"THE THEORY OF MORAL SENTIMENTS," BY ADAM SMITH, 1759

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To this, his first book, the author owed the opportunities of travel and leisure which enabled him to perfect his second, the *Wealth of Nations*, 1776. It has needed all the fame of the second to keep alive the memory of the first. The *Moral Sentiments* founded no school, and is usually passed over with the faint praise due to the author's reputation. Yet Burke welcomed its theory as "in all its essential parts just" (*Annual Register*, 1759, p. 484; Rae's *Life of Adam Smith*, p. 145); and it was treated by Lessing with respect, though not agreement, in the *Laocoon*, 1766 (ch. iv).

Readers of the *Wealth of Nations*, who have the curiosity to go back to the *Moral Sentiments*, might naturally expect to find in it an ethical counterpart of industrial division of labour, so prominent in the greater book; and, hearing from his biographers that the author was steeped in Greek Philosophy, they might look for Platonic justice and Aristotelian ἔργον and ἀρετή (say function and excellence) as in *Ethics*, ii, § 4 (5), something about development of the best faculties, and an appeal to the motto, "Unto every one his work."

They would be disappointed. The Greek influence is there, often when scarce suspected; but on the whole our author is content to follow the lines and use the language, almost foreign to us now, of the British philosophers of the eighteenth century, getting his cues from his admired teacher, Francis Hutcheson (professor at Glasgow in Smith's student days), and his personal friend, David Hume. The pillars of the reigning philosophy were soon to be threatened by the Samson of Königsberg (*Critique of Pure Reason*, 1781). Fifty years ago the Kantian Thomas Hill Green, after an exhaustive analysis, found that Hume's ethical theory explained at the best not Virtue but Respectability, the temper of a man "who without expectation of ulterior gain seeks to stand well with his neighbours." This respectability is treated as a "fixed quantity," as "the morality of the average man in his least exalted moments" in the world as it is (Introduction to Hume's *Human Nature*, vol. ii, p. 70, 1874). Edward Caird would say that we are here dealing with the actual achievement, rather

than with the principle at the bottom of it (*Philosophy of Kant*, vol. ii, p. 173). Adam Smith is not expressly mentioned in Green's analysis; but he and his theory of Sympathy are briefly arraigned and dismissed in "Popular Philosophy in Relation to Life" (*North British Review*, March, 1868, pp. 147, 149; Green's *Works*, vol. iii, pp. 108, 111). To Green and Caird, Kant and Hegel were the modern Plato and Aristotle. It seemed to them as impossible to build an Ethics surely on the unsure metaphysical foundations of Locke and Hume, as to build it in Greece on the philosophies before Socrates. If morality is only respectability, the question of a philosophical basis need hardly arise. If the moral philosopher takes us farther than respectability it must arise. "Such a criticism of moral interests . . . as is not based on a strict theory of moral good, may be called 'a theory of moral sentiments'." (Green, *Works*, vol. ii, p. 337, compare p. 552.)

Does Adam Smith stand under the same condemnation as Hume? In the *Wealth of Nations* he might be allowed to postulate, as indeed he practically does, no higher standard than Respectability.

But does he give us nothing more in the *Moral Sentiments?* Dugald Stewart, his admirer and biographer, admits it: "I acknowledge that this [mutual sympathy] may account for a man's assuming the appearance of virtue, and I believe [with Beattie] that something of this sort is the real foundation of good breeding in polished society; but in the important concerns of life I apprehend there is something more"; right and wrong, "ought" and "ought not," are not explained, and Adam Smith (he says) became more and more conscious of this as time went on (Stewart, *Active and Moral Powers*, Edinburgh, 1828, vol. i, pp. 312–13).

What, then, did our author set out to explain?

His first bare title for his book in the first three editions was *The Theory of Moral Sentiments.* Perhaps prompted by critics, he altered this (in the 4th ed., 1774) into a programme: "The Theory of Moral Sentiments, or an essay towards an analysis of the principles by which men naturally judge concerning the conduct and character, first of their neighbours and afterwards of themselves."

In the Essay on the External Senses, probably ten years older than this book, he had spoken (ed. 1795, p. 199) of "that fellow-feeling which Nature has for the wisest purposes implanted in man, not only towards all other men, but (though no doubt in a much weaker degree) towards all other animals. Having destined him to be the governing animal in this little world, it seems to have been her benevolent intention to inspire him with some degree of respect even for the meanest and weakest of his subjects."

(Compare 5th ed., p. 166; 6th ed., vol. i, p. 237.) Even in men it is not "reason," unless feeling is reason, and to him it is not. Happily he confines his ethics to rational animals. He is (as Green puts it in Hume's case) dealing with a "fixed quantity," a statical problem, or "actual achievement," whereas in the *Wealth of Nations* he is dealing with a dynamical problem, the results of industrial ambition as the motive force of a progressive society.

Moral Sentiment is taken for analysis in all its parts, assumed unchanging for the purpose in hand. In Adam Smith's college lectures, moral philosophy was, as a matter of fact, significantly preceded by Natural Theology, and succeeded by Natural Jurisprudence, followed finally by the study of the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations. (See last chapter of 1st ed. repeated in 6th ed. vol. ii, compared with Preface 6th ed. and Rae's *Life*, p. 54; Stewart's Preface to *Essays*, 1795, pp. xvii and l.)

Before he was a professor, he had been induced by Kames to lecture at Edinburgh on Rhetoric and Literature, 1749–50. Become Professor of Logic at Glasgow, 1751, he lectured (we are told) chiefly on Rhetoric; and he never rested till he was transferred to the more congenial chair of Moral Philosophy, 1752, lecturing there from 1752 to 1763 on all the four subjects above mentioned. He must have been giving the general outline of his Theory to his students in the first seven years; but (says Stewart), when the publication of 1759 provided a textbook, he left the subject alone. The students were as a rule thoughtful lads under twenty, and perhaps the most of them preparing for the Presbyterian ministry. He had pleasant recollections of them (*Wealth of Nations*, Book V, i, p. 343, Macculloch), and they may have left traces on his book. But, in order to turn lectures suited for such lads into a volume suited for all and sundry, he transformed the phraseology so thoroughly as to leave very little distinctively Scotch. "Panel" for accused occurs (in the 5th ed., p. 202, but not in the 1st), and no doubt other cases may be detected by English critics.

