Beauty as Independence: Stoic Philosophy and Adam Smith*

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ABSTRACT

Adam Smith adopts Stoic language in order to describe beauty and virtue as valuable in themselves, independently of praise or external circumstance. Smith's concept of beauty, with an emphasis on fitness, is described in Stoic terms as an intrinsic value rather than in terms of interest or advantage. Smith reads Cicero as a quasi-Stoic but somewhat more skeptical writer, somehow immune from the rigorous moral perfectionism that Smith sees in Marcus Aurelius's Stoicism, a partiality that influenced Francis Hutcheson, who lauded Aurelius. Smith's distinctive understanding of Cicero enables him to innovate by applying Stoic language to new fields, moving from natural jurisprudence to political economy. Cicero's language in *Cato Maior* (*An Essay on Old Age*) is crucial to Smith's concept of beauty as independence and his development of a new concept of natural liberty in his own political economy. Following the Stoics, Smith thinks that the most important virtue inherent in agriculture is its "independence," a synonym for "beauty" in Stoic language, by which he refers to farmers' capacity to envisage and implement improvements in their lands and practices on their own initiative.

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1 Introduction

The debate about sociability that took place in the moral philosophy of the Scottish Enlightenment was couched in a language strongly influenced by Stoic philosophy via the work of several thinkers who influenced the luminaries of the Scottish movement. Following the Earl of Shaftesbury (Anthony Ashley Cooper, the third earl; 1671–1713), Francis Hutcheson (1694–1746) thought that the task of modern moralists should be Stoic in demonstrating the existence

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and power of an inner faculty of moral sense constituting a part of the mind. Hutcheson sought to criticize Bernard Mandeville (1670–1732) by showing that it was virtuous to submit to the guidance of moral sense because virtuous and benevolent actions would provide benefits to humanity as a whole, as the Stoics taught (Moore 1994, 26; Phillipson 2000, 72). During the time that Adam Smith (1723–1790) was a student of Hutcheson, the study of the Greek and Latin classics was being revived in Glasgow mainly through Hutcheson's influence (Fowler 1882, 179), eventually resulting in Hutcheson's own translation of *The Meditations* (late first century CE) of Marcus Aurelius (121–180 CE), in 1742.[1] This paper seeks to reinterpret the influence of the Stoics in relation to other possible influences on Smith and to reappraise the importance of the language of Stoic philosophy in Smith's work. It argues that his concept of beauty as independence is crucial to his use of Stoic language in both *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759) and *The Wealth of Nations* (1776).

2 Stoic Philosophy and the Idea of Beauty in Mandeville, Hutcheson, and Hume

Smith's thinking about sociability was deeply influenced by Hutcheson at Glasgow. The philosophical education provided by Hutcheson was an introduction to a Stoic system of moral philosophy intended to salvage the field under pressure from the skepticism of Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679) and Mandeville (Phillipson 2000, 72). Below, I outline how Stoicism was adopted, modified, and criticized by Shaftesbury, Mandeville, Hutcheson, and Hume, focusing on its language of beauty. This sketch provides a background for understanding Smith's moral and economic writings, especially his ideas of beauty and natural liberty. These are the most important concepts expressed in the Stoic language developed by Smith.

Mandeville launched his criticism of modern commercial sociability by satirizing Stoic ideas. He clearly had Marcus Aurelius in mind when he wrote *The Grumbling Hive* (1705) and when he later elaborated it as *The Fable of the Bees* (1714), responding to Marcus Aurelius's idea that "[w]hat is not the interest of the hive, is not the interest of the bee" (*Meditations*, 6.54, 158).

Mandeville would have agreed, but for different reasons from those of Marcus Aurelius. In Marcus Aurelius, private interests are supposed to accord with public interests (*Meditations*, 6.44, 155; 10.6, 233). Marcus Aurelius regards

[1] Marcus Aurelius Antoninus Augustus, *Meditations of the Emperor Marcus Aurelius Antoninus* (late first century CE), translated by Francis Hutcheson and James Moor (Glasgow: Robert Foulis, 1742) (abbreviated as *Meditations* below). This work was translated by Hutcheson and Moor during the summer of 1741 (Scott 1900, 246); Moor translated the first two books and Hutcheson the remainder (Scott 1900, 144). My interpretations of Marcus Aurelius in this paper are derived from this translation.

the universe or society as an organic whole, not just a collection of individual members (*Meditations*, 7.13, 163–164; see also Hutcheson's footnote, 163). His investigation of the word "profitable" shows that, in his view, private "interest," which is "agreeable to the structure of his nature," is "profitable" to both the individual and society. Further, he states, "Let the word profitable be taken, here, in a more popular sense, to relate to things indifferent" (*Meditations*, 6.45, 155–156; see also 3.11, 85; 7.58, 177; and Hutcheson's footnotes for 3.11, 85; 5.36, 135; and 11.16, 267). Profit, or private interest, is therefore neither good nor evil but indifferent, because any part of the universe, however insignificant it might be, has its own role to play in the greater whole. Even "evils" are part of the universe, and are allocated their own indispensable roles by Providence. Providence, which is design, even exploits evils and delusions (*Meditations*, 5.17, 125–126; see also Hutcheson's footnote, 125, and 8.35, 196). The Stoic idea of Providence is in this sense the foundation of sociability in Stoic philosophy (*Meditations*, 2.3, 64; see also 2.9, 67; 7.48, 172–173).

This idea is not only the core of Marcus Aurelius's concept of sociability but also underlies his account of beauty. The Stoic idea of beauty is particularly crucial to Shaftesbury's and Hutcheson's concepts of sociability and virtue, because all three philosophers regard beauty as the modus of virtue. Marcus Aurelius describes beauty as a thing independent of anything else:

> Whatever is beautiful or honourable, is so from itself, and its excellence rests in itself: its being praised is no part of its excellence. It is neither made better nor worse by being praised. This holds too in lower beauties, called so by the vulgar; in material forms, and works of art. What is truly beautiful and honourable, needs not any thing further then [sic] its own nature to make it so. Thus, the law, truth, benevolence, a sense of honour. Are any of these made good by being praised? Or, would they become bad, if they were censured? Is an emerauld made worse than it was, if it is not praised? Or, is gold, ivory, purple, a dagger, a flower, a shrub, made worse on this account? (*Meditations*, 4.20, 96–97; see also 5.14, 123; 6.9, 138; 6.16, 142–144; 7.74, 183; 11.1, 257–258; 12.1, 279–280; 12.3, 280–281; 12.23, 287–288).[2]

The idea of beauty here is formed independently of self-interest, rather than in relation to it, as Mandeville argues. Virtues, equally, are independent of anything else. This is reflected in Marcus Aurelius's statements that "From my grandfather Verus I learned to relish the beauty of manners, and to restrain all anger" (*Meditations*, 1.1, 46), and "From my father I learned … his contentment in every condition; … he acted like one who regarded only what was right and becoming in the things themselves, and not the applauses which might follow" (*Meditations*, 1.13, 57–62). The "beauty of manners" advocated here is

[2] In this, as in many other translated quotes below, the punctuation is not correct by the standards of twenty-first century English; however, I have retained it as it is in the original.

a life away from "pride," "vainglory," "vanity," and "any passion." It is a life independent of concern with magnificence, as real beauty means independence, or "the life according to nature." Only beauty can therefore bring virtue into life, aligning it with nature (*Meditations*, 2.1, 62). Indeed, the goal of Stoic philosophy is to make one's life independent of others and of external materials (*Meditations*, 2.17, 73–74; 3.4, 79; see also 4.8, 94; 4.18, 95–96; 4.24, 99; 5.16, 124–125).

Wealth of a form that is advantageous in terms of its effects of one's own nature will consequently be advantageous for the common nature of the whole. In contrast, wealth contrary to nature, such as luxury pursued to excess, should be rejected. The key is to see wealth in light of the Stoic concept of beauty as independence, and as the source of sociability. Only beauty can make our conduct virtuous and independent of anything unnatural. Only beauty can make anything useful or profitable to private as well as public interests. Thus, only beauty can ensure that "[w]hat is not the interest of the hive, is not the interest of the bee."

Shaftesbury's notion of natural human sociability is unambivalently Stoic, specifically influenced by Epictetus (55–135 CE) and Marcus Aurelius. They are the Stoic philosophers whose influence is most seen in Shaftesbury in terms not only of ideas but also of language (Klein 1994, 60).[3] Following the Stoics, Shaftesbury in *Characteristicks of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times* (1711) singles out beauty and virtue, that is, beauty is the source of sociability and virtue is to be derived from a common basis with beauty (Shaftesbury 1711/1964, 216–217). This means that the mind is a "spectator" or "auditor" of the minds of others, with its own "eye" and "ear" judging their behavior and actions. The mind judges moral virtues in the same way as it perceives the shapes, colors, and proportions from which beauty and deformity result (Shaftesbury 1699/1977, 48–49; 1711/1964, 90). By using Stoic language and ideas, Shaftesbury distanced himself from the egoistic thinking of contemporary theorists of natural law, who he thought of as Epicurean (Klein 1994, 67–68). Shaftesbury once called Epicureanism an "un-polite Philosophy," which denies design, order, and real beauty in the universe and excludes the possibility of aesthetic experiences (Klein 1994, 69).

