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# Smith and Rousseau in dialogue

## Sympathy, *pitié*, spectatorship and narrative

Charles L. Griswold

There is a great deal of unmapped country within us which would have to be taken into account in an explanation of our gusts and storms.

(George Eliot, *Daniel Deronda*, 2005: 244)

Some years ago Knud Haakonssen remarked to me during a break in David Gauthier's Benedict lectures at Boston University that Adam Smith seems to have spent a great deal of intellectual effort responding to the challenges he encountered in Rousseau's *Discourse on the Origin and the Foundations of Inequality among Men*.<sup>1</sup> This passing remark prompts one to speculate that Rousseau cost Smith more than a few sleepless nights, and indeed that if Smith was in a dogmatic slumber with respect to the moral and human problems of commercial society, Rousseau woke him from it. The evidence for any such thought is indirect, to be sure. Rousseau's *Second Discourse* appeared in 1755 and was immediately reviewed by Smith. His 1756 'Letter to the *Edinburgh Review*' contains significant commentary on the *Discourse* and his own translation of three passages.<sup>2</sup> Those passages are very well chosen, as they summarize some of Rousseau's most important criticisms of what one might call modernity. Published within a year of the appearance of the *Second Discourse*, this must be among the earliest reviews of Rousseau's hugely influential and controversial essay, and of course preceded by several years the first edition (1759) of *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (henceforth abbreviated 'TMS'; Smith 1982a). Smith never refers to Rousseau by name in TMS, but there clearly are echoes; and in any case Smith refers to relatively few thinkers by name (Hume included). He does refer elsewhere to other of Rousseau's writings, and appears to have owned all of Rousseau's major and many of his minor works.<sup>3</sup> So far as we know, the two never met; Smith evidently decided to leave that delightful interaction to Hume. Hume certainly found Rousseau preoccupying personally and socially, but not (so far as I can tell) intellectually – the obverse of Smith's relation to Rousseau.

My aim in this essay is not to trace the ways in which Rousseau's thought finds echoes and responses in TMS. In their excellent work on Smith and

Rousseau, Dennis Rasmussen and Ryan Hanley have already made very helpful contributions to that project.<sup>4</sup> My aim is different: I shall reflect on two points Smith makes about Rousseau in his review, showing how they pose a challenge to Smith that would have warranted some sleepless nights on his part, whether or not Smith took them as such and whether or not Rousseau would have intended them as such. I am less concerned with tracing the historical transmission of ideas than with reconstructing several initial steps of a philosophical dialogue that might have taken place. It is a limitation of my essay that I attribute views to Rousseau that I do not sufficiently substantiate here. For now, let 'Rousseau' stand for both the letter and spirit of his views, backed by a promissory note for scholarly substantiation on another occasion. And sleepless nights can issue in decisive rebuttals: it may well be that Smith has the resources for persuasive replies to the Rousseauan criticisms I seek to articulate, and on another occasion I will pursue that further step. I do not here mean to endorse either side of the dialectic I am reconstructing.

My reflections amount to work in progress. In the background lies my even more speculative sense that Smith and Rousseau compose an unusually interesting pair. They share a similar set of concerns, themes, vocabulary, and even arguments; they are of course near contemporaries. In some sense, both espouse sentimentalist views of human nature. And yet what one might call their sensibilities or 'pictures' – to borrow a term from Wittgenstein – are deeply different. Rousseau is the great modern progenitor of notions of historicity, estrangement of self, social alienation, perspectivalism and narrative. He's a critic of philosophy (as an academic discipline) and a partisan of literature; indeed, as Peter Brooks notes, Rousseau's *Julie* is 'a novel that in so many ways announces the nineteenth-century tradition' of narrative writing (Brooks 1992: 21).<sup>5</sup> Rousseau's works are suffused with the themes of longing, fragmentation, reconciliation, redemption and forgiveness. While Smith is certainly attuned to problems of social and personal fragmentation, he is the great spokesman for the primacy of the social standpoint (crystallized in the 'impartial spectator'), a commitment not at all at odds with his supposed 'individualism' in the economic sphere (the impartial spectator endorses the individual's bettering his or her own condition, so long as rules of justice are not violated, and spectators admire wealth and greatness, as TMS explains). And while he is well aware of the pull of the Rousseauan vocabulary of loss and longing, and of the issue of paradoxical, unintended, and even ironical processes and outcomes, on the whole his outlook is more confidently reconciliationist, more trusting in the claims of philosophical theory (after all, he wrote a book containing the word 'theory' in its title, something Rousseau never did).

To return to the specifics to be discussed here: the first point has to do with what Rousseau calls '*pitié*', and the second with the rhetoric of the *Discourse*. I shall discuss these in turn, and hope to show that there is an unexpected connection between the two, between the 'content' and narrative 'form' of

the text. From the Rousseauan perspective I reconstruct, they jointly amount to a sort of argument against Smithian 'sympathy' – one that Smith can rebut only with difficulty. At stake are the meanings of such terms as pity, commiseration, sympathy, sociability and self-love. The possibility of epistemic access to others, of something like spectatorial insight into the situation of another, is also at issue.

### *Pitié* and sympathy

Towards the start of his discussion of Rousseau's *Discourse* Smith makes several intriguing comments, two of which I will mention. First, he claims that neither Rousseau nor Mandeville allows that human beings are social by nature. As Smith puts it, 'Both of them however suppose, that there is in man no powerful instinct which necessarily determines him to seek society for its own sake ...' ('Letter' 11, EPS: 250).<sup>6</sup> In Smith's special TMS sense of the word, neither allows that human beings are naturally *sympathetic*. Second, he notes that Rousseau agrees with Mandeville that pity is natural to us ('Letter' 11, EPS: 251). In Part VII of TMS (see VII.iii.1.1–4), Mandeville is cast as a 'self-love' theorist (even though he grants a place to pity). As glossed there, the proponent of the self-love theory holds that one is concerned for others only insofar as doing so is useful to oneself, that one approves or disapproves of others on similar grounds, and that one cannot fully enter into the situation of another (for this last point, see below). The last of these views would explain, for Smith, why there is no concern for 'society for its own sake'. Smith holds that concern for 'society for its own sake' is natural to us and that it is explained by a principle he also thinks undeniable, viz., 'sympathy'. He faults the self-love theorist for not understanding that and how we are sympathetic beings. Putting those passages together with the review, it would seem that from Smith's perspective – and here is an inference that Smith does not explicitly make – Rousseau is made a fellow traveller of Mandeville and so in some sense is a 'self-love' theorist. It is not that Rousseau's denial of natural sociability necessarily commits him, from Smith's perspective, to a crude version of the view that we are concerned for others just so far as we determine that doing so is useful to us, but that it is conceptually tied to the idea that our capacity to enter into the world of another is severely restricted. But how can that be – how can Rousseau reject the idea that we are naturally 'sociable', and thus implicitly reject the notion of 'sympathy' that Smith wants to defend against Mandeville (and Hobbes), all the while asserting that human beings naturally feel *pitié* (which itself seems able to restrain our self-interest)?<sup>7</sup>

The explanation of the consistency between *pitié* and (what Smith thinks of as) Mandevillean egoism has to do with the deep differences between *pitié* and Smithian sympathy. This is the first point that I would like to examine. In responding to Rousseau's thesis that we are naturally compassionate but not naturally sociable, Smith develops a notion of 'sympathy' that distances it

from self-love theory at an epistemic level. The result (in TMS VII) is what from the Rousseauan perspective is a rather extreme and problematic view, and I shall attempt to explain how the objections to Smith's alternative might go.