Hume writes to him from London (April 12, 1759) that bishops are buying the book eagerly. It reached a sixth edition in the year of Adam Smith's death, 1790, when it became for the first time two volumes, with alterations and especially expansions prepared some time before (Rae, p. 148). After the part on Custom, he inserts one on the Character of Virtue, dealing with Prudence, Benevolence, Self-Command. In the concluding part, Systems of Moral Philosophy, he no longer pillories Rochefoucauld with Mandeville under "licentious systems." Earlier (on the Sense of Duty, 6th ed., vol. i, pp. 302–3) he introduces the episode of Calas. He substitutes (ibid., pp. 228–9) a passage on Tartarus and Elysium

for a passage on Atonement, which had kept its place till then in all editions (Merit and Demerit, sect. ii, e.g. 5th ed., pp. 159, 160), and may have made him seem more orthodox than he really was. But the Other World plays as great a part as before. The author stands by his whole theory as first given, and with the same reiterations and "purple patches." An essay on the "Origin of Language" had been appended from the second edition onwards.

The repetitions may suggest a lecture; but the general style is not that of a lecturer pacing his platform and occasionally consulting his notes, rather of an essayist at his desk with his books about him. To get the argument we must penetrate many embellishments. He has himself remarked how much the beauty of an expression depends upon its conciseness ("Origin of Language," *Moral Sentiments*, 2nd ed., p. 475; 6th ed., vol. ii, p. 458). The concise "Smithian" style is to be found in the *Essays* and in the *Wealth of Nations*.

The argument is to this effect. Sympathy is one of the "original passions" or "propensities" [1] of our nature. We judge of our neighbour's feelings by our own; we put ourselves in his place, not by our senses, for they cannot give one man another's feelings, but by our imagination. We try to reproduce for ourselves his situation, that we may fancy how we should feel in his place. Indeed, we consider (1st ed., pp. 59, 60) how "an impartial spectator" would expect us, both, to feel when both are so placed, and how such a one would judge our sentiments, whether they were "appropriate" to the cause exciting them, or were in excess or defect of this "propriety." If our sympathy with our neighbour is to be so complete as to mean approbation of him, we must have come to a common meeting-ground, or (to take our author's metaphor from his favourite Music) we must have come to a concord (Compare Essay on Imitative Arts, Part II, p. 172 seq.). He must have tuned down his high pitch, and I must have tuned up my low one, to "make one music." Take the example of fortitude in distress. The distressed man must try to moderate his grief, and I must try to feel more of it. Or take the example of resentment. We never have by sympathy the full measure of the sufferer's feeling of resentment. We expect him to have a certain degree of it in self-defence, and we can rise to that amount of feeling. But if he shows boisterous emotion we cannot go with it; he must tune it down till we reach the pitch of concord and we approve of him. This concord is Propriety in the moral

[1] Cf. *Wealth of Nations*, Book I, ch. ii, p. 62. The division of labour is a consequence of "the propensity to truck, barter, and exchange one thing for another." So Hume, *Natural History of Religion*, section iii, near beginning, "a propensity in human nature which leads into a system."

sentiments. It is essential that we should not only reach it but be conscious of reaching it (5th ed., p. 131), or our sympathy does not amount to approbation. Our author admits that this concord does not go the whole way to Virtue. Virtue appears when an unusual effort has been made in the tuning down or the tuning up, when the distressed shows more fortitude or the bystander shows more feeling than could ever have been expected.

This last case would pass beyond "respectability" (compare 6th ed., vol. i, pp. 106, 202). Our author has always a forbearance for the ordinary frail man, and devotes a special chapter to "the amiable and respectable virtues" (vol. i, ch. v, p. 44 seq.), in distinction from the noble, saintly, or heroic, which he seldom expects to encounter. He seems to recognize that the majority of men will be morally and intellectually commonplace.

But even in commonplace morality Propriety is only the first requisite; there is, besides, the question of Merit or Demerit (Part II). When we speak of the Propriety of feelings we are looking at the causes and motives of them. Merit or demerit comes into view when we look at the effects of the feelings and at the acts arising from them; we see good or ill desert according to the beneficial or mischievous tendency of those acts. "Whatever appears to be the proper object of gratitude appears to deserve reward, and whatever appears to be the proper object of resentment appears to deserve punishment." Propriety in the motives must be assumed a *conditio sine qua non*; without it the good tendency may lose all merit. A benefit conferred from bad motives does not awake our sympathetic gratitude. A sympathetic resentment at the hurtfulness of an action ceases or stops short of full sympathy if the sufferer brought it on himself. The sense of merit comes really from an indirect sympathy. There are here in the judgment of Merit two distinct emotions, a direct sympathy with the sentiments of the agent and an indirect sympathy with the gratitude of those who benefit by his actions. Similarly with demerit: we have an "indirect sympathy with the resentment of the sufferer." "Revenge, the excess of resentment, appears to be the most detestable of all the passions" (vol. i, p. 188 *n.*). "We are not at present examining upon what principles a perfect being would approve of the punishment of bad actions, but upon what principles so weak and imperfect a creature as man actually and in fact approves of it" (ibid., p. 189 *n.*). As amended, therefore, the definitions run so: "Actions of a beneficent tendency, which proceed from proper motives, seem alone to require reward, because such alone are the approved objects of gratitude or excite the sympathetic gratitude of the spectator. Actions of a hurtful tendency, which proceed from improper motives, seem alone to deserve punishment,

because such alone are the approved objects of resentment or excite the sympathetic resentment of the spectator" (6th ed., vol. i, p. 193). When, besides the good motive, there is successful achievement of benefit, there will be greater gratitude, though there ouhgt not to be a sense of greater merit than when there is good intention with failure. Knowing there will be the greater gratitude, we are the more impelled to make our beneficent intentions successful (6th ed., vol. i, p. 268; cf. p. 234).

