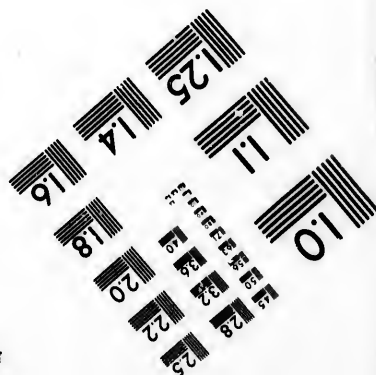
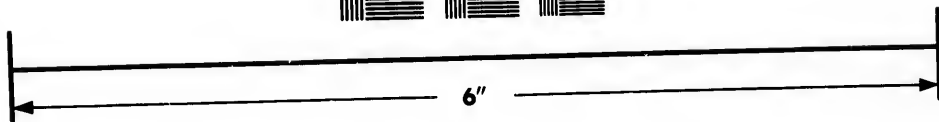
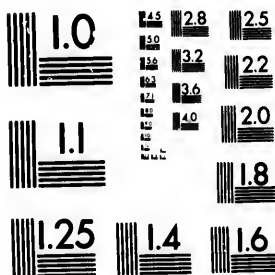


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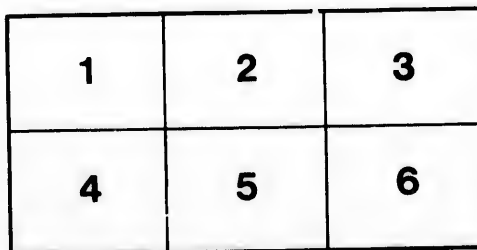
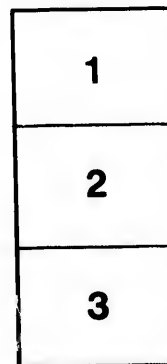
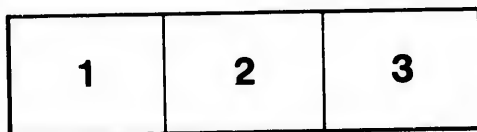
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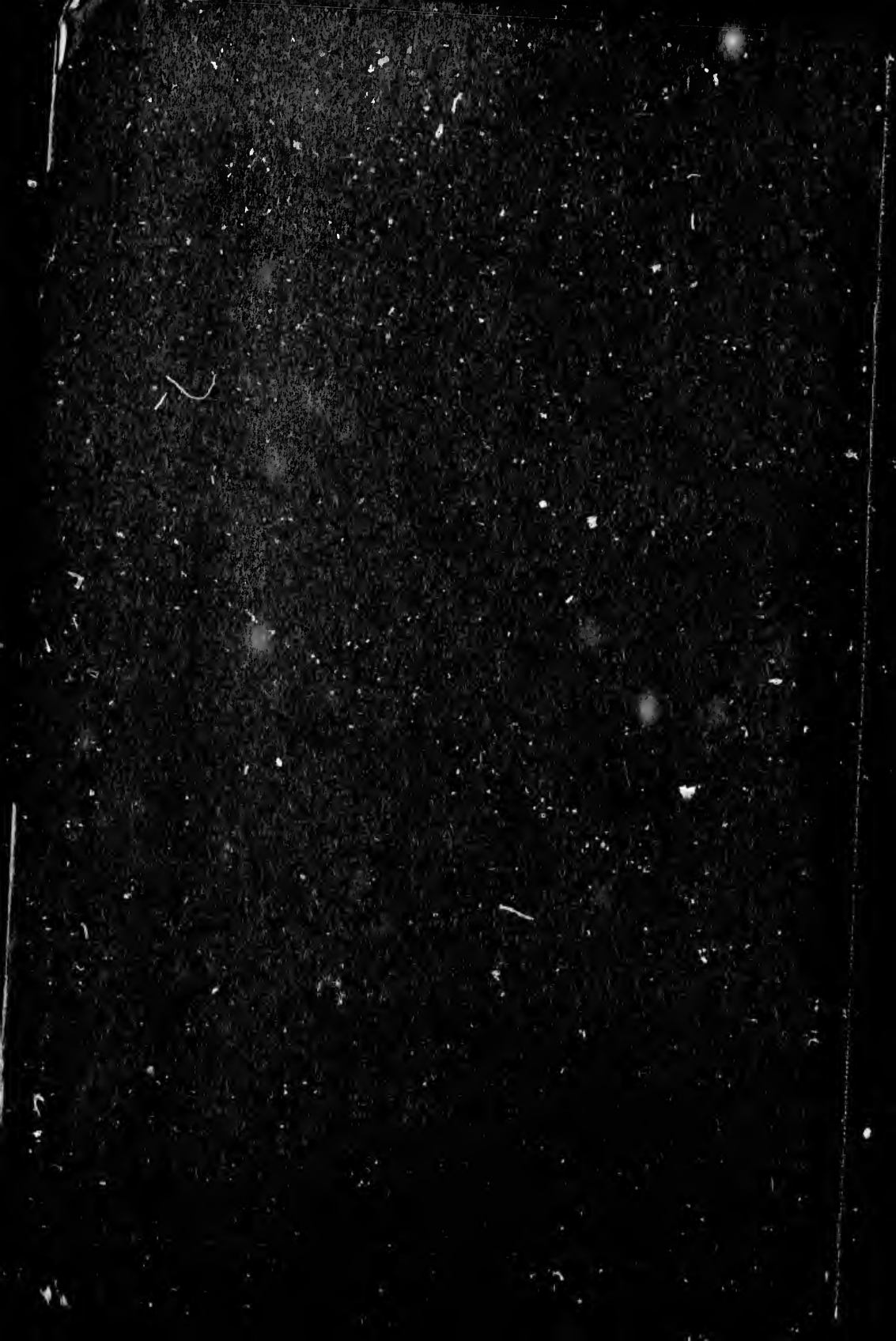
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THE ETHICAL SYSTEM  
— OF —  
ADAM SMITH.

BY ETHEL NUIR, M. L.

70083  
13-4-44

Thesis presented to the Faculty of Cornell University for the  
degree of Doctor of Philosophy, May, 1896.



## PREFACE.

---

In treating of the ethical system of Adam Smith I have found it necessary to introduce at some length the views of several of his predecessors, in order to show the source and to trace the development of fundamental principles emphasized in the *Theory of the Moral Sentiments*. This reference to previous systems was also necessary in order to bring out the independent contribution which Smith himself made to English ethical thought.

Though dealing with an ethical subject, this thesis was undertaken primarily as a study in the history of Philosophy. I have tried to acknowledge my indebtedness to the various authors from whom I have received help in footnotes. Here, however, I wish to acknowledge my obligations for many valuable suggestions to Professor J. E. Creighton, under whose direction the essay was written.

E. M.

*Mount Holyoke College,*  
*Dec. 1898.*



ERRATA.

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- On Page 17 — 19th line from top, for "*affects*" read effects.  
" 28 — 4th line from top, for "*is that*" read or that.  
" 28 — 7th line from top, for "*virtue morality*" read virtue and  
morality.  
" 39 — 9th line from bottom, for "*instructive*" read instinctive.  
" 57 — 16th line from top, for "*present*" read prevent.  
" 61 — 20th line from top, for "*derote*" read denote.

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# THE ETHICAL SYSTEM OF ADAM SMITH.

## PART I.—SMITH'S PREDECESSORS.

### CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION.

The work of the Moral Sense Philosophers was of the first importance for English Ethics. As a refutation of the extreme egoism of Hobbes, and an exhibition of the naturalness of man's social affections, it was most successful. Beginning with Shaftesbury, and carried on by Hutcheson and Hume, this line of thought is brought to its final completion in the *Theory of the Moral Sentiments* of Adam Smith, who was, undoubtedly, one of the greatest thinkers Scotland has ever produced.

In 1751, Smith, at the age of twenty-eight, was chosen Professor of Logic in the University of Glasgow, and in the following year was elected to the chair of Moral Philosophy at the same University: <sup>1</sup> a position which had been held shortly before this by Francis Hutcheson. In the *Moral Sentiments* and the *Wealth of Nations* we have what has been preserved of Smith's lectures at Glasgow, the Economic being supplementary to the Ethical work. <sup>2</sup> The former is regarded by Buckle as the most important book that has ever been written, <sup>3</sup> is ranked by Max Müller as the peer of Kants' *Critique* and is, undoubtedly, the work upon which the author's fame pre-eminently rests. But Smith's ethical views, as expressed in the *Theory* are also extremely valuable, and are worthy of far more attention than has, as yet, been bestowed upon them.

Buckle, certainly, in his *History of Civilization*, expresses the most unqualified approval and enthusiastic admiration. But he regards Smith's work as so completely an Ethics of Sym-

<sup>1</sup> Dugald Stewart, *Life and Writings of Dr. Smith*. Introduction.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, Introduction. Prof. J. W. Wilson, *An Old Master and other Political Essays*, p. 6.

<sup>3</sup> Buckle, *History of Civilization in England*, vol. 1, p. 214.

pathy, that he fails to emphasize points upon which the author was most anxious that stress should be laid. Oncken, on the other hand, in his *Die Ethik Adam Smith's und Kant's* draws so close a parallel between the ethical systems of those two great writers, and regards Smith's view of duty as of such paramount importance, that he practically ignores the great fundamental doctrine of sympathy. Hence, from his treatment, nothing but the most erroneous impression as to Smith's real position can possibly be obtained.<sup>1</sup>

As the *Theory of the Moral Sentiments* was written seventeen years earlier than the *Wealth of Nations*, it is not at all surprising that the former should suffer by contrast with the great Economic work. But the *Theory* is also an admirable book, showing a remarkable power of observation and wealth of illustration. Buckle claims so close a connection between the two, that neither can be understood without the other. But, for the understanding of the *Theory of the Moral Sentiments*, a knowledge of the ethical writers who preceded Smith, is much more important than a knowledge of his own *Wealth of Nations*. For, by the former, we gain information as to his statement of the question, and some idea as to how far Smith is indebted to those earlier thinkers, and what he has done independently for the development of the ethical problem. With this in view we will consider briefly the systems of Shaftesbury, Hutcheson and Hume, before taking up the special subject of "Adam Smith's Theory of the Moral Sentiments."

#### SECTION I.—SHAFTESBURY.

Shaftesbury is the first of the Moral Sense Philosophers. With him, a new phase of English Ethics begins. He, in common with all the moralists of his time in England, is an uncompromising opponent of Hobbes. He, however, differs from the majority in the ground of his opposition; and institutes a new method of attack.<sup>2</sup> Cudworth and his school had been aroused by Hobbes's insistence that good and evil are determined by the sovereign; and had maintained the essential and eternal distinctions of morality, as independent of any arbitrary will, human or divine. This question possessed no interest for

1. NOTE. A more satisfactory treatment of Smith's Ethics, recognizing the importance in the system of both sympathy and duty, is found in a German's Dissertation, by J. Schubert, *Die Moralphilosophie Adam Smith's*, Leipzig, 1891, which deals particularly with Oncken's views. I shall have occasion to refer to both of those writers later in this work.

2. Sidgwick *History of Ethics*. Chap. IV.

Shaftesbury, who regarded all discussions as to substances, entities, and the eternal and immutable relations of things as so much empty sound<sup>1</sup> It was the egoism of the system which angered him ; and he set himself to refute so false an account of the nature of man.

Shaftesbury agrees with Cumberland in insisting upon the ultimately social character of human nature. Cumberland had compared society to an organism, and had maintained the equal importance of sympathy with egoism. The greatest happiness was, for him, the objective end ; and he regarded the good of the individual and the good of society as identical<sup>2</sup> Shaftesbury holds that each individual being is a member in a system of creatures, which a common nature binds together. The individual man himself is a system, of which the various appetites, passions, and affections, are all united under the supreme control of reason. The parts of this system are so carefully arranged, and so interdependent, that any disarrangement or disproportion, however slight, may mar and disfigure the whole. If a single passion is extended too far, or continued too long, irrecoverable ruin and misery may result.<sup>3</sup>

This idea of system, or the harmony of parts, is the leading idea in Shaftesbury's ethics. His fundamental concept is aesthetic, unity in variety is the all-pervading law of the world. In every case where parts work together toward a common result, there rules a central principle. The parts of the organism are held together by the soul ; and, in the larger systems to which man is evidently related, individuals are joined with one another into species and genera by higher unities.<sup>4</sup> Out of society, and out of community, man never did nor never can exist.<sup>5</sup> There is no sense more natural than the sense of fellowship ; and this sense, as evinced in love of community, is one of the plainest means of self-preservation ; and a most necessary condition of self-enjoyment.<sup>6</sup> The moral and social system has thus its foundations deep in the nature of man.<sup>7</sup> Just as truly as musical harmony and proportion are natural, so also is there

1. *Soliloquy*. Pt. III. Sec. 1.

2. *De Legibus Naturae*. Introduction.

3. *Inquiry concerning Virtue and Merit*. Bk. II. Pt. II. Sec. 1.

4. *Ibid.* *The Moralists*. Pt. II. Sec. 1, pp. 286, 318.

5. *Ibid.* Vol. II. p. 354.

6. Falckenberg *History of Philosophy*, Eng. trans., p. 196.

7. *Essay on the freedom of Wit and Humor*. Pt. III. Sec. 2.

7. *Advice to an Author*. Pt. III. Sec. 3.  
*The Moralists*, p. 411.

a harmony and proportion of virtue in the character and the affections of men. Shaftesbury thus finds a natural basis for ethics, independent of self interest or conventional fancies. The good for him is the beautiful, and the beautiful is the symmetrical; hence the essence of virtue consists in the balance, the harmony or proportion, of the affections and the passions.

Shaftesbury is a thorough-going optimist; whatever is right. The finality and beauty of the parts of the world which we can know, justifies the inference to a like constitution of those which are unapproachable; so that we may be certain that the numerous evils, which we find in the details, work for a system superior to them, and that all apparent imperfections contribute to the perfection of the whole.<sup>1</sup> From the idea of social and moral harmony, Shaftesbury infers the existence of a formative power which works purposively, an all ruling unity, the soul of the world, the Deity. What Shaftesbury means by the Deity is however not quite clear. He, at times, uses language, which, as Leslie Stephen remarks,<sup>2</sup> would fit into an orthodox sermon about a personal God;<sup>3</sup> yet his teaching bears much more resemblance to the pantheism of Spinoza. Gizycki concludes that while passages are not wanting, in which Shaftesbury regards nature, and the life-giving power of nature, only as the representatives of Providence, the Creator endowed with all power, yet his proof only leads to a world-soul, and not to a God.<sup>4</sup> This is the view which is held also by Fowler,<sup>5</sup> who says: "we may infer that Shaftesbury conceived the relation of God to the World as that of the Soul to the body. Nature is, as it were, the vesture of God, and God the soul of the Universe." As the individual mind understands, thinks, and plans for the individual self, so the Universal Mind understands and acts for the whole of Nature.<sup>6</sup> This Universal Mind is not only all-powerful and all-wise, but is, also, perfectly good. For a general mind could have no private interests; but the good of the whole and its own good would, necessarily, be one and the same.<sup>7</sup>

Shaftesbury, consistently recognizes no conflict between the

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1. *The Moralists*. Pt. 1. Secs. 2, 3.  
Ibid. Sec. 4. Pt 11.
  2. Leslie Stephen, *English Thought of the Nineteenth Century*. p. 25.
  3. *The Moralists*. Pt. 11. Sec. 3.
  4. Gizycki, *Die Philosophie Shaftesbury's*. p. 62.
  5. T. Fowler, *Shaftesbury und Hutcheson*. Chap. 1v. p. 106.
  6. *The Moralists*. Pt. 111. Sec. 5.
  7. *Letter concerning Enthusiasm*, Sec. 5.

good of the individual and that of society. The natural and the self-affections, he commends as both good and both necessary.<sup>1</sup> Benevolence is the principal moral virtue: but a due regard to the interests and the preservation of the individual is not by any means to be neglected. As in particular cases public affection, on the one hand, may be too high, so private affection, on the other hand, may be too weak. These affections toward private good are necessary and essential to virtue. For though no creature can be called virtuous merely for possessing these affections, yet, since they are essential to the well-being of the system, a creature wanting in them is wanting in some degree in natural rectitude, and is vicious and defective.

