



ADAM SMITH

PANMURE
HOUSE

LIGHTS OF CALEDONIA – JOHN CAMPBELL OBE

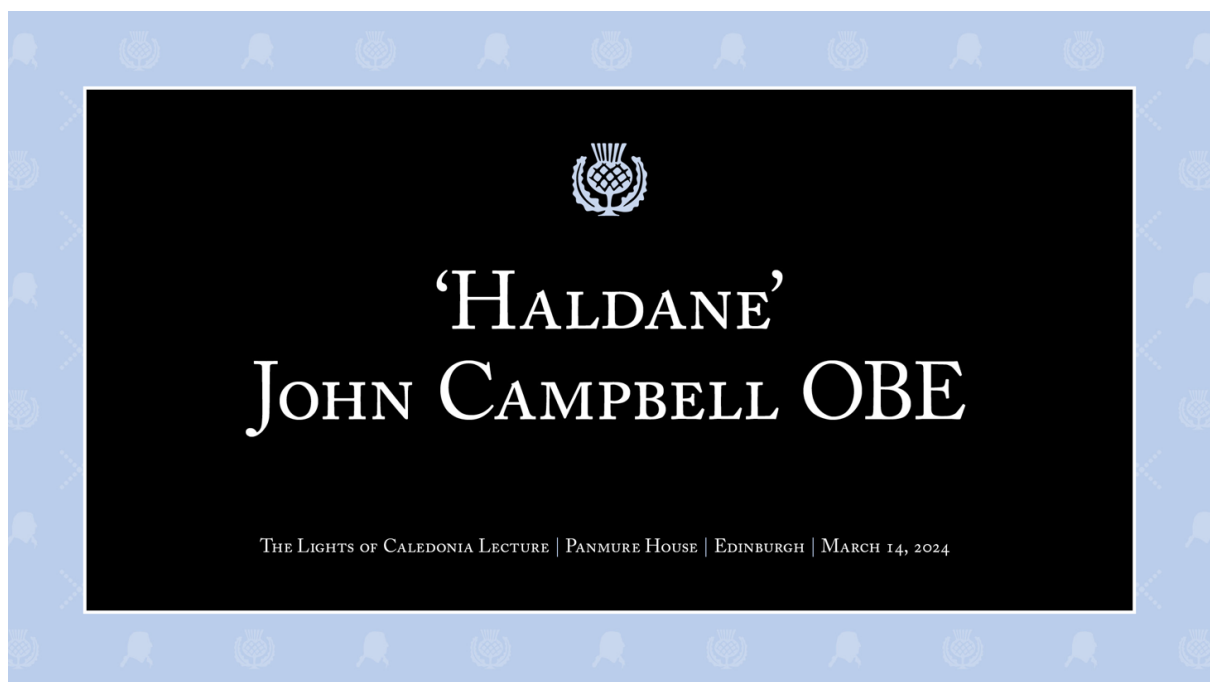
ABOUT THE PROGRAMME

This series of events is designed to celebrate Scotland's intellectual and cultural contributions to the world, aptly delivered from the final home of Adam Smith, the father of modern economics. Previous speakers in this lecture series include Former Assistant Secretary-General Andrew Gilmour, Rt Hon Jesse Norman and Panmure House Programme Director Dr Caroline Howitt.

To view a trailer video for a snapshot into the programme and its purpose in our 21st-century society, and previous lecture recordings, visit the [Panmure House website](#).

LECTURE TRANSCRIPT

Thursday, 14 March 2024





Good evening. And thank you very much indeed for those very kind words. I deeply appreciate them. And to be here in Adam Smith's home is something really very, very exciting. Thank you so much for inviting me. It's a great honour to be invited to be with you all and talk about my hero, Lord Haldane. Here in Edinburgh, the city of his birth in 1856, of his education, the city which he knew intimately until his death less than a century ago in 1928. He was extraordinarily multifaceted in his capabilities and achievements. And this is perhaps most efficiently illustrated if you come with me up the Royal Mile to the National Library of Scotland. There can be found the outstanding collection of Haldane papers principally and so generously donated by Graham Haldane, Lord Haldane's nephew whose son Dick, I'm delighted to say my oldest friend is with us this evening. Graham inherited Haldane's Scottish country home that Adam referred to at Cloan, set in the foothills of the Ochil Hills in Perthshire with that fantastic view, the panoramic view north over the Grampians, 150 miles from the northeast to the southwest. It was there above all places that Haldane would go to think, and what magnificent thinking he did.

The National Library papers provide a formidable record of the effects of that thinking by Richard Burdon Haldane, the first and being unmarried, the only Viscount Haldane of Cloan. A flavour of Haldane's correspondence in that archive will give you some idea of the breadth of his interests. First of all, the binding thread through the collection of the literally countless letters between Haldane and his formidable mother, Mary Elizabeth Burden Sanderson. She lived to celebrate her centenary in 1925, predeceasing her elder son, our subject tonight, by only three years. So rather like Adam Smith, lived the whole of his life very, very close to his mother. After leaving Edinburgh at the age of 21, for London in 1877, following the death of his father to read for the English bar. Haldane wrote to his mother when away from home almost daily and also

regularly to his sister Elizabeth. And his sister Elizabeth, Elizabeth was a considerable pioneering public servant and philosopher in her own right. Like Haldane, she never married, but lived between Cloan and her brother's London home for the whole of Haldane's life.



