



Cicero's duties and Adam Smith's sentiments: how Smith adapts Cicero's account of self-interest, virtue, and justice

Michael C. Hawley

To cite this article: Michael C. Hawley (2019): Cicero's duties and Adam Smith's sentiments: how Smith adapts Cicero's account of self-interest, virtue, and justice, History of European Ideas, DOI: [10.1080/01916599.2019.1568007](https://doi.org/10.1080/01916599.2019.1568007)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/01916599.2019.1568007>



Published online: 21 Feb 2019.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)



Cicero's duties and Adam Smith's sentiments: how Smith adapts Cicero's account of self-interest, virtue, and justice

Michael C. Hawley

Department of Government and Legal Studies, Bowdoin College, Brunswick, ME, USA

ABSTRACT

In this article, I explore the complex and unappreciated relationship between the moral and political thought of Cicero and Adam Smith. Cicero's views about justice, propriety, and the selfish love of praise find new expression in Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments*. I illustrate the important ways in which Smith adopts – often without attribution – Cicero's precepts and moral judgments. I then go on to demonstrate how Smith strips those Ciceronian conclusions from their original justifying grounds in teleology and natural law. In their place, Smith injects his own psychology based in sentiments as a new account of why it is that we prefer virtue and justice to their opposites. By exploring this relationship, I hope to shed light on an important dynamic whereby modern thought has creatively adapted classical moral and political concepts.

KEYWORDS

Cicero; Adam Smith; Alasdair MacIntyre; virtue; justice; moral psychology

'The fame of Cicero flourishes at present, while that of Aristotle is utterly decayed.' So wrote Adam Smith's companion and philosophical ally, David Hume, of the intellectual trends of his time. Although Cicero acquired a reputation as a second-rate thinker or a mere popularizer of Greek ideas in the nineteenth century, eighteenth century thinkers considered him a serious and original philosopher in his own right, especially on moral and political matters. Hume does not exempt himself from the trend he identifies, writing that he kept Cicero's *On Duties* 'in my Eye in all my Reasonings' (Hume 1932, 34). Indeed, Neal Wood has gone so far as to compare Cicero's relationship to Enlightenment thinkers with Aristotle's role in the late Medieval scholasticism, so pervasive was his influence.¹ Yet, neither Wood nor any other scholar has sought to explore in detail Cicero's influence on this period – which, if Wood's claim is even close to the truth, would complicate the still-common account of the Enlightenment as a self-conscious break with the themes and presuppositions of classical political philosophy. Of course, it is impossible to evaluate such a broad and general claim without examining particular cases.² In this article, I propose to do just that, and to explore the relationship between Cicero and Adam Smith on the level of political and moral philosophy.

Adam Smith is in some ways the archetypal Enlightenment thinker – if there could be such a thing. *The Wealth of Nations* appears to many as inaugurating the economic orientation characteristic of modernity, and modernity's preoccupation with the issue of self-interest seems reflected in Smith's famous claim that 'it is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own interest' (*WN* I.2). However, scholars

CONTACT Michael C. Hawley ✉ mcollinsh@gmail.com 📍 Department of Government and Legal Studies, Bowdoin College, 16 Cleaveland St, Brunswick, ME 04011, USA

¹Wood (1988, pr.).

²This is not to say that there has been no work at all done on Cicero's relationship to any of the important early modern thinkers. Scholars have noted, if not explored in great detail, Cicero's importance to Locke (Mitsis 2003), Montesquieu (Fott 2002), and Mably and Burke (Atkins 2014).

of Adam Smith know that he also offers a sophisticated account of our moral motivations in his *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (*TMS*) that belies his reputation as a simplistic advocate for acquisitive selfishness. Smith, it turns out, is deeply interested in questions of virtue and justice. In this article, I suggest that his views of virtue and justice depend in part on a deep critical engagement with Cicero's political and moral theory. Other scholars have noted particular instances of connection or resemblance between the ideas of Smith and Cicero.³ But, hitherto, no scholar has attempted to examine them systematically or has taken the view that they constitute a conscious, systematic, and significant engagement of Cicero by Smith.

One part of Smith's work in which scholars have recognized the centrality of Cicero as an influence has been in the realm of rhetorical theory.⁴ Indeed, Cicero's importance to Smith in that area is difficult to conceal, as he refers to Cicero by name more than 60 times in the now-published *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres*. In this article, I show that Cicero's influence on Smith's moral and political theory – while less explicit – is similarly significant. Smith finds a uniquely valuable classical source of inspiration in Cicero, whose thought revolves around many of the same philosophical problems as his own. In particular, Smith's explanation of how the twin virtues of justice and beneficence are regulated by our sense of propriety and our selfish desire for praise draws heavily from Cicero's account.

In the seventh part of *TMS*, Smith claims that all moral theories must answer two questions: what constitutes virtue, and how is it that we come to recognize and prefer virtue to vice (*TMS* VII.1.1)? For him, moral theories must not only account for what virtue is, but also for what *motivates* us to prefer virtue to its opposite. In Smith's view, Cicero (like all the ancients) offers virtually no account of the relationship of the sentiments to action; they lacked what we might now call moral and political psychology. Smith, in contrast, makes some of his greatest philosophical contributions in the area of psychology. Smith's rich and innovative account of 'moral sentiments' explains moral behaviour as the outcome of complex interactions between natural human selfishness, sympathy with our fellows, and our ability to abstract represented through the mechanism of the impartial spectator. Smith's theory provides a new foundation for Cicero's moral pronouncements largely absent in Cicero's own work. In this way, Smith can be seen as modernizing and revitalizing Cicero's account of justice, beneficence, and propriety by combining it with a persuasive account of the psychology underlying the concepts.

In addition to its primary task of illustrating how Smith engages and transforms Cicero's view of the relationship between self-interest and key moral virtues, the argument of this essay yields two further insights. First, it helps to clarify a longstanding debate in Smith scholarship over Smith's alleged Stoicism. Smith's ambivalent fascination with and rejection of Stoicism has prompted a dispute over whether we ought to consider him a modern Stoic.⁵ But, if we see Smith rather as a Ciceronian, we can more easily make sense of this controversy, as Cicero himself had a complex and ambiguous relationship with Stoicism; he describes himself as borrowing freely if eclectically from Stoic teachings, particularly in his most influential work, *On Duties* (I.6).⁶ In fact, Smith affirms and rejects precisely the same Stoic teachings as Cicero does, often giving the same reasons for his judgments. This then reveals the surprising continuity between the classical political ethics of Cicero and one of the central expressions of Enlightenment moral philosophy.⁷

³Several careful readers of Smith, including Griswold (1999), Nussbaum (2000), Vivenza (2001), and Phillipson (2010) in particular have noted such moments of continuity.

⁴A compelling account of this dynamic is offered by Kapust and Schwarze (2016).

⁵For those who focus on the similarities of between Stoicism and Smith's thought, see Heise (1995), Jones (2010), Montes (2008), and Waszek (1984). In contrast, Griswold (1999), Vivenza (2001), and Fitzgibbons (1995) are among those who have persuasively cast doubt on Smith's Stoicism.

⁶For more on Cicero's own complicated relationship to Stoicism, see Schofield (1991), Kries (2003), and Pangle (1998).

⁷Such a finding supports claims made by scholars such as Charles Griswold and Ryan Hanley, who have argued that virtue ethics – or something like it – play an important role in Smith's moral theory. This essay suggests a specific classical inspiration for that aspect of Smith's thought.

