

1 A Radical Building: The Science of Politics and the New Palace of Westminster

Those who have kingdoms to govern have understandings to cultivate.
Samuel Johnson, *The History of Rasselas*

Both the old and the new Houses of Parliament at Westminster embodied profound concerns over science and politics in the 1830s. After the 1832 Reform Act, which extended the British franchise from about 500,000 to around 813,000 voters, there followed a period of uncertainty over what direction politics was heading in and the roles of scientific thinking and objectivity in political philosophy. Before the ancient Palace of Westminster burned down in 1834 such questions, in relation to the architecture of Parliament, were somewhat limited to politically radical Utilitarian circles. Yet with the problem of rebuilding a new home for Britain's legislature, architecture became a subject of radical, Whig, and even Tory rhetoric. How Parliament was to be rebuilt involved architectural questions of style and engineering, yet contrasting approaches to government informed differing understandings over what was appropriate for the new Palace. This chapter examines the discourse which surrounded the new Palace of Westminster, and places the rebuilding of Parliament in the context of post-1832 politics.

The 1832 Reform Act was the political event of the decade. In this atmosphere of reform the physical Houses of Parliament had been subject to much attention, even before the fire. Varying suggestions for what form Parliament should take and what style or practical concerns should be prioritized were built on contrasting conceptions of what Parliament actually was. This was not self-evident. The Utilitarian *Westminster Review* portrayed Parliament as a machine for the manufacture of legislation. The radical Utilitarian MP Joseph Hume (1777–1858) felt Parliament to be a site of government, in which MPs were to act almost like automata in making objective decisions. Others considered Parliament not as a machine, but as an exemplar of the British constitution, embodying the government's right to rule. Robert Peel, for instance, asserted that this character was inseparably bound from the history which

surrounded the location of Westminster as the seat of government.¹ These varying notions of what Parliament was continued throughout the nineteenth century. Conservatives, such as the three-time Prime Minister the Earl of Derby (1799–1869), viewed Parliament as ‘a sovereign deliberative assembly, where parliamentary parties defined an authoritative national interest, distinct from ... the clamour of the populace’.² For Derby, Parliament’s autonomy was essential to the British political system. By comparison journalist Walter Bagehot (1826–1877), writing in 1867, was cautious over the power contained within the walls of the Palace of Westminster, considering the Cabinet to be the true site of governmental authority. Bagehot believed that the true purpose of the House of Commons was to appoint a Cabinet to rule. As he put it, the ‘cabinet, in a word, is a board of control chosen by the legislature, out of persons whom it trusts and knows, to rule the nation’. In this analysis, the House of Lords acted as ‘a *reservoir* of cabinet ministers’ to be chosen by the Commons.³ Parliament was thus both a chooser of, and a reservoir for, executive governments. At the same time, Scottish philosopher Thomas Carlyle (1795–1881) informed his readers that Parliament was redundant due to the increasing prominence of debate in the pages of *The Times*.⁴ With such a varied interpretation of Parliament’s meaning, it is hardly surprising that the question of what form the building should take descended into controversy.

While the meaning of Parliament varied, there was a widespread conviction that the new building should embody enlightened government. In the 1830s politics and science were closely interconnected and this relationship was central to much thought on the new Palace. If politics could be progressive by being scientific, then displaying this through architecture was conceived as a powerful form of constructing political credibility for Parliament. The style adopted, materials of construction, attention to lighting and ventilating, and allocation of space to parliamentary business were all central concerns. They were ways of showing how the government was rational and committed to ruling effectively, but science itself was problematic. While reform characterized the 1830s, the threat of revolution was an ever-present spectre. Within this, science had an important role. Moderate Whigs and liberal Tories shared in the utopian hope that the spread of knowledge would bring about social progress. Science revealed divine providence, underpinned the material and

¹ House of Commons debate, 9 February 1836, *Hansard*, 3rd Series, Vol. 31, p. 243.

² Angus Hawkins, *The Forgotten Prime Minister: The 14th Earl of Derby. Volume II: Achievement, 1851–1869*, (Oxford, 2008), p. 422.

³ Walter Bagehot, *The English Constitution*, (ed.) Miles Taylor, (Oxford, 2001), pp. 12–13.

⁴ Thomas Carlyle, ‘Parliaments’, in Thomas Carlyle (ed.), *Latter-Day Pamphlets*, (New York, 1850), p. 10.

spiritual advance of civilization, and justified established political hierarchies. However, existing social orders faced challenges from science's new findings. Geology's teachings over deep time challenged the literal truth of the Bible, while chemistry was feared as a harbinger of materialism, and new astronomical theories proposing that suns evolved from gaseous nebulae shook traditional beliefs over the origins of the solar system. The idea that all in the universe, mental and spiritual, resulted from matter in motion, was a dangerous one socially.⁵ Although science carried with it idealistic hopes of a society organized around nature, there were fears that such potent forms of knowledge could be misused. So although science assumed authority in the mid-nineteenth century, it was controversial in the 1830s. Not only were its own credentials unclear, but also it threatened existing authorities.⁶

Past histories have tended to overlook this context for Parliament's architecture. George Weitzman argued that the use of science and attention to utility in Parliament's construction could secure an image of enlightened governance.⁷ To make the building practically efficient for conducting public business was to enhance government's credibility. Weitzman explained how Joseph Hume led radical Utilitarian calls for a new Parliament, built in reference to recent natural philosophy focused on optics, blood circulation, and respiration.⁸ Hume's Utilitarian emphasis of function was accompanied by a commitment to the neoclassical style as reflective of scientific enlightenment and republicanism. Rorabaugh developed this by explaining how Whigs and Tories both favoured Gothic architecture as a means of implying government continuity in a post-reformed political landscape.⁹ In this account, post-1834 Whig and Tory commitments to ecclesiastical Gothic architecture stood in the way of radical demands for a scientific, republican, and neoclassical Parliament.¹⁰ Quinault's work on Parliament and the Victorian constitution extended

⁵ James A. Secord, *Visions of Science: Books and Readers at the Dawn of the Victorian Age*, (Oxford, 2014), pp. 243, 7.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 242; on astronomy and the controversy of the nebular hypothesis, see Iwan Rhys Morus, *When Physics Became King*, (Chicago, 2005), p. 202.

⁷ George H. Weitzman, 'The Utilitarians and the Houses of Parliament', *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, Vol. 20, No. 3 (October, 1961), pp. 99–107; also see M. H. Port, 'The old Houses of Parliament', in M. H. Port (ed.), *The Houses of Parliament*, (New Haven, 1976), pp. 5–19, 9–13.

⁸ Weitzman, pp. 103–04; on organic conceptions of city architecture, see Graeme Davison, 'The city as a natural system: theories of urban society in early nineteenth-century Britain', in Derek Fraser and Anthony Sutcliffe (eds.), *The Pursuit of Urban History*, (London, 1983), pp. 349–70.

⁹ W. J. Rorabaugh, 'Politics and the architectural competition for the Houses of Parliament, 1834–1837', *Victorian Studies*, Vol. 17, No. 2 (1973), pp. 155–75, 156.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 160–61.

this interpretation. He demonstrated that the pre-1834 Parliament was a Royal Palace, and that Barry's replacement structure continued this 'regal flavour'.¹¹ Parliament's longest room was the Victoria Gallery, its tallest structure was the Victoria Tower, and its decoration consisted of royal crests and sculptures. As Quinault put it, Parliament was evidently not 'a temple to Whiggism and Parliamentary sovereignty'.¹²

Philip Aspin has shown that a crude assessment of style as subject to party lines is unconvincing.¹³ Attempts to label styles such as Gothic and neoclassical either Whig or Tory do not work. This was also true of making the Parliament building scientific. The value of science was not limited to any specific group, but was broadly shared. There was a sustained conviction that politics could be treated in a way systematic and objective, employing irrefutable knowledge.¹⁴ This approach was often characteristic of Whig political philosophy, but shared similar intellectual foundations with Utilitarianism. The post-Newtonian concept that a good statesman should be adept at retaining and applying knowledge to social problems was, in the 1830s, a common conviction.¹⁵ Joe Bord has demonstrated that this idea of politics as a science was central to Whig political culture.¹⁶ Rather than limit science to Whig political philosophy, Bord cogently argues that science mattered to how a politician acted and displayed himself as a Whig. Illustrating natural philosophy to be at the heart of this 'Whig World', Bord defined four Whig values (liberality, statesmanship, cultivation, and rational sociability) through which scientific understanding could be articulated in the daily life of Whig politics. Building on Bord's conception of Whig manners, or rather the 'ways of being a Whig statesman', this chapter shows how in the 1830s there was an architectural dimension to Whig politics and science, expressed through the literature surrounding the new Parliament.

To do this, I first examine the architectural competition for the new Houses of Parliament and the selection of Charles Barry. I then go on to show how this decision was made at a time of political uncertainty. In 1834, the Whig government was far from stable following the Great Reform Act. Along with calling for further political reforms, radicals targeted the Palace as in need of rebuilding along functional lines. To

¹¹ Roland Quinault, 'Westminster and the Victorian constitution', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, Vol. 2 (1992), pp. 79–104, 103.

¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 82–86.

¹³ Philip Aspin, 'Architecture and identity in the English Gothic Revival, 1800–1850', (Oxford University DPhil, 2013), p. 127.

¹⁴ Stefan Collini, Donald Winch, and John Burrow, *That Noble Science of Politics: A Study in Nineteenth-Century Intellectual History*, (Cambridge, 1983), p. 3.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

¹⁶ Joe Bord, *Science and Whig Manners: Science and Political Style in Britain, c.1790–1850*, (Basingstoke, 2009), p. 2.

accompany the new political system, they demanded an efficient, more machine-like organ of governance. Such arguments were informed by a commitment to making politics scientific. However, I conclude by showing that while science could guide radical demands for a new Parliament, it could also shape broader interpretations of the new Palace. Amid the debates surrounding the new building, there was a rhetorical consensus that the Palace should reflect enlightened government, and this was widely believed to entail attention to science. This chapter then, shows how rebuilding Parliament was both a political, and an engineering challenge.

Catastrophe and Competition

On 16 October 1834, the Palace of Westminster was destroyed in a fire (Figure 1.1). While some observers feared the apocalyptic disaster to be a divine judgement for the overthrow of God's natural order in 1832, *The Times* chose to capture the drama and 'terrific splendour' of the spectacle.¹⁷ After the flames had finished their destructive work, the newspaper recorded the moment as a political epoch. The question of whether a new political system warranted a new building had long plagued Parliament but, as *The Times* reported, the 'motion for a new house' was now 'carried without a division'.¹⁸ The morning of 17 October marked the dawn of a controversy over how and who should build the new home of Britain's legislature. The Whig Prime Minister Lord Melbourne (1779–1848) instructed Robert Smirke (1780–1867), architect of the British Museum and influential leader of Greek revival architecture, to construct temporary accommodation for the Commons and Lords. Smirke reserved the remains of the old Painted Chamber for the Lords, and the walls of the old House of Lords for the new temporary House of Commons. After the addition of a roof and much refurbishment, the fire-damaged Upper Chamber provided the Commons with a larger space than the original Lower Chamber in St Stephen's Chapel. This conversion from fire-damaged ruins into a temporary Parliament was completed on 17 February 1835, by the adoption of prefabricated iron girders and timbering (Figure 1.2).¹⁹

¹⁷ Caroline Shenton, *The Day Parliament Burned Down*, (Oxford, 2012), pp. 3, 33; (Anon.), 'Destruction of both Houses of Parliament by fire', *The Times*, (London, England), 17 October, 1834; p. 3; Issue 15611.

