

THE GLASGOW EDITION OF THE WORKS AND
CORRESPONDENCE OF ADAM SMITH

*Commissioned by the University of Glasgow to celebrate the bicentenary of
the Wealth of Nations*

I

THE THEORY OF MORAL SENTIMENTS
Edited by D. D. RAPHAEL and A. L. MACFIE

II

AN INQUIRY INTO THE NATURE AND CAUSES
OF THE WEALTH OF NATIONS

Edited by R. H. CAMPBELL and A. S. SKINNER; textual editor W. B. TODD

III

ESSAYS ON PHILOSOPHICAL SUBJECTS
(and Miscellaneous Pieces)
Edited by W. P. D. WIGHTMAN

IV

LECTURES ON RHETORIC AND BELLES LETTRES

Edited by J. C. BRYCE

This volume includes the *Considerations concerning the
First Formation of Languages*

V

LECTURES ON JURISPRUDENCE

Edited by R. L. MEEK, D. D. RAPHAEL, and P. G. STEIN

This volume includes two reports of Smith's course together with
the 'Early Draft' of part of *The Wealth of Nations*

VI

CORRESPONDENCE OF ADAM SMITH
Edited by E. C. MOSSNER and I. S. ROSS

Associated volumes:

ESSAYS ON ADAM SMITH
Edited by A. S. SKINNER and T. WILSON

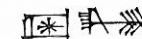
LIFE OF ADAM SMITH
By I. S. ROSS

*The Glasgow Edition of the Works and Correspondence of Adam Smith and
the associated volumes are published in hardcover by Oxford University
Press. The six titles of the Glasgow Edition, but not the associated volumes,
are being published in softcover by Liberty Fund.*

ADAM SMITH

The Theory of
Moral Sentiments

EDITED BY
D. D. RAPHAEL
AND
A. L. MACFIE



Liberty Fund
Indianapolis

This book is published by Liberty Fund, Inc., a foundation established to encourage study of the ideal of a society of free and responsible individuals.



The cuneiform inscription that serves as our logo and as the design motif for our endpapers is the earliest-known written appearance of the word "freedom" (*amagi*) or "liberty." It is taken from a clay document written about 2300 B.C. in the Sumerian city-state of Lagash.

This Liberty Fund edition of 1982 is an exact photographic reproduction of the edition published by Oxford University Press in 1976 and reprinted with minor corrections in 1979.

Liberty Fund, Inc.
8335 Allison Pointe Trail #300
Indianapolis, Indiana 46250-1684

This reprint has been authorized by the Oxford University Press.

© Oxford University Press 1976

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Smith, Adam, 1723-1790.

The theory of moral sentiments.

Reprint. Originally published: Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976. (The Glasgow edition of the works and correspondence of Adam Smith; 1)

Includes index.

1. Ethics—Early works to 1800. I. Raphael, D. D. (David Daiches), 1916-. II. Macfie, Alec Lawrence. III. Title. IV. Series: Smith, Adam, 1723-1790. Works. 1976; 1. AC7.S59 1976a vol. 1 [BJ1005] 330.15'3s 81-23693 ISBN 0-86597-012-2 (pbk.) [170] AACR2

03 04 P 12 11 10 9

Cover design by JMH Corporation, Indianapolis, Indiana
Printed & bound by
Edwards Brothers, Inc., Ann Arbor, Michigan

Preface

THIS is the first volume of a new edition of the works of Adam Smith undertaken by the University of Glasgow. In editing *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* we have received a great deal of help from the introduction and notes to Walther Eckstein's German translation of the book, published in 1926. Dr. Eckstein kindly added one or two further facts in private correspondence and showed a warm interest in this project of the University of Glasgow. We were sad to learn of his death a few years ago.

We are indebted to a number of other scholars who have given us information or suggestions. They include the late H. B. Acton, W. R. Brock, J. C. Bryce, the late C. J. Fordyce, L. Davis Hammond, K. H. Hennings, Nicholas M. Hope, I. D. Lloyd-Jones, the late W. G. MacLagan, J. C. Maxwell, Ronald L. Meek, W. G. Moore, Ernest C. Mossner, Sylvia Raphael, James Ritchie, Ian Ross, Andrew S. Skinner, Peter Stein, David M. Walker, Derek A. Watts, and W. Gordon Wheeler. All of them were most generous in responding to questions, but a special word of appreciation is due to J. C. Bryce and Andrew Skinner.

D. D. Raphael is grateful to the Warden and Fellows of All Souls College, Oxford, and to the University Court of the University of Glasgow for enabling him to spend more time on editorial work, first as a Visiting Fellow of All Souls for six months in 1967-8, and then as the Stevenson Lecturer in Citizenship at Glasgow in the autumn of 1972.

He also wishes to thank Mrs. Anne S. Walker, his secretary at Glasgow University, and Miss Hilary Burgess, his secretary at Imperial College, for the care with which they have typed the editorial matter.

Appendix II, always intended for this edition, has been published previously, with some minor changes, as an article by D. D. Raphael under the title 'Adam Smith and "the infection of David Hume's society"', in *Journal of the History of Ideas*, xxx (1969), 225-48. (The article contained an error on p. 245, saying that Smith refers to Hume in TMS II.ii.1.5. The reference is in fact to Kames.)

1974

D.D.R.
A.L.M.

