

Account of the Life and Writings of Adam Smith LL.D.

by Dugald Stewart 1793

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Section I.

From Mr. Smith's Birth till the Publication of the Theory of Moral Sentiments

Adam Smith, author of the *Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, was the son of Adam Smith, comptroller of the customs at Kirkaldy, (1*) and of Margaret Douglas, daughter of Mr Douglas of Strathenry. He was the only child of the marriage, and was born at Kirkaldy on the 5th of June 1723, a few months after the death of his father.

His constitution during infancy was infirm and sickly, and required all the tender solicitude of his surviving parent. She was blamed for treating him with an unlimited indulgence; but it produced no unfavourable effects on his temper or his dispositions: — and he enjoyed the rare satisfaction of being able to repay here affection, by every attention that filial gratitude could dictate, during the long period of sixty years.

An accident which happened to him when he was about three years old, is of too interesting a nature to be omitted in the account of so valuable a life. He had been carried by his mother to Strathenry, on a visit to his uncle Mr Douglas, and was one day amusing himself alone at the door of the house, when he was stolen by a party of that set of vagrants who are known in Scotland by the name of tinkers. Luckily he was soon missed by his uncle, who, hearing that some vagrants had passed, pursued them, with what assistance he could find, till he overtook them in Leslie wood; and was the happy instrument of preserving to the world a genius, which was destined, not only to extend the boundaries of science, but to enlighten and reform the commercial policy of Europe.

The school of Kirkaldy, where Mr Smith received the first rudiments of his education, was then taught by Mr David Miller, a teacher, in his day, of considerable reputation, and whose name deserves to be recorded, on account of the eminent men whom that very obscure seminary produced while under his direction. Of this number were Mr Oswald of Dunikeir; (2*) his brother, Dr John Oswald, afterwards Bishop of Raphoe; and our late excellent colleague, the Reverend Dr John Drysdale: all of them nearly contemporary with Mr Smith, and united with him through life by the closest ties of friendship. One of his school-fellows is still alive; (3*) and to his kindness I am principally indebted for the scanty materials which form the first part of this narrative.

Among these companions of his earliest years, Mr Smith soon attracted notice, by his passion for books, and by the extraordinary powers of his memory. The weakness of his bodily constitution prevented him from partaking in their more

active amusements; but he was much beloved by them on account of his temper, which, though warm, was to an uncommon degree friendly and generous. Even then he was remarkable for those habits which remained with him through life, of speaking to himself when alone, and of absence in company.

From the grammar-school of Kirkaldy, he was sent, in 1737, to the university of Glasgow, where he remained till 1740, when he went to Baliol college, Oxford, as an exhibitor (4*) on Snell's foundation.

Dr Maclaine of the Hague, who was a fellow-student of Mr Smith's at Glasgow, told me some years ago, that his favourite pursuits while at that university were mathematics and natural philosophy; and I remember to have heard my father remind him of a geometrical problem of considerable difficulty, about which he was occupied at the time when their acquaintance commenced, and which had been proposed to him as an exercise by the celebrated Dr Simpson.

These, however, were certainly not the sciences in which he was formed to excel; nor did they long divert him from pursuits more congenial to his mind. What Lord Bacon says of Plato may be justly applied to him: *'Illum, licet ad rempublicam non accessisset, tamen naturâ et inclinatione omnino ad res civiles propensum, vires eo praecipue intendisse; neque de Philosophia Naturali admodum sollicitum esse; nisi quatenus ad Philosophi nomen et celebritatem tuendam, et ad majestatem quandam moralibus et civilibus doctrinis addendam et aspergendam sufficeret.'* (5*) The study of human nature in all its branches, more particularly of the political history of mankind, opened a boundless field to his curiosity and ambition; and while it afforded scope to all the various powers of his versatile and comprehensive genius, gratified his ruling passion, of contributing to the happiness and the improvement of society. To this study, diversified at his leisure hours by the less severe occupations of polite literature, he seems to have devoted himself almost entirely from the time of his removal to Oxford; but he still retained, and retained even in advanced years, a recollection of his early acquisitions, which not only added to the splendour of his conversation, but enabled him to exemplify some of his favourite theories concerning the natural progress of the mind in the investigation of truth, by the history of those sciences in which the connection and succession of discoveries may be traced with the greatest advantage. If I am not mistaken too, the influence of his early taste for the Greek geometry may be remarked in the elementary clearness and fulness, bordering sometimes upon prolixity, with which he frequently states his political reasonings. — The lectures of the profound and eloquent Dr Hutcheson, which he had attended previous to his departure from Glasgow, and of which he always spoke in terms of the warmest admiration, had, it may be reasonably presumed, a considerable effect in directing his talents to their proper objects. (6*)

I have not been able to collect any information with respect to that part of his youth which was spent in England. I have heard him say, that he employed himself frequently in the practice of translation, (particularly from the French), with a view to the improvement of his own style: and he used often to express a favourable opinion of the utility of such exercises, to all who cultivate the art of composition. It is much to be regretted, that none of his juvenile attempts in this way have been preserved; as the few specimens which his writings contain of his

skill as a translator, are sufficient to shew the eminence he had attained in a walk of literature, which, in our country, has been so little frequented by men of genius.

It was probably also at this period of his life, that he cultivated with the greatest care the study of languages. The knowledge he possessed of these, both ancient and modern, was uncommonly extensive and accurate; and, in him, was subservient, not to a vain parade of tasteless erudition, but to a familiar acquaintance with every thing that could illustrate the institutions, the manners, and the ideas of different ages and nations. How intimately he had once been conversant with the more ornamental branches of learning; in particular, with the works of the Roman, Greek, French, and Italian Poets, appeared sufficiently from the hold which they kept of his memory, after all the different occupations and inquiries in which his maturer faculties had been employed. (7*) In the English language, the variety of poetical passages which he was not only accustomed to refer to occasionally, but which he was able to repeat with correctness, appeared surprising even to those, whose attention had never been directed to more important acquisitions.

After a residence at Oxford of seven years, he returned to Kirkcaldy, and lived two years with his mother; engaged in study, but without any fixed plan for his future life. He had been originally destined for the Church of England, and with that view had been sent to Oxford; but not finding the ecclesiastical profession suitable to his taste, he chose to consult, in this instance, his own inclination, in preference to the wishes of his friends; and abandoning at once all the schemes which their prudence had formed for him, he resolved to return to his own country, and to limit his ambition to the uncertain prospect of obtaining, in time, some one of those moderate preferments, to which literary attainments lead in Scotland.

In the year 1748, he fixed his residence at Edinburgh, and during that and the following years, read lectures on rhetoric and belles lettres, under the patronage of Lord Kames. About this time, too, he contracted a very intimate friendship, which continued without interruption till his death, with Mr Alexander Wedderburn, now Lord Loughborough, and with Mr William Johnstone, now Mr Pulteney.

At what particular period his acquaintance with Mr David Hume commenced, does not appear from any information that I have received; but from some papers, now in the possession of Mr Hume's nephew, and which he has been so obliging as to allow me to peruse, their acquaintance seems to have grown into friendship before the year 1752. It was a friendship on both sides founded on the admiration of genius, and the love of simplicity; and, which forms an interesting circumstance in the history of each of these eminent men, from the ambition which both have shewn to record it to posterity.

In 1751, he was elected Professor of Logic in the University of Glasgow; and, the year following, he was removed to the Professorship of Moral Philosophy in the same University, upon the death of Mr Thomas Craigie, the immediate successor of Dr Hutcheson. In this situation he remained thirteen years; a period he used frequently to look back to, as the most useful and happy of his life. It was indeed a situation in which he was eminently fitted to excel, and in which the daily

labours of his profession were constantly recalling his attention to his favourite pursuits, and familiarizing his mind to those important speculations he was afterwards to communicate to the world. In this view, though it afforded, in the meantime, but a very narrow scene for his ambition, it was probably instrumental, in no inconsiderable degree, to the future eminence of his literary character.

Of Mr Smith's lectures while a Professor at Glasgow, no part has been preserved, excepting what he himself published in the *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, and in the *Wealth of Nations*. The Society therefore, I am persuaded, will listen with pleasure to the following short account of them, for which I am indebted to a gentleman who was formerly one of Mr Smith's pupils, and who continued till his death to be one of his most intimate and valued friends. (8*)

'In the Professorship of Logic, to which Mr Smith was appointed on his first introduction into this University, he soon saw the necessity of departing widely from the plan that had been followed by his predecessors, and of directing the attention of his pupils to studies of a more interesting and useful nature than the logic and metaphysics of the schools. Accordingly, after exhibiting a general view of the powers of the mind, and explaining so much of the ancient logic as was requisite to gratify curiosity with respect to an artificial method of reasoning, which had once occupied the universal attention of the learned, he dedicated all the rest of his time to the delivery of a system of rhetoric and belles lettres. The best method of explaining and illustrating the various powers of the human mind, the most useful part of metaphysics, arises from an examination of the several ways of communicating our thoughts by speech, and from an attention to the principles of those literary compositions which contribute to persuasion or entertainment. By these arts, every thing that we perceive or feel, every operation of our minds, is expressed and delineated in such a manner, that it may be clearly distinguished and remembered. There is, at the same time, no branch of literature more suited to youth at their first entrance upon philosophy than this, which lays hold of their taste and their feelings.

'It is much to be regretted, that the manuscript containing Mr Smith's lectures on this subject was destroyed before his death. The first part, in point of composition, was highly finished; and the whole discovered strong marks of taste and original genius. From the permission given to students of taking notes, many observations and opinions contained in these lectures have either been detailed in separate dissertations, or engrossed in general collections, which have since been given to the public. But these, as might be expected, have lost the air of originality and the distinctive character which they received from their first author, and are often obscured by that multiplicity of common-place matter in which they are sunk and involved.

'About a year after his appointment to the Professorship of Logic, Mr Smith was elected to the chair of Moral Philosophy. His course of lectures on this subject was divided into four parts. The first contained Natural Theology; in which he considered the proofs of the being and attributes of God, and those principles of the human mind upon which religion is founded. The second comprehended Ethics, strictly so called, and consisted chiefly of the doctrines which he afterwards published in his *Theory of Moral Sentiments*. In the third part, he treated at more length of that branch of morality which relates to justice, and which, being susceptible of precise and accurate rules, is for that reason capable of a full and particular explanation.

'Upon this subject he followed the plan that seems to be suggested by Montesquieu; endeavouring to trace the gradual progress of jurisprudence, both public and private, from the rudest to the most refined ages, and to point out the effects of those arts which contribute to subsistence, and to the accumulation of property, in producing correspondent improvements or alterations in law and government. This important branch of his labours he also intended to give to the public; but this intention, which is mentioned in the conclusion of the *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, he did not live to fulfil.

'In the last part of his lectures, he examined those political regulations which are founded, not upon the principle of justice, but that of expediency, and which are calculated to increase the riches, the power, and the prosperity of a State. Under this view, he considered the political institutions relating to commerce, to finances, to ecclesiastical and military establishments. What he delivered on these subjects contained the substance of the work he afterwards published under the title of *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*.

'There was no situation in which the abilities of Mr Smith appeared to greater advantage than as a Professor. In delivering his lectures, he trusted almost entirely to extemporary elocution. His manner, though not graceful, was plain and unaffected; and, as he seemed to be always interested in the subject, he never failed to interest his hearers. Each discourse consisted commonly of several distinct propositions, which he successively endeavoured to prove and illustrate. These propositions, when announced in general terms, had, from their extent, not unfrequently something of the air of a paradox. In his attempts to explain them, he often appeared, at first, not to be sufficiently possessed of the subject, and spoke with some hesitation. As he advanced, however, the matter seemed to crowd upon him, his manner became warm and animated, and his expression easy and fluent. In points susceptible of controversy, you could easily discern, that he secretly conceived an opposition to his opinions, and that he was led upon this account to support them with greater energy and vehemence. By the fulness and variety of his illustrations, the subject gradually swelled in his

hands, and acquired a dimension which, without a tedious repetition of the same views, was calculated to seize the attention of his audience, and to afford them pleasure, as well as instruction, in following the same object, through all the diversity of shades and aspects in which it was presented, and afterwards in tracing it backwards to that original proposition or general truth from which this beautiful train of speculation had proceeded.

‘His reputation as a Professor was accordingly raised very high, and a multitude of students from a great distance resorted to the University, merely upon his account. Those branches of science which he taught became fashionable at this place, and his opinions were the chief topics of discussion in clubs and literary societies. Even the small peculiarities in his pronunciation or manner of speaking, became frequently the objects of imitation.’ While Mr Smith was thus distinguishing himself by his zeal and ability as a public teacher, he was gradually laying the foundation of a more extensive reputation, by preparing for the press his system of morals. The first edition of this work appeared in 1759, under the title of *‘The Theory of Moral Sentiments.’*

Hitherto Mr Smith had remained unknown to the world as an author; nor have I heard that he had made a trial of his powers in any anonymous publications, excepting in a periodical work called *The Edinburgh Review*, which was begun in the year 1755, by some gentlemen of distinguished abilities, but which they were prevented by other engagements from carrying farther than the two first numbers. To this work Mr Smith contributed a review of *Dr Johnson’s Dictionary of the English Language*, and also a letter, addressed to the editors, containing some general observations on the state of literature in the different countries of Europe. In the former of these papers, he points out some defects in Dr Johnson’s plan, which he censures as not sufficiently grammatical. ‘The different significations of a word (he observes) are indeed collected; but they are seldom digested into general classes, or ranged under the meaning which the word principally expresses: And sufficient care is not taken to distinguish the words apparently synonymous.’ To illustrate this criticism, he copies from Dr Johnson the articles BUT and HUMOUR, and opposes to them the same articles digested agreeably to his own idea. The various significations of the word BUT are very nicely and happily discriminated. The other article does not seem to have been executed with equal care.

The observations on the state of learning in Europe are written with ingenuity and elegance; but are chiefly interesting, as they shew the attention which the Author had given to the philosophy and literature of the Continent, at a period when they were not much studied in this island.

In the same volume with the *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, Mr Smith published a Dissertation ‘on the Origin of Languages, and on the different Genius of those which are original and compounded.’ The remarks I have to offer on these two discourses, I shall, for the sake of distinctness, make the subject of a separate section.

SECTION II

Of the Theory of Moral Sentiments, and the Dissertation on the Origin of Languages

The science of Ethics has been divided by modern writers into two parts; the one comprehending the theory of Morals, and the other its practical doctrines. The questions about which the former is employed, are chiefly the two following. First, By what principle of our constitution are we led to form the notion of moral distinctions; whether by that faculty which, in the other branches of human knowledge, perceives the distinction between truth and falsehood; or by a peculiar power of perception (called by some the Moral Sense) which is pleased with one set of qualities, and displeased with another? Secondly, What is the proper object of moral approbation? or, in other words, What is the common quality or qualities belonging to all the different modes of virtue? Is it benevolence; or a rational self-love; or a disposition (resulting from the ascendant of Reason over Passion) to act suitably to the different relations in which we are placed? These two questions seem to exhaust the whole theory of Morals. The scope of the one is to ascertain the origin of our moral ideas; that of the other, to refer the phenomena of moral perception to their most simple and general laws.

The practical doctrines of morality comprehend all those rules of conduct which profess to point out the proper ends of human pursuit, and the most effectual means of attaining them; to which we may add all those literary compositions, whatever be their particular form, which have for their aim to fortify and animate our good dispositions, by delineations of the beauty, of the dignity, or of the utility of Virtue.

I shall not inquire at present into the justness of this division. I shall only observe, that the words Theory and Practice are not, in this instance, employed in their usual acceptations. The theory of Morals does not bear, for example, the same relation to the practice of Morals, that the theory of Geometry bears to practical Geometry. In this last science, all the practical rules are founded on theoretical principles previously established: But in the former science, the practical rules are obvious to the capacities of all mankind; the theoretical principles form one of the most difficult subjects of discussion that have ever exercised the ingenuity of metaphysicians.

In illustrating the doctrines of practical morality, (if we make allowance for some unfortunate prejudices produced or encouraged by violent and oppressive systems of policy), the ancients seem to have availed themselves of every light furnished by nature to human reason; and indeed those writers who, in later times, have treated the subject with the greatest success, are they who have followed most closely the footsteps of the Greek and the Roman philosophers. The theoretical question, too, concerning the essence of virtue, or the proper object of moral approbation, was a favourite topic of discussion in the ancient schools. The question concerning the principle of moral approbation, though not entirely of modern origin, has been chiefly agitated since the writings of Dr Cudworth, in opposition to those of Mr Hobbes; and it is this question accordingly (recommended at once by its novelty and difficulty to the curiosity of speculative men), that has produced most of the theories which characterize and distinguish from each other the later systems of moral philosophy.

It was the opinion of Dr Cudworth, and also of Dr Clarke, that moral distinctions are perceived by that power of the mind, which distinguishes truth from falsehood. This system it was one great object of Dr Hutcheson's philosophy to refute, and in opposition to it, to show that the words Right and Wrong express certain agreeable and disagreeable qualities in actions, which it is not the province of reason but of feeling to perceive; and to that power of perception which renders us susceptible of pleasure or of pain from the view of virtue or of vice, he gave the name of the Moral Sense. His reasonings upon this subject are in the main acquiesced in, both by Mr Hume and Mr Smith; but they differ from him in one important particular, — Dr Hutcheson plainly supposing, that the moral sense is a simple principle of our constitution, of which no account can be given; whereas the other two philosophers have both attempted to analyze it into other principles more general. Their systems, however, with respect to it are very different from each other. According to Mr Hume, all the qualities which are denominated virtuous, are useful either to ourselves or to others, and the pleasure which we derive from the view of them is the pleasure of utility. Mr Smith, without rejecting entirely Mr Hume's doctrine, proposes another of his own, far more comprehensive; a doctrine with which he thinks all the most celebrated theories of morality invented by his predecessors coincide in part, and from some partial view of which he apprehends that they have all proceeded.

Of this very ingenious and original theory, I shall endeavour to give a short abstract. To those who are familiarly acquainted with it as it is stated by its author, I am aware that the attempt may appear superfluous; but I flatter myself that it will not be wholly useless to such as have not been much conversant in these abstract disquisitions, by presenting to them the leading principles of the system in one connected view, without those interruptions of the attention which necessarily arise from the author's various and happy illustrations, and from the many eloquent digressions which animate and adorn his composition.

The fundamental principle of Mr Smith's theory is, that the primary objects of our moral perceptions are the actions of other men; and that our moral judgments with respect to our own conduct are only applications to ourselves of decisions which we have already passed on the conduct of our neighbour. His work accordingly includes two distinct inquiries, which, although sometimes blended together in the execution of his general design, it is necessary for the reader to discriminate carefully from each other, in order to comprehend all the different bearings of the author's argument. The aim of the former inquiry is, to explain in what manner we learn to judge of the conduct of our neighbour; that of the latter, to shew how, by applying these judgments to ourselves, we acquire a sense of duty, and a feeling of its paramount authority over all our other principles of action.

Our moral judgments, both with respect to our own conduct and that of others, include two distinct perceptions: first, A perception of conduct as right or wrong; and, secondly, A perception of the merit or demerit of the agent. To that quality of conduct which moralists, in general, express by the word Rectitude, Mr Smith gives the name of Propriety; and he begins his theory with inquiring in what it consists, and how we are led to form the idea of it. The leading principles of his doctrine on this subject are comprehended in the following propositions.

1. It is from our own experience alone, that we can form any idea of what passes in the mind of another person on any particular occasion; and the only way in which we can form this idea, is by supposing ourselves in the same circumstances with him, and conceiving how we should be affected if we were so situated. It is impossible for us, however, to conceive ourselves placed in any situation, whether agreeable or otherwise, without feeling an effect of the same kind with what would be produced by the situation itself; and of consequence the attention we give at any time to the circumstances of our neighbour, must affect us somewhat in the same manner, although by no means in the same degree, as if these circumstances were our own.

That this imaginary change of place with other men, is the real source of the interest we take in their fortunes, Mr Smith attempts to prove by various instances. 'When we see a stroke aimed, and just ready to fall upon the leg or arm of another person, we naturally shrink and draw back our own leg or our own arm; and when it does fall, we feel it in some measure, and are hurt by it as well as the sufferer. The mob, when they are gazing at a dancer on the slackrope, naturally writhe and twist and balance their own bodies, as they see him do, and as they feel that they themselves must do if in his situation.' The same thing takes place, according to Mr Smith, in every case in which our attention is turned to the condition of our neighbour. 'Whatever is the passion which arises from any object in the person principally concerned, an analogous emotion springs up, at the thought of his situation, in the breast of every attentive spectator. In every passion of which the mind of man is susceptible, the emotions of the bystander always correspond to what, by bringing the case home to himself, he imagines should be the sentiments of the sufferer.'

To this principle of our nature which leads us to enter into the situations of other men, and to partake with them in the passions which these situations have a tendency to excite, Mr Smith gives the name of sympathy or fellow-feeling, which two words he employs as synonymous. Upon some occasions, he acknowledges, that sympathy arises merely from the view of a certain emotion in another person; but in general it arises, not so much from the view of the emotion, as from that of the situation which excites it.