The second – and perhaps more important – insight that arises from this analysis also concerns the relationship of classical and Enlightenment thought. Alasdair MacIntyre expresses a common view when he claims that modern life is characterized by a crisis that can be traced in large part to the moral and political philosophers of the eighteenth century.⁸ According to MacIntyre, in rejecting Biblical and Aristotelian teleology, the thinkers of that period found themselves in a quandary. They had inherited a set of moral beliefs and precepts, but the underlying justification for that morality (pre-modern teleology) had been dispensed with. They therefore sought a new rational justification for morality. MacIntyre believes this project was doomed to fail because the eighteenth century thinkers did not see that the moral system they sought to rationalize could only be made coherent through the now-abandoned teleology. MacIntyre points to the Scottish philosophers Hume and Smith as especially unaware of the ‘impossible and quixotic character of their self-appointed quest’ (MacIntyre 2007, 55). In a way, the analysis of this essay in a case study that confirms *part* of MacIntyre’s claim. Smith does indeed take Ciceronian moral claims, strips them of their original justification by natural law, and grounds them instead in his own sentiment-based psychology. But, this essay also suggests a reason to doubt the second part of MacIntyre’s thesis. As we shall see, Smith is well aware of his project and its stakes. For Smith, our moral thinking has not been newly deprived of its underlying support. Rather, if the previously advanced grounds for morality are flawed (and Smith believes they are), the inadequacy of that support has only been newly *recognized*; its deficiency has always been there. For this reason, Smith’s attempt to produce a new account of our moral reasoning is an attempt to solve a problem that afflicted classical philosophy as much as the moral systems of Smith’s contemporaries. A new appreciation for the complex dynamic of that attempt is the second major insight to be drawn from this analysis.

I. A philosophical kinship

That there has as yet been no systematic attempt to explore the relationship between Smith and Cicero’s moral and political thought can be partly attributed to the apparent paucity of Smith’s explicit references to Cicero in *TMS* – fewer than twenty. Yet there are numerous occasions where Smith makes use of Cicero’s ideas or expressions, sometimes translating them verbatim without attribution. Martha Nussbaum explains:

Smith, who usually footnotes with care the Greek and Roman philosophical texts he cites, simply assumes his audience’s familiarity with Cicero’s *De officiis* ... feeling that to mention the source would be to insult the learning of the audience, the way we might do with Shakespeare or the Bible. (Nussbaum 2000, 179)

Although Nussbaum offers no analysis of these instances, several are focal points of this article. But before exploring them, it is necessary to consider why Smith could assume his readers knew when he was drawing upon Cicero.

We might start with the context in which Smith wrote. As noted above, a great number of important figures of the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries acknowledged Cicero’s influence on their own work, including Smith’s friend, Hume, and his teacher, Francis Hutcheson. Liberal education of the times, including Smith’s own education, featured Cicero’s writings prominently. Cicero’s texts were taught in schools both as an examples of ideal Latin prose, and as vehicles for instruction in moral-political virtues. Smith’s own library contained several copies of Cicero’s works.⁹

Moreover, Smith’s *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* so abounds with references to Cicero, that one should not be surprised to find the latter’s influence in his other works. Smith writes of Cicero’s mastery of ‘Rhetorick and Logic or Dialectick... Cicero therefore attempted and has

⁸Others have made similar arguments tracing a crisis in the West to the Enlightenment’s alleged abandonment of classical philosophy. Perhaps most prominent among these is Leo Strauss (1989). Likewise, in a very recent book, Patrick Deneen makes a similar diagnosis of modernity. He, too, includes Smith among the key figures in the West’s going astray (Deneen 2018, 46). Of these, however, it is MacIntyre who singles out Smith for special consideration.

⁹According to the catalogue, Smith’s library contained 22 volumes of Cicero’s works (Smith and Bonar 1966, 22).

succeeded in the attempt to display in all his writings a compleat knowledge of these Sciences' (*Lectures* 29.ii.214). Two other comments from these lectures stand out, as they pertain to Smith's reading of Cicero beyond his relevance to issues of rhetoric. First, Smith considers Cicero important enough to provide a short but detailed biography of him, including the influence of Stoic teachers on his education. Second, Smith suggests that Cicero seems to have been 'possessed of a very high degree of Sensibility and to have been very easily depressed or elated by the misfortunes or prosperity of his friends' (*Lectures* 30.ii.236). Given how much Smith's own account of moral sentiments depends on the ability of people to enter into the emotional experiences of others, Smith's description of Cicero strongly suggests that he might find Cicero an especially valuable resource beyond matters of rhetoric. At any rate, Smith's reliance on Cicero in his work on rhetoric proves that Smith read Cicero closely and regarded him highly.

A few readers, while noting some of the occasions where Smith clearly draws on Cicero, attempt to downplay the importance of those instances. For example, while she recognizes the Ciceronian origin of several of Smith's concepts and expressions, Gloria Vivenza offers an alternative reason for why Smith might so often fail to refer to Cicero by name. According to her, Smith may have unintentionally internalized material from Cicero and then reproduced it (Vivenza 2001, 2–3). Yet, if Smith's excellence as a scholar makes such a claim improbable, the fact that his lecture course at Edinburgh typically included a commentary on Cicero's works makes it virtually impossible. Smith could hardly have forgotten the origin of something he himself had often taught. It is highly unlikely the presence of numerous unattributed quotations of Cicero throughout *TMS* is unintentional. In fact, Vivenza herself calls attention to the most persuasive piece of evidence that *TMS* is fundamentally and consciously influenced by Cicero's ideas when she notes that Smith based the work in part on lectures given at Glasgow, major sources for which were Cicero's works, *On Duties* and *On the Ends of Good and Evil* (Vivenza 2001, 42).¹⁰ In other words, the lectures upon which *TMS* was in part based featured Cicero's works prominently. For these reasons, it should already be clear that Smith is aware that Cicero's ideas play an important role in Smith's moral theory.

There are also thematic reasons for Cicero to hold special interest for Smith. It is uncontroversial to note that the themes of virtue and self-interest – and the tension between them – play a major role in Smith's *corpus*. In different ways, earlier thinkers such as Hobbes, Locke, and Mandeville had established self-interest as an ineradicable and thus legitimate source of motivation. This development created strong pressure for subsequent moral thinking to accommodate or otherwise deal with the claims of self-interest. The putatively modern nature of this issue forms the basis for a view that considers Smith's thought exemplary of the Enlightenment's position fundamentally in opposition to that of the ancient moralists.¹¹

But, such a view of ancient moral thought (one that, following more contemporary scholarly interests, often focuses on the Greeks) fails to account for the immense impact of Cicero from the Renaissance through the eighteenth century. To a far greater extent than his fellow classical authors, Cicero was concerned with the relationship between self-interest and virtue. His most influential work (and one of the two featured in Smith's Glasgow lectures), *On Duties*, is entirely devoted to an attempt to reconcile the useful (*utile*) with the morally upright (*honestas*) without collapsing the latter into the former.¹² Cicero asserts: 'whatever is morally upright must also be useful' and 'nothing more destructive could have been introduced into human life' than the denial of this truth (*On Duties* II.9–10). So, although Smith might find himself differing significantly from the priorities of many other Greek and Roman authors, Cicero explicitly addresses himself to one of the central problems that animate Smith's thought. He would therefore be an ideal classical source for Smith to turn to.

¹⁰That Cicero's complex relationship with Stoicism is most clearly apparent in these two works will prove relevant to the argument of this article.

¹¹For instance, Joseph Cropsey writes that Smith's project is 'the grand design in behalf of free society, requiring the emancipation from the reign of virtue that commerce makes possible' (1957, 88).

¹²All translations from the Latin are my own.

