

The Political Hypotheses of *Adam Smith's Pluralism*: A response to my commentators

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Adam Smith's Pluralism (ASP) develops a framework to connect Smith's eighteenth-century discourse with twenty-first century debate about the nature of liberal democracy. It is the first in a series of three volumes, the second of which will present a modernized account of Smithian justice. The third will offer a theory of democratic political participation.

The first, the subject of this special issue of *Cosmos + Taxis*, establishes the rules of engagement, so to speak. It outlines my theory of interpretation and modernizes the vocabulary required for Smith to authentically engage Rawls, Nozick, Nussbaum, and other contemporary liberal thinkers. While there are some historians of ideas who might find this project inherently corrupt—some might argue that epochs cannot be bridged—most philosophers would hold that the past is material to the present and future. Our history not only reveals our assumptions, but it helps illuminate our mistakes. Sometimes our ancestors were wrong, sometimes not, but the challenge of the history of ideas is as much in the exploration as the conclusion. Textual exegesis is scientific inquiry and sport; it is the pursuit of truth and the celebration of ideas. There is no *a priori* reason why philosophers of a previous age cannot help advance today's investigations.

The devil, of course, is in the details. Discourse simultaneously cannot presume that all texts are *prima facie* compatible.

Words, assumptions, metaphysics, and historical context may be significantly different, so one must do significant prep work to make texts talk to one another. Historical settings might be bracketed when teaching Descartes's *Meditations* in Philosophy 101, but they cannot be ignored for any serious scholarship. Thus, readers of *Adam Smith's Pluralism* can rightly ask both whether my interpretations are persuasive and whether I managed to convincingly connect Smith with what most concerns political philosophers today.

My interest in contemporary issues directed me towards the first three topics named in the title: pluralism, rationality, and education. My focus on interpretation led me to the last: the moral sentiments. But as I articulate throughout the book, each of these ideas have histories as well as contemporary lives. All of them bridge the centuries.

Furthermore, no matter how much we want to read the "historically accurate" Adam Smith, it is virtually impossible to read *The Wealth of Nations* (WN) without considering Mill, Marx, Rawls, and others on some level. *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (TMS) cannot be encountered without the more recent disciplinary additions of anthropology, sociology, and psychology, the Freudian subconscious especially. No matter how much we try to immerse ourselves in the his-

tory of ideas, our current understandings shape our imaginations.

Smith also cannot be considered without attending to capitalism, even though the term was not coined until one hundred years after he wrote. His impartial spectator cannot be evaluated without one eye on Kantian autonomy and the liberal/communitarian discourse that debates its coherence. In other words, my attempt to write with one foot in the past and one in the present is really an attempt to be intellectually honest. Many authors who claim to be doing history of ideas are not really being forthcoming about their political and intellectual motivations, because all the history of ideas can ever be is *today's* history of ideas.

On the other hand, pretending that we can read Smith as a contemporary is also intellectually dishonest. Consider, for example, how different Smith's reading experience was. Any book he bought would have been a very limited run by our standards, but read by a much wider percentage of his educated interlocutors.¹ He would have received the book with a simple board cover and then hired his own binder to cover it with leather of his choice. He would have read it by candlelight, holding a book knife, cutting each page apart as he turned it. How much difference this makes to the intellectual experience of reading, I can't say, but it suggests that reading was a slower, more active process than what we experience today. In Smith's time, the book was much more an object of wealth and status than the mass-produced object of today, but it still wasn't as rare as in the Middle Ages.

Smith didn't have electric lights or recorded music. Most of the oldest major museums we recognize today didn't appear until the second half of the 18th century, after Smith was done writing.² He probably never saw works of art by Rembrandt, Titian, Michelangelo, or Da Vinci. Western democratic standards of gender equity were embryonic, if they existed at all, as were gay rights, regardless of how relatively egalitarian Smith might have been. Modern notions of race were established in Germany a hundred years after Smith died, created around the same time as the nation state and the modern academic professionalized disciplinary divisions. And, the recognized length of childhood in Smith's time is incomparable with our own – Smith would have had no notion of the extended adolescence that marks the late 20th and 21st centuries. Apprentices started as young as ten.

Fashion, rules regarding nudity and sexual propriety, and notions of formality and informality all differed significantly from today. In other words, Smith's experience and his understanding of the everyday world is so much removed from the modern liberal democratic experience that it seems al-

most absurd that American politicians refer to its founders with reverence and that we look towards Hume, Smith, and Kant for such fundamental guidance as we do.

Yet, Smith wrote about almost all of those topics: art, music, and theater, gender equity and race, ethnicity and national identity, childhood, fashion and propriety. He made empirical observations and normative claims. He commented on cultural norms and made grand claims about what would eventually be called the world-historical level. He thought human nature was a constant and that "an hour's toil and trouble" remained the same through the ages.³

We also have to recognize Smith's political motivations in addition to his philosophical interests. He was a pamphleteer as much as he was a scholar, even though at over 1,000 pages and comprising two quarto volumes, WN seems as far from a pamphlet as one can get. A political advocate has a different relationship with an audience than a philosopher or historian, and he or she must rely on different rhetoric and utilize other forms of persuasion to explicate evidence. As Nathaniel Wolloch points out in his introduction to this volume, the scholarly world is still undecided as to how to balance Smith's context with his cross-temporal, cross-cultural, multi-contextual comments.

My remarks so far should be seen as a preamble to my responses to the authors in this volume, each of whom I am grateful to. Their comments belie the tension they inherited from my book. All of them have one foot in contemporary times and one in interpretation; all of them improve my work. And, while there are a few moments of disagreement (including one extended argument), my rebuttals should not be read as dismissive in any way. The contributors to the volume are top-notch scholars whom I have learned a great deal from, and I sincerely hope that I do not return the kindness of their labor with the kind of hostility and condescension that so often mar academic philosophy.

