Review of International Studies (2013), 39, 1–23
doi:10.1017/S0260210511000799

First published online 21 Feb 2012

The eighteenth-century historiographic tradition and contemporary 'Everyday IPE'

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Abstract. This article focuses on Adam Smith's largely sympathetic response to the Rousseauian critique of the moral degeneracy of modern 'economic man'. It thus emphasises his philosophical ambivalence towards commercial society over the textbook IPE presentations which ascribe to him an almost wholly unreflexive market advocacy. In doing so it provides important methodological lessons for the study of Everyday IPE today. Arnaldo Momigliano has identified a decisive break in historical method in the eighteenth century, of which Smith and Rousseau were key exponents. However unwittingly, contemporary Everyday IPE scholars are the spiritual heirs of the eighteenth-century move from writing public histories of the state to writing private histories of unnamed individuals who embody the most recent phase of human sociability. The eighteenth-century economic man was conceptualised in relation to evolving forms of economic organisation, where the economy in turn was thought to reflect the prevailing system of 'manners'. Smith united with Rousseau in the belief that their society's bourgeois politeness allowed materialist ideologies to corrupt the moral autonomy of the individual. The historical method underpinning such concerns also allows Everyday IPE scholars to ground similarly-styled attempts to understand threats to moral autonomy arising from the struggle over economic surplus today.

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Introduction

This is an article about the method underpinning the recent discovery by International Political Economists (IPE) of the realm of everyday economic affairs.[1] There has been a marked increase over the last ten years in this sort of work, particularly from members of what Benjamin Cohen has latterly christened the subject field's

* I am extremely grateful to the anonymous referees who provided me with such informative, insightful, and helpful comments on my original submission, as well as to the journal's editors in making it crystal clear how they would like me to respond.

[1] See, amongst others, Louise Amoore, *Globalisation Contested: An International Political Economy of Work* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002); Juanita Elias, *Fashioning Inequality: The Multinational Company and Gendered Employment in a Globalizing World* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004); Marianne Franklin, *Postcolonial Politics, the Internet, and Everyday Life* (London: Routledge, 2004); Rob Aitken, *Performing Capital: Toward a Cultural Economy of Popular and Global Finance* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007); Alison Watson, *The Child in International Political Economy: A Place at the Table* (London: Routledge, 2009).

British School.[2] Everyday IPE is a mode of study which reflects concerns for understanding the historically-specific cultural basis of prevailing world economic structures, rather than assuming that all economic agency follows the same abstract behavioural type. The aim is to illustrate the variety of ways in which the interaction between the socialising pressures of the economy and the development of particular sources of moral judgement leads to evolutionary change in the underlying economic form.[3] The recent cultural turn within political economy in general has thus been linked to a particular focus on the culturally-situated individual which emerges from social theories of the everyday. This provides the basis for understanding individual economic agency as a moralised activity, but where the limits of moral psychology are themselves shaped by the cultural production of specific time- and place-bound economic identities.

While this is rightly seen as a recent departure within IPE, taking a longer perspective shows that IPE's embrace of the everyday merely mirrors a much more decisive break in historical method which occurred at the dawn of classical political economy. The parallels are clear to see in terms of both analytical inspiration and analytical content. As the distinguished historian of historiography Arnaldo Momigliano has demonstrated, nothing less than a revolution in historical method took place in the eighteenth century, and this was propelled to a significant degree by the work of the classical political economists.[4] Until that time, it was conventional to present purely 'public' histories of the state, ones which were constructed on the basis of analysing the decisions of key members of the state's personnel.[5] True to the goals of Enlightenment philosophy as a whole, though, these public histories were increasingly overlain from around 1740 onwards. What came to prominence in their place was a focus on the 'private' histories of nameless, but representative, individuals whose activities drove the economy to the next stage of progress.[6] The field of Everyday IPE is indebted to the pioneering methodological work of eighteenth-century scholars in a manner that has not yet even been acknowledged, let alone adequately appreciated. The analysis in the following pages shows one way in which this situation might be rectified.

To do so, however, first requires rather more substantial engagement with the history of economic thought than is usually the case in IPE. At present, there is a tendency amongst IPE scholars to understand the evolution of economics in distinctly linear fashion: the concepts which are exposed to nineteenth-century marginalist analysis and twentieth-century mathematical methods are treated as authentic representations of those used by Enlightenment scholars to investigate the nature of

[2] Benjamin J. Cohen, *International Political Economy: An Intellectual History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008).

[3] For an early precursor, see, Craig Murphy and Roger Tooze, 'Getting Beyond the "Common Sense" of the IPE Orthodoxy', in Craig Murphy and Roger Tooze (eds), *The New International Political Economy* (London: Lynne Rienner, 1991).

[4] See, in particular, Arnaldo Momigliano, 'Ancient History and the Antiquarian', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 13:3/4 (1950), pp. 285–315; Arnaldo Momigliano, 'Gibbon's Contribution to Historical Method', *Historia*, 2:4 (1954), pp. 450–63.

[5] Mark Salber Phillips, 'Reconsiderations on History and Antiquarianism: Arnaldo Momigliano and the Historiography of Eighteenth-Century Britain', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 57:2 (1996), pp. 297–316, 300.

[6] J. G. A. Pocock, 'Adam Smith and History', in Knud Haakonssen (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Adam Smith* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 27.

market institutions.[7] At best, this overly simplified story can only ever provide a partial picture of the analytical space which has subsequently opened up for an Everyday IPE. Despite frequent claims in the broader IPE literature to the contrary, the increasing professionalisation of economics in the nineteenth century did not lead to the wholesale banishing of normative agendas in favour of mathematical precision.[8] The mathematical instincts of at least the first two generations of neoclassical economists were honed – much more often than not – in an attempt to provide a more rigorous basis for pursuing normative goals of fair distribution.[9] The important exorcism was much more subtle. It was the removal from economics, not of the whole essence of morality, but of concerns for the constitutive effects of the economy on the process through which individuals arrive at moral judgement. Economics remained a deeply moralised subject field throughout this period, yet the dominant conception of economic *agency* was no longer thought about in that way. Restoring such a conception has become a chief task today for those who are interested in exploring the possibilities of an Everyday IPE.

What the classical political economists had but the early neoclassical economists did not was a concern for how a particular form of economic life has a constitutive effect on an individual's judgement about the world. This concern was initially brought to the fore in the shift in historical method from public to private histories in the eighteenth century. It typically involved the incorporation of sentimentalist moral psychology into the historical study of evolving forms of everyday existence.[10] The new history sought to explain the relationship between the increasingly productive economies of the time and the increasingly prominent bourgeois politeness on which the most recent processes of economic change had been founded.[11] Moral judgement was not something to be passed in a purely extrinsic manner after the economic activity had been undertaken. In Enlightenment thought it was fully endogenised as a crucial element of contemplating and then deciding upon the action itself. The ensuing focus on an economic community's underlying structure of 'manners' might look a little out of place to the modern-day reader, transcended as it has been by more contemporary concerns in Everyday IPE for issues of identity construction. Yet, this at heart is largely two ways of talking about the same thing.

There is much to learn for contemporary IPE, then, from going back to a debate about bourgeois virtue that is now more than 250 years old. The main line of division in that debate emerged from the publication of Adam Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments* in 1759, which is increasingly being viewed by specialist Smith studies scholars as at least in part a response to Jean-Jacques Rousseau's full-blooded critique of the deceit and deception into which the early manifestations of commercial society lured the unwitting individual. Smith wrote an appreciative article for Alexander

[7] This general tendency is really well captured – and critiqued – in Vivienne Brown, 'Metanarratives and Economic Discourse', *Scandinavian Journal of Economics*, 96:1 (1994), pp. 83–93; see also William Tabb, *Reconstructing Political Economy: The Great Divide in Economic Thought* (London: Routledge, 1999).

[8] An important book showing why this was not the case is David Colander, *The Lost Art of Economics: Essays on Economics and the Economics Profession* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2001).

[9] Robert Heilbroner, *Teachings from the Worldly Philosophers*, new edn (London: W. W. Norton, 1997), p. 246.

[10] D. R. Woolf, 'A Feminine Past? Gender, Genre, and Historical Knowledge in England, 1500–1800', *American Historical Review*, 102:3 (1997), pp. 645–79, 665–7.

[11] Mark Salber Phillips, *Society and Sentiment: Genres of Historical Writing in Britain, 1740–1820* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), pp. 176–7.

