The Dynamics of Sympathy and the Challenge of Creating New Commonalities

DIONYSIS G. DROSOS
Professor of Moral Philosophy
Department of Philosophy
University of Ioannina
Greece

Email: drden25@gmail.com
Web: https://sites.google.com/site/dionysisdrosos/

Bio-sketch: Dionysis Drosos is Professor of Moral Philosophy at the University of Ioannina. His notable publications include the1st critical edition in Greek of Adam Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (2011) and *The Gentle Commerce of Sympathy: Civilized Society and Moral Community in the Scottish Enlightenment* (forthcoming, also in Greek).

Jack Russell Weinstein's book is an invaluable source of inspiration. Among its most intriguing insights, I will focus on three interconnected moments of understanding Adam Smith. These are particularly important and central to the author's argumentation.

1 The understanding of Smithian sympathy as a theory of *conscience*, continuing and correcting the tradition of Shaftesbury's perception of soliloquy as a process of self-division and internal dialogue.
2 The understanding of the interplay between the imagined impartial spectator (see point 1) and the real spectators, as taking place in moral *communities* where individuals preserve their rights.
3 The extended understanding of *rationality* as a complex process underlying and conjoining imagination, moral sentiments and judgment in the context of moral communities (see point 2).

THE PRIORITY OF THE *THEORY OF MORAL SENTIMENTS*

Crucial for Weinstein's understanding of Adam Smith is the prioritization of TMS. The latter is definitely not to be understood as just a "prelude" for WN, but as a pivotal work offering a pattern of theorizing human interaction, socialization, and acculturation. On this basis, the WN cannot provide a market modeled overall pattern for social relations, but it is rather the other way around: economic relations in Smith's thought should be considered as a sub-case of the TMS understanding of social-moral interaction.

As Weinstein argues, Smith's "theory of rational deliberation is complex and context-dependent, allowing for its usefulness not only in economic circumstances but in the full range of human experiences, including but not limited to the moral, political, familial, aesthetic and personal spheres" (Weinstein, p. 8). Reason is not understood as a device of "rational choice" limited to the so-called *homo economicus*, but following MacIntyre, reason is mainly "a tool of communication" (Weinstein, p. 11).

According to Weinstein:

> Smith develops a sophisticated account of otherness that is able to cultivate social unity despite the presence of significant differences. This relies upon socialization and education to maximize the ability of a spectator to enter into the perspective of an agent" (Weinstein, p. 16).

But what is more interesting and promising in Weinstein's approach is that he is not limited to text study and one more reading of Smith's work, but he goes one step further towards questioning the ways we could profit from Smith's thought while addressing our problems of pluralism and education in our contemporary societies. This approach raises the question whether our societies' challenges are identical or

not to Smith's. In this respect, I incline to argue that we are not facing the same problems Smith addressed in his era. Nevertheless, for all the distance separating our era from Smith's, his ideas on conscience may still be of great importance, not just as antiquities, but also as active devices and powers of understanding our societies. This depends upon the approach. It would be pointless to search in the writings of an eighteenth-century thinker for readymade keys to unlock our twenty-first-century society's problems. As far as economics is concerned, it is evident that a post-industrial stage of hedge funds and speculative financial bubbles is a totally different economic environment compared to the manufacture economy of the eighteenth century.

If, however, one chooses to focus on Smith's moral theory (considering economics as a special case and not as the central paradigm to apply in all social relations), to engage with the original texts, interrogating them, asking questions guided by the new interests of an informed reader of our century, the endeavor pays off. This is the way Weinstein takes by prioritizing TMS and Smith's theory of conscience in particular. His reading offers one of the most deep and well-evidenced interpretations of Smith's work. But what is more, he takes one audacious and confident step beyond this.

