FROM SCOTTISH ENLIGHTENMENT
TO TRIPARTITE THEORY:
RE-READING ADAM SMITH SYSTEMATICALLY [*]

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Abstract: In today's political philosophy framework, it is commonplace to associate Adam Smith with a kind of theory that ignores human dispositions and considers only the self-interested perspective of individuals. Although this view has been widely supported in different fields – viz Philosophy and Economy, we consider this a biased interpretation. Using the Cambridge School orientation, we explain the importance of historical background in reading Smith's work to argue that Smith's writings should be interpreted within the Scottish Enlightenment context. From this contextual approach, it is possible to sustain an integrated reading of Smith's books The Theory of Moral Sentiments (TMS) and An Inquiry into the Nature and Cause of the Wealth of Nations (WN). This reading leads to a more faithful interpretation of Smith's idea that the agent in society is morally engaged in socio-economic relations. Once this hypothesis is confirmed, we will defend a systematic analysis of Smith's philosophy arguing that Smith's philosophy is a holistic system, in what we call a tripartite theory.
Keywords: Scottish Enlightenment, moral, Adam Smith, Tripartite theory.

Resumo: No quadro atual da filosofia política, é comum associar Adam Smith a um tipo de teoria que ignora as disposições humanas e considera apenas a perspectiva do interesse próprio dos indivíduos. Embora esta visão tenha sido amplamente apoiada em diferentes campos – v. g. Filosofia e Economia, consideramos esta uma interpretação tendenciosa. Lançando mão da orientação da Escola de Cambridge, esclarecemos a importância do contexto histórico na interpretação da obra de Smith para argumentar que seus escritos devem ser interpretados a partir do contexto do Iluminismo escocês. A partir desta abordagem conjectural, é possível sustentar uma leitura integrada de seus livros The Theory of Moral Sentiments (TMS) e An Inquiry into the Nature and Cause of the Wealth of Nations (WN). Esta leitura leva-nos a uma interpretação mais fiel da ideia smithiana de que o agente está moralmente envolvido nas relações socioeconômicas. Uma vez confirmada esta hipótese, defenderemos uma análise sistemática da filosofia de Smith argumentando que sua filosofia é um sistema holístico, no que chamamos de teoria tripartite.
Palavras-chave: Iluminismo Escocês, moral, Adam Smith, Teoria tripartite.

Introduction

Adam Smith wrote in his masterpiece *An Inquiry into the Nature and Cause of the Wealth of Nations* that the prosperity of a nation depends to a large extent on the freedom of individuals to trade without government interference. In a pre-capitalist period, marked by monopolies and privileges, this thought offered a new perspective. However, as Smith's work was re-read over time, interpretations of his political and economic arguments took on different contours, shaped by the biases of his readers. One of these views transforms his system of thought into an archetype of atomized liberalism (libertarianism), whose outcome is an individualistic caricature of liberalism wholly unconcerned with social issues. Disregarding essential elements in Smith's books, this interpretation relegates to a second plane the individual's moral formation in the model of society proposed by Smith (WINCH 1978: 511; HEILBRONER 1999; HONT, IGNATIEFF 1986).

A comparable misinterpretation gave rise to the so-called *Adam Smith Problem*[1]. According to this interpretation, Smith's system holds that human behavior is governed by two contradictory principles (sympathy in *A Theory* and self-interest in *Wealth of Nations*), resulting in an incoherence between the notions of agency in each book. Such an incoherence would, of course, weaken the Smithian theory of human nature. Having criticized both perspectives, recent scholars on Adam Smith, like Eric Schliesser (2017), Leonidas Montes (2003), Charles Griswold (2006), and Emma Rothschild (2001), argue that when we consider the construction of Smithian system of thought carefully, these suppositions are simply the result of a hasty reading by previous commentators. These regrettable readings of Smith illustrate how carefully the analysis of his thinking should be conducted.

Surveying all the facets of the libertarianism is just a part of the scope of this text, as our concern extends to explaining the method we adopt in our treatment of Smith. Our working assumption is that if we want to understand Smith properly, we must read his theory through *his own eyes*. Taking this in consideration, the opening section will establish a methodological strategy to prepare the appropriate space for the discussion, whose primary purpose is to provide a methodological basis for elucidating Adam Smith's theory. The second section will reconsider Smith's social, political, and cultural context,

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[1] The Smith's Problem is extensively debated among scholars, and there are several approaches and nuances within those approaches that different authors adopt. For a helpful history of the Problem, see Teichgraeber, Rethinking Das Adam Smith Problem (1981); Tribe, The German Reception of Adam Smith (2002) and Montes, Das Adam Smith Problem (2003).

considering to what extent this background was able to shape his theory and whether this reading is capable of deconstructing certain biased views of his work. In the third section, we will begin by arguing that Scottish Enlightenment characteristics influenced Adam Smith's systematic philosophy, shaping his interest in both theoretical and practical philosophy. We will then sketch one way that TMS and WN are deeply connected and argue for the relevance of this integrated reading as a condition for further clarification of Smithian thought. Once our integrated reading hypothesis is confirmed, it will be possible to establish that atomized liberalism and the *Adam Smith Problem* both result from a fragmented reading of Adam Smith's works. More importantly, our intention is to lay the groundwork on which our tripartite theory will be defended.

Section 1 – Cambridge School Method: the reading protocol

In the field of philosophy, the methods section is sometimes considered a mere formality or something that is done out of habit – because it has always been done that way, rather than for any better reason – almost underestimated for understanding the author's thinking. However, this is a somewhat constrained view when we try to grasp the theoretical construction of Adam Smith's thought. So, we advocate that a more comprehensive understanding of Smith's theory is feasible by focusing on an analysis of his historical context. For that, a discussion of methodology is necessary because Smith's theory is complex, detailed, and requires attention to avoid misinterpretations and superficiality; after all, as Forman-Barzilai states: "the most effective way, perhaps the only way, to salvage Smith from what the economists [have] done to him, [is] to proceed historically" (2010, p. 16). Therefore, we propose using a systematic analysis from the Cambridge School to unfold the importance of Smith's historical context and suggest a systematic reading of his work.