Wedderburn's short-lived *Edinburgh Review* in 1756, in which he drew his Scottish readers' attention to the prescience of Rousseau's damning indictment of commercial society's corruption of the moral autonomy of the individual.[12] His later *Theory of Moral Sentiments* tackles Rousseau's critique head-on, accepting significant elements of his characterisation of corrupted everyday life but asking nonetheless whether there were still reasons to support the burgeoning commercial society in preference to available alternatives.[13] Significantly for what is to follow, the work of both men reflected the prior structural break in historical method from public to private histories, each building his respective theory around the economic actions of an ordinary yet individually unnamed person.[14] The ambivalent tone in which Smith wrote about commercial society tends to get lost in IPE in favour of a less reflexive reading of *The Wealth of Nations* and its key passages on the nature of market-based economic life.[15] However, the central question with which he wrestled in response to Rousseau – the question of how the economy shapes particular patterns of economic agency in potentially demoralising ways – bears revisiting. It is once again, today, the question around which so much Everyday IPE revolves.

This article proceeds in three stages in an attempt to demonstrate the importance of such links. The aim throughout is to bring to light methodological lessons from the history of historiography for contemporary Everyday IPE. To that end, the first section focuses on Momigliano's account of the rise of private histories in the eighteenth century as a challenge to more conventional forms of state-based history. The second section introduces the content of Rousseau's critique of commercial society, demonstrating the extent to which it relied in Momigliano's terms on the new trend in writing history. The third section does likewise for Smith's largely supportive response, highlighting his concern for the way in which market-based decision-making impacted adversely upon the individual's ability to undertake economic agency in line with principles of moral propriety. The conclusion offers further commentary on the significance of the analysis for how to do Everyday IPE today.

Before the analysis begins in earnest, though, it is important that two sets of contextualising comments are offered. The first is designed to locate my piece within the existing, but still very much embryonic, field of Everyday IPE. The whole concept of Everyday IPE remains something which tends to be alluded to rather than placed in direct typological form. Almost certainly the most comprehensive and best of the limited number of introductions to the nascent field is that which sets the scene for the subsequent chapters in John M. Hobson and Leonard Seabrooke's *Everyday Politics of the World Economy*.[16] They suggest that it is possible to identify two separate trajectories in the IPE literature which focuses on the social dynamics of the everyday.

[12] Adam Smith, 'A Letter to the Authors of the *Edinburgh Review*', reprinted in Adam Smith, *Essays on Philosophical Subjects*, ed. J.C. Bryce (Indianapolis, IN: Liberty Fund Press, 1982 [1756]).

[13] Samuel Fleischacker, *On Adam Smith's Wealth of Nations: A Philosophical Companion* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004), p. 117.

[14] Dennis Rasmussen, *The Problems and Promise of Commercial Society: Adam Smith's Response to Rousseau* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2008), p. 60.

[15] Matthew Watson, *Foundations of International Political Economy* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), pp. 172–7.

[16] John Hobson and Leonard Seabrooke, 'Everyday IPE: Revealing Everyday Forms of Change in the World Economy', in John Hobson and Leonard Seabrooke (eds), *Everyday Politics of the World Economy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

One might usefully be thought of as the 'everyday politics' approach, where the aim is to explain how existing economic structures have been undermined and new ones have been brought into being through small-scale local activities which begin as individual enactments of agency but subsequently snowball through mimetic strategies into something approaching collective action. There needs to be no formally articulated protest in the public sphere for such action to result in structural economic change if it renders prevailing structures increasingly ungovernable.[17] The other trajectory currently visible within the literature might equally usefully be thought of as the 'everyday life' approach. In this conception of the relationship between the structures of the world economy and individual economic agency, the task is to explain the sources of the socialising pressures which reward agents for enacting their preferred subjectivity in line with the reproduction of prevailing structures. In providing psychological comfort and often material advance for people who project the sense of ordinariness consistent with dominant cultural conceptions of the good life, the realm of the everyday can thus be a normalising force.[18]

It is far from straightforward to situate the work of eighteenth-century social theorists exclusively in either of these traditions; the same, by extension, applies to my discussion here. In general, Enlightenment thinking was oriented towards such large existential questions as to prevent it from being limited to only one of the everyday approaches.[19] In an important sense, both Rousseau and Smith worked fluidly across what is only ever, in any case, a heuristic boundary between everyday politics and everyday life. They were interested in the cultures of consumption which legitimated the spread of increasingly self-regarding behaviour ('everyday politics'), but they were just as interested in the way in which the process of legitimation was rooted in structures of decency which had no obvious historical parallel ('everyday life'). The development of new interpersonal relationships of politeness created forms of communicative action based on deference to possessions, which in turn caused the economy's productive potential to be increasingly harnessed to demands for possessiveness. However, satisfying such demands was also a feature of maintaining the returns to capital on which the accumulation function of commercial society depended. In this way, the work of both Rousseau and Smith can be seen as a preemption of the 'cultural political economy' approach which Jacqueline Best and Matthew Paterson suggest underpins all studies of the everyday realm in IPE.[20] They attempted to trace the history of the cultural processes which were embedded in the present-day economy, but at the same time they critiqued those processes for what they deemed to be their regressive impact on agential self-actualisation.

[17] One excellent example of such work is: Benedict Kerkvliet, *The Power of Everyday Politics* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005). Another example is Adam David Morton, 'Peasants as Subaltern Agents in Latin America: Neoliberalism, Resistance and the Power of the Powerless', in John Hobson and Leonard Seabrooke (eds), *Everyday Politics of the World Economy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

[18] See, for example, Matt Davies and Magnus Ryner (eds), *Poverty and the Production of World Politics: Unprotected Workers in the Global Political Economy* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006); Paul Langley, *The Everyday Life of Global Finance: Saving and Borrowing in Anglo-America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

[19] David Blaney and Naeem Inayatullah, 'Undressing the Wound of Wealth: Political Economy as a Cultural Project', in Jacqueline Best and Matthew Paterson (eds), *Cultural Political Economy* (London: Routledge, 2009).

[20] Jacqueline Best and Matthew Paterson, 'Introduction: Understanding Cultural Political Economy', in Jacqueline Best and Matthew Paterson (eds), *Cultural Political Economy* (London: Routledge, 2009).

The fact that *both* Rousseau and Smith were ambivalent about the model individual of commercial society leads directly to my second contextualising observation. Rousseau has been almost entirely overlooked as an historical source in IPE, albeit for reasons which are difficult to discern. Perhaps it is because so much of IPE is set up on the basis of what Craig Murphy and Roger Tooze have called its 'tripartite pedagogical framework' of liberalism, economic nationalism, and Marxism.[21] Rousseau's work is difficult to reconcile with the historical antecedents of any of these positions, so the more that they are treated as the outer limits of the field the less room there is likely to be within it for him. Smith, meanwhile, has typically been appropriated by the IPE textbooks as the standard-bearer of the liberal pole of the tripartite structure. Yet as Stephen Rosow has argued to extremely good effect, this is a specific and highly questionable understanding of liberalism, as well as one which appears to be unique to IPE.[22] It runs almost entirely contrary to Smith's eighteenth-century concern for the threat which was posed to the individual's moral autonomy by the specific method of searching for recognition within commercial society. Instead, IPE has seized upon a deeply economistic reading of the aims of liberalism and has re-presented Smith through such a lens. In IPE hands, his whole oeuvre tends to be reduced to *The Wealth of Nations* and it, in turn, tends to be reduced to a highly orthodox but historiographically-suspect market-eulogising account of the 'invisible hand' metaphor.[23]

The following pages should be treated as a challenge to the orthodox reading of Smithian liberalism within IPE. In this way I seek to correct IPE's general failure to thus far recognise the recent resurgence of activity in the specialist Smith studies literature. This was triggered by the publications which were brought out to commemorate the 200th anniversary of the 1776 edition of *The Wealth of Nations*, and it now incorporates the work of two generations of scholars who have learnt to read Smith through a much broader lens than the invisible hand metaphor.[24] Almost to a person, the new Smith studies scholars insist that the meaning of any single part of his work must be reconstructed through direct reference to his writings as a whole. At the very least, they say, *The Wealth of Nations* must be read alongside and within the context of his earlier *Theory of Moral Sentiments*.[25] It is not an exaggeration to say that this represents the new orthodoxy of specialist Smith studies scholars, which contrasts sharply with the orthodox IPE account of a deeply economistic Smith. My analysis is written from the perspective which now dominates the specialist Smith studies literature, and as a consequence it will appear to be a conscious study in heterodoxy when compared with the conventional appropriation of Smithian economics in IPE.