Mandeville wrote *The Fable of the Bees* as an explicit satire on Stoic ideas and Shaftesbury's theories. While agreeing that private interests may contribute to public interests, he argues that this is only because such pursuits of private interests are vicious in themselves. Every business contains vices, and it is not as indifferent as the Stoics taught (*FB*, volume 1, 61). Mandeville then presents the well-known example of evil from Cicero (106–43 BCE), that of merchants concealing the true, vital information regarding a commodity from each other (*FB*, volume 1, 61–63). This Ciceronian view of trade, however, in Mandeville's view,

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[3] For Shaftesbury's relation to Stoic thinking, see Klein 1994, 70–90; Rand 1900, ix.

comes from an unfair judgment of others; we naturally overestimate ourselves and underestimate others (*FB*, volume 1, 80–81). For most of us, our own private interests cannot be viewed as dispassionately as Marcus Aurelius stated, because whatever pleases us depends on our circumstances and is based on our individual tastes only (*FB*, volume 1, 148). Mandeville argues that beauty and taste vary in different times and places: "There are different Faults as well as Beauties, that as Modes and Fashions alter and Men vary in their Tastes and Humours, will be differently admired and disapproved of" (*FB*, volume 1, 326). He goes on: "In Morals there is no greater Certainty" (*FB*, volume 1, 330). Morality is relative to its situations and circumstances, as is beauty (*FB*, volume 1, 334). Beauty and virtue will never be as independent of private interest as the Stoics argued they could be (*FB*, volume 1, 150–151). Mandeville cites the Ciceronian criticism of Stoic philosophy, that it demands a strict and rigorous morality far beyond the practical ability of human nature. Mandeville instead adopts the Epicurean notion of pleasure, but then criticizes it severely from a rigorist, indeed Stoic, standard of virtue, to adduce the paradox of his subtitle, "Private Vices, Public Benefits." Mandeville concludes that real pleasure is only sensual and worldly, and hence that it is evil, in contrast to virtue or Stoic self-command. Stoic philosophy will inevitably be betrayed by the real practices of frail human beings (*FB*, volume 1, 166).

In the second dialog of the second volume of *The Fable of the Bees*, Mandeville attempts to demonstrate that the most beautiful superstructure is inevitably based on a rotten and despicable foundation. Miracles, for instance, are based on pride and vainglory, as are the good offices or duties that Cicero argued for, and the benevolence, humanity, and other social virtues that Shaftesbury argued for (*FB*, volume 2, 64–65). This contradiction in Stoic philosophy between the theory of virtue and actual moral practice constitutes the contradiction in human nature itself (*FB*, volume 1, 167–168). In Mandeville's view, the Stoics were moral perfectionists with no understanding of frail human nature. They supposed that only a rigorous morality can ensure that we are indifferent to that which is in our interest, and therefore that private interests can contribute to public interests. On the other hand, they had no confidence in sociability, which Mandeville describes as "private vices, public benefits." Mandeville presents his paradox by satirizing the moral perfectionism of Stoic philosophy and demolishing the Stoic system beloved of Shaftesbury.

For Hutcheson, who criticizes Mandeville in a way that follows Shaftesbury, there is therefore a rationale to resort to the Stoic language of beauty and morals. Hutcheson is as much a Stoic as Shaftesbury (of whom he was a great admirer), as reflected in the introductory remarks to his translation of the *Meditations* (*Meditations*, Introduction, 2–3). Regarding beauty as identical to virtue, Hutcheson elaborates on Shaftesbury from this perspective in his *Inquiry into the Original of Our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue* (1725). He adopts the Stoic idea of beauty as independence in order to criticize Mandeville for his argument that beauty is relative to circumstances. Hutcheson attempts to show that

the pleasure derived from an object's beauty does not necessarily arise from any knowledge of the object's utility, any prospect of advantage, or any perception of interest. Instead, it arises from the idea of beauty and harmony itself, which strikes the human mind necessarily and immediately (*BV*, I.I.XII–XIV, 24–25; see also I.III.V, 38–40). Beautiful objects might be pursued for reasons of self-love, but a sense of beauty, which derives an immediate pleasure from those beautiful objects and acts as a motive for beauty-seeking, is independent of self-interest. For Hutcheson, the appreciation of beauty is disinterested, necessary, and universal. The necessity of aesthetic appreciation means that given "uniformity amidst variety," a pleasant feeling results, independently of the will (Scott 1900, 189). The idea of beauty is not formed in relation to self-interest, as Mandeville argued; virtues are equally independent of anything else.

The sense of beauty and the moral sense in Hutcheson are divine endowments directing us toward beauty and virtue (*BV*, II.I.VIII, 99). The natural, immediate action motivated by the sense of beauty is not selfish but disinterested, because frail human beings are incapable of surviving without such a divine internal sense letting them pursue their self-interest (*BV*, I.VIII.II, 78–81). Hutcheson prefers to see the sense of beauty as the source of our capacity for sociability. It is the microcosm that directly or immediately brings contact with the macrocosm; and the macrocosm is in its highest or best state presided over by God (Scott 1900, 249–250). Hutcheson believes that the sense of beauty is the divinely endowed faculty on which human sociability depends. He emphasizes here the Stoic dimensions of his arguments more systematically than Shaftesbury had, specifically his understanding of the sense of beauty as endowed in us universally, timelessly, and disinterestedly. The point at issue is crucial, because it shows that the pursuit of wealth and power is driven by benevolent as well as self-regarding passions (*BV*, I.VIII.I, 76–78). Thus, Hutcheson shows us how we can acquire wealth and power with the help of human passions and sentiments that are not necessarily vicious, but can instead simply be disinterested or innocent endowments. If ambition is innocent or virtuous, the pursuit of wealth and power will be a means of generating virtue and honor (*BV*, II.V.VII, p. 157). If adequately pursued, wealth can improve human life and bring virtue and honor. Philosophy will then have to teach us how to refine our means of acquiring wealth with this ultimate goal in mind. This is the question Hutcheson is concerned with in his own moral philosophy and in his criticism of Mandeville.[4] Hutcheson's innovation as a moral philosopher is to transform the Stoic argument of beauty and virtue into his own theory of the

[4] Hutcheson's debt to Stoic philosophy in dealing with this question can be seen most clearly in his papers on laughter, which discuss how wealth and virtue can become compatible through laughter: see *BOHD*, 111, 113, and 116. The papers were originally published in *The Dublin Journal* in 1725 and finally collected and republished under the title, *Reflections Upon Laughter, and Remarks Upon "The Fable of the Bees"* in 1750.

sense of beauty and the moral sense.[5] These are senses endowed by Providence not only for our survival but also to shape motivations so as to produce actions that incidentally contribute to the public benefit, and not private interests (*BV*, II.VII.XII, 197). In Stoic language, Hutcheson describes the ability of human passions and senses to be independent of interest but still endowed by Providence as necessary for our interests. His argument here for beauty and virtue as qualities valued regardless of the advantage derived from them is explicitly and unequivocally Stoic (*System*, volume 1, 54; volume I, 61; see also volume 1, 57–58).[6]

Hutcheson's providentialist account is sometimes interpreted as Calvinist or generally Christian rather than Stoic. In fact, Hutcheson's fundamentally Stoic system of moral philosophy is certainly buttressed by his Christian principles (Sher 1985, 176). Some classical themes can be easily adapted to Christian precepts in order to create a Christianized Stoicism; these include the desire for wealth and power to benefit others as well as the Stoic principle of the cosmic order, so misleadingly similar to the Christian Providence (Vivenza 2004, 109).[7] In Hutcheson's brand of Christian Stoicism, however, Christian precepts are reflected more in his characterization of virtue as benevolence than in his idea of a providential order.[8] While praising Marcus Aurelius's system as a "just philosophy" (*System*, volume 2, 182), Hutcheson criticizes the rigid Christian adherence to the laws of nature, which he thinks ignores the fact that beauty and virtue are brought about by divinely endowed senses, not rigidly commanded by Scripture (*System*, volume 2, 128–133).

By composing his theory of the sense of beauty and the moral sense in Stoic language, Hutcheson can describe a sociability wherein the pursuit of wealth is guided by these senses toward the public good in a virtuous manner. He can then establish his views on jurisprudence and political economy in order to show legislators how to achieve their duty to the public through the practice of their sense of beauty and their moral sense. In this context, he argues for civil laws modeled on Roman law as a means by which governments can achieve

[5] Hutcheson's division of the internal sense into a sense of beauty and a moral sense is probably owed to Cicero (*De Officiis* [*Of Duties*], 45 BCE, 1.4). Hutcheson uses the term "sense" to mean the passive aspect of the mind, as opposed to active reason (Scott 1900, 186).

[6] The footnote on page 61 also approves the Stoic philosophy as characterized by Cicero's *De Finibus Bonorum et Malorum* (*Of the Ends of Good and Evil*, 45 BCE), 1.3.c.10.

[7] Since the Middle Ages, similarities between the two doctrines have been recognized, such that a legend was created about the relationship between Seneca and St Paul (Colish 1992, 338–340; Vivenza 2004, 109).

[8] In *A System of Moral Philosophy*, Hutcheson notes that the definition of virtue as benevolence is nothing more than a restatement of the sum of Christian moral law as recorded in Matthew 12.30–31, "*Loving God* and *our neighbour*" (*System*, volume 1, 225–226; Sher 1985, 176–177). Hutcheson's benevolence is a philosophical version of the Christian ethic of love (Raphael and Macfie 1976, 6).

social equality.[9] Thus, Stoic language paves the way for Hutcheson to construct his system of moral philosophy as a Stoic, after Mandeville had demolished the Stoic credentials of Shaftesbury's system with his paradox. Hutcheson can still use Stoic language, which was exploited for satire by Mandeville, as a powerful weapon to vitiate Mandeville's claims.