It is crucial to recognize that the emergence of the so-called Cambridge School of history of political thought can be understood as the alternative to the traditional way of reading classic philosophical and political texts, namely Traditional Textualism. Through the analysis of John Locke's thought, Peter Laslett began this intellectual tradition, opening the space for his students John Pocock and Quentin Skinner to develop their system. (LASLETT 1949; POCOCK 1972; SKINNER 1969) Laslett claimed that works of social and political thought could best be understood by placing them in their historical context, which has given rise to Sociological Contextualism.

Although initially welcome, this approach was accused of restricting the ideas studied to the author's past.

Pocock[2] and Skinner[3] were committed to overcoming, on the one hand, the traditional textualism that consisted of the simple reproduction of classical texts and, on the other hand, the sociological contextualism that ignored linguistic dimensions. Whereas Pocock is concerned with the political languages available in the context of enunciation, Skinner prioritizes the ntentions of the agents involved in linguistic action. (SKINNER, 1974, p. 288; POCOCK, 1985, p. 70). Skinner thinks it is important for us to understand the steps taken by the author we are studying when making his/her arguments. Skinner seems to take a step forward from Pocock's angle. Since it provides a tool for understanding what is timeless and what is time-bound in Smith's works, we believe that of all the Cambridge's School methods, the Linguistic Contextualism is the most helpful recourse to look at Smith's theory systematically.

Starting from the assumption that the comprehension of Adam Smith's theory depends on our understanding it in the context of his own time, using the Linguistic Contextualism method of reconstructing Smith's ideas can help us explain how some biased interpretations of Smith are constructed. Observe, for instance, when Skinner mentions the most typical mistakes in theorizing about writing from the past can be categorized into three kinds of mythologies: doctrine, coherence, and prolepsis (SKINNER, 1969, p. 7). According to Skinner, the mythology of doctrines[4] is what happens when you approach what you are reading with your own agenda or set of doctrines in mind. (1969, p. 65) We highlight as an example the conventional view that Smith makes a *tout court* defense of *laissez-faire* and the pure rational calculation

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[2] From the analysis of the mode of discourse used by the author, Pocock intends to prove what the author "should say and how to say it". (1972, p. 25)

[3] Skinner notes "the texts are events that need to be explained by reference to 'their' linguistic context". (2001, p. 111). Even considering the importance of language, Skinner recognizes the danger "arising from a notion of a tradition as a structure or edifice composed of a set of concerns defined historically and abstractly is that traditions become regarded as things which limit or constrain the imagination of individual thinkers". (1972, p. 74)

[4] For Pocock, the idea behind this kind of doctrine in politics is clear: "The main historical weakness in the antiliberal tradition is that all its practitioners, right and left, are so anxious to find, that they antedate and exaggerate, some moment at which economy became emancipated from polity and market man, productive man, or distributive man declared that he no longer needed the paideia of politics to make him a self-satisfactory being. We cannot find such a moment (not even a Mandevillean moment) in the eighteenth century, because the dialogue between polity and economy remained a dialogue". (POCOCK, 1985, p. 70)

of the economy.[5] In this case, some of Smith's statements were intentionally removed from the textual context to fit into a doctrine built from ideals that belonged only to the scholar (PEYREFITTE, 1999).

Similar situations occur in the mythology of coherence. This means ignoring things the writer said if those things do not suit the researcher's purpose.[6] Such a researcher, to defend his or her proposal, reformulates an explanation of Smith's theory and removes some possible contradictions from the text. (SKINNER, 1969, p. 16). The greatest example of this doctrine among Smithian commentators is the defense that he proposed self-interest as the only *Mobil* for human actions.[7] This inference is acceptable only if we ignore certain arguments to the detriment of others (HEILBRONER, 1999). Using such an interpretation neglects the fundamental points of Smithian theory, such as the need for sociability in interpersonal relations (WINCH, 1978, p. 511). Another example is the translation of the word *self-love* into *selfishness* or *self-interest*, in Brazil and Argentina[8]. Evidently, this translation changes the real meaning of Smith's ideas.

Another common source of error is the Skinnerean mythology of prolepsis – historical anticipation of a classic text to make its theory confirmed in the future. (SKINNER, 1969, p. 16)[9] In his account, understanding the

[5] This perspective encapsulates the nineteenth century debates about Ethics and Economics. Our purpose in this work is not to debate this topic specifically. Much work has been done since then to argue against this apparent disjunction, for example: Morrow, The Ethical and Economic Theories of Adam Smith (1973); Macfie, The Individual in Society (1967); Campbell, Adam Smith's Science of Morals (1971); Fitzgibbons, Wealth and Virtue (1995); Amartya Sen, On Ethics and Economics (1987); Werhane, Adam Smith and His Legacy for Modern Capitalism (1991); and Otteson, Adam Smith's Marketplace of Life (2002).

[6] As Winch emphasizes, "the reason the role of the legislator has previously been ignored is because of the historical shift in political-economic theory to divide the science from its application". (1978, p. 511)

[7] From a critical perspective about self-interest, see Shapiro, Adam Smith: Desire, History and Value (1993); Lovejoy, Reflections on Human Nature (1961); Myers, The Soul of Modern Economic Man: Ideas of Self-Interest (1983); Lamb, Adam Smith's System: Sympathy Not Self-Interest (1974); Skinner, A System of Social Science: Papers Relating to Adam Smith (1979); Macpherson, The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism (1962); Winch, Adam Smith's Politics, History of Political Economy (1979); Hirschman, The Passions and the Interests (1982); Dumont, From Mandeville to Marx: The Genesis and Triumph of Economic Ideology (1977); and Sagar, Beyond sympathy: Smith's rejection of Hume's moral theory (2017).

