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The 'INVISIBLE FOOTPRINT' OF ADAM SMITH IN MODERN WELLBEING STUDIES

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Abstract

This paper aims to spark increasing engagement with Adam Smith in the study of wellbeing. It shows his relevance to the current field, having anticipated key developments and inspired aspects of Sen's capabilities approach; and offering a strong justification for a pluralist approach to wellbeing. Smith can thus provide a timely intervention against the emergent 'hegemony of happiness', and an alternative to the dominant philosophical figures of Bentham and Aristotle - instead providing a richer understanding of varied valuable human ends which combines economics, moral philosophy, and a conception of human flourishing.

The minimal engagement with Smith's work in the field of wellbeing is thus surprising. Reasons for this are explored but shown to offer no justification of why engagement with Smith is neither possible nor beneficial. It concludes by outlining ways that further engagement with Smith would add richness to existing debates, and provoke novel ones, with central importance to considerations of human wellbeing.

Introduction

“No society can surely be flourishing and happy, of which the far greater part of the members are poor and miserable.” - Smith¹

The Easterlin paradox² shows the bulk of developed Western societies have reached a point where happiness has stopped increasing with income, with Radcliffe³ showing that while levels of happiness do increase alongside levels of economic development it does so with diminishing returns (and there is little increase in life satisfaction in nations once GDP per capita exceeds \$12,000⁴). Thus, the greater part of their members are no longer too poor to stop them flourishing and being happy. This is in large part thanks to the productive powers of the market famously identified and championed by Smith in *The Wealth of Nations*. Smith, perhaps typecast as the first person to identify the measurement of GDP⁵, has however been largely overlooked in recent attempts within the fields of economics, politics, and psychology to promote happiness and flourishing within the greater part of society, despite his assertion that:

¹ Smith, A (2012[1776]) *The Wealth of Nations* (Wordsworth: Ware), I.viii.36

² Easterlin, R (1974). "Does Economic Growth Improve the Human Lot? Some Empirical Evidence". In Paul A. David; Melvin W. Reder (eds.). *Nations and Households in Economic Growth: Essays in Honor of Moses Abramovitz*. New York: Academic Press, Inc.; Kahneman, D., et al (2006) 'Would You Be Happier If You Were Richer? A Focusing Illusion' No 77, *Working Papers from Princeton University, Department of Economics, Center for Economic Policy Studies* Available at URL:

<https://econpapers.repec.org/paper/princepsud/125krueger.pdf.htm>; Radcliffe, B (2013) *The Political Economy of Human Economy*, University of Notre Dame: Indiana; Easterlin, et al. (2010) 'The Happiness-Income Paradox Revisited' *PNAS* December 28, 2010 107 (52) 22463-

³ Radcliffe, B (2013) *The Political Economy of Human Economy* University of Notre Dame: Indiana

⁴ Kahneman, D., Krueger, A., Schade, D., Schartz, N., Stone, A (2006) 'Would Your Be Happier If You Were Richer? A Focusing Illusion' No 77, *Working Papers from Princeton University, Department of Economics, Center for Economic Policy Studies*

⁵ Sturgeon, N (2019), 'Why Governments Should Prioritise Wellbeing' *TedSummit 2019*, July 2019, Available at URL:

https://www.ted.com/talks/nicola_sturgeon_why_governments_should_prioritize_well_being?language=en

*"All constitutions of government... are valued only in proportion as they tend to promote the happiness of those who live under them. This is their sole use and end."*⁶

Ashraf's *Adam Smith: Behavioural Economist*⁷ shows that while the work of behavioural scientists was heralded as ground-breaking in the field of economics, much of this was just confirmation of ideas originating from Smith that had been missed, overlooked, or unexplored – with Smith anticipating work on preferences, dual-process perspectives, loss aversion, intertemporal choice, overconfidence, willpower, altruism and fairness which have since been focused upon in modern behavioural economics scholarship. A parallel can be drawn here to the study of happiness and wellbeing, with a large volume of Smith's work related to this topic being overlooked in modern scholarship. While Ashraf presented this as a masterstroke of Smithian genius in anticipating such developments, it also illuminated how far the wider field of economics had gone off track in its misplaced focus on economic utility, before being corrected by ideas that had been concealed in Smith's work for 200 years.

The study of wellbeing is currently on a misplaced track away from methodological and philosophical pluralism towards a 'hegemony of happiness'⁸, with a near-exclusive focus on subjective wellbeing (SWB) that fails to recognise the conceptual complexity of wellbeing and the epistemological uncertainties around its

⁶ Smith, A (1976[1759]) *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, ed. D. D. Raphael and A. L. MacField, Indianapolis, IN: Liberty Fund, IV.I.11

⁷ Ashraf, N., Camerer, C, and Loewenstein, G (2005) 'Adam Smith, Behavioural Economist' *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, Volume 19 (3) pp. 131–145

⁸ Austin, A (2016a) "On Well-Being and Public Policy: Are We Capable of Questioning the Hegemony of Happiness?" *Social Indicators Research: An International Interdisciplinary Journal for Quality-of-Life Measurement*, Springer, vol. 127(1), pp. 123-138

measurement⁹. This avoids philosophical debates around conceptions of happiness and wellbeing, as well as their suitability as public policy goals. Instead, the emerging 'hegemony of happiness' accepts a Benthamite conception of happiness that is heavily contested by the 'eudemonic' tradition of wellbeing. This 'New Science of Happiness'¹⁰ approach has nonetheless become dominant in British policy discussions of wellbeing. Here, increasing political interest¹¹ combined with increased confidence statistical techniques around SWB measurement¹² is leading to such studies having increasingly tangible real-world effects. Governmental attention to SWB maximisation thus deserves a considered and thorough debate. Yet Nussbaum suggests the lack of philosophy in modern economics precludes such normative discussions, without which 'certain positions can pass as orthodox and uncontested, when in fact, they are highly contested and contestable'¹³.

Here we may look to Smith, as a political economist writing before microeconomics was set on a different path to moral philosophy (arguably a consequence of Ricardo's analysis of Smith's work, detailed in Section 3.1), who thus offers an integrated theory of economics, moral philosophy, and conception of wellbeing. Importantly, Smith promotes a complex and considered pluralism that counters the shallow and potentially politically dangerous move towards a monistic focus on happiness maximisation. Smith thus offers views that differ from much of the existing field, at a point where the need to increase the diversity within the field. open up

⁹ Mitchell, P and Alexandrova, A (2021) 'Well-Being and Pluralism', *Journal of Happiness Studies*, Vol 23(3), pp. 2411–2433

¹⁰ Layard, R (2011) *Happiness: lessons from a new science*. Penguin: London, UK

¹¹ Bache, I. and Reardon, L. (2013) 'An idea whose time has come? Explaining the rise of well-being in British politics', *Political Studies*, Vol. 61, pp.898-914

¹² Evans, J (2018) 'The End of History and the Invention of Happiness' in Bache, I and Scott, K (Eds) *The Politics of Wellbeing* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan) pp 25-49

¹³ Nussbaum, M (2016) 'Economics still needs Philosophy', *Review of Social Economy*, Vol 74(3), pp. 229-247, DOI: [10.1080/00346764.2015.1044843](https://doi.org/10.1080/00346764.2015.1044843), p232

debates to the outside and recognising a wider picture is becoming increasingly important.

Smith's relevance to the study of wellbeing goes beyond this, however, and includes the anticipation of many 'new' discoveries and developments claimed by the studies of wellbeing and happiness, strong arguments against the 'happiness hegemony', a eudemonic conception of wellbeing constructed within an industrial society, and many other potentially fruitful avenues for future study. Thus, further allowing for the development of a more rounded understanding of Smith himself, who is largely understood without reference to his 'other' book, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*.

Section 1 will progress through outlining the current field, the concept of 'Smithian happiness', and the shift towards value monism in the 'strong' position on subjective wellbeing, before offering modern examples of arguments against the policy of happiness maximisation that were anticipated by Smith, showing his relevance to the field whilst offering arguments against the happiness hegemony. Smith will be further situated within the field in Section 2, which focuses on the under-appreciated influence of Smith on Sen's 'Capabilities Approach'¹⁴, offering an outline assessment of the similarities and differences, and gaining an understanding of Amartya Sen's engagements with Smith, which are rare for the field.

Section 3 will then present a range of canonical, practical, and ideological suggestions to why engagement with Smith is so rare within the study of wellbeing, offering counterpoints to suggest these reasons are insufficient to justify overlooking Smith. Section 4 then outlines multiple ways in which the engagement with Smith's

¹⁴ Sen, A (1999) *Development as Freedom*, New York: Knopf.

work would enrich current wellbeing studies, wider understanding of Smith, and the study of political economy.

By situating Smith within this literature, showing his relevance, and outlining future uses, this paper aims to encourage future engagement with Smith in the study of wellbeing: laying the groundwork for the further study of Smith in relation to the politics and economics of wellbeing, which has a range of potentially rich and insightful avenues.

Section 1: The current field of study

1.1 Defining Key Concepts:

It is first necessary to clarify the use of concepts and language within the field, as terminology in the happiness literature is a ‘nest of confusion’, with scholars often employing the same words to articulate substantially different concepts, and different words to mean the same.¹⁵

- **‘Happiness’** is a particularly ambiguous term sometimes used interchangeably with wellbeing. However, in its primary sense it refers to a person’s emotions¹⁶, often used in line with the utilitarian tradition of Bentham as ‘the presence of pleasure over pain’¹⁷. It will be used as such in this paper.

