

# **Adam Smith's concept of sympathy and contemporary research on empathy**

**Stian Møller Opøien**

**Veileder: Professor Christel Fricke**



Mastergradsessay ved Filosofisk fakultet

**UNIVERSITETET I OSLO**

11.11.09

## **Preface**

I would like to thank Professor Christel Fricke for all the kind help and patient guidance, but most of I am grateful to her for educating me on a subject that has been and continues to be of great importance to me. I cannot imagine that I would have noticed the intriguing features of Smith had it not been for her insights.

I am grateful to my father for all the practical help and to my mother for her kind spirit and her support.

In addition, I would like to thank all my loved ones for the encouragement, and for showing the incredible stamina that is required for enduring the company of a confused student of philosophy.

## **Abstract**

In this paper, I explain and analyse the concept of sympathy as Adam Smith describes it, then I present relevant research on empathy from the fields of social psychology and behavioural biology in order to compare the two concepts. I argue that this comparison shows that Smith's theory is consistent with modern scientific research and thus a realistic account of human psychology, which renders his moral theory even more appealing.

First, I introduce Smith by reference to his contemporary sentimentalism and faculty psychology, how stoicism influenced his theory of sentiments and the background of the teachings of Francis Hutcheson. Then I analyse Smith's concept of sympathy by focusing mostly on his descriptive account of sympathy and analysing his normative project only when relevant to understanding the descriptive account. By illustrating with Smith's example of a man who is a stranger to society, and how sympathy develops in him when introduced to society, I extract the main features of sympathy in order to compare these to contemporary scientific research. This man I compare to the myth of Narcissus in order to show that Smith has something different in mind with his example. I make use of Maria Carrasco's analysis of the development of sympathy as well as Christel Fricke's description of the circular form that the theory of Smith takes. I then comment on the challenge of circularity and propose a way of avoiding it, by focusing on the developing and educating features of moral sympathy and thereby reducing the importance of the objectivity of a static moment of sympathetic judgement of propriety.

From this analysis, I describe sympathy as constructed of an immediate, precognitive kind of sympathy, but also a more developed kind of sympathy that is based on imagination and cognition, and this kind can be automatic as well as deliberate and conscious. Further, noting that sympathy can be both one-way and mutual, I summarise the sympathetic process as starting by the spectator imagining being another person, the agent, while maintaining one's own perceptive, emotional and cognitive abilities and then judging of the information experienced from the imaginative act, agreeing or disagreeing with how the agent feels and acts. This creates the regulative process of mutual sympathy, aiming for harmonious or perfect sympathy between the spectator and the agent.

Turning to contemporary research, I focus on insights given by, most prominently, Damasio, Leary, Ekman, Batson, Preston & De Waal and Hurlbut. Here the main research is concerning theoretical presentation of emotions, the studies of mirror neurons and the behavioural research on emotional contagion, empathy, cognitive empathy as well as the role of self-awareness. By comparing this research with Smith's theory, I conclude that these are consistent views and that these different aspects of empathy describe the features of the development of sympathy, as I summarised them. I argue finally that this connection to empathy allows for the moral aspects of sympathy to avoid the static circularity by stressing the dynamic features of sympathy and its aim towards objectively judging of propriety.

## Contents

Preface .....	1
Abstract .....	2
Contents.....	4
Introduction .....	5
The Theory of Moral Sentiments in context .....	6
Smith's understanding of sympathy.....	8
Identifying the descriptive and the normative aspects of sympathy .....	8
The foundation of sympathy in human nature .....	9
The nature of sympathy.....	12
Smith's categories of emotions and how they evoke sympathy.....	15
Mutual sympathy.....	16
A comment on moral sympathy .....	18
The main aspects of sympathy .....	21
Contemporary research relevant to Smith .....	22
Emotions in general.....	22
Empathy .....	23
Comparing empathy to sympathy .....	26
Conclusion.....	28
References: .....	29
Research articles:.....	29
Literature: .....	31
Notes: .....	33

## Introduction

Human nature has often been described as selfish and people are as such supposed to have no genuine concern for the wellbeing of others. Taking interest in other people is thereby interpreted as self-interest and therefore selfish; because we experience joy in doing good for others, we are only doing good for ourselves and not for others. It has always seemed dubious to me that intense and profound experiences of emotional bonds to others are taken to be no more than tools for selfish needs, and learning about the nature of empathy provided stronger opinions against this view. Theories on empathy seem to explain the possibility for genuine concern for others, not derived from selfish desires. When reading *The Theory Of Moral Sentiments* with this somewhere in mind, the connection became apparent that Adam Smith had also systematically analysed and theorised on this same subject. Although first published in 1759, and with methods of inquiry that can hardly be called scientific by today's standards, his theory has many observations, insights and speculations that seem to be consistent with what modern research informs of today. Such information from science is an excellent resource for an investigation of Smith's thoughts to see if they may be in some sense confirmed or disconfirmed.

It is a common understanding among Adam Smith scholars that the moral project in *The Theory Of Moral Sentiments* is based on an account of human psychology.<sup>1</sup> By describing the way we in fact *do* think, feel and act, Smith develops a foundation for the way we *should* think, feel and act. This is to say, the basis of his theory of moral sentiments is on a theory of sentiments that are not from the beginning moral, but through social development and certain acts of the imagination, the sentiments eventually become moral. Smith describes sympathy as the sentiment that makes morality possible, and he begins with sympathy in its crudest form and explains how it transforms into a moral sentiment. The first object of this paper is to explain this process and to describe the nature of this development. This is a complex and multi-faceted process and is thus given an extensive analysis.

Further, I shall mainly explore the psychological side of sympathy, and only briefly discuss the moral aspects. The purpose of this is to see how realistic this account is compared to

some modern research on the emotions, focusing on behavioural biology and psychological studies. Not surprisingly, when considering the nature of these fields, the behavioural biology studies provide a quite more unified view than psychology does, which is on this matter still in some debate. Therefore, I present the view of emotions in general and of empathy in particular that corresponds best to Smith's theory, as the debates in psychology are not the subject matter of this essay. Competing views may well disagree with the selected studies, but it is the goal of this project to show the relevance of Smith and not the absolute truth of his theory. We therefore begin with following Smith's notion of sympathy in its development. In order to do so with some illustration, we employ his example<sup>2</sup> of the man who grows up in complete isolation and starts to develop character and normative traits as he begins to develop sympathy skills only when he meets with other people in society.

Moral aspects of Smith's theory will be discussed only when useful for these purposes or for a general understanding of sympathy. Because that moral project makes his concept of psychological sympathy especially important, it is necessary to discuss it briefly before turning to the contemporary part of this essay. Particularly, how we conceive of this moral project affects how we distinguish between the moral and psychological project of the theory. After analysing Smith and extracting the essential features of sympathy, I present the most relevant parts of the contemporary scientific view on emotions and relevant contemporary research on empathy. Then by comparing sympathy and empathy, I shall argue that not only is Smith's theory still relevant, but that by the relevance of his insights, his moral theory may be shown to contribute to establishing empathy as an essential tool for moral thought and behaviour.

## **The Theory of Moral Sentiments in context**

Smith was contemporary to the school of sentimentalism,<sup>3</sup> a revision of classic empiricism. A sentimentalist account of the mind accepts the empiricist view of the human mind as shaped by experience, but holds that the mind is disposed to respond in a certain way to experience. Such reactions constitute 'sentiments', what we may informally recognize as attitudes, beliefs, knowledge, emotions and the like. Seeing as Smith is influenced by stoic

thoughts on the cognitive content of emotions and the view that emotions are mainly voluntary,<sup>4</sup> we can reasonably apply the stoic account of emotions to explain with more detail what the notion of sentiments contains. Here we apply solely the descriptive account of emotions offered by stoicism, and not the normative project.<sup>5</sup> Emotions are here seen as not immediate and thoughtless, but with a cognitive content. They have an intentional object, of which the emotions express a value-laden belief. This belief has an essential “I-reference,” the object is tied to the self by its relevance to our happiness. While the stoics limited cognition to involve linguistically expressible propositions, Martha Nussbaum<sup>6</sup> appropriately includes non-verbal cognitions among animals, children and many emotions in adult humans. 'Cognitive' here is in the most general sense of 'regarding receiving and processing information.' She further notes that emotions are classified together not only due to their shared specifications, but also because of how emotions relate to other emotions. We can thus have emotions about our emotions, and agreeing or conflicting emotions.