The disinterested impulses, while aiming at other's good, lead a man to his own; while the self-affections, which aim at the individual's good, only attain their object when kept within strict bounds. In addition to the natural, and the self-affections, Shaftesbury distinguishes the unnatural affections. These are sufficiently characterised by their definition; since they are affections that tend neither to public nor to private good. From Shaftesbury's point of view it is not easy to understand this classification. For why are the affections, which tend to the good of others, any more *natural* than the self-affections? The selfish affections, as he himself occasionally admits, are just as important for the economy of nature. Why, therefore, may they not also be classed as natural. And why should those, which tend neither to public nor to private good be, on that account, termed unnatural? If all evil works for the good of a superior system, and all apparent imperfection contributes to the perfection of the whole, this latter class would appear to be as natural as either of the others.<sup>2</sup>

Upon the proper balance, the harmony of the passions, virtue depends. The virtuous man has at heart the interest of the public.<sup>3</sup> When all the affections and passions tend to the public good, or the good of the species, the temper is said to be entirely good; and if we have this universal good as our end or aim, we shall never be deceived by false views of right and wrong.<sup>4</sup> But Shaftesbury also defines virtue as a love of goodness for its own sake, on account of its own natural beauty and

1. *Inquiry*, Bk. II. Pt. I. Sec. 3.

2. Jodl *Geschichte der Ethik*.

3. *Inquiry*, Bk. I. Pt. III. Sec. 2.

4. *Ibid.*, Bk. I. Pt. II. Sec. 1.



worth.<sup>1</sup> Hence to understand his idea of virtue we must include these two elements: a disinterested love of goodness, and that harmony of the passions most conducive to the public good.

This disinterested love of goodness is not natural, and can only be obtained by reflection. A person may be generous, kind, compassionate; and yet, if he does not reflect upon what he himself does, or sees others do, so as to take notice of what is worthy or honest, and make that notice of worth and honesty an object of his affections, he is not virtuous. It is this reflective notice, which constitutes a truly good character.<sup>2</sup> Shaftesbury is conscious that just as in art, ignorance and want of taste may rule, so, in the moral sphere, the case may be the same. We learn by reflection not only to admire, but to have an inclination to admire that which is truly admirable. This attainment of a pure moral taste, which correctly distinguishes harmony and discord, is represented by Shaftesbury throughout as no easy matter.

We are led to this reflective approval and disapproval of the just and natural, or of the unjust and unnatural by a first principle in our constitution, by a natural sense of right and wrong.<sup>3</sup> This faculty, which approves of right, and disapproves of wrong, is with Shaftesbury a sense, and more than once he anticipates Hutcheson in calling it a moral sense.<sup>4</sup> This doctrine of the Moral Sense is not, however, by any means the central point of the system;<sup>5</sup> the harmony of the passions and affections is, as we have seen, the main doctrine. But the Moral Sense is that which exercised the greatest influence upon future writers of the school, especially upon Hutcheson, and is therefore often mistakenly considered the fundamental idea of Shaftesbury's ethics. This Moral Sense is universal. Every human being is endowed with natural inclinations fitted for the perception of moral harmony. However perverted and corrupt a heart may be, it yet finds, in all cases, a distinction between two actions or inclinations, from which it approves of the one as suitable, and rejects the other as unsuitable. We have here a

1. *Inquiry*, Bk. II. Pt. 1. Sec. 3.

2. *Essay on the Freedom of Wit and Humor*. p. 121.

3. *Inquiry*, Bk. I. Pt. III. Sec. I.

4. *Ibid.*, Bk. I. Pt. 3. Sections 1, 2, 3.

5. NOTE. For confirmation of this view, see Sidgwick's *History of Ethics*, Chap. 1v. For the opposite opinion, Schubert, *Die Moral Philosophie*, Adam Smith's. Introductory chapter.

hint of the "Impartial Spectator" which afterwards became so important in Smith's system.

This moral sense, which is Shaftesbury's idea of conscience, has its foundation in nature, and, while in its natural condition, is mainly emotional.<sup>1</sup> As emotional, it does not occupy so commanding and important a position in man's nature as does reason. But it admits of education and improvement, and this improvement consists in a general predominance of the rational element. The office of this educated conscience is the reflective approval of the good, and disapproval of the evil. No rational creature is ever entirely devoid of this moral or reflex sensibility. When, by means of this reflective conscience, the right has been determined, our author thinks that all that is necessary for virtue or goodness has been accomplished. Knowledge and virtue are practically one in the system. Evil and wickedness, in and for themselves, are nothing. They are merely negations of the good, owing to the incompleteness and the limitations of our nature.

The operation of the Moral Sense, when uncorrupted, is always in harmony with rational judgment as to what is or is not conducive to the good of the human species, though it does not necessarily involve the explicit formation of such a judgment. Even a man who had no moral sense, would always find it to his interest to maintain in himself precisely that balance of social and self-regarding affections which is best adapted to secure the good of society, and such a being might be said to have goodness, though not virtue. But such a man, Shaftesbury holds, is not really to be found.

The approbation or disapprobation of this moral sense, together with the love and reverence of God, form the proper sanctions of conduct. Neither the fear of future punishment, nor the hope of future reward can possibly be regarded as good affections, nor as the source of any truly good action. "No action prompted by these motives can be regarded as good and virtuous."<sup>2</sup> Virtue must please by its own worth and beauty, and not because of any external advantage. We are not to corrupt the love of the good for its own sake by mixing with it the hope of future reward.<sup>3</sup> We have here a hint of Kant, in

1. *The Moralists*, Pt. III. Sec. 2.

*Inquiry*, Pt. III. Sec. 2.

2. *Ibid.*, Bk. II. Pt. II. Sec. 1.

*Ibid.*, Bk. I. Pt. I. Sec. 3.

3. Falckenberg, *History of Philosophy*, Eng. trans., p. 200.

Shaftesbury's view that the excellence of the object, and not the reward or punishment should be our motive for conduct.

As to what constitutes the end of moral action, Shaftesbury is not very explicit. In trying to discover what he really conceives to be the good, there are two points which it is well to keep in mind:—(1.) The good of the individual, and the good of society are one and the same. (2.) Shaftesbury recognizes no possible conflict between virtue and happiness. Hence if we can find that which constitutes a person *either* virtuous or happy, we shall have found the good. The various explanations given of this, however, render the matter somewhat confusing. Taking the more general definitions first:—(1.) That alone is the good in which the nature of man can rest contented and find satisfaction,<sup>1</sup> (2.) Life and happiness consist in action and employment, and nothing can be called good but what is constant.<sup>2</sup> (3.) Virtue is the chief of all excellencies and beauties.<sup>3</sup> (4.) It consists in a harmony of the passions and affections, a love of goodness for its own sake, and a love of beauty and order in society.<sup>4</sup> This array of definitions is not very satisfactory, and instead of throwing any light upon the matter appears rather to 'darken counsel with words.' But the subject becomes clearer when we remember that, to Shaftesbury, the good, the beautiful, and the harmonious are one. This practically reduces (3) and (4) to identical propositions; and we are left with the good, as that in which the nature of man can find satisfaction; which must, also, be constant and furnish action and employment. Two interpretations of this good have been offered: (1) Hedonistic, the good is pleasure; and (2) it is self-satisfaction. The Hedonistic interpretation is, in this system, indefensible. It fails to fulfil either the requirements of constancy, or that of affording satisfaction to the nature of man. Moreover, Shaftesbury states distinctly that the good is not pleasure, which he says may be very great, and yet very contemptible.<sup>5</sup> This in itself is a sufficient refutation of the argument for pleasure; for if pleasure may at the same time be very great and very contemptible then surely it is not the good. The only way of escape from this would be to admit qualitative distinctions in pleasure, and this Shaftesbury denies; and maintains that the

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1. *Inquiry*, Vol II., p. 75.
  2. *Advice to an Author*, p. 319.  
*The Moralists* p. 225.
  3. *Inquiry*, Vol II. p. 175.
  4. *Ibid.*, Vol II. p. 75.
  5. *The Moralists*, p. 229.

so-called higher pleasures owe their preeminence to the addition of new and nobler elements to the pleasure, rather than to any change which has taken place in the character of the pleasure as such.

Sidgwick, however, maintains<sup>1</sup> that in the greater part of the argument, Shaftesbury gives the good of the individual this Hedonistic interpretation,<sup>2</sup> making it equivalent to pleasure, satisfaction, or enjoyment; and quotes from our author, in confirmation, that "philosophy is nothing but the study of happiness."<sup>3</sup> This passage proves nothing. It is a mere begging of the question. For it is just upon the meaning of "happiness" in the system that the whole discussion turns. And whatever else happiness may mean, for Shaftesbury, it does not mean pleasure in any ordinary acceptation of the term.<sup>4</sup>

The other interpretation of the good, which makes it equivalent to self satisfaction, brings Shaftesbury very near to Aristotle and the self-realisation moralists; and this view is certainly more in keeping with the whole spirit of the system. If we can discover that which renders one pleasure valuable and worthy, compared with another which we regard as indifferent or mean, by that stamp or character which causes the distinction, Shaftesbury says we may define the good,<sup>5</sup> but not by means of the pleasure itself. He further maintains that it is reason and virtue, which are thus called upon to ennoble pleasure.<sup>6</sup> Hence we must conclude that reason and virtue, since they form the stamp, the required characteristic of the so-called higher pleasures, constitute that for which we are in search—the good. In reason and in virtue, the nature of man can rest contented and find satisfaction. They also are constant and furnish permanent employment and action. They thus satisfy all the tests of the system, and may therefore be recognized as the good for Shaftesbury.

While Shaftesbury thus recognizes reason as an important factor in the good, in the end or aim of action, he, as we have seen, almost ignores its part in the formation of moral judgments. The great change, introduced by him in the foundation of English ethics, consisted in basing moral distinctions upon the sentient nature of man, rather than upon his reason. He

1. *The Moralists*, p. 233.
2. *History of Ethics*, p. 181.
3. *The Moralists*, Pt. III. Sec. 3. ¶ 1. 138.
4. *Advice to an Author*, p. 319.
5. *The Moralists*, p. 225.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 229.

regarded the affections and passions as the object of a higher reflective judging affection, an innate faculty of moral judgment, or sense for right and wrong,—a moral sense. We approve virtue and condemn vice by nature, and from this natural feeling for good and evil, exercise develops a cultivated moral taste. Goodness requires the reflective approval and disapproval of our own conduct, and that of others.

Shaftesbury's account of the Moral Sense is, however, most unsatisfactory. While, explicitly, he almost ignores the share of reason in its judgments, and greatly exaggerates the share of emotion, yet, in what he describes as the work of the moral sense, the constant exercise of reason is implied. For, before we can feel either approbation or disapprobation, we must refer an act to a class, or connect it by association with other acts of a similar kind. In either case, comparison or reflection is involved, and the process is a rational one. The very statement, that the approval or disapproval must be reflective, implies the influence of reason on the moral judgments; while Shaftesbury's treatment tends to utterly obscure the fact of this influence. He admits that the Moral Sense is capable of cultivation and improvement; but he does not state in what the process of education consists. He generally describes moral decisions as though they were immediate, and makes no attempt to analyse the Moral Sense, except by the occasional recognition of a rational, as well as an emotional element. As the moral taste becomes better instructed, the rational element becomes more prominent. If, then, we regard Shaftesbury's idea of goodness as the reflective approval and disapproval of our own conduct and that of others, we find reason necessarily implied; and no less is this the case if we consider his other view of goodness, as love to mankind in general, the study of the universal good, or the promotion of the interest of the whole world in so far as lies within our power. Here again reason would be indispensable for the consideration of means, and the comparison of results. Hence, in Shaftesbury's system, it is impossible to reconcile the nature of his criterion of right action, and the nature of the approving act. The idea of a reflective love of goodness, and a universal benevolence, as dependent upon sense, appears, however, somewhat more consistent, when we remember that Shaftesbury regarded human nature as divine. Hence the Moral Sense is a divine though natural instinct. These three conceptions—Moral Sense, Benevolence, and the great fundamental idea of system or harmony, exercised a great influence upon the succeeding writers of the English School.

## SECTION II.—HUTCHESON.

Shaftesbury, as we have seen, did much to refute Hobbes. Individualism was to him an utter impossibility: man is ever part of a system. Altruism is just as natural as is egoism, and the benevolent and the self-regarding affections both necessary, and both good. Not reason, but sense, which is, however, when uncorrupted, never in conflict with reason, is man's moral guide. The conduct approved by this moral sense is such as tends to the good of the system as a whole. In this reaction against egoism, the climax is reached in Hutcheson, who not only develops many of Shaftesbury's ideas, but, in his zeal for benevolence, almost overlooks the claim of the individual as such. His elaborate ethical system may, not unfairly, be summed up in two terms: the Moral Sense, and Benevolence.

The doctrine of the Moral Sense was fully developed by Hutcheson. Shaftesbury had suggested the idea, Hutcheson formed the *system* of the Moral Sense.<sup>1</sup> By his adoption and development of this principle, and by thus insisting upon human nature as the ultimate source of moral distinctions, Hutcheson exercised a tremendous influence both upon the philosophy and the theology of Scotland,<sup>2</sup> where, perhaps more than in any other country, the tendency had been to regard revelation as the one source of all knowledge of morality. That confidence could be placed in the judgment of the human understanding in regard to conduct, was an entirely new idea; but this Hutcheson taught; and insisted that the mind, if free and unfettered, was quite able to deal with ethical problems. He strenuously advocated the right of private judgment, which had been not only assailed, but almost destroyed by the Scotch Kirk, which at that time possessed unlimited power and influence.<sup>3</sup>

Hutcheson, like Shaftesbury, regards the Moral Sense as an original principle, a natural and immediate determination to approve certain affections, and actions consequent upon them. It is an instinct, but of so high a character, that it is a constant settled determination in the soul itself; as much so as are our powers of judging and reasoning; and, like other of our powers, it may be educated and improved.<sup>4</sup> By the presentation of larger systems, and more extensive affections, it is led to

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1. Fowler, *Shaftesbury and Hutcheson*, p. 237.
  2. Erdmann, *History of Philosophy*, Vol. II., p. 124.
  3. Buckle, *History of Civilization*, Vol. III., p. 293.
  4. *System of Moral Philosophy*, Vol. I., p. 91.
  5. *Inquiry*, Vol. II., p. 196. *System*, Chap. IV., p. 53.

approve of the more worthy objects, even when, by so doing, it must oppose the effect of narrower affections, which, considered in themselves, would be quite worthy of approval.<sup>1</sup> The existence of this sense is proved by the fact that moral differences of action are admitted by all, even when conscious that they will not themselves be affected by the actions.<sup>2</sup>

Hutcheson does not distinguish with sufficient clearness between emotions and ideas. He confuses the ultimate feeling of approbation or disapprobation, with the intellectual process, which usually precedes this feeling. His conception of the Moral Sense is rather that of an emotional, than of a perceptive faculty. It is more analogous to what he describes as the "Public Sense," that is "our determination to be pleased with the happiness of others, and to be uneasy at their misery," than it is to that of the external senses.<sup>3</sup> With Shaftesbury, the sense of beauty and the Moral Sense were one and the same sense, as applied either to external objects, or to human actions, character, and dispositions. Hutcheson, on the contrary, distinguishes between the moral and aesthetic sense.

The Moral Sense is from its very nature, designed to regulate and control all our powers; and of its dignity, and commanding nature, we are immediately conscious, as we are conscious of the power itself. The objects of this sense of moral good and evil are benevolence, on the one hand, and indifference to the public good, on the other.<sup>4</sup> The pursuit of the good of others is prompted by an instinct, and approved by the Moral Sense. The only actions which this sense determines us to approve as virtuous, are those which proceed, partly at least, from a desire for the happiness of others;<sup>5</sup> and the actions which it recommends as the most perfectly virtuous, are such as have the most universal unlimited tendency to the greatest and most extensive happiness of all the rational agents, to whom our influence can extend.<sup>6</sup>

While insisting on the importance and ultimate character of the Moral Sense, Hutcheson yet acknowledges the necessity and function of reason. Our power of reflecting and judging, makes us capable of discerning the tendencies of our senses, appetites, and actions, either to our own happiness or to that of others.

1. *Inquiry*, Vol. II., pp. 107, 110, 115.

2. *Ibid.*, Vol. II. Sec. iv., p. 203. *System*, Vol. I., p. 91.

3. Fowler, *Shaftesbury and Hutcheson*, p. 235.

4. *Inquiry*, Vol. II., p. 172.

5. *Ibid.*, Vol. II. Sec. 2.

6. *Ibid.*, Vol. II. Sec. 3., p. 181.