This is closely linked to **subjective wellbeing** (SWB), which has become the

¹⁵ Nussbaum speaking on: Roberts, R (2014b) *Martha Nussbaum on Creating Capabilities and GDP*. [Podcast] EconTalk, 29 September 2014. Available at URL: <https://www.econtalk.org/martha-nussbaum-on-creating-capabilities-and-gdp/>

¹⁶ Taylor, T (2018) ‘The Proper Role for Wellbeing in Public Policy: Towards a Pluralist, Pragmatist, Theory-Neutral Approach’ in Bache, I and Scott, K (Eds) *The Politics of Wellbeing* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan) pp 71-96

¹⁷ Burns, J (2005). Happiness and Utility: Jeremy Bentham's Equation. *Utilitas*, 17(1), 46-61. doi:10.1017/S0953820804001396

focus of most empirical research within the field, measuring individuals' emotional state¹⁸.

- **'Wellbeing'** is understood as a broader concept measured through a combination of objective and subjective measures. This is used more widely within the Aristotelian tradition, as a modern-day equivalent of Aristotle's 'eudaimonia', translated as the living of a good, successful life¹⁹ or flourishing across a range of domains.
- In this paper I will use the term **'Smithian happiness'**, which is more directly related to the concepts of 'wellbeing', 'flourishing' and 'eudaimonia'. This term will be used interchangeably with 'happiness' in sections with exclusive focus on Smith, to ensure consistency of terminology with Smith.

1.2 Relevance of this study

Easterlin's seminal article in 1974²⁰ stoked a return to focus on human ends in economics²¹, sparking a range of literature on economics, happiness, and wellbeing. This 'new' focus can be connected back to ancient Greek discussions of 'the good life'²², but was emboldened by a new, statistically focused 'cognitive science of wellbeing' that arose in the 1960s which suggested that it was possible to gather objective evidence on how happy people were with their life²³.

¹⁸ Taylor (2018)

¹⁹ Cooper, J (1975). *Reason and Human Good in Aristotle*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press

²⁰ Easterlin (1974)

²¹ Crespo, R and Mesurado, B. (2015) 'Happiness Economics, Eudaimonia and Positive Psychology: From Happiness Economics to Flourishing Economics', *Journal of Happiness Studies*, Vol 16, pp. 931–946

²² O'Neill, J. (2006) 'Citizenship, wellbeing and sustainability: Epicurus or Aristotle?' *Analyse and Kritik*, Vol 28, pp. 158-172

²³ Evans (2018)

This produced a 'second wave of political interest in wellbeing' emerging in the 1990s and coming to prominence in the 2000s driven by environmental concerns, the 2008 financial crisis, and the increasing acceptance of the use of measuring SWB leading to a perceived increased understanding of the drivers of wellbeing²⁴. This was reflected in the creation of over 160 new measurement frameworks that had come into use by 2014²⁵.

While the range of measurement frameworks and messy definitional nature of key concepts shows the level of internal disagreement of the field, much of the statistical success is focused on SWB approaches²⁶, with academics, politicians, and policymakers now believing themselves to be successfully monitoring the experience of happiness. These actors, maintaining that human happiness is a desirable policy aim, attempt to use these insights to increase the SWB of citizens²⁷.

Such developments have huge 'transformative potential'²⁸ in terms of policy aims and success measurement – with advocates such as Layard suggesting happiness should become the goal of policy²⁹. This would have a dramatic effect on society at large. However, the debates around the desirability of happiness as a policy outcome have been insufficiently contested³⁰, and thus it is vital they are brought to the fore with careful and considered debate, as it is both highly contestable as practically possible and politically desirable.

²⁴ Bache and Reardon (2013)

²⁵ Allin, P, and Hand, J (2014) *The Wellbeing of Nations: Meaning, Motive, and Measurement*. New York: Wiley

²⁶ Tomlinson, M. & Kelly, G. (2013) 'Is Everybody Happy? The Politics and Measurement of National Wellbeing.' *Policy and Politics*, Vol 41 (2), pp.139-157.

²⁷ Van der Rijt (2015) 'The Political Turn Towards Happiness' in J. Søraker, J. van der Rijt, J. de Boer, P. Wong & P. Brey (eds.) *Well-being in Contemporary Society*. Switzerland: Springer, pp. 215-231.

²⁸ Kroll, C (2011) *Measuring Progress and Wellbeing: Achievements and Challenges of a New Global Movement*, Berlin: International Policy Analysis, p1

²⁹ Layard (2011)

³⁰ (Van Der Rijt, 2015)

This paper will next introduce the two major traditions and the concept of ‘Smithian happiness’, before critiquing the move towards a hegemony of the hedonistic SWB approach. It then invokes the work of Smith to show why this move is potentially problematic.

1.3 The Eudemonic and Epicurean traditions

While the public-policy impacting ‘second wave’ is a recent phenomenon, discussions of wellbeing, happiness, and ‘the good life’ have been a common thread of philosophy since Ancient Greece. The two major approaches today stem from the eudemonic and epicurean traditions of Greek philosophy³¹.

The hedonistic, epicurean tradition finds its best expression in the work of Bentham, with a monistic focus on the ‘absence of pain and the presence of pleasure’³². Here, all aspects of life, including right and wrong, are reducible, and only relevant, to the degree they alter outcomes of pleasure or pain, with the maximisation of pleasure the appropriate aim³³. This leads to emphasis on SWB, focusing on the psychological state of happiness through peoples’ own perception.

The eudaimonic tradition, stemming from Aristotle, sees ‘happiness’ more in terms of what we may define as ‘human flourishing’, which tends more towards living a good life within a socio-political setting³⁴. Here a human is ‘happy’ through the success of achieving their *telos* as a good human living a good life. Thus, at least for Aristotle, the eudaimonic conception is based around being a rounded, functioning member of

³¹ O'Neill, J. (2006)

³² Bentham, J., Burns, J.H., Hart, H.L.A (Eds). (1996) *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*. Oxford: Clarendon

³³ Schofield, P (2020) ‘Jeremy Bentham: Nothing but pleasure and pain’ *TLS - The Times Literary Supplement*, Available at URL: <https://www.the-tls.co.uk/articles/jeremy-bentham-nothing-pleasure-pain/>

³⁴ Austin, A (2020) *A Universal Declaration of Human Wellbeing* Cham, Switzerland: Springer

the polis across a range of domains, requiring aspects such as virtue, community, purpose, and social relationships for *the good life* rather than the monistic pleasure-focused hedonism (although this somewhat oversimplifies Bentham³⁵). The eudaimonic tradition does still value the role of the SWB factors but follows Aristotle's guidance that 'to say that happiness is the chief good seems a platitude, and a clearer account of what it is, is still desired'³⁶. Thus, this tradition values goods other than 'happiness' as valuable ends in themselves, rather than as instrumental means towards happiness. From the Aristotelian tradition we therefore see a pluralistic, varied conception of wellbeing consisting of success across a range of domains for 'human flourishing'.

1.4 The Smithian conception of happiness

Before progressing, it is important to outline a Smithian conception of happiness. While broadly within the eudaimonic tradition³⁷, Smith 'doesn't treat the notion of happiness systematically in his work'³⁸, and subsequently Smithian happiness is a complex, multivariate, and contested concept. This led Peach to comment that of all the barriers to understanding Smith on this topic, the most insurmountable issue has been "a failure to comprehend, even to investigate, Smith's own understanding of happiness"³⁹.

³⁵ See: Goldworth, A (1969) 'The Meaning of Bentham's Greatest Happiness Principle' *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, Volume 7(3), pp. 315-321

³⁶ Aristotle. (1954). *Nicomachean ethics* (Sir David Ross, Trans. and Introduced). Oxford: Oxford University Press., 1097b

³⁷ Although significant differences between Smithian and Aristotelian conceptions are explained in part 3.3

³⁸ Matson, E (2021) 'A dialectical reading of Adam Smith on wealth and *happiness*' *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization* Volume 184, pp. 826-836, p832

³⁹ Peach, T (2010) 'Measuring "The Happiness of Nations": The Conundrum of Adam Smith's "Real Measure of Exchangeable Value"'. *History of Political Economy*, Vol 42 (3), pp. 403-424, p. 421

A multitude of incommensurate elements needed to achieve a ‘Smithian happiness’ can be identified, but we can point to three main elements (although they are non-exhaustive). These are basic material welfare, social relationships, and the leading of a virtuous life. The three work towards a ‘tranquillity of mind’, with “the chief part of human happiness arises from the consciousness of being beloved”⁴⁰.

In this sense, Smith suggests that to be happy you must be content, and to be content you must both be ‘loved and be lovely’ and ‘respected and respectable’⁴¹. Here we can read loved and respected as external approval from those around us, and lovely and respectable as knowing internally that we are deserving of such praise. A combination of which are required for meaningful contentment and happiness – while those who are loved without being lovely cannot reach such contentment.

Thus, central to Smith’s conception is that happiness comes from exercising virtue, which requires consideration of others, self-command, and actions prudent for the future⁴².

