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Development of his Views over Time**

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# THE 'NEW VIEW' OF ADAM SMITH AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF HIS VIEWS OVER TIME

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## ABSTRACT

This paper discusses two topics: Adam Smith's theology and the possibility that he changed his mind over time. Smith's theology sets up some of the foundations for his work. An understanding of it helps to clarify his overall project. This has been emphasized in recent writings on Smith. The 'new view' holds that Smith was a devout supporter of natural theology. Smith's foundational assumptions, including his theological assumptions, are set out primarily in the *Theory of Moral Sentiments*. This work was first published in 1759 and it was revised right through until Smith's final year. The possibility that his view changed over time needs to be incorporated into the study. While he shifted away from Christianity, his support for natural theology remained throughout his life.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

In recent times there has been an explosion of interest in Adam Smith. In the past, Smith scholars were almost exclusively economists; in the new wave of research, however, scholars from various backgrounds have become excited by his work.<sup>1</sup> In addition, economists themselves have moved beyond their traditional themes and methodologies in approaching Smith. Reflecting the broadening of the scholarship, there has been a shift in focus away from his *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (*WN* hereafter) towards Smith's other works, especially the *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (*TMS* hereafter).<sup>2</sup> In this chapter I wish to contribute to the broader approach to Smith scholarship. I have two specific questions which I will address. First, what is the character of Smith's theology, especially in the *TMS*? Second, is there any development in Smith's thinking during his lifetime and, if so, does it show itself in Smith's theology in the *TMS*?

Let me begin by giving my motivation for investigating these topics. First, why study Smith's theology in the *TMS*? He is said to have regarded the *TMS* as the better of the two books mentioned above (see Rae, 1965, [1895], 436). It is in the *TMS* that Smith gives the broader sketch of his foundational assumptions, including theological foundations. In addition, these foundational assumptions *may* be helpful in interpreting his other works, especially if the 'continuity' thesis holds (namely, that his youthful ideas were retained throughout his life) (see Dickey, 1986, 583). Further, as part of the broadening of the Smith scholarship mentioned above, there has been extensive discussion of Smith's theology. In the new scholarship there has been a genuine attempt to return to Smith's own intellectual context. The bulk of recent commentators have concluded that the Enlightenment (especially the Scottish Enlightenment) was not hostile to certain (rational) types of theology. Hume was an exception. The 'new view' of Smith's theology is that Smith was in the mainstream of his time. Indeed, 'new view' commentators claim that Smith was a devout supporter of natural theology. This type of theology relies only on reason; it does not require Revelation. The validity of the 'new view' interpretation warrants scrutiny.

Second, why study the possibility that Smith changed his mind? How one reads and understands Smith depends, to a considerable extent, on whether one accepts the continuity thesis. Concerns about whether Smith's writings form a unified whole date back to the 1850s, when various German scholars formulated *Das Adam Smith Problem* (see Dickey, 1986, 581). These scholars claimed that Smith had changed from an advocate of 'sympathy' in the *TMS* to an advocate of 'self-interest' in the *WN*. Because the latter work was published seventeen years after the former, these scholars

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<sup>1</sup> In addition to economists, the study of Smith has spread to philosophy (Griswold, 1999; Otteson, 2002); political science (Minowitz, 1993); and history (Muller, 1995).

<sup>2</sup> Textual references are to Smith unless otherwise noted. My citations from him follow the practice of the editors of *The Glasgow Edition of the Works and Correspondence of Adam Smith*, citing not the page number but the relevant Book, Chapter, Section and paragraph (i.e. *WN* I.x.b.3 = *The Wealth of Nations* Bk. I, Chap. X, Sect. b, para. 3). Abbreviations of Smith's works: *Corr* = *Correspondence of Adam Smith*; *ES* = 'Of External Sense' in *Essays on Philosophical Subjects*; *LJ* = *Lectures on Jurisprudence*; *TMS* = *Theory of Moral Sentiments*; *WN* = *Wealth of Nations*.

asserted that the ‘change of mind’ occurred during this interval. While the unity of Smith’s writings has tended to be affirmed in recent commentaries, considerable controversy remains. The possibility of a change of view during Smith’s lifetime is important, particularly because a shift in his presentation (or even wording) on certain details may well be a symptom of deeper structural changes in his assumptions, including his theology.

At this point it may be helpful to lay out the substance and structure of what follows. I will argue that the essence of the ‘new view’ of Smith’s theology is correct. Smith’s references to a benevolently designed divine order, final causes, and so on, are serious; his discussions of what we now call teleology are not irrelevant; they are integral components of his argument. Smith’s views on theology, however, *did* develop over time. They developed away from Christianity. Nevertheless, his fundamental commitment to natural theology remained.

This paper has five more sections. Section 2 discusses the literature on two topics: Smith’s theology and the possibility that he changed his mind. Section 3 presents a brief guide to the *TMS*. Section 4 sketches the theological aspects of the main topic of the *TMS*, namely, moral judgment. Section 5 provides a detailed historical account of Smith’s writings in order to highlight any development in his theology. The final section summarizes the chapter.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

There is a vast amount of scholarship on Smith and much of it discusses the topics under investigation. Naturally, there is great quality variation in such commentaries. An exhaustive discussion of all such material is, therefore, beyond the scope of this section. Nevertheless, some introduction to the literature is required. First, I will sketch the literature on the general character of Smith’s theology. Second, I will turn to the possibility that Smith’s views developed over time.

There is a wide range of views concerning the character of Smith’s theology. In 1895, one of his early biographers said that Smith adopted ‘natural religion’ (Rae, 1965 [1895], 430). In 1926 Eckstein said that Smith adopted ‘optimistic Deism’ (Eckstein, 2000 [1926], 13). More recently, Coase claimed that Smith made statements which could have been made neither ‘by a strong, or even a mild, Deist’; he ‘suspended belief’ (1976, 539). Even more pointedly, Dunn has said that Smith was ‘a practical atheist’ who *rejected* natural theology (1983, 119, 129-30).