¹⁸ (Anon.), 'Destruction of both Houses of Parliament by fire', *The Times*, (London, England), 18 October, 1834; p. 5; Issue 15612.

¹⁹ M. H. Port, 'The new Houses of Parliament', in J. Mordaunt Crook and M. H. Port (eds.), *The History of the King's Works*, Vol. VI: 1782–1851, (London, 1973), pp. 573–626, 574;

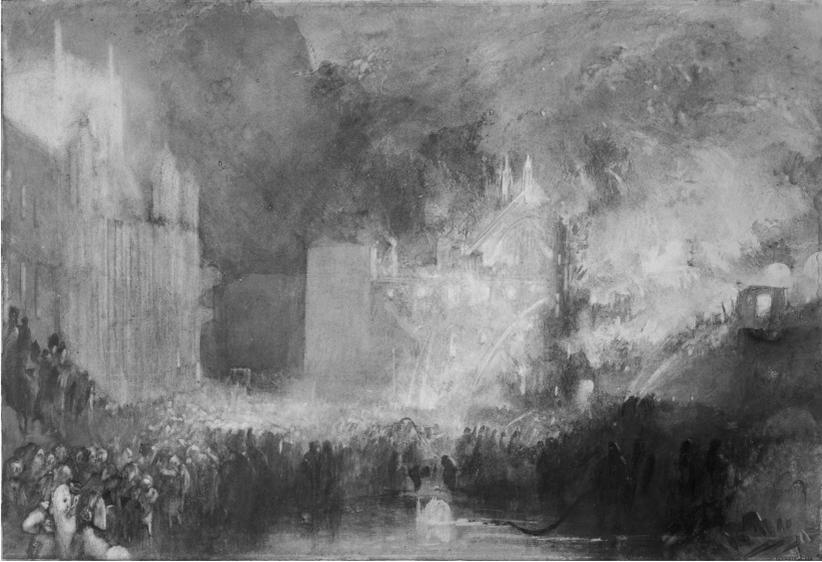


Figure 1.1 Joseph Mallord William Turner's 'The Burning of the Houses of Parliament' (1834). This is by permission of the Tate Britain, 2017

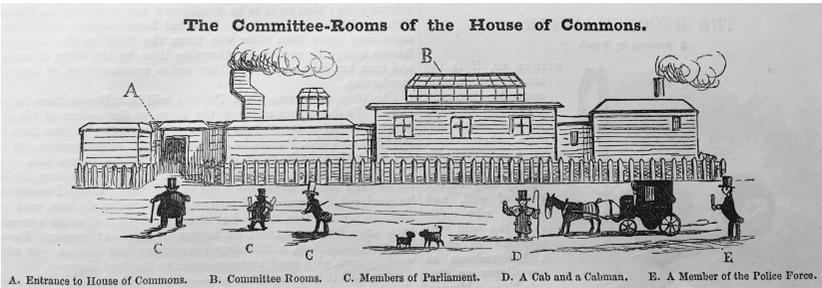


Figure 1.2 Committee rooms forming part of the temporary accommodation for the Houses of Parliament

Parliamentary Archives (PA) ARC/PRO/WORK11/26/6, 'Report on St Stephen's Chapel, 1835–37' (16 July, 1835), p. 15; Rebekah Moore is at present researching the first detailed study of the temporary accommodation in her PhD at the University of London, entitled 'Rehousing Parliament: temporary Houses of Parliament and the New Palace of Westminster, c.1830–c.1860'.

The question of the permanent new Parliament's architecture was one which reached the very pinnacle of government. Melbourne wrote to King William IV of his fears should 'debate and diversity of opinion' engulf the question of the new Palace. Melbourne was strongly committed to preserving the historical associations of Westminster's 'ancient and established place of assembly'.²⁰ Moving sites, he was sure, would encourage a larger accommodation for spectators which had in the past had 'fatal effects', such as during the 1789 French Revolution, when 'large galleries filled with the multitude' had exerted pressure on the 'deliberation of public assemblies, and consequently upon the laws and institutions of nations'. The dangers of large debating chambers were to be avoided. Melbourne also favoured preserving the site in order to continue the 'character, form, and extent' of the old Parliament. He hoped that this continuity would secure political stability. Melbourne requested Smirke rebuild Parliament quickly but his temporary fall from government in November 1834 jeopardized this appointment. Robert Peel's (1788–1850) brief Conservative administration was immediately confronted with the same problem of rebuilding Parliament. Like Melbourne, Peel defended the historical associations of the old site and favoured Melbourne's choice of architect.²¹ Smirke had worked on Peel's country seat, Drayton Manor, and his neoclassical townhouse near Parliament. In 1835, Smirke's Conservative credentials were underlined by his membership of the Carlton Club.²²

It was the ex-Tory MP and master of King Leopold of the Belgians' household, Edward Cust (1794–1878), who campaigned for a 'market' competition, judged by a King's Commission of men interested in architecture, to determine the design of the new Parliament.²³ He wanted individuals, who were not professional architects, to specify the requirements of the competition and evaluate the entries. This 'experiment' of a competition would, Cust reckoned, secure an appropriate building and a

²⁰ 'Letter from Lord Melbourne to the King, 1 Nov., 1834', in Lloyd C. Sanders (ed.), *Lord Melbourne's Papers*, (London, 1889), pp. 213–14.

²¹ Rorabaugh, pp. 161–62; House of Commons debate, 9 Feb., 1836, *Hansard*, 3rd Series, Vol. 31, p. 243; Richard Riddell, 'Smirke, Sir Robert (1780–1867)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, May 2010 [www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/25763, accessed 12 September 2014].

²² Rorabaugh, p. 169.

²³ (Anon.), 'Cust, Sir Edward, baronet (1794–1878)', rev. James Lunt, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/6973, accessed 7 March 2014]; Edward Cust, *A letter to the Right Honourable Sir Robert Peel, Bart. M. P. on the expedience of a better system of control over buildings erected at the public expense; and on the subject of rebuilding the Houses of Parliament*, (London, 1835), pp. 12, 15.

competent architect.²⁴ Over the preceding decade Cust had been gravely concerned by the state of public architecture. The 1820s had been a tumultuous time for government works. Under George IV's government, expenditure spiralled out of control, with architects appointed without competition and financial estimates rarely proving accurate. For example, the architect John Nash (1752–1835) initially estimated his designs for Regent's Street would cost £385,000 to build, but by 1826 the expense exceeded £1,533,000.²⁵ The most embarrassing of these public scandals was Nash's work at Buckingham Palace. Aside from his design's lack of aesthetic unity due to the connection of the main block to terminal pavilions with low wings, the architect's spending was so lavish that it became the subject of a select committee in 1828. It was later revealed that Nash did not believe architects should be held responsible for exceeding the costs of their estimates.²⁶ Calculating the cost of tradesmen and building materials did not, Nash contended, fall within an architect's remit. Furthermore, architects who were dependent on state patronage, such as Nash and Smirke, were hostile to open competitions, regarding them as a waste of labour.²⁷ While these government architects had the favour of George IV they could avoid competition, but with his death in 1830 and mounting public anger, there was a growing consensus that a modern professional architect had to be competent at calculating estimates and know the costs of materials, understand the skills and labour required in construction, and produce accurate drawings, good enough to win competitions.²⁸

Until losing his seat for Lostwithiel when it was disenfranchised in 1832, Cust had argued in Parliament that the government needed to exert greater authority over architectural projects.²⁹ He was sure that a competition to find a professional architect, who could deliver skilled work without extravagant expenditure, would best secure the nation's

²⁴ Cust, *A letter to the Right Honourable Sir Robert Peel*, pp. 16–17; compare with criticism of patronage, in T. Juvara, *Strictures on architectural monstrosities, and suggestions for an improvement in the direction of public works*, (London, 1835).

²⁵ Geoffrey Tyack, 'Nash, John (1752–1835)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, May 2009 [www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/19786, accessed 22 February 2015]; M. H. Port, 'Parliamentary scrutiny and treasury stringency', in Crook and Port (eds.), *The History of the King's Works*, pp. 157–78, 157.

²⁶ Port, 'Parliamentary scrutiny and treasury stringency', p. 161; on Buckingham Palace, see M. H. Port, 'Buckingham Palace', in Crook and Port (eds.), *The History of the King's Works*, pp. 263–93.

²⁷ Port, 'Parliamentary scrutiny and treasury stringency', p. 162.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 173–74; an architect's status was imprecise in the 1830s, positioned somewhere between a professional and a tradesman, see Christopher Webster, *R. D. Chantrell (1793–1872) and the Architecture of a Lost Generation*, (Reading, 2010), p. 181.

²⁹ Port, 'Parliamentary scrutiny and treasury stringency', p. 176.

interests. However, he was also eager to ensure Parliament was aesthetically pleasing. Cust did not trust the generation of neoclassical architects, which included Smirke, to deliver acceptable designs. While Buckingham Palace had been generally derided, Cust had personally worked alongside Barry to improve William Wilkins' (1778–1839) designs for the National Gallery which were criticized publicly for lacking aesthetic quality.³⁰ Cust's calls for a competition in 1835 were part of a widespread public campaign against the old practice of monopolizing architectural projects.³¹

When Peel briefly became Prime Minister after the election of late-1834, he maintained that the choice of new building would remain with those who would pay for the new Palace, the Commons.³² However, due to the increasing public hostility towards the government's architectural patronage, Peel embraced Cust's calls for an open competition. In March 1835, the Conservative government established a select committee to consider the form of the new building.³³ This committee paid particular attention to practical questions, including the physical arrangements of the Commons and means for preserving MPs' health. Along with matters of practicality, it limited the architectural style to Gothic or Elizabethan, believing that these would be consistent with Parliament's medieval heritage and surrounding architecture, particularly the Henry VII Chapel of Westminster Abbey.³⁴

On Melbourne's return to power in April 1835, this open approach was continued. The Whig First Commissioner of Woods and Forests from 1835 to 1841 and brother-in-law of Melbourne, Lord Duncannon (1781–1847), appointed five judges to a royal commission adjudicating on an open competition for the new building. This scheme was part of a wider project to reform the practices of the Office of Woods and Forests, which administered the Office of Works from 1832 and was responsible for public architecture. Duncannon's role of responsibility for public and

³⁰ M. H. Port, 'Barry, Sir Charles (1795–1860)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, October 2008 [www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/1550, accessed 4 December 2013].

³¹ M. H. Port, 'The Houses of Parliament competition', in Port (ed.), *The Houses of Parliament*, pp. 20–52, 21–23.

³² British Library (BL) British Museum, Add. Ms. 40,413, Peel Papers, Vol. CCXXXIII, folio 134, 'Letter from Sir Robert Peel to Edward Cust', (8 February 1835).