Akin to both Aristotle and Easterlin, Smith thus places consumption as a subsidiary concern for happiness, with basic material needs required for the ease of body but beyond this the pursuit of wealth to achieve happiness is largely a futile “deception”, as “In the most glittering and exalted situations that our idle fancy can hold out to us,

⁴⁰ Ibid, I.ii.5.2

⁴¹ Roberts, R (2014) *How Adam Smith Can Change Your Life* Penguin: New York, p.117

⁴² Mueller, P (2014) ‘Adam Smith’s Views on Consumption and Happiness’, *Adam Smith Review*, Vol 8, pp. 277-289

the pleasures from which we propose to derive our real happiness are almost always the same"⁴³ as in other situations.⁴⁴

The restless pursuit of such material wealth would merely disturb any state of contentment⁴⁵, preventing the achievement of 'tranquillity of mind' without which "there can be no enjoyment". When such tranquillity exists, however, "there is scarce anything which is not capable of amusing"⁴⁶. Yet Rasmussen⁴⁷ explains that while tranquillity of mind is a component of happiness, it is not itself sufficient. It must be combined with "enjoyment" (or pleasure). Thus, for Bentham, Smith sees a clear link between 'enjoyment' and 'happiness', but this is mediated through the tranquillity of mind⁴⁸. We therefore see 'utility' as a condition for Smithian happiness, but merely as one of many component parts⁴⁹.

While "happiness consists in tranquillity and enjoyment"⁵⁰, the complexity in Smithian happiness comes as these themselves consist of a range of component goods⁵¹.

Here, the Smithian conception of happiness becomes unclear, as these components

⁴³ Smith (1759) III.iii.32

⁴⁴ (a large body of literature terms this the "New Adam Smith Problem", observing how this deception is both negative for individuals but central to the functioning of the market in *Wealth of Nations*, and offers some of the most interesting existing theoretical scholarship on Smithian happiness. See: Diatkine, D (2010). "Vanity and the Love of System in 'Theory of Moral Sentiments.'" *The European Journal of the History of Economic Thought*, Vol 17 (3), pp. 383–404; Fleischacker, S (2004) *On Adam Smith's Wealth of Nations: A Philosophical Companion*. Princeton: Princeton University Press; Griswold, C (1999) *Adam Smith and the Virtues of Enlightenment*. New York: Cambridge University Press; Rasmussen, D (2006) "Does 'Bettering Our Condition' Really Make Us Better Off? Adam Smith on Progress and Happiness." *The American Political Science Review*, Vol 100 (3), pp. 308–18.; Uyl, D and Rasmussen, D.B., (2010) "Adam Smith on Economic Happiness," *Reason Papers*, Vol 32, pp. 29-40

⁴⁵ Rasmussen (2006)

⁴⁶ Smith (1759) III.iii.30

⁴⁷ Rasmussen (2006)

⁴⁸ Bréban, L and Sigot, N (2018) 'Back to Smith and Bentham: the Influence of Social Interactions on Happiness' *STOREP CONFERENCES, STOREP 2018 - Whatever Has Happened to Political Economy?*, Available at URL: <http://conference.storep.org/index.php?conference=storep-annual-conference&schedConf=2018&page=paper&op=view&path%5B%5D=383&path%5B%5D=0>

⁴⁹ Hollander, S (2016) 'Ethical Utilitarianism and The Theory of Moral Sentiments: Adam Smith in Relation to Hume and Bentham' *Eastern Economic Journal*, Vol 42(4), pp, 557-580

⁵⁰ Smith (1759) III.iii.30

⁵¹ Uyl and Rasmussen (2010)

are multiple in numbers, complex, and oftentimes conceptually confusing. For an illuminating example we may consider the practice of virtue, for which Smith 'attaches a great importance'⁵² as a precondition for tranquillity of mind.

To be virtuous we first require basic levels of 'propriety', the act of meeting the expectations and approval of those around you. Beyond this Roberts⁵³ indicates three further major components: prudence, justice, and beneficence. Here we run into the same problem once more, as components of Smithian happiness are made up of yet more conceptually contested components. Smith is aware of this lack of clarity, stating that while values such justice and propriety can be set to simple rules, much like the rules of grammar, there are no easy rules for the practise of some aspects of virtue such as beneficence and justice: such things are akin to the rules of beautiful writing, for which there are 'no rules whose observance will infallibly lead us to the attainment of elegance or sublimity'⁵⁴. Thus, the characteristics of the virtuous behaviour placed at the centre of his conception of happiness are 'loose, vague, and indeterminate'⁵⁵, with the beneficence within virtue itself comprising of a multitude of characteristics such as charity, hospitality, and generosity. All of which themselves are 'loose, vague and indeterminate'. This means that the creation of a singular conception of 'virtue' is impossible which, as merely a single example of many incommensurate component goods, makes the observance of a single conception of 'Smithian Happiness' impossible. This means that Smith's concept of happiness

⁵² Bruni, L (2006) *Civil Happiness: Economics and Human Flourishing in Historical Perspective* New York: Routledge, p88

⁵³ Roberts (2014)

⁵⁴ Smith (1759) III.vi.11

⁵⁵ Smith (1759) III.vi.11

“cannot be taken in any Benthamite sense of uniform happiness”⁵⁶, and is necessarily plural.

Here, Otteson⁵⁷ suggests *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*’ ‘meta-argument’ is that to achieve happiness you should abide by Smith’s ‘system of morality’. However, the ability to do so requires the reader to wrestle with questions of morality themselves. This is suggested in Matson’s⁵⁸ reading of the “The New Adam Smith Problem”, where he suggests Smith presents an open-ended dialectic for the reader’s consideration⁵⁹.

1.5 The success of SWB, the happiness hegemony, and the need for pluralism

As is widely acknowledged, there is variation in both conceptualisation and measurement in the study of wellbeing, reflected in the range of measures and definitions already discussed. Thus, the ‘science of wellbeing’ can be seen to consist of ‘methodological and conceptual pluralism’⁶⁰ (or less optimistically of the co-existence of multiple parallel approaches that ignore each other).

This brings with it a range of challenges, making the validation of a single wellbeing construct difficult, reducing the ease of comparison, and leading to contestations over validity, which ultimately makes wellbeing research less attractive to policymakers and thus limits the real-world impact of the field. Despite the existing methodological pluralism, however, Mitchell and Alexandrova characterise its existence as ‘fragile’ due to the pressures of a move towards a single construct, a

⁵⁶ Haakonssen, K (1981) *The Science of a Legislator: The Natural Jurisprudence of David Hume and Adam Smith*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p.135

⁵⁷ Otteson (2002) *Adam Smith’s Marketplace of Life* Cambridge University Press: Cambridge

⁵⁸ Matson (2021)

⁵⁹ Uyl and Rasmussen (2010)

⁶⁰ Mitchell and Alexandrova (2021)

single measure of this construct, and a single method of measurement. Here the ability of SWB measures to surmount practical challenges and allow analysts to validate the comparable quantitative results, with higher perceived levels of policy relevance, allows a simple science to be built around the causes and consequences of this common measurement with high levels of practicality and coherence.

This is appealing, as it allows a simple unidimensional indicator of how well peoples' lives are going (or at least their perception of this), which provides easy measurement and analysis of policy and a similar 'headline metric' to the GDP measurement that has been the cornerstone of previous processes⁶¹. This means economists can continue to undertake simple cost-benefit analyses⁶² focusing on maximising a single good. Austin refers to this as the emergence of a 'strong' position on SWB⁶³.

This is exemplified by Layard, contending governments should 'fearlessly'⁶⁴ pursue a political turn towards 'happiness', seeming to claim the 'New Science of Happiness' solves the historical inability of utilitarianism to accurately measure happiness/utility. With this obstacle rounded, governments can take a step further than even Bentham could and pursue true utilitarian policies confident in their ability to measure its success. In attempting to codify a felicific calculus, happiness economics progresses through the formulation of statistical techniques and 'happiness equations'⁶⁵ in which demographic and socioeconomic variables are analysed against subjective

⁶¹ Austin (2016a)

⁶² Alexandrova, A (2018) 'Can the Science of Well-being be objective?' *British Journal of Philosophy of Science*, Volume 69(2), Pages 421–445.

⁶³ Austin (2016a)

⁶⁴ Layard (2011), p.112

⁶⁵ Powdthavee, N. (2010) *The Happiness Equation: The Surprising Economics of our Most Valuable Asset*, Icon Books: London

measures to guide public policy⁶⁶. This Benthamite underpinning is explicit in the field's most influential literature, including Kahneman's articles '*Well-being: the foundations of hedonic psychology*'⁶⁷ and '*Back to Bentham?*'⁶⁸, or Layard's simple position that "People want to be happy. That should be the rule for public choice.....Bully for Bentham I say."⁶⁹. This approach has subsequently been widely adopted to the extent that (much of) the happiness economics literature "generally assumes a subjective account of wellbeing without question or debate"⁷⁰.

Thus, while the 'new science of happiness' may claim objectivity through positivist statistical techniques, it relies on specific normative (hedonistic utilitarian) values⁷¹ – concealing a range of value judgements. Any claims made by the science of happiness are therefore 'mixed claims'⁷², blending the normative and empirical in a way that truly objective science does not. Here, a claim is mixed if there is an empirical hypothesis around a statistical relationship where at least one of the variables is defined in a way that presupposes a particular normative, political, or moral value judgement on its nature. This is potentially problematic when those researching 'mixed' claims fail to engage with, or even notice, the value judgements implicitly made/accepted by their work.

While the new science of happiness may stress the ability to overcome the difficulties of measuring happiness, this ignores many key debates in the history of politics and moral philosophy over how to characterise the concept of happiness,

⁶⁶ Mitchell and Alexandrova (2021)

⁶⁷ Kahneman, D., Diener, E., & Schwarz, N. (Eds.). (1999). *Well-being: The foundations of hedonic psychology*. Russell Sage Foundation.