My commentators inherited another tension from my book. Like Smith's corpus, *Adam Smith's Pluralism* is an unfinished work, the first, as I already noted, of a three-volume series. I have therefore chosen to read these essays, not as oppositional, but as guidance for my future endeavors. This point will be repeated several times when I emphasize a particularly cogent contribution.

JUSTICE

I begin my comments addressing Lisa Herzog's observation that Smith's account of justice is "more central than it appears" in my account. She is correct; I didn't concern myself

with it as much as I might have. The first reason was strategic. As she notes, I plan to discuss it in ASP's sequel. The second reason, however, is more philosophical. Justice may be central for the state, but it is not psychologically primary for individuals. Justice creates the *conditions* for capabilities, not the capabilities themselves. My work in ASP was more focused on the processes of rationality, sympathy, and judgment than the political circumstances that cultivate them.

Smith did not share the classical Greek notion of justice as a *character* virtue. He did not regard it as a balance of the soul in the Platonic sense. Instead, justice represents a person refraining from harming others. It may result in "very little positive merit" since a person may "often fulfill all the rules of justice by sitting still and doing nothing" (*TMS* II.ii.1.9).⁴ This is not to suggest that justice isn't relevant to ASP, only that it is a secondary focus. Justice is an elaboration on my other comments.

As Herzog points out, "markets need a framework of positive law with which they can function," including "property rights and contract law," but Smith wrote almost nothing about legislation (if he did, he burnt these comments shortly before his death). His description of the limited role of the sovereign in *WN IV* provides very few specifics, and Smith offers us no democratic or republican theory. His readers are even left guessing as to whether he was a Whig, Tory, or something else entirely.⁵ Furthermore, whatever moral foundation Smith did offer for such legislation can only be discussed in combination with his account of progress and the normative value of history, issues I address in the final two chapters of the book but which are beyond the scope of Herzog's paper.

Herzog focuses on two areas: pluralism and economic inequality. Obviously, class difference is a form of diversity in and of itself, and it fits into many discussions of plurality, including holding a prominent place in ASP. But there is something unique about economic difference that deserves special attention; it is more than just sociological and cultural. As Smith reminds us, basic economic needs are the first concern, which is why (as Herzog illustrates) no society can be just that is not universally opulent.

This was also the case for Marx and the early Rawls, but in Rawls's later work, economic disparity was eclipsed by cultural questions, especially those revolving around liberty. Most liberal theorists followed his lead, a reversal of the several centuries before him.⁶ But the last few decades have seen various attempts to pull liberal theory back to real-world economic discussions, especially from Sen, Nussbaum, and the development ethicists; the most powerful pull has

come from the economic historian Thomas Piketty (2014). Herzog's comments are representative of this debate, fluctuating back and forth between identity politics and economic consideration, but her point is inarguable: economic disparity interferes with individuals' abilities to cultivate their capabilities, and justice is the mechanism by which we equal the playing field. As she writes: "without the rules of justice in place within a society, the process of the development of rationality, with all [its] rich social and emotional texture... can easily be corrupted."

My choice not to address economic inequality is, for Herzog, an "open flank" because justice, in general, acts as a "common denominator in a society made up of individuals with different sentiments, different rationalities, and different worldviews." However, she explains my motivations a few paragraphs later when she writes, "justice is also presupposed in the process, at least in the minimal sense of recognizing that others have an equally valid perspective." I do, in fact, presuppose a minimal economic justice in my discussion of the cultural and experiential diversity that leads to individuals having different sentiments, rationalities and worldviews, but I do not clarify what that economic justice looks like. I offer many educational prescriptions, but I do not address the role of economic disparity in schooling, such as the immense inequality that results in the United States from funding schools based on property taxes. I also consider the role of choice in curriculum, but I do not remark on the parental protection of privilege as illustrated by Herzog's use of Uncle Tom's Cabin. Her agenda is a useful one to follow. She is adroitly nudging me where I need to go next.

In short, her critique is as much one of contemporary liberal theory as of ASP. As I articulate in the introduction, my organizational scheme is based on the four dominant discourse threads in liberalism: differences in personal motivations and aims, differences in group identification, differences in experience and education, and differences in rationality and ways of thought (pp. 13-14). Economic considerations are not there. They should be, and this discussion must begin with understanding better what Herzog calls the common denominator of justice. She is most certainly correct that in the Rawlsian model, the overlapping consensus allows people to talk using a common vocabulary and political conception of justice. It is a suitable location for debate.

But what does her phrase "common denominator" mean economically? It can't mean common experience. People are raised in different circumstances and as Smith illustrates better than most, as the means of production changes, and as history progresses towards commercial society, employment

diversifies daily experience. Common denominator in this case is cultural, not commercial. Does common denominator mean instead that every culture establishes common standards of minimal goods and possessions? Smith suggests this, pointing to the importance of linen shirts and leather shoes (WN V.ii.k.3), although he makes no claim as to who should supply these goods to the needy. The United States saw a form of this debate recently when political pundits and The Heritage Foundation suggested that anyone who owns a refrigerator ought not be considered poor (Thompson, 2011).

Calling for a minimal economic standard is, of course, the path that Marx took, and Marx was probably the best Smithian who ever lived. But in the end, the discussion must revolve around the exact nature of universal opulence, not the general call that I emphasize in ASP. As it does today, this discourse may involve broad questions such as whether the state has an obligation to provide food, shelter, and clothing, but it may also dive deeper into asking what kind of food, shelter, and clothing people are entitled to.⁷ In either case, Herzog's call for attending to the economic conditions that underpin sympathy, the impartial spectator, and social unity cannot be ignored.

Herzog's call for more attention to the economic should not overshadow Maria Carrasco's analysis of justice. In her insightful essay, she shows that Smith's pluralism is not just a theory of diversity management, but a moral pluralism in and of itself. This pluralism, she writes, is defensible precisely because of its context-dependency.