This power judges about the means, or the subordinate ends, but about the ultimate ends there is no reasoning.<sup>1</sup> Reason is given to man in order that he may judge of the tendencies of his actions and not stupidly follow the first appearance of public good.<sup>2</sup> Desires, affections, and instincts, must be previous to all exciting reasons, and a moral sense antecedent to all justifying reasons.<sup>3</sup> It is always some good which men pursue, and the pursuit of this good is prompted by an instinct, and approved by the Moral Sense. The end is determined by our Moral Sense and affections, but it is reason which finds out the means. The difficulty noted in Shaftesbury's system in regard to the relation of reason and the Moral Sense arises again here. If moral decisions are entirely the result of an immediate intuition of the Moral Sense, why do these decisions require to be corrected or revised. And if the decisions of this Moral Sense are infallible, why should this faculty be regarded as capable of education or improvement? Almost all of the diversity in moral sentiment arises, Hutcheson says, from opposite conclusions of reason about the affects of actions upon the public, or about the affections from which they flowed. The Moral Sense always approves and condemns uniformly the same immediate objects, the same affections and dispositions. But people reason very differently in regard to actions and the notions by which they have been caused.<sup>4</sup> It is in kindly affection, and desire of the public good that true merit is found, and not in reason. These systems, which regard morality as conformity to reason, really presuppose a moral sense.<sup>5</sup>

By conscience, Hutcheson sometimes denotes the moral faculty itself, and sometimes the judgment of the understanding concerning the springs and effects of actions, upon which the Moral Sense approves or condemns them. When we have certain maxims and rules concerning the conduct which is virtuous and vicious, and regard them as the laws of God, or when we are persuaded that other laws are revealed to us in a different manner, then conscience may be defined as, "our judgment concerning actions compared with the laws." Other circumstances being equal, the greater the diligence and caution about

1. *System*, Vol. I., p. 93.

2. *Inquiry concerning moral Good and Evil*, Sec. 4.

3. *Illustrations on the Moral Sense*, Sec. 1.

4. *System*, Vol. I., pp. 38, 91.

5. *Illustrations on the Moral Sense*.

Sec. I., pp. 216, 220, 229.

Sec. IV., pp. 80, 81.

Sec. V., p. 291.



our duty, so much the better is the character ; and the less the diligence and caution, so much the worse is the character. ✓

Having considered this important doctrine of the Moral Sense, we now turn to Hutcheson's all-inclusive virtue, Benevolence. There is in human nature a disinterested, ultimate desire for the happiness of others ; and we only approve of those actions as virtuous, which proceed partly at least from such a desire. <sup>1</sup> The best state, and the greatest happiness of a human being, consists in universal, efficacious benevolence, and nothing more than this deserves the name of perfection. The perfectly virtuous person acts immediately from the love of others ; while selfish actions are the cause of shame and confusion. <sup>2</sup> It is not any form of selfishness, however, that causes us to desire the happiness of others ; we are not prompted to this by any prospects of personal advantage, such as wealth, power, or pleasure. For that which is most noble, generous, and virtuous in life, is the sacrifice of all positive interests, and the bearing all private evils for the public good ; while submitting also the interests of all smaller systems to the interests of the whole ; without any other exception or reserve than this, that every man may look upon himself as a part of this system, and, consequently, not sacrifice an important private interest to a less important interest of others. <sup>3</sup> While we cannot always know the tendency of our own actions, we may endeavour, to the best of our power, to do that which is most likely to tend to the public good ; and when we are conscious of a sincere endeavour for this, no evil consequences which may result will cause us to condemn our conduct.

This extremely altruistic position is somewhat modified by Hutcheson in his later work, <sup>4</sup> where he recognizes three calm, natural, determinations of the will : the calm desire of our own happiness, the calm desire of the happiness of others, and the calm desire of moral perfection ; each of these is alike ultimate, but when the first comes into conflict with the second or the third, the Moral Sense never fails to dictate to the agent the voluntary sacrifice of the first to either of the others. Hutcheson never allows much more to the individual than the admission that, as a part of the system, his rights are to be respected.

1. *Inquiry*, Vol. II. Sec. 2.

2. *Ibid.*, Vol. II., pp. 166, 177, 220, 218, 239, 323.

3. *Illustrations upon the Moral Sense*, Sec. VI., p. 319.

4. *System of Moral Philosophy*, Vol. I., p. 9.

Hutcheson is not a Utilitarian, although he comes much nearer to this school than Shaftesbury had done, and insists repeatedly upon the "greatest happiness of the greatest number," being, in fact, the first to make use of this phrase.<sup>1</sup> That in action, which Hutcheson considers of chief importance, is the affection or motive. The difficulty, however, arises for him, as it has done, also, for later moralists, that, in judging actions, we are practically obliged to regard only their effects or consequences. Thus, while the motive, the kind affection, is that which constitutes an act really or formally good, the Moral Sense points out, as the only good or virtuous deed, that which is materially good, as tending to the welfare or happiness of others.<sup>2</sup>

Yet Hutcheson shows plainly that neither pleasure nor usefulness forms the basis of moral distinctions. The notion under which we approve moral conduct is not: (1) that of giving us pleasure by sympathy; nor (2) that it is pleasing to our moral sense; nor (3) that it is useful to the agent himself; nor (4) that of conformity to the Divine will or laws. We do not approve all conduct, which gives us pleasure by sympathy, and sometimes we approve such conduct as does not give it. We are pleased in contemplating the virtue of another, as an excellence in that other, and not as something, which brings pleasure to ourselves. Nor does our approval of the conduct of another depend upon its usefulness; for the approver never expects a reward for the virtue of another; he approves when he feels no interest of his own promoted; and he would the less approve such actions as are beneficial, the more he considered them as advantageous to the agent, and imagined him influenced by views of his own advantage. Nor is the notion under which we approve conformity to the Divine will; for this must mean conformity to his goodness, justice, etc.; so these moral perfections must be previously known, or else the definition by conformity to them is useless. We cannot describe our moral approval, either, as fitness or congruity. The fitness of means or subordinate ends does not prove them to be good, unless the ultimate end is good; and the term "fitness" cannot be applied to an end truly ultimate. An ultimate end must be settled by an original determination of our nature. Neither custom, association of ideas, nor education can form the original of moral approbation, as these can give us no new senses; and the

1. *Inquiry concerning Moral Good and Evil*, Sec. 3.

2. *Ibid.*, Vol. II. Sec. 111, p. 184.

opinion or notion by which we approve must be an original principle.<sup>1</sup> This principle, as we have seen, is the Moral Sense by means of which we identify virtue and benevolence; and yet it is the fact that we naturally approve of benevolence, that proves that we have a Moral Sense.

While Hutcheson admits "the calm desire of moral perfection" as one of the ultimates of our nature, and claims that not only universal good-will, but also the love of moral excellence, may be ranked as a right affection,<sup>2</sup> yet the former, along with the Moral Sense, so occupy his attention that the latter is practically ignored. Had he developed his system in this direction he would have approached closely the self-realization moralists. But this he has not done, and, as the system stands, we must regard Hutcheson as the great exponent of the Moral Sense and of Benevolence.

Shaftesbury had found no conflict, but a complete *harmony*, between the good of the individual and that of Society, and had shown that it is not selfishness which makes us desire the good of others. But he had insisted strongly upon the pleasure which accompanies the exercise of the benevolent affections, and lest it might still be thought that the acquisition of this pleasure was the real motive of the benevolent man, Hutcheson established most carefully the utterly disinterested character of those affections. He also made, as we have seen, Shaftesbury's Moral Sense a central doctrine of his system, and regarded benevolent actions as the only objects of this sense. This brings him somewhat into line with later Utilitarianism, and it was probably his distinction here of the formally from the materially good that led to Smith's ingenious explanation of the irregularity of our sentiments in regard to motives and to actions.

In considering the sanctions of conduct, Hutcheson is at one with Shaftesbury. He argues against those who imagine that an action can only be virtuous when undertaken with the design of pleasing or obeying the Deity.<sup>3</sup> Yet the love and veneration of God, together with the moral sanction, strictly so-called, furnishes the purest of all motives to the exercise of virtue. This love is approved by the moral faculty as the greatest excellence of mind, and is most useful from Hutcheson's point

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1. *Inquiry*. Vol. I, pp. 116, 120, 123, 128.

2. *Ibid.* p. 252.

3. *Illustrations upon the Moral Sense*. Sec. 6.

of view; since the love of moral perfection is a natural incitement to all good offices.<sup>1</sup> Hutcheson regards the Sanctions of human law as simply preventive and deterrent. Human punishments are only methods of self-defence, in which the degrees of guilt are not the proper measure; but this measure is to be found in the necessity of restraining actions for the safety of the public.<sup>2</sup> This theory of punishment is in harmony with Hutcheson's view of morality, and forms another point of agreement between his system and that of later Utilitarians.

While the main conceptions of Hutcheson's system are those of the Moral Sense and Benevolence, yet his ideal of morality was, like that of Butler, of a life according to the highest principles of our nature. This view, as has been noted, receives but little development in the system; but that Hutcheson regarded it as the goal to be attained by the exercise of the Moral Sense and the practice of universal Benevolence is shown by the following quotation: "Our Moral Sense shows this calm extensive affection to be the highest perfection of our nature, what we may see to be the end or design of such a structure, and, consequently, what is required of us by the author of our nature; and, therefore, if any one like this description better, he may call virtue the acting according to what we may see from the constitution of our nature we were intended for by our Creator."<sup>3</sup>

#### SECTION III—HUME.

In opposition to Egoism as the basis of conduct, Shaftesbury had shown the complete harmony between the affections of self love and love for others. He had found also in the nature of man a sense which distinguished between right and wrong, and which led to self-sacrifice for others, if the good of others required that sacrifice. But Shaftesbury had emphasized so strongly the pleasure resulting from benevolence, and the complete identity of virtue and happiness, that his system was left open to the suspicion of still harbouring a subtle form of Hobbes' hated doctrine.

Hutcheson prevents any such misapprehension in regard to his views by making benevolence the one all-inclusive virtue,

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1. T. Fowler, *Shaftesbury and Hutcheson*, p. 109.  
*System of Moral Philosophy*. Bk. 1. Chap. 10.
  2. *Illustrations upon the Moral Sense*. Sec. 6. Art 6.
  3. *Essay on the Nature and Conduct of the Passions and Affections*, Preface, p. 16.

which constitutes the only object of the Moral Sense. He insists that the pleasure resulting from benevolent actions can only be obtained by a disinterested desire for the good of others, and is never to be had by merely desiring it. Hence the wish to benefit others is quite distinct from the desire for the pleasure arising from benevolence. But even here a difficulty arose. The only objects of the moral sense are actions which tend to the general good. But what if such an action shall have been performed from an interested motive? Hutcheson decided that in such a case the act was materially good, but not formally so; for to be formally or really good, the motive, also, must be benevolent.

Hume entirely does away with all such distinctions. His first great problem in the *Treatise* is regarding the source of our moral judgments. He agrees with Shaftesbury and Hutcheson that this is found not in reason, but in sense. For morals have an influence upon the actions and the affections, and so active a principle as conscience or a sense of morals could never have as its source anything so wholly inactive as reason.<sup>1</sup> Our approval or disapproval of an action simply means that from the constitution of our nature, we have a feeling or sentiment of praise or blame from the contemplation of it. Morality is neither a relation of objects, nor a matter of fact, and hence can be, to Hume, no object of the understanding.<sup>2</sup>

It was difficult to see, even in Shaftesbury's system, any objective validity for morality, when evil is regarded as but a negation of the good, and our moral judgments as based on sensations. But both Shaftesbury and Hutcheson regarded those judgments as objectively called forth, and as not ultimately referable to the person judging. With Hume, however, complete ethical subjectivity is reached. Virtue and vice are distinguished by particular pleasures and pains. We do not infer a character to be virtuous merely because it pleases, but in feeling that it pleases after a particular manner, we, in effect, feel that it is virtuous. Hume thus makes virtue and vice synonymous with pleasure and pain. Each of the passions and operations of the mind has a particular feeling which must be either agreeable or disagreeable; the first is virtuous, the second vicious. The particular feeling constitutes the very nature of the passion, and, therefore, need not be accounted for.<sup>3</sup>

1. *Treatise of Human Nature*, Bk. III. Pt. II. Sec. 3.

2. *Ibid*, Bk. III. Pt. III. Sec. 1.

3. *Ibid*, Bk. III. Pt. 1. Sec. 2.

This moral pleasure is only excited by the character and sentiments of a person, and only by them when considered without any reference to our particular interest. It is only by means of sympathy that we can obtain the pleasure which enables us to recognize others as virtuous. Hutcheson had noted as an important determination or sense of the soul, the sympathetic sense, which he pronounced very different from any external sense.<sup>1</sup> By its means, when we apprehend the state of others, we naturally have a fellow-feeling with them. In considering the pain or distress of another, we feel a strong sense of pity and a great inclination to relieve him without any thought of the advantage that we ourselves may obtain thereby. This sympathetic sense, which takes the place of the Moral Sense of Shaftesbury and Hutcheson, becomes a fundamental doctrine of Hume's system, and is especially important on account of its influence upon Smith's Ethics.

Hume's treatment of sympathy is one of the most interesting features of his work. For a writer to whom the mind is nothing but a series of separate impressions, and who holds that we can know nothing but our own feelings,<sup>2</sup> to insist upon our knowledge of, and entrance into the feelings of others, is most inconsistent. But this our author does, and he maintains that sympathy is universal, and is observable through the whole animal creation, but especially in man, who can form no wish, that has not a reference to society. This sympathy is the chief source of moral distinctions, and is a more noble source than any original instinct of the human mind.<sup>3</sup>

The origin of this principle, Hume explains by the conversion of an idea into an impression. The idea or impression of self is always present and lively, and any object related to ourselves must be conceived with a like vivacity. Other people closely resemble ourselves, and this resemblance makes us easily enter into their sentiments. The relations of contiguity and causation assist, and all, together, convey the impression or consciousness of one person to the idea of the sentiments or passions of others. Thus the idea of another's sentiment or passion may be so enlivened as to become that very sentiment or passion. In sympathy the mind passes from the idea of self to that of another object, which is contrary to the law of transition of ideas. It does so, because the *self*, independent of the

1. Hutcheson, *System of Moral Philosophy*, Vol. 1. p. 19.
2. *Treatise*, Bk. 1. Pt. 4. Sec. 6.
3. *Ibid.*, Bk. 1v. Pt. 11. Chap. 6.

perception of every other object, is in reality nothing; so we must turn our view to external objects; and it is natural for us to consider most attentively such as are near to us, or resemble us. On account of resemblance, every human being has an advantage over every other object in operation on the imagination, and by a vivid imagination we often feel the pains and pleasures of others which are not really in existence.<sup>1</sup>

In discussing this subject in the *Enquiry*, Hume gives up his original characteristic position of the *Treatise*, and sympathy becomes practically a feeling of humanity. In the later work, there is little to differentiate his treatment from that of Hutcheson. In the *Treatise*, our benevolent or social feeling is regarded as a mere sensitivity to pleasure and pain, which has become complicated and transformed by sympathy. This sympathy is described by Selby-Bigge as a solvent by which Hume reduces complex feelings to simpler elements.<sup>2</sup> But in the *Enquiry*, sympathy is just another name for benevolence, or natural philanthropy, rather than the name of the process by which the social feeling has been constructed out of non-social or individual feeling. The generosity ascribed to man in the *Treatise* is exceedingly limited. In one instance Hume goes so far as to declare that there is no such passion in human minds as the love of mankind, merely as such, independent of personal qualities or of relation to ourself, and that it is only by means of sympathy that we are at all affected by the happiness and the misery of others. But in the *Enquiry*, where sympathy has been transformed into benevolence, Hume, in several instances, expresses an exactly opposite opinion.<sup>3</sup>

Hume speaks, in this later work, of "a thousand instances, which are marks of a general benevolence in human nature, where no real interest binds us to the object,"<sup>4</sup> and refers to "the natural philanthropy of all men."<sup>5</sup> The controversy between self-love and benevolence is said to be one which can never be settled, and our author concludes that the selfish and the social sentiments are no more opposed than are the selfish and ambitious, selfish and revengeful, selfish and vain.<sup>6</sup> There must be an original basis of some kind for self-love, and none

1. *Treatise*, Bk. II. Pt. II. Sec. 5.

*Ibid.*, pp. 317, 320, 339, 340.

2. *Enquiry concerning the Human Understanding*, Introduction.

3. *Ibid.*, Sections 184, 187.

4. *Ibid.*, Sec. 252.

5. *Ibid.*, Sections 189, 190.

6. *Ibid.*, Sec. 230.

more suitable for this can be found than benevolence or humanity. The happiness of others invariably causes us pleasure, their misery causes us pain. Hence, Hume concludes, these are original principles, which cannot be resolved into others which are more simple.<sup>1</sup>

As will be seen from this use of sympathy and an original feeling of humanity, Hume is far removed from the Egoism of Hobbes. But equally distant, if not still farther, is he, in his earlier work, from the extreme benevolent theory of Hutcheson. While he holds that the natural selfishness of man has been greatly over-estimated, and that it is rare to meet with a person, in whom the kind affections do not overbalance the selfish, he yet admits that each man loves himself better than any other person,<sup>2</sup> and upholds a certain amount of selfishness as natural. While, also, the increased benevolence of the *Enquiry* is important, its increased utilitarianism must be remembered, and, as Selby Bigge points out, consequences might be drawn from this later use of utility, which would completely neutralize all the concessions made to benevolence.<sup>3</sup> As the system stands, however, Hume is brought much nearer to Hutcheson in the *Enquiry* by this treatment of benevolence, which is not only of vastly increased importance on its own account, but has also taken the place of the sympathy of the *Treatise*.