This photograph shows Haldane with his mother and sister at Cloan, with Haldane's famous physiologist brother, J.S. Haldane, and back right. Haldane knew just about every significant figure in public life. He was a liberal by philosophy, by instinct and by party, until in the last years of his life, despairing of the liberal's lack of interest in furthering the cause of education, he became in 1924 a member of Ramsay MacDonald's first Labour government. He enjoyed deep relationships across all parties. In certain respects, he was as close to the Conservative politician, philosopher, and Prime Minister Balfour as he was to his most intimate liberal colleagues, Asquith, Gray, Morley, Roseberry. The letters to and from these friends are a total delight, a real insight into life in Haldane's time and a textbook into how to get things done to make things happen.

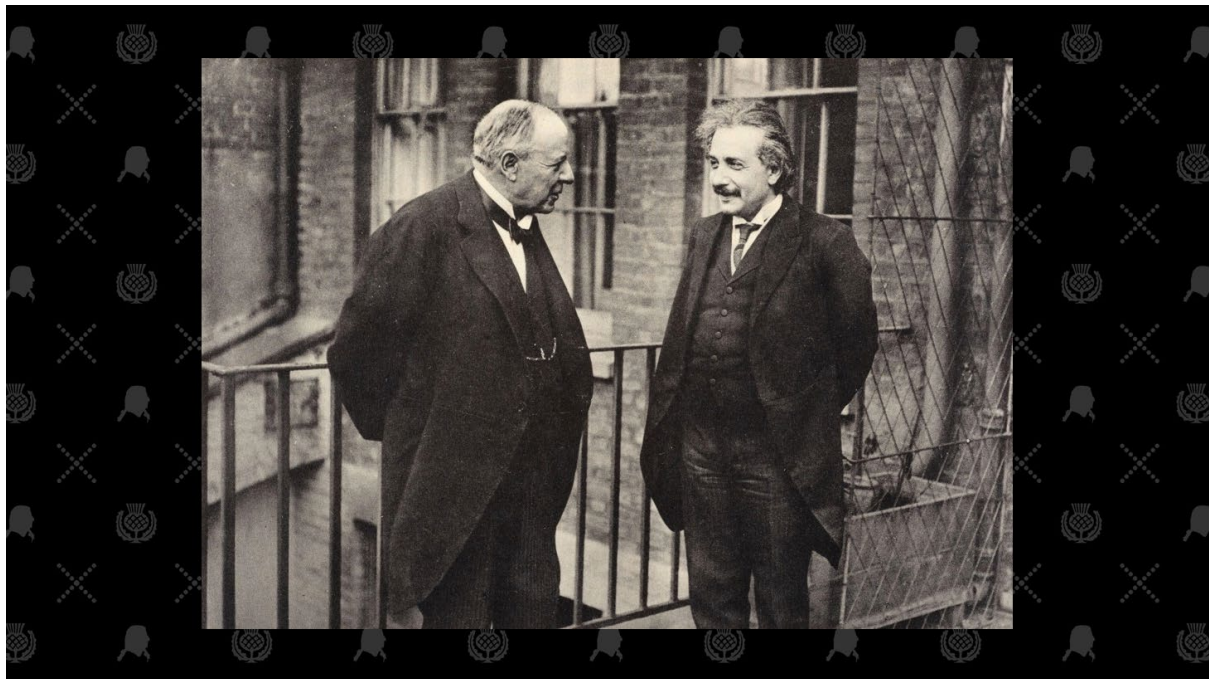


In military affairs, after becoming Minister for War in 1905, a position he held to 1912, he became particularly intimate with French and Hague who went on to be Field Marshals and worked closely and productively with many of the important generals of his time, such as Ian Hamilton, Henry Wilson, Gerald Ellison. In the law, you simply cannot rise to becoming twice Lord Chancellor, the first time from 1912 to 1915, and the same time as a judge, President of the Judicial Appeals Committee of the Privy Council, without knowing most senior lawyers and judges in the UK and many overseas. And happily, the correspondence also reveals his love of the seriously competent administrators and civil servants of his time. In many departments, like Hanke, the first cabinet secretary, Muir Mackenzie in the Lord Chancellor's department, and Morant at education. Each of them in turn loved him, not something one sees much in political life today. In his beloved field of philosophy, Bozenkett, Hume Brown, Seth Pringle, Patterson were his particular friends and significant correspondents.

His dedicated commitment to the expansion of university education fuelled his interactions with phalanxes of the educational great. But his 40 years of work and correspondence with Beatrice and Sidney Webb, the great educational and social pioneering partnership, as we'll see later, was particularly inspiring. This work in both education and politics brought him closely into contact with the royal family, who were then very much more influential in political life than they are today. Haldane was the confidant of Edward VII and worked productively with key courtiers like Viscount Esher and later under George V, Lord Stamfordham. The letters are all there. The NLS correspondence also evidences the assiduity of his cultivation of philanthropists whose support he needed to fund these great university education projects. Various Rothschilds, Andrew Carnegie, the Randalords, Rhodes, Werner, the Bytes, Sir Ernest Castle were

particularly generous. Castle alone provided holding with the equivalent of £50 million in today's money to fund his various educational schemes. And his devotion to scientific method and to science is also apparent.