Carrasco is, in a certain sense, elaborating on Herzog's attempt to find a common denominator, postulating an embryonic, but Smithian version of Rawls's overlapping consensus. She writes:

Smith's empiricist moral psychology...has sufficient resources to overcome moral incommensurability and cultural relativism. There is a small group of norms that are simultaneously context-dependent *and* universal. These are the rules of justice: a core set of rules with absolute authority that precludes relativistic interpretations of the TMS and lay the ground for an empiricist justification of universal human rights.

The problem in TMS, she explains, is "the empirical origin of the moral conscience." Many of our moral terms, she reports, are culturally bound; even harm is contextual. But, she insists, the fact that these ideas are local does not mean they are arbitrary:

Smith's moral normativity is context-dependent but not relativistic. First, it depends on the import of the specific situation and is thereby objective. Second, moral judgments are validated by the mediation of the impartial spectator, who moderates our innate self-preference in order to provide warrant for treating ourselves as we treat others. This double rapport, the agent with the import through the impartial spectator, is what allows Smith to propose objectivity amidst variations.

This insight recalls my emphasis on Alasdair MacIntyre's tradition-bound rationality and Toulmin's field-variant argument standards. While MacIntyre is often labeled a communitarian and a conservative, his work on multiple rationalities is a form of deep respect. It is his way of recognizing that even those moral traditions that one profoundly disagrees with can be understood as rational, and that humans have a drive towards reason that even our religious history bears out. Recognition of multiple rationalities, I would suggest, is a prerequisite for mutual respect in a diverse society, because it doesn't exclude any tradition as animalistic or sub-human in the classical sense, where rationality is a solely human character trait.

Ultimately, Carrasco writes, Smith's ethics "includes a group of moral rules that ought to be the same in all times and places. These are the rules of justice, which are exact, absolute and universally binding." Smith's justice safeguards "recognition respect," or "equality as human beings," which has an independent, intrinsic content, [and] may give us a tool to identify some universal injustices and lay the basis for the recognition of universal human rights."

Smith's pluralism, Carrasco offers, has both pluralistic and universalist elements, but the universalism isn't always apparent because culture has epistemological consequences that may obfuscate the moral truths that all societies ought to recognize. Nevertheless, there are truths independent of recognition, a point that echoes my claim that moral progress aims towards discovering morality as opposed to creating it. As she writes, for Smith, "moral justifications are not arbitrary. They depend on reality and may be discovered by any competent spectator. They are objectively justified."

Here, Carrasco's focus on pluralism overshadows the obvious realism implicit in her account. The impartial spectator is a solution to an epistemological problem; it aims towards discovery, first as an individual but then as a society. As she explains it:

Acknowledged or not by their cultures, black slaves have always had the same dignity as free white men. They have now been *recognized* as equals, but they have not been *made* equals. Women did not acquire their dignity as they started to be *considered* equals. Recognizing the equal dignity of *x* does not create or invent that dignity. It has always been there, but we were blind to it.

I am honored that Carrasco credits my book for inspiring her meditation; an author can ask for little more than to help contribute to such sophisticated work. In particular, what Carrasco does is illustrate how moral epistemology necessitates the discussion of progress laid out in the final chapters. If she is correct that lack of recognition-respect does not eradicate Smith's faith in the fundamental equality of all people (and I think she is), then the question of how to force such knowledge upon an ignorant or unwilling populace moves front and center.

Here again we move from the moral realm to the political one. How does one cultivate a state that makes people not just *act* morally but *understand* morally as well? How does justice differ from the other virtues? For Smith, as mentioned above, justice is a negative virtue, but this isn't enough of a distinction. Neither is his claim, as Carrasco phrases it, that justice is "exact, absolute and universally binding." What is special is Smith's emphasis on the equality implicit in justice, which is, she argues, "a culturally-neutral import." As she writes, "any unjustified hurt deliberately inflicted on a human being in *any* culture will be a material justice in *every* culture." This is why, as she points out, I claim that slavery is paradigmatic. Any case of "equals treated as inferiors" are "immediately" called injustice.

Carrasco leaves us in two helpful places. The first is that we now have a sophisticated rejoinder against those who claim Smith is a relativist. I argue in ASP that Smith does, in fact, derive "an ought from an is" (pp. 139, 231). Carrasco in turn gives us a clear mapping of how this works in the realm of justice. Second, Carrasco provides a clear terminological bridge between Smith's psychological theory of discovery and argumentation, and contemporary accounts of pluralistic justice that depend on some common denominator (in Herzog's words). If Smith is going to be a contender, we have to highlight the normative core of his prescriptions.

In ASP, I emphasize normativity in two ways, first by arguing that "central to the human understanding is an undeniable experience" of pain in the face of inequality or oppression (p. 98) and second, by showing how, in the long

run, human moral knowledge progresses. Carrasco supplements this by showing that in the case of justice, experience and progress presuppose the fundamental equality in humanness. With this established, Smith can be used to provide an even stronger alternative to Kantian liberalism.

CONTEMPORARY DEBATE

Dionysis Drosos illustrates just how intimately connected interpretation is to contemporary debate. He begins by calling attention to my discussion of "active principles," distinguishing them from the passive feelings that inspire apathetic responses to, among other things, a devastating earthquake in China (TMS III.3.4). He also observes how important they are to dialogical rationality, asking: "if the impartial spectator is not active, how can he/she be a judge?" This is not a rhetorical question. An impartial spectator is active by definition, and dialogical rationality presumes agency that descriptions of economic agents as preference-seeking overlook.

But Drosos's emphasis on the complex intentionality of the judging mind has a more crucial target than simple interpretation. He is taking aim at contemporary debate. He writes: "I tend to understand this stressing of the active dimension of spectatorship as a formidable critique to those readings of Adam Smith which overemphasize spontaneity."