2. A sympathy or fellow-feeling between different persons is always agreeable to both. When I am in a situation which excites any passion, it is pleasant to me to know, that the spectators of my situation enter with me into all its various circumstances, and are affected with them in the same manner as I am myself. On the other hand, it is pleasant to the spectator to observe this correspondence of his emotions with mine.
3. When the spectator of another man's situation, upon bringing home to himself all its various circumstances, feels himself affected in the same manner with the person principally concerned, he approves of the affection or passion of this person as just and proper, and suitable to its object. The exceptions which occur to this observation are, according to Mr Smith, only apparent. 'A stranger, for example, passes by us in the street with all the marks of the deepest affliction: and we are immediately told, that he has just

received the news of the death of his father. It is impossible that, in this case, we should not approve of his grief; yet it may often happen, without any defect of humanity on our part, that, so far from entering into the violence of his sorrow, we should scarce conceive the first movements of concern upon his account. We have learned, however, from experience, that such a misfortune naturally excites such a degree of sorrow; and we know, that if we took time to examine his situation fully, and in all its parts, we should, without doubt, most sincerely sympathize with him. It is upon the consciousness of this conditional sympathy that our approbation of his sorrow is founded, even in those cases in which that sympathy does not actually take place; and the general rules derived from our preceding experience of what our sentiments would commonly correspond with, correct upon this, as upon many other occasions, the impropriety of our present emotions.'

By the propriety therefore of any affection or passion exhibited by another person, is to be understood its suitableness to the object which excites it. Of this suitableness I can judge only from the coincidence of the affection with that which I feel, when I conceive myself in the same circumstances; and the perception of this coincidence is the foundation of the sentiment of moral approbation.

4. Although, when we attend to the situation of another person, and conceive ourselves to be placed in his circumstances, an emotion of the same kind with that which he feels naturally arises in our own mind, yet this sympathetic emotion bears but a very small proportion, in point of degree, to what is felt by the person principally concerned. In order, therefore, to obtain the pleasure of mutual sympathy, nature teaches the spectator to strive, as much as he can, to raise his emotion to a level with that which the object would really produce: and, on the other hand, she teaches the person whose passion this object has excited, to bring it down, as much as he can, to a level with that of the spectator.
5. Upon these two different efforts are founded two different sets of virtues. Upon the effort of the spectator to enter into the situation of the person principally concerned, and to raise his sympathetic emotions to a level with the emotions of the actor, are founded the gentle, the amiable virtues; the virtues of candid condescension and indulgent humanity. Upon the effort of the person principally concerned to lower his own emotions, so as to correspond as nearly as possible with those of the spectator, are founded the great, the awful, and respectable virtues; the virtues of self-denial, of self-government, of that command of the passions, which subjects all the movements of our nature to what our own dignity and honour, and the propriety of our own conduct, require.

As a farther illustration of the foregoing doctrine, Mr Smith considers particularly the degrees of the different passions which are consistent with propriety, and endeavours to shew, that, in every case, it is decent or indecent to express a passion strongly, according as mankind are disposed, or not disposed to sympathize with it. It is unbecoming, for example, to express strongly any of those passions which arise from a certain condition of the

body; because other men, who are not in the same condition, cannot be expected to sympathize with them. It is unbecoming to cry out with bodily pain; because the sympathy felt by the spectator bears no proportion to the acuteness of what is felt by the sufferer. The case is somewhat similar with those passions which take their origin from a particular turn or habit of the imagination.

In the case of the unsocial passions of hatred and resentment, the sympathy of the spectator is divided between the person who feels the passion, and the person who is the object of it. 'We are concerned for both, and our fear for what the one may suffer damps our resentment for what the other has suffered.' Hence the imperfect degree in which we sympathize with such passions; and the propriety, when we are under their influence, of moderating their expression to a much greater degree than is required in the case of any other emotions.

The reverse of this takes place with respect to all the social and benevolent affections. The sympathy of the spectator with the person who feels them, coincides with his concern for the person who is the object of them. It is this redoubled sympathy which renders these affections so peculiarly becoming and agreeable.

The selfish emotions of grief and joy, when they are conceived on account of our own private good or bad fortune, hold a sort of middle place between our social and our unsocial passions. They are never so graceful as the one set, nor so odious as the other. Even when excessive, they are never so disagreeable as excessive resentment; because no opposite sympathy can ever interest us against them: and when most suitable to their objects, they are never so agreeable as impartial humanity and just benevolence; because no double sympathy can ever interest us for them.

After these general speculations concerning the propriety of actions, Mr Smith examines how far the judgments of mankind concerning it are liable to be influenced, in particular cases, by the prosperous or the adverse circumstances of the agent. The scope of his reasoning on this subject is directed to shew (in opposition to the common opinion), that when there is no envy in the case, our propensity to sympathize with joy is much stronger than our propensity to sympathize with sorrow; and, of consequence, that it is more easy to obtain the approbation of mankind in prosperity than in adversity. From the same principle he traces the origin of ambition, or of the desire of rank and pre-eminence; the great object of which passion is, to attain that situation which sets a man most in the view of general sympathy and attention, and gives him an easy empire over the affections of others.

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Having finished the analysis of our sense of propriety and of impropriety, Mr Smith proceeds to consider our sense of merit and demerit; which he thinks has also a reference, in the first instance, not to our own characters, but to the characters of our neighbours. In explaining the origin of this part of our moral

constitution, he avails himself of the same principle of sympathy, into which he resolves the sentiment of moral approbation.

The words propriety and impropriety, when applied to an affection of the mind, are used in this theory (as has been already observed) to express the suitability or unsuitableness of the affection to its exciting cause. The words merit and demerit have always a reference (according to Mr Smith) to the effect which the affection tends to produce. When the tendency of an affection is beneficial, the agent appears to us a proper object of reward; when it is hurtful, he appears the proper object of punishment.

The principles in our nature which most directly prompt us to reward and to punish, are gratitude and resentment. To say of a person, therefore, that he is deserving of reward or of punishment, is to say, in other words, that he is a proper object of gratitude or of resentment; or, which amounts to the same thing, that he is to some person or persons the object of a gratitude or of a resentment, which every reasonable man is ready to adopt and sympathize with.

It is however very necessary to observe, that we do not thoroughly sympathize with the gratitude of one man towards another, merely because this other has been the cause of his good fortune, unless he has been the cause of it from motives which we entirely go along with. Our sense, therefore, of the good desert of an action, is a compounded sentiment, made up of an indirect sympathy with the person to whom the action is beneficial, and of a direct sympathy with the affections and motives of the agent. The same remark applies, *mutatis mutandis*, to our sense of demerit, or of ill-desert.

From these principles, it is inferred, that the only actions which appear to us deserving of reward, are actions of a beneficial tendency, proceeding from proper motives; the only actions which seem to deserve punishment, are actions of a hurtful tendency, proceeding from improper motives. A mere want of beneficence exposes to no punishment; because the mere want of beneficence tends to do no real positive evil. A man, on the other hand, who is barely innocent, and contents himself with observing strictly the laws of justice with respect to others, can merit only, that his neighbours, in their turn, should observe religiously the same laws with respect to him.

These observations lead Mr Smith to anticipate a little the subject of the second great division of his work, by a short inquiry into the origin of our sense of justice, as applicable to our own conduct; and also of our sentiments of remorse, and of good desert.

The origin of our sense of justice, as well as of all our other moral sentiments, he accounts for by means of the principle of sympathy. When I attend only to the feelings of my own breast, my own happiness appears to me of far greater consequence than that of all the world besides. But I am conscious, that, in this excessive preference, other men cannot possibly sympathize with me, and that to them I appear only one of the crowd, in whom they are no more interested than in any other individual. If I wish, therefore, to secure their sympathy and approbation (which, according to Mr Smith, are the objects of the strongest desire of my nature), it is necessary for me to regard my happiness, not in that light in

which it appears to myself, but in that light in which it appears to mankind in general. If an unprovoked injury is offered to me, I know that society will sympathize with my resentment; but if I injure the interests of another, who never injured me, merely because they stand in the way of my own, I perceive evidently, that society will sympathize with his resentment, and that I shall become the object of general indignation.

When, upon any occasion, I am led by the violence of passion to overlook these considerations, and, in the case of a competition of interests, to act according to my own feelings, and not according to those of impartial spectators, I never fail to incur the punishment of remorse. When my passion is gratified, and I begin to reflect coolly on my conduct, I can no longer enter into the motives from which it proceeded; it appears as improper to me as to the rest of the world; I lament the effects it has produced; I pity the unhappy sufferer whom I have injured; and I feel myself a just object of indignation to mankind. 'Such,' says Mr Smith, 'is the nature of that sentiment which is properly called remorse. It is made up of shame from the sense of the impropriety of past conduct; of grief for the effects of it; of pity for those who suffer by it; and of the dread and terror of punishment from the consciousness of the justly provoked resentment of all rational creatures.'

The opposite behaviour of him who, from proper motives, has performed a generous action, inspires, in a similar manner, the opposite sentiment of conscious merit, or of deserved reward.

The foregoing observations contain a general summary of Mr Smith's principles with respect to the origin of our moral sentiments, in so far at least as they relate to the conduct of others. He acknowledges, at the same time, that the sentiments of which we are conscious, on particular occasions, do not always coincide with these principles; and that they are frequently modified by other considerations, very different from the propriety or impropriety of the affections of the agent, and also from the beneficial or hurtful tendency of these affections. The good or the bad consequences which accidentally follow from an action, and which, as they do not depend on the agent, ought undoubtedly, in point of justice, to have no influence on our opinion, either of the propriety or the merit of his conduct, scarcely ever fail to influence considerably our judgment with respect to both; by leading us to form a good or a bad opinion of the prudence with which the action was performed, and by animating our sense of the merit or demerit of his design. These facts, however, do not furnish any objections which are peculiarly applicable to Mr Smith's theory; for whatever hypothesis we may adopt with respect to the origin of our moral perceptions, all men must acknowledge, that, in so far as the prosperous or the unprosperous event of an action depends on fortune or on accident, it ought neither to increase nor to diminish our moral approbation or disapprobation of the agent. And accordingly it has, in all ages of the world, been the complaint of moralists, that the actual sentiments of mankind should so often be in opposition to this equitable and indisputable maxim. In examining, therefore, this irregularity of our moral sentiments, Mr Smith is to be considered, not as obviating an objection peculiar to his own system, but as removing a difficulty which is equally connected with every theory on the subject which has ever been proposed. So far as I know, he is the first philosopher who has been fully aware of the importance of the difficulty, and he has indeed treated it with great ability and success. The explanation which he

gives of it is not warped in the least by any peculiarity in his own scheme; and, I must own, it appears to me to be the most solid and valuable improvement he has made in this branch of science. It is impossible to give any abstract of it in a sketch of this kind; and therefore I must content myself with remarking, that it consists of three parts. The first explains the causes of this irregularity of sentiment; the second, the extent of its influence; and the third, the important purposes to which it is subservient. His remarks on the last of these heads are more particularly ingenious and pleasing; as their object is to shew, in opposition to what we should be disposed at first to apprehend, that when nature implanted the seeds of this irregularity in the human breast, her leading intention was, to promote the happiness and perfection of the species.

The remaining part of Mr Smith's theory is employed in shewing, in what manner our sense of duty comes to be formed, in consequence of an application to ourselves of the judgments we have previously passed on the conduct of others.

In entering upon this inquiry, which is undoubtedly the most important in the work, and for which the foregoing speculations are, according to Mr Smith's theory, a necessary preparation, he begins with stating the fact concerning our consciousness of merited praise or blame; and it must be owned, that the first aspect of the fact, as he himself states it, appears not very favourable to his principles. That the great object of a wise and virtuous man is not to act in such a manner as to obtain the actual approbation of those around him, but to act so as to render himself the just and proper object of their approbation, and that his satisfaction with his own conduct depends much more on the consciousness of deserving this approbation than from that of really enjoying it, he candidly acknowledges; but still he insists, that although this may seem, at first view, to intimate the existence of some moral faculty which is not borrowed from without, our moral sentiments have always some secret reference, either to what are, or to what upon a certain condition would be, or to what we imagine ought to be, the sentiments of others; and that if it were possible, that a human creature could grow up to manhood without any communication with his own species, he could no more think of his own character, or of the propriety or demerit of his own sentiments and conduct, than of the beauty or deformity of his own face. There is indeed a tribunal within the breast, which is the supreme arbiter of all our actions, and which often mortifies us amidst the applause, and supports us under the censure of the world; yet still, he contends, that if we inquire into the origin of its institution, we shall find, that its jurisdiction is, in a great measure, derived from the authority of that very tribunal whose decisions it so often and so justly reverses.

When we first come into the world, we, for some time, fondly pursue the impossible project of gaining the good-will and approbation of everybody. We soon however find, that this universal approbation is unattainable; that the most equitable conduct must frequently thwart the interests or the inclinations of particular persons, who will seldom have candour enough to enter into the propriety of our motives, or to see that this conduct, how disagreeable soever to them, is perfectly suitable to our situation. In order to defend ourselves from such partial judgments, we soon learn to set up in our own minds, a judge

between ourselves and those we live with. We conceive ourselves as acting in the presence of a person, who has no particular relation, either to ourselves, or to those whose interests are affected by our conduct; and we study to act in such a manner as to obtain the approbation of this supposed impartial spectator. It is only by consulting him that we can see whatever relates to ourselves in its proper shape and dimensions.

There are two different occasions, on which we examine our own conduct, and endeavour to view it in the light in which the impartial spectator would view it. First, when we are about to act; and, secondly, after we have acted. In both cases, our views are very apt to be partial.

When we are about to act, the eagerness of passion seldom allows us to consider what we are doing with the candour of an indifferent person. When the action is over, and the passions which prompted it have subsided, although we can undoubtedly enter into the sentiments of the indifferent spectator much more coolly than before, yet it is so disagreeable to us to think ill of ourselves, that we often purposely turn away our view from those circumstances which might render our judgment unfavourable. Hence that self-deceit which is the source of half the disorders of human life.

In order to guard ourselves against its delusions, nature leads us to form insensibly, by our continual observations upon the conduct of others, certain general rules concerning what is fit and proper either to be done or avoided. Some of their actions shock all our natural sentiments; and when we observe other people affected in the same manner with ourselves, we are confirmed in the belief, that our disapprobation was just. We naturally therefore lay it down as a general rule, that all such actions are to be avoided, as tending to render us odious, contemptible, or punishable; and we endeavour, by habitual reflection, to fix this general rule in our minds, in order to correct the misrepresentations of self-love, if we should ever be called on to act in similar circumstances. The man of furious resentment, if he were to listen to the dictates of that passion, would perhaps regard the death of his enemy as but a small compensation for a trifling wrong. But his observations on the conduct of others have taught him how horrible such sanguinary revenges are; and he has impressed it on his mind as an invariable rule, to abstain from them upon all occasions. This rule preserves its authority with him, checks the impetuosity of his passion, and corrects the partial views which self-love suggests; although, if this had been the first time in which he considered such an action, he would undoubtedly have determined it to be just and proper, and what every impartial spectator would approve of. — A regard to such general rules of morality constitutes, according to Mr Smith, what is properly called the sense of duty.

I before hinted, that Mr Smith does not reject entirely from his system that principle of utility, of which the perception in any action or character constitutes, according to Mr Hume, the sentiment of moral approbation. That no qualities of the mind are approved of as virtues, but such as are useful or agreeable, either to the person himself or to others, he admits to be a proposition that holds universally; and he also admits, that the sentiment of approbation with which we regard virtue, is enlivened by the perception of this utility, or, as he explains the fact, it is enlivened by our sympathy with the happiness of those to whom the

utility extends: But still he insists, that it is not the view of this utility which is either the first or principal source of moral approbation.

To sum up the whole of his doctrine in a few words. 'When we approve of any character or action, the sentiments which we feel are derived from four different sources. First, we sympathize with the motives of the agent; secondly, we enter into the gratitude of those who receive the benefit of his actions; thirdly, we observe that his conduct has been agreeable to the general rules by which those two sympathies generally act; and, lastly, when we consider such actions as making a part of a system of behaviour which tends to promote the happiness either of the individual or of society, they appear to derive a beauty from this utility, not unlike that which we ascribe to any well-contrived machine.' These different sentiments, he thinks, exhaust completely, in every instance that can be supposed, the compounded sentiment of moral approbation. 'After deducting, says he, in any one particular case, all that must be acknowledged to proceed from some one or other of these four principles, I should be glad to know what remains; and I shall freely allow this overplus to be ascribed to a moral sense, or to any other peculiar faculty, provided any body will ascertain precisely what this overplus is.'

Mr Smith's opinion concerning the nature of virtue, is involved in his theory concerning the principle of moral approbation. The idea of virtue, he thinks, always implies the idea of propriety, or of the suitableness of the affection to the object which excites it; which suitableness, according to him, can be determined in no other way than by the sympathy of impartial spectators with the motives of the agent. But still he apprehends, that this description of virtue is incomplete; for although in every virtuous action propriety is an essential ingredient, it is not always the sole ingredient. Beneficent actions have in them another quality, by which they appear, not only to deserve approbation, but recompense, and excite a superior degree of esteem, arising from a double sympathy with the motives of the agent, and the gratitude of those who are the objects of his affection. In this respect, beneficence appears to him to be distinguished from the inferior virtues of prudence, vigilance, circumspection, temperance, constancy, firmness, which are always regarded with approbation, but which confer no merit. This distinction, he apprehends, has not been sufficiently attended to by moralists; the principles of some affording no explanation of the approbation we bestow on the inferior virtues; and those of others accounting as imperfectly for the peculiar excellency which the supreme virtue of beneficence is acknowledged to possess. (9*)

Such are the outlines of Mr Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments*; a work which, whatever opinion we may entertain of the justness of its conclusions, must be allowed by all to be a singular effort of invention, ingenuity, and subtilty. For my own part I must confess, that it does not coincide with my notions concerning the foundation of Morals: but I am convinced, at the same time, that it contains a large mixture of important truth, and that, although the author has sometimes been misled by too great a desire of generalizing his principles, he has had the merit of directing the attention of philosophers to a view of human nature which had formerly in a great measure escaped their notice. Of the great proportion of just and sound reasoning which the theory involves its striking plausibility is a sufficient proof; for, as the author himself has remarked, no system in morals can

well gain our assent, if it does not border, in some respects, upon the truth. 'A system of natural philosophy (he observes) may appear very plausible, and be for a long time very generally received in the world, and yet have no foundation in nature; but the author who should assign as the cause of any natural sentiment, some principle which neither had any connection with it, nor resembled any other principle which had some connection, would appear absurd and ridiculous to the most injudicious and inexperienced reader.' The merit, however, of Mr Smith's performance does not rest here. No work, undoubtedly, can be mentioned, ancient or modern, which exhibits so complete a view of those facts with respect to our moral perceptions, which it is one great object of this branch of science to refer to their general laws; and upon this account, it well deserves the careful study of all whose taste leads them to prosecute similar inquiries. These facts are indeed frequently expressed in a language which involves the author's peculiar theories: But they are always presented in the most happy and beautiful lights; and it is easy for an attentive reader, by stripping them of hypothetical terms, to state them to himself with that logical precision, which, in such very difficult disquisitions, can alone conduct us with certainty to the truth.

It is proper to observe farther, that with the theoretical doctrines of the book, there are everywhere interwoven, with singular taste and address, the purest and most elevated maxims concerning the practical conduct of life; and that it abounds throughout with interesting and instructive delineations of characters and manners. A considerable part of it too is employed in collateral inquiries, which, upon every hypothesis that can be formed concerning the foundation of morals, are of equal importance. Of this kind is the speculation formerly mentioned, with respect to the influence of fortune on our moral sentiments, and another speculation, no less valuable, with respect to the influence of custom and fashion on the same part of our constitution.

The style in which Mr Smith has conveyed the fundamental principles on which his theory rests, does not seem to me to be so perfectly suited to the subject as that which he employs on most other occasions. In communicating ideas which are extremely abstract and subtle, and about which it is hardly possible to reason correctly, without the scrupulous use of appropriated terms, he sometimes presents to us a choice of words, by no means strictly synonymous, so as to divert the attention from a precise and steady conception of his proposition: and a similar effect is, in other instances, produced by that diversity of forms which, in the course of his copious and seducing composition, the same truth insensibly assumes. When the subject of his work leads him to address the imagination and the heart, the variety and felicity of his illustrations; the richness and fluency of his eloquence; and the skill with which he wins the attention and commands the passions of his readers, leave him, among our English moralists, without a rival.



The Dissertation on the Origin of Languages, which now forms a part of the same volume with *the Theory of Moral Sentiments*, was, I believe, first annexed to the second edition of that work. It is an essay of great ingenuity, and on which the author himself set a high value; but, in a general review of his publications, it deserves our attention less, on account of the opinions it contains, than as a

specimen of a particular sort of inquiry, which, so far as I know, is entirely of modern origin, and which seems, in a peculiar degree, to have interested Mr Smith's curiosity. (10*) Something very similar to it may be traced in all his different works, whether moral, political, or literary; and on all these subjects he has exemplified it with the happiest success.