Along these lines, we may understand sentiments as containing cognitions instead of seeing them as immediate, involuntary and thoughtless feelings. As they have an intentional object, they are, at least to a large degree, voluntary and controllable and as such, they are therefore open for Smith's thoughts on self-command, which are essential to his moral project.

Smith was a student of Francis Hutcheson,<sup>7</sup> who thought of the moral sentiments as belonging to a moral sense. Like our external senses such as vision and hearing, we also have internal senses that perceive of concepts. The moral sense approves of the concept of benevolence, but the problem of morality being the domain of a sense is that it renders the moral experience arbitrary to what this sense happens to approve, in the same way that we cannot help what tastes good (although our tastes may be cultivated). Smith, as it will become apparent, did not entertain an understanding of sympathy as a moral sense, rather sympathy is a tool of the imaginative and attentive mind that can be voluntarily employed.

The mind, on the sentimentalist account, cannot be shaped in endless ways depending on experience, but responds in general ways to general kinds of experience. This view implies a possible difference between the experience of an object and the object in itself. The



challenge of such a difference is to justify that the experience of an object may lead to some sort of knowledge of the object in itself. In social philosophy, this challenge relates to the problem of other minds. If our own mind shapes our experience of another person, how can we say that we objectively know anything about that person? If we may achieve some sort of knowledge about that person's behaviour, the challenge of knowing about the mental processes and mental states of that person remains. We shall see how Smith manages after a brief introduction.

Smith's explanations of social life belong to the school of faculty psychology. This school responded to the earlier view of the mind as uniform and of one essence, by viewing the mind as a set of faculties, each with its special features, and thereby ascribing a general kind of thinking to a particular faculty of the mind. A particular emotion or set of emotions, e.g., corresponds to a particular faculty or set of faculties. A modern version of this view of the mind is expressed by research in neuroscience on cognition and emotions in the human mind.<sup>8</sup>

The combination of sentimentalism and faculty psychology may generate a particular method concerning philosophy of mind: By describing how we generally respond, what our sentiments are, and by describing the essential features that several sentiments have in common, and distinguish themselves from other sentiments, the sentiments may be clustered as a set and then ascribed to a particular faculty of the mind. This is, as we soon shall see in detail, what Smith does with the sentiments generally involved in social interaction.

## **Smith's understanding of sympathy**

### **Identifying the descriptive and the normative aspects of sympathy**

As mentioned, we are focusing on the descriptive account of sympathy, that is, the study of sympathy as a psychological phenomenon. Smith, however, is throughout his text often considering both psychology and morality at the same time. It is commonly agreed that his project becomes moral, or normative, with the introduction of the impartial spectator. It is

possible, however, to criticise Smith's moral theory for becoming circular, which will be given focus and explanation later.<sup>9</sup> When seen as circular the theory offers no elevation from psychology to morality; and because this is possible, it is thereby possible to consider the whole of his theory as concerned with psychological and descriptive aspects of sympathy. We therefore include the impartial spectator in the psychological account, as an analytical effort to understand the theory, not as a critique of circularity of argument and thus a lack of moral standard in Smith's theory. I do think there is a way out of the circle, but it is for the purposes of this essay not an important subject. Later, I therefore only briefly demonstrate a possible way out of the circle.

### **The foundation of sympathy in human nature**

Smith introduces sympathy in the very beginning of his theory, which informs of his view on human nature:

How selfish soever man may be supposed, there are evidently some principles in his nature, which interest him in the fortune of others, and render their happiness necessary to him, though he derives nothing from it, except the pleasure of seeing it.<sup>10</sup>

Those unselfish principles of human nature Smith identifies as sympathy, which motivates for benevolent actions and expressions of compassion, the “amiable” virtues. The selfish principles of self-love motivate to take care of ourselves in our lives, but overindulgence will be in conflict with benevolence and must thus be controlled. The control of emotions is the object of the “awful virtues” (in the sense of inspiring awe, not in the sense of being terrible).<sup>11</sup> Guiding these virtues in practical application is the task of the intellectual virtue of prudence, “by which we judge well of the appropriate means to action.”<sup>12</sup>

Selfishness can be understood as not opposed to sympathy, but entirely ignorant of it. The selfish passions are the 'original' passions.<sup>13</sup> These are the emotions developed by the solitary man, whom is introduced below, prior to the introduction to society. It is notable that this sense of selfishness connects to what Smith terms ‘self-love,’ but it does not constitute his concept of ‘self-interest.’<sup>14</sup> Rather, self-interest may more properly indicate

the interest of the totality of human nature, which is not only selfish but also unselfish by including sympathy.

In *The Wealth of Nations*, “Smith normally talks of the ‘interest’ of an agent rather than the agent's ‘self-interest,’ let alone his ‘self-love.’ The ‘interest’ of an agent is not really a sentiment like self-love; instead, it refers to the bundle of material goods that an agent seeks, abstracting from the purposes to which those goods may be put, the emotional yearnings they may satisfy.”<sup>15</sup> This insight to the economics of Smith may seem irrelevant to our discussion, but seeing how this is the most known and most misunderstood concept employed by Smith, it seems worth to clarify and distinguish from our discussion. All the same, it seems here that we can find the human nature in inner conflict between the two interests of selfishness and unselfishness, when these can, and often do, create opposing motivations.

With this understanding of human nature, we can now introduce Smith's thought experiment of the solitary man:

Were it possible that a human creature could grow up to manhood in some solitary place, without any communication with his own species, he could no more think of his own character, of the propriety or demerit of his own sentiments and conduct, of the beauty or deformity of his own mind, than of the beauty or deformity of his own face. (...) Bring him into society, and he is immediately presented with the mirror which he wanted before.<sup>16</sup>

Let us name this man Adam (after his creator). An interesting aspect of this thought experiment becomes salient if we imagine that in his solitary place, Adam sees his reflection in the still surface of a pool for the first time, like Narcissus.<sup>17</sup> Unlike Narcissus, Adam has never met people before, and according to Smith's theory, this difference in social experience creates a significant difference in how they react to perceiving the images of themselves for the first time.

Narcissus, acquainted to others but not his own image, thinks he sees another person and falls in love with this person, whom he finds extremely beautiful. Bending down to kiss this person, he thinks of his reflection as reciprocating his attempt to kiss and reaches into the water to embrace this supposed underwater-person. In some versions of the story, he falls

into the water and drowns, in other versions he becomes so disturbed by the ambiguous actions of his beloved that he lays down by the pool and dies of heartache.

With Adam, the story would be quite different. Never having seen other people, he would not have formed an expectation of what people look like nor made any preferences of facial appearances, and could not judge of the “beauty or deformity of his own face.” In spite of the valuable lessons learned from the moral of the myth of Narcissus, it is unlikely that Adam would join Narcissus in thinking that he saw another person. At the very least, he should have been able to correct this false impression after some pondering of the mimicking expertise of either himself or of his new acquaintance, or of them both. In addition, reaching into the water should serve as a final, indisputable fact against his beliefs that he was seeing another person. However, realising that it is not an image of another person, does not entail a realisation that he sees his own reflection; it is unlikely that he, as he has no concept of self, would develop self-awareness in this situation.