Probably Hume's greatest departure from views of the Moral Sense philosophers is to be found in his treatment of natural and artificial virtues. Natural virtues are those which have no dependence on the artifice or contrivance of man,<sup>4</sup> while the artificial virtues are inventions, which we rank as moral virtues, simply because they tend to the good of mankind. The good which results from a natural virtue results from every single act; while, from an artificial virtue, a single act, considered in itself, may often be contrary to the public good, and it is only the concurrence of mankind in a general scheme or system of action which is advantageous. Now it is only by means of sympathy that we are pleased with the good of society, where our own interest is not concerned. Hence sympathy is the source of the esteem, which we pay to all of the artificial virtues and to those of the natural virtues, which tend to the good of others.<sup>5</sup>

1. *Enquiry*, Sec. 250. *Note*.

2. *Treatise*, Bk. III. Pt. II. p. 487.

3. *Enquiry* (1894), Introduction.

4. *Treatise*, pp. 475, 577, 580.

5. *Ibid*, Bk. III. p. 578.



Hume insists that justice is not a natural but an artificial virtue. It arises artificially, though necessarily, from education and human invention.<sup>1</sup> It has its origin in the selfishness of mankind, combined with the scanty provision Nature has made for their wants. Both man's disposition and his circumstances are thus adverse to society. But for this "Nature provides a remedy in the judgment and understanding, for what is irregular and incommodious in the affections."<sup>2</sup>

The remedy suggested is very similar to that of Hobbes, but there are here no promises given. The members of society express to each other a general sense of common interest, and immediately the idea of justice arises, and dependent on this idea, such others as those of property, obligation, and right, come into existence. This convention is not at all one of goodness or wickedness, but is entirely one of prudence or of folly. Hume's treatment of justice is very much modified in the *Enquiry*. Its origin he still finds in utility, but he no longer regards it as an artificial virtue; for he here pronounces it as natural as self-love, benevolence, reason, or forethought, and claims that "in so sagacious an animal as man, the necessary product of his reason may justly be esteemed natural." The keeping of promises, and submission to government, Hume also ranks as artificial virtues.

We have seen that Shaftesbury regarded the judgments of the Moral Sense as always in accord with reason, and that reason became in his system the supreme ruler of the moral life. Hutcheson departed from Shaftesbury's doctrine on this point and said: "not in reason, but in kind affection, and desire of the public good is virtue found." And now with Hume, reason, once the supreme governor of the will, has become merely the slave of the passions.<sup>3</sup> Its functions, along with that of the Moral Sense, have been delegated to sympathy. Sympathy, or the sympathetic sense, had been mentioned by Hutcheson as an important impulse of our nature, which spontaneously assumes any feeling observed in another.<sup>4</sup> This sympathy becomes with Hume the basis of our moral judgments, but it is also, by him, curiously complicated with utility. Virtue and vice are synonymous with pleasure and pain. It is only by means of

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1. *Treatise*, Bk. III. Pt. II. Sec. I.
  2. *Ibid.*, Bk. III. p. 487.
  3. *Ibid.*, Bk. II. Pt. III. Sec. III. p. 415.  
Falckenberg, *History of Philosophy*, p. 233.
  4. Hutcheson, *System*. Vol. I. p. 19.

sympathy that we recognize this moral pleasure and pain; but it is, nevertheless, the utility, the pleasure or pain produced, upon which our judgment of the action depends. As benevolence was the only object of the Moral Sense, so pleasure is the only object of the sympathetic sense.<sup>1</sup> With all these admissions to the pleasure-pain theory we naturally class Hume as a Hedonist. And, indeed, with his psychology, it is somewhat doubtful how he can consistently hold any other theory. If the mind has, or, rather, is, nothing but a series of fleeting states, then the only rational procedure would be, to make those fleeting states as pleasant as possible.

But Hume is no Utilitarian in any recognised sense of the term. He denies the fundamental principle of the theory. He was not led away by the fallacy that the desire for an object, even an object which, when attained, shall be found, or has been found, to give pleasure, is necessarily and always a desire for pleasure. He follows Butler in holding that self-love is but a secondary impulse, whose appearance presupposes primary impulses. Only after we have experienced the pleasure which comes from the satisfaction of an original impulse, can this become the object of a conscious search after pleasure, or lead to egoism. On the other hand benevolence, Hume claims, is a primary impulse. It is an original affection of the mind, immediately directed toward the happiness of others. After we have experienced the self satisfaction which follows upon its exercise, it is then possible that the expectation of their natural consequences may influence us in performing benevolent actions. But the original motive is not for pleasure.<sup>2</sup>

Hume's treatment of morality is most unsatisfactory. Virtue and vice are synonymous, as we have seen, with pleasure and pain, and yet this pleasure is utterly disinterested; it is only when a character is considered in general, without any reference to our particular interest that this feeling or sentiment of moral good and evil arises.<sup>3</sup> It is from the influence of characters and qualities, upon those who have intercourse with any person, that we blame or praise him.<sup>4</sup> Our own interest or pleasure does not at all enter into the case. For, in judging of character, men could never agree in their sentiments and judgements, unless they chose some common point of view, from which they might

1. Martineau. *Types of Ethical Theory*, p. 535.

2. Falckenberg, *History of Philosophy*, p. 235.

3. *Treatise*, Bk. III. Pt. I. p. 472.

4. *Ibid*, Part III. Sec. I. p. 582.

survey their object, and which might cause it to appear the same to all of them. The only interest or pleasure that appears the same to every spectator, is that of the person himself, whose character is examined, is that of those who have some connection with him. These, then, being more constant and universal than our own interest and pleasures, are alone admitted in speculation as the standard of virtue morality. They alone produce that particular feeling or sentiment, on which moral distinctions depend.<sup>1</sup> Thus, while on the one hand, Hume has made morality entirely subjective, dependent on a feeling of pleasure or pain, which proclaims the presence of virtue and vice, yet, on the other hand, the feeling of moral approval or disapproval is entirely dependent in its origin upon the influence of the character of the person, who has performed the good or the evil deed. Hence, looking at the question from this point of view, we may say that, with Hume, moral distinctions ultimately depend upon, and are called forth by character. When we praise actions, we regard only the motives that produced them, and consider the actions as signs or indications of certain principles in the mind or temper. The external performance has no merit. We must look within to find the moral quality. We regard the actions as signs, and the ultimate object of our praise or blame is the motive that produced them.<sup>2</sup>

Hume, however, regards actions as infallible signs of character. There is just so much vice or virtue in any character as every one places in it, and it is impossible that we can ever be mistaken in regard to this.<sup>3</sup> In order that our inference from actions to motives and character should so inevitably result in a correct judgment, we would naturally conclude that the process was pre-eminently that of reason. But this, as we have seen, is not at all Hume's idea. It is by means of sympathy that we enter into the pain and pleasure caused by the characters of others, and thus obtain ourselves the sentiment which assures us of the moral quality of the character. Actions can never be finally accounted for by reason, but only by some desire for which no reason can be given. All morality depends upon our sentiments; and when any action or quality of the mind is capable of affording a certain kind of pleasure, either to the agent himself or to those affected by his character or his acts, we call such an action or quality virtuous. When the

1. *Treatise*, Pt. III. Sec. I. p. 591.

2. *Ibid*, Bk. III. Pt. II. Sec. I. p. 477.

3. *Ibid*, Bk. III. Pt. II. Sec. VIII. p. 547.

neglect or non-performance of an action displeases us in a similar manner, we consider that we are under an obligation to perform such an act.<sup>1</sup> "The ultimate ends of human action can never, in any case, be accounted for by reason, but recommend themselves entirely to the sentiments and affections of mankind, without any dependence on the intellectual faculties."<sup>2</sup>

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## PART II—SMITH'S THEORY OF THE MORAL SENTI- MENTS.

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### CHAPTER I.—SYMPATHY.

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#### SECTION I—SYMPATHY THE SOURCE OF OUR MORAL JUDGMENTS.

Adam Smith brings to a final completion in his system the work of the Moral Sense Philosophers. But his importance does not altogether, or mainly, consist in the fact that he developed the thought or the work of others; his *Theory* is also of great independent value. He makes a most ambitious attempt to find in sympathy a common answer to the two great questions of morality: that of the origin and that of the criterion of virtue. Sympathy is the key-note, the central idea of the *Theory of the Moral Sentiments*. In our treatment of the work, we shall consider sympathy (1) as the source of our moral distinctions, and (2) as the source of our judgments of merit and demerit. We shall then treat of the influence of custom, fashion, and utility upon our moral judgments, before taking up in chapter II. the question of our Sense of Duty.

The Moral Sense of Shaftesbury and Hutcheson had been discarded by Hume in favor of sympathy. But this sympathy is, in the *Treatise*, nothing more than a means by which to resolve our feelings of benevolence into a mere sensitivity to pain and pleasure. In the *Enquiry* on the other hand sympathy becomes a feeling of humanity, and Hume's system is almost indistinguishable from that of Hutcheson. Sympathy, also, in both the *Treatise* and the *Enquiry*, is so hopelessly mixed

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1. *Treatise*, Bk. III. Pt. II. Sec. v. p. 517.

2. *Enquiry*, Appendix 1.

with utility, that, as the source of moral distinctions, it was most unsatisfactory. Smith purified this principle of the utilitarian colouring it had received with Hume, and made it the main doctrine of his Theory. Sympathy primarily implies nothing but the power of imitating the feelings of others, but Smith finds it an essential element not only in our moral judgments of others, but also in our judgments of our own character and conduct, and in our sense of duty.

Smith's treatment of sympathy has caused much and serious misunderstanding of his work. It has called forth the most widely different interpretations of his views. The relation of reason to sympathy in the *Theory* is, undoubtedly, the great problem of the work; but that relation is such, that it is impossible to see how one writer can proclaim the system a purely rational one, and the basis of Kant's Moral Philosophy,<sup>1</sup> or how another can regard sympathy as the one great principle, from which Smith reasons, and to which all others are subservient.<sup>2</sup> Reason and sympathy are both important in the *Theory* and an attempt will be made later to show what Smith regards as the true relation of those great principles in a system of morality. We will consider first the treatment of sympathy in the system.

In distinguishing his principle from that of Hume, Smith gives an account of the sympathy of the previous system. Hume held that qualities and actions, according to their utility, produce pleasure, and that with the pleasure thus produced we sympathize. The tendency of qualities to the good of society is the sole cause of approbation, without any suspicion of the concurrence of another motive. Virtue is thus placed in utility, and the pleasure, with which we survey the utility of any quality, arises on account of our sympathy with the happiness of those who are affected by it.<sup>3</sup> This account of the source of moral approbation seems very objectionable to Smith, who says that approbation bestowed for such a cause is just the same as the approval we feel, when we observe a well-contrived machine, a sympathy with the pleasure of those who are benefitted by it. Such an approbation, Smith does not regard as a moral judgment at all.

He insists that true sympathy is something very different from this. According to his principle, we do not sympathize

1. Oncken, *Die Ethik Smith's und Kant's*, p. 100.

2. Buckle, *History of Civilization*, p. 344.

3. *Theory of the Moral Sentiments*. Pt. VIII. Sec. III. Chap. 3.  
Hume, *Treatise*, Bk. III. Pt. III. Sec. I.

with, or enter into the *pleasure* which is received from any source, but into the motives of the agent, and the gratitude of the persons benefited.<sup>1</sup> Utility is neither the first nor the principal source of our approbation. A sentiment of propriety is involved, which is quite distinct from that of utility. It is upon this propriety of sentiments and actions that our approbation is founded, and not upon utility.<sup>2</sup>

The source of sympathy Smith finds in the imagination. It is only by means of this faculty that we can form any conception of the sensations of another. The imagination enables us to do so by representing to us what our own sensations would be in a similar case. We place ourselves in the situation of the other person, and enter, as it were, into his body, and become, in some measure the same person with him. In joy, sorrow, gratitude, or in any other passion whatever, we can, by imagination, enter into the circumstances, which call forth the passion, and thus create in ourselves emotions similar to those of the person principally affected.<sup>3</sup>

We are led to imitate the feelings of another either by the perception of its expression and consequences, or by the circumstances and experiences which occasion it. The latter, Smith considers a much more powerful influence than the former. We are sometimes so influenced by such circumstances and experiences, that we feel for another a passion of which he himself is totally incapable. The passion arises in us through imagination when we put ourselves in his place, though the circumstances which have thus aroused our imagination, have failed to produce the passion in him.<sup>4</sup> The case of those who have lost their reason furnishes an example of this. The compassion of the spectator cannot be the reflection of any sentiment of the sufferer. It must arise altogether from the consideration of what he himself would feel, if he were in the same unhappy situation, and were, at the same time, able to regard it with his present reason and judgment. Another example, given by Smith, of a case in which we feel for others a passion, of which they themselves are altogether incapable, is our sympathy with the dead. Our sorrow, here, can be but an illusion of the

1. *Theory*, Pt. VII. Sec. 3. p. 386.

2. *Ibid.*, Pt. IV. Chap. 2.

3. *Ibid.*, Pt. I. Sec. 1.

4. *Ibid.*, Pt. I. Sec. 1. p. 5.

imagination, and no sympathy with any real sentiment of another.<sup>1</sup>

The great object of sympathy is the propriety of a sentiment or affection. Where we entirely sympathize with the passion of another, we approve of it as just and proper, and suitable to its object.<sup>2</sup> This suitability, of which we can only judge by the concord or dissonance of such affection with our own, Smith calls the "propriety" of the passion.<sup>3</sup> In judging of an affection or passion as proportionate or disproportionated to its exciting cause, the only standard by which we can judge is the correspondent affection in ourselves. We must judge by ourselves; we neither have, nor can have, any other method of judging about them.

Bonar objects, that according to Smith's principle of moral distinctions, the moral judgment passed upon an act would depend upon the particular age and society to which it belonged.<sup>4</sup> But is this at all peculiar to Smith's theory? With the exception of a purely Intuitionist, would not the same have to be said for any system of morality whatever? We can no more get rid of the influence of our age and society than we can of the self; and naturally so, for they are indeed a part of the self. A conception of virtue, for instance, is final in so far as it defines the good as goodness, but as a concrete ideal it is conditioned by the moral progress then achieved, and is, therefore, necessarily inadequate, and can never, from this point of view, be regarded as final.<sup>5</sup>

To return to the consideration of sympathy. When a person is in a situation that excites any passion, it is agreeable

1. *Theory*, Pt. 1. Sec. 1.

NOTE.—In giving this instance of our sorrow with the dead, Smith mentions as "that which is of real importance in their situation, that awful futurity which awaits them." This is the first of the many references to a future state, which Oncken considers the chief distinction between the ethical system of Smith, and that of any previous English writer. He says: "This belief in a future state is the principal point of distinction between Smith's system and that of earlier writers. It is not found in the Moral Philosophy of any previous writer in Great Britain, even where the concept of God was, though incidentally, admitted." (*Die Ethik Smith's und Kant's* p. 90). This is surely a most astonishing statement. Smith's belief in a future state in no way differentiates him from previous English writers. The *Dissertation of Gay*, which appeared in 1731, twenty-eight years before Smith's *Theory of the Moral Sentiments* was published, necessarily implied this belief. And the concept of God was admitted, by no means incidentally, by Cumberland, Cudworth, Clarke, Butler, More, and probably all other moral philosophers of Great Britain.

2. *Theory*, Pt. 1. Sec. 1. Chap. 3.

3. *Ibid.*, Pt. v. 11. Sec. 2.

4. Bonar, *Philosophy and Political Economy*.

5. Green, *Prolegomena to Ethics*. Chap. 5. p. 300.

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to him to know that the spectators of his situation enter with him into all its various circumstances, and are affected by them, in the same manner as he himself is.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, it is pleasant to the spectator to observe the correspondence of his sentiments with those of another. But, though naturally sympathetic, we never conceive for what has befallen another, that degree of passion which animates the person principally concerned. The imaginary change of situation, upon which the sympathy of the spectators is furnished, is but momentary. What they feel will always be, in some respects, different from what the person who is principally interested feels. Compassion can never be exactly the same as original sorrow. These two sentiments may, however, have such a correspondence with one another, as is sufficient for the harmony of society. In order to attain the pleasure of mutual sympathy, nature teaches the spectator to strive, as much as he can, to raise his emotions to a level with that which the object would really produce. And she teaches the person, also, whose passion this object has excited, to bring it down as much as he can to a level with that of the spectator.<sup>2</sup>

Upon the attempt to elevate, and upon the attempt to lower the expression of passion, Smith finds two different sets of virtues. Upon the effort of the spectator to enter into the situation of the person principally concerned, and to raise his emotions to a level with those of the actor, are founded the gentle, the amiable virtues; while upon the effort of the person principally concerned to lower his emotions to correspond with those of the spectator, are founded what Smith calls, "the great, the awful, the respectable" virtues.<sup>3</sup> These are the virtues of self-denial, of self-government, of that command of the passions, which subjects all the movements of our nature, to what our own dignity and honour, and the propriety of our conduct require. This latter class is of the utmost importance. For the most perfect knowledge, if not supported by the most perfect self-command, will not always enable one to do one's duty.<sup>4</sup>

Smith's classification of the passions is, in idea, though not in expression, like that of Shaftesbury. He distinguishes the

1. *Theory*, Pt. 1. Sec. 1. Chap. 2.
2. *Ibid*, Pt. 1. Chap. 4.