When, in such a period of society as that in which we live, we compare our intellectual acquirements, our opinions, manners, and institutions, with those which prevail among rude tribes, it cannot fail to occur to us as an interesting question, by what gradual steps the transition has been made from the first simple efforts of uncultivated nature, to a state of things so wonderfully artificial and complicated. Whence has arisen that systematical beauty which we admire in the structure of a cultivated language; that analogy which runs through the mixture of languages spoken by the most remote and unconnected nations; and those peculiarities by which they are all distinguished from each other? Whence the origin of the different sciences and of the different arts; and by what chain has the mind been led from their first rudiments to their last and most refined improvements? Whence the astonishing fabric of the political union; the fundamental principles which are common to all governments; and the different forms which civilized society has assumed in different ages of the world? On most of these subjects very little information is to be expected from history; for long before that stage of society when men begin to think of recording their transactions, many of the most important steps of their progress have been made. A few insulated facts may perhaps be collected from the casual observations of travellers, who have viewed the arrangements of rude nations; but nothing, it is evident, can be obtained in this way, which approaches to a regular and connected detail of human improvement.

In this want of direct evidence, we are under a necessity of supplying the place of fact by conjecture; and when we are unable to ascertain how men have actually conducted themselves upon particular occasions, of considering in what manner they are likely to have proceeded, from the principles of their nature, and the circumstances of their external situation. In such inquiries, the detached facts which travels and voyages afford us, may frequently serve as land-marks to our speculations; and sometimes our conclusions a priori, may tend to confirm the credibility of facts, which, on a superficial view, appeared to be doubtful or incredible.

Nor are such theoretical views of human affairs subservient merely to the gratification of curiosity. In examining the history of mankind, as well as in examining the phenomena of the material world, when we cannot trace the process by which an event has been produced, it is often of importance to be able to show how it may have been produced by natural causes. Thus, in the instance which has suggested these remarks, although it is impossible to determine with certainty what the steps were by which any particular language was formed, yet if we can shew, from the known principles of human nature, how all its various parts might gradually have arisen, the mind is not only to a certain degree satisfied, but a check is given to that indolent philosophy, which refers to a miracle, whatever appearances, both in the natural and moral worlds, it is unable to explain.

To this species of philosophical investigation, which has no appropriated name in our language, I shall take the liberty of giving the title of Theoretical or Conjectural History; an expression which coincides pretty nearly in its meaning with that of Natural History, as employed by Mr Hume (11*), and with what some French writers have called *Histoire Raisonnée*.

The mathematical sciences, both pure and mixed, afford, in many of their branches, very favourable subjects for theoretical history; and a very competent judge, the late M. d'Alembert, has recommended this arrangement of their elementary principles, which is founded on the natural succession of inventions and discoveries, as the best adapted for interesting the curiosity and exercising the genius of students. The same author points out as a model a passage in Montucla's *History of Mathematics*, where an attempt is made to exhibit the gradual progress of philosophical speculation, from the first conclusions suggested by a general survey of the heavens, to the doctrines of Copernicus. It is somewhat remarkable, that a theoretical history of this very science (in which we have, perhaps, a better opportunity than in any other instance whatever, of comparing the natural advances of the mind with the actual succession of hypothetical systems) was one of Mr Smith's earliest compositions, and is one of the very small number of his manuscripts which he did not destroy before his death.

I already hinted, that inquiries perfectly analogous to these may be applied to the modes of government, and to the municipal institutions which have obtained among different nations. It is but lately, however, that these important subjects have been considered in this point of view; the greater part of politicians before the time of Montesquieu, having contented themselves with an historical statement of facts, and with a vague reference of laws to the wisdom of particular legislators, or to accidental circumstances, which it is now impossible to ascertain. Montesquieu, on the contrary, considered laws as originating chiefly from the circumstances of society; and attempted to account, from the changes in the condition of mankind, which take place in the different stages of their progress, for the corresponding alterations which their institutions undergo. It is thus that, in his occasional elucidations of the Roman jurisprudence, instead of bewildering himself among the erudition of scholiasts and of antiquaries, we frequently find him borrowing his lights from the most remote and unconnected quarters of the globe, and combining the casual observations of illiterate travellers and navigators, into a philosophical commentary on the history of law and of manners.

The advances made in this line of inquiry since Montesquieu's time have been great. Lord Kames, in his *Historical Law Tracts*, has given some excellent specimens of it, particularly in his *Essays on the History of Property and of Criminal Law*, and many ingenious speculations of the same kind occur in the works of Mr Millar.

In Mr Smith's writings, whatever be the nature of his subject, he seldom misses an opportunity of indulging his curiosity, in tracing from the principles of human nature, or from the circumstances of society, the origin of the opinions and the institutions which he describes. I formerly mentioned a fragment concerning the *History of Astronomy* which he has left for publication; and I have

heard him say more than once, that he had projected, in the earlier part of his life, a history of the other sciences on the same plan. In his *Wealth of Nations*, various disquisitions are introduced which have a like object in view, particularly the theoretical delineation he has given of the natural progress of opulence in a country; and his investigation of the causes which have inverted this order in the different countries of modern Europe. His lectures on jurisprudence seem, from the account of them formerly given, to have abounded in such inquiries.

I am informed by the same gentleman who favoured me with the account of Mr Smith's lectures at Glasgow, that he had heard him sometimes hint an intention of writing a treatise upon the Greek and Roman republics. 'And after all that has been published on that subject, I am convinced (says he), that the observations of Mr Smith would have suggested many new and important views concerning the internal and domestic circumstances of those nations, which would have displayed their several systems of policy, in a light much less artificial than that in which they have hitherto appeared.'

The same turn of thinking was frequently, in his social hours, applied to more familiar subjects; and the fanciful theories which, without the least affectation of ingenuity, he was continually starting upon all the common topics of discourse, gave to his conversation a novelty and variety that were quite inexhaustible. Hence too the minuteness and accuracy of his knowledge on many trifling articles, which, in the course of his speculations, he had been led to consider from some new and interesting point of view; and of which his lively and circumstantial descriptions amused his friends the more, that he seemed to be habitually inattentive, in so remarkable a degree, to what was passing around him.

I have been led into these remarks by the *Dissertation on the Formation of Languages*, which exhibits a very beautiful specimen of theoretical history, applied to a subject equally curious and difficult. The analogy between the train of thinking from which it has taken its rise, and that which has suggested a variety of his other disquisitions, will, I hope, be a sufficient apology for the length of this digression; more particularly, as it will enable me to simplify the account which I am to give afterwards, of his inquiries concerning political economy.

I shall only observe farther on this head, that when different theoretical histories are proposed by different writers, of the progress of the human mind in any one line of exertion, these theories are not always to be understood as standing in opposition to each other. If the progress delineated in all of them be plausible, it is possible at least, that they may all have been realized; for human affairs never exhibit, in any two instances, a perfect uniformity. But whether they have been realized or no, is often a question of little consequence. In most cases, it is of more importance to ascertain the progress that is most simple, than the progress that is most agreeable to fact; for, paradoxical as the proposition may appear, it is certainly true, that the real progress is not always the most natural. It may have been determined by particular accidents, which are not likely again to occur, and which cannot be considered as forming any part of that general provision which nature has made for the improvement of the race.



In order to make some amends for the length (I am afraid I may add for the tediousness) of this section, I shall subjoin to it an original letter of Mr Hume's addressed to Mr Smith, soon after the publication of his Theory. It is strongly marked with that easy and affectionate pleasantry which distinguished Mr Hume's epistolary correspondence, and is entitled to a place in this Memoir, on account of its connection with an important event of Mr Smith's life, which soon after removed him into a new scene, and influenced, to a considerable degree, the subsequent course of his studies.

The letter is dated from *London, 12th April 1759.*

'I give you thanks for the agreeable present of your Theory. Wedderburn and I made presents of our copies to such of our acquaintances as we thought good judges, and proper to spread the reputation of the book. I sent one to the Duke of Argyll, to Lord Lyttleton, Horace Walpole, Soame Jennyns, and Burke, an Irish gentleman, who wrote lately a very pretty treatise on the Sublime. Millar desired my permission to send one in your name to Dr Warburton. I have delayed writing to you till I could tell you something of the success of the book, and could prognosticate with some probability, whether it should be finally damned to oblivion, or should be registered in the temple of immortality. Though it has been published only a few weeks, I think there appear already such strong symptoms, that I can almost venture to foretel its fate. It is in short this — But I have been interrupted in my letter by a foolish impertinent visit of one who has lately come from Scotland. He tells me that the University of Glasgow intend to declare Rouet's office vacant, upon his going abroad with Lord Hope. I question not but you will have our friend Ferguson in your eye, in case another project for procuring him a place in the University of Edinburgh should fail. Ferguson has very much polished and improved his treatise on Refinement(12*), and with some amendments it will make an admirable book, and discovers an elegant and a singular genius. The Epigoniad, I hope, will do; but it is somewhat up-hill work. As I doubt not but you consult the reviews sometimes at present, you will see in the Critical Review a letter upon that poem; and I desire you to employ your conjectures in finding out the author. Let me see a sample of your skill in knowing hands by your guessing at the person. I am afraid of Lord Kames's *Law Tracts*. A man might as well think of making a fine sauce by a mixture of wormwood and aloes, as an agreeable composition by joining metaphysics and Scotch law. However, the book, I believe, has merit; though few people will take the pains of diving into it. But, to return to your book, and its success in this town, I must tell you — . A plague of interruptions! I ordered myself to be denied; and yet here is one that has broke in upon me again. He is a man of letters, and we have had a good deal of literary conversation. You told me that you was curious of literary anecdotes, and therefore I shall inform you of a few that have come to my knowledge. I

believe I have mentioned to you already Helvetius's book *de l'Esprit*. It is worth your reading, not for its philosophy, which I do not highly value, but for its agreeable composition. I had a letter from him a few days ago, wherein he tells me that my name was much oftener in the manuscript, but that the Censor of books at Paris obliged him to strike it out. Voltaire has lately published a small work called *Candide, ou l'Optimisme*. I shall give you a detail of it ———

But what is all this to my book? say you.—My dear Mr Smith, have patience: Compose yourself to tranquillity: Shew yourself a philosopher in practice as well as profession: Think on the emptiness, and rashness, and futility of the common judgments of men: How little they are regulated by reason in any subject, much more in philosophical subjects, which so far exceed the comprehension of the vulgar.

——— *Non si quid turbida Roma, Elevet, accedas: examenve improbum in illa Castiges trutina: nec te quaesiveris extra.*

A wise man's kingdom is his own breast; or, if he ever looks farther, it will only be to the judgment of a select few, who are free from prejudices, and capable of examining his work. Nothing indeed can be a stronger presumption of falsehood than the approbation of the multitude; and Phocion, you know, always suspected himself of some blunder, when he was attended with the applauses of the populace.

'Supposing, therefore, that you have duly prepared yourself for the worst by all these reflections, I proceed to tell you the melancholy news, that your book has been very unfortunate; for the public seem disposed to applaud it extremely. It was looked for by the foolish people with some impatience; and the mob of literati are beginning already to be very loud in its praises. Three Bishops called yesterday at Millar's shop in order to buy copies, and to ask questions about the author. The Bishop of Peterborough said he had passed the evening in a company where he heard it extolled above all books in the world. The Duke of Argyll is more decisive than he uses to be in its favour. I suppose he either considers it as an exotic, or thinks the author will be serviceable to him in the Glasgow elections. Lord Lyttleton says, that Robertson and Smith and Bowver are the glories of English literature. Oswald protests he does not know whether he has reaped more instruction or entertainment from it. But you may easily judge what reliance can be put on his judgment who has been engaged all his life in public business, and who never sees any faults in his friends. Millar exults and brags that two-thirds of the edition are already sold, and that he is now sure of success. You see what a son of the earth that is, to value books only by the profit they bring him. In that view, I believe it may prove a very good book.

'Charles Townsend, who passes for the cleverest fellow in England, is so taken with the performance, that he said to Oswald he would put the Duke of Buccleuch under the author's care, and would make it worth his while to accept of that charge. As soon as I heard this I called on him twice, with a view of talking with him about the matter, and of convincing him of the propriety of sending that young Nobleman to Glasgow: For I could not hope, that he could offer you any terms which would tempt you to renounce your Professorship. But I missed him. Mr Townsend passes for being a little uncertain in his resolutions: so perhaps you need not build much on this sally.

'In recompence for so many mortifying things, which nothing but truth could have extorted from me, and which I could easily have multiplied to a greater number, I doubt not but you are so good a Christian as to return good for evil; and to flatter my vanity by telling me, that all the godly in Scotland abuse me for my account of John Knox and the Reformation. I suppose you are glad to see my paper end, and that I am obliged to conclude with

Your humble servant,

DAVID HUME.'

SECTION III

From the Publication of the Theory of Moral Sentiments, til that of the Wealth of Nations

After the publication of the *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, Mr Smith remained four years at Glasgow, discharging his official duties with unabated vigour, and with increasing reputation. During that time, the plan of his lectures underwent a considerable change. His ethical doctrines, of which he had now published so valuable a part, occupied a much smaller portion of the course than formerly: and accordingly, his attention was naturally directed to a more complete illustration of the principles of jurisprudence and of political economy.

To this last subject, his thoughts appear to have been occasionally turned from a very early period of life. It is probable, that the uninterrupted friendship he had always maintained with his old companion Mr Oswald, had some tendency to encourage him in prosecuting this branch of his studies; and the publication of Mr Hume's political discourses, in the year 1752, could not fail to confirm him in those liberal views of commercial policy which had already opened to him in the course of his own inquiries. His long residence in one of the most enlightened mercantile towns in this island, and the habits of intimacy in which he lived with the most respectable of its inhabitants, afforded him an opportunity of deriving what commercial information he stood in need of, from the best sources; and it is a circumstance no less honourable to their liberality than to his talents, that notwithstanding the reluctance so common among men of business to listen to the conclusions of mere speculation, and the direct opposition of his leading principles to all the old maxims of trade, he was able, before he quitted his situation in the university, to rank some very eminent merchants in the number of his proselytes.(13*)

Among the students who attended his lectures, and whose minds were not previously warped by prejudice, the progress of his opinions, it may be reasonably supposed, was much more rapid. It was this class of his friends accordingly that first adopted his system with eagerness, and diffused a knowledge of its fundamental principles over this part of the kingdom.

Towards the end of 1763, Mr Smith received an invitation from Mr Charles Townsend to accompany the Duke of Buccleuch on his travels; and the liberal terms in which the proposal was made to him, added to the strong desire he had felt of visiting the Continent of Europe, induced him to resign his office at Glasgow. With the connection which he was led to form in consequence of this change in his situation, he had reason to be satisfied in an uncommon degree, and he always spoke of it with pleasure and gratitude. To the public, it was not perhaps a change equally fortunate; as it interrupted that studious leisure for which nature seems to have destined him, and in which alone he could have hoped to accomplish those literary projects which had flattered the ambition of his youthful genius.

The alteration, however, which, from this period, took place in his habits, was not without its advantages. He had hitherto lived chiefly within the walls of an university; and although to a mind like his, the observation of human nature on the smallest scale is sufficient to convey a tolerably just conception of what

passes on the great theatre of the world, yet it is not to be doubted, that the variety of scenes through which he afterwards passed, must have enriched his mind with many new ideas, and corrected many of those misapprehensions of life and manners which the best descriptions of them can scarcely fail to convey. But whatever were the lights that his travels afforded to him as a student of human nature, they were probably useful in a still greater degree, in enabling him to perfect that system of political economy, of which he had already delivered the principles in his lectures at Glasgow, and which it was now the leading object of his studies to prepare for the public. The coincidence between some of these principles and the distinguishing tenets of the French economists, who were at that very time in the height of their reputation, and the intimacy in which he lived with some of the leaders of that sect, could not fail to assist him in methodizing and digesting his speculations; while the valuable collection of facts, accumulated by the zealous industry of their numerous adherents, furnished him with ample materials for illustrating and confirming his theoretical conclusions.

After leaving Glasgow, Mr Smith joined the Duke of Buccleuch at London early in the year 1764, and set out with him for the continent in the month of March following. At Dover they were met by Sir James Macdonald, who accompanied them to Paris, and with whom Mr Smith laid the foundation of a friendship, which he always mentioned with great sensibility, and of which he often lamented the short duration. The panegyrics with which the memory of this accomplished and amiable person has been honoured by so many distinguished characters in the different countries of Europe, are a proof how well fitted his talents were to command general admiration. The esteem in which his abilities and learning were held by Mr Smith, is a testimony to his extraordinary merit of still superior value. Mr Hume, too, seems, in this instance, to have partaken of his friend's enthusiasm. 'Were you and I together (says he in a letter to Mr Smith), we should shed tears at present for the death of poor Sir James Macdonald. We could not possibly have suffered a greater loss than in that valuable young man.'

In this first visit to Paris, the Duke of Buccleuch and Mr Smith employed only ten or twelve days, (14*) after which they proceeded to Thoulouse, where they fixed their residence for eighteen months; and where, in addition to the pleasure of an agreeable society, Mr Smith had an opportunity of correcting and extending his information concerning the internal policy of France, by the intimacy in which he lived with some of the principal persons of the Parliament.

From Thoulouse they went, by a pretty extensive tour, through the south of France to Geneva. Here they passed two months. The late Earl Stanhope, for whose learning and worth Mr Smith entertained a sincere respect, was then an inhabitant of that republic.

About Christmas 1765, they returned to Paris, and remained there till October following. The society in which Mr Smith spent these ten months, may be conceived from the advantages he enjoyed, in consequence of the recommendations of Mr Hume. Turgot, Quesnai, Morellet, (15*) Necker, d'Alembert, Helvetius, Marmontel, Madame Riccoboni, were among the number of his acquaintances; and some of them he continued ever afterwards to reckon

among his friends. From Madam d'Anville, the respectable mother of the late excellent and much lamented Duke of la Rochefoucauld, (16*) he received many attentions, which he always recollected with particular gratitude.

It is much to be regretted, that he preserved no journal of this very interesting period of his history; and such was his aversion to write letters, that I scarcely suppose any memorial of it exists in his correspondence with his friends. The extent and accuracy of his memory, in which he was equalled by few, made it of little consequence to himself to record in writing what he heard or saw; and from his anxiety before his death to destroy all the papers in his possession, he seems to have wished, that no materials should remain for his biographers, but what were furnished by the lasting monuments of his genius, and the exemplary worth of his private life.

The satisfaction he enjoyed in the conversation of Turgot may be easily imagined. Their opinions on the most essential points of political economy were the same; and they were both animated by the same zeal for the best interests of mankind. The favourite studies, too, of both, had directed their inquiries to subjects on which the understandings of the ablest and the best informed are liable to be warped, to a great degree, by prejudice and passion; and on which, of consequence, a coincidence of judgment is peculiarly gratifying. We are told by one of the biographers of Turgot, that after his retreat from the ministry, he occupied his leisure in a philosophical correspondence with some of his old friends; and, in particular, that various letters on important subjects passed between him and Mr Smith. I take notice of this anecdote chiefly as a proof of the intimacy which was understood to have subsisted between them; for in other respects, the anecdote seems to me to be somewhat doubtful. It is scarcely to be supposed, that Mr Smith would destroy the letters of such a correspondent as Turgot; and still less probable, that such an intercourse was carried on between them without the knowledge of any of Mr Smith's friends. From some inquiries that have been made at Paris by a gentleman of this Society since Mr Smith's death, I have reason to believe, that no evidence of the correspondence exists among the papers of M. Turgot, and that the whole story has taken its rise from a report suggested by the knowledge of their former intimacy. This circumstance I think it of importance to mention, because a good deal of curiosity has been excited by the passage in question, with respect to the fate of the supposed letters.

Mr Smith was also well known to M. Quesnai, the profound and original author of the *Economical Table*; a man (according to Mr Smith's account of him) 'of the greatest modesty and simplicity;' and whose system of political economy he has pronounced, 'with all its imperfections,' to be 'the nearest approximation to the truth that has yet been published on the principles of that very important science.' If he had not been prevented by Quesnai's death, Mr Smith had once an intention (as he told me himself) to have inscribed to him his '*Wealth of Nations*.' It was not, however, merely the distinguished men who about this period fixed so splendid an aera in the literary history of France, that excited Mr Smith's curiosity while he remained in Paris. His acquaintance with the polite literature both of ancient and modern times was extensive; and amidst his various other occupations, he had never neglected to cultivate a taste for the fine arts; — less, it is probable, with a view to the peculiar enjoyments they convey, (though he was

by no means without sensibility to their beauties,) than on account of their connection with the general principles of the human mind; to an examination of which they afford the most pleasing of all avenues. To those who speculate on this very delicate subject, a comparison of the modes of taste that prevail among different nations, affords a valuable collection of facts; and Mr Smith, who was always disposed to ascribe to custom and fashion their full share in regulating the opinions of mankind with respect to beauty, may naturally be supposed to have availed himself of every opportunity which a foreign country afforded him of illustrating his former theories.