Nevertheless, this thought-experiment is not meant to show what Smith thinks would happen if a person actually grew up isolated from other people; it is constructed in order to see how self-awareness is contingent on social interaction. Both Adam’s concept of own character, how he is an individual with certain traits and qualities distinct from other individuals with their traits and qualities, as well as the ability to think of his character in normative terms, rely entirely on meeting other people and studying their reactions to him. The “mirror” of society, however, does not function in a manner similar to ordinary mirrors. The first awareness of this mirror develops similarly to the awareness of ordinary mirrors when first meeting people:

Our first ideas of personal beauty and deformity, are drawn from the shape and appearance of others, not from our own. We soon become sensible, however, that others exercise the same criticism upon us. (...) We become anxious to know how far our appearance deserves either their blame or approbation. We examine our person limb by limb, and by placing ourselves before a looking-glass (...) endeavour (...) to view ourselves at the distance and with the eyes of other people.<sup>18</sup>

A similar process happens with the first formation of self-awareness. It is not the case that, on Adam’s first meeting with other people, they serve as direct mirrors of his character, propriety and demerit. He does not suddenly realise “so that’s what I am like, and this is

how I behave!” Instead, on his first meeting with other people, he is fascinated by how the “character and conduct of other people”<sup>19</sup> affect him, and he becomes aware that other people judge likewise of his character and conduct. Becoming anxious to learn if their judgements are deserved, he imagines being the spectator of his own behaviour. Then by investigating his conduct in detail, corresponding to examining his “person limb by limb” he forms an impression of what other people observe when judging of him. This impression he then tries to process in a way similar to viewing “at the distance and with the eyes of other people.” These are the general outlines of the sympathetic process: to observe others, to imagine what they think and feel, and to form an opinion of their thoughts and feeling. The main point from this example with Adam is that sympathy is part of the functions of the mind that are entirely dependent on social life in order to develop.

### **The nature of sympathy**

Smith describes sympathy as occurring in several examples between an agent, often referred to as 'the person principally concerned,' and a spectator.<sup>20</sup> The most basic kind of sympathy is the one that arises from simply observing an emotion in another person, without any knowledge of the relevant situation.<sup>21</sup> Here an emotion is “transfused” instantaneously. Maria Carrasco<sup>22</sup> notes of this 'mechanical' form of sympathy that it is “one-way,” that is, the spectator sympathises with the agent, but it is not mutual. This is also the case with the next form of sympathy, but we shall later see the two kinds of sympathy that are by contrast “two-way” or mutual. These are the first social emotions of Adam, when introduced to society. They correspond to what we know as 'contagion' of emotion, especially prominent in the case of an infant starting to cry merely from the sound of another infant's crying.

From this foundation, the most obvious parts of sympathy identify as “pity or compassion, the emotion which we feel for the misery of others.”<sup>23</sup> However, we do not have fellow feelings with merely pain or sorrow, but: “Whatever is the passion which arises from any object in the person principally concerned, an analogous emotion springs up, at the thought of his situation, in the breast of every attentive spectator.”<sup>24</sup> Sympathy, thereby, is more than pity or compassion; sympathy is “our fellow-feeling with any passion whatever.”<sup>25</sup>

Here, a new aspect is included: the thought of the situation of the agent. Smith further elaborates this aspect by identifying sympathy as a faculty not of the senses but of the imagination:

By the imagination we place ourselves in his situation, (...) and become in some measure the same person with him, and thence form some idea of his sensations, and even feel something which, though weaker in degree, is not altogether unlike them. (...) For as to be in pain or distress of any kind excites the most excessive sorrow, so to conceive or to imagine that we are in it, excites some degree of the same emotion, in proportion to the vivacity or dulness of the conception.<sup>26</sup>

This reaction is so automatic that it may be confused with being immediate like perception, but it is an active part of our mind belonging to the imagination. To Smith, such reactions are so instant and automatic that they can only occur from a natural desire of sympathy, as opposed to being a derivative from selfish desires instructed by long-term planning. With a basis in imagination, sympathy now entails a contextual reference to the sympathetic information, so the spectator, before sympathising, seems to judge of whether or not this is how he would feel if he were in that situation. Adam would here imagine what the agent experiences both perceptively, cognitively and emotionally.

From this, Smith explains that sympathy arises more from observing the situation of another than from observing merely the passions of another, although both aspects are usually important for sympathy. To demonstrate, he presents several instances of the many situations wherein we have sympathetic emotions not felt by the principal agent, his most obvious example being that we sometimes sympathise with people who are dead and obviously cannot feel anything at all.<sup>27</sup>

This example raises an interesting issue: it seems that sympathy is now described as imagining being in the situation of the other, however, imagining being dead should be a difficult task, as it clearly involves nothing to imagine, by imagining not existing. Still, Smith clearly states that we imagine being dead by imagining placing our own living mind in a dead body, and thus experiencing what it would feel like to be dead, which we have noted would be impossible. We thus seem to keep certain aspects of our own perspective when we take the perspective of another, which may be problematic for an account of how we get information of another person's subjective experience, unbiased by own interests.

This information does not need to be entirely unbiased, as it suffices to get an idea of what the other person is experiencing in order to make up an opinion. It is worth noticing here that Smith firmly held both points: we do keep some aspects of our own perspective in the imaginative transport into another persons experience, but we simultaneously also imagine completely being that other person. This last point is perhaps best stated in the example of a man imagining the pains of a woman in labour.<sup>28</sup> There, it is impossible for the man to imagine himself in his own person being in that situation, so he then must imagine actually being the woman in question.

Of these sympathetic experiences, Smith holds that they must arise from imagining being in the situation, but regarding it with own “present reason and judgement.”<sup>29</sup> This implies that we bring our own senses and mental abilities in order to imagine the situation of another sympathetically, which, in turn explains why we prefer not to be buried alive and why men tend to dislike imagining being a woman giving birth. In both cases, being well informed of the situation, and imagining bringing with us our own senses and mental abilities to the point of view of the person principally concerned will produce sympathetic emotions. Imagining being in the situations ourselves, in our own person, however, does not occur.<sup>30</sup> Further, the emotions expressed by the person actually in the situation affects the process of sympathy, but they do not constitute the sympathetic emotions.

Adam would now develop, by sympathetic experience, the ability to leave “himself behind” and enter more completely into the full, personal situations of others. We can thereby imagine that one becomes able to sympathise with an agent who has deficits in his perceptive, cognitive or emotional skills, by entering into their situation on the conditions set by such deficits. This will affect the sympathy process, a point most easily demonstrated by how we tend to be more sympathetic towards children as they usually have more limitations in regards to perceiving, understanding and emotionally reacting to a situation than adults do.

The spectator must, as noted, on some level, agree with the emotions of the agent in order to sympathise. If the spectator, were he in the situation of the agent, would feel something similar to what the agent does in fact feel, then the spectator agrees with the agent and finds

the emotions of the agent to be proper. A brief presentation of Smith's system of the emotions makes this process salient.

### **Smith's categories of emotions and how they evoke sympathy**

Smith categorises some passions as to their origin from the body, as opposed to those passions who originate in the imagination. Further, he categorises passions of the imagination as either habitual, or in the opposites of unsocial and social passions. Directly between the unsocial and the social passions, Smith places the selfish passions.

Instances of the bodily passions are hunger, pain, and sexual desires.<sup>31</sup> Bodily passions “(...) excite either no sympathy at all, or such a degree of it, as is altogether disproportioned to the violence of what is felt by the sufferer.”<sup>32</sup> Only when those passions are associated to a situation that induces passions of the imagination, sympathy may activate to a proportionate degree.<sup>33</sup>

Instances of the passions of habitual imagination are love, friendship, and interest in studies and other occupations.<sup>34</sup> We may associate these passions with idiosyncratic attitudes, which are constituted by personality traits of individual preferences. These passions evoke a similar degree of sympathy as the bodily passions, as the observer may not easily enter into the personal situations that produce them. Only when such passions are associated with social or unsocial passions, they evoke sympathy more easily.