SYMPATHY AND RATIONALITY AND THE VARIETY OF MOTIVATIONS

Weinstein rightly identifies Smith's rationality as having its roots in Shaftesbury's account of soliloquy. Soliloquy, as an internal dialogue, is a process of dialogical self-division that anticipates Smith's impartial spectator. By an ingenious movement, the platonic search to "know thyself" is being explored via a modern device—moral sense[1] and later impartial spectator—to address the contemporary question of otherness and pluralism. The intermediary link is the diversity of motives. Smith (following his predecessors Shaftesbury and Hutcheson) recognizes, against Hobbes and Mandeville, that there is more than one single motive to moral action. Smith avoids the trap of explaining eventually nothing by trying to explain everything through self-interest. Even the notion that self-interest is inherently vicious is being challenged. Along with the self-regarding affections there are also other regarding and social affections at work in the moral agent's soul. The agent is aware of this diversity and competition among sentiments during deliberation. The model of the divided self offers an understanding of the management of competing motivations and of moral adjudication, as a rational process. It is a dialogical rationality, having nothing to do with rational choice theory (Weinstein, p. 49).[2] This is not an abstract calculating reason, which undergoes such rationality, but sympathy. Sympathy is empirical in nature but "it assumes a certain a priori capacity that cultivates the social nature of humanity" (ibid.) and as such it incorporates moral and aesthetic elements. The workings of sympathy and the impartial spectator is developed in the TMS, and Weinstein's answer to the so called Adam Smith Problem consists in prioritizing the TMS over the other works of the Scottish philosopher.

Weinstein argues against the notion that for Smith the marketplace is the overarching pattern of social life. Challenging James Otteson's thesis, Weinstein opposes his conception of the diversity of motivations. Human motivation in Smith is not reduced to self-interest alone. The desire of bettering our condition, a phrase used in both TMS and WN, is not in principle incompatible with other motivations such as altruism, if we don't define the two terms too narrowly. Smith distinguishes between "self-love" and "selfishness," building on Mandeville's distinction between "self-love" and "self-liking." One can interpret "bettering our condition" differently than meaning acting in one's strict self-interest. If Smith defines "that great purpose of human life" as "to be observed, to be attended to, to be taken notice of with sympathy, complacency, and approbation" (TMS I.iii.2.1), then we can see in this purpose the real betterment of our condition. We really better our condition by trying to be worthy of sympathy, recognition etc. This is expressed in a moral language in TMS, and only elaborated in an economic language in the special case of the WN. Prioritizing "Kirkaldy Smith" over "Chicago Smith"—using the distinction introduced by Jerry Evensky (2005)—Weinstein insists that we can reveal Smith's overall project, "the search for principles that govern human social interaction and deliberation" (55). In TMS, Smith lays down the foundations of this project. Far from misconceiving the TMS as using the language of altruism, and the WN as using the language of self-interest, Weinstein points out that there is an interplay of competing motives in the TMS itself.[3] Such interplay is managed by the workings of sympathy and the impartial spectator. And what is more, the author calls our attention to a distinction not too commonly noticed in Smith scholarship—the distinction between "passive feelings" and "active principles." When Smith, in part III. Ch. III of the TMS, postulates a great disaster in China, and the proper sentimental reaction to this, he explicitly contrasts the selfishness of our passive feelings to the generosity and nobleness of our active principles (TMS III. 3-4). This is a case of juxtaposition between what the agent actually tends

to feel, and what the agent understands that he/she *should* do to meet the approbation of an imagined impartial spectator. Notably, the title of the chapter in question is "Of the Influence and Authority of the Conscience."

IMPARTIAL SPECTATOR AND "ACTIVE PRINCIPLES"

This stress on "active principles" seems to be very significant for the understanding of what the dialogical rationality consists in. What Smith offers in his moral theory is not just an empirical description of passive feelings. What is more important in his theory is the way passive feelings are mitigated, evaluated, and adjudicated in a process of deliberation, in which conscience[4] plays an active part. In Smith's words: "It is reason, principle, conscience, the inhabitant of the breast, the man within, the great judge and arbiter of our conduct" (TMS III.3.5). If the impartial spectator is not active, how can he/she be a judge? If there is not a diversity of competing motivations, then what can the arbiter arbitrate on?

