Unity in the Influences on Adam Smith

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Abstract: Argues that the principal influences on Adam Smith stem from the same source, namely, Francis Hutcheson. This is true both of the religious and Stoic influences on Smith and also (indirectly) of the influence on him of David Hume. Concludes that it is unwise to ignore the role of Design and the benevolent Deity in Smith's system, or to neglect his recognition of the social rather than individualistic nature of humankind.

1 Introduction

It is without doubt that Adam Smith is a major figure in the development of the discipline of economics. There does seem to be as much interest in his work now as at any time in the past, and in recent years there has been an increase in literature concerning him[1]. Much has been written regarding the main influences on him, but there is little agreement in this area. The literature on him suggests a number of different possibilities which include theology[2], Stoicism[3], David Hume[4] and Francis Hutcheson[5]. It will be argued here that these potentially different influences actually stem from the same source, that is, Hutcheson.

Of these potential influences, theology in particular has produced a significant amount of discussion. Kleer (1995, p. 275) points out that initially, Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (hereafter *TMS)* was seen as dependent upon the concept of a benevolent Deity. Kleer goes on to suggest, however, that 'in recent decades, the tendency has been to argue that teleological argument, while present in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, may be excised without impairing the cogency of his analysis' (1995, p. 275). For Raphael, for example, Smith is using 'the familiar heritage of religious language simply in order to make his readers appreciate the remarkable character of the phenomena' (1985, p. 72). In other words, the use of religious language was merely a device to enable readers to understand his ideas. Viner disagrees with this notion, stating that 'in the "enlightened" Scottish circles of Smith's time optimistic deism, sincerely held, was practically universal' (1968, p. 324), and Smith was no exception to this general rule. One notable exception to this was David Hume. For Viner, though, 'Adam Smith's system of thought …is not intelligible if one disregards the role he assigns in it to the teleological elements' (1972, p. 82). Viner does speculate, however, that Smith's position changed somewhat in later life. Whilst accepting that *TMS* was based on the *a priori* assumption of a benevolent Deity, he sees *An Inquiry into The Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (hereafter *WN)* as being based on 'facts', even if the Deity is the 'secret basis' (1958, p. 224). There has been a return to the idea of the importance of a benevolent Deity to Smith in some recent work (Kleer 1995 and 2000, Hill 2001).

As Hume was a well-known 'non-believer' it might be thought that his influence on Smith could not be compatible with the notion that theology was also an influence. If Hume was held to be the prime influence on Smith then this might be the case. Ross (1995, p. 118) however argues that Smith did not share Hume's

atheism[6]. It will be argued here that Hume was not the *prime* influence on Smith. Ross (1995, pp. 109-13) also illustrates a significant difference between these two friends by pointing out that, whilst Smith did sign the Calvinist Confession of Faith in 1751 on appointment to the Chair of Logic at Glasgow, Hume was opposed for a professorship at Edinburgh in 1744-5 and at Glasgow in 1751 by the clergy.

It should also be pointed out that the influences discussed are not necessarily mutually exclusive. This will be explained in due course. This also applies to some other suggested influences on Smith that are not covered by this paper. For example, Redman (1997) argues that Smith's method is drawn from Newton. This is not incompatible with other influences, firstly because it is specific to methodology and, secondly, because Newton himself did make reference to his own religious beliefs (see Hurlbutt 1985, p. 14 and Schumpeter 1994, pp. 30-1). Newton and religion can then, at least potentially, be compatible. Redman herself does argue the point made by Raphael (1985) that Smith's religious language is just a device. This, however, is not necessary in order to maintain the argument that his method was drawn from Newton, and the Newtonian influence on his method does not rule out the possibility of alternative influences on his moral philosophy.

A further example is the work of Hont and Ignatieff (1983), which suggests that Smith's work is in the natural jurisprudence tradition, or alternatively a form of civil humanism. In the same book, Dunn does accept that this does not rule out a religious influence, as he argues that 'it is still a controversial question precisely what the religious opinions of David Hume and Adam Smith in fact were' (in Hont and Ignatieff 1983, p. 119). His argument is that Smith moved away from a theological perspective in later life. The fact remains, however, that Smith's last work was the sixth edition of *TMS*, which seems to suggest that he had not abandoned his earlier ideas. The fact that he did leave out a passage on Christ's Atonement from the sixth edition has led some to conclude that he abandoned his religious beliefs in later life. Kleer does point out, though, that 'in that same sixth edition there appeared some new passages in which the teleological theme of earlier editions is repeated and even amplified' (1995, p. 299). Winch (in Hont and Ignatieff 1983, pp. 253-69) suggests that a civil moralist context is consistent with *TMS* but *WN* requires a natural law approach, and that this could be seen as a new 'Adam Smith problem'[7]. He also indicates that both these approaches are contained in the work of Hutcheson; therefore they are compatible with Hutcheson being a major influence. The theme of Hont and Ignatieff could then be compatible with either a religious influence or the influence of Hutcheson.