NOTE.—In this account of the moderation and elevation of passion, until a point is reached at which the person interested and the spectator can sympathize, Smith seems to have in mind Aristotle's wise man, who seeks the mean. See *Aristotle's Ethics*, Bk. II. Chap. 6.

3. *Theory*, Pt. 1. Chap. 5. p. 20.
4. *Ibid*, Pt. vi. Sec. 3. p. 277.



social, the unsocial, and the selfish passions.<sup>1</sup> The unsocial passions are necessary parts of the character of human nature. Resentment, when guarded and qualified, is even generous and noble.<sup>2</sup> But with all the unsocial passions, our sympathy is divided between the person who feels them, and the person who is the object of them. It is this divided sympathy, which renders the whole set of passions, of which resentment is the type, so ungraceful and disagreeable. There is another set, the opposite of these, which a redoubled sympathy renders peculiarly agreeable and becoming. These are the social passions, such as generosity, humanity, kindness, etc.<sup>3</sup> These please the indifferent spectator upon almost every occasion. His sympathy with the person who feels the passion, exactly coincides with his concern for the person who is the object of it. Between these two opposite sets of passions, there is another, which holds a sort of middle place between the social and the unsocial, which is never so agreeable as is the one set, nor so odious as is the other. Grief and joy upon account of our own private good or bad fortune constitute this third set of passions. Even when excessive, these are never so disagreeable as excessive resentment, because no opposite sympathy can ever interest us against them. And when most suitable to their objects, they are never so agreeable as impartial humanity and just benevolence, because no double sympathy can ever interest us for them.<sup>4</sup>

Smith insists that sympathy cannot, in any sense, be regarded as a selfish principle; and he considers sympathy as the real foundation of those systems which deduce the principle of approbation from self-love. But it is an entirely mistaken idea, he says, that sympathy can ever be selfish.<sup>5</sup> When I sympathize with the sorrow or the indignation of another, it may be pretended that my emotion is founded in self-love, because it arises from bringing the case of that other home to myself; from putting myself in his situation, and thence conceiving what I should feel in the like circumstances. But, though sympathy arises from an imaginary change of situation with the person principally concerned, yet this imaginary change is not supposed to happen to me in my own person and character, but in that of the person with whom I sympathize. My grief is entirely upon

1. *Theory*, Pt. 1. Sec. 2. Chap. 3.
2. *Ibid.*, Pt. 11. Sec. 11. Chap. 3.  
Sidgwick, *History of Ethics*, p. 183.
3. *Theory*, Pt. 1. Sec. 11. Chap. 4.
4. *Ibid.*, Pt. 1. Sec. 11. Chap. 5. p. 42.
5. *Ibid.*, Pt. vi11. Sec. 111. Chap. 1. p. 373.

his account, and not upon my own, and is not, therefore, in the least selfish. That cannot possibly be a selfish passion, which does not arise even from the imagination of anything that has befallen, or that relates to myself. That pity or compassion, which Hobbes explained as the consciousness of a possible misfortune to ourselves, similar to that seen to befall another, is, with Smith, a primary, not a secondary emotion of our nature; an original and not a derivative passion, and one that is purely disinterested in its manifestations. Oncken rightly claims that we cannot possibly find a more energetic opponent of the selfish view of morality than the author of the *Moral Sentiments*.<sup>1</sup>

What Smith terms "conditional" sympathy is important. Our approbation and disapprobation of the sentiments of others do not, in every case, depend upon their agreement or disagreement with our own. This our author admits,<sup>2</sup> but adds that even in those cases, our approbation is ultimately founded upon sympathy. As an illustration, he cites the case of a stranger, whom we may observe to be in deep grief on account of the death of his father. Both he and his father, probably, are unknown to us, but it is impossible that we should not approve of his grief. We have learned from experience that such a misfortune naturally excites such a sorrow; and we know that if we took time to consider his situation fully, and in all its parts, we should, without doubt, most sincerely sympathize with him. It is upon the consciousness of this conditional sympathy, that our approbation of his sorrow is founded, even in those cases, in which that sympathy does not actually take place; and the general rules derived from our preceding experience of what our sentiments would commonly correspond with, correct upon this, as upon many other occasions, the impropriety of our present emotions.

Smith treats this "conditional" sympathy as an exception to the general rule. But is it not much rather itself, ordinarily, the rule, and an originally excited sympathetic feeling the exception? In our constant contact with others, it is impossible that we should react to all of their affections and actions, with an originally excited, sympathetic feeling. New or unusual events may produce this, but the more frequently the case is repeated, so much the more does the emotional character of the judgment disappear.

Smith differentiates his sympathy, as we have seen, from

1. *Die Ethik Smiths und Kants*, p. 87.

2. *Theory*, Part 1. Sec. 1. pp. 6, 12.

that of Hume, in that the sympathy itself, and not utility, is the measure of the propriety of affections and actions. Imagination is the source of sympathy, and our view of the situation which excites the passion, rather than our view of the expression of the passion, is its cause. Sympathy is the only true test of the propriety of passions and actions. For our entire approbation means our complete sympathy, and this sympathy is our standard or measure for judging others. Sympathy is pleasing, both to the person principally concerned, and to the spectator; and, owing to the attempt of the one to lower and of the other to elevate his emotions to the point where this mutually pleasing sympathy may be enjoyed, it becomes the foundation of both the "amiable and gentle" and the "awful and respectable" virtues. As regards the passions, we meet the social with a redoubled sympathy, the unsocial with a divided sympathy; while self-regarding passions, such as joy and grief on our own account, occupy a midway position, and receive a moderated sympathy, neither so extreme as that accorded to the social, nor to the unsocial passions. The real foundation of the selfish systems of morality, which deduce the principle of approbation from self-love, is a misunderstood form of sympathy. But sympathy can never, properly, be regarded as a selfish principle.

#### SECTION II.—SYMPATHY THE SOURCE OF JUDGMENTS OF MERIT AND DEMERIT.

The sympathy of the spectator is, as we have seen, directed to the fitness of the motives, or the propriety of an action. But it is also called forth by the utility of the consequences, or the merit of an action. An action is *proper* when the impartial spectator is able to sympathize with the motive of the agent. It is *meritorious* when he can sympathize also with its end or effect. Propriety demands that the feelings shall be suitable to their object; merit, that the consequences of an act shall be beneficial to others. Propriety and impropriety, then, express the suitability or unsuitability of an affection to its exciting cause; merit and demerit refer to the result which the affection tends to produce.<sup>1</sup> When the tendency of an affection is beneficial, the agent appears to us a proper object of reward; when it is hurtful, he appears to be the proper object of punishment.<sup>2</sup>

Gratitude and resentment are the natural principles, which

1. *Theory*, Pt. II. Sec. I. *Introduction*.

2. *Ibid.*, Pt. II. Chap. I p. 75.

prompt us to reward and punish. But we do not sympathize with the gratitude of one man, merely because another has been the cause of his good fortune, unless this other has been the cause of it from motives of which we can approve. Our sense, therefore, of the good desert of an action, is made up of an indirect sympathy with the person to whom the action is beneficial, and of a direct sympathy with the affections and motives of the agent.<sup>1</sup> Hence the only actions which appear to us deserving of reward, are actions of a beneficial tendency, proceeding from proper motives. The only actions, which seem to demand punishment, are actions of a hurtful tendency proceeding from improper motives. The former, alone, seem to require a reward, because they alone are the approved objects of gratitude, or excite the sympathetic gratitude of the spectator. The latter, alone, deserve punishment because they alone are the approved objects of resentment, or excite the sympathetic resentment of the spectator.<sup>2</sup>

Our sympathy with unavoidable distress is not more real than is our fellow-feeling with just and natural resentment.<sup>3</sup> Smith's treatment of resentment is one of the most important parts of his work. He finds in it a natural means of defence which has been bestowed upon man.<sup>4</sup> Hume had sought in vain for a passion from which our sense of justice might be derived. He concluded that self interest was the original motive to the establishment of justice, and sympathy with public interest the source of the moral approbation which attends that virtue.<sup>5</sup> Both these explanations are rejected by Smith, who finds in our natural sympathy with resentment a sufficient ground and explanation of our sense of justice. Retaliation seems to be the great law, which is dictated to us by nature; as every man doeth so shall it be done to him.<sup>6</sup> Beneficence and generosity, we think are due to the generous and beneficent. The violator of the laws of justice ought to be made to feel himself that evil, which he has done to another; and since no regard to the sufferings of others is capable of restraining him, he ought to be overawed by the fear of his own. The man, also, who is barely innocent, who only observes the laws of justice with regard to others; and merely abstains

1. *Theory*, Pt. II. Sec. I. Chap. 5. p. 82.

2. *Ibid.*, Pt. II. Sec. II. Chap. 1.

3. *Ibid.*, Pt. II. Sec. I. Chap. 5.

4. *Ibid.*, Pt. II. Sec. II. Chap. 1.

5. Hume, *Treatise*, Bk. III. p. 500.

6. *Theory*, Pt. II. Sec. II. Chap. 1.

from hurting his neighbours, can merit only that his neighbours in their turn, should respect his innocence ; and that the same laws should be religiously observed with regard to him. <sup>1</sup>

In thus insisting upon our sympathy with resentment, and finding in it the source of justice, Smith is evidently influenced by Butler. Butler claimed that in resentment every man carries about with him that which affords him demonstration that the rules of justice and equity are to be the guide of his actions. For every man naturally feels an indignation upon seeing instances of cruelty and injustice, and, therefore, cannot commit the same without being self-condemned. Resentment is one of the bonds by which society is held together, a fellow-feeling which each individual has in behalf of the whole species as well as himself. This passion in us is plainly connected with a sense of virtue and vice, of moral good and evil. It is not called forth either by natural evil or by suffering, but its objects are moral evil and injury. Cruelty, injustice, and wrong arouse this indignation, and it is innocently employed against them. <sup>2</sup>

In treating of justice and self-love, Smith admits that each man is much more deeply interested in whatever immediately concerns himself, than in what concerns any other man. Yet, when he views himself in the light in which he is conscious that others will view him, he sees that, to them, he is but one of the multitude, in no respect better than any other in it. Hence he must humble the arrogance of his self-love, and bring it down to something of which others will approve. He knows that if he violates the rules of justice in his treatment of others, the spectator will naturally sympathize with the resentment of the injured, and that he himself will become the object of hatred and indignation. <sup>3</sup> There can be no proper motive for hurting or doing evil to another, with which mankind will sympathize except just indignation for evil, which that other has done to us.

In comparing the virtues of justice and beneficence, Smith finds that the latter is much less essential to the existence of society than is the former. <sup>4</sup> For society may exist from a sense of its utility, without any natural love and affection; but it cannot exist among those who are at all times ready to hurt and to injure one another. Beneficence is free and cannot be extorted by force, the mere want of it tends to do no real

1. *Theory*, Bk. II. Sec. II. Chap. 1.

2. Butler, *Sermon on Resentment*.

3. *Theory*, Pt. II. Sec. II. Chap. 2.

4. *Ibid*, Pt. II. Sec. II. Chap. 3.

positive evil.<sup>1</sup> It may disappoint of the good, which might reasonably have been expected, and, upon that account, it may justly excite dislike and disappointment, but it cannot provoke any resentment of which the spectator will approve.

The observance of justice, on the other hand, is not left to the freedom of our own wills. It may be extorted by force, and its violation exposes to resentment.<sup>2</sup> The violation of justice is injury. It does real and positive hurt to some particular persons, from motives which are naturally disapproved of. It is, therefore, the proper object of resentment and of punishment. In order to enforce the observance of justice, nature has caused that its violation shall be attended with consciousness of ill desert, and the terrors of merited punishment. These form the safe-guards of society. They secure the protection of the weak, and the punishment of the guilty. Smith's view of justice is very different from that of Hutcheson, who made it practically identical with benevolence; and from that of Hume, who insisted that it was an artificial virtue, or an invention of man for the benefit of society.

Smith agrees with Butler in holding firmly to the old retributive theory of punishment. It is necessary for the very subsistence of the world that injustice and wrong shall be punished, and as the natural compassion of men would render this punishment exceedingly difficult, indignation against vice and wickedness forms a balance to this weakness of pity. The law of retaliation is the most important of all natural laws, for upon it justice depends, and upon justice depends the existence of society.<sup>3</sup> Nature, antecedent to all reflections upon the utility of punishment, has impressed upon the human mind in the strongest and most indelible characters, an immediate and instructive approbation of the sacred law of retaliation. The natural gratification of resentment tends, of its own accord, to produce all the political ends of punishment; the correction of the criminal, and the example to the public. It is even of considerable importance, that the evil which is done without design, should be regarded as a misfortune to the doer as well as to the sufferer. Men are taught, by this means, to regard carefully the happiness of others; and to be cautious, lest by any carelessness, they should arouse the resentment, which they feel is ready to

1. *Theory*, Pt. II. Sec. II. Chap. 1.

2. *Ibid*, Pt. II. Sec. 2.

3. *Ibid*, Pt. II. Sec. II. Chap. 2.  
Butler, *Sermon on Resentment*.

burst out against them, if they should, even without design, cause the slightest injury, unnecessarily to another.<sup>1</sup> As a proof that it is not a regard to the preservation of society, which originally interests us in the punishment of crimes committed against individuals, Smith says: "the concern which we take in the fortune and happiness of individuals, does not, in common cases, arise from that which we take in the fortune and happiness of society. As when a small sum is unjustly taken from us, we do not so much prosecute the injury from a regard to the preservation of our whole fortune, as from a regard to that particular sum, which we have lost, so, when a single man is injured or destroyed, we demand the punishment of the wrong that has been done to him, not so much from concern for the general interest of society, as from a concern for the very individual who has been injured."<sup>2</sup> ✓

It is interesting to note in this connection that some modern ethical writers have argued for the retributive theory of punishment as forcibly as Smith does here. Professor James Seth claims that it is just this element of retribution that converts calamity or misfortune into punishment, and says: "the question is not whether, apart from its effects, there would be any moral propriety in the mere infliction of pain for pain's sake. Why separate the act from its effects in this way. In reality they are inseparable. The total conception of punishment may contain various elements indissolubly united. The question is: which is the fundamental? out of which do the others grow? Punishment is an act of justice, and the essence of punishment is retribution. Satisfaction is the primary object of punishment, and the other objects include reformation and deterrence. In all punishment, domestic, social, and even civil, justice should be tempered with mercy and compassion. Yet we must remember that there is a moral order, of which the physical and the civil orders are parts, and that any breach of that order must be rectified. Such rectification is punishment."<sup>3</sup>

Schubert points out, as a defect in the *Theory*, the fact that Smith nowhere discusses the problem of the Will. In any case where the word *Will* or *Free-Will* is mentioned, it bears so

1. *Theory*, Pt. II. Sec. III. Chap. 3.

2. *Ibid.*, Pt. II. Sec. II. Chap. 3.

3. *International Journal of Ethics*. Jan., 1892.

NOTE.—For a similar view, see *International Journal of Ethics*, July, 1896, pp. 479, 483. *Hegel's Theory of Punishment*, by J. Ellis MacTaggart, of Trinity College, Cambridge.

slightly and so accidentally upon the problem that we are not justified in drawing any conclusion as to Smith's real position on this question. While hesitating to express a decided judgment on the question, Schubert is led, for two reasons, to suppose that Smith would naturally occupy the stand-point of Determinism. His reasons are (1) the spirit of the *Theory* is deterministic; (2), if Smith had not approved of Hume's Deterministic views, he would have expressed his disapproval.<sup>1</sup>

In the spirit of the *Theory* I fail to find the Determinism referred to. There would seem to be, on the contrary, in Smith's idea of retributive punishment, and of justice, as dependent upon resentment, the strongest evidence that our author held the opposite view. It would be difficult, otherwise, to give any meaning to his statement that, "Nature has implanted in the human breast that consciousness of ill desert, and those terrors of merited punishment, which attend upon the violation of justice." As to the fact that Smith makes no mention of Hume's Determinism, the two writers occupy so diametrically opposed standpoints in regard to justice, that Smith might, on that account, consider it unnecessary to draw attention to their equally antagonistic positions, on a question so intimately related to justice and resentment, as is that of Free Will and Determinism. If resentment be once admitted as the basis of justice, freedom would seem to be at the same time admitted as a necessary postulate.