Some of his peculiar notions, too, with respect to the imitative arts, seem to have been much confirmed by his observations while abroad. In accounting for the pleasure we receive from these arts, it had early occurred to him as a fundamental principle, that a very great part of it arises from the difficulty of the imitation; a principle which was probably suggested to him by that of the *difficulté surmontée*, by which some French critics had attempted to explain the effect of versification and of rhyme (17*). This principle Mr Smith pushed to the greatest possible length, and referred to it, with singular ingenuity, a great variety of phenomena in all the different fine arts. It led him, however, to some conclusions, which appear, at first view at least, not a little paradoxical; and I cannot help thinking, that it warped his judgment in many of the opinions which he was accustomed to give on the subject of poetry.

The principles of dramatic composition had more particularly attracted his attention; and the history of the theatre, both in ancient and modern times, had furnished him with some of the most remarkable facts on which his theory of the imitative arts was founded. From this theory it seemed to follow as a consequence, that the same circumstances which, in tragedy, give to blank verse an advantage over prose, should give to rhyme an advantage over blank verse; and Mr Smith had always inclined to that opinion. Nay, he had gone so far as to extend the same doctrine to comedy; and to regret that those excellent pictures of life and manners which the English stage affords, had not been executed after the model of the French school. The admiration with which he regarded the great dramatic authors of France tended to confirm him in these opinions; and this admiration (resulting originally from the general character of his taste, which delighted more to remark that pliancy of genius which accommodates itself to established rules, than to wonder at the bolder flights of an undisciplined imagination) was increased to a great degree, when he saw the beauties that had struck him in the closet, heightened by the utmost perfection of theatrical exhibition. In the last years of his life, he sometimes amused himself, at a leisure hour, in supporting his theoretical conclusions on these subjects, by the facts which his subsequent studies and observations had suggested; and he intended, if he had lived, to have prepared the result of these labours for the press. Of this work he has left for publication a short fragment; but he had not proceeded far enough to apply his doctrine to versification and to the theatre. As his notions, however, with respect to these were a favourite topic of his conversation, and were intimately connected with his general principles of criticism, it would have been improper to pass them over in this sketch of his life; and I even thought it proper to detail them at greater length than the comparative importance of the subject would have justified, if he had carried his plans into execution. Whether his love of system, added to his partiality for the French drama, may not have led

him, in this instance, to generalize a little too much his conclusions, and to overlook some peculiarities in the language and versification of that country, I shall not take upon me to determine.

In October 1766, the Duke of Buccleuch returned to London. His Grace, to whom I am indebted for several particulars in the foregoing narrative, will, I hope, forgive the liberty I take in transcribing one paragraph in his own words: 'In October 1766, we returned to London, after having spent near three years together, without the slightest disagreement or coolness; on my part with every advantage that could be expected from the society of such a man. We continued to live in friendship till the hour of his death; and I shall always remain with the impression of having lost a friend whom I loved and respected, not only for his great talents, but for every private virtue.'

The retirement in which Mr Smith passed his next ten years, formed a striking contrast to the unsettled mode of life he had been for some time accustomed to, but was so congenial to his natural disposition, and to his first habits, that it was with the utmost difficulty he was ever persuaded to leave it. During the whole of this period, (with the exception of a few visits to Edinburgh and London,) he remained with his mother at Kirkaldy; occupied habitually in intense study, but unbending his mind at times in the company of some of his old school-fellows, whose 'sober wishes' had attached them to the place of their birth. In the society of such men, Mr Smith delighted; and to them he was endeared, not only by his simple and unassuming manners, but by the perfect knowledge they all possessed of those domestic virtues which had distinguished him from his infancy.

Mr Hume, who (as he tells us himself) considered 'a town as the true scene for a man of letters,' made many attempts to seduce him from his retirement. In a letter, dated in 1772, he urges him to pass some time with him in Edinburgh. 'I shall not take any excuse from your state of health, which I suppose only a subterfuge invented by indolence and love of solitude. Indeed, my dear Smith, if you continue to hearken to complaints of this nature, you will cut yourself out entirely from human society, to the great loss of both parties.' In another letter, dated in 1769, from his house in James's Court, (which commanded a prospect of the Firth of Forth, and of the opposite coast of Fife,) 'I am glad (says he) to have come within sight of you; but as I would also be within speaking terms of you, I wish we could concert measures for that purpose. I am mortally sick at sea, and regard with horror and a kind of hydrophobia the great gulf that lies between us. I am also tired of travelling, as much as you ought naturally to be of staying at home. I therefore propose to you to come hither, and pass some days with me in this solitude. I want to know what you have been doing, and propose to exact a rigorous account of the method in which you have employed yourself during your retreat. I am positive you are in the wrong in many of your speculations, especially where you have the misfortune to differ from me. All these are reasons for our meeting, and I wish you would make me some reasonable proposal for that purpose. There is no habitation in the island of Inchkeith, otherwise I should challenge you to meet me on that spot, and neither of us ever to leave the place, till we were fully agreed on all points of controversy. I expect General Conway here tomorrow, whom I shall attend to Roseneath, and I shall remain there a few

days. On my return, I hope to find a letter from you, containing a bold acceptance of this defiance.'

At length (in the beginning of the year 1776) Mr Smith accounted to the world for his long retreat, by the publication of his '*Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*.' A letter of congratulation on this event, from Mr Hume, is now before me. It is dated 1st April 1776 (about six months before Mr Hume's death), and discovers an amiable solicitude about his friend's literary fame. 'Euge! Belle! Dear Mr Smith: I am much pleased with your performance, and the perusal of it has taken me from a state of great anxiety. It was a work of so much expectation, by yourself, by your friends, and by the public, that I trembled for its appearance; but am now much relieved. Not but that the reading of it necessarily requires so much attention, and the public is disposed to give so little, that I shall still doubt for some time of its being at first very popular. But it has depth and solidity and acuteness, and is so much illustrated by curious facts, that it must at last take the public attention. It is probably much improved by your last abode in London. If you were here at my fire-side, I should dispute some of your principles..... But these, and a hundred other points, are fit only to be discussed in conversation. I hope it will be soon; for I am in a very bad state of health, and cannot afford a long delay.'

Of a book which is now so universally known as '*The Wealth of Nations*,' it might be considered perhaps as superfluous to give a particular analysis; and, at any rate, the limits of this essay make it impossible for me to attempt it at present. A few remarks, however, on the object and tendency of the work, may, I hope, be introduced without impropriety. The history of a philosopher's life can contain little more than the history of his speculations; and in the case of such an author as Mr Smith, whose studies were systematically directed from his youth to subjects of the last importance to human happiness, a review of his writings, while it serves to illustrate the peculiarities of his genius, affords the most faithful picture of his character as a man.

SECTION IV

Of the Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations(18)*

An historical view of the different forms under which human affairs have appeared in different ages and nations, naturally suggests the question, Whether the experience of former times may not now furnish some general principles to enlighten and direct the policy of future legislators? The discussion, however, to which this question leads, is of singular difficulty: as it requires an accurate analysis of by far the most complicated class of phenomena that can possibly engage our attention, those which result from the intricate and often the imperceptible mechanism of political society; -- a subject of observation which seems, at first view, so little commensurate to our faculties, that it has been generally regarded with the same passive emotions of wonder and submission, with which, in the material world, we survey the effects produced by the mysterious and uncontrollable operation of physical causes. It is fortunate that upon this, as upon many other occasions, the difficulties which had long baffled the efforts of solitary genius begin to appear less formidable to the united exertions of the race; and that in proportion as the experience and the reasonings of different individuals are brought to bear upon the same objects, and are combined in such a manner as to illustrate and to limit each other, the science of politics assumes more and more that systematical form which encourages and aids the labours of future inquirers.

In prosecuting the science of politics on this plan, little assistance is to be derived from the speculations of ancient philosophers, the greater part of whom, in their political inquiries, confined their attention to a comparison of the different forms of government, and to an examination of the provisions they made for perpetuating their own existence, and for extending the glory of the state. It was reserved for modern times to investigate those universal principles of justice and of expediency, which ought, under every form of government, to regulate the social order; and of which the object is, to make as equitable a distribution as possible, among all the different members of a community, of the advantages arising from the political union.

The invention of printing was perhaps necessary to prepare the way for these researches. In those departments of literature and of science, where genius finds within itself the materials of its labours; in poetry, in pure geometry, and in some branches of moral philosophy; the ancients have not only laid the foundations on which we are to build, but have left great and finished models for our imitation. But in physics, where our progress depends on an immense collection of facts, and on a combination of the accidental lights daily struck out in the innumerable walks of observation and experiment; and in politics, where the materials of our theories are equally scattered, and are collected and arranged with still greater difficulty, the means of communication afforded by the press have, in the course of two centuries, accelerated the progress of the human mind, far beyond what the most sanguine hopes of our predecessors could have imagined.

The progress already made in this science, inconsiderable as it is in comparison of what may be yet expected, has been sufficient to shew, that the happiness of mankind depends, not on the share which the people possesses, directly or

indirectly, in the enactment of laws, but on the equity and expediency of the laws that are enacted. The share which the people possesses in the government is interesting chiefly to the small number of men whose object is the attainment of political importance; but the equity and expediency of the laws are interesting to every member of the community: and more especially to those whose personal insignificance leaves them no encouragement, but what they derive from the general spirit of the government under which they live.

It is evident, therefore, that the most important branch of political science is that which has for its object to ascertain the philosophical principles of jurisprudence; or (as Mr Smith expresses it) to ascertain 'the general principles which ought to run through and be the foundation of the laws of all nations.' (19*) In countries where the prejudices of the people are widely at variance with these principles, the political liberty which the constitution bestows, only furnishes them with the means of accomplishing their own ruin: And if it were possible to suppose these principles completely realized in any system of laws, the people would have little reason to complain, that they were not immediately instrumental in their enactment. The only infallible criterion of the excellence of any constitution is to be found in the detail of its municipal code; and the value which wise men set on political freedom, arises chiefly from the facility it is supposed to afford, for the introduction of those legislative improvements which the general interests of the community recommend; combined with the security it provides in the light and spirit of the people, for the pure and equal administration of justice.—I cannot help adding, that the capacity of a people to exercise political rights with utility to themselves and to their country, presupposes a diffusion of knowledge and of good morals, which can only result from the previous operation of laws favourable to industry, to order, and to freedom.

Of the truth of these remarks, enlightened politicians seem now to be in general convinced; for the most celebrated works which have been produced in the different countries of Europe, during the last thirty years, by Smith, Quesnai, Turgot, Campomanes, Beccaria, and others, have aimed at the improvement of society, — not by delineating plans of new constitutions, but by enlightening the policy of actual legislators. Such speculations, while they are more essentially and more extensively useful than any others, have no tendency to unhinge established institutions, or to inflame the passions of the multitude. The improvements they recommend are to be effected by means too gradual and slow in their operation, to warm the imaginations of any but of the speculative few; and in proportion as they are adopted, they consolidate the political fabric, and enlarge the basis upon which it rests.

To direct the policy of nations with respect to one most important class of its laws, those which form its system of political economy, is the great aim of Mr Smith's Inquiry. And he has unquestionably had the merit of presenting to the world, the most comprehensive and perfect work that has yet appeared, on the general principles of any branch of legislation. The example which he has set will be followed, it is to be hoped, in due time, by other writers, for whom the internal policy of states furnishes many other subjects of discussion no less curious and interesting; and may accelerate the progress of that science which Lord Bacon has so well described in the following passage:

'Finis et scopus quem leges intueri, atque ad quem jussiones et sanctiones suas dirigere debent, non alius est, quam ut cives feliciter degant; id fiet, si pietate et religione recte instituti; moribus honesti; armis adversus hostes externos tuti; legum auxilio adversus seditiones et privatas injurias muniti; imperio et magistratibus obsequentes; copiis et opibus locupletes et florentes fuerint.—Certe cognitio ista ad viros civiles proprie spectat; qui optime nôrunt, quid ferat societas humana, quid salus populi, quid aequitas naturalis, quid gentium mores, quid rerumpublicarum formae diversae: ideoque possint de legibus, ex principiis et praeceptis tam aequitatis naturalis, quam politices decernere. Quamobrem id nunc agatur, ut fontes justitiae et utilitatis publicae petantur, et in singulis juris partibus character quidam et idea justae exhibeatur, ad quam particularium regnorum et rerumpublicarum leges probare, atque inde emendationem moliri, quisque, cui hoc cordi erit et curae, possit.'

The enumeration contained in the foregoing passage, of the different objects of law, coincides very nearly with that given by Mr Smith in the conclusion of his *Theory of Moral Sentiments*; and the precise aim of the political speculations which he then announced, and of which he afterwards published so valuable a part in his *Wealth of Nations*, was to ascertain the general principles of justice and of expediency, which ought to guide the institutions of legislators on these important articles; — in the words of Lord Bacon, to ascertain those *leges legum*, *'ex quibus informatio peti possit, quid in singulis legibus bene aut perperam positum aut constitutum sit.'*

The branch of legislation which Mr Smith has made choice of as the subject of his work, naturally leads me to remark a very striking contrast between the spirit of ancient and of modern policy in respect to the *Wealth of Nations*.(20*) The great object of the former was to counteract the love of money and a taste for luxury, by positive institutions; and to maintain in the great body of the people, habits of frugality, and a severity of manners. The decline of states is uniformly ascribed by the philosophers and historians, both of Greece and Rome, to the influence of riches on national character; and the laws of Lycurgus, which, during a course of ages, banished the precious metals from Sparta, are proposed by many of them as the most perfect model of legislation devised by human wisdom. — How opposite to this is the doctrine of modern politicians! Far from considering poverty as an advantage to a state, their great aim is to open new sources of national opulence, and to animate the activity of all classes of the people, by a taste for the comforts and accommodations of life.

One principal cause of this difference between the spirit of ancient and of modern policy, may be found in the difference between the sources of national wealth in ancient and in modern times. In ages when commerce and manufactures were yet in their infancy, and among states constituted like most of the ancient republics, a sudden influx of riches from abroad was justly dreaded as an evil, alarming to the morals, to the industry, and to the freedom of a people. So different, however, is the case at present, that the most wealthy nations are those where the people are the most laborious, and where they enjoy the greatest degree of liberty. Nay, it was the general diffusion of wealth among the lower orders of men, which first gave birth to the spirit of independence in modern Europe, and which has produced under some of its governments, and

especially under our own, a more equal diffusion of freedom and of happiness than took place under the most celebrated constitutions of antiquity.

Without this diffusion of wealth among the lower orders, the important effects resulting from the invention of printing would have been extremely limited; for a certain degree of ease and independence is necessary to inspire men with the desire of knowledge, and to afford them the leisure which is requisite for acquiring it; and it is only by the rewards which such a state of society holds up to industry and ambition, that the selfish passions of the multitude can be interested in the intellectual improvement of their children. The extensive propagation of light and refinement arising from the influence of the press, aided by the spirit of commerce, seems to be the remedy provided by nature, against the fatal effects which would otherwise be produced, by the subdivision of labour accompanying the progress of the mechanical arts: Nor is any thing wanting to make the remedy effectual, but wise institutions to facilitate general instruction, and to adapt the education of individuals to the stations they are to occupy. The mind of the artist, which, from the limited sphere of his activity, would sink below the level of the peasant or the savage, might receive in infancy the means of intellectual enjoyment, and the seeds of moral improvement; and even the insipid uniformity of his professional engagements, by presenting no object to awaken his ingenuity or to distract his attention, might leave him at liberty to employ his faculties, on subjects more interesting to himself, and more extensively useful to others.

These effects, notwithstanding a variety of opposing causes which still exist, have already resulted, in a very sensible degree, from the liberal policy of modern times. Mr Hume, in his *Essay on Commerce*, after taking notice of the numerous armies raised and maintained by the small republics in the ancient world, ascribes the military power of these states to their want of commerce and luxury. 'Few artisans were maintained by the labour of the farmers, and therefore more soldiers might live upon it.' He adds, however, that 'the policy of ancient times was VIOLENT, and contrary to the NATURAL course of things;' — by which, I presume, he means, that it aimed too much at modifying, by the force of positive institutions, the order of society, according to some preconceived idea of expediency; without trusting sufficiently to those principles of the human constitution, which, wherever they are allowed free scope, not only conduct mankind to happiness, but lay the foundation of a progressive improvement in their condition and in their character. The advantages which modern policy possesses over the ancient, arise principally from its conformity, in some of the most important articles of political economy, to an order of things recommended by nature; and it would not be difficult to shew, that, where it remains imperfect, its errors may be traced to the restraints it imposes on the natural course of human affairs. Indeed, in these restraints may be discovered the latent seeds of many of the prejudices and follies which infect modern manners, and which have so long bid defiance to the reasonings of the philosopher and the ridicule of the satirist.

The foregoing very imperfect hints appeared to me to form, not only a proper, but in some measure a necessary introduction to the few remarks I have to offer on Mr Smith's Inquiry; as they tend to illustrate a connection between his system of commercial politics, and those speculations of his earlier years, in which he

aimed more professedly at the advancement of human improvement and happiness. It is this view of political economy that can alone render it interesting to the moralist, and can dignify calculations of profit and loss in the eye of the philosopher. Mr Smith has alluded to it in various passages of his work, but he has nowhere explained himself fully on the subject; and the great stress he has laid on the effects of the division of labour in increasing its productive powers, seems, at first sight, to point to a different and very melancholy conclusion; that the same causes which promote the progress of the arts, tend to degrade the mind of the artist; and, of consequence, that the growth of national wealth implies a sacrifice of the character of the people.

The fundamental doctrines of Mr Smith's system are now so generally known, that it would have been tedious to offer any recapitulation of them in this place; even if I could have hoped to do justice to the subject, within the limits which I have prescribed to myself at present.(21*) I shall content myself, therefore, with remarking, in general terms, that the great and leading object of his speculations is, to illustrate the provision made by nature in the principles of the human mind, and in the circumstances of man's external situation, for a gradual and progressive augmentation in the means of national wealth; and to demonstrate, that the most effectual plan for advancing a people to greatness, is to maintain that order of things which nature has pointed out; by allowing every man, as long as he observes the rules of justice, to pursue his own interest in his own way, and to bring both his industry and his capital into the freest competition with those of his fellow-citizens. Every system of policy which endeavours, either by extraordinary encouragements to draw towards a particular species of industry a greater share of the capital of the society than what would naturally go to it, or, by extraordinary restraints, to force from a particular species of industry some share of the capital which would otherwise be employed in it, is, in reality, subversive of the great purpose which it means to promote.

What the circumstances are, which, in modern Europe, have contributed to disturb this order of nature, and, in particular, to encourage the industry of towns, at the expence of that of the country, Mr Smith has investigated with great ingenuity; and in such a manner, as to throw much new light on the history of that state of society which prevails in this quarter of the globe. His observations on this subject tend to shew, that these circumstances were, in their first origin, the natural and the unavoidable result of the peculiar situation of mankind during a certain period; and that they took their rise, not from any general scheme of policy, but from the private interests and prejudices of particular orders of men.

The state of society, however, which at first arose from a singular combination of accidents, has been prolonged much beyond its natural period, by a false system of political economy, propagated by merchants and manufacturers; a class of individuals, whose interest is not always the same with that of the public, and whose professional knowledge gave them many advantages, more particularly in the infancy of this branch of science, in defending those opinions which they wished to encourage. By means of this system, a new set of obstacles to the progress of national prosperity has been created. Those which arose from the disorders of the feudal ages, tended directly to disturb the internal arrangements of society, by obstructing the free circulation of labour and of stock, from employment to employment, and from place to place. The false system of

political economy which has been hitherto prevalent, as its professed object has been to regulate the commercial intercourse between different nations, has produced its effect in a way less direct and less manifest, but equally prejudicial to the states that have adopted it.

On this system, as it took its rise from the prejudices, or rather from the interested views of mercantile speculators, Mr Smith bestows the title of the Commercial or Mercantile System; and he has considered at great length its two principal expedients for enriching a nation; restraints upon importation, and encouragements to exportation. Part of these expedients, he observes, have been dictated by the spirit of monopoly, and part by a spirit of jealousy against those countries with which the balance of trade is supposed to be disadvantageous. All of them appear clearly, from his reasonings, to have a tendency unfavourable to the wealth of the nation which imposes them. His remarks with respect to the jealousy of commerce are expressed in a tone of indignation, which he seldom assumes in his political writings.

'In this manner (says he) the sneaking arts of underling tradesmen are erected into political maxims for the conduct of a great empire. By such maxims as these, nations have been taught that their interest consisted in beggaring all their neighbours. Each nation has been made to look with an invidious eye upon the prosperity of all the nations with which it trades, and to consider their gain as its own loss. Commerce, which ought naturally to be among nations as among individuals, a bond of union and friendship, has become the most fertile source of discord and animosity. The capricious ambition of Kings and Ministers. has not, during the present and the preceding century, been more fatal to the repose of Europe, than the impertinent jealousy of merchants and manufacturers. The violence and injustice of the rulers of mankind is an ancient evil, for which perhaps the nature of human affairs can scarce admit of a remedy. But the mean rapacity, the monopolizing spirit of merchants and manufacturers, who neither are nor ought to be the rulers of mankind, though it cannot perhaps be corrected, may very easily be prevented from disturbing the tranquillity of any body but themselves.'

