Adam Smith and the Scottish model of education: a Scottish bias

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Abstract:

Adam Smith’s analysis of Scottish education seems biased in favor of the Scottish educational system. Smith may have used his description of Scottish education to demonstrate that Scotland was not a rude and uncivilized society, but that it exceeded in refinement both England and the continent.

Smith lives in a booming time of his country. The Scottish Enlightenment and Scottish commerce brought about opulence and refinement. But is this opulence and politeness just a recent, possibly fragile, phenomenon? After all Scotland could be perceived, and was perceived by some, as a backward, poor, and beaten country. Scotland had lost its crown (1603) and its parliament (1707) to London. It had lost a quarter of its liquid capital attempting to establish a Scottish colony in Panama with the Darien Disaster (1698-99). It had lost its attempts to restore the House of Stuart, by overthrowing the House of Hanover, on the British throne with the battle of Culloden (1746). Is Scotland, in reality, at its heart, still an unsophisticated country to be ashamed of, like David Hume seems to feel? Is Scotland still a country to make fun of like Smith's classmates at Oxford did? Is Scotland still inferior to England? After all, with the Union, it is Scotland that became North Britain, while England stated its supremacy and did not become South Britain (Broadie [2007] 2011).

I will use Smith's analysis of education to show that Smith may have had more confidence in the civilization of Scotland than his friend Hume and that he uses his description of the Scottish educational system in the Wealth of Nations ([1776] 1981) to promote Scotland as a civilized and polite place, possibly more polite and civilized than its southern neighbor.

Education is one of the many aspects that may have contributed to the flourishing of Scotland in the 18th century. Education is also one of the sources of politeness and civility. Smith seems to ask:
what is the most effective way to educate people? His answer seems to be: freedom of choice, achieved through competition, like in Scotland. So the educational system of Scotland may be an example of civility and politeness. But while his argument sounds correct, it may not sound complete. Smith gives us the benefits of a system like the Scottish one, but overlooks the potential failures and weaknesses of it. Smith's presentation may be biased in favor of the Scottish system as if to make a stronger case that Scotland is not a barbaric, backward country as some would present, but rather a civilized country with an educational system that can and should be taken as a model of advanced civilization.

The next section shows that for Smith, as he describe in Book V of the *Wealth of Nations*, an effective educational system is a competitive system where students have almost complete freedom of choice. Students should choose their teachers, which means that teachers are paid by students; students should choose their schools, which means that fellowships should be transferable; students should choose their subjects, which means that useless things will not be taught. This is exactly how Smith claims the Scottish system is. Yet, Smith fails to account for the praiseworthiness of professors, which may be good and devoted teachers because it is praiseworthy to be so. He fails to account for the benefits schools have in attracting good students with fellowships. And he fails to account for the persistence of useless teaching even in competitive systems like the Scottish one.

The following section looks at the motivation of pursuing education in Smith. It seems like forming a polite gentleman is the primary role of universities, which implies, again, that if Scotland has an effective educational system, if not the most effective one, Scotland is therefore a country that produces gentlemen, politeness, and civilization.

Smith's analysis, as correct as it is, does not seem complete. And if he is biased in his analysis, he may be so to promote a specific view of Scotland. And if Smith's analysis of education is indeed normative rather than positive, Henry Bitterman (1940) may indeed have a point in claiming that the *Theory of Moral Sentiments* is the positive book of Smith while the *Wealth of Nations* is the normative book of Smith. This would also be consistent with recent interpretations of Smith which present him as a selective painter of reality, where an idealized picture of reality is preferred to a real one to make a stronger point, being that point against bounties (Hueckel 2009), in favor of agriculture (Furuya Manuscript), or describing the division of labor (Peaucelle 2006).
Competition and Compensation

Smith opens the chapter on education in book V of the *Wealth of Nations* by claiming that education should be funded privately, or with a mix of private and public funding. A completely publicly funded educational system was not an option for Smith, not even in case of the poorest children. And not even when Smith allows for the possibility of mandatory primary education. For Smith, students should always pay for their education, even if the amount of education received will vary with their income and their rank. Rich students should pay private tutors, and be educated mostly at home. Poor students may go to school, with a mix of private and public funds. Public funds may cover the physical facilities. But salary of teachers should always come from private funds.

