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## EDITIONS AND TRANSLATIONS OF DAVID HUME'S POLITICAL DISCOURSES (1752)

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### ABSTRACT

*The paper contains an historical analysis of the editions and translations of David Hume's Political Discourses (1752).*

It is not possible not to examine the connection between David Hume's various writings-economic, political, philosophical and historical but if we consider the Italian published translations, we could describe the situation as follows: in the eighteenth century Hume is the political writer, in the nineteenth century the historian, in the twentieth century the metaphysician. But this is of course no more than a first approach and requires some qualifications. In the eighteenth-century in Italy Hume is mainly the author of the economic essays included in the *Political Discourses*<sup>1</sup>. In the three year period (1753-1756) Hume collected his writings on various subjects, previously published, in four volumes<sup>2</sup>. Going back

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1 1 Hume, David (1752) *Political Discourses*, Edinburgh: A. Donaldson, A. Kincaid, printed by R. Fleming. «Nel 1752 furono pubblicati ad Edimburgo, dove allora vivevo, i miei Discorsi politici, l'unica delle mie opere che abbia avuto successo fin dalla prima pubblicazione; fu bene accolta in patria e fuori»: D. Hume, *Autobiografia*, in Dal Pra, Ronchetti (1974), p. 168. In 1752 we have two editions with the same contents (twelve essays): 1. Of commerce. 2. Of luxury. 3. Of money. 4. Of interest. 5. Of the balance of trade. 6. Of the balance of power. 7. Of taxes. 8. Of public credit. 9. Of some remarkable customs. 10. Of the populousness of ancient nations. 11. Of the Protestant succession. 12. Idea of a perfect commonwealth. Of the Protestant succession was written by February 1748, when Hume mentions it as a new essay to be added to his 1748 edition of *Essays moral and political*. In the 1758 edition of *Essays and Treatises*, 'Of the original contract' and 'Of passive obedience' were added (these originally appeared in the *Three Essays* of 1748); the 1760 edition of *Essays and Treatises* added 'Of the jealousy of trade' and 'Of the coalition of parties', and altered the title 'Of luxury' to 'Of refinement in the arts'. In their ultimate form, the *Political Discourses* thus numbered sixteen.

2 *Essays and Treatises* on several subjects (1753-1756): the first volume contains *Essays, moral and political* (1753-1a ed. 1741). The title of these and the following essays was changed in to *Essays, moral, political and literary* in the 1758 edition of *Essays and Treatises*. The second volume contains *Philosophical essays* (1756-1a ed. 1748) concerning human understanding, in the third volume we find *An enquiry concerning the principles of morals* (1753-1a ed. 1751) and in the fourth volume we have the third edition, with additions and corrections of the *Political Discourses*, Edinburgh: A. Donaldson, A. Kincaid, printed by A. Millar (1754-1a ed. 1752). We have an important change in the 1758 edition of *Essays and Treatises* in which part II of the *Essays, moral, political and literary* consists of the *Political Discourses* and part I of the original *Essays, moral and political*.



to the *Political Discourses*: many editions and translations ensued (eleven edition in Hume's life time), with the most enthusiastic reception to be found in France<sup>3</sup> and in Italy. In 1763 Pietro Verri calls Hume an 'Author of Commerce'. French translations of the *Discourses* are widely read in Italy. Verri himself in Vienna makes seven abstracts from them, probably from Jean-Bernard Le Blanc's version<sup>4</sup>, and in 1767 Matteo Dandolo translates eight economic essays into Italian. Le Blanc's translation<sup>5</sup> enjoyed enormous success, as we can see from the reviews that appeared in many European magazines. The *Novelle Letterarie* published a long review of the first edition by Giovanni Lami. He was the editor of the Florentine journal and a friend of Le Blanc, who had dedicated the preface of Hume's *Discourses* to him and expected academic favours in exchange. In the introduction, as well as mentioning Giovanni Lami<sup>6</sup>, Le Blanc viewed Hume's work in a broad context of scholars including recent French writers, such as Jean-Francois Melon and Charles de Fenare Dutot, as well as those in the English tradition. The following year, in 1756, again in the *Novelle Letterarie*, a second review appeared of the other French translation of Hume's *Discourses*, this time edited by Eléazar Mauvillon<sup>7</sup>. In the Sixties translations in Italian language begin to circulate<sup>8</sup>. The one which

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3 The *Journal britannique* played an important role. It is surprising that, at a time when Hume was no longer unknown in England, a journal devoted to English literature would inform its public about his writings. In 1752, two notices appeared: the first, on the *Political Discourses*; the second, on the *Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals*. Two years later, another periodical, the *Journal étranger*, announced the second edition of the *Political Discourses*: Malherbe in Jones (2005), pp. 53-54.