⁶⁸ Kahneman, D., Wakker, P., Sarin, R (1997) 'Back to Bentham? Explorations of Experienced Utility', *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, Vol 112(2), pp.375–406

⁶⁹ Layard (2011), p125

⁷⁰ Austin (2016a), p126

⁷¹ Crespo and Mesurado (2015)

⁷² Alexandrova (2018)

whether the ‘fearless pursuit of happiness’ is valuable, and, ultimately, if it should be the aim of public policy. This concerns Nussbaum⁷³ who stresses the need for philosophy in economics, suggesting ‘one of the worst aspects of the dearth of philosophy in the field is that certain positions can pass as orthodox and uncontested, when in fact, they are highly contested and contestable’⁷⁴. This leads her to lament that “most of the psychological research on happiness that economists use today is naïve and superficial for its failure to think through these issues”⁷⁵, mirroring Mitchell and Alexandrova’s⁷⁶ claim that the idea that knowledge of wellbeing can be reduced to a ‘happiness equation’ is both limited and shallow.

Due to the relative under-representation of philosophers and political theorists in the field, these discussions have been largely avoided. Yet this concern is clearly not only relevant, but important. One can only accept Layard’s recommendation to ‘fearlessly’ pursue the new science of happiness in public policy if humans are considered merely happiness maximisers. This would treat goods like liberty, virtue, and social relationships only as instruments to increasing subjective wellbeing, where Aristotle and Smith would contend they are important and valuable ends in of themselves. Thus, the ever-increasing sophistication, uniformity, and trust in the ‘New Science of Happiness’ appears a house of cards built on potentially insecure foundations, as its underlying assumptions are highly contestable.

Here we may look to Nozick’s⁷⁷ ‘simulated experience machine’ thought experiment, in which you could be artificially provided with desirable experiences (in this case, a

⁷³ Nussbaum (2016)

⁷⁴ Ibid, p232

⁷⁵ Ibid, p236

⁷⁶ Mitchell and Alexandrova (2021)

⁷⁷ Nozick, R. (1974) *Anarchy, State and Utopia*, Basic Books: Malden, Mass.

glut of pleasure and the absence of pain), in which he suggests most would not wish to spend their life in such a machine. If all that mattered to us was pleasure, we would plug in. But as research suggests most would not, there are clearly things that matter to us at least as much as affective pleasure. Similarly, a concern of Smith's was "to resist the reductionist characteristic of utilitarianism"⁷⁸. While acknowledging the good of utility maximisation, Smith proposed that suggesting utility maximisation as the ultimate standard of ethical value "precludes a comprehensive understanding of the multiple phenomena involved in moral judgment"⁷⁹. This is underlined in his example of how losing a finger would be more disturbing to our own happiness than the death of 100 million people in a faraway empire. However, given the opportunity to save the finger at the cost of millions of lives nobody would, instead being horrified at the depravity of an individual who might⁸⁰. Smith goes on to confront this issue further directly, arguing epicureans have missed the purpose of humanity and the meaning of life, as people have a desire to be good and help others⁸¹.

Thus, Nozick and Smith illuminate that a theory of hedonism is not merely 'shallow', but potentially concerning in its ability to ignore other goods vital to human wellbeing. At the very least, the increasing focus from governments and international organisations on SWB maximisation should be a topic for extensive debate. Van der Rijt⁸² argues that this has not occurred to a significant degree.

From here, numerous arguments against the monistic, hedonistic, SWB conception of happiness might be considered, from a variety of philosophical, practical, and

⁷⁸ Hollander (2016)

⁷⁹ Hanley, R (2009) *Adam Smith and the Character of Virtue* Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, pp 68-9

⁸⁰ Smith (1759) III.iii.4

⁸¹ *Ibid*, VII.ii.29

⁸² Van der Rijt (2015)

methodological standpoints. However, tackling these issues in detail is not in the main purpose of this paper (and has been tackled by other scholars). Yet, many modern critiques had already been anticipated in the work of Smith, but fail to reference him in their discussions, suggesting a similar circumstance as Smith anticipating developments in behavioural economics⁸³. Smith's work is highly relevant and has been available for over 200 years – people just haven't been looking!

Five critiques of the monistic focus on happiness are outlined below, with their Smithian links explained.

- **Happiness maximisation as damaging to human dignity**

Kolnai⁸⁴ argues that it is undignified to be happy about things you should not be happy about, or if you have no reason to be. If we value human dignity as one of many worthwhile ends, we might not support its removal in the pursuit of happiness. Smith asks 'what so great happiness as to be beloved, and to know that we deserve to be beloved?'⁸⁵, but warns 'a wise man feels little pleasure from praise where he knows there is no praise-worthiness'⁸⁶. This line of argument suggests that happiness that is not deserved cannot be classified as true happiness in the sense of 'wellbeing' that constitutes Smithian happiness, as it ignores key aspects of 'human flourishing'; one must have real reasons for happiness, whether that be achievement, virtue, or some other good. As the subsequent point will make, 'false' happiness may cause problems to wellbeing.

⁸³ Ashraf et al (2005)

⁸⁴ Kolnai, A. (1995) 'Dignity'. In R. S. Dillon (Ed.) *Dignity, character, and self-respect* (pp. 53–75). New York: Routledge

⁸⁵ Smith (1759) III.i.7

⁸⁶ *Ibid*, II.ii.7

- **Happiness is not always conducive to wellbeing / The maladaptive effects of happiness**

Gruber's '*The Dark Side of Happiness*'⁸⁷ claims that happiness is not always conducive to wellbeing understood as success across a range of domains. In certain circumstances happiness is maladaptive, as emotions other than happiness serve important purposes in human behaviour. Embarrassment, for example, serves an appeasement function to reconciling social relations when they have gone wrong⁸⁸, yet embarrassment is unpleasurable. Here we can draw a link with Smith's impartial spectator, where 'the man within the breast'⁸⁹ is invoked to self-judge conduct, reminding us that if we act improperly, we will be resented, disliked, and unloved. Thus, the man within the breast pushes us towards acting with propriety and virtue, benefiting both ourselves (in terms of self-respect and tranquillity of mind) and society. This mechanism relies on feelings of shame, embarrassment, anxiety, and other negative emotions – but is vital towards promoting human flourishing. This argument aligns with Gruber's that assertion it is possible to have too much happiness, experience it at the wrong time, pursue it in the wrong way, or have the wrong types. This is counter to the pursuit of happiness maximisation.

- **The inability of government to provide happiness**

Van der Rijt suggests even if there was a political consensus on the desirability of happiness as a policy goal (which he argues is not the case), the government would be unable to provide this⁹⁰; mirroring Smith's 'man of system' who is 'wise in his own

⁸⁷ Gruber, J., Mauss J., Tamir, M. (2011) 'A Dark Side of Happiness? How, When, and Why Happiness Is Not Always Good' *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, pp. 222-233.

⁸⁸ Keltner D, and Anderson, C (2000) 'Saving Face for Darwin: The Functions and Uses of Embarrassment' *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, Vol 9(6), pp187-192.

⁸⁹ Smith (1759) Part 3

⁹⁰ Van der Rijt (2015)

conceit'⁹¹ and blind to those harmed by the implementation of his plan. Through imagining he could arrange society as he would pieces on a chess board, the man of system ignores the will of individuals and other forces integral to systems of society which might interact with his plan in unknown and unpredictable ways. This has the potential to create unintended consequences for the plan, and lead to the 'highest levels of disorder'.

This falls foul of Smith's 4th source of moral approval, 'to consider actions as making a part of a system of behaviour which either improves the happiness of an individual or a society'⁹². Arguing that while government actions may have good intentionality, their consequences may cause it to fall short of moral approval due to unintended 'disorder'. This leads into Van der Rijt's main concern, the 'corrupting effect of happiness'.

- **The Corrupting Effect of Happiness**

With reference to the rise of populism in recent years, Van der Rijt argues that once people believe they have a right to something, they will readily demand a reduction in the rights of other people to maintain/gain it (which could be justified if the increased happiness created exceeds the happiness lost). He argues that authorising governments to promote happiness may therefore disturb the balance of the range of goods provided in modern democratic societies in the name of happiness maximisation, potentially affecting the liberty and individual rights of certain minority groups or individuals. This again is similar to Smith's concerns around 'the man of system', who in pursuit of his vision had the potential to be

⁹¹ Smith (1759) VI.ii.2

⁹² Ibid, VII.iii.16

'destructive of liberty, security, and justice',⁹³ through magistrates regulating behaviours counter to important goods, such as natural liberty and distributive justice. This problem is also noted by Evans⁹⁴ who states that while the science of wellbeing has thus far been used to promote progressive, liberal agendas, it is possible it could be used for darker means. Citing Putnam⁹⁵ and Dutt⁹⁶, Evans suggests that evidence indicating that less ethnically diverse societies have higher levels of happiness could justify political actions, suggesting Bhutan has seemingly maintained its high levels of Gross National Happiness in part by exporting Nepalese minorities into refugee camps.