Smith supports his case for private education with examples from the past and from his present-day Scotland.

In Rome, according to Smith, education was left in the hands of the individuals, even in law, where Rome excelled. There were no schools in Rome. Education was strictly private, done at home, with tutors. To learn law one would follow a renowned lawyer around. Similarly in Smith's Scotland, Smith claims, fencing and dancing are taught only privately. And he believes that fencing and dancing should be taken as example because they are taught, and taught relatively well. Anybody who goes to fencing or dancing school will learn how to fence or dance. True, those students may not learn to be the best possible dancers or the best possible fencers, but they will learn how to dance and how to fence. For Smith, what is taught best is *not* taught in public institutions (Smith [1776] 1981), WN V.i.f.16).

If students are indigent or if education is made mandatory and students are indigent, Smith suggests a mix system of private fees for the teachers and local public funds for the infrastructures. Smith shows the success of this mixed system by looking, again, at history as well as his contemporary Scotland. Looking at history, Smith looks at Greece. In Greece, Smith tells us, the state provided just some of the physical facilities for martial education, but was not involved with the teachers’ appointment and compensation, even if martial education was compulsory (V.i.f.41). Indeed, in Greece, the state required military training, but the state would not pay or appoint any master. The state just made available a public place where to conduct military training. In Greece, “read, write, and account” was taught at home for the rich and in schools for the poor, where the poor would hire a master to teach them. Similarly in Smith's times, learning how to read, write, and account is
taught at home for the rich (and for women) and in schools for the poor, where the poor would hire a master to teach them, like in Scotland’s parish schools. In Scotland, Smith tells us, indigent children can hire a teacher in their parish schools. And in Smith's Scotland, everybody, or almost everybody, can read, write, and account, even if not always well (V.i.f.16)—or at least Smith claims. (cf. Leathers and Raines 2007).

Notice that for Smith, public funding for education should not come from the general revenue of the state but from local or provincial revenue. Explicitly, he claims the local revenue is not to be from taxation but from the rent of landed estate of the sovereign or of some private donor (WN V.i.f.2).

Even when the physical facilities of the schools are paid with (local) public funds, the hiring of the teachers directly from students is for Smith an indispensable tool to offer (good) education. Students paying for their teachers implies that students have a choice of teachers. Students directly hiring their teachers implies teachers have to offer good service to attract students to pay their salary.

So Smith believes that the quality of education is positively related with the presence and the amount of competition for students among teachers, professors, and schools. Smith unpacks the way to enhance competition among schools and professors in two related ways: one is to link salary to students’ fee and the other to let students choose both their schools and their courses within their schools. I believe both prescriptions have their advantages, which Smith does mention, and their disadvantages, which Smith does not mention.

For Smith, endowment schools, where teaching is not connected with professors’ compensation, the incentives are such to diminishing the quality of teaching of professors so that, like at Oxford, public professors have given up “even the pretense of teaching” (WN V.i.f.8). On the other hand, Scottish schools, where professors are paid by students’ fees, maintain a decent quality of teaching.

It may not be by accident that the establishment of a medical school in Edinburgh, including the Royal Infirmary, with some of the best physicians of the time, put Edinburgh on the map of the best medical centers of the world, along with Salerno, Padua, and Leyden (Chintis 1982). This is how successful the method of Scottish teaching seems to be: good teachers do attract students. “Alexander Monro quickly brought educational objective to the fore and used the infirmary extensively for teaching […]. By 1730, the situation was out of hand. The physicians and surgeons in attendance were 'so crowded with numbers of apprentices and others who have no title to be
admitted. That it is Difficult to advise a case or perform any operation without the utmost Confusion or Irregularity so that Business is greatly retarded and the patients freighted [sic] with so great number of persons'. (A later regulation for students forbade them from dirtying the beds with their feet, indicating, perhaps, that some stood on the beds to ensure better view).” (Chintis 1982 p. 94-95).