[8] Consider the butcher's quote: "We address ourselves, not to their humanity but to their self-love". (WN I.ii.2) Self-love was translated to Portuguese as self-interest. (SMITH, 2016, p. 95) Alvaro Viñuales (2021) alleges a similar problem in the Argentinian WN's translation.

[9] There is a vast literature on the subject which can be found at Sen, Adam Smith and the Contemporary World (2010); Sher, Church and University in the Scottish Enlightenment (1995); Skinner, The Rise of Challenge to and Prospects for a Collingwoodian Approach to the History of Political Thought (2001); Schliesser, Adam Smith: Systematic philosopher and public thinker (2017); Stewart, Studies in the Philosophy of the Scottish Enlightenment (1990); Rothschild, Economic Sentiments: Adam Smith, Condorcet and the Enlightenment (2001); and Young, Economics as a Moral Science (1997).

overall idea that what authors in the past were concerned about is probably not the same issues we are concerned about right now, and that we cannot assume that whatever we currently find most interesting and important was also interesting and important (and meant the same) to them. An author might mention something for very different reasons than we would; we might be making a big deal out of something the author said because that issue is a big deal right now, but it might not really have been that important to them. An example of this mythology is expressed in the contemporary defense of Adam Smith as an atomized liberal, as if he had already defended this idea at that time. (PAGANELLI, 2009) However, we do not think that this libertarian character does justice to what Adam Smith proposes in his time (POCOCK, 1985, p. 114).

To avoid incurring misunderstandings and reductionism, historical elements will be useful as we pursue a more realistic portrayal of Smith's intentions. However, it would be naive to reduce Smith's reading only to his historical context as the sociological contextualism did, and it would be equally naive to disregard that history has its importance, as the textualism method does. For this reason, we believe that of all the Cambridge School tools, linguistic contextualism is the most helpful recourse to escape both reductionisms. This has been one of our main concerns in offering our interpretation. If we focused only on Smith's texts or context, we would be at the risk of performing just one more interpretation, which is exactly what we criticize. By contrast, we will try to offer a different tool for understanding Smith's philosophical system.

Section 2 – Adam Smith and the Scottish society

Smith spent most of his life in Scotland[10]. Having an obsolete agrarian economic base, was largely rural and devastated by poverty, geographical limitations, precarious industries, roads, ports, and communications during the seventeenth and middle eighteenth centuries As just one example of how different Scotland was from the continent, during the pre-enlightenment period, the country's development was approximately the equivalent of two centuries behind the rest of Europe, according to the historian Trevor-Roper (1967, p. 265) By the standards of continental Europe, Scotland suffered from cultural, social, and scientific lag. The situation started to change at the beginning of the eighteenth century when different historical

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[10] Adam Smith also lived in France and England (MULLER, 1993, p. 9).

facts engendered social transformations and the rejection of superstitions and dogmatism in Scotland. (TMS III.iii.43)

Supported by the historical scholarship of Broadie (2001), Emerson (1990), and Robertson (1994), we believe that three key events contributed to reinforcing the Scottish identity and facilitating the spread of enlightenment thinking in Scotland: 1) the Glorious Revolution and the consequent development of the natural sciences; 2) the University's development, resulting in the expansion of scientific and philosophical knowledge; and 3) the union of the Scottish and English parliaments, exacerbating the political differences between the two countries and, consequently, strengthening the Scottish national identity. Many other historical issues surround the facts cited here, however, we focus on the most impactful events for the development of Smith's ideas.

The well-known Glorious Revolution took place in England from 1688 to 1689. This movement removed the absolutist King James II in 1688 and provoked a rupture between Church and State (FISCHOFF, 1944, p. 62). This revolution contributed in a decisive way to the conception and justification of the National State, which unfolded in individual, commercial, and intellectual freedoms. Historically, the Modern State had its origin in the *Treaties of Westphalia*, in 1648 (NÚNES, 2013, p. 645). Although this process began well before that date, the treaty is considered a milestone for establishing the National States. Following the Revolution, clerical power in Scotland was weakened. With the rise of the modern ideas of Nation (Nation-State), Parliamentary Power took force. Likewise, the nobles and local landowners strengthened their political powers, in contrast with the old absolutist power marked by theocratic regimes (WN V.i.14).

Scotland had the Kirk as a religious institution, and even though its doctrine was Calvinist and less dogmatic than Catholic doctrine (previously adopted), the clerics were, for Smith, "among all corruptors of moral sentiments, the greatest" (TMS III.iii.43). As a public religious institution, it interfered excessively in various spheres of people's lives, such as what was taught in universities, with the restraint of debates on natural sciences. The persecution carried out by the Kirk manifested itself in burning books in public spaces and hangings, among other practices of the same type (TREVOR-ROPER, 1972, p. 310). It seemed to Smith that though that doctrine did not fully oppose the development of the natural sciences, it reduced scientific study to explain the nature of God (EMERSON, 1990). When used for theological purposes, rationality could serve only to justify religion, which explains Smith's criticism. Fundamentally, the Kirk era did not produce consistent scientific knowledge, and with the weakening of religion,

modern ideas of freedom and science were incentivized, and the study of nature as a search for divine revelation gave way to the study of the natural sciences (RIBEIRO, 2009).

With the gradual development of secular entities in society, Scottish scientific and commercial growth took place, and the universities were able to modernize at the beginning of the seventeenth century (WOOD, 1969, p. 99; TREVOR-ROPER, 1972, p. 310). This modernization is illustrated by the creation inof the *Parliamentary Commission* in 1960, which discussed curricular and pedagogical changes in educational institutions and sought to ensure that qualified professors remained in Scotland. These successive educational transformations opened the path to the second important factor: the development of the universities.