In addition, some commentators assert that there is a genuine theological gap between the *TMS* and the *WN*. Although Viner later reversed his view, in a famous early article he stated that ‘the emphasis in the *Theory of Moral Sentiments* upon a benevolent deity as the author and guide of nature is almost, though not quite, completely absent in the *Wealth of Nations*’ (1927, 207; cf. Viner, 1972). Taking this suggestion even further, Minowitz claims that there is contradiction between Smith’s ‘atheistic universe’ in the *Wealth of Nations* and a ‘theistic one’ in the *Theory*

of *Moral Sentiments* (Minowitz, 1993, 188).<sup>3</sup> According to him, this gap constitutes the real Adam Smith Problem (1993, 8). Brown (1994) and Dickey (1986) also adopt views broadly consistent with these suggestions.

Recently, Kleer has made one of the most interesting generalizations about the character of the secondary literature on Smith's theology. He claimed that the prevailing interpretation of Smith's theology ebbed and flowed over time. Kleer stated that the initial commentaries asserted that Smith's *TMS* was founded on 'the concept of a benevolent divine author of nature' (1995, 275). This 'original view' was maintained 'for a long time thereafter' (Kleer, 1995, 275, 279).<sup>4</sup> It was replaced after World War II by the view that 'teleological arguments, while present in the *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, may be excised without impairing the cogency of his analysis' (Kleer, 1995, 275). As examples of the modern view, Kleer cites, amongst others, Macfie (1967), Haakonssen (1981), and Raphael (1985). Some modern commentators go even further to claim not only that teleological statements were *superfluous* to Smith's argument, but that they were *deceptive* flourishes designed to mislead readers into thinking that he was a believer; Smith's 'invisible hand' doctrine, as well as many references to God, are often said to be 'rhetorical' cover for a secular doctrine (see references in Hill, 2001, 2).

In the last fifteen years or so, a 'new teleological and theological view' of Smith has arisen in opposition to the secular interpretations which have prevailed since World War II (see Kleer, 1995; Kleer, 2000; Hill, 2001). Kleer, who has helped to lead this 'new view,' says that 'the principle of a benevolent divine author of nature must be considered as one of the cornerstones of Smith's system of moral philosophy' (1995, 279). The 'new view' asserts that Smith held the view that the universe was created by a benevolent deity: teleological design underpinned Smith's work. The growing popularity of this 'new view' reflects dissatisfaction with both versions of the modern view mentioned above. While the evidence for the 'new view' interpretation is scattered throughout Smith's works, it is primarily located in the *TMS*.

Let me now turn to the second theme of the chapter, namely, the possibility that Smith's views developed over time. Smith scholars have taken a wide range of positions on this topic also. At one end of the spectrum are those who argue that there was a major change of view (Dwyer, 1987, 182). At the other end are those who say that there was little or none (Otteson, 2002, 14, 182; Hill, 2001, 4, 23 n.6).

Perhaps the most authoritative account is given by Raphael and Macfie, the editors of the *TMS* in the *Glasgow Edition of the Works and Correspondence of Adam Smith*. It draws heavily upon another contribution (Raphael, 1975) and thus the two can be read as one. Raphael says that the effect of the changes Smith made in the sixth edition of the *TMS* was that 'virtually a new book' had been produced (Raphael, 1975, 85). He says that the main features of Smith's revisions

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<sup>3</sup> Others have rejected Minowitz's claim that this is the crucial 'Adam Smith Problem' (Hill, 2001, 4, 23n.6; Waterman, 2002).

<sup>4</sup> Kleer cites Hasbach but we can add Dugald Stewart (1980 [1794], 315) and Thorstein Veblen (1899).

throughout the development of the *TMS* were the deepening of his accounts of the impartial spectator and conscience (1975 throughout; see Dwyer 1987, 168-85). Smith extends his usage of the impartial spectator concept in significant ways in later editions. Raphael and Macfie do not link these changes to any theological shift. On the other hand, they do find a pattern in other changes that Smith made throughout editions two to six. These changes, they suggest, show that Smith ‘moved away from orthodox Christianity’; there was a ‘trend towards natural religion’ (Raphael and Macfie, 1979a, 19). In doing so, they follow Eckstein, who had argued, fifty years earlier, that there was ‘a transformation in Smith’s religious views’ towards ‘a religion of reason’ (2000 [1926], 29, 31).

Another important contribution is Dickey (1986). He considers *Das Adam Smith Problem* but tries to ‘historicize’ it by examining Smith’s writings at three pivotal points in time: at 1759, when the first edition of the *TMS* was published; at 1776, when the *WN* was first published; and at 1790, when the sixth edition of the *TMS* was published. Dickey rejects the view that there was ‘continuity’ in Smith’s thought commencing in 1759, because to do so would require ‘an unhistorical view of Smith as a thinker’ (1986, 583, 585). The first edition of the *TMS* constitutes one historical layer, or ‘motivating centre,’ in Smith’s thought. Dickey tries to show that there was actually a ‘developmental sequence’ with at least three such ‘motivating centres,’ namely, the three dates mentioned above (1986, 585, 589; see 587-9, 606, 609).

Another excellent article on the development of Smith’s writings is Evensky (1989). He analyses Smith’s work within the changing external context and finds internal evidence there of a ‘transformation of Smith’s thought from the belief that’ society was automatically moving ‘toward the Deity’s design, to the belief that humans must be active agents in realizing that end’ (1989, 126).

Overall, the ‘secular’ commentators seem to think that Smith’s theology (at least as far as it was stated openly) was modified to some degree over the years. The ‘new view’ commentators have tended to take the view that there was either no change or no significant change in his theology. Evensky and Tanaka (2003) are exceptions. Following Evensky and Tanaka, there may be room to connect the literature on Smith’s theology with that on his change of view. This is what I will do in Sections 4 and 5 but, before doing so, I want to provide some background on the *TMS*.