Although the foregoing considerations illustrate why we might reasonably *expect* Smith to derive some inspiration from Cicero, it would be unpersuasive unless substantiated by proof from Smith's own text. In what follows, I explore the evidence provided by the text of *TMS* itself, working from the broad philosophical kinship suggested by Smith's own self-categorization as a thinker to specific examples in which Smith employs Ciceronian language, terms, and arguments.

Throughout most of *TMS*, it is difficult to gain any clear sense of how Smith sees himself in relation to previous philosophy. The seventh and final part of *TMS* is the most fruitful place to start when attempting to discern Smith's self-categorization as a moral thinker. Although extremely sparing in his explicit references to other thinkers throughout the first six parts of *TMS*, in Part VII Smith suddenly broadens his gaze and offers readers a comprehensive typology of moral systems, ancient and modern. This enables Smith to group different systems of moral philosophy into families, but it also gives Smith the opportunity to situate himself within the broader universe of moral thought.

In offering his typology of moral systems, Smith first groups the systems of Plato, Aristotle, and the Stoics together as those who believe virtue to lie in propriety – that is, 'the suitability of the affection from which we act to the object which excites it' (*TMS* VII.ii.1). As for Smith himself, while he asserts that propriety is not the 'sole ingredient' in every virtuous action, he insists that 'there is no virtue without propriety' (*TMS* VII.ii.1). Thus, by describing virtue as inseparable from propriety, Smith suggests that his closest philosophical affinity is not to his fellow moderns, but to the ancients. Smith's own self-identification poses a serious problem for the thesis of Deneen, MacIntyre, and others attempting to cast him as a leader in the Enlightenment break with classical notions of virtue. Smith further confirms his alignment with the classical outlook by condemning other families of moral thought that that locate virtue in the prudent calculation of self-interest, or that deny virtue entirely (*TMS* VII.ii.2, VII.ii.4).

II. Propriety and Smith's Ciceronian "Stoicism"

It may seem strange that in aligning himself with the ancient Platonists, Aristotelians, and Stoics, Smith would group all of those schools together. The teachings of each school differed substantially from the others, and their adherents frequently quarreled – sometimes bitterly – with each other. Yet, there is one classical thinker who groups the philosophical schools in precisely the same way: Cicero. Cicero presents these three schools as a united front on the subject of virtue and duty against the hedonistic system of the Epicureans. Moreover, Cicero also focuses on a conception of propriety as central to the proper understanding of virtue.

In the opening sections of *On Duties*, Cicero asserts that the Platonists, the Aristotelians, and the Stoics basically agree on all moral matters. According to him, the only difference lay in the largely semantic distinction over whether moral uprightness (*honestas*) was to be considered the *only* good, or merely by far the *highest*. Furthermore, Cicero connects this conception of *honestas* to the Greek term *prepon*, which Cicero translates into Latin as *decorum*, denoting seemliness, or propriety: a reasonable fit our action and what is appropriate under the circumstances. According to Cicero, *decorum* is conceptually distinct from *honestas*, but is inseparable from it in fact (*On Duties* I.93–94). The morally right thing will in every situation be seemly – taking into account the character of the actor, the needs of the moment, and due consideration for any other individual affected by the action. There is therefore never a real-world situation in which one could perceive moral uprightness apart from seemliness. There is a kind of intellectual beauty to moral action (*On Duties* I.95). Charles Griswold notes the importance of the Ciceronian aspect of Smith's conception of propriety, pointing out that Smith in book VII aligns himself with this understanding of *decorum*. Griswold shows how Smith's term 'blends the ethical and the aesthetic,' informing all of our evaluations of moral activity (Griswold 1999, 182–183).

This concept of propriety is a profoundly important component of Smith's moral theory. As Griswold notes, Smith – like Cicero – cannot easily separate propriety from his conception of virtue itself

(Griswold 1999, 183–184). Our sense of propriety regulates our appreciation of all the virtues. Smith defines propriety as ‘the proper government and direction of all our affections ... according to the subjects which they pursue, and the degree of vehemence with which they pursue them’ (*TMS* VII.ii.intro). Thus, Smith agrees with Cicero that there is a kind fitting or seamliness to moral behaviour, reflected in a proper relation between motives, actions, and ends.

If Smith can look to Cicero as an authority for uniting these three ancient schools and for the explanation of what particular understanding of virtue underlies that unity, it would suggest that Cicero plays an important role in helping Smith map out the different families of moral thought and Smith’s own self-categorization as a thinker. More than that, it suggests that Smith’s understanding of the key feature of moral virtue depends on Ciceronian concepts.

Smith clarifies the picture still further. Among the three major schools of thought that connect virtue to propriety, Smith tips his hand as to which he finds the most important. Smith devotes nearly five times as much space to his discussion of Stoicism as he does to the Platonists and the Aristotelians *combined*. In his discussion of Zeno, Epictetus and others, Smith often acknowledges that his information comes directly from Cicero, as when he examines the death of the Roman Stoic, Cato the Younger (*TMS* VII.ii.1). As discussed above, scholars have noted Smith’s obvious interest in Stoicism and have pointed out several striking similarities between Smith’s work and Stoic ideas. Yet, Smith’s clear repudiation of certain key Stoic tenets has made attempts to claim Smith as a latter-day Stoic problematic.

As for Smith’s obvious fascination with Stoicism, it is clear that the Stoics’ ideal of self-command has powerful resonance in Smith’s own theory. The Stoics famously emphasized the importance of restraining strong emotions. Similarly, in Smith’s account, we must not express our joys and sorrows as fully as we experience them in our own breasts. Instead, we must moderate their expression so that spectators can enter into them sympathetically. Failure to do so risks earning us the disapproval or censure of others who necessarily cannot feel our pains and pleasures as we ourselves do (*TMS* I.iii.1.15).

Nicholas Phillipson has gone so far as to suggest that Smith’s whole understanding of the actor-spectator relationship as the source of moral judgments is derived from the Stoic Epictetus, who envisions the moral man as a ‘spectator’ of nature (Phillipson 2010, 20). This is an intriguing suggestion, and Phillipson is right to point to Stoicism as a probable inspiration. But Cicero is a much more likely source here. Cicero explicitly analogizes the dynamic of propriety (*decorum*) to that of actors in a theater, who must behave in a way appropriate to the part in which they have been cast (*On Duties* I.96–97). Because Cicero’s analogy revolves around our observations of other people as actors in a play, rather than our observations of nature (Epictetus), and because of the strong connection he makes between this relationship and propriety, he is a much more plausible source of inspiration for Smith.

Drawing on examples such as Smith’s discussion of Cato, Norbert Waszek offers perhaps the most extreme (although, hardly the only) version of the Smith-as-Stoic view. He sees in Smith an esoteric teaching that advocates a thoroughly Stoic ‘path of “perfect virtue” that is open to a small élite’ (Waszek 1984, 591). According to orthodox Stoic doctrine, only a Stoic sage can perform the ‘perfect duties’ or ‘*katorthoma*,’ while everyone who falls short is equally vicious. As a result, this strain of Stoic thought holds that humanity consists of a (very) small number of wholly virtuous people, and the vast mass of individuals, who are entirely unvirtuous and only differentiated among each other by the extent to which they were able to falsely appear virtuous. Such is the Stoic doctrine Waszek believes Smith espouses esoterically.

