Remote Encounters of a Distant Kind: Natives and Westerners in Adam Smith's International Thought

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1. Introduction

International relations, through the prism of the British Empire in particular, were one of Smith's major concerns when he completed *The Wealth of Nations*[2]. Many scholars[3] agree with David Hume's view[4] that the American problem gradually became of such interest to Smith that he delayed the publication of the WN in 1776, when the work had been completed for almost three years[5]. His attention to the evolution of the conflict between the North American British colonies and the metropolis is particularly noticeable in the voluminous chapter 7 of Book IV of the work, entitled "Of the Colonies".

Much has been said about the importance of this chapter, which Smith himself saw as the climax of his "very violent attack (…) upon the whole commercial system of Great Britain[6]". Colonial trade restrictions, bitterly criticized by the author, indeed appear as the archetypal form of the monopoly system promoted by the mercantilist approach[7]. The stylized fact, therefore, most likely to represent and to focus the author's reproaches towards the "school" of thought that he explicitly designates as his main target in the WN. Smith's discourse on colonies has consequently been examined mainly through the prism of his critique of mercantilism. Most contributions emphasize the pernicious effects of exclusive trade on colonies as well as on "mother countries", notably the fact that these policies negatively affected the growth of both[8] or insist on Smith's warning that they did benefit only a minority of merchants and manufacturers at the expense of all other parties[9].

Comparatively, the relationship between colonist and colonized – in other words between "Natives" and Westerners - has been less brought into focus. This relationship is not limited to the North American case, since Smith also refers in WN.IV.vii as well as in other parts of his work to the Spanish and Portuguese conquests of South America, to the enslavement of African populations and

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[2] WN henceforth.

[3] For instance, Hébert (1996, p. 74); Mizuta (1996, p. 57); Skinner (1996, p. 115); Winch (1996, p. 40).

[4] See *Corr*, Letter 149, p. 185-186.

[5] According to Mizuta (1996, p. 57).

[6] See *Corr*, Letter 208, p. 251.

[7] "The colonial project as such is the most spectacular expression of the mercantile system", Diatkine (1996; p. 25); "The policy of Europe towards colonies had been a prime example of the folly and injustice of the mercantile system", Winch (1996, p. 45).

[8] See particularly Clary & Hill (1990). Skinner (1996) considers that the colonies were comparatively less affected, despite the trade monopoly. Hebert (1996) analyses the relationship between the American colonies and Great Britain through a benefit-cost framework and concludes that the net benefits of independence - and therefore the removal of mercantilist-inspired regulation acts - were, according to Smith, positive for both parties.

[9] See Diatkine (1996), Clary & Hill (1990, p. 49: "The trade monopoly did provide a higher rate of profit to the merchant class but at the expense of the general interest of the entire country"), Hébert (1996, p. 83: "Monopolization of the colonial trade produced profits for a small number of merchants while simultaneously raising costs to consumers everywhere"), Skinner (1996, p. 122-123 : "In Smith's eyes, the principal advisers on current British policies had been the merchant groups (…) Government too had fallen into a trap prepared by 'the groundless jealousy of the merchants and manufactures of the mother country' (WN, ii., 582)", Winch (1996, p. 41: "he advised legislators in Britain to accommodate her future views and designs (…) by abandoning the (…) prejudices of her merchant-influenced politicians").

to the conduct of European trading companies in the East Indies. Smith's discourse on these topics has mainly been considered through the question of whether he was, or was not, an avant-garde anti-colonial thinker[10]. This is both an important and, to some extent, fascinating question, but we believe that it does not exhaust all discussion on the subject. The encounter between colonists and colonized in the eighteenth century[11] is also the scene of a culture shock[12] and of an analysis of the general relationships and comparisons likely to be established between what was customarily referred to in the Age of Enlightenment as "civilization," "savagery" and "barbarism".

This encounter is, in fact, two-dimensional: on the one hand, we find the *actual* encounter between settlers and Natives, marked by the violence and dispossession suffered by the latter; on the other hand, we find the *remote* encounter - largely inspired by the travel accounts[13] of missionaries, explorers, adventurers, etc. - between the European scholar and civilizations of which he could, actually, only be in physical contact with a handful of "specimens" imported into Europe by the explorers as travel booty in the same way as exotic animals. Now Smith's discourse on this second topic is rich and protean: it mobilizes at the same time an explanation of the economic and military balances of power between savage, barbarous and civilized nations; a - materialist - vision of the place of these different types of societies in the comparative History of nations; a moral philosopher's discourse on the comparative virtues of the civilized man and the savage man; a questioning, finally, of the possibility or impossibility of relations between societies that are far apart, from a geographical point of view as well as from that of mores and customs, based on his principle of sympathy.

In what follows, we begin by examining what we call the *remote* encounter between the philosopher and Natives, that is, the various comparisons made by Smith between western and overseas societies. We will notably observe that while he sees European nations as much more economically advanced than "savage" and "barbarous" nations, Smith contrasts insistently the superior self-command and magnanimity of the Native with the greater tendency to humanity and compassion of the civilized man. This may partly explain why according to him the military relationship between "barbarous" and civilized nations appears at first sight to be balanced. We will then turn to the *actual* encounter between Westerners and Natives, i.e., Smith's depiction of modern colonization. We will first see that he was unequivocal in his criticism of European colonialism, which he saw as essentially motivated by greed and dooming the conquered populations to "dreadful misfortunes". Such a deleterious outcome is not inherent to all colonization process, according to Smith. It was partly due to what he describes as an accidental event: the invention of firearms, which the European Nations benefited from in their overseas conquest. Lastly, we will try to explain why Europeans lost their virtues of humanity through contact with the overseas populations, in other words, how their love of domination overrode sympathy, and how Smith envisions to overcome this issue. To do so, we will refer not only to WN, IV.vii, but also mobilize Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments* and his lectures at Glasgow University.

[10] See for example Pitts (2005), Hill (2010), Rothschild (2012), Hopkins (2013), Williams (2014), Ince (2021).

[11] There were of course writings on the subject in earlier centuries, but the intensification of the Atlantic slave trade and of the North American conquest seem to have inspired a particularly rich literature in the age of enlightenment.

[12] "The New World was (…) something difficult to locate within the received worldview", Cremaschi (2017, p. 15).

[13] Marouby (2004, p. 242-244) provides a list of bibliographic sources on which Smith relies, among which he highlights (p. 110-120) Lafitau's *Mœurs des sauvages américains* (1724) and Charlevoix's *Histoire et description générale de la Nouvelle France* (1744). Smith indeed mentions both authors in his lectures (see LJ(A), ii.96, p. 106; iv.5, p. 201). Other sources might include Smith's own personal acquaintances, as he was "surrounded, from his earliest childhood, by families with commercial and colonial connections", including slave owners (Rothschild 2012, p. 193-194).

2. Comparisons between savage, barbarous and civilized societies: Smith's *remote* encounter with the natives

The encounter between Westerners and Natives appears from Smith's point of view, as well as from that of most of his literate contemporaries[14], as a kind of clash of cultures and is the excuse for several comparisons. Indeed, the different themes addressed in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*[15], the *Wealth of Nations*, and the *Lectures on Jurisprudence*[16] are an occasion, for the author, to compare "savage", "barbarous" and "civilized" societies from an economic, moral, and military perspective. From an economic perspective, this comparison mobilizes what he considers to be the main cause of the wealth of nations, the division of labour (§2.1.). Economic disparities due to the degree of advancement of the division of labour allow Smith to explain in part the greater or lesser military power of nations and thus the balance of power between them (§2.3.). Because of his materialist approach, economic elements also allow Smith to account for the moral differences between societies (§2.2.).

If the economic and more generally "civilisational" comparison is clearly to Europe's advantage, things appear much more balanced on the moral level. The military balance of power, since it depends on both economic and moral criteria, appears as a sort of middle ground between the two. Be that as it may, it should be noted that Smith explains the backwardness of savage and barbarous societies by material and not by atavistic or climatic criteria.

2.1. Economic disparities and the four stages scheme

There is no discussion on the fact that Smith, like virtually all his contemporaries, considers European nations to be far more economically advanced than conquered nations, as well as far better governed. This general view is encapsulated by his famous insistence on the superior material affluence of an "industrious and frugal peasant" in a "civilised and prosperous country' compared to that of an "African king, absolute master of the lives and liberties of ten thousand naked savages"[17]. And there is of course a connection between economic and political improvement, since Smith, as noted by Lisa Hill (2010, p. 466) can be said to endorse Montesquieu's "doux commerce" thesis[18] when he maintains that "commerce and manufactures gradually introduced order and good government, and with them, the liberty and security of individuals (…) who had before lived almost in a continual state of war with their neighbours[19]". This general improvement also spreads in the realm of arts and manners since "opulence and commerce commonly precede the improvement of arts, and refinement of every sort[20]".

If Smith's look on overseas population can retrospectively be described as Eurocentric since it consists in gauging each civilization on the basis of western criterions ("progress", "wealth" and so on), the overall uncondescending and non-judgemental nature of his comments on Natives is nevertheless noticeable and stands out from most writings of the time. Indeed, in contrast to explanations in terms

[14] See for example, Montesquieu's *De l'esprit des lois* (1748), David Hume's essay *Of National Characters* (1753), Voltaire's *Essai sur les mœurs et l'esprit des nations* (1756), Adam Ferguson's *Essay on the History of Civil Society* (1767) or William Robertson's *History of America* (1777). For a broader discussion of the different depictions of the Natives that emerges from these works, see Dellemotte (2021).

[15] TMS henceforth.

[16] LJ henceforth.

[17] WN, I.i.11, p. 24. See also his comparison between the material ease of "a common day labourer in Britain or in Holland" and an "Indian Prince" (*LJ*, p. 338-339; p. 562). A comparison which was most probably inspired by Locke's *Treatise on Civil Government* (see 2nd treatise, chap. 5, §41).

[18] See Montesquieu (1748, XX.1-2).

[19] WN, II.iv.4, p. 412.

[20] LRBL, ii.115, p. 137.

of atavism[21] or climate[22] used by many of his contemporaries, Smith offers an original solution to the problem posed by the Natives' backwardness, in that it consists in explaining it by mobilizing economic – and more fundamentally material - features, that is, by putting forward a rudimentary social division of labour and material precariousness as explanatory factors.

Smith first presents the degree of refinement of the division of labour as the criterion of demarcation between the "early and rude" and the "advanced" states of society, elucidating why in the latter "a workman, even of the lowest and poorest order (…) may enjoy a greater share of the necessaries and conveniences of life than it is possible for any savage to acquire[23]". Secondly, he adds that this division of labour is limited by the opportunities for exchange, i.e., solvent outlets[24]. The logical consequence of this double thesis is to derive the poverty of "primitive" societies from an economic environment for which they are not responsible. Indeed, a social division of labour that is at least somewhat elaborate, and the subsequent production of wealth that it entails, are quite simply inconceivable in small-scale societies such as tribes or villages far remote from each other and with no regular contact with the outside world.