David Hume (1711–1776) attempts to solve Mandeville's paradox by discarding the rigorist, indeed Stoic, line of moral thinking that Mandeville seized on. In his *Treatise of Human Nature* (1739–1740), Hume seeks to rewrite the theory of sociability more logically and credibly, in a way that is better grounded in experience and observation; or, in his own words, by introducing the experimental method of reasoning. This means that Epicurean or Skeptic moral principles, rather than Stoic, appear to be more plausible and useful for Hume when he attempts to refute Mandeville's arguments. Hume thinks that we can form our ideas of beauty and virtue by the benchmark of their utility as a standard of taste and morals; he seeks to solve Mandeville's paradox by introducing the idea of utility as a measure. This explains Hume's preference for the language of natural jurisprudence in the Epicurean idioms to the Stoic language used by Shaftesbury and Hutcheson.

In his *Political Discourses*, volume 2, published in 1752, Hume offers a sketch of his views on both Stoic and Epicurean or Skeptic philosophies. Largely agreeing with Hutcheson, Hume understands that Stoic philosophy preached that both wealth and virtue could be achieved through industry and by controlling the passions (*Essays*, 150 [Essay 1.16: "The Stoic"]). To Hume, happiness lies in a cultivated mind, sound virtues, and praiseworthy glory, which are attained only by industry. Happiness is not present in bodily sensuality, fluctuating fortunes, or indulgent pleasure. Industry can bring happiness, and as a result both wealth and virtue (*Essays*, 153). Hume might here approve Hutcheson's use of Stoic language to argue that wealth and virtue can be simultaneously attained by the sense of beauty and the moral sense; however, in his subsequent essay on the Skeptic, he argues that beauty and virtue are not intrinsic, as the Stoics and Hutcheson maintained, but instead merely relative and dependent on various sentiments and tastes, as the Skeptics and their follower Mandeville

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[9] Hutcheson often praises Roman law as described by Cicero as a useful means of ensuring that governments respect "the natural equality of men" (*System*, volume 1, 299–300). He pays attention to the rights and duties of parentage as described in Roman law, which supposed the natural equality of rights and duties between parents and children and also regarded the latter as equally rational agents (*System*, volume 2, 192). The reverse side of this argument is Hutcheson's dismissal of canon law for its failure to bring either justice or equality between the sexes (*System*, volume 2, 180). Smith also prefers Roman law as a useful remedy for the inequalities institutionalized in English common law, in areas such as apprenticeship (*WN*, I.x.c.15, 139). For Smith's views on the defects of apprenticeship, see *WN*, I.x.c.13–14, 138–139. Smith equally saw Roman law as a possible remedy for the ills of the feudal law of succession (*LJ* (A), i.115–116, 49; *WN*, III.ii.5–6, 384–385); for Smith's views on the law of succession among the Romans, see *LJ* (A), i.93–104, 39–44.

argued (*Essays*, 162 [Essay 1.18: "The Skeptic"]). To Hume, the Skeptics rightly understand that the values of beauty and virtue are relative, because of the diversity of our tastes and sentiments (*Essays*, 163). Behind his interpretation of the Skeptics lies Hume's own argument that beauty or utility, especially public utility, is a perception or a moral idea arising from the association of ideas in the mind (*Essays*, 166–168; see also 165). What separates Hume from the Stoics and Hutcheson is his idea that these passions and natural abilities are something merely probabilistic, working by chance and fortune and frequently under the effects of imagination and delusion. In line with the Epicurean and Skeptical traditions of morals, Hume's argument differs to this extent from that of Hutcheson, whose views were presented in Stoic language (Moore 1994, 33–35). In Hume's view, beauty and virtue are only relative, and life is governed by fortune, chance, or probability. Hume argues in line with the Skeptics that "[i]n a word, human life is more governed by fortune than by reason; is to be regarded more as a dull pastime than as a serious occupation; and is more influenced by particular humour, than by general principles" (*Essays*, 180).

Hume is skeptical of the Stoic conceptions of virtue and vice. In another essay, he criticizes the Stoics for their neglect of the influence of chance, delusion, and probability upon human life, and emphasized the usefulness of biases, instincts, and prejudices, as well as the role of delusion in the sentiments of the heart (*Essays*, 539 [Essay 3.2: "Of Moral Prejudices"]). Hume instead adopts many of Cicero's arguments, especially those ideas of virtue and vice that Cicero drew from the Epicureans and the Skeptics. Cicero was eclectic, drawing his concepts from the different streams of ancient moral philosophy, mostly the Stoics, Epicureans, and Skeptics. Hutcheson, in contrast to Hume, read Cicero as a Stoic, and preferred those parts of Cicero's works written in favor of Stoic arguments (Moore 1994, 26).[10] Hume understands and favors Cicero in his Skeptic aspect, especially his views on probability and delusion and his idea of utility as the only criterion of beauty and virtue.[11] Hume inherits these

[10] In his theory of moral sense, Hutcheson rejected the traditional Old Epicurean response explained in Cicero's *De Finibus*, and espoused also by Hobbes, which attributed all the desires of the human mind to self-love or the desire for private happiness (*PA*, 134–135). In a letter to Hutcheson, Hume states that he had Cicero's *De Officiis* in view in all his reasoning and asks him to review the fourth book of Cicero's *De Finibus*, where he comes out against the Stoic ideas regarding virtue and its motives (quoted in Scott 1900, 118).

[11] Hume adopts the insights of the Epicureans, revived particularly by French writers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, in his attempt to reduce the insights of the ancient moral philosophers to an experimental science of morals. For Hume, the ideas of virtue and happiness conceived by those ancient moralists are merely hypothetical or fanciful (Moore 1994, 26–27). The ancient Epicurean moralists, such as Epicurus (341–270 BCE) himself, Titus Lucretius (c. 99–c. 55 BCE), and Quintus Horatius Flaccus (or Horace; 65–8 BCE), were revived in seventeenth-century Britain by Hobbes and modified by Pierre Bayle (1647–1706) and Mandeville, becoming identified as the morality of the Skeptics or the Pyrrhonians in the early eighteenth century. This line of Epicurean morality offers Hume the themes and topics he develops in his *Treatise*; for instance, the distinction

ideas from the Skeptics through Cicero and the Continental natural jurists, and regards them as useful for his theory of sociability and worth elaboration in his *Treatise of Human Nature*.

As a Stoic, Hutcheson emphasized human passions and senses as divinely endowed guiding principles for forming the ideas of beauty and virtue. Hume, however, as a Skeptic presupposing no Stoic (or any other) Providence, sets utility as the measure of beauty and virtue and shifts the focus back to imagination, responding to Mandeville's belief in the role of delusive imagination in forming sociability. Hume is in this respect sticking to his agenda of introducing experimental methods into the moral sciences. He prefers empirical reasoning to Stoic providentialism in his account of sociability and moral science, and unlike Hutcheson, he validates the role and influence of experience and habit, which will conspire to operate upon the imagination, leading to the formation of ideas, if only as probable knowledge. Memory, senses, and understanding are in Hume's view all founded on the imagination or, in his words, "the vividness of our ideas" (*THN*, 172–173). By introducing the idea of utility as the measure of beauty and morality, Hume demolishes the Stoic system adopted by Hutcheson and presents a Skeptic and quasi-utilitarian system of moral philosophy, while showing that it is still possible to solve Mandeville's paradox without referring to Stoic providentialism.

3 The Stoic Concept of Beauty in Smith

In comparison with Hutcheson and Hume, Smith appears to be a more balanced reader of Stoic philosophy. In *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759), Smith states that the Stoic system is at times too rigorous in its moral demand for apathy toward life as lived by most people, but he still appreciates the same merits of Stoic philosophy that Hutcheson found useful for his argument on sociability (Forman-Barzilai 2010, 7).[12] In particular, Smith is attracted to Stoic

between justice and the natural virtues, convention of abstaining from coveting the possessions of others, and moral approbation as derived from utility and pleasure (Moore 1994, 27; see also 28, 36, 49–50). For Hume's background in the Epicurean tradition from his time at the University of Edinburgh, see Moore 1994, 32–33. Moore concludes that Hume's moral philosophy is not at all Hutchesonian, in the sense that Hume writes in the Epicurean tradition revived by Hobbes and adopted by Bayle and Mandeville, who were opposed by Hutcheson in all the separate expressions of his moral philosophy (Moore 1994, 53–54; for a similar view, see Phillipson 1989, 48–49). It still has to be shown, however, how Hume's account of the observance of justice based on fellow-feeling and regard to public utility is not Hutchesonian.

[12] The Stoic sources which Smith enlists throughout *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* are the *Discourses* (c. 108 CE) and *Enchiridion* (c. 125 CE) of Epictetus, the *Meditations* of Marcus Aurelius, *De Officiis*, *De Finibus*, and *De Legibus* (*Of the Laws*, mid–first century BCE) of Cicero, and the *Dialogues* and *Epistles* (both early to mid–first century CE) of Seneca (c. 4 BCE–65 CE). Some of these classical texts were commonly used in Smith's schooldays (Phillipson 2010, 19–21). Smith read and admired the

philosophy for its good understanding of selfish passions, teaching "a certain order, propriety, and grace, to be observed" in pursuing riches, power, and authority (*TMS*, I.iii, 58), and its criticism of excessive ambition regarding wealth and power (*TMS*, I.iii, 58–60; I.iii. 2.9–12, 58 and 60–61).