In the sixteenth century, Scotland had five universities inspired by Parisian and Bolognese models; England, by contrast, had only two such institutions[11]. Even in the period of the Protestant Reformation (before 1517), it was common for Scottish professors from different areas – such as physics, mathematics, medicine, philosophy, and history – to study abroad. This pluralistic and cosmopolitan atmosphere was essential to the intellectual development of different ways of dealing with the nation's problems. After a long period of mere reproduction of intellectual thought from continental Europe, the Scottish national identity "was assumed under circumstances that made it publicly reflect on the arrival of the modern world and its place in it, in a way that, otherwise, could have taken much longer and been even more difficult" (HAAKONSSEN, 1996, p. vi). The resulting patriotic feeling motivated intellectuals' efforts to re-think Scotland. Smith was among these intellectuals.

Finally, we must highlight the union of the Scottish Parliament with the English due to a huge agrarian crisis. In the last years of the seventeenth century, successive collapses of agricultural production in Scotland caused a generalized wave of hunger. The agricultural crisis of 1690 caused around 10% of the Scottish population to starve to death (PHILLIPSON 1973). Scotland also suffered from the scarcity of productive land since less than 10% of its land was arable, and a slightly more significant portion was made up of pasture (Emerson 2003). As Smith emphasized, "it has often been said that it is not uncommon in the Scottish Highlands for a mother who has conceived twenty

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[11] These were the Scottish Universities: The University of St Andrews (1413), University of Glasgow (1451), University of Edinburgh (1582), King's College (1495), and Marischal College (1593). By contrast, until the beginning of the nineteenth century, England had only the University of Oxford and the University of Cambridge.

children not to have two alive" (WN I.i.8). In many regions of the country, groups of poor people roamed in search of work. In a country that the social arrangement was still characterized by the feudal system – divided into segments – people's struggle to escape poverty also contributed to changing the mentality of Scots as a whole.

In the face of these dramatic circumstances, Scotland felt it had to agree with the Parliament Union proposal. The Scottish Parliament and the English Parliament united to form the Parliament of Great Britain by the *Act of Union*, signed on 16 January 1707 (HEILBRONER, 1999, p. 91). This union had been proposed and rejected for several years previously, but Scottish politicians finally voted in favor of the agreement due to the economic crisis. This took place despite the refusal of some politicians (like the Jacobins – the resistance between 1715 and 1745). The suspicions and mistrust that had prevented the union during the previous century remained alive even with the Parliament Union.

Smith related Scottish distrust with the State of England's capricious attitude. As he saw it, England often restricted certain private initiatives in favor of other private initiatives, considering only its own interests, and not the interests of the entire society (WN V.i.3). For him, 'it is everywhere much easier for a wealthy merchant to obtain the privilege of trading in a town corporation, than for a poor artificer to obtain that of working in it' (WN I.i.8). In Smith's view, the most impactful example of this State protection was the *East India Company*[12], "a private corporation that aimed only at profit", set up in the UK by the seventeenth century" (WN II.v.3). Even though this company declared itself "exclusively to enrich investors", the British government ceded its investors' privileges and provided political and financial support. (FULCHER, 2015, p. 179) These privileges are "a sort of enlarged monopolies", for Smith (WN I.i.8,169). Consequently, all of that is antiliberal.

In sharp contrast, the government condemned the poorest, for example, by legally confining them to their local communities (*Poor Laws)*, resulting in hunger and death. The *Poor Laws*[13] declared that workers could only look for jobs in their own localities, preventing the free movement of these workers (ROBERTSON, 1985). Such laws were common in Europe during that time, but only England created a specific statute with more

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[12] The East India Company is considered the second capitalist company in history, losing the first position to the Dutch West India Company (DALRYMPLE, 2016).

[13] For Smith, "the Statute of Apprenticeship obstructs the free circulation of labour from one employment to another, even in the same place. (…) It consists in the difficulty which a poor man finds in obtaining a settlement, or even in being allowed to exercise his industry in any parish but that to which he belongs" (WN I.i.10).

restricted obligations: "It is the labour of artificers and manufacturers only of which the free circulation is obstructed by corporation laws. The difficulty of obtaining settlements obstructs even that of common labour" (WN I.ii.4). This limitation aggravated the situation of the poorest most severely.

Additionally, English sabotage was common at that time, as the case of the Company of Scotland's program well illustrates. In 1680, Scotland tried to strengthen its trade with the Central American colonies, which led to the founding of the Company of Scotland in Panama, a commercial colony in Central America. Even though Scotland had not yet developed much trade at the time, it had a great deal of experience with sea travel. Because of sabotage by England, this company declared bankruptcy 18 years after its establishment. The failure of this venture became known as the *Darien Scheme* (LANDSMAN, 1994). This fact also helps to explain the Scots' disagreement with the union with England.

The lack of Scottish autonomy and this representation of English "innumerable delusions" worsened the tension between the two countries (WN V.i.14). Yet, in line with Robertson (1994), England also felt the frustration about cultural differences towards Scotland that Scots felt towards England. Hume, for instance, illustrates this reciprocal aversion when he says that "Some hate me because I am not a Tory, some because I am not a Whig, some because I am not a Christian, and all because I am a Scotsman. Can you seriously talk of my continuing an Englishman? Am I, or are you, an Englishman? Will they allow us to be so?" (1932, p. 470). Given these misgivings, some prerequisites were imposed by both sides.

One important Scottish prerequisite to the Parliament Union agreement was the National Law. The legal system adopted by the Scotts and the English continued to be practiced in the same way as before the union; in other words, *Civil Law* continued in Scotland and *Common Law* in England. Although this legal dissociation risked increasing the gap between these two countries, mixing *Common Law*, a system of laws "based on customary and unwritten laws of England, which developed from the doctrine of precedents of court decisions", and *Civil Law* "constituted right system (or *Strict Law*), with laws enacted through the legislative process", could have brought harm to both legal systems (VICENTE, 2016, p. 224). Even though Scotland maintained a fundamentally different legal system from England, this Union challenged English influence over Scottish law and affected Great Britain's norms. This is reflected today in the Scottish hybrid legal system, reconciling the influence of English *Common Law* and Roman-Germanic *Civil Law* (VICENTE, 2016, p. 225).

