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The moral and social implications of politeness are fascinating topics in the European Enlightenment. Conventionally Addison and Steele's legacy on polite manners has been widely acknowledged as a hallmark of the Scottish Enlightenment's tradition. On the other hand the place of courtly, 'French' politeness within the Scottish Enlightenment is much less debated. Conceiving the European Enlightenment as a status quo built on 'French manners and English liberty', as Pocock perfectly synthesizes[1], points out to the restrictions imposed on religious fanaticism and warfare by the 'jus gentium' and European civility. In my paper I aim to shift the attention to the seemingly obvious fact that manners, the backbone of European civility, originate in court, and Versailles was the court par excellence. In this context I explore Adam Smith's struggle to strip politeness and civility of its aristocratic components. In the heart of the matter lies the strange idea of *courtoisie* without a court, of propriety that should overcome formal politeness i.e. imitation of aristocratic manners. In the *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, Smith offers a full-blown theory of propriety and manners. But this contribution to early modern Europe's 'state of manners' hardly exhausts his originality. In this paper I shall rather focus on Smith's genuine amendment of the Enlightenment's legacy on civility.

We should bear in mind that for Smith politeness covers a multitude of meanings: alongside Hume and other Enlightened figures, the age of politeness and refinement denote in commercial modernity the sense of the predominance of humanity and sentiment, the 'faith in the altruism of human beings liberated from irrational beliefs'[2] and the de-legitimacy of verbal and physical violence in many areas of social intercourse, especially towards women, children and social inferiors. Yet there is also the politeness close to etiquette, aristocratic politeness but also the politeness of the *Spectator*, more in tune with the overall environment of the 'age of refinement' than with ritualized behavior. Conspicuous, luxury consumption as a status seeking activity took on a different meaning once it moved beyond the feudal baron's mansion and encountered the attempt of middle class intelligentsia within the frame of Scottish Enlightenment to provide the 'middle stations of life' with codes of behavior that accommodate prosperity and moderation. Ostentatious consumption, a matter of fashion, is a status-seeking activity which requires constantly renewed rituals and codifications. In other terms, the 'middle station of life' should reconcile the ideal of 'accessible gentleness' regardless of social status with status seeking politeness, accepting the risk of developing a duplicate of courtly ethos. My core claim is that according to Smith the 'bourgeois' politeness, despite appeals to moderation, is ultimately best understood as an attempt to imitate the aristocracy rather than a new type unto itself. Therefore 'bourgeois' politeness needs to be redefined insofar as politeness has a social and political relevance that cuts deeper than manual of 'savoir-vivre'; parallel to the legal systems, the 'administration of justice,' manners are firmly embedded into the kernel of political regimes, especially in monarchies and aristocracies, and pervade the subsequent social stratification. Modern British, 'Sceptical Whiggism'[3] of a Smithian stripe aspires to reform and demystify politeness in the context of the 'established distinction of ranks' of a 'free government.'

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[1] Pocock, J.G.A. (1999) 'Enlightenment and Counter-Enlightenment, Revolution and Counter-Revolution: a Eurosceptical Enquiry', *History of Political Thought*, 20.

[2] Langford, P. 'British Politeness and the Progress of Western Manners, An Eighteenth Century Enigma', *Transactions of* the *Royal Historical Society*, Sixth Series, 1997, 54.

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[3] Forbes, D. 'Sceptical Whiggism, Commerce and Liberty' in *Essays on Adam Smith* Andrew Skinner and Thomas Wilson, (ed) (1975) Oxford: Clarendon Press, 191: 'As has been rightly suggested, the point that Hume was trying to make did not concern the superiority of the English constitution in the face of the French absolute monarchy, but the marks of civilized society that Britain and France have in common; a high degree of liberty, although it is not the political liberty secured by the British political system, plus a highly developed division of labour, opulence and, most importantly, "an established order of ranks.'

HISTORICAL CONTEXT: ADDISONIAN POLITENESS

One might call Addisonian politeness the socio-cultural practices[4] which Addison and Steele claimed and many thought would come ‘naturally’ to ordinary citizens living in the competitive circumstances and cultural environment of a modern city of the time like London or Paris.[5] As N. Phillipson eloquently contends, *Spectator*’s London was a commercial city in the widest sense of the term, ‘a theater of life…in which men and women where constantly engaged in the exchange of goods, services and sentiments.’[6] A world in which any settled standard of ‘taste, morality, politics and religion’ was rare. This form of urban environment gave to Adam Smith ‘his first glimpse of the modern commercial city as a complex pluralistic entity, which had the power to improve as well as to corrupt human nature.’[7] Therefore the culture of sentiments and sociability amounts to foster good manners and politeness. Indeed, Addison and Steele could effectively be described in Gramci’s terms as ‘organic intellectuals of Augustan Britain.’[8]

The interrelation of mercantile and moral values in the *Spectator* found an ideal expression in the portrait of ‘moral tradesman’ who simultaneously embraces the pursuit of prosperity and refinement, the quest of happiness and the goal of public utility.[9] The ‘moral economy’ of the *Spectator* unambiguously contains elementary moral concerns: ‘the most polite Age is in danger of being the most vicious’[10], in other words Steele castigates the separation of style and manners from reason, virtue and religion. Manners and politeness should be integrated in a discourse of moral philosophy. At this point Addison and Steele precisely match Shaftesbury's agenda on politeness.

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[4] See Langford, P. “The progress of politeness” *A Polite and Commercial People England 1727-1783* (Oxford: OUP, 1989) chap. 3

[5] Langford, P. ‘The Uses Of Eighteenth-Century Politeness, *Transactions of the RHS*, 12, 2002, 311: ‘Basically that meant cultivating our natural disposition to make and foster appropriate affective ties in the family, the professional environment and more broadly the civil society. The “Spectator mode” present famously in Addison and Steele, but widely imitated in all kinds of didactic literature, and in the works of fiction which sought both to mirror and mould contemporary manners. The appeal of the politeness thus described or approved but rarely very precisely defined was its enabling capacity, permitting to people who lacked the traditional components of social status – inherited rank, formal education and a place in political hierarchy – to achieve it by adopting a looser, supposedly more ‘natural’ code of behavior. The goal seems to be the making of a polite culture open to all suitably enquiring minds.’

[6] Phillipson, N. *Adam Smith. An Enlightened Life*, Penguin 2010, 22.

[7] *Ibid*. 23

[8] France, P. *Politeness and its Discontents. Problems in French Classical Culture*, C.U.P., 1992, 95: “In the essays of the *Spectator*, while the fashions of society where entertainingly mocked, there is a distinct attempt to create a social morality in which politeness and elegance are reconciled with Christian virtues and middle-class values…This clearly met a need: Addison and Steele were in their way what Gramsci might have called the organic intellectuals of Augustan Britain.’

[9] Knight, A. Ch. ‘The *Spectator*’s Moral Economy’, *Modern Philology*, 1993, 177.