4 Mazza in Jones (2005), pp. 183-184.

5 Hume, David (1754) *Discours politiques de Monsieur Hume traduits de l'anglois par Monsieur l'Abbé Jean-Bernard Le Blanc*, 2 vols, Amsterdam. Et se vend à Paris, chez Michel Lambert, libraire, rue & à coté de la Comédie Française, au Parnasse. Preface du traducteur à Monsieur le docteur Lami professeur à Florence. This translation includes all twelve discourses. Le Blanc, who had entered into correspondence with Hume, with the latter's corrections and additions, was able to prepare a second edition in 1755. Hume, David (1755) *Discours politiques de Monsieur Hume traduits de l'anglois, nouvelle édition par Monsieur l'Abbé Jean-Bernard Le Blanc*, 2 vols, Dresden: Chez Michel Groell, libraire & marchand d'estampes. Le Blanc wrote to Hume that the work was sold in France as a novel: D. Hume, *Autobiografia*, in Dal Pra, Ronchetti (1974), cit., p. 167.

6 Rosa (1956). Le Blanc's translation appeared in the *Année littéraire* and also in *Correspondance littéraire* beginning with the same remarks on Hume as the *Journal britannique*. «He was already known for philosophical works in which he boldly professed scepticism, when he published these *Political Discourses*. I have only one grievance against Mr Hume: he is too much fond of paradoxes, so that, sometimes, he argues poorly, and becomes a Jacobite»: Malherbe in Jones (2005), pp. 55-56.

7 Hume, David (1754) *Discours politiques de Mr. David Hume, traduits de l'anglois par Mr. De M\*\*\** [i.e. Eléazar Mauvillon], 2 vols, Amsterdam: J. Schreuder and Pierre Mortier le Jeune. It contains all the 12 discourses. The *Discourses* appear to have been first translated by Eléazar Mauvillon, a native of Provence, and private secretary to Frederic Augustus, King of Poland, who published his translation in 1754. Cf. *History of the editions*, in Hume, David (1964) *The Philosophical works*, edited by Thomas Hill Green and Thomas Hodge Grose, 4 voll, III vol., *Essays moral, political and literary*, p. 56. In the same years the *Political Discourses* are inserted in collections containing works by other authors: Hume, David (1754-57) *Discours politiques de Mr. David Hume, traduits de l'anglois par Mr. De M\*\*\**, 5 tomes, Amsterdam: Chez J. Schreuder & Pierre Mortier le Jeune, [t. I, 1754; t. II, 1756; t. III, 1756; t. IV, 1757; t. V, 1757: infact only the t. I (1754) contains the *Political Discourses* by Hume

deserves attention is the previously mentioned edition by Matteo Dandolo in 1767. It is a bilingual edition<sup>9</sup>. After the first edition the English text disappears. The translation by Dandolo

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<sup>8</sup> Hume, David (1764) *Essays Moral and Political*, Amsterdam: Chez J.H. Schneider. The first Italian translation - '1764. *Saggi morali e politici*. Amsterdam' - is a ghost. In his bibliography Thomas Jessop mentions it (without having seen it) and Marialuisa Baldi classifies it as an 'unlocated work': Jessop (1966) pp. 18, 25; Baldi (1978) pp. 275-276; (1983) p. 287. We suspect it to be the result of mistakes in Italian library catalogues (we know for a fact that in the Biblioteca Ambrosiana, Milano, the catalogue entry may mislead in this sense). Similarly misleading is the title page of the Milan 1836 Italian edition of the *Essays* which contains 'Amsterdam, 1764' in the title: Hume, David (1836) *Saggi morali e politici del Signore Hume*. Amsterdam, 1764, in *Saggi morali e politici*, in M.J.A.N. Caritat de Condorcet, C.C. De Peyssonel, I.-R.-G. Le Chapélier, *Estratti della Biblioteca dell'uomo pubblico, ossia Analisi ragionata delle principali opere francesi e straniere*, Sulla politica in generale, la legislazione [...] ecc. di Condorcet, tradotti da G.L. ad uso de' Repubblicani d'Italia, 2 voll., Milano: Stamperia a. s. Mattia alla Moneta, vol. II, pp. 3-148; Mazza in Jones (2005), p. 185.

