteration of this idea is Adam Smith's 'invisible hand'. Work on this concept led to articles on the legacy of the Scottish Enlightenment for contemporary social and political thought. Smith has engaged in the continuing controversy over Adam Smith's alleged relationship to contemporary political thinkers of the left and right. He is interested in conceptual history, the evolution of ideas and the development and coherence of traditions of thought. In addition to his academic work on political philosophy, Smith has contributed to policy papers that seek to apply the lessons of the Scottish Enlightenment to contemporary political issues.

Professor Roger Scruton, Professorial Fellow, in post since 2011, has a longstanding interest in Kantian ideas, particularly in relation to the beautiful and the sublime, and drew upon this interest in his Gifford Lectures at St Andrews, published as *The Face of God* [6]

3. References to the research

[1] John Haldane, *Faithful Reason: Essays Catholic and Philosophical* (Routledge, 2004). [Book] Evidence of quality: major publisher; reprints 13 articles originally published since 1993 (plus some earlier pieces); original sources included edited volumes from Cambridge University Press, Princeton University Press, and Blackwell, and peer-reviewed journals.

[2] John Haldane, *Reasonable Faith* (Routledge, 2010). [Book] Evidence of quality: major publisher; described as 'provid[ing] a model for how the religious philosopher can move the debate forward without throwing out much of what is important to him' (*Analysis*), and as 'intriguing philosophical explorations' (*Philosophical Quarterly*).

[3] James Harris, 'Religion in Hutcheson's Moral Philosophy', *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 46 (2008): 205-22. DOI: [10.1353/hph.0.0017](https://doi.org/10.1353/hph.0.0017) [Article] Evidence of quality: significant peer-reviewed journal; cited in *The Historical Journal*, and *Journal of Scottish Philosophy* (x2); on reading list for module HIST10339 at University of Edinburgh.

[4] James Harris, "'A compleat chain of reasoning': Hume's Project in *A Treatise of Human Nature*, Books I and II", *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 109 (2009): 129-48. DOI: [10.1111/j.1467-9264.2009.00261.x](https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9264.2009.00261.x) [Article] Evidence of quality: significant journal; cited in *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science*, and in *Hume Studies*.

[5] Craig Smith, 'The Scottish Enlightenment, Unintended Consequences and the Science of Man', *Journal of Scottish Philosophy* 7 (2009): 9-28. DOI: [10.3366/E1479665108000304](https://doi.org/10.3366/E1479665108000304) [Article] Evidence of quality: well-regarded peer-reviewed journal; cited by Wolloch, by Sebastiani, and in the *Brill Companion to Enlightenment Historiography*.

[6] Roger Scruton, *The Face of God: The Gifford Lectures* (Continuum, 2012). [Book] Evidence of quality: well-regarded publisher; described as 'profound and important' (Piers Benn, *Philosophical Quarterly*).

4. Details of the impact

Philosophers at St Andrews have engaged in a variety of activities which have interested and involved the wider community in discussions surrounding the history of philosophy. The purpose has been to draw attention to an aspect of our heritage that is too frequently hidden from most people's view, especially here in the UK where philosophy is generally not taught during the course of ordinary school education. When people are introduced to ideas drawn from the philosophical tradition, the results can be transformative and empowering. Issues of deep yet everyday concern are given a historical dimension, with the result that people come to understand their own beliefs,

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and the beliefs of others, in new and sometimes surprising ways.

Impact via broadcast media

Media appearances have proved to be particularly effective means to these ends. John Haldane and James Harris have appeared on Melvyn Bragg's BBC Radio 4 programme *In Our Time* to discuss Aquinas (Haldane, 17 September 2009, drawing on research including [1]), Maimonides (Haldane, 17 February 2011), Hume (Harris, 6 October 2011, drawing on research including [4]), and the ontological argument for the existence of God (Haldane, 27 September 2012). *In Our Time* has a regular audience of around two million listeners [S1]. Each programme is available as a downloadable podcast. Online comments describe the Aquinas programme as "excellent", "lucid", and "brilliant", with one person saying "for the first time I developed a real sense of the relationship between Platonism and Aristotelianism" [S2], whilst listeners to Harris on Hume said "after listening to your programme, I went back and re-read Peirce [on Hume]", calling the programme "fascinating" and "a great show" [S3]. In January 2010 Craig Smith appeared with Antony Giddens and Naomi Klein on the BBC World Service programme *Business Daily* to discuss the economic and political ideas of Adam Smith (drawing on research including [5]). No specific audience figures are available but the World Service as a whole has a weekly audience of approximately forty million [S4].