He was a fellow of both the Royal Society and of the British Academy. He was able to hold his own with the great scientists, Eddington, Rayleigh, J.J. Thompson. He was fascinated with relativity, not just in scientific, but also in philosophical terms, which led him to write a major book entitled *The Reign of Relativity*. Just after the end of the war, Haldane invited Einstein and his wife, Elsa, to make a first visit to Britain and to stay with him in his London home.



Here they are together just at the back of their house in Queen Anne's Gate in London. Yes, all of those letters and very much more are available just up the road, providing one of the best and most affordable days out in Edinburgh. But let's return to Panmure House and let me use Adam Smith as an early illustration of Haldane in thought and action.

Let's go back to 1887. Haldane's now 31. In two years, he'll take silk, being made up to Queen's Council at the early age of 33, the youngest QC, so Haldane believed, for half a century. His specialist legal work, particularly in constitutional law, has resulted in him appearing solely before the highest courts in the land. Yet in parallel to this extraordinary achievement for one so young.

he's pursued two further callings, philosophy and public service, public service both in education and representative politics. In philosophy, he had by the age of 27, together with his friend John Kemp, completed the first translation into English of Schopenhauer's formidable three -volume work, *The World as Will and I Dare*. He followed this by co-editing with Andrew Seth, his own first book on philosophy, a serious collection of essays and philosophical criticism, which took forward a wider appreciation of Haldane's beloved doctrine of idealism, which we'll discuss later. In public service, as soon as he'd arrived in London, he'd made time to work and lecture amongst young men and women at Toynbee Hall and to address social improvement. He was already thinking deeply about his own liberal, socially orientated political beliefs. At 24, he was a leading element in forming the 80 Club, which celebrated and built upon Gladstone's success in the 1880 general election. At the age of only 29, in 1885, he became the Member of Parliament for Haddington shire in East Lothian. So, what is it that he does in 1887 at the age of 31? Well, Adam here tonight has beaten me to it. With his love of political economy and moral philosophy, he writes *The Life of Adam Smith*, which he combines with an assessment of the relation of Smith's teaching to modern political life. This was the first dedicated life of Adam Smith to be written since the early days of the century and did much to inform the public of Haldane's time about Smith's ideas. Now, why do I dwell on that?

Other than the happy coincidence of the connection between Haldane and where we are this evening. It's because of the practical influence of Adam Smith's thinking on Haldane as an example of his devotion to preparation and going back to first principles. Haldane predicted in that 1887 book on Smith that it was,

The battle between free trade and protectionism.

It was likely once more to be fought out before the newly enfranchised electorate of this country. He continued a very serious battle. It's likely to be. 17 years later, when Joseph Chamberlain splits the Conservative Party over the question of free trade and declares himself for imperial preference and protectionism, this prediction of Haldane bears full fruit. The Liberal Party, much influenced by Haldane, chose to settle their own differences and unite under the banner of free trade. That policy brought them back into government in Campbell Bannerman's administration of 1905, the administration in which Haldane first takes ministerial office at the age of 49. So let me now turn to Haldane's statesmanship.

Jesse Norman gave an admirable address on Adam Smith in his very place following the publication in 2018 of his book, *Adam Smith, What He Thought and Why It Matters*. In that talk, he recalled Adam Smith's memorable denunciation of what he called that,

Insidious and crafty animal, vulgarly called the statesman or politician, whose counsels are directed by the momentary fluctuation of affairs.

Now, I don't want to take on Smith nor Jesse Norman, but I do want to draw the distinction between the statesman and the politician by illustrating some of Haldane's statesmanship. For my own definition of a statesman is someone who by action today, however underappreciated or misunderstood, can head off the preventative, the preventable evils of tomorrow.

In these days, we witness little long-term thinking, few efforts to address the really big longer-term questions. But Haldane relished those challenges. And the longevity of what he created is proof that statesmanship can still flourish. So let me give you a snapshot of Haldane's work in terms of some of the organizations whose shape he created, developed, or influenced. For it's the breadth of that work that led me to subtitle my book, *The Forgotten Statesman Who Shaped Modern Britain*.



Here is Fidders-Watt's portrait depicting Haldane in a Secretary of State for War. Over his six years at the War Office, his famous Haldane and Army reforms totally transformed the Army, which had proved so disastrously unfit for purpose in the Boer War. Holding the poisoned chalice of the Seals of Office of a Department, generally considered to be the toughest of all, to be the graveyard of political ambition, he reformed the unreformable, absorbing 20% of government expenditure in 1905, the War Office was the largest government spending department, interestingly just larger in percentage terms than our largest ministry today, the Department of Health and Social Care. I often ask myself whether putting a whole day into that department could resolve today's far from fit for purpose National Health Service. Come August 1914 and war, his creation as the centrepiece of the regular army, the British Expeditionary Force, played its pivotal role in preventing the early fall of Paris and thus saving Britain, France

and our allies from the Kaiser's clutches. He created the Territorial Army, the Imperial General Staff, which coordinated and mobilised the forces of the Empire alongside those of the United Kingdom. He created the Officers' Training Corps, that genius idea which enabled the immediate rapid scalability of the army at the outset of war.