> "In a savage tribe of North Americans, who are generally hunters, the greatest number who can subsist easily together seldom exceeds one hundred or one hundred and fifty persons. Each village is at so great a distance from every other, and it is so very difficult and dangerous to travel the country, that there is scarce any intercourse between the different villages even of the same nation except what war and mutual defence give occasion to. *In such a country it is impossible that any one employment should be entirely separated from every other*. (…) One man may excel all his companions in some particular piece of dexterity, but *it is impossible that he can be wholly employed in it, for want of a market to take off and exchange* for other commodities the greater part of the goods which he would, in this case, necessarily produce. *Hence the poverty which must necessarily take place in such a society.*" ("Early Draft of the *WN*", LJ, p. 583, our italics)

Since the absence of specialization, due to a rudimentary division of labour, undermines the productive powers of labour, the "laziness" commonly attributed to "savages" can be explained by material and psychological factors rather than climatic or anatomical ones, just as in the case of rural dwellers:

> "A man commonly saunters a little in turning his hand from one sort of employment to another. When he first begins the new work he is seldom very keen and hearty (…) The habit of sauntering and of indolent careless application, *which is naturally, or rather necessarily acquired* by every country workman who is obliged to change his work and his tools every half hour, and to apply his

[21] Too many authors might be evoked here. Among the most renowned, see Voltaire (1756, introd., sect. 3 : "most Negroes, all the Cafris, are immersed in the same stupidity, and will languish there for a long time"), Kant (1764, p. 61 : "this scoundrel was completely black from head to foot, a distinct proof that what he said was stupid") or Hume's infamous essay *Of National Characters* (1753, p. 208, 629-630 : "I am apt to suspect the negroes, and in general all the other species of men (…) to be naturally inferior to the whites. There never was a civilized nation of any other complexion than white, nor even any individual eminent either in action or speculation. (…) Such a uniform and constant difference could not happen, in so many countries and ages, if nature had not made an original distinction between these breeds of men").

[22] "Nature and the climate rule almost alone over the savages"; Montesquieu (1748, XIX.4). Among the disseminators of the climate theory in the eighteenth century, see, apart from Montesquieu, Jean-Batiste Dubos' *Réflexions critiques sur la poésie et sur la peinture* (1712) and John Arbuthnot's *Essay Concerning the Effects of Air on Human Bodies* (1733). Buffon also transposes the climate theory into the field of his *Natural History* (1749-1804) to explain the variety of human phenotypes.

[23] WN, introduction, p. 11.

[24] "When the market is very small, no person can have any encouragement to dedicate himself entirely to one employment, for want of the power to exchange all that surplus part of the produce of his own labour, which is over and above his own consumption, for such parts of the produce of other men's labour as he has occasion for", WN, I.iii, p. 31.

> hand in twenty different ways almost every day of his life, *renders him almost always slothful and lazy, and incapable of any vigorous application* even on the most pressing occasions." (WN, I.i, p. 18-19, our italics)

There is also according to Smith a close relationship between economic, scientific and technological progress, the latter being considered by most of his contemporaries as the main gauge of the "genius" of a nation. Regarding the general progress of knowledge, Smith explains in one of his first essays (the *History of Astronomy*[25]), that the harsh material living conditions of savages do not allow them the leisure to philosophize:

> "A savage, whose subsistence is precarious, whose life is every day exposed to the rudest dangers, has no inclination to amuse himself with searching out what, when discovered, seems to serve no other purpose than to render the theatre of nature a more connected spectacle to his imagination. Many of these smaller incoherences, which in the course of things perplex philosophers, entirely escape his attention." (*EPS*, p. 48)

Now this lack of philosophy, itself fed by a rudimentary division of labour, puts - as can be deduced from the *WN* - a brake on technological progress:

> "In the progress of society, philosophy or speculation becomes, like every other employment, the principal or sole trade and occupation of a particular class of citizens. Like every other employment too, it is subdivided into a great number of different branches, each of which affords occupation to a peculiar tribe or class of philosophers; and this subdivision of employment in philosophy, as well as in every other business, improves dexterity, and saves time (...) more work is done upon the whole, and the quantity of science is considerably increased by it." (*WN*, I.i, p. 21-22).

The general backwardness of "primitive" societies thus results both from precarious living conditions and from an embryonic division of labour, preventing specialization and its material and speculative benefits. The Native, consequently cleared of the atavistic or climatic-behavioural inferiority that many thinkers of the time attributed to him, remains nevertheless prisoner of an inferior stage of History. Smith, like other prominent authors in the field of eighteenth-century conjectural history[26], indeed locates Natives in the stages of hunters or herdsmen, that is to say the two first stages of economic development according to the four stages scheme[27]. More precisely, as we will develop below, he locates African and East Indian societies in the age of shepherds, and Amerindians in the age of hunters. In any case, due to the difficulty of acquiring the first stocks that will allow the division of labour process to take off and flourish, progress is according to Smith very slow in these first stages of society:

> "*Before labour can be divided some accumulation of stock is necessary* (…) Before a man can commence farmer he must at least have laid in a years provision, because he does not receive the fruits of his labour till the end of the season. (...) *Bare subsistence is almost all that a savage can procure, and having no stock to begin upon, nothing to maintain him but what is produced by the exertion of his own strength, it is no wonder that he continues long in an indigent state*. The meanest labourer in a polished society has in many respects an advantage over a savage. He has more assistance in his labour; he has only one particular thing to do, which by assiduity he attains a facility in performing; he has also machines and instruments which greatly assist him. An Indian has not so much as a pick-ax, a spade, or a shovel, or any thing else but his own labour. *This is one great cause of the slow progress of opulence in every country*; till some stock be produced there

[25] This essay was published posthumously, but in all likelihood written before the TMS. See Whightman (1980, p. 5-11).
[26] On Smith's historical discourse, see Meek (1976, p. 99-130) or Marouby (2004).
[27] Hunting, pasturage, agriculture and commerce. On the four stages theory, see Meek (1976)'s classical study.

> can be no division of labour, and before a division of labour take place there can be very little accumulation of stock[28]." (LJ(B), 286-287, p. 521-522, our italics)

Two comments can be made here. First, it is important to underline that Smith applies this interpretative framework to "every country". Second, such a materialistic vision tends again to restore the image of the savage, by explaining his situation from economic circumstances summoning neither the idea of intellectual inferiority, nor that of deleterious characters[29]. Furthermore, the four stages theory, insofar as it aims to account for a universal path to economic development, is inseparable from the idea of progress, seen from a deterministic angle. In other words, one can suppose that savage and barbarous nations will ineluctably, although slowly, leave the hunting or pasture stages as civilized nations have done in the past[30]. Today's savages, as well as ancient and present Westerners, are indeed subject to the natural and constant desire to better one's condition[31] and the will and capacity for "progress" are universal and inherent in every man[32].

More generally such a vision, insofar as it rests on the assumption of the uniformity of the capacities of the mind, regardless of place and age[33], leads to giving priority to the acquired over the innate. Accordingly, it is no surprise that Smith asserts that "the understandings of the greater part of men are necessarily formed by their ordinary employments[34]" and that the diversity of talents is not the cause but the consequence of the division of labour (*WN*, I.ii.4). This anti-innatism is coupled with an - at least moderate - relativism[35]. Primitive societies are characterized by a lack of philosophy and material precariousness, but also by radical equality and the absence of economic oppression. In a nutshell, as the exact antithesis of advanced societies.

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[28] About this paradox, see Marouby (2004, p. 154–159). "According to Smith's own reasoning, the division of labour should never happen" (*ibid*, p. 158).

[29] "[*Smith*] turns first to environmental and material explanations for a society's level of development and seeks to explain the diversity of developmental stages around the world without suggesting that more advanced societies are so because they are abler or more rational", Pitts (2005, p. 29; see also p. 34).

[30] Smith posits « a stadial sequence with four universal, developmental stages based on means of subsistence (hunting, pasturage, agriculture and commerce) through which all societies will pass », Hill (2010, p. 465).

[31] "The savages who do not apply themselves to different trades can each of them supply themselves with food, with cloaths, and with lodging. The fruits of the earth spontaneously produced, with the flesh of the animalls he takes by the chase, supply him with food which he can easily prepare. A few skins, stitched perhaps together with a few thongs of the same, supply him with raiment, and a few poles stuck in the ground and covered over with skins or matts afford him a shelter in the night or in the inclemencies of the weather. *The same temper and inclinations which prompted him to make these improvements push him to still greater refinements. This way of life appears rude and slovenly and can no longer satisfy him; he seeks after more elegant nicities and refinement"*, LJ(A), vi.12-13, p. 335, our italics.

[32] "Smith's narrative describes a 'natural' progress from one stage to the next, driven, among other factors, by the pressures of population growth and universal human capacities and desires, such as the desire to better one's condition and the disposition to truck, barter, and exchange", Pitts (2005, p. 28).

[33] As claimed by Dugald Stewart (1854, p. 69-70), who first identified the concept of conjectural – or theoretical – history in the works of historians and early social scientists of Scottish and French enlightenment : "that the capacities of the human mind have been in all ages the same, and that the diversity of phenomena exhibited by our species is the result merely of the different circumstances in which men are placed, has been long received as an incontrovertible logical maxim [...] the application of this fundamental and leading idea to the […] theoretical history of society in all its various aspect [...] is the peculiar glory of the latter half of the eighteenth century". See also Cremaschi (2017, p. 16-17: "human nature reveals itself as much in commercial society as in the age of hunters, and those revealed at different times and places are just different traits of one human nature") or Rothschild (2012, p. 196: "the universal human nature to which [*Smith*] alludes so frequently is the human nature of all individual human beings, including the individuals whom he describes as 'natives' or 'savages'").

[34] WN, V.i.f, p. 781-782.

[35] Forman-Barzilai (2006, p. 111) considers Smith's view to be "pluralist" rather than relativist.

> "In a civilized society the poor provide both for themselves and for the enormous luxury of their superiors (. . .) all the indolent and frivolous retainers upon a court are, in the same manner, fed, cloathed, and lodged by the labour of those who pay the taxes which support them. Among savages, on the contrary, every individual enjoys the whole produce of his own industry. There are among them no landlords, no usurers, no taxgatherers." ("Early Draft of part of WN", *LJ*, p. 563–4)

It is only a short step from there to thinking that primitive societies are much less prosperous but more equitable than civilized ones - where "so much oppressive inequality[36]" reigns. In his lectures[37], Smith also points out that although the development of commerce favours probity and punctuality, it generally narrows the views of men - confined to one kind of work thanks to the division of labour - to a degree that can render low people stupid, when their daily occupation consists in carrying out one or two elementary and repetitive operations[38]. The development of the division of labour also results in the carelessness of the education of children, sooner putted to work than in previous stages where this division is less advanced. As summed up by Cremaschi (2017, p. 29), in Smith's view commercial society "is not the end point of a triumphal march", and the evolution from the first to the fourth stage carries "losses and gains".