While, theoretically, praise and blame are due to the good and evil motive alone, yet, in actual life, Smith finds that the judgment is pronounced on the consequences which follow an action.<sup>2</sup> Such punishments as are inflicted for breaches of what is called civil police or military discipline, are both inflicted and approved of merely from a view to the general interest of society, which, we imagine, cannot otherwise be secured. A sentinel, for example, who falls asleep upon his watch, suffers death by the laws of war, because such carelessness might endanger the whole army. Although such carelessness appears very blameable, yet the thought of this crime does not naturally excite any such resentment as would prompt to such dreadful revenge. Great firmness and resolution are required before a person can bring himself either to inflict it, or to approve of it when it is inflicted by others.<sup>3</sup> It is plainly, here, not the

1. Adam Smith's *Moralphilosophie*. pp. 55-56.

2. *Theory*, Pt. II. Sec. 111. Chap. 2.

3. *Ibid*, Pt. II. Sec. 11. Chap. 3.



motives of the offender, but the consequences of the action, which call forth such severe punishment ✓

Smith considers that this diversity of our theory and practice, in regard to praise and blame, is intended by nature for the happiness and the perfection of the species.<sup>1</sup> If the hurtfulness of the design, and the malevolence of the affection, were alone the causes, which excited our resentment, we should feel all the force of that passion against any person whom we suspected of such a design, even though they had not committed any action of which we could disapprove. Thoughts and intentions would become the objects of punishment, and if the indignation of mankind ran as high against them as against actions, every court of judicature would become a real inquisition. There would be no safety for the most innocent conduct. It is, therefore, a necessary rule of justice in this life, that men are liable to punishment for their actions only, and not for their designs and intentions. Hence this irregularity in human sentiments, concerning merit and demerit, is both salutary and useful although, at first sight, it appears absurd and unaccountable.

In examining this irregularity of our moral sentiments, Smith is considering a difficulty, which is present in every theory, that has ever been proposed. Dugald Stewart, speaking of this, says: "So far as I know, Smith is the first philosopher, who has been fully aware of the importance of the difficulty. And his remarks on the important purposes to which this irregularity of sentiment is subservient, are particularly ingenious and pleasing. Their object is to show, in opposition to what we should be disposed at first to apprehend, that when Nature implanted the seeds of this irregularity in the human breast, her leading intention was to promote the happiness and the perfection of the species."<sup>2</sup>

Sympathy, then, is not only the source of our judgments of right and wrong, or, as Smith terms it, of propriety and impropriety, but also of our judgments of merit and demerit, or of the qualities of deserving reward and punishment. Where there is no approbation of the conduct of the person who confers the benefit, there is little sympathy with the gratitude of him who receives it. And where there is no disapprobation of

1. *Theory*, Pt. II. Sec. III. Chap. 3.

2. *Life and Writings of Dr. Smith*, p. 40.

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the motives of the person who does the mischief, there is no sort of sympathy with the resentment of him who suffers it. Smith, as we have seen, finds resentment a most important quality. It forms a natural basis for justice, which Hume, unable to discover for it a satisfactory foundation in the human mind, had pronounced an artificial and not a natural virtue. He therefore consistently upholds the retributive theory of punishment, as depending upon a justice based on resentment. The question may occur as to whether the case of military discipline instanced by Smith as illustrating our judgment of actions by their consequences, rather than by their motives is not, more correctly, an instance of a too excessive resentment, which has retained its original and unusual force through tradition, and in consequence of its supposed necessity. The fact of our judgment of actions by consequences rather than by motives had led Hutcheson to distinguish between the formally and the materially good; and had led Hume to the doubtful conclusion that while the motive is that which constitutes an action good, we can yet infer, from the pleasure or displeasure produced, the character of the motive.<sup>1</sup> Smith faces the question honestly, and admits the inconsistency of our theory and our practice; but claims that this irregularity is a wise provision of Nature, which leads to the increased happiness and the welfare of mankind.

### SECTION III.—THE INFLUENCE OF UTILITY, CUSTOM, AND FASHION UPON OUR SENTIMENTS OF MORAL APPROBATION AND DISAPPROBATION. ✓

Smith's discussion of the influence of Utility upon our moral sentiments is mainly a criticism of Hume's principle of sympathy, which was called forth by utility, and a justification of his own principle of sympathy with propriety. According to Hume, the utility of any object pleases by perpetually suggesting the pleasure which it is fitted to promote. Every time we look at it, we are put in mind of this pleasure; and the object thus becomes the source of perpetual satisfaction and enjoyment.<sup>2</sup>

Smith, on the other hand, claims that even in regard to a

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1. Hume, *Treatise*, Bk. II. Pt. III. Sec. I.  
*Theory*, Bk. III. Pt. II. Sec. I.
  2. *Theory*, Pt. IV. Chap. I.

production of art, it is the fitness, the happy contrivance, the propriety, that we value rather than the end for which the object was intended. The exact adjustment of means for obtaining any pleasure is often of more importance to us than the very pleasure, in the attainment of which the value of the means would seem to consist. Even as thus stated, Smith does not seem to have a good argument against Hume. Within the moral sphere, where propriety, the suitability of a passion to its exciting cause, was itself an end, Smith's principle appeared of much greater value than Hume's sympathy with utility ; but the case is very different when we come to apply these principles to an object, or to a work of art. We must, surely, in this case regard the end or aim for which the object was created, as more valuable than the means used to bring about that end. The point upon which Smith is insisting here, will, however, be better understood if we take some of his own illustrations.

A person comes into a room, and finds all the chairs standing in the middle of the room. Rather than see them continue in that disorder, he takes the trouble to set them all in their places with their backs to the wall. The whole propriety of this new arrangement arises from the superior convenience of leaving the floor free and disengaged. To attain this convenience, he voluntarily puts himself to more trouble than all he could have suffered from the want of it. For nothing was easier than to have set himself down upon one of the chairs, which is, probably, what he does when his labour is over. It seems, therefore, what he wanted was not so much the convenience, as that arrangement of things which promotes it. Yet it is the convenience, which ultimately recommends that arrangement, and bestowes upon it the whole of its propriety and beauty.

This instance, while it shows plainly that the question under discussion is that of the relative importance of means and of ends, does not add anything to Smith's side of the argument. The propriety of arrangement spoken of, is entirely derived from the utility or the convenience which it tends to promote, and must be regarded as subordinate to this utility. This instance is, therefore, in favour of Hume's standard of utility as opposed to propriety. For even granting that the end in view, the utility, has practically dropped out of sight, yet it is that end which bestows all that they possess of value upon the means ; and in this, as in any other case, the end is best secured, not by being kept constantly before the mind, but by concentrating the attention upon the means best adapted to secure the

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end. With this concentration of the attention, it would be strange if its immediate objects did not sometimes possess for the mind a significance and importance, sufficient to overbalance for the time, that of the end to which they are subservient; but yet these means do not appear of greater value than the end to which they are the means.

Smith quotes and endorses Hume's opinion that "no qualities of the mind are approved of as virtuous, but such as are useful and agreeable either to the person himself or to others."<sup>1</sup> This, Smith says, is a fact, but, nevertheless, it is not the view of this beauty or utility, which is either the first or the principal source of our approbation. Those useful qualities, and the actions which flow from them, meet with approbation, much more upon account of their great propriety, than upon account of their utility. Utility bestows upon them an additional beauty, and thus recommends them still further to our approbation. But this beauty is not easily perceived, and is, certainly, not the quality which first recommends such actions to the majority of men.

While Smith utterly rejects utility as an ethical principle, and even tries to show here that it is not the cause of our approbation of any object or work of art, he yet admits one case in which the principle of utility is of the first importance. Even in this case, however, its importance is not real, but is due to an illusion of the imagination. The good which results from this illusion, however, is real, and is of the very first consequence. This important deception, upon which industrial progress mainly depends, is the influence that the utility of wealth and greatness has upon the imagination.<sup>2</sup> All commercial prosperity, and all progress in the arts and sciences are due to this false view of the utility of wealth. Owing to this illusion of the imagination, wealth comes to be regarded as one of the great ends and aims of life, and as worthy of all the trouble and anxiety which its attainment involves.

In considering the importance of this illusion of the imagination in regard to wealth, and the great and momentous interests it subserves, Smith endeavours to show that the principle best adapted to secure this utility, the principle of commercial ambition or selfishness, brings about a very similar state of affairs, to that which would have resulted, had the

1 *Theory*, Pt. iv. Chap. 3.

2 *Ibid.*, Pt. iv. Chap. 1.

opposite principle of sympathy been employed. There are many ends of life besides wealth, but, this given as an end, selfishness, the great principle of economics, offers the best means of securing it.<sup>1</sup> Each man is, naturally, better fitted to take care of himself than of any other person. He is, also, more deeply interested in what concerns himself than in what concerns any one else. His chief business is to govern the affairs of his own daily life, but, in doing this, however, while intending only his own gain, he promotes also an end which was no part of his intention, the good of society. And this end he could not so well have promoted, if he had deliberately aimed at the public good.

Sympathy is thus the great ethical principle, and selfishness the great principle of Economics, and each of these is supreme in its own sphere. But even between those distant and dissimilar principles there is a connection. For selfishness, as we have seen, proves to be a principle of development and works out the same beneficial results in society, that would have been promoted by benevolence or sympathy. The wealthy landowner may have no thought for anyone but himself, and may most selfishly regard the produce of his fields, but he cannot possibly consume the whole harvest. His employees derive from his extravagance a share of the necessaries of life, which they never would have obtained from his humanity or his justice. The produce of the soil maintains at all times nearly that number of inhabitants it is capable of maintaining. The rich may select that which is most precious, but they cannot really consume very much more than the poor. And, in spite of their selfishness, though they intend only their own comfort, they divide with the poor the produce of all their improvements.<sup>2</sup> The necessaries of life are distributed in an almost similar nanner, to what they would have been if the earth had been divided into equal portions among all its inhabitants. The influence of utility upon the imagination is thus of great Economic value. While utterly useless as a principle of morality, it is, nevertheless, of supreme importance for Economics, and, indirectly, brings about what we may regard as ethical or moral results.

The influence of custom is also important both from the aesthetic and from the moral point of view.<sup>3</sup> Smith ascribes all

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1. *Theory*, Pt. II. Sec. II. Chap. 2.
  2. *Ibid*, Pt. IV. Chap. 1.
  3. *Ibid*, Pt. I. Chap. 5.

changes in architecture and literature, as well as those in dress and furniture, to this cause. He holds that it is because artistic productions are more lasting, so that a poem or a musical composition may continue for ages to remain the same and be in vogue, that we are unwilling to allow that custom has much influence upon our judgment in regard to them. We imagine that these arts are founded upon reason and nature, not upon habit and prejudice. This, however, Smith regards as an error, and claims that the influence of custom and fashion is not more absolute over dress and furniture, than over architecture, poetry, and music.

The influence of custom and fashion upon moral sentiments, while not so great, is similar to what it is ever, where else. Those who have been educated amid vice become so accustomed to it that they lose largely the sense of its impropriety, and fail to understand or appreciate the evil or the punishment due to it. Each age and country, also, regards that degree of each quality, which is commonly to be met with in those who are esteemed among themselves, as the golden mean of that particular talent or virtue. This varies according as different circumstances render different qualities more or less habitual to them; hence their sentiments concerning the exact propriety of character and behaviour vary accordingly.

Custom and fashion do not exercise so great influence in regard to the general style of behaviour and character, as they do concerning the propriety and impropriety of particular usages. In matters of great importance, it is expected that there shall be no variation in conduct. Truth and justice, for example, are demanded of all. It is only in matters of small consequence, or with regard to particular usages, that the influence of custom is destructive of good morals, and is capable of establishing as lawful, particular usages, which are contrary to the plainest principle of right and wrong.<sup>1</sup>

In this account of the influence and importance of custom, Smith surely goes too far in regarding the great revolutions which have taken place in art and in literature, as simply a change in fashion. The conditions which bring about the former, must lie deep in the spirit and the needs of the time. If the change had not been, unconsciously, first wrought in the minds of the people, such a revolution could never have influenced

those who were unprepared for it. So also in moral relations, though custom and fashion are, undoubtedly, influential in certain classes of society, yet the different moral perceptions are rooted deep in the conditions of the people and the age. Balfour considers this question of the influence of custom and fashion from the Naturalistic point of view. He agrees with Smith in regarding art and literature as dependent in their changes upon the same principles as the changes in dress and furniture. He says: "The aesthetic likings which fashion originates, however trivial, are perfectly genuine; and to an origin similar in kind, however different in dignity and permanence, should be traced much of the characteristic quality, which gives its special flavour to the higher artistic sentiments of each successive generation."<sup>1</sup> The principle to which Balfour ascribes all such artistic sentiments and aesthetic changes of fashion is a universal "tendency to agreement," which he describes, however, as by no means a simple, undecomposable social force, but rather as highly complex, having as one of its most important elements the instinct of uncritical imitation. This instinct he regards as the very basis of all effective education and it is this same instinct of imitation which is the fundamental element in sympathy upon which Smith bases his system. Balfour criticises the statement that "the artist is the creation of his age," and maintains that while the action of the age is important, its importance consists in its destructive rather than in its creative character, since it does not so much produce as select. While the influence of environment in moulding and developing genius is great, yet innate and original genius is not the creation of any age, but is a biological accident, the incalculable product of two sets of ancestral tendencies. The age does not create these biological accidents, but chooses from them, encourages those which are in harmony with its spirit, and crushes out and sterilises the rest. Aesthetic likes and dislikes are not usually connected with the object which happens to excite them by any permanent aesthetic bond at all. Their true cause is to be found in fashion, in that *tendency to agreement* which is so useful, and plays so important a part in social economy. This according to Balfour, is the only possible view of aesthetics consistent with Naturalism. Yet, he admits that mankind will not easily reconcile themselves to this view. "We must believe that somewhere and for some Being there shines an unchanging splendour of beauty of which in nature

1. Balfour, *Foundations of Belief*, Pt. 1. Chap. 2.

and in Art we see, each of us from our own standpoint, only passing gleams and stray reflections, whose different aspects we cannot now co-ordinate, whose import we cannot fully comprehend, but which at least is something other than the chance play of subjective sensibility or the far-off echo of ancestral lusts. No such mystical creed can, however, be squeezed out of observation and experiment. Science cannot give it us; nor can it be forced into any sort of consistency with the Naturalistic Theory of the Universe!"<sup>1</sup>

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## CHAPTER II.—THE NATURE OF CONSCIENCE.

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### SECTION I.—CONSCIENCE AND SYMPATHY.

In treating of morality, there are, Smith says, two questions to be considered. First: wherein does virtue consist, or what is the tone, temper, or tenor of conduct, which constitutes the excellent and praiseworthy character, the character which is the natural object of esteem, honour and approbation? And, secondly: by what power or faculty in the mind is it, that this character, whatever it is, is recommended to us; or, in other words, how, and by what means does it come to pass that the mind prefers one tenor of conduct to another, denominates the one right, and the other wrong, considers one as the object of approbation, honour, and reward, and the other of blame, censure and punishment?<sup>2</sup> In the preceding chapters our aim was to explain how, according to Smith, we learn to judge of the conduct of our neighbors; and, as we have seen, he there answered his two great questions in regard to morality by finding that virtue consists in *propriety*, or in that degree of sentiment or affection, which is fitting and suitable to its exciting cause: and by finding in sympathy, the sympathetic feelings of the impartial and well-informed spectator, the power or faculty of the mind which recommends this character to us.

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1. *Foundations of Belief*, Pt. 1. Chap. 11. p. 66.

2. *Theory of the Moral Sentiments*, Pt. VII. Sec. 1.



The chapter, with which we are now to deal, is concerned with a totally distinct enquiry: Smith's opinions in regard to our judgments concerning our own sentiments and conduct, and particularly our sense of duty. In reference to our own conduct, Smith answers the two great questions of morality very similarly to what he did when considering them in their application to the conduct of others. Virtue consists in an exalted propriety, and it is by means of the sympathy of the impartial spectator that this virtue is recommended to us. The work of the impartial spectator is, however, much more difficult when our own conduct forms the object of judgment. For it is comparatively easy to judge impartially of another, but exceedingly difficult to become the impartial spectators of our own conduct. Hence Smith finds it necessary to introduce much more prominently into this part of the discussion, the function and importance of that which is really the great underlying principle of his system, namely reason. Even in judging others, reason was found to be indispensable. For in all cases of conditional sympathy, we are dependent upon general rules, and general rules are formed by reason. Much more are we dependent upon reason when judging of the propriety of our own sentiments and actions. For in order that we may form any impartial judgment in reference to our own conduct, general rules are necessary, that we may not be unduly influenced by self love and passion, which would tend to bias our judgments, or the judgments of the impartial spectator, in favour of ourselves.<sup>1</sup>

The relation of this fundamental principle of reason to sympathy, the central doctrine of the *Theory*, has been already mentioned, and will later be considered more at length. We have now to see what is implied in Smith's idea of Conscience.