This argument is familiar to economists today: it can be seen as a sort of principal-agent problem. We promote working on commission, as opposed to receiving a flat salary, to incentivize effort in employees and de-incentivize shirking. Shop attendants work on commission to decrease the probability of conflict between the interest of the customer and the self-interest of the sale representative. Uri Gneezy and John List (2013) using economic experiments, shows indeed that monetary incentives do make a difference in performance of students, even if the incentives may be more effective when combined to incentives offered to students and parents. Smith’s argument seems therefore correct. And if we look at some inner city public schools (in the U.S. at least), Smith seems indeed correct again. But is this it? His is story complete?

Are sales representatives in shops the same as university professors? Did Smith think of himself as a sale representative in a shop? Smith was a fairly good teacher. At Glasgow, his students paid him fees. So being paid by students and being a good and popular professor are linked by a causal relation, Smith says. But would Smith himself have been a much worst teacher, had he been paid a flat salary from Glasgow College as opposed to fees from his pupils? This is a man who claim to have burned half of his wardrobe after he become a custom officer and realized that half of his wardrobe was technically illegal in Scotland (Ross [1995] 2010). In the Theory of Moral Sentiments ([1759] 1984), Smith tells us that we have an innate desire to be praiseworthy, not just to be praised. Why would professors’ desire to be praiseworthy be suffocated by their self-interest? Why would work ethics not be part of the motivation of professors? Why would they be different from the praiseworthy people presented in the Theory of Moral Sentiments? Granted, professors may be different; work ethics may play no role with teachers, but Smith does not tell us why we should expect to see this difference. In addition, in WN I.x, describing different forms of compensation which would eventually lead to an equilibrium wage, Smith tells us that monetary compensation and social approbation are two forms of payment. Everything else equal, higher social approbation from a profession calls for less monetary compensation, and vice-versa, jobs with low social approbation require higher monetary compensation, everything else equal. But Smith does not seem to count
social approbation as part of the compensation of academics. Why are educational jobs so different not to have this social approbation component in them? Smith does not tell.

Let's assume Smith wishes to explain differences in teaching effectiveness. Holding work ethics/praiseworthiness constant, changes in monetary incentives matter. But what if we hold monetary incentives constant: do changes in work ethics matter? Smith does not consider this option, needed to present a complete picture. Can we ignore this absence? I fear the absence of a complete analysis of teachers' incentives may not give as an objective analysis as one would wish.

Overlooking some aspects of an analysis is not a common characteristic of Smith style—for example, when talking about division of labor he does not hesitate to give us the benefits as well as the costs. But yet, as Hueckel (2009) points out, Smith seems to overlook some aspects of the analysis in WN when he seems to have an agenda to pursue. Leathers and Raines (2007) also suggests that what Smith describes is not necessarily the reality of Scotland at his time. At Glasgow College there are professors willing to pay thugs to beat up their students, because students show no respect to their professors, despite professors being paid by students' fees (Scott 1965). These behaviors are not accounted for, nor mentioned for that matter. Could we dismiss them as outliers? Even if they were scandals and well known while Smith was at Glasgow? Or, is Smith's analysis a more biased presentation of the Scottish system to promote Scotland not as a backward country but as an advanced one and as a possible example of increasing civilization rather than a dispassionate presentation of teachers' incentives? And if there is a promotional agenda, how seriously should we overlook the parts of the arguments that Smith overlooks?