### **3. THE *TMS*: ITS CONTENT, PURPOSE AND STRUCTURE**

This section serves as a transition to the two major sections that follow. As I will be focussing on certain aspects of the *TMS*, this is an appropriate point to gain some perspective on that particular work before turning to the substantive sections. Several questions are addressed in this section. What is the origin of the *TMS*? What does it discuss? What is its purpose? What is its structure?

Smith lectured on ethics (as well as natural theology, political economy and other subjects) at

Glasgow University (1752-64). The *TMS*, is often said to have been based on these lectures (Raphael and Macfie, 1979a, 2-4). The *TMS* was envisaged by Smith as part of a wide publication agenda (see Griswold, 1999, 29-39). Part of the plan was realized when he published his second book, the *WN*, but other parts were never completed (*TMS* ‘Advertisement’ and VII.iv.37).

The *TMS* discusses moral philosophy. Neither it, nor the *WN*, was designed to be a textbook on theology. Indeed, he seems never to have considered publishing his lectures on natural theology as a separate work. Therefore, Smith’s theology will tend to be implicit in his work.

A careful study of the *TMS* reveals that Smith thought that moral philosophy had very wide boundaries. The *TMS* is the sort of book that one would expect from someone who has thought about a wide range of issues and has a wide publication agenda. It gives brief insights into his views on human nature, aesthetics, political theory, jurisprudence, history, and political economy, as well as moral philosophy. It is a wide-ranging work.

Let us now turn to Smith’s primary purpose in writing this first instalment in his grander project. The goal of the *TMS* was to present a ‘system’ of moral philosophy. In Smith’s view, moral philosophy has to address two questions: what type of action is virtuous, and how does the mind come to approve of this type of conduct and not others (*TMS*, VII.i.2)? The *TMS* primarily addresses the latter, more technical, question which Kleer calls ‘the problem of moral judgments’ (1995, 279). This is what I will focus upon below.

There are eight types of moral judgments; once one sees moral judgments as always resulting in approval or disapproval, there are actually four pairs of such judgments (*TMS* I.i.3.5-7; I-III throughout). First, we can judge the *causes of an action of someone else*, namely, whether it was a proper or improper response to a given situation. Smith calls this the propriety or impropriety of others. Second, we can judge whether the *consequences of someone else’s act* deserve reward or punishment: the merit or demerit of others. Third, we can judge *our own propriety* or impropriety in a specific instance. Fourth, we can judge the *merit or demerit of a specific act of our own*. Smith’s consideration of these four pairs of judgments provides the structure of the *TMS*. Before showing this, I need to say something about the history of the work itself.

As stated above, the first edition of the *TMS* was published in 1759. Revisions of various degrees of importance were made in the next four editions. As Raphael noted, in the sixth edition (published just before Smith’s death) there were vast changes; a whole new part was added on the first question in moral philosophy, namely, virtue. With this background in mind, we are now in a better position to discuss the structure of the *TMS*.

In the first five editions of the *TMS* there were six parts. Parts I and II discussed the origins and development of the *moral judgments of others*: Part I gave Smith’s account of the propriety of their conduct; Part II accounted for the merit of their conduct. Part III turned to the propriety and merit of *our own conduct*. Hence, as Otteson says, ‘[t]he first three parts contain the core of Smith’s



theory'; the subsequent parts were 'supplements to the theory' (2002, 14; see 15, 137; Kleer, 1995, 280). Part IV was Smith's critique of Hume's claim that moral judgments are based on utility. Part V discussed 'the influence of custom and fashion' upon moral evaluation, in order to account for the observed (national and historical) variation in moral codes. The final Part summarized the competing systems of moral philosophy. This structure of the *TMS* remained unchanged until the sixth edition when the new Part on virtue was added; this Part was placed before the literature review (which became the new Part VII).

A complete treatment of Smith's moral theory cannot be undertaken below (see Griswold, 1999; Otteson, 2002). In the next section, therefore, I will focus on moral judgment, as that is what Smith saw as his *primary* topic in the *TMS*. Doing so has the advantage that it avoids the thorny issue of self-interest in an account of virtue and, consequently, I can sidestep some core issues raised by *Das Adam Smith Problem*.

#### 4. THEOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF MORAL JUDGMENT IN THE *TMS*<sup>5</sup>

As stated above, Smith's primary task in the *TMS* was the investigation of moral judgment rather than virtue. His task was a more technical one than had he focussed on virtue. This means that the character of Smith's account is often seen as descriptive, or scientific, rather than the clearly normative inquiry into virtue itself. Indeed, much of his writing tends to look like human psychology or a descriptive account of morals (Raphael, 1975, 84-5; Raphael, 1985, 36). Smith's focus is on human sentiments, passions, instincts and their consequences. His theology seems to enter at a second stage of the argument. *To that extent*, one can understand why some commentators have said that Smith's theology can be removed (although one suspects that they have brought their own modern, secular biases into play as well). In this section I will show that Smith's theological views also impacted on his theory of moral judgment (the theoretical core of the *TMS*). Teleological statements are not detachable, rather they complete his argument.

Moral judgment is either approval or disapproval of an action. Regardless of which of the eight judgments is decided upon, the actual judgment is the last step in a series of processes. Judging is a complex matter. Let us begin with the process called sympathizing. Sympathy does not mean compassion; Smith defines it in a neutral way to mean what we call empathy (*TMS*, I.i.1.5; see I.i.1.1). This capacity to empathize requires imagination and seems to be unique to humans. Only humans therefore can make moral judgments.

