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978-0-521-63018-4 - Economy, Polity, and Society: British Intellectual History 1750–1950

Edited by Stefan Collini, Richard Whatmore and Brian Young

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Economy, Polity, and Society British Intellectual History 1750–1950

Economy, Polity, and Society and its companion volume *History, Religion, and Culture* aim to bring together new essays by many of the leading intellectual historians of the period while at the same time serving as a tribute to the work of Donald Winch and John Burrow. The essays in *Economy, Polity, and Society* begin by addressing aspects of the eighteenth-century attempt, particularly in the work of Adam Smith, to come to grips with the nature of ‘commercial society’ and its distinctive notions of the self, of political liberty, and of economic progress; they then explore the adaptations of and responses to the Enlightenment legacy in the work of such early nineteenth-century figures as Jeremy Bentham, Tom Paine, Maria Edgeworth, and Richard Whately; and finally, in discussions which range up to the middle of the twentieth century, they explore particularly telling examples of the conflict between economic thinking and moral values.

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Preface

Although this book has been planned and written to be read and used in its own right, *Economy, Polity, and Society* and its companion volume, *History, Religion, and Culture*, form a two-book set whose scope is signalled by their common sub-title, *British Intellectual History 1750–1950*. The primary aim of the publication of these two volumes is to bring together the work of many of the leading scholars in what has become a flourishing field in the last couple of decades. But their appearance is also intended to be a way of paying tribute to the impact on that field of the work of two individuals in particular, John Burrow and Donald Winch. Winch and Burrow were for many years the animating spirits of a small group who, at the time, all taught at the University of Sussex, a group which has, in consequence, sometimes been referred to as ‘the Sussex School’ (a label whose appropriateness is discussed in the ‘General Introduction’). In the year 2000 both men reach the retiring-age of sixty-five, and although they will both, we may hope, long continue to be active and prominent in the practice of intellectual history, a collection of their friends and admirers did not want to let this joint landmark pass unrecognised. A pleasing consequence of this originating purpose is that all the contributors to these two volumes have some connection – personal, intellectual, or institutional – with Intellectual History at Sussex and/or with Burrow and Winch as individuals, whether as students, colleagues, or friends. A colloquium was held at Sussex in September 1998 at which draft versions of all the essays were presented and discussed, and at which there was considerable collective brooding on how best to revise and integrate the essays for publication. Throughout, Donald Winch and John Burrow have been kind enough to indulge their friends in their folly, affecting a certain superficial embarrassment (presumably as a mask for their actual deep embarrassment), but nonetheless agreeing both to be participants in the colloquium and contributors to these volumes. It is characteristic of them that they should prefer to contribute to a collaborative enterprise in this way, adding their voices to a set of continuing conversations rather than simply receiving tributes from others, and in this

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spirit no special indulgence has been granted them as contributors by the implacable and stony-faced (but perhaps not altogether stony-hearted) editors.

This originating purpose also dictates the arrangement of the introductory material. The ‘General introduction’, which discusses the field of intellectual history as a whole, and Burrow’s and Winch’s contributions to it in particular, is reproduced in both volumes; it is then followed by a ‘Presentation’ specific to each particular volume, which briefly attempts to introduce the subject-matter covered by the essays and to draw out some of their relations and common themes. Readers impatient to engage with the substantive historical material should, therefore, skip the ‘General Introduction’ and proceed directly to the ‘Presentation of *Economy, Polity, and Society*’.