The unsocial passions are the different modes of hatred and resentment.<sup>35</sup> Though these passions are similarly difficult to sympathise with for the agent who observes them, these passions are, for the agent, of more sympathetic concern than the previously mentioned. The sympathetic concern is in these cases fractured between the person who expresses unsocial passions and the person who is the object of those passions: “(...) we are concerned for both; and our fear for what the one may suffer, damps our resentment for what the other has suffered.”<sup>36</sup> Thus, the person exhibiting unsocial passions must lower them in order for the agent to sympathize with them.



The opposite is the case with the social passion, instances of which are generosity, humanity, kindness, compassion, mutual friendship, and esteem.<sup>37</sup> When observing such passions, our sympathy is doubled, instead of divided, between the person exhibiting the social passions and the person made object of those passions. There is therefore no upper limit to those passions required for sympathy.

The selfish passions,<sup>38</sup> constituted by grief and joy, are the object of a degree of sympathy that falls in between the social and unsocial passions, as this sympathy neither divides nor doubles because it concerns affections affecting only their possessor. With grief, we sympathise more with more and less with less; with joy, our sympathy is conditioned oppositely.

Now having explored the foundation and basics of sympathy, let us see how Smith explains the quality of the sympathetic experience, which introduces the two-way aspect of sympathy.

### **Mutual sympathy**

Smith notes, “(...) nothing pleases us more than to observe in other men a fellow-feeling with all the emotions of our own breast; nor are we ever so much shocked as by the appearance of the contrary.”<sup>39</sup> This mutual sympathy is what connects the agent and the spectator; it is a bond that is anticipated in the sense that its absence shocks us but it is not necessarily expected in a strong way because we are quite pleased to observe it. In a way, we may say that it impresses us just as the food made by a master chef or the vocal performance of a virtuoso opera singer impresses us. Poor performance shocks us and we are overjoyed with what exceeds our expectations. Perhaps this tendency comes from the fact that the human mind is usually a solitary place, even in social situations with little or no sympathy, so when sympathy does occur the otherwise lonely state of mind connects with another and they are, simply put, happy together. Thus, we experience mutual sympathy to a certain degree as a joy and therefore of intrinsic value and not just the instrumental source of the benevolent virtues. From this, it follows that sympathy “(...) enlivens joy and alleviates grief. It enlivens joy by presenting another source of satisfaction; and it alleviates grief by insinuating into the heart almost the only agreeable

sensation which it is at that time capable of receiving.”<sup>40</sup> Likewise, the agent is pleased from feeling sympathy to the person principally concerned and troubled from not feeling sympathy.

From this description, it is reasonable to assume that Adam, upon meeting other people and experiencing this mutual sympathy for the first time, would feel overjoyed by the social bond it offers. Being a spectator and not used to mutual sympathy, he still feels compelled to sympathise with the agent that exhibits self-command by regulating his emotional expressions in order to achieve perfect harmony in the mutual sympathy from our once solitary, now turned social spectator, who in turn increases his sympathetic approval. In addition, as an agent himself, he will feel compelled to attune his behaviour to the sympathetic expressions of the spectator in order to achieve mutual sympathy.

Following this process, Adam experiences something essential; he learns to judge of himself:

We become anxious to know how far we deserve their censure or applause, and whether to them we must necessarily appear those agreeable or disagreeable creatures which they represent us. We begin, upon this account, 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.<sup>41</sup>

Like Maria Carrasco points out,<sup>42</sup> the agent becomes a spectator of the spectator, and imagines being him in order to judge of his sympathy. When an immediate harmony does not occur instantaneously between their emotions, the agent shows self-command by regulating his emotional expressions into something more agreeable, which will allow the spectator in turn to show more sympathy. This process is sustained until harmony in sympathy is obtained, that is, the spectator is sympathetic to the emotions of the agent and the agent finds this sympathy proper. Thus, the agent is provided with another point of view for regarding himself and considering the propriety of his emotions, while the spectator continuously re-evaluates the propriety of the emotions of the agent and thereby re-evaluates the propriety of his own sympathy.

This mutual sympathy is the foundation for the 'principle of self-approbation and of self-disapprobation,' or in other words our judgements concerning our own sentiments and

conduct.<sup>43</sup> To Smith, this principle is “altogether the same with that which we exercise the like judgements concerning the judgements of the conduct of other people.”<sup>44</sup> In order to make a judgement of our own “sentiments and motives,” we must:

(...) endeavour to view them with the eyes of other people, or as other people are likely to view them. Whatever judgement we can form concerning them, accordingly, must always bear some secret reference, either to what are, or to what, upon a certain condition, would be, or to what, we imagine, ought to be the judgement of others. We endeavour to examine our own conduct as we imagine any other fair and impartial spectator would examine it.<sup>45</sup>

### **A comment on moral sympathy**

So far, the psychological account of sympathy has explained how we gain knowledge relevant for morality as well as motivation for being moral. However, it is not yet explained what this morality contains; we seem to be lacking a standard for moral judgement and conduct. Christel Fricke explains the circularity: “The impartial spectator sympathises with proper feelings exclusively. Those feelings are proper with which the impartial spectator sympathises.”<sup>46</sup> Clearly, the circularity here needs to be avoided or solved. It seems that this circularity comes from focusing on a particular judgement of propriety. Indeed, such judgements are based on a standard that refers to sympathy and are thus circular, but I will argue in the following that they do imply a development towards objectivity and that they are therefore not trapped in this circular state.

Although the impartial point of view provides a fair and impartial basis for judgement, it is not clear how this judgement is a moral judgement: By escaping the influence of selfish interests when judging from the impartial point of view does not exclude the possibility that our judgements remain subjective and relative to personal opinions, in the sense that they can be affected by personal values and principles that are not selfish but based on upbringing and cultural identity. For example, women wearing trousers was in the past thought of as improper whereas today most people think of it as entirely proper for almost all occasions. Because this is a value held as part of a personal belief-system, I think it is necessary to rule out such values as part of the mental tools we bring to the point of the impartial spectator. This is not implied in leaving behind the selfish passions only. There is,

then, no guarantee that the judgements of all people, who have normal mental health and mental abilities, and after taking the impartial position, will be judgements that are in agreement with each other. Therefore, this circularity emerges and we remain largely uninformed of the contents of morality. The question that remains unanswered, in my view, is what qualifies as impartiality, and what is impartial *enough* to account for morally objective judgements?

The answer to this question is found when we focus not on the objectivity of present judgements, but on the objectivity of the ideal judgements. Sympathising is a learning process at which we develop gradually by exercise in taking the position of the impartial spectator. We may never reach total objectivity but it is still a goal worth pursuing. When reaching a high level of mastering this skill we may say that our judgements are objective not in the sense of true belief but in the sense of intersubjectivity. All people would agree with these judgements, were they to view them as impartial spectators.

Thus as we improve our abilities of taking the position of the impartial spectator we gradually obtain more relevant information, both more minute details and a more general overview. An important part of this improvement lies in the ability of ignoring the sometimes urgent and powerful claims of the selfish emotions. The impartial point of view is here seen not as an absolute point, which exclusively contains qualities otherwise unobtainable, but a goal towards which we strive and by approaching it, we become increasingly impartial. Here, the argument is elevated into an upward spiral where the sense of propriety to the impartial spectator is continuously developed by the constant refinement of the sympathetic ability improving impartial perception and thus escapes circularity.

