

Call for Papers: Smith and the Nature of Commerce
Joint session of AISPE-SISE and IASS, Palermo 18-21 October

On the occasion of Adam Smith's Tercentenary celebrations, the Marie Curie Project 'Rethinking Exchange' would like to solicit papers for a session titled 'Smith and the Nature of Commerce' and to be organized jointly with the International Adam Smith Society (IASS) during the upcoming 2023 AISPE (Associazione Italiana per la Storia del Pensiero Economico) and SISE (Società Italiana degli Storici Economici) conference.

Before the 19th century, commerce was part of a vast debate on human nature, the foundations of sociability and society, which involved thinkers from nascent disciplines like anthropology, political science, political economy and natural history, later considered separately. Back then, commerce was not exclusively understood as an economic concept, but also as a moral and political one. It meant not only the economic exchange of goods but was rather conceived as a particular form of social interaction based on moral sentiments, as a principle of social regulation that could possibly serve as an alternative to war and political subordination. On which attributes of human nature was commerce grounded? What kind of exchange and sociability did it concern? Under which moral, social or political conditions could it become a peaceful, free and fair way of social interaction? And under which conditions could it turn into a means of alienation, social domination and corruption? These were some of the questions that thinkers from the 18th century were grappling with.

Adam Smith made an important contribution to these debates through his two main works: the *Theory of Moral Sentiments* and the *Wealth of Nations*. In these books, Smith developed his own response to challenges put forward by thinkers like Hobbes, Pufendorf, Mandeville, Hume and Rousseau regarding the nature of commerce and human sociability. But what is the meaning of his contribution? Although scholars now amply recognize there was no contradiction between his economic and moral thought, there is no consensus regarding his stance towards commerce. In Smith's view, was commerce an expression of the moral sentiments and a means of fulfilling one's moral needs, or did it beget inequality, corruption and social division? Was it after all an actual solution for the problem of social conflict and violence, or did it instead pose serious moral and political problems to modern societies? We can also ask ourselves: how Smith's questions and answers are still relevant today?

The session is open to contributions by scholars and PhD students that intend to consider Smith's thought on these and related issues in the historical and theoretical depth of the multidisciplinary debates in which he participated. It is also open to contributions that discuss Smith's current relevance for the branches of economics, philosophy, social and political sciences that in various ways reintroduce the themes of those debates in contemporary times.

Papers may focus on, but are not limited to, the following:

- The role of moral feelings and ideas in Smith conceptualization of economic exchange
- The debate on human nature and Smith's concept of self-love
- The 17th and 18th century debate on moral and political concerns regarding commerce (e.g. corruption, inequality, social division, political and religious fanaticism, nationalism, slavery and imperialism).
- Smith's conception of commerce and its relation to the doctrine of *reason of state*.
- Smith and the legacy of natural law tradition

Please reply with an abstract of up to 200 words to Ivan Sternick (ivanprates@cedepiar.ufmg.br) by Wednesday 31 May.

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