But beneficence is free and cannot among equals be extorted by force (6th ed., vol. i, p. 199). It is otherwise with the virtue of justice, the avoidance of the infliction of damage and hurt to our neighbour. This is no doubt a mere negative virtue, secured sometimes by sitting still and doing nothing (ibid., p. 203). But it is of definite strict obligation, and may be secured by force. Indeed, for the safety of society, it will be said, this must be (p. 213 seq.). Obvious utility reinforces humanity. Justice supports the whole edifice of society. It is thus that "man who can subsist only in society was fitted by Nature to that situation for which he was made." Hume had strongly insisted that it does not come "naturally," like Beneficence, but comes only from utility. Smith insists that, though in the keeping of it as a negative act there is no great reward, yet in the breaking of it there is occasioned an indignation of the sufferer and sympathetic spectator which will be great or small according to the sacredness of the rights affected (5th ed., p. 143); and the violation of the most sacred is a vice of incomparable guilt, leading to "remorse, of all the sentiments which can enter the human breast the most dreadful" (6th ed., vol. i, p. 211). The maintenance of justice is founded on a deeper consideration than the interests of society on earth, and we look for a punishment of injustice in another world if it has not come to pass in this one (6th ed., vol. i, pp. 227–9). To avoid unjust actions in our own case we resort to "reason, principle, conscience, the inhabitant of the breast, the man within, the great judge and arbiter of our conduct" (ibid., p. 336). It is "the love of what is honourable and noble, of the grandeur and dignity and superiority of our own characters" (ibid., p. 338); and it is not felt only by heroes, but by everyone however humble who does his part in life (p. 338).

These are "moral sentiments" far beyond mere respectability. It seems hard to justify them in terms of sympathy, direct or indirect, compounded or uncompounded; but it is at any rate clear that Adam Smith has abandoned Hutcheson's Moral Sense and Hume's Utility for the guidance of the Impartial Spectator. Adam Smith has made him a great figure. It is more than the imagination of myself in my neighbour's place, and more than the

Stoic isolation of myself by self. It may be an old idea: "commune with thine own heart." Most of the difficulty we find in the *Moral Sentiments* is due to terminology. We should not approach the subject now by sympathy, but should speak of consciousness of identity, or of common humanity, the idea of a common good as ground of a common obligation, and find ourselves not far from the maxim "What you would that men should do unto you, do unto them." We should perhaps find in the "spectator" only an awkward expression for self-consciousness. Every man *qua* reason is the impartial spectator confronting the passions (Caird, *Kant*, vol. ii, pp. 213–14). Dugald Stewart, who seems puzzled by the idea, quotes Shaftesbury's "Advice to an Author": "When the wise ancients spoke of a demon, genius, or angel to whom we are committed from the moment of our birth, they meant no more than enigmatically to declare that we have each of us a patient in ourselves, that we are properly our own subjects of practice, and that we then become due practitioners when by virtue of an intimate recess we can discover a certain duplicity of soul and divide ourselves into two parties; according as this recess was deep and intimate and the dual number practically formed in us, we were supposed by the ancients to advance in morals and true wisdom" (*Philosophy of the Active and Moral Powers*, vol. i, p. 314, 1828). Stewart could remind us of passages like this one (*Moral Sentiments*, 5th ed., p. 202): "It is evident that in all such cases [when I try to examine my own conduct] I divide myself as it were into two persons, and that I, the examiner and judge, represent a different character from that other I, the person whose conduct is examined into and judged of."

There is a similar stretch of "imagination" in a passage (1st ed., pp. 495, 496; 6th ed., vol. ii, pp. 329, 330; cf. vol. i, p. 182,) where the author says that Sympathy is not Self-love, for in entering into it I am really changing persons and becoming the other person. In this way I may have sympathy with a case that never could by any possibility be mine, from a difference of sex, or with a character in long past history whom I never saw or could see. I detach myself from myself for the occasion. The idea of the spectator was not confined by him to ethics. In the Lectures, 1763 (ed. Cannan, 1896, p. 108) we read: "Occupation [right of the first holder] seems to be well founded when the spectator can go along with my possession of the object and approve me when I defend my possession by force. If I have gathered some wild fruit, it will appear reasonable to the spectator that I should dispose of it as I please" (cf. Stewart, *Powers*, vol. ii, p. 317, confirming the Student's Notes). The most characteristic features of Adam Smith's ethics are supposed to be Sympathy

and the Spectator. Propriety, though really more novel, is a detail. If the Sympathy was suggested by Polybius (sixth book, sect. 4), and our author undoubtedly was a reader of Polybius, Hume had found in the same passage of Polybius a plea for self-love rather than sympathy (*Principles of Morals*, 1752, sect. v, Why Utility Pleases, p. 425 of ed. 1758). If the "spectator" was suggested by Shaftesbury, he has at least been put to new uses. The mere name occurs frequently in Hume (e.g. *Morals, Appendix concerning Moral Sentiment*, p. 469), who was before his friend there, as in the attention to sympathy; he thought to get more out of "pleasure" by extending it through sympathy but in both cases Adam Smith develops the idea differently and more fully.

The use he makes of the Spectator may have been first inspired by the Nicomachean Ethics of Aristotle, not forgotten in the "Systems of Moral Philosophy" (last section of *Moral Sentiments*). If a great moral philosopher has all the wisdom of his age and a little more, we expect him with all his greatness to owe most of his moral ideals and standards to the current ideals and standards of his own age. We find Aristotle teaching that with most of the virtues (not the Intellectual Virtues, and not Friendship, and hardly Justice) the virtuous man is he who avoids extremes and brings his passions to a mean or middle point, a point determined for him by his own judgment, assisted by the judgment of the typically prudent man, ὁ φρόνιμος, ὁ σπουδαῖος. The notion may have been in Aristotle's case the moulding of a statue artistically, or it may have been simply the general Greek fear of excess. In similar fashion Adam Smith reaches Propriety by a tuning up and a tuning down till we reach concord, the man of typically good ear deciding when we have reached it. "If he is not good, no one is good." The metaphor is still from Art. Adam Smith, who loves music, takes it from that Art.