In aviation, he created the Royal Flying Corps and became the RAF and in security and intelligence, the Secret Service Bureau, which became the forerunner of MI5 and MI6. Having been elevated to the Lords in 1911, still as Minister for War, to help stir through the reforming Parliament Bill, in 1912, he was appointed Lord Chancellor. In parallel, he became the President as I've said, of the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council. That's the final appeals tribunal on all legal and constitutional matters of the whole empire, in short, the Supreme Court of the Empire. From then onwards, he was able as a judge to deploy both his legal and philosophical skills in the constitutional structure and development of the empire.



Here we see Haldane in procession as Lord Chancellor to the House of Lords. As Lord Chancellor, he brought his brilliant practical mind to bear on every aspect of the work of what was then a massive, unified department. Even his own job specification was not exempt from critical analysis. He believed that the conflicts inherent in his own personal duties and responsibilities required change. So, ever innovative, he advocated splitting parts of the Lord Chancellor's duties between three separate and distinct people, an independent chairman or speaker of the House of Lords, an independent chief justice of a Supreme Court of the United Kingdom, and a separate minister of justice in charge of a justice department and accountable to the people through the House of Commons, thus leaving for the Lord Chancellor his central role

as the principal legal adviser to the government. As always, wonderful clear thinking, but years ahead of his time. The Lord Speaker of the House of Lords was created in July 2006, the Minister of Justice in May 2007, and the Supreme Court in October 2009, each nearly 100 years after his recommendation. But Haldane's statesmanship extended well beyond his official work, as Minister for War, Lord Chancellor. It can be seen in all of its brilliance in the field of education.

And I want to dwell on this, and I think it links into his foundational philosophy, which I'll then come to. Education for Haldane facilitates the mind to progress towards an ever more comprehensive vision of reality, one which does not become narrowly stuck on one abstraction. Of course, he was also deeply aware of the economic importance of an educated public. This was part of why he laid stress on ways to expand technical vocation and scientific training, as well as a broader humanistic education. But on an even more fundamental level, he knew from personal experience that a good education could provide the resources by which one could rise above the troubles and tragedies of the everyday. This was not only the path to a calm, strong, courageous, and successful person, this was the path to a nation's prosperity. To be educated is to be given the opportunity for emancipation from those blinkered views that keep us from truly realising our potential. Haldane's principal education memorials lie in his educational work, but he also worked with determination to advance causes which remediated the lack of early education. He actively supported Mansbridge's Workers' Education Association, formed in 1903. He created, in 1921, the British Institute of Adult Education, and he constantly promoted technical education and continuation schools.

The university system in Britain, which was the real holiday in work at that time, was very much narrower than we know today. Scotland easily led the field in terms of universities per head of population. Here there were four universities, Aberdeen, Edinburgh, Glasgow, and St Andrews, each established in the 15th, 16th centuries. In Ireland there were two universities, the 16th century Trinity College Dublin and the Queen's University of Ireland constituent colleges in Belfast, Cork and Galway. That was established in 1850. And then there was the University of Wales, the sole university in that principality was founded in 1893. But in England, there were only five universities. The two ancient foundations of Oxford and Cambridge and many years later in the early 19th century, Durham, then London comprising University College, King's College and most recently in 1880, the Victoria University, which I'll talk further with its three constituent colleges in Liverpool, Manchester and Leeds.

In 1894, hand in hand with Sidney and Beatrice Webb, he supports the pioneering formation of the London School of Economics and Political Science, providing legal advice and bringing his network of philanthropic friends, in particular Lord Rothschild to provide its early funding. The Whigs viewed Haldane as their co-founder and arranged for his portrait to hang alongside theirs

in the Founder's Room at LSE. Next, we find Haldane in cross-party cooperation with the Conservatives in office from 1895 to 1905 and especially with his philosopher friend A.J. Balfour who became Prime Minister in 1902. To transform London University from a merely examining body for its constituent and other external colleges into a fully integrated teaching university. This was finally achieved in the hard fought over London University Act of 1898 on which Haldane worked tirelessly. At that time the Irish MPs whose crucial voting support was needed to pass that act made it a condition of that support that Haldane should come over to Ireland and develop a blueprint for their own university system. The plans that he set out were finally enacted by the Liberal government, which he was then part in 1908, and that created the Catholic-centric National University of Ireland with colleges in Cork, Dublin and Galway, and the separate Protestant-centric Queen's University in Belfast. 1902, with a red letter year for Haldane in the cause of university expansion. Bring the full force of his personality and legal understanding in order to bear on the corridors of power at the Privy Council, dominated by conservative aristocrats and politicians, but who recognised both the cross -party support that Haldane had given Balfour and the power of Haldane's arguments.

He succeeded in bringing about a crucial change in regulation which allowed the concept of the modern civic university to be rolled out. Civic universities would thereafter be located in individual important cities, each supported by their local authority, by local business, by the local community. Something the importance of which Haldane had been brought up to recognize in Scotland and had observed in action on the continent.