Such are the liberal principles which, according to Mr Smith, ought to direct the commercial policy of nations; and of which it ought to be the great object of legislators to facilitate the establishment. In what manner the execution of the theory should be conducted in particular instances, is a question of a very different nature, and to which the answer must vary, in different countries, according to the different circumstances of the case. In a speculative work, such as Mr Smith's, the consideration of this question did not fall properly under his general plan; but that he was abundantly aware of the danger to be apprehended from a rash application of political theories, appears not only from the general strain of his writings, but from some incidental observations which he has expressly made upon the subject. 'So unfortunate (says he, in one passage) are the effects of all the regulations of the mercantile system, that they not only introduce very dangerous disorders into the state of the body politic, but disorders which it is often difficult to remedy, without occasioning, for a time at least, still greater disorders. — In what manner, therefore, the natural system of perfect liberty and justice ought gradually to be restored, we must leave to the wisdom of future statesmen and legislators to determine.' In the last edition of

his *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, he has introduced some remarks, which have an obvious reference to the same important doctrine. The following passage seems to refer more particularly to those derangements of the social order which derived their origin from the feudal institutions:

‘The man whose public spirit is prompted altogether by humanity and benevolence, will respect the established powers and privileges even of individuals, and still more of the great orders and societies into which the state is divided. Though he should consider some of them as in some measure abusive, he will content himself with moderating, what he often cannot annihilate without great violence. When he cannot conquer the rooted prejudices of the people by reason and persuasion, he will not attempt to subdue them by force; but will religiously observe what, by Cicero, is justly called the divine maxim of Plato, never to use violence to his country no more than to his parents. He will accommodate, as well as he can, his public arrangements to the confirmed habits and prejudices of the people; and will remedy, as well as he can, the inconveniencies which may flow from the want of those regulations which the people are averse to submit to. When he cannot establish the right, he will not disdain to ameliorate the wrong; but, like Solon, when he cannot establish the best system of laws, he will endeavour to establish the best that the people can bear.’

These cautions with respect to the practical application of general principles were peculiarly necessary from the Author of *The Wealth of Nations*; as the unlimited freedom of trade, which it is the chief aim of his work to recommend, is extremely apt, by flattering the indolence of the statesman, to suggest to those who are invested with absolute power, the idea of carrying it into immediate execution. ‘Nothing is more adverse to the tranquillity of a statesman (says the author of an Eloge on the Administration of Colbert) than a spirit of moderation; because it condemns him to perpetual observation, shews him every moment the insufficiency of his wisdom, and leaves him the melancholy sense of his own imperfection; while, under the shelter of a few general principles, a systematical politician enjoys a perpetual calm. By the help of one alone, that of a perfect liberty of trade, he would govern the world, and would leave human affairs to arrange themselves at pleasure, under the operation of the prejudices and the self-interests of individuals. If these run counter to each other, he gives himself no anxiety about the consequence; he insists that the result cannot be judged of till after a century or two shall have elapsed. If his contemporaries, in consequence of the disorder into which he has thrown public affairs, are scrupulous about submitting quietly to the experiment, he accuses them of impatience. They alone, and not he, are to blame for what they have suffered; and the principle continues to be inculcated with the same zeal and the same confidence as before.’ These are the words of the ingenious and eloquent author of the Eloge on Colbert, which obtained the prize from the French Academy in the year 1763; a performance which, although confined and erroneous in its speculative views, abounds with just and important reflections of a practical nature. How far his remarks apply to that particular class of politicians whom he had evidently in his eye in the foregoing passage, I shall not presume to decide.

It is hardly necessary for me to add to these observations, that they do not detract in the least from the value of those political theories which attempt to delineate the principles of a perfect legislation. Such theories (as I have elsewhere observed(22*)) ought to be considered merely as descriptions of the ultimate objects at which the statesman ought to aim. The tranquillity of his administration, and the immediate success of his measures, depend on his good sense and his practical skill; and his theoretical principles only enable him to direct his measures steadily and wisely, to promote the improvement and happiness of mankind, and prevent him from being ever led astray from these important ends, by more limited views of temporary expedience. 'In all cases (says Mr Hume) it must be advantageous to know what is most perfect in the kind, that we may be able to bring any real constitution or form of government as near it as possible, by such gentle alterations and innovations as may not give too great disturbance to society.'

The limits of this Memoir make it impossible for me to examine particularly the merit of Mr Smith's work in point of originality. That his doctrine concerning the freedom of trade and of industry coincides remarkably with that which we find in the writings of the French Economists, appears from the slight view of their system which he himself has given. But it surely cannot be pretended by the warmest admirers of that system, that any one of its numerous expositors has approached to. Mr Smith in the precision and perspicuity with which he has stated it, or in the scientific and luminous manner in which he has deduced it from elementary principles. The awkwardness of their technical language, and the paradoxical form in which they have chosen to present some of their opinions, are acknowledged even by those who are most willing to do justice to their merits; whereas it may be doubted, with respect to Mr Smith's Inquiry, if there exists any book beyond the circle of the mathematical and physical sciences, which is at once so agreeable in its arrangement to the rules of a sound logic, and so accessible to the examination of ordinary readers. Abstracting entirely from the author's peculiar and original speculations, I do not know that, upon any subject whatever, a work has been produced in our times, containing so methodical, so comprehensive, and so judicious a digest of all the most profound and enlightened philosophy of the age.(23*)

In justice also to Mr Smith, it must be observed, that although some of the economical writers had the start of him in publishing their doctrines to the world, these doctrines appear, with respect to him, to have been altogether original, and the result of his own reflections. Of this, I think, every person must be convinced, who reads the Inquiry with due attention, and is at pains to examine the gradual and beautiful progress of the author's ideas: But in case any doubt should remain on this head, it may be proper to mention, that Mr Smith's political lectures, comprehending the fundamental principles of his Inquiry, were delivered at Glasgow as early as the year 1752 or 1753; at a period, surely, when there existed no French performance on the subject, that could be of much use to him in guiding his researches.(24*) In the year 1756, indeed, M. Turgot (who is said to have imbibed his first notions concerning the unlimited freedom of commerce from an old merchant, M. Gournay), published in the Encyclopédie, an article which sufficiently shews how completely his mind was emancipated from the old prejudices in favour of commercial regulations: But that even then,

these opinions were confined to a few speculative men in France, appears from a passage in the *Mémoires Sur la Vie et les Ouvrages de M. Turgot*; in which, after a short quotation from the article just mentioned, the author adds: 'These ideas were then considered as paradoxical; they are since become common, and they will one day be adopted universally.'

The Political Discourses of Mr Hume were evidently of greater use to Mr Smith, than any other book that had appeared prior to his lectures. Even Mr Hume's theories, however, though always plausible and ingenious, and in most instances profound and just, involve some fundamental mistakes; and, when compared with Mr Smith's, afford a striking proof, that, in considering a subject so extensive and so complicated, the most penetrating sagacity, if directed only to particular questions, is apt to be led astray by first appearances; and that nothing can guard us effectually against error, but a comprehensive survey of the whole field of discussion, assisted by an accurate and patient analysis of the ideas about which our reasonings are employed. — It may be worth while to add, that Mr. Hume's Essay 'on the Jealousy of Trade,' with some other of his Political Discourses, received a very flattering proof of M. Turgot's approbation, by his undertaking the task of translating them into the French language.(25*)

I am aware that the evidence I have hitherto produced of Mr Smith's originality may be objected to as not perfectly decisive, as it rests entirely on the recollection of those students who attended his first courses of moral philosophy at Glasgow; a recollection which, at the distance of forty years, cannot be supposed to be very accurate. There exists, however, fortunately, a short manuscript drawn up by Mr Smith in the year 1755, and presented by him to a society of which he was then a member; in which paper, a pretty long enumeration is given of certain leading principles, both political and literary, to which he was anxious to establish his exclusive right; in order to prevent the possibility of some rival claims which he thought he had reason to apprehend, and to which his situation as a Professor, added to his unreserved communications in private companies, rendered him peculiarly liable. This paper is at present in my possession. It is expressed with a good deal of that honest and indignant warmth, which is perhaps unavoidable by a man who is conscious of the purity of his own intentions, when he suspects that advantages have been taken of the frankness of his temper. On such occasions, due allowances are not always made for those plagiarisms, which, however cruel in their effects, do not necessarily imply bad faith in those who are guilty of them; for the bulk of mankind, incapable themselves of original thought, are perfectly unable to form a conception of the nature of the injury done to a man of inventive genius, by encroaching on a favourite speculation. For reasons known to some members of this Society, it would be improper, by the publication of this manuscript, to revive the memory of private differences; and I should not have even alluded to it, if I did not think it a valuable document of the progress of Mr Smith's political ideas at a very early period. Many of the most important opinions in *The Wealth of Nations* are there detailed; but I shall quote only the following sentences: 'Man is generally considered by statesmen and projectors as the materials of a sort of political mechanics. Projectors disturb nature in the course of her operations in human affairs; and it requires no more than to let her alone, and give her fair play in the pursuit of her ends, that she may establish her own designs.' — And in another passage: 'Little else is requisite to carry a state to the highest degree of opulence from the lowest

barbarism, but peace, easy taxes, and a tolerable administration of justice; all the rest being brought about by the natural course of things. All governments which thwart this natural course, which force things into another channel, or which endeavour to arrest the progress of society at a particular point, are unnatural, and to support themselves are obliged to be oppressive and tyrannical. — A great part of the opinions (he observes) enumerated in this paper is treated of at length in some lectures which I have still by me, and which were written in the hand of a clerk who left my service six years ago. They have all of them been the constant subjects of my lectures since I first taught Mr Craigie's class, the first winter I spent in Glasgow, down to this day, without any considerable variation. They had all of them been the subjects of lectures which I read at Edinburgh the winter before I left it, and I can adduce innumerable witnesses, both from that place and from this, who will ascertain them sufficiently to be mine.'

After all, perhaps the merit of such a work as Mr Smith's is to be estimated less from the novelty of the principles it contains, than from the reasonings employed to support these principles, and from the scientific manner in which they are unfolded in their proper order and connection. General assertions with respect to the advantages of a free commerce, may be collected from various writers of an early date. But in questions of so complicated a nature as occur in political economy, the credit of such opinions belongs of right to the author who first established their solidity, and followed them out to their remote consequences; not to him who, by a fortunate accident, first stumbled on the truth.

Besides the principles which Mr Smith considered as more peculiarly his own, his Inquiry exhibits a systematical view of the most important articles of political economy, so as to serve the purpose of an elementary treatise on that very extensive and difficult science. The skill and the comprehensiveness of mind displayed in his arrangement, can be judged of by those alone who have compared it with that adopted by his immediate predecessors. And perhaps, in point of utility, the labour he has employed in connecting and methodizing their scattered ideas, is not less valuable than the results of his own original speculations: For it is only when digested in a clear and natural order, that truths make their proper impression on the mind, and that erroneous opinions can be combated with success.

It does not belong to my present undertaking (even if I were qualified for such a task) to attempt a separation of the solid and important doctrines of Mr Smith's book from those opinions which appear exceptionable or doubtful. I acknowledge, that there are some of his conclusions to which I would not be understood to subscribe implicitly; more particularly in that chapter, where he treats of the principles of taxation; — a subject, which he has certainly examined in a manner more loose and unsatisfactory than most of the others which have fallen under his review.(26*)

It would be improper for me to conclude this section without taking notice of the manly and dignified freedom with which the author uniformly delivers his opinions, and of the superiority which he discovers throughout, to all the little passions connected with the factions of the times in which he wrote. Whoever takes the trouble to compare the general tone of his composition with the period of its first publication, cannot fail to feel and acknowledge the force of this

remark. — It is not often that a disinterested zeal for truth has so soon met with its just reward. Philosophers (to use an expression of Lord Bacon's) are 'the servants of posterity;' and most of those who have devoted their talents to the best interests of mankind, have been obliged, like Bacon, to 'bequeath their fame' to a race yet unborn, and to console themselves with the idea of sowing what another generation was to reap:

Insere Daphni pyros, carpent tua poma nepotes.

Mr Smith was more fortunate; or rather, in this respect, his fortune was singular. He survived the publication of his work only fifteen years; and yet, during that short period, he had not only the satisfaction of seeing the opposition it at first excited, gradually subside, but to witness the practical influence of his writings on the commercial policy of his country.

Section V

Conclusion of the Narrative

About two years after the publication of *'The Wealth of Nations,'* Mr Smith was appointed one of the Commissioners of his Majesty's Customs in Scotland; a preferment which, in his estimation, derived an additional value from its being bestowed on him at the request of the Duke of Buccleuch. The greater part of these two years he passed in London, enjoying a society too extensive and varied to afford him any opportunity of indulging his taste for study. His time, however, was not lost to himself; for much of it was spent with some of the first names in English literature. Of these no unfavourable specimen is preserved by Dr Barnard, in his well-known *'Verses addressed to Sir Joshua Reynolds and his friends.'*

If I have thoughts, and can't express 'em, Gibbon shall teach me how to dress 'em
In words select and terse: Jones teach me modesty and Greek, Smith how to
think, Burke how to speak, And Beauclerc to converse.(27*)

In consequence of Mr Smith's appointment to the Board of Customs, he removed, in 1778, to Edinburgh, where he spent the last twelve years of his life; enjoying an affluence which was more than equal to all his wants; and, what was to him of still greater value, the prospect of passing the remainder of his days among the companions of his youth.

His mother, who, though now in extreme old age, still possessed a considerable degree of health, and retained all her faculties unimpaired, accompanied him to town; and his cousin Miss Jane Douglas, (who had formerly been a member of his family at Glasgow, and for whom he had always felt the affection of a brother) while she divided with him those tender attentions which her aunt's infirmities required, relieved him of a charge for which he was peculiarly ill qualified, by her friendly superintendence of his domestic economy.

The accession to his income which his new office brought him, enabled him to gratify, to a much greater extent than his former circumstances admitted of, the natural generosity of his disposition; and the state of his funds at the time of his death, compared with his very moderate establishment, confirmed, beyond a doubt, what his intimate acquaintances had often suspected, that a large proportion of his annual savings was allotted to offices of secret charity. A small, but excellent library, which he had gradually formed with great judgment in the selection; and a simple, though hospitable table, where, without the formality of an invitation, he was always happy to receive his friends, were the only expences that could be considered as his own.(28*)

The change in his habits which his removal to Edinburgh produced, was not equally favourable to his literary pursuits. The duties of his office, though they required but little exertion of thought, were yet sufficient to waste his spirits and to dissipate his attention; and now that his career is closed, it is impossible to reflect on the time they consumed, without lamenting, that it had not been employed in labours more profitable to the world, and more equal to his mind. During the first years of his residence in this city, his studies seemed to be

entirely suspended; and his passion for letters served only to amuse his leisure, and to animate his conversation. The infirmities of age, of which he very early began to feel the approaches, reminded him at last, when it was too late, of what he yet owed to the public, and to his own fame. The principal materials of the works which he had announced, had been long ago collected; and little probably was wanting, but a few years of health and retirement, to bestow on them that systematical arrangement in which he delighted; and the ornaments of that flowing, and apparently artless style, which he had studiously cultivated, but which, after all his experience in composition, he adjusted, with extreme difficulty, to his own taste.(29*)

The death of his mother in 1784, which was followed by that of Miss Douglas in 1788, contributed, it is probable, to frustrate these projects. They had been the objects of his affection for more than sixty years; and in their society he had enjoyed, from his infancy, all that he ever knew of the endearments of a family.(30*) He was now alone, and helpless; and, though he bore his loss with equanimity, and regained apparently his former cheerfulness, yet his health and strength gradually declined till the period of his death, which happened in July 1790, about two years after that of his cousin, and six after that of his mother. His last illness, which arose from a chronic obstruction in his bowels, was lingering and painful; but had every consolation to sooth it which he could derive from the tenderest sympathy of his friends, and from the complete resignation of his own mind.

A few days before his death, finding his end approach rapidly, he gave orders to destroy all his manuscripts, excepting some detached essays, which he entrusted to the care of his executors; and they were accordingly committed to the flames. What were the particular contents of these papers, is not known even to his most intimate friends; but there can be no doubt that they consisted, in part, of the lectures on rhetoric, which he read at Edinburgh in the year 1748, and of the lectures on natural religion and on jurisprudence, which formed part of his course at Glasgow. That this irreparable injury to letters proceeded, in some degree, from an excessive solicitude in the author about his posthumous reputation, may perhaps be true; but with respect to some of his manuscripts, may we not suppose, that he was influenced by higher motives? It is but seldom that a philosopher, who has been occupied from his youth with moral or with political inquiries, succeeds completely to his wish in stating to others, the grounds upon which his own opinions are founded; and hence it is, that the known principles of an individual, who has approved to the public his candour, his liberality, and his judgment, are entitled to a weight and an authority, independent of the evidence which he is able, upon any particular occasion, to produce in their support. A secret consciousness of this circumstance, and an apprehension that, by not doing justice to an important argument, the progress of truth may be rather retarded than advanced, have probably induced many authors to withhold from the world the unfinished results of their most valuable labours; and to content themselves with giving the general sanction of their suffrages to truths which they regarded as peculiarly interesting to the human race.(31*)

The additions to the *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, most of which were composed under severe disease, had fortunately been sent to the press in the beginning of

the preceding winter; and the author lived to see the publication of the work. The moral and serious strain that prevails through these additions, when connected with the circumstance of his declining health, adds a peculiar charm to his pathetic eloquence, and communicates a new interest, if possible, to those sublime truths, which, in the academical retirement of his youth, awakened the first ardours of his genius, and on which the last efforts of his mind reposed

In a letter addressed, in the year 1787, to the Principal of the University of Glasgow, in consequence of being elected Rector of that learned body, a pleasing memorial remains of the satisfaction with which he always recollected that period of his literary career, which had been more peculiarly consecrated to these important studies. 'No preferment (says he) could have given me so much real satisfaction. No man can owe greater obligations to a society than I do to the University of Glasgow. They educated me; they sent me to Oxford. Soon after my return to Scotland, they elected me one of their own members; and afterwards preferred me to another office, to which the abilities and virtues of the never to be forgotten Dr Hutcheson had given a superior degree of illustration. The period of thirteen years which I spent as a member of that society, I remember as by far the most useful, and therefore as by far the happiest and most honourable period of my life; and now, after three and twenty years absence, to be remembered in so very agreeable a manner by my old friends and protectors, gives me a heart-felt joy which I cannot easily express to you.'

The short narrative which I have now finished, however barren of incident, may convey a general idea of the genius and character of this illustrious Man. Of the intellectual gifts and attainments by which he was so eminently distinguished; -- of the originality and comprehensiveness of his views; the extent, the variety, and the correctness of his information; the inexhaustible fertility of his invention; and the ornaments which his rich and beautiful imagination had borrowed from classical culture; — he has left behind him lasting monuments. To his private worth the most certain of all testimonies may be found in that confidence, respect, and attachment, which followed him through all the various relations of life. The serenity and gaiety he enjoyed, under the pressure of his growing infirmities, and the warm interest he felt to the last, in every thing connected with the welfare of his friends, will be long remembered by a small circle, with whom, as long as his strength permitted, he regularly spent an evening in the week; and to whom the recollection of his worth still forms a pleasing, though melancholy bond of union.

The more delicate and characteristical features of his mind, it is perhaps impossible to trace. That there were many peculiarities, both in his manners, and in his intellectual habits, was manifest to the most superficial observer. but although, to those who knew him, these peculiarities detracted nothing from the respect which his abilities commanded; and although, to his intimate friends, they added an inexpressible charm to his conversation, while they displayed, in the most interesting light, the artless simplicity of his heart; yet it would require a very skilful pencil to present them to the public eye. He was certainly not fitted for the general commerce of the world, or for the business of active life. The comprehensive speculations with which he had been occupied from his youth, and the variety of materials which his own invention continually supplied to his thoughts, rendered him habitually inattentive to familiar objects, and to common

occurrences; and he frequently exhibited instances of absence, which have scarcely been surpassed by the fancy of La Bruyère. Even in company, he was apt to be engrossed with his studies; and appeared, at times, by the motion of his lips, as well as by his looks and gestures, to be in the fervour of composition. I have often, however, been struck, at the distance of years, with his accurate memory of the most trifling particulars; and am inclined to believe, from this and some other circumstances, that he possessed a power, not perhaps uncommon among absent men, of recollecting, in consequence of subsequent efforts of reflection, many occurrences, which, at the time when they happened, did not seem to have sensibly attracted his notice.

To the defect now mentioned, it was probably owing, in part, that he did not fall in easily with the common dialogue of conversation, and that he was somewhat apt to convey his own ideas in the form of a lecture. When he did so, however, it never proceeded from a wish to engross the discourse, or to gratify his vanity. His own inclination disposed him so strongly to enjoy in silence the gaiety of those around him, that his friends were often led to concert little schemes, in order to engage him in the discussions most likely to interest him. Nor do I think I shall be accused of going too far, when I say, that he was scarcely ever known to start a new topic himself, or to appear unprepared upon those topics that were introduced by others. Indeed, his conversation was never more amusing than when he gave a loose to his genius, upon the very few branches of knowledge of which he only possessed the outlines.