As Rousseau describes *pitié* in the *Discourse*, it is one of two natural principles governing the residents of the state of nature; the other is the drive for self-preservation. Here is how Rousseau describes it in the passages to which Smith alludes: *pitié* having been given to humans (and some non-human animals) in the state of nature to

soften the ferociousness of his amour propre or of the desire for self-preservation prior to the birth of amour propre, tempers his ardor for well-being with an innate repugnance to see his kind suffer. ... I speak of Pity, a disposition suited to beings as weak and as subject to so many ills as we are; ...

(Rousseau 1997b: 152)

It is

the pure movement of Nature prior to all reflection: such is the force of natural pity, which the most depraved morals still have difficulty destroying, since in our theaters one daily sees being moved and weeping at the miseries of some unfortunate person people who, if they were in the Tyrant's place, would only increase their enemy's torments; ...

(Rousseau 1997b: 152)

And:

Indeed, what are generosity, Clemency, Humanity, if not Pity applied to the weak, the guilty, or the species in general? ... Even if it were true that commiseration is nothing but a sentiment that puts us in the place of him who suffers, a sentiment that is obscure and lively in Savage man, developed but weak in Civil man, what difference could this idea make to the truth of what I say, except to give it additional force? Indeed commiseration will be all the more energetic in proportion as the Onlooking animal identifies more intimately with the suffering animal: Now this identification must, clearly, have been infinitely closer in the state of Nature than in the state of reasoning. It is reason that engenders amour propre, and reflection that reinforces it; reason that turns man back upon himself; reason that separates him from everything that troubles and afflicts him: It is Philosophy that isolates him; ...

(Rousseau 1997b: 153)

Pity 'carries us without reflection to the assistance of those we see suffer', and is thus key to our 'natural goodness' (154). Rousseau goes on to paint



a picture of the 'Savage' who lacks passions of (romantic) love, revenge, jealousy, and such; this creature seems to have no imagination or language (155–7, 165).

From this I think we can draw several conclusions about *pitié*. In its most primitive expression in the state of nature, it is minimally cognitive (it is, pre-linguistic and spontaneous, but perhaps involves grasping what would be of help to the sufferer), and does not involve (in spite of some of Rousseau's formulations) putting oneself in the place of the agent if that means something like taking on the perspective of the agent.<sup>8</sup> Indeed, in the last passage from the *Second Discourse* just quoted, Rousseau seems to *oppose* commiseration understood as 'nothing but a sentiment that puts us in the place of him who suffers' and *pitié* understood as 'identification'. *Pitié* doesn't seem to require anything like perspective-shifting. It amounts to something like the disposition to respond to suffering by wishing to alleviate the circumstances that create that condition – but all without plan, reflection, and comparison of self and other, at least in the pre-linguistic state of nature. Rousseau's remarks in the *Second Discourse* don't make *pitié* sound like a contagion of feeling, so much as spontaneous and ad hoc beneficence. Therein the source, in that text, of the moral virtues.<sup>9</sup>

Neither on Rousseau's account, nor on Smith's account of Rousseau, is *pitié* sufficient for natural sociability; so *pitié* still lies within the orbit of what Smith thinks of as Rousseau's Mandevillian orientation, that is, it is still compatible with self-love theory. And that is because there is no transposition of self involved, no viewing of the other from the other's perspective, and no viewing of self from the other's perspective. Without sympathy, there is no genuine interdependence. Indeed, for Smith, sympathy is constitutive of being a self (or, being an agential self); absent the 'mirror' in which one sees oneself, there is no self (recall TMS III.1.3–4). I note that unlike Smithian sympathy, *pitié* does not transmit the agent's joy or 'positive' feelings to the onlooker, feelings pleasurable to *both* their owner and the onlooker – another difference between the two.<sup>10</sup> It is hard not to read the first two sentences of TMS as referring to, or incorporating, Rousseau's remarks about *pitié* (of course, they may be read as responding to other thinkers as well). Smith begins as follows:

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.

(TMS I.i.1.1)

I see little here that Rousseau would disagree with, indeed the multiple echoes of the passages from the *Second Discourse* are striking. Yet it is also striking that Smith is setting this up as a *response* to the supposition that man is 'selfish', given that he takes (or so I am arguing) Rousseauan *pitié* as compatible with that very view.

Smith's self-assigned task, in other words, could be put this way: to articulate a conception of sympathy that incorporates Rousseauan *pitié* but also something Rousseau's story rejects, viz. genuine interdependence from the get-go. For then true sociality (such that, to quote again from Smith's review of Rousseau, the human being possesses a 'powerful instinct which necessarily determines him to seek society for its own sake') would be built into the very fabric of the simplest moral exchanges of the sort Rousseau is vividly depicting, and the supposition that we are naturally 'selfish' would be refuted. Then the conceptual space for exploring the positive moral possibilities for sociality would open up – possibilities that scarcely seem to arise in the *Second Discourse*.

Smith launches into that task in the second paragraph of TMS. And here begins a series of formulations found throughout the book. They are not equivalent to each other, and a hostile critic would no doubt argue that they amount to a kind of equivocation. Smith starts off in the first sentence of the second paragraph by glossing 'pity or compassion' as the spectator's 'conceiving what we ourselves should feel in the like situation'. Let us observe, first, that as Smith sets up the discussion from the very first sentence of the book, the axis is the relation between actor and spectator, not between two actors or two spectators. Second, pity or compassion is extended by the spectator. Smith does speak further on as though there could be agential sympathy, but that seems to come to something like adopting a spectator's point of view on self and other. So sympathy is spectatorial, and that seems crucial for it already embodies the beginnings of the psychological – or better, identity- and character-constituting – interdependence which Rousseau judges to be at the heart of our loss of freedom, authenticity and happiness. I grant that Rousseau too used, in talking about *pitié*, the metaphor of the 'onlooker', a point Smith would no doubt drive home in a debate with Rousseau.