In his history of moral philosophy, Smith classifies Stoic philosophy as one "[o]f those Systems which make Virtue consist in Propriety," along with those of Plato (427–347 BCE) and Aristotle (384–322 BCE; *TMS*, VII.ii.1.1, 267). This is the point where Smith approves of them (*TMS*, VII.ii.1.15–17, 272–273; see also 275; as regards Plato and Aristotle, see VII.ii.1.11–12, 270–271). Smith contrasts the Stoics with Epicurus (341–270 BCE), who presented one "[o]f those Systems which make Virtue consist in Prudence" (*TMS*, VII.ii.2.1, 294; VII.ii.2.7–8, 296–297). Smith objects to the Epicurean doctrine (*TMS*, VII. ii.2.13, 298), not because it makes virtue consist in prudence, but because it assumes that virtue arises from its utility and "tendency to prevent pain and to procure ease and pleasure." In this respect, Smith views Plato, Aristotle, and the Stoics as philosophers superior to Epicurus in that they think virtue worthy of pursuit for its own sake and value rather than for its utility (*TMS*, VII.ii.2.9, 297; VII.ii.2.17, 299–300). Both Hutcheson and Smith consequently adopt Stoic language in order to describe beauty and virtue as valuable in themselves, independently of praise or external circumstances.

On the other hand, Smith argues that there is a need to pay attention to such matters of fact as the frailty of human nature in our understanding of morals. Accepting Mandeville's and Hume's criticisms of the Stoics, Smith admits that the "honourable" demerit of Stoic philosophy is its teaching of "a perfection altogether beyond the reach of human nature" (*TMS*, 60; see also III.3.8 and 11, 139–141; III.4.5–6, 158).[13] Like Hutcheson, Smith evaluates passions and sentiments in terms of their ability to usefully contribute to the public good. He aims at a moral account of passions and sentiments more suited to a wealthier modern commercial society.

In this respect, the Stoic vocabulary adopted in the early modern argument about sociability provided Smith with a useful tool in his criticism of Mandeville and his argument that wealth and virtue can be compatible. Neo-Stoicism was a powerful influence on European thought during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Stoic philosophy was revived on the Continent by the sixteenth-century neo-Stoics such as Michel de Montaigne (1533–1592). The old Stoic emphasis on self-discipline and moderation was applied to early modern European thought by the Flemish humanist Justus Lipsius (1547–1606) and others. Although the ancient Romans often associated self-discipline with

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Stoics in his youth, and Stoic ideas were popular among Scottish Enlightenment thinkers searching for a framework to replace a discredited Aristotelianism (Stewart 1991; Oslington 2011a, 6).

[13] Hume similarly thinks that the Stoics departed "too far from the receiv'd Maxims of Conduct and Behaviour, by a refin'd Search after Happiness or Perfection" (*Essays*, 542).

an attitude of passivity "following nature," early modern neo-Stoicism valued self-discipline for its effects in the world of commerce (Kaye 1924, xcix; Muller 1993, 47).[14] Neo-Stoicism was influential especially in the Netherlands, where moderation and self-control were emphasized by the jurist Hugo Grotius (1583–1645), who took from the Stoics the notion of natural sociability. Dutch influences were in turn conveyed to eighteenth-century Scotland by Scottish scholars who had been educated at the Dutch universities, and the neo-Stoic idea of sociability became the basis of an idea of self-discipline without extensive state supervision (Muller 1993, 47).

Smith decides to apply Stoic vocabulary to his account of modern commercial sociability by refiguring the Stoic and Hutchesonian passion for writing moral accounts. He prefers to write like a critic, following a looser method and presenting agreeable, lively pictures of manners; in this, he takes Aristotle's *Ethics* (c. 350 BCE) and Cicero's first book of *De Officiis* (*Of Duties*, 45 BCE) as his models. Such a method is more useful and agreeable for a science of morals (*TMS*, VII.iv.2, 327; VII.iv.5–6, 329). On the other hand, Smith considers that the Stoics and Hutcheson wrote moral accounts like grammarians. They introduced a sort of accuracy to provide exact rules of behavior. Such writers include not only casuists such as Hutcheson but also natural jurists such as Grotius and Samuel Pufendorf (1632–1694; *TMS*, VII.iv.2, 327; VII.iv.7, 329–330; *LJ* (B), 1–2, 397). This method may be appropriate for natural jurists, because they are dealing with the rules of justice, but is inappropriate when casuists apply it to ethics. Grammarian-style writing on morals is rooted in "the custom of auricular confession, introduced by the Roman Catholic superstition, in times of barbarism and ignorance" (*TMS*, VII.iv.8, 330; VII.iv.16, 333). Using this method, casuists "attempted, to no purpose, to direct by precise rules what it belongs to feeling and sentiment only to judge of" (*TMS*, VII.iv.33, 339).

Smith therefore writes about morals as a critic rather than as a grammarian. The style is to be applied equally even to his theory of justice and government: Smith concludes that "The two useful parts of moral philosophy, therefore, are Ethics and Jurisprudence: casuistry ought to be rejected altogether" (*TMS*, VII.iv.34, 340). Aristotle's *Ethics* and Cicero's *De Officiis*, in Smith's view, "treat of justice in the same general manner in which they treat of all the other virtues" (*TMS*, VII.iv.37, 341). In his writing on the laws of government and of political economy Smith adopts the style of Plato's *Of the Laws* (mid–third century BCE) and Cicero's *De Legibus* (*Of the Laws*, mid–first century BCE). Interestingly, Hutcheson criticized Cicero for his "too general and inaccurate"

[14] Skinner (1978) emphasizes that the vocabulary of the moral and political thought of Renaissance Italy, and of early modern Europe in general, was derived from Roman Stoic sources (Skinner 1978, volume 1, xiv). Skinner analyzes the important role of Stoic ideas in Montaigne's *Essays* (1580–1595), and the subsequent popularity of Stoic philosophy in France and the Netherlands in the late sixteenth century (Skinner 1978, volume 2, 275–284).

account of *depositum* in *De Officiis*, which led Hutcheson to present a typically casuistic account of ethics (considering gratitude, beneficence, and so on). In Hutcheson's definition, *depositum* meant a contract "where 'the business committed and undertaken is the safe custody of goods'" (*System*, volume 2, 68). Hutcheson's concept of political economy in his *System of Moral Philosophy* was accordingly a casuistic account of private rights, concerning property (Book 2, Chapters 7 and 8), commerce (Chapter 12), and contracts (Chapters 9, 10 and 13). Conversely, Smith's political economy is a lively description of roles of the passions, sentiments, tastes, and sociability in commerce and production. As explained in his discussion on the regulation of the banking trade, this is because the perfectionism of morals in the science of a legislator could well jeopardize government, or the public benefit, in the name of justice or natural liberty (*WN*, II.ii.94, 324).

Later in the newly written sections of Part 7 in the sixth and final edition of *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1790), Smith becomes critical of the moral perfectionism of Marcus Aurelius. Marcus Aurelius was the great apostle of the doctrine of "the most entire submission to the order of Providence; the most complete contentment with every event which the current of human affairs could possibly cast up." He was "the mild, the humane, the benevolent" philosopher who preached a sort of perfect sociability of man (*TMS*, VII.ii.1.35–37, 288–289). Rather, Smith prefers to focus his reading of the Stoics on "what we may call the practical morality of the Stoics," or "the doctrine of those imperfect, but attainable virtues," "which they supposed them capable of exercising, not rectitudes, but proprieties, fitnesses, decent and becoming actions, … what Cicero expresses by the Latin word *officia*, and Seneca, I think more exactly, by that of *convenientia*" (*TMS*, VII.ii.1.42, 291–292). The Stoics seem to teach us to interest ourselves in a department of "the great Superintendent of the universe," a department beyond our management or direction, while endeavoring to render us altogether indifferent to and unconcerned with the events that immediately affect us and which interest us the most, or "the proper business and occupation of our lives" (*TMS*, VII.ii.1.43–47, 292–293).[15]

Smith nevertheless, and unlike Hume, is a fairly sympathetic reader of Stoic philosophy. He chooses to develop its language in order to outline his description of natural sociability in a modern commercial society. In a typically Smithian digression in *The Wealth of Nations*, he says in passing that he values Stoic moral philosophy because of "the beauty of a systematical arrangement" (*WN*, V.i.f.25, 768–769). In his very early essays on "The History of the

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[15] Vivenza (2001, 2004) argues that it is right not to put too much weight on Smith's explicit rejection here, because the true reason for it was Smith's feeling that Stoic morals were completely self-sufficient (Vivenza 2001, 74–75; Vivenza 2004, 111). Rothschild (2001) may be overstating the case when she claims that Smith was quite skeptical about a great deal of the Stoic system and that the idea of the invisible hand is "un-Smithian" (Rothschild 2001, 132–134).

Ancient Physics" and "The History of the Ancient Logics and Metaphysics," Smith begins to develop his argument of the beauty of philosophical systems, and approves the system of Stoic providentialism (*EPS*, "Ancient physics," 11, 116–117). Throughout his academic career, Smith seems to value highly the beauty of the Stoic system as a model of his account of sociability, wherein he describes the system of a commercial society as a beautiful system. Smith adopts Stoic language to comprehensively describe how individuals can contribute to society as a whole through natural sociability, the invisible hand, the sense of beauty or taste, and the sense of justice.

