

Adam Smith on the Philosophy and Provision of Education

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Abstract

This article examines the views of Adam Smith on the philosophy and provision of education. On the basis of his *Theory of Moral Sentiments* and other writings, it becomes clear that Smith views education, conceived broadly to include both the learning of 'wisdom' and 'moral sentiments', as central to a prosperous or flourishing society. Education, in Smith's view, is not restricted to formal institutions of education but also includes social learning—that between parents and children, and the learning arising from friendships. For Smith, education is a social process. Smith also discusses the important role of wonder and surprise in the process of education. The provision of education, as outlined in his *Wealth of Nations*, largely supports the public provision of education with partial contributions from the enrolled students. Smith favoured education for all because he believed that it would offset the harmful effects of division of labour on the workers, and therefore, education had to be accessible to the workers. The essay concludes by reiterating Smith's position that education for all is *necessary* to create a prosperous society.

JEL: A20, B12, B31

Keywords

Moral sentiments, philosophy of education, public education, liberal capitalism, Adam Smith

I

Adam Smith, the professor of moral philosophy at the University of Glasgow, is famous for his work *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of*

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Nations (1776), a foundational treatise on political economy. However, this is not his first published book. Smith's first book, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (*TMS* hereafter) (Raphael & Macfie, 1976), was published in 1759. *TMS* is a normative work on human sentiments and their importance to a society that aims to flourish. Related aspects are found in other works of Smith: lectures on the History of Astronomy, *Lectures on Jurisprudence* and *Lectures on Rhetoric*. Both 'education' and 'flourish' warrant a definition at the outset because their interpretation in this paper is sufficiently non-usual. Education refers not only to the imparting of skills and ideas in a systematic form but also to the wider learning of morals as well as the process of knowledge acquisition. To 'flourish' is to 'prosper' (*TMS*, p. 313; for Smith's uses of 'flourish' in *TMS*, see pp. 88, 153, 281, 285).

Smith's views on education, as Rothschild informs us, 'were a continuing standard for successive programmes of educational reform of the revolutionary period, both in England and in France. Condorcet invoked Smith in his first plan of universal public instruction of 1788...' (Rothschild, 1998, p. 208). That is, his views have been employed in the reform of education. The present essay revisits Smith's oeuvre to find aspects of education which are of enduring value. An account of Smith's philosophy of education is presented first. This is followed by Smith's views on the provision of education. Smith takes up the latter issue in some detail in Book V of the *Wealth of Nations* (Campbell, Skinner & Todd, 1976) (*WN* hereafter). The core aspects of Smith's philosophy and provision of education is summarized in the concluding section. In particular, the role of education in the attainment of a flourishing society is underscored.

II

Jack Weinstein, the guest editor of the symposium¹ 'Adam Smith and Education', interprets Smith's 'philosophy of education' found scattered across his oeuvre as strongly aligning with 'nurture' and not with 'nature'.² The present essay supports Weinstein's interpretation. In the following extracts from *TMS*, Smith points out how nature 'teaches' humans sympathetic behaviour.

Mankind, though naturally sympathetic, never conceive, for what has befallen another, that degree of passion which naturally animates the person principally concerned. That imaginary change of situation, upon which their sympathy is founded, is but momentary. (*TMS*, p. 21)

In order to produce this concord, as nature teaches the spectators to assume the circumstances of the person principally concerned, so she teaches this last in some measure to assume those of the spectators. (*TMS*, p. 22)