[10] *Spectator* No6 (March 7, 1711)

Both the popular moralists and the virtuoso moralist seek to elevate politeness to a higher pitch or, as Shaftesbury puts it, 'to carry Good-Breeding a step higher".[11] In line with *Spectator*'s project, Shaftesbury strives to instill simplicity in a context of ritualized, outward civility. Yet this is only a first step to take in this philosophical project of reconciliation of manners and morals, form and substance. To this end, a continuum is sketched among 'social manners, connoisseurship, ethics and a sense of cosmic design.'[12] On this head, Shaftesbury's philosophy draws a close parallel between polite gentleman's behavior and polite learning and writing. His polite philosophy aims at 'moral worldliness'. The importance of public space and public discourse, urbanity and sociability led Shaftesbury to attribute a prominent role to ancient Athens. Polite conversation spread out to open public spaces, and rely on wit, taste and good humour that pervade the national character. Athens serves as a powerful marker: the Whigs political project lay not in a dilemma, whether to choose modernity or look backward to some rustic political virtue; simplicity could be integrated into a modernity project of reformed manners. For Shaftesbury, politeness elevated 'commerce on a high cultural plane and secured virtue to it.'[13]

Yet this is a philosopher's agenda, notwithstanding its theoretical importance and influence. Harsh, complex social realities and intricate historical narratives can always challenge insulated, normative conceptions of manners and morals. As the title of Paul Langford's landmark study prominently indicates, a distinctively 'polite and commercial' people' presumably lived in eighteenth century's British society. The new money and social mobility that benefited by the emergence after 1688 of a parliamentary polity could also be viewed as legitimized by the manners and tastes of a similarly 'inclusive politeness.'[14] The 'Spectator-like informality' supposedly represented a 'vision of accessible gentility.'[15] Yet the increasing social mobility and so-called 'middle-class materialism' has to be understood against a framework of conspicuous consumption on behalf of aristocracy as well as middle classes, sign of a generalized opulence and pursuit of well-being. In this context the outward signs of politeness served as marker of status. Despite the diversification and internal divisions of middle classes, the common trend throughout the period seems to be a 'passion of aping the manners and morals of the gentry.'[16] Now, 'petty social wars' were to be waged in the circles of aristocratic peerage as well as among nouveaux riches. The vulnerability of middle-class status, especially of tradesmen, shopkeepers or peasants and craftsmen of lower orders matched their equally eager effort to attain a level of politeness that could confirm social ascension. Yet the persistence of petty social wars tarnishes the delightful image of 'natural politeness.' In the same vein one could invoke historical studies either on the nature of politeness throughout 18th century. The idealized image of a polite world gives way to the more accurate picture of a polite compromise among dissenting strands of 'middle stations of life[17]. There is also the banal, 'rough civility' and even cruelty shown to handicapped and social inferiors or even among equals. The 'weakness and unreliability of sympathy' and fellow-feeling is manifest in the 'forgotten comic literature' of an 'unsentimental eighteenth century.'[18] The debate about social morality instantiated by the *Spectator* 'attempted to embrace the aristocracy, the gentry and the nouveaux riches in an ideological compromise' that could overshadow the impolite 'petty social wars' mentioned above. Even if one assumes that Enlightened British politeness moved away from 'the court-based culture of Louis XIV's France, and adopted a more open, even more egalitarian tone'[19], this less idealized, toned down picture of politeness as a compromise among competing complex social mores and interests goes beyond ideals of a perfectly comprehensible social order. It also pervades Smith's acute description of polite morality in *TMS* I.

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[11] Shaftesbury, *Miscellany*, III, i., cited in Klein, L. "The Third Earl of Shaftesbury and the Progress of Politeness', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 18:2, 1984, 200.

[12] *Ibid.*

[13] *Ibid.* 214

[14] Langford, P. 'The Uses of Eighteenth Century Politeness' *Transactions of the RHS* 12, 2002, 312: 'Moreover this lowering of barriers between the aristocratic nobility and number of its social inferiors was envisaged as proceeding without subverting social stability and authority. Overall, the politeness of the turn of the 17th and 18th centuries helped provide a means of escape on the part of the 'middle ranking' from the trammels of the well-born.' Arguably it was the middle stations of life who might benefit more from the Spectator-like informality.

[15] *Ibid.* 331

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16. Langford, *A Polite and Commercial People*, 67.
17. Castiglione, D. 'Considering Things Minutely: Reflections on Mandeville and the Science of Man', *History of Political Thought,* 3:7, 1986, 475-6. "Just the impoverished labourers were under both material and ideal pressure to adopt new values and mode of behavior, so were the gentry, the wealthy artisans, the professional man and the growing middle class generally… the breaking of paternalism did not come from the pressure exerted by popular culture, but rather form the criticism triggered off by tendencies intrinsic to high culture which progressively identified themselves with the dissenting middle class.'
18. Dickie, S. *Cruelty and Laughter. Forgotten Comic Literature and the Unsentimental Eighteenth Century*, The University of Chicago Press, 2012, 2-4, 20.
19. Langford, P. 'British Politeness and the Progress of Western Manners', 55: 'Politeness as defined by its 18th century proponents was supposed to move away from the court-based culture of Louis XIV's France, and adopted a more open, even more egalitarian tone.'

DEFERENCE TO OLD MONEY AND RESPECT TO MERIT

Adam Smith straightforwardly lays out the problem in examining the frictions between moral and social sentiments in *TMS* I.iii.2-3.; In plain summary form, courtly manners do an adequate job of serving as a substitute for courtly virtues in commercial, modern Europe, in contrast with all primitive eras where at least military virtues and bravery were required in order to be acknowledged as a legitimate member of the ruling elite.

> The man of rank and distinction, on the contrary, whose whole glory consists in the propriety of his ordinary behavior, who is contended with the humble renown which this can afford him and has no talent to acquire any other, is unwilling to embarrass himself with what can be attended either with difficulty or distress. To figure at a ball is his great triumph and to succeed in an intrigue of gallantry, his highest exploit…He may be willing to expose himself to some little danger, and to make a campaign when it happens to be the fashion. But he shudders with horror at the thought of any situation which demands the continual and long exertion of patience, industry, fortitude and application of thought. (I.iii.2.6)

Thus the admiration of the rich and the great is substantially spontaneous and disinterested, mimicking in an embarrassing manner moral sentiments: 'The great mob of mankind are the *admirers and the worshippers* [my italics], and, what may seem more extraordinary, most frequently the disinterested *admirers and worshippers*, of wealth and greatness.' (TMS I.iii.3) What exactly this is supposed to mean? This form of admiration throws up different puzzles but I will focus on the most relevant ones for the occasion: Is the sympathy with the rich and the great a- or pre-moral, in the sense that it leads to social sentiments that remain beyond morality? Courtly manners are devoid of any moral significance but nevertheless they have a social utility. They are clear-cut benchmarks of social identity. Social order and stability- and, therefore peace, order and ultimately preservation of society -, are based on a clearly identified albeit morally unworthy ruling elite.[20] The wisdom of nature surpasses the ill-considered and hasty moralist's outcries.

Yet if politeness is the only 'virtue' of the great, if the superficial theater of social etiquette has a social meaning as a status seeking activity, a 'middle stations of life' mentality should not blur the terms in which the social game is taking place: in other words, the plethora of signs of social distinction entails confusion and probably social unrest:

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[20] *TMS* VI.ii.1 "Nature has wisely judged that the distinction of ranks, the peace and order of society, would rest more securely upon the plain and palpable difference of birth and fortune, than upon the invisible and often uncertain difference of wisdom and virtue."

> Politeness is so much the virtue of the great that it will do little honour to any body but themselves'. The coxcomb, who imitates their manner, and affects to be eminent by the superior propriety of his ordinary behavior, is rewarded with a double share of contempt for his folly and presumption. Why should the man whom nobody thinks it worth while to look at, be very anxious about the manner in which he holds up his head, or disposes his arms while he walks through a room? (*TMS* I.iii.2.5/54-5)

Imitation of courtly politeness also fosters moral corruption as the title of the added chapter to the ultimate edition of the fosters TMS I notably indicates[21]. Thus it replicates aristocratic shallowness within the circle of moderate virtues. Most importantly it corrupts the moral sentiments of middling ranks as they conflate moderate virtues with immoderate aristocratic manners, modesty with flaunting of wealth, *both* legitimate if properly constrained within clear social borders. It is even more crucial: both moderate virtues and shallow manners are required because they entail two equally important social attitudes: deference to aristocrats, – and ultimately to royalty, and respect to merit.