Drosos is inarguably correct. Active principles are central to deemphasizing spontaneity, and even though he is elaborating on my book and ascribing this motivation to me, I must credit him with getting to this insight first. I did not see it, and wish that I had, because just a few additional pages of explication in ASP would have helped forestall Craig Smith's condemnation that "more troubling still is Weinstein's argument that for Smith the rules of morality are not spontaneous but rather are progressive and the product of rational inquiry" (Smith, 2014, p. 163).

I will not respond to Craig Smith in detail here other than to record that Drosos starts the rebuttal for me. Drosos is yet another contributor who has guided me to where I need to be for the second volume. He explains: "If we take spontaneity in its strict sense, then we risk reducing moral rules into a passive conformity.... This would mean to succumb to the current common opinion. This would compromise the project of understanding ethics as a process of moral development."

Drosos is pointing out that understanding the moral process as spontaneous precludes the possibility of distinguishing oneself from the crowd. The self-critical analysis that

cultivates the impartial spectator requires deliberation and personal growth, especially since, as I argue, the impartial spectator is a form of conscience. A spontaneous conscience is nothing more than blind faith to the status quo; Adam Smith clearly wants more than that.

An analogy to Kant is useful here. As he describes it, the manifold of understanding organizes sense data according to their appropriate category. The process is precognitive in the sense that agents do not consciously choose to understand an object as having quantity, quality, modality, relation, and modality. The categories are part of the structure of the mind. As a result, the understanding *feels* both intimate and spontaneous. But, just because the understanding feels this way, does not make it so. For Kant, a great deal of organizational work goes into sorting sense data into a form that the human mind can grasp. To see the manifold as spontaneous because it is automatic (or structural) is to confuse epistemology and phenomenology and conflate spontaneity with instantaneity.

Sympathy feels similarly spontaneous. Our shock at experiencing someone's impropriety is immediate and natural, but it is more often than not (as Herzog tells us) a cultural by-product. Further, we can change this reaction, although sometime this takes a great deal of effort. Individuals learn from new experiences. We are self-critical. We grow. To reduce Smithian moral judgment to a spontaneous action is to both erase human agency and to abdicate individual responsibility. Spontaneity makes the question "why be moral?" irrelevant because it is a form of determinism in disguise.

Let me put this in a completely different way. Imagine a jazz pianist who has spent three decades playing the instrument, who has developed impressive aural skills, and who has superior command of music theory. One day during a performance, an accompanying guitarist plays an Asus4 chord. The pianist, in response and without forethought or reflection, improvises on the Dorian scale in the key of D. Only the most disrespectful listener would call this spontaneous. Doing so would erase the pianist's decades of practice and study. It would eradicate the musician's expertise and agency. Spontaneity, in this case, is the product of decades of preparation and critical thought. It is not really spontaneous in any Hayekian sense.

The same is true of moral judgments on the political level. No one does a better job than Foucault of showing how ideas such as madness or sexuality are the very opposite of spontaneous. They are intersubjective and the product of an unmappable network of cultural micro-judgments growing out of, of course, the texts, rituals, and practices that MacIntyre

highlights. As I showed in the final two chapters, in many respects, Foucault and Smith are quite compatible. If moral development were truly spontaneous, TMS would have been one paragraph long.

The attempt to make Smith an advocate of spontaneity is yet another layer in the seemingly endless libertarian cooption of Adam Smith. It is, as I allude to above, more evidence that one never reads Smith on his own terms but always through one's own contemporaries. In the next volume, I'm simply going to have to tackle this issue head on.⁸ I thought I might be done arguing against the libertarian Smith. I was wrong.

Drosos anticipates another concern for the second volume: the roles of shock and civilization in commercial societies. To illustrate them, he postulates a believable scenario in which a natural or human-created disaster disrupts a society to such an extent that the four criteria of civilization break down. They are:

- a) a society of independent *commerçants*, bonded together through exchange, in a context of a social division of labor and under the rule of law; b) the inequalities must be big enough to incite emulation and ambition, but not so great as to cause unsocial sentiments such as envy and resentment; c) a moral community of peers, persons of equal moral value, interdependent upon each other's free recognition, without being subjected to a hierarchical moral order of personal dependency; and d) each member should have access to minimal wealth and education, enough to enable them to enter each others' feelings, so that the above mentioned sympathy procedure building the social bonds works properly.

Drosos is doubtful that Smithian sympathy is strong enough to withstand such chaotic conditions, and, as such, he questions whether social bonds would continue to work effectively. Smith's response to his scenario, I suspect, would emphasize the circles of sympathy. He would likely argue that those farthest from our hearts and our everyday experiences would be trusted the least, and those closest to us would be trusted the most. In other words, the strongest social bonds would be the ones most likely continuing past the disaster. This would also probably result in the return to a clan-based society in which small familiar groups rely upon each other for their basic needs and long-term planning.

But then scarcity would arise (not to mention the inevitable adventurous human spirit).⁹ The clans would be forced

to trade with one another, first tentatively with many explicit safeguards and then, eventually, once the trustworthy have been identified, with a comfort level that would allow for intermingling and the enlarging of the clan society.¹⁰

In a certain sense, this seems like Nozick's societal genealogy in *Anarchy, State, Utopia*, giving *prima facie* credence to, yet again, a more libertarian interpretation of Smith. But giving too much attention to the similarities would be misleading, since Drosos's scenario necessarily divorces the social evolution from Smith's stadial theory.

Smith's point in WN is that human progress is integrated with discovery—the very first pages of WN present an account of specialized innovation. Government structures naturally change as the means of production changes, which is why agricultural and feudal societies have different types of governance than commercial societies. But in the wake of a disaster, human learning does not go backward. Certain technologies may be unavailable, but the populace knows they existed and would strive to reinvent them as quickly as possible. They are restoring society, not inventing it. This means, ultimately, reestablishing law and order, as well as social bonds, as quickly as possible. Thus, however libertarian-like the response to a disaster might appear, the Smithian goal is always to move away from libertarian structures towards a more robust and orderly society as quickly as possible. Smith's libertarian genealogy, if it exists at all, is only a way station on the way to a thick polity.