Smith's idea of the invisible hand has been often, and rightly, associated with the Stoic character of providentialism.[16] Epictetus commented on the unintended social consequences of self-interested actions: Jupiter had so ordered human reason that "it can no longer be regarded as unsocial for a man to do everything for his own sake" (*Discourses*, 1.19.13–15, 131). The Stoic idea inspired Richard Cumberland (1631–1718) when he asserted in *De Legibus Naturae* (*Of the Laws of Nature*, 1672) that the best means to forward the common good is to forward one's own legitimate interest: this is the crucially important Stoic principle of self-preservation, which, however, is not so contrary as may appear to the other Stoic principle of the prevalence of the common over the individual good (Cumberland 1672/1727, 164; Vivenza 2004, 110).

Oslington (2011a) argues that, although there is no denying Stoic influences on Smith, scholars have been too ready to assume that acknowledgement of these influences deals fully with Smith's religious language, disposing of the need to come to terms with Christian theology as a crucial influence (Oslington 2011a, 6).[17] Sher (1985), Stewart (1991), and others, however, show that Stoicism and Christianity are not mutually exclusive categories, and that the motif of a Christianized Stoicism was common in the Scottish Enlightenment (Sher 1985, 175–186; Stewart 1991; Vivenza 2004, 109). Smith's ethical doctrines too are a combination of Stoic and Christian virtues—or, in philosophical terms, a combination of classical Stoicism and Hutcheson, who reduced all virtue to

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[16] The Stoic interpretation of the theological language in Smith rose to prominence through Macfie (1967, 1971), and Raphael and Macfie's (1976) introduction to the Glasgow edition of *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*. Raphael and Macfie stated that Stoic philosophy was the primary influence on Smith's ethical thought and also fundamentally affected his economic theory. For Smith, self-command came to permeate the whole of virtue, an indication of the way in which Stoicism permeated his reflection on the whole range of ethics and social science to follow (Raphael and Macfie 1976, 5–6). They were followed by Waszek (1984), Heise (1991), Brown (1994), Hill (2001), and others (Vivenza 2004, 108; Forman-Barzilai 2010, 6–7; Oslington 2011a, 5–6).

[17] Bouwsma (1975, 1988) discusses relationships between the Augustinian and Calvinist traditions and Stoicism in the early modern period. Friedman (2011) and Blosser (2011) deal with the relationship between Smith and the Calvinist tradition, and Gregory (2011) provides the Calvinist context and background. Although Heise (1995) attributes Smith's divine spectatorship to Stoic philosophy, Vivenza (2004) alleges that this is a character of the Christian and not of the Stoic Deity, in the sense that God is seen as transcendent (Heise 1995, 22; Vivenza 2004, 112).

benevolence. This was a philosophical version of the Christian ethic of love. When Smith sets Stoic self-command beside Christian love, he calls it "the great precept of nature" (*TMS*, I.i.5.5, 25; Raphael and Macfie 1976, 6). Calvinists see our sensory and moral capabilities as limited and distorted, a fact that is a part of Waterman's argument that there is an Augustinian theodicy of markets in Smith (Waterman 1991, 2002, 2004; Oslington 2011a, 8). The idea of limited and twisted human capabilities is, however, also abundant in Stoicism. Although Oslington (2011a) asserts that the Calvinist theology that dominated Scottish life from the sixteenth century until well into the nineteenth was far more important than any Stoic influence on Smith (Oslington 2011a, 6–8), it cannot be claimed that Smith was an intentional theological advocate of Calvinism or even New Light Scottish Presbyterianism. Blosser (2011) concedes that it can only be suggested, at best, that Calvin's theological conception of freedom was part of the social imaginary in which Smith lived. Although Calvin's ideas persisted throughout the *Westminster Confession* and other sources, it cannot be shown, either, that there is a direct link between Calvin's *Institute of the Christian Religion* (1536) and Smith's writings (Calvin 1536/1960; Blosser 2011, 47–48),[18] whereas the link between the Stoics and Smith is explicit and abundant in his writings.

In adopting Stoic language, Smith seems to have read and appreciated the Stoics in a more balanced way than did Hutcheson or Hume. Smith pays attention to the Stoic defect of moral perfectionism, which Hutcheson did not care about, as well as to their argument about delusion or the role of imagination, which Hume attributed more to Cicero and the Skeptics than to the Stoics. In Stoic language, Smith describes us as fitted by nature to society, as we need mutual assistance; and as possessing a sense of remorse, and there with the ability to check our own conduct (*TMS*, II.ii.3.1, 85). In Stoic language, Smith describes how wealth can be pursued properly by selfish passions directed through a sense of remorse and duty (*TMS*, III.5.7–8, 166).

Smith opts to refine Stoic language in order to respond to Mandeville and show that human nature is not vicious in the pursuit of wealth. The self-checking mechanism of the mind that Smith describes, however, is different from both the benevolence-based account that Hutcheson outlines and the skeptical, quasi-utilitarian account of Hume. Smith does not agree with Hume's terminology, which denotes any motive contributing to the public benefit as virtuous. Rather, Smith argues that self-love can be virtuous because it controls itself out of self-interest. Smith argues that passions seek a means to an end for the sake of the means itself, and that the sense of beauty is not primarily concerned with the utility of beauty (*TMS*, IV.1.6, 180). Hume argued that beauty was derived from its utility, which would give the possessor pleasure and

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[18] In dealing with the Calvinist theological context of the Scottish Enlightenment, Stewart (2003) indicates that Smith has little to do with it.

convenience (*THN*, II.I.8.1–2, 195–196; see also *TMS*, IV.1.2, 179). Claiming originality for his account of beauty, Smith argues:

> But that this fitness, this happy contrivance of any production of art, should often be more valued, than the very end for which it was intended; and that the exact adjustment of the means for attaining any conveniency or pleasure, should frequently be more regarded, than that very conveniency or pleasure, in the attainment of which their whole merit would seem to consist, has not, so far as I know, been yet taken notice of by any body. That this however is very frequently the case, may be observed in a thousand instances, both in the most frivolous and in the most important concerns of human life. (*TMS*, IV.1.3, 179–180)

Like Hutcheson, Smith understands the sense of beauty as originating from the pleasure of seeing the order, harmony, and economy of an organization or arrangement. Hume presented the sentiment of beauty as something that provides a motive for moral action and ideas, with his emphasis on utility (*THN*, II.II.5.16–17, 235). Smith's concept of beauty, with his emphasis on fitness, is described in Stoic language as an intrinsic value, not a value based on interest and advantage—at least, not primarily. A spectator will sympathize with the beauty of formal arrangement, balance, symmetry, and proportion. As among the Stoics, Smith's beauty is valued intrinsically by a spectator, not by its tendency to promote public good or utility.

> We are then charmed with the beauty of that accommodation which reigns in the palaces and oeconomy of the great; and admire how every thing is adapted to promote their ease, to prevent their wants, to gratify their wishes, and to amuse and entertain their most frivolous desires. If we consider the real satisfaction which all these things are capable of affording, by itself and separated from the beauty of that arrangement which is fitted to promote it, it will always appear in the highest degree contemptible and trifling. But we rarely view it in this abstract and philosophical light. We naturally confound it in our imagination with the order, the regular and harmonious movement of the system, the machine or oeconomy by means of which it is produced. The pleasures of wealth and greatness, when considered in this complex view, strike the imagination as something grand and beautiful and noble, of which the attainment is well worth all the toil and anxiety which we are so apt to bestow upon it. (*TMS*, IV.1.9, 183)

Smith goes on to describe how beauty, which is pursued intrinsically, nevertheless promotes public good or utility in the end. Here, he has introduced the idea of a "deception" by nature and uses the phrase "an invisible hand."

> And it is well that nature imposes upon us in this manner. It is this deception which rouses and keeps in continual motion the industry of mankind. … The earth by these labours of mankind has been obliged to redouble her natural fertil-

> ity, and to maintain a greater multitude of inhabitants. It is to no purpose, that the proud and unfeeling landlord views his extensive fields, and without a thought for the wants of his brethren, in imagination consumes himself the whole harvest that grows upon them. … The produce of the soil maintains at all times nearly that number of inhabitants which it is capable of maintaining. The rich only select from the heap what is most precious and agreeable. They consume little more than the poor, and in spite of their natural selfishness and rapacity, though they mean only their own conveniency, though the sole end which they propose from the labours of all the thousands whom they employ, be the gratification of their own vain and insatiable desires, they divide with the poor the produce of all their improvements. They are led by an invisible hand to make nearly the same distribution of the necessaries of life, which would have been made, had the earth been divided into equal portions among all its inhabitants, and thus without intending it, without knowing it, advance the interest of the society, and afford means to the multiplication of the species. (*TMS*, IV.1.10, 183–185)