Now this analysis could stop here. The characters of the coxcomb, of the nouveaux riches compel us to move further on as it carries significant socio-cultural as well as political overtones. Thus there is nothing trifling with this attitude as it carries a deep lesson of social psychology of subordination and crowd psychology. We should bear in mind that manners and upper class status are sufficient to trigger deference to authority: 'His air, his manner, his deportment, all mark that elegant and graceful sense of his own superiority, which those who are born to inferior stations can hardly arrive at…These arts supported by rank and preeminence, are, upon ordinary occasions, sufficient to govern the world (I.iii.2.2)…upon this disposition of mankind, to go along with the passions of the rich and the powerful is founded the distinction of ranks, and the order of society. Our obsequiousness to our superiors more frequently arises from our admiration for the advantages of their situation, than from any private expectations of benefits from their good-will.'(I.iii.2.3)

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[21] *TMS* I.iii.2.3/52. This disposition to admire, and almost to worship, the rich and the powerful, and to despise, or, at least, to neglect persons of poor and mean condition, though necessary both to establish and to maintain the distinction of ranks and the order of society, is, at the same time, *the great and the most universal cause of the corruption of our moral sentiments*.

Smith describes the coxcomb as a figure whose essential distinctive traits are twofold: the coxcomb"... sets his character upon the frivolous ornaments of dress and equipage, or upon the equally frivolous accomplishments of ordinary behaviour."[22] First, a ruinous attitude of living following material standards beyond his means and, concomitantly, the illusion that his obsessive imitation of aristocratic manners, "the frivolous accomplishments of ordinary behavior," is the subject of as much sympathetic attention as is received by true elites.[23] The 'coxcomb' spends his fortune on appearances in order to live up to his fake and deluding image. The imitation of the rich and the great conduces to the phenomenon of trend setters and fashion victims. Vanity is then intimately bound up to 'fashionable profligacy.'

The reference to the "court of princes, the drawing room of the great" recalls the theme of courtly politeness that turns up alongside with the emergence of the "man of fashion." In two separate occasions Smith issues a warning sign for the conspicuous consumption that characterize the coxcomb. The imitation of the lifestyle of the wealthy, the "frivolous ornaments of dress and equipage" leads to self-destruction.[24] The slippery slope of imitating "the splendid way of living of his superiors"[25] leads directly to a dead end. The coxcomb loses sight of the meaning of ostentatious consumption; it is a status-seeking activity as well as a lifestyle. The dissolute wealthy folk will squander their position in the same way the feudal lords did and gradually be replaced by those of the 'middling stations' who practice proper manners and behave in a more restrained manner. Yet this does not resolve the problem of imitation of aristocratic manners.

In his account of commercial civility, Smith realized that there is a potentially dangerous path left wide open: proto-bourgeois or commercial manners in process of formation can be downgraded into fake copies of aristocratic manners. His insistence on the imitation of dissipated lifestyles[26] lead to the following conclusion: The ‘middling or inferior station of life’ is inclined to imitate the lifestyle of aristocrats forgetting that conspicuous consumption of luxury goods or fashionable behaviour are status symbols as well as models of lifestyle. This opens up a Pandora’s box of moral corruption that matches the historical account of the ‘polite and commercial people’, that is, the bourgeois imitation of aristocratic manners, given by Paul Langford.[27] ‘Unashamed snobbery’[28] cuts across social boundaries stretching from artisans imitating respectable country gentlemen to municipal oligarchy aping upper gentry. But all imitations are not equally worthy. The status of politeness can never be more radically jeopardized than by its very success. Studying the concept of civility in the history of European manners, J. Revel[29] offers manifold instances of rejection of older, once triumphant, forms of civility as outmoded and formulaic stretching from Abbé Bellegarde to Louis Sébastien Mercier and from high aristocracy to the petty bourgeois and the ‘bourgeois gentleman’. There is a difference between a living and an outmoded social code to be copied and the game of social distinction is a complicated one. New social codes come to take hold and the very nature of politeness as tool of social distinction relies heavily on the constant renewal and sophistication of ‘fashionable profligacy.’ Furthermore, the ‘ inclusive’ Addisonian politeness gradually turned into an insipid, commonplace civility by the end of 18th century. Supposedly accessible to anyone in reality it ended up consisting in empty formulas.[30]

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[22] *TMS* VII.ii.4.8

[23] In his refutation of Mandeville's licentious system, as already discussed, Smith resumes his reflection over the significance of the coxcomb. A moderate degree of ambition can be legitimate without evoking vanity pace Mandeville. Contrariwise, Mandeville is right to identify hypocrisy and genuine vanity as exemplified by the coxcomb, *TMS* VII.ii.4.8: '...who sets his character upon the frivolous ornaments of dress and equipage, or upon the equally frivolous accomplishments of ordinary behaviour. He is guilty of vanity who desires praise for what indeed very well deserves it, but what he perfectly knows does not belong to him. The empty coxcomb who gives himself airs of importance which he has no title to...'

[24] *TMS* VI.iii.37: "Of all the illusions of vanity, this is, perhaps, the most common."

[25] *TMS* I.iii.3.7

[26] *TMS* I.iii.3.4: men imitate 'even the profligate vices' of the great whereas the 'profligacy of the man of fashion is looked upon with much less contempt and aversion than that of a man of meaner condition'

THE PRUDENT, THE SIMPLE AND THE PLAIN MAN: PORTRAITS OF MIDDLING POLITENESS

If the aristocratic polite hero is the ‘man of fashion’ or, on the fake side, the vain man, there are a few portraits of middle class bourgeois politeness in Smith. High status and hypocritical strategy are equally absent from them.

The prudent man has been often identified with the ‘bourgeois’, unerotic and unheroic, uninspiring and boring. This picture has elements of truth but I think that this is more of a vague assumption and requires clarification. Most importantly it would be profitably contextualized within Adam Smith's moral theory once linked with the other two similar but not identical characters anatomized in the LRBL: the simple and the plain man. These three characters are located somewhere in the middle between the Addisonian ideal of 'accessible gentility' and the Rousseauist sincerity of behavior, reconciling 'good nature' with civilized manners.[31] They also share a dismissal of courtly politeness expressed in various ways. In due course I will argue that Smith's anatomy has a distinct political relevance that has often passed unnoticed concerning the distinctively anti-absolutist potential of these characters. Equipped with a solid work ethic and professional ethos, the prudent man is sincere and despises falsehood and although not a particularly sensitive being, he is capable of solid friendships based on modesty, discretion and good conduct. Although he feels uneasy amidst these 'convivial societies' and therefore takes some distance from coffee-house sociability, he dismisses rudeness. As a result he manifests a form of refined conformism without neglect of standard social rituals but presumably not a follower of polite hypocrisies stemming from any kind of courtly sociability: 'He never assumes impertinently over anybody, and, upon all common occasions, is willing to place himself rather below than above his equals. Both in his conduct and conversation, he is an exact observer of decency, and respects with an almost religious scrupulosity, all the established decorums and ceremonials of society.'(TMS VI.i.10)

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[27] The importance of these phenomena is also attested in the *LRBL* where Smith commenting on Swift’s satirical writings. The nouveaux riches’ s manners and way of life are object of satire: Swift’s target is ‘…to ridicule someone of the prevailing gay follies of his Time. They are chiefly leveled against Coxcombs, Beaus, Belles, and other characters where gay follies rather than the graver ones prevail’ (LRBL i.119)

[28] Langford, *The Eighteenth Century Uses of Politeness*, 315

[29] Revel, J. ‘The Uses of Civility’ in *A History of Private Life*, vol. III, eds. R. Chartier, Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1989.

[30] Langford, *Eighteenth Century Uses of Politeness*, 331

This portrait could be profitably contrasted with the vain man's uses of politeness. 'He flatters in order to be flattered. He studies to please, and endeavours to bribe you into a good opinion of him by politeness and complaisance, and sometime even by real and essential good offices, though often displayed, perhaps, with unnecessary ostentation.'(TMS VI.iii.36) The vain man significantly overlaps with the distinctive traits mentioned in the case of the coxcomb and Smith replicates the same tale of the self-destructive tendency of the vain man to live above his means in order to mark out a lifestyle beyond his own rank and fortune. Politeness is a crucial component of this fake identity and it is clear that it amounts to aristocratic, courtly politeness. Living close to fashionable people, the vain man shows 'unnecessary ostentation, groundless pretensions… frequently flattery.'

