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An Adam Smithian Account of Humanity

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Abstract: In *The Sources of Normativity*, Korsgaard argues for what can be called “The Universality of Humanity Claim” (UHC), according to which valuing humanity in one’s own person entails valuing it in that of others. However, Korsgaard’s reliance on the claim that reasons are essentially public in her attempt to demonstrate the truth of UHC has been repeatedly criticized. I offer a sentimentalist defense, based on Adam Smith’s moral philosophy, of a qualified, albeit adequate, version of UHC. In particular, valuing my humanity, understood as (my awareness of) my perspective and the reasons determined from within it, entails valuing your humanity, understood as (your awareness of) your perspective and the reasons determined from within it. Given Korsgaard’s emphasis on the publicity of reasons in her argument for UHC, I also discuss the role of reasons in my account. I argue that the relative weights of at least some of an agent’s reasons are determined from within a shared evaluative point of view, namely, the standpoint of what Smith calls “the impartial spectator.” These reasons have normative authority over and constrain the agent’s private reasons, that is, those that are determined from within her own particular evaluative point of view.

Keywords: Adam Smith, constructivism, humanity, impartial spectator, Korsgaard, reasons, sympathy

1. Introduction

Some sentimentalists, inspired by Adam Smith’s moral philosophy, have tried to show that one cannot have a perspective unless one can enter empathetically into other perspectives (Fleischacker 2019: ch. 2), or that one is committed to acknowledging the authority of others’ “affective perspective” or “emotional agency” (Debes 2012; 2017), or that one’s reasons have normative authority over others (Stueber 2017). These accounts are trying to attain a strong normative connection between one’s perspective and/or reasons and others’ perspectives and/or reasons, as a way of showing that we are reciprocally bound to, and ought to be engaged with, our fellow human beings. I will understand the connection in question via Christine Korsgaard’s (1996: 132) claim that “valuing humanity in your own person [. . .] implies, entails, or involves valuing it in that of others,” which I shall call “The Universality of Humanity Claim” (UHC).¹ Korsgaard understands the nature of this claim as different from both Hobbesian and neo-Kantian positions: according to the former, rational justifications of morality must show that self-interest gives individuals good reason to participate in a moral system; according to the latter, since my humanity is normative for me, I am committed, on pain of contradiction, to the claim that your humanity is normative for you. She argues that the Hobbesian position will not do because moral conduct by definition is not conduct motivated by self-interest and that the neo-Kantian position will not do because demands of consistency can only force me to grant that your humanity is normative for you in the same way that mine is normative for me—it cannot make your humanity normative for me (1996: 132–34). This last point is of the utmost importance, since Korsgaard does aim to show that your humanity—

¹ Korsgaard’s (1996: 92) ultimate goal is to show that “if we take anything to have value, then we must acknowledge that we have moral obligations.” The main argument for this claim can be found in the third lecture of *The Sources of Normativity*, although additional aspects of the argument, especially those that I will be discussing, can be found in the fourth lecture. For excellent summaries of Korsgaard’s argument, see Cohen (1996: 185) and Bukoski (1998: 200; 213). Stueber (2017), who I mention above, engages with Korsgaard’s views (especially those of *The Sources of Normativity*), and Fleischacker (2019) equates a person’s perspective with their humanity, as I discuss in Section 2.

anyone’s humanity—is normative for me. She understands “humanity” as denoting “rational nature,” as the sources of one’s reasons, in the following way: one’s humanity necessitates one to conform to some of one’s practical identities, each of which provides one with normative reasons, on pain of not having normative reasons at all (1996: 123). This connection between humanity and reasons is crucial, for in order to show the truth of UHC, Korsgaard argues for the truth of another claim, which I will call “The Publicity of Reasons Claim” (PRC): “reasons are not private, but public *in their very essence* [and] have normative force for *everybody* (1996: 133–35; emphasis added). As Korsgaard (2009: 192) later puts the point, I must treat your reasons as “considerations that have normative force for *me* as well as you, and therefore as public reasons.” If PRC is true, then UHC is true, for the following reason: if, given the public nature of reasons, we are necessitated to share in one another’s reasons, then we are also necessitated to make one another’s humanity—which, per Korsgaard, is the source of these reasons—normative for ourselves.

Korsgaard’s argument for the truth of PRC—an analogy between Wittgenstein’s private language argument and the claim that reasons are essentially public²—has been criticized for showing only that reasons are not essentially private, not that they are essentially public.³ I will offer a sentimentalist defense, based on Adam Smith’s moral philosophy, of a qualified, albeit

² In a nutshell: both meanings and reasons are normative and need a criterion of correctness, which requires at least two agents. As Korsgaard (1996: 137–38) puts the point, “to say that X means Y is to say that one ought to take X for Y; and this requires two, a legislator to lay it down that one must take X for Y, and a citizen to obey”; and, again, “to say that R is a reason for A is to say that one should do A because of R; and this requires two, a legislator to lay it down, and a citizen to obey.”

³ The gist of this criticism is that while meanings and reasons share the need for public criteria in the Wittgensteinian sense, this only rules out the possibility of a “logical egoism,” namely, the position that someone has a reason to ϕ simply because they believe they have a reason to ϕ , while denying the possibility of being corrected by others. The analogy does not rule out the possibility of “rational egoism”—the position that someone has a reason to ϕ only if ϕ -ing advances her own interests—since the rational egoist both allows that she might be mistaken about her reasons and allows for the possibility of being corrected by others. Therefore, the analogy between meanings and reasons certainly does not show that reasons are universally shareable in the sense of applying to everyone, always. For excellent discussions of this criticism see, for example, LeBar (2001), Gert (2002), and Sussman (2022: §1). I am indebted to David Sussman for making some of these points explicit in a presentation of his 2022 paper at UIUC.

adequate, version of UHC. In particular, valuing my humanity, understood as (my awareness of) my perspective and the reasons determined from within it, entails valuing your humanity, understood as (your awareness of) your perspective and the reasons determined from within it. The account is “qualified” because it is conditioned on the premise that agents have certain psychological capacities, primarily the capacity, and the desire, for (mutual) sympathy.⁴ Nevertheless, the account is “adequate” because it applies to the right set of agents, namely, those agents who are capable of being aware, qua spectator, of their own perspective, qua actor and who are, therefore, distinctively human. The key premise in the argument for the proposed version of UHC is that an objective, third-person point of view—the standpoint of what Smith calls “the impartial spectator”—gives authority to a second-person point of view in the form of a certain type of sympathy, namely, imagining being another agent in that agent’s situation (Sections 2–3). Given Korsgaard’s emphasis on reasons in PRC, I also discuss the role of reasons for action in my account. I argue that the relative weights of at least some of an agent’s reasons are determined from within a shared evaluative point of view. These reasons have normative authority over and constrain the agent’s private reasons, that is, those that are determined from within her own particular evaluative point of view. I apply this idea to the impartial spectator framework and discuss its relation to UHC (Section 4). I then reply to objections pertaining to differences between Korsgaard’s account of humanity and my Smithian account (Section 5). I conclude by considering the relations between Smith’s own account of humanity and my Smithian account (Section 6).

⁴ In using the term “sympathy,” I follow Smith, but we would call the phenomenon “empathy.” The term “empathy,” which is a translation of the German *Einfühlung*, was coined by the psychologist Edward Titchener only in 1909.

2. An Adam Smithian Account of Humanity: The Setup

The conception of humanity that I wish to develop is closely connected to Smith's *projection* or *simulation* account of sympathy, according to which we use our "imagination" in order to "place ourselves" in the actor's "situation" (TMS I.i.1.2),⁵ so that sympathy "does not arise so much from the view of the passion, as from that of the situation which excites it" (TMS I.i.1.10). This account of sympathy thus pays special attention to one's *perspective* on the situation, including the *causes* of one's passions: "The first question which we ask is, What has befallen you? Till this be answered, [. . .] our fellow-feeling is not very considerable" (TMS I.i.1.9). Now, a question that will be of importance is how much of the spectator's self is transported into the actor's situation when the spectator sympathizes with the actor. In part I of TMS, Smith emphasizes the *spectator's* perspective within the sympathetic process: when A sympathizes with B, A imagines how A would feel in B's situation. Thus, he notes that spectators' sympathy "arises from conceiving what they themselves would suffer, if they really were the wretches whom they are looking upon, and if that particular part in themselves was actually affected in the same miserable manner" (TMS I.i.1.3).⁶ However, in part VII of TMS, Smith emphasizes the *actor's* perspective within the sympathetic process: when A sympathizes with B, A imagines how B would feel in B's situation. He writes:

[T]hough sympathy is very properly said to arise from an imaginary change of situations with the person principally concerned, yet this imaginary change is not supposed to

⁵ *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* will be referenced as "TMS" with the part, section (if applicable), chapter, and paragraph in the Glasgow Edition (Smith 1976).