We are once again back to the political questions I put aside for the first volume. We are asking about the social foundation of justice, and the relative power of laws over character and inclination. Smith understands that personal commitment is the greatest threat to political stability and sees religion as the surest road to factions. I will address this further in the next volume, especially since religion fanaticism is such a pervasive problem today.¹¹ But a recent study by the journalist Naomi Klein suggests that there is an even greater threat, the use of shock to manipulate markets (Klein, 2008). She outlines the ways in which neoconservatives have created or exploited disasters to make real economies into laboratories, and the horrendous economic circumstances that result.

Klein's claims are controversial to say the least, but they must be addressed and I am currently working on postulating a Smithian response to her work that will also find its way into the next volume. However, an abridged version of my anticipated response might be as follows: markets are managed by legislation and government maintenance to a much larger extent than most people like to admit. The term “free

market” is a misnomer; a civilized society houses a “well-managed” market at best. For Smith, the term free market refers to global trade, not completely unfettered trade. In fact, while Smith uses the terms free competition (and free and universal competition), free commerce, free circulation (particularly the free circulation of labor), free trade and freedom of trade, and free importation many times, he only uses the term free market once (WN IV.viii.26). Those who seek to create free markets within communities either over-emphasize or misunderstand Smith's point.

What a free market actually is unclear. On the global scale, Smith offers a clearer blueprint—no tariffs or regulations that limit trade or promote bootlegging, for example, or no monopolization of trade routes—but what would such a market look like within a given society? Whatever it is, it promotes the ability for people to change trades as often as they please; it brings the market price in as much alignment with the natural price as possible; it necessitates a reasonable form of informed consent, and it probably does not permit much price fixing.¹² But other questions abound. Are all products permissible? Does sales tax have to be evenly applied? What forms of consumer protections are acceptable or required? As we saw with Herzog's economic comments, we are used to dealing with these questions on the general level, but much more needs to be said.

These are tentative conclusions at best; significantly more work needs to be done on the interpretive level, let alone prescriptively. But I am confident of my basic point: free markets exist within government structures, and are necessarily guided by regulation and intervention to a significant extent. This is a fact that should be celebrated, not lamented. A rejection of the governmental role in managing the economy is a form of anarchy, not free commerce.

MORAL EDUCATION THROUGH SATIRE

Returning to Drosos's disaster, it is worth noting that the chaos that he describes does more than create a breakdown of laws and practices. It also destroys the mechanism of social recognition that Spiros Tegos addresses in such detail. First off, what is easy to forget about Drosos's scenario is that the first breakdown is that of conversation. In times of crisis, there is little leisure and little attention to the more rhetorical aspects of day to day life. There is also little attention to satire as public engagement.¹³ Without satire, there are fewer ways with which to socialize individuals. It is, as Tegos points out, harder to temper hypocrisy.

Echoing Freud, Tegos maps out the process by which the impartial spectator internalizes social standards and identity cues. Following D. D. Raphael and Fonna Forman, he sees Smith's account of the internalization of favorable and unfavorable attitudes as anticipating Freud's super ego. He then adds Smith's foreshadowing of the role of Freudian idealization in establishing both the "I" (ego) and identifying those whom the moral agent should emulate (even when worshipping "the great" has no utilitarian value). This is useful because it reminds us that society chooses whom to advertise as virtuous. Role models are culturally defined, and as society changes or breaks down, those who stand out change. This is related to Carrasco's point that harm and its concomitant categories are socially defined as well.

But this breakdown is not solely a product of large-scale disasters. It also happens in instances of significant personal change. To illustrate this, Tegos highlights Smith's suspicion of the "coxcomb" or the nouveau riche. As he summarizes it:

The nouveau riche is blind to other spectators' gaze because he is so vain that he cannot realize how ridiculous his social image remains. As a result, this character puts the function of the impartial spectator in serious trouble because he is deaf to social stigma even in the most conventional sense of the term. It seems therefore highly unlikely for him to transgress conventional morality.

Vanity, Tegos claims, prevents the coxcomb from hearing the tempering voices of others, but I would suggest that this is only possible because the nouveau riche have, for lack of a better phrase, lost their way. They have little life experience evaluating the virtuous and the vicious among the aristocracy, and they are uncertain whom to emulate. Like those faced with a new and unprecedented crisis, they find their old ways eclipsed. Perhaps this is why ridicule works so well. Humor is cutting and is almost always more effective in countering vanity than persuasion is. But also, the coxcomb, as Tegos explains, has trouble distinguishing between vanity and bettering his or her own condition.

Tegos is no doubt correct that vanity is a "corruption of the natural tendency to 'bettering condition.'" He is also wise to emphasize Smith's poor man's son. But he must remember that for Smith, the lie that the poor man's son tells himself is a lie that drives economic advancement. As Mandeville points out before Smith, the profligate, the "sensual Courtier" and "Fickle Strumpet that invents new Fashions every Week" are the agents that "procure an honest Livelihood to the vast

Multitudes of working poor" (Mandeville and Kaye 1988, p. 355). However immoral or misguided the poor man's son is, he has significant utilitarian purpose.

So, there is a tension between Smith's optimism and the poor man's son who is a "lover of system." On the one hand, as Tegos writes:

the poor man's anxiety and restlessness recalls a kind of manic-depressive personality in the non-technical and widely popularized sense of the medical term. The main reason for this oversight resides in a more serious oversight: the poor man's son's character is a species of a broader genre, and his obsessions are species of obsessions proper to a broader family of characters, the "lovers of toys." And for those who rush to overlook these thoughts as overstatements, Smith issues a warning as he often does; minute things contain important messages.

