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Dipartimento di Economia e Finanza
Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore
Largo Gemelli 1 - 20123 Milano – Italy
tel: +39.02.7234.2976 - fax: +39.02.7234.2781
e-mail: dip.economiaefinanza@unicatt.it

Is There Room for 'Fear' as a Human Passion in the Work by Adam Smith?[1]

Daniela Parisi

Abstract: The sciences tell us that fears are physical feelings and mental emotions that play a key role in any society. Not many issues related to fear are explored by economists today. The aim of this paper is to go backwards through the history of economic thought, and examine if and how Adam Smith considered fear in his work: in effect, he devoted a great deal of attention to the concept of fear. This paper does not intend to cover the whole of the topic at hand as it would also be useful to investigate the connections between fear and all the other feelings that pervade Smith's thought.

Keywords: Adam Smith, Human Passions, Fear, Sociology, Psychology, Neurosciences.

Jel: BOO; B12.

[1] Daniela.parisi@unicatt.it

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1. Introductory remarks: Contemporary analysis on fear and work project

Today we find references to fear in sociological, psychological and neurosciences literature, on the individuals' sense of identity and the collective mental state. In sociological literature, the impact of national and collective issues on the individual is taken into account. In psychological literature, the "collective mental state" is conceived as a condition subordinated to mechanisms of change. In the case of the neurosciences, a wealth of information and analyses on fear is available thanks to the interventions presented at the international Conference on "The Neurobiology of Emotion" (Stresa, Italy, 11-15 November 2012), included in the programs of the European Science Foundation and FENS. Interesting sessions were attended by a limited number of participants that seriously questioned and discussed the presentations offered by the interdisciplinary attendees. Fear had its own room in this context: in effect, fear was presented as a part of everybody's emotional history, as also including fear feeling, learning, consolidating and memorizing, and fear storing through morphological neuronal changes in a basket of fear neurons and extinction neurons intermingled and differentially connected. The interventions dealt with the phenomena related to expressing fear, inducing or inhibiting it, to being anesthetized from fear, or controlling and orienting it.

In all these cases, fear is described by contemporary scholars as a feeling, an emotional state, caused by the presence of danger, real or imagined. Overall, fear is considered to be a feeling that has some basic features. Fear is omnipresent: in all societies people suffer from fears; these are generated by something or someone. Fear is experienced in anticipation of some specific danger. It helps to explain the development of conditioned reactions to initially neutral stimuli, and, therefore, it has social and political consequences, since the system may decide to exploit real fears or create imaginary ones to achieve its own goals. Fear can change anybody's personality, and influence human relationships. It cannot be removed easily but it can be controlled/restrained; it is difficult to stop once it arises. It is linked to the role of the State (the central administration of a State having its legitimacy and efficiency, in a "statist" perspective) as a guarantor of order in society. The State either instills fear in the opposition, or instills a strong fear of sanctions in its supporters, so as to maintain order in society and deflect attention away from more

dangerous and politically unpalatable situations. Fear can be instilled, controlled, and also hidden with "brutal delicacy" for political, tactical, and strategic purposes. It can even be de-centralized: it is not necessarily related to the power of the State but also to the power of informal groups that may induce others to follow their rules, using—positively or negatively—instruments inductive of fear. It has both a destructive and a constructive aspect: fear can break you down or trigger a better relation between the subject and the world; learning to hope by fearing fear itself is a crucial point in human life (Block 1985).

Contemporary literature makes very careful distinctions when naming concepts related to a situation of disturbance, to a mix of uneasiness and discomfort. In effect, a great fear is termed 'dread'. Dread is different from 'apprehension' or 'anxiety': apprehension is linked to an uneasy perception, while anxiety is more likely connected to some indefinite evil. As for 'worry', it is the state of being entangled in chains of thought and images of a negative and uncontrollable nature, concerning real or imagined issues, usually pertaining to the personal sphere. Apprehension, anxiety and worry are related to a present condition, not to something that may occur in the future. Fear is also different from 'fright', which depicts the feeling of being alarmed at a sudden danger, and from 'scare', which is a widespread alarm.

Sociologists and psychologists studying these topics refer to a Western classical tradition of thought on fear; they do so widely and from different perspectives that can be traced back to the ancient civilizations. In the Greeks—mostly the Stoics—, in writers as Homer and Ovid, and then, more recently, in Nicolò Machiavelli (1512), fear is mainly conceived as a political issue. Machiavelli expressed his fear that a long period of peace may lead to enervation and decadence, and that the common good be scarcely promoted under princely or monarchical rule as the prince cannot/does not confer bestow honors on any good or capable citizens under his rule because he does not want to have any cause to fear them (Delumeau, 1990:102-7).

In a different light and referring to the ancient Greek system of ideas, Michel de Montaigne (1580)[2] listed fear among the human passions, starting from the hypothesis that animals feel fear only in their permanent quest for food; fear carries human judgement away from

[2] The online Library of Liberty *Essays of Montaigne, vol. 1,* trans. Charles Cotton, revised by William Carew Hazlett (New York: Edwin C. Hill, 1910). Chapter: *OF FEAR*.

its proper setting and **"**it adds wings to the heels, … sometimes it nails down [them], and fetters [them] from moving…**".** In this way, fear is conducive to hyperactivity or, on the contrary, to catatonia, and it is able to "drive out all intelligence" from anyone's mind and generate "panic terrors."

Thomas Hobbes (Leviathan, 1651)[3] was concerned with self-preservation as the major reason for action; he pinpointed the dearth of resources as the cause of conflicts, focusing on the fear that the others may have more power than us, and on the uneasiness that urges people to avoid fighting each other permanently and use rationality instead (Delumeau, 1990: 104-6).

The main concern of these three authors was definitely "mutual" fear. On the contrary, the Neapolitan Giambattista Vico (*Principj di Scienza nuova di Giambattista Vico d'intorno alla comune natura delle Nazioni***,** 1744) hypothesized that all human civilizations spring from fear, which is not an individual sentiment but "gives rise to a common point of reference that can serve as the starting point for a community" (Delumeau, 1990: 102); this means that his concern was "common fear." Giambattista Vico also developed a political language that included the role of fear -- as Machiavelli had done two centuries before him, obviously with different tones and stressing different aspects. Charles-Louis de Montesquieu in *The Spirit of Law* (1748) dealt with fear from a political point of view too, yet he externalized fear, recognizing that it originates in the ruling of the despot.