⁶ Smith then goes on to provide multiple examples that support this conceptualization of sympathy. In particular, he argues that "we blush for the impudence and rudeness of another, though he himself appears to have no sense of the impropriety of his own behavior; because we cannot help feeling with what confusion we ourselves should be covered, had we behaved in so absurd a manner" (TMS I.i.1.10). Moreover, when someone has lost his mind and is incapable of appreciating his miserable condition, "the compassion of the spectator must arise altogether from the consideration of what he himself would feel if he was reduced to the same unhappy situation, and [. . .] was at the same time able to regard it with his present reason and judgment" (TMS I.i.1.11). And while a sick infant only feels the uneasiness of his present situation, his mother "joins, to its real helplessness, her own consciousness of that helplessness, and her own terrors for the unknown consequences of its disorder" (TMS I.i.1.12). Finally, Smith argues that by 'putting ourselves in their situation', we can even sympathize with the dead (TMS I.i.1.13).

happen to me in my own person and character, but in that of the person with whom I sympathize. When I condole with you for the loss of your only son, in order to enter into your grief, I do not consider what I, a person of such a character and profession, should suffer, if I had a son, and if that son was unfortunately to die; but I consider what I should suffer if I was really you; and I not only change circumstances with you, but I change persons and characters. My grief, therefore, is entirely upon your account, and not in the least upon my own. [TMS VII.iii.1.4]

In order to streamline the subsequent discussion, I will call the first type of sympathy—imagining being oneself in the actor’s situation—“self-oriented sympathy,” and the second type of sympathy—imagining being the actor in the actor’s situation—“other-oriented sympathy.”⁷ The conception of humanity that I wish to develop builds on the notion of perspective that is at the heart of Smith’s account of sympathy. In particular, it associates humanity with having a unique perspective and being aware of this perspective. More specifically, and as I will argue below, we are the type of being that is *aware*, qua spectator, of its own unique *perspective*, qua actor.

The key idea, which in connection with Smith’s moral philosophy has been proposed by Samuel Fleischacker (2019: 31), is that to be human is “to develop and sustain a perspective,” understood as “a mesh of opinions and attitudes that respond to the situations we have lived through in the past and shape the way we live through future situations,” or “a *subjective take on the world*.”⁸ While this conception of humanity is primarily sentimental in nature, our rational

⁷ I have previously used these terms in Ben-Moshe (2020c), where I loosely relied on Coplan’s (2011: 9–10) distinction between “self-oriented perspective-taking” (“a person represents herself in another person’s situation”) and “other-oriented perspective-taking” (“a person represents the other’s situation from the other person’s point of view”).

⁸ As noted above, Fleischacker (2019: 34) argues, among other things, that “you cannot even have a perspective unless you can enter empathetically into other perspectives,” so that “the connection between empathy and perspectivalism is [. . .] a metaphysical and not just an epistemological one.” This claim is strong and is not, I believe, psychologically plausible; for example, it seems possible that a highly narcissistic individual has a perspective, even if they are incapable of empathy. (This individual may simply project their own perspective onto others and/or believe that others should promote their perspective, while not empathetically appreciating that other people have their own perspectives.) Whether or not Fleischacker is correct, his claim, which is psychological in nature, cannot establish UHC, since UHC is a claim about *normative* relations between my humanity and your humanity: the thought is that your humanity—anyone’s humanity—is normative for me, and thus that your perspective—anyone’s perspective—is normative for me. I will build on Fleischacker’s idea that humanity is tied to having a perspective and to Smithian sympathy, but

capacities are also implicated: imagining oneself or the actor in the actor's situation, which includes complex knowledge of the causes of passions, would seem to involve reasoning. Thus, instead of insisting that humanity pertains either to our sentimental nature or to our rational nature, our humanity is a complex combination of both.⁹ However, conceptualizing humanity merely in terms of having a unique perspective might be over-reaching, for certain animals may have the requisite mesh of opinions and attitudes. Accordingly, what makes us human is not merely that we have a perspective, but that we are capable of being *aware* that we have a perspective, an awareness that is distinctively human.¹⁰ This emphasis on being aware that we have a perspective is of particular interest in a Smithian context, since the awareness in question would seem to be a necessary condition for the very possibility of self-oriented sympathy towards others: it is reasonable to assume that it is precisely because we are aware of the fact that we have a perspective that we can imagine ourselves, our own perspective, in another person's situation. It is highly plausible that other animals are not aware of their perspective in this sense. One could further argue that one's awareness of one's perspective just is sympathy towards *oneself* in this Smithian sense.

will make more substantial normative use of the standpoint of the impartial spectator than he does. See Ben-Moshe (in press) for a more detailed exposition of these criticisms of Fleischacker's position.

⁹ Fleischacker (2019: 30) makes similar observations. It is worth noting that I diverge from Debes (2017), who, using Smith's moral philosophy, claims that all persons are entitled to demand respect for their "emotional agency," which is *distinct* from their "rational agency." Since Debes understands people's "emotional agency" as equivalent to their "affective perspective," their "essentially emotional point of view," he further argues that all persons are entitled to demand respect for their point of view. However, Debes *assumes* the normative authority of emotional agency and hence of agents' affective perspectives. In an earlier paper, Debes (2012) does argue that, on Smith's account, when we guide ourselves morally, we assign authority to a spectator's judgement. He further argues that since that judgement is tied to that spectator's affective perspective, we are committed to acknowledging the authority of the spectator's affective perspective. However, (a) there is a difference between us assigning authority to spectators and them actually *having* this authority, and (b) different spectators will have different degrees of epistemic authority. Indeed, while Smith argues that we initially internalize the judgments of actual spectators, it does not follow that these spectators' perspectives, in and of themselves, have normative authority. (In the later paper, Debes (2017: 187) argues that "because empathetic judgments [that others make of us] originate from within an affective perspective, and because all persons have a legitimate demand to have that perspective recognized (for that is simply what affective dignity entails), then their empathetic judgments inherit a demand to be taken account of"; however, again, he *assumes* the authority of our emotional agency.) As I will argue, it is the impartial spectator that provides the grounds for the requisite normative authority, including the normative authority of the (affective) perspectives of different agents.

¹⁰ Fleischacker (2019: 34) does sometimes recognize this point, noting, for example, that "there is a connection between engaging in Smithian empathy and being aware of perspectives: being aware, even, of our own perspective."

Indeed, Smith, who argues that we judge ourselves by attaining a certain distance from ourselves and imagining the effects that our behavior would have on us through the eyes of others (TMS III.1.2), notes that in judging one's conduct, one divides oneself into "two persons": (a) "the judge," that is, "the spectator, whose sentiments with regard to my own conduct I endeavour to enter into, by placing myself in his situation, and by considering how it would appear to me, when seen from that particular point of view," and (b) "the person judged of," that is, "the agent, the person whom I properly call myself, and of whose conduct, under the character of a spectator, I was endeavouring to form some opinion" (TMS III.1.6). And we approve or disapprove of our own conduct in the same manner in which we approve or disapprove of the conduct of others: when we place ourselves in the situation of the judge, we either can or cannot sympathize with the sentiments that influenced it (TMS III.1.2). Thus, we are the type of being that can act as both a judge and the person judged, and, accordingly, we can empathize, qua spectators, with ourselves, qua actors. And to return to my initial thought, since Smith's account of sympathy is perspective-based, we are the type of being that is *aware*, qua spectator, of its own *perspective*, qua actor.