But even assuming Smith is unbiased, do we want professors to be like sale representatives? Smith tells us that within a college, there should be freedom to choose the courses taught by specific professors, not to impose some professors on students (V.i.f.13). Lectures that are worth attending will be attended without the need to impose attendance (V.i.f.15). The shops that offer the things consumers like most will be more successful than the ones that do not. Here again, Smith's analysis may be both correct and yet problematic, especially if made abstract enough to be applied in full in today's context. Popular professors may be popular because they are good, or because they are easy graders. A student may learn more from a rigorous and hard professor than from an entertaining and easy one. Yet, students may prefer easy grades and entertainment to hard work. The role of students evaluation in the evaluation of professors, in the U.S. at least, is an open question with no clear answer. What if professors, like sale representatives, attract customers by flattery, and by
flattery only (or mostly)? If that is a possibility, Smith does not tell us how to prevent or reduce the incentives that professors may have to flatter students and lower academic standards to attract students and their money to their classrooms. He seems to assume they will not. Which we can infer would be due to the professors' integrity. So while he implicitly asked us to assume away work ethics in case of teachers' motivation linked to compensation, he implicitly asked us to assume it in case of teachers' standards of teaching.

In addition, as E.G. West (1964) argues, John Stuart Mill presents an early counter-argument to Smith, which Smith does not address: parents and students may be ignorant, they may not know what is best for the education of the children. Leaving the choice to them alone may be inefficient. Leathers and Raines (2007) also claims that letting educational choices only in the hands of its customers may be counterproductive because students (and maybe parents?) could be steered by fashion rather than by actual education. Leathers and Raines bring fencing as an example. Smith, Leathers and Raines state, lobbied to introduce fencing in the Glasgow curriculum, and this was due to fashion rather than academic rigor. While Leathers and Raines may be correct in general, this example does not hold water. Fencing in the 18th century was indeed a rigorous and required part of a gentleman's education. Upper class men would be part of the military elite and fencing was part of their training, just like military strategy. In addition, fencing was part of that martial education, so much invoked by Smith and his fellow Scots, required to maintain sound citizens (Montes 2009). Smith was not yielding to fashion by asking to have fencing as a discipline at Glasgow, but was actually completing the curriculum appropriate for a gentleman of his time (see Broadie 2017).

Another argument which Smith makes to promote competition, and which is recognizable and (to some) appealing today, is school choice. In addition to students choosing their professors within their school, Smith suggests, students should be able to choose their schools too. If we think of today voucher system, Smith's argument is familiar: Smith tells us scholarships may be useful only if students can use them in the school of their choice. If not, if a scholarship is linked to a college, the college will attract the student, and students will go there regardless of the quality of the college (V.i.f.12). This is indeed what happened to Smith himself. He received a scholarship to go studying in Oxford, where he was forced “to go to prayers twice a day and to lecture twice a week” (24 August 1740 Letter from Adam Smith to William Smith, Duke of Argyles in Smith (1987), p. 1). Again, I believe Smith's analysis may be both correct and incomplete. His analysis does seem to apply well to voucher system in primary schools, especially when parents do not have the possibility
to choose the school for the children by moving to a neighborhood with the school they prefer. Similarly, fellowships and scholarships do link students to specific colleges. But fellowships and scholarships do not necessarily induce students to disregard the quality of the school lured only by short-sighted monetary incentives. With equal or similar quality of schools, a student would indeed prefer the school with fellowship. But would a student with means chose to forgo paying tuition at Harvard because he received a scholarship to go to a Community College tuition-free? And even in case of students with lower means, if accepted into Harvard, would they rather go to the subsidized Community College? In case of higher education, especially, we can see the positive returns to our investment. Smith himself tells us that a higher level of education/training commands a higher salary (sigh). Assuming with Smith this logic (even if based on faulty cost/labor theory of value), I suppose, it could be applied also to quality of education—a Harvard degree may command a higher salary than a Community College degree, following Smith’s logic, because the cost of the Harvard education is higher than the cost of the Community College education, and so it may be a worthy investment, even if expensive.

The problem may be different for students who are not well-off, especially for primary education. Transferable scholarships would be like a voucher system. Students can use the voucher/scholarship in the school of their choice. And given the choice, one would expect to use the voucher/scholarship toward the better school. The people who benefit the most would be the least well-off.