2.2. Moral characters of the savage and of the civilised man

This balanced vision is particularly reflected in the field of morals strictly speaking, by the identification of two categories of virtues: the "amiable" (and feminine[39]) virtues of civilized man; the "respectable" (and masculine) virtues of the savage and barbarous states.

> "Among civilized nations, the virtues which are founded upon humanity, are more cultivated than those which are founded upon self-denial and the command of the passions. Among rude and barbarous nations, it is quite otherwise, the virtues of self-denial are more cultivated than those of humanity." (TMS, V.2.9, p. 204-205)

The development of these categories of virtues derives again, just as economic and philosophical progress, from the material conditions of existence[40]:

> "The general security and happiness which prevail in ages of civility and politeness, afford little exercise to the contempt of danger, to patience in enduring labour, hunger, and pain (…) Among savages and barbarians it is quite otherwise. Every savage undergoes a sort of Spartan discipline, and by the necessity of his situation is inured to every sort of hardship. (…) His circumstances not only habituate him to every sort of distress, but teach him to give way to none of the passions which that distress is apt to excite. He can expect from his countrymen no sympathy or indulgence for such weakness." (*ibid*. p. 205)

Although he distinguishes between the character and virtues of the savage or barbarian and that of the civilized man, Smith does not draw any explicit hierarchy from it[41]. He can only appreciate the

[36] *Ibid*., p. 564.
[37] LJ(B), 326-330, p. 538-540.
[38] See Smith's diatribe on the deleterious effects of the technical division of labour in WN (V.i.f.50, p. 781-782).
[39] "Humanity is the virtue of a woman, generosity of a man", TMS, VI.2.10, p. 190.
[40] See Cremaschi (2015, p. 20-21, 25). Smith also explains the "greater uniformity of character (...) observed among savages than among civilized nations" by a rudimentary division of labour : "among the former there is scarce any division of labour and consequently no remarkable difference of employments; whereas among the latter there is an almost infinite variety of occupations, of which the respective duties bear scarce any resemblance to one another" ("Early Draft of part of WN", LJ, p. 563–564).
[41] "Thus, neither the state of the savage nor that of those living in polished society may be declared to be superior" according to Cremaschi (2017, p. 23); "Smith articulated a moral and social theory that was broad-minded in its analysis of unfamiliar societies and practices and careful to avoid presumptions of European cultural

predominance in modern societies of virtues that foster sympathy – the sharing of sentiments between a spectator and an actor on which Smith bases his moral philosophy - and sensibility to the feelings of others[42], but is on the other hand highly critical of the decline of the martial spirit[43] and the "effeminacy[44]" of his contemporaries. Conversely:

> "When a savage is made prisoner of war, and receives, as is usual, the sentence of death from his conquerors, he hears it without expressing any emotion, and afterwards submits to the most dreadful torments, without ever bemoaning himself, or discovering any other passion but contempt of his enemies (...) The same contempt of death and torture prevails among all other savage nations. There is not a negro from the coast of Africa who does not, in this respect, possess a degree of magnanimity which the soul of his sordid master is too often scarce capable of conceiving[45]." (TMS, V.2.9, p. 206-207)

Smith's contrast with some of his literate contemporaries is again remarkable[46]. Conversely, Montesquieu insisted on the lack of courage[47] of the peoples of the torrid zones or on the abundance in which the savages of America seemed - according to him - to live[48]. And about slavery, Voltaire - although denouncing its cruelty[49] - expressed an opinion far removed from that of Smith:

> "We buy domestic slaves only from Negroes. We are blamed for this trade: a people who sell their children is even more reprehensible than the buyer: this trade demonstrates our superiority; he who gives himself to a master was born to have one.", Voltaire (1756, chap. 197, our translation)

Smith's close friend, David Hume (1753, p. 214), also tended to blame African people for the slave trade:

> "You may obtain any thing of the Negroes by offering them strong drink; and may easily prevail with them to sell, not only their children, but their wives and mistresses, for a cask of brandy[50]."

Now this comparison of virtues and characters implies again in Smith's view gains and losses. The *quid pro quo* for the savage's magnanimity is its lack of humanity, which is the consequence of the

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or moral superiority (…) Smith's theory is unusual in its refusal to rank societies or deprecate members of less "polished" societies, and Smith did not draw on it to support civilizing European rule over other societies", Pitts (2005, p. 25).

[42] As Pitts (2005, p. 36) and Cremaschi (2017, p. 23-24, 32) judiciously point out, Smith's distinction between both set of virtues does not amount to saying that savages are altogether incapable of sympathy and of the desire to get other people's approval, but rather that virtues and characters expressing self-command are more valued in a savage society than virtues and characters expressing sensitivity.

[43] WN, V.i.f.59, p. 786-787; LJ(B), 331-333, p. 540-541 ("Another bad effect of commerce is that it sinks the courage of mankind, and tends to extinguish martial spirit", p. 540).

[44] LJ, p. 339, 540 & 563.

[45] As French translator of the TMS notice, this moral critique of slavery contrasts with the essentially economic critique found in the WN. On Smith's position towards slavery, see Salter (1996), Lapidus (2002) and Silva (2022).

[46] According to Pitts (2005, p. 25), Smith has a "respectful posture toward non-European societies he regarded as being in earlier stages of development" and his moral theory "encourages open-mindedness toward unfamiliar values and practices" (p. 43); "Smith is less ethnocentric than most contemporaries", Cremaschi (2017, p. 24).

[47] "La chaleur du climat peut être si excessive que le corps y sera absolument sans force. Pour lors l'abattement passera à l'esprit même ; aucune curiosité, aucune noble entreprise, aucun sentiment généreux ; les inclinations y seront toutes passives ; la paresse y fera le bonheur", Montesquieu (1748, XIV.2).

[48] "Ce qui fait qu'il y a tant de nations sauvages en Amérique, c'est que la terre y produit d'elle-même beaucoup de fruits dont on peut se nourrir. (…) La chasse et la pêche achèvent de mettre les hommes dans l'abondance", *ibid*., XVIII.9.

[49] See the famous episode of the slave of Surinam in chapter 19 of *Candide* (1759).

[50] The argument was commonplace at the time, and can be found, for example, in the article "Nègre (Commerce)" (1765, anonymous author) of the *Encyclopédie*.

hardiness of his daily life[51]. His revenge, "when he comes to give way to it, is always sanguinary and dreadful" (TMS, V.2.11, p. 208), and the harshness of his character can lead to barbarous customs, such as "roasting men alive" (LJ(A), iv.101, p. 239) or infanticide, a practice Smith believes "prevails among all savage nations" (TMS, V.2.15, p. 210). But even on this subjects, Smith's materialistic relativism surfaces. On infanticide he concedes that "in that rudest and lowest state of society it is undoubtedly more pardonable than in any other[52]" (*ibid*.). While regarding the alleged custom of certain tribes of North America consisting in tying "four boards round the heads of their children, and thus squeeze them, while the bones are tender and gristly, into a form that is almost perfectly square", he immediately comments in a tone close to Montaigne's *Essays*[53] :

> "Europeans are astonished at the absurd barbarity of this practice, to which some missionaries have imputed the singular stupidity of those nations among whom it prevails. But when they condemn those savages, they do not reflect that the ladies in Europe had, till within these very few years, been endeavouring, for near a century past, to squeeze the beautiful roundness of their natural shape into a square form of the same kind. And that, notwithstanding the many distortions and diseases which this practice was known to occasion, custom had rendered it agreeable among some of the most civilized nations which, perhaps, the world ever beheld." (TMS, V.1.8, p. 199).

Another flaw of the barbarian or savage's character is, according to Smith, duplicity and readiness to falsehood: "it is observed by all those who have been conversant with savage nations, whether in Asia, Africa, or America, that they are all equally impenetrable, and that, when they have a mind to conceal the truth, no examination is capable of drawing it from them." (TMS, V.2.11, p. 208). A habit they necessarily acquire, due to their global environment, whereas conversely, "polished people being accustomed to give way, in some measure, to the movements of nature, become frank, open, and sincere" (*ibid*.).

2.3. The military balance of power between nations

It is tempting to suppose that Smith attributes a pre-eminence to the Natives over Westerners in warfare because of the superior Spartan discipline, cruelty and duplicity he ascribes to them. But things reveal more complex than they first appear as he relates the military power of a nation to its stage of development.

At the beginning of Book 5 of WN, in a chapter entitled "Of the Expence of Defence[54]", Smith explains that the military strength of a nation depends on several elements such as population, obedience to leaders, skill in handling weapons and the ability to endure military expenditure. For him population is the primary factor influencing the military strength of a nation. Now, as Lange (2017, p. 114-115) points out, he considers that the size of population is determined by the availability of the means of subsistence which depends itself on the stage of society[55]. In other words, he believes that the population and consequently - all other things being equal – the military power of a nation increases with the progress of civilization. For instance, Smith argues that the larger population of the nations of shepherds, because of their mode of subsistence, gives them greater military power than the nations of hunters:

[51] "Hardiness is the character most suitable to the circumstances of a savage; sensibility to those of one who lives in a very civilized society", TMS, V.2.13, p. 209.
[52] See Pitts (2005, p. 48-49) discussion on the subject.
[53] A book of which Smith had a copy in his personal library. See Bonar (1894, p. 69).
[54] WN, V.i.a, p. 689-708.
[55] "[T]he populousness of every country must be in proportion to the degree of its improvement and cultivation." (WN, IV.vii.b.7, p. 568)

> "An army of hunters can seldom exceed two or three hundred men. The precarious subsistence which the chace affords could seldom allow a greater number to keep together for any considerable time. An army of shepherds, on the contrary, may sometimes amount to two or three hundred thousand. As long as nothing stops their progress, as long as they can go on from one district, of which they have consumed the forage, to another which is yet entire" (WN, V.i.a.5, p. 691).

The author even goes so far as to write that "there seems to be scarce any limit to the number [of shepherds] who can march on together" so that they could be a threat even to civilized nations (*ibid*.). Such a conclusion seems to suggest that a nation's military power unequivocally increases as civilisation progresses, but two other factors may mitigate this general effect. First is the skill in handling weapons which necessarily decreases with economic development. Smith indeed states that as civilization develops, people have less and less leisure time for military exercises. This phenomenon reaches its peak in commercial society where the cessation of any activity results in a loss of income[56]:

> "A shepherd has a great deal of leisure; a husbandman, in the rude state of husbandry, has some; an artificer or manufacturer has none at all. The first may, without any loss, employ a great deal of his time in martial exercises; the second may employ some part of it; but the last cannot employ a single hour in them without some loss, and his attention to his own interest naturally leads him to neglect them altogether. These improvements in husbandry too, which the progress of arts and manufactures necessarily introduces, leave the husbandman as little leisure as the artificer. Military exercises come to be as much neglected by the inhabitants of the country as by those of the town, and the great body of the people becomes altogether unwarlike." (WN, V.i.a.15, p. 697)

As our section 2.2. suggests, this negligence in military training is likely to be encouraged by the loss of martial spirit that goes along with the progress of material ease. Furthermore, the general decline in martial skills and spirit associated with the progress of society is accompanied by that of another element which Smith considers at least as decisive for the military power of a nation: obedience to leaders (WN, V.i.a.22-26, p. 699-701). Pastoral societies "like the Tartar or Arab militia" writes Smith, "go to war under the same chieftains whom they are accustomed to obey in peace" (*ibid*., p. 700). However, as society progresses, its members have less and less contact with their military leader, especially in peacetime, which tends to diminish their authority.

