

PART III

SOURCES, INFLUENCE AND CONCLUSIONS

CHAPTER I

SOURCES OF TUCKER'S THOUGHT

THE sources from which Tucker obtained his economic facts and ideas were of three kinds: I. Previous economic writers. II. Parliamentary reports and state papers, statutes, histories, and special collections of economic data. III. His own observations and original thought upon the economic relations of men and things.

I. DEBT TO OTHER WRITERS

Tucker was acquainted with the work of the leading writers preceding his author-day. He quotes or refers to William Petty, Josiah Child, Joshua Gee, Harrington, Mandeville, Berkeley, Ustariz, and Montesquieu. He does not mention Sir Dudley North. It does not appear that any of these writers, with the exception of Montesquieu, exercised any direct influence upon Tucker which is worth noticing.

Petty is merely referred to as having believed that England could sustain a larger population.¹ Gee is criticized because he was despondent, and alleged so great a balance

¹ *Reflect. Nat. For. Prot.*, Part ii, p. 18.

of trade against Great Britain "that for sixty years past, according to his figures, we should not have had a shilling, . . . yet we have lavished £150,000,000 on useless wars."¹ Harrington is referred to as a writer of moderate ability, who, "himself a gentleman," maintained that only gentlemen were fit to rule, and "proceeded to discover a gentleman ancestor for his darling megaleter, Oliver Cromwell."² Mandeville's *Fable* is characterized as an "absurdity."³ The one idea from Berkeley which seems to have remained with Tucker is his query whether a man might not be proprietor of twenty square miles in America and yet be in want for a dinner.⁴ It is not improbable that Tucker may have adopted from Berkeley his frequent use of the query⁵ form of presenting an argument. Ustariz is mentioned in two⁶ of Tucker's works, and from his treatise Tucker secured many of the facts relative to Spanish history and economic conditions, which he used illustratively in his writings.

Josiah Child is oftener referred to than any of the above-mentioned authors, and his works found favor in Tucker's eyes. In *Instructions for Travellers*,⁷ he recommends Child's treatise on trade as the leading work under his division on

¹ *Cui Bono*, p. 74.

² *Letters to Shelburne*, pp. 88-91.

³ *Essay on Trade*, 3rd ed., p. 130.

⁴ This query is twice referred to: *Four Tracts* pp. 64 and 216.

⁵ The whole of *Reflect. Nat. For. Prot.*, Part ii, is in this *Querist* style.

⁶ *Reflect. Nat. For. Prot.*, Part i, p. 61, and *Elements*, p. 148, both mention *The Theory and Practise of Commerce*, by "Don Geronimo Ustariz, one of the lords of trade to his Catholic Majesty of Spain." The work of Ustariz is a critical commentary upon the commercial history and conditions of European countries, closing with a practical program for revivifying Spanish industry and trade. It makes no attempt at scientific exposition of general economic principles.

⁷ pp. 5 and 9.

"Commerce and Taxes." Child is quoted with approval ¹ several times, but Tucker's knowledge of human nature leads him to explain why Child made an exception of the East India Company when he was advocating open trade. "Sir Josiah, himself, was the chairman of that company, and his brother the chief governor abroad." ² Since Tucker approves Child's writings so generally, and ranks them so highly in advising others as to their reading, it seems reasonable to suppose that Tucker learned much from Child. But Tucker has left a direct statement to the contrary. In the *Elements* ³ he criticizes Child's claim that the East India Company was necessary to maintain forts. He prefaces this criticism with the remark:

"Sir Josiah Child (with whom the writer of these sheets had the honor to agree in every other commercial point, before he had read his book) etc."

This is express testimony that Tucker had worked out his thought-system without any assistance from Child.

Tucker probably learned from Montesquieu that environment is a most important factor in explaining human institutions. *L'Esprit de Lois* is recommended ⁴ by Tucker as one of the three works on "Ethics, Civil Law, and Government in General," which his traveler should study. His comment is: "The Spirit of Laws by Mr. de Montesquieu is

¹ See *Essay on Trade*, pp. ix and x, and *Reflect. Nat. For. Prot.*, Part ii, p. 14.