In both variants of the theory the same difficulty arises. We should not know the extremes but by the mean. We should not know either of them but by the guidance of the Prudent Man who knows both. Who, then, trained the Prudent Man and gave him his knowledge? How did he acquire the judgment, tact, second instinct which we are to learn from him? The Greek answer would be that he was citizen of a good State, and was trained by Greek society. Adam Smith may well have had the same answer in his mind, and it is one not far away from the answer of the philosophies after Kant. They tell us that civilized human society, "relations dear and all the charities of father, son, and brother," fill the empty sheath of the categorical imperative.

We are told in the *Moral Sentiments* that morality begins with society, that the field of moral training is provided for a man (see e.g. 6th ed., vol. i, pp. 213, 348, 355) in the family first, and then in society and the State, how the range, though not the intensity, of his sense of duty expands (ibid., p. 221) as he feels himself within the larger after the smaller circles. Adam Smith is the more likely to incline to this answer, since he regards even the society of his own time and the world itself (p. 415) as having more good than evil in it, and (p. 265) more happiness than unhappiness. The Creator made the world for our happiness. The world, even as it is, gives a field for moral training; it is "the great school of self-command, the bustle and business of the world" (6th ed., vol. i, p. 359). General rules, whether called "laws" of duty or not, are formed and used to this end. Men try to correct Nature where she seems not to give her rewards to the best, but with little success, the "natural course of things" being too strong for them (5th ed., p. 241; 6th ed., vol. i, p. 420 seq.). Fortunately happiness is better distributed than wealth, and ambition is usually folly, due to desire of shining, sometimes a fancied comfort no greater than what is already possessed. We read of "the poor man's son whom heaven in its anger has visited with ambition" (vol i, p. 456), and who, in order to get the blessings and honours of the rich, submits to "more fatigue of body and more uneasiness of mind than he could have suffered through the whole of his life from want of them" (loc. cit., pp. 457–8). In his homely man, happy when "in health, out of debt, and with a clear conscience," we may care to discover Pope and Bolingbroke (Stephen, *English Thought*, vol. ii, p. 72; Pope, *Essay on Man*, iv, 80; *Moral Sentiments*, 6th ed., vol. i, p. 106, Propriety, sect. iii). It may be a reflection on Plato's Cephalus, in the first book of the *Republic* (sect. 331). So (we may fancy Hume's dictum, "Reason is and always ought to be the slave of the passions," is a reflection on Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, for it means that no sane person acts without a motive (cf. *Hamlet*, Act III, Sc. ii, l. 77). We do not necessarily get light on an author's thought by tracking down the primitive suggestion of his phrases. Like every "well-read" man, Adam Smith is full of concealed quotations.

He goes on in this passage to describe wealth and greatness as "mere trinkets of frivolous utility." We might think there has been a real change of persons. Was this plea for poverty really written by the author of the apology for commercial ambition, and the glorification of the progressive state, in the *Wealth of Nations*? Yet the two persons come together. When we might think in this passage of the *Moral Sentiments*, Adam Smith has spoiled all taste for ambition, we hear that, after all, the

illusion is a happy one. "It is this deception which rouses and keeps in continual motion the industry of mankind," and transforms the whole face of the earth (6th ed., vol. i, p. 464). It is, too, "the [world's] bustle and business" that have trained "the man of real constancy and firmness" (loc. cit., vol. i, p. 359), who keeps his self-control and is always mindful of his inward monitor. He will, we should think, himself represent to others the moral standard.

But our moral standards do not remain alike. The Golden Mean is one thing at Amsterdam and another in Warsaw (5th ed., p. 312; 6th ed., vol. ii, beginning, Influence of Custom). Do our Wise Men carry our principles higher than current rules and current practice? The common standard may contain more than the commonalty recognize in it, though the popular wisdom may be greater than that of the individuals and the mind of a nation, so expressed, may be like Aristotle's collective wisdom, something wiser than appears in the citizens separately.

The summary given by our author himself near the close of his book in all editions (e.g. 6th ed., vol. ii, pp. 355, 356) is a model of the conciseness he had elsewhere praised but neglected. Our moral approbation of a character, he says, is given when "first, we sympathize with the motives of the agent; secondly, we enter into the gratitude of those who receive the benefit of his actions; thirdly, we observe that his conduct has been agreeable to the general rules by which those two sympathies generally act; and last of all, when we consider such actions as making a part of a system of behaviour which tends to promote the happiness either of the individual or of the society, they appear to derive a beauty from this utility, not unlike that which we ascribe to any well-contrived machine."

Is this really the conclusion of the whole matter? Does Adam Smith provide in this or any other way for a morality that is more than tradition and custom? A rule of mere sympathy might lead us all to act alike; but this would mean a customary morality, which the "Law and the Prophets" are sure sooner or later to find faulty. It is pointed out by T. H. Green that Butler's "Conscience" was described by him as "a faculty of reflex approbation and disapprobation" (Green, *Works*, vol. iii, p. 100). Adam Smith was working hard, like Bishop Butler, to escape from the infirmities of the same original basis. In later times we proceed rather by ideals of goodness and the notion of development than by the standard of common approbation, and we miss room in the *Moral Sentiments* for the morally progressive state. When it is provided at all, it is provided dogmatically. Our author seems to be judging himself in a remarkable and characteristic passage (vol. i, p. 320 seq.)

of the sixth edition of the book, the last opportunity he had for giving his views on the subject. He begins: "The all-wise Author of Nature has, in this manner, taught man to respect the sentiments and judgments of his brethren, to be more or less pleased when they approve of his conduct, and to be more or less hurt when they disapprove of it. He has made man, if I may say so, the immediate judge of mankind, and has, in this respect, as in many others, created him after his own image and appointed him his vicegerent upon earth, to superintend the behaviour of his brethren. They are taught by Nature to acknowledge that power and jurisdiction which has thus been conferred upon him, to be more or less humbled and mortified when they have incurred his censure, and to be more or less elated when they have obtained his applause."