Also natural scientists like Darwin, and philosophers, such as Dewey, Kierkegaard, Heidegger, Sartre, as also Freud, Fromm, Horney, etc., have extensively dealt with fear (Delumeau 1990: 102). In effect, on the basis of this rich tradition, contemporary sociologists studying the mechanism that regulates societies have found that order in society—regardless of whether it is considered as an arena for the free expression of pre-existing factors—has been conceived as a system built through a process of interactions able to shape a community. This human group-life is an ongoing result of a formative process, a network of intelligent people. The philosopher Judith Shklar is inclined to underline the "cohesive effect" of fear: fellow-citizens in awe really are in the favorable condition to drive their political system towards freedom (Delumeau, 1990: 109).

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[3] The online Library of Liberty, *Hobbes's Leviathan reprinted from the edition of 1651 with an Essay by the Late W.G. Pogson Smith* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1909). Accessed from http://oll.libertyfund.org/title/869 on 2012-12-18.

Culture and values play a very important role in sustaining social order: the more they are internalized, the more important their role. Culture and values, internalized by natives and by immigrants in any society, play a key role in sustaining social order in that selfsame society; yet, sometimes or quite often, devotion to values hides the rules that have to be obeyed in order to survive, or progress, and in order to avoid losing a reward or incurring a punishment.

Unlike genes, social values are not stable, and are subject to any external factor, such as the influence of economic, social, and political factors. Values are flexible because they serve individuals and societies as mechanisms of adaptation and survival.

In some cases, a society can be considered socially, ethnically and culturally homogeneous and stable, and as endowed with some sort of national character and identity. But this situation is uncommon, slightly unreal, and in any case, this homogeneity cannot be the foundation of order because people have different attitudes towards very important issues.

Summing up: the sciences tell us today that fears are physical feelings and mental emotions that play a key role in maintaining social order and in determining the quality of life, and also that this attitude has been present in the Western philosophical tradition ever since the Greek philosophers till our century's political and social scientists, psychologists, and historians. Today, we recognize the value of this rich Western tradition that makes the idea of fear very flexible. We may consider it within the sphere of political discourse – either fear as a cohesive element for a group dominated by a tyrant, or fear as a force bonding loose agents that clash against their own or an external group. In addition to that, we may consider fear as embedded in the economic sphere when this passion is linked to subsistence, namely as fear of not being able to maintain well-being or enhance it.

Obviously, the different manifestations of fear are hardly expressible in such a hasty way, because fear—as a basic emotion—exists in all cultures but it is expressed differently, by different norms, in different cultural contexts. Emotions are expressed in a variety of forms, from culture to culture: "What we fear, and how strongly, depends on our conceptions of the world, of what dangerous forces exist in it and what possibilities we have for protecting ourselves against them" (Svensen 2008: 24).

If attention to the role of fear is increasing in Sociology, Social Psychology, Political Science and the Neurosciences, we may suggest - without fear of contradiction - that Economics, as a discipline, underrates fear.

In the first decades of the 20th century, relevant economic analyses on the possible applications of instinct theory were conducted (Asso and Fiorito 2004), trying to establish connections "between the concepts of instinct and human motive on the one hand, and the real working of industry and the shaping of industrial relations on the other" (Id.: 450), and "to analyze problems of social reform of the labor market" (Id.: 455). Then, Behaviorism supplanted this alternative economic wave and the "institutionalist research approach" underwent "a profound transformation" (Id.: 474). What came before instinct theory should have approached the analysis of fear: it was a missed opportunity.

Not many issues related to fear are explored by economists today. In standard economic literature, the issue of fear and the role it plays in the quality of life is barely present: there is no room for the issues related to fear and the labor market; fear as a promoting force; fear and the perception of the future by the different economic agents; fear and demand for commodities and services; there is no room for fear and the issue of maintaining economic "order" (whatever definition we accept for it); fear and stability of the system; fear and global demand or global supply. The main textbooks of Macroeconomics present economic behavior as a model dominated only by incentives based on cost-benefit calculation. Economists do not rate fear as a cost or a benefit; in their models, they also "ignore" fear of unemployment, the managers' fear of being ousted from the market or going bankrupt, as well as the people's fear of losing what they have. Fears act like exogenous factors in the economy. The feeble interest that economic theory shows in fear as an endogenous factor is rather odd if one considers the key role it plays when speculative bubbles burst: history tells us that the role of fear entails the existence of reactions on the part of economic agents sensing a drop in prices; history has told us so, at least since 1637 when the tulip mania reached its peak in Amsterdam triggering a deep crisis.

Those few economists that study the role of fear in the economic system are intrigued by its global dimension (related to scarcity of resources, pollution, strong and increasing inequalities between regions and income brackets, and by the fear of losing liberty that is

conducive to discussions on the validity/opportunity of liberty); by individual fear due to shortage and poverty; by fear that can lead to the improvement of personal conditions which may simultaneously enhance self and common welfare; and by fear of losing one's job when the general unemployment rate increases (Frey: 2012). Yet, is however a field that interests very few economists.

Does this lack of interest emerge for nominalistic reasons, as the term "fear" is considered vague and not certainly ascribable to one theoretical sphere (passions? sentiments? emotions? or sensations?)? Does it arise because fear is considered an irrelevant variable in describing human life? Does it emerge because fear is considered an irrational attitude, an artefact created by media and politicians?

Think only of the fact that the project of the University of Michigan on "Human Values and Beliefs" comprises the definition of 370 variables that describe aspects of human life: fear is not included.

In an article published by Paul Krugman recently, we read that "the only thing we have to fear is fear-merging itself" (New York Times, August 9, 2013). It means that Krugman himself does not conceive the possibility of considering fear as an endogenous element of the economic system.

Had a larger number of economists investigated whether and how economics has to do with fear, this would have been key to the discipline. For example, why don't we ask Economics — as Evelyn Forget does in one of her recent articles — if the level of income has anything to do with fear, or who populates this relation between fear and income.