Conversely, an imposition by England on Scotland was obedience to dynastic succession. Of course, the Scots did not feel comfortable with this monarchical configuration. As part of the British Empire, Scotland had been subordinated to the decisions of England, which consistently undermined any attempt to strengthen Scottish autonomy. Nevertheless, despite belonging to the British Empire at that time, there was a relative local self-governance on the part of the nobility in Scotland since the difficulty of communication at the time was a limiting factor for the total control of England over Scotland (ROBERTSON, 1994, p. 237).

With the departure of the crown and a small number of politicians from Scotland to England, the largest number of Scottish Parliament politicians continued to live in Scotland, restricted to local administration. This political fragmentation resulted in a locally centralized powerand parliamentarians were able to make nominations for positions in universities and legal institutions. This capacity proved socially impactful and advanced the government' plan to develop Scotland. Part of this development plan had involved the dissemination in public space of science as "the great antidote to the poison of rapture and superstition" – as Smith reinforces – and the promotion of strategic values like virtues and nationalism (WN V.i.14). This government strategy was evident in scholarly works in diverse areas such as economics, history, philosophy, astronomy, chemistry, architecture, and the arts published in Scotland in the first half of the eighteenth century[14] (ANCHOR, 1967, p. 144).

Another result of this political fragmentation was elite engagement with intellectuals and artists. Without the Scottish Parliament, many painters, writers, and other artists would have lost their main resources (BROADIE, 2001, p. 6). The unification of parliament is when the Scottish elites started to pay a kind of patronage to maintain intellectuals and artists in the country (ROBERTSON, 1994, p. 237). Associations for discussion and debate about scientific developments were widely promoted. Together, these forces made sure that Enlightenment ideas flourished in Scotland.

In the wake of the Parliament Union, Scotland's commerce opened to trade with the English market and the leading English colonies. Even though England imposed some restrictions on the exportation of Scottish products

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[14] Scotland was already a country open to world cultural and scientific progress, with a thriving intellectual elite that had the educational resources necessary for moral and social formation, producing the knowledge that was, over time, absorbed from the continent (For more details, see ROBERTSON, 1985). Between 1663 and 1715, only to depict Scottish scientific contributions, England nominated several Scot intellectuals to become a member of the Royal Society of London – a renowned intellectual discussion group on scientism and knowledge production (See HUNTER, 1994).

(for example, see the *Alien Act*), this commercial opening alleviated some economic problems in Scotland (FULCHER, 2015, p. 179). Furthermore, the political restriction and cultural oppression resulting from the Scottish Parliament fragmentation also contributed to a strengthened Scottish nationalism. And "despite becoming politically 'unified' with England, Scotland preserved its identity" (BROADIE, 2001, p. 8). These factors set the stage for the social, economic, and ideological transformations that followed (PHILLIPSON, 1973).

In the final analysis, the historical context closely contributes to the Scottish enlightenment process to which Adam Smith's thought is an heir. The input of this interpretation gave rise to the so-called Theory of Rupture. This emerging defense aims to explain the construction of Scottish Enlightenment thinking as a response to the thinkers' historical context of the seventeenth and middle eighteenth centuries (WOOD, 1969, p. 99; GILL, 2006, p. 203; POCOCK, 1982, p. 311). Shedding light on this theory, we will present how we believe that Smith wrote: as a reaction to or rupture with the reality of those times. Though Smith's biography reveals that he did not write exclusively to the Scottish audience – he wrote for a trans-European audience – the Scottish environment profoundly influenced his orientation. Smith lived in a period in Scotland when education, patronage, and government service were closely linked, and those elements influenced his social course and shaped the systematic model of his philosophy.

Section 3 – Scottish Enlightenment: the dialogue between theory and practice

The term Scottish Enlightenment only came into existence in 1904, a few years after James McCosh coined the expression *Scottish Philosophy* in 1875 (POCOCK, 1982, p. 311). Before that, in the eighteenth century, Scottish intellectual activity was disregarded as an offshoot of the English Enlightenment. The reason for this narrow association may be that the Scottish tradition does not have the same appeal as the German or French movement. This issue is often forgotten even by contemporary scholars who study renowned Scottish thinkers such as Adam Smith, David Hume, and Francis Hutcheson. In Brazil, for example, literature on the Scottish Enlightenment is scarce and, at times, neglectful of the features that differentiate this movement from other Enlightenments.

Broadly speaking, enlightenment is the defense of science and technology as a means of improving the material and spiritual condition of

humanity (ANCHOR, 1967, p. 144). From the critique of superstitions and dogmatic metaphysical systems, this tradition supports the universalization of science and education (ROBERTSON, 1985). Although all the Enlightenment movements share these similarities, the epistemological nucleus of each tradition is different. German and French ideology, for instance, defends Reason as the single source of human knowledge, whereas the British tradition accords less importance to this Rational notion.

According to British ideology, considering only Reason for epistemological explanations is disregarding that other elements make up human nature. It is not a matter of rejecting Reason, *per se*, but simply asserting that it cannot be the only explanation. On the contrary, British Enlightenment thinkers focus on what is called experimental rationalism (See BACON, *Novum Organum*, 1620). Acquired through everyday practical experience, knowledge about the world comes from what the cognitive structures of each person can grasp using their senses and experiences, that is, from observing natural phenomena.