I tend to understand this stressing of the active dimension of spectatorship as a formidable critique to those readings of Adam Smith which overemphasize spontaneity.[5] Moral rules are not given *a priori*, but have to be formed gradually on the basis of the corrective activity of the impartial spectator's adjudications. If we take spontaneity in its strict sense, then we risk reducing moral rules into a passive conformity guidance. This would mean to succumb to the current common opinion. This would compromise the project of understanding ethics as a process of moral development. Gilbert Elliot was the first to touch this problem. As we can presume (as Elliot's original private letter has not survived) from Smith's answer (Letter to Gilbert Elliot, October 10, 1759), his old friend's objection must have been: "if conscience is a reflection of social attitudes, how can it ever differ from, or be superior to, popular opinion?"[6] In his answer Smith exposes (in a note, later incorporated in the 1761 2nd edition of TMS) his idea of what we call "moral development." After declaring that man is to be considered a moral being because he is regarded as an accountable being, Smith provides a step-by-step account of the ways a moral agent experiences his/her being accountable to some other, from childhood to maturity. Being accountable for its action to some other entails, for a moral being, regulating its behavior according to the likings of this other. Who is this "other"? This can be God and its fellow creatures. Leaving God aside for the moment, the first nearest fellow creatures to a child are his/her parents. Being accountable to his/her parents means to conform to their instructions and dictations. Next, we are accustomed to rendering our behavior agreeable to every other person we converse with, to our masters, to our companions. Soon we learn that it is altogether unattainable to be universally pleasing. Then we begin learning to conceive ourselves as acting in the presence of an imagined person who is "candid and equitable," and who has no relation with nor interest in us or those we converse with, who is neither father, nor brother, nor enemy to us or them. This imagined judge is set up by our minds; he is the product of our self-division into an actor and a spectator; he is not an exterior observer anymore, but he is the "man within." This is the impartial spectator. The more mature the moral being, the more it feels accountable to this "inmate of the breast," the "abstract man," the "representative of mankind and the substitute of God."[7] This moral development renders us less dependent on the sympathy of the exterior real spectators, and more accountable to our conscience.[8]

IDEAL AND ACTUAL SPECTATORSHIP AND MORAL DEVELOPMENT

But by which standards does the impartial spectator judge? This is a very delicate moment in Smith's theory. There are no definitively laid down, once and for all, universal standards. But this is not the end of the story. Smith alludes time and again to the principles inscribed by Nature in our hearts. But what those principles consist of is something that is manifested to us as moral development unfolds. Smith's narrative of moral development, as summarized above, seems to vindicate Weinstein's hypothesis. It seems that our search for a more impartial judgment starts with the awareness of the *diversity* of interests, motivations and points of view. The development of the internal impartial spectatorship is understood as a reaction to this diversity, fueled by our thirst for a perfect and never to be fully attained perfection of judgment. In this process partake people with very differently and unequally developed consciences. In such a context, the adjudications of the impartial spectator, internalized by wise and virtuous persons as inevitable, is at variance or even at war with what the common opinion concedes to. From Socrates to Dreyfus, via Calas (a case well known to Smith), there are innumerable cases in human history where the opinion of the great majority was very defective in impartiality and equity. In such cases, where "mankind are in the wrong," the moral judgment of an impartial spectator meets the disapprobation and the condemnation of the common opinion. But the verdict of the "superior court" of our con-

science makes this "appear to be of small moment." When one is accustomed to have recourse to this inner judge, one avoids being a "slave of the world."

Consulting our "man within" is the only way to "make a proper comparison between our own interests and those of other men".[9] Smith explains our correcting false "passive feelings" via "active principles" by an analogy to the way we correct the false impressions of things as they appear to the eye, through our imagination based on the knowledge of their real magnitudes.[10] In Weinstein's terms, the adjudication of the impartial spectator, by managing and evaluating a diverse and competing motivation, is analogous to the correction of our vision by what we do not actually see, but can imagine on the basis of our knowledge on true proportion, magnitude and dimension.

But more importantly, the perseverance in what our inner arbiter dictates seems to have, in the long run, a corrective influence upon the points of view of others. That's why today one doesn't need to be exceptionally wise or righteous to realize that in the Calas case there was a miscarriage of justice. Voltaire or Zola failed to convince their contemporaries, but the opinions of common people did not stay immune in the long run, although they are always much less perfect in comparison to those of the more wise and virtuous, and always prompt to new fallacies. This is a slow, unending, and never satisfactory enough process of moral progress, and the dynamics of competing adjudications of varying degrees of impartiality is the explanation provided by Smith, if we read him this way.