[21] Craig Murphy and Roger Tooze, 'Introduction', in Craig Murphy and Roger Tooze (eds), *The New International Political Economy* (London: Lynne Rienner, 1991), p. 6.

[22] Stephen Rosow, 'Echoes of Commercial Society: Liberal Political Theory in Mainstream IPE', in Kurt Burch and Robert Denemark (eds), *Constituting International Political Economy* (London: Lynne Rienner, 1997), pp. 42–4.

[23] On which, see Emma Rothschild, *Economic Sentiments: Adam Smith, Condorcet, and the Enlightenment* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), pp. 116–56.

[24] This has been described as nothing less than a 'renaissance' in Smith studies. See Horst Claus Recktenwald, 'An Adam Smith Renaissance *anno* 1976? The Bicentenary Output. A Reappraisal of his Scholarship', *Journal of Economic Literature*, 16:1 (1978), pp. 56–83.

[25] Leonidas Montes, *Adam Smith in Context: A Critical Reassessment of some Central Components of His Thought* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004).

Momigliano and the eighteenth-century revolution in historical method

Most of Arnaldo Momigliano's observations about how eighteenth-century scholarship changed the process of historical writing have been dissected in great detail by others working on the history of historiography. By comparison, one comment from his famous paper, 'Gibbon's Contribution to Historical Method', has tended to slip through the net. Gibbon was a contemporary of Smith and Rousseau and known to them both,[26] but most importantly for current purposes he was a product of the same intellectual milieu that was responsible for the way in which each reflected on the accomplishments of commercial society. Momigliano argued that Gibbon's writing paid 'full homage to the amiable prejudice that history is a theatre where you must play your part with appropriate words and gestures'.[27] In this way Gibbon's work was taken to be paradigmatic of a process through which historical narratives came to be put together at least in part for the effects that they were likely to have on their audience. Histories were increasingly being written by the middle of the eighteenth century to tell audiences what sort of people they were and how they had become that way. Chronological accounts of events were deemed to hold less interest for readers than thematic accounts charting the development of particular types of subjectivity. In keeping with his presumed paradigmatic status for the new history, Momigliano described Gibbon as 'the perfect blend of philosopher and antiquarian'.[28]

In his words, the eighteenth-century revolution in historical method was all about recognising that, on its own, 'an accumulation of facts does not make a history'.[29] Prior to that point, the writing of history was 'aimed at factual truth, not at interpretation of causes or examination of consequences'.[30] As Momigliano wrote about this earlier generation, 'thinking was not their profession',[31] as they sought only to specify essential linearities in unfolding sequences of events.[32] The generic boundaries of historical writing thus came to be challenged, especially the practice of equating history with the compilation of texts solely about the evolution of the state.[33] The result was an increasing focus on what Marc Bloch has called the 'knot' of reality,[34] whereby a focus on individual *persons* responsible for activating the rollercoaster intrigues of high politics was replaced with an alternative focus on symbolic personality *types* who illustrated the everyday conditions of the age.

Enlightenment thinking differentiated itself from the prior view that the management of the state simply involved the translation of religious edicts into law and that the evolution of the state was thereby to be understood as a series of power struggles over who got to impose their chosen edict. The underlying subject matter of history was henceforth no longer necessarily the contest between monarchs and aristocrats for control of the state and, in particular, for control of the authority structure which

[26] Smith admired Gibbon as a person, but Rousseau did not. See respectively John Rae, *Life of Adam Smith* (London: Macmillan, 1895), p. 414; David Edmonds and John Eidinow, *Rousseau's Dog: Two Great Thinkers at War in the Age of Enlightenment* (London: Faber and Faber, 2006), p. 57.
[27] Momigliano, 'Gibbon's Contribution to Historical Method', p. 459.
[28] Ibid., p. 457.
[29] Ibid., p. 453.
[30] Ibid., p. 307.
[31] Ibid., p. 453.
[32] Phillips, 'Reconsiderations on History and Antiquarianism', pp. 297–8.
[33] Arnaldo Momigliano, 'The Introduction of the Teaching of History as an Academic Subject and Its Implications', *Minerva*, 21:1 (1983), pp. 1–15, p. 3.
[34] Marc Bloch, *The Historian's Craft* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992), p. 27.

bound the state to the church. Instead, for the first time, historians enjoyed the intellectual freedom to ask how the institutions of the state – and therefore the role of everyone acting within them – were influenced by new cultural forms arising from the economy. For Momigliano, this allowed histories of the present to be written as a means of highlighting the new concern for the emergence of custom in social situations in which appearance was as important as being.[35] Significantly in this respect, 'appearance' meant not in the eyes of an unseen deity, where the state might be called upon to punish those who failed to live by prescribed religious doctrines. Rather, it meant making sure that emerging secular trends were observed and that full social rewards were claimed for such obedience.[36]

In this way, eighteenth-century historians seized upon the attractiveness of alternative and socially resonant art forms to ensure more immediate symmetries of concern between author and reader. The rise of the novel in the early eighteenth century provided a blueprint for techniques of connection in this regard.[37] It was the first genre to emphasise the likely emotions of the reader in determining the precise wording of its literary formulations, the aim being to create characters that were sufficiently familiar for readers to be carried along on an emotional wave of at least partial self-recognition when learning about their ups and downs. With the novel established by the middle of the eighteenth century, historians were then able to follow the philosophical trend of placing human sentiment at the heart of the analysis.[38] Readers of the time were increasingly accustomed to emotions of introspection, doubt, and self-discovery when having to come to terms with the everyday dilemmas of literary heroes, as well as to using those vicarious emotions as mirrors into their own lives. In these circumstances it was not a large step for historians to begin to innovate with markedly similar styles of writing. The same emotions of introspection, doubt, and self-discovery consequently began to be ever more prominent in their work, challenging readers to think about turning points in a country's history less in terms of the rise and fall of particular statesmen and more in terms of what such cycles implied for how ordinary people might project their understandings of the self into society. History therefore became a means of addressing readers directly about their own lives rather than indirectly through recounting the fortunes of their country's leaders.

These changes ensured that historical authorship increasingly became a shared journey in which readers were invited to pass judgement on the types of cultural subjectivities they had embraced within everyday economic life. According to the historiographer, Karen O'Brien, the resulting texts thus became a means for author and reader together to create 'an interpretive community engaged in a rhetorical arbitration of their own history'.[39] Momigliano described the process of pre-eighteenth-century historical formulations as attempts to provide acceptable bases for official

[35] Momigliano, 'Gibbon's Contribution to Historical Method', p. 459.
[36] J. G. A. Pocock, *Barbarism and Religion, Volume Two: Narratives of Civil Government* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 27.
[37] Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson and Fielding* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1974), p. 38.
[38] Manuel Schonhorn, *Defoe's Politics: Parliament, Power, Kingship, and Robinson Crusoe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 47–50.
[39] Karen O'Brien, *Narratives of Enlightenment: Cosmopolitan History from Voltaire to Gibbon* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 5.

state decrees: he stressed their 'value for the ruling classes'.[40] After that time, the aim was much more likely to be the interpellation of the reader to a particular view of the society that their everyday actions helped to maintain.[41] All such accounts played to and attempted to shape in their own image the reader's emotions. To write history from the middle of the eighteenth century was increasingly to construct morality plays that were to be consumed in private but with the intention of influencing the public persona of the individual.

It is here that it is possible to identify a distinct parallel with the turn towards Everyday IPE in recent years. Much of that turn has been built upon the suspicion that theories *of* the state in IPE might also be theories *for* the state. The concern in this respect is that in trying to generate explanations of state behaviour many IPE scholars have simultaneously explained away the tensions which every policy choice necessarily introduces into the everyday realm. As such, the sense of struggle immanent in all policymaking decisions gets forced into the background as explanations of state behaviour often get folded into the state's own justification of why it has acted in a specific way. In general, Everyday IPE scholars have been eager to reassert the contested nature of all policy decisions by tracing what people become whenever they internalise into their own sense of self the full implications of any instance of state behaviour. The frequent invocation from Everyday IPE scholars that the subject field should be more than straightforward accounts of what a particular country did at a particular moment of time is instructive in this respect. It is about recognising the significance of how people construct particular economic personae to mark out where they believe they fit into the social structures which surround them.