Third, to state the obvious, at least two people are written into the original scene of Smithian commiseration; in that minimal sense it is already social. Fourth, the controlling metaphor in Smith's articulation of the matter, from the second sentence on, is visual.<sup>11</sup> By the fourth paragraph, he has deployed the term 'spectator'. His is a spectator theory and not, say, an auditor theory, a point to which I shall return. Fifth, Smith's use of the verb 'conceive' in the first and second paragraphs already carries the un-Rousseauan suggestion that the process is somehow, to some extent, intrinsically cognitive from the

get-go (in what Rousseau would think of as its natural state). It involves *understanding* the point of view and situation of the other, and thus perspective-shifting on the spectator's part. To be sure, he also uses the term in a way that suggests it is synonymous with 'imagine', as in 'to conceive or to imagine' (end of second paragraph); so the imagination must in some sense be cognitive (a point also evinced in Smith's lectures on the history of astronomy). That 'pity or compassion' will require imagination, for Smith, is explicitly asserted in the second paragraph.

Smith's first gloss on *sympathy* (our 'conceiving what we ourselves should feel in the like situation') doesn't seem to get us past the self-love theory, any more than do the others in TMS's second paragraph. He also says there such things as that '[b]y the imagination we place ourselves in his situation', and speaks of us as spectators who 'thus brought home to ourselves' the sufferer's sentiments and 'thus adopted and made them our own', and in the third paragraph of their 'changing places in fancy with the sufferer'. Versions of such formulations abound. In the fourth paragraph, when introducing the term 'spectator', Smith speaks of 'an analogous emotion' that 'springs up, at the thought of his [the agent's] situation', and he illustrates this with our response to tragedy or romance. In the sixth paragraph he acknowledges the possibility that on some occasions sympathy may spread emotions instantaneously (I.i.1.6); while this may allow for sympathy as contagion, the next three paragraphs seem to argue that even in such cases an exchange of places is taking place.<sup>12</sup>

If the 'imaginary change of situation' (I.i.4.7) that lies at the core of such formulations comes to feeling what I would feel were I in the agent's situation, Rousseauan *pitié* may have been modified but not in a way that decisively calls into question the self-love thesis Smith takes himself to be refuting. For that thesis seems primarily to be an epistemic one about our knowledge of others, and secondarily a moral one about motivation (expressed, say, in caring or endorsing attitudes and actions). Indeed, Smith seems to be assuming that one cannot rebut the second, moral sense of 'selfish' without rebutting the first, epistemic, sense. It is a crucial part of my argument that Smith's argument works in that way (I return to this contention below). But to borrow a thought Nagel offers in a not unrelated context, in asking ourselves 'what it is like' to be so and so, we are not asking "what (in our experience) it *resembles*" but rather "how it is for the subject himself" (Nagel 1974: 440, n. 6, and p. 439). We want to understand not what it would be like for us to be that other or in the other's situation, but what it is like for it to be what it is. Comprehension by analogy, or contagion of feeling, or simply bringing home the case by imagining myself in the other's situation, plainly won't do *that* job – even according to Smith, as I shall argue in a moment. Yet a tension is inherent in the matter. Since I can't actually *be* the 'person principally concerned' (as Smith insists at the start of the second paragraph), it would seem that there is going to have to be some sort of comparative work going on. I can't know what it is like for X to be itself without some relation

of resemblance between it and me. So one pole of the imaginative relation will be the spectator, whose ego cannot therefore be subtracted out.

And that seems to me to be precisely the sort of point Rousseau might have driven home: the split between actor and spectator, and the demand that the former be accessible to the latter's sympathetic and supervisory gaze, already asks for the impossible and invites self-falsifying strategies on both sides — all the more so when the actor learns to need the spectator's review. Perhaps some such thought helps to explain why Rousseau distinguished between two kinds of self-love (*amour propre* and *amour de soi*) rather than simply opposing self-love and sympathy.

It seems that Smith was well aware of these sorts of considerations, and therefore that he needed to go beyond the formulations of sympathy that characterize the opening pages of TMS. When in Part VII he turns to the lengthy discussion of the 'self-love' theory of the sources of approbation, he wrote what I take to be the most extreme version of his anti-Rousseauian, non-egoistic doctrine of sympathy:

Sympathy, however, cannot, in any sense, be regarded as a selfish principle. When I sympathize with your sorrow or your indignation, it may be pretended, indeed, that my emotion is founded in self-love, because it arises from bringing your case home to myself, from putting myself in your situation, and thence conceiving what I should feel in the like circumstances. But though sympathy is very properly said to arise from an imaginary change of situations with the person principally concerned, yet this imaginary change is not supposed to happen to me in my own person and character, but in that of the person with whom I sympathize. When I condole with you for the loss of your only son, in order to enter into your grief I do not consider what I, a person of such a character and profession, should suffer, if I had a son, and if that son was unfortunately to die: but I consider what I should suffer if I was really you, and I not only change circumstances with you, but I change persons and characters. My grief, therefore, is entirely upon your account, and not in the least upon my own. It is not, therefore, in the least selfish. How can that be regarded as a selfish passion, which does not arise even from the imagination of any thing that has befallen, or that relates to myself, in my own proper person and character, but which is entirely occupied about what relates to you? A man may sympathize with a woman in child-bed; though it is impossible that he should conceive himself as suffering her pains in his own proper person and character.

(TMS VII.iii.1.4)

Smith concludes his proclamation by stating that the entire self-love theory of human nature seems to him 'to have arisen from some confused misapprehension of the system of sympathy' (VII.iii.1.4). Rousseau's theory of *pitié* is presumably one such misapprehension. Nothing in the remaining

twenty-five or so pages of TMS modifies or dilutes this culminating passage; it is Smith's last, best stab at distinguishing his view from the self-love alternative, and it is noteworthy that it does not reduce to processes of analogizing or of finding resemblances between spectator and actor, and uses no phrases to suggest that the actor and his or her plight is in principle anything but fully perceptible, in its own terms, to the spectator.

This final formulation seems markedly different from most of the earlier ones in TMS. My bringing your case home now means my putting myself in your shoes, as you; not confusing myself with you, of course, but also not simply putting myself in your shoes. It entails my feeling not just with you, but feeling your feelings as you have them, and thus somehow sharing your perspective on your situation. This is quite far from the examples in the third paragraph of TMS, where the spectators' fellow-feeling 'arises from conceiving what they themselves would suffer, if they really were the wretches whom they are looking upon, and if that particular part in themselves was actually affected in the same miserable manner' (I.i.1.3). Now, by contrast, we have scenes of unambiguous and self-negating sympathy, epistemically speaking. As I read the Part VII passage, Smith thinks this is a necessary condition of adequate moral assessment, as already suggested. The repeated use of 'therefore' in the text just quoted at length makes best sense if Smith sees himself as making an inference from the affirmation of an epistemic possibility (viz., that the situation and perspective of another is accessible to the spectator) to the denial of the truth of the selfishness theory. Even at the start of the book, the references to changing places with the other seem clearly to be about epistemic access to another's self and world; but in Part VII we are given the most extreme statement of the thesis that the required epistemic access can be had. So a lot rides, for Smith himself, on whether or not he has got the epistemic issue right.