Contents

PART I

OF the PROPRIETY OF ACTION

SECTION I

Of the SENSE OF PROPRIETY	p. 9
CHAP. I <i>Of SYMPATHY</i>	9
CHAP. II <i>Of the Pleasure of mutual Sympathy</i>	13
CHAP. III <i>Of the manner in which we judge of the propriety or impropriety of the Affections of other Men, by their concord or dissonance with our own</i>	16
CHAP. IV <i>The same subject continued</i>	19
CHAP. V <i>Of the amiable and respectable virtues</i>	23

SECTION II

Of the Degrees of the different Passions which are consistent with Propriety	27
CHAP. I <i>Of the Passions which take their origin from the body</i>	27
CHAP. II <i>Of those Passions which take their origin from a particular turn or habit of the Imagination</i>	31
CHAP. III <i>Of the unsocial Passions</i>	34
CHAP. IV <i>Of the social Passions</i>	38
CHAP. V <i>Of the selfish Passions</i>	40

SECTION III

Of the Effects of Prosperity and Adversity upon the Judgment of Mankind with regard to the Propriety of Action; and why it is more easy to obtain their Approbation in the one state than in the other	43
CHAP. I <i>That though our sympathy with sorrow is generally a more lively sensation than our sympathy with joy, it commonly falls much more short of the violence of what is naturally felt by the person principally concerned</i>	43
CHAP. II <i>Of the origin of Ambition, and of the distinction of Ranks</i>	50
CHAP. III <i>Of the corruption of our moral sentiments, which is occasioned by this disposition to admire the rich and the great, and to despise or neglect persons of poor and mean condition</i>	61

PART II

Of MERIT and DEMERIT; or of the Objects of REWARD and PUNISHMENT

SECTION I

Of the SENSE of MERIT and DEMERIT

67

CHAP. I *That whatever appears to be the proper object of gratitude appears to deserve reward; and that, in the same manner, whatever appears to be the proper object of resentment, appears to deserve punishment*

67

CHAP. II *Of the proper objects of gratitude and resentment*

69

CHAP. III *That where there is no approbation of the conduct of the person who confers the benefit, there is little sympathy with the gratitude of him who receives it: and that, on the contrary, where there is no disapprobation of the motives of the person who does the mischief, there is no sort of sympathy with the resentment of him who suffers it*

71

CHAP. IV *Recapitulation of the foregoing chapters*

73

CHAP. V *The analysis of the sense of Merit and Demerit*

74

SECTION II

Of Justice and Beneficence

78

CHAP. I *Comparison of those two virtues*

78

CHAP. II *Of the sense of Justice, of Remorse, and of the consciousness of Merit*

82

CHAP. III *Of the utility of this constitution of Nature*

85

SECTION III

Of the Influence of Fortune upon the Sentiments of Mankind, with regard to the Merit or Demerit of Actions

92

CHAP. I *Of the causes of this Influence of Fortune*

94

CHAP. II *Of the extent of this Influence of Fortune*

97

CHAP. III *Of the final cause of this Irregularity of Sentiments*

104

PART III

Of the Foundation of our Judgments concerning our own Sentiments and Conduct, and of the Sense of Duty

109

CHAP. I *Of the Principle of Self-approbation and of Self-disapprobation*

109

CHAP. II *Of the love of Praise, and of that of Praise-worthiness; and of the dread of Blame, and of that of Blame-worthiness*

113

CHAP. III *Of the Influence and Authority of Conscience*

134

CHAP. IV *Of the Nature of Self-deceit, and of the Origin and Use of general Rules*

156

CHAP. V *Of the influence and authority of the general Rules of Morality, and that they are justly regarded as the Laws of the Deity*

161

CHAP. VI *In what cases the Sense of Duty ought to be the sole principle of our conduct; and in what cases it ought to concur with other motives*

171

PART IV

Of the EFFECT of UTILITY upon the Sentiment of Approbation

CHAP. I *Of the beauty which the appearance of UTILITY bestows upon all the productions of Art, and of the extensive influence of this species of Beauty*

179

CHAP. II *Of the beauty which the appearance of Utility bestows upon the characters and actions of men; and how far the perception of this beauty may be regarded as one of the original principles of approbation*

187

PART V

Of the INFLUENCE of CUSTOM and FASHION upon the Sentiments of Moral Approbation and Disapprobation

CHAP. I *Of the Influence of Custom and Fashion upon our notions of Beauty and Deformity*

194

CHAP. II *Of the Influence of Custom and Fashion upon Moral Sentiments*

200

PART VI

Of the CHARACTER of VIRTUE

INTRODUCTION

212

SECTION I

Of the Character of the Individual, so far as it affects his own Happiness; or of Prudence

212

SECTION II

Of the Character of the Individual, so far as it can affect the Happiness of other People

INTRODUCTION

218

CHAP. I *Of the Order in which Individuals are recommended by Nature to our Care and Attention*

219

CHAP. II *Of the Order in which Societies are by Nature recommended to our Beneficence*

227

CHAP. III *Of universal Benevolence*

235

SECTION III

Of Self-command

237

CONCLUSION of the SIXTH PART

262

PART VII

Of SYSTEMS of MORAL PHILOSOPHY

SECTION I

Of the Questions which ought to be examined in a Theory of Moral Sentiments

265

SECTION II

Of the different Accounts which have been given of the Nature of Virtue

INTRODUCTION

CHAP. I *Of those Systems which make Virtue consist in Propriety*

266

CHAP. II *Of those Systems which make Virtue consist in Prudence*

267

CHAP. III *Of those Systems which make Virtue consist in Benevolence*

294

CHAP. IV *Of licentious Systems*

300

SECTION III

Of the different Systems which have been formed concerning the Principle of Approbation

306

INTRODUCTION

CHAP. I *Of those Systems which deduce the Principle of Approbation from Self-love*

314

CHAP. II *Of those Systems which make Reason the Principle of Approbation*

315

CHAP. III *Of those Systems which make Sentiment the Principle of Approbation*

318

SECTION IV

Of the Manner in which different Authors have treated of the practical Rules of Morality

321

327

PART I

Of the PROPRIETY of ACTION
Consisting of Three Sections

SECTION I

Of the SENSE of PROPRIETY

CHAP. I

Of SYMPATHY

¹ 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. Of this kind is pity or compassion, the emotion which we feel for the misery of others, when we either see it, or are made to conceive it in a very lively manner. That we often derive sorrow from the sorrow of others, is a matter of fact too obvious to require any instances to prove it; for this sentiment, like all the other original passions of human nature, is by no means confined to the virtuous and humane, though they perhaps may feel it with the most exquisite sensibility. The greatest ruffian, the most hardened violator of the laws of society, is not altogether without it.