If Smith does espouse it, it must be *very* esoterically indeed, since he explicitly condemns it. Although he admires the austere integrity of Cato’s death as depicted by Cicero, Smith also writes ‘nature, in her sound and healthful state, seems never to prompt us to suicide,’ and suggests that the urge to kill oneself is a ‘disease’ (*TMS* VII.ii.1.34). Moreover, Smith addresses directly the Stoic position about perfect duties:

As all the actions of the wise man were perfect, and equally perfect; so all those of the man who had not arrived at this supreme wisdom were faulty, and as some Stoics *pretended*, equally faulty ... As in shooting at a mark, the man who missed it by an inch had equally missed it with him who had done so by a hundred yards ... the man who has killed a cock, for example, improperly and without a sufficient reason, [equal] with him who had murdered his father. (*TMS VII.ii.1.40*, emphasis added)

As if Smith's description of this Stoic position did not make his view of it sufficiently clear, he then writes that it 'is evidently too absurd to deserve any serious consideration. It is, indeed, so very absurd that one can scarce help suspecting that it must have in some measure been misunderstood' (*TMS VII.ii.1.41*). With such an authoritative pronouncement on the matter, it seems reasonable to reject the contention that Smith harboured secret allegiance to this version of Stoicism.

Indeed, Smith critiques the whole family of propriety-oriented moral theories for their harshness, singling out Stoicism for special censure. They fail to give the gentler moral virtues, such as kindness, mildness, and good humour their due:

The ancient systems, which place virtue in propriety, seem chiefly to recommend the great, the awful, and the respectable virtues, the virtues of self-government and self-command; fortitude, magnanimity, independency upon fortune, the contempt of all outward accidents, of pain, poverty, exile, and death. It is in these great exertions that the noblest propriety of conduct is displayed. The soft, the amiable, the gentle virtues, all the virtues of indulgent humanity are, in comparison, but little insisted upon, and seem, on the contrary, by the Stoics in particular, to have been often regarded as mere weaknesses which it behoved a wise man not to harbour in his breast. (*TMS VII.ii.4.2*)

We might then wonder: if orthodox Stoicism appears in such a harsh light to Smith, why he would expend such effort analysing it? In addition, a scholar of Stoicism might object that Smith's depiction of that tradition as harsh and demanding is a mischaracterization. For instance, Seneca possessed unimpeachable Stoic credentials and yet wrote *De Clementia*, in which he strongly recommends many gentler virtues. Nevertheless, Smith includes Seneca among those Stoics who make unrealistically harsh moral claims (*TMS III.3.44*). Ultimately, for our purposes, what Stoicism is *for Smith* matters far more than what view a more comprehensive historical survey of the Stoic School as a whole might yield. But in an important way, Smith's somewhat one-sided account may be taken as still further evidence of his reliance on Cicero, since Cicero depicts the drawbacks of orthodox Stoicism in precisely the same light as Smith does. Moreover, Cicero's alternative to that version of Stoicism is the one Smith himself adopts.

Cicero presents the same critique as Smith of the Stoics' harsh condemnation of all those who fail to achieve 'perfect virtue' in his *On Ends*. In Book III of that dialogue, Cicero allows Cato the Younger (same individual whom Smith critiques for harshness) to expound about orthodox Stoic principles. In Book IV, Cicero (as a character in his own dialogue) rebuts Cato by pointing out the absurdity of equating someone who is not quite perfectly virtuous with a sacrilegious murderer, using language that Smith later imitates (*On Ends IV.63*). Moreover, Cicero writes that his work *On Duties*, while generally following Stoic principles, does not address itself to the so-called 'perfect duties,' but rather to 'middle' or 'common' duties, available to all relatively decent individuals. These individuals may be driven by mixed, partly selfish motivations, but they are still capable of achieving a non-negligible level of virtue (*On Duties I.7–8, 46*). In much the same way, Smith believes most of humanity to be formed of 'coarse clay' incapable of perfection, but able with effort to achieve 'tolerable decency' (*TMS III.v.2*). Like Cicero, Smith seems to aim his moral teaching at just such imperfect, yet decent, beings.

In yet another passage in which Cicero distances himself from the Stoic tendency to write off all those who fall short of perfect virtue, he also makes the case for heightening the dignity of the gentler virtues: 'we ought to cultivate those who are most gifted with the gentler virtues, modesty, restraint, and justice' (*On Duties I.46*). Smith echoes this call when he lauds especially the 'soft, the gentle, the amiable virtues' (*TMS VII.ii.4.2*).

It is this gentler, moderate, and non-dogmatic version of Stoicism that appeals to Smith. Smith explicitly points to Cicero's *On Duties* as the necessary corrective to Stoic harshness and absolutism. Smith writes:

The Stoics in general seem to have admitted that there might be a degree of proficiency in those who had not advanced to perfect virtue and happiness. They distributed those proficient into different classes, according to their degree of advancement; and they called the imperfect virtue which they supposed them capable of exercising, not rectitudes, but proprieties, fitnesses, decent and becoming actions, for which a plausible reason could be assigned, what Cicero expresses by the Latin word *officia* ... The doctrine of those imperfect, but attainable virtues seems to have constituted what we may call the practical morality of the Stoics. It is the subject of Cicero's Offices. (*TMS VII.ii.1.42*)¹³

It may be tempting to attribute Smith's preference for gentle virtues to the influence of his friend Hume. But, in his *Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*, Hume himself appeals to Cicero's authority for his judgment (Hume 1930, 2.1). In the letter to Hutcheson, mentioned above, Hume affirms his indebtedness to Cicero on this point (Hume 1932, 34). Thus, even if Smith's proximate source were Hume, it would seem that the ultimate source for this preference for gentle virtues remains Cicero. Yet, Smith's choice to cite Cicero rather than Hume in support of his argument suggests that both he and Hume were influenced by the same source: Cicero himself.

All of this evidence suggests that Smith's apparent ambivalent Stoicism might be best understood as examples of his Ciceronianism. In those areas where Cicero demonstrates agreement with orthodox Stoic tenets – the importance of self-command, steadiness of character in the face of changing fortune, the idea of propriety as connected to an actor-spectator relationship – Smith follows. Likewise, on those points where Cicero parts ways with Stoic claims – its harsh demands, unrealistic moral absolutism, disdain for mixed motives – Smith also diverges from traditional Stoicism. For Smith, Cicero's eclectic borrowing from Stoicism (and from Platonism and Aristotelianism) captures what is best of those ancient philosophies that located virtue in propriety.

III. Virtue, self-interest, and the Epicurean alternative

Yet, there is more to the agreement between Smith and Cicero than their views of Stoic doctrine. When rendering an account of morality that takes seriously the demands of self-interest, there is always a danger of appearing to sacrifice the former to the latter. Moralistic critics may argue that any attempt at mediation abolishes the concept of virtue entirely and replaces it with a disguised and prudent concern for one's own good. Both Smith and Cicero take pains to avoid giving grounds to this charge. In part by pitting their arguments against representatives of hedonism and greed, they try to distance themselves from such discreditable opinions.

In insisting so firmly that 'whatever is morally upright must also be useful' (*On Duties*, it might be understandable that some read Cicero as advocating for a selfish conception of virtue. Marcia Colish expresses this view when she claims that Cicero 'elevates the *utile* to an ethical consideration in its own right, making it the norm of *honestum*' (Colish 1978, 86). However, Cicero insists that quite nearly the opposite is the case. It would be fairer to say that he makes *honestas* the criterion of *utile*. Cicero maintains a fairly orthodox account of *honestas*, according to which it consists entirely of the traditional virtues – wisdom, justice, courage, moderation (*On Duties* I.15). *Utile*, however, undergoes a transformation at Cicero's hands. Cicero does not deny that the practice of the virtues may be useful in the ordinary understanding of our self-interest: being known to be just or liberal will often endear you to others who may aid you in turn (e.g. *On Duties*, II.38–39). But, Cicero aligns himself with the Stoics, Aristotelians, and Platonists (as he understands them) in asserting that the greatest possible good for a human being is a life characterized by moral uprightness (*On Duties*

¹³Smith's description of middle duties as 'something for which a plausible reason can be given for acting' is a direct translation of *On Duties* 1.8. Commenting on this very passage, Phillipson argues that Cicero's imperfect duties constituted 'the useful heart of "the practical morality of the Stoics"' in Smith's eyes (Phillipson 2010, 21).