Smith outlines the theory of sympathy (a 'moral sentiment') formation in *TMS*. Even though the 'desire to sympathise' is natural for Smith (Weinstein, 2007, p. 60), the how and when to sympathize requires learning, or broadly, education.³ This is the central point. Education is not a one-off activity or affair. It calls for continuous and often repeated rounds of learning and unlearning. As Smith observes in the context of the formation of moral sentiments, '[o]ur continual observations

upon the conduct of others insensibly lead us to form to ourselves certain general rules concerning what is fit and proper either to be done or to be avoided. Some of their actions shock all our natural sentiments' (*TMS*, p. 159, emphasis added). Or, as he writes in another instance, '[t]hose general rules of conduct, when they have been fixed in our mind by *habitual reflection*, are of great use in correcting the misrepresentations of self-love concerning what is fit and proper to be done in our particular situation' (*TMS*, p. 160, emphasis added). These excerpts point to the idea that moral sentiments can be learnt or nurtured. Berry expresses the same view in his entry entitled 'Smith and Science' in *The Cambridge Companion to Adam Smith*:

A pervasive theme in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* is that morality is a learnt phenomenon...moral behaviour is an effect of socialisation and thus exhibits the traits of soft determinism... The fact that it is habitual...means that, building on the given natural dynamics of human nature, it is a learnt resource. (Berry, 2006, p. 133)

What are the 'qualities' Smith considers most important for an individual? His answer: 'reason' and 'self-command', the 'union' of which brings about 'prudence'—care, concern, and good judgement about the present and future.

The qualities most useful to ourselves are, first of all, superior reason and understanding, by which we are capable of discerning the remote consequences of all our actions, and of foreseeing the advantage or detriment which is likely to result from them; and, secondly, self-command, by which we are enabled to abstain from present pleasure or to endure present pain, in order to obtain a greater pleasure or to avoid a greater pain in some future time. In the union of those two qualities consists the virtue of prudence, of all the virtues, that which is most useful to the individual. (*TMS*, p. 189)

In other words, 'reason' alone is not sufficient in the education of an individual. The learning of moral sentiments, according to Smith, is also important. The society flourishes⁴ when its members possess good moral sentiments.

All the members of human society stand in need of each other's assistance, and are likewise exposed to mutual injuries. Where the necessary assistance is reciprocally afforded from love, from gratitude, from friendship, and esteem, *the society flourishes and is happy*. All the different members of it are bound together by the agreeable bands of love and affection, and are, as it were, drawn to one common centre of mutual good offices. (*TMS*, p. 85, emphasis added)

The core of a flourishing and happy society is therefore *care*—to 'stand in need of each other's assistance' and the reciprocity arising from love, gratitude and friendship. Developing moral sentiments is, therefore, as important as studying reason, and the former cannot be reduced to the latter: 'it is altogether absurd and unintelligible to suppose that the first perceptions of right and wrong can be derived from reason' (*TMS*, p. 32). In short, 'the study of wisdom and the practice of virtue' are both equally important (*TMS*, p. 62). Education, not narrowly conceived as the development of reason, but broadly defined to include also the learning of socially useful values—benevolence, care, sympathy and virtue, to name a few—therefore contributes to the formation of a flourishing society.

TMS discusses a wide range of moral sentiments besides sympathy: ‘amiable and respectable virtues’, ‘unsocial passions’, ‘social passions’, ‘selfish passions’ and ‘ambition’ in part I of the book; ‘gratitude and resentment’, ‘justice’ and ‘remorse’ in part II; ‘self-approbation’, ‘self-disapprobation’, ‘praise-worthiness’, ‘blame-worthiness’ and ‘duty’ in part III; and ‘virtue’, ‘benevolence’ and ‘self-command’ in part VI. Smith presents his theory of moral sentiments through the concept of the ‘impartial spectator’—‘a peculiar power of perception, called a moral sense’ (*TMS*, p. 266; cf. pp. 164–165). Or, as he writes elsewhere: ‘[i]t is reason, principle, conscience, the inhabitant of the breast, the man within, the great judge and arbiter of our conduct’ (*TMS*, p. 137). For Smith, conscience ‘is a product of social relationship’ (Raphael & Macfie, 1976, p. 15). The formation of moral sentiments of a good nature can and has to be inculcated.