- **Transference of responsibility to individuals for their own happiness**

Opposite to the concerns of the man of system, William Davies's *The Happiness Industry*⁹⁷ suggests that the happiness agenda looks to unfairly download the responsibility of happiness onto individuals, who are themselves seen to blame for their own misery and sadness, rather than the problems of stress, disempowerment, and depression created by modern capitalism. In short, the agenda pays insufficient attention to the structural causes of well- and ill-being. Such ideas have parallels in Smith's *Wealth of Nations*, where he argued that the man who spends his life performing a simple single job required in capitalist production, while productive, "*becomes as stupid and ignorant as it is possible for a human creature to become. The torpor of his mind renders him not only incapable of relishing or bearing a part in*

⁹³ Ibid, II.ii.8

⁹⁴ Evans (2018)

⁹⁵ Putnam, R (2007) '*E Pluribus Unum: Diversity and Community in the Twenty-first Century*' *Scandinavian Political Studies*, Vol 30(2), pp. 137-174

⁹⁶ Dutt, A (2013) 'The Ethnic Cleansing Behind Bhutan's Happy Face'. *First Post* [Online] Available at URL: <https://www.firstpost.com/world/the-ethnic-cleansing-hidden-behind-bhutans-happy-face-918473.html>

⁹⁷ Davies, W (2015) *The Happiness Industry* Verso Books: London

*any rational conversation, but of conceiving any generous, noble, or tender sentiment, and consequently of forming any just judgment concerning many even of the ordinary duties of private life*⁹⁸. This results in the problem of alienation⁹⁹, and is clearly not the ‘happiness’ of human flourishing Smith prioritises¹⁰⁰. Smith may therefore interestingly add some depth to the debate about the structural problems in modern capitalism that contribute to reductions in happiness.

The importance of pluralism

These arguments simultaneously offer an insight into some problems with the move towards a ‘hegemony of happiness’ whilst illuminating ways in which Smith is directly relevant to contemporary debates, although not frequently invoked. A consideration of Smith in this context has the potential to open fruitful debates around both the need for pluralism within the field of wellbeing and arguments around the meaning and intentionality in the work of Smith himself.

All the debates above are lost in the move towards monism, which clearly fail to take seriously the complexity of wellbeing and the significant uncertainty surrounding its components and measurements, as well as its variation across contexts and different normative ideas. As such, it overstates knowledge on what constitutes wellbeing. Therefore, despite the clear appeal of SWB as creating a simple, single construct of wellbeing with unified measurement and methodology, accounts of wellbeing without active engagement in relevant philosophical debates leave a lot to

⁹⁸ Smith (1776) VI.i.50

⁹⁹ Tribe, K (2008) “‘Das Adam Smith Problem’ and the origins of modern Smith scholarship”, *History of European Ideas*, Vol 34(4), pp. 514-525

¹⁰⁰ Ashraf et al (2005)

be desired; leading to the building of intricate ‘castles in the sky’ that make little real or responsible academic progress¹⁰¹.

As the answers to these philosophical debates are necessarily contested and undetermined, and contextual factors also matter, a degree of pluralism is inevitable if we are to understand human wellbeing holistically. In this sense, wellbeing can be characterised as a ‘wicked problem’,¹⁰² due to difficulty securing agreement on how to define the concept and the inability to find definitive, objective answers to the practical challenges of making wellbeing into public policy. It is clearly an important objective of society, yet it is difficult to conceptualise how (and how successfully) governments can promote wellbeing, as well as whether they should even be trying! We must accept the idea that wellbeing is pluralistic, and irreducibly so. Here, a Smithian approach is particularly valuable as a singular exception to the general run of classical economics with a moral philosophy that is ‘in contrast with the utilitarian outlook’¹⁰³, with Smith suggesting more than one type of happy life exists¹⁰⁴.

Smithian happiness meets all three types of pluralism advocated by Mitchell and Alexandrova simultaneously, being constitutively pluralist in that his end of happiness can be constituted by several different objects. This is shown by his argument that *“in ease of body and peace of mind, all the different ranks of life are nearly upon a level, and the beggar, who suns himself by the side of the highway, possesses that security which kings are fighting for.”*¹⁰⁵ Here Smith suggests that

¹⁰¹ Nussbaum (2016), p245

¹⁰² Bache, I., Reardon, L., and Anand, P (2016) ‘Wellbeing as a wicked problem: navigating the arguments for the role of government’ *Journal of Happiness Studies*, Vol 17(3) pp. 893–912.

¹⁰³ Robbins, L (1952) *The Theory of Economic Policy in English Classical Political Economy*. London: Macmillan, p.178

¹⁰⁴ Uyl and Rasmussen (2010)

¹⁰⁵ Smith (1759) IV.i.10

while one has obtained happiness through wealth and greatness and the other through increased security, both have obtained equal happiness¹⁰⁶.

Smith also meets criteria of conceptual pluralism as there is no singular essence to his conception of happiness. This contrasts with the Benthamite notion of pleasure which characterises all instances of wellbeing. As ideas around propriety and virtue will differ between groups and cultures, conceptions of wellbeing will necessarily vary. This is seen even with the UK, where Eichhorn shows that factors constructing wellbeing vary from region to region¹⁰⁷. This understanding of morality and wellbeing 'as a social phenomenon'¹⁰⁸ also allows Smith to pass Mitchell and Alexandrova's specification of philosophical pluralism, as Smith's moral philosophy does not search for a universal understanding of happiness or wellbeing.

Such an approach that meets these specifications for pluralism within the modern literature is Amartya Sen's Capabilities Approach¹⁰⁹ (CA), which allows for a richer foundation and more comprehensive conception of the study of human wellbeing, devoid of many of the problems of the hedonistic SWB focus¹¹⁰. As it is within the eudaimonic tradition, references to the CA tend to link these ideas inextricably with Aristotle. This paper suggests, however, that the links between the CA and the work of Smith are closer but underappreciated and under-cited within the current literature. The following section will outline the CA, before exploring its Smithian links and origins.

¹⁰⁶ Breban, L (2016) 'La richesse ne fait pas le bonheur: du paradoxe d'Easterlin à celui d'Adam Smith', *L'Économie politique*, vol. 71(3), pp. 17-26.

¹⁰⁷ Eichhorn, J (2014) 'Where Happiness Varies: Recalling Adam Smith to Critically Assess the UK Government Project Measuring National Well-Being.' *Sociological Research Online*, Vol 19(2), pp.1-9.

¹⁰⁸ Raphael, D (1985) *Adam Smith – Past Masters*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, p.5

¹⁰⁹ Sen, A (1985) *Commodities and Capabilities*, Amsterdam: North-Holland

¹¹⁰ Austin, A (2016b) 'In Defence of The Capabilities Approach' *CWiPP Working Paper*, Series No.8, Available at URL: <https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/cwipp/working-papers/201608>

Section 2: The Capabilities Approach and its Smithian underpinnings

The Capabilities Approach (CA)¹¹¹ to wellbeing meets the criteria of both methodological and philosophical pluralism, under which the definition of wellbeing is broader, the domains measured are wider, and the scope of desired outcome includes a varied range of valuable outcomes, with positive subjective mental states as merely one plurality of valuable goods¹¹². The CA is thus grounded in a broad informational basis, in contrast to the utilitarian influence seen in both standard economic analysis¹¹³ and the ‘strong’ position on SWB.

This is seen clearly in Sen’s distinction between ‘wellbeing freedoms’ and ‘agency freedoms’, showing that while a decision may make us worse off in traditional wellbeing terms, it may enhance our ability to express agency and thus add value to us in another way¹¹⁴. Instead of traditional wellbeing measures, the CA is therefore interested in individuals’ ‘capabilities’ and ‘functionings’. Capabilities being what individuals can achieve if they choose to which when realised become functionings. This approach allows for consideration of the diversity of human goals and the importance of individual agency in people achieving the lives ‘they have reason to value’¹¹⁵. CA advocates therefore suggest that the aim of policy should be the expansion of capabilities, increasing the space within which people can act in accordance with their own perception of the good life¹¹⁶.

¹¹¹ Sen (1985); Nussbaum, M (2000) *Women and Human Development: The Capabilities Approach*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

¹¹² Austin (2016b)

¹¹³ Eiffe, F (2010) ‘Amartya Sen Reading Adam Smith’, *History of Economics Review*, Vol 51(1), pp. 1-23

¹¹⁴ Sen (1985)

¹¹⁵ Sen, A (1992) *Inequality Re-examined*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, p.22

¹¹⁶ Austin (2016b)

In this sense we can view the CA as a flexible and ‘thin’ framework which needs to be ‘thickened’ with context-specific values, theories, and considerations, as opposed to a singular, specific theory of wellbeing¹¹⁷, much like the pluralism seen in the Smithian approach. While the CA is mainly talked about as being within the Aristotelian tradition, the focus away from the polity and towards the individual suggests more of a Smithian underpinning. This may be unsurprising, however, as Sen is a keen scholar of Smith’s work, writing in foreword to *The Theory of Moral Sentiment’s* 250th anniversary edition that it was a ‘remarkable monograph’, of which the continuing relevance was ‘quite astonishing’ for any society wrestling with issues of morals, politics, and economics¹¹⁸. However, little attention has been paid to this connection in the wellbeing literature.

Sen has claimed Smithian lineage since *On Ethics and Economics* where he argued that ‘the narrowing of the broad Smithian view of human beings, in modern economics, can be seen as one of the major deficiencies of contemporary economic theory’¹¹⁹. However, Sen’s most explicit references to Smith are not regarding CA, but when considering justice and human motivation.