III.2,12–18; *On Ends* III.35). Therefore, our truest self-interest (whether we recognize it or not) is *honestas*. As a result, nothing that takes away from moral uprightness can actually be useful, and anything that *seems* useful to us while violating *honestas* is in fact detrimental to our self-interest in the highest sense and therefore cannot be truly useful. In this way, Cicero achieves a reconciliation between self-interest and virtue on terms very favourable to virtue.

But perhaps in part because any identification of the moral with the advantageous can lead to the misreading that Colish offers, Cicero contrasts his view with the one remaining major classical philosophical school, the Epicureans. The hedonist Epicureans serve as a foil for Cicero's view of virtue and usefulness. By failing to recognize that our highest good lies in moral virtue, they fail to distinguish the apparently useful from the truly useful. Accepting their view leads one to 'mistake wickedness for wisdom,' which according to Cicero is 'an error that must be refuted' (*On Duties* II.10). Cicero claims that Epicureans ought to therefore be excluded from all discussion of morality and virtue, as their prioritization of self-interest understood as pleasure leaves them nothing to contribute (*On Duties* I.6).¹⁴

Even more than Cicero, Smith's thought has been read as the epitome of a philosophical system based on self-interest. The development of economic thought based on his insights has contributed mightily to this impression. George Stigler expresses a still-powerful view that the *Wealth of Nations* is 'a stupendous palace erected upon the granite of self-interest' (Stigler 1971, 265). In response, many scholars have worked to demonstrate that his moral system does not rest on any such 'granite.'¹⁵ Like Cicero, Smith denies that utility can be made the standard of morality, saying 'that it is not the view of this utility or hurtfulness which is either the first or the principal source of our approbation or disapprobation' (*TMS* IV.ii.3). This does not mean that the moral is ultimately contrary to the useful for Smith, only that utility is a secondary characteristic of moral behaviour. What we approve of as moral turns out 'after the strictest examination' to be useful – that is, what we approve of morally proves beneficial either to the agent or the spectators (*TMS* IV.ii.3).¹⁶

Smith, too, employs a foil to help clarify his view by contrast. Bernard Mandeville's argument for the utility of vice plays a very similar role in Smith's argument to the one played by Epicureanism in Cicero's.¹⁷ Mandeville's thought is the only example Smith gives of a 'licentious system,' which obliterates entirely the very concept of virtue as anything other than pretense. When treating Mandeville's ideas, Smith's typically measured prose gives way to almost Ciceronian rhetoric of denunciation. Mandeville's system is a 'great fallacy,' 'absurd,' 'sophistry.' He teaches vice 'to appear with more effrontery, and to avow the corruption of its motives with a profligate audaciousness which had never been heard of before' (*TMS* VII.ii.4). Perhaps the author of *The Wealth of Nations*, who wrote that 'It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own interest' (*WN* I.2), feared that his ideas would be easily conflated with Mandeville's valorization of selfishness. Indeed, Smith acknowledges that Mandeville's philosophy contains a kernel of truth that accounts for its pervasive influence. Mandeville's recognition that selfish motives can play a role even in apparently moral behaviour is an idea Smith shares. Yet, for Smith, this insight does not vitiate the status of virtue or justify brute egoism. Thus, by dramatically denouncing Mandeville, Smith can emphasize the differences in their theories.

Mandeville had attempted to show, for instance, that much of our apparently moral behaviour is in truth motivated by a selfish desire for approval and praise (and thus, not really moral or virtuous at all). Smith acknowledges the same phenomenon. But instead of viewing the praise-seeking

¹⁴See also his extended attack on Epicureanism as a philosophical system in book II of *On Ends*.

¹⁵The famous 'Adam Smith problem' of Lujo Brentano suggested that the self-interested orientation of *WN* is incompatible with the moral account in *TMS*. This view is now generally rejected by scholars as a misreading. See Force (2003, 256–260) for a summary of this debate.

¹⁶The nature of this dynamic is explored in greater depth below.

¹⁷In fact, Smith connects Epicureanism to Mandeville, in part to demonstrate how much worse Mandeville is in comparison. But, it is noteworthy that, as he does with Mandeville, Smith acknowledges that there is a modicum of truth the Epicurean position, which even its staunchest opponents must recognize. Smith cites Cicero in support of this contention (*TMS* VII.ii.4.5).

motivation behind so much good behaviour as proof of the hollowness of our pretensions to virtue, Smith argues that this relationship ennobles our love of praise – precisely because it leads us to perform good actions. Smith writes that the love of virtue is ‘the noblest and the best passion in human nature. The second is the love of true glory, a passion inferior no doubt to the former, but which in dignity appears to come immediately after it’ (VII.ii.4.8).

The love of praise (and its more exalted manifestation, glory) is a famous Ciceronian theme. Smith cites Cicero’s condemnation of those who disdain glory and the praise of others to support his argument (*TMS* III.2.30). For Cicero, the love of praise was the peculiar mark and motivation of *magnitudo animi* – greatness of soul (*On Duties* I.13). It drives an individual to do good for his political community. Although both Smith and Cicero acknowledge that the love of praise might lead individuals to seek applause where they have not earned it, both still consider it a helpful guide to moral action. This is because they agree that the surest way to gain praise is to actually *be* the praiseworthy person that one wishes to *seem*. According to Cicero, ‘the shortest route to glory ... is to act in such a way that one is what one desires to be thought’ (*On Duties* II.43). Smith echoes this sentiment exactly in his distinction between vanity and the ‘love of true glory’ (*TMS* VII.ii.4.10). In this way, Smith follows Cicero in making the morally good the standard for evaluation of potentially useful things. Thus, he accepts the love of praise as useful because it tends to prompt us to moral action, rather than (the Epicurean/Mandevillian alternative) advising moral action because of its utility in gaining us praise.

IV. Smith’s psychological innovation

From all of the above evidence, it seems clear that Cicero exerts a much greater and more systematic influence on Smith’s moral thought than has previously been recognized. However, it should already be clear that Smith is no passive pupil of Cicero. Recall that when offering his typology of moral theories in Part VII, Smith claims that all moral theories must answer two fundamental questions: ‘first, wherein does virtue consist ... secondly, by what power or faculty in the mind is it, that this character, whatever it be is recommended to us?’ (*TMS* VII.1.2) The first question asks about the content of morality, what virtue *is*. The evidence above – to which more shall be added below – suggests that Smith borrows significantly from Cicero in answering that first question. But the second question is psychological; it focuses on what enables us to recognize virtue, and what motivates us to prefer virtuous behaviour and to disapprove of its opposite. On this issue, Smith clearly parts ways with all of the ancient thinkers, even Cicero. But, rather than abandoning him, Smith instead regularly injects his own psychological account to bolster Cicero’s normative claims.

Immediately after his approving account of Cicero’s modifications to Stoic orthodoxy, Smith abruptly states: ‘the plan and system which Nature has sketched for our conduct, seems to be altogether different from that of Stoic philosophy’ (*TMS* VII.2.1.43). According to Smith, the Stoics attribute right moral action to ‘the awful and benevolent voice of that divine Being distinctly calling upon us to do so’ (*TMS* VII.ii.1.26). On this topic, Cicero offers little in the way of an alternative to the Stoic view, falling into the Smith’s category of those who ‘make reason the principle of approbation’ (*TMS* VII.ii.2). Aside from his discussion of the love of praise, Cicero does not dwell on issues of moral psychology.