<sup>9</sup> Hume, David (1767) *Political Essays on Commerce by David Hume Esq. with the Italian Version by Matthew Dandolo Noble Venetian*, 2 vols, Venice, printed for Lewis Pavini and John Bassaglia./ *Saggi politici sopra il commercio del Signor David Hume. Traduzione dall'inglese di Matteo Dandolo Patrizio Veneto*, 2 voll, Venezia: Appresso Giammaria Bassaglia e Luigi Pavini. *A Sua Eccellenza il Signor Alvise Emo Fu di Messer Giovanni Procurator di San Marco*, di Matteo Dandolo, t. I, pp. V-XVI. «Ecco l'unico fine che mi sono proposto nel tradurre dall'INGLESE questi Saggi, e pubblicarli colle stampe. Questi poi (vedendo io, che in oggi la lingua INGLESE è divenuta lingua di moda), ho pensato bene di stampare coll'Originale a fronte della traduzione; Originale riflessivo, elegante, purgato, e per dir tutto in una parola scritto dalla nota celebre penna del Signor HUME. Anche ciò può essere forse un grande attrattivo per impegnare molte persone a leggerlo, e ad approfittare delle sagge massime, che vi son contenute» (pp. XV-XVI). This translation was reprinted in 1774 and in 1798. Hume, David (1774) *Saggi politici sul commercio del Signor David Hume tradotti dall'inglese coll'aggiunta di un discorso preliminare sul commercio di Sicilia di D. Isidoro Bianchi socio della Reale Accademia delle Scienze di Siena*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Venezia e Palermo: Andrea Rapetti, stamperia di Vincenzo Gagliani. The essays translated are the ones of the 1767 edition. [Bianchi sees to the edition and writes the *Discorso*, but the translation, as he declares in the *Discorso*, is Dandolo's]. The publisher is Andrea Rapetti, a Venetian printer who had moved to Sicily. In this edition Isidoro Bianchi's preface recalled the greatness of Sicilian trade, on the same lines as Dandolo's introduction. From *Discorso Preliminare* by Isidoro Bianchi, pp. III-XII. «Ma era troppo da desiderarsi, che un'Opera di tanta importanza si rendesse più comune con una Traduzione. La lingua inglese, sebbene ora sia una lingua di moda per i nostri Giovani, pure rimane per lo più sconosciuta a coloro, che di presente sono destinati ad essere i Ministri, od i Promotori del Commercio. I Saggi del Sig. Hume se meritavano di essere conosciuti da tutte le nazioni più ripulite, la nostra Italia non doveva certamente esserne priva. Essa però ha l'obbligo al dotto Sig. Matteo Dandolo Patrizio Veneto, il quale nel 1767 fu il primo a pubblicarli in Venezia nella nostra Lingua colle stampe di Giammaria Bassaglia, e Luigi Pavini. L'accorto e benemerito Traduttore consecrò la sua fatica al Nobil Uomo il Sig. Alvise Emo con una Dedicca, nella quale senza perdersi a tessere elogi al suo Mecenate, il di cui (IV) nome è, e sarà sempre più grande di qualunque elogio, si fece solo una premura di mettere sotto l'occhio de' suoi Concittadini l'antica gloriam il valorem e le ricchezze della Repubblica, quando per il suo florido Commercio fù l'emporio d'Europa, e di animarli ad imitar sempre il genio, il travaglio, e l'industria de' loro Maggiori».