Smith's idea of deception by an invisible hand is sometimes attributed to Calvinist or Scottish Presbyterian roots (Sher 1985, 44). Adam Ferguson (1723–1816) preached in Gaelic or "Ersh" to his regiment of Highlanders on December 18, 1745, during the last Jacobite Rebellion: "What Change for the better this Rebellion would bring, is not easily conceived" (Ferguson 1746, 14). Because "Society, under the Regulation of Laws and Government, is the State for which Providence has calculated our Natures" (Ferguson 1746, 7), in the end, the Jacobites and their French allies discover "that they are only made Tools to serve Purposes very different from the Ends they propose to themselves" (Ferguson 1746, 17).[19] The sermon that Hugh Blair (1718–1800) preached before the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland on May 18, 1746—scarcely one month after the Battle of Culloden put an end to hostilities—centered on the theme of divine retribution for moral and religious transgressions (Blair 1746; Sher 1985, 42). Blair wrote that, despite their evil intentions, the Jacobite rebels were actually part of the providential plan, for God "makes the unruly Passions of bad Men *work* in a secret Way, towards Ends, by them altogether unseen." Like the ancient Hebrews, in Blair's view, the people of Britain, and especially of Scotland, were dealt a divine blow so that they might acknowledge their sinfulness and reform their corrupt ways (Sher 1985, 42). Sher (1985) argues that, by seeking to explain the rebellion in terms of a providential logic of history, Ferguson's and Blair's sermons employed a traditional Calvinist and Scottish Presbyterian mode of moral and political preaching: the jeremiad (after the Biblical Jeremiah). The use of this term in its more restricted, preacherly sense implies the assertion that national misfortunes are punishments by God

[19] Ferguson translated the sermon into English and published it in London at the request of his patroness the Duchess of Atholl (Sher 1985, 40).

for national corruption: Ferguson wrote that "Sacred History gives sufficient Authority to presume, that publick Calamities are the Effect of publick Corruption, and that there is no way of thoroughly averting the Punishment but by a general Reformation of Manners" (Ferguson 1746, 3). Only widespread moral regeneration can restore the chosen to their special place in the eyes of God and prevent God's wrath from similarly falling on them in the future. Consequently, political events like "the Forty-Five" are endowed with moral and religious meaning, and seemingly secular occurrences become part of sacred history (Sher 1985, 43; see also 198 and 206–211). With the introduction of God instead of impersonal fate as the ultimate director of events and determiner of outcomes, Stoicism was stripped of its pagan attributes and reconciled with the promise, and threat, of the Scottish Presbyterian jeremiad, which taught that divine Providence rewards or punishes the people of Scotland or Britain as a whole according to the extent of their faithfulness to their ethical and religious covenant with the Lord (Sher 1985, 325).

In Smith, however, excessive self-love and delusion bring about positive unintended consequences, not divine blows for sin as preached by Ferguson and Blair. Smith does not regard all self-interested action as bad in itself or redeemable only by the deception of nature. Smith does not even accept Hutcheson's view that self-love is morally neutral. Smith follows the Stoics in holding that self-preservation is the first task entrusted to us by nature (*TMS*, II.ii.2.1, 82; VI.ii.1.1, 219; VII.ii.1.15, 272; Raphael and Macfie 1976, 8). Self-delusion, most evident in the love of wealth and power, is necessary for the economic dynamo to function. It creates the fundamental, natural and proper, but not sinful, desire to better one's condition, which drives most forms of economic behavior (*TMS*, I.iii.2.1, 50; *WN*, II.iii.28, 341; *WN*, III.iii.12, 405; *WN*, IV.v.b.43, 540; *WN*, IV.ix.28, 674; Raphael and Macfie 1976, 9; Long 2011, 101). Stoic metaphysics also said that good could come out of evil (*TMS*, I.ii.3.4, 36; Raphael and Macfie 1976, 8), and in Smith's work evil in fact appears to be concealed good. This is a fundamental Stoic principle: there is no real or pervasive evil, just partial evils (*TMS*, VI.ii.3.3, 235), such as war, natural disaster, social injustice, and poverty. The delusions of excessive self-love and greed are a secondary, influencing but not core, factor—imperfections only (Long 2011, 101). Smith accounts for evil as the unintended consequence of human action, maintaining a positive and optimistic theological claim that the providentialist grounding of human nature insures that the delusion of excessive self-love works unintentionally on the whole for good (Long 2011, 103–104). Long (2011) claims that the philosophical influences on Smith were predominantly Christian, that Smith's God is a Christian God, and that Smith is a genuine and consistent Christian theist who places a Christian emphasis on the Golden Rule: to love others as we love ourselves (Long 2011, 98–99). He admits, however, that Smith's system does not have the tone of Christ's scriptural imperative (Long 2011, 99), and concludes that Smith's account of evil is in contrast to the "negative anthropology" of

the Calvinist tradition, which says that excessive self-love and delusion have pervasive, negative unintended consequences in society (Long 2011, 104).[20]

Smith's idea of deception by an invisible hand was an outcome of his extension of the philosophy of beauty and taste laid out in Hutcheson and Hume. The phrase "an invisible hand" appears in Part IV of *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, which deals with the aesthetic pleasure afforded by power and riches. In Smith, "delusion" is an aesthetic term, developed out of Cicero via Hume's account of beauty, sympathy, and the role of imagination (Furuya 2010; 2012). As Raphael and Macfie (1976) rightly argue, the echoes of Mandeville and of Rousseau in the invisible hand passage are faint, nothing to the echoes of Stoicism and Hume that appear so often in both the language and the doctrine of *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (Raphael and Macfie 1976, 11). Life according to nature was the basic tenet of Stoic ethics, and the Stoics themselves applied their idea of the harmonious system to society no less than to the physical universe. The Stoic ideas of nature as a cosmic harmony and of a harmonious system seen in the working of society, form a major part of the philosophical foundation of *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* and *The Wealth of Nations* (Raphael and Macfie 1976, 7). Smith's use of Stoic language shows that, even though he is in agreement with Hutcheson's and Hume's criticism of Mandeville, he is not totally convinced by their strategies and rhetoric. Instead, Smith reads and evaluates the Stoics, and develops their language in his own way.[21]

4 Beauty as Independence and the Stoic Image of Natural Liberty in Smith

Smith's distinctive understanding of Stoic philosophy enables him to innovate in the application of Stoic language in a way that enables him to move from natural jurisprudence toward political economy. He adapts Stoic language to develop

[20] Elsewhere, Oslington (2011b) maintains that the most important key to understanding Smith's three references to the invisible hand is attention to the British scientific natural theological accounts of divine action and Providence, and discusses Smith's application of the idea of the providential transformation of action on the economy. For the thinkers of the Scottish Enlightenment, Isaac Newton (1642–1727) was the key figure in this tradition, often mediated by Colin Maclaurin (1698–1746), who offered a heavily theologized Newtonianism that meshed with the Moderate Calvinism of the Scottish Enlightenment (Maclaurin 1748; Oslington 2011a, 9). Smith's belief that excessive self-love and delusion produce positive unintended consequences, is shown not only in the invisible hand hypothesis: it is a generic principle that runs through the whole of his writings and therefore is not fully captured by his three particular references to the invisible hand (*EPS*, "History of Astronomy," III.2, 49; *TMS*, IV.1.10, 184; *WN*, IV.ii.9, 456; Long 2011, 101).

[21] Griswold discusses Smith's criticism of the Stoics in terms of the difference between the Stoic concept of nature and Smith's new concept of nature as revealed in the impartial spectator (Griswold 1999, 317–324).

the theory of justice per se outlined in his *Lectures on Jurisprudence* into a new theory of sociability that refines the concept of justice as the science of the legislator in *The Wealth of Nations*. Smith's understanding of the Stoics leads him to read Cicero as a quasi-Stoic but rather more skeptical writer, somehow immune from the rigorous Stoic moral perfectionism that Smith sees in Marcus Aurelius's language, lauded by Hutcheson. The introduction of Ciceronian language and the Ciceronian style of writing (writing as criticism) is therefore an indispensable step taken by Smith toward a new concept of natural liberty expressed in his political economy. The arrival at a recognizable concept of political economy is implausible without a prior movement from the grammarian-style account of justice and casuistic framework of Continental natural jurisprudence. A new language has to be developed wherein passions and sentiments can be strongly depicted as actively oriented toward the self-interest of the one who feels them and yet be unintentionally contrived to further the public good.

In his development of a new concept of natural liberty in his political economy, Smith owes a lot to Cicero's language in *Cato Maior de Senectute* (*An Essay on Old Age*, 44 BCE). Cicero's language is useful to Smith for emphasizing that agriculture is by far the most advantageous industry, on which assumption his concept of natural liberty is based. Cicero describes agriculture as being as profitable as it is pleasurable.

> I come now to the pleasures of husbandmen, with which I am excessively delighted; which are not checked by any old age, and appear in my mind to make the nearest approach to the life of a wise man. For they have relation to the earth, which never refuses command, and never returns without interest that which it hath received; but sometimes with less, generally with very great interest. And yet for my part it is not only the product, but the virtue and nature of the earth itself delight me. (*Cato Maior*, Chapter 15, 240)

Agriculture will bring us to an awareness of the pleasure and beauty of nature.

> Of which not only the advantage, as I said before, but also the cultivation and the nature itself delights me: the rows of props, the joining of the heads, the tying up and propagation of vines, and the pruning of some twigs, and the grafting of others, which I have mentioned. … Nor indeed is rural life delighted by reason of corn-fields only and meadows and vineyards and groves, but also for its gardens and orchards; also for the feeding of cattle, the swarms of bees, and the variety of all kinds of flowers. Nor do plantings only give me delight, but also engraftings; than which agriculture has invented nothing more ingenious. (*Cato Maior*, Chapter 15, 241–242)

Agriculture, above all, affords more wealth, beauty, and virtue than any other profession.