Specifically in his work on human motivation, Sen adds the motivational dimensions of ‘sympathy’ and ‘commitment’ to standard economic utility preferences. The use of sympathy here is a signpost to Smith¹²⁰, but their conceptions differ¹²¹. Sen uses sympathy as the dependence on the wellbeing of others for our own, while Smith

¹¹⁷ Comim, F., Qizilbash, M., and Alkire, S (2008) *The Capabilities Approach: Concepts, Measures, and Applications* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

¹¹⁸ Sen, A (2009a) ‘Introduction’ in Smith [2009(1959)] *The Theory of Moral Sentiments 250th Anniversary Edition*, London: Penguin, pp. vii-xxvii

¹¹⁹ Sen, A (1987) *On Ethics and Economics* New York: Wiley-Blackwell, p28

¹²⁰ With sympathy being a main theme of *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*

¹²¹ Sen, A (1977) ‘Rational fools. A critique of the behavioural foundations of economic theory’, *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, Vol 6, pp. 317-44

uses it as the ability to imagine how others feel as a means of judging our own behaviour. Bréban and Gilardone¹²² note a similar relationship in Sen's conception of the impartial spectator – another idea taken from *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*. Sen claims that his impartial spectator is derived from Smith, yet two major differences exist, as Sen's impartial spectator is neither an abstract figure nor a moral reference point, as in Smith's account, but real individuals whose wellbeing we depend on for our own. However, while there is major difference, Bréban and Gilardone suggest the two figures are not altogether inconsistent.¹²³ Both cases show that for Sen, Smith's work is not an object of study itself but an inspiration from which he 'extends the ideas of Smith', adding to them, altering them, and sometimes attempting to integrate them into formal modelling¹²⁴.

While Sen's references to Smith regarding the CA are less pronounced, an explicit reference comes in *On Economic Inequality*¹²⁵, which uses Smith's analysis of necessities. Here, Sen cites how Smithian 'necessities'¹²⁶, understood as core elements of human life, vary from society to society. This means what is a necessity in one context may not be in another. Smith gives the example of clothing that allows appearance in public without shame, which in richer nations may require more expensive clothes. Thus, the expensive clothing becomes a necessity because the capability to be seen in public without shame is an important means to achieve valuable goals, not because the commodity is itself valuable. Here, even if one is rich by world standards, relative deprivation can yield deprivation in terms of capabilities,

¹²² Bréban, and Gilardone, M (2020) 'A missing touch of Adam Smith in Amartya Sen's account of Public Reasoning: the Man Within for the Man Without', *Cambridge Journal of Economics*, Vol 44(2), pp. 257–283.

¹²³ See each of these articles for detailed analysis on these aspects, which are beyond the scope of this project

¹²⁴ Eiffe (2010), p134

¹²⁵ Foster, J. & Sen, A. K. (1997) 'On economic inequality after a quarter century', in: A. K. Sen, *On Economic Inequality*, 2nd edn, pp.107-219 (Oxford, Clarendon Press).

¹²⁶ Smith (1776) Book 5

especially within the Aristotelian tradition where the necessities of a virtuous life go beyond the necessities of the body and require ‘achieving self-respect, taking part in the life of the community, [and] appearing in public without shame’¹²⁷. Here it seems Smith had not only anticipated idea of capabilities, but also the importance of relative wealth to wellbeing and the idea of the ‘hedonic treadmill’¹²⁸.

In keeping with Sen’s erstwhile engagement with Smith, one would expect there to be a range of complex and multivariate distinctions/differences in the work of Sen and Smith alongside these similarities; an obvious example being the absence of discussions of virtue and morality from Sen. But as the works of both Smith and Sen are incredibly wide-ranging and complex, this would be beyond the scope of this paper, however offer a fruitful topic for future study.

This considered, there is surprisingly little secondary engagement around Smith, Sen, and the CA. This is despite Sen himself stating that “*the capability perspective involves, to some extent, a return to an integrated approach to economic and social development championed particularly by Adam Smith*”¹²⁹, with most commentary on Sen giving no reference to Smith.

In short, Smith had discussed ideas of capabilities, conversion factors, and functionings, as well as wider findings in the literature of happiness and wellbeing economics including the importance of relative wealth, the hedonic treadmill, and the Easterlin paradox. Smith’s ability to do this remains both underappreciated and under cited in the contemporary literature. The following section suggests reasons

¹²⁷ Sen (1992), p.367

¹²⁸ Brickman, P & Campbell, D (1971). ‘Hedonic relativism and planning the good society.’ In M. H. Appley (Ed.), *Adaptation-level theory: A symposium* (pp. 287–302). New York: Academic Press.

¹²⁹ Sen (1999), pp. 295-6

why Smith is overlooked and underutilised within the field, before showing none of these offer reasons why the study of Smith regarding wellbeing would not be possible or beneficial.

Section 3. Why has Smith been overlooked?

Despite the clear relevance of Smithian ideas to important and ongoing debates within the field of wellbeing, engagement with Smith remains rare. This leads to the important question of why, as founding figure of the field of economics who had also written extensively specifically around the topics of happiness and human flourishing, Smith has been overlooked. This section will present four suggestions to why Smith is largely absent from debates around happiness and wellbeing.

3.1 The pervasiveness of *The Wealth of Nations* as Smith's legacy

The primary reason for Smith being overlooked might be the stereotyping and misunderstanding of his work. Here Smith is, in a sense, a victim of his own success in relation to *The Wealth of Nations*. The impact of this work has been monumental, leading to the development of the field of political economy and being described as 'almost inexhaustible in its richness'¹³⁰. It remains the second most cited book in the social sciences published before 1950.¹³¹ The result of writing one of the world's most influential books was the eclipse of *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, with Smith

¹³⁰ Calkins, M and Werhane, P (1998) 'Adam Smith, Aristotle, and the Virtues of Commerce' *The Journal of Value Inquiry*, Vol 32, pp. 43–60

¹³¹ With Marx's 'Das Kapital' pipping Smith to 1st place.

Green, E (2016) "What are the most-cited publications in the social sciences (according to Google Scholar)?" *LSE Impact Blog* (12 May 2016) Available at URL:

<https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/impactofsocialsciences/2016/05/12/what-are-the-most-cited-publications-in-the-social-sciences-according-to-google-scholar/>

seen near-exclusively as the author of *Wealth of Nations*¹³². This is illuminated by Russ Roberts:

*“You’d think I would have read both major books by the founder of my field. But until recently I knew very little about *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*. In fact, most of my career I never heard anyone mention Smith’s ‘other’ book.”*¹³³

The areas of Smith’s work left unexamined are thus surprisingly large for a scholar of his influence, with Sen lamenting that while “some men are born small, and others achieve smallness, it is clear Smith has smallness thrust upon him”¹³⁴. This smallness, within both academic and wider understanding, comes from Smith being largely reduced to Books 1 and 2 of *The Wealth of Nations* and near-exclusively quoted on the self-interest of the baker and the butcher¹³⁵. Thus, economists like Stigler¹³⁶ have promoted rational choice, self-interest theories as being “on Smithian lines”.

However, this focus on pure self-interest only illuminates Smith’s models of motivations in impersonal market actions, and ignores the complex motivations of considerations of virtue, social norms, and sympathy that Smith stresses in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*¹³⁷ (and even in parts of *The Wealth of Nations*¹³⁸). This oversight misses an important distinction in Smith’s work between what motivates trade and exchange, and what is needed for a society that promotes happiness and flourishing, with the books largely focusing on different areas. This has left Smith

¹³² Sen, A (2013) ‘The Contemporary Relevance of Adam Smith in Berry, C. Paganelli, M. and Smith, C *The Oxford Handbook of Adam Smith*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp.581-592

¹³³ Roberts (2014a), p.3

¹³⁴ Sen (2013), p586

¹³⁵ Smith (1776) I.2.

¹³⁶ Stigler, G (1975) *The Citizen and the State*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, p237

¹³⁷ Eichhorn (2014)

¹³⁸ Including the virtues of prudence and justice to which Smith also refers in the *Wealth of Nations*.

widely misunderstood since “*The Theory of Moral Sentiments* has not been explored extensively”¹³⁹.

This misunderstanding is clear in the limited work in the field of wellbeing that does reference Smith; for example with McDaid arguing “*Adam Smith was wrong: the new economics foundation is right: economic prosperity does not of itself bring enhanced individual and social wellbeing.*”¹⁴⁰ This is illustrative of the gross misunderstanding of Smith who, as we have seen, denies that increasing economic prosperity enhances individual wellbeing (at least beyond the scope of basic material provision). This misinterpretation of Smith is not new, however, with Loria making such a similar assertion in 1893, stating ‘*all our [Italian] economists are dealing not so much, like Adam Smith, with the wealth of nations, but with public happiness*’¹⁴¹. Both must have missed *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*.

Walsh¹⁴² attributes this problem to a range of factors, including politicians and colonial administrators distorting Smith’s messages in their own interests. However, more interestingly perhaps, she suggests a canonical reason, stemming Ricardo’s engagement with *The Wealth of Nations*. Ricardo, who was not a trained moral philosopher and subsequently did not focus on these aspects of Smith’s work, concentrated on Smith’s mistakes regarding distribution mechanisms, meaning ‘a spotlight [was shone] upon certain issues in the analytical core of Smith’s economics, leaving a great part of his work in darkness’¹⁴³. This concentration on a

¹³⁹ Baujard, A., Gilardone, M. and Salles, M. (2010). *A conversation with Amartya Sen, La Forge Numérique, MRSH, Université de Caen Normandie*, URL: <http://www.unicaen.fr/recherche/mrsh/forge/262>

¹⁴⁰ McDaid, D (2005) ‘Time to Extend a Visible Helping Hand’, *Journal of Mental Health Promotion*, Vol 3(4), pp.16-17

¹⁴¹ Loria, A (1893) *Verso la giustizia sociale*, Milano: Società Editrice Libreria, p.83

¹⁴² Walsh, V (2000) ‘Smith After Sen’, *Review of Political Economy*, Vol 12(1), pp. 5-25

¹⁴³ Walsh, V (1998a) ‘Normative and positive classical economics’. (Eds) Kurz, H and Salvadori, N., In *The Elgar Companion to Classical Economics*, Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, pp. 188-94, p.190

few vital issues of classical theory was reproduced through engagement with Ricardo's work, which continued with the revival of classical theory in the 20th century. Thus, Smith's moral philosophy and full scope of political economy remained, largely, in the darkness.