Our empathy is activated when we observe other humans and notice that they are scrutinizing us. We then begin to judge them. In judging the propriety of others we imagine ourselves in the position of someone whom we have observed acting; we evaluate what we imagine we would have felt in their shoes when they acted (*TMS*, I.i.1). Next, we compare this with what they seem to

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<sup>5</sup> I have discussed Smith's moral theory at some length elsewhere and draw upon that account here (Alvey, 2003: 40-56).

have felt and then make a judgment (*TMS*, I.i.3.1). This elementary type of judging relies on *actual spectatorship*. In human development, and in Smith's own account of it in the *TMS*, this type of judgment is later transcended (recall the discussion above of Raphael and Macfie).

Let us skip over this developmental stage, to the point where we have some experience in judging. Smith says that we learn the importance of impartiality and *imagine an impartial spectator* of the actions of others (*TMS*, I.i.4.8-9; I.i.5.4). Next, we try to imagine what such an impartial spectator would have felt in the shoes of the person judged (recall *TMS*, I.i.1). Having sympathized *indirectly* with the agent in this way, we draw a conclusion as to the quality and quantity of the impartial spectator's sentiment. Then we evaluate what we imagine the agent actually felt. Next, we compare these two evaluations. When they match, we have a concord of sentiments (which is pleasant) and we judge the agent to have acted with propriety and approve of his<sup>6</sup> action; if not (which is painful), we judge the agent to have acted with impropriety and condemn his action (*TMS*, I.i.3.1; see Kleer, 1995, 280; Otteson, 2002, 109). Similar processes occur in the case of the consequences of the action of others. If an agent benefits someone else, the person acted upon will tend to feel gratitude; when the pitch of gratitude of the person acted upon matches that of the impartial spectator, there is a *prima facie* case for reward of the actor (*TMS*, II.i.intro.; II.i.1-2). Actual reward requires a further step, because the motivation of the actor also needs approval (*TMS*, II.i.3-5; see Kleer, 1995, 280).

The processes involved in self-evaluation are modifications of those described above. In self-evaluation, we have to divide ourselves into two beings: one is the agent being judged and the other is the judge (*TMS*, III.1.6). First, in considering the propriety or impropriety of our action, we need to imagine what an impartial spectator would feel in our shoes when we acted. Second, we try to recall what our own sentiments were at the time we acted. Then we compare the two. Finally, we make the judgment: if the two sentiments coincide, we approve of our action; if otherwise, we condemn it. In the case of merit or demerit, we use analogous processes to those discussed above.

This seems to be a rather abstract account of moral judgment. Smith admits that many people would not think that this is what they do but he implies that philosophic reflection shows that he is right (*TMS*, note at 130; III.3.3; Otteson, 2002, 105). Further, Smith provides numerous illustrations designed to persuade us about its validity. He makes such efforts because moral judgment is a serious matter. Judging, and being judged for, the quality of our moral actions is not like judging the beauty of a painting (*TMS*, V.2.1; see Otteson, 2002, 215-20). Smith says: 'The all-wise Author of Nature has ... made man ... the immediate judge of mankind; and has in this respect ... created him after his own image, and appointed him his vicegerent upon earth, to superintend the behaviour of his brethren' (*TMS*, III.2.31).

Smith is not satisfied with the depth of explanation of moral judgment given above, however; he thinks that *moral judgment of ourselves* is so important that it warrants detailed attention (as we

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<sup>6</sup> Following Smith, I will use the masculine pronoun as a general rule henceforth.

will explain below, this focus was added after the first edition of the *TMS*). It can be seen as virtually an extra level of Smith's argument, although impartial-spectator processes remain the key (see Otteson, 2002, 66-84; cf. 42-64). When we really consult with the impartial spectator in judging ourselves, and bring that spectator's sentiments home to ourselves, we see that the sentiment of that spectator is superior in some sense to that of any individual's sentiment, including our own (Otteson, 2002, 199-257). The impartial spectator, while *partly human*, because his shape and 'voice' are determined by our imagination, is more than that; Smith says that 'this demigod within the breast' is 'partly of immortal, yet partly too of mortal extraction' (*TMS*, III.2.32; see Otteson, 2002, 255-6).<sup>7</sup> Humans may not have an innate set of moral rules implanted in them by God but they have been divinely designed so that moral judgment develops virtually automatically.

Yet another layer in Smith's argument concerns the emergence and development of general rules of morality. General rules build up from below on the basis of experience gained through (1) an active life, (2) the communication of feelings with others, and (3) induction. While the rules also feed-back to individual judgments, they obviously constitute a new, higher layer of moral judgment (Otteson, 2002, 101-33). Otteson thinks that the gradual historical development of moral judgment, including general rules, is typical of spontaneous order (2002, 101-33, 199-289 and throughout). It is not just any order, however; Smith himself asserts that the 'important rules of morality are the commands and laws of the Deity' (*TMS*, III.5.3). Moral judgments, then, can be seen as comprising a series of layers with individual judgements at the bottom, general rules above them, and God at the peak of the moral pyramid.

There is a lot which can be commented upon in the foregoing account. Smith's account is primarily descriptive. He wants to make a coherent analysis of the processes of moral judgment. While some aspects of this account are empirical, others are irreducible assumptions about human nature (Otteson, 2002, 84-91). Core aspects of our hard-wired constitution drive moral judgment.

What are the relevant efficient causes? Here the 'new view' theorists provide very good accounts showing the vast number of specific and arbitrary human traits which are required in order for the system of moral judgment to work. Three examples will have to suffice (see Kleer, 1995; Otteson, 2002). First, as has been implied already, Smith thinks that humans are not born with a moral sense, the sense emphasised by Hutcheson (*TMS*, III.4.5; VII.iii.3.4-16; see Raphael and Macfie, 1979a, 12, 14). This is shown in his brief but telling discussion of the hypothetical case of a solitary human, who grew up without ever seeing another human (*TMS*, III.1.3). By the logic of his thought experiment, such a human never judged any other human but, in addition, Smith says that the solitary never judged himself either.<sup>8</sup> Smith thinks that without actual human spectators, we never have a 'mirror' to judge ourselves; the solitary individual never had occasion to make *any* moral judgment (*TMS*, III.1.3). Thus, human society is an *essential environmental prerequisite* for

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<sup>7</sup> Otteson (2002, 248 n.62; 256 n.72) explains this reference in terms of the combination of divine design and human free will.