I should think that Rousseau would deny that he does, and would start by noting that Smith doesn't actually provide any *argument* in this key passage for the possibility of sympathy so understood. Smith is pounding the table and insisting, with the help of his two examples, that this is what is 'supposed' to go on when I sympathize with the sufferer. Smith had earlier said things to buttress his case, however, and I'd like briefly to examine one of them in particular.

I noted that Smith's controlling model for sympathetic spectatorship is visual (though other metaphors are deployed as well).<sup>13</sup> Recall several of the initial examples: we see the stroke about to land on another's body; the mob is 'gazing at a dancer on the slack rope'; 'persons of delicate fibres and a weak constitution' are 'looking on' the bodies of beggars (all from the third paragraph). When Smith introduces the term 'impartial', it is again in conjunction with the metaphor of sight (I.i.4.8, 'As their sympathy makes them look at it, in some measure, with his eyes ...'). When discussing the possibility of a 'human creature' growing up outside of society, Smith uses metaphors of mirrors and looking-glasses to capture the sense in which self-spectatorship is

there absent (III.1.3,4). And there are other such occurrences of visual metaphors scattered throughout the book.<sup>14</sup> The impartial spectator, who is the ideal sympathizer (VII.ii.1.49; VII.ii.3.21), has the keenest sight.

Why is the visual metaphor so useful for Smith? I speculate that he seized upon it for several reasons. First, as Smith wants to build an ethics on his doctrine of sympathy, ocular language is a natural way to talk about *perspective*, which of course is crucial to the effort. Second, the metaphor suggests detachment from the object seen, and that may be thought important for insulating the spectator from the agent's turbulence (in the form, say, of passions), and thus for correct perspective. Third, sight suggests a model of knowing that does seem, in the ideal case, to leave the spectator's ego behind. If I correctly see the tree outside my window, whatever else is true about me seems irrelevant: I really have grasped the object I am perceiving, and I have done so without altering the object of sight. The impartial spectator's own perspective-distorting turbulence is also left behind. Presumably this is one reason why the metaphor has been so attractive to philosophers back to Plato. It fits in with the sort of epistemic point about sympathy that Smith is trying to maintain, as I read him. Fourth, while Smith invokes examples that involve visual clues, he is also talking about the imagination; and it is natural to characterize the imagination as 'seeing' this or that. Imagining and visualizing seem connected.

Fifth, vision is correctable, as is intellectual vision. In discussing the authority of conscience, Smith talks about impartial sympathy as a process in which the spectator compensates for bias by learning to 'view them [the interests and passions of the agent], neither from our own place nor yet from his, neither with our own eyes nor yet with his, but from the place and with the eyes of a third person, who has no particular connexion with either, and who judges with impartiality between us' (III.3.3). This follows a paragraph in which Smith has described how the 'natural eye of the mind' learns to assess distances correctly, and he refers for support to the 'philosophy of vision', meaning Berkeley's *New Theory of Vision*, as the editors note.<sup>15</sup> Smith must have been attracted to the idea that sympathetic seeing could learn to assess impartially by correcting for subjective bias, that is, self-love.

But Rousseau would question the capacity of sympathy to 'see' the situation of the other in the sense required by Smith, and might do so by focusing on other features of Smith's account, some of which stand in tension with the thesis of transparency to the impartial spectator. Rousseau might start off by noting that for Smith, sympathizing is not really much like correctly seeing the object outside the window. All that is too external; what is at stake here is some process of getting 'inside' the agent and his situation, not simply a spectatorial appraisal of their features – aesthetic or other – from a third person standpoint.<sup>16</sup> The imaginative re-creation of 'the situation' is what interests us, whether in life or, Smith says, in literature or drama (I.i.1.10; I.ii.2.2, 3, 4; II.i.5.3). But this requires, Rousseau might insist, a discursive *description* of the situation, as well as a potentially complicated appraisal of

what the *salient* features are. For Rousseau, the complications will be accentuated by what he takes to be the corruptions of our post-lapsarian state (one that includes, moreover, the weakening of *pitié*). 'The situation' does not consist simply in a set of facts; it will include, for any spectator however impartial, a judgment of what the relevant facts are, of their causal relations, of how they did or might have seemed to an actor at the time and why (not causally why, but why according to the actor). The salient features may lie in the (actor's) past, future, or both. The diachronic sequences of events will also have to be understood, as they are part of 'the situation'. The ocular metaphor tends to occlude the temporal dimension by suggesting a static, spatial model.<sup>17</sup>

There are a number of places where Smith brings out the interpretive complexity of grasping a situation, and yet without explicitly recognizing its tension with the visual model of impartial spectatorship. Consider for example his discussion of conscience, during the course of which he describes how the agent would review his conduct 'in the light in which the impartial spectator would view it', comparing it with how the misinformed public views it, and so forth (III.2.5). The interpretive and narrative manoeuvres required for the operation are quite complex. In another striking case, described in a passage leading up to one with a clear Rousseauan echo (duly noted *ad loc.* by the editors of TMS), Smith analyses the 'deception which rouses and keeps in continual motion the industry of mankind' (IV.1.10). The sympathetic and imaginative work of the spectator is amazingly complicated here, as it produces a story about the supposed happiness of the rich and the great, especially about their possessions. On account of their aesthetic qualities – 'the ingenious and artful adjustment of those means to the end for which they were intended' – these possessions strike the spectator as admirable. Smith follows all this with an account of how perspective on the whole scene changes as one enters old age, and with it the corresponding narrative: 'Power and riches appear then to be, what they are, enormous and operose machines contrived to produce a few trifling conveniences to the body ...' (IV.1.8).

The hermeneutic complexity of bringing the situation home to oneself was in fact implicit at the start of the book as well, perhaps most clearly in Smith's striking example of the 'illusion of the imagination' that enables our 'sympathy' with the dead (I.i.1.13). Smith vividly sketches a story about the situation of the dead, as recounted by us from their perspective as we imagine it. We should recall that his story is actually quite selective, as it effectively dismisses the notion that the souls of the dead are happily off in some other-worldly place (hence his use of the word 'illusion'). Humans have anciently told many a complex story about post-mortem life, sometimes spun in elaborate religious terms; perhaps this is one of the original subjects of story-telling.

Even the initial examples already mentioned are much more complex descriptively than they might appear. Your brother is upon the rack – is this judicial punishment? In a secular or religious frame? Is it torture? How you,

*qua* spectator, answer such questions will surely affect your sympathetic understanding. The spectator draws back at the stroke aimed at the agent's leg or arm – is this observation of punishment? If so, an elaborate social context must be assumed. The mob gazes at the dancer on the slack rope. – presumably this is at some public fair, a social scene whose character and very existence call for a complex narrative. Passersby squirm as they gaze upon the beggar – but beggars are, as Smith later points out, the object of a number of feelings in the spectator, such that he (the beggar) 'excites little compassion' but is nonetheless sufficiently 'pitied' as to be rescued from abject poverty. Our response is mingled with 'contempt', and depends in part on what story we tell about the role of the beggar in bringing about his own condition (III.3.18). A complex set of social norms as well as assumptions about the (un)fairness of the economic system also play into the sense in which we sympathize with the beggar.