³³ M. H. Port, 'The new Houses of Parliament', in Crook and Port (eds.), *The History of the King's Works*, pp. 573–626, 575; also see House of Commons debate, 2 March 1835, *Hansard*, 3rd Series, Vol. 26, pp. 469–71.

³⁴ *Report from the Select Committee on Rebuilding Houses of Parliament; with the minutes of evidence, and an appendix*, PP. 1835 (262), pp. 3–4; Kenneth Clark, *The Gothic Revival: An Essay in the History of Taste*, (Harmondsworth, 1962), p. 99.

government buildings was both administrative and also highly political.³⁵ Duncannon and Melbourne delegated the choice of Parliament's style and form to the royal commission, made up of Cust, Thomas Liddell, George Vivian, and as chairman, the Whig MP for Tewkesbury and amateur architect Charles Hanbury-Tracy (1778–1858). With the closing date set for 1 December 1835, ninety-seven proposed designs were submitted from which the commissioners shortlisted four.³⁶ From these they declared entry sixty-four to be outstanding and announced it as the winner. This entry was that of Charles Barry.

Barry's entry conformed to the competition specification of a Gothic structure. He proposed a Palace rich in medieval Gothic detail, typical of the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth centuries. At the House of Lords' end of the building, a colossal square tower, known as the Victoria Tower, was proposed over the Royal Entrance. His Gothic plans were to be built around surviving medieval structures, such as Westminster Hall and the Undercroft Chapel, beneath St Stephen's Chapel. In this way, the past was incorporated with the new. Barry's designs, although lavishly covered in elaborate Gothic carvings, were actually rather classical in style, based on the principle of symmetry. Much of the Gothic detail, as will be seen in Chapter 2, was the contribution of Augustus Pugin (1812–1852). For many Tory and Whig commentators, these Gothic plans appeared to reaffirm traditional and institutional power, implying continuity with the past in a narrative of gradual progress.³⁷ However, Barry's entry was hugely controversial in post-1832 British politics.

Radical Proposals: The Politics of Barry's Appointment

The choice of Barry's designs came at a crucial moment in British politics. Even before the destruction of the old Houses of Parliament the question of what form the legislature should take was controversial, with radical Utilitarians demanding a new building more befitting of a modern, enlightened, political system. These calls for a physical Parliament to accompany the 1832 Reform Act were grounded in a conviction that politics should be made more scientific. An enlightened government required an appropriate building, and radicals were sure that this was not to be found in a Gothic shrine to traditional notions of a Constitution,

³⁵ Dorothy Howell-Thomas, *Duncannon: Reformer and Reconciler, 1781–1847*, (Norwich, 1992), pp. 198–248, and on Parliament see pp. 225–34; K. Theodore Hoppen, 'Ponsonby, John William, fourth earl of Bessborough (1781–1847)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, January 2008 [www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/22500, accessed 4 December 2013].

³⁶ Port, 'The Houses of Parliament competition', p. 41. ³⁷ Rorabaugh, p. 156.

but in a structure which prioritized function and efficiency. While a Classical style would conjure up images of republican democracy, attention to lighting, ventilation, and suitable space for business would ensure Parliament became a more mechanistic, rational organ of governance.

Before 1834 Joseph Hume led this campaign for a building of efficiency and utility. Born in Scotland, the son of a shipmaster, Hume's education included natural science. Apprenticed to a surgeon in 1790, he then studied medicine at the Universities of Aberdeen and Edinburgh. After gaining experience as a naval surgeon's mate and seeing service with the East India Company from 1799, he took his first seat in Parliament in 1812. A confirmed radical, the MP for Kilkenny had been a fervent advocate of the Reform Bills of 1831 and 1832.³⁸ He campaigned for the secret ballot, triennial parliaments, further franchise extension, and religious toleration. He also worked alongside Edwin Chadwick to draft public health legislation, employing his experience as a physician. In all his endeavours Hume was guided by his Utilitarian philosophy. During his time at the Montrose Academy, Hume's closest friend had been James Mill (1773–1836), and in later life he shared the philosophic radicalism of Jeremy Bentham (1748–1832) and John Stuart Mill (1806–1873). This radicalism held that all actions should be judged morally right or wrong based on their creation or diminution of pleasure, and that this held implications for legal and social institutions.³⁹ Utilitarian philosophical radicalism argued that the maximizing of happiness was the moral standard by which all human choices should be measured.

Even before the fire, Hume raised the question of the overcrowded reformed Parliament in the Commons. Debates were conducted, sometimes continually for over seventeen hours, in an atmosphere which Hume deemed unhealthy. In 1833, he declared the House unfit for more than 400 MPs, but due to the 1832 Reform Act, this number was now at over 600.⁴⁰ Hume's concerns were grounded in his readings of medical texts, such as physician William Harvey's (1578–1657) teachings, which focused on blood flow and respiration.⁴¹ He found support

³⁸ V. E. Chancellor, 'Hume, Joseph (1777–1855)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, January 2008 [www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/14148, accessed 7 March 2014]; also see Valerie Chancellor, *The Political Life of Joseph Hume, 1777–1855*, (London, 1986).

³⁹ Ronald K. Huch and Paul R. Ziegler, *Joseph Hume: The People's M.P.*, (Philadelphia, 1985), p. 3; on Utilitarian philosophy and politics, see James E. Crimmins, *Utilitarian Philosophy and Politics: Bentham's Later Years*, (London, 2011).

⁴⁰ House of Commons debate, 2 July 1833, *Hansard*, 3rd Series, Vol. 19, p. 61.

⁴¹ Andrea Fredericksen, 'Parliament's genius loci: the politics of place after the 1834 fire', in Christine Riding and Jacqueline Riding (eds.), *The Houses of Parliament: History, Art, Architecture*, (London, 2000), pp. 99–111, 108; on Harvey's teachings and city planning,

from the MP for Bridport, Henry Warburton (1784–1858), a fellow doctor who believed sitting in the Commons to be a ‘state of bodily torture’.⁴² Hume cited evidence collected during a recent select committee which he had chaired. The problem of Parliament’s physical structure had been assessed before the Reform Act, in 1831. During this select committee the architect Benjamin Wyatt (1775–1852) provided technical information on sound and ventilation in the Commons. Wyatt considered possible alterations to the chamber’s roof to assist the acoustics. He asserted that raising the Commons’ roof would improve hearing, having weighed up the potential for sound vibrations to irregularly collide with ‘the particles of the fluid which constitutes the vehicle of sound’.⁴³ Despite such optimism, the committee judged the House to be both inadequate for enacting efficient public business, and also incapable of undergoing any improvement.

Hume’s 1833 committee placed increased emphasis on practical matters and judged that a new Parliament was essential for a reformed legislature. It reviewed the form a new Parliament should take. This committee, which included Peel, Warburton, and the MP for Monmouth and civil engineer, Benjamin Hall (1802–1867), declared ventilation to be very imperfect, and the threats to the health of MPs to be extensive.⁴⁴ Hume’s questioning focused on the transmission of sound, debating chamber shape, and means of ventilation. The architect John Soane (1753–1837) felt Parliament’s existing site secured good air circulation, but recommended a debating chamber based on the Olympic Theatre at Vicenza.⁴⁵ This would mean a rectangular room with a semi-circular apse for the transmission of sound. Smirke agreed with Soane’s straight parallel sides, but favoured a semi-hexagonal apse.⁴⁶ Decimus Burton (1800–1881), protégé of Nash and architect of the Athenaeum, advised Hume that a new Parliament should

see Richard Sennett, *Flesh and Stone: The Body and the City in Western Civilization*, (London, 1994), pp. 255–70.

⁴² House of Commons debate, 2 July 1833, *Hansard*, 3rd Series, Vol. 19, pp. 63–64; H. C. G. Matthew, ‘Warburton, Henry (1784–1858)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, May 2009 [http://ezproxy.ouls.ox.ac.uk:2117/view/article/28672, accessed 8 April 2013].

⁴³ *Report from the Select Committee on House of Commons Buildings; together with the minutes of evidence taken before them*, PP. 1833 (17), p. 12.

⁴⁴ G. F. R. Barker, ‘Hall, Benjamin, Baron Llanover (1802–1867)’, rev. H. C. G. Matthew, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, January 2012 [www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/11945, accessed 22 February 2015].

⁴⁵ *Report from the Select Committee on the House of Commons’ Buildings; with the minutes of evidence taken before them*, PP. 1833 (269), pp. 11–12; David Watkin, ‘Soane, Sir John (1753–1837)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, January 2008 [www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/25983, accessed 22 February 2015].

⁴⁶ PP. 1833 (269), p. 13.

be 'advantageously placed for light and ventilation' and have a rectangular debating chamber with semi-circular ends.⁴⁷ This was based on experiments he had made on sound in theatres and churches. Nevertheless, he felt parallel benches were vital to securing the intense cross-bench debate characteristic of English politics.⁴⁸ Hume also interrogated Burton over his newly designed system of lighting, conceived so as to avoid stress on the eyes of members.⁴⁹ To subsequent witnesses, including architects James Savage (1779–1852), Thomas Hopper, and Edward Blore (1787–1879), Hume pursued questions over the relation between sound and the shape of walls and height of roofs, considering the advantages and drawbacks of a circular debating chamber like that of the Chamber of Deputies in Paris. His commitment to utility shaped his questioning. However, the witnesses' evidence presented little accord over what was a practical form and shape for a new chamber.

Hume's efforts won praise in the *Westminster Review*. Sir Henry Cole (1808–1882), the inventor of the commercial Christmas card and an establishing member of Imperial College London, heralded Hume's campaign for a suitable building for Britain's democratic representatives.⁵⁰ As a friend of John Stuart Mill, Cole was close to the Philosophical Radicals and along with promoting improved urban drainage and water supply, would go on to play an instrumental role in the 1851 Great Exhibition before becoming the first director of the Victoria and Albert Museum.⁵¹ He believed the physical structure, or 'machinery', of Parliament to be an important matter. To pursue reformed politics in the 'barbarous' House of Commons was impractical. The building was too small for 658 MPs and presented an unhealthy atmosphere where members were subjected to noxious vapours and typhus fever.⁵² Cole felt the Whig and Tory commitment to the existing Commons was a scheme to undermine the impact of the Reform Act. It was 'a regular system for driving out the people's agents by making the house too hot to hold them'.⁵³

Hume's commitment to a new Parliament of utility was typical of a broader Utilitarian agenda. Both James Mill and Joseph Hume had Scottish roots, as did their political philosophy. The Utilitarian philosophical

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 28; Dana Arnold, 'Burton, Decimus (1800–1881)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, May 2012 [www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/4125, accessed 22 February 2015].

⁴⁸ PP. 1833 (269), pp. 28–29. ⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

⁵⁰ Ann Cooper, 'Cole, Sir Henry (1808–1882)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, January 2008 [www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/5852, accessed 7 March 2014]; Henry Cole, 'Parliaments of our ancestors', *Westminster Review*, Vol. XXI (October, 1834), pp. 319–34, 319.