Some means has to be found today to connect political ideas about the good society with the modes of reader awareness which Everyday IPE scholars typically seek to engender, just as was the case two and a half centuries ago with the modes of reader awareness on which eighteenth-century history thrived. In this earlier time, appeals to readers' imaginative capacities provided the link as history began to be written in an ever more philosophical manner.[42] The reader's imagination was called upon to act as an interlocutor between what Mark Salber Phillips has described as the two essential narratives of early Enlightenment historical writing: one concerned with sentiments and the other with manners.[43] The use of sentimentalist techniques enabled readers to identify with the character traits being presented to them, as well as to seek within themselves the appropriate instinctive response. The manners of any social community arise from the outcomes when members of an interpretive community observe one another's actions – either literally or vicariously through reading written reports of them – before then allowing those actions they deem to be representative of the good society to guide their own future conduct. This process takes place initially in the mind: it takes the form of an imaginative leap enacted against

[40] Momigliano, 'The Introduction of the Teaching of History', p. 7.
[41] G. W. Bowerstock, 'Momigliano's Quest for the Person', *History and Theory*, 30:4 (1991), pp. 27–36, 28.
[42] Maureen Harkin, 'Adam Smith's Missing History: Primitives, Progress, and Problems of Genre', *English Literary History*, 72:2 (2005), pp. 429–51, 438–9.
[43] Mark Salber Phillips, 'Adam Smith and the History of Private Life: Social and Sentimental Narratives in Eighteenth-Century Historiography', in Donald Kelley and David Harris Sacks (eds), *The Historical Imagination in Early Modern Britain: History, Rhetoric, and Fiction, 1500–1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 326.

the backdrop of social observations. In this way, the writing of history for an interpretive community connecting author and reader merely reflects the fact of living in a society whose cultural norms are continually being remade through particular sentimental activities. This much is as true today for Everyday IPE scholars as it was for the early Enlightenment philosophers. It leads in both instances to situations in which overt demarcations between private and public life are extremely difficult to countenance.

In the eighteenth century, this distinction was almost entirely collapsed through focusing on the essential Enlightenment principle of politeness.[44] Delineating acceptable manners played a leading role in the new history, and this involved understanding the process through which socially derived yet individually articulated attitudes were projected into the social realm. Describing the public actions of public men employed to do the state's will held no such promise for piecing together how society might have evolved through various stages into its current form. Besides, Phillips's two essential narratives of early Enlightenment historical writing came together to ensure that the public actions of public men were themselves treated as manifestations of what was deemed permissible under prevailing social norms. As the structure of those norms shifted over time in response to changing forms of economic life, so too did the understanding of the self that the individual tried to promote within society.[45] As J. G. A. Pocock has argued, 'more powerfully even than laws, manners rendered civil society capable of absorbing and controlling human action and belief'.[46] Eighteenth-century historians departed radically from their predecessors in increasingly assuming that the law played only a subsidiary role in accounting for changes in both individual behaviour and socialised intuitions about appropriate conduct.

This became a focus specifically on the economic aspects of everyday life through the emphasis that was placed on the history of commerce in unravelling the story of the evolution of the state.[47] The existence of increasingly institutionalised commercial relations – both within and beyond the state – was deemed to be symbolic of an economy capable of producing surplus. As that capability embedded potential sites of conflict, the arrival of an age of surplus was thought to require new political and moral structures in order to contain likely flashpoints.[48] Acting within those structures, economic agents were required to embody new subjectivities, donning masks of politeness to guard against unseemly struggles over surplus and their associated ideologies of possessive individualism.[49]

The most celebrated account of such ideas amongst eighteenth-century historians was David Hume's articulation of the '*doux commerce*' thesis.[50] Here, the necessity

[44] Peter Miller, 'Momigliano, Benjamin, and Antiquarianism after the Crisis of Historicism', in Peter Miller (ed.), *Momigliano and Antiquarianism: Foundations of the Modern Cultural Sciences* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), p. 337.

[45] N. J. Allen, 'The Category of the Person: A Reading of Mauss's Last Essay', in Michael Carrithers, Steven Collins, and Steven Lukes (eds), *The Category of the Person: Anthropology, Philosophy, History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 39.

[46] Pocock, *Barbarism and Religion, Volume Two*, p. 20.

[47] Harkin, 'Adam Smith's Missing History', p. 439.

[48] Michael Ignatieff, *The Needs of Strangers* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1984), pp. 111–13.

[49] Christopher Berry, *The Idea of Luxury: A Conceptual and Historical Investigation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 136.

[50] Albert Hirschman, *The Passions and the Interests: Political Arguments for Capitalism before Its Triumph*, Twentieth Anniversary Edition (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997 [1977]), pp. 56–63.

of presenting oneself in a favourable light to one's trading partners required the genuine embrace of what Deirdre McCloskey has called the 'bourgeois virtues' of honesty, trustworthiness, hard work, and prudence.[51] The economic man of Hume's *doux commerce* was scrupulous in the attention he paid to presenting himself as a virtuous individual. More generally, he was designed to show that observable patterns of economic agency were produced historically as the economy was guided sequentially through a series of emergent social objectives.[52] The specific structure of politeness he was deemed to personify would have been meaningless were it not that economy and society had evolved into the commercial stage. Yet to act like the economic man of Hume's *doux commerce* first requires the ability to imagine acting in that way. Overall, eighteenth-century historians were as interested in the unobservable presence of human thought in the moments preceding action as they were in the observable presence of action itself. Shifts in the dominant form of economic life were thereby attributed, as much as anything else, to products of the mind increasingly being manifested as social norms.[53] The individual was thus placed centre stage in the writing of history, even when no named people featured in the account. The appeal was rather to readers to connect themselves to past manifestations of the state if they were to understand their own place in history.[54] The boundaries between what counted as public and what counted as private were thereby rendered deeply unstable.[55]

In order to achieve such an outcome, however, it was necessary for the new history to rely on the conjectural method. That is, historicising the present entailed the creation of abstract individuals from the past of purely hypothetical form, on the assumption that the comparison between the two could unlock important insights about how life had latterly come to be lived.[56] Although never described explicitly as such, the same conjectural method, I argue, today dominates research undertaken in the name of Everyday IPE. The generic categories of subjectivities which Everyday IPE scholars use in their discussion of the influence of cultural norms on economic agency are abstractions in the same way as Gibbon, Hume, *et al.* first began 250 years ago to use abstract personae to present historiographies of society. The focus on subjectivities created in and through engagement with the economy tie the two forms of analysis very closely to one another. In content, too, the private histories of Enlightenment thinking continue to resonate today. This is particularly so when asking what individuals must be required to relinquish in terms of their own moral autonomy if they are to manifest the character traits best suited to economies which promise to make them materially better off. The positions in this debate were laid down most vigorously in their original form by Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Adam Smith, which in turn also makes them important – albeit entirely accidental – precursors of contemporary Everyday IPE. It is to their work that I now turn in the final two sections of the article, as I attempt to establish firmer intellectual foundations for the conduct of Everyday IPE today.

[51] Deirdre McCloskey, *The Bourgeois Virtues: Ethics for an Age of Commerce* (Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press, 2006), pp. 72–6.
[52] Helena Rosenblatt, *Rousseau and Geneva: From the First Discourse to the Social Contract, 1749–1762* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 60–2.
[53] Phillips, *Society and Sentiment*, pp. 176–7.
[54] Woolf, 'A Feminine Past?', p. 653.
[55] O'Brien, *Narratives of Enlightenment*, p. 16.
[56] Mary Poovey, *A History of the Modern Fact: Problems of Knowledge in the Sciences of Wealth and Society* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press), pp. 214–63.