So far he seems to proceed by the logic of an English moralist of the eighteenth century, through Propriety to Merit and Duty. The next step is taken without full logical authority, however creditable it is to his heart. He goes on: "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, to that of the man within the breast, the great judge and arbiter of their conduct. The jurisdictions of those two tribunals are founded upon principles which, though in some respects resembling and akin, are, however, in reality different and distinct. The jurisdiction of the man without is founded altogether in the desire of actual praise, and in the aversion to actual blame. The jurisdiction of the man within is founded altogether in the desire of praiseworthiness and in the aversion to blameworthiness, in the desire of being good as well as seeming good; in the desire of possessing those qualities and performing those actions, which we love and admire in other people, and in the dread of possessing those qualities and performing those actions which we hate and despise in other people. If the man without should applaud us, either for actions which we have not performed, or for motives which had no influence upon us, the man within can immediately humble that pride and elevation of mind which such groundless acclamations might otherwise occasion, by telling us that, as we know we do not deserve them, we render ourselves despicable by accepting them" (loc. cit., p. 322). If the man within is brow-beaten by the man without (we may almost say the man in the street), there is always an appeal to the "all-seeing Judge of the world, whose eye can never be deceived and whose judgments can never be perverted" (loc. cit., p. 324).

There follows an eloquent passage which gives us Browning's " Rabbi Ben Ezra " in prose, with few touches omitted (pp. 325–6), and pointing in the same way to another world redressing the balance of this one. Adam Smith gives abundant references not only to French literature but to the Bible and Greek Philosophy. Is he unconsciously following Plato's example and writing a myth when he has come to the end of his logic? Like Plato, he will not on such matters vouch for details, but like Plato he is confident that " something of the kind " is true.

Adam Smith's Glasgow students could have supplied missing links in the argument from their notes of his lectures on Natural Theology, which probably followed the same lines as Hutcheson's. We may gather his views, therefore, from Hutcheson's *System of Moral Philosophy*, published by his son in 1755. In Book I, ch. ix (vol. i), pp. 168–208, Hutcheson deals with the existence and attributes of Deity. Adam Smith's lectures on the subject may have been among the papers destroyed by his own orders at the time of his death (Rae, p. 434).

It is fair to say that he tries to bridge the gap in the book itself. In editions before the sixth, in the chapter on Duty, e.g. 5th ed., p. 206, of which only the substance is given in the sixth (vol. i, e.g. p. 395), we read: " But though this tribunal within our own breast be thus the supreme arbiter of all our actions, . . . yet if we inquire into the origin of its institution, its jurisdiction we shall find is in a great measure derived from the authority of that very tribunal [man the immediate judge of mankind (5th ed., p. 204)] whose decisions it so often and so justly reverses. When we first come into the world, from the natural desire to please, we accustom ourselves to consider what behaviour is likely to be agreeable to every person we converse with, to our parents, to our masters, to our companions. We address ourselves to individuals, and for some time fondly pursue the impossible and absurd project of gaining the goodwill and approbation of everybody. We are soon taught by experience, however, that this universal approbation is altogether unattainable. As soon as we come to have more important interests to manage, we find that by pleasing one man we almost certainly disoblige another, and that by humouring an individual we may often irritate a whole people. The fairest and most equitable conduct must frequently obstruct the interests, or thwart the inclinations of particular persons who will seldom have candour enough to enter into the propriety of our motives, or to see that this conduct, how disagreeable soever to them, is perfectly suitable to our situation. In order to defend ourselves from such partial judgments, we soon learn to set up in our own minds a judge between ourselves and

those we live with. We conceive ourselves as acting in the presence of a person quite candid and equitable, of one who has no particular relation either to ourselves or to those whose interests are affected by our conduct, who is neither father nor brother nor friend either to them or to us, but is merely a man in general, an impartial spectator who considers our conduct with the same indifference with which we regard that of other people. If, when we place ourselves in the situation of such a person, our own actions appear to us under an agreeable aspect, if we feel that such a spectator cannot avoid entering into all the motives which influenced us, whatever may be the judgments of the world, we must still be pleased with our own behaviour and regard ourselves as the just and proper objects of approbation" (loc. cit., pp 207–8). Weak and vain folk may be mortified by censure and elated by applause: "This inmate of the breast, this abstract man, the representative of mankind and substitute of the Deity, whom Nature has constituted the supreme judge of all their actions, is seldom appealed to by them; they are contented with the decision of the inferior tribunal" (pp. 208–9).

In Kantian language, having found the "impartial spectator" a useful regulative idea, he converts it into a constitutive one (*Pure Reason, Antinomy*, viii). To say that one thing becomes another by degrees ("We soon learn," etc.) is not to explain the change unless some necessity for the degrees is shown. It may be the same sort of justification by which Hegel leads us from Law into Morality (*Philosophy of Right*, sect. 104), the notion of a will identical with the law. But Adam Smith is leading us from a lower to a higher stage within Morality itself; he thinks that to attain the highest morality we pass beyond the judgments of society, from which indeed it is our refuge. In spite of his disclaimer of Stoicism (6th ed., vol. ii, pp. 261–4; cf. 1st ed., p. 136), this is not far from the last refuge of the Stoic, his own soul, which enabled him to "care as little for the Roman Empire as the Roman Empire cared for him." Stoicism is rejected as too high for the ordinary man. But how does the ordinary man live a good life without it?