The poor man's son misunderstands his true economic goals. He confuses bettering oneself with amassing toys and prestige. Yet on the other hand, the

universal trait of human imagination—the love of system—gains new life in commercial contexts where, in contrast to earlier socio-economic stages, opportunities for the acquisition of wealth are more abundant, and synonymous with social ascent for larger strata of the population. Thus the poor man's son as a case of the love of system destined to flourish in commercial society, entails an ambiguous assessment—a blend of surprise, admiration, laughter and sadness—and demands the finest ironic skills to be fairly gauged that go beyond Mandeville's satire.

Tegos's point, I think, is that commercial success is both so powerful and so desirable that ordinary moral education will not overpower its negative side effects. As such, only satire and ridicule can tame the famous and powerful. But, at the same time, one can't walk away from the inherent optimism present in Smith's fable. The poor man's son's qualified success and his walk away from virtue make us all better off.

This, as Tegos reminds us, is Mandeville's influence on Smith. But it is also indicative of the book's two Smithian themes that I announce in the introduction:

First, as already noted in his philosophy of history, Smith's work assumes a constant interaction between

an ideal that acts as evaluative criteria for human thought, motivation, and moral inquiry and an actual but imperfect process of discovery that illustrates well the limitations of the human project. Smith's agents always aim for perfection but never achieve it; progress and comparison must always be the standard of betterment.

A second theme is that that which divides people also unites them. Perhaps one of the most problematic aspects of Smith's work is that the very factors that help unify people in the face of diversity are the same ones that cause them to understand one another as different in the first place. This is an empiricist's dilemma and an accurate account of the human condition; Smith's philosophical problem is everyone's existential one. As we shall see, natural tendencies make individuals want to domineer, but these same tendencies motivate people toward mutual sympathy. Lived experience results in agents' having different perspectives, but this same root empiricism (however limited it may turn out to be) allows people to imagine themselves in another person's circumstance. The division of labor creates political divisions just as it creates universal opulence. How Smith manages these factors and how he overcomes the divisive forces that may also be used to cement society are important questions that guide my investigation (p. 18).

In other words, the poor man's son, like the slave, as Carrasco has pointed out, is paradigmatic. He sets himself an ideal and fails to achieve it, and he does so because the ideals that make us a closer community can also push us farther apart. We strive to do the right thing and even though we act appropriately, we cannot avoid the possibility that it will all end up negatively. I don't believe one can grasp the accuracy of Smith's work without attention to these two themes. I also think, if I can speculate, that being inattentive to them has led to the greatest miscommunication in this volume: Maria Pia Paganelli's misunderstanding of my use of optimism and progress.

OPTIMISM

Paganelli's analysis makes two different points. The first is that I do not provide enough textual evidence to claim that Smith is an optimist and the second is that Smith should not be read as one. Obviously, the second is more philosophi-

cally interesting than the first, and while I do not believe that my evidence was as spare as she suggests, to the first point I will respond simply that if she, as a reader, walked away unconvinced, then I probably did not do the job I needed to do.

However, it is important to recognize, as Nathaniel Wolloch remarks in the introduction, that Paganelli's conclusion "goes against the grain of mainstream Smith scholarship, which tends to see him as an example of general Enlightenment optimism." This doesn't mean she's wrong, of course, but it speaks to why my defense was less vociferous than she would have liked. I, like many scholars, simply take Smith's optimism for granted.

Is Smith an optimist? The contributors to this volume certainly seem to think so. Maria Carrasco writes: "Indeed, despite Smith's strong commitment to fallibilism he believes that, using the various resources at its disposal for attaining a better perception, a better identification and a more accurate moral judgment, the sympathetic process discovers truth (objective appropriateness) and normative ethics." Lisa Herzog, quoting Smith himself, explains:

...in commercial societies, 'the road to virtue and that to fortune, [...] are, happily in most cases, very nearly the same,' at least for the 'middling and inferior stations' (TMS I.III.3.5). In the markets Smith envisaged, working hard, delivering good quality, being reliable, and building up a good reputation (LJ (B), 538-9), all lead to economic prosperity, thus providing incentives for these virtues, which may not be the highest virtues, but which can be expected from all members of commercial society.

Spiros Tegos keenly calls Smith's parable of the poor man's son as "probably the first sketch of the American dream" and quotes him as believing that satire "is altogether consistent with the character of a Gentleman as it tends to the reformation of manners and the benefit of mankind" (1.88). And, as we have seen, Dionysis Drosos sees enough optimism in Smith as to suggest excess on his part. I will add that even the first line of TMS is optimistic, suggesting that people do care about the happiness of others, despite having no real interest in it, and, as we have seen with our discussion of the poor man's son, Smith is profoundly optimistic that people's personal betterment, even the attempts that go awry, can make the whole better off. The invisible hand is an optimistic story, as is Smith's stadial theory, his faith in the expertise of the worker, and his belief implicit in all of his work that we can learn from history.

But perhaps I am being unfair. Showing optimistic elements in Smith does not prove he is an optimist, and there is no doubt that Smith is, at times, mean, suspicious, critical, and even dark. There also seems to be little fruit in asking how many optimistic beliefs a person must have in order to be considered an optimist; I don't want to engage in casuistry. Instead, I would suggest that Paganelli and I differ in that I consider Smith's role as a pamphleteer, emphasizing what I call elsewhere the educative nature of his texts (Weinstein, forthcoming). I see his work as calls to action—calls that demand comparisons of what is to what might be.

Notice, for example, that all of the quotes Paganelli cites involve his present-day circumstances: China wasn't stagnant, but it is now, and Marco Polo is not much different than his contemporaries; Bengal was booming but it is now regressive; there isn't enough demand for laborers in Europe to match the birthrate; in its present condition, Great Britain resembles a diseased body; the workers face lives of torpor and "drowsy stupidity"; progress has made great warriors into weak men; government can now use public debt to finance war, leading to ruin; organized interests get governmental favors, especially the merchants and manufacturers; citizens are entertained by the news of wars and dream of empire for amusement; the sovereign squanders public monies on trinkets; and the barons and landlords spent their money on trinkets with no disposition to share. Each of these observations are descriptive not prescriptive.