Having clarified the conception of humanity at stake, I now wish to discuss three components of Smith's moral theory that will allow me to argue for a version of UHC. The first component is the "impartial spectator," which Smith uses as a privileged standpoint from which the "passions of human nature" become "proper" (TMS II.i.2.2).¹¹ This standpoint, from which we judge both ourselves and others, can itself be constructed in a given society (TMS VI.iii.25). In particular, Smith observed that it is part and parcel of human life that we judge others and find others judging us. This allows us to see ourselves through the eyes of others, by internalizing the way in which

¹¹ Smith also writes that the "precise or distinct measure by which this fitness or propriety of affection can be ascertained or judged of [. . .] can be found nowhere but in the sympathetic feelings of the impartial and well-informed spectator" (TMS VII.ii.1.49).

others respond to us, and thus to make judgments of propriety of our own sentiments (TMS III.1.3–5). But why should we assume that the people whose reactions we internalize provide the *correct* standard of moral judgment? Smith was sensitive to the fact that agents in a human society, who desire to be *worthy* of approval (TMS III.2.1), might come to realize that the actual spectators who judge them are biased, because they are not informed about the non-normative facts and/or they have a personal stake in the circumstances, and are thus unreliable sources for determining what is worthy of approval (TMS III.2.4–5). Thus, people will come to seek approval from spectators who know all the relevant facts and are not biased, and so ultimately seek approval from an impartial spectator, who exemplifies these characteristics and whose jurisdiction is founded “in the desire of praise-worthiness, and in the aversion to blame-worthiness” (TMS III.2.32). More specifically, given their desire to be worthy of approval, people will seek to go *beyond* the actual bystanders they encounter and use their *imagination* to create a well-informed and impartial bystander (TMS III.1.2). So while the impartial spectator is constructed from our interactions with actual people, we use our imagination to build on these interactions to construct a spectator whose point of view is different from any one of these agents’ points of view.¹² We can thus end up with a person “quite candid and equitable [. . .] who has no particular relation either to ourselves, or to those whose interests are affected by our conduct, [. . .] but is merely a man in general [. . .] the representative of mankind.”¹³ The normative force of this spectator stems from its *hypothetical* and *idealized* nature: facts about the morally appropriate and inappropriate are constituted from hypothetical, idealized conditions (those of the impartial spectator) that—while agents in a given

¹² Smith notes that the standpoint of the impartial spectator has *priority* over and can be used to *correct* the reactions of the actual people we encounter when those reactions are deemed inappropriate from this standpoint (e.g., TMS III.2.32 & VII.ii.4.10).

¹³ This quote is taken from a passage which first appeared in the 2nd edition of TMS, remained with minor variations in editions 3–5, and was replaced by a slightly different passage in the 6th edition (TMS III.2.31–32). The quoted passage can be found in a footnote in the Glasgow Edition of TMS (Smith 1976: 129–30). In the remainder of this paper, I will change Smith’s talk of “a man in general” to the more appropriate phrase “a person in general.”

society might have yet to attain them—can be constructed from those agents’ shared experiences. These conditions guarantee the authoritativeness of agents’ responses in constituting the standard of moral judgment, and, if an actual agent or an actual community of agents are not under these conditions, their responses are not authoritative in setting this standard. In doing so, the account offers a standard that can transcend the biases and prejudices of the society that gave rise to it. (Although, as I discuss in the next section, this achievement might occur somewhat gradually.)

The second component is the normative status of other-oriented sympathy. It is reasonable to assume that Smith emphasizes other-oriented sympathy towards the end of TMS, after he has developed his account of the impartial spectator, because the standpoint of this spectator makes us ready to experience fully developed other-oriented sympathy. In particular, Smith believed that our excessive self-love makes it difficult for us to see things from other people’s perspective (TMS III.4.3). Adopting the standpoint of the impartial spectator allows the spectator to humble his self-love, since he sees that he is “but one of the multitude, in no respect better than any other in it” (TMS II.ii.2.1 & III.3.4). The spectator can then take into account the perspectives and interests of all concerned and correct his perception of his own interests (which are tied to his self-love) versus the interests of others. This is so because he views these interests “from the place and with the eyes of a third person, who has no particular connexion with either, and who judges with impartiality” (TMS III.3.3). Importantly, by consulting the impartial spectator, we “see what relates to ourselves in its proper shape and dimensions” (TMS III.3.1). That is, the standpoint of the impartial spectator allows one to make a comparison between one’s own and others’ interests by affording one an understanding of the aspects of the situation that pertain to oneself, but perhaps not to others. So when we ultimately come to sympathize with ourselves through the eyes of an impartial spectator, we are also ready to imagine being B in B’s situation, without self-love or our own point of view

interfering with our ability to do so. There is also reason to assume that fully developed other-oriented sympathy is not only a psychological achievement but a normative one. When Smith discusses other-oriented sympathy, he writes that while the account which “deduces all sentiments and affections from self-love” arose “from some confused misapprehension of the system of sympathy”—namely, self-oriented sympathy, which is “founded in self-love, because it arises [. . .] from putting myself in your situation”—other-oriented sympathy is not rooted in self-love because it is “entirely occupied about what relates to you” (TMS VII.iii.1.4). Smith’s insistence that other-oriented sympathy is not rooted in self-love suggests that it is the proper form of sympathy, especially given the association of self-oriented sympathy with the “confused misapprehension of the system of sympathy.” More generally, given (a) Smith’s account of the impartial spectator as a standpoint that humbles self-love and (b) the fact that the attainment of the standpoint of the impartial spectator leads to the attainment of proper sentiments, a sentiment that is not founded in self-love is a more proper sentiment. Therefore, Smith also emphasizes other-oriented sympathy at the end of TMS because it is ultimately the *proper* form of sympathy.¹⁴

The third component is the desire for mutual sympathy with others (TMS I.i.2.1-6). Smith notes that “nothing pleases us more than to observe in other men a fellow-feeling with all the emotions of our own breast; nor are we ever so much shocked as by the appearance of the contrary” (TMS I.i.2.1). But not only are people pleased when others sympathize with them and hurt by the lack of such sympathy, people are also pleased when they are able to sympathize with others and

¹⁴ The key ideas in the paragraph above are taken from Ben-Moshe (2020c: 747–51). It is important to emphasize that Smith does not deny that we experience some degree of other-oriented sympathy from the get-go, but, importantly, our initial ability to do so is limited. Indeed, in the second paragraph of TMS, Smith writes that “we enter as it were into [the actor’s] body, and become in some measure the same person with him,” experiencing “some degree of the same emotion” (TMS I.i.1.2). Smith is suggesting here that as we imagine ourselves in the actor’s situation, we begin to understand the actor from the inside: we start to comprehend the way in which the actor experiences the situation by becoming the person he is. However, Smith is careful to note in this passage that the process happens “in some measure” and to “some degree.” Therefore, the attainment of *fully developed* other-oriented sympathy is a process.

hurt when they are unable to do so: “As the person who is principally interested in any event is pleased with our sympathy, and hurt by the want of it, so we, too, seem to be pleased when we are able to sympathize with him, and to be hurt when we are unable to do so (TMS I.i.2.6). Indeed, this is true even when we sympathize with painful sentiments: “[T]he pleasure which we find in the conversation of one whom in all the passions of his heart we can entirely sympathize with, seems to do more than compensate the painfulness of that sorrow with which the view of his situation affects us” (TMS I.i.2.6).¹⁵ Smith further argues that this desire for mutual sympathy makes the spectator attempt to augment his sympathy so as to match the experiences of the actor: the spectator tries “to put himself in the situation of the other, and to bring home to himself every little circumstance of distress which can possibly occur to the sufferer”; indeed, he tries to “adopt the whole case of his companion, with all its minutest incidents” and “strive to render as perfect as possible that imaginary change of situation upon which his sympathy is founded” (TMS I.i.4.6). However, given the manner in which self-love limits sympathy, the actor, who “passionately desires a more complete sympathy,” attempts to lower his emotions to levels at which spectators feel sympathy: he “lower[s] his passion to that pitch, in which the spectators are capable of going along with him” and “flatten[s] [...] the sharpness of its natural tone, in order to reduce it to harmony and concord with the emotions of those who are about him” (TMS I.i.4.7). In order to produce this concord in sentiments, both spectator and actor constantly imagine being in the other

¹⁵ One can question the claim that the ability to sympathize with unpleasant sentiments gives rise to a sentiment that is pleasant (Raynor 2006: 242). However, it does seem that people are pleased when they have achieved a harmony (via sympathy) in their sentiments with others, even if these sentiments are unpleasant, such as sentiments of sadness or outrage (Fleischacker 2012: 301). One could also follow Bailey (2022), who argues that empathy—sympathy, as I have been referring to the phenomenon—is the unique source of a particular form of understanding, namely, the direct apprehension of the intelligibility of others’ emotions, which she calls “humane understanding.” Bailey argues that humane understanding of others is non-instrumentally valuable to its recipients: people have a complex but profound need to be humanely understood. If Bailey is right, this observation might in part support Smith’s discussion of mutual sympathy, for people might desire mutual sympathy, and take pleasure in it, because, among other things, they have a need to be humanely understood. For an excellent discussion of mutual sympathy in Smith, see McHugh (2016). I am grateful to an anonymous referee for encouraging me to incorporate this dimension of Smith’s thought.

person's situation (TMS I.i.4.8). It is presumably this process that initially leads people to construct a rudimentary internal spectator—albeit one that is just averaged out from the perspectives of the actual people that we have encountered—as a psychological mechanism to guide us in what patterns of attitude and behavior are likely to make it such that we can maintain this sympathy.