² As we have no immediate experience of what other men feel, we can form no idea of the manner in which they are affected, but by conceiving what we ourselves should feel in the like situation. Though our brother is upon the rack, as long as we ourselves are at our ease, our senses will never inform us of what he suffers. They never did, and never can, carry us beyond our own person, and it is by the imagination only that we can form any conception of what are his sensations. Neither can that faculty help us to this any other way, than by representing to us what would be our own, if we were in his case. It is the impressions of our own senses only, not those of his, which our imaginations copy. By the imagination we place ourselves in his situation, we conceive ourselves enduring all the same torments, we enter as it were into his body, 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. His agonies, when they are thus brought home to ourselves, when we have thus adopted and made them our own, begin at last to affect us, and we then tremble and shudder at the thought of what he feels. 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.

We might be pleased with the humanity of his temper, but we should still regard him with a sort of pity which is altogether inconsistent with the admiration that is due to perfect virtue. It is the same case with all the other passions. We do not dislike to see them exert themselves properly, even when a false notion of duty would direct the person to restrain them. A very devout Quaker, who upon being struck upon one cheek, instead of turning up the other, should so far forget his literal interpretation of our Saviour's precept, as to bestow some good discipline upon the brute that insulted him, would not be disagreeable to us. We should laugh and be diverted with his spirit, and rather like him the better for it. But we should by no means regard him with that respect and esteem which would seem due to one who, upon a like occasion, had acted properly from a just sense of what was proper to be done. No action can properly be called virtuous, which is not accompanied with the sentiment of self-approbation.

PART IV

Of the EFFECT of UTILITY upon the Sentiment of Approbation

^aConsisting of One Section^a^bCHAP. I^b

Of the beauty which the appearance of UTILITY bestows upon all the productions of art, and of the extensive influence of this species of Beauty

¹ THAT utility is one of the principal sources of beauty has been observed by every body, who has considered with any attention what constitutes the nature of beauty. The conveniency of a house gives pleasure to the spectator as well as its regularity, and he is as much hurt when he observes the contrary defect, as when he sees the correspondent windows of different forms, or the door not placed exactly in the middle of the building. That the fitness of any system or machine to produce the end for which it was intended, bestows a certain propriety and beauty upon the whole, and renders the very thought and contemplation of it agreeable, is so very obvious that nobody has overlooked it.

² The cause too, why utility pleases, has of late been assigned by an ingenious and agreeable philosopher,¹ who joins the greatest depth of thought to the greatest elegance of expression, and possesses the singular and happy talent of treating the abstrusest subjects not only with the most perfect perspicuity, but with the most lively eloquence. The utility of any object, according to him, pleases the master by perpetually suggesting to him the pleasure or conveniency which it is fitted to promote. Every time he looks at it, he is put in mind of this pleasure; and the object in this manner becomes a source of perpetual satisfaction and enjoyment. The spectator enters by sympathy into the sentiments of the master, and necessarily views the object under the same agreeable aspect. When we visit the palaces of the great, we cannot help conceiving the satisfaction we should enjoy if we ourselves were the masters, and were possessed of so much artful and ingeniously contrived accommodation. A similar account is given why the appearance of inconveniency should render any object disagreeable both to the owner and to the spectator.

³ But that this fitness, this happy contrivance of any production of art, should often be more valued, than the very end for which it was intended; and that the exact adjustment of the means for attaining any conveniency or pleasure, should frequently be more regarded, than that very conveniency

^{a-a} om. I Consisting of One SECTION 2-7
^{b-b} SECT. I x

¹ David Hume. *Treatise of Human Nature*, II.ii.5; ed. Selby-Bigge, 363-5: III.iii.1; Selby-Bigge, 576-7: *Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals*, V.ii; ed. Selby-Bigge, § 179. Section V of the *Enquiry* is entitled 'Why Utility pleases', but Smith seems to be thinking more of *Treatise*, II.ii.5.

or pleasure, in the attainment of which their whole merit would seem to consist, has not, so far as I know, been yet taken notice of by any body.² That this however is very frequently the case, may be observed in a thousand instances, both in the most frivolous and in the most important concerns of human life.

- 4 When a person comes into his chamber, and finds the chairs all standing in the middle of the room, he is angry with his servant, and rather than see them continue in that disorder, perhaps takes the trouble himself to set them all in their places with their backs to the wall. The whole propriety of this new situation arises from its superior conveniency in leaving the floor free and disengaged. To attain this conveniency he voluntarily puts himself to more trouble than all he could have suffered from the want of it; since nothing was more easy, than to have set himself down upon one of them, which is probably what he does when his labour is over. What he wanted therefore, it seems, was not so much this conveniency, as that arrangement of things which promotes it. Yet it is this conveniency which ultimately recommends that arrangement, and bestows upon it the whole of its propriety and beauty.
- 5 A watch, in the same manner, that falls behind above two minutes in a day, is despised by one curious in watches. He sells it perhaps for a couple of guineas, and purchases another at fifty, which will not lose above a minute in a fortnight. The sole use of watches however, is to tell us what o'clock it is, and to hinder us from breaking any engagement, or suffering any other inconveniency by our ignorance in that particular point. But the person so nice with regard to this machine, will not always be found either more scrupulously punctual than other men, or more anxiously concerned upon any other account, to know precisely what time of day it is. What interests him is not so much the attainment of this piece of knowledge, as the perfection of the machine which serves to attain it.
- 6 How many people ruin themselves by laying out money on trinkets of frivolous utility? What pleases these lovers of toys is not so much the utility, as the aptness of the machines which are fitted to promote it. All their pockets are stuffed with little conveniences. They contrive new pockets, unknown in the clothes of other people, in order to carry a greater number. They walk about loaded with a multitude of baubles, in weight and sometimes in value not inferior to an ordinary Jew's-box,³ some of which may sometimes be of some little use, but all of which might at all times be very well spared, and of which the whole utility is certainly not worth the fatigue of bearing the burden.