It was his assiduous preliminary lobbying and preparation, combined with the dazzling evidence that he gave before the Committee of the Privy Council, that enabled the college in Liverpool to spring free from the tripartite Victoria University. That resulted in the parallel creation in 1903 and 1904 of the three new independent civic universities of Liverpool, Manchester and Leeds. They were quickly followed by Sheffield in 1905, Belfast in 1908, and Bristol in 1909, and by the university colleges of Reading, Nottingham, and Southampton, each of whose foundation stones Haldane laid, and which would each go on to become the next three full civic universities within 25 years of his death.



Here we have a photo of Haldane as Chancellor of Bristol University with George V at the opening of their new buildings in 1925. Haldane was by the early 1900s a trustee of the Carnegie Trust for the Universities of Scotland, which courtesy of his friend Andrew Carnegie, financed free university education for eligible Scottish children, regardless of their means. By 1910, he was financing half of all undergraduates in Scotland. Perhaps this was a constituent reason for Haldane's enormous popularity with the students at Edinburgh University, where he was elected Lord Rector between 1906 and 1908.

During his regular travels in Germany, Haldane had visited the great German Technische Hochschule, the technical high school at Charlottenberg in Berlin, which had fertilised in his mind the absence of a great technical university in Britain. It took him five years of assiduous preparatory work, lobbying, cajoling, enlisting the support of everyone from the London County Council to fellow politicians on both sides of the house to academics, to financiers, to the King himself, to bring together in 1907 three existing constituent colleges as the core of the new Imperial College of Science and Technology. He arranged for it to be endowed by a munificent £100,000 in today's money, £10 million had raised from the landlords. And to round off this educational tour d'horizon for four years, from 1910 to 1913, he chaired a Royal Commission into what he termed the ideal overall structure of university education in London, which in Terelia led to the purchase of its famous Bloomsbury Headquarters site. And in 1917 and 1918, the Royal Commission, he also chaired the Royal Commission.

into university education in Wales, whose far-reaching proposals he wrote to his mother, temporarily made him even more popular in the principality than Lloyd George. This lifetime's vocation to education concluded only months before his death in 1928 by being appointed Chancellor of St Andrews University to complement his chancellorship of Bristol and the presidency of Birkbeck, London University's adult education college. But as I move on, please be aware that all the work that Haldane did in the educational field was done in what might be called his spare time. He never held any ministerial office in education.

As we're here in Haldane's home country of Scotland and the land of enlightenment thinking, I want particularly before I close to discuss Haldane's philosophical foundations and his beliefs. Haldane was adamant that

To see life steadily and to see it whole, to understand the world with its multitude of differing aspects, scientific, moral, aesthetic, religious demanded a plurality of perspectives and disciplines.

Haldane not only viewed philosophy as one of those important perspectives, it was his philosophical training that taught him the need for this plurality. We cannot understand Haldane's statesmanship if we fail to understand those philosophical beliefs. The passionate yet proselytizing Baptist religious beliefs of Haldane's parents were the dominant factor in his early intellectual life. But by the time he reached 16, he was unsure. As he wrote,

It was religion of a somewhat emotional type stimulated by a wave of feeling which at that time was pervading Scotland. But presently questions force themselves upon me. Was the basic foundation of such feeling reliable?

Haldane's youthful response was characteristic of how we deal with all subsequent unsettlement.

I began to read copiously.

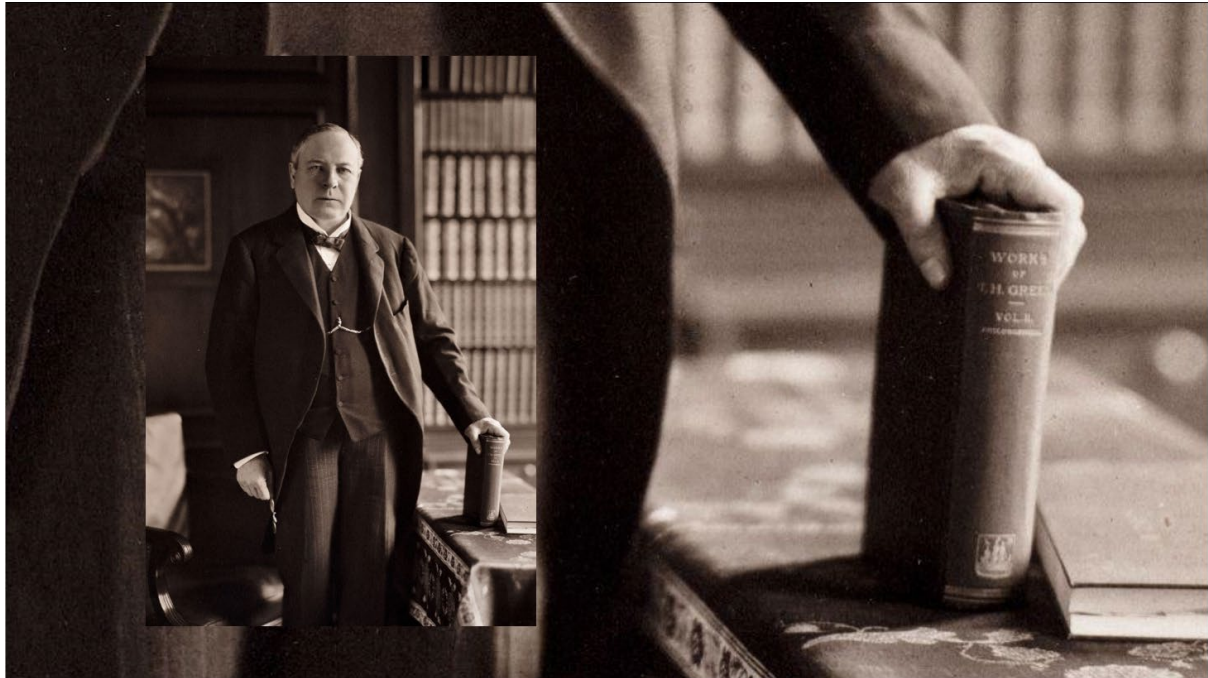
But he was unable to find the depth of reflection he was looking for in the established religious authors. Far more stimulating, he found, were the revolutionary writings of thinkers like David Friedrich Strauss, which put easy assurances of Jesus' divinity into question. Believing things on the basis of religious authorities was no longer an option for Haldane. He needed logical reasoning; philosophy became his refuge. For a time, he couldn't work himself out of this muddle. Everything that he'd known and been taught about life's great questions was up in the air. And so, it was at the instigation of Edinburgh's eccentric professor of Greek, John Stuart Blackie, it was decided the young Haldane ought to spend at the age of 16 some months in Germany at the University of Göttingen studying under the philosopher Herman Lertz before returning to his studies in Edinburgh.