Herein lies Smith’s critique of Cicero and the other ancient moralists. It is not that they inaccurately identify moral action, but that they cannot properly account for the psychological motivations for acting and judging morally: ‘None of these systems either give, or even pretend to give any precise or distinct measure by which this fitness or propriety of affection can be ascertained or judged of.’ Smith explains his solution: ‘That precise and distinct measure can be found nowhere but in the sympathetic feelings of the impartial and well-informed spectator’ (*TMS* VII.ii.1.49). As he continues, Smith elaborates on the point that the problem with the ancient moral systems lies in their rudimentary account of our psychology: they cannot account for why certain actions give rise to particularly intense feelings of approbation or resentment. Neither unaided reason nor teleology offer can

actually motivate us to prefer or oppose moral action. The answer, Smith tells us, lies in the impartial spectator, and the interaction of the imaginary spectator with our own sense of self-interest. If one could but affix such a psychology to the moral pronouncements of Cicero's modified Stoicism, one would ground Cicero's philosophy on a firm foundation. In other sections of *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, it seems that this is precisely what Smith does. Whereas Cicero's great work is a book of 'duties' (*officia*) – naturally focused on moral responsibilities and outcomes, Smith's work is devoted to 'sentiments' – the psychological motivations behind the judgments and actions we make in the moral sphere.

Having now established what Smith feels Cicero's moral system lacks, it is possible turn to Smith's solution: the impartial spectator. Many scholars have written extensively on this idea.¹⁸ It is not my intention here to provide a radically new account of it, but to show how it can fill the void left by Cicero's inadequate moral psychology. Smith begins by insisting that there is some other natural human tendency at work in our psychology besides self-love. The opening lines of Smith's *magnum opus* run: 'how selfish soever man may be supposed, there are evidently some principles in his nature, which interest him in the fortune of others, and render their happiness necessary to him, though he derives nothing from it except the pleasure of seeing it' (*TMS* I.i.1.1).

It turns out that the principle Smith refers to is sympathy, our fellow-feeling with the emotions of other human beings. Through it, we are able to enter imaginatively into the sentiments of others, even if we do not share their circumstances. In contrast to the Stoics, who found the moral law inscribed by Providence in nature, Smith argues that our moral frameworks come neither *a priori*, nor through a pure, rational analysis of existence. The germ of moral intelligence is located in experience, but because we can never truly experience the world through the perspective of another, we must depend on imagination: 'though our brother is upon the rack, as long as we ourselves are at our ease, our senses will never inform us of what he suffers ... it is by the imagination only that we can form any conception' (*TMS* I.i.1.2).¹⁹

From the interplay, then, of our attention to our own pain and pleasure, coupled with our natural concern for others and our capacity to imagine ourselves in their place, Smith's complex moral psychology emerges.²⁰ Smith explicitly denies that sympathy is a manifestation of self-love (*TMS* VII.iii.1.4). But it is in a certain sense self-regarding.²¹ When acting or judging the actions of others, instead of merely considering our own self-interest, we consult how we would feel if we were in their situation, and through this process, we begin to approximate a disinterested observer of the situation. The reactions of others to our own actions (in the form of praise or censure) give us further clues to identify the morally right, and inspire in us a desire for praise and an aversion to blame. Eventually, these moral reflections and impressions coalesce into the 'impartial spectator,' an imagined judge to whom we appeal to determine if an action deserves our praise or blame (*TMS* III.2.32). This impartial spectator is not itself the source of our inclination to prefer virtue to vice. Our moral sentiments of resentment, gratitude, joy, and the like are still the source of our motivation. But the impartial spectator is the mental mechanism by which we refine and regulate those sentiments, allowing us to derive general rules from them, and restraining the inappropriate expression of sentiments that others will not share.

V. The love of praise: revisited

Smith's moral psychology is one of his greatest philosophical contributions. If this essay's thesis is correct, we should expect to see examples of Smith accepting a Ciceronian version of a duty, but innovating radically in his explanation of how we come to that recognition. In this spirit, we can

¹⁸A very partial list includes Griswold (1999), Broadie (2006), Haakonssen (1981), Heath (1995), Campbell (1971), and Forman-Barzilai (2005).

¹⁹This image is Cicero's. See *On Ends* III 13, 42.

²⁰For a fuller and more exact account of this process, see Griswold (1999, especially pp. 83–85).

²¹See Broadie's rebuttal to Thomas Reid's claim that sympathy is at bottom a selfish impulse (2006, 163–164).

return to Smith's Ciceronian defense of the love of praise. Smith expands on this defense by offering a distinction between the desire to be praised and the desire to be *praiseworthy* (*TMS* III.2.32). For Smith, both are natural and usually tend to the same end. As noted above, the love of praise answers both the selfish and social aspects of our nature. When we are praised, we often stand to gain materially from those who approve of our action. But, because our sympathy with others is also natural, we feel pleasure in their approval even stripped of the possible material rewards we stand to gain from their good opinion. More importantly, the praise of others is a helpful indicator that we have acted rightly, since other observers are likely to be more impartial judges of our actions than we. So Smith explains:

The all-wise Author of Nature has, in this manner, taught man to respect the sentiments and judgments of his brethren; to be more or less pleased when they approve his conduct, and to be more or less hurt when they disapprove of it. He has made man, if I may say so, the immediate judge of mankind ... and appointed him his viceregent upon earth to supervise the behavior of his brethren. They are taught by nature, to acknowledge that power and jurisdiction which has thus been conferred upon him, to be more or less humbled and mortified when they have incurred his censure, and to be more or less elated when they have incurred his applause. (*TMS* III.ii.31)

Thus, the love of praise also helps us to refine our own impartial spectators, and so is a fairly accurate guide to proper moral behaviour. Smith introduces this very important passage with a quote from Cicero about human beings' sensitivity to the censure of others. In likening the opinion of others to the voice of God, we might see in this passage a further allusion to Smith's objection to the Stoics. Smith critiques the Stoics for imagining that we act rightly because of the prompting voice of the divine. But, Smith makes the judgment of our fellow humans the substitute for God's voice. This illustrates almost literally the process by which Smith's more sophisticated psychology replaces those of the ancients.

According to Smith, the only time when we must attenuate our desire for praise (or aversion to blame) is when that praise (or, conversely, blame) is based on false appearances or biases (*TMS* III.ii.32). In these situations, we must appeal to our own internal impartial spectator to determine whether our actions are truly worthy of praise or blame. But even here, this new metric is simply a purification of the old; we are to ask ourselves: if the spectators now praising or blaming us (perhaps unjustly) had access to all the relevant information and were free of bias, would they *then* praise or blame us? The only way to answer such a question, according to Smith, is to consult the general rules we have distilled from all our previous social interactions in which we have received praise or blame. It is for this reason that Smith, in discussing Cicero, had said that the love of praise was the second best passion of the human spirit. While it ultimately must yield before the tribunal of 'praiseworthiness,' it nevertheless usually agrees with the pronouncements of that higher judge (*TMS* III.ii.31–32).

VI. Justice and beneficence

From here we can turn to see how Smith's appreciation for the love of praise or approval works in the case of justice. Justice is a central concept in Smith's moral system. Smith explains that one can have a functioning – if unpleasant – society without all of the other virtues, but one cannot do without justice (*TMS* II.ii.3). It is therefore striking that Smith uses Cicero's exact expression to explain it. First, consider the case as Cicero portrays it:

When a man runs in the stadium, he ought to strive and compete to the greatest possible extent in order to win, but he ought in no way to trip those with whom he is racing or push them down; thus, in life, it is not unjust for anyone to pursue whatever he finds useful, but to despoil another is a violation of justice. (*On Duties*, 3.42)²²

²²Cicero himself takes this example from Chrysippus. But, as none of the latter's works are extant, and Smith's phrasing so nearly matches that of Cicero, we are again compelled to conclude that Cicero is Smith's source.