² Smith sets great store by this observation not only for its originality but also because it forms a link, in his view, between ethics and political economy, as may be seen from §§ 8–11, especially § 10. See also Introduction, 14.

³ Presumably a box of wares carried by a Jewish pedlar.

7 Nor is it only with regard to such frivolous objects that our conduct is influenced by this principle; it is often the secret motive of the most serious and important pursuits of both private and public life.

- 8 The poor man's son, whom heaven in its anger has visited with ambition, when he begins to look around him, admires the condition of the rich. He finds the cottage of his father too small for his accommodation, and fancies he should be lodged more at his ease in a palace. He is displeased with being obliged to walk a-foot, or to endure the fatigue of riding on horseback. He sees his superiors carried about in machines, and imagines that in one of these he could travel with less inconveniency. He feels himself naturally indolent, and willing to serve himself with his own hands as little as possible; and judges, that a numerous retinue of servants would save him from a great deal of trouble. He thinks if he had attained all these, he "would" sit still contentedly, and be quiet, enjoying himself in the thought of the happiness and tranquillity of his situation. He is enchanted with the distant idea of this felicity. It appears in his fancy like the life of some superior rank of beings, and, in order to arrive at it, he devotes himself for ever to the pursuit of wealth and greatness. To obtain the conveniences which these afford, he submits in the first year, nay in the first month of his application, to more fatigue of body and more uneasiness of mind than he could have suffered through the whole of his life from the want of them. He studies to distinguish himself in some laborious profession. With the most unrelenting industry he labours night and day to acquire talents superior to all his competitors. He endeavours next to bring those talents into public view, and with equal assiduity solicits every opportunity of employment. For this purpose he makes his court to all mankind; he serves those whom he hates, and is obsequious to those whom he despises. Through the whole of his life he pursues the idea of a certain artificial and elegant repose which he may never arrive at, for which he sacrifices a real tranquillity that is at all times in his power, and which, if in the extremity of old age he should at last attain to it, he will find to be in no respect preferable to that humble security and contentment which he had abandoned for it. It is then, in the last dregs of life, his body wasted with toil and diseases, his mind galled and ruffled by the memory of a thousand injuries and disappointments which he imagines he has met with from the injustice of his enemies, or from the perfidy and ingratitude of his friends, that he begins at last to find that wealth and greatness are mere trinkets of frivolous utility, no more adapted for procuring ease of body or tranquillity of mind than the tweezer-cases of the lover of toys; and like them too, more troublesome to the person who carries them about with him than all the advantages they can afford him are commodious. There is no other real difference between them, except that the conveniences of the one are somewhat more observable than those

"could 1–3

of the other. The palaces, the gardens, the equipage, the retinue of the great, are objects of which the obvious conveniency strikes every body. They do not require that their masters should point out to us wherein consists their utility. Of our own accord we readily enter into it, and by sympathy enjoy and thereby applaud the satisfaction which they are fitted to afford him. But the curiosity of a tooth-pick, of an ear-picker, of a machine for cutting the nails, or of any other trinket of the same kind, is not so obvious. Their conveniency may perhaps be equally great, but it is not so striking, and we do not so readily enter into the satisfaction of the man who possesses them. They are therefore less reasonable subjects of vanity than the magnificence of wealth and greatness; and in this consists the sole advantage of these last. They more effectually gratify that love of distinction so natural to man. To one who was to live alone in a desolate island it might be a matter of doubt, perhaps, whether a palace, or a collection of such small conveniences as are commonly contained in a tweezer-case, would contribute most to his happiness and enjoyment. If he is to live in society, indeed, there can be no comparison, because in this, as in all other cases, we constantly pay more regard to the sentiments of the spectator, than to those of the person principally concerned, and consider rather how his situation will appear to other people, than how it will appear to himself. If we examine, however, why the spectator distinguishes with such admiration the condition of the rich and the great, we shall find that it is not so much upon account of the superior ease or pleasure which they are supposed to enjoy, as of the numberless artificial and elegant contrivances for promoting this ease or pleasure. He does not even imagine that they are really happier than other people: but he imagines that they possess more means of happiness. And it is the ingenious and artful adjustment of those means to the end for which they were intended, that is the principal source of his admiration. But in the languor of disease and the weariness of old age, the pleasures of the vain and empty distinctions of greatness disappear. To one, in this situation, they are no longer capable of recommending those toilsome pursuits in which they had formerly engaged him. In his heart he curses ambition, and vainly regrets the ease and the indolence of youth, pleasures which are fled for ever, and which he has foolishly sacrificed for what, when he has got it, can afford him no real satisfaction. In this miserable aspect does greatness appear to every man when reduced either by spleen or disease to observe with attention his own situation, and to consider what it is that is really wanting to his happiness. Power and riches appear then to be, what they are, enormous and operose machines contrived⁴ to produce a few trifling conveniences to

⁴ Probably recalls 'operose Contrivances' in Mandeville, *Fable of the Bees*, Remark (L) on luxury; ed. F. B. Kaye, i.119.

the body, consisting of springs the most nice and delicate, which must be kept in order with the most anxious attention, and which in spite of all our care are ready every moment to burst into pieces, and to crush in their ruins their unfortunate possessor. They are immense fabrics, which it requires the labour of a life to raise, which threaten every moment to overwhelm the person that dwells in them, and which while they stand, though they may save him from some smaller inconveniences, can protect him from none of the severer inclemencies of the season. They keep off the summer shower, not the winter storm, but leave him always as much, and sometimes more exposed than before, to anxiety, to fear, and to sorrow; to diseases, to danger, and to death.