The principle by which we naturally approve or disapprove of our own conduct is very similar to that by which we judge concerning the conduct of others. We approve or disapprove of our own conduct, according as we feel that when we place ourselves in the situation of another man, and view our actions, as it were, with his eyes, and from his station, we either can or cannot entirely enter into and sympathize with the sentiments and motives which influenced them. The only way in which we can justly estimate our own sentiments and motives is by endeavoring to view them with the eyes of other people, or as

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1. *Theory*, Pt. VII. Sec. III. Chap. 2.  
*Ibid*, Pt. III. Chap. 4.

other people are likely to view them. We endeavour to examine our own conduct, as we imagine any fair and impartial spectator would examine it. If, upon placing ourselves in his situation, we thoroughly enter into all the passions and motives which influenced our conduct, we approve of it by sympathy with the approbation of this supposed equitable Judge. If otherwise, we enter into his disapprobation, and condemn it.<sup>1</sup> It is, thus, by means of sympathy alone, that we can make a just decision in estimating our own motives and conduct.

Our first moral criticisms are exercised upon the character and conduct of other people, and we observe very quickly how each of these affects us. But we soon learn that other people are equally frank with regard to our own conduct. We become anxious to know how far we deserve their censure or applause, and whether we must necessarily appear such as they represent us to be. We begin, therefore, to examine our own passions and conduct, and to consider how these must appear to them, by considering how they would appear to us if in their situation. We suppose ourselves the spectators of our own behaviour, and endeavour to imagine what effect it would, in this light, produce upon us. If, in this view, it pleases us, we are tolerably well satisfied. We can be more indifferent about the actual opinions of others, when we are sure that we are the natural and proper objects of approbation.

We here become the impartial spectators of our own conduct, and, in sitting thus in judgment upon ourselves, the self becomes the highest court of appeal in all cases of morality. From our observations upon the conduct of others, reason has formed rules and measures by which to judge,<sup>2</sup> and these rules, each man, as an impartial spectator, applies to himself. In endeavoring to examine and to pass sentence upon my own conduct, I divide myself, as it were, into two persons. I, the examiner and the judge, represent a different character from the other, I, the person whose conduct is examined into and judged of. The first 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. The second is the agent, the person whom I properly call myself, and of whose

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1. *Theory*, Pt. III. Chap. 1.

2. *Ibid*, Pt. VII. Sec. III. Chap. 2.

conduct, under the character of a spectator, I am endeavoring to form some opinion. The first is the judge, the second the person judged of. <sup>1</sup>

SECTION II.—CONSCIENCE IDENTIFIED WITH REASON.

Conscience is, in the *Theory*, identified with reason. Speaking of Plato's system, Smith says: "The judging faculty, Plato called, as it is very properly called, reason, and considered it the governing principle of the whole. Under this appellation, he comprehended not only that faculty by which we judge of truth and falsehood, but that by which we judge, also, of the propriety or impropriety of desires or affections."<sup>2</sup> When considering the motive power to self-sacrifice, Smith plainly identifies reason and conscience. He says: "it (this motive power) is not humanity, it is not benevolence etc. It is a stronger power, a more forcible motive, which exerts itself upon such occasions. It is *reason*, principle, *conscience*, the inhabitant of the breast, the man within, the great judge and arbiter of conduct."<sup>3</sup> Smith regards the judgment of conscience as very different from any individual judgment of man. He says: "an appeal lies from the sentence of man, to that of a much higher tribunal, to the tribunal of conscience, to that of the supposed impartial and well-informed spectator, to that of the man within the breast, the great judge and arbiter of conduct. The jurisdiction of the man without is founded 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 praise-worthiness and in the aversion to blame-worthiness."<sup>4</sup> The judgments of Conscience are thus very different from those of any *individual* spectator.

In estimating our own merit, in judging of our own conduct and character, there are two different standards to which we compare them. The one is the idea of exact propriety and perfection which conscience sets up for the guidance of the life; the other is that degree of approximation to this idea, which is commonly attained in the world, or which is the recognized standard of our own age and country. The wise and virtuous man directs his principal attention to the standard of exact propriety and perfection.<sup>5</sup> His great object is not to act in such a manner as to obtain the actual approbation of those around him, but to act

1. *Theory*, Pt. III. Sec. III. Chap. I.

2. *Ibid*, Pt. VII. Sec. II. Chap. I.

3. *Ibid*, Pt. III. Chap. 3.

4. *Ibid*, Pt. III. Chap. 2.

5. *Ibid*, Pt. VII. Sec. 3.

in such a manner as to render himself the just and proper object of that approbation. His satisfaction with his own conduct depends much more upon this consciousness of deserving approbation, than upon that of really enjoying it. 1

Smith holds that Conscience is not infallible. The violence and injustice of our selfish passions are sometimes so great as utterly to pervert our judgments concerning our own conduct. The "man within the breast" is induced to make a report very different from what the real circumstances of the case demand. 2 There are two different occasions on which we examine our own conduct, and endeavour to view it in the light in which the impartial spectator would view it. First, when we are about to act, and, second, when we have acted. In both cases our views, are very apt to be partial. When we are about to act, passion seldom allows us to consider what we are doing with the candour of an indifferent person. When the action is over, although we can then enter into the sentiments of the indifferent spectator more coolly than before, yet it is so disagreeable to us to think ill of ourselves, that we often purposely turn away our view from those circumstances which might render our judgment unfavourable.

The impartial spectator is not only liable to be influenced by our own passions, so as to give a judgment more favourable to us than the case warrants, but he is also liable to err in the other direction. When the judgment of others, that of all the real spectators, is unimously and violently against us, the impartial spectator seems to give his opinion in our favour with fear and hesitation. On this account, Smith likens the impartial spectator to the demigods of the poets, who, though partly of immortal, are yet partly of mortal extraction. When his judgments are directed by the sense of praise-worthiness and blame-worthiness, he seems to act suitably to his divine extraction. When he is astonished and confounded by the judgments of ignorant men, he discovers his connection with mortality, and acts suitably rather to the human than to the divine part of his origin.

In order to guard ourselves against the delusions and the self-deceit brought about by our selfish passions, nature leads us to form insensibly, by observations upon the conduct of others, general rules, concerning what is fit and proper to be done. We observe that some actions shock us, and also shock other people.

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1. *Theory*, Pt. III. Chap. 2.

2. *Ibid.*, Pt. III. Chap. 4.

We conclude that all such actions are to be avoided, and we fix this general rule in our minds, in order to correct the misrepresentations of self-love.<sup>1</sup> It is from reason that we derive all those general maxims and ideas, and it is by these that we regulate the greater part of our moral judgments.<sup>2</sup>

A regard for general rules constitutes our sense of duty, a principle which Smith pronounces of the greatest consequence in human life. It is the only principle by which the bulk of mankind are capable of directing their actions.<sup>3</sup> Our reverence for these general rules is further enhanced by an opinion, which is first impressed by nature, and afterwards confirmed by reasoning and philosophy, that these important rules of morality are the commands of the Deity, who will finally reward the obedient and punish the transgressors.<sup>4</sup> Although the sense of duty should be the ruling and the governing principle of life, yet Smith maintains, that it should not, by any means, be the sole principle of our conduct.<sup>5</sup> It depends upon the natural agreeableness or deformity of an affection itself, how far our actions ought to arise from it, or entirely proceed from a regard to the general rule. The actions to which the benevolent affections prompt, ought to proceed as much from the passions as from any regard to general rules of conduct. We ought, on the contrary, to resist injuries more from the sense that they deserve and are the proper objects of resentment; and ought always to punish with reluctance, and more from a sense of duty, a sense of the propriety of punishing, than from any savage disposition to revenge.<sup>6</sup> It depends, also, partly upon the precision and exactness, or the looseness and the inaccuracy of the rules themselves how far our conduct ought to proceed entirely from a regard to them.

The general rules of almost all of the virtues: of prudence of charity, of generosity, of friendship, are in many respects loose and inaccurate. They admit of many exceptions and require so many modifications, that it is scarcely possible to regulate our conduct entirely by a regard to them. The general rules of justice, on the other hand, determine with the greatest exactness, every external action which it requires. These rules are perfectly clear and most undoubted; they are precise, accurate, and indis-

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1. *Theory*, Pt. III. Chap. 4.
  2. *Ibid.*, Pt. VII. Sec. III. Chap 2.
  3. *Ibid.*, Pt. III. Chap. 4.
  4. *Ibid.*, Pt. III. Chap. 5.
  5. *Ibid.*, Pt. III. Chap. 6.
  6. *Ibid.*, Pt. VI. Sec. 3.

pensable. It may be awkward and pedantic to affect too strict an adherence to the common rules of many of the virtues; but there is no pedantry in sticking fast by the rules of justice. On the contrary, the most sacred regard is due to them, and the actions, which this virtue requires, are never so properly performed, as when the chief motive for performing them is a reverential regard to those general rules, which require them.<sup>1</sup> Smith's opposition to Hume is no where more clearly shown than in his treatment of justice. We have already noted, that where Hume pronounced this virtue artificial, depending upon the contrivance of man, Smith regarded it as the chief of the virtues, and the corner stone of society. He here again emphasizes its preeminence insisting on the precision, exactness, and supreme importance of the general rules by which the acts required by this virtue are regulated.

#### SECTION III.—CONSCIENCE THE SOURCE OF THE MORAL IDEAL.

Guided by general rules, conscience forms within us an idea of exact propriety and perfection.<sup>2</sup> There exists in the mind of every man such an idea, gradually formed from his observations upon the character and conduct both of himself, and of other people. It is the slow, gradual, and progressive work of conscience, the great judge and arbiter of conduct.<sup>3</sup> The perfection of this ideal depends upon the care and attention which each man bestows upon its formation. The wise and virtuous man forms a much more correct image of it than a man of the opposite character, and endeavours more and more to realise it in his life. But, in doing so, he is attempting to imitate the work of a divine artist which can never be equalled.

This perfect virtue, which the sense of duty leads us to strive after, is not any way dependent upon the opinion of others. To be amiable and to be meritorious, that is to deserve love and to deserve reward, are the great characteristics of virtue; and to be odious and punishable of vice.<sup>4</sup> Man naturally desires not only praise, but praise-worthiness, or to be that thing which, though it should be praised by nobody, is however, the natural and proper object of praise. He dreads not only blame, but blame-worthiness, or to be that thing which, though it should be blamed by nobody, is, however, the natural and proper object

1. *Theory*, Pt. III. Chap. 6.

2. *Ibid*, Pt. VI. Chap. 3.

3. *Ibid*, Bk. III. Sec. 3.

4. *Ibid*, Pt. II. Chap. 1.

of blame. Instead of the love of praise-worthiness being derived from the love of praise, the love of praise is largely derived from that of praise-worthiness.

Virtue, in every particular instance, necessarily pleases for its own sake. To obtain approbation, even where it is due, may sometimes be of no great importance; but to deserve approbation must always be of the highest. A man's self-approbation if not the highest, is at least the principal thing about which he can or ought to be anxious. The love of it is the love of virtue. It is not the thought of being hated and despised that we are afraid of, but that of being hateful and despicable.<sup>1</sup> Moreover it must be noted that virtue and happiness are united in the *Theory*. Happiness is said to consist in tranquillity and enjoyment. Without tranquillity there can be no enjoyment, and where there is tranquillity, but little else is required. Peace of mind does not, to any great extent depend upon outward circumstances. Virtue is the most desirable thing in life, for it is always accompanied by self-satisfaction, and with self-satisfaction there never can be misery and wretchedness.<sup>2</sup>

The supreme judge of conduct, then, is the self. An appeal lies from the sentence of our fellow men to this higher tribunal—the tribunal of conscience. That which prompts us to sacrifice our own interests to the interests of others is not really benevolence. It is a much stronger power and more forcible motive: the love of what is honourable and noble, a sense of the grandeur and dignity and superiority of our own character, which is given by reason, or the principle of conscience. Without the approbation of the self, of this highest principle of our nature, no action can, properly, be called virtuous.<sup>3</sup> The really virtuous man governs his whole behaviour and conduct according to the sentiments and emotions which conscience prescribes and approves.<sup>4</sup>

The sentiment or affection of the heart from which any action proceeds is that upon which its whole virtue must ultimately depend. The grand motive of life must be the desire and attempt to realise an ideal which has been divinely implanted in man. In order that there may be any progress in the realisation of this ideal, society is necessary.<sup>5</sup> To feel much for

1. *Theory*, Pt. III. Chap. 2.

2. *Ibid.*, Pt. VII. Sec. 11. Chap. 1.

3. *Ibid.*, Pt. VII. Sec. 111. Chap. 2.

*Ibid.*, Pt. VI. Chap. 1.

4. *Ibid.*, Pt. III. Chapters 3 and 6.

5. *Ibid.*, Pt. I. Chap. 1. Sec. 5.

others and little for ourselves, to restrain our selfish, and strengthen our benevolent affections, constitutes the perfection of human nature, and can alone produce the harmony of sentiments and passions in which their whole grace and propriety consists. As, to love our neighbors as we love ourselves, is the great law of Christianity, so the great precept of nature is to love ourselves only as we love our neighbors, or what comes to the same thing, as our neighbor is capable of loving us. Society is thus necessary for the development of moral character. But it is necessary, also, in a yet more fundamental way than is here implied. For, as we have already seen, we are not only dependent upon others as a means for the perfection of moral character, but, also, for our first knowledge of moral distinctions. For these are formed, in the first instance, from our observations upon the conduct of others.

We find, then, that conscience, in the *Theory* is identified with reason; and in order to present its judgments upon our sentiments and conduct from being influenced by self-love and passion, reason is said to form, from our observations upon the conduct of others, general rules by which its decisions may be guided. We thus become, by means of reason, or conscience, the impartial spectators of our own conduct, and the self is thus constituted the highest court of appeal in all cases of morality. Moreover our reverence for general rules constitutes our sense of duty and we come at length, to regard those rules as the laws of God. The sense of duty is not here, as it is in Kant's system, the sole principal of morality, but it is, nevertheless the ruling and the governing principle, and the only principle by which the majority of men are capable of guiding their conduct. It depends upon the natural agreeableness of an affection itself, in how far it, or our sense of duty, should have the preëminence in regulating conduct. In acts which should spring from affection or benevolence, the very highest form of conduct must depend upon the affection, and cannot arise solely from our sense of duty. All acts of justice, on the other hand, should proceed entirely from our respect for the general rules of this virtue, as justice is best secured by the most exact compliance with the demands of duty.

Guided by general rules, conscience forms within us a perfect ideal of conduct, and our sense of duty leads us constantly to strive to realise this ideal. This perfect virtue is not, in any way, dependent upon the opinion of others: it, in every instance necessarily pleases for its own sake. Self-approbation is the principal thing about which we can, or ought to be anxious.



Virtue is the most desirable thing in life for it is always accompanied by self-satisfaction, and self-satisfaction is that which is most essential to happiness.

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### CHAPTER III. CONCLUSION.

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#### SECTION I. — RELATION OF THE THEORY OF THE MORAL SENTIMENTS TO OTHER ETHICAL SYSTEMS.

In proceeding now to sum up the results of our investigation, we may first consider the relation of Smith's *theory* to the systems of the preceding writers of the Moral Sense School. The great work of these writers was, as we have seen, their recognition of the importance of the sentient element in morality, and the proof that man has not only instincts and inclinations toward his own good, but that he has equally important natural tendencies which seek to promote the welfare of others. Shaftesbury insisted upon the natural harmony and just proportions of egoism and altruism, maintaining that the one is quite as natural and as necessary to man as is the other. Shaftesbury also claimed that it was not reason which led men either to be benevolent, or to distinguish right and wrong, but a sense, which he called the Moral Sense. The judgments of this sense, however, when uncorrupted, are always in harmony with reason. Hutcheson, developing Shaftesbury's ideas, found all virtue in benevolence, which he proclaimed the only object of the Moral Sense. The pursuit of the good of others is for him prompted by an instinct and approved by the Moral Sense. Our moral sense and affections determine the end, but it is reason which finds out the means. Virtue is to be found, however, not in reason but in kind affections towards the good of others. Hume could see no necessity for the introduction of a new factor, such as the Moral Sense, into human nature when there already existed, in sympathy, that which might, or, as he claimed, did perform the work allotted to this new sense. More important still, Hume utterly ignores reason, or degrades it to the rank of a passion. He holds, that, by reason, we only mean that passion, which, in the particular instance, has happened to secure

the mastery. Moral judgments rest only upon the feeling of pleasure or displeasure which an action excites in the spectator. Sympathy thus becomes the source of moral distinctions, but it is entirely a sympathy with pleasure and pain; a pleasure and pain which, Hume maintained, accompanied all moral actions. Right and wrong thus become synonymous with pleasure and pain, and with Hume complete ethical subjectivity is reached. The transference of moral judgments from the actor to the spectator who pronounces actions good or bad *through his sympathy with pleasure and pain*, is the characteristic feature that distinguishes Hume's ethical system from its predecessors.<sup>1</sup>

To Adam Smith this appeared a most objectionable method of settling moral questions. Hence, while he makes sympathy or fellow feeling the central doctrine of his system, he purifies it from all the utilitarian colouring it had received in Hume's theory, and makes the spectator sympathise not with pleasure and pain, but with the sentiments and motives of the person acting, and the gratitude and resentment of the person affected by the action. Smith thus receives and develops the doctrine of the moral sense, which had been transformed by Hume into a utilitarian sympathy. But it is also to be noted that he likewise reconsiders the function of reason, which Hume had completely destroyed. Indeed, the most important and the most difficult doctrine of the *Theory* is Smith's view of the necessity of both reason and sympathy for the formation of any moral judgment, and the mutual relation of these great fundamental principles.