The opinions he formed of men, upon a slight acquaintance, were frequently erroneous; but the tendency of his nature inclined him much more to blind partiality, than to ill-founded prejudice. The enlarged views of human affairs, on which his mind habitually dwelt, left him neither time nor inclination to study, in detail, the uninteresting peculiarities of ordinary characters; and accordingly, though intimately acquainted with the capacities of the intellect, and the workings of the heart, and accustomed, in his theories, to mark, with the most delicate hand, the nicest shades, both of genius and of the passions; yet, in judging of individuals, it sometimes happened, that his estimates were, in a surprising degree, wide of the truth.

The opinions, too, which, in the thoughtlessness and confidence of his social hours, he was accustomed to hazard on books, and on questions of speculation, were not uniformly such as might have been expected from the superiority of his understanding, and the singular consistency of his philosophical principles. They were liable to be influenced by accidental circumstances, and by the humour of the moment; and when retailed by those who only saw him occasionally, suggested false and contradictory ideas of his real sentiments. On these, however, as on most other occasions, there was always much truth, as well as ingenuity, in his remarks; and if the different opinions which, at different times, he pronounced upon the same subject, had been all combined together, so as to modify and limit each other, they would probably have afforded materials for a decision, equally comprehensive and just. But, in the society of his friends, he had no disposition to form those qualified conclusions that we admire in his writings; and he generally contented himself with a bold and masterly sketch of the object, from the first point of view in which his temper, or his fancy, presented it. Something of the same kind might be remarked, when he

attempted, in the flow of his spirits, to delineate those characters which, from long intimacy, he might have been supposed to understand thoroughly. The picture was always lively, and expressive; and commonly bore a strong and amusing resemblance to the original, when viewed under one particular aspect; but seldom, perhaps, conveyed a just and complete conception of it in all its dimensions and proportions. — In a word, it was the fault of his unpremeditated judgments, to be too systematical, and too much in extremes.

But, in whatever way these trifling peculiarities in his manners may be explained, there can be no doubt, that they were intimately connected with the genuine artlessness of his mind. In this amiable quality, he often recalled to his friends, the accounts that are given of good La Fontaine; a quality which in him derived a peculiar grace from the singularity of its combination with those powers of reason and of eloquence, which, in his political and moral writings, have long engaged the admiration of Europe.

In his external form and appearance, there was nothing uncommon. When perfectly at ease, and when warmed with conversation, his gestures were animated, and not ungraceful: and, in the society of those he loved, his features were often brightened with a smile of inexpressible benignity. In the company of strangers, his tendency to absence, and perhaps still more his consciousness of this tendency, rendered his manner somewhat embarrassed; — an effect which was probably not a little heightened by those speculative ideas of propriety, which his recluse habits tended at once to perfect in his conception, and to diminish his power of realizing. He never sat for his picture; but the medallion of Tassie conveys an exact idea of his profile, and of the general expression of his countenance.

His valuable library, together with the rest of his property, was bequeathed to his cousin Mr David Douglas, Advocate.(32*) In the education of this young gentleman, he had employed much of his leisure; and it was only two years before his death (at a time when he could ill spare the pleasure of his society), that he had sent him to study law at Glasgow, under the care of Mr Millar; — the strongest proof he could give of his disinterested zeal for the improvement of his friend, as well as of the esteem in which he held the abilities of that eminent Professor.

The executors of his will were Dr Black and Dr Hutton; with whom he had long lived in habits of the most intimate and cordial friendship; and who, to the many other testimonies which they had given him of their affection, added the mournful office of witnessing his last moments.

Notes to the Life of Adam Smith, LL.D.

Note (A)

‘Of this number were Mr Oswald of Dunikeir,’ etc.] — The late James Oswald, Esq. — for many years one of the most active, able and public spirited of our Scottish representatives in Parliament. He was more particularly distinguished by his knowledge in matters of finance, and by his attention to whatever concerned the commercial or the agricultural interests of the country. From the manner in which he is mentioned in a paper of Mr Smith’s which I have perused, he appears to have combined, with that detailed information which he is well known to have possessed as a statesman and man of business, a taste for the more general and philosophical discussions of political economy. He lived in habits of great intimacy with Lord Kames and Mr Hume; and was one of Mr Smith’s earliest and most confidential friends.

Note (B)

‘The lectures of the profound and eloquent Dr Hutcheson,’ etc.] Those who have derived their knowledge of Dr Hutcheson solely from his publications, may, perhaps, be inclined to dispute the propriety of the epithet eloquent, when applied to any of his compositions; more particularly, when applied to the *System of Moral Philosophy*, which was published after his death, as the substance of his lectures in the University of Glasgow. His talents, however, as a public speaker, must have been of a far higher order than what he has displayed as a writer; all his pupils whom I have happened to meet with (some of them, certainly, very competent judges) having agreed exactly with each other in their accounts of the extraordinary impression which they made on the minds of his hearers. I have mentioned, in the text, Mr Smith as one of his warmest admirers; and to his name I shall take this opportunity of adding those of the late Earl of Selkirk; the late Lord President Miller; and the late Dr Archibald Maclaine, the very learned and judicious translator of Mosheim’s *Ecclesiastical History*. My father, too, who had attended Dr Hutcheson’s lectures for several years, never spoke of them without much sensibility. On this occasion we can only say, as Quintilian has done of the eloquence of Hortensius; ‘*Apparet placuisse aliquid eo dicente, quod legentes non invenimus.*’

Dr Hutcheson’s *Inquiry into our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue*; his *Discourse on the Passions*; and his *Illustrations of the Moral Sense*, are much more strongly marked with the characteristical features of his genius, than his posthumous work. His great and deserved fame, however, in this country, rests now chiefly on the traditionary history of his academical lectures, which appear to have contributed very powerfully to diffuse, in Scotland, that taste for analytical discussion, and that spirit of liberal inquiry, to which the world is indebted for some of the most valuable productions of the eighteenth century.

Note (C)

According to the learned English translator of ‘Aristotle’s *Ethics and Politics*,’ the general idea which runs through Mr Smith’s Theory, was obviously borrowed from the following passage of Polybius: ‘From the union of the two sexes, to

which all are naturally inclined, children are born. When any of these, therefore, being arrived at perfect age, instead of yielding suitable returns of gratitude and assistance to those by whom they have been bred, on the contrary, attempt to injure them by words or actions, it is manifest that those who behold the wrong, after having also seen the sufferings and the anxious cares that were sustained by the parents in the nourishment and education of their children, must be greatly offended and displeased at such proceeding. For man, who among all the various kinds of animals is alone endowed with the faculty of reason, cannot, like the rest, pass over such actions: but will make reflection on what he sees; and comparing likewise the future with the present, will not fail to express his indignation at this injurious treatment; to which, as he foresees, he may also, at some time, be exposed. Thus again, when any one who has been succoured by another in the time of danger, instead of shewing the like kindness to this benefactor, endeavours at any time to destroy or hurt him; it is certain, that all men must be shocked by such ingratitude, through sympathy with the resentment of their neighbour; and from an apprehension also, that the case may be their own. And from hence arises, in the mind of every man, a certain notion of the nature and force of duty, in which consists both the beginning and the end of justice. In like manner, the man, who, in defence of others, is seen to throw himself the foremost into every danger, and even to sustain the fury of the fiercest animals, never fails to obtain the loudest acclamations of applause and veneration from all the multitude; while he who shews a different conduct is pursued with censure and reproach. And thus it is, that the people begin to discern the nature of things honourable and base, and in what consists the difference between them; and to perceive that the former, on account of the advantage that attends them, are fit to be admired and imitated, and the latter to be detested and avoided.'

'The doctrine' (says Dr Gillies) 'contained in this passage is expanded by Dr Smith into a theory of moral sentiments. But he departs from his author, in placing the perception of right and wrong, in sentiment or feeling, ultimately and simply. Polybius, on the contrary, maintains with Aristotle, that these notions arise from reason, or intellect, operating on affection or appetite; or, in other words, that the moral faculty is a compound, and may be resolved into two simpler principles of the mind.' — (*Gillies's Aristotle, Vol. I. pp. 302, 303, 2d Edit.*)

The only expression I object to in the two preceding sentences, is the phrase, his author, which has the appearance of insinuating a charge of plagiarism against Mr Smith; a charge which, I am confident, he did not deserve; and to which the above extract does not, in my opinion, afford any plausible colour. It exhibits, indeed, an instance of a curious coincidence between two philosophers in their views of the same subject; and as such, I have no doubt that Mr Smith himself would have remarked it, had it occurred to his memory, when he was writing his book. Of such accidental coincidences between different minds, examples present themselves every day to those, who, after having drawn from their internal resources all the lights they could supply on a particular question, have the curiosity to compare their own conclusions with those of their predecessors: And it is extremely worthy of observation, that, in proportion as any conclusion approaches to the truth, the number of previous approximations to it may be reasonably expected to be multiplied.

In the case before us, however, the question about originality is of little or no moment; for the peculiar merit of Mr Smith's work does not lie in his general principle, but in the skilful use he has made of it to give a systematical arrangement to the most important discussions and doctrines of Ethics. In this point of view, the *Theory of Moral Sentiments* may be justly regarded as one of the most original efforts of the human mind in that branch of science to which it relates; and even if we were to suppose that it was first suggested to the author by a remark of which the world was in possession for two thousand years before, this very circumstance would only reflect a stronger lustre on the novelty of his design, and on the invention and taste displayed in its execution.

I have said, in the text, that my own opinion about the foundation of morals does not agree with that of Mr Smith; and I propose to state, in another publication, the grounds of my dissent from his conclusions on that question.(33*) At present, I shall only observe, that I consider the defects of his Theory as originating rather in a partial, than in a mistaken view of the subject; while, on some of the most essential points of ethics, it appears to me to approximate very nearly to a correct statement of the truth. I must not omit to add, in justice to the author, that his zeal to support his favourite system never has led him to vitiate or misrepresent the phenomena which he has employed it to explain; and that the connected order which he has given to a multiplicity of isolated facts, must facilitate greatly the studies of any of his successors, who may hereafter prosecute the same inquiry, agreeably to the severe rules of the inductive logic.

After the passage which I have quoted in the beginning of this note, I hope I shall be pardoned if I express my doubts, whether the learned and ingenious writer has not, upon this, as well as on some other occasions, allowed his partiality to the ancients to blind him a little too much to the merits of his contemporaries. Would not his laborious and interesting researches into the remains of the Greek philosophy, have been employed still more usefully in revealing to us the systems and discoveries to which our successors may yet lay claim, than in conjectures concerning the origin of those with which we are already acquainted? How does it happen that those men of profound erudition, who can so easily trace every past improvement to the fountain-head of antiquity, should not sometimes amuse themselves, and instruct the world, by anticipating the future progress of the human mind.

In studying the connection and filiation of successive Theories, when we are at a loss, in any instance, for a link to complete the continuity of philosophical speculation, it seems much more reasonable to search for it in the systems of the immediately preceding period, and in the inquiries which then occupied the public attention, than in detached sentences, or accidental expressions gleaned from the relics of distant ages. It is thus only, that we can hope to seize the precise point of view, in which an author's subject first presented itself to his attention; and to account, to our own satisfaction, from the particular aspect under which he saw it, for the subsequent direction which was given to his curiosity. In following such a plan, our object is not to detect plagiarisms, which we suppose men of genius to have intentionally concealed; but to fill up an apparent chasm in the history of Science, by laying hold of the thread which insensibly guided the mind from one station to another. By what easy and natural steps Mr Smith's Theory arose from the state of ethical discussion in

Great Britain, when he began his literary career, I shall endeavour elsewhere to explain.

A late author, of taste and learning, has written a pleasing and instructive essay on the *Marks of Poetical Imitation*. The marks of Philosophical Plagiarism, are not less discernible by an unprejudiced and discriminating eye; and are easily separable from that occasional similarity of thought and of illustration, which we may expect to meet with in writers of the most remote ages and countries, when employed in examining the same questions, or in establishing the same truths.

As the foregoing observations apply with fully as great force to *the Wealth of Nations*, as to the *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, I trust some allowance will be made for the length of this note.(34*)

Note (D)

Extracted by Mr Stewart from (John) Nichols's *Illustrations of the Literary History of the Eighteenth Century, etc., Vol III (1818)*, pp. 515, 516; and appended in manuscript to one of his own copies of this Memoir.

Dr. Adam Smith to Mr. George Baird Glasgow, February 7, 1763.

'DEAR SIR, I have read over the contents of your friend's(34*) work with very great pleasure; and heartily wish it was in my power to give, or to procure him all the encouragement which his ingenuity and industry deserve. I think myself greatly obliged to him for the very obliging notice he has been pleased to take of me, and should be glad to contribute anything in my power towards completing his design. I approve greatly of his plan for a Rational Grammar, and am convinced that a work of this kind, executed with his abilities and industry, may prove not only the best system of grammar, but the best system of logic in any language, as well as the best history of the natural progress of the human mind in forming the most important abstractions upon which all reasoning depends. From the short abstract which Mr Ward has been so good as to send me, it is impossible for me to form any very decisive judgement concerning the propriety of every part of his method, particularly of some of his divisions. If I was to treat the same subject, I should endeavour to begin with the consideration of verbs; these being, in my apprehension, the original parts of speech, first invented to express in one word a complete event: I should then have endeavoured to show how the subject was divided from the attribute; and afterwards, how the object was distinguished from both; and in this manner I should have tried to investigate the origin and use of all the different parts of speech, and of all their different modifications, considered as necessary to express all the different qualifications and relations of any single event. Mr Ward, however, may have excellent reasons for following his own method; and, perhaps, if I was engaged in the same task, I should find it necessary to follow the same, -- things frequently appearing

in a very different light when taken in a general view, which is the only view that I can pretend to have taken of them, and when considered in detail.

Mr Ward, when he mentions the definitions which different authors have given of nouns substantive, takes no notice of that of the Abbé Girard, the author of a book called *Les vrais Principes de la Langue Française*, which made me think it might be possible he had not seen it. It is a book which first set me a thinking upon these subjects, and I have received more instruction from it than from any other I have yet seen upon them. If Mr Ward has not seen it, I have it at his service. The grammatical articles, too, in the French *Encyclopédie* have given me a good deal of entertainment. Very probably Mr Ward has seen both these works, and, as he may have considered the subject more than I have done, may think less of them. Remember me to Mrs Baird, and Mr Oswald; and believe me to be, with great truth, dear Sir, sincerely yours,

(Signed) ADAM SMITH.'

Note (E)

I ought to have mentioned, among the number of Mr Smith's friends at Paris, the Abbé Morellet, of whom I have frequently heard him speak with much respect. But his name, with which I was not then very well acquainted, happened to escape my recollection while writing this Memoir; nor was I at all aware that they had been so well known to each other, as I have since learned that they were. On this subject I might quote the Abbé Morellet himself, of whom I had the pleasure to see much in the year 1806; but I prefer a reference to his own words, which coincide exactly with what he stated to myself. '*J'avais connu Smith dans un voyage qu'il avait fait en France, vers 1762; il parlait fort mal notre langue; mais La Théorie des Sentimens Moraux, publiée en 1758, m'avait donné une grande idée de sa sagacité et de sa profondeur. Et véritablement je le regarde encore aujourd'hui comme un des hommes qui a fait les observations et les analyses les plus complètes dans toutes les questions qu'il a traitées. M. Turgot, qui aimait ainsi que moi la métaphysique, estimait beaucoup son talent. Nous le vîmes plusieurs fois; il fut présenté chez Helvétius; nous parlâmes de la théorie commerciale, banque, crédit public, et de plusieurs points du grand ouvrage qu'il méditait.*'—*Mémoires de l'Abbé Morellet, Tome I. p. 257, (Paris, 1821).*

Note (F)

The Theory of Moral Sentiments does not seem to have attracted so much notice in France as might have been expected, till after the publication of the *Wealth of Nations*. Mr Smith used to ascribe this in part to the Abbé Blavet's translation, which he thought was but indifferently executed. A better reason, however, may perhaps be found in the low and stationary condition of Ethical and Metaphysical science in that country, previous to the publication of the *Encyclopédie*. On this head I beg leave to transcribe a few sentences from an anonymous paper of his own, printed in the *Edinburgh Review* for the year 1755. The remarks contained in them, so far as they are admitted to be just, tend strongly to confirm an observation which I have elsewhere quoted from

D'Alembert, with respect to the literary taste of his countrymen. (*See Philosophical Essays*, pp. 110- 111) *Part I, Essay iii; Works Vol.V. p. 126.*

'The original and inventive genius of the English, has not only discovered itself in Natural Philosophy, but in morals, metaphysics, and part of the abstract sciences. Whatever attempts have been made in modern times towards improvement in this contentious and unprosperous philosophy, beyond what the ancients have left us, have been made in England. The meditations of Des Cartes excepted, I know nothing in French that aims at being original on that subject; for the philosophy of M. Regis, as well as that of Father Malebranche, are but refinements on the meditations of Des Cartes. But Mr Hobbes, Mr Locke, and Dr Mandeville, Lord Shaftesbury, Dr Butler, Dr Clarke, and Mr Hutcheson, have all of them, according to their different and inconsistent systems, endeavoured at least, to be, in some measure, original; and to add something to that stock of observations with which the world had been furnished before them.

This branch of the English Philosophy, which seems now to be entirely neglected by the English themselves, has, of late, been transported into France. I observe some traces of it, not only in the *Encyclopédie*, but in the *Theory of agreeable sentiments* by M. de Pouilly, a work that is in many respects original; and above all, in the late *Discourse upon the origin and foundation of the inequality amongst mankind*, by M. Rousseau of Geneva.'

A new translation of Mr Smith's *Theory*, (including his last additions), was published at Paris in 1798 by Madame de Condorcet, with some ingenious letters on *Sympathy* annexed to it, written by the translator.

Note (G)

By way of explanation of what is hinted at in the foot-note, I think it proper for me now to add, that at the period when this memoir was read before the Royal Society of Edinburgh, it was not unusual, even among men of some talents and information, to confound, studiously, the speculative doctrines of Political Economy, with those discussions concerning the first principles of Government which happened unfortunately at that time to agitate the public mind. The doctrine of a Free Trade was itself represented as of a revolutionary tendency; and some who had formerly prided themselves on their intimacy with Mr Smith, and on their zeal for the propagation of his liberal system, began to call in question the expediency of subjecting to the disputations of philosophers, the arcana of State Policy, and the unfathomable wisdom of the feudal ages. In reprinting this Section at present, I have, from obvious motives, followed scrupulously the text of the first edition, without any alterations or additions whatsoever; reserving any comments and criticisms which I have to offer on Mr Smith's work, for a different publication. (1810.)

Note (H)

Notwithstanding the unqualified praise I have bestowed, in the text, on Mr Smith's arrangement, I readily admit, that some of his incidental discussions and digressions might have been more skilfully and happily incorporated with his general design. Little stress, however, will be laid on blemishes of this sort, by those who are aware of the extreme difficulty of giving any thing like a

systematic shape to researches so various, and, at first view, so unconnected, as his plan embraces: Some of them having for their aim to establish abstract principles of universal application; and others bearing a particular reference to the circumstances and policy of our own country. It ought to be remembered, besides, how much our taste, in matters of arrangement, is liable to be influenced by our individual habits of thought; by the accidental conduct of our early studies; and by other circumstances which may be expected to present the same objects under different aspects to different inquirers. Something of this kind is experienced even in those more exact Sciences, where the whole business of an elementary writer is to state known and demonstrated truths, in a logical and pleasing series. It has been experienced most remarkably in pure geometry, the elements of which have been modelled into a hundred different forms by the first mathematicians of modern Europe; while none of them has yet been able to unite the suffrages of the public in favour of any one arrangement as indisputably the best. What allowances, then, are those entitled to, who, venturing upon a vast and untrodden field, aspire to combine with the task of original speculation, a systematical regard to luminous method, if they should sometimes happen to mistake the historical order of their own conclusions for the natural procedure of the human understanding!