3. An Adam Smithian Account of Humanity: The Key Move

In order to appreciate the importance of these three components of Smith's thought for an argument that aims to demonstrate the truth of a version of UHC, I wish to make use of a distinction that Nagel (1986: 170) draws between *recognizing* a perspective and *occupying* it. The standpoint of the impartial spectator is a standpoint from which I *recognize* that all perspectives have *equal* worth: it tells me that insofar as my perspective is worthy of recognition, your perspective is worthy of recognition too.¹⁶ In particular, recall that the standpoint of the impartial spectator is one from which we take into account the perspectives and interests of all concerned. Furthermore, and importantly, it is a standpoint of a person in general, a neutral point of view, which humbles our self-love and from which we appreciate that our own perspective is but one of the multitude and in no respect better than any other in it. Thus, adopting the standpoint of the impartial spectator makes us appreciate that our own perspective is no more privileged than—indeed, is *equal* to—other people's perspectives. Of course, the process by which agents arrive at this recognition need not be instantaneous. Consider society S in which As are not initially considered equals to Bs. We might envision the following developmental stages: (a) Bs attain further information about and imagine themselves in the situation of As, who are initially not considered their equals from the

¹⁶ For excellent discussions of (variations of) this theme, see, in particular, Darwall (2004) and Fleischacker (2016).

point of view of society S; (b) Bs start taking As' perspectives and interests into account; (c) Bs can now better imagine being an A in As' situation; (d) Bs see As' perspectives and interests as equal to their own.¹⁷ This line of reasoning can be buttressed by Smith's account of commutative justice, which pertains to our experience with warranted sentiments of resentment—that is, sentiments of resentment experienced from the standpoint of the impartial spectator—towards injuries done to others (TMS II.i.2.1–2 & II.ii.1.4–5). Thus, Smith notes that impartial spectators “do not enter into that self-love, by which [a person] prefers himself so much to this other, and cannot go along with the motive from which he hurt him,” adding that “they readily, therefore, sympathize with the natural resentment of the injured, and the offender becomes the object of their hatred and indignation” (TMS II.ii.2.1). Indeed, by imagining being in the victim's situation, we often experience resentment against injustice even when those suffering the injustice do not (TMS II.i.2.5). Thus, we can imagine the warranted resentment we would feel upon observing a wrongful injury inflicted upon someone whose perspective is not recognized as having equal worth.¹⁸

However, this would merely require me to recognize that your perspective has normative force for you in the same way that my perspective has normative force for me; it would not show, in and

¹⁷ I further elaborate on these themes in Ben-Moshe (2021a: 494-96). In that paper, I argue that the impartiality of the impartial spectator might, initially, still be one that is relative to a given society: the impartial spectator might simply apply the society's standards fairly and in full knowledge of the facts. However, the attainment of further information about and sympathy with those who are not initially considered equals from the point of view of a given society can broaden the group of people who fall under the purview of a society's impartial spectator. As a result of this process—but perhaps also independently of it—one would presumably start to realize that potentially most, or even all, of the members of one's society may not be sufficiently informed and/or have a personal stake in the circumstances. An impartial spectator *of* the society itself would arise, one that does not arbitrarily limit the scope of people whose perspectives and interests are to be taken into account. In the previous section, I suggested that the desire to be worthy of approval might explain why we would seek approval from impartial spectators and ultimately from an imagined impartial spectator. Note that the desire to be worthy of approval, in conjunction with the desire for mutual sympathy, can also explain why we would sympathize with those who are not currently in our ingroup: if the desire to be worthy of approval is understood as, among other things, a desire for greater impartiality, then we have a good explanation of our (ultimately) coming to sympathize with outsiders, who might not share the type of biases inherent to individuals in our ingroup, especially if we also desire mutual sympathy with others. For similar suggestions, see McHugh (2021).

¹⁸ For further discussion of Smith's views on commutative justice, see Ben-Moshe (2021b: 255, 260), Darwall (1999: 142–43), and Griswold (1999: 239).

of itself, that your perspective has normative force for me. This is so because while the recognition of equality necessitates consistency, this consistency can be attained by recognizing that each perspective has normative force for its author; it does not necessitate my engagement with your perspective. This is where other-oriented sympathy, as the *proper* form of sympathy, has a crucial role to play: the impartial spectator requires me to see the situation from your perspective rather than my own, that is, to try to *occupy* your perspective. In other words, not only is it the case that I ought to recognize your perspective as equal to my own, but it is also the case that I ought to occupy it (as best I can).¹⁹ The idea is that the appropriate form of sympathy to experience from a neutral point of view is a form of sympathy that is not influenced by an agent's self-love, namely, other-oriented sympathy. This requirement to occupy someone else's perspective does not come about *ex nihilo*, but rather builds on the aforementioned third component, namely, the desire for mutual sympathy with others. Recall that this desire leads to a process in which we constantly imagine being in the other person's situation and augment our sympathy so as to match the experiences of the actor; this process, in turn, leads people to construct a rudimentary internal spectator, albeit one that is just averaged out from the perspectives of the people that we have encountered. When the *impartial* spectator is constructed, he reaffirms these sympathetic efforts to see the situation from others' perspectives, giving normative authority to other-oriented sympathy. And to return to the key point: the combination of being required to both recognize and

¹⁹ Smith was well aware that the person judging and the person being judged cannot become identical. For example, he concludes the passage about dividing oneself into two persons, the judge and the person whose conduct is being judged, by noting: "that the judge should, in every respect, be the same with the person judged of, is as impossible as that the cause should, in every respect, be the same with the effect" (TMS III.1.6). Moreover, Smith seems to have been sensitive to the fact that there cannot be an imagined identity between spectator and actor, as he notes that the sentiments of spectators and those of actors "will never be unisons," but "they may be concords, and this is all that is wanted or required" (TMS I.i.4.7). Thus, a plausible interpretation of what Smith takes other-oriented sympathy to be is not an imagined identity between spectator and actor, but rather the spectator imagining the actor's situation as confronted by someone with the actor's characteristics, that is, by someone with the actor's beliefs, attitudes, character traits, and so on. These observations are taken from Nanay (2010: 90) and Ben-Moshe (2020c: 751–52).

occupy your perspective means that your perspective has normative force for me in the following way: insofar as I value my perspective as a unique perspective, I am required to engage with your perspective and consider it from the inside—I am required to attempt to sympathize with you in your person and character in the same way that I, qua spectator, sympathize with myself, qua actor, in my person and character—while also recognizing that your perspective has equal standing to my own perspective; by doing so, your perspective, which is equal in standing to, but different in content from, mine, demands a rational response from me, thereby making your perspective normative for me.²⁰ Thus, this Smithian account shows that valuing my humanity, (my awareness of) my perspective, entails valuing your humanity, (your awareness of) your perspective.

Before concluding this section, an important point requires clarification. There is a distinction to be made between (a) my adopting, or treating as normative, the perspective of the impartial spectator, and (b) my adopting, or treating as normative, your perspective. While (a) might seem uncontroversial, this is not obviously the case in regards to (b). Indeed, suppose that one is deeply evil, such that one’s perspective centrally involves intrinsically desiring that all other persons suffer as much as possible. Adopting the perspective of the impartial spectator will presumably involve treating this perspective as deeply mistaken. So, is it the case that even if one’s perspective is monstrous, I ought to recognize this perspective as equal to my own, and, furthermore, occupy it (as best I can)?²¹ I want to begin by making an important further distinction; then I will provide

²⁰ I borrow the language of “rational response” from Stueber (2017: 204–5), although his “Smithian Constructivism” makes use of, among other things, the idea of *reenacting* another person’s reasons through other-oriented sympathy: when engaging in such reenactment, I recognize that, while the actor’s reasons are not necessarily reasons that I would have in the situation, they are reasons that I could have were I to adopt all of his background beliefs and values. Stueber argues that this is akin to hypothetically reflecting on various courses of action. So, another person’s reasons, grasped in the reenactive mode, engage me as a critical reasoner. This raises the question of whether the attitudes I quarantined in reenactment need to be reconsidered. It is this question that requires a rational response. However, it is not entirely clear what role *sentimentalism* plays in this account, since Stueber’s emphasis seems to be on what *reasoners* do.