A further problem faced by modern commentators when examining Smith is that they are faced with interpreting work that was written over 200 years ago. This has led some to suggest that if we are to understand Smith's true meaning it is necessary to examine the context that gave rise to his work. This has always been the approach of relativists such as J.K. Galbraith, who has stated that 'economic ideas are always and intimately a product of their own time and place; they cannot be seen apart from the world they interpret' (1991, p. 1)[8]. Vivienne Brown, echoing this, has suggested that interpreting Smith requires 'a re-examination of the eighteenth century context'; one cannot 'simply reproduce the conventional wisdom of twentieth century economic thinking' (1991, p. 218). The extent to which this has been achieved though, is questioned by Salim Rashid, who argues that: 'The great fame of Adam Smith is based on a false premise. Historians of economic thought have not placed Smith in context' (1998, p. 3).

The aim of this paper, then, is to examine the supposed influences on Smith and to place these within the context of ideas in which Smith wrote. It will be argued that these different influences can be linked within the context of the eighteenth century, and, more specifically, linked to Francis Hutcheson. Each of these suggested influences will be examined in turn. The next section of the paper then examines the religious and Stoic influence on Smith. Section three looks at the influence of Hume, and section four that of Hutcheson. Finally, some conclusions will be drawn.

2 Religious and Stoic Influences

The current author has argued elsewhere that the religious and Stoic influences on Smith are linked and relate to changes in religious thought of that era (Clarke 2000). The argument will therefore only be summarised here.

Various other commentators have argued that a religious influence is evident in his work[9] (see also endnote 2), and there is ample evidence of a belief in the 'Design' argument within the pages of *TMS* [10]. Examples include:

> …the governing principles of human nature, …are to be regarded as the commands and laws of the Deity, promulgated by those vicegerents which he has thus set up within us. (Smith 1976a, p. 165)
>
> The happiness of mankind… seems to have been the original purpose intended by the Author of nature, when he brought them into existence …by acting according to the dictates of our moral faculties, we necessarily pursue the most effectual means for promoting the happiness of mankind, and may therefore be said… to co-operate with the Deity, and to advance as far as is in our power the plan of Providence. (Smith 1976a, p. 166)

There are many such references within the *TMS*. One that perhaps suggests a belief in the traditional Christian view of heaven and hell is that '…those important rules of morality are the commands and laws of the Deity, who will finally reward the obedient, and punish the transgressors of their duty' (Smith 1976a, p. 163).

Smith's methodology basically follows that of Locke and Hume in suggesting that all knowledge is *a posteriori*, that is, known after the event or through experience. This is clearly stated in his essay *Of the External Senses* (Smith 1982). The 'Design' argument, then, rests on 'establishing by observation and inductive reasoning the existence of an omniscient and benevolent Deity' (Evensky 1987, p. 465). Included in this 'Design', though, is the apparent flaw of human frailty, but '[w]hile the reason is obscured by our limited human vision, it must be taken on faith that the purpose is in the ultimate greatest good' (Evensky 1987, p. 465). This provides further evidence of Smith's own religious beliefs in that the arguments that are put forward in *TMS* are underpinned by an *a priori* assumption of the existence of a benevolent Deity.

Some writers on Smith suggest that Stoicism was an important influence on him (see endnote 3). For example, Brown argues that '*TMS* is operating within a discursive space that is marked by the presence of Stoic categories of thought' (1994, p. 76), and Fitzgibbons states that 'Smith was neither an idealist nor a materialist, but a Stoic philosopher' (1995, p. 19). In part VII of *TMS* Smith does quote lengthy passages from both Marcus Aurelius[11] and Epictetus, both of whom are Stoics. The extent of the Stoic influence has been examined elsewhere and so will not be re-examined here (Clarke 1996, 2000). Even some of Smith's important

concepts, though, can be seen as having their roots in Stoicism. For example, Marcus Aurelius states:

> I have often wondered how it should come to pass, that every man loving himself best, should more regard other men's opinion concerning himself, than his own. For if any God or grave master standing by, should command any of us to think nothing by himself, but what he should presently speak out; no man were able to endure it, though but for one day. Thus do we fear more what our neighbours will think of us, than what we think ourselves. (Marcus Aurelius 1906, pp. 149-50)

This can be seen as similar to Smith's 'impartial spectator':

> We suppose ourselves the spectators of our own behaviour, and endeavour to imagine what effect it would, in this light, produce upon us. This is the only looking-glass by which we can, in some measure, with the eyes of other people, scrutinise the propriety of our own conduct. (Smith 1976a, p. 112)

For both Marcus Aurelius and Smith we are concerned with the way in which others view our actions. Smith's oft-quoted comment in *WN* regarding self-interest can be seen as being drawn from the same source. Smith states, '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' (Smith 1979, p. 119). This sentiment is expressed in a number of passages by Marcus Aurelius (1906). For example:

> No man useth to be weary of that which is beneficial unto him. But every action according to nature, is beneficial. Be not weary then of doing what is beneficial unto thee, whilst it is so unto others. (*ibid*., p. 87)
>
> For nothing that is behoveful unto the whole, can be truly hurtful to that which it is part of it. For this being the common privilege of all natures, that they contain nothing in themselves that is hurtful unto them. (*ibid*., pp. 120-1)

The Stoics also, like Smith, held a belief in the 'Design' argument. It can be argued, then, that there is an extensive Stoic influence in Smith's work. This does not, though, rule out religion as an influence, as religion and Stoicism are linked by the contemporary context of the eighteenth century. This may also put into perspective some of the apparently anti-religious remarks that are made by Smith in *TMS* and which have led a number of commentators to suggest that Smith is, in fact, an atheist (for example, see Marx 1974, p. 681n and Minowitz 1993).

Smith's was an era when there was significant change in religious ideas, brought about by the 'scientific revolution'. The 'Design' argument had been influential on early Christianity, but this influence did not last. The 'Design' was also central to Stoicism, but this was rejected by St Augustine (AD354-430) on the grounds that: 'The Stoic conception of Fate is mistaken, since angels and men have free will. It is true that God has foreknowledge of our sins, but we do not sin because of His foreknowledge' (Russell 1961, p. 355). Fitzgibbons suggests that 'Augustine rejected Stoicism because it lacked spiritual transcendence' (1995, p. 34). So, after Augustine, the 'Design' argument disappeared from mainstream religious thinking and was replaced by the idea that the active 'hand of God' was necessary. Examples can be drawn to demonstrate this from any theological work that was published between the time of Augustine and that of Galileo. As an illustration, the following examples have been taken from a work by Thomas à

Kempis (1963) called *The Imitation of Christ*, which was written around the end of the fourteenth century. This work states, 'Make sure you have good conscience and God will watch over you - and if God is prepared to support a man, no one else's unpleasantness can hurt him' (p. 86). Along the same lines, 'Temporal things do nothing but lead you astray, and there is no profit in the whole of creation if the creator desert[s] you' (p. 110). Another example is: 'There is no holiness, Lord, if you withdraw your hand. No wisdom is of any use if you no longer guide it. No strength can avail, if you do not preserve, no purity is safe, if you do not protect. No watchfulness on our part can effect anything unless your holy vigilance is present with us' (p. 133). These are typical of the pre-Galileo era. As Cupitt indicates, this meant that 'everything in the universe was ultimately dependent upon and energised by the power of God, nature was not autonomous' (Cupitt 1984, p. 41. See also Brooke 1991, especially pp. 52-81, and Viner 1972, pp. 1-26).

The 'scientific revolution', however, came to challenge such views. The first important challenge came from Copernicus (1473-1543). As early as the 1580s Giordano Bruno, a Dominican friar, realised that to have the sun at the centre of the universe rather than the earth, as Copernicus had suggested, meant that the 'distinction between the earthly world below and the heavenly world above was no longer tenable' (Cupitt 1984, pp. 14-5). Bruno concluded by merging God and the universe, which took religious thought back towards the 'Design' argument. The work of Copernicus was, however, banned by the Catholic Church. Another major assault on the position of Augustine came from Galileo himself. He showed that once a body is in motion, it would remain so unless something occurs to stop that motion. Even then, action and reaction are equal and opposite. The implication of this is that motion is perpetual and the universe no longer needs the power of God for its day-to-day existence. The outcome of this was that his teaching was condemned as heretical in 1616, and when his *Dialogue on the Two Chief World Systems* was published in 1632 he was summoned to Rome to answer to the Pope. The old religious order, however, could not withstand this challenge from science, and so religious ideas began to change. This resulted in the re-emergence of the 'Design' argument.

The work of Isaac Newton amply illustrates the change that occurred. In his *Mathematical Principles* (1687) he states: 'This most beautiful system of the sun, planets, and comets, could only proceed from the council and dominion of an intelligent and powerful Being' (cited by Hurlbutt 1985, p. 14). This is clearly a reference to the 'Design', and Hurlbutt comments that 'the Newtonian "System of the World" supports the Christian conception of God' (1985, p. 15). The point is, though, that two centuries earlier this may well have been considered heresy[12]. Further evidence of the change in religious ideas comes from the fact that the Catholic Church's ban on Copernicus was lifted in 1757 – just two years before the publication of *TMS*. This return to the 'Design' argument was accompanied by a renewed interest in Stoicism. This is evidenced by looking at the dates of 'chief English translations of the *Meditations of Marcus Aurelius*' as listed in the 1906 edition. These occurred in 1701, 1747, 1792, 1844, 1862 and 1882.

Galileo viewed the universe as mechanical, and Cupitt points out that he believed in the power of mathematics to unlock its secrets. Galileo, then, was 'convinced of the truth of the mechanistic view of nature' (1985, p. 43). This mechanistic view also appears in *TMS*. Smith refers to 'the immense machine of the universe' (*TMS*, p. 236), and his allegory of nature as a watch whose wheels 'are all admirably adjusted to the end for which it was made' (*TMS*, p. 87) is also in this

mode. His belief in the 'Design' can then, be seen as typical of the religious thought of his era, and this does put into perspective some of the criticisms of religion that do appear in *TMS* and *WN*.

