

Dissertations on Adam Smith

Adam Smith is a classic author and an unavoidable reference to carry out the increasingly difficult task of seeking explanations about our society. As Jeffrey Alexander affirms in his article “The Centrality of the Classics”, these texts fulfill a special function in the social sciences. In these sciences, unlike the natural sciences, traditions coexist in disagreement regarding their underlying assumptions. The classic texts contribute to give a place to disagreements without this generating an impediment for a systematic reflection of society. As Alexander claims: "By speaking in terms of the classics, we can have relative confidence that our interlocutors will at least know what we are talking about, even if they do not recognize their own particular position in our discussion"¹. It is very noticeable in the case of Adam Smith, who is recovered from various traditions many times in conflict with each other.

This centrality of Smith, widely recognized in the field of economics, has recently been extended to the broader field of the social sciences and humanities. It is notorious to any historian of ideas that Smith was able to anticipate the development of the nascent commercial and industrial society. His capacity for representation allowed him to capture a vivid picture of the society to which he belonged and understand what he was becoming. However, for a long time studying Adam Smith meant almost exclusively studying his economic work *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations (WN)*. Currently this horizon is extended to all of the author’s work² and especially to the relationship between his different works. Likewise, besides being considered a precursor of economics, more and more links are being studied and found that relate his work to philosophy, sociology and other areas of the humanities. At the same time, the discovery of these links has allowed us to better understand the meaning and scope of his economic work. The study of these links in Smith's work with other areas, as well as the connection between the various topics addressed by the author – jurisprudence, moral, philosophy, politics, etc.–, has allowed not only to discover *WN*'s assumptions but also rethinking the limits of one's own economic discipline. In this way, it is possible to analyse the influence that the economy had and has on other fields of the humanities, as well as the influence that these fields have and had on it.

This issue of *Cultura Económica* had its kickoff at the “Adam Smith” symposium within the framework of the XXVI Conference on

Epistemology of Economic Sciences of the University of Buenos Aires, co-organized by the Research Center in Epistemology of Economic Sciences and by the Interdisciplinary Institute of Political Economy. Some articles published here are reformulations of those exhibitions.

In the first place, the article "Adam Smith and the Limits to Nature" by Hernán Gabriel Borisonik begins by giving a general sample of the modern tendency to see regular laws in economic behavior and to displace the social as a function of the individual. Faced with this, he searches Adam Smith's thought for some clues to recover an appeal to the need to take political measures when they are necessary, even if they oppose natural designs.

Then, Gonzalo Carrión in his article "The dialogic-imaginative character of creativity and innovation in Adam Smith" will deal with Smithian economic growth, focusing on two fundamental aspects: on the one hand, the importance of imagination in creative-innovative processes, and, on the other, the dialogical foundation of the division of labor.

In third place, the article by Ariadna Cazenave and Pablo Enrique Levín "Adam Smith: capitalism and its frustrated project of civilization" proposes to reconstruct the question of the historical viability of modern society within the work of Adam Smith.

Continuing, in the article by Pilar Piqué "On the possibility and viability of capitalist civilization. Adam Smith and Henri Bergson", it is reconstructed how, and to what extent, these two authors conceive the question about the historical conditions and circumstances that can make possible the realization of the promises of the values of modernity.

In fifth place, in Ruth Pustilnik's article "The conciliation between virtue and commerce in Adam Smith" it is argued that, according to Smith, virtue and commerce stimulate each other mechanically and cumulatively. Thus producing new links that generate new economic and moral concepts. The necessary and internal link between trade, division of labor, capital accumulation, prices and prudence is shown.

In the essays section we publish "Philosophical roots in the birth of Political Economy: the (in) completeness of Adam Smith's project" by Mauro Ciani, which recapitulates the debate between C. L. Griswold and I. S. Ross about the reasons for which Adam Smith failed to complete,

within the framework of the articulation of a philosophical system, the chapter dedicated to Natural Jurisprudence.

Then, an essay by Álvaro Perpere Viñuales, “From the first to the third edition of *WN*: the evolution of Adam Smith's economic thought in the light of his texts”, in which he deals with the intellectual evolution of Adam Smith between 1776 and 1784, at which time he published the first and third editions of the *Wealth of Nations*.

In third place, an essay outside the dossier is presented. Salvatore Muscolino writes “The complexity of the modern. A catholic critique between Carl Schmitt and Augusto Del Noce” in which he proposes to point out some affinities between these authors.

We hope that this issue dedicated to dissertations on Adam Smith will stimulate the study of the original texts of classical economic authors, bringing this hermeneutical practice that is common in the humanities closer to the economic sciences.

Ruth Pustilnik
Guest Editor
rpustil@hotmail.com

¹ Alexander, J. (1987). “La centralidad de los clásicos”. En Giddens, A. & Turner, J. *La teoría social hoy*. Madrid: Alianza Editorial, p. 43.

² Reeder (1998) reconstructs the grand plan that Smith sets out to carry out, the areas of knowledge it encompasses, and the works through which he carries it out. See Reeder, J. (1998). “Estudio preliminar”. En Smith, A. *Estudios filosóficos*. Pirámide: Madrid, p. 27.