⁵¹ Elizabeth Bonython, *King Cole: A Picture Portrait of Sir Henry Cole, KCB 1808–1882*, (London, 1982), pp. 3–6.

⁵² Cole, 'Parliaments of our ancestors', p. 320. ⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 334.

radicalism of Bentham and Mill placed emphasis on the science of legislation; Bentham's political science was a set of utility-based principles guiding the choices of the legislator.⁵⁴ Mill and his son, John Stuart, both believed that for the science of politics to be truly enlightened, increasing the franchise was required, and argued that government had to focus on principles rather than party.⁵⁵ John Stuart Mill argued that the principle of utility in government was essential because it was the purest measurement of society's progress to high civilization.⁵⁶ Mill's emphasis on intellectualism in governance built on the work of the University of Edinburgh's professor of moral philosophy from 1785 to 1810, Dugald Stewart (1753–1828), who placed value on science in politics as a means to progress. Like Stewart, Mill believed that the nature of reasoning in science carried an authority which was transferable to politics. Mill explained that induction, by which he meant the operation of discovering general propositions and rules from observable evidence, was vital in both science and politics. He was confident that induction was at the heart of logic in science, and that 'a complete logic of the sciences would be also a complete logic of practical business and common life'.⁵⁷ In politics, as in science, it was important to establish general truths through induction, and then make choices based on these known principles. Mill was thus concerned with establishing a system of epistemological methodology applicable to the physical world, which could be transferred to questions of morality and science.⁵⁸ This concept was at the heart of the Utilitarian philosophical radicalism which Hume shared. So not only would a Parliament of utility be practically good for an efficient government, but for the Parliament to itself espouse utility had broader implications. It would demonstrate to observers that Parliament was an organ of objective, scientific government and that here was an authority both capable and credible of ruling the nation.

These radical overtones made architecture and the prioritizing of practical concerns like lighting and ventilation contentious at Westminster. Peel summarized Whig-Tory concerns regarding the Utilitarian drive for a new Parliament in his response to Hume's 1833 select committee report. Peel believed that of all reports he had ever read, it was 'the most imperfect' and

⁵⁴ Collini, Winch, and Burrow, p. 95. ⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 102, 109. ⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

⁵⁷ John Stuart Mill, *System of Logic Ratiocinative and Inductive: Being a Connected View of the Principles of Evidence and the Methods of Scientific Investigation*, (London, 1886), pp. 185–86.

⁵⁸ Collini, Winch, and Burrow, p. 130; also see William Thomas, *The Philosophic Radicals: Nine Studies in Theory and Practice, 1817–1841*, (Oxford, 1979); on politics and science, see Harvey W. Becher, 'Radicals, Whigs and Conservatives: the middle and lower classes in the analytical revolution at Cambridge in the age of aristocracy', *British Journal for the History of Science*, Vol. 28, No. 4 (December, 1995), pp. 405–26.

the 'most discreditable'.⁵⁹ He damned the report's inability to produce a decisive opinion on any question and failure to select any of the twenty-two proposed plans for a new House of Commons. He warned that a larger debating chamber would be ineffectual for improving the discharge of public business, and that it was foolish to blame the building for all the faults of health and hearing among MPs.⁶⁰ Hume's motion to build a new Parliament was subsequently defeated in a division by 154 votes to seventy. Peel's reservations over a new Utilitarian Parliament were part of wider political uncertainties within Parliament immediately after the 1832 Reform Act. As leader of the Tory party Peel had, after the Duke of Wellington's loss of the leadership following his refusal to consider political reform, opposed Prime Minister Earl Grey's (1764–1845) reform programme between 1830 and 1832.⁶¹ Both in opposition, and during his brief ministry between 1834 and 1835, Peel was cautious over making concessions to radicals. Many Whigs shared these fears. Following Grey's resignation in July 1834, Melbourne was confronted with navigating his ministry through a newly reformed political world.⁶² Like Peel, Melbourne was apathetic towards the Utilitarian calls for a new Parliament.

This context of the post-reformed political system is important for understanding the Whig-Tory ambiguity regarding Hume's calls for a Parliament built to embody values central to Utilitarianism. Although it expanded the electorate to men who occupied premises worth at least £10 per annum in towns and £50 per annum in counties, abolished rotten boroughs, and created new representation for large towns like Birmingham and Manchester, the 1832 Reform Act changed very little of the existing political system at Westminster.⁶³ From 1832 until 1852, only Melbourne's cabinet between 1834 and 1835 contained more commoners than peers.⁶⁴ Despite this, Peter Mandler has shown that while the Reform Act had little effect on Parliament, it had a great impact on the

⁵⁹ House of Commons debate, 2 July, 1833, *Hansard*, 3rd Series, Vol. 19, pp. 64–65.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 65.

⁶¹ John Prest, 'Peel, Sir Robert, second baronet (1788–1850)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, May 2009 [www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/21764, accessed 7 March 2014].

⁶² Peter Mandler, 'Lamb, William, second Viscount Melbourne (1779–1848)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008 [www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/15920, accessed 7 March 2014].

⁶³ Robert Stewart, *Party and Politics, 1830–1852*, (Basingstoke, 1989), p. 32; John A. Phillips and Charles Wetherell, 'The Great Reform Act of 1832 and the political modernization of England', *American Historical Review*, Vol. 100, No. 2 (April, 1995), pp. 411–36, 414.

⁶⁴ Stewart, *Party and Politics*, pp. 33, 35; for post-1832 context, see Ian Newbould, *Whiggery and Reform, 1830–41: The Politics of Government*, (Basingstoke, 1990), pp. 81–101.

unenfranchised, provoking popular expectations of reforms to come.⁶⁵ Mandler demonstrated that this agitation concerned the post-reformed ministries of Grey and Melbourne. The big question for Grey and Melbourne between 1832 and 1834 was how could governments assert ministerial authority over popularly elected seats and provide direction to legislation? There were two managerial problems for post-1832 governments. Primarily, Parliament witnessed an increased activity by MPs, threatening the government's control over Parliament's legislative timetable, and secondly, an increase in petitioning.⁶⁶ The Whig ministry's response in 1833 was to reserve Mondays and Fridays exclusively for government business. This was, as the Speaker of the Commons noted, a reaction to 'popular feeling'. Grey and Melbourne feared that any election would return a government unable to govern; the Reform Act appeared to have created a 'rudderless' administration.⁶⁷ By the summer of 1834, Melbourne had endured two exhausting sessions of reformed Parliament. The following decade was a period of consolidating and reaffirming stability in a reformed system. As Mandler put it, 'Whigs and Tories are seen to be rallying together against the threat from below and groping towards the "Victorian Compromise" of moderate Liberalism'.⁶⁸ So although Parliament did not appear radically different in 1834 from its 1831 state, the Reform Act provided a context of uncertainty which was important in debates over Parliament's architecture both before and after the fire of 1834. At the heart of these debates was a concern not only with the form of a new building, but what Parliament should be, and what its business was. Challenges from radicals such as Hume were not new after 1833, but drew increasing Whig and Tory caution.⁶⁹ As Jonathan Parry concluded, the Whig government, which was above all a 'Reforming' government, never seemed to secure stability.⁷⁰

In this context of uncertainty, the Utilitarian agenda for rebuilding Parliament aroused concern. Hume was proposing a radically new building, conceptualized as a mechanistic organ of government at the very moment the Whig administration sought to secure solidarity. Following Parliament's destruction, the Utilitarian imperative for a building of science and practical utility intensified. Hume assisted Arthur Symonds in publishing a Utilitarian

⁶⁵ Peter Mandler, *Aristocratic Government in the Age of Reform: Whigs and Liberals, 1830–1852*, (Oxford, 1990), p. 151; on Whig values, see Abraham D. Kriegel, 'Liberty and Whiggery in early nineteenth-century England', *Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 52, No. 2 (June, 1980), pp. 253–78; J. W. Burrow, *Whigs and Liberals: Continuity and Change in English Political Thought*, (Oxford, 1988).

⁶⁶ Jonathan Parry, *The Rise and Fall of Liberal Government in Victorian Britain*, (New Haven, 1993), pp. 95, 102.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 106. ⁶⁸ Mandler, *Aristocratic Government*, pp. 155–57. ⁶⁹ Parry, p. 99.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 128.

perspective of the opportunity the fire presented in the *Westminster Review*. He believed that the fire had removed the 'aching tooth' of government, eradicating all sentimental attachments to the old building. As he crudely put it, referring to the negligence of the old Parliament's caretaker, all Whig and Tory arguments had been 'dissolved by the carelessness of some slut that forgot to sweep her hearth-stone'. Symonds hoped the new Parliament would be functional, with space for committee rooms, accommodation, and all the appropriate 'machinery' for individual MPs to work to their full potential.⁷¹

This analogy of an ideal Parliament as a machine ran through Symonds's article. A government ruling by political science and clear principles demanded a mechanistic building of Utilitarian function. He believed the new structure should be 'A powerful machine, of nicest force . . . of wondrous power . . . adjusted to a thousand special functions, yet combining for the production of one grand general effect'.⁷² This description shows what was the ideal government building in Utilitarian philosophy, but also illustrates how subjective the meaning of Parliament was. For the Utilitarian journal, the question of a new House of Commons was not one of four walls, but 'by what machinery shall the legislative functions be best performed?' To work mechanistically, Symonds described how the new Parliament must have good access, sound, warmth, ventilation, and efficient means of division, as well as space for reporters, refreshment rooms, records, while also being fireproof. Interestingly he explained that a decrease in representative members would allow for a smaller debating chamber and make questions of heating and ventilating easier to address. The new Parliament could, he suggested, entail considerable political reform. Reducing the number of MPs would increase the legislature's efficiency. Furthermore, he declared that the new Parliament could only be truly enlightened if women were permitted inside the Commons. He believed a female audience within the Commons itself would reduce impolite debates and encourage MPs to be diligent on the benches.⁷³ A later committee on the admission of ladies to the Commons, which included Hume, appeased the *Westminster Review's* calls for female spectators; as of July 1835, up to twenty-four spaces in the Strangers Gallery would be reserved for women.⁷⁴

It was not just questions of utility that aroused radical passions. The use of Gothic was immensely alienating. For the likes of Hume, the Gothic did not

⁷¹ Arthur Symonds, 'New House of Commons', *Westminster Review*, Vol. XXII (January, 1835), pp. 163–72, 164–65.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 165. ⁷³ *Ibid.*, pp. 169, 171.