Adam Smith gives us to understand that the ordinary man has the sense of duty, resting on general rules of conduct: "Our continual observations upon the conduct of others insensibly lead us to form to ourselves certain general rules concerning what is fit and proper either to be done or to be avoided" (5th ed., p. 223; 6th ed., vol. i, p. 393). "The general rule is formed by finding out from experience that all actions of a certain kind or circumstances in a certain manner are approved or disapproved of." On the other hand, this judgment of others only comes in to support

our own original experience; a man's detestation of an inhuman murder arises spontaneously. "The general rule which he might afterwards form would be founded upon the detestation which he felt necessarily arise in his own breast at the thought of this and every other particular action of the same kind" (5th ed., pp. 224–5; 6th ed., vol. i, pp. 396–7). In spite of his disclaimer of Hutcheson, this is not far from the doctrine of a moral sense. He goes on to say that we are the stronger for knowing that others think as we do. The general rules thus formed are taken as having a higher authority than the particulars from which they are collected. With ordinary men the knowledge of the existence of the rules may quicken them when they are morally dead. For the superior men they may have greater weight than the data or dicta of the particular high or humble authorities contributing to what is after all a popular code. The principle at the bottom of the achievement may be higher than the achievement itself. But we are not assured that this generalizing from somewhat meagre data takes us beyond mere respectability and groundless applause or censure. "For a wise man he was too much guided by general maxims" was a sage saying of Burke. The dilemma of the morally disappointed man, so well described by Adam Smith in the passage quoted, is analogous to that of the judge in Aristotle called upon to decide in cases where law (a hard general rule) conflicts from its very generality with rightfulness, and a new source of judgment appears in Equity (ἐπιείκεια, *Ethics*, vol. v, p. 14 (10)). So with "extenuating circumstances." So Bacon says that the Court of Chancery "holds the Prætorian Power for mitigating the rigour of law in case of extremity *by the conscience of a good man*" (*Henry VII*, p. 64). From customary manners we may conceive ourselves passing into deeper morals by means of Aristotle's Prudent Man, who is one with what is best in the general rules, has mastered them and thereby seen a little beyond them, thus showing in his life a living embodiment of them. He and his followers are the men "of the happiest mould," distinguished from "the bulk of mankind," "formed of coarse clay" (5th ed., p. 231). We may consider Adam Smith himself to have so risen above ordinary standards when he writes (6th ed., vol. i, p. 382, Part III, ch. iii): "When two nations are at variance, the citizen of each pays little regard to the sentiments which foreign nations may entertain concerning his conduct. His whole ambition is to obtain the approbation of his own fellow-citizens; and, as they are all animated by the same hostile passions which animate himself, he can never please them so much as by enraging and offending their enemies. The partial spectator is at hand; the impartial one [the neutral nation] at a great distance. In war and negotiation,

therefore, the laws of justice are very seldom observed. Truth and fair dealing are almost totally disregarded."

Hume in treating of the same subject had shown more acquiescence in the usual national feeling. "As nature has implanted in everyone a superior affection to his own country, we never expect any regard to distant nations where the smallest competition arises. Not to mention that, while every man consults the good of his own community, we are sensible that the general interest of mankind is [thus] better promoted, than by any loose indeterminate views to the good of a species, whence no beneficial action could ever result, for want of a duly limited object on which they could exert themselves" (*Principles of Morals*, sect. v, Why Utility Pleases, p. 430 *n.* of ed. 1758).

Hume, in the *Treatise of Human Nature* (1739, vol. ii, Of the Passions, Part I, sect. xi; vol. iii, Of Morals, Part III, sect. i), had made use of Sympathy, "a very powerful principle in human nature," not only influencing our æsthetic taste but producing "our sentiment of morals," "the esteem which we pay to all the artificial virtues," by which he means Justice and all the virtues connected with Property as distinguished from the natural virtues, even those however, so far as they are social, owing the esteem which attends them to Sympathy. There is one very scanty allusion to Hume's conjunction of the two in the *Moral Sentiments* (1st ed., p. 520; 6th ed., vol. ii, p. 357). It was an obvious debt. Why was there so little acknowledgement? The best answer is, that Hume was serious in desiring to forget his first book (*Life* by Hill Burton, vol. i, p. 273, etc.), and to remind him of it would have been an unfriendly act. There is no such lavish use of Sympathy in the *Inquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*, 1751, as in the *Human Nature*, 1739, 1740.

Hume, therefore, had no grievance. He was above jealousy, knew his friend's powers, and rejoiced in his growing fame. But was he really an admirer of the *Moral Sentiments*? His welcome ("Euge! belle!") of the *Wealth of Nations* is far heartier than his reception of the earlier book. The sneer at the bishops was perhaps also a reflection on his friend. Not that he disliked the praise of himself (e.g. in *Moral Sentiments*, Part IV, sect. i, On Utility) as a philosopher not only deep but eloquent, any more than the similar praise of him as "by far the most illustrious philosopher and historian," in the *Wealth of Nations* (Book V, ch. i, art. iii, p. 354). He would have given back praise for praise. But his friend's position involved a theology and teleology alien to Hume. Readers of the biographies of both men will remember how faithfully on his friend's death in 1776 (August 25th) Adam Smith fulfilled the executor's duty of publishing Hume's autobiography, adding

testimony to him with a full heart "as approaching as nearly to the idea of a perfectly wise and virtuous man as perhaps the nature of human frailty will permit." They will remember also the obstinate refusal of Adam Smith to perform the same office to the *Dialogues on Natural Religion.* They were written as long before as 1751, when Hume submitted them to his friend Gilbert Elliot of Minto, who advised him not to publish them, and drew on himself a characteristic letter (March 10, 1751) from the author in their defence. Hill Burton, who gives these particulars in the *Life of Hume,* vol. i, pp. 328–37, describes the MS. as full of corrections of form but not of argument (p. 328). Hume was no propagandist, and his anxiety in 1776 for publication must have been in large part due to the joy of battle and belief in the merits of the *Dialogues.* Three years after his death, after many parleyings among the executors, they were published by Hume's nephew David, without name of editor or publisher (London, 1779). The whole story is given in Rae's xixth chapter, with which should be compared Birkbeck Hill's edition of *Letters of Strahan to Hume* (pp. 330, 364).