<sup>8</sup> Historically, humans begin by judging others and only later judge themselves. This is made clear in the sub-title added to the *TMS* in the fourth edition (Raphael and Macfie, 1979a, 40; see also III.1.4-5).

moral judgment to begin. It is telling, therefore, that Smith asserts that humans always have this prerequisite (*TMS*, II.ii.3.1; *LJ* (B), 3). Further, he spends much effort in showing *why* that is so: society has a deep, sub-rational support (*TMS*, I.iii.2.2-3; II.i.5.10; II.ii.3 throughout; III.2.6; see Kleer, 1995, 284-8; Alvey, 2003, 36-40, 47-53). Smith also says that this strong foundation is a sign of divine Providence: ‘the immense fabric of human society, that fabric which to raise and support seems in this world ... to have been the peculiar and darling care of Nature’ (*TMS*, II.ii.3.4). The next two examples can be considered together: sympathy; and the pleasure that each human derives from a concord of sentiments with another human (actual or imagined). Our actual sympathy with others is a prerequisite for moral judgment; more importantly, our actual sympathy with an impartial spectator (at least in the last five editions of the *TMS*) is also a prerequisite. Just as important, however, is the pleasure derived from a concord of sentiments, which signals approval. These are ‘mere arbitrary properties of human nature’ (Kleer, 1995, 290). A fourth example is conscience. It turns out that Smith says that we derive instinctive pleasure not just from ‘being approved of’ but also from ‘what ought to be approved of’ (*TMS*, III.2.7; see Otteson, 2002, 87-90; Kleer, 1995, 289-90). Further, conscience is also linked to the fear of deserved punishment. Smith’s understanding of deserved punishment (demerit) is linked to the resentment of the agent acted upon. Resentment, in turn, is an instinct which ‘immediately and directly prompts us to punish’ (*TMS*, II.i.1.2). To cut a long story short, Kleer concludes that ‘the sense of guilt is entirely instinctive in nature’ (1995, 292).

Mainstream commentators are not concerned by the number and peculiar character of such instincts. Either they imply that the efficient causes just happen to be what they are (by chance) or they claim that Smith was groping for some sort of theory of evolution (Coase, 1976, 539-40). The ‘new view’ theorists deny this explicitly or implicitly. They also take a different view to the mainstream on the *effects* of the efficient causes.

Smith cites innumerable cases where, without human intention, beneficial results flow from human action (see Kleer, 1995, 281-2). One of these beneficial outcomes is a complex and orderly system of moral judgments. In other words, there is a spontaneous moral order which evolves over time due to the operation of a vast array of efficient causes. Commentators like Haakonssen state that Smith is a spontaneous order theorist; nevertheless, they claim that everything about the spontaneous order is explained by efficient causes (1981, 77-8). Similarly, Kiesling says that ‘The idea behind the invisible hand underpins Smith’s work. Smith’s invisible hand is not a theory of providential design but rather a causal mechanism, a metaphor for spontaneous, unplanned social order’ (2003, 517). Again, the ‘new view’ theorists disagree.

The ‘new view’ theorists consider the various themes in Smith’s writings on a case-by-case basis in order to establish what deep assumptions he makes. They can then show the *arbitrary* features of human nature, and the environment, that are required. In addition, they note how Smith turns to explain *why* these precise features exist. At this stage, Smith and the ‘new view’ commentators rely upon divine design: humans could not have designed the relevant features of human nature (Otteson, 2002, 246, 248; Kleer, 1995, 296). Final causal explanations enter at this later stage in

his argument but they *complete* his argument. They are not detachable. Even if the doctrine of evolution had been available to Smith (and obviously it was not), it is not clear that he would have adopted it in the case of human beings.<sup>9</sup> The ‘new view’ theorists claim that Smith understood the moral system as spontaneous order but that it was a *divinely designed* order. Final causes are essential in understanding Smith’s system as a whole. The ‘new view’ theorists have a strong case.

## 5. A CHANGE OF THEOLOGY?

This section continues the earlier discussion of the claim that Smith changed his mind. It focuses on the possibility that his revisions to the *TMS* are the surface phenomena of deep structural shifts in his thought. The section is structured to reflect the chronological sequence of Smith’s publications. Within that structure, comments will be made on the character of Smith’s revisions as they occurred in the sequence. In addition, I will refer to glosses from some of the more important commentators on Smith’s sequence of works. I will show that Smith’s thinking on theology developed over time. While the cumulative effect of these changes was significant, throughout his lifetime he retained his core commitment to natural theology.

Smith gave lectures and wrote drafts of what was later published well before the first edition of the *TMS* (1759). Most of these documents—as well as later drafts of his unfinished works—were burned, at his request, when he was in his final illness. Also at Smith’s request, however, a few essays were spared and published posthumously in a book called *Essays on Philosophical Subjects*. One such fragment, called ‘Of the External Senses,’ is important. It is thought to have been written before 1752. In this essay Smith once again stresses instinct; he says that the sense of seeing arose from ‘The benevolent purpose of nature’; he also refers to ‘fellow-feeling’ or sympathy as being another sign of what ‘Nature has, for the wisest purposes, implanted in man’ (*ES*, 7, 60). Similarly, in a fragment from a paper written in 1755, Smith refers to economic growth as being a spontaneous outcome of the operation of nature (see Stewart, 1980, 322).