Importantly, the position of the impartial spectator is therefore neither an ideal spectator of perfect knowledge nor the lowest common denominator of actually agreed sentiments; rather, it is something in between these two. On the one hand, it informs of something everybody would agree on from an impartial point of view, so it is not ideal in the sense of perfect and complete information but it is not misinformed by selfish emotions. The ideal spectator is a concept that requires perfect knowledge and thus becomes impossible for men to achieve. However, according to Smith we do construe an idea of perfection, albeit possibly vague. This comes from admiration of the expert or genius. Admiration consists of

“approbation heightened by wonder” and the common object of which is “the great leader in science and taste.” We approve of his judgements “not as something useful, but as right, as accurate, as agreeable to truth and reality: and it is evident that we attribute those qualities to it for no other reason but because we find that it agrees with our own.”<sup>47</sup> By observing a “moral expert,” we are then informed of, what to us appears as an ideal way of judging and conducting, and by such observations we form an idea of an ideal moral agent and how such an agent judges and acts and this entails an idea of virtue or of excellence.

This relates to Smith’s conception of the first standard of judgement, where the object of our judgement is compared to “the idea of complete propriety and perfection (...) in comparison with which the actions of all men must for ever appear blameable and imperfect.”<sup>48</sup> This is to say that when judging of the conduct and emotions of others, or ourselves we compare it to an idea of perfection. Smith does not explain how this idea emerges in our mind, but we may interpret this to imply imagining feeling and acting perfectly attuned to the sentiments of the impartial spectator. This involves the ability completely to leave the original point of view and the selfish passions, which is for Smith what limits our possibilities for becoming identical in judgement with the impartial spectator.

On the other hand, the impartial point of view informs of something everybody would agree on when not misguided by selfish emotions, it is therefore reasonable to exclude those commonly held sentiments that qualify as judgements informed by selfish emotions, such as opinions based on resentment put in system and institutionalised.<sup>49</sup> Smith thinks that to obtain sympathetic judgements of perfect propriety often “requires no more than that common and ordinary degree of sensibility or self-command which the most worthless of mankind are possess of, and sometimes even that degree is not necessary.” This relates to Smith’s second standard of judgement, which involves comparing the object of our judgement to “(...) the distance from this complete perfection, which the actions of the greater part of men commonly arrive at.”<sup>50</sup> We can interpret this to be an idea of what we generally expect of people, not what we are impressed by or disappointed of but rather a neutral baseline; it is an idea formed from our sympathetic experience of social acts and feelings. By applying both these standards we get a perspective from which we can

comparatively place the object of our judgement along a one-dimensional line ranging from blameworthy through neutral to praiseworthy, approaching complete perfection in the infinite distance: “Whatever goes beyond this degree [of common actions], how far soever it may be removed from absolute perfection, seems to deserve applause; and whatever falls short of it, to deserve blame.”<sup>51</sup>

These two standards shape the view of the impartial spectator: it does not entail objectivity in the sense of a purely rational mind deducing logical consequences from universal moral rules. Rather, it entails an intersubjectivity aiming at a universality, which includes the approval of all of humanity and thus a perspective that provides the clarity of perception and judgement necessary to form moral judgements. From this foundation, Smith constructs his moral theory, which focuses mainly on the virtues of self-command and benevolence and prudence. We shall not investigate further on morality in Smith, but instead summarize his concept of sympathy.

### **The main aspects of sympathy**

Sympathy, as we have described, has several levels of functioning. The immediate kind occurs without cognition, but the imaginative part of sympathy entails rich cognitive content. In addition, some of the sympathetic imagining may be fully automatic, while more complicated abilities such as taking the position of the impartial spectator may require quite active and deliberate thinking. We also noted that sympathy can be one-way as well as mutual. The sympathetic process starts by imagining being another person while maintaining one's own perceptive, emotional and cognitive abilities and thereafter forming a judgement of the information gathered. This judgement consists in agreeing or disagreeing with the actions and feelings of the other, according to the extent one would act and feel in the same way. In mutual sympathy, this creates the regulative process both of the sympathy of the spectator and of the actions and feelings of the agent, which has harmonious sympathy as its goal. As we have noted, the notion of propriety is an important aspect of sympathy, one that develops along with the training of sympathetic skills. We now can turn to exploring modern research on empathy.

## Contemporary research relevant to Smith

### Emotions in general

In psychology, there are a number of discussions on the nature of emotions, but for our context, the focus limits to the neurobiology of emotions, and social and cognitive components, especially self-awareness.

Regarding the neurobiology of emotions, Antonio Damasio summarizes:

Most emotions are responsible for profound changes in *both* the body and the brain. Moreover, note that emotions are not feelings. It is only when the brain manages to make a coordinated representation of all the emotional changes in the form of images that we come to *feel* an emotion. Note, finally, that it is only when we have consciousness that we come to know that we feel an emotion.<sup>52</sup>

This coordinated representation of emotional changes as images relates to the foundation of Nussbaum's concept of the cognitive contents of emotions as described earlier. We may say that this is the informational source that tells us how we feel and what general emotion we are experiencing, but it does not inform of the object of the emotions. This requires more reflection about oneself in relation to one's surroundings. As noted, Smith had self-awareness as a prerequisite for all the social emotions, including sympathy. Leary<sup>53</sup> specifies that being able to self-reflect makes our emotional life "far more extensive and complex," and that having a self permits people to "(1) evoke emotions in themselves by imagining self-relevant events, (2) react emotionally to abstract and symbolic images of themselves in their own mind, (3) consciously contemplate the cause of their emotions (4) experience emotions by thinking about how they are perceived by other people, and (5) deliberately regulate their emotional experience." (1) and (2) are associated to Nussbaum's notion of the "I-reference" of emotions; but more importantly, (3) and (4) concern the information gained from sympathy and (5) describes Smith's central idea of self command which is so important for mutual sympathy. In addition, the ability of imagination that is crucial to Smith is here given much emphasis. Self-awareness seems thus to be of importance on several levels concerning sympathy. Salovey goes even further in saying that "the emotions themselves *are* social processes."<sup>54</sup> This implies that Adam would have no

emotions prior to socialising, not even the original passions. Instead, his original passions could be the simplest forms of affect and lacking all of the five features mentioned above.

As to cognition in emotions, Scherer<sup>55</sup> claims that modern psychology, although affected by the tradition of seeing emotion as an “impediment to the proper functioning of the pinnacle of cognition – rational thought, (...) the Zeitgeist seems to be dominated by efforts to integrate rather than oppose cognition and emotion.” The tendency in modern research is here a shift towards conceiving of emotions as allied to cognition in the manner Smith illustrated. A problem here will be to define cognition consistently.<sup>56</sup> It is agreed that a basic understanding such as Nussbaum’s, where cognition simply is general processing of information, allows emotions to have cognitive content. However,

the challenge that confronts modern emotion research is to specify with increasing precision the types of cognitive operations that may be critical to the emotion-generation process and to identify the neural circuitry that differentially subserves emotion and cognition. We also need to study the two-way interaction between these systems.<sup>57</sup>

These ongoing studies are relevant to Smith’s view of emotions, but we have seen that the basics of general cognition are corresponding to the main view of Nussbaum’s account, which we argued was seemingly fitting Smith’s view. Further, focusing on empathy will inform of the cognitive aspects of this particular emotion, which is sufficient for the purposes of this discussion. With this general outline of emotions, the specifics of empathy may now be addressed.