My task in this paper is to go backwards in the history of economic thought, and examine if and how Adam Smith considered fear in his work. In effect, Smith devoted a great deal of attention to the concept of fear: fear occurs 45 times in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759)[4]; three times in *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* (1762)[5]; 22 times in

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[4] Online Liberty Library (A Project of Liberty Fund, Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1982). *The Theory of Moral Sentiments, ed. D.D. Raphael and A.L. Macfie, vol. I of the Glasgow Edition of the Works and Correspondence of Adam Smith*.

[5] Online Liberty Library (A Project of Liberty Fund, Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1985). *Lectures On Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* (1962), ed. J. C. Bryce, vol. IV of the *Glasgow Edition of the Works and Correspondence of Adam Smith*.

Lectures on Jurisprudence (Jan.-Feb. 1763)[6]; 25 times in *Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (1776)[7]; and nine times in *Essays on Philosophical Subjects* (1795)[8]. This paper begins by examining the definition and the origins of human fear as formulated in the works by Adam Smith. When referring to the origin of human fear, Smith makes reference to the universality of fear and to the clear distinction between its existence in the "ruder states of society" and in "the age of artificial reasoning and philosophy". These topics/themes... are focused upon in Section 1. The essay deals then with the general topic of the political framework within which people fear themselves and others, and the reactions that are triggered by fear (Section 2). A third part is devoted to the investigation of a specific set of arguments directly referring to the economic sphere of human life deducible from the Smithian framework outlined in the previous sections (Section 3).

Some historical observations conclude the essay.

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[6] Online Liberty Library (A Project of Liberty Fund, Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1982). *Lectures on Jurisprudence,* ed. R.. L. Meek, D. D. Raphael and P. G. Stein, vol. V of the *Glasgow Edition of the Works and Correspondence of Adam Smith*.

[7] Online Liberty Library (A Project of Liberty Fund, Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1981). *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations by Adam Smith,* edited with an Introduction, Notes, Marginal Summary and an Enlarged Index by Edwin Cannan (London: Methuen, 1904). *Vol. I ed. R. H. Campbell and A. S. Skinner, vol. II of the Glasgow Edition of the Works and Correspondence of Adam Smith* (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1981).

[8] Online Liberty Library (A Project of Liberty Fund, Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1982). *Essays on Philosophical Subjects,* ed. W. P. D. Wightman and J. C. Bryce, vol. III of the *Glasgow Edition of the Works and Correspondence of Adam Smith*.

1.Adam Smith's definition of fear and its origins in any state of society

In his *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, *Essays on Philosophical Subjects* and in *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres*, Smith does not make any distinction between different fears and their forms. In these works, he focuses on highlighting fears that he considers common to all human beings, universal to every human group, and the conditions that accompany fear.

We find that Smith gives an Aristotelian definition of fear: in his *Etica Nicomachea* (Book 1, par. 6), Aristotle wrote that "plainly the things we fear are terrible things, and these are, to speak without qualification, evils; for which reason people even define fear as expectation of evil. Now we fear all evils, e.g., disgrace, poverty, disease, friendlessness, death."

1)Fear and anxiety are defined by Smith as "the great tormentors of the human breast" (TMS, Part I. I. 12). Fear is a natural human passion, a "very strong passion" (EPhS, Section 1: Of the Effects of Unexpectedness, or of Surprise, par. 153). Fear — along with anger and "some other passions that are mixed or connected with those two" — also constitutes the "first class" (TMS, Part VI. III. 3) of passions that "gives occasion to other passions," (Part I. II. 16). In particular, the human fear of death has a natural and universal character, and it is the most pervasive fear for any human being.

2)Fear is "a passion derived altogether from the imagination, which represents, with an uncertainty and fluctuation that increases our anxiety, not what we really feel, but what we may hereafter possibly suffer" (TMS, Part I. II. 11). It is an emotion caused by the threat of danger, pain, or harm, and it is connected to the likelihood of something unwelcome happening. It is a very strong passion that is by nature an object of our aversion (TMS, Part I. II. 24). It is the immediate feeling of "some uncertain evil" that makes one "circumspect and attentive" (EPhS, Of the External Senses, par. 386); an "admiration" that "does not partake of hope or desire but rather of a referential awe and respect…" (LR&BL, Lecture 13a, par. 350). Fear is the current emotion arising from the expectation of something unpleasant and frightening that may occur, and that puts one on the alert. In this respect, Smith provides a useful example: "Comets, eclipses, thunder, lightning, and other meteors, by their greatness, naturally overawe him [a savage], and he views them with a reverence that approaches to fear " (EPhS, Section III: Of the origin of philosophy, par. 176). The imminence of a danger and the perception of a looming disaster could be at the origin of fear too.

3)Furthermore, fear has a typical feature consisting in its natural musicality: this means that music "imitates" fear by its "modulation" and its "notes"; music "inspires us [either] with fear" (TMS, Part I. II. 25), and can expresses the "screaming outcries of dastardly fear" as well (EPhS, Of the Nature of that Imitation which takes place in what are called The Imitative Arts/Of the Affinity between Music, Dancing, and Poetry, par. 434). The music that imitates this kind of passion "is not the most agreeable" (TMS, Part I. II. 26).
4) In Smith's work, coordination with the behaviour of the others is a concern related to passions and sentiments. This means that a person can suffer from fear under conditions directly felt by him or her, and/or conditions created by another person; these two conditions might be mutually connected, or better, the former may come before the latter.
5)Having affirmed that fear is a common feeling among human beings, Smith deduces that infants and adults in any society do feel fear.[9] Only infants, who manage to express every emotion — fear included — by the violence of their cries, have however developed an "antidote" against fear due to the fact that they "feel[s] only the uneasiness of the present instant," (TSM, *chap. I: Of Sympathy*), while, with regard to the future, they are "perfectly secure" (TSM, Id.) and in a state of "thoughtlessness" (TSM, Id.). Neither reason nor philosophy can help attempt to defend adults from this natural torment.