Smith also advises caution because he states that moral sentiments are liable of being corrupted, particularly by the principles of ‘custom and fashion’ (*TMS*, p. 194; cf. p. 195). It is perhaps in this context that he criticizes boarding schools and schools run by nuns for boys, young men and young ladies ‘in the higher ranks of life to have hurt most essentially the domestic morals’ and encourages their parents to educate them in their own houses (*TMS*, p. 222).⁵ Note that Smith’s education is a broadly conceived one and not one restricted to formal institutions like schools and universities. Another aspect Smith discusses is the affection between parents and their children. Although the affection is natural, because of the possibility that the behaviour of the child may have adverse effects on other children in the future, the affective tendencies require to be nurtured and learnt.⁶ In his *Lectures on Jurisprudence*, Smith writes:

The long time that children are dependent on their parents and unable to subsist by themselves...[is] productive of the most salutary effects. During all this time the child being dependent on the parents is obliged in many instances to yield its will to theirs, to bring down its passions and curb its desires to such a pitch as they can go along with, and by this means learns in its very infancy a chief and most essential part of education, without which being first implanted it would be in vain to attempt the instilling of any others. This is one of the most necessary lessons one can acquire. (p. 141, the extra ‘l’ in ‘essential’ is Smith’s own and in the original)

According to Smith, moral sentiments—those of passion and desire—can be and ought to be imparted during early childhood (cf. Fleischacker, 2013, pp. 491–492). In the same *Lectures*, Smith reiterates the importance of early childhood education by parents: ‘that children have so long a dependance upon their parents, to bring down their passions to theirs, and thus be trained up at length to become usefull members of society. Every child gets this piece of education, even under the most worthless parent’ (p. 438). Surprisingly, he believes that every child gets such education.

While critically reviewing the different systems of moral philosophy in part VII of *TMS*, Smith notes that the aim of the theory of moral sentiments present in the different systems is ‘to encourage the best and most laudable habits of the human mind’ (*TMS*, p. 307). Smith further describes the ‘most laudable habits of the human mind’ which can be learnt from the different systems of moral philosophy.

We may learn from each of them something that is both valuable and peculiar. If it were possible, by precept and exhortation, to *inspire* the mind with fortitude and magnanimity, the ancient systems of propriety would seem sufficient to do this. Or if it were possible, by the same means, to *soften* it into humanity, and to *awaken* the affections of kindness and general love towards those we live with, some of the pictures with which the benevolent system presents us, might seem capable of producing this effect. (*TMS*, p. 307, emphases added)

Notice the use of ‘inspire’, ‘soften’ and ‘awaken’, all of them critical to the process of learning and the development of knowledge. Similarly, in his lectures entitled ‘The History of Astronomy’ (published in his *Essays on Philosophical Subjects* [pp. 33–105]), Smith discusses the effects of ‘wonder’, ‘surprise’ and ‘admiration’. Smith describes ‘wonder’ in the following way: ‘It is this fluctuation and vain recollection, together with the emotion or movement of the spirits that they excite, which constitute the sentiment properly called *Wonder*’ (p. 39, emphasis in original). Smith talks about how the viewing of certain natural objects generates wonder: ‘[w]e wonder at all extraordinary and uncommon objects, at all the rarer phaenomena of nature, at meteors, comets, eclipses, at singular plants and animals, and at every thing, in short, with which we have before been either little or not at all acquainted; and we still wonder, though forewarned of what we are to see’ (p. 33). Of course, Smith does not explicitly connect these sentiments with education or the process of learning; nevertheless, he is discussing these sentiments in the context of how scientific knowledge develops and is, therefore, of significance to education and more so, in the process of learning.

In Smith’s *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres*,⁷ a set of lectures on language—more accurately, on rhetoric—he talks about how best to communicate an idea:

Another thing that is necessary is that the description should be short and not taedious by its length. But here there is a difficulty, to attain this conciseness and at the same time bring in those circumstances which give a description vivacity and force. This may often be accomplished by picking out some of the most curious and striking circumstances, which may suggest the others to the reader. (pp. 71–72; cf. Weinstein, 2007, p. 59)

Communicating an idea well is important in education as it is a space where ideas are disseminated.