In his LRBL, Smith draws a parallel between style and characters: plain and simple styles correspond to plain and simple moral characters. A plain man is 'one who pays no regard to the common civilities and forms of good breeding.' A plain man's character greatly overlaps with the proud man as depicted in TMS

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[31] Langford, P. *Englishness identified. Manners and Character, 1650-1850*, Oxford : OUP, 2000, 88.

VI.iii. The proud man's excessive self-esteem induces him to despise even his equals and superiors and obliges him to be surrounded by 'inferiors, flatterers and dependents' while his approach of social superiors is only a means of confirming his social ascension. Politeness puts him into difficulty and he can only begrudgingly follow common civilities. By and large, the plain man is the opposite of the vain man regarding politeness and offers a case of flat-footed denigration of aristocratic civilities and courtly manners. Far from being 'sedulous to please', 'he affects austerity and hardness of behavior, so that when the common civilities of behavior would be the most natural and easy manner, he industriously avoids them. He is so far from affecting any graces or civilities that he affects the contrary…He despises the in every point and neither conforms himself to it [in] dress, in language nor manners, but sticks by his own downright ways.'[32]

Ultimately it comes as no surprise that the simple man 'is not indeed studious to appear with all the outward marks of civility and good breeding that he sees other of a more disingenuous temper generally put on.' He probably most accurately marks out the middle ground between civilized manners and natural goodness.[33] 'He appears always willing to please, when this desire does not lead him to act disingenuously.' Modesty and affability *oblige*, and he is always 'willing to comply with customs that don't look affected, plainly shew the goodness of his heart.'[34] His 'unaffected modesty' manifests itself in conversation along with his moderate self-esteem.[35] These three figures simultaneously constitute a multiform reaction to politeness in modern, commercial context ranging from outright rejection to critical endorsement. Yet aristocratic politeness is unanimously dismissed.

MONARCHIC, DEFERENTIAL POLITENESS: the Montesquieu-Hume thesis

Resuming a long tradition that goes back to Erasmus, Maurice Magendie in a famous study[36] sheds light on the ambiguity between an universalist, inclusive tendency originating in Erasmus for whom civility is accessible through effort and education notwithstanding social status and the courtoisie tradition which focus on the favor of the prince and the aristocratic background -therefore on exclusivist criteria- in order to access the polite world. Closer to the latter, Morvan de Bellegarde insists on the capacity of personal distinction through manners in order to compensate for humble origins. Well versed in mid-18th century conceptual intricacies, the article 'Civility, affability, politeness' of the *Encyclopédie* signed by Chevalier L. Jaucourt, draws a distinction between affability, civility and politeness. First he asserts that affability is present only in relations between socially unequal. Then he classifies civility as an inferior species of politeness, based on vain and sclerotic ceremonies aiming to avoid the stigma of vulgarity. Politeness pertains more to the upper class ethos, to people with more sophisticated and profound experience of social life whereas civility is more within the reach of the average citizen. Oddly enough politeness is depicted as based on a 'natural disposition' transcending any given place and time and subject to perfectibility while civility is hinging on custom and the fluctuation of fashion.[37] Ultimately civility in its demotic form gain Jaucourt's favor as it develops an elementary form of mutual respect among citizens.

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[32] *LRBL*, i.87, 37.

[33] He is more capable of admiration, pity, joy, grief and compassion than the contrary and rarely contemptuous.

[34] *LRBL*, i.89, 37

[35] For a thorough account of the parallel between plain and simple styles and characters see R. Hanley 'Style and Sentiment. Smith and Swift', *The Adam Smith Review*, 4 , 2008.

[36] Magendie, M, *La politesse mondaine et les théories de l'honnêteté en France au XVIIe siècle, de 1600 a 1660*, Paris : Alcan, 1925.

In his article, Jaucourt draws heavily on Montesquieu but the latter developed a somewhat different dimension of the problem emphasizing the relationship between manners and political regimes. Montesquieu's core argument is that manners constitute status-seeking activities firmly embedded into the core of political regimes. Therefore he stresses the differences between civility and politeness against this background of regime typology. This has noteworthy consequences. In monarchies, the citizen should polish his manners because

> [politeness] rises form a desire of distinguishing ourselves. It is pride that renders us polite: we are flattered with being taken notice of for a behavior that shows we are not of a mean condition…Politeness, in monarchies, is naturalized at court. One man excessively great renders everybody else little…hence that politeness, equally pleasing to those by whom, as to those towards whom, it is practiced; because it gives people to understand that a person belongs, or at least deserves to belong, to the court.[38]

Montesquieu put it bluntly; in a government based on honor such as monarchy, virtue is not an outward movement toward fellow citizens but a principle of distinction among them. Thus practices of politeness increase integration across ranks fostering stability within hierarchical social relations. Adam Smith shares this assumption as we shall see in due course. Ancient post–republican Rome was notoriously remarkable for the exchange of deferential civilities among unequals as the juxtaposition of Plato's and Cicero's dialogues testify.[39]

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[37] Quoted by Alan Pons, article 'Civilité-Urbanité' in *Dictionnaire raisonné de la politesse et du savoir-vivre*, eds. A. Montandon, Paris : Seuil, 1995, 102-3.

[38] *The Spirit of Laws*, II, ch. 4

In the *Spirit of Laws* the balance is markedly tipped towards civility because of the inveterate 'courtly' element deeply rooted in politeness and turns manners into 'imitations of virtue'. Despite the lack of interior sincerity, civility turns out to be more reliable: 'Civility is, in this respect, of more value than politeness.[40] Politeness flatters the vices of others, and civility prevents our owns from being brought to light. It is a barrier which men have placed within themselves to prevent the corruption of each other.'[41] Finally, Montesquieu issues a disclaimer: it is politeness of morals, that is genuine culture and not 'politeness of manners' that should distinguish civilization from rudeness.

Most importantly, Montesquieu stresses the relationship between indolence and politeness in monarchies. In discussing the impact of laws on customs and manners in the case of Britain, he draws a clear-cut division between absolute regimes relying on leisure and indolence pace the cultural and political preeminence of industry that enabled Britain to gain its special status in commercial modernity. By contrast, the dominance of polite manners is a disquieting sign for it carries despotic overtones. 'As they are always employed about their own interest, they have not that politeness which is founded on indolence; and they really have not leisure to attain it. The aera of Roman politeness is the same as that of the establishment of arbitrary power. An absolute government produces indolence,, and this gives birth to politeness. The more people there are in a nation, who require a circumspect behavior and a care not to displease, the more there is of politeness.'[42]

The crucial lesson to be drawn is the distinctive link of leisure – endemic to absolute monarchical regimes – with politeness. The problematic connection between the virtue of industry and courtly politeness is an unmitigated conclusion. To what extent a regime of politeness could be devoid of any significant valorization of leisure is more ambiguous. In a context of assessing the impact of constitutions on the rise of arts and sciences in antiquity and modernity, Hume endorses the main lines of Montesquieu's analysis in developing further the distinctive traits of 'civilized monarchies,' an argument absent in this form in Montesquieu. Hume's crucial step is to contextualize the treatment of politeness by inserting it into his regime typology. This move conduces, in the essay 'Of the Rise and Progress of the Arts and Sciences,' to sketch a contrast between 'civilized monarchies' on the one hand, mainly France, where the rule of law and economic progress exist without political liberties, and republics on the other. Although Hume acknowledges a background of shared standards of modern civilization – i.e. common security of property and lawful order – he draws a sharp contrast between civilized monarchies and republics regarding the nature of ambition and distinction of ranks.[43] This line of reasoning conduces to the conclusion that 'strong genius' and more generally science find a more appropriate ground in republics[44] while 'refined taste' and 'polite arts' chiefly flourish in civilized monarchies. [45]

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[39] *LRBL* 163-4, 158

[40] On Montesquieu and his conception of politeness, and, more broadly, on his distinction between manners and morals, see the excellent study of B. Binoche, *Introduction à l'Esprit des lois de Montesquieu*, Paris: PUF, 1998, 179-182.