Four years later, the first edition of the *TMS* was published. Generally, in this work Smith relied on sympathy, actual spectatorship, and socialization for his theory of moral judgment. He mentions that we derive pleasure from both praise and praiseworthiness but this point is not developed; he also mentions the impartial spectator but relies upon actual spectators in his theory (1992 [1759b], 43, 181-2, 248, 254, 261; Raphael, 1975, 88-9). According to Dickey, in this edition, Smith ‘used the “society as mirror” image’; ‘society was the “natural” source’ of moral judgments (1986, 601; see Smith, 1992 [1759b], 260). Similarly, Dwyer says that ‘Smith appeared to have every confidence in the moral mechanism of public opinion’ (1987, 170). Overall, Smith had an ‘optimistic model’ of moral judgment; it ‘was one of a harmonious and self-regulating human

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<sup>9</sup> Evolution aims at survival; Smith says that Nature aims at happiness (*TMS*, III.5.7,9; cf. Laurent and Cockfield, in this volume). Smith appears to say that in the case of animals other than human beings, Nature aims at only self-preservation and procreation (*TMS*, II.i.5.10). On the other hand, contrary to the Darwinian theory of evolution, he seems to hold that the “nature” or character of each species is fixed.

community in which public opinion played the dominant normative function' (Dwyer, 1987, 170). Moreover, 'public opinion was infallible as a "general" guide to conduct' (Dwyer, 1987, 172). Nevertheless, overall, Smith's account of moral philosophy was consistent with the Christian Stoicism of the Scottish Enlightenment (Sher, 1985).

After the first edition of the *TMS* was published, Smith received comments from various people. Hume noted that 'sympathy' was the 'hinge' of Smith's system (*Corr*, 43; see also Raphael and Macfie, 1979a, 2-3) and then made a minor criticism. More important was the objection made by Sir Gilbert Elliot (whose letter has been lost), to the effect that Smith's system had assumed the infallibility of popular opinion (see *Corr*, 48-57). Smith responded to these in the second edition (1761). In Book III he made a significant addition to his argument which signified a slight shift away from reliance upon public opinion (*TMS*, III.1.6-7; III.3.1-5, 7-9, 11; see Smith, 1992 [1761], 202-19; Raphael and Macfie, 1979a, 16; Dwyer, 1987, 170-1). He also explained the process of dividing oneself into two and elaborated upon the processes in self-judgment using the impartial spectator. Conscience was linked more closely with the impartial spectator standard. Overall, he developed a more solid theory of moral judgment (see Otteson, 2002, 38-9). Do these additions include theological statements? Yes. In the new material he refers to 'The great judge of the world' and 'his eternal justice' (Smith, 1992 [1761], 203). Smith also writes here the substance of what was quoted earlier along the lines that God created man 'after his own image' and made him 'his vicegerent upon earth' (Smith, 1992 [1761], 204).

In the third edition (1767) there was a major addition of an article on the origin and development of language (reprinted in Smith, 1983, 203-31). Otteson sees that article as another example of spontaneous order in Smith's thinking (2002, 258-75). Also of importance for us are the various minor revisions that he made to the text of the *TMS* itself. Raphael and Macfie catalogue these changes at some length (1979b, 399 and the editorial notes at *TMS*, II.ii.3.12; cf. Smith, 1992 [1761], 157-9). They focus on Smith's discussion of God's justice and how human beings approach Judgment Day. In revision after revision Smith becomes more cautious about what had been confidently asserted before. The net effect of all of these changes on his work as a whole is only a marginal qualification of his original view but they suggest some deeper movement in his theology away from Christian doctrines.

The whole period up to about 1773 is defined by Evensky to be Smith's early period, during which time Smith purportedly remained a theological optimist. According to Evensky, Smith suggests 'that human kind is in some long historical sense progressing toward the ideal state'; the divine design is evident in history (1989, 128). While Smith was no Panglossian, he thought that possible obstructions would be overcome with social progress (Evensky, 1989, 131-2; cf. Denis, 1999; Hill, 2001).

Evensky suggests that a second phase in Smith's thinking occurred in the period from 1773 to 1776 when he was in London, engaged in writing, revising and polishing the *WN*. At the same time as this shift was occurring, the fourth edition of the *TMS* was published (1774). Did it display any

shift? No. There were no significant changes in it, probably because Smith had his attention focussed on completing his second book.

What was the purpose of the *WN*? Smith wanted to discuss the nature and causes of economic growth, as shown in the title of his work and in two of his definitions of political economy (*WN*, title, II.v.31; IV.ix.38). According to Kleer, Smith's fundamental task was to describe and explain why economic growth occurs spontaneously (2000, 14, 22-3, 25). Smith's focus is on describing the efficient causes of growth. Nevertheless, once one stands back, one sees again that Smith understands political economy as another case of spontaneous order which arises from divine design (Kleer, 2000 14-5, 22-6; see also Stewart 1980, 315). Otteson (2002, 274-85) agrees. Despite Smith's focus on efficient causes in the *WN*, Kleer thinks that Smith's theological principles are still present. While a detailed analysis of Smith's theology in the *WN* is not possible here, enough has been said to suggest that this fundamental theological disposition is what the 'new view' theorists find in it (see Waterman, 2002). Others, as stated previously, describe it as an atheistic work (Minowitz, 1993, 188).

An intermediate view is adopted by Evensky. In comparing the *WN* with Smith's earlier work, he suggests that Smith still presented 'the progressive evolution of society' but his 'tone ... was less sanguine than before'; at this stage he adopted a 'new role of social critic' (Evensky, 1989, 131-2). According to Evensky, this shift reflected Smith's exposure to the politics of London. The role of factions, and the domination of the parliament by group interests, seem to have had a sobering effect on Smith. The consequence was that he began to lose optimism about the path of history and began to see the need for a more active role to achieve the result intended by divine design (Evensky, 1989, 135-7).<sup>10</sup>

Evensky's account above is not the only one given by 'new view' commentators. On the general trend of history, Fitzgibbons takes the opposite view to Evensky. He bases this claim on a different issue and on different texts from those adduced by Evensky. Fitzgibbons considers what Smith has to say about the durability of commercial societies in the latter's *Lectures on Jurisprudence* and in the *WN*. The *Lectures* are actually lecture notes taken by his students at Glasgow University and these have been attributed to Smith's lectures in 1762-3 and in 1763-4. Smith claimed that commercial societies inevitably collapse in the *Lectures* but he took a more sanguine view in the *WN*; in the latter work he says that the cyclical tendency of history can be overcome (Fitzgibbons, 1995, 121-3; see *LJ* (A), iv.99; *LJ* (B), 46; *WN*, V.i.a.39-44). In short, for Fitzgibbons, Smith became *more* optimistic over time about the path of history (Fitzgibbons, 1995, 123; see also Alvey, 2003, 240-3).