Smith’s philosophy of education may now be summarized. First, the aims of education, broadly understood, is the flourishing of all members in a society. Second, to achieve these aims, the members of the society must be educated in the appropriate moral sentiments besides ‘the study of wisdom’ (*TMS*, p. 62) through formal educational institutions and through wider social interactions, such as parenting, friendships and other social relations. As Tegos writes while discussing the importance of moral imagination in Smith, the ‘moral deliberation of ordinary citizens is contingent on the ongoing process of sharpening the moral imagination, itself a product of the inextricably linked moral and intellectual faculties and their subsequent cultivation through an educational policy’ (Tegos, 2013, p. 363).

That is, Smith's philosophy of education requires to be translated into practice through an educational policy which is in line with his philosophy. In the next section, Smith's views on how to provide education to the members of a community are presented.

III

Smith does not view education as a 'commodity' where the forces of demand and supply determines its availability (quantity) and accessibility (price). Education, being central to the attainment of a flourishing society, could not possibly be entirely left to the market forces. Smith treats the issue of provision of education at some length in Book V, entitled 'Of the Revenue of the Sovereign or the Commonwealth', of the *WN*. Both West (1964) and Skinner (1996) have written about the provision of education in Adam Smith. West interprets Smith as possessing a strong preference for 'the operation of market forces in providing education' (West, 1964, p. 465). However, Skinner argues, in line with our interpretation, that Smith preferred 'a combination of modest private, and a more significant public, contribution' in the case of elementary education (Skinner, 1996, p. 200). Neither West nor Skinner includes 'moral sentiments' as an important component of education in Smith.

According to Smith, the provision of the following services falls under the ambit of the government: law and justice, defence, public works—particularly transport infrastructure—and education (*WN*, pp. 814–815; cf. Aspromourgos, 2009, p. 227). How should education be financed?

The expence of the institutions for education and religious instruction, is likewise, no doubt, beneficial to the whole society, and may, therefore, without injustice, be defrayed by the general contribution of the whole society. This expence, however, might perhaps with equal propriety, and even with some advantage, be defrayed altogether by those who receive the immediate benefit of such education and instruction, or by the voluntary contribution of those who think they have occasion for either the one or the other. (*WN*, p. 815)

In the above passage, Smith also offers suggestions on the collective ways of financing the expenses necessary for the provision of education (religious instruction included). Note that Smith advocates that the costs of education be partially borne by the users. Smith's position on user charges for education is based on the comparative performance of Scottish and English education. The Scottish education system, where the teachers' salaries were borne by the students, performed better than the English education system, where wealthy benefactors financed the costs of education through endowments (West, 1964, p. 465). As Smith writes, '[i]n the university of Oxford, the greater part of the publick professors have, for these many years, given up altogether even the pretence of teaching' (*WN*, p. 761). Some pages later, Smith notes that '[i]n general, the richest and best endowed universities have been the slowest in adopting those improvements, and the most averse to permit any considerable change in the established plan of education'

(*WN*, p. 772). In the English education system, over time, the interests of the administrators took precedence over that of the benefactors, whereas in the Scottish education system, because the incomes of the teachers were dependent on the number of students, the teaching corresponded to the wishes of the students and their parents (West, 1964, pp. 465–466). Smith provides the reason for the difference in the Scottish and English education systems in the following excerpt.

The endowments of schools and colleges have necessarily diminished more or less the necessity of application in the teachers. Their subsistence, so far as it arises from their salaries, is evidently derived from a fund altogether independent of their success and reputation in their particular professions. (*WN*, p. 760)

The endowment, it must be noted, ‘arises chiefly from some local or provincial revenue, from the rent of some landed estate, or from the interest of some sum of money allotted and put under the management of trustees for this particular purpose, sometimes by the sovereign himself, and sometimes by some private donor’ (*WN*, p. 759). Therefore, for Smith, the issue was not one of public versus private financing of education but one of endowment-based versus user-charge-based financing of education. Smith favoured the user-charge-based system of financing and he maintained that the user charge ought to be affordable for all.