I left a few out, not because they don't fit my thesis, but because they are posed as conditionals or prescriptions: "if Britain succumbs to lobbyists and mercantilists, it may go the way of Bengal rather than its North-American colonies"; the diseased body of England "deserves the most serious attention of government" otherwise it will spread like a leprosy; and, when war comes, it will "probably" ruin the nations of Europe. These quotes clearly point to a fork in the road. They are advisory in nature. They show that Smith is giving us both a pessimistic warning and an optimistic alternative.

The one quote I have passed over is Smith's observation that North America has more potential for growth than England, but, of course, this is neither pessimism nor optimism, it is simply fact. An unexplored continent of uncultivated and largely unpopulated land does indeed have more growth potential than the crowded, exploited lands of Europe that are buried in history and politics. Nevertheless, this is why trade is so important for Smith. Commercial interaction can bring these opportunities to Europe, revitalizing the economies of countries that are on the brink of ruin. This sounds optimistic to me.

Smith wrote his "very violent attack . . . upon the whole commercial system of Great Britain" because he wanted to change policy and he did (Corr. 208). He wanted to show us how bad things are under mercantilism and then project the positivity of free trade. He is doing what any sophisticated pamphleteer would do. He is gathering evidence for his advice and explaining all the good that will come from it.

Insofar as we can know anything about his mind, I'm confident that Smith was optimistic enough to believe that his works could influence policy. This is the same kind of optimism he revealed when he observed that students will learn what is worth learning without compulsion: "No discipline is ever requisite to force attendance upon lectures which are really worth the attending, as is well known wherever any such lectures are given" (WN V.i.f.15). In this, he is certainly more optimistic about student enthusiasm than I am. And regarding the impact of WN, he was correct. His book changed the world.

In the midst of her criticism, though, Paganelli changes tone. She starts off by suggesting that Smith wasn't an optimist at all, but then remarks: "If there is progress in Smith, it is not necessarily inevitable or something to take for granted." Regarding this, she and I couldn't agree more. There is nothing *inevitable* about progress at all. As I state in ASP:

...whether there has or has not been progress in opulence is not arbitrary. This is an empirical matter depending on the definitions of progress and opulence, accepting the fact that no single meaning may be definitive. Certainly, there might have been progress for some people and regress or stasis for others...As Maureen Harkin suggests, in addition to Smith's recognizing that progress does come with some loss, he seems to suggest that his own narratives are "local to a time and place, neither unconditionally true nor unqualifiedly certain." For Smith, this is yet again the tension between the actual epistemological limitations of inquirers who create the narratives and the ideal theoretical constructs they use to investigate nature (ASP 258-259).

As I go to great pains to detail, Smith's notion of progress is an ideal by which he measures actual history, just as the impartial spectator is an ideal moral standard by which one evaluates actual activity, and natural price is an ideal measure of comparative worth that one strives for when evaluating market price. Smith is interested in asking why actual events do not conform to the way they should be; if he was as

optimistic as Paganelli claims I think he is, then his project would be nonsensical because there wouldn't be any variation between the ideal and the actual.

It is unclear what Paganelli means by “an optimist”, but I suspect I have seen this debate before. In a serious misreading of Jerry Evensky's *Adam Smith's Moral Philosophy*, Samuel Fleischacker casts doubt on Smith's progressivism. He writes:

If Smith really did think every jot and tittle of human history could be accounted for by the design of a benevolent deity, we might expect a cheerful story about progress to run through his work, telling us that we can be sure that our societies today – the more “advanced” ones, at any rate – are better off in every respect than past societies were, and that we will continue to progress until we reach some ideal utopian state...But one of the most striking features of Smith's work...is the way that he complicates the easy story of progress that dominated the Enlightenment (Evensky, 2007, pp. 196–197).

Fleischacker then lists many pessimistic moments in Smith's writing and concludes, “No cheerful progressivism here! Rather we have a story every bit as much about ‘corruption and degeneracy’...as about improvement.” (ibid).

Fleischacker's misreading is not of Smith; everything he writes is a reasonable interpretation. It is, however, deeply unfair to Evensky, who offers no such Pollyannaish interpretation. Thankfully, Evensky had his say. In his response, after pointing out that Fleischacker has “done to Evensky just what he claims Evensky has done to Smith, grossly oversimplify[ing] his work,” he summarizes his position as follows: “the reality of human history is primarily pain and struggle as individual societies emerge, progress, stagnate, and decline.” The stories of China and Bengal, for example, he explains as “each a story of unbridled self-interest and absurd institutional structures leading to human exploitation, immiseration, and starvation.” (Evensky, p. 199). His description of history is similar to mine and Evensky's book included all of this information, but his reviewer simply didn't recognize it.¹⁴

Now, let me be clear: Paganelli is not as egregious as Fleischacker. We disagree, but she has not misread my book. We may differ on how much evidence counts as enough, but I fully accept that she herself was not persuaded, and I appreciate her being so forthcoming. I also agree that her understanding of Smith is defensible—there are many ways

to read Smith. But there is no “straw man” in ASP and my interpretation of Smith, however it differs from hers, is not “deformed.” If the evidence for Smith's optimism, in her words, “may not be as clear as Weinstein wants it to be,” then all she has established is that there is ambiguity, not that my interpretation is off. She has overstated her points for effect and not engaged my whole argument.