It is not absolutely clear what these 'active principles' consist of. Smith does not endorse the stoic normative commitment to overcome the limits of *oikeiosis*. Any crystallization of principles of action entails a set of norms that is social and contextual. We cannot have recourse to any pre-cultural, unsocialized resources of normativity. Nevertheless, all normative arrangements are sensed to be imperfect as new knowledge is introduced and new experience built. In modern societies there is a continuous accumulation of knowledge, and enrichment of experience through encounters with "others" through commerce, social mutations, cultural intercourse and population movements. "Others" is to be understood in terms of gender, race, class and cultures. The notion of the "stranger" has undergone a continuous change. The more sensible the spectator, the more the pressure to enlarge the perspectives of sympathy is sensed. But this pressure does not flow from an explicitly defined substantial maxim. This would engage us in a vicious circle of discussing what would be the *summum bonum*. What really fuels the progress in the perspective of sympathy is something more humble and not so far-reaching as the idea of a normative universal principle. It is the new common experience (as described above) that challenges the existing standards of normativity. The progress of such standards is a slow, step-by-step one, carried out through the interplay of ideal and actual spectatorship, and through education and socialization. It is a long and non-linear process of maturation that respects the "laws of gravity" of the consolidated opinions, and it is not meant to take big leaps through the circles of sympathy.

INDIVIDUALITY, MORAL COMMUNITY AND EDUCATION: CREATING NEW COMMONALITIES

Such interpretation of moral sentiments allows a fresh view of our contemporary problems of liberal individuality and community, of cultural pluralism, and of sympathizing with otherness. In the eighteenth-century Scottish Enlightenment tradition, self is understood as a social self. Given our physical separateness, our understanding of the sentiments of others depends upon our imagination. It is through imagination that we put ourselves in the situation of others. Sympathy does more than produce imperfect "copies" (sympathetic sentiments are always imperfect, as our physical separateness cannot be really overcome). It is not the actual sentiments of others we sympathize with, but the situation in which they take place. The more we are acquainted with such situations, the easier we sympathize with them. How do we become acquainted with such situations? By sharing the same conditions, values and moral standards. That is, by being part of the same commonalities. Even in the simplest and closest relations, these commonalities are based not on blood, but on common conditions. Individuals form commonalities through processes of acculturation, socialization and education. Weinstein introduces on the one hand a subtle and crucial distinction between acculturation and socialization, and on the other education proper. Acculturation and socialization are educational processes in a broader sense. In this sense, even the marketplace relations are educational as well. But education in the strict sense (as it is provided by distinct institutions), is intentional in character. The more the proximity of the agents diminishes (in the process of enlarged "circles of sympathy"), the more difficult it becomes to sympathize with others. The looser the bonds of commonality become, the stronger the imagination is required for the unfolding of the sympathy process. Imagination is cultivated

by education. And when the education provided by everyday acculturation is not enough to trigger imagination and sympathy with unknown conditions, then new knowledge should be brought in, and intentional education must be of assistance to cover the gap.

Imagination is of fundamental importance for the workings of sympathy; and sympathy is indispensable for social interaction "which is itself a component of happiness" (Weinstein, 103). But imagination is an imperfect ground. Imagination is liable to be strongly influenced and limited by culture and custom. Weinstein offers relevant illustrations in cases, such as gender, slavery, intimate experience, and class, where our imagination can be easily misguided by prevalent prejudices. Even our self-image can be deformed by socially misguided imagination, and our "impartial spectator" can be seriously affected in its jurisdictions. The same holds for aesthetics, where fashion and custom heavily influence the impartial spectator. Smith is well aware of this reality (TMS. V.1.8, V.2.2., V.1.9).

