beautifully organized book. And certainly, all those with the surnames of Weaver, Webb, Webster, Fuller, Walker, Dyer, and Lister, and there are many, will find themselves in the realm of family history as Lee narrates the daily lives of their ancestors.

Cynthia Johnston is a lecturer in the history of the book at the Institute of English Studies, School of Advanced Study, University of London. Her most recent publications are The Concept of the Book (2019) and Collecting the Past (edited with Toby Burrows; 2018).

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Reviewed by Ryan Patrick Hanley

This volume gathers essays from ten eminent contributors (with an introduction by four equally eminent editors) to honor the scholarly legacy of the late Istvan Hont. Hont (1947–2013), a leading historian of eighteenth-century political and economic ideas, was a prominent member of what has come to be known as the Cambridge School. Collectively the essays in this volume helpfully illuminate his distinctive substantive and methodological contributions to the Cambridge approach and also, in a number of cases, fruitfully take up themes of his to break new ground in their own right.

The volume begins with a very fine introductory essay by the four editors. It aims both to document how Hont’s own life history shaped his scholarship and to present the political and philosophical questions that Hont addressed through his work. On the former front, the editors helpfully call attention to the degree to which Hont’s early life in postwar communist Hungary helped to create the scholar he would become. The son of a senior official in the National Planning Office and the Ministry of Agriculture, and himself a member of the Hungarian Socialist Workers’ Party, Hont came of age in a “privileged and highly political setting” that both afforded him the resources to pursue an academic career and led him to be deeply concerned with the past, present, and future of the socialist state (p. 6). After completing his Hungarian dissertation on David Hume and Scotland, Hont defected to the West in 1975, going first to study with Hugh Trevor-Roper in Oxford and then to King’s College, Cambridge for the project “Society and Political Economy, 1750–1850.”
It was at Cambridge that Hont would make his name and spend his career. But as this volume shows, his work at Cambridge was animated by his life and study in Hungary. One of the book’s particular benefits is the way it calls attention to the centrality of Marx in Hont’s synthesis; as Peter Miller notes in his essay, Marx stood for some considerable time “at the center of Hont’s intellectual universe” (p. 24). Of course, moving from East to West shaped his awareness of the limits of the states built in Marx’s name. But Hont also came to regard the vision of Marx himself as fatally flawed—indeed, in the same way that the visions of Marx’s liberal adversaries were flawed. That is, each was vitiated by an “antipolitical utopianism,” and Hont’s deep awareness of these shortcomings shaped his conviction that “politics could not be avoided” and that ideologies, left or right, that failed to account for the limits of political reality were tragically shortsighted (p. 4). Herein lies the distinctiveness of Hont’s approach to the study of the history of political thought. As the editors note, “all of Hont’s writings were characterized by a singular realism about the political present and future” (p. 9). Indeed, they argue, it was this “singular realism” that prompted Hont’s characteristic focus on “‘the interdependence of politics and the economy’,” as well as his efforts to recover the vision of this interdependence articulated by Hume and Adam Smith and other philosophers who “had not been driven to separate empirical research from theory” and “acknowledged the political limits to economic innovation in addition to the economic limits on domestic and international politics” (pp. 15, 3).

The ten essays that follow develop these and other themes of Hont’s. Most are by senior scholars who came to know Hont personally at Cambridge, and nearly all begin with explicit and generous acknowledgments of Hont’s influence on their own thought. As the editors explain, the essays are organized in a manner that “retraces the intellectual journey that Hont himself took, starting with Marx and historiography, going back to the seventeenth century to pose questions about sociability and its consequences, and moving from there to examine the nature of the commercial society that Marx had attacked” (p. 16). A short review cannot do justice to all of the contributions, but suffice it to say that students of the history of political thought will find a great deal that is of interest throughout the volume, including Richard Tuck’s accounts of responses to Thomas Hobbes, Keith Tribe’s reassessment of the Prussian reforms, Gareth Stedman Jones’s study of the religious sources of Owenite socialism, Raymond Geuss’s analysis of the concept of envy and its role in communist and capitalist narratives, and John Pocock’s extension of Hont’s analysis of the concept of the nation-state.

This reader particularly benefited from three essays. John Robertson’s, like Tuck’s, examines the history of responses to Hobbes, focusing
in particular on his notorious denial of natural sociability. In so doing, Robertson helpfully contrasts the familiar responses that emerged from the Protestant natural law tradition with those that emerged in the context of Catholic Italy. Robertson rightly notes that this is an “understudied line of inquiry,” and his illuminating analysis of the ways in which such Neapolitan authors as Pietro Giannone and Giambattista Vico went beyond civil history to sacred history to buttress their accounts of the emergence of sociability opens up crucial questions about the interaction of religion with politics and economics, questions less emphasized by Hont (p. 55). Second, Michael Sonenscher’s essay aims to provide a reassessment of the emergence of republicanism in the early-modern period. His contention is “that civic humanism, the civic tradition, and civic republicanism were, in reality, new names for what was once called autonomy”—an insight that, if correct, compels us to rethink in important ways how indeed “both Rawlsian rights-based” political theories and “non-Rawlsian republican” political theories in fact “had common intellectual origins” (pp. 163, 164). Finally, John Dunn concludes the volume by calling for fuller recognition of—as the title of his contribution puts it—“why we need a global history of political thought.” In the course of so doing, Dunn strikingly challenges himself to “throw caution to the winds” and “to recognize the sort of task I have so far failed to undertake and now certainly must” (pp. 307–8). It is an arresting conclusion to the volume, and one that will leave readers eagerly awaiting the further development of themes and questions central to Hont’s scholarship.

Ryan Patrick Hanley is the Mellon Distinguished Professor of Political Science at Marquette University and, in spring 2019, visiting professor in the Department of Government at Harvard University. Two of his books will appear in 2019: The Political Philosophy of Fénelon (forthcoming from Oxford University Press) and Adam Smith on Living a Life (forthcoming from Princeton University Press).


Reviewed by Lars Heide

This economic history of the United States provides an extensive and entertaining overview from the perspective of business executives in only 240 pages. The author rests his history on well-selected narratives