² *Reflect. on Turkey Trade*, p. 5.

³ *Elements*, p. 95. Tucker here again notes that Child was "Chairman and director of the company at home, and his brother, John Child, was their governor abroad."

⁴ *Instruct. for Trav.*, p. 5.

superior to all eulogiums whatever.”¹ The entire *Instructions for Travellers* is framed according to the Montesquieu idea. The young traveler is first advised to keep before himself such questions as how far the looks, numbers, behaviour, clothing, food, dwelling, agriculture, manufacture, arts and sciences are due to soil and climate, to the peculiar genius and inventions of the people, to the spirit of the constitution, and to religious principles.² The remainder of the work consists of illustrative queries and answers concerning British people and conditions. Montesquieu is to be credited with influencing the development of Tucker’s historic sense.

Tucker was also in touch with at least two contemporary writers who might have influenced him in his economic productions. They were Hume and Turgot. Rightly to estimate their influence, it must be remembered that Tucker had developed substantially his whole system of economic thought by the close of his economic decade, in 1758. There is no evidence that prior to 1758 Tucker had been acquainted with either of the men in any way. The correspondence with Hume did not begin until 1758, and that with Turgot not until 1770.³ There is nothing to show that Hume’s political essays (1752) influenced Tucker in any way. He had expressed his thought upon the trade balance and upon the philosophy of exchange in the *Essay on Trade*⁴ (1749), so that he did not derive these from Hume’s essays. It is possible that Hume’s discussion of the jealousy of trade between nations may have stimulated Tucker, to some extent,

¹ *Instruct. for Trav.*, p. 7. See *Elements*, p. 101, for the only exception Tucker takes to any of Montesquieu’s ideas. He there denies the allegation that Oriental people do not desire English wares.

² *Instruct. for Trav.*, p. 10.

³ See *ante*, pp. 32, 33 and 67, for data as to these correspondences.

⁴ *Essay on Trade, Introduction*, pp. v and vi.

towards his own later amplification of this theme. Beyond this mere possibility, neither Hume nor Turgot had opportunity to impress their thought upon Tucker until after he had worked out his system of economic thought to substantial completeness.

Two facts make it certain that the Physiocratic school had no influence¹ in shaping Tucker's economic thought: (1) the *Elements*, containing Tucker's entire economic thought, at least in full outline, was printed in 1755, the year in which Cantillon's *Essai sur le Commerce*, the first of the Physiocratic works, was published; (2) Tucker did not read French readily,² and therefore could not have carried on extensive correspondences with Frenchmen, nor could he have read French manuscripts prior to 1755.

Tucker does not mention either James Steuart or Adam Smith. The *Wealth of Nations* appeared after his economic work was done. There is nothing in any of his writings to indicate that he knew anything about this great work.

There is but one topic of any length and importance, in all of Tucker's writings, which he has taken almost bodily from the writings of another man. This is a plan for a single tax, taken from an anonymous pamphlet.³ He presents this plan simply for its interest as an ideal tax-system,

¹ It is extremely unlikely that the plagiarized portions of Cantillon's *Essai* which appeared in Postlethwayt's *Universal Dictionary of Trade and Commerce* (1751, 1st ed.), exercised any influence upon Tucker.

² In his letter to Tucker, dated Dec. 10, 1773, Turgot apologizes for writing in French saying that English is difficult for him and that a mutual friend, Mr. Bostock, may translate the letter for Tucker. See Turgot, *Oeuvres* (Paris, 1810), vol. ix, p. 370.

³ *An Essay on the Causes and Decline of Foreign Trade*, London, 1744. Printed for J. Brotherton. Quoted by Tucker in *Essay on Trade*, 3rd ed., pp. 124, 131, 133 and 148 to 168.

and he frankly acknowledges his debt and gives full credit ¹ to the pamphlet.