Impact via print

We have written regularly for non-specialist magazines and newspapers with large and diverse readerships. Haldane writes frequently for *The Scotsman*, among other print outlets, and has used his column to show the relevance to modern questions of philosophers such as Hume and Thomas Reid, and of the Scottish Enlightenment more generally (drawing on the research of Harris and Smith, e.g. [3], [4] and [5]). Haldane's writing in *The Scotsman* reliably generates comment. One reader on his Hume piece, for example, wrote: "Any more of this stuff and people will start regarding *The Scotsman* as a serious newspaper". Harris has written on Hume for *The RSA Journal*, the main readership of which is the approx. 25 000 Fellows of the RSA (motto: 21st Century Enlightenment), but which is also available to all online. He has written on Reid for *The Philosopher's Magazine*, a magazine intended to bring philosophy to a popular audience (including school students), drawing on his [3] and [4]. *The Philosopher's Magazine* has a vibrant online presence, and Haldane has written a blog post there on the Scottish Enlightenment, described in the comment thread as "heart-warming" [S5]. Mention should also be made here of Craig Smith's book (written with Tom Miers) *Democracy and the Fall of the West* (Imprint Academic, 2011). This book, which draws in part on Smith's work on Adam Smith and the liberal tradition, is intended for a wide, non-specialist audience, and has provoked substantial comment on the web [e.g., S6, S7].

Impact via personal interactions

We have given several lectures to large non-academic audiences. 2010 was the tercentenary of the birth of Reid and 2011 the tercentenary of the birth of Hume, and both anniversaries were the occasion of events that drew large public audiences. In April 2010 Haldane spoke on Reid at the Royal Society of Edinburgh. The lecture is available on YouTube and has been viewed almost 2000 times [S8]. In May 2011 Harris spoke on Hume to an audience of approximately 100 at the Institute for Advanced Study in the Humanities at Edinburgh. In July 2011 Harris organised a major international conference on Hume in Edinburgh. The plenary sessions of the conference were open to the public, and a lecture by the Nobel laureate Amartya Sen drew an audience of close to 1 000. The conference was reported on in the local media, and Harris contributed to a Newsnight Scotland segment on the conference. The segment is on YouTube and has been viewed over 700 times [S9]. We have also been invited to speak on themes from the history of philosophy in a variety of non-academic settings: Smith has given talks to Loretto High School (audience c. 40) and the Dimensional Investment Fund (audience c. 100), whose 'company philosophy' is 'markets work'. Harris spoke on the Scottish Enlightenment to the 2010 annual meeting of the Royal Society of Anaesthetists (audience c. 300). Smith and Harris organized a session on the Scottish tradition of political thought at the 2012 Festival of Politics, part of that year's Edinburgh Festival. All 80 tickets were reserved prior to the event. In all these instances, researchers are drawing on their own and their colleague's published research, including the items cited in section 3, and earlier publications.

Impact in the art world

We have brought our work in the history of philosophy into dialogue with contemporary artists with significant followings. In April 2010 Haldane organized a 'Festival of Philosophy' at St Andrews that featured philosophical and musical exchanges between Roger Scruton and the composer James Macmillan. This event was open to the public, as were Scruton's Gifford Lectures at St Andrews of the same year. These lectures were published as *The Face of God* in 2012, and the book has been widely reviewed and commented upon [e.g., S10].

Haldane's intellectual influence has been acknowledged by Turner Prize shortlisted artist David Tremlett. Tremlett made a grid-text piece entitled 'Faithful Reason p. 104, 2010', based on Haldane's text *Faithful Reason* [S11] He also commissioned Haldane to write a catalogue essay for an exhibition 'Walls' in Italy (2010) and to deliver a public lecture in connection with a major exhibition of his work at the Hamburg Kunsthalle (2011).

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

[S1] <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/tvandradio/8371699/Who-says-Britain-is-dumbing-down.html> (verifies audience figures for *In Our Time*)

[S2] <http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/features/in-our-time/comments/b00mkd63/> (source for audience response to Aquinas edition of *In Our Time*)

[S3] http://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/radio4/posts/the_in_our_time_newsletter_dav (source for audience response to Hume edition of *In Our Time*)

[S4] <http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/programmes/wbrbd09w.pdf> (verifies audience figures for World Service)

[S5] <http://philosophypress.co.uk/?p=563#comments> (source for audience response to Haldane on Scottish Enlightenment)

[S6] <http://dickpuddlecote.blogspot.co.uk/2012/09/democracy-does-not-equal-freedom.html> (example of non-academic blog discussing Smith's research)

[S7] http://www.amazon.co.uk/Democracy-Fall-Societas-Craig-Smith/dp/1845402154/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1380297547&sr=8-1&keywords=craig+smith+democracy (Amazon reader reviews as evidence of discussion of Smith's research)

[S8] <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4AVWHvfNxEU> (Download figures for RSE lecture on Reid.)

[S9] <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W6AOCTI4XEI> (Download figures for Harris on Newsnight.)

[S10] <http://www.economist.com/node/21549915/print> (Review of Scruton.)

[S11] <http://www.davidtremlett.com/attachments/books/565/1> (Image of Tremlett artwork.)