The problem regarding the function of reason and sympathy in the system, has called forth two widely differing interpretations of Smith's views. By one class of writers sympathy is said to be the one great principle from which Smith reasons, and to which all others are subservient,<sup>2</sup> "the basis of the whole of moral philosophy."<sup>3</sup> Another writer maintains that sympathy is no more the fundamental principle in Smith's ethics than it is in that of Kant, and contends that they who regard it as such totally misunderstand the system.<sup>4</sup> This difference of opinion is not surprising, and may largely be accounted for by a fact, which has caused a great deal of misunderstanding and misrepresentation of Smith's work generally. This fact is Smith's peculiar method of reasoning. Buckle says

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1. Erdmann, *History of Philosophy*, Vol. 11. p. 132.
  2. Buckle, *History of Civilization*, p. 344.
  3. Erdmann, *History of Philosophy*, Vol. 11. p. 133.
  4. Oncken, *Die Ethik Smith's and Kant's* p. 100.

of this: "in that peculiar form of deduction, which consists in a deliberate suppression of part of the principles, Adam Smith stands alone."<sup>1</sup> It is indeed true that in showing the applications of one principle Smith frequently loses sight of all else. His ethics, for example, knows nothing but altruism, his economics nothing but egoism. With both of these principles he is in thorough sympathy, but in considering the one totally ignores the other.

Within his ethical work the same thing is noticeable. Smith is here utterly opposed to egoism, and regards his view of sympathy as the characteristic feature of his work, and as that by means of which he has made an advance on all previous ethical writers. He therefore makes sympathy the central doctrine of his system, and emphasizes the fact that it is *by means of* this principle alone that we are able to form our moral judgments. Following his usual method of reasoning, he is almost oblivious to any phase of the question except that, which, for the purpose of his present discussion, appears of paramount importance. Hence, while he fully recognizes, and ultimately acknowledges, reason as absolutely indispensable to our moral judgments, a large part of his work is necessarily spent upon the explanation and vindication of that which he regards as his peculiar contribution to the development of ethical thought—the function of sympathy. While thus engaged he makes but little reference to reason, which he, nevertheless, considers the great fundamental principle of morality. For, notwithstanding the prominence given to sympathy, Smith recognizes, as few ethical writers have done, the importance to morality of both reason and sense, and hence deserves to rank far above the philosophers of the Moral Sense school. Ethics, all questions of conduct, arise out of the fact of the duality of man's nature, and an extreme insistence upon either reason or sense, to the exclusion of the other, cannot fail to produce a false view of morality. Reason and sense are equally necessary, for no moral judgment can ever be formed, which does not involve those two elements. That this is the view held by Smith, we hope to make clear.

#### SECTION II.—FUNCTION OF REASON AND OF SENSE IN THE THEORY OF THE MORAL SENTIMENTS.

We shall consider first the opinions of some writers who hold that reason is utterly ignored in the *Theory*. Sidgwick says: "What we call our conscience is really sympathy with the feel-

1. *History of Civilization*, p. 344.

ings of an imaginary impartial spectator, looking at our conduct."<sup>1</sup> Haldane says: "Smith makes the nature and validity of ethical principles depend on the state of mind of an individual."<sup>2</sup> Schubert asks: 'why, above all things, does Smith accept such a principle as the applause of the world for the explanation of conscience?'<sup>3</sup> We shall endeavor, in answering these objections to Smith's system, to show the equal importance of reason and sympathy in the *Theory*.

Let us first examine Sidgwick's statement: "What we call our conscience is really sympathy with the feelings of an imaginary, impartial spectator, looking at our conduct." This is really not what Smith means by conscience. It is, indeed, by means of sympathy that conscience recognizes right and wrong,<sup>4</sup> but, as we have seen in chapter II, conscience itself is not sympathy or feeling at all, but reason. There would appear to be no justification in the *Theory* for this identification of sympathy with conscience. A consideration of one or two passages will show conclusively that Smith did not regard them as one. He says: "The word conscience does not necessarily devote any moral faculty by which we approve or disapprove. "Our moral judgments would be extremely uncertain and precarious if they depended altogether upon what is liable to so many variations as immediate sentiment and feeling," "It is by reason that we discover the general rules of justice, prudence, generosity, etc., according to which we endeavour, as well as we can, to model the tenor of our conduct."<sup>5</sup> "An appeal lies to the tribunal of their own conscience to that of the supposed impartial and well-informed spectator." Smith here plainly identifies conscience and the impartial spectator, and shows that it is primarily upon reason rather than upon sense and feeling that our moral judgments depend. When speaking of the motive power to self-sacrifice, he says: "It is reason, principle, conscience, the inhabitant of the breast, the man within, the great judge and arbiter of our conduct." Conscience and reason are here again synonymous terms, but neither here, nor anywhere else in the *Theory*, does Smith regard conscience and sympathy as one!

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1. *History of Ethics*, p. 207.
  2. R. B. Haldane, "*Life of Adam Smith*," p. 93.
  3. *Die Moralphilosophie Adam Smith's*, Pt. III.
  4. *Theory*, Pt. III, Chap. 1.  
*Ibid.*, Pt. VII, Sec. III, Chap. 2.
  5. *Ibid.*, Pt. VII, Sec. III, Chap. 3.

Haldane maintains that "Smith makes the nature and validity of ethical principles depend upon the state of mind of an individual." So far is this from being the case that there are few points which Smith has made more clear than this ; that the criterion of moral distinctions is not individual. He says : "Man has been rendered the immediate judge of mankind, but he has been rendered so only in the first instance. 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. The jurisdictions of those two tribunals are founded upon principles which, though in some respects similar, are 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 praise-worthiness, and in the aversion to blame-worthiness.<sup>1</sup> Conscience, the man within, whose jurisdiction is founded altogether upon the desire of praise-worthiness is, as we have seen, identified by Smith with reason. Hence reason is the supreme ruler in the moral sphere, and the judgments of reason are always universal and can never be regarded as depending upon the state of mind of an individual. It is from the tribunal of man that we turn for sentence to this higher court of appeal with its standard of exact propriety and perfection."<sup>2</sup>

Schubert holds that, in the *Theory*, even the general rules are regarded as of purely empirical derivation,<sup>3</sup> and asks : "why above all things does Smith accept such a principle as the applause of the world for the explanation of conscience?" That Smith by no means considered *general rules* as empirically derived has already been clearly shown. The importance of reason in their formation receives great emphasis from him. We have had occasion several times already to note his insistence upon this ; but his views are clearly expressed in the following : "The general rules of morality are formed, like all other general maxims, from experience and induction. We observe in a great variety of particular cases what pleases or displeases our moral faculties, what these approve or disapprove of, and by induction from this experience, we establish those general rules. But induction is always regarded as one of the operations of reason. From reason, therefore, we are very properly said to derive all those general maxims and ideas. It is by these, however, that

1. *Theory*, Pt. III. Chap. 2.

2. *Ibid.*, Pt. VI. Sec. 3.

3. *Die Moralphilosophie Adam Smith's*, Pt. III.

we regulate the greater part of our moral judgments, which would be extremely uncertain and precarious if they depended altogether upon what is liable to so many variations as immediate sentiment and feeling. As our most solid judgments, therefore, with regard to right and wrong, are regulated by maxims and ideas derived from an induction of reason, virtue may very properly be said to consist in a conformity to reason, and so far this faculty may be considered as the source and principle of approbation and disapprobation."<sup>1</sup> In the face of such a passage as this it is difficult to see how any one could claim that Smith holds that the general rules of morality are "purely empirically derived." And that Smith does not accept the "applause of the world as an explanation of conscience" we have already seen. For the judgments of conscience are not based upon the desire for actual praise, but upon the desire for praise-worthiness. Moreover, conscience is reason, and hence does not require any explanation beyond itself. "Reason is not only the faculty by which we judge of truth and falsehood, but that also by which we judge of passions and affections."<sup>2</sup>

It is clear, then, that Smith's system should not be ranked as a Moral Sense theory, or as a mere ethics of sympathy. Can we, on the other hand, view it, as Oncken does, as a purely rational system? Oncken finds a close parallel between the ethical theories of Smith and Kant, and considers seriously the question as to how far Kant could either have borrowed from, or been influenced by Smith. He regards the similarity between the two systems, which reaches, he claims, to a "complete identity of words," in the most important part of the work, as one of the most remarkable phenomena in the history of the human mind.<sup>3</sup> This complete similarity between the ethical systems of Smith and Kant seems to me purely imaginary, and it is, moreover, utterly impossible that such should exist. The one doctrine which, above all others, Smith feels called upon to emphasize is the place and importance of feeling, of sympathy, in morality. That upon which Kant insists, and upon which his system depends, is that in morality feeling has no place, and is of no importance. Just as strongly does Smith oppose a purely rational, an ascetic, as a purely non-rational system of morality. He insists that our first perceptions of right and wrong are not

1. *Theory*, Pt. VII. Sec. 111. Chap. 2.

2. *Ibid*, Pt. VII. Sec. 11. Chap. 2.

3. *Die Ethik Smith's and Kant's*, p. 96.

the objects of reason, but of immediate sense and feeling.<sup>1</sup> Sympathy undoubtedly remains the main doctrine of the *Theory*. This, Oncken denies;<sup>2</sup> and maintains that sympathy is of no more importance to Smith's system than it is to that of Kant. But so far is this from being the case that, as we have seen, Smith holds that there can be no true morality without feeling, while Kant maintains that there can be none without it. Smith says that it depends upon the character of an affection whether it or a sense of duty should be the source of an action; and claims that an act which proceeds from a sense of duty, when the agent should have been urged to its performance by affection, is not, in the highest sense, good.<sup>3</sup> Kant, on the other hand, holds that only if an act shall have been performed from a sheer sense of duty, and in opposition to inclination, is it truly good. Kant's system is thus purely rational, and ascetic, while Smith regards equally the rational and the sentient nature of man. Hence, instead of a marvellous similarity or identity between the ethical systems of these authors, there exists an insurmountable opposition.

The *Theory*, then, is neither a purely rational, nor yet a purely Moral Sense system of ethics. Both reason and sense are indispensable to the formation of any moral judgment, and each of these is supreme in its own sphere. The question now arises as to the relation of the two great principles, of reason and of sympathy, in the *Theory*. Can the one in any sense be said to be more truly ultimate than the other. Smith speaks of reason as "the governing principle of the whole,"<sup>4</sup> "the great judge and arbiter of conduct,"<sup>5</sup> and as of divine extraction. Sympathy is an impulse, a feeling, and the life of impulse and of passion is judged and sentenced at the bar of reason. Hence we shall have to conclude that Smith regards reason as supreme, and sympathy as occupying a subordinate position. Yet it must be noticed that the first perception of right and wrong can never be derived from reason; and secondly, that conscience, as reason, is dependent upon sympathy for the particular instances or cases, out of which the general rules are formed.

Smith's ethical theory is, as we have seen, only related to

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1. *Theory*, Pt. v. II. Sec. III. Chap. 2.
  2. *Die Ethik Smith's and Kant's* p. 102.
  3. *Theory*, Pt. III. Chap. 6.
  4. *Ibid.*, Pt. VII. Sec. II. Chap. 1.
  5. *Ibid.*, Pt. II. Chap. 2.

that of Kant by way of opposition. But, in a sense, we may be said to have a hint of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, in Smith's conception of the relation between sense and reason. Smith finds in the moral sphere that which Kant later discovered in regard to the intellect, that while our knowledge is all obtained from experience, it, nevertheless, is not all of experience. To Smith, as to Kant, conception without perception is empty, and perception without conception is blind. Sympathy, or the sympathetic sense, is as important and, at the same time, as utterly powerless in itself, as is any bodily sense. Indispensable to the mind for the attainment of knowledge in the field to which it is adapted, it is, nevertheless, nothing but an instrument or means through which reason can work. The general maxims of morality are formed, like all other general maxims, from experience and induction, and induction is always regarded as one of the operations of reason. Perceptions are always the beginning and constitute the express conditions of thought. We are not to remain by them, nevertheless, as what is ultimate. The concrete 'Vorstellungen' are the preliminary condition, but they must be purified into the abstract Begriff: else we never attain to mastery over ourselves, but float about a helpless prey to our own pictures.<sup>1</sup> As any bodily sense is utterly dependent upon reason, so that it is not the eye which sees, but reason which sees through the eye, as well as reason alone which can make use of the varied perception thus received, so also does reason work through sympathy, in acquiring moral perceptions and in using these so as to form a moral judgment. But it is absurd and unintelligible to suppose, that the first perception of right and wrong can be derived from reason, even in those particular cases, upon the experience, of which the general rules are formed. These first perceptions are not the object of reason but of immediate sense and feeling. Just as Kant found that neither reason nor sense is, of itself, competent to form an object, but that the work of both is necessary, so Smith argues that, in the moral sphere, it is by sympathy alone that the perceptions can be collected, out of which reason forms the moral object, the moral judgment. Smith thus recognizes the great fact, neglected by Kant in his ethics, that man is by no means purely rational. In any system of ethics which treats at all adequately the facts

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1. Sterling, *Secret of Hegel*, Vol. 1, p. 44.



of the moral life, reason must reign supreme; and yet, without the aid of sense, reason is powerless. Hence, while Smith makes reason the governing principle, he never forgets the importance of sense, and maintains the necessity of both for morality, as either without the other would be utterly useless.

Smith has not at all over-emphasized the importance of sympathy. ✓ "The root of morals, the ultimate inducement to moral conduct, is surely to be discovered in those original impulses of our nature which urge us to seek the good of ourselves and of others, and in those reflex feelings which approve or disapprove of actions, according as they are or are not attended by those effects. Our emotions are, as it were, the raw material of morality. At the same time it must, undoubtedly, be granted that they are often transformed by the action of reason into what almost assumes the character of a new product."<sup>1</sup> The root idea of sympathy is the power of imitating the feelings of others, and this instinct of imitation is, as Balfour expresses it, "the very basis of all effective education." It is, indeed, the most important factor in, if not a synonym for, that "consciousness of kind" which marks off the animate from the inanimate and of which all association and social organization are consequences!<sup>2</sup> In endeavouring to find the origin of moral distinctions, Smith, neglecting for the moment man's rational nature, and seeking the fundamental *sentient* element in morality, rightly finds this in sympathy. "Out of community and out of society, man never did nor ever can exist," and it is these inevitable social relations which form the source of morality. As an object would cease to be an object and would become, in reality, nothing, if removed out of all possible relation to anything but itself, so also would morality cease to be if it were not for these indispensable social relations. Hence the recognition of these relations, which is founded alone in sympathy or in imitation of the feelings of others, is the fundamental element of morality when viewed from the stand-point of sense or the emotional nature of man. But, while this is true, there is in human nature that which is even more fundamentally important than this sympathy, this instinct of imitation, this consciousness of kind. This deepest and most fundamental principle is not that by which man recognizes, imitates, and

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1. Fowler, *Shaftesbury and Hutcheson*, p. 215.

2. F. H. Giddings, *Principles of Sociology*.

enters into the feelings and passions of others, but is that which alone differentiates man as man, namely reason. Thus reason is, as Smith holds, nothing individual, but is universal, and is the supreme moral ruler. But reason is dependent upon sympathy, as we have seen, for assistance in the formation of its judgments and its rules. For without sympathy, man would be unable to enter into any relations where morality would be possible or where there could be any necessity for the moral judgments of reason.

Morality arises from the nature of human nature, and in so far as it is a part of utilitarianism, and has endeavoured to combine the action of both reason and sense. This system is an advance upon that of the philosophers or the utilitarian writers; it is based upon the purely rational, and as