It is these two elements, the diminishing martial skills and authority of leaders, that lead Smith to advocate to the nations concerned a change of military organization to a professional army ("a standing army"[57]) - as opposed to a militia organization - in which soldiers, specializing in the "art of war[58]", are constantly subject to the authority of their officer. This is evidenced, for example, by the way he describes the change in military organization in Europe with the transition to the commercial society:

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[56] "Though a husbandman should be employed in an expedition, provided it begins after seed-time and ends before harvest, the interruption of his business will not always occasion any considerable diminution of his revenue. Without the intervention of his labour, nature does herself the greater part of the work which remains to be done. But the moment that an artificer, a smith, a carpenter, or a weaver, for example, quits his work-house, the sole source of his revenue is completely dried up […] in a country of which a great part of the inhabitants are artificers and manufacturers, a great part of the people who go to war must be drawn from those classes" (WN, V.i.a.9, p. 694-695).

[57] See, for instance, WN, V.i.a.19, p. 698.

[58] While Smith considers that specialization in most occupations "is not originally the effect of any human wisdom" (WN, I.ii.1, p. 25), he believes that the state must intentionally make soldiering a specific occupation: "Into other arts the division of labour is naturally introduced by the prudence of individuals, who find that they promote their private interest better by confining themselves to a particular trade, than by exercising a great number. But it is the wisdom of the state only which can render the trade of a soldier a particular trade separate and distinct from all others." (WN, V.i.a.14, p. 697)

> "The military force of the German and Scythian nations who established themselves upon the ruins of the western empire, continued for some time to be of the same kind in their new settlements, as it had been in their original country. It was a militia of shepherds and husbandmen, which, in time of war, took the field under the command of the same chieftains whom it was accustomed to obey in peace. It was, therefore, tolerably well exercised, and tolerably well disciplined. As arts and industry advanced, however, the authority of the chieftains gradually decayed, and the great body of the people had less time to spare for military exercises. Both the discipline and the exercise of the feudal militia, therefore, went gradually to ruin." (WN, V.i.a.37, p. 705)

In the end, the decline in martial skills and obedience to leaders associated with the economic progress of society renders necessary the adoption of a professional army. It is the means by which, Smith tells us, civilization can perpetuate itself for it is the only military organization capable of shifting the balance of power between barbarous and polished nations and offsetting the "natural superiority" which the former have over the latter.

> "When a civilized nation depends for its defence upon a militia, it is at all times exposed to be conquered by any barbarous nation which happens to be in its neighbourhood. The frequent conquests of all the civilized countries in Asia by the Tartars, sufficiently demonstrates the natural superiority, which the militia of a barbarous, has over that of a civilized nation. A well-regulated standing army is superior to every militia. Such an army […] can alone defend such a nation against the invasion of a poor and barbarous neighbour. It is only by means of a standing army, therefore, that the civilization of any country can be perpetuated, or even preserved for any considerable time." (WN, V.i.a.39, p. 705-706)

It is also the means by which barbarous nations can become civilized:

> "As it is only by means of a well-regulated standing army that a civilized country can be defended; so it is only by means of it, that a barbarous country can be suddenly and tolerably civilized." (WN, V.i.a.40, p. 706)

Now, according to Smith, a professional army "can best be maintained by an opulent and civilized nation", which brings us to the last factor that influences military power: the ability to endure military expenditure (WN, V.i.a.39, p. 705-706). The author insists on the inherent character of the military expenditures to increase with the progress of civilization. The more society progresses, the less men are able to provide for their needs, first in wartime - because war forces them to interrupt the activity that sustains them (WN, V.i.a.2-13, p. 689-697) - and then in peacetime - because of the specialization required to perfect the "art of war" (WN, V.i.a.14, p. 697). The State must therefore maintain soldiers in wartime as well as in peacetime in the most advanced societies that have a professional army. In civilized societies, Smith writes, "the soldiers are maintained altogether by the labour of those who are not soldiers[59]" (WN, V.i.a.11, p. 695). Whereas in savage or barbarous societies, "every man is a warrior as well as a hunter" (WN, V.i.a.2, p. 690) or a shepherd and subsists on his own labour in war and peace.

Thus, the establishment of a professional army, which is necessary or even decisive to maintain a favourable balance of military power, requires significant expenditure that civilised nations are best able to bear. On the other hand, it is the only way for them to compensate the loss of obedience to military leaders and martial skills which would expose them to the threat of barbarous nations.

[59] Just as unproductive labourers are maintained by productive labourers (WN, II.iii).

3. The *actual* confrontation between Westerners and Natives: an encounter of a *distant* kind

The above analysis provides a first framework for understanding Smith's overall position on modern European colonization. Notably, it shows that he displayed a comprehensive and non-condescending view of "savage" and "barbarous" societies, whose inhabitants he considered as being of the same nature as Westerners but placed in different material circumstances. In this section, we will argue that despite a few ambiguities pointed out by some commentators, Smith's condemnation of the harms done to the Natives by westerner colonists is unequivocal (§3.1.). On the other hand, we shall see that he believes that such persecutions are not inherent to any colonization process and were accidentally due to the disproportion of forces between Europeans and indigenous populations (§3.2.). If the preceding analysis helps to lift the veil on Smith's position on colonization, it raises another question: what led Europeans supposedly gifted with virtues of humanity to take advantage of their military supremacy to the point of enslaving and dispossessing the Natives? The answer to this question will lead us to focus on a powerful inclination that Smith considers to be natural to mankind: the love of domination (§3.3.).

3.1. An economic progress built on 'dreadful misfortunes'

Most works focusing on Smith's depiction of the *actual* encounter between colonists and colonized populations revolve around the extent to which he should be considered an anti-colonial author or not. As such, Williams (2014) argues that the straight-forward anti-colonial position bestowed on Smith by Pitts (2005) or Rothschild (2012) is exaggerated and should be tempered. In support of his argument, Williams (2014, p. 285) claims that (i) "Smith struggled to balance recognition of moral diversity with a universal moral framework, and a commitment to a particular interpretation of progress through history", (ii) "Smith's opposition to colonial rule derived largely from its impact on the metropole, rather than on its impact on the conquered and colonized" and (iii) "Smith recognised colonialism had brought 'improvement' in conquered territories".

If this reading has the merit of underlining some seeming ambivalences in Smith's discourse, it seems to us that it is based on a major flaw, consisting in considering native populations as a negligible matter in Smith's overall assessment of colonization[60], and that the three arguments put forward by Williams can be, at the very least, put into perspective.

Concerning point (i), Williams seems, like other commentators[61], to fall victim to a confusion between what comes under a positive discourse on the one hand - what are the dominant norms in a given society and why are they so, given their context? - and a normative discourse on the other hand - what these dominant norms ought to be? But Smith's overall moral discourse is rather positive[62] and,

[60] The same critic may be addressed to Hébert (1996), according to which Smith "took care to identify advantages and/or disadvantages *to all affected parties, i.e., the colonies as well as the mother country*, and the different classes of individuals within each politico-economic unit" (p. 79, our italics), and whose cost-benefits analysis obviously does not take Natives into account ("Policies (…) obviously must be evaluated from one perspective or the other — in this case, either from the perspective of the colonies or from that of the mother country", p. 82).

[61] We think particularly of works supposing that a "failure" of the system of sympathy to account for an ideal moral society would have gradually led Smith to an economic treatment of the social question - most notably in France, Dumont (1977, p. 83-93) and Diatkine (1991) who later changed his mind on the subject. Conversely, we consider that Smith's moral philosophy is essentially positive, and that the principle of sympathy allows him to account for the genealogy of the moral world as well as its imperfection and corruption. See next note below.

[62] We endorse T.D. Campbell's (1971) classic study on the subject. As Smith clarifies "the present inquiry is not concerning a matter of right, if I may say so, but concerning a matter of fact. We are not at present examining upon what principles a perfect being would approve of the punishment of bad actions; but upon what principles so weak and imperfect a creature as man actually and in fact approves of it" (TMS, II.i.5.9, p. 77).

as we have seen, imbued with materialism. Accordingly, the distinction he draws between savage and civilized virtues is essentially descriptive and aims at elucidating the emergence of value norms specific to a given society from its concrete economic circumstances. It is by the way significant that he does not establish a hierarchy between these two categories of virtues, and that his distinction is precisely intended to fit into his materialistic description of the evolution of human societies. Williams' argument also rests on the assumption of a universal morality in the author's thought whereas it is possible to assess, for reasons we have seen in section 2.2., that morality and morals according to Smith are - at least relatively - contextual[63]. Hence the relative inability of the impartial spectator "to completely transcend cultural differences" and "to render unbiased cross-cultural judgements", noted by Hill (2010, p. 471) and Forman-Barzilai (2006, p. 96) respectively. If there is any apparent tension between relativism and universalism in Smith[64], it seems that it can be resolved by considering that he posits a universal human nature[65], whose mores may vary as a result of adaptation to material circumstances and necessity[66].

Point (ii) is not an argument. What would an extended discussion on the plight of Natives do in a political economy book that logically extends more broadly on the economic impact of colonial mercantilism on the metropolis? It is not surprising that WN, rightly or wrongly considered the founding work of classical political economy, is primarily concerned with economic issues. In the same vein, one could question the sincerity of the concern expressed by Smith towards workers on the pretext that it only covers a few pages of the same book. The ethical question of the impact of colonization on the colonized is understandably a subsidiary concern in WN, while that of the economic impact of colonial mercantilism is a priority, especially in a book conceived by its author as "a very violent attack" upon the commercial system, of which colonial trade restrictions represented the most extreme form[67].

Let us now focus on point (iii). While it is true that Smith insists repeatedly on the progress – above all technological and economic - brought by European colonization on conquered territories, this in no way amounts to saying that he would have neglected its impact on the colonized populations, still less that he would have judged legitimate the motives that led Europeans to colonize. The first paragraphs of WN IV.vii. are, on the contrary, very explicit on the subject. The chapter begins with a comparison between rationales behind the colonies of ancient Greece, ancient Rome, and modern Europe[68]. According to Smith, the Greek settlement colonies were above all motivated by necessity (in response to the progressive overpopulation of the narrow territories of the states of ancient Greece) and had a status close to that of independent states. Those of ancient Rome were equally based on necessity, but also on the cupidity of the rich. They were subordinated to the metropolis, and consequently much less independent than Greek colonies. At the other end of the spectrum, in sharp contrast to ancient Greek colonies, modern European colonies all maintain a more or less close link of dependence with

[63] "Smith believes we can know what the impartial spectator's judgments would be only by considering the judgments actual spectators form (…) his own account of how we know what is praiseworthy is resolutely contextual", Pitts (2005, p. 15-16).