## **Empathy**

Not unlike ‘sympathy,’ ‘empathy’ is a term that has several different meanings and connotations, also in science. Batson, one of the main researchers in social psychology on the field of altruism, outlines a general historical view, starting in 1909 when Titchener translated the German term ‘*emfühlung*.’ This meant intuitively seeing something from the inside. Through several changes over the years, ‘empathy’ has since the late 1970’s come “to refer to one particular set of congruent vicarious emotions, those that are more other-focused than self-focused, including feelings of sympathy, compassion, tenderness and the



like (Batson et al., 1981,1983; Coke et al.,1978; Toi & Batson, 1982).”<sup>58</sup> Later, Batson takes ‘empathy’ to mean “an other-oriented emotional response congruent with the perceived welfare of another. If the other is perceived to be in need, then empathic emotions include feelings of sympathy, compassion, tenderness, and the like.”<sup>59</sup> This definition Batson employed to operationalise empathy for his experimental studies of the empathy-altruism hypothesis, which claims that “empathy evokes motivation directed toward the ultimate goal of reducing the needy person’s suffering; the more empathy felt for a person in need, the more altruistic motivation to have that need reduced.”<sup>60</sup> This hypothesis is an alternative to three classes of egoism that may explain altruism: reward seeking, punishment avoidance and aversive-arousal reduction. Batson concludes that in the more than 25 experiments conducted, the results have shown “[w]ith remarkable consistency (...) patterns as predicted by the empathy-altruism hypothesis. Results have failed to support any of the egoistic alternatives.”<sup>61</sup>

This we may take to demonstrate to large extent what we know from Smith to be the motivational factor of sympathy; it is genuine concern for the needs of others, and not selfish concerns, that motivates unselfish action. However, for our purposes it is not sufficient with this operationalised version of ‘empathy’. To see that empathy may have the same meaning as sympathy we need a more detailed definition. Therefore, we continue from this starting point in social psychology and continue towards behavioural biology. Here, Preston and De Waal divide the subject matter into three classes, emotional contagion, empathy and cognitive empathy.

‘Emotional contagion’ is the process by which a spectator or observer is in an emotional state as “a direct result of perceiving the emotional state of another.”<sup>62</sup> This process includes all kinds of emotions, and one familiar example is the phenomenon of how infants start to cry simply from hearing the cries of other infants. ‘Empathy’ “refers to situations in which the subject has a similar emotional state to an object as a result of the perception of the object’s situation or predicament.”<sup>63</sup> ‘The subject’ is here an observer of the emotional state of another, namely, ‘the object.’ Empathy contrasts to emotional contagion, in which the subject experiences strong emotions that are self-focused. With empathy, on the other hand, the emotions focus on the object. Furthermore, here empathy is viewed as a process more than a result, so therefore “(...) an incidence may still qualify as empathy even if the

subject's beliefs about the object are incorrect or if their states do not exactly match.”<sup>64</sup>

This kind of empathy has evidence in several animal studies, including experiments with rodents,<sup>65</sup> experiments with monkeys<sup>66</sup> and behavioural data on apes.<sup>67</sup>

‘Cognitive empathy’ refers to a “shared state that is arrived at through cognitive means, as when the distress of the object is displaced spatially or temporally, when the situation of distress is unfamiliar, or when the object of distress is unfamiliar.”<sup>68</sup> Several primates and even rodents have exhibited empathy in experiments but cognitive empathy is so far only shown in humans and great apes.<sup>69</sup> Chimpanzees managed to transfer knowledge by perspective taking when reversing roles in a different task requirement experiment, but monkeys did not manage the same task.<sup>70</sup> There is in cognitive empathy a higher order of cognitive processes employed which do not employ in ordinary empathy where problem solving is not required.

Summarising these aspects, Hurlbut<sup>71</sup> describes, “this extraordinary capacity [empathy] is built on a combination of evolutionary ancient emotional responses and more recent anatomical and neurological innovations unique to primates and highly refined in human beings.” Further, Paul Ekman's studies show that specific emotions correlates with physical manifestations such as facial and bodily expressions, which lead to defined central, and autonomic nervous system changes. Hurlbut concludes “(...) that there are no subjective (psychological) states without psychological correlates. Thus emotions are simultaneously both inward and outward realities; they are intrinsically bodily based and have visible expressive manifestations which can be drawn on in the communication process.”<sup>72</sup> In these studies, the ancient emotional responses, identified as emotional contagion, receive a biological foundation.

This foundation further develops with the study of “mirror neurons” in monkeys, neurons which fire both when observing a specific action and when performing the very same action. Mirror neurons seem to be the underlying neurological mechanism of all three classes of emotional contagion, empathy and cognitive empathy. The findings of this study suggests that we can expect the same to be the case in humans as in monkeys, and “that we comprehend the motions of another by a kind of low-level imitation of the same action, thereby feeling both the action and something of its concomitant psychological context and

intention.”<sup>73</sup> Preston & De Waal describes this phenomenon as an organisation of both perception and action in a “common code of representation in the brain,” which

(...) may include abstract, symbolic representations (Prinz, 1997). Thus, in the case of emotions, the representations need not just map body postures and facial expressions directly from actor to perceiver; they can also map the meanings or goals of the expressions.”<sup>74</sup>

This point shows that mirror neurons may be the foundation not just of simple emotional contagion, but also of understanding the emotions of the agent in context to the situation.

### **Comparing empathy to sympathy**

We can already note several obvious similarities to Smith. Emotional contagion connotes to the immediate and automatic nature of the sympathetic process:

When we see a stroke aimed, and just as ready to fall upon the leg or arm of another person, we naturally shrink and draw back our own leg or arm; and when it does fall, we feel it in some measure, and are hurt by it as well as the sufferer.<sup>75</sup>

We may take these studies to further address Smith’s thoughts about sympathetic responses as immediate and automatic, and therefore not a derivative from selfish attitudes or emotions. Empathy as described here is remarkably similar to sympathy, being an other-focused process of observing the situation of the other, resulting in a similar emotional state but not necessarily identical. All this is included in Smith’s sympathy as key features. Cognitive empathy too, we recognize with Smith’s description. The cognitive perspective taking here is what Smith described as imagining “(...) we place ourselves in his situation (...)”<sup>76</sup> However, as Hurlbut stressed, this ability is highly refined in humans and we should therefore not take this to signify that chimpanzees in the studies actually imagined being the other. It is more likely that they imagined being in the situation as themselves and not as the other, as Smith describes sympathy. This highly refined ability is developed by human beings only. Cognitive empathy requires self-awareness, as Hurlbut points out,<sup>77</sup> which starts to develop in the human child between the first and second year

of life, and begins differentiating between animate and inanimate along with deepening the conscious personal identity. This is continued by the awareness of other selves and “indiscriminate emotional contagion is superseded by cognitive empathy, a willed and knowing stepping into the role of the other.”<sup>78</sup> Here, the argument on escaping the circularity of sympathetic judgement previously discussed becomes relevant. As mentioned, by focusing on the progressive nature of sympathy, the circularity can be avoided. This feature of cognitive empathy stresses this point of developing skills as it implies the improvement of the skill by exercise and heightening one’s self-awareness and awareness of other selves. In other words, the willed and knowing stepping into the role of the other is developed by repetition.

This corresponds to Smith's thought-experiment of Adam and the development of his self-awareness through social interaction. Self-awareness is on both accounts the beginning of developing the imaginative ability of taking the point of view of another. Because empathy may replace sympathy in Smith’s moral theory, empathy can be considered as a tool for moral thinking and acting, it is an active part of the moral mind, precisely in the way Smith described sympathy to be.

The studies of mirror neurons explain the immediacy and urgency of the sympathetic response while it avoids reducing sympathy to a moral sense similar to Hutcheson’s account with no cognitive content because of voluntary focus. Instead, sympathy is an immediate response that allows focus to be directed at the other and the sympathetic reaction develops by imagining being the other and judging of the information processed by this imaginative act. We see here that the mirror neurons as well as the development from emotional contagion through empathy and towards cognitive empathy are all features coherent to the sympathetic process as described by Smith.