⁷⁴ *Report from the Select Committee on the Admission of Ladies to the Strangers' Gallery; with the minutes of evidence*, PP. 1835 (437), p. 3; on this 'privileged space', see Kathryn Gleadle, *Borderline Citizens: Women, Gender, and Political Culture in Britain, 1815–1867*, (Oxford, 2009), pp. 57–58.

appear an appropriate style for an enlightened legislature. This question of style had actually been a divisive topic for over forty years before the fire. Attempts to reconceive the old Parliament as a neoclassical senate house, including those of architects Soane and Wyatt, had come to nothing following the increased association of the style with republicanism after the 1789 French Revolution. In 1799 Wyatt embraced the Gothic in his plans to rework the Lords' chamber and in subsequent years focused on reconstruction work which showed off the medieval splendour of the palace.⁷⁵ The nineteenth century witnessed a commitment to maintaining Parliament's Gothic character as part of an anti-revolutionary affirmation of English politics.⁷⁶ Radicals claimed the neoclassical as reminiscent of ancient democracies and emulative of continental republics.⁷⁷ Hume also believed that while the Gothic was especially prone to the ill-effects of weathering, neoclassical structures would defy decay better due to their lack of ornament.⁷⁸ The *Architectural Magazine* shared in these concerns with style and practicality, asserting 'the importance of science and engineering' in the new Parliament building.⁷⁹ The journal's founding editor, John Claudius Loudon (1783–1843), had met Bentham in 1803 after graduating from the University of Edinburgh in 1802. Through his *Architectural Magazine*, Loudon oversaw John Ruskin's first publication. Despite this, the journal only ran from 1834 to 1839.⁸⁰ Loudon was concerned with utility in architecture and promoted what he was sure was a rational approach to building which focused on the materials and practices of construction. His journal provided a commentary on the 'pragmatic functionalism' of the 'benefits of modern technology', including heating and ventilation.⁸¹

Loudon agreed that Hume was correct to be guided by 'fundamental principles of utility', avoiding damp and bad air, and focusing on facilitating efficient public business.⁸² The new Parliament should be fire-proof, lit by gas lamps, heated by steam boilers, and well ventilated. He felt its construction should build on 'human knowledge', which was

⁷⁵ Sean Sawyer, 'Delusions of national grandeur: reflections on the intersection of architecture and history at the Palace of Westminster, 1789–1834', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, Vol. 13 (2003), pp. 237–50, 242.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 242–45. ⁷⁷ Rorabaugh, p. 157. ⁷⁸ Weitzman, p. 105.

⁷⁹ Howard Leathlean, 'Loudon's architectural magazine and the Houses of Parliament competition', *Victorian Periodicals Review*, Vol. 26, No. 3 (Fall, 1993), pp. 145–53, 151.

⁸⁰ Brent Elliott, 'Loudon, John Claudius (1783–1843)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, May 2010 [www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/17031, accessed 7 March 2014].

⁸¹ Leathlean, pp. 146–47; for an early call for improved ventilation, see Alfred Ainger, *On Ventilation, in reference to the Houses of Parliament*, (London, 1835).

⁸² 'The Conductor', 'A new site for the Houses of Parliament suggested, and the fundamental Principles on which they ought to be designed pointed out', *Architectural Magazine*, Vol. III, No. 25 (March, 1836), pp. 100–03, 100–01.

'always progressive'. Loudon favoured open competition and a change of site. Although Loudon wanted a new competition for a new site without style restrictions, he felt Cust's existing competition, far from being unscientific had, in revealing the talent of Britain's architects, already contributed much 'to the progress of architecture as a science'.⁸³ The attention surrounding the new building was thus seen to itself be compiling and advancing architectural knowledge. The journal especially feared that the Gothic style did not represent modern knowledge. When Barry's plans were publicized, the style was deemed unenlightened in this 'age of railroads'.⁸⁴ It demanded a style reflecting modern learning, rather than the Gothic, which invoked the crude 'materialism of the Flemish school'. One commentator in the journal, particularly concerned by the future of architecture which was at stake in the rebuilding of Parliament, was the Devonian architect and engineer, Charles Fowler (1792–1867).⁸⁵ Fowler had experienced both disciplines by the 1830s, having constructed Totnes Bridge in Devon between 1826 and 1828. Like Loudon, Fowler believed the new Parliament signified an epoch 'for the development of genius, and the exercise of the arts and science'.⁸⁶ Good architecture embraced a wide range of arts and sciences and was the product of 'the profound resources of the philosopher'. Parliament mattered because it would, he predicted, give direction to architecture for years to come. Yet he derided Gothic as a third-rate style, essentially ecclesiastic and collegiate. No Gothic Parliament could be modern 'in this enlightened age'.⁸⁷ Outside of the *Architectural Magazine*, Fowler echoed these sentiments, choosing to focus instead on the site, but remaining convinced that Gothic was ignorant and that architecture was inherently connected to a nation's industry.⁸⁸ Style then was controversial, not only for politicians, but in wider circles, and Parliament was identified as the vital stylistic battleground. Along with calls for a more mechanistic legislature, style

⁸³ *Ibid.*, pp. 102–3; for a comparative publication considered suitable for review in a 'scientific journal', see Xylopolist, *A few remarks on the style and execution of the New Houses of Parliament, the insertion of which was refused by a scientific journal for unknown reasons. With some additional observations, occasioned by the debate on the subject in the House of Commons, the 14th February, 1848*, (London, 1848).

⁸⁴ Leathlean, p. 149.

⁸⁵ Peter Leach, 'Fowler, Charles (1792–1867)', rev. *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/37426, accessed 7 March 2014].

⁸⁶ Charles Fowler, *Remarks on the resolutions adopted by the committees of the Houses of Lords and Commons for rebuilding the Houses of Parliament, particularly with reference to their dictating the style to be adopted*, (reprinted from the *Architectural Magazine*, September, 1835), p. 1; copy in Joseph Hume's papers at UCL.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

⁸⁸ Charles Fowler, *On the Proposed Site of the New Houses of Parliament*, (London, 1836), p. 1.

was a subject for radical discussion. Commitments to a mechanistic classical Parliament engendered radical approaches to government.

The Science of Politics and the New Palace

A conviction that science should guide politics informed philosophies beyond those which were politically radical and this had consequences for wider understandings of how Parliament should be rebuilt. Across the political spectrum there was a consensus that the new building should embody enlightened governance. Curiously such interpretations often shared similar intellectual roots. Being scientific provided several political identities with an ideal of what the new Palace should be. To build a structure which embodied scientific learning through practical applications and an appropriate style was a broadly shared value.

In Whig politics science and governance were, in the 1830s, closely connected. Joe Bord has described the strong links between Whig political philosophy and science, as well as between Whig manners and the cultivation of objective knowledge.⁸⁹ Four Whig customs demonstrate the ways in which scientific engagement was an expression of identity for Whig statesmen. These Bord termed ‘liberality’, ‘statesmanship’, ‘cultivation’, and ‘rational sociability’.⁹⁰ Bord used these manners to show how Whigs demarcated themselves from radicals and Tories. For Whigs, good government could be achieved by intellectually equipped statesmen who flaunted knowledge in the execution of their legislative duties.⁹¹ Politicians were also to exude rational sociability, meaning the ability to value and accept all opinions, even if conflicting, in order to work together in coalition for the national good.⁹² This paralleled accepting alternate intellectual positions in areas of natural philosophy such as Geology, so as to conduct effective improving investigations, often through learned societies. By liberality Bord has shown that the Whig sentiment of projecting a generosity of spirit towards matters of state concurred with a generosity towards scientific liberality. As a political behaviour, liberality involved opposing war and supporting political reform, while in science, liberality meant a devotion to the finding of truth while ignoring private interests and undue patronage.⁹³ Finally, the Whig manner of cultivation stemmed from a connection between Whig government and land. An

⁸⁹ Bord, *Science and Whig Manners*, p. 2; on Whig political reform and the Royal Society, see Roy M. MacLeod, ‘Whigs and savants: reflections on the reform movement in the Royal Society, 1830–48’, in Ian Inkster and Jack Morrell (eds.), *Metropolis and Province: Science in British Culture, 1780–1850*, (London, 1983), pp. 55–90.

⁹⁰ Bord, *Science and Whig Manners*, p. 3. ⁹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 31–55. ⁹² *Ibid.*, pp. 56–78.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 79–80.

appreciation of agriculture entailed agrarian chemistry and experiments on enhancing produce.⁹⁴ This pursuit of improving knowledge extended beyond agriculture to industrial duties. Crucially, it was in this way possible for Whigs to be utilitarian, that is concerned with matters of utility and improvement through enhanced knowledge, without subscribing to the political philosophy of Utilitarianism.⁹⁵

Science shaped more than broad Whig manners, but an approach to government which emphasized an unbiased and objective manner of legislating. The belief that politics should be made a subject comprising of systematic knowledge was an ancient one.⁹⁶ In the eighteenth century the Scottish philosopher David Hume (1711–1776) injected this science of politics with an intense vigour which was part of a wider post-Newtonian attempt to apply experimental methodology to moral subjects. Collini, Winch, and Burrow have demonstrated how Dugald Stewart shared this Scottish inheritance with his students, including Henry Brougham (1778–1868), Francis Horner, Sydney Smith, and Francis Jeffrey.⁹⁷ These young philosophic Whigs founded the *Edinburgh Review* in 1802; Stewart played a shaping role in forming these men's persistence with politics as a science. Building on David Hume and Adam Smith's (1723–1790) works that proposed a link between advances in commerce and manufacturing, and good government and liberty, Stewart posited a scientific approach to politics.⁹⁸ Stewart actually opposed David Hume's philosophy of scepticism, which asserted that facts and assumptions were always open to uncertainty, and instead promoted a common-sense philosophy that held that observable qualities belonging to external objects constituted true knowledge. Stewart taught his students that the enlightened legislator would be directed by an impulse to improve the happiness of society and a consideration of 'general utility'.⁹⁹ He coveted a government of general principles, not private interests: this replicated natural philosophy's apparent objectivity. The active study of science was vital in this framework, cultivating improved intellect in legislators. Stewart envisaged 'a moral-cum-intellectual fusion of the purposes of science with the art of legislation'.¹⁰⁰

If there was a personification of this Whig philosophy, then it was Stewart's pupil, Lord Brougham, who of all Whigs had the most to say about the new Parliament (Figure 1.3).¹⁰¹ At the University of

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 102–34. ⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 111. ⁹⁶ Collini, Winch, and Burrow, p. 13.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 25. ⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 27, 36. ⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 37–38.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 42; Bord provides a study of the 1806–07 Whig ministry showing how Dugald Stewart's philosophy shaped government approaches to administration, in Joe Bord, 'Whiggery, science and administration: Grenville and Lord Henry Petty in the Ministry of All the Talents, 1806–7', *Historical Research*, Vol. 76, No. 191 (February, 2003), pp. 108–27.