For his refusal to act as editor, Adam Smith alleged "many reasons," one not creditable and not credible, that it would injure his prospects. He had just before declared that the book should never be published by him in his lifetime (Rae, pp. 303, 306). There was another reason. The two men had much in common, and most by far in the very matters with which Adam Smith has been most generally identified. Hume's grasp is as strong there as in any of his many lines of study. But on certain other subjects they were widely at variance. Hume's *Natural History of Religion,* first published in 1757 (Hill Burton, vol. ii, pp. 6, 13), had rendered to Theism a lip-homage withheld in the *Dialogues.* It is not a discussion of philosophical arguments, but a historical view of the origin of religion and the forms of belief in all ages and peoples. It is a popular essay, reaching Hume's usual high level, literary and philosophical. The *Dialogues* strike many of us now, and they struck some of Hume's friends then (*Hume to Strahan,* June 8, 1776, ed. Hill, p. 330), as even above that level. Thomas Hill Green said once (in private conversation) that they were "perhaps the cleverest book Hume ever wrote." Even without the convenient aid of a dialogue (in this case taken up by four persons) Hume loves to leave his guileless readers a means of explaining him away, and he has done so in the *Dialogues* here and there (cf. letter to Elliot, Hill Burton, vol. i. p. 332). But he creates an unmistakable impression that Philo's case is the strongest. Mainly through Philo, he assaults, one after another, the positions argued out by Hutcheson and assumed by Adam

Smith after him. The pessimism of Philo ("Neither man nor any other animal is happy," Part X, ed. 1779, p. 185; 1874, p. 440; cf. the struggle for existence described p. 176 seq., ed. 1874, p. 436 seq.) reads like an attack on his friend's optimism, which was even more pronounced than Hutcheson's. The more closely we compare the *Dialogues* with the corresponding places in Smith and Hutcheson, the more natural it seems for Adam Smith (who may be assumed to have known the MS. in 1751) to take Hume's commission of the *Dialogues* to him as a sort of personal challenge. Hutcheson was long dead (1747). Adam Smith must be champion for his old master as well as himself; if the book appeared through him, there must be a Reply along with the *Dialogues*. For such a Reply, a reply to such a friend just gone, he did not feel inclined. His opinions were as well known as Hume's, and like Hume he was at his age "incapable of instruction" on the subject (Hume to Blair *apud* Hill Burton, vol. ii, p. 117 (1761): so Gibbon, *Miscell.*, vol. ii, p. 599.)

Hume had early made it a fixed rule not to answer critics, but leave the public to judge (loc. cit., pp. 118–19, 1762). He seems to have broken the rule only once in history (loc. cit., p. 252, over Mary Queen of Scots). Were the *Dialogues* not an exception in philosophy? "Semper ego auditor tantum?" is not an immoral sentiment.

Whether or not he meditated such a rejoinder on the first reading of the book, it is curious that in 1759 he did not discuss the matter at all in letters to his friend, and did not even deal with the direct criticism of his views on Utility. He contented himself (in a letter of July 28, 1759) with a single comment on the supposed agreeableness of all sympathy (1st ed., pp. 20, 99, 111), and our author answered (2nd ed., Part I, iii, p. 76, and afterwards) that the recognition of coincidence is always agreeable, though the coincidence may be in a painful feeling. Hume himself made sympathy subordinate to Utility or tendency to the general happiness. Adam Smith reversed the positions. If we read the chapter of Hume, "Why Utility Pleases" (sect. v of *Principles of Morals*), and compare it with Adam Smith's chapters (Part IV of 1st ed., 1759) on "The Effect of Utility," we get the impression that Adam Smith is making the most of the differences between them. The world may have gained more from the economics of Adam Smith than from the philosophy of David Hume; but few who have read both authors will deny that Hume had the nimbler wit and the lighter touch.

Hume might have fancied a certain approach to some at least of his own views in the chapter of the *Wealth of Nations* (Book V, ch. i, sect. ii) which deals with "the expense of institutions for the education of youth." It is an argument against endowments.

But incidentally it is a survey of what we sometimes call Higher Education, and philosophical studies as a part of it. The physics, ethics, and logic of the Greeks formed a division " perfectly agreeable to the nature of things." Common connecting principles were sought, first for nature, then for morals; and the study of the general principles of good and bad reasoning was essential where the speculative systems were so much at variance with each other. In the middle ages, two more subjects were added, and, as the programme was for ecclesiastics, the order was altered; and (p. 346) the Universities taught logic, ontology, pneumatology, and " a debased system of moral philosophy which was considered as immediately connected with the doctrines of pneumatology, with the immortality of the human soul, and with the rewards and punishments which from the justice of the Deity were to be expected in a life to come; a short and superficial system of physics usually concluded the course." Immortality and a future life were taught by himself in his earlier book, re-issued with his *imprimatur* in 1774 (4th ed.). The " debasement " must have come from casuistry and asceticism, both condemned there. Accordingly, here, in the *Wealth of Nations*, he goes on: " Casuistry and an ascetic morality made up in most cases the greater part of the moral philosophy of the schools. By far the most important of all the different branches of philosophy became in this manner by far the most corrupted " (*Wealth of Nations*, loc. cit., pp. 346, 2; cf., *Moral Sentiments*, 6th ed., vol. ii, p. 364).

He had told us how moral philosophy arose: " In every age and country of the world men must have attended to the characters, designs, and actions of one another, and many reputable rules and maxims for the conduct of human life must have been laid down and approved by common consent " (p. 345). Then with writing came the recorded maxims of proverbial philosophy. The earliest philosophy was no doubt an endeavour after Physics, but, after that, something of the same kind would be attempted in Morals. " The maxims of common life were arranged in some methodical order and connected together by a few common principles in the same manner as they [' men '] had attempted to arrange and connect the phenomena of nature. The science which pretends to investigate and explain those connecting principles is what is properly called moral philosophy " (pp. 345, 2). This sketch belongs to what his biographer, Stewart (*Essays*, page XLII), would call Theoretical or Conjectural or (after Hume) Natural History. Hume had attempted it for Religion, and Adam Smith thought of attempting this and something more for Jurisprudence and Government (see conclusion of *Moral Sentiments* and Preface to the 6th ed.). Coming to written history,