Scholarships that link students to specific colleges are indeed common practice today, in the U.S. at least: colleges compete for students and attract students by offering scholarships applicable to that particular college only. But rather than seeing scholarships a limitation of students’ choice, in the U.S. at least, it is generally seen as an enhancement of choice. Scholarship may increase the choices of good students with lower means as now they may have the option to go into a better college than otherwise they would. And scholarships can also be seen as an enhancement of the quality of that school. Scholarships attract better students, and the better the students the better the professors will be. Good schools compete for good students via scholarships to become even better schools. So it is not necessarily that case that Smith’s personal experience is generalizable, and generalizable to today in particular.

The lack of choice that students have, for Smith, is dictated by the self-interest of the masters. And the self-interest of the masters is not necessarily in line with the interest of their students and of
society. For example, in Smith’s account, in Europe, ecclesiastical schools teach Latin because the priests officiate in Latin. Greek and Hebrew have not been taught since the introduction of the Latin Vulgata, the Latin Bible. (V.i.f.19). But Latin is not useful to students. In Scotland, on the other hand, where there is more competition, rather than Latin, parish schools teach geometry, mechanic, and literary education, which are much more beneficial for the pupils since they will find some applications for their knowledge (V.i.f.55). The common education in Europe derives from the education for the ecclesiastics, and it is not proper for gentlemen and men of the world (V.i.f.32). Women, on the other hand, are educated at home, and learn only what is useful, proper, or fashionable for them, not what is demanded by a bureaucracy disconnected from them (V.i.f.46).

But while Smith is correct in stating that in Scotland Latin is taught much less than on the continent, Alexander Brodie (1990) tells us that Latin is actually taught a lot in Scotland, and Latin grammar has been taught until very recent times. Latin is needed to read the bible and to understand revelation. It is part of the standard education in parish schools. And if one thinks, like Brodie does, that before the Reformation there are three universities in Scotland where teaching is in Latin, one needs to believe both that the primary educational system is functioning enough to feed students to these universities and that it functioning enough to allow students to attend classes in Latin. The “never to be forgotten” Francis Hutchinson, Smith’s teacher, is the first professor to abandon Latin lectures in Scotland. So the primary Latin education may not have been completely dismantled when Smith writes. He himself was quite fluent in Latin and Greek (Clayden 1887).

And while the downplay of Latin education and the up-play of geometry and natural philosophy education seems to imply a decrease of the presence of the church and of religion in secular education, we cannot ignore, like Smith does, that as recent as in 1696 the 18 year old Thomas Aikenhead, a student at Edinburgh University was burnt at the stake for blasphemy, or that Glasgow professor of Divinity John Simson (1668-1740) was charged with heresy and was forbidden from teaching and all university faculties were put under severe scrutiny as a consequence. True, in the second half of the 18th century the church eventually opened up to natural religion, but this did not prevent Hume from not being ostracized from academia because of his alleged agnosticism, or Smith from receiving serious negative consequences for praising Hume in his death announcement (Ross [1995] 2010).

So is this emphasis on the promotion of natural philosophy as opposed to Latin then just another way to hit that alleged backward Scotland is actually more innovative and advanced than the more
civilized and stale countries? In addition, while I appreciate the public choice-like argument Smith offers us, I can’t help thinking: If we take Smith’s argument seriously, can we use it to abolish Classics departments or the Humanities in today’s universities, because they are “useless” subjects, and expand natural sciences departments instead? But again, this contradicts Smith’s ideas about curriculum, which is heavily based on literature (modern and ancient), theater, philosophy, and history. So again, Smith seems to present a partial picture of education in Scotland which brings center-stage the dynamic and modern spirit of his peripheral country. The picture maybe right, but it may also not be complete.

Motivation to pursue education and Innovation

Smith offers several reasons why individuals should pursue education and why the state should care about it. These reasons are not universal. They vary over time, institutions, and across groups of people. And again, they depict Scotland as an example of civilization and innovation compared to the rest of Europe and England.

In barbarian and rude societies, Smith claims, every man has more or less the same knowledge and ingenuity, but very few have a lot of it (V.i.f.51). Formal education is not indispensable because individuals gain knowledge and ingenuity from the variety of experiences they are exposed to.