After recognizing the existence of inequality of education in the society, with those of higher ‘rank’ and status being more educated than the rest, Smith prescribes the following.

For a very small expence the publick can facilitate, can encourage, and can even impose upon almost the whole body of the people, the necessity of acquiring those most essential parts of education. (*WN*, p. 785)

The ‘most essential parts of education’, according to Smith, are the capacities ‘to read, write, and account’ (*WN*, p. 785). Although Smith advocates user charges for education, the charges should be such that ‘even a common labourer may afford it’ (*WN*, p. 785). Smith’s proposition that education should be affordable even to the common labourer is sufficient to reject the view that he favoured unrestricted competition in education. As Skinner writes, ‘Smith advocated a policy that would encourage the poor to send their children to school, but also that he supported compulsion’ because the poor ‘typically lacked either incentive or inclination to provide an education for their children’ (Skinner, 1996, p. 194). Smith argues that educating the ‘inferior ranks of people’ is advantageous to the state.

The more they are instructed, the less liable they are to the delusions of enthusiasm and superstition, which, among ignorant nations, frequently occasion the most dreadful disorders. An instructed and intelligent people besides are always more decent and orderly than an ignorant and stupid one.... In free countries, where the safety of government depends very much upon the favourable judgment which the people may form of its conduct, it must surely be of the highest importance that they should not be disposed to judge rashly or capriciously concerning it.⁸ (*WN*, p. 788)

Since education is about imparting reason as well as self-command (understanding how to feel and behave), it is expected to make people ‘more decent and orderly’. Not just that, in countries where people determine who forms the government, the voter ought to be able to make informed judgements on economic, political and social matters (cf. Skinner, 1996, p. 195).

Another reason for the public provision of education arises from Smith’s concerns about the debilitating effects of division of labour, which he considers essential for economic growth in particular and liberal capitalism in general. The advantage and disadvantage of division of labour to the society are visible from the following two passages from the *Wealth of Nations*.

THE greatest improvement in the productive powers of labour, and the greater part of the skill, dexterity, and judgment with which it is any where directed, or applied, seem to have been the effects of the division of labour. (*WN*, p. 13)

In the progress of the division of labour, the employment of the far greater part of those who live by labour, that is, of the great body of the people, comes to be confined to a few very simple operations; frequently to one or two. ... He naturally loses, therefore, the habit of such exertion, and generally becomes as stupid and ignorant as is possible for a human creature to become. The torpor of his mind renders him, not only incapable of relishing or bearing a part in any rational conversation, but of conceiving any generous, noble, or tender sentiment, and consequently of forming any just judgment concerning many even of the ordinary duties of private life. (*WN*, pp. 781–782)

Smith is unequivocal that ‘in every improved and civilized society this is the state into which the labouring poor, that is, the great body of the people, must necessarily fall, unless government takes some pains to prevent it’ (*WN*, p. 782). Hence, ‘[t]he education of the common people requires, perhaps, in a civilized and commercial society, the attention of the publick...’ (*WN*, p. 784). The public provision of education, Smith suggests, will partly offset the negative consequences arising from the division of labour (cf. Skinner, 1996, p. 195; Rothschild & Sen, 2006, p. 352; Aspromourgos, 2013, p. 268). As Aspromourgos (2013, p. 268) writes, and rightly so, the suggestion of public education in the *Wealth of Nations* ‘is evidence of Smith’s not being an ideologue for liberal capitalism: he is not prepared to suppress this undesirable consequence of economic development’. Insofar as this is the case, the provision of some services under Smith’s ‘unproductive sector’ will require to be provided, and that too at an increasing rate (see also the discussion at Aspromourgos, 2009, p. 264). Also, Smith’s use of ‘unproductive’ should not be taken to mean ‘unnecessary’ or ‘undesirable’ from the point of view of the society as a whole. As Aspromourgos (2013, p. 283) puts it: ‘the role proposed for government in education—compulsory education, it may be noted—makes that activity at least partly “productive” in Smith’s strict sense, insofar as labour skills are an element of society’s “capital”, as he understands it.’