Smith made some minor revisions in the second edition of the *WN* in 1778. The fifth edition of the

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<sup>10</sup> Veblen adopted a similar view. He compared the *WN* with the *TMS* and the then newly-discovered set of student notes from Smith's lectures on jurisprudence and concluded that Smith's teleology 'fell more into the background as his later work ... proceeded' (Veblen, 1899, 399). While the '[invisible] guiding hand has withdrawn farther from the range of human vision,' Smith retained a 'devout optimism' (Veblen, 1899, 400).

*TMS* (1781) was published and again there were no major changes. On the other hand, there were two major publications in 1784. The first was 'Additions and Corrections' for purchasers of the second edition of the *WN* and the other was a complete third addition of that work, which incorporated these changes. Evensky detects in these changes another significant shift in Smith's position. He traces these back to the collapse of Shelbourne's administration of the British Treasury (1782-3), which had supported the thrust of Smith's economic reform programme. The fall of this administration within a year of taking office, and the growing power of sectional interests (especially the merchants), led Smith to deeper pessimism about the historical trajectory of commercial society (Evensky, 1989, 138-9 citing *WN*, IV.viii).

The fourth (1786) and fifth (1789) editions of the *WN* contain nothing significant. In Smith's final years, however, he made one final effort to set out his position. While Smith could have tried to write one of the books he planned from an early stage, he decided to devote himself to improving the *TMS* (see *Corr*, 310-1). In these final years Smith seems to have become very concerned to set the record straight; he stated that 'I have been labouring very hard' on the revisions and that 'I have even hurt my health' in doing so (*Corr*, 319-20). Dickey suggests that 'about one-third of the book was newly written' in this edition (1986, 592). After completing the sixth edition of the *TMS*, Smith says that many things 'prevented me from revising this work with the care and attention which I always intended' ('Advertisement,' *TMS*, p. 3). This edition, therefore, seems to contain his final view.

In this edition, the most dramatic change was the addition of the new Part on virtue. In the discussion in Section 4, my focus was on what Smith called the first question in moral philosophy. It is important now to discuss the second question. The addition of the new Part was quite lengthy, comprising 53 pages out of the 342 pages of the text of the *Glasgow* edition of the *TMS*. This addition can be interpreted in two ways. Either it was just *completing* his theory with views which had not changed since 1759, or it was a more extreme example of Smith's *change of view*. The former seems to be the view of Kleer; he cites Smith's new discussion of benevolence in order to show that, once again, divine design is evident (Kleer, 1995, 299 citing *TMS*, VI.ii; see also Kleer, 1995, 279 n. 14).

By contrast, Evensky (1989) takes the view that this new Part is a further sign of a structural shift in Smith's position. He says that this new Part revealed Smith's shift towards a civic humanist view of citizenship as active virtue (1989, 140; citing *TMS*, VI.ii.2.7-VI.ii.3.6 and Pocock, 1983, 235; see also Dickey, 1986, 593-5). Raphael and Macfie take another line. They note that the new Part has a substantial treatment of self-command. This, they suggest, shows that 'Smith had now acquired an even warmer regard for Stoicism than he felt in earlier days' (1979a, 18; Dwyer, 1987, 176).

There were also other additions and revisions to the text of the *TMS*. The revised Part III has received considerable comment. Raphael and Macfie refer to Smith's deepened treatment here as integrating conscience and self-command into 'the fully developed concept of the impartial



spectator' (1979a, 18; see *TMS*, III.3). Dwyer finds in the revisions to this Part an extended role of conscience due to the deepening of Smith's opposition to public opinion (see Dwyer, 1987, 169-83; *TMS*, III.2.10-32). Dickey suggests that in these revisions the notion of self-command is revised and presented in terms of gradations; only the extreme degree of self-control became the model for praise (*TMS*, III.2.7; III.3.20-8; Dickey, 1986, 592-5; see Dwyer, 1987, 174-83).

The revised Part VII 'expands and deepens [Smith's] portrayal of the Stoics' and this more thematic treatment is cited as further evidence of his drift towards Stoicism (Eckstein, 2000 [1926], 29; see *TMS*, VII.ii.1.15-47; Raphael and Macfie, 1979a, 18). On the other hand, after 18 paragraphs of summarizing and praising the Stoics, Smith concludes that even this system is invalid (Raphael and Macfie, 1979a, 9-10; Otteson, 2002, 141 n.18). Stoicism seems to be too pessimistic about the role of human agency in the realization of the divine design (*TMS*, VII.ii.1.43-7).

Also of importance is Smith's discussion of Atonement (*TMS*, note at II.ii.3.12; see Raphael and Macfie, 1979b). In Christian theology, what is now called soteriology has a central place: the death of Christ on the Cross is the means of securing a pardon for the sins of humanity. Only through Christ's sacrifice is human salvation possible. In the first five editions of the *TMS*, Smith included a passage (which runs for about five pages of text) in which he endorsed the Atonement doctrine. This doctrine is specific to Christian theology, whereas most of Smith's theological discussion is framed in terms of natural theology. He dropped the whole Atonement passage in the sixth edition of the *TMS*. He replaced it with a single sentence: 'In every religion, and in every superstition that the world has ever beheld, ... there has been ... a place provided for the punishment of the wicked, as well as one for the reward of the just' (*TMS*, II.ii.3.12). Unlike the Atonement passage, this sentence does not endorse Revelation. It endorses something like natural religion; further, it has a Humean tone (Raphael and Macfie, 1979b, 400). The excision of the Atonement passage caused a controversy in the early 1800s (see Rae, 1965 [1895], 428-9; Raphael and Macfie, 1979b). Henceforth, it was often cited as evidence of Smith's drift away from Christianity (Eckstein, 2000 [1926], 29-30; Raphael and Macfie, 1979a, 19) and the contagion effect of the sceptical Hume.