It has been claimed that Smith was an atheist[13], and certainly there are passages in both *TMS* and *WN* that do sound anti-religious. For example, when referring to casuistry Smith locates its cultivation in 'the custom of auricular confession, introduced by the Roman Catholic superstition, in times of barbarism and ignorance' (*TMS*, p. 333). He is also critical of medieval Catholicism in *WN* (1976b, pp. 788-814). This is, however, a reference to the pre-Galileo era. Minowitz is one of those who claim that Smith was an atheist, and he comments: 'Smith nowhere acknowledges the books of Augustine and Aquinas, and the only "apostles" he mentions are Marcus Aurelius and Epictetus, the Stoic philosophers'[14] (1993, p. 154). Augustine and Aquinas are, of course, pre-Galilean religious writers, and so it is unsurprising that Smith does not draw on their work. Minowitz goes on to acknowledge that 'the most exalted denunciation in his (Smith's) entire corpus is applied to the *medieval* Church' (1993, p. 159; emphasis added). The evidence above supports this statement, and it is consistent with the religious views of Smith's era. Smith is not rejecting religion *per se*, but is rejecting the pre-Galileo version of Christianity.

It can be argued, therefore, that the context of the eighteenth century links religion and Stoicism in Smith's work. The 'scientific revolution' led to a change in mainstream religious ideas and a return to the 'Design' argument, which had been out of favour since the time of Augustine. Smith's religious views can be seen as consistent with his era. Two of his essays on the history of science, namely *The History of Astronomy* and *The History of Ancient Physics*, both of which appear in *Essays on Philosophical Subjects* (Smith 1982), exhibit this link between science and the 'Design' argument. *The History of Ancient Physics* also ends with a discussion of the Stoics. Brown (1994, p. 62) does suggest that, although Smith was influenced by Stoicism, he ultimately rejects it. This point will be returned to in section 4, as it can be seen as relevant to the influence of Hutcheson on Smith.

So, in many ways, Smith can be seen as a man of his times, at least on the matters discussed above[15]. That is not to suggest that no contemporary individuals influenced him. For Raphael and Macfie, though, the influence of contemporary moral philosophers other than Hume or Hutcheson was 'remarkably small' ('Introduction' to *TMS*, p. 10). It is necessary, then, to examine the influence of these two contemporaries. The next section deals with the influence of Hume, and section 4 turns its attention towards Hutcheson.

3 The Influence of David Hume

It is now fairly commonly held that Smith and Hume were friends, and many see Hume as the primary influence on Smith. Pack, for example, comments that 'it is now relatively well known that Smith and Hume were the closest of friends ...and that Smith's economic, social and political thought was heavily influenced by Hume' (1995, p. 293). Also Raphael and Macfie state, '[a]mong contemporary thinkers Hume had the greatest influence on the formation of Smith's ethical theory' ('Introduction' to *TMS*, p. 10). Much has been written regarding Hume's influence on Smith, and it is not necessary to repeat all of it here. Fitzgibbons, however, argues that 'Smith never acknowledged a philosophical debt to Hume, because he did not owe one' (1995, p. 21). This does require some discussion.

There are similarities between Smith and Hume. Both see humans as essentially social creatures. Smith suggests: 'It is thus that man, who can subsist only in society, was fitted by nature to that situation for which he was made. All the members of human society stand in need of each other's assistance, and are likewise exposed to mutual injuries' (*TMS*, p. 85). Hume states: 'reduce a person to solitude, and he loses all enjoyment, except either of the sensual or speculative kind' (1975, p. 220). So both are in agreement on this point, and both seek to explain human behaviour in these terms. They are concerned with finding the moral foundation for this social behaviour. Whilst there is this similarity in their aims, though, there are significant differences in their conclusions.

For Smith the 'Design' of the Deity is central to this. He states, for example:

> Nature, when she formed man for society, endowed him with an original desire to please, and an original aversion to offend his brethren. She taught him to feel pleasure in their favourable regard…. Nature, accordingly has endowed him, not only with a desire of being approved of, but with a desire of being what ought to be approved of; or of being what he himself approves of in other men. (*TMS*, pp. 116-7)

Nature, then, provides the framework within which human moral relations operate. This is part of the 'Design', and the 'happiness of mankind, as well as all other rational creatures, seems to have been the original purpose intended by the Author of nature' (*TMS*, p. 166).