And the plot thickens. The actor will often, Smith indicates, solicit the spectator's pity and compassion by telling his or her story, by advocating on his or her own behalf. Contrary to Smith's controlling formulations, it may well be not simply a question of the spectator looking at the scene, adjusting the eye of the mind, and sympathetically getting the full picture, so much as listening to the actor's suasive narrative, and then comparing it to his or her own interpretation. That may take place in the context of what Smith sometimes calls a 'conversation' (I.i.4.10). As I am picturing the exchange, it has a lot to do with competing stories and interpretations. There is not going to be, in many cases, a simple and decisive spectatorial grasping of the situation by bringing it home to oneself.

Consider once again the two key examples Smith provides in TMS VII. iii.1.4. The perspective one takes on what (one imagines) the bereft father is experiencing seems heavily dependent on the sort of story one tells about the particulars. Was the son killed fighting nobly in battle? Run over by a drunk driver? A suicide? Died in prison? While rebelling against the father's authority? How long ago was it and how old was the son? Obviously, different cultures will promote varying norms about what it is that one is to feel in the relevant context, which will inevitably affect the spectator's understanding of the matter. Smith himself brings up the very same example of the loss of an only son in Part V ('Of Custom') and makes just these sorts of points. As we 'bring home to ourselves' the situation of the sufferer, much will depend on our assumptions about his 'fixt habit and temper' derived from this or that way of life – Smith mentions that of a general as contrasted with that of a parent in private life (V.2.5).

And surely the narratively and socially embedded character of sympathy is all the more evident in the controversial example of the man sympathizing with the woman in child-birth. Introducing as it does interesting questions about the gendered character of sympathy, it problematizes still further the notion that impartial sympathizing can somehow see the other's situation from their standpoint fully and definitively. And yet Smith speaks in that



Part VII passage (VII.iii.1.4) as though the process weren't heavily mediated. As he there says, as spectator 'I change persons and characters' with you the agent and experience your situation as you, not as me – precisely in spite of the impossibility of my being in your situation.

Smith is right to emphasize that what he's calling 'sympathy' requires conception, that is, cognition, as well as imagination. But in TMS he doesn't seem to want to draw the consequence: viz. that there is no such thing as 'the' spectatorial perspective on the other's situation and experience, no 'imaginary change of situations' that gets the impartial spectator inside the agent or the agent's situation in the way Smithian sympathy requires. What there is instead, in all of the interesting cases, is an interpretive process expressed in part through narrative, or probably narratives whose competing claims must themselves be adjudicated somehow. And these will be socially mediated, reflective of custom and thus of a history of conventions. Not only will a multiplicity of narratively embedded perspectives present themselves, they will all be from some particular standpoint or other; the ego of the onlooker, itself socially embedded, is not simply left behind.<sup>18</sup> There is no such thing as 'the impartial spectator', just this or that spectator who may be more or less impartial (in some sense of the term).

In sum, the Rousseau I have postulated would argue that Smith's account of sympathy contains an internal tension between its official claims, resoundingly asserted in the culminating Part VII passage I have examined, and much else that lies implicit in Smith's account of sympathy. From that deconstructive argument he would infer that Smith's rebuttal of the view that we are not by nature sociable (I am glossing this as the self-love theory, for the reasons mentioned) is undermined by the very terms in which it is, in good part, stated. The transparency of the agent to the impartial spectator, the definitiveness of the latter's knowledge and judgment, the hygienic separation of self-love from sympathy – these are among the views that Smith's reply to Rousseau seems to require according to Smith himself, and which Rousseau in turn would judge to be unsuccessfully defended. I also would argue that Rousseau thinks such extreme claims on behalf of sympathy to be unnecessary to understanding or feeling for another.

And this thought brings me to a second point Smith remarks upon in his review of Rousseau's *Second Discourse*.

### Rhetoric and narrative

When not quoting from Rousseau, the point on which Smith perhaps remarks the most vividly in his review of the *Second Discourse* is Rousseau's rhetorical style. Before the three long quotations, he remarks:

Mr. Rousseau, intending to paint the savage life as the happiest of any, presents only the indolent side of it to view, which he exhibits indeed with the most beautiful and agreeable colours, in a style, which, tho' laboured

and studiously elegant, is every where sufficiently nervous, and sometimes even sublime and pathetic. It is by the help of this style, together with a little philosophical chemistry, that the principles and ideas of the profligate Mandeville seem in him to have all the purity and sublimity of the morals of Plato, and to be only the true spirit of a republican carried a little too far.

(‘Letter’ 12, EPS: p. 251)<sup>19</sup>

Smith goes on to remark that there is no point in analysing Rousseau’s presentation of the state of nature or of its decline into civilization because the work ‘consists almost entirely of rhetoric and description’. That is a rather harsh judgment but does point to something true: by and large Rousseau presents a narrative, not an argument. The *Second Discourse* is not fundamentally a theory, but a species of ‘conjectural history’, to borrow Dugald Stewart’s description of some of Smith’s work (Stewart 1966: 34).<sup>20</sup> It is a kind of genealogical narrative. Rousseau was, in fact, a narrator or storyteller *par excellence*. The autobiographical writings are obviously forms of genealogical narrative; but the stories about the genesis of the ideal state (the *Social Contract*) and ideal moral education (*Emile*) may also be seen as narratives. And of course, he is the author of the novel *Julie*, among other literary exercises. By contrast, TMS presents itself as a theory and analysis, not as a narrative, however much it deploys stories and other rhetorical or stylistic devices to make its argument.

Of course, Smith knew a lot about rhetoric, and in his lectures on the topic he explicitly made connections between the workings of sympathy and those of communication (e.g., Smith 1985, LRBL i.v.56 and i.133). He remarked on the different ways in which social status, as presented in literature, affects sympathy (LRBL ii.90–1), and in effect discusses how various forms of rhetoric – say, that of Thucydides – do or don’t enable the spectator to sympathize with the actors (e.g., LRBL ii.28). He formulates the ‘Generall rule that when we mean to affect the reader deeply we must have recourse to the indirect method of description, relating the effects the transaction produced both on the actors and Spectators’ (LRBL ii.7).<sup>21</sup> If I am right that sympathetic spectating is often dependent on narrative, then the resources of the LRBL ought to have something to teach us about how the machinery set out in TMS is supposed to work.<sup>22</sup> To take a further example, historical narrative may, Smith states, retain its ‘impartiality’ while exciting emotions in the audience but only by narrating facts which excite those feelings. By contrast, the orator ‘heightens every incident and pretends at least to be deeply affected by them himself’ (LRBL ii.38). Applied to a complex scene of sympathy in which there is interchange between actor and spectator, we might think of the competing narratives as, in Smith’s jargon, oratorical in the actor’s case and historical in the spectator’s. I earlier referred to this as a species of ‘conversation’. The LRBL makes it clear that Smith considers language to be inherently persuasive (he ‘makes rhetoric the genus to which all communication

is species', to quote McKenna 2006: 1), and that the forms of communication relevant to explaining actions, sentiments and motives will include what we (not he) would call narrative. And this brings in some interesting problems of audience, the role of fiction, the question of perspective, and the role of social norms and political agendas, as the Smith of the LRBL well knew.<sup>23</sup>