Even though British thinkers had shared concerns about "empirical knowledge and the conceptions about human nature", the Scottish and English ideals still had different approaches (PORTER, 2000, p. 14). The English Enlightenment was centered on legal concerns, such as the right of liberty, the National Constitution, and institutional power organizations. English thinkers' proposals underlined the attempt to dominate nature and society, replacing religion with order, reason, progress, and science, intertwining the Constitution and human rights of equality (WOOD, 1969; FULCHER, 2015; ROSANVALLON, 1998). The Scottish approach also focused on ideas such as "freedom, equality, progress", but as social reactions, rather than as legal concerns (GRISWOLD, 1999, p. 10).

In contrast to the English tendency to be conservative about institutional values, the Scottish movement was a revolutionary Enlightenment. (ROTHSCHILD, 2001, p. 3) The heart of this revolutionary aspect is a rupture between Scotland's past circumstances and values and the Enlightenment's new ones – that in Scotland, the Enlightenment was a dramatic, radical change, basically. The emphasis on rupture is present, for example, in a passage written in the early nineteenth century by Dugald Stewart, Smith's biographer, in which the rise of the Scottish Enlightenment is explained as the result of intellectual influences "from the outside world" (1991, p. 273). This cosmopolitan notion, to some extent, allowed Scots to develop theories incorporating different beliefs into their intellectual proposals.

In this scenario, the "philosophical attitude" arose as an ideal of freedom in the face of the abusive State, a rupture from the old system

(ROTHSCHILD, 2001, p. 6). The understanding of its peripheral and subaltern condition to England, for its part, strengthened the feeling of Scottish identity, being decisive for the process of Scottish Enlightenment. David Hume illustrated this reaction:

> Is it not strange that, at a time when we have lost our Princes, our Parliaments, our independent Government, even the Presence of our chief Nobility, are unhappy, in our Accent & Pronunciation, speak a very corrupt Dialect of the Tongue which we make use of; is it not strange, I say, in these Circumstances, we should be the People most distinguished for Literature in Europe? (HUME, 1932, p. 19)

With the same Humean nationalist stance, Adam Smith, already a professor of logic and moral philosophy at the University of Glasgow, joined other Scottish intellectuals to think of ways to promote human and social development in the country. Influenced by English transformations, Scotland began its intellectual transition (STEWART, 1990). At that time, England was undergoing a moment of attaining fundamental rights that came with the end of absolutism, urban population growth, and the revolution introduced by the expansion of economic markets. These facts ensured the possibility of the English to give concrete expression to these new values and styles. In light of this, it is understandable that Scots produced a discourse based upon nationalist and economic elements for social development, positioning themselves against the monopolies and privileges of centralized power, as well as upon moral psychology and human nature.

Nowadays, there are two main interpretations of the Scottish Enlightenment's central concepts. The first makes the point that the Scottish Enlightenment was essentially a human sciences investigation (TREVOR-HOPPER, 1967; ROBERTSON, 1985, BROADIE, 2001). Scholars who support this first interpretation claim that the Scottish Enlightenment centered on human development in society: social progress, moral philosophy, history, and political economy. By contrast, according to the second interpretation, the Scottish tradition is better understood as an investigation of the natural sciences (EMERSON, 1990; PHILLIPSON, 1973). For scholars who support this interpretation, the goal of the Scottish Enlightenment was to explain the nature of human beings using an elaborated methodological strategy that involved only the natural sciences: physics, human nature, and biology (WOOD, 1969, p. 99).

We do not see an inherent conflict between these two approaches; hence we suggest a hybrid view. From our point of view, the Scottish

Enlightenment may have been *about* both human affairs and the natural sciences[15]. Arising as "the expression of new intellectual and moral values, new canons of good taste, styles of sociability, and conceptions of human nature", the Scottish tradition is firstly a new way of looking at science, psychology, moral, and social elements (PORTER, 2000, p. 14). This combination of ideas is consistent with the union between the cultural, social, humanistic, and scientific values that shape these thinkers with different influences. On the one hand, Bacon's science impacted scientific concerns; on the other, Cicero's and Machiavelli's political ideas and Plato's moral philosophy (among many others) were very influential in human science for the Scots. We will not go deeply into the concepts of these authors, as the most important thing for this moment concerns the Scottish methodology of associating the human and natural sciences.

Second, Scottish thinkers had a systematic model of philosophy. This dialectical style of methodology has the Newtonian system of universal law as its inspiration – the conception of scientific knowledge that held sway in Scottish universities during that time (MONTES, 1966, p. 76). Newton had demonstrated (by discovering the law of gravity) how natural science can provide a system supported by universal law to explain the world. The Scottish Enlightenment devised a system of principles intended to govern the social world as Newton's laws governed the natural realm. The Newtonian methodological approach provided for the Scottish Enlightenment tradition a systematic basis to explain human nature and made possible the connection between the analytical dimension and social experiences.

The humanistic and naturalist influences with Newton's systematization gave birth to the hybrid vision of the Scottish Enlightenment. Having in view the legacy of this hybrid perspective, human and nationalist values and economic and social progress went hand in hand with the natural sciences. Also, this hybrid perspective provides a holistic basis for the Scottish tradition by combining the scientific, ethical, and historical frameworks[16] (EMERSON, 1990). Building on this foundation, the strategy adopted by the Enlightenment thinkers in Scotland "was the development of a science of morality, which on the assumption that humans were intrinsically social beings became a science of society in all its ramifications. [It] took the form of

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[15] "The conclusion many nineteenth century scholars drew was that Smith's two books were simply inconsistent. Smith may have been a great economist, but he was no philosopher" (OTTESON, 2002, p. 195).

[16] As Emma Rothschild notes, the "Enlightenment in Scotland can be considered a fourth sense which is previously a universal, potentiality, disposition, which are connected in the sense of a philosophical Baconian attitude" (2001, p. 16).

jurisprudence, which was then organized into history and next [was applied to] political economy" (POCOCK, 1982, p. 313).