## Conclusion

Smith's view of the nature of emotions is in all the main aspects consistent with the modern view. In addition, now having a more precise understanding of empathy that is synonymous to sympathy, we can indeed apply Batson's study of the empathy-altruism hypothesis to address the motivational function of sympathy. Also, the biological studies show that empathy also contains an explanation for Smith's informational aspect of sympathy, both by the low-level mirror-neuron imitations of actions and defined central and autonomic nervous system changes as well as by the higher level cognitive empathic information of the situation of another. Importantly, by explaining the role of empathy and its possibilities as a highly refined feature of human mental skill, the point of improving one's sympathetic abilities becomes salient. Thereby, it becomes easier to focus on the educating and developing aspects of moral sympathy and thus avoiding the circularity of the standard of judgements of propriety. The Theory Of Moral Sentiments is based on ideas and observations that are in no way obsolete but on the contrary still quite relevant and thus the moral project of Adam Smith seems realistic on this account. I hope that research that is more thorough can elaborate on the connection between Smith and scientific studies on empathy, extending far beyond the initial comparison made here and perhaps aiming towards establishing empathy as an essential tool for moral thought and action.

## References:

### Research articles:

- Adolphs, R., Tranel, D., Damasio, H. & Damasio, A., 1994: *Impaired recognition of emotion in facial expressions following bilateral damage to the human amygdala*. Nature, 372(6507), 669-672
- Adolphs, R., Tranel, D., Damasio, H. & Damasio, A. R., 1995: *Fear and the human amygdala*. Journal of Neuroscience, 15(9), 5879-5891
- Brothers, L., 1989: *A biological perspective on empathy*. American Journal of Psychiatry, 146(1), 10-19
- Church, R. M., 1959: *Emotional reactions of rats to the pain of others*. Journal of Comparative and Physiological Psychology, 52, 132-134
- Cialdini, R. B., Brown, S. L., Lewis, B. P., Luce, C. & Neuberg, S. L., 1997: *Reinterpreting the empathy-altruism relationship: When one into one equals oneness*. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 73(3), 481-494
- Cords, M. & Thurnheer, S., 1993: *Reconciling with valuable partners by long-tailed macaques*. Ethology, 93, 315-325
- Davidson, K., 1996: *Scientists debate animal motives*. San Francisco Examiner
- Eibl-Eibesfeldt, I., 1974: *Love and Hate* (G. Strachan, Trans.). New York: Schocken Books. (Original works published 1971)
- Ekman, P., Levenson, R. W. & Friesen, W. V., 1983: *Autonomic nervous system activity distinguishes among emotions*. Science, 221(4616) 1208-1210
- Estes, W. K. & Skinner, B. W., 1941: *Some quantitative properties of anxiety*. Journal of Experimental Psychology, 29, 390-400
- Lavery, J. J. & Foley, P. J., 1963: *Altruism or arousal in the rat?* Science 140 (3563), 172-173
- Macdonald, N. E. & Silverman, I. W., 1978: *Smiling and laughter in infants as a function of level of arousal and cognitive evaluation*. Developmental Psychology, 14(3), 235-241

- Mason, W. A. & Hollis, J. H., 1962: *Communication between young rhesus monkeys*. *Animal Behavior*, 10(3-4), 211-221
- Masserman, J. H., Wechkin, S. & Terris, W., Jr., 1964: "Altruistic" behavior in rhesus monkeys. *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 121(6), 584-585
- Miller, R. E., Banks, J. H. & Kuwahara, H., 1966: *The communication of affect between feral and socially isolated monkeys*. *Journal of Genetic Psychology*, 108(1), 121-134
- Mirsky, I. A. Miller, R. E. & Murphy, J. V., 1958: *The communication of affect in rhesus monkeys*. *Journal of American Psychological Association*, 6, 433-441
- Murphy, J. V., Miller, R. E. & Mirsky, I. A., 1955: *Interanimal conditioning in the monkey*. *Journal of Comparative and Physiological Psychology*, 48, 211-214
- O'Connell, S. M., 1995: *Empathy in chimpanzees: Evidence for theory of mind?* *Primates*, 36(3), 397-410
- Partan, S. & Marler, P., 1999: *Communication goes multimodal*. *Science* 283, 1272-1273
- Povinelli, D. J., Nelson, K. E. & Boysen, S. T., 1992a: *Comprehension of role reversal in chimpanzees: Evidence of empathy?* *Animal Behaviour*, 43(4), 633-640
- Povinelli, D. J., Parks, K. A. & Novak, M. A. 1992b: *Role reversal by rhesus monkeys, but no evidence of empathy*. *Animal Behaviour*, 44(2), 269-281
- Preston, S. D. & Jacobs, L. F., 2001: *Conspecific pilferage but not presence affects Merriam's kangaroo rat cache strategy*, 12:517-523, *Behavioral Ecology*
- Rice, G. E., Jr. & Gainer, P., 1962: "Altruism" in the albino rat. *Journal of Comparative and Physiological Psychology*, 55(1), 123-125
- Rice, G. E., Jr., 1964: *Aiding behavior vs. fear in the albino rat*. *Psychological Record*, 14(2) 165-170
- Sagi, A. & Hoffman, M. L., 1976: *Empathic distress in the newborn*. *Developmental Psychology*, 12(2), 175-176
- Stinson, L & Ickes, W., 1992: *Empathic accuracy in the interactions of male friends versus male strangers*. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 62(5), 787-797
- Thompson, R. A., 1987: *Empathy and emotional understanding: The early development of empathy*. In N. Eisenberg (Ed.), *Empathy and its development* (pp. 119-145), New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Trivers, R. L., 1971: *The evolution of reciprocal altruism*. *Quarterly Review of Biology*, 46, 35-57

- Ungerer, J. A., 1990: *The early development of empathy: Self-regulation and individual differences in the first year*. *Motivation and Emotion*, 14(2), 93-106
- De Waal, F. B. M., 1982: *Chimpanzee politics: Power and sex among apes*. New York: Harper & Row.
- De Waal, F. B. M., 1996a: *Conflict as negotiation*. In W. McGrew, L. Marchant & T. Nishida (Eds.), *Great Ape Societies* (pp. 159-177). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- De Waal, F. B. M., 1996b: *Good natured: The origins of right and wrong in humans and other animals*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- De Waal, F. B. M. & Aureli, F., 1996: *Consolation, reconciliation and a possible cognitive difference between macaques and chimpanzees*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- De Waal, F. B. M. & van Roosmalen, A., 1979: *Reconciliation and consolation among chimpanzees*. *Behavioral Ecology and Sociobiology*, 5, 55-66
- Watanabe, S. & Ono, K., 1986: *An experimental analysis of "empathic" response: Effects of pain reactions of pigeons upon other pigeon's operant behavior*. *Behavioural Processes*, 13(3), 269-277
- Wechkin, S., Masserman, J. H. & Terris, W., Jr., 1964: *Shock to a conspecific as an aversive stimulus*. *Psychonomic Science*, 1(2), 47-48
- Zahn-Waxler, C. & Radke-Yarrow, M., 1982: *The development of altruism: Alternative research strategies*. In N. Eisenberg (Ed.), *The development of prosocial behavior* (pp. 133-162). New York: Academic Press

## **Literature:**

- Allport, F. H., 1924: *Social Psychology*. Cambridge, MA: Riverside Press
- Audi, Robert (ed.), 1999: *The Cambridge Dictionary Of Philosophy*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Cambridge University Press
- Batson, C. D., 1991: *The Altruism Question: Toward A Social-Psychological Answer*, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Inc.
- Carrasco, Maria A., 2009: *From Psychological To Moral Sympathy* (Unpublished Draft), Contribution To The Adam Smith Conference In Glasgow