The main difference between infants and grown-ups in the perception of sentiments is the degree of self-command acquired through the great school of learning in order "to be more and more master of itself, and begin[s] to exercise over its own feelings a discipline which the practice of the longest life is very seldom sufficient to bring to complete perfection" (TSM, *a chap. III: Of the Influence and Authority of Conscience*). Self-command is necessary to human beings to achieve the ability of surveying their own conduct, which Smith defines self-approbation. This is not typical of infants because they are not conscious of their needs and of the fear of not being able to satisfy them. Self-command is absent if there has not been this long school of learning, if one lacks the memory of the capitalized experience of fearing. If one is not in "the age of artificial reasoning and philosophy," in an advanced society where "law has established order and security, and subsistence ceases to be precarious, the curiosity of mankind is increased, and their fears are diminished "

9 Hume includes *fear* under the "direct passions," together with desire, aversion, grief, joy, hope, despair, and security (668). The direct passions are "the impression which arises immediately from good and evil, from pain or pleasure" (760), and "you cannot quite simply decide not to be afraid, since rationality in such cases is steam-rollered by the amygdale" (491).

(EPhS, Section III: *Of the Origin of Philosophy*, par. 178), one is "in the ruder state of mankind" (LR&BL, *Lecture XXth* a, par. 463), "during the ignorance and darkness of pagan superstition," when "mankind seemed? to have formed the ideas of their divinities with so little delicacy, that they ascribed to them, indiscriminately, all the passions of human nature…."— fear, too. And these natural sentiments were propagated, confirmed and "gave a sanction to the rules of morality" (TSM, Chapter: *a chap. V a: Of the influence and authority of the general Rules of Morality, and that they are justly regarded as the Laws of the Deity*).

This specification of the difference between the two different ages of human history informs Smith's whole work.

In *Lectures on Jurisprudence,* fear is presented as a human passion existing since "the first stages of arts"; fear is discussed as something that men feel as if they were "being cut out of their livelihood by the increase of their rivals[sic]" (LJ, Monday, Jan. 17th 1763), when one has the necessity of a certainty of a "comfortable subsistence".

To be a civilized society, group members need to be "settled in a country naturally defended against invasions, capable of maintaining themselves against their enemies"; in this case, the group has "therefore little to fear from enemies" (LJ, Wedn. Feb. 23th 1763). Men acquire the power of defending themselves from the encroachments of their neighbours, and in a condition like this nobody needs to fear his neighbour. This happens when a community—also called society by Smith—is "pretty far advanced." This is the state of society – a "civil society" (LJ, Introduction; Id., Chapter: *Of Public Jurisprudence*) - where "bloodshed and disorder" are expected to be absent (TMS, *SECTION IV: Of the Manner in which different Authors have treated of the practical Rules of Morality*)[10].

To contrast the fundamental features of an advanced society with a vivid example of a society of fear, in *Lectures on Jurisprudence* Smith refers to the society of the "seraglio" where wives, concubines, and eunuchs live together with the "master" of the seraglio, "this happy man to appearance" who "is not in an agreeable situation." Everything here is affected by "fear of their getting a sight of or corrupting their women. They are jealous even of the imaginations…" (LJ, *Tuesday February 8. 1763*). Neither friendship nor trust between families are possible where there is polygamy: the fear of being dismissed by the other party produces little mutual trust and disadvantages for the children. These countries

10 In this case only does Smith use the expression "civil society" in TSM; in one case only is the same expression used also in WN (V.1.222).

"are under the most despotic and arbitrary government… And as the government is arbitrary so the heads of the families are entrusted with the most absolute and arbitrary authority that possibly can be" (LJ, *Tuesday February 8. 1763*).

The same distinction between the two different states of society is developed by Smith also in the *Wealth of Nations*, with the specificity that here his attention immediately turns to typically economic aspects of fear, and that it is currencies that play a key role.

As a matter of fact, in a "rude state of society", fear of losing money is common: individuals hide their money for fear that it "would quickly be plundered" and "few people would be able, and nobody would be willing, to lend their money to government on extraordinary exigencies" (WN, V. 3). Then, when "men come to be governed by the authority of written laws" (WN, b. I, Introduction; b. I, ch. 1; b. I, ch. 2; b I, ch. 4); when "entirely binding" contracts (of sale, letting and hiring, partnership) are stipulated "either by word of mouth or one in the same manner by writing," with "some solemnity" (blood from each party is filled into a bowl) to "make a great impression on the mind of the contractors" (LJ 324), this is exactly when a "civilized society" takes over. In this civilized society, and in the relations between civilized societies, the role of money is crucial because it "binds together all the relations" (WN IV. 9. 38.).

Regardless of fear as a natural feeling, these institutional conditions allow the emergence of a society where people can behave with fortitude and firmness, and may continue to do so; this happens in a country where self-approbation is proportional to? self-command. In such a society, every man created by Nature with natural fear of death is capable of behaving with fortitude and firmness.

When the occasion of an imminent danger arises - Smith asks himself and the reader -: "Who would choose all at once to inform his friend of an extraordinary calamity that has befallen him, without taking care before-hand, by alarming him with an uncertain fear, to announce, if one may say so, his misfortune, and thereby prepare and dispose him for receiving the tidings? That happens because anyone sympathizes with his friend (EPhS, Section I:, *Of the Effect of Unexpectedness or of Surprise*, par. 152).

We may conclude this paragraph noting that sympathy with friends and self-command are the key features of conduct in a group that conforms with an advanced society.

2. Fear connected to the political and economic conditions of human society

At this point — on the basis of the analysis by Smith — we may affirm that fear exists naturally in any kind of society or state of society: fear is a natural passion that evinces itself in several shapes, and by refraining these different fears there emerges human society as characterised by internal freedom and outbound force, a society that Smith defines ”advanced”. In Smith’s work, the economic element outstandingly plays the role of the third principle – besides those of the authority of the law and of contracts - that induces men to enter a civil society (LJ, 662): this third principle is the division of labor (WN,I, 1).

The shapes in which fear manifests itself are not sharply distinguishable, they are intermingled. Fear connected to the institutional and political framework of a group's cohabitation is in this paper distinguished from fear specifically connected to the sphere of economic activity for the sake of exposition only.

With respect to the first category, the political one, a person or population can experience a sentiment of fear whenever it is subject to a specific condition determined by the government.

1) With regard to the case of 'a person', Smith analyzes the behavior of a person who, violating a law of justice, leads another person to fear by “an assault” (“any threat or menace”). In this case, he or she is “punishable by an arbitrary fine and damages” and this is done “for the safety but also for the security of the individuals” (LJ, 349).