[64] On the subject, see the balanced analysis of Forman-Barzilai (2006) and Fleischacker (2011).

[65] "The sentiments of moral approbation and disapprobation, are founded on the strongest and most vigorous passions of human nature; and though they may be somewhat warpt, cannot be entirely perverted", TMS, V.2.1, p.200.

[66] "We can describe Smith as believing that a general sketch or outline of good conduct, and of the good human life, holds across all societies but that such general picture allows for details, and types of shading, to be filled in differently by different societies", Fleischacker (2011, p.40).

[67] See Diatkine (2019, p. 123-137).

[68] WN.VI.vii.a.1-4, p. 556-558.

the metropolis, and were by no means established by necessity[69], but motivated by "avidity[70]", which Smith associates later in the text with the "sacred thirst for gold[71]".

If we take seriously Smith's recommendations in the field of rhetoric, according to which the "Newtonian method" consisting in "lay[ing] down certain principles known or proved in the beginning, from whence we account for the several phenomena (…) is undoubtedly the most philosophical, and in every science (…) more ingenious and for that reason more engaging[72]", and if we consider - both from the standpoint of its structure and the circumstances of its drafting - chapter IV.vii as a book within the book whose propagandistic ambitions are quite obvious[73], then it seems clear that Williams is misrepresenting his view when he assesses that "it is far from clear that Smith made (…) a significant moral argument against colonialism[74]". Smith's account of European colonization is unflattering from the start, and this introduction sets the tone for the rest of the chapter. Shortly afterwards, he stresses the main outcome of the greed that motivated European colonization: its deleterious and disastrous impact on native populations. He starts with the discovery by Columbus of "those unfortunate countries ever since[75]", inhabited by "wretched natives", some of whom where even transported to Europe to satisfy the curiosity and taste for novelty of European notables[76]. Then he goes on sarcastically:

> "In consequence of the representations of Columbus, the council of Castile determined to *take possession of countries of which the inhabitants were plainly incapable of defending themselves*. The pious purpose of converting them to Christianity *sanctified the injustice of the project* (…) the whole or the far greater part of the gold, which the first adventurers imported into Europe, *was got by so very easy a method as the plundering of the defenceless natives*." (WN, V.vii.a.15, p. 561, our italics)

After this opening, Smith undoubtedly focuses his narrative on the swift "improvements" brought to conquered territories by colonization. Mexico and Peru, for instance, could not have been so much improved and so well cultivated as at present by the natural course of events. Thanks to the refinement of the division of labour, European colonists indeed came with "a knowledge of agriculture and of other useful arts, superior to what can grow up of its own accord in the course of many centuries among savage and barbarous nations[77]" as well as with political mores more suited to economic development. The most remarkable improvements are now to be seen in the British colonies of North America, where economic progress and demographic growth were more rapid than in any other, due to two main factors: the plenty of good land and better institutions[78] allowing settlers to "manage their own affairs their own way" (this second factor bringing them closer to the model of the ancient Greek colonies). Their progress has been so spectacular, Smith foresees, that "in the course of little more

[69] "The establishment of the European colonies in America and the West Indies arose from no necessity", WN, IV.vii.a.4, p. 558.

[70] "The great profits of the Venetians tempted the avidity of the Portuguese.", *ibid*.

[71] *Ibid.*, p. 562.

[72] *LRBL*, ii. 133, p. 146.

[73] It seems to have been the case in France, since chapter IV, vii. was translated by Elie-Salomon-François Reverdil and published separately in 1778 under the title "Fragment sur les colonies", before any complete French translation of the book was available. Regarding Britain, Rothschild (2012, p. 193-194) recalls that "the earliest publications that were actually *about* Smith were concerned, in general, with his writings on empire".

[74] Williams (2014, p. 288). Rothschild (2012, p. 188) conversely highlights "Smith's diatribes against colonial oppression" and sees them "at the very center of his concerns". As summarized by Hill (2010, p. 454), "though it is true that the bulk of his thought on the subject is devoted to the inefficiencies and indefensible costs of Empire, Smith did not neglect the moral aspects and there are many references to the injustices of empire".

[75] WN, IV.vii.a.9, p. 560.

[76] WN, IV.vii.a.14, p. 561.

[77] WN, IV.vii.b.2, p. 564.

[78] Among these, Smith highlights moderate taxes and two arrangements likely to promote an efficient distribution of land: a low prevalence of primogeniture and the obligation for each landowner to improve and cultivate a certain proportion of his land, in order to limit the grabbing of uncultivated land.

than a century, perhaps" North American colonies contributions to the empire might surpass that of Britain[79].

Such emphasis has led some commentators to question the systematic nature of his critique of colonial imperialism. Ince (2021) and Hopkins (2013) thus discuss whether non-slaveholding North American agrarian colonies can be considered an exception to it. In support of this discussion, both commentators highlight the first paragraph of the second section of WN, IV.vii:

> "The colony of a civilized nation which takes possession, either of a waste country, or of one so thinly inhabited, that the natives easily give place to the new settlers, advances more rapidly to wealth and greatness than any other human society." (WN, IV.vii.b.1, p. 564)

According to Ince (2021, p. 1081), this quote would aim at exempting agrarian colonies of British North America from his general criticism of empire, since they would represent the closest historical approximation to what Smith characterized as "the natural progress of opulence[80]" as well as an empirical support for his own system of natural liberty. Ince's argument rests on the idea that the agrarian colonies of North America might have been considered by the author to be an example of non-violent "occupation without conquest[81]", where land lay hitherto unoccupied and could therefore be regarded as *res nullius* before the settlers' first occupation. On this basis, Ince transposes Smith's theory of natural justice and considers that while an impartial spectator would indisputably sympathize with the Natives' resentment towards the first settlers who subjugated or enslaved them by force, this would not be the case with later non-violent occupation, as it could not be regarded as an injury to a people among which property in land was unknown[82].

Ince's argumentation is more grounded in a cross-reading of Smith's works than Williams' but can nonetheless be seen as partially extrapolated. First, because Smith never explicitly states that the occupation of North American land occurred without prior violence or conquest. One might wonder if one of the reasons this area appeared so "thinly inhabited" was because of the initial "cruel destruction[83]" of the Natives which the first colonists were responsible for[84]. Second, the spectator's agreement is to some extent a double-edged argument. If we admit that the judgments of the impartial spectator about what is blameworthy or praiseworthy are at least partly contextual, it may be that the judgements of a westerner spectator might enter in conflict with those of a native spectator. While the former would indeed see no injury or prejudice done in the Westerners' first occupation of land for the above-mentioned reasons, the latter might consider it as an insufficient ground to legitimizing a landownership to which he has never been accustomed so far. Worse still, the native spectator could consider the Westerners' occupation of land as a prejudice done to the community, insofar as such

[79] WN.IV.vii.c.79, p. 625-626.

[80] "According to the natural course of things (…) the greater part of the capital of every growing society is, first, directed to agriculture, afterwards to manufactures, and last of all to foreign commerce", a natural order of investments which was subverted in Europe (WN, III.i.8-9, p. 380).

[81] See Ince (2021, p. 1080, 1088, 1091).

[82] *Ibid*., p. 1088-1092. Ince also puts forward the Lockean argument according to which the occupation of land in a country where it was abundantly available did not infringe the Native's natural rights.

[83] WN, IV.vii.b.7, p. 568.

[84] Given that, for reasons seen above, savage nations are less populated than nations of higher historical stages.

occupation amounts to partly depriving the tribe of their game[85], a conclusion that Smith seems to suggest elsewhere[86].

On the other side, Ince has the merit of distinguishing two different types of colonization: (i) that of the first conquerors, where motives (avidity) and consequences (the violence inflicted on Natives) would be both disapproved by any neutral spectator (Ince 2021, p. 1091), a typical case of blameworthy behaviour according to Smith's moral philosophy[87], and (ii) that of subsequent north American settlers, whose motives might be tolerated apart from their consequences. These late colonists certainly correspond to those to whom Smith refers when he claims that the settlers, "who formed some of the later establishments, joined, to the chimerical project of finding gold and silver mines, *other motives more reasonable and more laudable*[88]", that is to say English puritans, Catholics and Quakers, who fled religious persecutions and established governments in New England, Maryland and Pennsylvania[89].

Yet this concession, insofar as it insists on the persecutions fled by the second wave of settlers and not on the legitimacy of land occupation in itself, does not amount to saying that Smith tried to morally justify the taking of American land by Westerners on any degree. As Hopkins (2013, p. 64) judiciously argues, any analogy between Locke's[90] and Smith's argumentation would be "misleading[91]" and the stress laid by both authors on "waste land" bears only a "superficial resemblance":

> "Smith (…) had little time for such apologetics; he was quite clear that the European conquest of America represented a grave injustice to the indigenous inhabitants and was purely the result of an accidental military preponderance, which may in future be overturned. The stress he placed upon 'waste country', whilst undoubtedly intended to chime with the common characterisation of pre-Columbian America, was not intended to establish a precedence of right to whomsoever should first put the land to the plough. Rather, it served to establish the basis of the extraordinary potential for growth he attributed to colonial societies." (*Ibid*.)

Indeed, the use of the indeterminate article "a" and of the pronoun "one" in the much-discussed sentence "the colony of *a* civilized nation which takes possession, either of *a* waste country or of *one* so thinly inhabited *etc*." suggests that Smith is describing here an ideal set of circumstances likely to foster optimal economic growth. Put another way, his assessment, which appears at the very beginning of the second section of WN.IV.vii entitled "Causes of the Prosperity of new Colonies", remains general and is made on a strictly economic level, free from any specific historical reference. In Hopkins' (2013, p. 66) words this amounts to endorsing America's potential for economic growth, independently of the consequences this may have. As soon as he discusses colonization from a historical perspective, Smith makes clear (in all three sections of WN,VI.vii) that all these improvements benefited essentially the settlers and not in the least the Natives : despite the fact that "the discovery of America, and that

[85] History has shown that this was indeed the case, as the slaughter of bison was deliberately used in the nineteenth century as a means of depriving Indians of their main source of food and forcing them onto reservations. The American bison population dropped from 25-30 million in the sixteenth century to 10-15 million by 1865 and a few hundred by the end of the nineteenth century. In an abundant literature, see for example Smits (1994) and Scott Taylor (2011).

[86] Indeed, Smith states in his lectures (LJ(A), i.33, p. 16) that "in North America, again, where the age of hunters subsists (…) as there is almost no property amongst them, the only injury that can be done is the depriving them of their game".