¹⁰¹ See Henry Brougham, *The Life and Times of Henry Lord Brougham Written by Himself*, Vol. 3 of 3, (Edinburgh, 1871); J. Harwood, *Memoirs of the Right Honourable Henry, Lord*

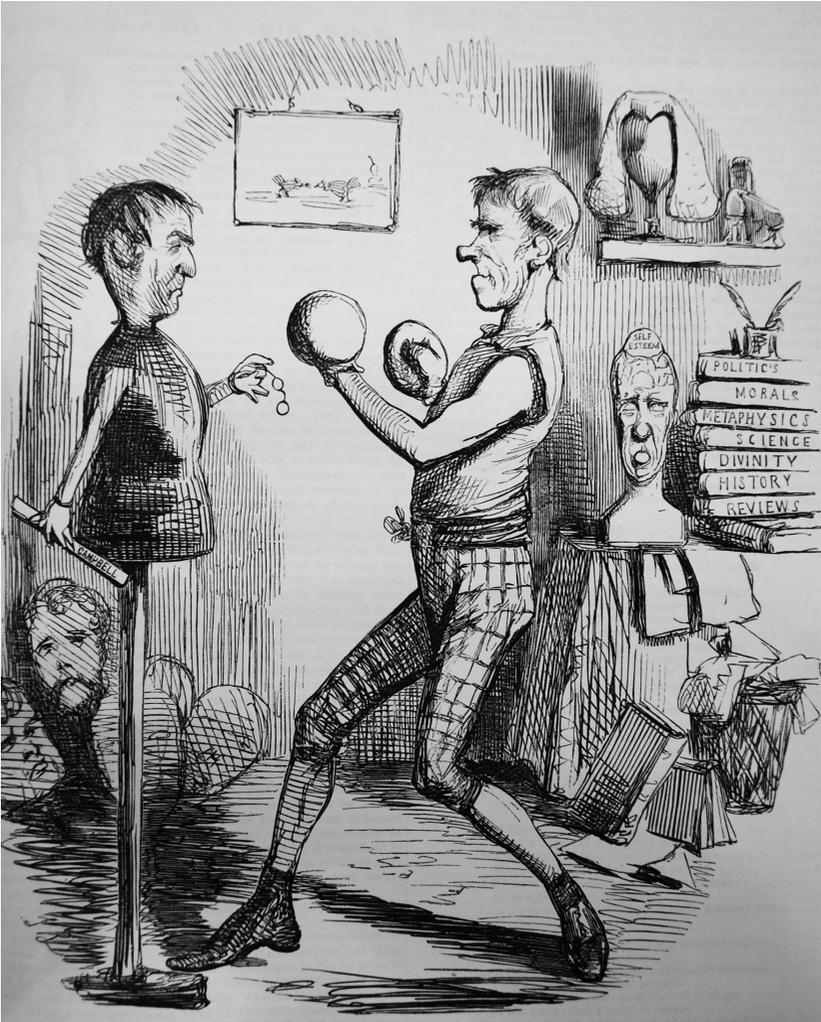


Figure 1.3 Henry Brougham in training: The embodiment of science and politics in 1830s Britain

Edinburgh academia was a highly political concern; academic offices were the patronage of the Town Council. In 1834 one critic felt that the University's recent decline was attributable to 'political intrigue', while

Brougham, (London, 1840); Robert Stewart, *Henry Brougham, 1778–1868: His Public Career*, (London, 1985).

Tory and Whig interests shaped the city's societies which endeavoured to promote science.¹⁰² Natural philosophy, and particularly medicine, was therefore inseparable from political matters. Between 1790 and 1830 Edinburgh was home to a 'Whig science', in which political economy went hand in hand with chemistry.¹⁰³ Brougham had been at the centre of this world, believing that knowledge of chemistry would improve manufacturing and society. In part such beliefs stemmed from the university's inseparability from the city and local industrial area. Students of Edinburgh were often sure that while Oxford University's 'politico-classical dream' was detached from reality, the Scottish university's place in the context of an industrial town shaped an interest in addressing problems of poverty and industrialization.¹⁰⁴ Brougham typified such a perspective, for example, during his inquiry into the health and welfare of Ireland's poor.

Brougham was a prolific author who enjoyed natural philosophy, and was, when arriving in London after his Edinburgh education, the embodiment of a 'modern' Whig.¹⁰⁵ He shared Stewart's conviction that good political science, scientific method, and attention to natural philosophy were all intrinsically connected. Through the 1790s Brougham and Horner loved to visit places of manufacturing around Edinburgh or apply their chemical knowledge to practical problems of agricultural productivity.¹⁰⁶ At the 1812 general election Brougham, when attacking the Tory George Canning (1770–1827), claimed enlightened government displayed a considered use of knowledge and that this was fundamentally a Whig characteristic.¹⁰⁷ Brougham was preoccupied with epistemological matters and engaged frequently in debates over the role of hypothesis in contemporary science and experiment. For Brougham, hypotheses as generalizations based on unobserved phenomena were acceptable, but speculative hypotheses on unobservable phenomena were not.¹⁰⁸ Brougham was both a Whig and a natural philosopher deeply concerned with pursuing what he believed to be good scientific methodology. Maintaining a reliable epistemology in science was important for his political philosophy. As Stewart had taught, government should follow general principles rather than private interests and consider public matters objectively, reflecting on knowledge of observed facts. This was Stewart's definition of being scientific in government and it had ramifications for Brougham's views of Parliament's architecture in the 1830s.

¹⁰² L. S. Jacyna, *Philosophic Whigs: Medicine, Science and Citizenship in Edinburgh, 1789–1848*, (London, 1994), p. 3; Steven Shapin, "Nibbling at the teats of science": Edinburgh and the diffusion of science in the 1830s', Inkster and Morrell (eds.), *Metropolis and Province*, pp. 151–78, 153.

¹⁰³ Jacyna, pp. 6, 3. ¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 159. ¹⁰⁵ Collini, Winch, and Burrow, pp. 49–50.

¹⁰⁶ Bord, *Science and Whig Manners*, p. 119. ¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 34. ¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 48.

Collini, Winch and Burrow have demonstrated how Brougham's Whig science of politics shared much common ground with radical Utilitarian concepts of scientific government. This was reflected in the often overlapping approaches to the new Parliament's architecture. In the years running up to the 1832 Reform Act, Utilitarian philosophical radicalism and philosophic Whiggism contested and embraced similar territory. This confrontation climaxed during the 1832 reform.¹⁰⁹ While Utilitarians emphasized radical reform and utility, Whigs refused to allow utility to supersede moral feelings and favoured moderate reform.¹¹⁰ Whigs envisaged reform which protected talented men in government, such as Brougham, who might not win power through popular support alone. Science in government was thus controversial as Utilitarians and Whigs shared calls for reform and objective government, combined with enlightenment through scientific learning. This was a broad adoption of Stewart's faith that enhanced intellect would secure social progress. These differences and similarities were manifest in the debates surrounding Parliament's rebuilding.

After Barry's appointment in 1836, Brougham raised doubts over how well the proposed Parliament building embodied progressive governance whenever the subject arose in the House of Lords. On one occasion, Brougham warned his fellow Peers that Barry's plans would produce 'a great long low Gothic building, which in a few years . . . would become encrusted with smoke, and covered with innumerable Gothic ornaments, until it resembled a large engraving – an eye-sore to every body of taste'. He went on to predict that Barry's 'monument to their [the people of the ninth century] barbarity' would remain a proof of architectural ignorance 'when classical taste shall have overwhelmed . . . this Gothic mania'.¹¹¹ Though rousing the laughter of fellow Whig, the Marquess of Lansdown, who opposed Brougham's views of the Gothic, these comments demonstrated Brougham's dissatisfaction with the selection of Barry. Lansdown's response, however, reveals the divided Whig opinion concerning the style of the new Palace.

Brougham's clearest evaluation of Parliament's architecture appeared in the *Edinburgh Review*.¹¹² In April 1837 he reviewed a series of articles assessing how Parliament could best be symbolic of enlightened government. The articles were the work of William Richard Hamilton

¹⁰⁹ Collini, Winch, and Burrow, p. 93. ¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 97–98.

¹¹¹ House of Lords debate, 17 May 1844, *Hansard*, 3rd Series, Vol. 74, p. 1247.

¹¹² On Brougham's position in the *Edinburgh Review*, see Joanne Shattock, *Politics and Reviewers: the Edinburgh and the Quarterly in the Early Victorian Age*, (London, 1989), pp. 26–27; on the *Edinburgh Review* and the Tory *Blackwood's Magazine*, see William Christie, *The Edinburgh Review in the Literary Culture of Romantic Britain: Mammoth and Megalonyx*, (London, 2009), pp. 147–66.

(1777–1859) who had attacked Barry's selection and the choice of Gothic. Praising Hamilton's 'good taste' and 'important service' in rejecting Barry's Gothic designs, Brougham noted that Hamilton was a reputable scholar, 'creditably known' and with high political connections.¹¹³ Hamilton had 'manfully' protested 'against the barbaric' Gothic style. Brougham stipulated that the construction of Parliament was no small concern, but an unsurpassed event in the history of art; it was the most monumental work for a free people of the age. The choice to employ Gothic was a 'pain' for Brougham, who agreed entirely with Hamilton's praise for the classical art of 'the most enlightened ages'.¹¹⁴ Brougham appealed to readers to seek out Hamilton's works and appreciate his insightful observations.¹¹⁵

That Hamilton's writings informed Brougham's approach to Parliament's architecture really matters. Brougham was the most outspoken Whig advocating that Parliament's architecture should symbolize enlightened government. He was also the epitome of a Whig statesman who united science and politics. In Hamilton's work, Brougham found the most cogent and sustained analysis of how and why Parliament should mirror scientific learning. Between 1836 and 1837 Hamilton composed three letters addressed to his former Foreign Office colleague Thomas Bruce (1766–1841), seventh Earl of Elgin, arguing for Parliament to represent science and knowledge through the Grecian style of architecture. These letters attracted much attention in the specialist and technical press and had a considerable readership within Parliament, including Hume. Hamilton had won fame in 1801 by foiling a French attempt to transport the Rosetta Stone from Alexandria to France following Napoleon's disastrous Egyptian campaign. He was at the time serving as the attaché to Elgin and the British ambassador to the Ottoman Empire in Constantinople.¹¹⁶ The son of the Archdeacon of Colchester, Hamilton had attended Harrow and matriculated from St John's College, Cambridge, in 1795. After securing the Rosetta Stone and Parthenon Marbles as British war trophies, Hamilton returned back to London and worked in the Foreign Office until retiring on health grounds in 1824.

¹¹³ Henry Brougham, 'The new Houses of Parliament', *The Edinburgh Review*, Vol. LXV, No. CXXXI (April 1837), pp. 174–79, 174.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 175. ¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 178.

¹¹⁶ William St Clair, 'Bruce, Thomas, seventh earl of Elgin and eleventh earl of Kincardine (1766–1841)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, May 2013 [www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/3759, accessed 7 March 2014]; R. E. Anderson, 'Hamilton, William Richard (1777–1859)', rev. R. A. Jones, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, May 2006 [www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/12147, accessed 7 March 2014].