²¹ I am grateful to an area editor of *Ergo* for pressing me to clarify this point.

two reasons why this question should be answered in the affirmative. The distinction I have in mind is between the manner in which the impartial spectator makes a perspective worthy of *consideration* and the manner in which it makes a perspective worthy of *endorsement*. The impartial spectator requires, in the first instance, that I recognize and occupy your perspective in the same way that I recognize and occupy my own perspective: I am required to attempt to sympathize with you in your person and character in the same way that I, qua spectator, sympathize with myself, qua actor, in my person and character. This does not yet mean that your perspective is worthy of endorsement for the same reason that it is not necessarily the case that my perspective is worthy of endorsement: any perspective, whether it be yours or mine, is worthy of endorsement if and only if it would be endorsed from the standpoint of the impartial spectator.²² This is so because this spectator determines which perspectives, including the motivations and attitudes inherent to them, are worthy of approval, and hence correct. In other words, when I treat the standpoint of the impartial spectator as normative, I recognize that this standpoint has, among other things, the normative authority to determine which individual perspectives are in fact correct. However, when I treat your perspective as normative, I am not, in the first instance, accepting that your perspective is correct; rather, I am merely accepting that I ought to *consider* your perspective by (a) recognizing it as a perspective equal to my own and (b) doing my best to occupy it.

But even if I do not endorse your perspective as correct, why should I recognize and attempt to occupy, for example, a monstrous perspective? If this is where the argument leads us, surely it is a *reductio ad absurdum* of that argument! I have argued that the standpoint of the impartial spectator gives authority to a second-person point of view in the form of a certain type of sympathy, namely, imagining being another agent in that agent's situation. Here I want to offer two

²² For a discussion of a similar distinction in the context of empathetic judgments, see Debes (2017: 187–88).

independent reasons in order to motivate the desirability of the argument's conclusion: one reason pertaining to the limitations of the perspective of the impartial spectator and the other pertaining to the process leading up to the construction of the impartial spectator. First, we do not necessarily know which perspectives are in fact monstrous before adopting the standpoint of the impartial spectator, but even that standpoint, in and of itself, has its limitations. For example, a Nazi might view the perspective of any Jew as monstrous until he adopts the standpoint of the impartial spectator. However, that standpoint, in and of itself, will only show the Nazi that a Jew's standpoint is equal to his own; it will not necessarily render a Jew's perspective more intelligible to the Nazi. On the other hand, actually attempting to occupy individual Jews' perspectives might very well do so. And the converse is also true (to a certain extent): if a Jew attempts to adopt a Nazi's perspective, he will come to recognize that the Nazi operates from recognizably human motivations, which are susceptible to various forms of brainwashing, corruption, and so on. This could serve as an important step in overcoming demonization and achieving reconciliation.²³ Second, recall that the standpoint of the impartial spectator is one that constitutes worthiness of approval and so has normative force for me. It would thus seem *prima facie* plausible that anything which is necessary for the construction of this standpoint is, at the very least, worthy of my consideration. Now, the impartial spectator is in fact a social construction that represents a person

²³ I do not mean to suggest that the Nazi's perspective is correct or justified. I am merely suggesting that attempting to occupy this perspective might help others better understand it, as a step towards the attainment of reconciliation. In the final chapter of his book, Fleischacker (2019) makes a similar observation by arguing that demonization is the refusal to empathize with others: we cut off shared humanity with those we demonize by refusing to acknowledge that we may share a motivational structure with them and that we could ourselves have arrived at their perspectives. He further argues that refusing to demonize anyone is key to a humanistic outlook: we need to see any evildoer, even a Hitler, as someone we could have been if we had lived in other circumstances. And a commitment to seeing oneself in every person will enable us, so the thought continues, to work together to heal evil. I am very sympathetic to Fleischacker's reasoning here, although I believe that he overstates the point: I do not think that we should see a Hitler as a member of the human community in the sense of "seeing every human being as worthy of our empathy—and worthy, therefore, of our respect and concern," as Fleischacker (2019: 165) puts it in the final sentence of the book. See also my response to the second objection in Section 5, "Objections and Replies," below for a related discussion.

in general. Importantly, it is constructed from, and ultimately constituted by, the perspectives of any person with whom I can sympathize. Therefore, I have *prima facie* reason to at least consider the perspective of any person with whom I can sympathize. However, in order to seriously consider the perspective in question, so the thought continues, I would need to attempt to occupy it.²⁴ Therefore, there are good (independent) reasons to recognize and occupy other perspectives.

4. An Adam Smithian Account of Humanity: Reasons for Action

Recall that Korsgaard argues for the truth of UHC by virtue of her key claim about *reasons*, “The Publicity of Reasons Claim” (PRC), namely, the idea that I must treat your reasons as considerations that have normative force for me as well as for you. Now, insofar as each individual has reasons that are determined from within his *own* perspective, we can clarify that my proposed version of UHC is as follows: valuing my humanity, (my awareness of) my perspective and the reasons determined from within it, entails valuing your humanity, (your awareness of) your perspective and the reasons determined from within it. Korsgaard insists, however, that all reasons are public. Apart from the fact that her argument for the publicity of reasons is not sound, there are two worries inherent in the idea that all reasons are public. First, as Korsgaard (2009: 207) herself asks: “If all reasons [. . .] are public, then it seems as if *none* of them are *mine*. [. . .] How is that supposed to leave me with a practical identity that is my own and no one else’s?”²⁵ Second,

²⁴ I am indebted to Robert Vanderbeek for this second reason (or argument).

²⁵ Korsgaard’s (2009: 210–12) response combines an impersonal component with a personal one. For example, if my ambition is to write a book about Kant that will be required reading, the structure of this ambition is not: “(1) I want my book to be required reading (where that gives me a private reason). (2) therefore: I shall write a good book”; but rather: “(1) Someone should write a book on Kant good enough that it will be required reading (I will that as public reason). (2) I want to be that someone.” Reasons arising from love have a similar structure: “I think that someone should make my darling happy, and I want very much to *be that someone*.” She argues, among other things, that “what you want is not merely to be me-in-particular nor of course is it just to be a generic human being—what you want is to be a *someone*, a particular instance of humanity.” However, Korsgaard’s examples are not necessarily true to the

consider an example that Korsgaard (1996: 141–42) provides to make her case for PRC: if A and B, a professor and a student, are trying to set up a meeting, then they are reasoning together and sharing reasons. However, as Stueber (2017: 197) notes, the fact that A’s reasons normatively obligate B can be understood only in light of the fact that other reasons and norms are already public and obligate B. So, if, for example, the professor and student try to schedule a meeting at a time when the student does not have a certain class, but the professor does not think highly of the instructor of the class and so thinks that the student should skip the class for that reason, the student’s reasons for not meeting during the class would not automatically be the professor’s reasons. Stueber concludes that the student’s reasons are normatively compelling for the professor only if the student and professor interact in a realm of shared norms. Therefore, we would not want *all* reasons to be public because (a) we risk not having reasons that are truly our own and (b) we would have to automatically endorse someone else’s reasons. What we do want is reasons to be public *to the extent they are*, that is, we want to have some public reasons that constrain our private reasons and that make each agent’s private reasons normatively compelling for other agents.