Ironically, the notion that all communication – including narrative – is a form of rhetoric is affirmed by Smith himself in TMS. Some nineteen pages after the culminating passage on sympathy as the answer to self-love theory, and just a few paragraphs before the conclusion of TMS, Smith wrote these intriguing lines:

The desire of being believed, the desire of persuading, of leading and directing other people, seems to be one of the strongest of all our natural desires. It is, perhaps, the instinct upon which is founded the faculty of speech, the characteristic faculty of human nature.

(TMS VII.iv.25)

Framing the narrative of sympathy as part of an often bilateral process of discursive persuasion helps to underline the limitations of the ocular model embedded in the impartial spectator theory, which is the theory of sympathy. Sympathy now looks more and more like a communicative, rhetorical process.

I cannot here further work out how the rhetorical theory of LRBL might bear on TMS, as that would amount to a different inquiry. I am suggesting that there is such a connection; that, more specifically, there is a narrative dimension to sympathy as analysed in TMS; and that TMS tends to occlude that fact by advancing a non-narrativistic, ocular conception of sympathetic spectatorship with which the narrative dimension is in tension. All of that suggests a relatively neglected, second 'Adam-Smith Problem', viz. that of the relation between the moral theory and the theory of rhetoric. By contrast, Rousseau's writing trumpets its rhetorical or narrative frame, as Smith rightly if dismissively notes of the *Second Discourse*.

At this point, a definition of 'narrative' may be requested. Putting the technical complexities of the LRBL aside, including its definition of 'narrative', let me offer the briefest definition of the term, sufficient for the purposes of the present essay.<sup>24</sup> I am not claiming that Smith would agree with the following.

Let us begin by distinguishing between a 'chronicle' and a 'narrative'. I shall stipulate that the former refers to the bare facts: say, that X did Y in manner Z at time T. By referring to 'facts' I mean to keep the door open not just to events, but reactions to events. Notionally, a chronicle is content abstracted from viewpoint. Normally there will be different ways of trying to convey the chronicle, the content; but notionally, just one content to be conveyed. Narration does the conveying or the telling; it discursively organizes events into some sort of pattern – say, a temporal pattern, a causal one, or one that supplies insight into motivations (this is not a complete list, and these could hold concurrently) – and implies one or more perspectives.

Narrative does not aspire to be non-perspectival in the way that a mathematical treatise or logical proof or Smithian impartial spectatorship does. Narrative is necessarily diachronic in that it attempts to make an intelligible whole out of contingent events occurring through time.

The basic ideas of narrative include (i) the organization of events into a pattern or whole with beginning, middle and end – plot, in short; and (ii) the perspective of the narrator on events and on the perspectives of the agents or actors – a point of view implicit or explicit in the telling. A narrative is normally a unifying, and in that way meaning-making, discursive enterprise. The line between chronicle and narrative is not hygienic; how could one say what the chronicle is – how could one recount it – without narrating in any way whatsoever? Yet one cannot infer that a chronicle ‘just is’ a narrative, let alone that every narrative is a fiction.<sup>25</sup> The narrative *characterizes* what is happening or happened; in so doing it reshapes it, or remembers it, or reimagines it, but does not necessarily fabricate it out of thin air. In the context relevant to the present discussion, narrative claims to represent, in some sense, how things are (or were), what happened, and why; not just causally ‘why’, but why from the perspective of the agent.

Now if some such view of narrative helps flesh out what the sympathetic spectator is doing, then we may perhaps draw the following conclusions. First, a narrative model should help articulate how the spectator understands what it is like to be the person in that situation without requiring full-blown Smithian sympathy (recall the examples of the woman in child-birth and of the man who loses his only son). As Goldie puts what is involved in such ‘understanding’ (whether in literature or life):

our interpretive task involves what has been called the *hermeneutic circle* (see Gadamer, 1975, pp. 265ff.). Putting it as more paradoxical than it really is, we will not achieve an understanding of the episodes of thought and feeling involved in a person’s emotional experience unless we have a prior understanding of his overall character (with that term taken in the broadest sense) and of his mood, and we will not achieve an understanding of a person’s overall character and of his mood without some prior understanding of the episodes of emotional experience. It is not that paradoxical because, of course, it is possible to ‘work one’s way in to’ the circle; one can and does on first acquaintance make certain assumptions about a person’s thoughts, feelings, emotions, mood and character, and then one can revise those assumptions on the basis of further knowledge and acquaintance.

(Goldie 1999: 398)<sup>26</sup>

A few pages further on in the article just quoted, Goldie notes:

A further step in the interpretive project of piecing together a person’s narrative structure will involve determining what is the object of his

emotion, and the way he is thinking of, and feeling towards, that object, as well as determining what are the emotional desires which he has about it.  
(Goldie 1999: 401)

As Goldie emphasizes, this appraisal need not be (and usually is not) indifferent to the interpreter's mood, emotions, or character (p. 401). But *this* kind of understanding – one compatible with what we might call an 'informed narrator' rather than 'impartial spectator' theory – does not accomplish what Smith wanted to claim in TMS VII for his sympathy theory. This is so for several reasons.

First, if Smith's claim in that culminating passage really held, the narrative reconstruction of the other's situation would not be necessary, so far as understanding it goes. When any such perspective-laden reconstruction is required, it's because the transparency that Smith claimed for sympathy is impossible. It's not just a question of degree of transparency or clarity of perspective that is at stake, but the kind of imaginative procedure. Narrative understanding does not seem to require that 'I change persons and characters' (TMS VII.iii.1.4) with the agent, which is what Smith insisted is 'supposed to happen' in sympathizing.

Second, on this model, sympathetic understanding cannot uninvolve the ego of the spectator. And on the flip side, there is no reason to think that however well some aspect of the actor's experience is explained to the spectator, what that experience is like for the actor will be fully narratable to another. I would argue that this is more than a matter of the 'subjective' aspect of any experience. It also comprises – and here I assert merely – the sheer complexity of the relevant particulars, as well as the problem as to which particulars are relevant (these will include the actor's own perceptions, sentiments, memories, and so forth, many of them fleeting even to the actor) and why and to what degree. The 'identification' and complete sympathetic understanding of which Smith speaks is in that sense impossible.