Yet another reason for the public provision of education, particularly for the majority of the people (the workers), in the society *may* be the following. Smith believes that liberal capitalism will result in a rise in real wages, although there are no forces in his theory that will generate this result (cf. Aspromourgos, 2009,

p. 188, pp. 213–214; Thomas, 2015, pp. 78–79). For Smith, real wages are determined by the relative bargaining power of the workers vis-à-vis the employers and the socio-political situation. In other words, the extant real wage, according to Smith, is very much a product of history—of workers coming together to bargain for higher wages and of the employers resisting higher wages. Perhaps Smith, like his contemporary, James Steuart,⁹ also believed that ‘education’ of the workers will improve their real wages (Thomas, 2015, p. 58). Nowhere does Smith make this connection, but the elements necessary for such a connection are in Smith, notably in his theory of wages. After all, real wages in Smith depend on subsistence which is considered customary by the workers.

By necessities I understand, not only the commodities which are indispensably necessary for the support of life, but whatever the custom of the country renders it indecent for creditable people, even of the lowest order, to be without. ... Under necessities therefore, I comprehend, not only those things which nature, but those things which the established rules of decency have rendered necessary to the lowest rank of people. (*WN*, pp. 869–870)

Perhaps education could raise the level of customary subsistence. If education is broadly defined (as in section II) to include moral sentiments also, then the positive connection between education and real wages is stronger. In her book on the theory of wages in classical economics, Stirati observes that in Smith, ‘through social interchange and historical experience, widespread opinions form as to what is the decorous level of consumption even for “the lowest rank of people”, which the wages of an adult worker should be able to provide’ (Stirati, 1994, pp. 59–60).

Not only does Smith favour the public provision of education with private contributions, he also suggests that education be made compulsory, especially for workers. One reason for this, explicit in Smith, is that education will partly offset the debilitating effects of division of labour, a central feature of liberal capitalism. Another reason, only implicit in Smith, is that education may lead to rising real wages, a tendency which Smith believes liberal capitalism will bring about. Yet another reason is that education makes the society more informed and judicious and, therefore, contributes to the ‘safety of the government’. To use latter-day terms, education improves the functioning of democratic processes by enabling the society to make informed decisions in their role as citizens. The following passage from Viner summarizes well our preceding discussion.

Smith supports the participation of the government in the general education of the people, because it will help prepare them for industry, will make them better citizens and better soldiers, and happier and healthier men in mind and body. Public education is made necessary to check as far as may be the evil effects on the standards, mentality, and character of the working classes of the division of labor and the inequality in the distribution of wealth. (Viner, 1927, p. 227)

IV

Underlying Adam Smith's views on the philosophy of and provision of education is his normative idea of a society: one where all the members are flourishing. Education, for Smith, is not narrowly defined, but is a broad conception—which includes the 'study of wisdom' as well as that of 'moral sentiments'. Smith recognizes that the inequalities in education almost always closely correspond with the inequalities in income and wealth. Smith believes that education can lead to an improvement in the lives of the poor. In addition, he believes that education can partially offset the ill effects on workers brought about by division of labour. As for the provision of education, Smith favours a user-charge-based system to an endowment-based system. Although Smith advocates user charges for education, the charges should be such that 'even a common labourer may afford it' (*WN*, p. 785), a proposition that does not support the view that Smith favoured unrestricted competition in education. Moreover, Smith strongly believed that education for the 'common people requires...the attention of the publick' (*WN*, p. 784). Smith's position on the provision of education is not only nuanced but also contextual:

In some cases the state of the society necessarily places the greater part of individuals in such situations as naturally form in them, without any attention of government, almost all the abilities and virtues which that state requires, or perhaps can admit of. In other cases the state of the society does not place the greater part of individuals in such situations, and some attention of government is necessary in order to prevent the almost entire corruption and degeneracy of the great body of the people. (*WN*, p. 781)

It is the case, as Smith recognized in the eighteenth century, that the development of conceptual frameworks based on observation and reason *alongside* the development of benevolence, care, sympathy and virtue will enable all of us to flourish or prosper.