⁹ But though this splenetic philosophy, which in time of sickness or low spirits is familiar to every man, thus entirely depreciates those great objects of human desire, when in better health and in better humour, we never fail to regard them under a more agreeable aspect. Our imagination, which in pain and sorrow seems to be confined and cooped up within our own persons, in times of ease and prosperity expands itself to every thing around us. We are then charmed with the beauty of that accommodation which reigns in the palaces and oeconomy of the great; and admire how every thing is adapted to promote their ease, to prevent their wants, to gratify their wishes, and to amuse and entertain their most frivolous desires. If we consider the real satisfaction which all these things are capable of affording, by itself and separated from the beauty of that arrangement which is fitted to promote it, it will always appear in the highest degree contemptible and trifling. But we rarely view it in this abstract and philosophical light. We naturally confound it in our imagination with the order, the regular and harmonious movement of the system, the machine or oeconomy by means of which it is produced. The pleasures of wealth and greatness, when considered in this complex view, strike the imagination as something grand and beautiful and noble, of which the attainment is well worth all the toil and anxiety which we are so apt to bestow upon it.

¹⁰ And it is well that nature imposes upon us in this manner. It is this deception which rouses and keeps in continual motion the industry of mankind. It is this which first prompted them to cultivate the ground, to build houses, to found cities and commonwealths, and to invent and improve all the sciences and arts, which ennable and embellish human life; which have entirely changed the whole face of the globe, have turned the rude forests of nature into agreeable and fertile plains,⁵ and made the track-

⁵ Recalls Smith's translation, in his 'Letter to the Editors of the Edinburgh Review' (now published in EPS), 13, of a passage from Rousseau, *Discours sur l'origine de l'inégalité*: 'and the vast forests of nature were changed into agreeable plains'. Rousseau's own words were: 'les vastes forêts se changèrent en des campagnes riantes'. Smith's repetition of the phrase here may be mere coincidence, but it is also possible (as was suggested to us by

less and barren ocean a new fund of subsistence, and the great high road of communication to the different nations of the earth. The earth by these labours of mankind has been obliged to redouble her natural fertility, and to maintain a greater multitude of inhabitants. It is to no purpose, that the proud and unfeeling landlord views his extensive fields, and without a thought for the wants of his brethren, in imagination consumes himself the whole harvest that grows upon them. The homely and vulgar proverb, that the eye is larger than the belly, never was more fully verified than with regard to him. The capacity of his stomach bears no proportion to the immensity of his desires, and will receive no more than that of the meanest peasant.⁶ The rest he is obliged to distribute among those, who prepare, in the nicest manner, that little which he himself makes use of, among those who fit up the palace in which this little is to be consumed, among those who provide and keep in order all the different baubles and trinkets, which are employed in the oeconomy of greatness; all of whom thus derive from his luxury and caprice, that share of the necessities of life, which they would in vain have expected from his humanity or his justice. The produce of the soil maintains at all times nearly that number of inhabitants which it is capable of maintaining. The rich only select from the heap what is most precious and agreeable. They consume little more than the poor, and in spite of their natural selfishness and rapacity, though they mean only their own conveniency, though the sole end which they propose from the labours of all the thousands whom they employ, be the gratification of their own vain and insatiable desires, they divide with the poor the produce of all their improvements. They are led by an invisible hand⁷ to make nearly

H. B. Acton) that Smith is implicitly contesting Rousseau's view that the acquisition of property causes inequality. The phrase about the forests is preceded, in the translation from Rousseau, by '... equality disappeared, property was introduced, labour became necessary, ...' In the present paragraph of TMS Smith proceeds to argue that the rich are led by an invisible hand to make a distribution of necessities that is nearly the same as would exist in a state of natural equality. In the 'Letter' Smith introduced Rousseau as a critic of Mandeville, and he may well have both writers in mind here also (cf. preceding note).

⁶ Cf. WN I.xi.c.7: 'The rich man consumes no more food than his poor neighbour. . . . The desire of food is limited in every man by the narrow capacity of the human stomach; but the desire of the conveniences and ornaments . . . seems to have no limit or certain boundary.' See A. L. Macfie, *Individual in Society*, III-vi, for relation of TMS to WN.

⁷ The phrase recurs in WN IV.ii.9: 'every individual necessarily labours to render the annual revenue of the society as great as he can. He generally, indeed, neither intends to promote the public interest, nor knows how much he is promoting it. . . . he intends only his own gain, and he is . . . led by an invisible hand to promote an end which was no part of his intention.' In both places Smith says that the end unintentionally promoted is the interest of society, but there is a difference: the TMS passage refers to the distribution of means to happiness, the WN passage to maximization.

Smith first used the expression 'invisible hand' in Astronomy, III.2, when writing of early religious thought, in which only irregular events were attributed to supernatural agency. 'Fire burns, and water refreshes; heavy bodies descend, and lighter substances fly upwards, by the necessity of their own nature; nor was the invisible hand of Jupiter ever

the same distribution of the necessities of life, which would have been made, had the earth been divided into equal portions among all its inhabitants, and thus without intending it, without knowing it, advance the interest of the society, and afford means to the multiplication of the species. When Providence divided the earth among a few lordly masters, it neither forgot nor abandoned those who seemed to have been left out in the partition. These last too enjoy their share of all that it produces. In what constitutes the real happiness of human life, they are in no respect inferior to those who would seem so much above them. In ease of body and peace of mind, all the different ranks of life are nearly upon a level, and the beggar, who suns himself by the side of the highway, possesses that security which kings are fighting for.