For Cicero, the metaphor of the race illustrates how justice works, but it in no way describes the psychological motivations that maintain these rules of justice. Now, let us compare this to Smith's example, quoted almost verbatim from Cicero (without attribution), but with an addition and an explanation:

In the race for wealth, and honors and preferments, he may run as hard as he can, and strain every nerve and every muscle, in order to outstrip all his competitors. But if he should justle, or throw down any of them, the indulgence of the spectators is entirely at an end. It is a violation of fair play, which they cannot admit of. This man is to them, in every respect, as good as he: they do not enter into that self-love by which he prefers himself so much to this other ... They readily, therefore, sympathize with the natural resentment of the injured, and the offender becomes the object of their hatred and indignation. He is sensible that he becomes so, and feels that those sentiments are ready to burst out from all sides against him. (*TMS* II.ii.2.2)

Smith takes Cicero's metaphor and assents wholeheartedly to the moral lesson it illustrates. In both cases, the individual's self-interest is accommodated, but also restrained within set bounds. For Smith, Cicero is correct as to the *content* of justice. But Smith innovates upon Cicero's version by adding his own psychological account that includes the actor-spectator relationship, the impartial spectator, and the fear of blame to explain how we arrive at this conclusion.

This pattern continues in Smith's account of the relationship between justice and beneficence. Beneficence is one of the gentler virtues that Smith and Cicero both advance as a corrective to Stoicism's harsh demands. Let us first consider Cicero's account of justice and beneficence. According to Cicero, justice and beneficence are in fact two aspects of the same virtue (*On Duties* I.20). Yet, Cicero offers no reason why we ought to consider them so, or even what precisely their connection consists in. All Cicero says on the matter is that justice and beneficence relate to 'the community of human beings among themselves' (*societas hominum inter ipsos*). As the metaphor of the race illustrates, justice for Cicero entails that 'no man should harm another unless he is provoked by wrongdoing' (*On Duties* I.20). Beneficence, on the other hand, is kindness toward others that goes beyond the requirements of justice (*On Duties* I.42).

Smith defines justice and beneficence in almost exactly the same way as Cicero: justice is violated by unprovoked harm, while beneficence consists in gratuitous kindness (*TMS* II.i.1.5–9). Smith even echoes Cicero in describing the proper objects of punishing injustice: the repentance of the wrongdoer and deterrence of others. Smith also detects a fundamental connection between the two virtues that goes beyond the element of propriety found in all virtues. But whereas Cicero had vaguely located this connection in human sociability, Smith sees that the connection lies in the two related human sentiments that are evoked in each case: resentment and gratitude. Resentment and gratitude are connected by their relation to a mean point of merit. Resentment is the natural response to harm that exceeds the bounds of merit (the province of justice), and gratitude is the natural response to kindness that exceeds merit (the province of beneficence).

For Smith, justice is policed by the sentiment of resentment. When an individual violates the principles of justice (say, by tripping a competitor in a race), the victim and the spectators experience resentment and anger towards the violator (*TMS* II.i.5).²³ The violator's self-love has driven him to exceed the bounds of propriety and earns him demerit. Yet, the mere adherence to the principles of justice does not inspire resentment's opposite, gratitude (*TMS* II.i.9).

Instead, the sentiment of gratitude is the proper response to beneficence. When someone does something kind to someone who has not earned and is not owed such kindness, the beneficiary and spectators experience gratitude. Thus, justice and beneficence can be explained as the actions governed by two related but opposite moral sentiments. Smith's account also helps explain a key component of Ciceronian beneficence. In his discussion of this virtue, Cicero presents a complex and detailed list of rules governing the giving of gifts and the appropriate reciprocal acts. For Cicero,

²³See Griswold (1999, 233, 235–236). Griswold rightly notes Smith's awareness that our sympathy in the case of violated justice has a certain illusory quality, as we sympathize even with the dead, and we feel resentment on their behalf if they were wrongfully killed, even though the dead presumably feel nothing themselves.

these rules are simply the practical duties (*officia*) of the virtue of beneficence. But, Smith explains *why* there might be unwritten social rules about the returning of gifts: the sentiment of gratitude, which is more or less intense depending on the value and circumstances of the kind act or gift, urges us to reciprocate appropriately.

In his enumeration of the various duties (including gift-giving), Cicero asserts that we have greater duties to aid our parents and to our country than we have to a stranger or a foreigner (although we have duties to them as well). For Cicero, the ranking of duties comes from the hierarchy of responsibility laid out by providential nature, where those nearest to us have the first claim, then those slightly further away, and so on (*On Duties* I.53, I.58). This is Cicero's version of the Stoic doctrine of *oikeosis*, which teaches individuals to expand their sense of association to an ever-greater extent.²⁴

Here too, Smith agrees with Cicero insofar as we do have greater obligations to those nearest us. Cicero even touches upon a kernel of the Smithian psychology behind this when he writes that 'we notice and feel our own good and ill fortune more than those of others, which appear as if at a great distance; we make different judgments about ourselves and them.'²⁵ But, once again, Smith offers a more comprehensive reason for this psychological fact and its relation to our hierarchy of duties. According to Smith, these duties spring from the natural human tendency to care more for those nearest to us, because they seem more like us, thereby making the processes of sympathy easier (*TMS* VII.ii.i.44). So, for Smith, our expectation that individuals ought to care more for those closest to them arises because we naturally find it easier to enter into sympathy with those who are most familiar to us.²⁶

Conclusion: a new foundation for an old system

Cicero's modifications of Stoic teaching about self-interest and its relationship to justice and our duty to help others lies at the heart of Smith's own account of the same issues. He relies on Cicero for key concepts and memorable expressions. But, by accepting Cicero's moral judgments while rejecting Cicero's foundation for those judgments, Smith opens a gap, which he fills with his modern psychology. The natural faculties of sympathy and imagination, when combined with reason and self-interest (especially our selfish desire for praise) give rise to moral sentiments filtered through an impartial spectator. This spectator allows us to judge the propriety of just or beneficent actions.

The importance of any given philosopher for Smith's thought cannot be adequately reckoned by counting Smith's explicit citations of him (although Cicero would rank among the top in such a count), but by how much that philosopher influences Smith's most important ideas. From his very understanding of what constitutes the fundamental differences among moral philosophies to his particular moral formulations and descriptions of the virtues, we see Smith relying heavily on Cicero. Cicero's ideas form a kind of scaffolding for Smith's broader moral vision, which Smith fleshes out and gives a firmer foundation to with his psychology.

In addition, Cicero's influence upon Smith alters our perception somewhat of the role of each of these thinkers in the history of political thought. Cicero now appears more modern, his concerns relevant to an Enlightenment thinker such as Smith, and through Smith to us. Smith, in turn, seems far less an example of the eighteenth century's alleged break with the classics than as a critical engager with the classics – Cicero in particular. Smith, then, is a confirmation of MacIntyre's thesis that eighteenth century philosophy depends in an important and unappreciated way on classical thought. But, Smith's self-awareness and his clear insight that our moral thinking requires some

²⁴One might be tempted to attribute the source of Smith's knowledge of *oikeosis* to Hierocles – the Stoic philosopher most closely associated with the concept. However, Forman-Barzilai, whose work thoroughly explores Smith's engagement with the idea of *oikeosis*, argues persuasively that the concept instead comes to Smith through Cicero (2005, 6).

²⁵See *On Duties* I.30; this is a Stoic-inflected position.