Of course, the Atonement deletion was only one of many that Smith made in the sixth edition. The deletions, and the other changes mentioned above, formed a pattern according to many commentators. Eckstein said that the revisions show that in his later years, Smith's turning towards 'a religion of reason—nonetheless in no way towards atheism—became consistently more prevalent in Smith's thinking' (2000 [1926], 32). Similarly, Rothschild says that the sixth edition 'is strikingly less Christian than ... earlier editions' (2001, 129).

Let me return to Evensky's analysis. Along with many others, he suggests that in this edition Smith made a final, significant change. Smith became increasingly convinced that achieving the ideal 'required the active participation of citizens' along civic lines (Evensky, 1989, 140). A much larger role was given to statesmen and legislators (Evensky, 1989, 141 citing *TMS*, VI.ii.2.14-8). While Smith's view of the ideal remained unchanged, his view of the path there changed 'from a

confidence that the invisible hand will guide us there to a hope that civic virtue can take us there' (Evensky, 1989, 143).

An interesting alternative to Evensky is offered by Dickey (1986). He says that Smith abandoned the unified view of nature presented in the first edition (nature gives us the desire for praise). Instead, in the sixth edition he gives us two views of nature: nature supported both the desire for praise and for praiseworthiness (*TMS*, III.ii.1,7).<sup>11</sup> In creating this new view of nature, Smith added an ‘ethico-teleological’ dimension to the notion (Dickey, 1986, 603). Dickey is following Lovejoy’s interpretation of Smith. Smith’s view that the love of praiseworthiness is an aspect of human nature adds a ‘distinctively moral motive’ which ‘finds its completion in the religious consciousness’; indeed, it was ‘an expression of religious piety (Lovejoy, 1961, 264). On the other hand, Dickey apparently accepts Dunn’s interpretation of the *WN* as atheistic. How can these views be reconciled? By the time of the sixth edition of the *TMS*, Smith had become ‘alarmed’ at the falling stock of moral capital in commercial society and that is why Dickey thinks that 1790 marked a new ‘motivating centre’ of Smith’s thought (Dickey, 1986, 608; see Dwyer, 1987, 170-83). The new ‘ethico-teleological argument’ was required, therefore, in order ‘to motivate his readers to pursue more high-minded moral values’ (Dickey, 1986, 604-5).

What are we to make of all of this? Evensky and Fitzgibbons are correct in claiming that Smith’s philosophy of history is linked to his theology. Both assert that Smith’s view of history changed and cite valid evidence in support of their contention. Evensky and Fitzgibbons rely upon *different* evidence and reach *opposite* conclusions as to the direction of Smith’s change of view. Thus, at least in my view, no firm conclusion can be reached about whether Smith shifted towards theological pessimism or theological optimism. On the other hand, I think that the evidence adduced by Eckstein, Raphael, Macfie, and others, unambiguously suggests that Smith revised his theological views over the years. How deep was the shift? His change of view was considerable: he shifted away from Christianity and towards Stoicism. Nevertheless, his commitment to natural theology was retained. To use an analogy, the main foundations of his early works remained; on the other hand, over the years some of the minor foundations and more of the superstructure was demolished and then rebuilt.

## 6. CONCLUSION

In order to understand the details of Smith’s work we need to grasp his foundational principles. These are his views on human nature and theology. The ‘new view’ theorists are right to claim that Smith’s world-view was shaped by natural theology. Smith’s theory of moral judgment demonstrates this (as do other theories in his *oeuvre*). The ‘new view’ commentators have started to sway the mainstream secular view of Smith and I support this trend in the literature.

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<sup>11</sup> As stated previously, even in the early editions of the *TMS*, Smith had actually mentioned the natural desire for praiseworthiness.

On the other hand, some ‘new view’ commentators have not taken their contextual approach far enough. The *TMS* was revised five times over 31 years. It is likely, therefore, that Smith’s views developed over this period. The continuity thesis is not entirely valid. There was a developmental sequence in his theology; it underwent a *significant* development during these years. Nevertheless, his broad commitment to a type of natural theology remained. The ‘new view’ commentators may need therefore to be more careful when they quote from Smith in the future because the subtle differences in Smith’s position over the years need to be taken into account.

A systematic treatment of virtue was missing from the first edition of the *TMS*. Adding a new Part on this theme in 1790, at least potentially, could have been nothing more than publishing what Smith would have written in 1759 had he noticed the lacuna in his theory. Indeed, the new Part does have some similarities to what he did write thirty-one years earlier. On the other hand, it does have a different tone to the earlier material. Of course, regardless of the date it was written, a Part devoted to virtue would necessarily have had a more normative tone than the rest of the work. Nevertheless, it is my sense, guided by the work of several of the commentators cited above, that the new Part (along with other changes) does show a *development* in his thought.

While evidence of a change in view adduced from his philosophy of history is doubtful, conclusions based on his references to Christianity and Christian doctrines are more certain. He moved away from Christianity and all forms of organized religion. Smith seems to have shifted towards some sort of loose support for divine design. This meant that his final theological view was closer to Stoicism than his youthful view. Indeed, Smith’s final revisions to the *TMS* seem to bear this out. Nevertheless, he could not adopt Stoicism either. Smith’s final revisions, stressing the importance of active virtue, were consistent with his criticism of Stoicism for being fatalistic. In sum, Evensky’s view that Smith adopted the view that the realization of the divine design needed human help is close to the truth.

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