Two central features of Smith's work are relevant to this process, namely the impartial spectator and sympathy. It is the impartial spectator who rules on conduct: 'We endeavour to examine our own conduct as we imagine any other fair and impartial spectator would examine it' (*TMS*, p. 110). Humans, though, as a part of the 'Design', seek social approval, for as Smith states, 'humanity does not desire to be great, but to be beloved' (*TMS*, p. 113). Human behaviour is directed by this desire. Human behaviour can be driven by the desire to be loved but even this can be interpreted as a type of self-interest. We act based on our desire 'to be beloved' so the self is the focus of action. The impartial spectator is informed by sympathy, which for Smith provides us with an insight into the passions of others. He argues that sympathy can 'be made use of to denote our fellow-feeling with any passion whatever' (*TMS*, p. 10). Sympathy in itself does not ensure action, but it is sympathy that allows us to have this 'fellow-feeling' with other humans. Sympathy, then, forms the foundation of morals. Self-interest does not produce sympathy, but it can be seen as the determinant of behaviour.

Hume's solution is somewhat different. Firstly, it is most definitely not based on the 'Design' argument. He states:

> There are many philosophers who, after an exact scrutiny of all the phenomena of nature, conclude, that the WHOLE [emphasis in original], considered as one system, is, in every period of its existence, ordered with perfect benevolence; and that the utmost possible happiness will, in the end, result to all created beings …. Every physical ill, say they, makes an essential part of this benevolent system, and could not possibly be removed, even by the Deity himself, considered as a wise agent, without giving entrance to greater ill, or excluding greater good, which will result from it….But though this topic be specious and sublime, it was soon found in practice weak and ineffectual... nor is it possible to explain distinctly, how the Deity can

> be the mediate cause of all the actions of men, without being the author of sin and moral turpitude…. To reconcile the indifference and contingency of human action with prescience; or to defend absolute decrees, and yet free the Deity from being the author of sin, has been found hitherto to exceed all the power of philosophy. (Hume 1975, pp. 101-3)

This marks the origin of his system as being different from that of Smith's. The foundation of morals differs as well:

> Compelled by these instances, we must renounce the theory, which accounts for every moral sentiment by the principle of self-love. We must adopt a more public affection, and allow, that the interests of society are not, even on their own account, entirely indifferent to us…. If usefulness ...be a source of moral sentiment, and if this usefulness be not always considered with reference to the self; it follows that everything, which contributes to the happiness of society, recommends itself directly to our approbation and good-will. Here is a principle, which accounts, in great part, for the origin of morality. (Hume 1975, p. 219)

For Hume, then, it is utility that 'is a foundation of the chief part of morals' (1975, p. 231).

This represents a significant difference from Smith. It is a difference of which Smith was well aware. In section VII of *TMS* he states:

> That system which places virtue in utility, coincides too with that which makes it consist in propriety. According to this system, all those qualities of the mind which are agreeable or advantageous, either to the person himself or to others, are approved of as virtuous, and the contrary disapproved of as vicious…. According to this system therefore, virtue consists not in any one affection, but in the proper degree of all the affections. The only difference between it and that which I have been endeavouring to establish is, that it makes utility, and not sympathy, or the corresponding affection of the spectator, the natural and original measure of this proper degree. (*TMS*, pp. 305-6)

Smith, then, does recognise the similarity between his system and Hume's, but also points to the important difference, and, as Fitzgibbons comments, 'if Smith's whole system was based on moral insight, then the difference between Smith and Hume was radical' (1995, p. 21).

There is sufficient difference between Smith and Hume to suggest that Hume was not the primary influence on Smith's moral philosophy. Even Raphael and Macfie, who argue that he was, accept that 'Smith rejects or transforms Hume's ideas far more than he follows them' ('Introduction' to *TMS*, p. 10). His influence for them lies in the assertion that Smith's 'views would have been markedly different if he had not been stimulated to disagreement with Hume' ('Introduction' to *TMS*, p. 10). In terms of the context of the eighteenth century, though, it is interesting to note that, whilst disagreeing with the idea, Hume does, like Smith, discuss the 'Design' argument. Hume's *Dialogues* are a powerful critique of this argument, but Smith distanced himself from his friend's position. For Ross this may have been 'because he had not or could not come to grips with their content' (1995, p. 340).

The next section of this paper examines the influence of Smith's teacher, Francis Hutcheson. The claim that he was an important influence is not new, but

this section will attempt to link the other influences that have been discussed earlier to Hutcheson's influence on Smith. This being the case, then, the apparent divergent claims of Stoicism or religion being the primary influences of Smith can be unified and seen as having the same source.