In such cases the importance of education is made crucial. Education needs to counterbalance acculturation. Education can provide the corrective mechanism to mitigate the partiality of customary, repetitive usages of imagination. Yet this is not the only possibility. Pertinently, Weinstein sees in this a central difficulty in Smith's system. This difficulty stems from what seems to me one of the most intriguing characteristics of Smith's thought, which makes it so compelling even today. Smith, in Weinstein's words, "implies a universal ethic throughout his work, yet he adopts a context-dependent moral psychology" (101). Moral judgment is being formed as a compromise between real and ideal evaluations. Moral community is present in the actual adjudications of the impartial spectator. At the same time, imagination and impartial spectator possibly tend to transcend the limitations of actual commonalities, by extending sympathy towards what is not yet sympathizable, anticipating standards and values not yet meeting the consensus of the moral community. I've tried myself to allude to such a process by depicting the impartial spectator as a personification of idealized moral community in progress.[11] But Weinstein, far more eloquently and persuasively, proceeds in a detailed fleshing out of how all this works. What I found most attractive and familiar at the same time is his idea that "the ability to sympathize rests on either preexisting commonalities or the ability to create new commonalities by learning the contexts and perspective of others" (96). Creating new commonalities is in tension with the inertia of preexisting commonalities. This idea of dynamics between actual and ideal spectatorship, communal and individual perspectives, may prove very helpful for a modern understanding of Adam Smith's thought, overcoming the dilemma individualism vs. communitarianism.[12]

In such a dynamic and uncertain compromise, education's importance is both crucial and equivocal. Education has the potential to unify, and the potential to divide (101). The outcome of this tension could not be securely anticipated. Smith surely prevents us from the drawbacks of relying too much on what he calls "love of system," that is, the perseverance in consciously shaping society following a preconceived plan. Such "love of system" should be balanced by "public spiritedness," that is by awareness of circumstances, and readiness to realize in what a good compromise exists, having in mind the achievable public good in a historical context. Both forces in this balance rely on imagination, and imagination, as we have seen, is being built upon knowledge and education. Regardless of the issue of how optimistic Smith can be about the long-run outcome of unintended consequences, what is—or so it seems to me—highly relevant for a twenty-first-century reader, is the clairvoyance of Smith to realize the limits of his own "system." His allusions on the urgently needed corrective role education had to undertake (WN V i.f.50), prove that Smith wisely avoided falling in love with his own "system."

Education proper is intentional and endowed with dual possibilities, as stated above, and this opens a field for competing educational policies. The absence of educational policy would have the undesired effect of harming the intellectual and moral capacities of the bulk of mankind, abandoned unaided in the stupefying conditions of a dull and unimaginative work. A conservative policy bolstering preexisting commonalities risks solidifying exclusions and prejudices. A policy of developing and encouraging knowledge of, and acquaintance with, less familiar circumstances, a policy of enhancing the sympathizing potential of people, would tend to enlarge commonalities and create new ones. In this respect, education has an important part to play. "Education must be geared toward encouraging a diversity of shared experiences that allow for communality between those whose own experiences seem farther from those of others" (Weinstein, p.106). Such policies are compatible with, and furthermore indispensable, for the adequate deployment of Smith's project. Those who are interested in promoting educational policies which aim at the opening of the agents' knowledge and understanding of otherness, can find substantial supportive Smithian resources. Weinstein's eye-opening approach seems to allow us to throw some more light on this perspective. Smith's vision of civilized society

relies heavily on the development of the sympathizing capacities of the individual moral agents. Such development entails finding interest in the knowledge of others. By "others" we are to understand, in our era of globalization and multiculturalism, other cultures, attitudes, customs, faiths, other ways of giving meaning to life, and other not yet open communities. How can we create new commonalities encompassing those new forms of otherness without compromising individual liberty and independence? We cannot find in Smith any readymade recipe. But we can find some useful theorizing instruments and attitudes, as Weinstein carefully shows.

ILLIBERAL AND OPEN COMMUNITIES

Profiting from Smith's subtle and balanced understanding of the tension between universal (although vague and imperfectly defined) principle aspirations and contextual pragmatism, we are encouraged to give less trust to market-oriented automatisms, and pay some more attention to the ways we dispose of, or must invent, for developing sympathizing capacities.[13]