- Cushman, Thomas, 2009: *Resentment in Theory of Moral Sentiments: A Sociological Re-examination and Critique*. Unpublished abstract of article, submitted to the Interdisciplinary Adam Smith Conference Commemorating the 250th anniversary of 'The Theory of Moral Sentiments' at CSMN, Oslo University. Collected at <http://www.csmn.uio.no/events/2009/smith.xml>
- Davidson, R. J., Scherer, K. R. & Goldsmith, H. H., 2003: *Handbook Of Affective Sciences*, Oxford University Press
- Ekman, P. & Davidson, R.J., 1994: *The Nature Of Emotion. Fundamental Questions*, Oxford University Press
- Fleischacker, Samuel, 2004: *On Adam Smith's Wealth Of Nations: A Philosophical Companion*, Princeton University Press
- Fricke, Christel, abstract from "Genesis und Geltung moralischer Normen – Ein Gedankenexperiment von Adam Smith" in Fricke, Christel & Scütt, Hans-Peter (eds.), 2005: *Adam Smith als Moralphilosoph*, Walter deGruyter GmbH & co., Berlin collected Oct. 9<sup>th</sup>, 2009 at <http://uio.academia.edu/ChristelFricke/Papers>,
- Nussbaum, Martha C., 2003: *Upheavals Of Thought: The Intelligence Of Emotions*, Cambridge University Press
- Post, Stephen G. et al., eds., 2002: *Altruism And Altruistic Love: Science, Philosophy And Religion In Dialogue*, Oxford University Press
- Smith, Adam, 1976: *The Theory Of Moral Sentiments*, Raphael, D. D. & Macfie, A. L. (eds.), Oxford University Press

## Notes:

---

<sup>1</sup> See, e.g. Fleischacker, Raphael or Carrasco

<sup>2</sup> Smith, III.1.4

<sup>3</sup> See, e. g., Radcliffe, Elizabeth S. in Audi: "Sentimentalism"

<sup>4</sup> See, e.g., Raphael & Macfie in Introduction to T.M.S., p. 5-7

<sup>5</sup> Although Smith's account of self-command is largely inspired by stoic ethics, his concept of sympathy is unique and the impartial spectator theory is entirely his own. It is therefore irrelevant for our purposes to take stoic normative theory into account, only their descriptive view is needed. To explain their descriptive account of emotions, I interpret them along with Martha Nussbaum's reading, although we do not here employ her own neo-stoic hybrid theory, which combines stoic emotions with Aristotelian ethics.

<sup>6</sup> Nussbaum, 2003, p. 23

<sup>7</sup> See, e. g., Radcliffe, Elizabeth S. in Audi: "Hutcheson, Francis"

<sup>8</sup> See, e. g., Leahey, Thomas H. in Audi: "Faculty Psychology"

<sup>9</sup> See, e. g., Fricke's "Genesis und Geltung moralischer Normen – Ein Gedankenexperiment von Adam Smith" in Fricke & Schütt. Here it is also offered a possible way out of the circularity.

<sup>10</sup> Smith, I.i.1.1

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., I.ii.5.1

<sup>12</sup> Fleischacker, p. 66

<sup>13</sup> Smith, III.3.3

<sup>14</sup> Raphael and Macfie have in their edition of T.M.S. equated 'self-interest' and 'self-love' ('self-interest' is indexed under 'self-love.' This is perhaps because Smith often uses the term in that sense, however, this does not contradict the sense of self-interest here employed.

<sup>15</sup> Fleischacker, p. 98

<sup>16</sup> Smith, III.1.3

<sup>17</sup> See, e.g., "Narcissus," *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 2009. Encyclopædia Britannica Online. 05 Nov. 2009 <<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/403458/Narcissus> >, or <http://www.echo.me.uk/legend.htm>

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., III.1.4

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., III.1.5

<sup>20</sup> Smith also sometimes uses examples when the spectator observes the agent acting in ways that in different ways affects another person, who is now the 'person principally concerned.' These cases demonstrate how the spectator often must divide his sympathetic attention between two or more people involved in a situation. In our discussion, we use only the two person scenarios for reasons of simplicity.

<sup>21</sup> Smith, I.i.1.6

<sup>22</sup> Carrasco, p.1

<sup>23</sup> Smith, I.i.1.1

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., I.i.1.4

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., I.i.1.5

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., I.i.1.2

- 
- <sup>27</sup> Ibid., I.i.1.13
- <sup>28</sup> Ibid., VII.iii.14
- <sup>29</sup> Ibid., I.i.1.11
- <sup>30</sup> Ibid., I.i.1.11
- <sup>31</sup> Ibid., I.ii.1.1-12
- <sup>32</sup> Ibid., I.ii.1.5
- <sup>33</sup> Ibid., I.ii.1.6
- <sup>34</sup> Ibid., I.ii.2.1-6
- <sup>35</sup> Ibid., I.ii.3.1-8
- <sup>36</sup> Ibid., I.ii.3.1
- <sup>37</sup> Ibid., I.ii.4.1-3
- <sup>38</sup> Ibid., I.ii.5.1-4
- <sup>39</sup> Ibid., I.i.2.1
- <sup>40</sup> Ibid., I.i.2.2
- <sup>41</sup> Ibid., III.1.5
- <sup>42</sup> Carrasco, p. 3
- <sup>43</sup> Smith, III.1.1
- <sup>44</sup> Ibid., III.1.2
- <sup>45</sup> Ibid., III.1.2
- <sup>46</sup> Fricke, 2005
- <sup>47</sup> Smith, I.i.4.4
- <sup>48</sup> Ibid., I.i.5.9
- <sup>49</sup> On this last point, see Cushman for an interesting view, based on a reading of Smith, of how this sociological phenomenon occurs.
- <sup>50</sup> Smith, I.i.5.9
- <sup>51</sup> Ibid., I.i.5.9, my interpolation.
- <sup>52</sup> Post et al., p. 266
- <sup>53</sup> Davidson et al., p. 775
- <sup>54</sup> Ibid., p. 747
- <sup>55</sup> Ibid., p. 563
- <sup>56</sup> Ekman, p. 232
- <sup>57</sup> Ibid., p. 234
- <sup>58</sup> Batson, p. 86
- <sup>59</sup> Post et al., p. 92
- <sup>60</sup> Ibid., p. 92
- <sup>61</sup> Ibid., p. 98
- <sup>62</sup> Ibid., p. 286
- <sup>63</sup> Ibid., p. 286
- <sup>64</sup> Ibid., p. 286

- 
- <sup>65</sup> Allport, F. H. (1924); Church, R. M. (1959); Eibl-Eibesfeldt, I. (1971/1974); Estes, W. K. & Skinner, B. W. (1941); Lavery, J. J. & Foley, P. J. (1963); Partan, S. & Marler, P. (1999); Preston, S. D. & Jacobs, L. F. (2001); Rice, G. E., Jr. (1964); Rice, G. E., Jr. & Gainer, P. (1962); Watanabe, S. & Ono, K. (1986)
- <sup>66</sup> Adolphs et al. (1994,1995); Cialdini et al. (1997); Cords & Thurnheer (1993); Ekman et al. (1983); Macdonald & Silverman (1978); Mason & Hollis (1962); Masserman et al. (1964); Miller et al. (1966); Mirsky et al. (1958); Murphy et al. (1955); Stinson & Ickes (1992); Trivers (1971); Wechkin et al. (1964); Zahn-Waxler & Radke-Yarrow (1982)
- <sup>67</sup> Post et al., p. 287
- <sup>68</sup> Ibid., p. 287
- <sup>69</sup> de Waal (1996b)
- <sup>70</sup> Povinelli et al. (1992a,b); Mason & Hollis (1962)
- <sup>71</sup> Post et al., p. 314-315, my interpolation
- <sup>72</sup> Ibid., p.315
- <sup>73</sup> Brothers, 1989, p.78; Sagi & Hoffman (1976)
- <sup>74</sup> Post et al., p. 300-301
- <sup>75</sup> Smith, I.i.1.3
- <sup>76</sup> Ibid., I.i.1.2
- <sup>77</sup> Post et al., p. 316
- <sup>78</sup> Ibid., p. 318