Rousseau and the moral threats of commercial society

In his *Letter to d'Alembert*, Rousseau, once a revered playwright attracting the esteem of Parisian high society, turned his fire on the very structure that had helped to make his name.[57] His attack on the theatre was a mixture of the sardonic and the savage, and it was directed in a manner that was designed to bring maximum hurt to the people who had previously looked up to him. He wrote a coruscating account of the way in which the theatre revelled in the corruption of the individual,[58] presenting for audience acclaim characters that represented the very worst forms of excess in a society in which the struggle over surplus led to all manner of personal conceit.[59] In this, one of his least discussed tracts, Rousseau operated with an inversion of Momigliano's later observation that Enlightenment scholars had turned history into theatre.[60] In Rousseau's mind, what had become so insufferable about the theatre was that it reflected the history of fallen humanity back to an audience of the fallen for the purpose of its entertainment. It thereby invited people to glorify the fact that they had become increasingly alienated from their 'natural selves'.[61]

Rousseau's concern was that the theatre of his day cemented forms of life through which individuals took their cues about how to act from paying closer attention to responses to other people's actions than to protecting themselves from the potentially alienating influence of social conformity. The theatre thereby naturalised the experience of being a member of an audience and of constantly living within the 'empire of opinion'.[62] Yet, this in itself merely reflected the distancing frame enacted at the moment at which the economy first began to provide incentives for separating appearance from being.[63] According to Rousseau, the struggle over the surplus that commercial society routinely produced created a means for people to act in a manner that was unbecoming to their natural selves and to cloak their actions in a veil of feigned politeness.[64] Hume's progressivist ideology of *doux commerce*, in which the move to commercial society ushered in real and lasting benefits to the manners on display, was therefore entirely turned on its head.[65] For Rousseau, that same move was replete with contrary tendencies, whereby individuals lost their sense of wholeness by creating for themselves 'factitious' subjectivities, ones designed to elicit others' praise but that lead ultimately to self-deception.[66] In his earliest published

[57] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Politics and the Arts: Letter to M. d'Alembert on the Theater*, trans. notes, introduction Allan Bloom (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1968 [1758]).
[58] Timothy Costelloe, 'The Theater of Morals: Culture and Community in Rousseau's *Lettre á M. d'Alembert*', *Eighteenth-Century Life*, 27:1 (2003), pp. 52–71, 55.
[59] Amal Banerjee, 'Rousseau's Concept of Theatre', *British Journal of Aesthetics*, 17:2 (1977), pp. 171–7, 172–3.
[60] See Momigliano, 'Gibbon's Contribution to Historical Method', p. 459.
[61] David Marshall, 'Rousseau and the State of Theater', *Representations*, 13:1 (1986), pp. 84–114, 84.
[62] Rousseau, *Politics and the Arts*, p. 22.
[63] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, 'A Discourse on the Origin of Inequality', in Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract and Discourses*, trans. and introduction G. D. H. Cole (London: Everyman, 1993 [1754]), pp. 95–6.
[64] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, 'A Discourse on Political Economy', in Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract and Discourses*, trans. and introduced G. D. H. Cole (London: Everyman, 1993 [1755]), p. 147.
[65] Istvan Hont, 'Free Trade and the Economic Limits to National Politics: Neo-Machiavellian Political Economy Reconsidered', in John Dunn (ed.), *The Economic Limits to Modern Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 48.
[66] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Reveries of the Solitary Walker*, trans. with preface, notes and an interpretative essay Charles E. Butterworth (Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 1992), p. 115.

work, the *Discourse on the Moral Effects of the Arts and Sciences*, modern manners were ridiculed as entailing nothing more than the 'art of pleasing'.[67]

Rousseau's most profound criticism of commercial society was that it fragmented the modern self, with every individual constantly being confronted with someone new to measure their material possessions against and someone new to please with the aesthetic attraction of their possessions.[68] The theatre did nothing to ameliorate this tendency, because it had been appropriated as a training ground for historically-produced imaginative acts suited to commercial society, whereby each economic agent was forced into self-comparisons with multiple others.[69] Activities purely of the mind were harnessed by eighteenth-century historians to enable them to enlist their readers in an interpretive community bound together by shared sentimental responses to their histories as individuals.[70] For Rousseau, however, the activation of the imagination to tutor the self to exhibit shared sentimental responses was *itself* a factor in humankind's fall from the natural self.[71] Dramatic performances served merely to institutionalise such a tendency, playing deliberately to the social vulnerabilities of audience members in an attempt to reinforce them.[72] Rousseau was fearful of the extent to which the theatre mimicked public prejudices about the righteousness of ownership and therefore rendered those prejudices ever more credible as a form of social expression.[73]

As a matter purely of method, none of this differentiates him from the other eighteenth-century historians identified by Momigliano as having a primary interest in the evolution of manners. What did set Rousseau apart, however, was the strength of the emphasis he placed on the morally degenerative effects of the interpersonal comparison that was necessary for perfecting bourgeois politeness. The aim of such a process, he said, was to emerge from it believing that one has in some way bettered one's neighbours.[74] However, 'assuming pre-eminence as an individual' was, at the same time, 'the first yoke [socialised man] inadvertently imposed on himself'.[75]

The success of the eighteenth-century's new productive techniques was the cause of Rousseau's heightened anxiety about the impact of everyday economic life on the moral autonomy of the individual. More goods being produced meant more goods in circulation as economic surplus, leading in turn to more chances to catch admiring glances through the display of luxury. Overall, commercial society facilitated potentially innumerable ways of harnessing possessive ideologies to the search for social esteem. The Rousseauian subject had an instinctive, but always socially-initiated, love of appearance. It took on new forms of materiality as eighteenth-century advances in production became established: relative status could be confirmed simply by public

[67] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, 'A Discourse on the Moral Effects of the Arts and Sciences', in Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract and Discourses*, trans. and introduced G. D. H. Cole (London: Everyman, 1993 [1750]), p. 6.
[68] Michael Locke McLendon, 'The Overvaluation of Talent: An Interpretation and Application of Rousseau's *Amour-Propre*', *Polity*, 36:1 (2003), pp. 115–38, 123.
[69] Benjamin Barber, 'Rousseau and the Paradoxes of the Dramatic Imagination', *Daedalus*, 107:3 (1978), pp. 79–92, 79.
[70] O'Brien, *Narratives of Enlightenment*, p. 5.
[71] Rousseau, 'A Discourse on the Origin of Inequality', p. 75.
[72] Costelloe, 'The Theater of Morals', p. 58.
[73] Rousseau, *Politics and the Arts*, p. 57.
[74] Rousseau, *The Reveries of the Solitary Walker*, p. 118.
[75] Rousseau, 'A Discourse on the Origin of Inequality', pp. 86, 88.

demonstrations of wealth in consumption.[76] Rousseau complained that the rich only wanted the possessions with which they surrounded themselves because they valued the symbolic effect of being associated with goods that were consumed exclusively by people of a certain social standing: 'The rich think so much of these things, not because they are useful, but because they are beyond the reach of the poor.'[77] Yet, he also noted the entirely transient nature of such possessiveness. In outlining his principles for an education commensurable with nature, he cautioned his young charge, Émile, against placing too much emotional value on goods that could be lost as easily as they were gained.[78] The warning was for Émile to avoid becoming too dependent on what he could be tempted to think might be derived socially from possessions, for fear that otherwise his material goods would come, in effect, to possess him.[79]

Reduced to its simplest form, the problem envisioned by Rousseau was the increasing subjugation of socialised forms of existence to a theatrical consciousness. In David Marshall's words, he was worried about how life lived in 'the exchange of regards' led to an increasingly encompassing 'awareness of others as beholders'.[80] Such forms of agential realisation threaten to entrap the economic man of Hume's *doux commerce*. He is rendered constantly susceptible to forms of self-judgement stimulated by the thought of what might elicit praise from other people.[81] 'Why should we build our happiness on the opinions of others, when we can find it in our own hearts?', Rousseau asked in his first reflection on such a theme.[82] The constitution of social norms via the material realm of exchange relations thus stands accused of undermining the 'wholeness' of the Rousseauian subject. He clearly thought that the move to a commercial society imposed unbearable costs on the modern individual by enforcing the embrace of falsity in the search for social esteem: 'The man of the world almost always wears a mask. He is scarcely ever himself and is almost a stranger to himself.'[83]

Rousseau developed the concept of *amour-propre* specifically for describing the condition into which the modern individual lapses when falling from the natural state. It is a way of acting associated with the competition for esteem, through which individuals impose self-oriented ontologies onto the struggle to consume the economic surplus produced socially.[84] In Rousseau's characterisation it emerged as a historically-enacted variety of self-love designed to offer legitimation for the private expropriation of goods arising from public economic activities.[85] Possessive ideologies were compatible with societies in which the presentation of affective selves was governed by *amour-propre*, but only with societies of that nature. Commercial society became a specific object of criticism for Rousseau because it offered the greatest

[76] Rosenblatt, *Rousseau and Geneva*, p. 127.
[77] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Émile, Or Treatise on Education*, trans. Barbara Foxley (New York: BiblioBazaar, 2006 [1762]), p. 149.
[78] Jonathan Marks, 'The Savage Pattern: The Unity of Rousseau's Thought Revisited', *Polity*, 31:1 (1998), pp. 75–105, 89.
[79] Rousseau, *Émile*, p. 562.
[80] Marshall, 'Rousseau and the State of Theater', p. 85.
[81] Ryan Hanley, 'Commerce and Corruption: Rousseau's Diagnosis and Adam Smith's Cure', *European Journal of Political Theory*, 7:2 (2008), pp. 137–58, 139.
[82] Rousseau, 'A Discourse on the Moral Effects of the Arts and Sciences', p. 29.
[83] Rousseau, *Émile*, p. 264.
[84] McLendon, 'The Overvaluation of Talent', pp. 117–19.
[85] Rousseau, 'A Discourse on Political Economy', pp. 160–2.

incentives yet witnessed in human history for individuals to focus their attention on using material goods rather than the development of their character as a signal for what sort of person they wished to be known as.