Aside from his diplomatic career, Hamilton enjoyed antiquarian and scientific pursuits. In addition to translating the Greek on the Rosetta Stone to English, Hamilton was a founding member of the Royal Geographical Society, an ardent supporter of the Royal Institution, and from 1838 a trustee of the British Museum. As president of the Royal Geographical Society, Hamilton oversaw the election of the Cambridge historian and philosopher of science William Whewell (1794–1866) in 1837 and was well acquainted with his writings.¹¹⁷ Hamilton was also a close friend of the eminent geologist Roderick Murchison (1792–1871). Together they enjoyed days out combining natural history and mechanics. On one occasion Murchison visited Hamilton at his house in Portsmouth. They took breakfast before examining a stretch of coast and then surveying several Royal Navy vessels, including the HMS *Victory*. Following this, they rowed over to the Navy's New Victualing Establishment. There they witnessed the 'most curious thing . . . namely the Baking of Ship's biscuit by machinery'.¹¹⁸ Hamilton and Murchison shared a mutual interest in the natural and the industrial. Indeed in 1843 Hamilton felt Murchison to be his ideal replacement as President of the Royal Geographical Society: such a man of science would secure the best interests of the society.¹¹⁹

In 1836, Hamilton turned his attention to Parliament's architecture. Hamilton's initial work denounced the Gothic style in favour of the Grecian. Gothic, he argued, was monastic in character and reflected a 'barbarous' period of history. Grecian however, Hamilton argued, embodied 'improved knowledge' and learning. He explained that 'Architecture had thus become a mirror of the improvement of science in various periods'.¹²⁰ He felt that the post-Reformation abandonment of the Gothic complemented England's 'more wholesome direction' in the arts, literature, and science. Inigo Jones and Christopher Wren produced classical architecture which mirrored the natural philosophy of men like Robert Boyle (1627–1691) and Isaac Newton (1642–1727). The Greek style imitated the 'grandeur of nature' and marked 'progress', while 'Gothic barbarism' was indicative of the ignorance of the Middle Ages.¹²¹ Gothic architecture projected the romance central to the works of Walter Scott, but it also appealed to an age both 'feudal and ancestral',

¹¹⁷ (Anon.), 'Royal Geographical Society', *The Times*, (London, England), 29 June, 1837; p. 3; Issue 16455.

¹¹⁸ BL Add. Ms. 46,126, Murchison Papers Vol. II, folio 355, 'Letter from Hamilton to Murchison', (27 October, 1832).

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, folio 367, 'Letter from Hamilton to Murchison', (13 April, 1843).

¹²⁰ W. R. Hamilton, *Letter from W. R. Hamilton, to the Earl of Elgin, on the New Houses of Parliament*, (London, 1836), p. 5; UCL holds a copy which Hume annotated.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

and therefore wholly inappropriate for a reformed legislature. Hamilton argued that architecture should show ‘the advancement of national science’, rather than fleeting literary fashion.¹²²

In his second and third letters, Hamilton specified how Parliament could embody science in two ways. Primarily, architectural construction itself was a science. Hamilton stated that it ‘it is idle to discuss whether architecture be a science or an art . . . it is both . . . It is based upon science, and it culminates in art’.¹²³ Architecture involved ‘all the various developments of the properties of nature, of mathematical truths, and of inventive genius . . . it marks the progress of the human race in the powers of composition’. Hamilton described how the Greek style exhibited this employment of nature in a way superior to Gothic. Nature inspired all Greek structures. For example, architectural virtues of mathematics and geometry could be observed in the works of spiders.¹²⁴ Greek architecture employed such observations through the ‘rude stems of oak or willow placed against each other in parallel lines, [and] the horizontal beams which rest upon them’.¹²⁵ To build with Grecian pillars (tree trunks) and in the Corinthian order (the leaves of the acanthus) was to ‘copy from Nature’.¹²⁶ Such simplicity in weight distribution reflected ‘rational faculties, truth and nature’. Hamilton believed Parliament should be an ‘exemplification of the simplicity of ancient art applied to modern science’.¹²⁷

According to Hamilton, the second way in which Parliament’s architecture should be a work of science was to ‘mirror’ the science of the age. Architectural works were ‘calculated to record the scientific and mechanical discoveries’ of a period.¹²⁸ The Greek architecture of ancient times paralleled ‘the progress of intellectual philosophy, whose real triumph in the person of Socrates was to enquire into, and interpret the phenomena of the moral and physical worlds’.¹²⁹ Hamilton believed that modern inductive science was the descendent of this Greek philosophy. Ancient Greece

¹²² Ibid., p. 9.

¹²³ W. R. Hamilton, *Second letter from W. R. Hamilton, esq. to the Earl of Elgin, on the propriety of adopting the Greek style of architecture in the construction of the New Houses of Parliament*, (London, 1836), p. 5.

¹²⁴ W. R. Hamilton, *Third letter from W. R. Hamilton, esq. to the Earl of Elgin, on the propriety of adopting the Greek style of architecture in preference to the Gothic, in the construction of the new Houses of Parliament*, (London, 1837), p. 17.

¹²⁵ Hamilton, *Second letter*, p. 7.

¹²⁶ ‘W. E. H.’, ‘Mr. Barry’s design for the new Houses of Parliament’, *Westminster Review*, Vol. 3 (25 July, 1836), pp. 409–24, 420; these comments complicate Levine’s conception that, in the nineteenth century, ‘history finally replaced nature as the sole basis for representation’, in Neil Levine, *Modern Architecture: Representation and Reality*, (New Haven, 2009), p. 11.

¹²⁷ Hamilton, *Second letter*, p. 15. ¹²⁸ Hamilton, *Third letter*, p. 5.

¹²⁹ Hamilton, *Second letter*, p. 6.

had lacked the 'commanding necessity' to study and apply the 'physical sciences, such as Mechanics, Astronomy, Optics and Hydrostatics' because they did not have to navigate beyond the Mediterranean.¹³⁰ He claimed that in the Mediterranean, no compasses, astronomy, or optical glasses were required. Hamilton observed such techniques were only necessary for the discovery of the new World and passage to India, yet the ancients' application of geometry and mechanics to temples was highly advanced.¹³¹ While Britain did not derive the skills of navigation from the Greeks, Hamilton showed that this was because of differing demands.

Although Hamilton distinguished between the specific subjects of ancient and modern natural philosophy, he felt that enlightened learning was part of a Greek inheritance. Furthermore, as Grecian architecture reflected nature and therefore mirrored the philosophical investigations of the natural world, Parliament should emulate the style to embody a nation which appreciated such enlightenment. Grecian embodied not only the mechanics of architecture, but all contemporary natural philosophy. For Hamilton, this mirroring of modern science was more important for Parliament than any other public building. He asserted that the Palace should reflect 'human intellect' and the reformed political system to project a character of enlightened government. In Parliament, 'politics, trade, justice, religion, property, laws, agriculture, jurisprudence, police, manufactures, roads, enclosures, all our daily wants and interests' were to be 'sifted, debated, and resolved'.¹³² Hamilton contended that important discussions had to take place in an atmosphere of scientific enlightenment. Such work should have an architectural style which mirrored Britain's eminence in natural history, the pure and experimental sciences, and navigation. This was an inheritance from the ancients, not the barbaric Middle Ages.¹³³

Brougham completely endorsed Hamilton's essays. The close association of science and governance were shared values and Brougham found Hamilton's views compatible with his own Whiggism. Although no Utilitarian, Hamilton's first publication concerning Parliament actually appeared in the *Westminster Review* in July 1836. Writing under the initials 'W. E. H.', Hamilton began by attacking Barry's design. Such a Gothic edifice represented 'the ascendancy of the Church, and the triumph of Episcopacy'.¹³⁴ Hamilton warned sarcastically that the use of Gothic was part of a 'great ecclesiastical plot' to overturn the newly reformed constitution and restore power to the King and Bishops. He feared that the 'increasing ascendancy of the Catholic party over the ministry' was transforming the Commons into 'a great monastic establishment'. Part of this monastic

¹³⁰ Hamilton, *Third letter*, p. 40. ¹³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 41. ¹³² Hamilton, *Second letter*, p. 23.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, p. 25. ¹³⁴ 'W. E. H.', 'Mr. Barry's design', p. 409.

regime included opposition to allowing women into the gallery of the House. In the context of recent Catholic emancipation and the government-funded church building programme, Gothic perpetuated an increasingly High-Church Anglican, or even Catholic, approach to government. Dissenting non-conformist MPs were the target of such architecture. Barry's design would mean that 'The infidel portion of the Lower House will no longer be enabled to avoid going to church; every committee-room will be a chapel . . . [furnished] with Bibles, prayer-books, and useful homilies'.¹³⁵ Hamilton believed that the reading of prayers before debates and Parliamentary sermons would soon be accompanied by organ music.¹³⁶ With its cathedral and monastic associations, Gothic was not modern, but inappropriate to house a Parliament governing a nation including dissenters, infidels, and Jews. Hamilton demanded the site be changed to one not consecrated, ideally Green Park, and the style be altered to one free of religious connotations.¹³⁷

Hamilton also cited improvements to drainage and air circulation as additional reasons for a change of site. Despite his suspicion that most victims of poor ventilation would be 'elderly astmatical [sic.] gentlemen (who fortunately are all Conservatives)' and therefore harbouring hopes that Westminster's bad air would undermine underhand attempts to unseat worthy liberal representatives, Hamilton believed government should be sheltered from such 'noxious influences' and high mortality rates.¹³⁸ As for style, a switch to Grecian promised further practical improvements regarding the durability of stone. London's coal consumption would, Hamilton claimed, damage and discolour any public building of excessive ornament.¹³⁹ He felt that Gothic's reliance on intricate mouldings and delicate carvings for aesthetical quality would contrast poorly with Grecian's simplicity in London's deleterious atmosphere. However, Hamilton was not espousing a Utilitarian manifesto.

Hamilton's writings instead seem to fit better within the sentiments of what David Watkin has labelled the 'Cambridge Hellenists'. This group of travelling scholars, which included the prominent designer Thomas Hope (1769–1831) and architect William Wilkins, was active throughout the early nineteenth century in promoting academic interest in Ancient Greece.¹⁴⁰ In particular, Hamilton's thoughts resonate with those of the Hellenist Charles Kelsall (1782–1857) who argued that neoclassical architecture was a central

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 410.

¹³⁶ On Parliamentary prayers, see Pasi Ihalainen, 'The sermon, court, and Parliament, 1689–1789', in Keith A. Francis and William Gibson (eds.), *Oxford Handbook of The British Sermon, 1689–1901*, (Oxford, 2012), pp. 229–44, 233.

¹³⁷ 'W. E. H.', 'Mr. Barry's design', p. 412. ¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 414.

¹³⁹ Hamilton, *Letter from W. R. Hamilton*, p. 10.

¹⁴⁰ David Watkin, *Thomas Hope, 1769–1831: and the neo-classical idea*, (London, 1968), p. 64.

feature in the liberalization and modernization of the nation.¹⁴¹ He called for a purifying process of civilization, in which Greek architecture, and specifically the pure Greek Doric order, was central. As early as 1814, Kelsall united architecture and science in a proposed reform of Oxford and Cambridge Universities. He asserted that Cambridge should be made to offer a variety of subjects, taught through six subject-specific colleges, including natural philosophy, mathematics, and agriculture and manufacturing. This scheme for what he referred to as a ‘Nurse of Universal Science’ envisaged much attention to the architecture of each college, including the mathematics college built in the Doric order. However, this was not shaped by a desire for political reform, as witnessed in the 1830s, but a commitment to intellectual neoclassicism.¹⁴² Hamilton’s arguments echo Kelsall’s appraisal of the Greek style and science; much more so than Utilitarian notions of function. Neoclassicism was not inseparably linked to republican politics. As Frank Salmon showed, in the 1830s it was classical Roman architecture which was the dominant style of English public architecture.¹⁴³

Hamilton’s works are important because between 1836 and 1837 they were a focal point of discussion concerning the use of Gothic at Westminster. The case for the Gothic style was compelling, including appeals to nature and history every bit as elaborate as Hamilton’s. Obviously, the style could easily be assimilated with the existing architecture of Westminster Hall and the Abbey. However, the other central arguments were historical and environmental. The idea that architecture was a body of knowledge comparable to science was built on a growing attention to history and nature. This had implications for the use of Gothic for the new palace. Historically, the Gothic was associated with Westminster; the place where it was held that the British constitution and law had been moulded. Importantly, the Gothic was fundamentally Christian in character and could be portrayed as a British style; its selection was an assertion of national confidence. *The Times*, for example, believed the Gothic appropriate because it was England’s ‘best national style’.¹⁴⁴ Much romantic sentiment had been stirred up

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 71.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 72–74; David Watkin, ‘Kelsall, Charles (1782–1857)’, rev. *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/37627, accessed 22 February 2015]; he argued that Windsor Castle should be rebuilt in a Classical rather than Gothic style, in C. Kelsall, *A letter to the Society of the Dilettanti, on the works in progress at Windsor*, (London, 1827), pp. 6–7.