[87] See TMS, II.i.5, p. 74-78.

[88] WN, IV.vii.b.60, p. 589, our italics.

[89] *Ibid*., IV.vii.b.61.

[90] See Locke 1690, 2nd treatise, chap. V ("Of property"). On the relationship between the colonial context and Locke's theory of property, see Hulme (1990), Tully (1993, p. 137-176) or Armitage (2004).

[91] As editors of the LJ recall, Smith's explanation of the right to property by occupation is intended as an alternative to Locke's argument. See Meek, Raphael & Stein (1978, p. *33*) and LJ(A), i.35-44, p. 16-20.

of a passage to the East Indies by the Cape of Good Hope, are the two greatest and most important events recorded in the history of mankind", whose "consequences have already been very great ", he underlines that "to the natives, however, both of the East and West Indies, all the commercial benefits which can have resulted from those events have been sunk and lost in the dreadful misfortunes which they have occasioned[92]".

Among these misfortunes, Smith notably refers to the replacement, either by violence or by interbreeding, of native populations, who indeed "easily give place to the new settlers". Hence the "cruel destruction" of the original inhabitants of Mexico and Peru, territories whose people are now "surely very different" insofar as "antient Indians" had been replaced by "Spanish creoles" (WN, V.vii.b.7, p. 568-569). Such harsh damages on original inhabitants due to colonization are not limited to the American case[93], since Smith also suspects the Dutch companies of having deliberately "reduced" the population of the Moluccas archipelago for purely commercial reasons[94], and holds the East India Company partly responsible for the great Bengal famine[95] of 1770. In the end, some of the last paragraphs of section 2 take on a diatribe-like tone.

> "The policy of Europe, therefore, has very little to boast of, either in the original establishment, or, so far as concerns their internal government, in the subsequent prosperity of the colonies of America.
>
> Folly and injustice seem to have been the principles which presided over and directed the first project of establishing those colonies; the folly of hunting after gold and silver mines, and the injustice of coveting the possession of a country whose harmless natives, far from having ever injured the people of Europe, had received the first adventurers with every mark of kindness and hospitality.
>
> The adventurers, indeed, who formed some of the later establishments, joined, to the chimerical project of finding gold and silver mines, other motives more reasonable and more laudable; but even these motives do very little honour to the policy of Europe." (WN, IV.vii.b.58-60, p. 588-589)

It is noteworthy to observe that this condemnation of the deleterious effects of colonization does not begin with the writing of the WN. In the first and subsequent editions of the TMS, in a passage to which we previously referred (2.2.), Smith, already denounced the Westerners' attitude towards Africa and their commitment in the slave trade:

> "There is not a negro from the coast of Africa who does not, in this respect, possess a degree of magnanimity which the soul of his sordid master is too often scarce capable of conceiving. Fortune never exerted more cruelly her empire over mankind, than when she subjected those nations of heroes to the refuse of the jails of Europe, to wretches who possess the virtues neither of the countries which they come from, nor of those which they go to, and whose levity, brutality, and baseness, so justly expose them to the contempt of the vanquished." (TMS, V.2.9, p. 206-207)

All in all, although Smith does not criticize all forms of colonies (as evidenced by his relatively laudatory discourse on Ancient Greece[96]), it seems obvious that he unequivocally condemns on a moral

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[92] WN, IV.vii.c.80, p. 626. As noted by Rothschild (2012, p. 195-196), Smith here seriously tempers the enthusiasm displayed by Raynal in his *Histoire des deux Indes*.

[93] See Pitts (2005, p. 55-56).

[94] "By different arts of oppression they have reduced the population of several of the Moluccas nearly to the number which is sufficient to supply with fresh provisions and other necessaries of life their own insignificant garrisons" (WN, V.vii.c.101, p. 636).

[95] WN, IV.v.b.6, p. 527. On this subject, see Bouillot & Diatkine (2017), p. 111-114.

[96] "In contrast to the colonial designs of the ancient Greeks and Romans (…) Smith denounced the mercantilist drive to establish colonies as foolhardy", Hébert (1996, p. 79-80); "In sharp contrast to the ancient colonies of Greece and Rome, which were established because of necessity, Smith believed that there was no real need for the European nations to establish colonies in America (…) the hope of finding treasures of gold and silver was the sole motive of the colonization of America", Clary & Hill (1990, p. 46-47).

level the motivations of modern European colonies and stresses their consequences on the conquered: the latter have been the victims of European greed and have thus undergone a more or less advanced process of eradication : “the savage injustice of the Europeans rendered an event, which ought to have been beneficial to all, ruinous and destructive to several of those unfortunate countries[97]”.

3.2. The persecution of the Natives: an accidental event

Consistent with the fact that Smith is not hostile to all types of colonization, he does not consider that the persecutions suffered by the Natives of territories colonized by Europeans are inherent to any colonization process. According to him, the persecutions of the Natives of both the East and West Indies and Africa were mainly accidental and linked to particular historical conditions relating to the nature of the balance of military power between nations at the time of the Great Discoveries. In other words, if the balance of power between colonists and Natives had not been so disproportionate, the discovery of the “New World” might have been a less dramatic event for the latter. As Smith seeks to assess the effects for mankind of the discovery of America, and that of the passage to the East indies by the Cape of Good Hope, he denounces - as we have seen in section 3.1 - the “dreadful misfortunes” these events occasioned on native populations, and adds:

> “These misfortunes, however, seem to have arisen rather from accident than from any thing in the nature of those events themselves. At the particular time when these discoveries were made, the superiority of force happened to be so great on the side of the Europeans, that they were enabled to commit with impunity every sort of injustice in those remote countries.” (WN, IV.vii.c.80, p. 626)

We must interpret this passage in the light of Smith’s analysis of military power relations between nations of which an account was given in section 2.3. If these relations are mainly determined by the stage of development at which each nation finds itself, the author identifies an event, also of an accidental nature, which would have given a clear supremacy to civilized nations over nations of hunters and shepherds. This event is the invention of firearms, "a great revolution in the art of war, to which a mere accident, the invention of gun-powder, seems to have given occasion"(WN, V.i.a.43, p. 708). Smith distinguishes the effects of this invention on the colonization of the East Indies and Africa on the one hand, and that of America on the other. He considers that America, being populated by hunters, would have been militarily inferior to the European nations in every respect (in terms of population, discipline and military organization), so that the invention of firearms would only have widened the already immense gap between these two types of societies. As for the East Indies and Africa, which Smith sees as mainly populated by pastoral societies, they would have been able to hold their own against European societies in terms of population, discipline, and military organization if the accident of history that was the invention of gunpowder had not occurred:

> “A nation of hunters can never be formidable to the civilized nations in their neighbourhood. A nation of shepherds may. Nothing can be more contemptible than an Indian war in North America. Nothing, on the contrary, can be more dreadful than a Tartar invasion has frequently been in Asia […] If the hunting nations of America should ever become shepherds, their neighbourhood would be much more dangerous to the European colonies than it is at present.” (WN, V.i.a.5, p. 691-692)

The author hence underlines the greater difficulty encountered by Europeans in colonising the territories and displacing the Natives of Africa and the East Indies, compared to America.

> “Though the Europeans possess many considerable settlements both upon the coast of Africa and in the East Indies, they have not yet established in either of those countries such numerous and thriving colonies as those in the islands and continent of America. Africa, however, as well as

[97] WN, IV.i.32, p. 448.

> several of the countries comprehended under the general name of the East Indies, are inhabited by barbarous nations. But those nations were by no means so weak and defenceless as the miserable and helpless Americans; and in proportion to the natural fertility of the countries which they inhabited, they were besides much more populous […] the difference is very great between the number of shepherds and that of hunters whom the same extent of equally fertile territory can maintain. In Africa and the East Indies, therefore, it was more difficult to displace the natives, and to extend the European plantations over the greater part of the lands of the original inhabitants." (WN, IV.vii.c.100, p. 634).

However, the invention of firearms proved decisive in shifting the balance of power between barbarous and civilized nations in favour of the latter:

> "In modern war the great expence of fire-arms gives an evident advantage to the nation which can best afford that expence; and consequently, to an opulent and civilized, over a poor and barbarous nation. In antient times the opulent and civilized found it difficult to defend themselves against the poor and barbarous nations. In modern times the poor and barbarous find it difficult to defend themselves against the opulent and civilized. The invention of fire-arms, an invention which at first sight appears to be so pernicious, is certainly favourable both to the permanency and to the extension of civilization." (WN, V.i.a.44, p. 708)

It is thus from this perspective that we must understand the accidental character that Smith attributes to the "dreadful misfortunes" suffered by the Natives. Now the question remains as to why Westerners took advantage of their military supremacy to the point of enslaving African and destroying West Indian - and to some extent East Indian - populations. If we consider Smith's comparison between the respective virtues and characters of the "savage" and the "civilized" on the one hand, and his discourse on the takeover of the Americas by European settlers and their commitment to the Atlantic slave trade on the other hand, a paradox emerges. How is it that Europeans settlers did lose their "amiable" virtues founded upon humanity through contact with the overseas population and eventually revealed to be more "barbarous" and violent than supposedly "sanguinary" savages? Why did the "dreadful misfortunes" suffered by the Natives not arouse any sympathy among them, nor even among the citizens of the metropolis who were not directly involved in the colonization process?

3.3. Distance, national pride and the love of domination

While we see the causes which, according to Smith, are at the origin of the disproportion of military force between nations, it remains difficult to grasp at first glance the reasons which lead him to assert that their military supremacy drove the Europeans to persecute the Natives, given the civilized virtues of "humanity" and "sincerity" which they were supposed to carry with them. Unless one assumes that all western settlers would have been "refuses of the jails of Europe who possess the virtues neither of the countries which they come from, nor of those which they go to", which is not a serious hypothesis[98].

A first set of hints can nevertheless be found in the functioning of the sympathetic process as described in the TMS. Despite Smith's assertion that our concern for the feelings of others "does not necessarily include in it any degree of those exquisite sentiments (...) by which we distinguish our particular friends and acquaintance" and requires only "the general fellow-feeling which we have with every man merely because he is our fellow-creature" (TMS, II.ii.3.10), several obstacles likely to impede the sympathy felt by Westerners towards the Natives can indeed be identified.

[98] Mizuta (1996) discusses at length the extent of the expression "refuse of the jails of Europe" in Smith's overall narrative of colonization.