Rousseau believed that commercial society elevated the merit associated with the display of possessions to an unhealthy degree, consequently inflaming the pride in distinctiveness which is evident whenever one individual constitutes a sense of self relative to other people. When living in the natural state, the individual requires only a morally harmless self-absorption to secure day-to-day survival. Yet this is turned by the temptations of commercial society into 'a destructive and rapacious form of selfishness' linked to the consumption of physically decorous but socially worthless goods.[86] Such consumption arises purely from *amour-propre* and the perceived self-worth which arises in commercial society when performing well in the competition for esteem. According to Rousseau, though, creating feelings of distinctiveness through the acquisition of possessions of high monetary but debatable use value does nothing to promote an authentic and morally intact self. Indeed, every luxury item owned is further proof for him that a self-love born of possessive ideologies dominates all other emotive states within commercial society: 'if we have a few rich and powerful men on the pinnacle of fortune and grandeur, while the crowd grovels in want and obscurity, it is because the former prize what they enjoy only in so far as others are destitute of it'.[87]

However, despite such criticisms of the state of the human condition within commercial society, the account of the Rousseauian subject contains a definite twist in the tale. Even in the terms of his own theory, the evolution of the human condition under the influence of structural economic change is not a history that can be escaped.[88] The Rousseauian subject is locked into the existence of the double identities he bemoaned, because time cannot simply be reversed to a point preceding entry to commercial society. As soon as any kind of sociability is first encountered, individuals will always have reason to obscure their natural predispositions behind multiple affective selves in the search for esteem. This is simply an existential feature of sociability. Humanity and humankind's fall are thereby mutually inscribed into one another. Irrespective of Rousseau's idealisation of independence, the only way to explore what it means to be truly human is to submit to forms of social and economic dependence. As Nancy Yousef puts it, 'Rousseau's natural man should not be understood as a model for what human beings might have been, but as a model for all they cannot be on their own.'[89]

As the basis for a moral critique of commercial society, there is little to separate Rousseau's dystopian account of the individual's loss of virtue in status-directed consumption and Smith's admittedly more mildly-worded contemporaneous work on the same subject. This in itself is an important finding for IPE, where typically Smith's work is taken to be representative of an almost wholly unqualified support

[86] Graeme Garrard, *Rousseau's Counter-Enlightenment: A Republican Critique of the Philosophes* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2003), p. 48.
[87] Rousseau, 'A Discourse on the Origin of Inequality', p. 112.
[88] Peter Melville, 'The Sleepy Carib: Rousing the 'Native Informant' in Rousseau', *European Romantic Review*, 13:2 (2002), pp. 183–9, 183.
[89] Nancy Yousef, 'Savage or Solitary?: The Wild Child and Rousseau's Man of Nature', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 62:2 (2001), pp. 245–63, 263.

for commercial society and for the abstract market mechanism to which the organisation of that society has subsequently been subsumed.[90] Analytically, Smith did not follow Rousseau directly in drawing a distinction born of conjectural history between the *moi particulier* and the *moi commun*: that is, between 'the self as a discrete, self-absorbed entity and the self as the bearer of attributes and dispositions drawn from that self's role in society'.[91] Yet he focused just as much attention as Rousseau on the way in which the founding principles of the *moi commun* threatened to collapse into the morally degenerative process of attempting to emulate the consumption of wealthier people. In a scarcely veiled attack on the exaggeration within commercial society of both status-seeking economic activity and the materiality of human vanity, Smith argued that excessive admiration of the material possessions of the rich was 'the great and most universal cause of the corruption of our moral sentiments'.[92] The final section of the article now moves on to explore Smith's position in more detail, all the time focusing attention on his methodology of private history.

Smith and the moral threats of commercial society

Smith's most obvious analytical concern mirrored Rousseau's in the extent to which he understood economic agency to be a historicised phenomenon.[93] The individual does not reflect any transcendent behavioural principle when making economic decisions, but instead allows the cultural norms of the surrounding society to influence choices about appropriate conduct. The interaction between the individual and a structured system of manners is therefore inescapable, because such systems become the backdrop at any given moment to all ideas about proper and improper action.[94] However, Smith's philosophical work is littered with an undercurrent of distrust of the materiality which was valued so highly in commercial society, to the point at which that particular system of manners is accused of corrupting the very idea of propriety.

In *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* he described '[m]odern good manners' as 'extremely indulgent to human weakness',[95] where those activities which 'serve to promote luxury [may] set the example of the dissolution of manners' properly understood.[96] For Smith, contemporary bourgeois politeness both reflected and gave incentives to accentuate 'the character which [people] think worthy of esteem'.[97] There is a clear echo in this of Rousseau's disquiet about how what he called the art of pleasing had 'taught our passions to speak an artificial language'.[98] Smith's attack on the pretence surrounding status seeking in commercial society went as far as the

[90] Watson, *Foundations of International Political Economy*, pp. 101–8.
[91] Nicholas Dent, *A Rousseau Dictionary* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), p. 29.
[92] Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, The Glasgow Edition of the Works and Correspondence of Adam Smith, eds David Daiches Raphael and Alec Macfie from a composite of all seven editions (Indianapolis, IN: Liberty Fund Press, 1982 [1759/1790]), I.iii.3.1.
[93] Ronald Meek, 'New Light on Adam Smith's Glasgow Lectures on Jurisprudence', *History of Political Economy*, 8:4 (1976), pp. 439–77, 440.
[94] Donald Winch, *Adam Smith's Politics: An Essay in Historiographic Revision* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), p. 127.
[95] Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, III.3.34.
[96] Ibid., I.ii.3.4.
[97] Ibid., V.2.13.
[98] Rousseau, 'A Discourse on the Moral Effects of the Arts and Sciences', p. 6.

suggestion that an inherent falseness accompanied any attempt to differentiate the behaviour of rich and poor solely on the grounds of preferring to imagine oneself in the place of the rich: 'To superficial minds, the vices of the great seem at all times agreeable. [People] connect them, not only with the splendour of fortune, but with many superior virtues, which they ascribe to their superiors.'[99] As Louis Schneider suggests, Smith detected no virtue in personal wealth *per se*. 'He writes readily of ''the sober and industrious poor'', but he has no parallel phrase suggestive of sympathy or compassion for the rich.'[100]

However, the rich were in no sense written off, doomed to live in a moral squalor in direct proportion to their accumulated wealth. It was just that arriving at a position of wealth was not *in itself* reason to presume that a person would use all the advantages of that position to enforce in the mind a natural conflation between wealth and virtue.[101] This is one possibility of how the imaginative fellow-feeling Smith described as 'sympathy' might be enacted,[102] and in this way it could be possible for the rich to add a social justification for their material privilege by demonstrating how they have used it to become a role model of moral rectitude. However, it must be stressed that this is only one possibility. Another, which Smith believed to be more likely, is that the fellow-feeling operates on the basis of the poor falsely ascribing virtue to the rich merely for the fact of their riches and notwithstanding any contrary content of their conduct. It was a source of genuine regret for him that: 'We frequently see the respectful attentions of the world more strongly directed towards the rich and the great, than towards the wise and the virtuous.'[103] Moral propriety might thus be misleadingly attributed to the actions of the rich for no reason other than that most people learn to esteem those who are capable of putting more wealth on display than they are.