[41] *The Spirit of Laws,* XIX, ch. 16

[42] *The Spirit of Laws*, XIX, ch. 27

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[43] *David Hume [1742] Essays Moral, Political and Literary Eugene F. Miller ed. (1985)* 'Of the Rise and Progress of the Arts and Sciences', 126. As Hume puts it, political authority 'excites the ambition and avarice of mankind. The only difference is that, in a republic, the candidates for office must look downwards, to gain the suffrages of the people; in a monarchy, they must turn their attention upwards, to court the good graces and the favour of the great. To be successful in the former way, by his industry, capacity, or knowledge: To be prosperous in the latter way, it is requisite for him to render himself agreeable, by his wit, complaisance, or civility.'

[44] . In effect Hume endeavors to point out that 'arts of conversation' and manners can possibly exist between equals and take on the form of a 'mutual deference' that 'curb and conceal…natural arrogance and presumption.' 'Of the Rise and Progress of the Arts and Sciences': 'Among the arts of conversation, no one pleases more than mutual deference or civility, which leads us to resign our inclination to those of our companion, and to curb and conceal that presumption and arrogance, so natural to the human mind. A good-natured man, who is well educated, practises this civility to every mortal, without premeditation or interest. But in order to render this valuable quality general among people, it seems necessary to assist the natural disposition by some general motive.' For a strong reading of the idea of mutual deference as a claim for equal respect among human beings irrespective of their social status in Hume see the remarkable study of Richard Boyd, 'Manners and Morals: David Hume on Civility, Commerce and the Social Construction of Difference' in *David Hume's Political Economy* eds. Carl Wennerlind and Margaret Schabas, 2008, Routledge: 70-76.

[45] Furthermore Hume points to the paradox of mutual deference that can be solely exercised among the members of the recently emerged 'middle station of life" replacing the condescension of the 'great' and the obsequiousness of the popular strands. 'Of Refinement in the Arts', 287: '…while the tradesmen and merchants acquire a share of the property and draw authority and consideration to that middling rank of men, who are the best and firmest basis of public liberty. These submit not to slavery, like the peasants form poverty and meanness of spirit; and having no hopes of tyrannizing over others, like the barons, they are not tempted, for the sake of that gratification, to submit to the tyranny of their sovereign. They covet equal laws, which may secure their property, and preserve them form monarchical as well as aristocratical tyranny.' The image of the rich and powerful is traditionally tainted by the stain of a publicly displayed but ultimately fake esteem. Indeed Hume contextualizes his assessment of the "middling rank of men" along the lines of his political regime typology. The middling rank's social status simply renders obsolete any reason for obsequiousness in the face of the rich and pretentiousness towards the low status agents. Therefore they can defy 'monarchical as well as aristocratical tyranny' and cultivate the virtues of friendship.

This analysis has far-reaching consequences for the nature of politeness within the frame of each regime. Inserted into a political context, manners or politeness seem to flourish in a hierarchical environment within which models of behavior are set up by the aristocracy. Therefore civility becomes a socially integrative device taking on the form of *deferential* civility.[46] Hume sets out to explain that in republics people detain the power of suffrage while the "great" rests on the "superiority of their station." Contrariwise, in civilized monarchies a "long train of dependence" exists against a background of rule of law and lack of arbitrariness. This creates an environment of deferential civility in the context of which different sub-orders of people learn how 'to please their superiors'[47] and to imitate the rich and powerful aristocrat's manners as part of their social skills. By the same token, politeness is a social status-seeking activity in civilized monarchies that Hume does not seem to disapprove in any significant way.[48] Hence the seemingly stunning conclusion for a British proponent of politeness that

> ...in a civilized monarchy, there is a long train of dependence, which is not great enough to render property precarious, or depress the mind of the people; but is sufficient to beget in every one an inclination to please his superiors, and to force himself upon those models, which are most acceptable to people of condition and education. Politeness of manners, therefore, arises most naturally

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[46] Clark, H.C. (1992) 'Conversation and Moderate Virtue in Adam Smith's Theory of Moral Sentiments', *Review of Politics* Vol. 54, (1992) p194.

[47] 'Of the Rise and Progress of the Arts and Sciences', 126.

[48] Forbes, D. 'Sceptical Whiggism, Commerce and Liberty' in *Essays on Adam Smith* Andrew Skinner and Thomas Wilson, (ed) (1975) Oxford: Clarendon Press, 191: 'As has been rightly suggested, the point that Hume was trying to make did not concern the superiority of the English constitution in the face of the French absolute monarchy, but the marks of civilized society that Britain and France have in common; a high degree of liberty, although it is not the political liberty secured by the British political system, plus a highly developed division of labour, opulence and, most importantly, "an established order of ranks.'

in monarchies and courts and where that flourishes, none of the liberal arts will be altogether neglected and despised.[49]

ADAM SMITH ON THE STATUS OF POLITENESS IN POLITICAL CONSTITUTIONS

Politeness seems to play no significant role in the cultivation of middle station's virtues in any case not a primordial one. In the chapter of the TMS on the corruption of moral sentiments Smith offers the anatomy of 'corrupted societies', in other words of court-based cultures. 'In the court of princes, in the drawing-rooms of the great, where success and preferment depend, not upon the esteem of intelligent and well-informed equals but upon the fanciful and foolish favour of ignorant, presumptuous and proud superiors; flattery and falsehood often prevail over merit and abilities.' (TMS I.iii.3.6) There is a Rousseau-like[50] flavor in this anathema against 'corrupted societies.' Flattery and falsehood are paramount to politeness which, in the previous chapter, was called the 'virtue of the great.' I would suggest that this point is of seminal importance because it brings to the fore a distinctively French albeit intricate relationship: the one between the court and the salon. In the aftermath of the Fronde, throughout the 17th and 18th century[51], the French nobility strove to carve out some free space from the stranglehold of Royal court. Gradually there was a shift, the intriguing details of which go beyond the scope of this paper. Therefore Paris salons begin to set the 'tone in manners.'[52] The structure of salon life coincides with the crucial notion of worldliness (mondanité) which describes the gentleman's lifestyle, *les gens du monde* (man of the world)'s way of living. The Salon was a microcosm of courtly life, the difference being that the salon, in contrast with Versailles, outlived the court after the French revolution. It established itself firmly in French and, par imitation, European ideals of social ascension and class distinction.[53] The role that women played in it, despite controversy, is crucial.

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[49] 'Of the Rise and Progress of the Arts and Sciences', 127: 'If the superiority in politeness should be allowed to modern times...Whenever nature has given the mind a propensity to any vice, or to any passion disagreeable to others, refined breeding has taught men to throw the bias on the opposite side, and to preserve, in all their behaviour, the appearance of sentiments different from those to which they naturally incline. Thus, as we are commonly proud and selfish, and apt to assume the preference above others, a polite man learns to behave with deference towards his companions, and to yield the superiority to them in all common incidents in society. In like manner, whenever a person's situation may naturally beget any disagreeable suspicion in him, it is the part of good manners to prevent it, by a studied display of sentiments, directly contrary to those of which he is apt to be jealous. Thus, old men know their infirmities, and naturally dread contempt from the youth: Hence, well-educated youth redouble the instances of respect and deference to their elders. Strangers and foreigners are without protection: Hence, in all polite countries, they receive the highest civilities, and are entitled to the first place in every company. A man is lord in his own family, and his guests are, in a manner, subject to his authority; Hence, he is always the lowest person in the company; attentive to the wants of everyone; and giving himself all the trouble, in order to please, which may not betray too visible an affectation, or to impose too much constrain on his guests. Gallantry is but an instance of the same generous attention:'

[50] Amidst manifold instances of Rousseau's critique of politeness, 'ce voile uniforme et perfide' of vice, 'Discours sur les sciences et les arts' (1750) *Œuvres complètes* t. III, Paris: Gallimard, 1964, 8-9.