First there is the simple possibility that the former do not consider genuinely and entirely the latter as their "fellow-creature". Denial of humanity has historically, as is known, served as an ex-post pretext to justify the colonization and enslavement Native American and African populations[99]. As far as philosophers and scholars were concerned, besides Smith, Ferguson (1767) or Rousseau's (1755) comprehensive and quite relativistic discourses, prominent figures of seventeenth and eighteenth centuries intellectual life regrettably committed in degrading comparisons and suppositions. Hence Hume comparing a Jamaican born poet[100] of his time to a parrot[101], or Voltaire assuming sexual intercourse between people living in torrid areas and apes[102]. Not to mention Locke who, by writing that reason commands us to subdue the earth for the benefit and preservation of humankind, and by chastising Native Americans for not doing so, implies that the latter are deprived of the main attribute distinguishing man from animal[103]. Presumably these kinds of perceptions were more or less prevalent among eighteenth century European citizens whose knowledge of overseas populations emanated primarily from reports of adventurers, merchants or missionaries personally involved in the colonization process.

Letting this possibility aside, the main impediment to sympathy consists in *distance*, as well from an affective and geographical as from a socioeconomic perspective.

From a geographical perspective Smith indeed admits that we naturally feel much concern about our friends and our countrymen than about foreigners[104]. More generally he recognizes that sympathy is favoured by the affective proximity between people and is hence more easily exercised towards a friend than towards a common acquaintance, and towards a common acquaintance than towards strangers[105]. This last observation follows logically from the functioning of the identification process on with sympathy is based, a process which relies on the work of the imagination and for this reason implies inherent imperfections. Indeed, as a generally rule, the spectator feels the need to know the circumstances in which the actor's original passion occurred, the causes which generated it, to share it more easily. This explains why affective as well as geographical proximity increases the probability of sympathizing: it is generally accompanied by a better knowledge of the circumstances (personal situation, character, custom) likely to explain the actor's passion. In short, although assuring that sympathy is likely to affects all men whatever the nature, anonymous or not, of their relationship, Smith acknowledges that affective or geographical distance may alter our propensity to sympathize.

[99] As historian Eric Williams (1944, p. 10) summarized, "slavery was not born of racism: rather, racism was the consequence of slavery".

[100] Francis Williams (c. 1700–1770), a scholar and poet born in Kingston to a free Black couple, who was granted with British citizenship in 1723.

[101] "In Jamaica, indeed, they talk of one negroe as a man of parts and learning; but it is likely he is admired for slender accomplishments, like a parrot, who speaks a few words plainly.", Hume (1753, p. 208).

[102] "Il n'est pas improbable que dans les pays chauds des singes aient subjugué des filles", Voltaire (1756, introd., sect. 2). Historian and colonial administrator Edward Long (1774, vol. 2, p. 370), an ardent defender of slavery, makes the same assumption: "nor, for what hitherto appears, do [orangutans] seem at all inferior in the intellectual faculties to many of the Negroe race; with some of whom, it is credible that they have the most intimate connexion and consanguinity. The amorous intercourse between them may be frequent".

[103] Locke (1690, 2nd treatise, V. 41).

[104] "By Nature the events (…) which immediately affect ourselves, our friends, our country, are the events which interest us the most, and which chiefly excite our desires and aversions, our hopes and fears, our joys and sorrows." (TMS, VII.ii.1.44, p. 292). "In the common-sense priority thesis adopted by Smith (…) distance regulates the intensity of obligation and people will invariably give priority to intimates before strangers and compatriots before foreigners", Hill (2010, p. 456); "[*Smith*] observed that our sympathy seems to be constrained by geographical limits", Forman Barzilai (2006, p. 391).

[105] TMS, I.i.4.9, p. 23.

As Rothschild (2012, p. 196) summarizes, his system "is not, in any straightforward sense, a system that has room for extremely distant and different people[106]".

Therefore, the Natives cannot expect much more sympathy from the inhabitants of the mother-country than from the settlers. As Smith states in a famous passage of the TMS (III.3.4, p. 136): "a man of humanity in Europe, who had no sort of connexion with that part of the world" would probably be much more be affected by the loss of his little finger than by the destruction of the empire of China and its inhabitants in an earthquake, "provided he never saw them[107]". Since metropolitan inhabitants probably do not feel responsible for the misfortunes of Native Americans and Africans whom they have never personally met, most of them might therefore be indifferent to their fate.

Another type of distance to consider in explaining the lack of sympathy expressed by the colonists towards the Natives of North America and Africa is related to social condition. Thus, Smith explains the more or less severity shown by masters towards their slaves by the greater or lesser socioeconomic distance between the two parties. More specifically, he makes a long comparison in his lectures between the treatment of slaves in a rich society on the one hand and in a poor society on the other[108], which he illustrates by the examples of slavery in his time in West Indian sugar islands, which he associates with the former, and in American colonies which he associates with the latter[109].

Smith first explains that in the West Indies, the disproportion between the number of slaves and freemen keeps the latter in "continual dread", a fear that leads them to treat their slaves "with the greatest rigour and severity[110]". But he afterwards insists on socioeconomic distance to elucidate the lesser humanity shown by West Indian masters compared to their American counterparts. Indeed, as the latter can only afford to maintain a small number of slaves, they share with them most of their living and occupations[111], a situation which is altogether different that which prevails in West Indian islands[112].

> "A North-American planter, as he is often at the same work and engaged in the same labour, [*he*] looks on his slave as his friend and partner, and treats him with the greatest kindness; when the

[106] This is the reason why Smith rejected Stoic cosmopolitanism as being « altogether different » from « the plan and system which Nature has sketched out for our conduct" (TMS, VI I.ii.1.43, p. 292). See Forman-Barzilai (2000, p. 393-400), who goes as far as to conclude that Smith theorized "a world without sympathy" (*ibid*., p. 392-393).

[107] Smith nevertheless points out that the same man would never sacrifice the lives of millions of remote strangers to prevent this "paltry misfortune" to himself and uses this example to distinguish between our "sordid and selfish" passive feelings and our "generous and noble" active principles (*ibid*.).

[108] LJ(A), iii.105-111, p. 182-185.

[109] Smith explains this difference by the greater profitability of the West Indian sugar trade compared to the cultivation of corn in which American planters are chiefly involved. On the relationship between profitability and the treatment of slaves in Smith, see Lapidus (2002, p. 62-65).

[110] LJ(A), iii.106, p. 183.

[111] "They will eat at the same table, work together, and be cloathed in the same manner, and will be alike in every other particular", *Ibid*., p. 184.

[112] In his seminal work on African-American music, *Blues People*, Amiri Baraka (Leroi Jones by the time the book was published) explains by the very same reasons the greater and faster acculturation suffered by African descendant in North America, compared to South America and the West Indies : ""if we think about the importation of Africans into the New World as a whole, rather than strictly into the United States, the most apparent difference that can be seen is that Africans throughout the rest of the Americas were much slower to become westernized and "acculturated." (…) in the United States, the Utopia of the small businessman, the small farmer was the rule, rather than the exception, and these farmers could usually afford to own only a very small number of slaves. On these small farms intimate contact between master and slave was unavoidable (…) certainly the most significant result was the rapid acculturation of the African in this country. With no native or tribal references, except perhaps the stories of his elders and the performance of nonreligious dances and songs, the American-born slave had only the all-encompassing mores of his white master. Africa had become a foreign land, and none of the American-born slaves could ever hope to see it", Jones (1963, chap. 2).

> rich and proud West Indian who is far above the employment of the slave in every point gives him the hardest usage." (LJ(A), iii. 110, p. 184-185)

Smith generalizes this observation to other type of subordination relationships and concludes that the greater the socioeconomic distance between people, the less likely a man of superior condition is to feel sympathy and compassion for his inferiors.

> "A man of great fortune, a nobleman, is much farther removed from the condition of his servant than a farmer. (…) The disproportion betwixt them, the condition of the nobleman and his servant, is so great that *he will hardly look on him as being of the same kind*; he thinks he has little title even to the ordinary enjoyments of life, and *feels but little for his misfortunes*. The farmer on the other hand considers his servant as almost on an equall with himself, and is therefore the more capable of feeling with him. *Those persons most excite our compassion and are most apt to affect our sympathy who most resemble ourselves, and the greater the difference the less we are affected by them*." (LJ(A), iii. 108-109, p. 184, our italics)

Thus, the indifference towards others usually favoured by geographical and affective distance is probably reinforced by the - partly illusory as we have seen - feeling of their own superiority that Westerners feel towards overseas inhabitants. This seems all the more so since, as we suggested above, Smith's system of sympathy does not seem to be intrinsically likely to overcome cultural bias in the judgments made towards remote customs and mores; the norms of behaviour and judgment conveyed by the impartial spectator - resulting from the internalization of past and observed experiences of sympathy in others - merely reflecting the values specific to a given context[113]. As Lisa Hill (2010, p. 471) judiciously summarized "the greater the degree of social distance between people, the less sympathy they can expect from each other; the more strange a stranger is to us, the higher the levels of self-control we are required to muster". As self-command is not as we have seen the most developed virtue of the civilized man, such assessment at least partly explains the lack of sympathy and humanity expressed by Westerners towards the "dreadful misfortunes" suffered by Natives.

But this argument is not sufficient on its own. Through his discussion of slavery, in his LJ and in the WN, Smith advances another factor likely to shed light on the relationship between colonists and colonized. It consists of the "love of domination"[114], a propensity that he describes as "natural to mankind" (LJ(A), iii.130, p. 192 ; LJ(B), 134, p. 452) and which makes him pessimistic about the prospect of a general abolition of slavery[115]. We can relate what Smith writes about this inclination to what he calls, in the TMS, the "natural", "untaught" and "undisciplined feelings" that he opposes to the "sense of honour" which leads to adopting the perspective of an impartial spectator (TMS, III.3.28, p. 148). As Lapidus (2002) points out, Smith derives this natural inclination from human pride, which he presents as a vice and the result of an excessive self-esteem. He describes the proud man as "convinced of his own superiority; though it may sometimes be difficult to guess upon what that conviction is founded" and as more concerned with, not so much making people "sensible of his superiority", as of their "own meanness" (TMS, VI.iii.35, p. 255). The consequence is that "the pride of man makes him love to domineer, and nothing mortifies him so much as to be obliged to condescend to persuade his inferiors" (WN, III.ii.10, p. 388).

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[113] On this topic, see Forman-Barzilai (2006). "Smith's sympathy model fails to enlarge the perspective of spectators entangled within cultural space" (*ibid.*, p. 100).

[114] see LJ(A), iii.114, p. 186; iii.130, p. 192; WN, III.ii.10, p. 388. Smith also speaks of love of "authority" (LJ(A), iii.114, p. 186; iii.130, p. 192) or "tyrannizing" (LJ(A), iii.114, p. 186).

[115] "This institution therefore of slavery, which has taken place in the beginning of every society, has hardly any possibility of being abolished (…) Slavery therefore has been universall in the beginnings of society, and the love of dominion and authority over others will probably make it perpetuall", LJ(A), iii.116-117, p. 187). On the conditions for the abolition of slavery according to Smith, see Lapidus (2002).