Even more so, the person who violates a law of justice feels “the agonies of shame, and horror, and consternation” (TMS, II. II. 13); when he reflects on his past conduct, he becomes the object of his own negative judgement, and he fears the lack of fellow-feeling with the others as well as all the negative sentiments that the others have for him: “Everything seems hostile, and he would be glad to fly to some inhospitable desert, where he might never more behold the face of a human creature, nor read in the countenance of mankind the condemnation of his crimes. But solitude is still more dreadful than society… The horror of solitude drives him back into society, and he comes again into the presence of mankind, astonished to appear before them, loaded with shame and distracted with fear; of all the sentiments which can enter the human breast the more dreadful. It is made up of shame from the sense of impropriety of past conduct; of grief for the effect of it; of

pity for those who suffer by it; and of the dread and terror of punishment from the consciousness of the justly provoked resentment of all rational creatures" (TSM, II. II. 13).

A radical change happens when a guilty person "ceases to be an object of fear," and "he begins to be an object of pity"; this happens because "the thought of what he is about to suffer extinguishes their [of the others] resentment for the suffering of others to which he has given occasion. They are disposed to pardon and forgive him, and to save him from that punishment, which in all their cool hours they had considered as the retribution to such crimes…. They counterbalance the impulse of this weak and partial humanity by the dictates of a humanity that is more generous and comprehensive" (TSM, II, II, 21).

A different case is related to fear as a sentiment that arises and grows in the relationship between a population and its government: the government can be in fear of rebellion (LJ 371); fear its slaves (LJ 418); or be in fear of insurrections by the colonies (WN, IV. 7. 28).

As to the fear of rebellion, it mainly occurs in three situations. The first of these takes place when the punishments of crimes appear to be "rather capricious than following necessarily from the commission of the crime" (LJ, Feb. 3d 1963). Fear of rebellion against the Sovereign may also occur when he disdains the use of management and persuasion— the "easiest and safest instruments"—and prefers using "force and violence" that "are the worst and most dangerous" instruments of government. This behavior of the governors is particularly damaging for "public tranquillity" and the "security of the sovereign" in a specific case, i.e. when force and violence are "employed against any order of men who have the smallest pretension of independency," as churches do: "To attempt to terrify them [the churches] serves only to irritate their bad humour, and to confirm them in an opposition which more gentle usage perhaps may easily induce them either to soften or to lay aside altogether. […] For though management and persuasion are always the easiest and the safest instruments of governments, as force and violence are the worst and the most dangerous, yet such, it seems, is the natural insolence of man…."

The sovereign has to let orders have their inner rules, provided that these rules do not compete with the general laws in force in the country; he has to radiate the "necessity of learning," "the study of science and philosophy," by means of "probation [given by him] that permits to exercise any liberal profession"; he has to encourage public diversions "by painting, poetry, music, dancing; by all sorts of dramatic representations and exhibitions,

would easily dissipate, …, that melancholy and gloomy humour which is almost always the nurse of popular superstition and enthusiasm" (WN, V. 1. 208).[11]

In some societies, the numbers of slaves far exceeds the number of freemen. This keeps the latter in continual dread of the former, and the greatest rigor and severity are consequently exercised upon them. They are put to death in prodigious numbers on the least appearance of insurrection. "Any one who appears to make the least disturbance is immediately hanged up; and this not in the common way with a rope, but with an iron collar…. In a rich country the disproportion betwixt them will be prodigious in all these respects. This disproportion will make the rich men much more severe to their slaves than the poorer ones" (LJ, Feb. 16th 1763). But, for fear of a general insurrection even "the violent and arbitrary government of Spain has, upon many occasions, been obliged to recall or soften the orders which had been given for the government of her 28 colonies" (WN, IV. 7. 28).

With respect to fear of the colonies, the example mentioned by Smith is that of the English colonists who manage their own affairs their own way, like their fellow-citizens do at home; in the colonies, the authority of the colonial Assembly has nothing to fear from the resentment of the civil and military officers stationed in the English provinces. In the opinion of Smith, this kind of relationship between England and the English provinces and colonies contributes to? the unity of distant parts of the world and the "mutual communication of knowledge and of all sorts of improvements which an extensive commerce from all countries naturally, or rather necessarily, carries along with it" (WN, IV. 7. 166).

2) In the first part of this paragraph devoted to fear and political issues, some words used to explain the different conditions or effects of fear refer directly or indirectly to the economic sphere of behaviour; in addition to that, any institutional topic has its economic aspects that cannot be distinguished from the whole.

Smith's work presents some conditions of fear that are manifestly related to the economic conditions of living: think of the population of a great empire which is in direct contact with a war and experiences an increase of taxes, and is not at all amused by "a thousand of visionary hopes of conquest and national glory from a longer continuance of the war" (WN,

11 Smith disagrees with Hume as to the way to reduce the worst manifestations of the activity of religious sects. Smith maintains that competition between religions is the best way to avoid the dominance of any of them.

V. 3. 37). Frequently, on these occasions, the government and the population may become poorer on account of the war, and both unable to pay the great debts contracted. This fact leads to reduce by law, drastically or gradually, the coins of all denominations to a part of the original value, as happened in Rome during the Punic wars (WN, V. 3. 9; 3. 37; 3. 62). In such a desperate condition, the poorest populations of the empire, subject to debts, deriving their subsistence from the occasional distributions of grain and mostly by the bounty of the candidates, tended "to vote for the candidate whom the creditors recommended" (WN, V. 3. 62).

At this point, we cannot overlook the fact that, besides a general discussion, Smith's arguments on fear often delve into more precise examples, thereby entering directly the economic sphere of human action. In this perspective, the *Lectures on Jurisprudence* offer considerations on a person that can be led to fear by an "extortion by means of fear"—termed? "robbery"—by someone who forcibly takes his goods from him (LJ, 360).

The *Wealth of Nations* refers to the fear of people of losing money, which is a sentiment that prevents Scotland's money from entering into England (WN, II. 2) and that strikes people when there is a war (WN, V. …). Smith refers to the fear of a workman of losing his ordinary employment and remaining vagrant because of the restoring of the freedom of trade: "they can have nothing to fear from the freest importation" of foreign basic commodities: "… break down the exclusive privileges of corporations, and repeal the statute of apprenticeship, both which are real encroachments upon natural liberty, and add to these the repeal of the law of settlements, so that a poor workman, when thrown out of employment either in one trade or in one place, make seek for it in another trade or in another place without the fear either of a prosecution or of a removal, and neither the public nor the individuals will suffer much more from the occasional disbanding some particular classes of manufacturers than from that of soldiers [at the end of a war]" (WN, IV. 2. 42); after all, "[t]he popular fear of engrossing and forestalling may be compared to the popular terrors and suspicions of witchcraft" (WN, IV. 5. 65).