¹¹ The same principle, the same love of system, the same regard to the beauty of order, of art and contrivance, frequently serves to recommend those institutions which tend to promote the public welfare. When a patriot exerts himself for the improvement of any part of the public police, his conduct does not always arise from pure sympathy with the happiness of those who are to reap the benefit of it. It is not commonly from a fellow-feeling with carriers and waggoners that a public-spirited man encourages the mending of high roads. When the legislature establishes premiums and other encouragements to advance the linen or woollen manufactures, its conduct seldom proceeds from pure sympathy with the wearer of cheap or fine cloth, and much less from that with the manufacturer or merchant. The perfection of police, the extension of trade and manufactures, are noble and magnificent objects. The contemplation of them pleases us, and we are interested in whatever can tend to advance them. They make part of the great system of government, and the wheels of the political machine seem to move with more harmony and ease by means of them. We take pleasure in beholding the perfection of so beautiful and grand a system, and we are uneasy till we remove any obstruction that can in the least disturb or encumber the regularity of its motions. All constitutions of government, however, are valued only in proportion as they tend to promote the happiness of those who live under them. This is their sole use and end. From a certain spirit of system, however, from a certain love of art and contrivance, we sometimes seem to value the means more than the end, and to be eager to promote the happiness of our fellow-creatures, rather from a view to perfect and improve a certain beautiful and orderly system, than from any immediate sense or feeling of what they either suffer or enjoy. There have been men of the greatest public spirit, who have shown themselves in other respects not very sensible to the feelings of humanity. And on the contrary, there have been men of the greatest humanity, who seem to have apprehended to be employed in those matters.' See A. L. Macfie, 'The Invisible Hand of Jupiter', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, xxii (1971), 595-9.

been entirely devoid of public spirit. Every man may find in the circle of his acquaintance instances both of the one kind and the other. Who had ever less humanity, or more public spirit, than the celebrated legislator of Muscovy?⁸ The social and well-natured James the First of Great Britain seems, on the contrary, to have had scarce any passion, either for the glory or the interest of his country. Would you awaken the industry of the man who seems almost dead to ambition, it will often be to no purpose to describe to him the happiness of the rich and the great; to tell him that they are generally sheltered from the sun and the rain, that they are seldom hungry, that they are seldom cold, and that they are rarely exposed to weariness, or to want of any kind. The most eloquent exhortation of this kind will have little effect upon him. If you would hope to succeed, you must describe to him the conveniency and arrangement of the different apartments in their palaces; you must explain to him the propriety of their equipages, and point out to him the number, the order, and the different offices of all their attendants. If any thing is capable of making impression upon him, this will. Yet all these things tend only to keep off the sun and the rain, to save them from hunger and cold, from want and weariness. In the same manner, if you would implant public virtue in the breast of him who seems heedless of the interest of his country, it will often be to no purpose to tell him, what superior advantages the subjects of a well-governed state enjoy; that they are better lodged, that they are better clothed, that they are better fed. These considerations will commonly make no great impression. You will be more likely to persuade, if you describe the great system of public police which procures these advantages, if you explain the connexions and dependencies of its several parts, their mutual subordination to one another, and their general subserviency to the happiness of the society; if you show how this system might be introduced into his own country, what it is that hinders it from taking place there at present, how those obstructions might be removed, and all the several wheels of the machine of government be made to move with more harmony and smoothness, without grating upon one another, or mutually retarding one another's motions. It is scarce possible that a man should listen to a discourse of this kind, and not feel himself animated to some degree of public spirit. He will, at least for the moment, feel some desire to remove those obstructions, and to put into motion so beautiful and so orderly a machine. Nothing tends so much to promote public spirit as the study of politics, of the several systems of civil government, their advantages and disadvantages, of the constitution of our own country, its situation, and interest with regard to foreign nations, its commerce, its defence, the disadvantages it labours under, the dangers to which it may be exposed, how to remove the one, and how to guard against the other. Upon this account

⁸ Peter the Great.

political disquisitions, if just, and reasonable, and practicable, are of all the works of speculation the most useful. Even the weakest and the worst of them are not altogether without their utility. They serve at least to animate the public passions of men, and rouse them to seek out the means of promoting the happiness of the society.

^aCHAP. II^a

Of the beauty which the appearance of Utility bestows upon the characters and actions of men; and how far the perception of this beauty may be regarded as one of the original principles of approbation

1 THE characters of men, as well as the contrivances of art, or the institutions of civil government, may be fitted either to promote or to disturb the happiness both of the individual and of the society. The prudent, the equitable, the active, resolute, and sober character promises prosperity and satisfaction, both to the person himself and to every one connected with him. The rash, the insolent, the slothful, effeminate, and voluptuous, on the contrary, forebodes ruin to the individual, and misfortune to all who have any thing to do with him. The first turn of mind has at least all the beauty which can belong to the most perfect machine that was ever invented for promoting the most agreeable purpose: and the second, all the deformity of the most awkward and clumsy contrivance. What institution of government could tend so much to promote the happiness of mankind as the general prevalence of wisdom and virtue? All government is but an imperfect remedy for the deficiency of these. Whatever beauty, therefore, can belong to civil government upon account of its utility, must in a far superior degree belong to these. On the contrary, what civil policy can be so ruinous and destructive as the vices of men? The fatal effects of bad government arise from nothing, but that it does not sufficiently guard against the mischiefs which human wickedness gives occasion to.

2 This beauty and deformity which characters appear to derive from their usefulness or inconveniency, are apt to strike, in a peculiar manner, those who consider, in an abstract and philosophical light, the actions and conduct of mankind. When a philosopher goes to examine why humanity is approved of, or cruelty condemned, he does not always form to himself, in a very clear and distinct manner, the conception of any one particular action either of cruelty or of humanity, but is commonly contented with the vague and indeterminate idea which the general names of those qualities suggest to him. But it is in particular instances only that the propriety or

impropriety, the merit or demerit of actions is very obvious and discernible. It is only when particular examples are given that we perceive distinctly either the concord or disagreement between our own affections and those of the agent, or feel a social gratitude arise towards him in the one case, or a sympathetic resentment in the other. When we consider virtue and vice in an abstract and general manner, the qualities by which they excite these several sentiments seem in a great measure to disappear, and the sentiments themselves become less obvious and discernible. On the contrary, the happy effects of the one and the fatal consequences of the other seem then to rise up to the view, and as it were to stand out and distinguish themselves from all the other qualities of either.