The practical plan for taxation which Tucker advocates is very different from this ideal plan. This practical plan, which he proposed and consistently advocated as a practical system, was original with himself. He testifies directly upon this point. In the *Elements* he asks for the criticisms and suggestions of friends,² saying that he cannot hope to succeed, in the remainder of his planned work, without their aid,

“especially that relating to taxes For indeed the reasons on the moral tendency and commercial use of proper taxes have never yet been exhibited to the public; or if they have, the author hath not been so happy as to meet with them; and therefore, since he must consider them as a *new system*, he would be the more desirous of producing it finished and complete etc.”³

The evident conclusion from this consideration of the influence which economic writers, precedent and contemporary, had upon Tucker, is that he was very slightly indebted to them. A general impression left from reading the works of such writers may have given him his mercantilism and may have inspired his opposition to privileged companies; more probably it tended, as was the undoubted case with reference to Josiah Child's writings, to confirm him in views which he had culled from current thought or had worked out for himself. But whatever debt he may have

¹ See *Essay on Trade*, pp. 148 *et seq*, for this plan, and p. 149 for explicit acknowledgment of the source: “The scheme is taken out of a quarto pamphlet which would do honor to any man, etc.”

² It will be remembered that only 50 or 60 copies of this first rough draft and outline of Tucker's great work were privately printed and circulated among friends for criticism, etc.

³ *Elements*, p. 169.

owed, possibly, with reference to trade thought, his systematization of economics, with all of its expressed connotations, his emphasis upon self-interest, his taxation theories, his opposition to colonies, were clearly his own contributions. He appears to have been unusually independent of earlier writers. He certainly believed his system of economic thought to be original. In the *Advertisement* of the *Elements* he apologizes to the reader for his elaboration of every point, saying:

"as his manner of treating the subject is entirely new, he is obliged to be more explicit in setting it forth. For in a new system, everything must be proved, etc."

II. REPORTS, STATUTES, &C.

Attention has already been called¹ to the fact that Tucker made frequent use of first-hand materials. A few examples may be here mentioned. When making his attack upon the privileged companies, he quoted freely from a report in the "3d of James I," by Sir Edward Sandys, giving reasons for destroying trade monopolies. The quotations and comments upon this report occupy twelve quarto pages,² the abstracts from the report serving as texts from which Tucker develops an entire argument against privileged companies.

There are many citations to such sources as *Journals of the House of Commons*, Townshend's *Historical Collections*, British Statutes, and the *British Merchant*.³

Tucker's warehouse scheme was adopted by him from a

¹ See *ante*, pp. 40, 41 and 95 to 103.

² *Elements*, pp. 155 to 167.

³ He characterizes the *British Merchant* as a "Book . . . which will be remembered as long as any regard for commerce or love of our country shall remain." *Reflect. Nat. For. Prot.*, Part i, p. 55.

proposal for warehouses made by Sir Robert Walpole. Tucker commends the plan frankly as "Walpole's 'excise scheme.'" ¹

These are but illustrations. Tucker's works are replete with references to statutes, to parliamentary records, to reports of special commissions, to historical documents, and to historical collections. It is evident that he preferred to study records of facts and speeches, or documents, bearing directly upon public problems, rather than the opinions and speculations of economic writers.

III. PERSONAL OBSERVATION.

Tucker's own personal observations furnished him much material and suggested to him much of his best thought. Bristol was a working laboratory in economics for him. He studied human nature very observantly; that he was habitually introspective is proven by his many statements of aims and interests. His analyses of wants and of self-interest, and his conclusion that self-interest is the supreme economic motive, are direct results of his study of human nature. The life of his works is born of reflection upon the facts of commercial and industrial life and of human nature, which he observed. Tucker was essentially a constructive student of life in his own world and in the world of history; he was not an echo author, who simply recast the ideas of other writers.

¹ *Elements*, p. 148.