In order to better understand the type of account that I wish to develop, it might be helpful to offer an analogy with a recent debate regarding a certain brand of the Humean Theory of Reasons, most associated with Bernard Williams and Sharon Street. According to such theories, if p is a reason for A to ϕ , then, *under suitable conditions*, for example, p must be able to motivate A to ϕ (Williams 1981), or the judgment “ p is a reason for agent A to ϕ ” must withstand scrutiny from

phenomena: it seems plausible that some people who write a book do so, and have a (defeasible) reason to do so, because they want the book to be required reading; likewise, it seems plausible that most people want to make their loved ones happy and have a (defeasible) reason to do so. More generally, it seems plausible that people do not tend to want to be a “someone” who instantiates a more general “humanity”; rather, they often want, and have (defeasible) reason to want, directly to attain the objects of their idiosyncratic desires and values and thus to be “me-in-particular.”

the standpoint of A's other judgments about reasons (Street 2006; 2008).²⁶ While the introduction of such conditions leaves room for evaluative error—for A can be mistaken about her reasons for action—the standard of correctness that determines what counts as an evaluative error is ultimately set by the agent herself, by her own motivations or evaluative judgments under suitable conditions (Street 2006: 110–11; 2008: 207–8). These Humean theories can thus easily provide us with reasons that are truly ours, reasons that are determined from within our own unique perspectives. However, they do not seem to account for any reasons that are necessarily *shared*, precisely because all reasons are ultimately a function of the contingent attitudes of particular agents. Some authors have attempted to add a shared evaluative point of view and shared reasons to these Humean accounts by using Hume's moral philosophy. For example, Julia Driver (2017) develops a Humean constructivism, according to which reasons that apply to all social beings are extractable from Hume's "general point of view," which corrects their individual sentiments. However, the scope of Hume's (1978: 582–83, 591, 602) general point of view in the *Treatise* is relatively limited, since adopting it amounts to judging the actor's character traits by confining oneself to and sympathizing with the people with whom the actor regularly interacts, her circles of influence.²⁷ And if one focuses on the *Enquiry* account, where he no longer makes use of the actor's circles of influence, Hume (1975: 173, 228–29) seems to suggest that this point of view is constructed through conversation and shared reasoning with others within a community (Taylor

²⁶ Williams and Street have different motivations for their projects and understand the relevant conditions differently. Williams's focus is on developing a theory of practical reasons; Street's on developing a (Humean) constructivist account in the meta-ethical landscape. Moreover, for Williams (1981: 102–5) the suitable conditions include no false beliefs and all the relevant true beliefs pertaining to the action, as well as sound deliberation; for Street (2006: 110–11), they include primarily reflective equilibrium among one's evaluative judgments about one's reasons.

²⁷ There are additional problems with the *Treatise* account of the general point of view. For example, the actor might reveal different character traits to different people, so that certain character traits are not revealed to the people in a given circle of influence; indeed, the actor's character traits can have different effects on different members of the circle, and/or the members of the circle can be biased individuals (Baier 1991: 212–13; Cohon 1997: 844; Taylor 2002: 53). Moreover, our sympathetic reactions will vary as a function of our distance from those agents with whom the actor interacts (Darwall 1994: fn. 37). For a discussion of these (and other) issues, see Ben-Moshe (2020b).

2002: 57–58; Ben-Moshe 2020b: 437–40). Hence, a theory of normative reasons based on either account risks applying *only* to the members of a given set or community of agents, a group that, moreover, might be biased. Another possibility is Dale Dorsey’s (2018) use of resources from Hume’s moral philosophy in order to provide an account in which “humanity’s evaluative nature”—values that we share qua species—has authority over a given agent’s contingent attitudes and thus provides him with overriding normative reasons. However, one of the main problems here is that humanity’s evaluative nature might include unsavory tendencies. As Williams (1972, 59) noted, “if one approached without preconceptions the question of finding characteristics which differentiate men from other animals, one could [...] end up with a morality which exhorted men to [...] despoiling the environment and upsetting the balance of nature; or killing things for fun.”²⁸

I wish to build on this debate and argue for the following model: (a) we each have our own particular evaluative point of view with the reasons that are determined from within it (for example, by our contingent motivations and evaluative attitudes); (b) the relative weights of at least some of our reasons are determined from within a shared evaluative point of view; (c) these shared reasons have normative authority over and constrain our private reasons, those that are determined

²⁸ Dorsey (2018: 587) attempts to deal with this objection (primarily) by appealing to the idea of a *qualified* (aesthetic) judge in Hume’s “Of the Standard of Taste” (1987) and, accordingly, making use of an “acquaintance requirement”: a condition on a sentiment counting as “sound” is that the person in question must have “some knowledge, information, or experience of the subject of the sentiment.” Thus, Dorsey (2018: 596-97) writes that the fact that “some particular ϕ [...] is unrecognizable as reason giving to many or most typical and acquainted humans seems to be dispositive evidence that the valuing of ϕ cannot be part of humanity’s evaluative nature”; or that his position requires “broad agreement among those whose sentiments are in a ‘sound state’” and so “it would be quite surprising to discover that racist and prejudiced attitudes are the product of ‘near-universal’ agreement among those who have had experience with [...] the relevant ‘outsiders’.” The problem with this suggestion is that it is far from obvious that appeal to those who are sufficiently acquainted will provide, in a non-question-begging way, the right results. Indeed, those who are sufficiently acquainted with outsiders might come to the conclusion that racist and prejudiced attitudes are so universal that they *are* part of humanity’s evaluative nature. It is worth noting that there is a further question of whether Driver’s and Dorsey’s accounts retain the internalism requirement, according to which reasons for an agent must link up with her valuing attitudes or motivations—or, according to more austere Humeans, with her desires—and which is key to the Humean Theory of Reasons. I will not be discussing the internalism requirement in the current paper, but for a discussion of the issue in connection with a Smithian account of normative and moral reasons, see Ben-Moshe (2020a).

from within her own particular point of view. The standpoint of the impartial spectator is a good candidate for a shared evaluative point of view, because it is from this standpoint that what is worthy of approval is determined. Indeed, it is an imagined standpoint of a *notional* or *hypothetical* person—any person, not a representative of a given society—which takes into account the perspectives and interests of *all* concerned (“all” without qualification); hence, there is a stronger case to be made that, unlike evaluative standpoints that are based on Hume’s moral philosophy, normative reasons stemming from within it (a) need not apply only to members of a certain community, nor reflect the prejudices and biases of any given community, and (b) need not be hostage to humanity’s (potentially unsavory) nature. It is thus natural to assume that *deliberation* from this standpoint would yield the right shared normative reasons with the correct normative weights. The thought here is that the standpoint of the impartial spectator, qua authoritative standard of moral judgment, also provides us with the authoritative standard of correctness for our shared normative reasons. Furthermore, since the impartial spectator is the *ultimate* standard of correctness for worthiness of approval, the reasons determined via deliberation from this standpoint will have normative authority over our private reasons, in much the same way that the responses of the impartial spectator have normative authority over a given agent’s responses.²⁹ Nevertheless, many normative reasons can be private in the sense that A has a reason to ϕ simply if ϕ -ing advances A’s own interests.³⁰ This is so because, while the standpoint of the impartial spectator has final authority in determining our shared reasons, many of our reasons will be

²⁹ Smith writes: “But though man has, in this manner, been rendered the immediate judge of mankind, he has been rendered so only in the first instance; and an appeal lies from his sentence to a much higher tribunal, to the tribunal of their own consciences, to that of the supposed impartial and well-informed spectator” (TMS III.2.32). While Smith talks about a “higher,” rather than “the highest,” tribunal, for the purposes of this paper, I am interpreting him as arguing that there is no higher standard of correctness than the one provided by the responses of the impartial spectator. (Recall that the standard of the impartial spectator serves as the standard for determining the propriety of sentiments.)