This perspective mirrors Nussbaum's complaints¹⁴⁴ regarding the lack of philosophy in economics today, suggesting the same problem of lack of engagement remains due to the lack of trained moral theorists in the field. This results in the reproduction of the existing and dominant ideas by academics more interested in economic modelling and statistical operationalisation, who are unlikely to have the knowledge, skills, or interest to engage with Smith's detailed and complex writings on moral philosophy and happiness.

Furthermore, Evans suggests that the rhetoric and science of wellbeing is mainly used to promote a progressive agenda¹⁴⁵, meaning there are potentially political and ideological reasons for the overlooking of Smith. Those inclined towards increasing the role of the state in regulating markets and redistributing wealth might be unlikely to turn to the perceived hero of liberal political economy for insights into happiness, despite Sen trying to situate Smith as more interventionalist than this perception. However, the stereotype of Smith ensures that these views remain relatively niche knowledge and may again be another reason his work has not found itself at the centre of wellbeing economics.

¹⁴⁴ See Section 1

¹⁴⁵ Evans (2018)

Thus, we can suggest that Smith has been overlooked due to a combination of lack of awareness, lack of understanding, hundreds of years of academic reproduction of a fraction of his work, and the potentially off-putting stereotyping of his views.

3.2 Operationalisation problems under a Smithian conception of happiness

As Smithian ideas and the CA have many similar characteristics, we could see the levelling of similar concerns to that of the CA, which has been called “empirically unsound”¹⁴⁶ and “unworkable in practice”,¹⁴⁷ with problems around the measurability of capabilities¹⁴⁸.

This measurability issue would be pronounced within Smithian happiness, where component parts such as ‘virtue’, ‘beneficence’, and ‘tranquillity of mind’ are set to ‘the rules of beautiful writing’ and thus are necessarily ‘loose, vague, and indeterminate’, requiring normative judgements around incommensurate goods, and thus not open to simple quantitative study. As noted in Section 1, complexities in operationalisation make such approaches unattractive to economists, academics, or policymakers looking to affect public policy, which in part explains the emerging ‘hegemony of happiness’.

However, as we have seen, SWB approaches (as will theories of human wellbeing will) also require ‘mixed claims’ that necessarily require the acceptance of utilitarian normative ideas that are often left unexplored¹⁴⁹. Therefore, the consideration and contestation over Smithian conceptions could lead to enriching debates over the

¹⁴⁶ Srinivasan, T (1994) ‘Human development: A new paradigm or reinvention of the wheel?’, *American Economic Review*, Vol 84, pp. 238-243

¹⁴⁷ Rawls, J. (1999) *The Law of Peoples*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

¹⁴⁸ Robeyns, I (2006) ‘The Capability Approach in Practice’, *Journal of Political Philosophy*, Vol 14(3), pp. 351-376

¹⁴⁹ Alexandrova (2018)

components of happiness and wellbeing. Here, a rich history exists for differing scholars competing to lay claim to Smith's legacy, from figures as diverse as Mill and Marx,¹⁵⁰ to Sen's modern attempt to 're-claim' Smith. Such debate would significantly increase the quality of philosophy and political theory underpinning both the economics and politics of wellbeing. This would allow us to work towards a meaningful conception of human wellbeing rather than the continuation in the use of measurements that miss key aspects of wellbeing.

In this vein, Smith's concept of 'necessities' could be used to build context-specific sets of necessities along similar lines of Nussbaum's¹⁵¹ basic capabilities to measure if individuals are achieving the 'rules of grammar' (including objective factors and measurements of basic capabilities). From here, aspects of CA can be used to assess the freedoms and wider opportunities available for individuals to achieve the aspects needed for 'beautiful writing', and then use SWB measures to assess important Smithian 'functionings' such as tranquillity of mind, quality of social relationships, and levels of enjoyment.

While there is difficulty in creating such a framework (and specifying it for certain contexts), there is successful work being done currently in the eudaimonic tradition using combinations of subjective and objective indicators¹⁵². Even so, difficulty in the measurement and conceptualisation of such concepts doesn't alter their importance for a true conception of human wellbeing, and tackling this difficulty is preferable to continuing to 'build intricate castles in the air'.¹⁵³

¹⁵⁰ Sen (2013)

¹⁵¹ Nussbaum (2000)

¹⁵² Anand, P., Hunter, G., Carter, I., Dowding, K., Guala, F., & Van Hees, M (2009) 'The Development of Capability Indicators', *Journal of Human Development and Capabilities*, Vol 10(1), pp.125-152

¹⁵³ Nussbaum (2016), p236

3.3 Smith as a step in the Aristotelian tradition

One potential argument is that the field does not miss Smith, but references Aristotle more commonly as the main scholar of the Eudaimonic tradition within which Smith resides, suggesting that while we see distinctly Smithian ideas within Sen's capabilities approach, the ultimate source of these was Aristotle. Calkins and Werhane suggest this, stating "Smith's notion of human flourishing differs very little from Aristotle's", since it must also be seen in accordance with specific standards¹⁵⁴ and eudaimonia is also a pluralistic concept consisting of a set of incommensurate second-order ends¹⁵⁵ including "external goods", "personal liberty"¹⁵⁶, goods contributing to "ease of body"¹⁵⁷, and most importantly, virtue¹⁵⁸.

However, while eudaimonia is the indirect outcome of virtuous actions 'carried out for their own intrinsic value'¹⁵⁹, similarly to Smith's tranquility of mind and subsequent happiness through virtue, there is a significant difference with large implications in the politics of wellbeing for the spheres Smith and Aristotle reserve for virtue. While Aristotle sees eudaimonia as a fulfilled life within the Polis, with the individual and the Polis' final goods being similar¹⁶⁰, Smith sees this as a concern for the private sphere.

Thus, while Aristotle believes the role of the polis is to provide eudaimonia for its citizens through fostering their virtues "by forming habits in them"¹⁶¹, Smith would be

¹⁵⁴ Calkins and Werhane (1998) p.50

¹⁵⁵ Crespo and Mesurado (2015)

¹⁵⁶ Smith (1759) III.iii.31

¹⁵⁷ Ibid, IV.i.10

¹⁵⁸ Uyl and Rasmussen (2010)

¹⁵⁹ Bruni, L and Porta, P (2007) *Handbook on the Economics of Happiness*, Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing, p.14

¹⁶⁰ Aristotle (1954), I, 2, 1094b

¹⁶¹ Ibid, II, 1, 1103b

against such planning by virtue of the Man of System argument¹⁶². This provides Sen with closer links to Smith than Aristotle, with his capabilities approach being based upon individuals being able to do whatever they have reason to value. Here, the difference, Berry suggests, is one of historical context with “Smith’s general argument . . . [being] that the postclassical world is irretrievably a world of strangers and that in this world we must look to the public realm for rules to govern us and to the private for virtue.¹⁶³” This points to a clear distinction in the work of *The Wealth of Nations*, in the realm of commerce, and of *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* in our private spheres. Importantly here, Smith offers modern insights into flourishing within larger states and a global economy, more useful to us in modernity than Aristotle’s observances from a Greek City State. This provides a significantly more individualistic, less paternalistic, and liberty-focused perspective on how to achieve human wellbeing. This focus on the private sphere, however, points the way for the next reason Smith’s work might be overlooked in the literature.

3.4 How does a theory of an individual ‘good life’ connect with political institutions, processes, and decisions?

While Smith’s reflections are no doubt interesting as a source of personal reflection, guidance, and morality, the fact his work is so focused on the level of individual virtue within the private sphere may offer very little guide for influencing public policy. As we have seen above, Aristotle’s conception of the good life was inextricably linked with the polity and the role of legislators within them. This is also true of the

¹⁶² See Section 1

¹⁶³ Berry, C “Adam Smith and the Virtues of Commerce,” in John W. Chapman and William A. Galston (eds.), *Virtue* (New York: New York University Press, 1992), p. 84.

work of Bentham, who was ‘overwhelmingly’ concerned with the public sphere, with his arguments primarily addressed to the legislators¹⁶⁴.

Thus, Smith’s work may be overlooked precisely because those interested in the economics and politics of wellbeing focus on the ways in which governments can increase happiness, which Bentham and Aristotle suggest a greater role for. Where *The Wealth of Nations* says little about happiness, wellbeing, and human flourishing¹⁶⁵, it is perhaps illuminating that *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* says little about the role of the statesman or legislator, with the longest passage on this topic being the scathing critique of ‘the man of system’s’ ability to provide such goods for the public beyond the provision of the basic conditions for them to achieve them individually (although what Smith would allow this to consist of is highly contestable).