3 The same ingenious and agreeable author who first explained why utility pleases, has been so struck with this view of things, as to resolve our whole approbation of virtue into a perception of this species of beauty which results from the appearance of utility. No qualities of the mind, he observes, are approved of as virtuous, but such as are useful or agreeable either to the person himself or to others;¹ and no qualities are disapproved of as vicious but such as have a contrary tendency. And Nature, indeed, seems to have so happily adjusted our sentiments of approbation and disapprobation, to the conveniency both of the individual and of the society, that after the strictest examination it will be found, I believe, that this is universally the case. But still I affirm, that it is not the view of this utility or hurtfulness which is either the first or principal source of our approbation and disapprobation. These sentiments are no doubt enhanced and enlivened by the perception of the beauty or deformity which results from this utility or hurtfulness. But still, I say, they are originally and essentially different from this perception.

4 For first of all, it seems impossible that the approbation of virtue should be a sentiment of the same kind with that by which we approve of a convenient and well-contrived building; or that we should have no other reason for praising a man than that for which we commend a chest of drawers.²

5 And secondly, it will be found, upon examination, that the usefulness of any disposition of mind is seldom the first ground of our approbation; and that the sentiment of approbation always involves in it a sense of propriety quite distinct from the perception of utility. We may observe this with regard to all the qualities which are approved of as virtuous, both those which, according to this system, are originally valued as useful to ourselves,

¹ Hume, *Treatise of Human Nature*, III.iii.1; ed. Selby-Bigge, 591: *Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals*, especially IX.i; ed. Selby-Bigge, §§ 217, 219, 226.

² Hume must have had an objection of this character put to him, for he attempts to reply to it in a footnote appended to *Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals*, V.i, first paragraph; ed. Selby-Bigge, § 172. The footnote is in all editions of the *Enquiry*, including the first (1751).

as well as those which are esteemed on account of their usefulness to others.

6 The qualities most useful to ourselves are, first of all, superior reason and understanding, by which we are capable of discerning the remote consequences of all our actions, and of foreseeing the advantage or detriment which is likely to result from them: and secondly, self-command, by which we are enabled to abstain from present pleasure or to endure present pain, in order to obtain a greater pleasure or to avoid a greater pain in some future time. In the union of those two qualities consists the virtue of prudence, of all the virtues that which is most useful to the individual.

7 With regard to the first of those qualities, it has been observed on a former occasion,³ that superior reason and understanding are originally approved of as just and right and accurate, and not merely as useful or advantageous. It is in the abstruser sciences, particularly in the higher parts of mathematics, that the greatest and most admired exertions of human reason have been displayed. But the utility of those sciences, either to the individual or to the public, is not very obvious, and to prove it, requires a discussion which is not always very easily comprehended. It was not, therefore, their utility which first recommended them to the public admiration. This quality was but little insisted upon, till it became necessary to make some reply to the reproaches of those, who, having themselves no taste for such sublime discoveries, endeavoured to depreciate them as useless.

8 That self-command, in the same manner, by which we restrain our present appetites, in order to gratify them more fully upon another occasion, is approved of, as much under the aspect of propriety, as under that of utility. When we act in this manner, the sentiments which influence our conduct seem exactly to coincide with those of the spectator. The spectator does not feel the solicitations of our present appetites. To him the pleasure which we are to enjoy a week hence, or a year hence, is just as interesting as that which we are to enjoy this moment. When for the sake of the present, therefore, we sacrifice the future, our conduct appears to him absurd and extravagant in the highest degree, and he cannot enter into the principles which influence it. On the contrary, when we abstain from present pleasure, in order to secure greater pleasure to come, when we act as if the remote object interested us as much as that which immediately presses upon the senses, as our affections exactly correspond with his own, he cannot fail to approve of our behaviour: and as he knows from experience, how few are capable of this self-command, he looks upon our conduct with a considerable degree of wonder and admiration. Hence arises that eminent esteem with which all men naturally regard a steady perseverance in the

³ I.i.4.4. The word 'occasion' is a relic of the original lecture form of Smith's material. Cf. § 9 below and VII.iii.1.2.

practice of frugality, industry, and application, though directed to no other purpose than the acquisition of fortune. The resolute firmness of the person who acts in this manner, and in order to obtain a great though remote advantage, not only gives up all present pleasures, but endures the greatest labour both of mind and body, necessarily commands our approbation. That view of his interest and happiness which appears to regulate his conduct, exactly tallies with the idea which we naturally form of it. There is the most perfect correspondence between his sentiments and our own, and at the same time, from our experience of the common weakness of human nature, it is a correspondence which we could not reasonably have expected. We not only approve, therefore, but in some measure admire his conduct, and think it worthy of a considerable degree of applause. It is the consciousness of this merited approbation and esteem which is alone capable of supporting the agent in this tenour of conduct. The pleasure which we are to enjoy ten years hence interests us so little in comparison with that which we may enjoy to-day, the passion which the first excites, is naturally so weak in comparison with that violent emotion which the second is apt to give occasion to, that the one could never be any balance to the other, unless it was supported by the sense of propriety, by the consciousness that we merited the esteem and approbation of every body, by acting in the one way, and that we became the proper objects of their contempt and derision by behaving in the other.

9 Humanity, justice, generosity, and public spirit, are the qualities most useful to others. Wherein consists the propriety of humanity and justice has been explained upon a former occasion,⁴ where it was shewn how much our esteem and approbation of those qualities depended upon the concord between the affections of the agent and those of the spectators.

10 The propriety of generosity and public spirit is founded upon the same principle with that of justice. Generosity is different from humanity. Those two qualities, which at first sight seem so nearly allied, do not always belong to the same person. Humanity is the virtue of a woman, generosity of a man. The fair-sex, who have commonly much more tenderness than ours, have seldom so much generosity. That women rarely make considerable donations, is an observation of the civil law*. Humanity consists merely in the exquisite fellow-feeling which the spectator entertains with the sentiments of the persons principally concerned, so as to grieve for their

* Raro mulieres donare solent.⁵

⁴ I.i.3.1. The word 'occasion' again shows the original lecture form of the material (cf. § 7 above and VII.iii.1.2), but in the lecture the next word 'where' will have been 'when'.