¹⁴³ Frank Salmon, *Building on Ruins: The Rediscovery of Rome and English Architecture*, (Aldershot, 2000), pp. 20, 138.

¹⁴⁴ (Anon.), ‘Exhibition of designs for new Houses of Parliament, now exhibiting in the National Gallery’, *The Times*, (London, England), 29 April, 1836; p. 6; Issue 16090.

by the 1830s thanks to the popularity of Walter Scott's (1771–1832) literary creations, especially his Waverley novels. Such enthusiasm for the medieval was enhanced after the fire of 1834. With Parliament in ruins, the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century alterations were stripped away revealing the staggering beauty of the original medieval walls of St Stephen's Chapel. This rediscovered ancient glory roused popular support for the Gothic.¹⁴⁵ Taken together with the romantic notions of Westminster's role in the formation of the British political system, this presented a powerful basis for those advocating a new Gothic palace.

In terms of nature, the Gothic also seemed appropriate. Promoters of the style noted its suitability for the northern Europe climate, with its sombre appearance fitting of Britain's grey skies and persistent rain. At the same time, its forms were claimed to be taken from nature, including vaulting which was likened to the meeting branches of trees in a forest. More than the neoclassical, the Gothic boasted endless variation in ornament, which was analogous to the infinite variety of botany.¹⁴⁶ As will be shown, this scientific basis for Gothic as a rational style of architecture became increasingly sophisticated during the decades following the 1830s. Such interpretations of the Gothic reached a crescendo in the 1850s with John Ruskin and the architects who followed Barry, including George Gilbert Scott, Alfred Waterhouse, and William Butterfield.

Nevertheless, in the 1830s, Hamilton had a wide readership. One review in the *Architectural Magazine* echoed Hamilton's view of architecture as the 'mirror of the improvement of science' and praised his argument for the superiority of the Grecian style.¹⁴⁷ Others opposed Hamilton's promotion of the Grecian. Colonel Julian R. Jackson (1790–1853), who eventually became secretary to the Royal Geographical Society, felt Hamilton's distinction between the Grecian and Gothic to be superficial.¹⁴⁸ Jackson had contributed several papers to the Royal Geographical Society arguing that geography should be an independent science and in 1834 proposed a systematic terminology for the study of river systems. Within the society, Jackson's work was commonly

¹⁴⁵ Caroline Shenton, *Mr Barry's War: Rebuilding the Houses of Parliament after the Great Fire of 1834*, (Oxford, 2016), p. 33; M. H. Port, 'The Houses of Parliament competition', in M. H. Port (ed.), *The Houses of Parliament*, (New Haven, 1976), pp. 20–52, 30.

¹⁴⁶ Port, 'The Houses of Parliament competition', p. 31.

¹⁴⁷ (Anon.), 'New Houses of Parliament', *Architectural Magazine*, Vol. IV, No. 37, (March, 1837) pp. 120–32, 121.

¹⁴⁸ J. R. Jackson, *Observations on a letter from W. R. Hamilton, Esq. to the Earl of Elgin, on the New Houses of Parliament*, (London, 1837), p. 10.

regarded to be scientifically rigorous.¹⁴⁹ When it came to architecture, Jackson thought that Hamilton was merely a ‘professed amateur of the Greek style’. Jackson argued that true ‘genius’ was the ability to apply ‘skill and science’ to any style. The Parliamentary competition, by specifying either Gothic or Elizabethan, was thus effectively saying to architects, ‘You have done well in the Grecian style; now show your science by a master-piece of Gothic’.¹⁵⁰ The competition was therefore actively promoting science. Jackson also felt the religious connotations of Gothic were appropriate for a morally upstanding and patriotic legislature. He praised Barry’s designs and the Gothic in general. He believed that Gothic vaulting, spires, and buttresses revealed ‘such a degree of science in the composition and division of forces . . . as can have resulted only from much mathematical knowledge’.¹⁵¹

While Brougham and Hamilton damned the Gothic for its medieval character and unscientific nature, advocates of the style were equally keen to defend its practical and scientific qualities. The *Quarterly Review* noted in 1837 that the philosophies of architecture were ‘in a state of war’.¹⁵² A Conservative organ, the journal sympathized with the commissioners of Cust’s competition, who were caught in the conflict between Greeks and Goths. It asserted that recent appeals deploying ‘technical knowledge’ against the Gothic were merely the responses of disgruntled losing entrants to the competition. The journal believed vaulting to be an indication of enlightenment and felt the style to have great ‘utility’.¹⁵³ Such work was the product of architects who had ‘profoundly studied the natural feelings of mankind’. It was a style to conjure up emotion in the ignorant and encourage intellectual cultivation. Authoring the *Quarterly Review*’s consideration of Parliament’s architecture, the classical scholar John Bacon Sawry (1772[?]-1843) felt that the Gothic clearly displayed ‘mechanical skill, and no less intellectual refinement than had been exhibited in the construction of the most finished Grecian temple’.¹⁵⁴

Even staunch Tories felt compelled to wade into the debates over Parliament’s architecture armed with a rhetoric of science and practicality. Sir Archibald Alison (1792–1867) provided a Tory commentary on British architecture in the Conservative *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine*. A graduate of the University of Edinburgh and son of an Episcopalian

¹⁴⁹ Elizabeth Baigent, ‘Jackson, Julian (1790–1853)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/14540, accessed 12 September 2014].

¹⁵⁰ Jackson, *Observations*, p. 12. ¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

¹⁵² John S. Morritt, ‘Review of Hamilton, etc. on architecture’, *The Quarterly Review*, Vol. 58 (February, 1837), pp. 61–82, 62.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, pp. 65, 67. ¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 70–71.

cleric, Alison was a frequent contributor to *Blackwood's*.¹⁵⁵ Aside from adopting an anti-Malthusian view of population growth and writing a series of thirteen articles between 1831 and 1832 linking English reform with the French Revolution of 1830, Alison opposed all Whig ideology and argued that the 1832 Reform Act engendered a descent into anarchy. Architecture, Alison asserted, was a noble art which conveyed sentiment through history, defying time and testifying to 'the immortality of man'.¹⁵⁶ He considered Britain's cathedrals and monasteries as evidence of the nation's architectural pre-eminence. However, Alison detested the recent English penchant for building Regency edifices of 'monstrous fragility'.¹⁵⁷ The point of good architecture was to employ quality stone in a style which would defy the decay of time. It was an architect's duty to build works that would last, as the ancients had done. With the wealth of Britain's empire, Alison thought that the ancients would have 'made London the noblest city in Christendom' by using durable stone. As for style, rather than the recent neoclassical piles, a 'more manly' one was called for: one that would glorify the works of the 'Creator'. He felt this was Gothic.

Turning to the new Palace of Westminster, Alison believed a building was called for which honoured God and would endure the ages. He appealed for attention to be paid to the choice of stone and design so that the building might house Britain's government for centuries to come. He advised a construction '*entirely of stone*, fire-proof, and worthy of being the palace of the constitution'.¹⁵⁸ Architects should 'erect on such a scale of durability as may defy alike the war of elements, the decay of time, and the madness of people'. Alison's sentiments reveal a very different conception of what Parliament meant to those held in Utilitarian circles. Rather than a machine for legislation production, or making momentous decisions, Alison's ideal Parliament was a building which would confirm the solidarity of the British constitution.

This Tory call for practical attention to materials was framed with caution. Practical knowledge should be deployed to capture the truth of Anglican government for generations to come and defy time. Yet Alison warned against society's obsession with utility. Although utility was, he

¹⁵⁵ Michael Fry, 'Alison, Sir Archibald, first baronet (1792–1867)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/349>, accessed 7 March 2014].

¹⁵⁶ Archibald Alison, 'The British school of architecture', *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, Vol. XL, No. CCL (August 1836), pp. 227–38, 231.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 227, 232. ¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 234, 238.

conceded, vital in bridges, roads, docks, and canals, and was a source of national pride in works such as the Manchester Railway and Thames Tunnel, in architecture it was in danger of overcoming all aesthetics. He feared the nation was becoming a 'mere race of utilitarians', living by dividends. A Parliament determined purely by utility and function would therefore embody not only Utilitarian philosophy, but a more general utilitarian approach to life. Furthermore, it was the 'great convulsion of 1832' that was to blame. Alison argued that great works of durability were rare in 'Democratic societies' where governments lived in fear of expenditure. Reform entailed a stinginess inhibiting the construction of any great and lasting architecture.¹⁵⁹ Alison felt that the consequence of extended franchise was thus ephemeral architecture. Ironically, such an argument was intended to deconstruct utilitarian claims of practicality and reason. To build a Parliament worthy of Britain would entail the use of expensive quality stone; an option that Alison reckoned was severely undermined by recent Whig reforms.¹⁶⁰ Alison demonstrates how all political sides could employ a language of practical knowledge when articulating their ideas. What was contested was not whether the building should be scientific, but what was a suitable manner of being practical and what style best embodied British politics. Interestingly, similar to Hume's Utilitarianism and Brougham's Whiggism, Alison had strong connections with Dugald Stewart. Alison's father, Archibald Alison (1757–1839), was a lifelong friend of Stewart following his time at the University of Glasgow. Hume, Brougham, and Alison's intellectual foundations were not too distant.

Conclusion

Although in the 1830s, science had a broad meaning and curious political value, its prominence in contemporary society means that its adoption as a rhetorical tool in debates over the new Palace should not come as a surprise. In the hands of radicals, science became a rational approach apparently justifying a mechanistic, objective legislature. For others, it was a crucial epistemological resource for improving governance. Indeed, it became something which might help preserve the political system from more extensive reforms, or even dangerous revolutions. Barry's appointment came in

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 235, 237.

¹⁶⁰ In the late 1820s, Whig and Tory administrations both endeavoured to cut expenditure on public architecture, see Port, 'Parliamentary scrutiny and treasury stringency', pp. 158, 175.

the context of this delicate relationship between science and politics. He was required to produce a Palace emphasizing political stability and traditional continuity, but also one which appeared enlightened, built with attention to the latest scientific learnings. Rebuilding Parliament was an engineering challenge, and a political one, and Barry intended to provide solutions to both.