Although Smith did not follow Rousseau directly in treating the affectations so beloved of the theatre as a direct analogue of the fall of humanity in the commercial age, there is nonetheless a necessary theatricality embedded in his understanding of how the history of manners was delivered to readers in the eighteenth century. In this respect, he was a direct exponent of the new approach to history identified by Momigliano.[104] On the subject of avowedly sentimentalist histories, Smith wrote that: 'by the justness as well as delicacy of their observations they may often help both to correct and to ascertain our natural sentiments with regard to the propriety of conduct, and suggesting many nice and delicate attentions, form us to a more exact justness of behaviour, than what, without such instruction, we should have been apt to think of'.[105] Yet here there is an important difference between Rousseau's and Smith's allusions to theatricality. For Rousseau, all such manifestations were symptomatic of the unfortunate history of enhanced human sociability, leading ever onwards to individual moral corruption in the quest for material possessions: theatrical

[99] Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, V.2.3.
[100] Louis Schneider, 'Adam Smith on Human Nature and Social Circumstance', in Gerald O'Driscoll (ed.), *Adam Smith and Modern Political Economy: Bicentennial Essays on The Wealth of Nations* (Ames, IA: Iowa State University Press, 1979), p. 57.
[101] Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, IV.1.8.
[102] I am grateful to one of the journal's anonymous referees for getting me to focus on this aspect of the argument.
[103] Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, I.iii.3.2.
[104] Harkin, 'Adam Smith's Missing History', p. 433.
[105] Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, VII.iv.6.

performances did nothing other than to naturalise that quest.[106] For Smith, by contrast, abstract examples of nameless individuals could be used – much in the way of a theatrical cast list – to urge the reader to guard against inadvertently turning the moral decline made possible by the material temptations of commercial society into a historical necessity.

One such example is his character, 'the man of fashion'. More precisely, and giving an immediate impression of the content of the morality play for which he was being activated, Smith called him 'that impertinent and foolish thing called a man of fashion'.[107] His characterisation bordered on character assassination, and it was designed to ensure that readers of *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* were left in no doubt that the vanity he displayed in associating himself visibly with the material trappings of wealth enfeebled him as a moral role model. Smith's tone was so acerbic that even today it is almost impossible not to be drawn into a particular interpretive community when reading his words. The instinct he was trying to induce in his readers was to understand the history of manners in such a way as to find the man of fashion laughable rather than admirable. He derided the showy possessions with which the man of fashion physically adorned himself as mere 'frivolous accomplishments' compared with genuine acts of virtue, suited only to the tastes of 'insolent and insignificant flatterers'.[108] He is the 'lover of toys', a wastrel dedicated to the consumption of 'trinkets of frivolous utility'.[109]

The image of 'trifling little conveniences' and 'baubles' of affectations also emerges in Smith's characterisation of the 'poor man's son'.[110] The poor man's son is the person who aspires to be rich on the grounds of imagining the comfort that riches can buy, a lifestyle liberated from the constancy of desperate livelihood struggle. Smith wrote that such a man is 'enchanted with the distant idea of this felicity',[111] inviting his readers to also envision themselves in some such scenario before instantly dashing their hopes. The poor man's son travels along the road towards increased personal wealth, making numerous physical and psychological sacrifices along the way, but arrives only to find the destination promised more than it delivered: 'He thinks if he had attained all these, he would sit still contentedly, and be quiet, enjoying himself in the thought of the happiness and tranquillity of his situation.'[112] The elision of material and moral comfort turns out to be a trick of the imagination. Like the Rousseauian subject, once Smith's poor man's son has unlocked the desire to live within the opinion of others, it makes him constantly restless. He is always looking for new opportunities to distinguish himself from his peers through his possessions, searching for materially-based evidence of his superiority. However, all he ends up doing is revealing to himself that his possessions are 'mere trinkets' with nothing other than show value, as well as nothing like a direct substitute for the additional opportunities for moral reflection which a wealthy existence can provide.[113]

Underlying the characterisation of both the man of fashion and the poor man's son is Smith's commitment to the thoroughly Rousseauian idea that a society's

[106] Banerjee, 'Rousseau's Concept of Theater', pp. 175–6.
[107] Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, I.iii.3.6.
[108] Ibid., I.iii.3.6.
[109] Ibid., IV.1.6.
[110] Ibid., IV.1.6, IV.1.10.
[111] Ibid., IV.1.8.
[112] Ibid., IV.1.8.
[113] Ibid., IV.1.8.

morals co-evolve with its capacity to produce economic surplus. According to Charles Griswold, he was 'consciously nonfoundationalist' in his approach to moral sentiments, refusing to ground them in anything other than historically-conditioned and historically-specific social conditions.[114] The Smithian subject therefore reveals an essential attachment to conventionalist ontology: individuals discover their sense of who they are and of who they should aim to be through being called to pass judgement on the propriety of other people's conduct.[115] There is, for Smith, as a consequence, an irreducible tension running through commercial society. Individuals get a sense of the type of moral agent they might be only by placing their self-image in the opinion of others as a means of observing the different responses generated by different presentations of the self. At the same time, however, the extra productive capacity of commercial society means an increased chance of those opinions being irreparably corrupted by the quest for purely gratuitous forms of material wealth. If other people's opinions constantly replicate those of the man of fashion and the poor man's son, individuals are denied access to their pristine moral selves, because their economic agency is reflected back to them through the lens of others' moral corruption.

So far, it seems, still so very Rousseauian. However, Smith made an important break with Rousseau – and, at first glance, also with his own non-foundationalist ontology – in suggesting that there is one principle of moral sentiment which is always capable of overriding social opinion. Smith continually emphasised the individual's ability to distinguish praiseworthiness from praise, as well as to view the former as more morally worthy than the latter.[116] Smith got quite close to reinventing Rousseau's notion of a natural self uninhibited by the experience of sociability when he wrote about the original love of praiseworthiness.[117] However, to be conscious of having behaved in a praiseworthy manner of course first requires social interaction if it is to be a meaningful emotion. Nonetheless, Smith hinted at the possibility for the individual to recover a sense of self-sufficiency in being oriented towards purely praiseworthy activities, even though commercial society appeared more obviously to reward what Ryan Hanley has called 'the love of praise characteristic of the bourgeois'.[118] To engage in the struggle to enjoy economic surplus as lifestyle adornments is meritorious only to the extent that merit is sought in praise. Crucially, the means of demonstrating that such praise is deserved requires the value system of commercial society to be transcended altogether.[119]

The Smithian subject must therefore walk something of a tightrope. The choice of lifestyle is not as straightforward as for the Rousseauian subject, for whom living in the opinion of others is an existential necessity in commercial society and can only be countered by embracing forms of life which completely reject that society. The

[114] Charles Griswold, *Adam Smith and the Virtues of Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 165.
[115] Rothschild, *Economic Sentiments*, p. 231.
[116] James Otteson, *Adam Smith's Marketplace of Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 122–4.
[117] Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, III.2.1.
[118] Hanley, 'Commerce and Corruption', p. 144.
[119] Thomas Pangle, 'The Classical and Modern Liberal Understandings of Honor', in Peter McNamara (ed.), *The Noblest Minds: Fame, Honor, and the American Founding* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 1998), p. 211.

Smithian subject lives in the opinion of others as surely when targeting praiseworthiness within commercial society as when targeting praise. It is the *content* of others' opinion that changes form between the two instances, not the difference between the ability and the inability to satisfy one's sense of self other than through the approbation of observant others. To act in a praiseworthy manner was, for Smith, to act with 'self-command': moderating the emotions as a means of avoiding overt showiness when presenting oneself in public.[120] The economic virtue that most clearly fitted such a template was prudence, through which the thrifty management of household affairs allowed for careful financial planning for the future.[121] This corresponds, of course, to a logic of foregone consumption opportunities in the present, and in commercial society, where praise results from the relationship between individuals and their possessions, it therefore largely takes praise out of the equation. Yet, there is an inevitable time delay between the moment of acting through self-command and the moment at which the approbation of others arises for the praiseworthiness of that action. The positive outcomes for prudential behaviour only become apparent over time, and so too, as a consequence, does the endorsement of that behaviour in the opinion of others.