In the intellectual realm, Lertz completely changed the trajectory of Haldane's life. Lertz was the very embodiment of the pursuit of truth and the desire for knowledge. Lertz showed Haldane that philosophy could be more than a helpful resource for getting through life's muddles. It could be lived; it could be a vocation.

It's no surprise that one of the first books that's recommended to Haldane was Johann Gottlieb Fichte's *The Vocation of Man*. That book had a profound impact on Haldane with its stress for every individual on the importance of a life acting in accordance with one's conscience and of seeking to eradicate inequality. Fichte wrote, I'm a priest of truth. If I should be pursued and hated, for the truth's sake, or if I should die in its service, what more would I have done than what I simply had to do? Those ideas that each of us has a purpose in the world and the scholars as one of the most vital had a profoundly inspirational effect on Haldane. It clearly appealed to him that one could give one's life to something that wasn't dependent on historical revelation didn't require membership in a limited human community, both key aspects of the Christianity of his childhood. The idea moreover that the philosophical task could be bound up with the very fate of humanity and history was revelatory.

Here was an activity that could give Haldane's life a point and a grand one at that, even in a world where for him religious observances had become redundant. Haldane returned from Goettingen to Scotland mentally and physically transformed. Back here at Edinburgh University, his studies increased in intensity, and he was fortunate to be surrounded by friends of equal fervour, in particular Andrew Seth, who would later become known as Andrew Seth Pringle-Patterson, Professor of Logic, Rhetoric and Metaphysics at St Andrews. His talent was obvious.

And Haldane saw his philosophical studies as a kind of preparation, a bulwark against the inevitable fluctuations of future success and failure, a grounding in the values and eternal verities which made sense of the social and political actions that would form his public life. He became immersed in the groundbreaking philosophical thinkers of the day, especially James Hutchinson Stirling, Edward Caird and T.H. Green, who came to be known as the British idealists. T.H. Green, more than any other perhaps, was responsible for the rise of this movement. He was an Oxford philosopher, and Sir Haldane did not study directly under him, although Asquith did, but Green's emphasis on the social responsibilities of the philosopher, his belief that human fulfilment and freedom could be found in the active exercise of one's citizenship within the state. Each of these would mark out Green as a philosophical master worthy of Haldane's discipleship.



And here we see Haldane's hand resting on the work of Greens. The constellation of thinkers who contributed to Haldane's own first philosophical book, *Essays and Philosophical Criticism* in 1883, such as Bernard Bozenkett and Henry Jones would become not only the leading lights of the next generation of British philosophers, but also close associates of Haldane. Woven closely into this is the thinking of Hegel, who died in 1831. It was Hegel who most enthralled Haldane. Haldane considered him to be

The greatest master of abstract thought the world has seen since the day when Aristotle died.

He believed the Hegelian claim that

The spiritual alone is the real.

was one of life's most vital truths. So important, that he had those words carved in the original German into the wooden corners of his bookcase and the library at Cologne where they remain today.

Haldane somehow continued his philosophical work despite all his legal, political, and educational commitments. So, reach forward to 1902, and we find Haldane, by then a QC at the peak of his profession, an MP for nearly 20 years and not least, as we've seen that year with his civic universities, a devoted educational reformer invited by the University of St. Andrews to give the prestigious Gifford Lectures. He dedicated those 14 lectures, delivered extemporaneous over two academic years, which when printed ran to over 600 pages to what he'd learned from Hegel and how he interpreted his idealism. It's a reflection of his scholarship that he was at the

same time offered the Chair of Moral Philosophy at St. Andrews no mean achievement for a non-fully academic philosopher.