This helps us understand why some scholars say that the Scottish Enlightenment was the origin of the social sciences (FLEISCHACKER, 2004; HILDEBRAND, 2013). In Müller's account social science was born during the enlightenment out of the attempt to develop systematic knowledge on an empirical basis (1993, p. 85). This assumption seems perfectly reasonable when we consider that the theme of the foundations and consequences of our social action became popular in Scotland at that time, which gave rise to the connection between moral philosophy and social science. For the thinkers of the Scottish Enlightenment, empirical knowledge results from the set of experiences we acquire, which serve as a kind of beacon (what motivated the Scottish thinkers to want to understand how humans create knowledge) to determine the way human beings understand the world and what they know about it.

Drawing connections between human nature and sociability, Smith represents the crystallization of that Scottish approach about the general rules of human behavior. And like the other thinkers, he used the Newtonian style to develop his theory (Astronomy, II.45)[17]. In opposition to philosophical models such as the Aristotelian, in which there is a multiplicity of principles for explaining natural phenomena, Smith believes the explanations of the phenomena of nature are made up of only a few principles[18]. For this reason, "the Newtonian method is undoubtedly the most philosophical, and in every science whether of Moral or Natural philosophy etc., is vastly more ingenious and for that reason engaging than the other" (Astronomy IV.65)

Smith's own philosophical motives arose, he said, out of admiration for the intrinsic form of a superior system (EPS, 107). By system, he means a harmonious and structured intellectual pattern; a system may be a scientific theory, a piece of music, or a philosophical worldview (FITZGIBBONS, 1995, p. 5). Smithian thinks that "the ultimate purpose is to find and state general principles linking a wide range of appearances", as a "man of system"

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[17] According to Smith's account, "the phenomena which we reckoned the most unaccountable all deduced from some principle (commonly a well-known one) and all united in one chain, far superior to what we fell from the unconnected method" (TMS VII.ii.2; See LRBL, introduction). From this perspective, philosophy is also the science of the connecting principles of nature, and the Newtonian methodological style reveals "the most universal empire that was ever established in philosophy" (LRBL II.132).

[18] Thus, he first selects one set of premises and reasons from them in one specific context. Then he takes the remaining daily observations as another set of premises for inference in a different context. His tendency is to focus on "methods that are proper to the particular" (MACFIE, 1955, p. 97). In addition, Bacon's scientific thesis helped shape the logic of Smith's and the other Scottish philosophers' system of thought in which the world is explained through observations and from everyday practical experiences.

(SKINNER, 1974, p. 310; TMS VI.ii.2). From this perspective, Smith blends analytical, historical, psychological, and sociological aspects, initiating "the modern analytic method on its course of conquest" (MACFIE, 1955, p. 95). Such a system had to address practical issue but with intellectual motives.

Smithian systematization is based on "the idea of construction, or more broadly (…) the mind as first and last *poietic*" (LANDSMAN, 1989, p. 4). This systematic approach is at the heart of Smithian thought once his philosophical system combines two distinct procedures: formal analysis and theoretical application (Astronomy IV.35). The former constitutes the theoretical part of Smith's system and comprises analytical and empirical aspects, emotion, and reason, feeling and thought (RAPHAEL, MACFIE, 1976, p. 21). The latter is the practical nature of theoretical knowledge relative to the contextualization of theoretical results. We also believe in this connection. In our view, Smith wrote about a real society and what he observed during his own experiences, without making any clear metaphysical appeal to theoretical idealism (TMS VI.iii.2).

Based on this systematization of the Smithian proposal, it is possible to offer a counterargument to *Das Problem*. Proponents of the unity thesis claim that Smith constructed his books TMS and WN using this systematic approach (MULLER, 1993; HILDEBRAND, 2013). For them, Smith's goal was to improve the individual's earthly lot by reforming the State. In this sense, his entire system of thought, such as his way of dealing with the State, laws, and society, is the result of careful observation of events. This empirical epistemology is present in both WN and TMS (Astronomy IV.35). When understanding the epistemology of the construction of Smithian thought, it seems highly likely that he developed his works as the progress of ideas (Astronomy IV.19; LRBL I.v.67; ii.132). Dialoguing between theoretical systems and the practical experience of everyday life, Smith aimed to provide a comprehensive and well-balanced critical picture of social reality (MAIR, 1990; LEHMANN, 1960; COHEN, 1990).

On top of all that, in the sixth edition of TMS Smith himself suggests that WN is the continuation of the sequence of thought set out in TMS. In the last paragraph of the *Advertisement*, he promises another book on law and government, affirming that he has partly executed this promise in WN (RAPHAEL, MACFIE, 1976, p. 24). Smith remarks,

> In the last paragraph of the first edition of the present work, I said, that I should
> in another discourse endeavour to give an account of the general principles of
> law and government, and of the different revolutions which they had undergone
> in the different ages and periods of society; not only in what concerns justice,

but in what concerns police, revenue, and arms, and whatever else is the object of law. In 'The Enquiry of the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations', I have partly executed this promise; at least so far as concerns police, revenue, and arms. What remains, the theory of jurisprudence, which I have long projected, I have hitherto been hindered from executing, by the same occupations which had till now prevented me from revising the present work. Though my very advanced age leaves me, I acknowledge, very little expectation of ever being able to execute this great work to my own satisfaction; yet, as I have not altogether abandoned the design, and as I wish still to continue under the obligation of doing what I can, I have allowed the paragraph to remain as it was published more than thirty years ago, when I entertained no doubt of being able to execute everything which it announced (ED 6, TMS Advertisement, 2, 3).