She is not alone. There is something about the idea of progress that drives many people to rhetorical apoplexy.¹⁵ They seem to think that if someone suggests there has been progress, then he or she is suggesting that there has never been suffering, or that they are using a means-ends justification to excuse the suffering there was. Yet, I explicitly reject the notion that pain is necessary for goodness, writing, “by victims, I mean those whose cultures, economic or moral lives, or institutions did not survive the vast historical change, or who endured more suffering because of the successes of others. I do not claim that these tragedies are necessary for progress” (256 n. 97). I also write:

Furthermore, Smith never claims that suffering is required for progress. While he does think that lessons come from tragedy and suffering—the experiments of history yield results—he never makes an argument for the necessity of oppression. As a result, his philosophy of history is not susceptible to the postcolonial critique that any notion of progress justifies historical injustice. To use Kipling's phrase, there is no “White Man's Burden” in any of Smith's work (p. 259).

There is always suffering; I never claim Smith is utopian. There are always stops and starts; progress is not perfectly linear. I was as explicit about that as Evensky was. I am disappointed that Paganelli didn't see it.

I must admit that I anticipated this reaction to a certain extent, which is why I spent the final chapters presenting Smith's philosophy of history and arguing against Foucault, the person who most powerfully argued against the concept of progress itself. If Paganelli had addressed these chapters as well, I am sure I would have learnt a great deal from her analysis.

CONCLUSION

I fear that it may be unsatisfying to read an author respond “I'm getting to that,” over and over to his commentators. I have tried to include many substantive arguments in this essay and to anticipate many of my coming conclusions. But

the fact of the matter is that my project is too long for one book, and were I to wait until it was all completed, the result probably wouldn't be available to the public for another decade.

More importantly, though, I cannot complete my research without engaging the community of scholars along the way. There is no point in writing if one does not address the audience and learn from their experience. Adam Smith had the luxury of living in a scholarly culture that permitted a person to revise the same work year after year until he or she died. We do not. Instead, the best we can do is present our findings and immerse ourselves in the discourse that results. This is the opportunity that this issue of *Cosmos and Taxic* has given me, and I am thankful for every moment of it. The sequel to *Adam Smith's Pluralism* will be better because of the commentary included here. I look forward to the time when the contributors read that next volume and help teach me where I need to go after that.¹⁶

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NOTES

- 1 To illustrate, while TMS was successful enough to warrant six editions in Smith's lifetime the total print run during the life of it copyright was 7750 copies (Ross, 2010, p. 188).
- 2 The British Museum opened to the public in 1759; the Louvre opened to the public in 1793.
- 3 Here we face a compelling interpretive issue. While Smith's basic point is understood, an hour has not been a consistent measure throughout the ages. As Joel Kraemer explains: "It is important to realize that the hours of the day for Maimonides' contemporaries had different lengths depending on the seasons. As the earth revolves around the sun, the length of the period of daylight changes. The ancients divided a day into twelve equal parts of daytime and nighttime, so the length of their hours called seasonal hours, actually varied. In Maimonides' milieu, people counted twelve hours of nighttime and twelve hours of daytime, whatever the length of daylight. If daylight was long, each hour would be correspondingly long, and if short, the hour would be correspondingly short. An hour was one-twelfth of the length of daylight or nighttime. Instead of our sixty-minute hour, then, the ancient hour could be from forty to eighty minutes. For astronomical calculations, the hours known as equinoctial were one twenty-fourth of a day, or equal to the length of a seasonal hour at equinox" (Kraemer, 2010, p. 78). It is worth asking, then, whether the Smith interpreter should address the fact that an

hour's toil and trouble could not be the same because an hour had such fluctuation, or is it better to think of Smith's point as he intended it: physiologically, basic human labor capabilities have not varied in recorded history.

- 4 As I point out in the book, Smith does find Plato's account of justice compatible with his own (TMS VII. ii.1.11; ASP 56).
- 5 For more on Smith's politics and the attempt to determine his legislative perspective, see: Haakonssen, 1989; Winch, 1978.
- 6 As Istvan Hont astutely observes, Hobbes's theory was purely political with no economic consideration at all, but by the time the tradition got to Marx, these characteristics were reversed: "Marx had no use for politics at all" (Hont, 2005, p. 2).
- 7 Such a discussion might involve asking questions such as: Should countries equalize access to meat or other forms of protein? Should each person be entitled to a specific range of square footage? Is culturally-appropriate clothing a reasonable government benefit for those receiving assistance?
- 8 A primer on this spontaneous order tradition can be found in Hamowy and Ross, 1987.
- 9 Smith sees the desire to trade as innate, although while he suggests that it is a unique human trait, nothing rests on his claim of uniqueness. See, Weinstein, 2014, pp. 447-65.
- 10 My description of the breakdown is as speculative as Smith's and I make no attempt to root it in the sociological research of social activity during disasters. I do this because Drosos asks a question about the text, not about the real world, so to speak.
- 11 See also Weinstein, 2012, pp. 223-36.
- 12 This list is not intended to be exhaustive.
- 13 I do not mean to suggest that people don't insult one another in times of crisis. Instead, I mean that satire changes its rhetorical purpose. Its goal is to motivate allies against a common enemy and not to inspire social change through education of the object of satire.
- 14 For more on Evensky, see: Weinstein, 2007, pp. 61-69.
- 15 Consider the critical reaction to Stephen Pinker's argument that the world is less violent now than it has ever been. Many of his critics refuse his position on principal and avoid debating the content of his very sophisticated argument (Pinker, 2011).
- 16 I am deeply honored to have my work attended to by such wonderful scholars. In today's academic world,

research time is probably the most valuable commodity. That all the participants thought my book worthy of their efforts is an immeasurable compliment. I was humbled by Leslie Marsh's invitation to this special volume and overwhelmed by Nathaniel Wolloch's willingness to devote such time to the editorial process. Finally, I hope that my respect for Maria Alejandra Carrasco, Denis Drosos, Lisa Herzog, Maria Pia Paganelli, and Spiros Tegos permeates every sentence. I thank them all for their kindness and thoughtful attention.