Finally, Smith refers to the fear of the farmers that are obliged to pay a too high personal taille; the taille is "commonly assessed in proportion to the stock which he appears to employ in cultivation," and this tends to "discourage cultivation, and consequently to dry up the principal source of the wealth of every great country...," and to have a market worse supplied (WN, V. 2. 108).

In my opinion, all these paragraphs dealing with specific cases of fear contribute to better specify the general argumentation on *fear and the economic system*, and their meaning culminates in Book III of the *Wealth of Nations* where Smith develops his historical analysis of the behavior of the burghers. The behavior of the burghers arouses fear in the lords and the king because the former's wealth provokes the latter's envy and indignation (WN, III. 3. 8), and because the former need neither be protected by the king, nor become slaves or vassals of anybody; rather, they are far from needing the lords. In effect, the burghers were willing, for "mutual interest," to "support the king, and the king to support them against the lords. They were the enemies of his enemies, and it was his interest to render them as secure and independent of those enemies as he could": the king built "walls for their own defence … and he gave them all the means of security and independency of the barons which it was in his power to bestow." The overall effect was that the burghers felt the difficulty of becoming corporate and no longer free to exercise any trade.

Fear might refer to dreadful future events, like losing employment (WN, I. 10. 86), or having a super-abundance of a specific commodity. In any case, these events which directly perturb the equilibrium of the quantity and prices of commodities in the market could even be productive of positive effects.

Indeed, fear of unemployment "restrains his [workman's] frauds and corrects his negligence"; it has an effect on some young people whose age when they choose their profession does not necessarily allow them to "enlist as soldiers or to go to sea …" (WN, I. 10. 32), nor to "enter into what are called the liberal professions" on the basis of their "hope of good luck."

The same observation has to be made about the super-abundance of a specific natural commodity: it is a dreadful condition for a population which foresees its future as being unable to sell commodities that are difficult to preserve. This sentiment of fear discourages the cultivation of a natural commodity ("vegetable"), which prevents the availability of basic natural food to feed all the different ranks of the population. It also has a detrimental effect on the market of goods (WN, I. 11. 43) that can be easily replaced by implementing free trade policies: a nation is capable of making up for this condition and avoiding fear for farmers and countrymen—either in the case of exportation or of importation—disclosing the positive effects of free trade to the whole of the country (WN, IV. 2. 20).

Smith's awareness of the lack of legitimacy of the burghers in the English system, and of their strong call for it, turns his book on the wealth of nations into a perfect legitimization

of the activity and aims of the burghers, into a legitimization, I would say, of burghers' society. Smith is dealing with a society centered on the production of goods and the exchange of money and goods through the operation of the market. This new reality signifies the breakdown of privileges, statutes and corporations, and also means that a workman may look for employment in any trade or in any place; a commodity may be moved from a place to any other; and the distribution of wealth will pay for any effort.
[...] (TMS, *SECTION IV: Of the Manner in which different Authors have treated of the practical Rules of Morality*).

3.*The human reaction to fear*

Another issue dealt with by Smith is the identification of the reactions stirred by fear once the latter pervades society.
Resentment and punishment are the immediate reactions to a situation that puts someone in fear of something/someone whose danger is expected to be experienced in the future. These reactions depend on "the desire of actual praise." In effect, this means that we are driven to punish someone by a sentiment (TMS, II. III. 25); and this behavior is almost impertinent, if not nonsensical.[12]
A better understanding of this topic is provided in TMS, Part I, which explains the Smithian view of sympathy. In the first pages of TMS we read that our reaction to the "furious behaviour of an angry man" drives us "to disgust" and provokes us against "him and to take part against the man from whom originates the fear or resentment hitting a man" (TMS, I. I. 7).

12 For Hume, fear is "founded on the supposition of the existence of objects, which really do not exist" (1022); it is linked to our reflection on the situation that we are experiencing at the moment (1031), and it depends on the degree of probability of the passions by which we are affected under a certain condition: "according as the probability inclines to good or evil, the passion of joy or sorrow predominates in the composition" of the views of our imagination that "produce by their union the passion of hope and fear" (1098). This means that "hope and fear arise from the different mixture of these opposite passions of grief and joy, and from their imperfect union and conjunction" (1102). "Throw in a superior degree of probability to the side of grief, you immediately see that passion diffuses itself over the composition, and tincture it into fear. Encrease the probability, and by that means the grief, the fear prevails still more and more, till at last runs sensibly, as the joy continually diminishes, into pure grief…. Are not these as plain proofs, that the passion of fear and hope are a mixture of grief and joy, as in optics 'tis a proof, that a colour'd ray of the sun passing thro' a prism, is a composition of two others, when, as you diminish or increase the quantity of either, you find it prevail proportionably more or less in the composition? I am sure neither natural nor moral philosophy admits of stronger proofs" (1105). Probability—as Hume specifies—is a feature of both the object itself and our judgement (1006), and it is connected to the uncertainties to which people are exposed.
The idea of "conditional probability" was defined by Thomas Bayes (1702- 1761) in his *Essay toward solving a problem in the doctrine of chances* (1763).

We sympathize with the distress of others because "we imagine ourselves in the situation of sufferers, and thence readily conceive the grief, the fear and consternation, which must necessarily distract them" (TSM, I. II. 3); this means that we sympathize with the fear of the sufferer, not with the illness *per se*, with "the gout[13] or the tooth-ache, though exquisitely painful" (TSM I. II. 11). In other words, we "enter" the distress which is feared by others from an a annoyance, and what happens to others "[I]nterest[s] us not as a passion, but as a situation that gives occasion to other passions which interest us…" (TSM, I, II, 16). As a matter of fact, in Smith's thought, the consequences of perceiving fear are much more relevant than the concrete object of fear itself.

The first reaction of a man driven by the sentiment of fear induced by the sufferings of another man is feeling sympathy for him, not being indifferent to him (TSM, I, II, 25). This natural reaction "forces us almost involuntary to fly to his assistance."