In Haldane's time, a philosophically grounded public servant and more rarely a philosopher statesman was a species that could still live and breathe. A philosophical education as it was in the latter decades of the 19th century when idealism reigned supreme could inspire a young man or woman with the hope that their actions could have world changing consequences. It could assure them that there was a deep, bond uniting all human beings. Hegel called this deep bond Geist, meaning spirit. It could tell them something about the liberating effect of living as a responsible citizen within society. And that is why I place my hopes for a resurrection of a better politics in our nation today in the resurrection of the doctrine and the teaching of the ennobling principles of idealism in our universities.

But following the First World War, the doctrine of realism took firm a route in the English universities, and that remains so even today. Realism is a view not easily summarized, but which fiercely repudiated the idealist claim that thinking affected the reality of the thing that's being thought about. Instead, it focused heavily on philosophical semantics. In the 1930s, a notable and admirable exception to this change of thinking was the Oxford philosopher R.G. Collingwood. He considered the whole bent of the realist school to be one that undermined the earlier vision of philosophy as a possible guide to life. He wrote:

If the realist had wanted to train up a generation of Englishmen and English women expressly as the potential dupes of every adventurer in morals or politics, commerce, or religion, who should appeal to their emotions and promise them private gains which he neither could procure them nor even meant to procure them, no better way of doing it could have been discovered.

What a warning, especially when we note that he wrote that in 1938. How equally relevant I believe those words to be today, for as we turn to Haldane's philosophical outlook in itself so optimistic, it may well seem alien and hard to reconcile with our contemporary view of the world. And you may well be inclined to raise a sceptical eyebrow and question its relevance. On the other hand, our present national and international life may create in you a longing for a restored optimism, in which case you may find the seeds of hope in the achievements of Haldane which was so driven by his belief in idealism.

Haldane held that a key function of philosophy was its ability to recover and harmonize all the many differing viewpoints within the world, including the differing viewpoints of science and philosophy. He argued that if we consider the workings of the mind closely and carefully enough, with philosophical rigor, that is, we discover that all individual views of the world simply represent what he called different categories or degrees within reality, which are determined by the purposes we have in mind when we engage with the world before us. The implications of

that view for Haldane's statecraft are significant. When faced with a difficulty, say the reorganisation of the army, his style was always to consult others. In this case, the Army's senior officers and many others, each with their own specialist knowledge, adding new perspectives to his own, building a fuller picture of the problem and its possible solutions. His predecessor of the War Office had failed precisely because of their unwillingness to take this range of views seriously, clinging obstinately to their own individual ideas of what the Army should be.

But Haldane was wise enough to know that he could never be in sole possession of the true, complete view of things. As he said, reality is more than what in each case it's been taken by abstraction to be. And if it is so, no single order of conceptions is adequate to a complete explanation. This tolerance, indeed, this welcome of others' conception of reality, this philosophical weariness about branding one view of reality right and another wrong is also part of why Haldane worked so well with others, both within and outside his own political party. And this undoubtedly related to his decision to leave the Liberals and join the first Labour government in 1924 in pursuit of the overriding cause of education.



Here's a photograph of Haldane next to Ramsay Macdonald on his left as you look at the picture with his cabinet in the garden of Downing Street. This approach: Principle above Party, was central to Haldane's statesmanship. The continual struggle for the best on behalf of others, often the detriment of his own health and comfort. The apparent serenity in the face of troubles. These can all be accounted for when we consider the philosophy that underpins his political activity.

As Haldane once tellingly observed, I think that the recent death of Alexei Navalny inspiringly resonates in this context.

It's the man who accepts his obligations to those around him and who does his work in his station whatever that station may be, with indifference as to the consequence to himself and without thought of what may happen to him individually who makes the real impression.

As Fischter had taught him,

If I'm to die in the service of truth, what more could I have done than what I simply had to do?

Haldane's exalted understanding of the human mind also helps us to understand why he was at such pains to emphasize the power of thinking. It was at one with the divine. He had a profound faith in the capacity of thought to solve a problem, even the most intractable. In his autobiography written just before his death, Haldane relates that he had offered to have the words,

Thinking costs nothing.

put up in letters of gold on the walls of the war office. Haldane, whose debt to T.H. Green's reading of Hegel is apparent throughout his reflections on the state, put this in his own unique way. Knowledge is power, but knowledge must not be merely abstract and material. It must be knowledge of those things that are high and spiritual, and knowledge that tells men and women the state is largely their own lives and that their own lives are a trust to be carried out for the benefit of those around them as well as for themselves. What seems to be implied in that notion of freedom, which focuses on self-satisfaction at the expense of others and not really, the notions of freedom that focus on self-satisfaction at the expense of others are not really representative of freedom at all or if they are, then they're representative of the most undeveloped form of freedom and are deeply deficient. It's only when we begin to will, in common with others, to seek together the unifying underlying truth and good that we begin to discover concrete freedom. By the British idealist's account, that ability to be oneself and to be oneself with and for others, is freedom. As Henry Jones said, the state and the citizen both share the same destiny. The state exists to provide the conditions and means for the development of citizens. Which brings me to the close of these philosophical comments with just some last words from Haldane's preface to the 1919 edition of *The New State*, a book written by his friend, the Bostonian Mary Follett, whose work Haldane so greatly admired.

The cardinal doctrine of her book, he wrote this in the preface, is that the state is what its members make it to be.