Third, Smith's occasional appeal to literary narratives to illuminate how sympathy works (see the passages cited above) would now be seen not so much as mere examples or occasions for sympathy, but as expressing the type of understanding that goes on in sympathy. He can shift back and forth between literary models and real-life examples because they are fundamentally of a piece with respect to the narrative character of understanding others, in spite of the ocular, spectatorial model with which Smith leads. But interpreting literature need not be understood as Smithian sympathizing with the characters; one can enter into the fictional world, understand what it's like to be its characters, but not feel as they do. One might feel solidarity with them, wanting to encourage them along, as one does in watching a boxing match; or one might resonate with them; or identify with them. One might have the emotions appropriate to the other's joys or sufferings. But none of this seems to require Smithian sympathy, either when we interpret a work of literature, or a person in real life.<sup>27</sup>

Fourth, a narrative understanding of the other's situation does not, simply because it *is* narrative, reduce understanding to confabulating. But narrative understanding does introduce serious questions of perspective. Even in historical narrative it always seems possible to re-tell the events from a different perspective (hence we are on, for example, the nth book about the genesis of the French Revolution, and so forth).<sup>28</sup> It's not that anything goes, but that beyond basic threshold conditions of factual accuracy, establishing what does go seems perpetually open, with the result that claims to finality (the definitive account of X) seem insupportable. And the narrative view introduces problems as to where the line between understanding and fiction, or let us say more ambiguously, between understanding and imagining is to be drawn. I cannot literally put myself in the place of the woman in child-birth; as I try to give an account of what she's going through, I must in part posit or attribute what I cannot myself know. That is a far cry from the sort of imaginative transposition of self Smith ends up judging necessary if the self-love view is to be overcome.

### Rousseau contra Smith: concluding thoughts

By way of conclusion, let me recast some of this dialectic between Smith and Rousseau. Rousseau understood, acutely and astutely, the problems of transparency of self, of getting inside someone else's experience, of the partiality and revisability of perspective, and of the pervasive role of narrative in rendering the human self intelligible. His novel *Julie*, for example, includes a great deal of discussion about the sense in which lovers can and cannot be known to and by each other (Rousseau 1997a: 45, 111, 270–1, 555, *inter alia*). Not surprisingly, Rousseau would see the impartial spectator as a character in a narrative. In *Julie*, one of the central characters (Monsieur de Wolmar, Julie's husband) is cast as an impartial observer.<sup>29</sup> I should think that Rousseau's deconstructive reaction to Smith's concluding insistence on the large sphere of sympathy would go something like this: Smith is telling a narrative throughout TMS in which a character, called 'the impartial spectator', is alleged to do such things as be a male who perfectly sympathizes with a woman in child-birth. The motivations for this story-line, he would continue, are ethical and in the broadest sense political: Smith wants to persuade his readers that we will be better off if we carry on *as though* it is true both that the impartial spectator can sympathize in this way and that we ought to take the impartial spectator as a role model, that is, subject ourselves to the social standard represented by the impartial spectator. The 'protreptic rhetoric' of the book, as I have elsewhere called it (Griswold 1999: 48–58), reflects the ethical and in a sense social agenda of Smith's story.

But Smith presents it all in the guise of a *theory* that plays down its narrative and rhetorical dimension. And this too, from the Rousseauan perspective, is part of the intent of Smith's story. The very idea of a non-narrative 'theory' of the moral sentiments reflects at the philosophical level an ideal

represented by the impartial spectator as painted within that same theory: that of perfect perspective, of well-adjusted intellectual sight, of a timeless non-diachronic apprehension of how the matter stands. Such has always been the ambition of philosophical *theoria*. But for the Rousseau I am postulating, that is part of the philosopher's imaginative story about philosophy, and he questions just such claims to a-perspectival imagining. 'Theory' is itself a kind of gazing that conceals a tale about – in this case – the supreme value of social interdependence as regulated by an impartial spectator whose very character and existence are themselves postulated in the tale. My sense is that Rousseau doesn't share Smith's view that the story about impartial spectating, whether sympathetic and moral or merely intellectual, is in fact ethically and politically beneficial, and this perhaps for three reasons. I conclude with them.

First, it is built on what for Rousseau is a fiction: the alleged transparency of the actor to spectator. The most we can have is something like *pitié* or imaginative literary narrative accompanied by compassion, not full-fledged Smithian sympathy. For the individual, this may be a painful realization, to be sure; and it is a sort of headline of many of Rousseau's writings about the self, especially the autobiographical writings, that nobody ever *really* understands anyone else. Our mutual unnarratability at one level is lamented but not concealed by Rousseau. The recognition of that shared fate perhaps constitutes the deepest sense of commonality that narrative provides. And it is inscribed both into the state of nature, where we are each solitary, and into those socialized states of being in which we are still alone but pretend not to be. That pervasive social pretence is worse than the disease it might be thought to cure.

For, second, that pretence requires self-falsification as well as various oppressive mechanisms of social control, in particular the supervisory eye of Big Spectator armed with a big stick (the disbursement of social approval and other regulatory machinery). Rousseau's point here opens up, of course, a whole line of criticism that goes down through Marx and beyond. We would be better off figuring out a 'system of natural liberty' that is based on our natural separateness and equality, Rousseau would claim, rather than on our alleged sympathetic spectatorial reactions as well as subjection to the spectatorial point of view (think here one more time about the woman in child-birth subject to the man's assessing gaze). I suspect that he would push hard Smith's own admission that commercial society, especially when understood in terms of Smithian sympathy, leads to the 'corruption of our moral sentiments' (TMS I.iii.3.1), and would argue that we are better off dropping talk about sympathy (and for the most part, *pitié*, as already noted) when creating a just society.

Finally, for Rousseau it was a cardinal mistake of earlier state of nature theories to project the current traits of human beings onto original human nature (Rousseau 1997b: 132). Smith continually casts his theory as articulating the natural; for Rousseau, this is rationalizing rhetoric, something like 'ideology' in the sense later defined by Marx and Engels. Its fit with Smith's

defence of the free market – a defence Rousseau did not share – would only amplify Rousseau's suspicions about Smith's agenda.