As Lewis (2000) reminds us, according to Smith, domination is an alternative to persuasion for men to get what they want from others. When the love of domination prevails, it supersedes a second inclination: the well-known "propensity to truck, barter, and exchange" involved in the division of labour (WN, I.ii). This other propensity relates to men's regard for others 'judgment which is rooted in sympathy (see TMS, III.3.3, p. 135-136). In contrast to the love of domination, which belongs to the realm of impulses, Smith presents the propensity to exchange as an inclination built up through social interactions. It is the expression of a powerful desire specific to humans: the desire to persuade others (see LJ(B), 221-222, p. 493-494). It relies on the exercise of sympathy, and more particularly on the search for sympathy agreement (see Dellemotte 2005, p. 62-63). Indeed, in the same way that we seek to establish a concordance of feelings between others and ourselves, we seek to ensure, Smith says, that their opinions and ours converge (see TMS, I.i.3.2, p. 17). From this arises our desire to persuade others, which is particularly expressed in the exchange relationship when it comes to convincing others to carry out a transaction[116].

Thus, unlike the love of domination which leads to imposing one's views on others rather than seeking such agreement[117], exchange requires an effort to put oneself in another's shoes and understand what can persuade them to exchange with us. But Smith insists that our pride leads us to be naturally reluctant to make this effort with those we consider inferior. Indeed, this effort is all the more important as the distance that we perceive between the others and ourselves is great. Yet according to Smith, pride overestimates this distance. It must therefore be moderated in order to reduce it and facilitate the process of identification on which sympathy is based. It is not by accident that Smith deals with pride in the section of the TMS devoted to self-command (TMS, VI.iii). The moderation of pride is the condition for the development of sympathetic relations and thus for the emergence of the propensity to exchange.

Smith explicitly also addresses the issue of pride in his chapter on the colonies, in a discussion on the exorbitant expenses inflicted by the North American colonies on Great Britain[118] which does not directly concern the relationship between colonists and Natives. Here he asserts that no nation has ever and will ever voluntarily give up its authority or "dominion of any province" even though it is contrary to its interest. The will to maintain such domination over the colonized territories stems from a national pride that is expressed, this time, collectively:

> "No nation ever voluntarily gave up the dominion of any province, how troublesome soever it might be to govern it, and how small soever the revenue which it afforded might be in proportion to the expence which it occasioned. Such sacrifices, though they might frequently be agreeable to the interest, are always mortifying to the pride of every nation, and what is perhaps of still greater consequence, they are always contrary to the private interest of the governing part of it." (WN, IV.vii.c.66, p. 616-617)

The "private interest" involved in promoting such national pride is of course that of merchants and men of power advantaged or seduced by the mercantile system. In the remainder of this passage, Smith imagines what the relationship between Britain and its colonies would be if the former decided to give up its authority over the latter - although he does not seriously believe that this could happen. Such a decision on the part of Britain would reflect a moderation of its pride allowing for pacified free trade relations that would be more advantageous for the different parties than the mercantile system.

[116] See LJ(A), vi.56-57, p. 352; LJ(B), 222, p. 494 ("Since a whole life is spent in the exercise of [*the power of persuasion*], a ready method of bargaining with each other must undoubtedly be attained").
[117] For example, about pride from which the love of domination arises, Smith writes in the TMS that the proud man "disdains to court your esteem. He affects even to despise it" (TMS, VI.iii.35, p. 255).
[118] On how this fits into Smith's critique of the colonies, see Pitts (2005, p. 54-55).

The love of domination that the latter encourages would then be replaced by a free trade between nations mobilising the propensity to exchange (*ibid*.).

If this passage focuses on the relations of Britain with its colonies, it shows that the pride on which the love of domination is based extends to relations between nations, in this case between an independent nation and its provinces. This is a topic that Smith also addresses in the TMS, this time in the context of relations between independent nations[119]. And when Smith specifically addresses the behaviour of Europeans towards the Natives of the colonies, he suggests that the slightest deviation in power must lead the nation with the favourable balance of power to abuse its advantage to impose what it wants over the other. This is how, for instance, he presents the Spanish enterprise in South America, as having consisted in taking advantage of its very large military superiority over the Natives to seize their gold and their silver (see WN, IV.vii.a.15, p. 561). This is how, more generally, he explains the way Europeans have abused their "superiority of force" over the Natives "to commit with impunity every sort of injustice" in the already quoted passage about the accidental nature of the misfortunes suffered by the latter (WN, IV.vii.c.80, p. 626).

Thus, we can see in the attitude that Smith lends to the colonists towards the Natives in WN, IV.vii the expression of the love of domination that leads the formers to favour tyranny rather than negotiation in order to obtain what they want. Here again, it may be assumed that the decline of respectable virtues among Europeans - and therefore of the self-command necessary for the moderation of pride - combined with the geographical and affective distance, played against the Natives.

4. The future evolution of international relations: towards a convergence?

If we follow Smith's comparisons between civilized and indigenous people, the "dreadful misfortunes" suffered by the latter were evitable. The violent conquest of overseas territories, which the author clearly denounces, is the consequence of an accident of history, which European colonists and adventurers took advantage of out of love of domination. Regardless of the progress they brought to the conquered territories, they failed to show humanity towards "savages" and "barbarians" whom they considered as their inferiors, and somehow, when reaching the "New World", they lost the virtues of the countries which they came from. The indifference or support of the metropolitan populations towards the actions of the colonists can be explained in the same way by a lack of sympathy towards the Natives caused by geographical distance, and a feeling of national pride flattered by the idea of a dominion over remote territories and peoples. However, Smith saw a way out of the imbalance in relations between Westerners and Natives. As several commentators[120] have already pointed out, this way out was based on free trade.

Indeed, in the WN, Smith not only denounces the way Westerners took advantage of their military supremacy over the Natives. He also speculates on the future evolution of power relationships between them and between all countries in general:

> "Hereafter, perhaps, the natives of those countries may grow stronger, or those of Europe may grow weaker, and the inhabitants of all the different quarters of the world may arrive at that equality of courage and force which, by inspiring mutual fear, can alone overawe the injustice of

[119] Strictly speaking, Smith does not use the term "pride" in this context, but "love of our nation" (TMS, VI, ii, 2, §3, p. 228), which is not a reprehensible sentiment in itself and which he even describes as "noble", but whose excess can lead to "savage patriotism" or to "national prejudices and hatreds" (TMS, VI.ii.2.3-5, p. 228-229). On patriotism in Smith, see Forman-Barzilai (2000, p. 407-410) and Hill (2010, p. 460-461).

[120] See, for instance, Forman-Barzilai 2000 and Hill 2010.

> independent nations into some sort of respect for the rights of one another. But nothing seems more likely to establish this equality of force than that mutual communication of knowledge and of all sorts of improvements which an extensive commerce from all countries to all countries naturally, or rather necessarily, carries along with it." (WN, IV.vii.c.80, p. 626-7)

Thus, Smith predicts that the expansion of trade will pacify relations between nations because it will give rise to a rebalancing of military powers between them and thus establish reciprocal dissuasion. The peace-making role that he attributes to trade has led Forman-Barzilai (2000) and Hill (2010) to use the terms of "economic", "commercial and instrumental cosmopolitanism" (Hill 2010, p. 450) or more simply "commercial cosmopolitanism" (Forman-Barzilai 2000, p. 412) to refer to his approach. What the two commentators seek to highlight through these terms is that, for Smith, the "universal benevolence" advocated by the Stoics would fail to produce a social harmony beyond the scope of the nation. And he would see in trade a means to compensate for this failure. Thus, in a supranational context, self-interest, which would be the basis of commercial relations, would be able to replace benevolence to produce such a harmony.

Of course, it is difficult to deny the role that Smith assigns to self-interest in the implementation of the international division of labour that must result from the extension of free trade. But it does not seem to us sufficient to explain the continuation of a lasting peace between nations, as Smith imagines it. By the way, his analysis of the British Empire's relations with its provinces shows that interest is not sufficient to direct nations to what is most advantageous for them. As with many aspects of Smith's economic work, one can assume that morality is not far away. Certainly, Smith excludes benevolence from relations between nations. But what about sympathy? We have shown that it was its absence that explained the persecution of Westerners towards the Natives and that it was involved in the propensity to exchange that constitutes an alternative to the love of domination. It is then not absurd to see in Smith's hope for the future of relations between nations the idea, probably inherited from Montesquieu[121], that beyond mutual dissuasion, trade will soften mores by favouring the emergence of sympathy so that there will be better knowledge and understanding between countries.

Trade, by bringing societies considered less advanced into contact with those that are more advanced, should reduce the distance between them in terms of development. This should be all the truer as trade is free and involves the linking of "all countries to all countries"(WN, IV.vii.c.80, p. 627). The transmission of knowledge that it induces should have the effect of reducing the gap between nations militarily, but also geographically and socioeconomically. Now, such a rapprochement is favourable to the emergence of sympathy.

A last remarkable and noted aspect of WN, VI.vii that we did not mention in these lines consists of Smith's predictions (i) about the outcome of the American conflict itself, to which he sees only one alternative between a strengthened democratic union between England and its colonies and outright separation[122], and (ii) about the future economic predominance of North America[123]. Needless to say, the second part of the alternative to the conflict would come true in the same year that WN was published, and the second of these predictions would eventually prove correct in the early decades of the twentieth century. Unfortunately, the realization of these predictions was not accompanied by a global rebalancing of the power relations between distant and economically heterogeneous territories. The nineteenth century saw the development of a scientific racism particularly disseminated by the "American school" of anthropology (Samuel Morton, Louis Agassiz, Josiah Nott) and the expansion of

[121] "Qu'on ne s'étonne donc point si nos mœurs sont moins féroces qu'elles ne l'étaient autrefois. Le commerce a fait que la connaissance des mœurs de toutes les nations a pénétré partout: on les a comparées entre elles, et il en a résulté de grands biens", Montesquieu (1748, XX, chap. 1).

[122] WN.IV.vii.c.66, p. 616-617.

[123] WN, IV.vii.c.79, p. 625-626.

European colonial empires, of which one of the pretexts was to civilize populations considered as intrinsically inferior or backward. A civilizing enterprise that an intellectual like Kipling did not hesitate to describe as the "White man's burden". The twentieth century, for its part, in spite of decolonization, saw the instrumentalization of Third World countries through the Cold War, the rise and apex of American imperialism, inequal exchange between rich and poor countries, and the persistence of political practices still largely influenced by mercantilism. For all these reasons, the 'equality of forces' between nations that Smith dreamed of as a result of mutual communication never became fully effective.

In his terms, one might conclude that the love of domination continued to prevail over sympathy.

5. References

For references to Adam Smith's works, we use the abbreviation standards of the Glasgow edition of the author's complete works & correspondence as follows:	
Corr.	*Correspondence of Adam Smith* (below: Smith 1977)
EPS	*Essays on Philosophical Subjects* (Smith 1795)
LJ	*Lectures on Jurisprudence* (Smith 1978)
LRBL	*Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* (Smith 1983)
TMS	*The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (Smith 1759)
WN	*An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (Smith 1776)

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