The practical consequences of that doctrine struck Haldane as particularly important.

So, neighbourhood education and neighbourhood organisation is then the pressing problem of 1918. All those who are looking towards a real democracy, not the pretence of one which we have now, feel the most imminent of our needs is the awakening and invigorating, the educating and organising of the local unit. All those who in the humblest way in settlement or community centre are working for this, are working at the greatest political problem of the 20th century.

In many respects, I think that remains the case today. For what Mary Follett on Haldane meant by this was that for a state to be effective, it should be built from the bottom up. That has enormous importance for constitutional affairs today, not least in the relationship between Scotland and the United Kingdom.

Haldane's and Follett's philosophical beliefs favoured keeping every power and responsibility which could be effectively and efficiently deployed as close as possible to the individuals affected. And what this means is that each of us should have the maximum ability to run our own family and home free from interference, but in a way that's neighbourly. So, it follows that we must individually also be a willing part of our village, or local community where certain matters for our mutual benefit can be better and more efficiently organised together. And equally, going wider, we should ourselves then pass upwards to a greater level, but one in which we as individuals remain an integral part, all activity which can be better or more efficiently carried out at that level, be that our country, be that the United Kingdom, be that the international bodies we choose to work with, the European Court of Human Justice, the tribunals at The Hague, the Commonwealth, the United Nations, NATO, the World Bank, whatever you fancy, you are an integral part of every one of those organisations because one's seen the efficiency of passing that responsibility higher, but you stay part of each level as one goes higher.

So, the key for democracy and for the creation of the strong state is that it's built upon the desire of each of us as individuals to embrace and be part of that wider fellowship and that each of us as individuals remains an integral part of every single one of those wider and greater circles.

So let me conclude with a brief summary of some of the underlying essential elements that after his death in 1928 have ensured that what Haldane built has lived on to influence modern Britain, even if his name is so often forgotten.



And to accompany them, here's a portrait of a very much thinner and unwell Haldane painted by de Laszlo literally months before his death at the age of 72.

To my mind, these Haldanean essential elements lie in the unusual combination of the principles that guided him and the techniques he used to build upon them. I believe that five in particular stand out. The first is the importance of returning to first principles. It is insistence that thinking costs nothing and that thought must proceed action. It's this that allowed Haldane to define the key questions to see things whole, to fit each component element of his work into an organism that could live and breathe, develop, and grow over the longer term. Hence the immense importance he placed on independent research, not designed to reflect a politically expedient agenda, hence to his passion for being philosophically rigorous in all his undertakings. No politician of the modern age in Britain has ever attempted to put his or her philosophy into practice in the way that Haldane did.

The second core principle is that investment in education is the best investment that any nation can make. Haldane's ability to act upon this conviction means that none can rival his contribution to the university landscape in Britain. His success lay in some key Haldanean techniques, establishing principles, focus on clear deliverables, martial influential support, ensuring a sound financial footing for every endeavour, and in his many speaking engagements and through his books, inspiring his audience with the loftiness of his cause.

The third principle is the decisions should be taken as close as possible to the people of the effect. Haldane's stances on Home Rule for Ireland and on provincial autonomy in Canada show

his commitment in his time to this ideal. I would love to have had time to explain how I believe Haldane's judicial devolution of powers from the Dominion to the provinces in his judgment helped posthumously in 1995, 67 years after his death, saving the integrity of Canada through diluting the vote in favour of the succession of Quebec. You remember it was 50.6 to 49.4% to stay in Canada.

The fourth Haldane principle is to balance realism with idealism in the sense of recognising the importance of timing in relation to affecting change. Haldane recognised there was no point in seeking to drive radical change at a pace which would have been simply rejected by a House of Lords, then dominated by the Conservatives. The compromises he made to get his army reforms through Parliament, pre the reforming Parliament Act of 1911, again illustrate this point. He was fully conscious that in politics, a developed sense of timing, along with a subtle pragmatic approach, determines what can be achieved, just as much as the ability to articulate the big arguments.

And the fifth essential Haldane principle is a recourse to statesmanship rather than to politics. Haldane's approach to cross-party cooperation demonstrates the true difference, I believe, in the approach between the statesman and the politician. The statesman is someone who holds certain well-thought-through views and opinions that transcend day-to-day party-political life. Haldane recognised that cross-party cooperation often led to the most valuable policies. His legacy in education and defence amply bears out the wisdom of such a conviction. But these five principles would count for little if they were not underwritten by a fundamental idealistic belief in the transformational capacity of the human spirit and a corresponding goodness of character. It was Haldane's moral quality and his depth that lifted him to the highest level of statesmanship. That's why I'm convinced that the study of Haldane can be more than just a study of history, that his work and thinking can be read as a handbook of leadership and statesmanship.

I often think, and I'm sustained by the thought, that a Haldanean approach to public affairs could be beneficial in addressing many of our current dilemmas. Perhaps what's needed is that the study of Haldane, this remarkable Scot, this Light of Caledonia, should become a set subject in our nation's schools and universities. Thank you very much.

REFERENCES

Campbell, John (2022) *Haldane: The Forgotten Statesman Who Shaped Modern Britain*. C Hurst & Co Publishing Limited.