In a civilized society, on the other hand, there is much more diversity: education must take different forms to satisfy the differences of society. In a society divided in social ranks, like the civilized society that Smith describes, it is not appropriate to have a universal education equal for all. The proper education of a man of rank cannot be the same which is proper for a common person. In a civilized society, characterized by specialization, knowledge becomes also more specialized. And therefore while there is less variety of knowledge for the individual, there is more variety of knowledge as a whole in society (V.i.f.51).

For Smith, in civilized societies, people of rank pursue education to become proper gentlemen and proper men of the world. Their education is always privately funded, and often privately achieved at home or by foreign travel. If the results are not as satisfactory as one would hope for it is not for lack of trying but for misdirected expenditure. (V.i.f.52). Smith goes as far to claim that the practice of sending a son to study abroad from a few years is a complete ineffective way to educate young
men. Yet is it frequent in England, because it is dictated by the fathers’ desire not to see their sons “going to ruin before [their] eyes” (WN Vi.f.36).

In polite societies, professionals pursue education privately through apprenticeship or on the job-training. The expense of vocational and professional education are generally repaid by the higher salaries that those professions command (WN I.x)

Finally, in commercial society, Smith tells us, that differently from men of rank and artisans and professionals, common people may not voluntarily pursue education. Children may be sent to work rather than to school. Yet, Smith said, they should go to school. If from a young age, common people dedicate themselves only to one task, they will fail to develop understanding and ingenuity. Their mind will atrophied (V.i.f.50). In civilized societies common people are characterized by their “drowsy stupidity” (V.i.f.51). To prevent the corruption of the great body of society (V.i.f.49), reading, writing, and accounting may be imposed upon common people when they are too young to go to work (V.i.f.54).

So Smith tells us that the education of the lower classes is a form of public sanitation project: It prevent the diffusion of “leprosy” of the mind of the great body of the people. In Smith’s words: “to prevent that sort of mental mutilation, deformity and wretchedness […] from spreading themselves through the great body of the people, would still deserve the most serious attention of government; in the same manner as it would deserve its most serious attention to prevent a leprosy or any other loathsome and offensive disease, though neither mortal nor dangerous, from spreading itself among them; though, perhaps, no other publick good might result from such attention besides the prevention of so great a publick evil” (WN Vi.f. 60).

Educating people of lower ranks may even help in forming a more decent and orderly society. Notice that is may sound like a call for mandatory education, rather than public funding for education. Smith’s description of this is worth citing in full

“The same thing may be said of the gross ignorance and stupidity which, in a civilized society, seem so frequently to benumb the understandings of all the inferior ranks of people. A man, without the proper use of the intellectual faculties of a man, is, if possible, more contemptible than even a coward, and seems to be mutilated and deformed in a still more essential part of the character of human nature. Though the state was to derive no advantage from the instruction of the inferior ranks of people, it would still deserve its
attention that they should not be altogether uninstructed. The state, however, derives no inconsiderable advantage from their instruction. The more they are instructed, the less liable they are to the delusions of enthusiasm and superstition, which, among ignorant nations, frequently occasion the most dreadful disorders. An instructed and intelligent people besides are always more decent and orderly than an ignorant and stupid one. They feel themselves, each individually, more respectable, and more likely to obtain the respect of their lawful superiors, and they are therefore more disposed to respect those superiors. They are more disposed to examine, and more capable of seeing through, the interested complaints of faction and sedition, and they are, upon that account, less apt to be misled into any wanton or unnecessary opposition to the measures of government. In free countries, where the safety of government depends very much upon the favourable judgment which the people may form of its conduct, it must surely be of the highest importance that they should not be disposed to judge rashly or capriciously concerning it.” (Vi.f.61).

Scottish parish schools are Smith's model for this: mandatory, but privately funded.

