Twitter Thread by @AdamSmithWorks



@AdamSmithWorks
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We have to pause now, because we have to have a whole new tweet thread on #AdamSmith and “savage nations,” because he’s going to keep using this kind of phrase, so we need to talk about it. #WealthOfTweets #SmithTweets

Please know that your friendly SmithTweeters give heavy side-eye to Smith’s use of phrases like “savage nations” and “naked savages” and so on. They are obviously shocking to the modern ear, and they should be. #WealthOfTweets #SmithTweets

“Well, it’s the 18th century, what do you expect?” just isn't a sufficient explanation. #WealthOfTweets #SmithTweets

The 21stC changed from talking about the First World/Third World to talking about developed/developing nations. That’s a good change and a respectful one. The terms we use for countries will continue to change. See: https://t.co/Qit53r8PoX

Probably the best way to think about Smith’s use of the term “savage nations” is to think of it as its own developmental stage on its way to a better set of terms for talking about the differences among nations. https://t.co/2wr7yACEv5 #WealthOfTweets #SmithTweets

Because it would be a shame to let the phrasing get in the way of discussing his ideas, which are often much better than his contemporaries' (Hume, this shade's on you) on these issues. #WealthOfTweets #SmithTweets

Remember he explicitly rejects the idea that climate/location predicts anything about industriousness, morality, etc. No matter how it sounds to us, Smith is not implying something about the character or capacity of the people in these nations. #WealthOfTweets #SmithTweets

It’s not about race, either. Smith was anti-slavery for moral and economic reasons, and seems to have no sense that race or nation of origin determined one’s ability to be a smart, diligent, dignified human. #WealthOfTweets #SmithTweets

So what DOES Smith mean when he talks about "savage nations?" He is referring to countries and people who are living in an earlier stage of economic development than those in "civilized" nations. (Ugh. We know.) #WealthOfTweets #SmithTweets

So continue to give it heavy side-eye. We certainly will. It is a thing to be critical of in Smith. There will be more of those things, and we should criticize them! But we do not think any of them are a reason to dismiss him wholesale. #WealthOfTweets #SmithTweets