[51] Among numerous studies, there is one that is of interest in the context of Adam Smith studies because it thoroughly explores La Rochefoulauld's thought. It started with a contextualization of the relationship between nobility and royal absolutism in 17th century France, Clark, H. *La Rochefoucauld and the Language of Unmasking*, Genève : Droz, 17-37

Salon life replicated Versailles's court culture sharing a homologue structure *mutatis mutandis* with the *salonnière* occupying the place of the king.[54] In reality, 'salon sociability was deeply rooted in the tradition of aristocratic hospitality, where women, as "maîtresses de maison," had an important role to play.'[55] Thus salon life lay on overlapping circles of influence and patronage among multiple foyers of courtly life. Indeed, patronage networking was one of the main functions of salon life especially on behalf of artists, authors and broadly scientists and man of letters seeking a *protégé* status. This was the universe of worldliness, of high society (*le monde*), of the men of the world [*hommes du monde*]."[56] Salons as the 'kingdom of politeness' played an unquestionably important role in Enlightenment sociability enabling a fusion between aristocratic strands and intellectuals in the broad sense of the term. Refusing elite sociability's protocols and elite patronage, as in the case of Rousseau, could endanger one's social standing. Adam Smith had a first-hand experience of the salon life during his visit in France where he was guest of honor in the salons of Madame Geoffrin and Madame du Deffand. He also encountered the Duke of la Rochefoucauld's mother, Madame d'Anville.[57]

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[52] Nicole Castan, 'The Public and the Private', in *A History of Private Life*, III: *Passions of the Renaissance*, ed. Roger Chartier , Cambridge, MA, 1989, 424 quoted in Langford, 'Eighteenth Century Uses of Politeness', 313

[53] Jolanta T. Pekacz, *Conservative Tradition in Pre-Revolutionary France: Parisian Salon Women* (New York: Peter Lang,1999);

[54] Lilti, A. "The Kingdom of *Politesse*: Salons and the Republic of Letters in Eighteenth-Century Paris." *Republics of Letters: A Journal for the Study of Knowledge, Politics, and the Arts* 1, no. 1, May, 2009, 10-11: 'In fact, salon sociability was at odds with republican principles and republican values as they were defined in the eighteenth century. Salons were mostly organized as little courts, revolving around the hostess, and ruled by the ideals of *politesse*, witty conversation, social distinction and *galanterie*. No wonder republicans like Rousseau were so eager to denounce the salons and the role women played there on behalf of republican virtues. In truth, every thinker of the eighteenth century, from Montesquieu to Hume, agreed that French salons were a piece with the monarchical system, based on *politesse*, social imitation, and woman's role in sociability and that they had nothing to do with the republican tradition.'

[55] The *Kingdom of Politesse,* 10.

[56] Lilti, A, 'The Writing of Paranoia. Jean-Jacques Rousseau and the Paradox of Celebrity' *Representations* 103, 2008, 60-2.

Hume has put some early thoughts on politeness in a remarkable letter addressed to Adam Smith during his first travel to Paris. As Hume has it, "politeness" has become so "conspicuous" in France that "it is not only" a common feature among the high but the low, insomuch as even the porters and coachmen "are civil." Hume was quite impressed by the fact that these vulgar men are "not only" polite towards "Gentlemen but likewise among themselves." Hume admits that of course "the little niceties of the French behavior" can be described as "troublesome and impertinent." Yet they "serve to polish the ordinary kind of people and prevent rudeness and brutality".[58] Hume thinks that the French are more polite because they carefully follow the outward expressions of politeness. As a result, in constructing his theory of politeness and good manners as artificial virtues, later in *Treatise* III, he rejects the claim that man's naturally virtuous nature promotes sociability.

Spectator n48 statement significantly echoes a slightly banal yet powerful commonplace: French luxury undermines the British way of life. In the context of Whig disparaging of French absolutist Ancient regime[59], there is a widespread attitude among patriotic Whigs and beyond that 'We have a country to embrace, not a court to adore.'[60] In this environment, Smith holds an ambiguous stance towards French politeness especially as it is fleshed out in French literature.[61] In his correspondence[62], as a response to the latter's tentative plans of settling in Paris, Smith tries to dissuade Hume writing from Toulouse where he was serving as travelling tutor to the young Duke of Buccleuch. He then goes on to express his diffidence regarding French politeness, relying on the hollowness and the formalism of manners reigning in the oversized French aristocratic salons. Overall, Smith shows a mistrust of French courtly politeness while calling close attention to French, polite literature in the TMS. I claim that Smith has followed up on Hume's insights. More specifically there is in Smith's thought an underlying layer of dialogue with and response to Hume's admiration of French manners[63]. To put it bluntly, I claim that Smith has taken up the Humean challenge about the origin and nature of deferential civility in a commercial context. Without wholeheartedly sharing Hume's admiration of French politeness, Smith has heavily drawn on Hume's analysis while sharpening and broadening its critical, cutting edges. I think that the smoking gun here is their divergent conception of monarchical, deferential politeness and the status of politeness in different political regimes.

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[57] Rae, J. *Life of Adam Smith*, London: 1895. Dawson, D. 'Is Sympathy so Surprising? Adam Smith and the French Fictions of Sympathy', *Eighteenth-Century Life*, 1991, 148.

[58] In the same context, Hume contends that he has "not yet seen one Quarrel in France, tho' they are everywhere to be met with in England" The reason "you scarce ever meet with a clown, or an ill bred man in France" is that "men insensibly soften towards each other" while they practice outward ceremonies and "the mind pleases itself by the progress it makes in such trifles" turning into an actual inclination to be polite.

[59] Forbes, D. ''Sceptical Whiggism, Commerce and Liberty' in *Essays on Adam Smith*, A.S. Skinner and T. Wilson ed. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976.

[60] Hurd, R., A Picture of England (2 vols., 1789), I, 159.

[61] Leddy, N. 'Adam Smith's Moral Philosophy in the context of Eighteenth-Century French Fiction', *The Adam Smith Review*, 4: 2008.

[62] 'To David Hume, Sept. 1765', in *The Correspondence of Adam Smith*, Ernest Campbell Mossner and Ian Simpson Ross (ed.) (1977) Oxford: Clarendon Press, p. 108: 'A man is always displaced in a foreign country, and notwithstanding the boasted humanity and politeness of this Nation, they appear to me to be, in general, more meanly interested, and that the cordiality of their friendship is much less to be depended on that of our country men. They live in such large societies and their affections are dissipated among so great a variety of objects that they can bestow but very small share of them upon any individual.'

Manners are deeply ingrained into political regimes. Middle class mores are in quest of political expression. Beyond all critique, moderate virtues of the middle ranks amount to talent and merit, necessary to carry out important functions and offices. Moderate virtues have a political significance; middle stations exercise the highest political offices even in monarchies, '…the highest offices are generally possessed, and the whole detail of the administration conducted, by men who were educated in the middle and inferior ranks of life, who have been carried forward by their own industry and abilities, though loaded with the jealousy, and opposed by the resentment, of all those who were born their superiors, and to whom the great, after having regarded them first with contempt, and afterwards with envy, are at last contented to truckle with the same abject meanness with which they desire that the rest of mankind should behave to themselves.' (TMS I.iii.2.5)

I am bound to think that this image of a hereditary nobility disparagingly sharing offices with commoners sparks a form of 'bourgeois resentment' in Smith. Yet his line of argument goes far beyond this point. At this juncture, the distinction between the ability to please, prevailing in courtly manners of monarchies, and the ability to serve,[64] prevailing in the republican, meritocratic ethos draws heavily on Hume and Montesquieu but cuts even deeper.

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[63] Accordingly we can speculate on another potential source of admiration for the manners of civilized monarchies in a Humean spirit; the 'rise of arts and sciences' demands a patronage network traditionally relying on established aristocracy, the pillar of civilized monarchy's 'distinction of ranks'.