We can illustrate the urgent need for this by venturing a counter paradigm. How can we understand sectarianism, consolidating exclusive, closed communitarianism and fanaticism, using Smithian instruments? We can treat such cases as examples of non-liberal exclusive communities. The cohesion of such communities rests on some kind of sympathy among their attending members with enmity towards other communities. Such enmity is foundational for the workings of sympathy in the interior of those communities. What would the quality of such a sympathy look like? It must be considered as a conditional sympathy: we sympathize with the other members of the group on the condition that they are members of the group, i.e. they do not depart from the values determining group identity. Collective identity prevails over individual rights and perspectives. This is reminiscent of premodern societies, where it was easier "for a spectator to sympathize with any agent since he or she will always be familiar with the situation of those whom he she encounters" (Weinstein, p.105). In such cases imagination has a far more restricted part to play, and narrative rationality is seriously refrained from developing. Such communities can be charged with irrationality, but not in the sense of formal rationality deficiency. For Smith, as understood by Weinstein, rationality is "audience focused" and narrative in character. The narrative informing the spectator view in a non-liberal community is focused on restricted and homogenous audience. This means that the interior spectator is a prisoner of a cyclical narrative. Moral conscience is prompted to comply with the judgments of the exterior spectators, conformable to the standards of collective identity, and insofar that it does, the agent feels more self-assured as a group member. And this is attended with an agreeable feeling, consolidating self-approval. In such a context, any judgment that departs from the judgments of the exterior spectators (exterior to the individual agent but interior to the group) is disapproved, and endangers the very community membership of the individual.[14] Such communities are built on the exclusion of any extension of commonality beyond their borders. But this is tantamount to thwarting imagination and frustrating sympathy.[15] The sympathetic feelings consolidating the group are mutilated in their potential and partial by definition. This is quite the contrary to what Smith aspires to. Such an attitude would be "natural" in premodern societies, but in societies where the spectator faces differences and gaps in experience, beliefs and customs, it is an outright denial to sympathize with otherness, perpetuating prejudices and intolerance. The danger is the enclosure into a restricted circle of actor-spectator interaction, addressing a particular sectarian audience providing recognition and approbation, and motivating unsocial and even evil acting.[16] Such a kind of conformism freezes imagination and detains sympathy. Conformism prompts individual agents to understand themselves not as persons, but as community members, and consequently to treat others not as persons but as members of other communities.

We could perhaps establish a parallel between this stagnation of sympathy and the effects of dull repetitive movements of hand workers, as depicted by Smith in his "alienation passage." Just as in the case of the workers, the members of exclusive communities face a closed horizon in their socialization, determined by the unchanged repetition of the same sentimental experiences, leading to an analogous mental stiltedness (torpor), blocking imagination, inhibiting their mental and moral capacities, and perpetuating ignorance and fear of otherness.

When enclosed in a uniform community, facing an undiversified audience, we are deprived of incentives to see ourselves in a critical light. As we conform to what the others (the others of the same community) are expecting from us to do and to be, we experience no discordance between our real and our ideal image of ourselves. In this context, inner moral deliberation is paralyzed. This is a case of self-deception; we are assured we are doing the right thing. Our "present" impartial spectator prevails over our "past" impartial spectator

(the spectator of our cool hours). In common cases of self-deception, the moral voice challenging our actions comes from outside; it is the external spectators who derange our easy conscience and invite us to realize our self-deception.[17] But in our case, where there is no discordance between our actions and the standards of the community, this corrective process does not work. In this case, the challenge could come only from outsiders; from voices coming from spectators not belonging to the community. The outcome is not predictable; it may be an open conflict or a moral crisis affecting the cohesion of the community; in any case the external voices cannot be internalized and inform the impartial spectator, before a new normativity has been established.

Nevertheless, there is an issue on which I tend to be more skeptical than Weinstein. To tell the truth, it is an issue concerning Adam Smith himself and not Weinstein's reading. In Smith's project sympathy has a twofold function. First, sympathy plays the part of imaginatively putting oneself in the place of another person, and so inferring his/her motives and entering their feelings and thoughts. This is what nowadays psychologists call *empathy*. Secondly, through sympathy we grasp the way our own motives, feelings, emotions, thoughts are received and estimated by others. In this case we anticipate other persons' not real, but potential and probable, reactions. How can we soundly expect that such reaction are probable? We can rationally predict others' reactions on the basis of two premises: a) the hypothesis of the homogeneity of human nature; and b) the sharing of the same set of values and standards in the commonality we share. By anticipating others' sympathetic sentiments, we tend to respond by mitigating our unsocial, too much self-focused attitudes, and we eventually come up with a non-preconceived, non-imposed conformity to the rules and manners the moral community consents to. This is what is supposed to take place in a civilized society. But what happens when such a civilization process is disrupted? This is not a speculative hypothesis. The twentieth-century's bitter experience has severely damaged both our ethical optimistic progressivism and our self-congratulating image of human nature. We are at least obliged not to leave unquestionable our received ideas, inherited from the eighteenth-century's innocence and optimism.