Affirming that our "fellow-feeling with the other" leads us to share the same sentiment of fear (TMS, I. II. 21) means that fear is a passion that is communicated within a society, that is contagious in the precise sense that it drives and spreads reactions of different kinds: one might be disturbed by somebody else's fear, might be made afraid of it, angry, in disagreement, or boisterous; in any case, he or she is activated, engaged, or prepared to be active, even without alarming the others, or, rather, disposing them "for receiving the tidings" (EPhS, 152) even if they are not aware of the precise and punctual cause or origin of that fear.

A step further in this field is made by Smith in TMS, III (I. 39) where he points out that this human tribunal, where a "man is judge of mankind" and its sentiments, works functionally very similarly to a very different and "much higher tribunal, to the tribunal of their own consciences, to that of the supposed and well-informed spectator, to that of the man within the breast, the great judge and arbiter of their conduct." Thanks to the coexistence of these two tribunals, the man "within" may correct the false judgement of the man "without."

This means that the advanced society is shaped by the profiles of persons whose judgements are balanced between immediate reactions and informed reactions. This balance on the one hand prevents love of distinction, "so natural to man", from overwhelming the sentiment of approbation, and on the other it prevents the belief of magnificence of wealth from keeping away the hard times of "the winter storm." As a

13 The same reference to gout is in Hume, *A Treatise on Human Nature* (1896 ed.), par. 666.

matter of fact, "power and riches" leave people "sometimes more exposed [as if it were in the middle of a winter storm] than before, to anxiety, to fear, and to sorrow; to diseases, to danger, and to death" (TSM, V. I. 16).

In other words: fear, as a passion, follows the suggestion of its own "violent agitations," but it is restrained "by prudential considerations of the bad consequences which may follow from their indulgence" (TSM VI. III. 56).[14] Were the government aware of these prudential considerations, it would set itself free from fear of rebellion by directing its laws on the punishment of crimes along two criteria, i.e. one related to the correction of the offender and the other to the safety of the community (LJ, 371). Nowadays, we would say that such emotional turbulence of sentiments drives affected individuals to deliberations on the basis of more than one sentiment; and that these personal sentiments are intertwined with the reaction of other people's sentiments; and this makes the analysis of behavior complex.

Finally, fear may drive persons to fortitude, manhood, and strength of mind, to the full extent of winning the fear of death. This condition does not coincide with escaping the presence of death in one's mind; rather, it makes human beings familiar with it: "many seemingly great dangers are not so great as they appear"—Smith wrote—"with courage, activity, and presence of mind, there is often a good probability of extricating themselves with honour from situations where at first they could see no hope"; consequently—Smith concludes—people may "learn to expose themselves to danger with less reluctance" (TSM, VI. III. 3).

All these behaviors turn a person into a hero. This is true because "there is always something dignified in the command of fear, whatever be the motive upon which it is founded": the command of fear is always synonymous with nobility and greatness (TSM, VI. III. 3-12).

The above-sketched general profile of the passion of fear highlights that safety and security are indispensable conditions for the existence of the advanced society, in a Smithian sense. The advanced society is not at all a "society of fear," in the very sense that in the "age of artificial reasoning and philosophy," fear is not the device that can bind people within a social system: fear is replaced by a system of laws and rules which everybody recognizes; the system of laws dignifies the government and the same system

14 May we perhaps consider this Smithian line of reasoning to resemble Hume's views on probability? On this, see [note 2].

of laws is a warrant of the legitimacy of power, and of the legitimacy of social actors' regulated freedom as well.

The aforementioned profile of fear tells us that this passion can generate counter-actions by means of effective changes in the minds of the social players; these changes lead these 'actors' to turn their behavior from a passionate condition of natural torment into a positive, active attitude towards the future. This new attitude embodies and reveals all the passions that originate from the primary passions— like fear—and drives man towards a precautionary perspective of life, that is, towards reducing the number of the typologies of danger. This is the general framework in which Smith sets the concept of fear as a human passion.

Some conclusive considerations

An initial conclusion is drawn from this reconstruction of the Smithian concept of fear. Good luck and misfortune have no room in human existence because any person feels passions in his or her own breast, and on their bases any person has other sentiments and conceives ideas that drive him or her to cultivate potential abilities, more refined skills, new power and knowledge, and hidden abilities; to overwhelm the agitations that accompany passions; and to strengthen his or her command over them and his or her self-esteem too.

As a result, we may state that every person — in the Smithian vision — has resources by nature, and any moral sentiment is among these natural resources. What matters in our argumentation is specifically fear as the source that makes people able to respond to needs and wants, and — in doing so — to produce both individual and personal profit.

If fear is considered a resource, it follows that it may be capitalized: this is the economic meaning of fear. Partial pieces of an answer to this question may be drawn from the following insight, based on the paragraphs in which Smith deals with *society and fear*.

This reading of Smith's books enhances the tranquillity of society and the power of the sovereign as the result of power and command exerted by the government through instruments that facilitate safety, accountability, trust, and confidence within the community. This prudent behavior of the high ranks of society prevents and avoids the conditions under which fear arises from the daily and the exceptional circumstances of life and in which it spreads its perturbing effects connected to the assumption of a negative event likely to happen in the future.

As a matter of fact, fear can also motivate and activate behaviors that are positive for the well-being and the wealth of a nation. Fear may bind together individuals, at the same time allowing them to be free: in this case, fear is connected to hope and can be attractive and have a cohesive effect, which is a prerequisite for the existence of any society. In this sense, fear is a resource.

The target of this ideal governance seems to coincide with the appropriate answer to the needs of the individuals and bodies that partake in the same society: fear may be considered as depending "on the situation, or rather, it depends on how a person interprets the situation in which he finds himself."[15]

The Smithian society — as the place of the bargaining of accountable words, skilled abilities and work, and valuable commodities — is a community of barters that is secured by every persons' "approbation" and "command," as well as by the government's power and dignity (Paganelli, 2009). This happens because — in our specific case — fear is one of the original passions, and, as such, it generates other passions that constitute the mainsprings of prospective actions: taking care of the future of the whole system and of its parts, and generating positive actions from fear corresponds to being committed to the personal and the common good. In this sense, fear is a sentiment whose object, together with its direct and indirect effects, changes and evolves with and within any society.