Note (I)(35*)

When this memoir was first written, I was not fully aware to what an extent the French Economists had been anticipated in some of their most important conclusions, by writers (chiefly British) of a much earlier date. I had often, indeed, been struck with the coincidence between their reasonings concerning the advantages of their territorial tax, and Mr Locke's speculations on the same subject, in one of his political discourses published sixty years before; as well as with the coincidence of their argument against corporations and exclusive companies, with what had been urged at a still earlier period, by the celebrated John de Witt; by Sir Josiah Child; by John Cary of Bristol; and by various other speculative men, who appeared in the latter part of the seventeenth century. To these last writers, my attention had been directed by some quotations and references of the Abbé Morellet, in his very able *Memoir on the East India Company of France*, printed in 1769. Many passages, however, much more full and explicit than those which had fallen in his way, have been pointed out to me by the Earl of Lauderdale, in his curious and valuable collection of rare English Tracts relating to political economy. In some of these, the argument is stated in a manner so clear and so conclusive, as to render it surprising, that truths of which the public has been so long in possession, should have been so completely overborne by prejudice and misrepresentation, as to have had, to a large proportion of readers, the appearance of novelty and paradox, when revived in the philosophical theories of the present age.(36*)

The system of political economy which professes to regulate the commercial intercourse of different nations, and which Mr Smith has distinguished by the title of the Commercial, or Mercantile System, had its root in prejudices still more inveterate than those which restrained the freedom of commerce and industry among the members of the same community. It was supported not only by the prejudices with which all innovations have to contend, and by the talents of very powerful bodies of men interested to defend it, but by the mistaken and clamorous patriotism of many good citizens, and their blind hostility to

supposed enemies or rivals abroad. The absurd and delusive principles, too, formerly so prevalent, with respect to the nature of national wealth, and the essential importance of a favourable balance of trade (principles which, though now so clearly and demonstrably exploded by the arguments of Mr Smith, must be acknowledged to fall in naturally, and almost inevitably, with the first apprehensions of the mind when it begins to speculate concerning the Theory of Commerce), communicated to the Mercantile System a degree of plausibility, against which the most acute reasoners of our own times are not always sufficiently on their guard. It was accordingly, at a considerably later period, that the wisdom of its maxims came to be the subject of general discussion; and, even at this day, the controversy to which the discussion gave rise cannot be said to be completely settled, to the satisfaction of all parties. A few enlightened individuals, however, in different parts of Europe, very early got a glimpse of the truth;(37*) and it is but justice, that the scattered hints which they threw out should be treasured up as materials for literary history. I have sometimes thought of attempting a slight sketch on that subject myself; but am not without hopes that this suggestion may have the effect of recommending the task to some abler hand. At present, I shall only quote one or two paragraphs from a pamphlet published in 1734, by Jacob Vanderlint;(38*) an author whose name has been frequently referred to of late years, but whose book never seems to have attracted much notice till long after the publication of the *Wealth of Nations*. He describes himself, in his Preface, as an ordinary tradesman, from whom the conciseness and accuracy of a scholar is not to be expected; and yet the following passages will bear a comparison, both in point of good sense and of liberality, with what was so ably urged by Mr Hume twenty years afterwards, in his *Essay on the Jealousy of Trade*.

‘All nations have some commodities peculiar to them, which, therefore, are undoubtedly designed to be the foundation of commerce between the several nations, and produce a great deal of maritime employment for mankind, which probably, without such peculiarities, could not be; and in this respect, I suppose, we are distinguished, as well as other nations; and I have before taken notice, that if one nation be by nature more distinguished in this respect than another, as they will, by that means, gain more money than such other nations, so the prices of all their commodities and labour will be higher in such proportion, and consequently, they will not be richer or more powerful for having more money than their neighbours.

‘But, if we import any kind of goods cheaper than we can now raise them, which otherwise might be as well raised at home; in this case, undoubtedly, we ought to attempt to raise such commodities, and thereby furnish so many new branches of employment and trade for our own people; and remove the inconvenience of receiving any goods from abroad, which we can anywise raise on as good terms ourselves: and, as this should be done to prevent every nation from finding their account with us by any such commodities whatsoever, so this would more effectually shut out all such foreign goods than any law can do.

‘And as this is all the prohibitions and restraints whereby any foreign trade should be obstructed, so, if this method were observed, our gentry would find themselves the richer, notwithstanding their consumption of such other foreign goods, as being the peculiarities of other nations, we may be obliged to import.

For if, when we have thus raised all we can at home, the goods we import after this is done be cheaper than we can raise such goods ourselves, (which they must be, otherwise we shall not import them), it is plain, the consumption of any such goods cannot occasion so great an expence as they would, if we could shut them out by an act of parliament, in order to raise them ourselves.

‘From hence, therefore, it must appear, that it is impossible any body should be poorer, for using any foreign goods at cheaper rates than we can raise them ourselves, after we have done all we possibly can to raise such goods as cheap as we import them, and find we cannot do it; nay, this very circumstance makes all such goods come under the character of the peculiarities of those countries, which are able to raise any such goods cheaper than we can do; for they will necessarily operate as such.’ — (pp. 97, 98, 99.)

The same author, in another part of his work, quotes from Erasmus Philips, a maxim which he calls a glorious one: ‘That a trading nation should be an open warehouse, where the merchant may buy what he pleases, and sell what he can. Whatever is brought to you, if you don’t want it, you won’t purchase it; if you do want it, the largeness of the impost don’t keep it from you.’

‘All nations of the world, therefore,’ (says Vanderlint) ‘should be regarded as one body of tradesmen, exercising their various occupations for the mutual benefit and advantage of each other.’ — (p. 42.) ‘I will not contend,’ (he adds, evidently in compliance with national prejudices,) ‘I will not contend for a free and unrestrained trade with respect to France, though I can’t see it could do us any harm even in that case.’ — (p. 45.)

In these last sentences, an argument is suggested for a free commerce all over the globe, founded on the same principle on which Mr Smith has demonstrated the beneficial effects of a division and distribution of labour among the members of the same community. The happiness of the whole race would, in fact, be promoted by the former arrangement, in a manner exactly analogous to that in which the comforts of a particular nation are multiplied by the latter.

In the same Essay, Mr Vanderlint, following the footsteps of Locke, maintains, with considerable ingenuity, the noted doctrine of the Economists, that all taxes fall ultimately on land; and recommends the substitution of a land-tax, in place of those complicated fiscal regulations, which have been everywhere adopted by the statesmen of modern Europe; and which, while they impoverish and oppress the people, do not, in the same degree, enrich the sovereign.(39*)

The doctrine which more exclusively distinguishes this celebrated sect, is neither that of the freedom of trade, nor of the territorial tax, (on both of which topics they had been, in part, anticipated by English writers), but what they have so ingeniously and forcibly urged, with respect to the tendency of the existing regulations and restraints, to encourage the industry of towns in preference to that of the country. To revive the languishing agriculture of France was the first and the leading aim of their speculations; and it is impossible not to admire the metaphysical acuteness and subtlety, with which all their various discussions are so combined as to bear systematically upon this favourite object. The influence of their labours in turning the attention of French statesmen, under the old

monarchy, to the encouragement of this essential branch of national industry, was remarked by Mr Smith more than thirty years ago; nor has it altogether ceased to operate in the same direction, under all the violent and fantastic metamorphoses which the government of that country has since exhibited.(40*)

In combating the policy of commercial privileges, and in asserting the reciprocal advantages of a free trade among different nations, the founders of the economical sect candidly acknowledged, from the beginning, that their first lights were borrowed from England. The testimony of M. Turgot upon this point is so perfectly decisive, that I hope to gratify some of my readers (in the present interrupted state of our communication with the continent), by the following quotations from a memoir, which, till lately, was very little known, even in France. They are transcribed from his Eloge on M. Vincent de Gournay; a name which has always been united with that of Quesnay, by the French writers who have attempted to trace the origin and progress of the now prevailing opinions on this branch of legislation. (*Oeuvres de M. Turgot, Tome III. Paris, 1808.*)

'JEAN-CLAUDE-MARIE VINCENT, Seigneur DE GOURNAY, etc. est mort à Paris le 27. Juin dernier (1759) âgé de quarante sept ans.

'Il étoit né à Saint-Malo, au moi de Mai 1712, de Claude VINCENT, l'un des plus considérables négocians de cette ville, et secrétaire du roi.

'Ses parens le destinèrent au commerce, et l'envoyèrent à Cadix en 1729, à peine âgé de dix sept ans.' — (p. 321.)

'Aux lumières que M. de Gournay tiroit de sa propre expérience et de ses réflexions, il joignit la lecture des meilleurs ouvrages que possèdent sur cette matière les différentes nations de l'Europe, et en particulier la nation Angloise, la plus riche de toutes en ce genre, et dont il s'étoit rendu, Pour cette raison, la langue familière. Les ouvrages qu'il lut avec plus de plaisir, et dont il goûta le plus la doctrine, furent les traités du fameux Josias Child, qu'il a traduits depuis en François, et les mémoires du Grand Pensionnaire Jean de Witt. On sait que ces deux grands hommes sont considérés, l'un en Angleterre, l'autre en Hollande, comme les législateurs du commerce; que leurs principes sont devenus les principes nationaux, et que l'observation de ces principes est regardée comme une des sources de la prodigieuse supériorité que ces deux nations ont acquise dans le commerce sur toutes les autres puissances. M. de Gournay trouvoit sans cesse dans la pratique d'un commerce étendu la vérification de ces principes simples et lumineux, il se les rendoit propres sans prévoir qu'il étoit destiné à en repandre un jour la lumière en France, et à mériter de sa patrie le même tribut de reconnaissance, que l'Angleterre et la Hollande rendent à la mémoire de ces deux bienfaiteurs de leur nation et de l'humanité.' — (pp. 324, 325.)

'M. de Gournay, après avoir quitté l'Espagne, prit la resolution d'employer quelques années à voyager dans les différentes parties de l'Europe, soit pour augmenter ses connoissances, soit pour étendre ses correspondances et former des liaisons avantageuses pour le commerce,

qu'il se proposoit de continuer. Il voyagea à Hambourg; il parcourut la Hollande et l'Angleterre; partout il faisoit des observations et rassembloit des mémoires sur l'état du commerce et de la marine, et sur les principes d'administration adoptés par ces différentes nations relativement à ces grands objets. Il entretenoit pendant ses voyages une correspondance suivie avec M. de Maurepas, auquel il faisoit part des lumières qu'il recueilloit.' — (pp. 325, 326.)

'M. de Gournay acheta, en 1749, une charge de conseiller au grand conseil; et une place d'intendant du commerce étant venue à vâquer au commencement de 1751, M. de Machault, à qui le mérite de M. de Gournay étoit trèsconnu, la lui fit donner. C'est de ce moment que la vie de M. de Gournay devint celle d'un homme public: son entrée au Bureau du commerce parut être l'époque d'une révolution. M. de Gournay, dans une pratique de vingt ans du commerce le plus étendu et le plus varié, dans la fréquentation des plus habiles négocians de Hollande et d'Angleterre, dans la lecture des auteurs les plus estimés de ces deux nations, dans l'observation attentive des causes de leur étonnante prospérité, s'étoit fait des principes qui parurent nouveaux à quelques-uns des magistrats qui composoient le Bureau du Commerce.' — (pp. 327, 328.)

'M. de Gournay n'ignoroit pas que plusieurs des abus auxquels il s'opposoit, avoient été autrefois établis dans une grande partie de l'Europe, et qu'il en restoit même encore des vestiges en Angleterre; mais il savoit aussi que le gouvernement Anglois en avoit détruit une partie; que s'il en restoit encore quelques-unes, bien loin de les adopter comme des établissemens utiles, il cherchoit à les restreindre, à les empêcher de s'étendre, et ne les toléroit encore, que parceque la constitution républicaine met quelquefois des obstacles à la réformation de certains abus, lorsque ces abus ne peuvent être corrigés que par une autorité dont l'exercice le plus avantageux au peuple excite toujours sa défiance. Il savoit enfin que depuis un siècle toutes les Personnes éclairées, soit en Hollande, soit en Angleterre, regardoient ces abus comme des restes de la barbarie Gothique et de la foiblesse de tous les gouvernemens qui n'avoient ni connu l'importance de la liberté publique, ni su la protéger des invasions de l'esprit monopoleur et de l'intérêt particulier. (41*)

'M. de Gournay avoit fait et vu faire, pendant vingt ans, le plus grand commerce de l'univers sans avoir eu occasion d'apprendre autrement que par les livres l'existence de toutes ces loix auxquelles il voyoit attacher tant d'importance, et il ne croyoit point alors qu'on le prendroit pour un novateur et un homme à systèmes, lorsqu' il ne feroit que développer les principes que l'expérience lui avoit enseignés, et qu'il voyoit universellement reconnus par les négocians les plus éclairés avec lesquels il vivoit.

'Ces principes, qu'on qualifioit de système nouveau, ne lui paroissoient que les maximes du plus simple bon sens. Tout ce prétendu système étoit appuyé sur cette maxime, qu'en general tout homme connoît mieux son propre intérêt qu'un autre homme à qui cet intérêt est entièrement

indifférent. (42*) 'De là M. de Gournay concluait, que lorsque l'intérêt des particuliers est précisément le même que l'intérêt general, ce qu'on peut faire de mieux est de laisser chaque homme libre de faire ce qu'il veut. — Or il trouvoit impossible que dans le commerce abandonné à lui-meme, l'intérêt particulier ne concourût pas avec l'intérêt général.' — (pp. 334, 335, 336.)

In mentioning M. de Gournay's opinion on the subject of taxation, M. Turgot does not take any notice of the source from which he derived it. But on this head (whatever may be thought of the justness of that opinion) there can be no doubt among those who are acquainted with the writings of Locke and of Vanderlint. 'Il pensoit' (says Turgot) 'que tous les impôts, sont en derniere analyse, toujours payés par le propriétaire, qui vend d'autant moins les produits de sa terre, et que si tous les impôts étoient répartis sur les fonds, les propriétaires et le royaume y gagneroient tout ce qu' absorbent les fraix de régie, toute la consommation ou l'emploi stérile des hommes perdus, soit à percevoir les impôts, soit à faire la contrebande, soit à l'empêcher, sans compter la prodigieuse augmentation des richesses et des valeurs résultantes de l'augmentation du commerce.' — (pp. 350, 351.)

In a note upon this passage by the Editor, this project of a territorial tax, together with that of a free trade, are mentioned among the most important points in which Gournay and Quesnay agreed perfectly together:(43*) and it is not a little curious, that the same two doctrines should have been combined together as parts of the same system, in the Treatise of Vanderlint, published almost twenty years before.(44*)

It does not appear from Turgot's account of M. de Gournay, that any of his original works were ever published; nor have I heard that he was known even in the capacity of a translator, prior to 1752. 'Il eut le bonheur' (says M. Turgot) 'de rencontrer dans M. Trudaine, le même amour de la vérité et du bien public qui l'animoit; comme il n'avoit encore développé ses principes que par occasion, dans la discussion des affaires ou dans la conversation, M. Trudaine l'engagea à donner comme une espèce de corps de sa doctrine; et c'est dans cette vue qu'il a traduit, en 1752, les traités sur le commerce et sur l'intérêt de l'argent, de Josias Child et de Thomas Culpepper.' — (p. 354.) I quote this passage, because it enables me to correct an inaccuracy in point of dates, which has escaped the learned and ingenious writer to whom we are indebted for the first complete edition which has yet appeared of Turgot's works. After dividing the Economists into two schools, that of Gournay, and that of Quesnay, he classes under the former denomination (among some other very illustrious names), Mr David Hume; whose Political Discourses, I must take the liberty of remarking, were published as early as 1752, the very year when M. Gournay published his translations of *Child* and of *Culpepper*.

The same writer afterwards adds: 'Entre ces deux écoles, profitant de l'une et de l'autre, mais évitant avec soin de paroître tenir à aucune, se sont élevés quelques philosophes éclectiques, à la tête desquels il faut placer M. Turgot, l'Abbé de Condillac, et le célèbre Adam Smith; et parmi lesquels on doit compter très-honorablement le traducteur de celui-ci, M. le Sénateur Germain Garnier, en Angleterre my Lord Landsdown, à Paris M. Say. à Genève M. Simonde.'

How far Mr Smith has availed himself of the writings of the Economists in his *Wealth of Nations*, it is not my present business to examine. All that I wish to establish is, his indisputable claim to the same opinions which he professed in common with them, several years before the names of either Gournay or of Quesnay were at all heard of in the republic of letters.

With respect to a very distinguished and enlightened English statesman, who is here included along with Mr Smith among the eclectic disciples of Gournay and of Quesnay, I am enabled to state, from his own authority, the accidental circumstance which first led him into this train of thought. In a letter which I had the honour to receive from his Lordship in 1795, he expresses himself thus:

'I owe to a journey I made with Mr Smith from Edinburgh to London, the difference between light and darkness through the best part of my life. The novelty of his principles, added to my youth and prejudices, made me unable to comprehend them at the time, but he urged them with so much benevolence, as well as eloquence, that they took a certain hold, which, though it did not develope itself so as to arrive at full conviction for some few years after, I can fairly say, has constituted, ever since, the happiness of my life, as well as any little consideration I may have enjoyed in it.'

As the current of public opinion, at a particular period (or at least the prevailing habits of study), may be pretty accurately judged of by the books which were then chiefly in demand, it may be worth mentioning, before I conclude this note, that in the year 1751 (the same year in which Mr Smith was promoted to his professorship), several of our choicest tracts on subjects connected with political economy were re-published by Robert and Andrew Foulis, printers to the University of Glasgow. A book of Mr Law's entitled, *Proposals and Reasons for constituting a Council of Trade in Scotland, etc.* reprinted in that year, is now lying before me; from which it appears, that the following works had recently issued from the university press: — *Child's Discourse of Trade; Law's Essay on Money and Trade; Gee's Trade and Navigation of Great Britain considered; and Berkeley's Querist.* In the same list, Sir William Petty's *Political Arithmetic* is advertised as being then in the press.

Mr Smith's Lectures, it must be remembered (to the fame of which he owed his appointment at Glasgow), were read at Edinburgh as early as 1748.

Note (J)

Among the questionable doctrines to which Mr Smith has lent the sanction of his name, there is perhaps none that involves so many important consequences as the opinion he has maintained concerning the expediency of legal restrictions on the rate of interest. The inconclusiveness of his reasoning on this point, has been evinced, with a singular degree of logical acuteness, by Mr Bentham, in a short treatise entitled *A Defence of Usury*; a performance to which (notwithstanding the long interval that has elapsed since the date of its publication), I do not know that any answer has yet been attempted; and which a late writer, eminently acquainted with the operations of commerce, has pronounced (and, in my opinion, with great truth), to be 'perfectly unanswerable.'(45*) It is a remarkable

circumstance, that Mr Smith should, in this solitary instance, have adopted, on such slight grounds, a conclusion so strikingly contrasted with the general spirit of his political discussions, and so manifestly at variance with the fundamental principles which, on other occasions, he has so boldly followed out, through all their practical applications. This is the more surprising, as the French Economists had, a few years before, obviated the most plausible objections which are apt to present themselves against this extension of the doctrine of commercial freedom. See, in particular, some observations in M. Turgot's *Reflections on the Formation and Distribution of Riches*; and a separate Essay, by the same author, entitled, '*Mémoire sur le prêt à intérêt, et sur le Commerce des Fers.*' (46*)

Upon this particular question, however, as well as upon those mentioned in the preceding Note, I must be allowed to assert the prior claims of our own countrymen to those of the Economists. From a memoir presented by the celebrated Mr Law (before his elevation to the ministry), to the Regent Duke of Orleans, that very ingenious writer appears to have held the same opinion with M. Turgot; and the arguments he employs in support of it are expressed with that clearness and conciseness which, in general, distinguish his compositions. The memoir to which I refer is to be found in a French work entitled, *Recherches et Considérations sur les Finances de France, depuis 1595 jusqu'en 1721.* (See Vol. VI. p. 181. Edit. printed at Liège, 1758.) In the same volume, this doctrine is ascribed by the editor, to Mr Law as its author, or, at least, as its first broacher in France. '*Une opinion apportée en France pour la première fois par M. Law, c'est que l'état ne doit jamais donner de réglemens sur le taux de l'intérêt.*' — p. 64.

To this opinion Law appears evidently to have been led by Locke, whose reasonings (although he himself declares in favour of a legal rate of interest), seem, all of them, to point at the opposite conclusion. Indeed the apology he suggests for the existing regulations is so trifling and so slightly urged, that one would almost suppose he was prevented merely by a respect for established prejudices, from pushing his argument to its full extent. The passage I allude to, considering the period when it was written, does no small credit to Locke's sagacity. — (See the folio edit. of his Works, Vol. II. p. 31, et seq.)

I would not have entered here into the historical details contained in the two last Notes, if I had not been anxious to obviate the effect of that weak, but inveterate prejudice which shuts the eyes of so many against the most manifest and important truths, when they are supposed to proceed from an obnoxious quarter. The leading opinions which the French Economists embodied and systematized were, in fact, all of British origin; and most of them follow as necessary consequences, from a maxim of natural law, which (according to Lord Coke), is identified with the first principles of English jurisprudence. '*La loi de la libgrté entière de tout commerce est un corollaire du droit de propriété.*'

The truly exceptionable part of the economical system (as I have elsewhere remarked), is that which relates to the power of the Sovereign. Its original authors and patrons were the decided opposers of political liberty, and, in their zeal for the right of property and the freedom of commerce, lost sight of the only means by which either the one or the other can be effectually protected.

Note (K)

In the early part of Mr Smith's life it is well known to his friends, that he was for several years attached to a young lady of great beauty and accomplishment. How far his addresses were favourably received, or what the circumstances were which prevented their union, I have not been able to learn; but I believe it is pretty certain that, after this disappointment, he laid aside all thoughts of marriage. The lady to whom I allude died also unmarried. She survived Mr Smith for a considerable number of years, and was alive long after the publication of the first edition of this Memoir. I had the pleasure of seeing her when she was turned of eighty, and when she still retained evident traces of her former beauty. The powers of her understanding and the gaiety of her temper seemed to have suffered nothing from the hand of time.