More precisely, the workings of sympathy seem to change dramatically as the prerequisites of a civilized society are challenged. What is such a thing as a civilized society? Trying to reconstruct this crucial Smithian concept we can enumerate four indispensable traits: a) a society of independent *commerçants,* bonded together through exchange, in a context of a social division of labor and under the rule of law; b) the inequalities must be big enough to incite emulation and ambition, but not so great as to cause unsocial sentiments such as envy and resentment; c) a moral community of peers, persons of equal moral value, interdependent upon each other's free recognition, without being subjected to a hierarchical moral order of personal dependency; and d) each member should have access to minimal wealth and education, enough to enable them to enter each others' feelings, so that the above mentioned sympathy procedure building the social bonds works properly.

Now let us imagine a case of society affected by a serious disruption (a natural disaster, a massive migration, a devastating war, an invasion, an economic crisis or a "shock therapy" policy). In such a case, all the three first prerequisites of a civilized society would be subverted, and consequently the fourth one would be seriously jeopardized. In such circumstances we have the phenomenon Simon Baron-Cohen calls "empathy erosion."[18] Individuals tormented by hunger and terrorized by anxiety, violent oppression, and the fear of imminent death, become too focused on themselves only. Sympathy dysfunctions in both its operations: a) to sympathize with others becomes a hard and rare accomplishment; and b) the interest in how we appear to our peers, and how our image is appreciated by them, is replaced by our concern just to survive. This means that to develop sympathetic sentiments ceases to be the vehicle of social conformity through alleviation of selfishness, and now tantamount rather with an act of resistance against the distorted conformity and "normality" of the new established order. Under such "abnormal normality" conformity is gained against individual independence, and via a vicious circle of empathic mimicry which replaces the virtuous circle of empathic mimicry through sympathy, as understood in Smith's idea of normality. In other words, "civilized," "commercial" moral sentiments could not work anymore as social bonds, and even elementary sympathy could not stay alive, unless strongly supported by what Smith calls the "great, the respectable, the awful virtues," the virtues of self-denial and self-sacrifice. But the emergence of such virtues brings out discord and conflict. Sympathy and solidarity pave their way against the established moral order, prefiguring the establishment of an alternative one. As we move away from Smith's ideal civilized world, the set of moderate virtues proposed by him seems to lack the auto-corrective mechanisms which would get us back to the desired point of equilibrium. In such a case, civilized arrangements and concurring sentiments are out of work, and they could not be restored without the civic vigilance and the martial spirit, on the importance of which

Adam Ferguson so much insists, in his variant of the Scottish Enlightenment. When the empathic ability is eroded, no invisible-hand remedy seems plausible. The author might consider casting more light on this direction.

If I am not misled, Weinstein's book brings out, among other things, the very crucial issue of understanding the interplay of individual and communal moral judgments and standards, and their formation in Adam Smith's theory of conscience.[19] If the impartial spectator is understood as a theory of conscience that negotiates personal and community judgment (Weinstein, p.169), this understanding is very helpful for modern theory, helping to overcome an overly rigid distinction between liberal individualism on the one hand and communitarianism on the other. And this provides a pertinent criterion to distinguish between premodern and modern conceptions of moral community. We are looking forward to seeing the next step in the deployment of Weinstein's ambitious project as announced in the Introduction of this fascinating book.