[64] See the excellent account of Diatkine, D. in "L'utilité et l'amour du système dans la *Théorie des sentiments moraux*", *Revue Philosophique*, 4/2000.

Ultimately, in his political analysis in the LJ, Smith reduced all of the various kinds of governments into two, monarchy and republic, and has sketched two psychological types, the monarchical lover of peace and order and the republican public spirited lover of liberty derived from two principles of human nature, authority and utility[65].

> Indeed, Smith argues that two psychological principles found civil obedience[66]: the principle of authority and the principle of utility (in the sense of public spirit). In analyzing the principle of utility, Smith contends that it relies on the more rational powers of every individual, whereas the principle of authority relies on the more (in modern terms) emotional ones.
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> …But superior wealth still more than any of these qualities [age, superior strength, superior mental capacity] contributes to confer authority. This proceeds not from any dependence that the poor have upon the rich, for in general the poor are independent, and support themselves by their labour, yet tho' they expect no benefit from them they have a strong propensity to pay them respect. This principle is fully explained in the Theory of Moral Sentiments, where it is shown that it arises from our sympathy with our superiors being greater than with our equals and inferiors: we admire their happy situation, enter into it with pleasure, and endeavour to promote it (LJB 13)

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[65] See Forbes, 'Sceptical Whiggism, Commerce and Liberty', 200.

[66] *Lectures on Jurisprudence*, LJA, v. 120, 318. 'This principle or duty of allegiance seems to be founded on two principles. The 1st we may call the principle of authority, and the 2 the principall of common or generall interest.- With regard to the principle of authority, we see that every one naturally has a disposition to respect an established authority and superiority in others, whatever they be. The young respect the old, children respect their parents, and in generall the weak respect those who excel in power and strength. Whatever be the foundation of government this has a great effect. One is born and bred up under the authority of the magistrates; he finds them demanding the obedience of all those about him and he finds that they always submit to their authority; he finds they are far above him in the power they possess in the state; he sees they expect his obedience and he sees also the propriety of obeying and the unreasonableness of disobeying. They have a naturall superiority over him; they have more followers who are ready to support their authority over the disobedient. There is the same propriety in submitting to them as to a father, as all those in authority are either naturally or by the will of the state who lend them their power placed far above him.
With regard to the other principle, every one sees that the magistrates not only support the government in generall but the security and independency of each individuall, and they see that this security cannot be attained without a regular government. Everyone therefore thinks it more advisable to submit to the established government, tho perhaps he may thinks that it is not disposed in the best manner possible; and this too is strengthend by the naturall modesty of mankind, who are not generally inclined to think they have a title to dispute the authority of those above them. Each of these principles takes place in some degree in every government, tho one is generally predominant.'

He reinterprets the conventional categorization of the forms of government by focusing on the fact that "the principle of authority is that which chiefly prevails in a monarchy",[67] while the principle of utility prevails more in a republican government or in a democracy. By emphasizing the perspective of the psychology of political obligation, Smith gives an even more contextual account of his categorization of political belief. Smith insists that the obligation is not only legal – it relies on manners and mores. Tories seem to follow more the principle of authority while the Whigs tend to follow the utility principle[68]. Furthermore, Smith sketches, following Aristotle and Machiavelli, a correlation between the psychological profile of the obedient citizen and his allegiance to the political party, in a manner almost reminiscent of the contemporary social psychology of crowds and political parties. The supporters of the utility principle follow the Whig party and they are described as "bustling, spirited, active folks"[69], because they think that the authority of the government is derived exclusively from the people and that the benefit of the rulers should not be taken into account; any resistance to the abuse of authority by the magistrates has to be considered as legitimate. The Tories' supporters, who are "calm, contented folks,"[70] are "pleased with a tame submission to superiority," and moreover belong among the wealthier citizens, who do not want to disturb or be disturbed. The Tories, above all, believe that the King has patriarchal authority, being like a father to the people; royal authority is like a divine institution. Conversely, respect and deference – that is, the main features of the principle of authority – exist even in the context of conventional denial of the principle of authority. The successful 'democratic' leader who can ask and obtain anything from the people, a leader towards whom "they know <no> bounds in their affection," is considered dangerous and is banished, but "however, even here the principle of authority has some influence in procuring the obedience of the subjects. This respect is not indeed paid to persons, the naturall objects of it, but to offices."[71] Even in the context of democratic or popular government or in the republican state, the deferential element can never be reduced below a certain point, despite the replacement of personalized authority by impersonal 'office'. But above all of these reasons, the *habitus* of a specific constitution creates a custom of obedience and the very idea of resistance appears shocking. "In this case and in many others the principle of authority is the foundation of that of utility or common interest"[72]. In fact, in societies with a certain institutional tradition, it is "the traditional authority of institutions which makes them useful".[73]

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[67] *LJ*A, v. 121, p. 318.

[68] *LJ*A, v. 123, p. 319.

[69] *LJ*A,v.124, see also, B, 15: "In a man of a bold, daring and bustling turn the principle of utility is predominant…"

[70] *LJ*A, v.124, p. 320.

[71] *LJ*A, v. 122, p. 319.

We have to bear in mind that both principles exist in all *modern* governments. At this point we should put all the threads together. I argue that is fruitful to interpret Smith's psychological basis of political obligation against a background shaped by TMS I on aristocratic politeness and the converging lessons of the Montesquieu-Hume thesis on politeness as a status-seeking activity firmly embedded into the core of political regimes. Having this in mind, alongside the spectrum of middle ranking characters – the plain, the simple and the prudent –, I hope it becomes evident that Smith's analysis of the principles of political obligation contains an original restructuring of the premises of the Montesquieu-Hume thesis on politeness. It also heavily relies on his critique of courtly and salon politeness.

Primo: Salon politeness calls attention to the role of women.[74] The debate around Hume's notion of gallantry and the participation of women in the polite world recalls the relationship between hypocrisy, gender and power.[75] I think is possible to read through this lens Smith's famous treatment of Rousseau as a republican extremist and his spirit as 'the true spirit of a republican carried a little too far.'[76] Rousseau's criticism of the effeminizing effects of salon sociability was not so much misogynist[77] as political, based on the opposition between the republican model of politics and sociability, and the monarchical one.[78] In the same passage in which he denounces the 'corrupted societies' of courtly culture Smith praises the 'masculine' virtues of the meritorious person, 'all the great and awful virtues, all the virtues which can fit, either for the council, the senate or the field (TMS I.iii.3.6) Smith's positions on the respective importance of humanity and self-command, on amiable and awful virtues are well-known. His emphasis on salon sociability's intricacies regards the political relevance of politeness. According to my interpretation of Smith's approach, Rousseau was wrong to sharply distinguish republican and monarchical models. On the one hand, they do co-exist, certainly entertaining complicated relationships, in the British constitution. On the other hand, the abilities to please and the capacity to serve – monarchical deference and meritocratic, republican ethos are kept together within an unsteady balance. Deference to authority inherently carries the courtly culture of French ancient régime. The absolutist, monarchical element is inextricably linked to the Ancient regime's social and psychological structure insofar as the court and the salon are profoundly 'Frenchified' entities.

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[72] *LJ*A, v.132, p.322.

[73] Haakonssen, K. *The Science of the Legislator, The Natural Jurisprudence of David Hume and Adam Smith*, Cambridge: CUP, 1989, 129.

[74] On the 'commerce between the sexes' and the containment of seduction as the source of polite manners see Voltaire, *Zaïre*, Seconde épître dédicatoire, *Oeuvres complètes*, *Théâtre*, T. I, publiées par Louis Moland, Paris, Garnier, 1877, 553.

[75] See Davidson, J. *Hypocrisy and Politics of Politeness. Manners and Morals from Locke to Austen*, Cambridge: CUP, 2004, chap. 2 'Gallantry, adultery and the principle of politeness'.