> To the whole race of mankind the cultivation of the land is beneficial; but also from the amusement, which I have mentioned, and that fullness and abundance of all things which are connected with the food of men, and also with the worship of the gods; so that, since some have a desire for these things, we may again put ourselves on good terms with pleasure. (*Cato Maior*, Chapter 16, 242–243)

> Nothing can be either more rich in use, or more elegant in appearance than ground well tilled. (*Cato Maior*, Chapter 16, 243)[22]

Following Cicero, Smith praises agriculture because it is, he feels, the most productive industry engaged in by human societies, and therefore contributes most to the public good. As in Cicero, economic productivity is grounded in the natural status of agricultural production.

> No equal capital puts into motion a greater quantity of productive labour than that of the farmer. Not only his labouring servants, but his labouring cattle, are productive labourers. In agriculture too nature labours along with man; and though her labour costs no expence, its produce has its value, as well as that of the most expensive workmen. … The labourers and labouring cattle, therefore, employed in agriculture, not only occasion, like the workmen in manufactures, the reproduction of a value equal to their own consumption, or to the capital which employs them, together with its own profit; but of a much greater value. Over and above the capital of the farmer and all its profits, they regularly occasion the reproduction of the rent of the landlord. This rent may be considered as the produce of those powers of nature, the use of which the landlord lends to the farmer. … It is the work of nature which remains after deducting or compensating every thing which can be regarded as the work of man. … No equal quantity of productive labour employed in manufactures can ever occasion so great a reproduction. In them nature does nothing; man does all; and the reproduction must always be in proportion to the strength of the agents that occasion it. (*WN*, II.v.12, 363–364; see also V.i.a.9, 694–695)

Manufacturing produces no rent and adds less value than agriculture to the annual production of labor in a society and to the real wealth and revenue of its members. Moreover, the capital invested in manufacturing, and in domestic and foreign trade, is more vulnerable to greater risk via accidents.

> The capital of the landlord, on the contrary, which is fixed in the improvement of his land, seems to be as well secured as the nature of human affairs can admit of.

[22] Hume, similarly, thought that the beauty of a field lay in its fertility (*THN*, 235).

> The beauty of the country besides, the pleasures of a country life, the tranquillity of mind which it promises, and wherever the injustice of human laws does not disturb it, the independency which it really affords, have charms that more or less attract every body; and as to cultivate the ground was the original destination of man, so in every stage of his existence he seems to retain a predilection for this primitive employment. (*WN*, III.i.3, 378)

In this language, adapted from Cicero to the needs of Smith's political economy as exemplified above, "independency" is synonymous with "beauty," as in Hutcheson's Stoic vocabulary. "Beauty" is a term whose meaning overlaps with those of both "wealth" and "virtue," and Smith seeks to show how the "beauty" of agriculture achieves both these goods.[23] Farmers are in a position to enhance their engagement in the most productive of activities with attention and application, the virtues most required for agricultural improvement.

Cicero was clear that *Cato Maior* was concerned with political economy, as in the following discussion of Xenophon (c. 430 BCE–c. 354 BCE).

> For many purposes the books of Xenophon are very useful; which read, I pray you, with diligence, as you are doing. At what length is agriculture praised by him in that book, which treats of the management of private property, and which is styled "Œconomicus." (*Cato Maior*, Chapter 17, 243; *Œconomicus*, 104–211; see also Donaldson 1775, 28)

Smith's praise of agriculture is Stoic, as shown by his quotation in *The Wealth of Nations* of the following passage from the *De Agri Cultura* (*On Farming*, c. 160 BCE) of Cato the Elder (Marcus Porcius Cato, 234–149 BCE), the protagonist of Cicero's *Cato Maior*:

> Trading can sometimes bring success, but it is insecure; so can money-lending, but that is not respectable. So our forefathers thought; and so they enacted that a thief should pay any penalty twice over, a money-lender four times over, which allows us to infer how much worse a citizen they thought a money-lender was than a thief. When they wanted to say that a man was good, their highest compliments were to call him "a good farmer and a good husbandman." I believe that a trader may display bravery and skill in the course of trade, but, as I said above, it is insecure and liable to disaster. As to farmers, their offspring are the strongest men and

[23] The semantics of the term "beauty" in this sense was to be shared by political economists in the early nineteenth century. John Sinclair (1754–1835), for instance, sought to show that the beauty of the fine arts was closely interwoven with the prosperity as well as morality of a people (Sinclair 1825, 2).

> bravest soldiers; their profit is truest, safest, least envied; their cast of mind is the least dishonest of any. (Cato, 53, cited in *WN*, IV.ii.21, 462) [24]

Smith praises the vast knowledge that agriculture requires of farmers and the consequent superior judgment and understanding they need to acquire (*WN*, I.x.c.23–24, 143–144; see also *LJ* (B), 328, 539). The effect of the division of labor in agriculture is limited compared with that in other industries. This means that the improvement of productivity in agriculture cannot keep pace with that in manufacturing (*WN*, I.i.4, 16; see also IV.ix.35, 676; *LJ* (A), vi.30–31, 342; (B), 214, 490). However, this is hardly a concern for Smith; it is rather evidence of the virtue of agriculture because of the difficulty involved in subdividing operations on the farm and the consequent requirement for greater knowledge on the part of the workman. This virtue, in other words, stems from the fact that husbandmen are not as ignorant as workers in manufacturing in the context of the increasing division of labor in a modern commercial society (*WN*, V.i.f.50, 781–782). As Winch (1978) argues, Smith's expression of the mental mutilation of the modern manufacturing worker fits within its history as a classical and civic-humanist motif, and Vivenza (2004) clarifies that Smith has taken it from Xenophon (*Œconomicus*, IV.2–3, 121 and 123), where the Greek author describes the "illiberal arts" that oblige the laborer to live an unhealthy life that renders him unfit both for social and for military activity. This was a *locus classicus* in ancient thought, which Smith knew perfectly well (*LJ* (A), iv.82, 231; Winch 1978; Vivenza 2004, 109).

Hume reads Cicero more as a skeptic moralist, whereas Smith regards Cicero as something between a Stoic and a Skeptic, although not entirely as Stoic as Hutcheson would have preferred. Smith's understanding of the Stoics leads him into thinking that the most important virtue of agriculture is its "independence," a synonym for "beauty" in Stoic language, exemplified here by farmers' capacity to envisage and implement improvements on their own initiative. Smith cites the economy of the North American colonies as an area that he thought was progressing most rapidly (*WN*, IV.vii.b.15, 571). Smith describes their prosperity in Ciceronian language, emphasizing that "Plenty of good land, and liberty to manage their own affairs their own way, seem to be the two great causes of the prosperity of all new colonies" (*WN*, IV.vii.b.16, 572). The independence of the farmers allows them to make decisions and operate in their own interest. In Ciceronian language, Smith depicts the British North American colonies as the most rapidly progressing economies under British political institutions and British free trade, wherein independent farmers will naturally and necessarily concentrate their capital in agriculture, following their own interest (*WN*, II.v.21, 366). On this point also, Smith echoes the Ciceronian imperative that

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[24] Cato's *De Agri Cultura* is the first surviving work of Latin prose, and is first-hand evidence of farming, rural life and slavery in Italy in the second century BCE (Dalby 1998, 7).

agriculture is the most virtuous industry as well as the most advantageous in terms of increasing the wealth of nations.

The British North American colonies, to Smith, are ideal political economies wherein capital flow is essentially free of political interference and farmers can fully exploit their capital for their own interest. They can thus act in a way that will consequently (unintentionally) maximize the value of annual public production, riches, and power. Smith's famous "invisible hand" paragraph in *The Wealth of Nations*, which graphically illustrates how private actions amalgamate unintentionally with the public good, must be read on that assumption.

> But the annual revenue of every society is always precisely equal to the exchangeable value of the whole annual produce of its industry, or rather is precisely the same thing with that exchangeable value. As every individual, therefore, endeavours as much as he can both to employ his capital in the support of domestick industry, and so to direct that industry that its produce may be of the greatest value; every individual necessarily labours to render the annual revenue of the society as great as he can. He generally, indeed, neither intends to promote the publick interest, nor knows how much he is promoting it. By preferring the support of domestick to that of foreign industry, he intends only his own security; and by directing that industry in such a manner as its produce may be of the greatest value, he intends only his own gain, and he is in this, as in many other cases, led by an invisible hand to promote an end which was no part of his intention. Nor is it always the worse for the society that it was no part of it. By pursuing his own interest he frequently promotes that of the society more effectually than when he really intends to promote it. I have never known much good done by those who affected to trade for the publick good. It is an affectation, indeed, not very common among merchants, and very few words need be employed in dissuading them from it. (*WN*, IV.ii.9, 455–456)

It is only when capital invested in production at home mobilizes a greater amount of domestic labor and gives revenue and employment to a greater number of the inhabitants of a country than an equal amount of capital employed in foreign trade that selfish private interests are, as the Stoics described, arranged in a cosmic harmony, as if "an invisible hand" is at work (*WN*, IV.ii.5–8, 454–455; see also IV.ii.3–4, 453–454; IV.v.a.3, 505–506). This is a distinctively Smithian assumption based on what could be called the aesthetics of investment. Needless to say, Smith remarks on the Ciceronian precedent that agriculture is the safest and most profitable of all the sectors of the economy (*WN*, III.i.1–9, 376–380).