NOTES

1 Moral sense for Shaftesbury does not have the meaning of a sixth sense (Uehlein, 1976, pp. 248-249.) The notion of sense is related to reason [the *Hegemonikon*] (*Regimen, Rand I*, p. 175). Moral sense is not to be understood as an immediate instinctive reaction, but as a product of rational cultivation of natural sensibility (Larthomas, 1985, p. 384). This process is inseparable from the life of the community. Gadamer stressed the relevance of the notion of Bildung for understanding Shaftesbury's conception of socially cultivated moral sense (Gadamer, 1975, pp. 10-27). What Shaftesbury calls "heart" is not a passive feeling but reason in action, a *sensorium actif* as Larthomas calls it (Larthomas, 1985, p. 383). And this is not just an inner form, but through informing sensus communis, it becomes the "intersubjective sense of the unity of human genre" (Larthomas, 1985, p. 384). This reflective, active and social character of moral sense by Shaftesbury seems to have escaped the attention of his Scottish followers, according to Ernst Cassirer (1979, p. 315). Weinstein helps us see how more attentive Smith has been. Against this background, we can appreciate the criticism of Smith against Shaftesbury, pointing to the failures of the latter to accomplish such a project, by distorting communication with his linguistic choices, and thus impairing the sympathetic process and weakening the capacity to make moral judgments.

2 Shaftesbury, challenging the mechanical understanding of rationality (*Regimen, Rand I*, pp. 114, 139), juxtaposes the notion of the living subject. (Bλ. Uehlein, 1976, p. 136- fn. 4). In this perspective, the idea of the good cannot find a form irrespective of the inner form of conscience. The same holds for the idea of God. (Larthomas, 1985, p. 183).

3 The case of the economic implications of prudence in WN is very telling. Smith juxtaposes two motivations: the passion for present enjoyment, and the principle which prompts us to save (WN I.viii.44). This discussion is carried out in a non-moral language. This is evidence of interplay and judgment between diverse motivations, notably between two different aspects of self-interest. The moral value of each is discussed in TMS (VII. ii.3.16). As Weinstein dexterously remarks, "TMS tells us that attending to one's own economic self-interest is an act of propriety, and WN tells us how we are supposed to do it. TMS alludes to the economic discussion but never completes it; WN assumes moral discussion but doesn't quite acknowledge it" (p. 58).

4 The impartial spectator, acting as an "anthopomorphization of duty" (p. 75).

5 Weinstein, relying on Smith's *Lectures on Rhetoric* (i.144), invites us to understand "moral observation" as incorporating much more than feelings and reactions, signifying "the complete package of observation, reflections, deliberations, and conclusions" (p. 136).

6 As formulated by D. D. Raphael and A. L. Macfie, editors of the TMS, The Glasgow Edition of the Works and Correspondence of Adam Smith, p. 16.

7 Adam Smith, "Letter to Gilbert Elliot," op.cit., p. 55.

8 Smith does not go so far, of course, but we might perhaps conjecture that his analysis leaves open the possibility to extend this moral development to the point where we can conceive even the deity as a higher internal, and no more as an external superintendent of our sentiments and actions.

9 Adam Smith, "Letter to Gilbert Elliot," op.cit., p. 55.

10 Adam Smith, "Letter to Gilbert Elliot," op.cit., p. 56.

11 Drosos (2014), passim.

12 "TMS has strong *communitarian* elements where 'communitarian' is understood as acknowledging some priority of the community or society, and '*liberal*' is understood as commitment of the priority of the individual and his or her identity" (Weinstein, pp. 68-69).

13 As Weinstein put it: "The 'self-correcting' aspects of the market (...) function only if actors are *self-consciously* correcting" (p. 226, emphasis in the original). The term "*spontanéité réfléchie*," coined by Larthomas, (Larthomas, 1985, p. 349) for Shaftesbury's "lovely system" seems even more appropriate for Smith.

14 This is another way to address the problem that Kant understood as "moral heteronomy."

15 "The barrier to sympathy in both scientific and moral contexts is *the lack of commonality* between the individuals who are engaged in the acts of either sympathizing or being sympathized with" (Weinstein, p. 169, emphasis added).

16 This eclipse of sympathy lies at the core of the phenomenon Hanna Arendt describes as the "banality of evil."

17 Fleischacker explains this perfectly (Fleischacker, 2011).

18 Simon Baron-Cohen, 2011, passim.

19 As Weinstein comprehensively defines it, "the impartial spectator is the aggregate of a person's experience balanced with what he or she knows of the moderating power of community (...); it is an anthropomorphization of the rational process and incorporates the sentimental foundation into the reasoned analysis" (Weinstein, p. 72).

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