The Smithian system allows individuals to compensate for this temporal disjuncture by substituting their own judgement on their behaviour for the missing judgement of others. If living in the opinion of others is always a vicarious exercise, it becomes doubly so in this instance. There is a moral good entailed in self-judgement for Smith, enabling a distinctly non-bourgeois contentment to be enjoyed in 'that thing which, though it should be praised by nobody, is however, the natural and proper object of praise'.[122] Bourgeois contentment derived from mere praise of possessions is, by contrast, 'groundless applause',[123] incapable of being activated in any meaningful way through self-judgement. In order to emphasise the significance of self-judgement, Smith argued that the modern individual was endowed, 'not only with a desire of being approved of, but with a desire of being what ought to be approved of; or of being what he himself approves of in other men'.[124] This enables all individuals to be the ultimate arbiter of their own praiseworthiness, providing them with the psychologically-comforting ability of imagining in a self-satisfactory manner how distinctly non-bourgeois forms of contentment should be viewed by others. Smith thus created a 'jurisdiction of the man within' to render possible behaviour built on self-command. This applies even though commercial society privileges the 'jurisdiction of the man without',[125] or what Rousseau described as the masks of social artifice.[126]

The difficulty that Smith encountered in fully repudiating Rousseau's critique of commercial society is evident in the fact that there is no fail-safe mechanism preventing the internalisation of moral judgement from falling foul of self-deception. Smith himself alluded to the very real possibility that 'the man within' might be sufficiently corrupted by the materialistic instincts of social opinion to allow those instincts to

[120] Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, I.ii.intro.2, VI.iii.11.
[121] Fleischacker, *On Adam Smith's Wealth of Nations*, pp. 87–90.
[122] Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, III.2.1.
[123] Ibid., III.2.4.
[124] Ibid., III.2.7.
[125] Ibid., III.2.32.
[126] Rousseau, *Émile*, p. 265.

override more reputable forms of moral judgement.[127] He wrote that: 'The great mob of mankind are the admirers and worshippers, and, what may seem more extraordinary, most frequently the disinterested admirers and worshippers, of wealth and greatness.'[128] In such circumstances, the individual's internal arbiter of appropriate decision-making becomes nothing more than a personalisation of Rousseau's theatre, reflecting the prejudices and superstition of commercial society back onto the self.[129] The search for forms of praiseworthy behaviour might therefore become prey to an inadvertent process through which the individual's moral self merely mimics the prevailing materialism of commercial society. There is nothing in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* to say why this should definitively not be the case, which leaves Smith's ethical defence of commercial society looking somewhat half-hearted.

The qualification 'definitively' might in this respect be more important than it first appears. The text of *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* is littered with instances in which Smith bemoaned the fact that the 'gaudy and glittering' provided the most obvious source of emulation in commercial society, especially when this was preferred to 'humble modesty and equitable justice' in the search for recognition.[130] This makes it look as though his defence of commercial society was distinctly, rather than only somewhat, half-hearted, given his concerns that it bred an instinct towards possessiveness which was itself inimical to morally pristine forms of imaginative sympathy. 'The propriety of our moral sentiments is never so apt to be corrupted', he wrote, 'as when the indulgent and partial spectator is at hand, while the indifferent and impartial one is at a great distance'.[131] Yet, shortly after this passage Smith offered something of a counter to his own concern, detailing the effects of a 'love of system' which might be sufficient to turn the individual away from certain manifestations of partiality. This is a 'regard to the beauty of order, [which ...] frequently serves to recommend those institutions which tend to promote the public welfare'. 'We take pleasure in beholding the perfection of so beautiful and grand a system', he suggested, 'and we are uneasy till we remove any obstruction that can in the least disturb or encumber the regularity of its motions'.[132] Interestingly for current purposes, though, Smith mentioned 'faction and fanaticism' by name as those 'corrupters of moral sentiments' which might be negated by the historically-induced appreciation of social order, but not material possessiveness.[133] The only way to extend such instincts to self-regarding consumption remains an awareness of the distinction between praiseworthiness and praise, but Smith failed to explain the origin of that distinction in a manner consistent with his own theory of the process of moral judgement.

Conclusion

It goes without saying that neither Rousseau nor Smith was an Everyday IPE scholar. They asked the questions that were of intellectual concern in their own time

[127] Pierre Force, *Self-Interest before Adam Smith: A Genealogy of Economic Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 122.
[128] Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, I.iii.3.2.
[129] Ibid., III.3.41.
[130] Ibid., I.iii.3.2.
[131] Ibid., III.3.41.
[132] Ibid., IV.1.11.
[133] Ibid., III.3.43.

completely unburdened by any professional pressure to frame their thoughts with respect to the language, concepts and theoretical assumptions of a distinctly modern-day academic subject field. Yet there are sufficient similarities between the style of their analyses of commercial society and Everyday IPE to believe that significant lessons can be learnt about the latter from further in-depth study of the former. They were representatives of an important advance in Enlightenment thinking which can be viewed as a precursor to how Everyday IPE scholars establish the essence of their break with IPE orthodoxy.

The work of Rousseau and Smith reflects the significant eighteenth-century shift in historical method, one which enabled the writing of history to be liberated from the focus on the public actions of public men. They could not have asked the questions they did about the co-evolving structures of politeness and production had there not been a growing concern for understanding changes in everyday experience through a perspective emphasising distinctly private histories. It was this that saw them focus on nameless yet representative individuals of the age in an effort to highlight the moral threats posed by the materialist ideologies of commercial society. Even a fairly cursory reading of their work is likely to be sufficient to reveal the numerous characters they created along such lines when attempting to trigger interpellative moments of self-recognition amongst readers. These characters represented a new departure in the methodology of history insofar as they were theoretical abstractions rather than empirical examples. However, they became historically significant in their own right insofar as they were plausible abstractions invoking feelings of familiarity. They did their job by telling people what they were in danger of becoming, even if learning this about themselves was somewhat unsettling.

Everyday IPE likewise implores its readers to look into themselves in its accounts of more recent examples of the way in which changing structures of economic organisation evolve their own specific behavioural rationalities. Entirely consistently with their eighteenth-century counterparts, such study implies a style of writing which is produced at least in part for the effects it will have on its target audience. The objective of Everyday IPE is every bit as much to stimulate moments of self-awareness amongst audience members as it was for Rousseau and Smith, asking people to look inwards to themselves rather than outwards to the state. The primary source of interest in both is with the emergence of particular forms of customary behaviour in particular social situations, as well as in the way in which those customs imply particular economic subjectivities. Viewed from such a perspective, the similarities between the two bodies of literature are so pronounced as to be extremely eye-catching. Even the questions that divided the classical political economists across analytical and normative lines are paralleled in contemporary IPE. Those questions are whether prevailing economic subjectivities are built upon social masks which hide the moral degeneracy of those who display them and, if so, whether this is too high a price for economic improvement.

Can Everyday IPE flourish in the absence of knowledge about how the rise of political economy was itself founded on a specific Enlightenment shift in the method of writing history? Perhaps it can, but it would be grounded on much surer footings with an appreciation of Momigliano's description of the onset of private histories in the eighteenth century. The original rationale for political economy was to assert that there was more to the evolution of forms of economic life than the power of the state. Harnessing the historian's instincts to the substantive focus on contextually-specific

manners was the eighteenth-century answer to how to avoid an overly restrictive field of study for political economy. Reactivating a similar agenda today to cast light on the specific subjectivities and forms of contemporary economic agency would seem to be an admirable objective for Everyday IPE.

Equally, can Everyday IPE illuminate the most important normative issues related to the management of the global economy in the absence of knowledge about how the rise of political economy was also founded on sentimentalist philosophical history? Again, perhaps it can, but once more it would be grounded on much surer footings with an appreciation of Momigliano's description of Enlightenment scholars' use of behavioural ideal-types to bring the reader into the text. Rousseau and Smith continue to stand at the apex of the technique of enlisting the reader into the normative cause of the historical narrative with which they are faced. Forging an interpretive community between author and reader was the eighteenth-century answer to how to consciously moralise the evolution of economic life. As the struggle over enhanced levels of economic surplus today leaves even more asymmetric patterns of poverty and wealth than it did in Rousseau's and Smith's time, reactivating a similar agenda would also seem to be an admirable objective for Everyday IPE.

Yet this in turn implies an even more fundamental break with IPE orthodoxy than the current crop of Everyday IPE scholars has thus far envisaged. If the search for its foundations means uniting Everyday IPE with similar styles of analysis to be found within classical political economy, then a turn towards historiography is essential. However, this must be a much deeper historiographical process than is currently in evidence within IPE, where it is usual to read the history of economic ideas backwards in an attempt to render the work of much older scholars compatible with the framework of ideas which belongs to modern IPE theory. It is about recognising that there is more to eighteenth- and nineteenth-century scholarship than is captured by orthodox IPE's tripartite pedagogical framework of liberalism, economic nationalism and Marxism, as well as that the textbook appeal to Smith, List and Marx as the respective founders of these positions is historiographically suspect in significant ways. The most robust foundations for Everyday IPE will therefore be established through reclaiming the authority of original texts and once again enabling them to speak for themselves. I have made a very small start on this task by using the preceding pages to place Smith back into the historical context of his engagement with Rousseau, albeit thus presenting a Smith who is largely unknown in IPE. The difference could hardly be greater between this Smith and the IPE textbook depiction of a purely economistic Smith who had nothing but praise for the efficiency of market outcomes. This suggests that the textbooks might themselves be a barrier to developing the historiographical depth which, I argue, is necessary to fully exploit the potential of Everyday IPE.