In a "community," defined by Smith as "a set of men agree'd to live together" (LJ, 309), laws and rules are not the sources but the consequences of individual rights. Taken the other way round, individual rights are secured by a concrete system of relationships between citizens; the safety and security of these relationships are confirmed by society, day by day, in accordance with repeated bilateral and multilateral actions. This mutually respectful context reflects the systematic collection of laws, whose destiny is to be subject to amendments as time passes. The new values of the new society are transformed into laws, by their active exercise.[16]

This community lies at the bases of the acknowledgement that everyone — reciprocally — does not desire to be disturbed by the pain of others, and that this disposition works as a training ground to learn how to judge any action as if seen and evaluated by an "impartial spectator." Society becomes the primary means of controlling and subjecting the

15 This is "cognitive labelling" in Svendsen, 2008: 32-33.

16 In our contemporary scientific vocabulary, this role of the passions would probably be defined "descriptive" and "performative" (Ledoux, 1998).

government, like in the contents of *The Bill of Rights* (1689) in which the Crown is subject to the law and has to govern through Parliament, and the individuals have the right to be free of unlawful interference in their private affairs.

We take for granted that Adam Smith followed in the wake of the tradition of the *Bill of Rights*, and that he was applying the model of the *Bill of Rights* to a society that had already evolved into a commercial state. Here, people were becoming more skilled and industrious, and also turning into being "obsessed with acquiring a seemingly infinite number" of "trinkets," "frivolous objects" and a "multitude of baubles." New people are concerned with "changing their habits, appearance, their identity and interactions," by different civic and economic actions; they "might become locked into a status-seeking game paying more attention to what the 'spectator' thought than their free will," and they may possibly become victims of illusions— Smith's "deception," -- if they do not learn to comply with self-command and self-approbation (Hall and Trentmann 2005: 8).

But it is exactly "this deception which rouses and keeps in continual motion the industry of mankind… which has[ve] entirely changed the whole face of the globe…. The homely and vulgar proverb, that the eye is larger than the belly, never was more fully verified than with regard to him [landlord]. The capacity of his stomach bears no proportion to the immensity of his desires, and will receive no more than that of the meanest peasant. The rest he is obliged to distribute among those who prepare, …, that little which he himself makes use of,…" (TMS,…).

Only by practising these virtues can a people experiment with self-organization, recognize and trade mutual differences, may agree and consent to common living within a system; in this way, a people proceeds towards a form of society, an ever-renewing socio-economic system that reflects the dynamic relationships pertaining to it; the whole activity of this people reflects their legitimacy in an ever-changing set of laws, and constitutes a guarantee for the feasibility of the civil life of mankind (Simon 2009).

The fact that Smith does not hide the existence of fear and its effects seems very interesting to me. Nor does he foresee a system in which a strategy successfully works in concealing fear. On the contrary, his "society" becomes civilized also by means of the force of fear in motivating actions. His society, if rooted in the interactions between several human passions — among which fear —, plays an original role in driving human activities towards the best social conditions.

By placing Smith within the frame of the contemporary "philosophy of fear," we may accept that fear, as connected to uncertainties (like in Smith's work), can be the object of intentional strategies aimed to remove something or someone from the 'inside' of the system, to capture awareness, to deselect it in favor of other possibilities, to cultivate and keep it out of the boundaries, by limiting freedom within the system.

Such reasoning on fear makes fear a "perspective on the world", and simultaneously a force able to change the perspective of the world. Indeed, potential fear may be conducive to a number of moral rules shaped by means of direct experience and consciousness of these rules; this makes the latter consubstantial within the community in which they continuously sprout and whose evolution they reflect.

Yet, transferring today this conceptualization of fear into the Smithian system might be error-driven: as a matter of fact, I have not found any evidence of a Smithian conception of fear as a passion that can be handled in order to activate social control, or as a deceptive sentiment having to do with "witches".

More realistically, what Smith believed had to be feared were events embodying very high values in the eyes of his fellow-citizens: no doubt, the fear of losing dignity, liberty and freedom was a central concern in his whole argumentation on society and its wealth.

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Appendix 1

Today renewed attention is paid to fear also by the history of literature: in Franco Moretti's article *The Dialectic of Fear* ("New Left Review", I/136, Nov.-Dec.1982), he addresses the methods by which Mary Shelley and Bram Stoker highlight the problems and inconsistencies of their societies through their respective novels *Frankenstein* and *Dracula.* Moretti notes that in Shelley's *Frankenstein*, fear lies in the protagonist so as to encourage the reader to "reflect on a number of important problems (the development of science, the ethic of family, respect for tradition) and agree - rationally - that these are threatened by powerful and hidden forces". Stoker's *Dracula*, by contrast, wants to scare its readers. Hyde and Dracula, both born in 1816, are indivisible, as they are complementary figures; the two horrible faces of a single society, its *extremes*: the disfigured wretch and the ruthless proprietor, the property-less worker and property-owner capitalist.

Appendix 2

China is widely present in Smith's work. Smith deals with Chinese economic history in several paragraphs, where he compares Chinese development to the economic conditions of other countries. He also refers to Ricci, commenting on his opinion about China. Differently, no commentary on Chinese philosophy, political or economic thought is present in Smith's work.

Confucius was very interested in the notion of fear. In his view, we should feel fear of nature, of the sage and of the bigman (this word has its special meaning here); it is thanks to this fear that we human beings do not violate the rules. Confucianism paid much attention to the ways in which this human fear-feeling - which comes from the environment – can be transformed by internalizing it: in this way, fear would become a conscious demand on the part of man, a demand able to transform "I have to" into "I want to"[17].

17 I am very grateful to Yajun Chen (Department of Philosophy, Nanjing University and University of Pittsburgh) for this initial insight into Confucianism and fear.

Appendix 3

An application of Adam Smith's basic idea on the elements that attract factors of opulence into the economic system is provided with reference to the cellular biological system by Barrett Rollins (Department of Adult Oncology, Dana Farber Cancer Institute, Boston Mass.): his research deals with the chemoattractants for leukocytes; the attractors are the chemokines, a mix of proteins that may reveal the presence of leukocytes in the vessel wall[18].

18 Rollins B., Chemokines and atherosclerosis: what Adam Smith has to say about vascular disease, 2001, "Journal of Clinical Investigation", 108, 9 : 1269-1271.

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