4 The Influence of Francis Hutcheson

Francis Hutcheson occupied the Chair of Moral Philosophy at Glasgow University from 1730 until his death in 1746, and Smith attended his lectures whilst he was a student there (1737-40). There is evidence to suggest that Hutcheson was a significant influence on Smith, as indeed he was on other members of the Scottish Enlightenment. Meek, for example, points out that Hutcheson 'appears to have exercised a significant influence on a number of the major figures of the Scottish Enlightenment – not least Adam Smith' (1973, p. 25). Dugald Stewart, in his biography of Smith, talks of this influence:

> The lectures of the profound and eloquent Dr. Hutcheson, which he (Smith) had attended previous to his departure from Glasgow, and of which he always spoke in terms of the warmest admiration, had, it may be reasonably presumed, a considerable effect in directing his talents to their proper objects. (Smith 1982, p. 271)

Smith himself refers to the 'abilities and virtues of the never to be forgotten Dr. Hutcheson' (1987, p. 309). Smith's adherence to the basics of the moral philosophy of Hutcheson is illustrated by a passage in *TMS*:

> Dr. Hutcheson had the merit of being the first who distinguished with any degree of precision in what respect all moral distinctions may be said to arise from reason, and in what respect they are founded upon immediate sense and feeling. In his illustrations upon the moral sense he has explained this so fully, and, in my opinion, so unanswerably, that if any controversy is still kept up about this subject, I can impute it to nothing, but either to inattention to what that gentleman has written, or to a superstitious attachment to certain forms of expression, a weakness not very uncommon among the learned, especially in subjects so deeply interesting as the present, in which a man of virtue is often loath to abandon, even the propriety of a single phrase which he has been accustomed to. (*TMS*, pp. 320-1)

Smith, then, clearly held Hutcheson in very high regard. The aim here, though, is to establish a link between Hutcheson and the other claimed influences on Smith that have been previously discussed.

Hutcheson was a very influential figure in the Scottish Enlightenment, and Sher goes as far as to comment that he was 'the father of Scottish academic moral philosophy during the age of the Enlightenment' (1985a, p. 167). He was a Presbyterian minister, and religion did influence his moral philosophy, as did the moral philosophy of the Enlightenment. Again, for Sher 'the Enlightenment in Scotland …was largely an ecclesiastical and academic phenomenon' (1985a, p. 151). More precisely, 'Scottish moral philosophy, like Scottish "social science", had orthodox Presbyterian roots' (Sher 1985a, p. 44). This was a period, as discussed earlier, of change in religious thought, and Camic (1983, pp. 60-4) identifies this change in religious thought as being influential on the Scottish Enlightenment. He concludes that the move away from the pre-Galileo model is evidence of secularisation. This, however, is to ignore the religious context of the

era. Camic has also been criticised by Sher (1985b, p. 741) for ignoring the Presbyterian influence on the Enlightenment. For Sher the Enlightenment was certainly not a secular movement, and the 'philosophical mentor Francis Hutcheson' (1985b, p. 741), was a minister of the Church.

This change in the religious thought of the era did influence Hutcheson and he 'brought God into his essentially Stoic discussion of moral theory as a replacement for the Stoic conception of fate' (Sher 1985a, p. 177). For the Stoics it is necessary to endure misfortune; for example, Marcus Aurelius states:

> Our life is warfare, and a mere pilgrimage. Fame after life is no better than oblivion. What is it then that will adhere and follow? Only one thing, philosophy. And philosophy doth consist in this, for a man to preserve that spirit which is within him, from all manner of contumelies and injuries. (1906, p. 17)

Hutcheson, despite being essentially Stoic in his approach, does depart from the Stoics on this point:

> When we despair of glory, and even of executing all the good we intend, 'tis a sublime exercise to the soul to persist in acting the rational and social part as it can; discharging its duty well, and committing the rest to God….Thus the most heroick excellence, and its consequent happiness and inward joy, may be attained under the worst circumstances of fortune; nor is any station of life excluded from the enjoyment of the supreme good. (Hutcheson 1968, pp. 225-6)

For Hutcheson, then, it is 'the existence and perfection of God (that) save the Stoic system from ultimate pessimism and make happiness possible' (Sher 1985a, p. 177), and this brand of Christian Stoicism became the approach of the Scottish Enlightenment:

> Instead of employing this Stoic philosophy as a weapon against Christianity …the Moderate literati followed Francis Hutcheson in using it as a foundation for a Christian Stoic approach to morality. With God instead of personal fate as the ultimate director of events and determiner of outcomes, Stoicism was stripped of its pessimistic, pagan attributes and reconciled with the promise – the 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 1985a, p. 325)

Christian Stoicism, then, was common amongst the members of the Scottish Enlightenment.[16]

It has already been noted that Stoicism is fairly commonly held to have been an influence on Smith, yet Brown (1994), although accepting that this is the case, argues that he ultimately rejects it. She writes:

> In *TMS*, however, instead of dichotomising the self into reason and the passions, conscience is presented as the attempt to achieve impartiality and moral distance in making judgments, where a moral agent must step outside himself in order to see himself within an appropriate moral perspective. This model of conscience deploys the agent's imagination as the basis for sympathy and the impartial spectator mechanism, and it is this that provides the dialogic element. But in substituting the imagination for reason as the prime moral mover, *TMS* privileged

> nature over reason and, ultimately, rejected Stoicism itself. (Brown 1994, p. 62)

Action in the Stoic system was based on reason. Smith fully accepts this, however, and explicitly states that:

> It is by reason that we discover those general rules of justice by which we ought to regulate our actions: and it is by the same faculty that we form those more vague and indeterminate ideas of what is prudent, of what is decent, of what is generous or noble, which we carry constantly about with us, and according to which we endeavour, as well as we can, to model the tenor of our conduct. (*TMS*, p. 319)

Imagination plays a role in the process as, for Smith, we imagine the effect our actions will have on another person:

> It is reason, principle, conscience, the inhabitant of the breast, the man within, the great judge and arbiter of our conduct. It is he who, *whenever we are about to act* so as to affect the happiness of others, calls to us, with a voice capable of astonishing the most presumptuous of passions, that we are but one of the multitude, in no respect better than any other in it; and that when we prefer ourselves so shamefully and blindly to others, we become the proper objects of resentment, abhorrence, and execration. (*TMS*, p. 137; emphasis added)

Reason, though, is not absent from this process:

> The general maxims of morality are formed, like all other general maxims, from experience and induction. We observe in a great variety of particular cases what pleases our moral faculties, what these approve or disapprove of, and, by induction from this experience, we establish those general rules. But induction is always regarded as one of the operations of reason. From reason, therefore, we are very properly said to derive all those general maxims and ideas. (*TMS*, p. 319)

It is reason, and not imagination, that forms the basis of the ruling of the 'impartial spectator', so Smith is not rejecting Stoicism here.

Smith does, though, state that the 'plan and system which Nature has sketched out for our conduct seems altogether different from that of Stoical philosophy' (*TMS*, p. 292). For Smith, 'Stoical philosophy prescribes it [contemplation] as the great business and occupation of our lives. That philosophy teaches us to interest ourselves earnestly and anxiously in no events, external to the good order of our own minds' (*TMS*, p. 292). That is, we must accept our fate. This is not Smith's position:

> Nature has not prescribed to us this sublime contemplation as the great business and occupation of our lives…. The causes which naturally excite our desires and aversions, our hopes and fears, our joys and sorrows, would no doubt, notwithstanding all the reasonings of Stoicism, produce upon each individual, according to the degree of his actual sensibility, their proper and necessary effects. The judgments of the man within the breast, however, might be a good deal affected by those reasonings, and that great inmate might be taught by them to attempt to overawe all our private, partial, and selfish affections into a more or less perfect tranquillity. (*TMS*, pp. 292-3)

So Smith clearly differs from the Stoics and is suggesting here that 'Nature' has provided us with the means of achieving 'perfect tranquillity'. This is actually Hutcheson's position and can be seen as being drawn from Christian Stoicism.

There are other areas in which Smith and Hutcheson concur. Hutcheson too adheres to the 'Design' argument; for example, he refers to the 'Author of Nature to our species' (Hutcheson 1968, p. 3). He also sees humans as social creatures: 'One can scarce deny to mankind a natural impulse to society with their fellows' (1968, p. 34). Smith again follows Hutcheson in his view that the 'happiness of mankind, as well as all other rational creatures, seems to have been the original purpose intended by the Author of nature' (*TMS*, p. 166). For Hutcheson: 'God the Author of our Nature …plainly intended the universal happiness, and that of each individual' (1968, p. 51). Hutcheson, whilst not discussing the 'impartial spectator', does suggest an internal process for assessing action: 'Altho' men cannot accurately judge about the degrees of virtue, or vice, in the actions of others, because their inward springs are unknown: yet some general rules may be abundantly certain and useful in judging about ourselves' (1968, p. 238).

Smith's system does differ from that of Hutcheson's, though, when discussing the source of our moral sense. For Hutcheson it is innate:

> God has set in our hearts, if we would attend to it, a very high standard of necessary goodness, and we must be displeased with ourselves when we omit any office, how burdensome or hurtful soever to ourselves, which would increase the public happiness after all its consequents are considered. (1968, p. 240)

Smith's system is different from this. Man does have 'an original desire to please, and an original aversion to offend his brethren' (*TMS*, p. 116) which is endowed by nature, but the moral sense itself is not innate. We learn acceptable behaviour from experience.

Smith's work, then, is not identical with that of Hutcheson. There are, however, important similarities that, when coupled with Smith's praise of Hutcheson, lead to the conclusion that Hutcheson was a major influence on Smith. Smith is at one with Hutcheson in the Christian Stoic approach to moral philosophy and the 'Design'. This does link the supposed influence of religion and Stoicism in Smith's work.