includes only eight essays, out of the twelve written by Hume. His translation of Hume's *Essays* included 'Of Commerce', 'Of Refinement in the Arts', 'Of Money', 'Of Interest' (I vol.), 'Of the Balance of Trade', 'Of the Jealousy of Trade', 'Of Taxes' and 'Of Public Credit' (II vol.)<sup>10</sup>. 'Of the Populousness of Ancient Nations' was excluded, and although Dandolo had said he wanted to translate it<sup>11</sup>, it never appeared: possibly he did not perceive its relevance to current economic policy. The reviewers of the *Political Discourses*, one in the *Magazzino italiano* and the other in Francesco Grizelini's *Giornale d'Italia*, liked both the introduction and the text very much. According to the *Giornale d'Italia*, Dandolo gives his peers one of those «useful works that tend to enlighten us, especially in the science of commerce», a science which «is the most useful and necessary to improve the condition of the nations»<sup>12</sup>. Dandolo's edition seems to be the Italian version of Le Blanc's first volume. It also recalls the *Essai sur le commerce* printed in Lyon in 1767<sup>13</sup>.

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Hume, David (1798) *Saggi politici sopra il commercio del Signor David Hume. Traduzione dall'inglese di Matteo Dandolo Veneto*, new edition, Parma per i Fratelli Gozzi. This third edition included the introductions written by Dandolo and Bianchi. The essays have notes and one *Preface*, that is pp. 1-29 without numbers, thus divided: *Gli Stampatori*, pp. 1-4; *Discorso di Matteo Dandolo* (è riprodotto ma tagliato nella parte iniziale e finale quello dell'ed. 1767), pp. 4-14; *Discorso di D. Isidoro Bianchi* (è quello dell'ed. 1774), pp. 14-29. The printers write: «questi Saggi d'uno de' più grandi ingegni d'Albione, dallo Inglese nello Italiano idioma voltati da Matteo Dandolo, portavan essi in fronte dedicatoria del valente traduttore [...]. Nel riprodurre co' nostri torchj questa dotta traduzione abbiam riputato utile divisamento lo anteporvi le accennate riflessioni ben veggendo che (p. 1) [...]. La rinomanza di questa Italiana versione [quella di M. Dandolo] non si tenne solamente nella nostra Penisola; che varcato il mare risuonò in Sicilia, e per lei ristampati vidersi in Palermo nell'anno 1774 i presenti Saggi con in fronte un priliminare discorso di D. Isidoro Bianchi sul Commercio di quell'Isola. Questo ancora noi riprodurrem di presente, siccome quello che nel render più compita l'Edizion nostra farà pur fede della molta utilità, che la Sicilia non solo, ma l'Italia tutta derivar potrebbe dallo studio dei Saggi Politici di Hume, e servirà fors'anche a dar la spinta agl'Ingegneri delle altre regioni di questa eletta parte del Globo, onde promuovano coi loro scritti il restauromento dell'antico suo Commercio» (pp. 3-4).

<sup>10</sup> The titles of the essays are translated in the parallel text in this way: Del Commercio; Del Lusso, o dell'Affinamento nell'Arti; Del Danajo; Dell'Interesse; Della Bilancia del commercio, Della Gelosia del commercio, Delle Pubbliche Imposizioni; Del Credito pubblico.

<sup>11</sup> In 1762 Dandolo had already translated into italian the *Political Discourses* by Hume and sent a copy to the philosopher with these words: «[...] Excusez Monsieur s'ils n'ont pas les beautés de la langue naturelle, quelque soin j'y aie apporté pour bien rendre vos pensées. J'espère de mettre aussi bientôt sous la presse votre essai sur la populasion (*sic*) que je me donnerai le plaisir de vous faire presenter. [...], Venice, le 2 mai 1762»: Grimsley and Ronco (1965), p. 412.

<sup>12</sup> *Magazzino italiano*, [Venice], 3 June 1767; *Giornale d'Italia*, [Venice], 25 Aprile 1767.

<sup>13</sup> Hume, David (1767) *Essais sur le commerce; le luxe; l'argent; l'intérêt de l'argent; les impôts, le crédit public, et la balance du commerce*, traduction nouvelle [par Mlle. de la Chaux], avec des réflexions du traducteur. Traduite sur la seconde édition, London and Paris: Saillant; Lyon: Aimé Delaroche



Even the later Italian editions are not forgotten by the periodicals, for example, *Effemeridi letterarie* of Rome, although with an unappreciative tone indicates the translation of 1774. At the end of the eighteenth century interest in the political works by Hume begins to decrease, the following century sees few editions and translations.

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