Despite this critique, however, there are multiple ways in which increasing study and engagement of those within the field of happiness economics and the politics of wellbeing could enrich their studies. These will be presented in the section below, alongside a range of benefits in terms of the intellectual history of Smith and the wider study of political economy.

Section 4: How might greater reflection on Smith add to debates on wellbeing?

As shown in the previous sections, the work of Smith is relevant to existing literature in multiple ways including its anticipation of many subsequent ‘new’ developments in

¹⁶⁴ Burns (2005)

¹⁶⁵ Although still discusses these topics more than it widely acknowledged.

the field¹⁶⁶, conceptual underpinning of the capabilities approach, and providing a eudaimonic conception of wellbeing within the global economy. Further to this, it is highly relevant in some key debates within the current field by providing strong arguments against the movement towards the ‘happiness hegemony’, a rich account of a pluralist conception of wellbeing, and offering an example of an economist with deep engagement with moral philosophy and theories of wellbeing. All of these contributions are valuable and timely interventions that offer fruitful paths for future scholarship. Importantly, Smith offers a range of views that differ to much of the existing field at a point where the need to increase the field’s diversity is increasingly important.

Engagement with Smith from the field of wellbeing will also teach us more about his work, as the current standard understanding of *The Wealth of Nations* is largely without reference to Smith’s moral philosophy developed seventeen years earlier. Such a move can be seen already in the work of Sen¹⁶⁷ who argues against the popular view of Smith as an advocate of a laissez-faire economy, suggesting instead that while Smith was convinced of the necessity of a well-functioning market economy, he did not see it as sufficient by itself. Instead he posits that Smith can be read as an interventionalist defender of state provision of public services and poverty relief, with the profit-seeking motive sometimes needing restraint from government in the interest of other goods¹⁶⁸.

This reading potentially suggests a role for Smith within the existing traditions of wellbeing, contrary to Robert Skidelsky’s¹⁶⁹ labelling of Smith a ‘scarcity economist’

¹⁶⁶ Including the Easterlin Paradox, Hedonistic Treadmill, and the importance of relative wealth

¹⁶⁷ Sen (2009)

¹⁶⁸ Sen (2014)

¹⁶⁹ Skidelsky and Skidelsky (2012)

who offers very little on what life should be like after abundance and opulence has been met. While it is true Smith often mixed the causes of wealth with the causes of happiness in the lower orders of society¹⁷⁰, as we have seen previously, this is not the full extent of Smith's work. Smith lived in a period where absolute poverty was rife. Considering this, and his assessment of the need of basic material welfare as a component of happiness, it is unsurprising and in line with the Easterlin paradox that improvements in industrial productivity and wealth would lead to increasing happiness. Here we can clearly see how the development of the market, through fostering growth, was "a revolution of the greatest importance to the publick happiness"¹⁷¹.

However, many societies have now reached the point of the Easterlin paradox, meaning the importance of market-led economic growth is no longer correlated to increasing happiness outcomes across society. However, Skidelsky's assertion of Smith as a 'scarcity economist' remains highly contestable, as it fails to take seriously the role of Smith as a moral philosopher concerned with happiness and human flourishing across varied domains. Instead, such a time of 'abundance' is the time to stop focussing on *The Wealth of Nations* and pick up *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*. The two books were clearly not contradictory in Smith's mind: while *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* was written before *The Wealth of Nations*, the former was periodically revised by Smith until his death. This raises interesting questions around how Smith wrote the most famous defence of free markets whilst his 'other' book argued that the wealth-seeking required to rouse and keep that very market in perpetual motion tends to leave people "as much, and sometimes more exposed

¹⁷⁰ Crespo and Mesurado (2015), p.126

¹⁷¹ Smith (1776), III.iv.17

than before, to anxiety, to fear, and to sorrow; to diseases, to danger, and to death”¹⁷², and also stating that the promotion of happiness should be our primary concern.

Problems such as this apparent conflict between Smith’s view of happiness as tranquillity and the promotion of tranquillity-disturbing market processes have received relatively little attention¹⁷³ except from a small group of political theorists with a particular interest in Smith: a group detached completely from those within the study of wellbeing who tend not to be involved in such deep-rooted normative theoretical debates. However, there would be significant benefits for both groups in engagement with one another. Wellbeing and happiness economists would increase the rigour of their theoretical underpinnings and the theorists would be able to apply their studies to real-world events and potentially have policy effects in an age where economists are afforded more political attention.¹⁷⁴

Such a discussion around Smith has the potential to ignite sustained and rich discussion over the importance and role of markets in fostering human wellbeing, as well as the composition and measurement of wellbeing itself. As seen in section 1.5, Smithian arguments can be found to suit both the political left and right on such issues, meaning this debate would have the ability to expand the ideological diversity of scholars looking at both Smith and at wellbeing.¹⁷⁵

Here we might see arguments from the left such as Davies’¹⁷⁶ focus on the alienating effects of the market (which Smith discussed in *The Wealth of Nations*);

¹⁷² Smith (1759), IV.i.8

¹⁷³ Rasmussen (2006)

¹⁷⁴ Nussbaum (2016)

¹⁷⁵ Sen (2013)

¹⁷⁶ Davies (2015)

Sen's consideration of Smith as an advocate of a more centrist position of markets managed in the interests of society at large¹⁷⁷; and from the right a rejection of the prescriptions of most modern happiness economists as 'men of system' who would damage wellbeing through the 'unintended consequences' of damage to the Smithian conceptions of the processes of 'natural liberty' and 'distributive justice' (mirroring Hayekian claims the road to serfdom is paved with good intentions¹⁷⁸). This is an argument expanded by Rasmussen¹⁷⁹ who suggests that the successful functioning of a commercial society creates greater liberty and security within political systems, both vital aspects of Smithian happiness. This is illustrative of the deepness and richness of debates available with the consideration of Smithian ideas.

Smith also offers us an alternative standard for the eudaimonic tradition. With Bentham as a reference point for the epicurean tradition, it makes sense to compare him to Smith, as contemporaries who wrote in the same historical context and exchanged letters¹⁸⁰. This is a more useful comparison than with Aristotle, who as noted in section 3.3, was writing in the significantly different context of antiquity, as the modern state (and global economy) requires very different social norms due to our reliance on the impersonal work of millions globally rather than those in our City-State with whom we regularly and personally interact.

Consequently, discussions of Smithian ideas and the potential issues around incommensurability and sometimes incompatible goods is not merely important in gaining greater understanding of one of the West's most influential theorists, but also

¹⁷⁷ Sen (2013)

¹⁷⁸ Hayek, F (1976 [1944]) *The Road to Serfdom*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul

¹⁷⁹ Rasmussen (2006)

¹⁸⁰ Hollander (2016)

offers a discussion of a range of goods within an integrated theory of analytical economics, moral philosophy, and discussions of human wellbeing and happiness in a way that is different and arguably much richer than those prominent within the field today. Here Smith displays the level of engagement with philosophy and normative political theory that Nussbaum laments the absence of in modern economics¹⁸¹.

Wider discussion around these topics would open the important debates that Van der Rijt¹⁸² suggests have largely been missing around what should constitute happiness, if it should in fact be the aim of governments and, if so, how these governments could successfully construct, measure, and obtain such goals. In a global political climate where wellbeing and happiness are climbing political agendas, such debates will have significant real-world consequences.

Beyond the benefits suggested above, it is likely there are many other ways in which we would be able to see the benefits of greater reflection on Smith's work on wellbeing, as *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* has been shown to have already anticipated a range of developments 'subsequently' made by the fields of both behavioural and happiness economics, yet remains relatively unexplored. Thus, there are potentially numerous bountiful insights hidden both within the book and within its relationship to *The Wealth of Nations*.

Conclusion

This paper aims to lay the groundwork for an increasing engagement with the work of Adam Smith within the field of wellbeing. It has shown that Smith is both highly relevant in terms of anticipating developments in the field, offering strong arguments

¹⁸¹ Nussbaum (2016)

¹⁸² Van der Rijt (2015)

against the current prominence afforded to the SWB approach, and exemplifying a comprehensive theory combining wellbeing, political economy, and moral philosophy. Furthermore, Smithian ideas may be vital in providing strong and timely interventions against the emergent 'hegemony of happiness', which has been shown to be both limited in its understanding of human wellbeing and potentially politically undesirable. Instead, Smith's work offers a richer understanding of the complex nature of desirable human ends, and how this is liable to change between cultures, individuals, and over time. Smith is thus a strong alternative to the current dominant philosophical figures in the wellbeing literature, showing Bentham's hedonism to be insufficient to foster real human flourishing and offering a more individualistic, less paternalistic, conception of the eudaimonic tradition that is more suited to the functioning of individuals in modernity.

Given these factors, the lack of engagement with Smith's work in the field of wellbeing is surprising. The potential reasons for this have been outlined but offer no insurmountable reason as to why greater engagement with Smith would not be either possible or beneficial. Subsequently, it has then been shown how such consideration of Smith could lead to new insights into both the nature of human flourishing and the role of the market in providing/preventing such flourishing. This is not only relevant to discussions around wellbeing, but also key to understanding one of the most influential scholars in the history of Western political thought and helping to bring philosophy back into economics.

All of these considerations pose complex, interesting, and vital questions, with central importance to the way we think about human wellbeing, how governments should act towards wellbeing issues, and ultimately how we can structure society in the interests of wellbeing promotion. Across all of these topics, we can see that

Smith offers opportunities to open these vital questions for lively and engaging debates that will push the field, and society at large, towards a richer understanding of human wellbeing.

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