Near the end of his life, Smith claims that TMS and WN were part of a larger, not entirely completed, system of philosophy (SCHLIESSER, 2017). So, the idea that this reference included in the 6th edition of TMS implies that the connection between Smith's two books seems plausible. Some scholars, however, are not convinced. Vivienne Brown, for instance, concluded that Smith's statement is purely ethical and unconcerned with the WN political economy as a branch (1997: 134). Others, like Fleischaker, are more far-reaching and concluded that Smith in this quotation expressed his intent to advocate a proto egalitarianism. We tend to agree more with Fleischaker's point of view than with Brown's defense. For us, Smith's economic theory is responsible for the cohesion of TMS and WN, providing "a crucial moral context for understanding [Smith's] economic theory" in WN (SAYRE-MCCORD, 2013, p. 01). In other words, that the way for the economic agent of WN to deal with his self-interested nature would be the moral theory of TMS.

Dennis Rasmussen sees the political sphere as solving *Das Problem.* For him, "according to Smith, the desire to better our condition is the main engine driving economic growth in commercial society" (RASMUSSEN, 2006, p. 309). This approach seems consistent with an argument that supports the connection between politics and morality. In Otteson's account, (2002, p. 80) the moral approach uses Smith's moral theory to underpin the rest of his texts and fundamentally believes there is no tension between WN and TMS. Otteson argues that Smith makes a distinction between the politician, who will be guided by momentary passions, and the legislator, whose actions will be governed by general principles, with the role of the philosopher being to "encourage the development of the public-spirited attitudes of the legislator at the expense of those of the politician by enunciating general principles"

(WINCH, 1978, p. 423). This approach takes one idea, such as the invisible hand (or unintended consequences) and argues that this is the connecting force between his books (WINCH, 1978, p. 502). Adopting a similar perspective, Evensky (1986) says that Smith's position supports economic and political structures primarily for moral reasons. He inquires about the analytical principles behind human actions and describes a moral theory focused on the individual.

In our view, the Smithian proposal would start by observing human behavior and aim toward a society that is equally created and developed by and for humans. Therefore, during events, individual morality develops in the private sphere, affecting economic and political institutions. That is our tripartite theory, an interpretation centered on the idea of a sympathetic agent and the attribution of a more relevant role to State regarding social progress and human flourishing. For us, TMS puts forward a moral and social theory focusing on individuals and their feelings, virtues, and behaviors, while WN focuses on the coexistence of these different individuals, with different feelings and behaviors, in a commercial society. Briefly, he states that the natural laws of the world are constituted by the rules of human behavior and shaped by human dispositions. Morality is formed by the moral judgments individuals make about others and themselves, with a genuinely empirical character. In this sense, civil society is the reflection of its social context and should turn to the moral improvement of humanity to develop citizenship.

Final remarks

By reading both books together, it is possible to defend the position that Smith supports economic and political structures primarily for moral reasons, which would refute the two mainstream interpretations presented in the first section of this paper. The moral elements in Smithian thought deconstruct the libertarian vision on Smith's thesis and the *Adam Smith Problem* (SKINNER, 1972, p. 315). Both problems arise from "Readers' disregard for Smith's concern with the practical aspects [which] often results in a poor understanding of his work (…) on reading WN's Book I static analysis while skipping the dynamic and historical accounts" (COMIM, 2002, p.110). Also, this systematic approach is the fundamental foundation for our defense that Smithian moral theory provides the cornerstone on which his economics and politics are built. This is the basis for the tripartite theory.

Supported by the Cambridge School's methodology, we sought to justify our perspective of linking historical, rhetorical, economic, legal, and

philosophical issues that, in the reading of Smith's work, extrapolate conceptual limits. we provided different analyses of the historical context, presenting contours such as the most important conjectural factors, and recognizing the historical and complex character of the interdisciplinary discussion. We pointed out that Adam Smith was an economist during the pre-industrial period and did not get to know the market system with the accumulation of laws and the huge corporations that we have today. When he was writing, the world was composed of a system of privileges and restrictions typical of mercantilism.

With a nationalist discourse, Smith rejected the corrupt, manipulative metropolitan authority of England and the Church's interference in state affairs. Recognizing the peripheral condition of Scotland at the time, Smith and other Scottish intellectuals redirected the discussion to a better understanding of its context. Ultimately, the influence of the Scottish historical moment on Adam Smith's thought was discussed to understand the key elements of his thought through the integrated reading of his works WN and TMS. We defended a systematic analysis of Smith's works in which the WN can be read as a subsequent work of the TMS, although this position has been largely neglected. In short, the first book is the theory, and the latter explains how his theory can be applied in practice.

By shedding light on the systematic project that unites TMS and WN, we realize Smith employs different examples of sympathy to impart economic and political lessons, but also moral lessons upon the reader. The economy in Scotland, as I mentioned, remained agricultural throughout Smith's life, and most people lived in poverty. The WN grew out of Smith's reflection on this situation compared to the situation in England, setting the stage for the industrial revolution. This book talks about the effect of unintended consequences, poverty, industries, and opulence of the government and mainly explores public institutional reforms to address goals such as public education and, ultimately, the elimination of poverty. On the other hand, TMS was written primarily for intellectuals concerned with philosophical explanations of virtues and social explanations of how the individual becomes moral. Smith talks about the nature of morality and rules of conduct and reinforces the feeling that acting virtuously is worthwhile and requires education and habit. Both books argue that passion can be channeled into morally laudable and socially beneficial forms of behavior depending on the encouragement provided by institutions. Together, these two books bring to light Adam Smith's project to offer moral improvement of society. This demonstrates the connection between moral, economic and political aspects that allows us to read Adam Smith as a tripartite theory.

Finally, if we look at the big picture, we can see that Smith cannot be read as dissociated from his context. This does not mean reducing the force of his theory to the context that shaped it. It is just a matter of applying the correct methodology to understand his theory in a unified manner. Furthermore, with its peculiarities, the Scottish Enlightenment is an epistemological tradition heavily anchored in the Newtonian system, influencing the way Smith elaborates his proposals. Smith writes for and about his time and portrays moral, political, and economic problems in his surroundings. That explains why Smith wrote his theory always within a mutually balanced dialogue between theory and practice.

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