5 Unity in the Influences on Smith

Different possibilities, then, have been put forward as being the main influence on Adam Smith. It has been argued here, though, that they stem from the same source, that is, Francis Hutcheson. The religious and Stoic influences can be seen as derived directly from 'Hutcheson's brand of Christian Stoicism' (Sher 1985, p. 177). The influence of Hume also stems indirectly from this source. Dugald Stewart indicates this in his biography of Smith:

> His (Hutcheson's) reasonings upon this subject are in the main acquiesced in, both by Mr. Hume and Mr. Smith; but they differ from him in one important particular, - Dr. Hutcheson plainly supposing, that the moral sense is a simple principle of our constitution, of which no account can be given; whereas the other two philosophers have both attempted to analyse it into other principles more general. (in Smith 1982, p. 279)

Whilst both Hume and Smith attempt to extend Hutcheson, they 'are very different from each other' (Stewart in Smith 1982, p. 279). This difference was discussed in section 3. Smith still operates within the 'Design' argument and with a

fundamentally Stoic approach. Hume, however, rejects Stoicism and the 'Design'. Smith, then, remains true to the approach of Hutcheson, and Raphael and Macfie are correct when they say, 'Smith rejects or transforms Hume's ideas… but his own views would have been markedly different if he had not been stimulated to disagreement with Hume' ('Introduction' to *TMS*, p. 10). Hutcheson's views can also be seen as stemming from a particular context. Changes in religious thought and a return to the 'Design' argument lead to Christian Stoicism.

Hopefully, then, this paper has drawn together some of the different influences on Smith as stemming from Hutcheson. This in turn is linked to the particular context of changing religious ideas. Seeing Hutcheson as the primary influence is not new, indeed Dugald Stewart had pointed us in that direction, but his view has become less popular, perhaps almost forgotten, as other possibilities were put forward. Bringing these different influences together can provide a more unified basis for interpreting the work of Adam Smith.

Certainly one conclusion to come from such an interpretation is that Viner was undoubtedly correct when he suggested that 'modern professors of economics and of ethics operate in disciplines which have been secularized to the point where the religious elements and implications which were an integral part of them have been painstakingly eliminated' (1972, p. 81). This is the case with interpretations of Smith that ignore the role of the Design and the benevolent Deity in his system.

Furthermore, such an interpretation would need to acknowledge the social, rather than the individualistic, nature of humankind. For Marcus Aurelius and the Stoics '[t]he true joy of a man, is to do that which properly belongs unto a man. That which is most proper unto a man, is … to be kindly affected towards them, that are of the same kind and nature as he is himself' (1906, p. 94). This is also where self-interest lies for Smith. The self-interested rational individual maximiser of free market economics is altogether different. For Smith, markets can produce the best possible outcomes only if we behave with a clearly defined social awareness.

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Notes

1 See Brown (1997) for a survey of recent publications.
2 See, for example, Anderson (1988), Evensky (1987, 1989,1993) and Pack (1995).
3 See, for example, Brown (1994) and Fitzgibbons (1995).
4 See, for example, Raphael and Macfie ('Introduction' to Smith 1976a, p. 10).
5 See, for example, Meek (1973, p. 25).
6 (Winch 1996, p. 39) 'Smith was not so much an active sceptic on religious matters in the Humean vein'. Winch does go on to suggest, though, that Smith was 'either indifferent or calmly undecided' (p. 39).
7 The original 'Adam Smith problem' was concerned with the apparent contradiction between the sympathy of *TMS* and the selfishness of *WN*. As Winch suggests, 'few scholars now believe that this is how the problem should be posed' (in Hont and Ignatieff 1983, p. 254).

8 Of course there are many in economics who would disagree and take an absolutist position. See Blaug (1985, pp. 1-9) for a summary of this relativist versus absolutist debate.
9 It should be noted that this is usually based on an analysis of his writings. As Winch (1996) suggests, there is little evidence one way or the other from other sources. We do at least know from Ross (1995) that Smith did come from a religious background in that his mother was known to be very religious and that religious books were the biggest group in his father's inventory of books.
10 See Kleer (1995, 2000), who concludes 'that the principle of a divine author of nature cannot be removed without impairment to Smith's moral theory' (1995, p. 300).
11 His full name was Marcus Aurelius Antoninus. Smith refers to him as Marcus Antoninus, or just Antoninus, rather than the now more common Marcus Aurelius.
12 Brooke (1991) traces such developments in religious thought. The 'Design' argument did not disappear in the period between Augustine and Galileo, but it was rejected by orthodox Christian teaching. Viner (1972) agrees with this, pointing out that St Thomas Aquinas did use the Design argument as a part of his proof of the existence of God but this did not gain widespread acceptance until the seventeenth century (Viner 1972, p. 8).
13 See, for example, Marx (1974, p. 681n).
14 Note that Minowitz is not totally correct in his assertion. There is one passing reference to St Augustine in *TMS* (p.331). It does not alter the point that he is making, though, and it can still be claimed that Augustine was not a significant influence on Smith.
15 Note Winch's comment that this was an era in which 'science and religion, let alone religion and politics, were usually inseparable' (1996, p. 23).
16 See Sher (1985, especially pp. 175-86) for a fuller account of this Christian Stoic influence on the Scottish Enlightenment. He does link a number of the leading members to it, including Adam Ferguson (p. 175), Hugh Blair (pp. 179, 182), John Drysdale (p. 180-1) and William Robertson (p. 181). Also, slightly later than the others, Dugald Stewart, Smith's pupil, is linked to this doctrine (p. 313).

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