It is in Stoic and Ciceronian language that Smith develops his distinctive idea of a system of natural liberty. He concludes that the best policy is to take away completely all systems of preference and restraint, so that "the obvious and simple system of natural liberty establishes itself of its own accord" (*WN*, IV.ix.51, 687; see also IV.v.b.43, 540; *LJ* (A), vi.92–97, 365–366; (B), 232–235, 498–499).

> Some moderate and gradual relaxation of the laws which give to Great Britain the exclusive trade to the colonies, till it is rendered in a great measure free, seems to be the only expedient … which, by gradually diminishing one branch of her industry and gradually increasing all the rest, can by degrees restore all the different branches of it to that natural, healthful, and proper proportion which perfect liberty necessarily establishes, and which perfect liberty can alone preserve. (*WN*, IV.vii.c.44, 606)

The Stoic image of natural harmony appears especially in Smith's idea of natural or perfect liberty. The three writers on whom Smith chiefly draws in his discussion of Stoic doctrine—Epictetus, Marcus Aurelius, and Cicero—were all Roman, and the practical bent of the Romans closely connected their moral duties with their legal obligations as citizens (Raphael and Macfie 1976, 7). This tradition Smith accepted, because of the tradition of natural law that has long been recognized as part of his background, especially the Continental, Protestant natural law philosophy of Hugo Grotius and Samuel Pufendorf (Oslington 2011a, 9). Natural law theory was instrumental in structuring the moral philosophy curriculum that Smith taught at Glasgow, and was the disciplinary matrix out of which political economy grew (Oslington 2011a, 10). Natural law theories are usually presented as detachable from theological commitments, and the classical doctrine underlying the natural law paradigm is Stoic, mainly because natural law treatises opposed Hobbesian egoistic theories on the basis of the Stoic principle of the natural sociability of human beings (Buckle 1991, 23–29 and 69–77; Vivenza 2004, 109).[25]

Consequently, Smith's concept of natural liberty differs in a crucial way from the Physiocratic ideas of perfect liberty and laissez-faire policy. Smith criticizes the French Physiocrats for the excessively rigid political-economic regimen they prescribe. In his view, their perfectionist policy mindset could well jeopardize what he calls "the natural balance of industry" (*LJ* (B), 233, 498). Unlike his faith in the principle of natural liberty, the Physiocratic regimen of perfect liberty, he felt, ignored "the wisdom of nature," failed to recognize "some unknown principle of preservation" contained in the political body itself, and had no confidence in "the natural effort which every man is continually making to better his own condition" (*WN*, IV.ix.28, 673–674).[26] These were the fundamental Stoic principles of self-preservation, which were absent from Physiocratic thinking. Smith is all too often regarded as crucially influenced by the Physiocrats

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[25] For the Continental natural law tradition and its importance for Smith, see, for instance, Forbes (1975; 1982), Haakonssen (1981; 1982; 1996; 2003), Stein (1982), Hont and Ignatieff (1983), Moore (2006), and Haldane (2011).

[26] This criticism of moral rigor is echoed in Smith's criticism of the "spirit of system" in the final edition of *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (*TMS*, VI.ii.2.15–18, 232–234).

because of his praise of agriculture and so forth, but he himself thinks that the Stoics had a better understanding of the way frail, twisted human nature works, despite the similarity of their perfectionist thinking to that of the Physiocrats (*TMS*, I.ii.3.4, 36). It is not surprising that Smith values Stoic ethics for their role in understanding and encouraging sociability (Phillipson 2000, 80). Marcus Aurelius wrote:

> I cannot be angry at my kinsmen, or hate them. We were formed by nature for mutual assistance, as the two feet, the hands, the eyes lids [*sic*], the upper and lower rows of teeth. Opposition to each other is contrary to nature; all anger and aversion is an opposition. (*Meditations*, 2.1, 63) [27]

> Go on straight in the way pointed out by your own nature, and the common nature of the whole. They both direct you to the same road. (*Meditations*, 5.3, 114)

> [T]he universal destiny or fate of the whole, is made a complete cause out of all the particular causes. (*Meditations*, 5.8, 117)

These Stoic ideas no doubt inspired Smith's arguments about sympathy, sociability, and the division of labor, as well as his criticism of mercantile hostility. Smith envisions the free commerce of independent people in the Stoic spirit of sociability; that is, commerce "ought naturally to be, among nations, as among individuals, a bond of union and friendship" (*WN*, IV.iii.c.9, 493; see also IV.iii.c.11, 494).[28] Free trade was, for instance, the main advantage of the Union of 1707 for Scotland, which saw an increase in the price of cattle, a rise in the value of all Highland estates, and the improvement of the Lowlands (*WN*, I.xi.l.3, 239–240; see also I.xi.b.8, 165).

5 Conclusion

When Smith makes remarks about the unintended consequences of intentional actions, in the invisible hand paragraph and elsewhere, he is describing a new concept of natural liberty in political economy, drawn from his distinctive reading of the Stoics. The concept of the invisible hand in Smith is inspired,

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[27] The error is in the English printing and not in the original, where the passage is "[…] ut pedes, ut manus, ut palpebra, ut ordines superiorum et inferiorum dentium," and "palpebra" is the normal plural of palpebrum or "eyelids." I would like to acknowledge the Editor of *The Kyoto Economic Review* for assistance on this point.

[28] In the final edition of *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1790), Smith refers more explicitly to national prejudices, especially that between England and France, which Hume discussed (*TMS*, VI.ii.2.3, 228–229; see also *LJ* (A), vi.158–160, 389–390; *LJ* (B), 261–266, 511–513).

above all, by the Stoic ideas of sociability, harmony within society, and the guiding hand of Providence behind individual causes or the private actions of independent individuals. Smith's concept of the invisible hand is by no means exclusively Stoic,[29] but phrases such as "of its own accord" that he repeatedly used in *The Wealth of Nations* (e.g., *WN*, IV.ii.3, 453) are expressions based on the Stoic notion of beauty as independence, and then refined by Smith. In the process, Smith applies the Stoic concept to his description of the state of natural liberty, wherein the independence of each sector of the economy and the cosmic harmony between the sectors within the economy generate an optimal outcome. Employing and further developing Stoic and Ciceronian language was a strategy that allowed Smith to destroy Mandeville's paradox of "private vices, public benefits" in a non-utilitarian way, and also to reconstruct a neo-Stoic system of political economy in the post-Humean age (after Hume had demolished Hutcheson's Stoic system). Smith's concept of natural liberty in political economy is the product of these efforts.

This new concept is useful for Smith as he echoes Cicero's praise of agriculture, enabling him to present what I would call his "aesthetics of investment," which is based on the implicit assertion that capital invested in agriculture is the safest and most profitable, a Ciceronian claim (albeit without theoretical or empirical proof). It is equally effective in a post-Humean sense in the way it presents Smith's criticism of factional spirits in foreign trading without committing him to what he thought of as an error by the mercantilists as well as the Physiocrats, that of advocating or criticizing a particular sector of the economy beyond "its own accord."

The Stoic notion of beauty as independence that yields the basis of Smith's new concept of natural liberty is reflected in the following passages by Marcus Aurelius (in addition to those already cited above):

> The governing part is that which rouses, and turns, and forms itself, such as it chuses to be; and makes every event appear such to itself, as it inclines. (*Meditations*, 6.8, 138)[30]

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[29] Vivenza (2004) stresses that Smith used ancient arguments to support his own views, combining different elements according to his purpose on the basis of his accurate and deep knowledge of the classics (Vivenza 2004, 116). There is no denying that Smith was influenced by many traditions, such as the Stoic, civic humanist (Aristotelian), natural jurisprudential (neo-Stoic), Newtonian, Democritean (Foley 1976), and Skeptic (Griswold 1999, 217–227 and 317–324); Smith's thought encompasses and integrates all these and many more components (Vivenza 2004, 117). As Craig Smith (2006) shows, Adam Smith's ideas of unintended consequences and of spontaneous order can be profitably viewed in many aspects.

[30] "The governing part" may have referred to "reason" in Marcus Aurelius, but Smith could well have interpreted it as "prudence," an interpretation which depended, in Smith's view, on understanding, reason, and self-command.

> … what remains as valuable? This one thing, I imagine, to move, or stop yourself, in all desires or pursuits, according to the proper fabric or structure of your nature: For, this is what all design and art is tending to; this is all its aim, that the thing formed by art, should be adapted to the work it is designed for. This, the planter, and the vine-dresser, the horse-rider, and the breeder of the hound, are in quest of. …. Won't you, then, cease to value other things? If you don't, you'll never attain to freedom, self-contentment, independency, or tranquility. … (*Meditations*, 6.16, 143)

Smith adapted Stoic language to describe his own concept of natural liberty and to argue that, if agriculture is pursued by independent farmers for its own beauty and for the safety of their own investments, rather than for any regard for the public benefit, then their profits and their contribution to the wealth of nations can be maximized. On the contrary, if the public good is vigorously pursued, wealth cannot be maximized, as shown in the invisible hand passage quoted above. The concept of independence or beauty in Stoic language is thus refined to constitute Smith's advocacy of a free market policy.

> Is it not cruel, to restrain men from desiring, or pursuing, what appears to them as their proper good or advantage? And yet you seem chargeable in a certain manner with this conduct, when you are angry at the mistakes, and wrong actions of men: for, all are carried toward what appears to them their proper good. (*Meditations*, 6.27, 147–148)

It would come as no surprise had a statement such as this been written by Smith rather than by Marcus Aurelius.

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