In civilized societies, Smith tells us, there is also another group of people to consider: the very few who do not in need to be attached to any specific knowledge or employment. These very few, Smith tells us, can compare and combine the variety of activities they see in society and develop an “acute understanding” (Vi.f.51).

Depending on the institutional system, men with “acute understanding” may be found either inside or outside universities. Smith tells us, the improvement in philosophy does not come from within the universities (Vi.f.34). For Smith, rich and endowed universities are slow to innovate as they have no incentives to do so, while poor universities are on the other hand fast to adopt changes because they depend on the reputation of their teachers, and the reputation of the teachers depends on their attention to the world (Vi.f.34).

Let's look at this last point first. What Smith seems to tell us, is that in the continent, universities rejects intellectuals such as the luminaries, and that great ideas have to come from outside the universities. Montesquieu, Voltaire, Rousseau, Turgot, and the other continental great thinkers would not be to be found in universities but in saloons. But, in Scotland, men with big views and innovative capacities are to be found inside universities. Edinburgh is the first to teach Newtonianism: Newton's *Principia* was published in 1687 and it was in Edinburgh's library as early as 1690. In
Glasgow it appeared in 1695 and a bit later in Aberdeen and St Andrews (Shepherd 1982). The university of Glasgow has Adam Smith, Joseph Black, James Hutton, James Watts; the university of Aberdeen has Colin Maclaurin, John Gregory, Alexander Gerard; the university of Edinburgh has William Cullen, John Hope, John Sinclair. But David Hume is still unable to obtain an academic position. While it is true, even today, that many inventions come from the workplaces and non-top universities, can we say with the same certainty as Smith that little improvement of knowledge comes from university? Is our local Community College really adopting new technologies and innovation faster than Harvard? Again, while Smith may have a point, does his point hold?

What is also of interest is Smith's justification for achieving education. This justification varies with social rank. Working poor's education in parish schools seems to be justified by social control. Middle class' education in the form of apprenticeships seems to be justified as a private investment in human capital from which private pecuniary advantages are gained. And upper class' education in universities seems to be justified for the formation of polite gentlemen and men of the world. The polite gentleman is able to converse in all scientific subjects and in all the novelty of science. He is willing and able to divulge useful knowledge to promote the well-being of his society, such as for example the application of chemistry to agriculture or to medicine (Donovan 1982; Bonnyman 2014).

Notice that R&D is not an explicit goal of education for Smith. If philosophical innovation comes from outside academia, practical inventions, Smith seems to imply, seem to come from the common people's repetitive jobs. While division of labor may lead to atrophy of the mind, it may also lead to discovery of better ways of doing things. So a little boy, bored with the repetitiveness of his task and wishing to go play instead, invents the fire engine (WN I.i.8). Smith's emphasis regarding university education is on the formation of gentlemen as polite gentlemen, not on innovation. And while it is true that the two go hand in hand in a polite society, Smith prefers to emphasize the function of forming “men of the world” rather than inventions for the world. Which could be interpreted as saying that Scotland is a much more polite society than people wish to think and ought to be thought of as a more polite society than what we traditionally think as polite societies, given its superior educational system. The superiority of Scottish educational system produces superior men of the world, making Scotland a leader in politeness rather than a backward country.
Conclusion

Adam Smith's analysis of education offers us ways to understand a possible component of the progress and marvels that Scottish Enlightenment achieved. The 18\textsuperscript{th} century Scottish boom was an economic boom as well as an intellectual boom. Smith seems to imply that Scotland was in fact enlightened and civilized, possibly defending it against accusations of having been or still being a barbaric and uncivilized place. Smith's analysis of the Scottish educational system presents a picture of Scotland as having the most effective educational system possible, a system, in Smith's description, almost without defects. If Smith ignores the dark or weak sides of the Scottish educational system, it may be to promote a specific image of Scotland rather a more objective one. The educational system of Scotland is presented as superior to the English one and to the continental ones. The politeness, civility, and refinement of Scotland cannot therefore be inferior, but it may even be superior, to the English or the European ones. Scotland may actually surpass England and Europe for its civilization.
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