³⁰ Two points are worth emphasizing. First, I am not arguing that *all* reasons are private in the sense specified above and so am not arguing for rational egoism. Second, these reasons are not subject to the private-language critique, since the agent can allow for the possibility that she (a) is mistaken about her reasons and (b) can be corrected by others.

determined, de facto, by the contingent motivational and evaluative contents of our particular evaluative points of view. Such reasons might include those pertaining to actions that involve only the agent herself. Therefore, insofar as it does not bear on others, whether one has reason to read a novel or watch a movie, for example, will be entirely dependent on one's novel-reading or movie-viewing desires. However, the reason to help someone in immediate, life-threatening danger will presumably trump the reason to read a novel or see a movie, regardless of one's novel-reading or movie-viewing desires. This is so because the (normatively weightier) public reasons that emerge from the standpoint of the impartial spectator will reflect the type of norms that one might expect to develop from a standpoint that humbles spectators' self-love and that takes into account the perspectives and interests of all concerned; hence, it is reasonable to assume that public reasons will emerge which give certain other-regarding actions precedence over self-regarding actions.³¹

Let me say more about the relations between the shared point of view and our own particular points of view. To return to the analogy with Humean theorists such as Williams and Street, the idea of our normative reasons being determined under suitable conditions can be construed as the idea of these reasons being determined by our *ideal selves*. The thought is that there is a certain distance between the motivations or evaluative judgements of the agent's actual self and those of his ideal self: the latter is under suitable conditions and determines the former's normative reasons. The shared point of view, the point of view of the impartial spectator, might be understood as

³¹ The norms in question can attain progressively greater levels of generality. In the first instance, the impartial spectator is very attuned to the *specifics* of the situation. However, more general norms can be formulated by using this standpoint. For example, we come to formulate general norms given the strong reactions that we have towards certain actions, especially when others have similar reactions. Indeed, we can formulate general norms by induction, that is, by surveying cases and inferring the badness or goodness of a feature of those cases from that survey (TMS III.4.7–8). Accordingly, if we build on these suggestions, general norms can be derived by agreement among those agents who adopt the standpoint of the impartial spectator. More specifically, those adopting the standpoint of the impartial spectator can share their verdicts, and/or their verdicts can be compared to each other by others, in order to formulate these norms. These (and additional pertinent) observations can be found in Ben-Moshe (2021b: 256–57).

constituting in part our ideal *ethical* selves, as the suitable conditions that determine in part the *shared* reasons of our actual selves (and even of our ideal selves, as Humeans such as Williams and Street conceive of them). Indeed, Smith argues that we often do identify ourselves with and become the impartial spectator, which he calls “conscience” (TMS III.3.4, III.3.29, & III.4.4).³² Note, however, that there is a sense in which we do not all have *identical* ideal ethical selves (hence my use of “in part”): despite being the standpoint of a person in general, the impartial spectator can respect certain societal and cultural differences.³³ These societal and cultural differences, including certain virtues inherent to their respective societies, would presumably be factored into the motivations and evaluative judgments of our particular evaluative points of view, and hence into our ideal selves as Humeans conceive of them. However, the *normative constraints* that are determined by the impartial spectator and that are placed on the specific virtues of a given society or culture—and on people’s particular evaluative points of view and ideal selves—are identical. Smith himself notes that when it comes to “the general style of conduct or behavior,” local virtues cannot authorize substantial “departure from what is the natural propriety of action” (TMS V.2.14). And, again, since the impartial spectator is a *notional* or *hypothetical* person, these constraints will take the form of taking into account the perspectives and interests of *all* concerned. Therefore, the

³² Smith does argue that there are some situations in which, while we can imagine what the impartial spectator would approve of and closely approximate the impartial spectator’s judgment, we will do so only imperfectly (TMS I.i.5.8). Moreover, Smith suggests that even the wise and virtuous man only approximates the impartial spectator’s judgments (TMS III.3.25 & VI.iii.25). Nevertheless, given Smith’s other views about the impartial spectator, it is clear that most of us can become the impartial spectator to the degree needed for this ideal observer to count as *our* ideal ethical self. (Indeed, even in TMS I.i.5.8, Smith notes that the approximation in question “may be denominated virtuous.”)

³³ Smith was sensitive to the fact that some virtues may be culture-relative: “The different situations of different ages and countries are apt [. . .] to give different characters to the generality of those who live in them, and their sentiments concerning the particular degree of each quality that is either blameable or praiseworthy, vary according to that degree which is usual in their own country and in their own times”; accordingly, the “degree of politeness which would be highly esteemed [. . .] in Russia, would be regarded as rudeness and barbarism at the court of France” and the “degree of order and frugality which, in a Polish nobleman, would be considered as excessive parsimony, would be regarded as extravagance in a citizen of Amsterdam” (TMS V.2.7). Importantly, this claim about the culture-relativity of virtues is for Smith a *normative* judgment: “in general the style of manners which takes place in any nation may commonly, upon the whole, be said to be that which is most *suitable* to its situation” (TMS V.2.13; emphasis added). Hence, it would presumably be a characteristic that would be incorporated into the standpoint of the impartial spectator.

ideal ethical self of a person living in society A at t1 might not, all things considered, be identical to that of a person living in society B at t2: A slaveholder's and a Nazi's ideal ethical selves might retain many of the virtues considered worthy of approval in 1830s America or in 1930s Germany, respectively; however, these virtues would be constrained by norms that do not permit slavery and genocide, since the perspectives and interests of all concerned are to be taken into account.³⁴

Recall that according to my version of UHC, valuing my humanity, (my awareness of) my perspective and the reasons determined from within it, entails valuing your humanity, (your awareness of) your perspective and the reasons determined from within it. However, we can now better appreciate that it is only against the backdrop of the reasons determined from a shared evaluative point of view that our private reasons are normatively compelling for each other. Barring certain objections that I discuss shortly, I believe that this account captures the spirit of Korsgaard's intentions. Consider Korsgaard's example according to which if A and B, a professor and a student, are trying to set up a meeting, then they are reasoning together and sharing reasons. Korsgaard is suggesting that, in valuing another person's humanity, we enter that person's specific perspective and the reasons determined from within it. Thus, if (a) Korsgaard is right that valuing humanity in your own person entails valuing it in that of others, and (b) my humanity is a function of my perspective and the reasons determined from within it and your humanity is a function of your perspective and the reasons determined from within it, then I have explained why respecting my perspective and my reasons entails respecting your perspective and your reasons. However, contrary to Korsgaard's position, there is no question that we have reasons that are truly our own, because each individual can have private reasons that are determined from her own evaluative

³⁴ I develop most of the observations in this paragraph in Ben-Moshe (2021a: 506-508), although I have introduced some changes to the manner in which I had presented them in that earlier paper.

point of view. Furthermore, we do not automatically endorse someone else's reasons. Rather, on the proposed Smithian account, the fact that A's reasons normatively obligate B should in fact be understood in light of the fact that other reasons are already public and obligate B, namely, those shared reasons that are determined from the standpoint of the impartial spectator. In other words, and to repeat the key point, while not all reasons are public in Korsgaard's sense, my account does give authority to shared reasons in the sense that our private reasons are *constrained* by shared ones. And note that these shared reasons, which are determined from the standpoint of the impartial spectator, would likely rule out the type of private reason advanced by the professor in Stueber's aforementioned example, because the impartial spectator would take into account the perspectives and interests of all concerned, including those of the instructor of the class in question.

5. Objections and Replies

In this section, I wish to discuss three objections that one could raise against my account, objections which suggest crucial differences between Korsgaard's account of humanity and my own account. First, one could object that in comparison to Korsgaard's account, my proposed Smithian account is too psychologistic. In particular, while Korsgaard makes use of a normative category (reasons) in order to attempt to demonstrate the truth of UHC, I seem to be using a psychological category (perspectives and our awareness of them) in order to attempt to demonstrate the truth of a version of UHC. But note that it is the standpoint of the impartial spectator, and the normative authority that it imparts to other-oriented sympathy, that is supposed to forge a normative connection between my perspective and your perspective, between my humanity and your humanity. I have argued that the normative force of the standpoint of the impartial spectator should be understood in terms of its serving as the hypothetical and idealized set of conditions that guarantees the

authoritativeness of agents' responses in constituting the normative standard in question. The appropriate form of sympathy to experience under these conditions, those of a person in general, is a form of sympathy that is not influenced by excessive self-love, namely, other-oriented sympathy. The motivation for appealing to idealized responses in order to establish normative authority (and, perhaps, truth) is familiar to those who embrace a naturalistic picture of the world and are skeptical about the prospects of meta-ethical realism. Assuming one wishes to (a) ground moral judgment in the *responses* of agents without paying the normative prices of subjectivism and relativism, and (b) attain a robust form of *objectivity* without paying the metaphysical, epistemological, and motivational prices of realism, one could opt for the position that it is the responses of agents *who are under certain conditions* that constitute what is morally right. Since actual agents may not meet these conditions, their responses, individually and collectively, might be in error.³⁵ Of course, the conditions in question cannot be defined in terms of these agents getting the right results, on pain of circularity. However, these conditions are required to guarantee that the agents' responses are authoritative, and one strategy is to *idealize* them via the postulation of an ideal observer whose reactions determine whether an ethical (or some other normative) judgment is true or false.³⁶ Note, however, that, on the proposed account, the idealization is relatively modest: the standpoint of the impartial spectator provides a standard of correctness for moral judgments which, while transcending individual points of view, does not transcend the point of view of human beings. The thought is that any higher standard, above and beyond the one set by the impartial spectator, would be unintelligible to us, since it would transcend the imaginative

³⁵ I take these observations from Vallentyne (1996: 101) and Ben-Moshe (2021a: 490).