²⁶For a very thorough treatment of this topic, see Forman-Barzilai (2010). See also Hill (2010).

sort of grounding in our sentiments (and not only in our reason) confounds MacIntyre's accusation that Smith in particular did not understand his own role in that historical development.

In his 'Discourse on Cicero,' Montesquieu laments that Cicero had not lived in a 'more enlightened time,' so that he could ground his philosophy on something more firm (Montesquieu and Fott 2002, 733). We may view these aspects of Smith's engagement with Cicero as an unexpected way of realizing Montesquieu's dream. Thus grounded in a Smithian psychology, Cicero's moral philosophy gains a new birth in the age of 'Enlightenment.'

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Richard Whatmore and the anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments and suggestions. An earlier version of this paper was presented at the Berkeley Graduate Conference in the History of British Political Thought. I would like to thank Shannon Stimson for her very constructive feedback. In addition, I owe thanks to Michael Gillespie, Ruth Grant, Thomas Spragens, Alexandra Oprea, Samuel Bagg, Christopher Kennedy, and Antong Liu for their contributions to earlier stages of this project.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

Bibliography

- Atkins, Jed W. 2014. 'A Revolutionary Doctrine? Cicero's Natural Right Teaching in Mably and Burke.' *Classical Receptions Journal* 6 (2): 177–197.
- Broadie, Alexander. 2006. 'Sympathy and the Impartial Spectator.' In *Cambridge Companion to Adam Smith*, 158–188. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Campbell, T.D. 1971. *Adam Smith's Science of Morals*. London: George Allen & Unwin.
- Cicero, Marcus Tullius. 1913. *Cicero De Officiis*. London: W. Heinemann.
- Cicero, Marcus Tullius. 1998. *De Finibus Bonorum Et Malorum: Libri Quinque*. Edited by Leighton Durham Reynolds. New York: Clarendon Press.
- Cicero, Marcus Tullius. 2006. *De re publica; De legibus; Cato Maior de senectute; Laelius de amicitia*. Edited by J.G.F. Powell. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Cicero, Marcus Tullius. 2014. *On the Republic; On the Laws*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Colish, Marcia. 1978. 'Cicero's *De Officiis* and Machiavelli's *Prince*.' *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 9 (4): 80–93.
- Cropsey, Joseph. 1957. *Polity and Economy: And Interpretation of the Principles of Adam Smith*. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff.
- Deneen, Patrick J. 2018. *Why Liberalism Failed*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Fitzgibbons, Athol. 1995. *Adam Smith's System of Liberty, Wealth, and Virtue: The Moral and Political Foundations of The Wealth of Nations*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Force, Pierce. 2003. *Self-Interest Before Adam Smith: A Genealogy of Economic Science*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Forman-Barzilai, Fonna. 2005. 'Sympathy in Space(s): Adam Smith on Proximity.' *Political Theory* 33 (2): 189–217.
- Forman-Barzilai, Fonna. 2010. *Adam Smith and the Circles of Sympathy: Cosmopolitanism and Moral Theory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Frazer, Michael L. 2010. *The Enlightenment of Sympathy: Justice and the Moral Sentiments in the Eighteenth Century and Today*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Gocmen, Dogan. 2007. *The Adam Smith Problem*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Griswold, Charles. 1999. *Adam Smith and the Virtues of Enlightenment*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Haakonssen, Knud. 1981. *The Science of a Legislator*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hanley, Ryan Fitzpatrick. 2009. *Adam Smith and the Character of Virtue*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Heath, Eugene. 'The Commerce of Sympathy: Adam Smith on the Emergence of Morals.' *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 33: 447–466.
- Heise, P.A. 1995. 'Stoicism in the EPS: The Foundation of Adam Smith's Moral Philosophy.' In *The Classical Tradition in Economic Thought: Perspectives on the History of Economic Thought*, edited by I.H. Rima, Vol. XI, 17–30. Aldershot: Edward Elgar.
- Hill, Lisa. 2006. 'Adam Smith and the Theme of Corruption.' *The Review of Politics* 68 (4): 636–662.
- Hill, Lisa. 2010. 'Adam Smith's Cosmopolitanism: Expanding Circles of Commercial Strangership.' *History of Political Thought* 31 (3): 449–473.

- Hirschman, Albert. 2003. *The Passions and the Interests*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Hume, David. 1930. *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*. Chicago: Open Court.
- Hume, David. 1932. *The Letters of David Hume*. Edited by J.Y.T. Greig, Vol. 1. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Jones, Harold. 2010. 'Marcus Aurelius, the Stoic Ethic, and Adam Smith.' *The Journal of Business Ethics* 99 (1): 89–96.
- Kapust, Daniel, and Michelle Schwarze. 2016. 'The Rhetoric of Sincerity: Cicero and Smith on Propriety and Political Context.' *American Political Science Review* 100 (1): 100–111.
- Kries, Douglas. 2003. 'On the Intention of Cicero's De Officiis.' *The Review of Politics* 65 (4): 375–393.
- Locke, John. 1968. *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* in *The Educational Writings of John Locke*. Edited by James L. Axtell. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- MacIntyre, Alasdair. 2007. *After Virtue*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press.
- Mitsis, Phillip. 2003. 'Locke's Offices.' In *Hellenistic and Early Modern Philosophy*, 45–61. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Montes, Leonidas. 2008. 'Adam Smith as an Eclectic Stoic.' *The Adam Smith Review* (4): 44–70.
- Montesquieu and David Fott. 2002. 'Discourse on Cicero.' *Political Theory* 30 (5): 733–737.
- Nussbaum, Martha. 2000. 'Duties of Justice, Duties of Material Aid: Cicero's Problematic Legacy.' *Journal of Political Philosophy* 8 (2): 176–206.
- Packham, Catherine. 2013. 'Cicero's Ears, or Eloquence in the Age of Politeness: Oratory, Moderation, and the Sublime in Enlightenment Scotland.' *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 46 (4): 499–512.
- Pangle, Thomas L. 1998. 'Socratic Cosmopolitanism: Cicero's Critique and Transformation of the Stoic Ideal.' *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 31 (2): 235–262.
- Phillipson, Nicholas. 2010. *Adam Smith: An Enlightened Life*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Schofield, Malcolm. 1991. *The Stoic Idea of the City*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Sher, Richard B. 1989. 'Adam Ferguson, Adam Smith, and the Problem of National Defense.' *The Journal of Modern History* 61 (2): 240–268.
- Smith, Adam. 1963. *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres*. Edited by John Maule Lothian. London: T. Nelson.
- Smith, Adam. 1976. *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*. Indianapolis: Liberty Classics.
- Smith, Adam and Bonar, James. 1966. *A Catalogue of the Library of Adam Smith, Author of the 'Moral Sentiments' and 'The Wealth of Nations'*. New York: A.M. Kelly.
- Strauss, Leo. 1989. 'The Three Waves of Modernity.' In *An Introduction to Political Philosophy: Ten Essays by Leo Strauss*, 81–98. Detroit: Wayne State University Press.
- Stigler, George. 1971. 'Smith's Travels on the Ship of State.' *History of Political Economy* 3 (2): 265–277.
- Teichgraber, Richard. 1981. 'Rethinking Das Adam Smith Problem.' *Journal of British Studies* 20 (2): 106–123.
- Waszek, Norbert. 1984. 'Two Concepts of Morality: A Distinction of Adam Smith's Ethics and Its Stoic Origin.' *Journal of the History of Ideas* 45 (4): 591–606.
- Wood, Neal. 1988. *Cicero's Social and Political Thought*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Vivenza, Gloria. 2001. *Adam Smith and the Classics: The Classical Heritage in Adam Smith's Thought*. New York: Oxford University Press.