⁵ We are advised by Professor Peter Stein that although this phrase does not occur in the *Corpus Iuris Civilis*, it was a maxim coined by later commentators in the light of passages on the miserly character of women to be found in the Great Gloss of Accursius (thirteenth century), which came to be regarded as an authoritative part of the civil law. The phrase is given in S. Daoyz, *Iuris Civilis Summa seu Index* (1742), under *mulier*.

sufferings, to resent their injuries, and to rejoice at their good fortune. The most humane actions require no self-denial, no self-command, no great exertion of the sense of propriety. They consist only in doing what this exquisite sympathy would of its own accord prompt us to do. But it is otherwise with generosity. We never are generous except when in some respect we prefer some other person to ourselves, and sacrifice some great and important interest of our own to an equal interest of a friend or of a superior. The man who gives up his pretensions to an office that was the great object of his ambition, because he imagines that the services of another are better entitled to it; the man who exposes his life to defend that of his friend, which he judges to be of more^b importance;^b neither of them act from humanity, or because they feel more exquisitely what concerns that other person than what concerns themselves. They both consider those opposite interests, not in the light in which they naturally appear to themselves, but in that in which they appear to others. To every bystander, the success or preservation of this other person may justly be more interesting than their own; but it cannot be so to themselves. When to the interest of this other person, therefore, they sacrifice their own, they accommodate themselves to the sentiments of the spectator, and by an effort of magnanimity act according to those views of things^c which, they feel,^c must naturally occur to any third person. The soldier who throws away his life in order to defend that of his officer, would perhaps be but little affected by the death of that officer, if it should happen without any fault of his own; and a very small disaster which had befallen himself might excite a much more lively sorrow. But when he endeavours to act so as to deserve applause, and to make the impartial spectator enter into the principles of his conduct, he feels, that to every body but himself, his own life is a trifle compared with that of his officer, and that when he sacrifices the one to the other, he acts quite properly and agreeably to what would be the natural apprehensions of every impartial bystander.

11 It is the same case with the greater exertions of public spirit. When a young officer exposes his life to acquire some inconsiderable addition to the dominions of his sovereign, it is not because the acquisition of the new territory is, to himself, an object more desireable than the preservation of his own life. To him his own life is of infinitely more value than the conquest of a whole kingdom for the state which he serves. But when he compares those two objects with one another, he does not view them in the light in which they naturally appear to himself, but in that in which they appear to the nation he fights for. To them the success of the war is of the highest importance; the life of a private person of scarce any consequence. When he puts himself in their situation, he immediately feels that he cannot be too prodigal of his blood, if, by shedding it, he can promote so valuable a

^{b-b} 5 ~, 1-4 6 7 ^{c-c} 2 ~_Λ ~, 1 3 4 6 7 ~_Λ ~_Λ 5

purpose. In thus thwarting, from a sense of duty and propriety, the strongest of all natural propensities, consists the heroism of his conduct. There is many an honest Englishman, who, in his private station, would be more seriously disturbed by the loss of a guinea, than by the national loss of Minorca, who yet, had it been in his power to defend that fortress, would have sacrificed his life a thousand times rather than, through his fault, have let it fall into the hands of the enemy.⁶ When the first Brutus led forth his own sons to a capital punishment, because they had conspired against the rising liberty of Rome,⁷ he sacrificed what, if he had consulted his own breast only, would appear to be the stronger to the weaker affection. Brutus ought naturally to have felt much more for the death of his own sons, than for all that probably Rome could have suffered from the want of so great an example. But he viewed them, not with the eyes of a father, but with those of a Roman citizen. He entered so thoroughly into the sentiments of this last character, that he paid no regard to that tie, by which he himself was connected with them; and to a Roman citizen, the sons even of Brutus seemed contemptible, when put into the balance with the smallest interest of Rome. In these and in all other cases of this kind, our admiration is not so much founded upon the utility, as upon the unexpected, and on that account the great, the noble, and exalted propriety of such actions. This utility, when we come to view it, bestows upon them, undoubtedly, a new beauty, and upon that account still further recommends them to our approbation. This beauty, however, is chiefly perceived by men of reflection and speculation, and is by no means the quality which first recommends such actions to the natural sentiments of the bulk of mankind.

¹² It is to be observed, that so far as the sentiment of approbation arises from the perception of this beauty of utility, it has no reference of any kind to the sentiments of others. If it was possible, therefore, that a person should grow up to manhood without any communication with society, his own actions might, notwithstanding, be agreeable or disagreeable to him on account of their tendency to his happiness or disadvantage. ^aHe^d might perceive a beauty of this kind in prudence, temperance, and good conduct, and a deformity in the opposite behaviour: he might view his own temper and character with that sort of satisfaction with which we consider a well-contrived machine, in the one case; or with that sort of distaste and dissatisfaction with which we regard a very awkward and clumsy contrivance,

^{a-d} 1-5 7 he 6

⁶ Smith is doubtless referring to the ignominious failure of Admiral Byng in May 1756 to defeat the French fleet blockading Minorca, then a British possession.

⁷ Lucius Junius Brutus is called the founder of the Roman Republic because he led the Romans in the expulsion of their tyrannical king Tarquinus Superbus. Brutus was then elected consul in 509 B.C. Tradition has it that he condemned his two sons to death for joining a conspiracy to restore the Tarquins.

in the other. As these perceptions, however, are merely a matter of taste, and have all the feebleness and delicacy of that species of perceptions, upon the justness of which what is properly called taste is founded, they probably would not be much attended to by one in ^ethis^e solitary and miserable condition. Even though they should occur to him, they would by no means have the same effect upon him, antecedent to his connexion with society, which they would have in consequence of that connexion. He would not be cast down with inward shame at the thought of this deformity; nor would he be elevated with secret triumph of mind from the consciousness of the contrary beauty. He would not exult from the notion of deserving reward in the one case, nor tremble from the suspicion of meriting punishment in the other. All such sentiments suppose the idea of some other being, who is the natural judge of the person that feels them; and it is only by sympathy with the decisions of this arbiter of his conduct, that he can conceive, either the triumph of self-applause, or the shame of self-condemnation.

^{e-e} 1 2E his 2-7