³⁶ This position was summed up by Firth (1952: 321), who argued that “X is P [an ethical predicate]” means “Any ideal observer would react to x in such and such a way under such and such conditions.” Firth uses the notion of an ideal observer primarily in order to analyze the *meaning* of moral terms. Brandt (1959: ch. 10) uses this observer—or “Qualified Attitude Method,” as he calls it—in order to provide a *standard of correctness* of moral judgments.

lives of beings such as ourselves; or, alternatively, even if such a standard were intelligible, it would not have any resonance for us, since it would be detached from our human sensibilities.³⁷

Second, one might object that my account has diminished the normative import of Korsgaard's project. In particular, one might argue that what Korsgaard sought to demonstrate was that we necessarily *endorse* one another's reasons and not merely *understand* them. However, as I have already argued above, if this is in fact Korsgaard's position, then her position seems highly implausible, for it is implausible that agents necessarily endorse the reasons of all other agents. Indeed, Geuss (1996: 197), who makes the distinction between endorsing and understanding reasons in the context of his critique of Korsgaard's argument in *The Sources of Normativity*, provides the following example: we can understand why certain groups of Muslims might want to kill Rushdie and appreciate that the considerations that move them are good reasons for them without thinking that they would be good reasons for us. As I argued, endorsement of an agent's perspective and the reasons that are determined from within it has the appropriate normative authority if and only if it is made from the standpoint of the impartial spectator. Accordingly, the reason to kill Rushdie might not be endorsed from the standpoint of the impartial spectator, which

³⁷ Enoch (2005: 761–65) has argued that idealizing theorists are not likely to be able to motivate the idealization that they employ and so the idealization is likely to remain objectionably ad hoc. In particular, Enoch argues that response-dependence views of the normative cannot consistently employ the natural rationale for idealization—according to which responses under idealized conditions serve as *evidence of* mind-independent facts—since this rationale would undermine their claim that it is the responses of agents under certain conditions that *constitute* the facts in question. Some authors have proposed responses to these worries. For example, Sobel (2009: 343), who focuses on subjectivist accounts of well-being, has argued that the most obvious rationale for idealization is to provide the agent “with a more accurate understanding of what the option she is considering would really be like.” And more to the point, I have used Smith's account of the impartial spectator to argue that the idealization is warranted given *our justificatory practices* (a possibility that Enoch raises, but dismisses). In particular: (a) actors come to realize that the spectators who judge them are fallible, because they are not informed about the facts and/or have a personal stake in the circumstances; (b) a way of fixing such deficiencies is by seeking approval from spectators who are sufficiently informed and who do not have a personal stake in the circumstances; (c) these justificatory practices suggest that a promising way of attaining approval from the right type of spectator is by imagining an idealized spectator, namely, the impartial spectator; (d) since people's patterns of approval and disapproval *constitute* our initial assessment of propriety and merit, it is warranted to assume that patterns of approval and disapproval of agents under idealized conditions also *constitute*, and are not evidence of, what is in fact morally appropriate and inappropriate (Ben-Moshe 2021a: §5).

takes into account the perspectives and interests of all concerned. So if my account does not show that we necessarily endorse each other's reasons, I believe that it is a strength, rather than a weakness, of the account. Nevertheless, given Geuss's distinction, an objector might worry that I have merely made room for understanding someone else's reasons. Indeed, Stueber (2017: 203–4) argues that Smithian other-oriented sympathy can, at most, allow me to understand your reasons, and that this does not yet show that your reasons have any normative authority over me. However, as I argued, it is the combination of *both* the standpoint of the impartial spectator and other-oriented sympathy that gives your perspective and the reasons determined from within it normative force for me. In particular, being required both to recognize and to occupy your perspective means that your perspective and reasons are, as argued earlier, *worthy of consideration*, thereby demanding a rational response from me. And this, I believe, is the crucial point: I take worthiness-of-consideration to be weaker than endorsement, but stronger than mere understanding. More specifically, while I might not endorse your reasons, I ought to do more than understand them: out of respect for your humanity, I ought to consider your reasons as real alternatives to mine, that is, as *reasons*, and consider their merits. So, to return to Geuss's Rushdie example: even if we do not endorse the Muslims' reasons, we must treat them as *reasons*. Thus, not only is it the case that we might understand these people's reasons, but, out of respect for their humanity, we should consider the merits of their reasons for wanting to kill Rushdie, even if we ultimately do not endorse them.

Third, one could object that I have not really demonstrated the universality and the necessity of UHC, since my account is dependent on the existence of certain psychological capacities, primarily the capacity, and the desire, for (mutual) sympathy. In this regard, I wish to bite the bullet and admit that my account does not demonstrate that valuing my humanity entails valuing your humanity *simpliciter*. Rather, I am arguing for the truth of a *version* of UHC: UHC on my

account does in fact apply only to those agents who have the pertinent psychological capacities. Note, however, that Korsgaard's account of humanity is also contingent in an important way. In particular, (a) she has not demonstrated that all reasons are public via the analogy to Wittgenstein's private language argument, and (b) her examples of the way in which we interact with others show, at most, that our practical identities sometimes provide us with reasons which have no egocentric component and which are shareable with others whose identities provide them with the same non-egocentric reasons; this does not demonstrate that reasons are *essentially* public (Gert 2002: 314–17). Put differently, all that Korsgaard has shown is that we can share reasons and that we usually do live in contexts of shared reasons, not that we must engage in common reasoning with all human beings (Geuss 1996: 198). Since Korsgaard has not shown the truth of PRC, she has also not demonstrated the truth of a truly universal and necessary form of UHC: if reasons are not essentially public, then, even if it is unlikely, it might be the case that I can value the humanity in my own person without valuing it in your person. In this sense, our respective accounts are in the same boat. More importantly, I wish to insist, on grounds independent of Korsgaard's position, that my Smithian account is adequate, for the following reason: it is questionable whether there are any distinctively human agents who are capable of being aware, qua spectator, of their own perspective, qua actor, who do not, at the very least, experience sympathy. (Recall that one's awareness of one's perspective just is sympathy towards *oneself* in the Smithian sense.) So, if there are such agents, we may not want to say that they are distinctively human and so may not want UHC to apply to them anyway. Furthermore, Smith argues, regarding a different psychological component, the desire to be worthy of approval, that human beings have developed it because it is "necessary" to make them "really fit" for society (TMS III.2.7). One could understand Smith's thought as follows: the desire to be worthy of approval is needed to make us the type of social

being that we are, and our social systems, or perhaps even our species, are structured so as to instill such a desire. And one could make a similar case vis-à-vis the role of sympathy—the capacity to experience sympathy but, given the type of social creature we are, also the *desire* for (mutual) sympathy—in our psychological constitution, and the manner in which it has been instilled in us.

6. Conclusion

I have offered a sentimentalist defense, based on Adam Smith’s moral philosophy, of a qualified, albeit adequate—in the sense of applying to the right set of agents—version of “The Universality of Humanity Claim”. In particular, valuing my humanity, understood as (my awareness of) my perspective and the reasons determined from within it, entails valuing your humanity, (your awareness of) your perspective and the reasons determined from within it. It is worth noting, in conclusion, that while I have developed a *Smithian* account of humanity, and not Smith’s *own* account of humanity, there is, I believe, an interesting connection between the two accounts. Returning to one of the components in our discussion of the desire for mutual sympathy, Smith understands “humanity” as the virtue of the spectator who attempts to augment his sympathy so as to match the experiences of the actor: “The soft, the gentle, the amiable virtues, the virtues of candid condescension and indulgent humanity, are founded upon” the efforts “of the spectator to enter into the sentiments of the person principally concerned” (TMS I.i.5.1; see also Raphael 2007: 34). On my Smithian account, humanity is the ability to have a unique perspective and be aware of it. However, apart from incorporating the desire for mutual sympathy into the account, a key element in my ability to value your humanity, your perspective and the reasons determined from within it, is the ability to experience (normatively authoritative) other-oriented sympathy. This type of sympathy helps us see the situation from the actor’s perspective and is thus akin to the

aspiration of humanity as Smith conceives of it, namely, the aspiration to augment sympathy to match the experience of others. Thus, Smith’s understanding of “humanity,” while not identical to mine, does have an affinity to a key component in my argument for the truth of a version of UHC.

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