he evidently found in Greek Philosophy something more to his mind than the medieval. The Greek programme is, as a matter of fact, the programme of the *Moral Sentiments*. "Wherein consisted the happiness and perfection of a man, considered not only as an individual but as the member of a family, of a State, and of the great society of mankind, was the object which the ancient moral philosophy proposed to investigate. . . . The duties of human life were treated of as subservient to the happiness and perfection of human life. But when moral as well as natural philosophy came to be taught only as subservient to theology, the duties of human life were treated of as chiefly subservient to the happiness of a life to come" (*Wealth of Nations*, V, i, ii, pp. 346, 2). Adam Smith is far from considering them as so subservient; but in the *Moral Sentiments* he shows himself constantly mindful of "the other world" (e.g. 6th ed., vol. i, p. 303, 1790), especially as a consolation to those whose resolute virtue is not rewarded in this life. For a full statement of his ethical views we must look to his ethical book and not to the *Wealth of Nations*, and, as already said, there is no sign in 1790 of any essential change since 1759. The subject is only introduced at all in the *Wealth of Nations* to give the author an opportunity of showing the mischievousness of endowments. They are (he says) nearly as bad in the case of Churches as in the case of Universities. In the *Dialogues* (p. 252) Hume's agrees; but in the *History of England*, under date 1521, Henry VIII (quoted in *Wealth of Nations*, V, p. 354) he professes to think them good because keeping the clergy quiet and free from enthusiasm. To this argument ('After Compliments') Adam Smith rejoins that, without Church establishment, the concessions which the sects would find it "convenient and agreeable to make to one another might in time probably reduce the doctrine of the greater part of them to that pure and rational religion, free from every mixture of absurdity, imposture, or fanaticism, such as wise men have in all ages of the world wished to see established," but which will never be established by positive law (*Wealth of Nations*, ibid., p. 356, 1). This would be "the religion common to all good men"; it might be Kant's "religion within the bounds of mere reason."

Professor Oncken of Bern (then, 1877, of Vienna) made a brave attempt in his *Smith und Kant*, Leipzig, 1877, to show a close agreement between the two men, especially in Ethics and Political Philosophy. The verbal coincidences are often remarkable, and, as Kant quotes the *Wealth of Nations*, he may conceivably have known the *Moral Sentiments*.[1]

[1] The same is true of Burns, who may have read *Moral Sentiments*, 1st ed., p. 264: "If we saw ourselves in the light in which others see us . . . a reformation would generally be unavoidable."

Nevertheless, though both philosophers believe in "God, freedom, and immortality," they reach the belief in very different ways, and the contrasts seem as striking as the resemblances. The very title of one of Kant's books, the *Metaphysic of Ethics*, would have horrified Adam Smith, who hated metaphysics. Oncken's quotations will seem to most of us insufficient proof that Adam Smith gave no higher place to Sympathy than Kant would have done (Oncken, pp. 100, 101). That Sympathy can only be the means of communication, a way of conveying a message, not the message itself, is a criticism that touches Adam Smith, not Kant. That Sympathy enables us to judge of our own character through that of others would be a natural interpretation of the second title of the *Moral Sentiments*. Given as a full account of the aim of the book, it is misleading, or, at least, not exhaustive. Our author himself seems aware now and then that the word sympathy is not free from ambiguity. It may mean a simple reflection without judgment; it may mean approbation; and in Smith's book frequently does so. Brown remarks that if sympathy is like a mirror, it can only give us what was in the reflected object, ourselves (Thomas Brown, *Philosophy*, Edinburgh, 1828, Lecture LXXXI, p. 545. Cf. *Moral Sentiments*, 5th ed., pp. 199, 200, Sense of Duty; 6th ed., vol. i, p. 281). But the reflection need not be that of the fool in the brook, or of "the habitual novel-reader looking at the fictitious life which is the reflex of his own" (Green, *Works*, vol. iii, p. 38). Human beings may reflect each other to better purpose than soulless objects, and our author seems to think that their reflection of each other may change their first differing ideas into one idea held in common. To vary the metaphor, sympathy is only a conductor or transmitter; but he thinks it can conduct us in the region of ethics almost everywhere, and transform what it transmits. This is a different atmosphere from that of the Practical Reason. The question would then (as above said) present itself: What test or warrant have we for the moral value of ideas so reached?

The nearest approach to the idea of the Categorical Imperative is perhaps the idea of the sovereign rule of the moral faculties over other faculties (5th ed., p. 235, Sense of Duty). There is scanty trace in Adam Smith of Kant's postulate that men are ends in themselves, though there is a striking claim for the inviolableness of the individual (6th ed. vol. i, p. 270). His Will is usually "heteronomous." The question of will and freedom and necessity, discussed by Hume under "Passions" (*Human Nature*, vol. ii), does not seem to be considered at all by Adam Smith. Choice and will are taken for granted; we can do or forbear to do, whenever occasion calls us. There is no conception, to

separate Smith from Hume, of self, or even of a "permanent possibility of sensation," though that, too, at times seems taken for granted. Adam Smith seems to assume that men, within the limits of their (inward and outward) opportunities and resources, can create their own character for better or for worse. As that is done, according to him, by the following of general rules, which are admittedly of the reason, it is not a determination by feeling, but implies a power in man to follow rules instead of being controlled by passing impulses; it implies that reason is not the slave of the passions. Kant was not content with this negative result, which indeed is not always avowed.

In regard to the macrocosm (a favourite phrase in those days) the Physico-theological or Design argument, not accepted by Kant as sufficient, seems to have been the chief basis of Adam Smith's Theism. Teleology is a ruling idea everywhere in his works. In the *Wealth of Nations* it becomes an unconscious altruism, if such a thing be possible.

Remarkable coincidences in expression may mean only that both men were aware of the sublimity of their subject. Persons far away from each other in time or space have held the same language about the law of duty, from Hebrew prophets to German philosophers, without having the same, if any, philosophical clue to its origin. What Adam Smith had learned from Judæa and Attica remained with him, and, like Bishop Butler, he found it hard to state or interpret the lessons in terms of the reigning philosophy. He did not leave out very much; but he did not show warrant for all he put in.