[76] *Letter to the Edinburgh Review in Essays on Philosophical Subjects,* 251.

[77] See Rosenblatt, H. "On the 'Misogyny' of Jean-Jacques Rousseau: The Letter to d'Alembert in Historical Context," *French Historical Studies* 25 (2002): 91–114

[78] Lilti, A. "The Kingdom of *Politesse',* 11.

Secondly, the constitutional balance in modern Britain relies on fragile tensions inherent to the 'mixed constitution.'[79] This controversial topic in the political science of the time receives a new light in this respect. It is of seminal importance to recall that for Smith a 'regular subordination' and an 'evident distinction of ranks' is a normal feature of any civilized polity.[80] The coexistence of a monarchical and a republican dominant passion, deference to authority and respect to merit, so pointedly sketched in TMS I, reveals a more complicated picture. If the Whig party followers are described as "bustling, spirited, active folks' this evokes an absence of polite manners in the sense of French, courtly politeness and a possible contestation of even Addisonian politeness. On the other hand, Tories' supporters, who are "calm, contented folks,"[81] are "pleased with a tame submission to superiority" and therefore their deferential politeness is deeply rooted in the function of British free government. In the same vein, the prudent, the simple and, partly, the plain man, in respecting the Addisonian dimension of politeness, even in a rudimentary way, call attention to the problem that will become clear in the discussion of the status of natural aristocracy in Smith: in rejecting, following a republican psychological principle, the deferential politeness and in embracing basically a respect to merit, it becomes difficult to develop a solid deference to authority. In other words, a minimal form of solid reverence to authority seems incompatible with republican folk's disrespect of courtly politeness and their respect to merit. Yet this infra-legal reverence to authority is indispensable for the functioning of civil government alongside the 'impartial administration of justice.'

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[79] See the excellent analysis of Duncan Forbes, *Hume's Philosophical Politics*, CUP, 1975, 70, 181-186, 267.

[80] 'History of Astronomy', *Essays on Philosophical Subjects* III.5, 51, *WN* V.i.b.3

[81] *LJ*A, v.124, 320.

The manners of a 'natural aristocracy'

In conclusion, Smith's quest of a 'natural aristocracy' comes as no surprise. It could even be read as a Rousseau-like quest of a sincere yet outward mark of politeness, independent of nobility titles. Hume famously called the middling ranks "chief support of liberty'. I think that the much neglected Smith's discussion of "natural aristocracy" refers to the problem of non-courtly, 'natural' politeness. In accounting for the nature of the newly formed establishment, the leading groups in British America, Smith holds that 'the stability and duration of every system of free government' depends on 'the natural aristocracy of every country.' [82] As Donald Winch shrewdly notes[83], when Smith employs the concept of natural aristocracy, 'we are justified in thinking that it is not synonymous to actual aristocracy'. Thus natural aristocracy is not a titled aristocracy and 'would entail a larger element of leadership based on genuine achievement.' The only credible candidate is the famous "middle station of life," men of "middling rank." This hypothesis seems to gain Smith's approval. In a fascinating paper, it has been suggested that country gentlemen, gentry, wealthy artisans and professional men embody the natural aristocracy in Smith but with important qualifications. For in fact, so far from merely affirming that this social layer or class is endowed with public spirit and could successfully support public interests, Smith suggests that this is a whole project that should be carry out with caution and through various means. Apart from changing legislation and removing feudal relics, a culture of prestige proper to propertied gentry should be elaborated in order to uplift their spirit as civic leaders. [84] As intimated above regarding the "men educated in the middle and inferior ranks of life," Smith notices that the highest offices in all government, even in monarchies, are possessed by this class of people whose virtues are "long exertion of patience, industry, fortitude and application of thought."[85] Yet recasting manners exclusively in a bourgeois key emphasizing modesty and moderation is neither coherent nor successful. Should we admit that the middle rank could obtain what merchants and manufacturers have not, namely the "sort of authority which naturally over-awes the people, and without force commands their willing obedience"[86]?

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[82] *WN*, IV.vii.c.74, 622: 'Men desire to have some share in the management of publick affairs chiefly on account of the importance which gives it them. Upon the power which the greater part of the leading men, the natural aristocracy of every country, have of preserving or defending their respective importance, depends the stability and duration of every system of free government. In the attacks which those leading men are continually making upon the importance of one another, and in the defence of their own, consists the whole play of domestick faction and ambition. The leading men of America, like those of all other countries, desire to preserve their own importance.

[83] Winch, D. *Riches and Poverty, An Intellectual History of Political Economy in Britain, 1750-1830,* Cambridge: CUP, 1996, 182.

[84] Haakonsen, K. 'Adam Smith et la société civile' in eds. Magali Bessone&Michael Biziou *Adam Smith Philosophe,* Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2009, 161-2.

[85] *TMS*, I.iii.2.5.

This point goes to the heart of the matter. Indeed could the moderation and "centrism" of the people belonging to this middle class gain the minimum degree of adulation and admiration, that authority requires in order to simply exist and maintain itself? That's the core of Smith's problem of authority in this un-heroic world of domestic virtues and moderate men and women. Finally, the only credible candidate to the role of natural aristocracy, the middling rank and country gentlemen seem to be equally problematic in its role as ruling class, as "natural aristocracy," given its un-heroic, "banal," identity whenever it does not simply follows the 'great mob of mankind' in becoming the "worshiper" of the rich and the powerful. Unless we admit that it is merely an interesting exception in Smith's famous anti-utopian spirit: the utopia of the authority of the "middle station of life." In her account of the "insidious shortcomings" of the liberal order, E. Rothschild[87] invokes the fact that the liberal order is founded on the existence of a minimal deference to authority and at the same time is subversive of all forms of deference to authority. [88] The answer to the question if this is only an insidious shortcoming of the liberal order or the locus of a genuine liberal utopia lies beyond the scope of this paper.

CONCLUSIVE REMARKS

Bourgeois narratives will endlessly denounce the devaluation of human industry throughout 18th and 19th centuries as a feudal, barbarous mentality trait, a negation of the progress of civilization. The issue of politeness will form a hidden agenda of this heated debate, cutting across the all too obvious opposition between meritocratic virtue and shallow aristocratic emphasis on ancestry in the aftermath of French Revolution. Following Norbert Elias's insights, one can assert that the link between material and symbolic heritage, property and manners will be called into question several times in 18th and 19th century literature and social thought, originating in the pre-Revolutionary struggle between aristocratic and 'bourgeois' strands of court society.[89] The question of symbolic domination will haunt the non-aristocratic social milieu insofar as all kind of manners inevitable pass for copies of an aristocratic ethos due to their clearly ritualized nature and the social etiquette and taboos they convey. Moral codes of modernity being utterly colonized by the language of merit, inherited social identities based on internalized, aristocratic manners seem doomed to eclipse. And yet manners will transform themselves into bourgeois manners throughout the 19th century, replicating the same debate and attracting the same vehement accusations of duplicity and superficiality from socialist libels that aristocratic, courtly manners had received by the middle class intelligentsia during the 18th century. Adam Smith's move beyond 'Addisonian' and courtly politeness realigns the relationship between manners and morals. TMS deserves its place within this intriguing debate about social distance and distinction as a pioneering work regarding the implications of politeness in the context of the socio-cultural transformations of commercial society and the political issues that it raises.

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[86] *WN IV.vii.c 104*/638, the profession of merchant "in no country in the world carries along with it that sort of authority which naturally over-awes the people, and without force commands their willing obedience".

[87] Rothschild, E. *Economic Sentiments, Adam Smith, Condorcet and the Enlightenment,* Harvard University Press: 2001, 220.

[88] Another insidious shortcoming of the liberal order is its own insecurity. As Emma Rothschild puts it, "it is founded on the (minimal) security of all individuals and at the same time is subversive of all security, *ibid*. 252.

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[89] Elias, N. 'The Sociogenesis of the Concept of Civilization in France' in *The Civilizing Process*, Blackwell [1939] 1994