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Notes

1. Other papers in the symposium deal with 'Adam Smith and French Ideas on Education', 'Adam Smith as a Teacher on Classical Subjects', 'Adam Smith's (Weak) Case for Fee Incomes for University Faculty and Student-consumer Sovereignty' and 'Dr Smith and the Moderns: Adam Smith and the Development of Human Capital Theory', all published in V. Brown (2007).
2. See Aspromourgos (2009, pp. 44–48) for a detailed account of Smith's use of 'natural' across all his works.
3. Smith use of 'education' in *TMS* usually goes along with an adjective. For instance, 'most vulgar education' (p. 139), 'most artificial and refined education' (p. 139), 'education has been very singular' (p. 160) and 'virtuously educated' (p. 162). These can be taken to indicate that, based on his theory of moral sentiments, Smith distinguished between good and bad education.

4. But note that Smith's view arises from 'the Stoic idea of harmonious system, seen in the working of society' (Raphael & Macfie, 1976, p. 7). Smith describes it thus: '[h]uman society, when we contemplate it in a certain abstract and philosophical light, appears like a great, an immense machine, whose regular and harmonious movements produce a thousand agreeable effects' (*TMS*, p. 316).
5. Smith goes as far as saying that '[d]omestic education is the institution of nature—public education the contrivance of man. It is surely unnecessary to say which is likely to be the wisest' (*TMS*, p. 222).
6. The complete passage of Smith, evocative of moral values, particularly the reciprocity of affection between the children and their old parents deserves to be quoted in full.

In ordinary cases, the existence and preservation of the child depend altogether upon the care of the parents. Those of the parents seldom depend upon that of the child. Nature, therefore, has rendered the former affection so strong, that it generally requires not to be excited, but to be moderated; and moralists seldom endeavour to teach us how to indulge, but generally how to restrain our fondness, our excessive attachment, the unjust preference which we are disposed to give to our own children above those of other people. They exhort us, on the contrary, to an affectionate attention to our parents, and to make a proper return to them in their old age for the kindness which they had shown to us in our infancy and youth. (*TMS*, p. 142)

7. Delivered in Edinburgh from 1748 to 1751, Court (1985, p. 325) writes that these were 'the first formal lectures on the subject of "English" in Britain to give singular pedagogical prominence to the application of selections from English literature in the university classroom'. Court argues that Smith considered 'belles lettres', the study of literature, as being capable of instilling in people good moral sentiments (see Court, 1985, pp. 329–330, 337; cf. Griswold, 2006, p. 26).
8. Some pages later, Smith discusses the unsocial morals found in 'little religious sects' of Christianity. For Smith, one effective remedy 'is the study of science and philosophy, which the state might render almost universal among all people of middling or more than middling rank and fortune ... [because] [s]cience is the great antidote to the poison of enthusiasm and superstition' (*WN*, p. 796). Smith's second remedy is the provision of what he calls 'publick diversions', the aim of which is 'to amuse and divert the people by painting, poetry, musick, dancing; by all sorts of dramatic representations and exhibitions, would easily dissipate, in the greater part of them, that melancholy and gloomy humour which is almost always the nurse of popular superstition and enthusiasm' (*WN*, p. 796; cf. Haakonssen, 2006, p. 20).
9. Steuart published his economic treatise *An Inquiry into the Principles of Political Oeconomy* in 1767, after *TMS* and before *WN*.

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