END OF THE NOTES

P.S. Soon after the foregoing account of Mr Smith was read before the Royal Society, a Volume of his Posthumous Essays was published by his executors and friends, Dr Black and Dr Hutton. In this volume are contained three Essays on the Principles which lead and direct Philosophical Inquiries; -- illustrated, in the first place, by the *History of Astronomy*; in the second, by the *History of the Ancient Physics*; in the third, by the *History of the Ancient Logics and Metaphysics*. To these are subjoined three other Essays; — on the *Imitative Arts*; on the *Affinity between certain English and Italian Verses*; and on the *External Senses*. 'The greater part of them appear' (as is observed in an advertisement subscribed by the Editors) 'to be parts of a plan the Author had once formed, for giving a connected history of the liberal sciences and elegant arts.' — 'This plan' (we are informed by the same authority) 'he had long abandoned as far too extensive; and these parts of it lay beside him neglected till his death.'

As this posthumous volume did not appear till after the publication of the foregoing Memoir, it would be foreign to the design of these Notes, to offer any observations on the different Essays which it contains. Their merits were certainly not overrated by the two illustrious editors, when they expressed their hopes, 'that the reader would find in them that happy connection, that full and accurate expression, and that clear illustration which are conspicuous in the rest of the author's works; and that, though it is difficult to add much to the great fame he so justly acquired by his other writings, these would be read with satisfaction and pleasure.' The three first Essays, more particularly the fragment on the *History of Astronomy*, are perhaps as strongly marked as any of his most finished compositions, with the peculiar characteristics of his rich, original, and comprehensive mind.

In order to obviate a cavil which may possibly occur to some of those readers who were not personally acquainted with Mr Smith, I shall take this opportunity of mentioning, that in suppressing, through the course of the foregoing narrative, his honorary title of LL. D. (which was conferred on him by the University of Glasgow a very short time before he resigned his Professorship), I have complied not only with his own taste, but with the uniform practice of that circle in which I had the happiness of enjoying his society. To have given him, so soon after his death, a designation, which he never assumed but on the title-pages of his books;

and by which he is never mentioned in the letters of Mr Hume and of his other most intimate friends, would have subjected me justly to the charge of affectation from the audience before whom my paper was read; but the truth is (so little was my ear then accustomed to the name of Doctor Smith), that I was altogether unconscious of the omission, till it was pointed out to me, several years afterwards, as a circumstance which, however trifling, had been magnified by more than one critic, into a subject of grave animadversion.

NOTES:

1. Mr Smith, the father, was a native of Aberdeenshire, and, in the earlier part of his life, practised at Edinburgh as a writer of the signet. He was afterwards private secretary to the Earl of Loudoun (during the time he held the offices of principal secretary of state for Scotland and of keeper of the great seal), and continued in this situation till 1713 or 1714, when he was appointed comptroller of the customs at Kirkaldy. He was also clerk to the courts-martial and councils of war for Scotland; and office which he held from 1707 till his death. As it is now seventy years since he died, the accounts I have received of him are very imperfect; but, from the particulars already mentioned, it may be presumed that he was a man of more than common abilities.
2. See Note A.
3. George Drysdale. Esq. of Kirkaldy, brother of the late Dr Drysdale.
4. As the word exhibitioner has misled a French author, to whose critical acquaintance with the English language I am indebted for a very elegant translation of this memoir. I think it proper to mention, that it is used here to denote a student who enjoys a salary to assist him in carrying on his academical education. 'The word Exhibition' (says Johnson) 'is much used for pensions allowed to scholars at the university.'—In the translation above referred to, as well as in the Notice prefixed to M. Garnier's translation of the *Wealth of Nations*, the clause in the text is thus rendered: *il entra au college de Baliol à Oxford, en qualité de démonstrateur de la fondation de Snell. With respect to Snell's foundation ('the largest, perhaps, and most liberal in Britain'), see the Statistical Account of the University of Glasgow by Dr Thomas Reid.*
5. *Redargutio Philosophiarum*. ('Although he had not taken up politics, he was by nature and entire disposition inclined towards civil affairs, and his talents tended chiefly in that direction; nor was he particularly concerned about Natural Philosophy, except to the degree it should suffice for maintaining the good name and fame of Philosophy, and adding to moral and civil disciplines and shedding on them a kind of majesty.')
6. See Note B.
7. The uncommon degree in which Mr Smith retained possession, even to the close of his life, of different branches of knowledge which he had long ceased to cultivate, has been often remarked to me by my learned colleague and friend, Mr Dalzel, Professor of Greek in the University.—Mr Dalzel mentioned particularly the readiness and correctness of Mr Smith's memory on philological subjects, and the acuteness and skill he displayed in various conversations with him on some of the minutiae of Greek grammar.

8. Mr Millar, the late celebrated Professor of Law in the University of Glasgow.
9. See Note C
10. See the letter quoted in Note D.
11. See his *Natural History of Religion*.
12. Published afterwards under the title of '*An Essay on the History of Civil Society*'.
13. I mention this fact on the respectable authority of James Ritchie, Esq. of Glasgow.
14. The day after his arrival at Paris, Mr Smith sent a formal resignation of his Professorship to the Rector of the University of Glasgow. 'I never was more anxious (says he in the conclusion of this letter) for the good of the College, than at this moment; and I sincerely wish, that whoever is my successor may not only do credit to the office by his abilities, but be a comfort to the very excellent men with whom he is likely to spend his life, by the probity of his heart, and the goodness of his temper.'

The following extract from the records of the University, which follows immediately after Mr Smith's letter of resignation, is at once a testimony to his assiduity as a Professor, and a proof of the just sense which that learned body entertained of the talents and worth of the colleague they had lost:

'The meeting accept of Dr Smith's resignation, in terms of the above letter, and the office of Professor of Moral Philosophy in this University is therefore hereby declared to be vacant. The University, at the same time, cannot help expressing their sincere regret at the removal of Dr Smith, whose distinguished probity and amiable qualities procured him the esteem and affection of his colleagues; and whose uncommon genius, great abilities, and extensive learning, did so much honour to this society; his elegant and ingenious Theory of Moral Sentiments having recommended him to the esteem of men of taste and literature throughout Europe. His happy talent in illustrating abstracted subjects, and faithful assiduity in communicating useful knowledge, distinguished him as a Professor, and at once afforded the greatest pleasure and the most important instruction to the youth under his care.'

15. See note E.
16. The following letter, which has been very accidentally preserved, while it serves as a memorial of Mr Smith's connection with the family of Rochefoucauld, is so expressive of the virtuous and liberal mind of the writer, that I am persuaded it will give pleasure to the Society to record it in their Transactions.

Paris, 3 Mars 1778.

'Le desir de se rappeler à votre souvenir, Monsieur, quand on a eu l'honneur de vous connoître, doit vous paroître fort naturel; permettez que nous saisissons pour cela, ma Mère et moi, l'occasion d'une édition nouvelle des Maximes de la Rochefoucauld, dont nous prenons la liberté de vous offrir un exemplaire. Vous voyez que nous n'avons point de rancune, puisque le mal que vous avez dit de lui dans la Théorie des Sentimens Moroux, ne nous empêche point de vous envoyer ce même ouvrage. Il s'en est même fallu de peu que je ne fisse encore plus, car j'avois eu peut-être la témérité d'entreprendre une traduction de votre Théorie; mais comme je venois de terminer la première partie, j'ai vu paroître la traduction de M. l'Abbé Balvet, et j'ai été forcé de renoncer au plaisir que j'aurois eu de faire passer dans ma langue un des meilleurs ouvrages de la vôtre. [See note F]

Il auroit bien fallu pour lors entreprendre une justification de mon grandpère. Peut-être n'auroit-il pas été difficile, premièrement de l'excuser, en disant, qu'il avoit toujours vu les hommes à la Cour, et dans la guerre civile, deux théâtres sur lesquels ils sont certainement plus mauvais qu'ailleurs; et ensuite de justifier par la conduite personnelle de l'auteur, les principes qui sont certainement trop généralisés dans son ouvrage. Il a pris la partie pour la tout; et parceque les gens qu'il avoit eu le plus sous les yeux étoient animés par l'amour propre, il en a fait le mobile général de tous les hommes. Au reste, quoique son ouvrage merite à certains égards d'être combattu, il est cependant estimable même pour le fond, et beaucoup pour la forme.

Permettez-moi de vous demander, si nous aurons bientôt une édition complete des oeuvres de votre illustre ami M. Hume? Nous l'avons sincèrement regretté.

Recevez, je vous supplie, l'expression sincère de tous les sentimens d'estime et d'attachement avec lesquels j'ai l'honneur d'être, Monsieur, votre très humble et très obeissant serviteur.

Le Duc de la Rochefoucauld.

Mr Smith's last intercourse with this excellent man was in the year 1789, when he informed him, by means of a friend who happened to be then in Paris, that in the future editions of his Theory the name of Rochefoucauld should no longer be classed with that of Mandeville. In the enlarged edition, accordingly, of that work, published a short time before his death, he has suppressed his censure of the author of the Maximes; who seems indeed (however exceptionable many of his principles may be) to have been actuated, both in his life and writings, by motives very different from those of Mandeville. The real scope of these maxims is placed, I think, in a just light by the ingenious author of the notice to the edition of them published at Paris in 1778.

17. . See the Preface to Voltarie's *Oedipe*, edit. of 1729.

18. The length to which this Memoir has already extended, together with some other reasons which it is unnecessary to mention here, have induced me, in printing the following section, to confine myself to a much more general view of the subject than I once intended. See Note G.
19. See the conclusion of his *Theory of Moral Sentiments*.
20. *Science de la Legislation, par le Chev. Filangieri, Liv. i. chap. 13.*
21. *Elements of the Philosophy of the Human Mind, p. 261.*
22. See Note H.
23. In proof of this, it is sufficient for me to appeal to a short history of the progress of political economy in France, published in one of the volumes of *Ephémérides du Citoyen*. See the first part of the volume for the year 1769. The paper is entitled, *Notice abrégée des différens Ecrits modernes, qui on concouru en France à former la science de l'économie politique.*
24. See Note I.
25. See Note J.
26. See Annual Register for the year 1776.
27. Some very affecting instances of Mr Smith's beneficence, in cases where he found it impossible to conceal entirely his good offices, have been mentioned to me by a near relation of his, and one of his most confidential friends, Miss Ross, daughter of the late Patrick Ross, Esq. of Innerneathy. They were all on a scale much beyond what might have been expected from his fortune; and were accompanied with circumstances equally honourable to the delicacy of his feelings and the liberality of his heart.
28. Mr Smith observed to me, not long before his death, that after all his practice in writing, he composed slowly, and with as great difficulty, as at first. He added, at the same time, that Mr Hume had acquired so great a facility in this respect, that the last volumes of his History were printed from his original copy, with a few marginal corrections.

It may gratify the curiosity of some readers to know, that when Mr Smith was employed in composition, he generally walked up and down his apartment, dictating to a secretary. All Mr Hume's works (I have been assured) were written in his own hand. A critical reader may, I think, perceive in the different styles of these two classical writers, the effects of their different modes of study.

29. See Note K.
30. Since writing the above, I have been favoured by Dr Hutton with the following particulars.

“Some time before his last illness, when Mr Smith had occasion to go to London, he enjoined his friends, to whom he had entrusted the disposal of his manuscripts, that, in the event of his death, they should destroy all the volumes of his lectures, doing with the rest of his manuscripts what they pleased. When now he had become weak, and saw the approaching period of his life, he spoke to his friends again upon the same subject. They entreated him to make his mind easy, as he might depend upon their fulfilling his desire. He was then satisfied. But some days afterwards, finding his anxiety not entirely removed, he begged one of them to destroy the volumes immediately. This accordingly was done; and his mind was so much relieved, that he was able to receive his friends in the evening with his usual complacency. They had been in use to sup with him every Sunday; and that evening there was a pretty numerous meeting of them. Mr Smith not finding himself able to sit up with them as usual, retired to bed before supper; and, as he went away, took leave of his friends by saying “I believe we must adjourn this meeting to some other place.” He died a very few days afterwards.”

Mr Riddell, an intimate friend of Mr Smith’s, who was present at one of the conversations on the subject of the manuscripts, mentioned to me, in addition to Dr Hutton’s note, that Mr Smith regretted ‘he had done so little’. But I meant (said he) to have done more; and there are materials in my papers, of which I could have made a great deal. But that is now out of the question.’

That the idea of destroying such unfinished works as might be in his possession at the time of his death, was not the effect of any sudden or hasty resolution, appears from the following letter to Mr Hume, written by Mr Smith in 1773, at a time when he was preparing himself for a journey to London, with the prospect of a pretty long absence from Scotland.

Edinburgh, 16th April 1773.

My dear Friend,

As I have left the care of all my literary papers to you, I must tell you, that except those which I carry along with me, there are none worth the publication, but a fragment of a great work, which contains a history of the astronomical systems that were successively in fashion down to the time of Des Cartes. Whether that might not be published as a fragment of an intended juvenile work, I leave entirely to your judgment, though I begin to suspect myself that there is paper book in my back room. All the other loose papers which you will find in that desk, or within the glass folding doors of a bureau which stands in my bed room, together with about eighteen thin paper folio books, which you will likewise find within the same glass folding doors, I desire to be destroyed without any examination.

Unless I die very suddenly, I shall take care that the papers I carry with me shall be carefully sent to you.

I ever am, my dear Friend, most faithfully your's,

Adam Smith.

To David Hume, Esq.
St Andrew's Square.

31. Ultimately a Senator of the College of Justice, under the title of Lord Reston.

32. *Vide, Works, vol. vii pp. 35, 36, 329, seq., 407, seq.*

33. I shall have occasion afterwards to vindicate Mr Smith's claims to originality in the former of these works, against the pretensions of some foreign writers. As I do not mean, however, to recur again to his alleged plagiarisms from the ancients. I shall introduce here, though somewhat out of place, two short quotations; from which it will appear, that the germ of his speculations concerning national wealth, as well as concerning the principles of ethics, is (according to Dr Gillies) to found in the Greek philosophers.

'By adopting Aristotle's principles on the subjects of exchangeable value, and of national wealth, Dr Smith has rescued the science of political economy from many false subtilties and many gross errors.' *Vol. I. p. 377, 2d edit.*

'The subject of money is treated above, *Vol. I. p. 374, et seq.* In that passage, compared with another in the *Magna Moralia*, we find the fundamental principles of the modern economists.' *Vol. II. p. 43.*

In reply to these observations, I have only to request my readers to compare them with the well-known passage in the first book of Aristotle's *Politics*, with respect to the lawfulness of usury. When we consider how much the interest of money enters as an element into all our modern disquisitions concerning commercial policy, is it possible to imagine, that there should be any thing more than the most general and fortuitous coincidence between the reasonings of such writers as Smith, or Hume, or Turgot; and those of an author whose experience of the nature and effects of commerce was so limited, as to impress his mind with a conviction, that to receive a premium for the use of money was inconsistent with the rules of morality? Compare the subsequent edition of Gillies's *Ethics and Politics of Aristotle*.

34. Probably William Ward, A.M. master of the Grammar School of Beverley, Yorkshire, who, among other grammatical works, published *An Essay on Grammar as it may be applied to the English Language, in two Treatises, etc., 4 to, 1765*, which is perhaps the most philosophical Essay on the English language extant.

35. In regard to Adam Smith's originality on various points of Political Economy, I may refer in general, to *Vols. VIII and IX*, in which Mr Stewart's Lectures on this science are contained.
36. That the writers of this Island should have had the start of those in the greater part of Europe, in adopting enlightened ideas concerning commerce, will not appear surprising, when we consider that 'according to the Common Law of England, the freedom of trade is the birthright of the subject.' For the opinions of Lord Coke and of Lord Chief-Justice Fortescue, on this point, see a pamphlet by Lord Lauderdale, entitled, '*Hints to the Manufacturers of Great Britain*,' etc.; where also may be found a list of statutes containing recognitions and declarations of the above principle.

37. According to the statement of Lord Herbert of Cherbury, the following doctrine was delivered in the English House of Commons by Sir Thomas More (then speaker), almost three centuries ago. "I say confidently, you need not fear this penury or scarceness of money; the intercourse of things being so establish'd throughout the whole world, that there is a perpetual derivation of all that can be necessary to mankind. Thus, your commodities will ever find out money; while, not to go far, I shall produce our own merchants only, who, (let me assure you) will be always as glad of your corn and cattel as you can be of any thing they bring you." — *The Life and Reign of King Henry the Eighth*, London, 1672, p. 135.

It is not a little discouraging to reflect, that the mercantile prejudice here combated by this great man, has not yet yielded entirely to all the philosophical lights of the 18th century.

38. '*Money Answers all Things*' etc. etc. London, 1734.
39. Lord Lauderdale has traced some hints of what are commonly considered as the peculiarities of the economical system, in various British publications now almost forgotten. The following extract, from a Treatise published by Mr Asgill, in 1696, breathes the very spirit of Quesnay's philosophy.

'What we call commodities is nothing but land severed from the soil. Man deals in nothing but earth. The merchants are the factors of the world, to exchange one part of the earth for another. The king himself is fed by the labour of the ox: and the clothing of the army, and victualling of the navy, must all be paid for to the owner of the soil as the ultimate receiver. All things in the world are originally the produce of the ground, and there must all things be raised.' — (*Inquiry into the Nature and Origin of Public Wealth*. p. 113)

The title of Asgill's Treatise is, 'Several assertions proved, in order to create another species of Money than Gold.' Its object was to support Dr Chamberlayne's proposition for a Land Bank, which he laid before the

British House of Commons in 1693, and before the Scottish Parliament in 1703.

40. It is but justice to the Economists to add, that they have laid more stress than any other class of writers whatsoever, on the principles of political economy, considered in their connection with the intellectual and moral character of a people.
41. Some of these liberal principles found their way into France before the end of the 17th century. — See a very curious book entitled, *Le Détail de la France sous le Règne Présent*. The first edition (which I have never met with), appeared in 1698 or 1699; the second was printed in 1707. Both editions are anonymous; but the author is well known to have been M. de Bois-Guilbert; to whom Voltaire has also (erroneously) ascribed the *Projet d'une dixme Royale*, published in the name of the Maréchal de Vauban. (See the *Ephémérides du Citoyen* for the year 1769. Tome IX. pp. 12, 13.)

The fortunate expression *laissez nous faire*, which an old merchant (Le Gendre) is said to have used in a conversation with Colbert; and the still more significant maxim of the Marquis d'Argenson, *pas trop gouverner*, are indebted chiefly for that proverbial celebrity which they have now acquired, to the accidental lustre reflected upon them by the discussion of more modern times. They must, at the same time, be allowed to evince in their authors, a clear perception of the importance of a problem, which Mr Burke has somewhat pronounced to be 'one of the finest in legislation; — to ascertain, what the state ought to take upon itself to direct by the public wisdom; and what it ought to leave, with as little interference as possible, to individual discretion.' The solution of this problem, in some of its most interesting cases, may be regarded as one of the principal objects of Mr Smith's Inquiry; and among the many happy changes which that work has gradually produced in prevailing opinions, none is, perhaps, of greater consequence, than its powerful effect in discrediting that empirical spirit of tampering Regulation, which the multitude is so apt to mistake for the provident sagacity of political experience.

42. I have endeavoured, in a former work, to vindicate, upon the very same principle, some of Mr Smith's political speculation against the charge of being founded rather on theory than on actual experience. I was not aware, till very lately, that this view of the subject had been sanctioned by such high authorities as M. de Gournay and M. Turgot. — See *Philosophy of the Human Mind*, pp. 254, 255, 256, 3d edit.
43. *Ceci est, avec la liberté du commerce et du travail, un des principaux points sur lesquels M. de Gournay et M. Quesnay on été complètement d'accord.*
44. I have already quoted, from Vanderlint, his opinion about the freedom of trade. His ideas with respect to taxation I shall also state in his own words: "I can't dismiss this head without shewing, that if all the taxes were taken off goods, and levied on lands and houses only, the gentlemen would have more nett rent left out of their estates, than they have now when the taxes are almost wholly levied out of goods." For his argument in proof of

this proposition, see his *Essay on Money*, p. 109 et seq. See also Locke's *Considerations on the lowering of interest and raising the Value of Money*; published in 1691.

As to the discovery (as it has been called) of the luminous distinction between the 'produit total' and the 'produit net de la culture', [See the *Ephémérides du Citoyen* for the year 1769, T. I pp. 13, 25 and 26, and T. IX, p. 9.] it is not worth while to dispute about its author. Whatever merit this theory of taxation may possess, the whole credit of it evidently belongs to those who first proposed the doctrine stated in the foregoing paragraph. The calculations of M. Quesnay, however interesting and useful they may have appeared in a country where so great a proportion of the territory was cultivated by Métayers or Coloni Partiarum, cannot surely be considered as throwing any new light on the general principles of Political Economy.

45. Sir Francis Baring, *Pamphlet on the Bank of England*.
 46. In an Essay read before a literary society in Glasgow, some years before the publication of the *Wealth of Nations*, Dr Reid disputed the expediency of legal restrictions on the rate of interest; founding his opinion on some of the same considerations which were afterwards so forcibly stated by Mr Bentham. His attention had probably been attracted to this question by a very weak defence of these restrictions in Sir James Steuart's *Political Economy*; a book which had then been recently published, and which (though he differed widely from many of its doctrines), he was accustomed, in his academical lectures, to recommend warmly to his students. It was indeed the only systematical work on the subject that had appeared in our language, previous to Mr Smith Inquiry.
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