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### Notes

- 1 Gauthier's lectures were subsequently published as Gauthier (2006). A version of Haakonssen's thought (which I mention here with permission) has been noted in the secondary literature. For example, R. Wokler remarks that 'While it [the *Second Discourse*] attracted some praise and even more hostility from reviewers in France, its greatest impact was probably first felt in Scotland, where Adam Smith was to cast his *Theory of Moral Sentiments* in part as a reply to it ...' (Wokler 2001: 44). See also I. Hont and M. Ignatieff (1983: 10), as well as Ignatieff (1984, ch. 4).
- 2 Smith's 'Letter to the *Edinburgh Review*' is reprinted in his *Essays on Philosophical Subjects* (henceforth abbreviated 'EPS'; Smith 1982b: 242–56). Citations to this 'Letter' give paragraph number followed by page number.
- 3 On Smith's owning the works of Rousseau, see Leigh (1986: 11), Hanley (2006: 198, n. 9), and Rasmussen (2008: 57). I note that in the 'Considerations Concerning the First Formation of Languages', which he appended to editions 3–6 of TMS (it was there titled 'Dissertation on the Origin of Languages'), Smith refers to Rousseau by name (calling him 'ingenious and eloquent'), and specifically to the account of the origin of language in Part I of the *Second Discourse*. See Smith's *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* (henceforth abbreviated 'LRBL'; Smith 1985), p. 205.
- 4 See Rasmussen (2008) and Hanley (2006, 2008). Force (2003) is also a major contribution to the study of the relation between Smith and Rousseau. I regret that F. Neuhausser's *Rousseau's Theodicy of Self-Love* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008) arrived on my desk too late to be taken into account in this essay.
- 5 Brooks adds: 'The question of identity, claims Rousseau – and this is what makes him at least symbolically the *incipit* of modern narrative – can be thought only in narrative terms, in the effort to tell a whole life, to plot its meaning by going back over it to record its perpetual flight forward, its slippage from the fixity of definition' (1992: 33). But the quest is unrealizable: 'Always out of place, never coincident with his inner self in the eyes of others – and thus in his behavior – he is always going back over the traces of conduct and interior disposition, not to reconcile them – which is impossible – but to confess their irreconcilability ...' (1992: 32).



seau did not share – would only agenda.

- Gauthier (2006: 50) usefully remarks that ‘Rousseau is perhaps the first modern thinker to understand us as alienated from our true selves’. These comments are congenial to the contrasts between Rousseau and Smith I seek to draw out in this essay.
- 6 Smith’s name was not attached to the review when it was published, but the editors of EPS clearly believe that it is by Smith (EPS: 230), as do most scholars. For some arguments in favour of Smith’s authorship, see Ross (1995: 145), where he concludes that ‘The phrasing of the letter itself and these points clinch the argument for Smith’s authorship of the letter rather than Hume himself’ (in private correspondence, which I mention with permission, Ross develops his case in even greater detail). In private correspondence, which I also mention with permission, David Raynor has expressed his scepticism concerning the widely-held view that Smith alone is the author of the ‘Letter’.
  - 7 In the *Second Discourse*, Rousseau is explicit that ‘sociability’ is not one of the two ‘principles prior to reason’ that define human nature (Rousseau 1997b: 127). The passages translated by Smith in his review are to be found at Rousseau (1997b: 167, 170, and 186–7). All these passages are from Part II of the *Second Discourse*, and the last quotation is from the second to last paragraph of Rousseau’s text. In the last passage quoted by Smith, Rousseau refers to Stoic *ataraxia*; Smith’s decision to quote that is suggestive, given the importance of Stoicism for his own thought.
  - 8 My interpretation is thus at odds, so far as I can tell, with that of Force (2003: 31), who remarks that ‘in Rousseau’s theory, we experience pity by putting ourselves mentally in the position of the sufferer. Rousseau’s key innovation consists in basing pity on identification’. Yet several pages later, Force notes that ‘The ability to reflect has two decisive consequences: the rise of self-love, and the transformation of pity into a sentiment based on identification’ (37). So pity cannot simply be based on identification. In any case, I would argue that once modulated by reflection, it still does not involve what *Smith* would think of as sympathy, that is, putting oneself in the place of the other in such a way as to adopt the other’s perspective. Force remarks that “‘Sympathy’ in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* corresponds to *identification* in the *Second Discourse*’ (43; cf. 132–3); that may be true, but correspondence is very different from equivalence, in the particular ways I shall attempt to explain.
  - 9 As he says in the text already quoted, ‘what are generosity, Clemency, Humanity, if not Pity applied to the weak, the guilty, or the species in general?’ (153). It would be interesting to compare Rousseauan *pitié* and Hutchesonian benevolence on this score. *Pitié* is not the same thing as moral virtue, though in the *Second Discourse* it is the origin thereof. From Smith’s perspective, as I shall argue, Rousseau nonetheless fails to put enough daylight between other-regarding virtue and self-love, precisely since Rousseau did not found virtue in sympathy properly understood. I hasten to add that for Smith self-love *can* be compatible with virtue; when it is, though, it must be regulated by the impartial spectator, and that can take place only through (Smithian) ‘sympathy’.
  - 10 I would argue that Rousseau’s comments on *pitié* in *Emile* book IV, and in his essay on the origin of languages, are consistent with the points I have just made, though the issue is contestable. The problematic status of spectatorial pleasure – mentioned by Smith in the passage I am about to quote – would provide another interesting point of comparison with *Emile*. Rousseau there remarks that ‘Pity is sweet because, in putting ourselves in the place of the one who suffers, we nevertheless feel the pleasure of not suffering as he does’ (Rousseau 1979: 221; also 229), a remark Smith would no doubt take as confirmation that Rousseau is at base a self-love theorist. In *Emile* Rousseau also speaks of *pitié* as extending to humanity as such, so that one learns to ‘identify’ with the species (233).

That is another indication that he cannot mean by the term what Smith means by 'sympathy', since one cannot put oneself in the position of humanity as such. All that said, *pitié* plays no role in the *Social Contract* (the general will and religion, *inter alia*, come to the fore) and only a limited role in Emile's moral education (cf. the importance of religion), and this pattern is repeated elsewhere in Rousseau's political writings. A more detailed reconstruction of the dialectic between Smith and Rousseau would take into account Rousseau's effort to understand political life not only without appealing to something like Smithian sympathy, but to a great extent without *pitié* as well.

- 11 Note also his use of 'seeing' in the first sentence of the book. Further instances are cited below.
- 12 I am indebted to S. Fleischacker for pointing this out. See Fleischacker (2004: 9–10).
- 13 The importance of the metaphor for Smith is also noted by Brown (1994: 59–62, 72). Brown notes that 'In TMS the activities of watching, seeing and observing all constitute forms of moral judgment, and the impartial spectator is simply the proper and most objective moral judge' (60). I do not mean to deny that Smith uses other metaphors too (for example, auditory ones at TMS I.i.4.7) when talking about sympathy.
- 14 For example, at III.4.4, where Smith refers to our being able to 'identify ourselves, as it were, with the ideal man within the breast, and, in our own character, view, as in the one case, our own situation, so in the other, our own conduct, with the severe eyes of the most impartial spectator'; cf. III.3.4, 'the eye of this impartial spectator'.
- 15 For Smith's comments on Berkeley's essay, see his 'Of the External Senses' (in EPS: 135–68), paragraphs 60–2, pp. 156–8 (citations to this essay give paragraph number followed by page number). The ways in which sight and reading or language are connected, in Smith's report of Berkeley, are fascinating, and pertinent to the sort of point I am about to make about narrative. For example, he remarks that 'The objects of sight, as Dr. Berkeley finely observes, constitute a sort of language which the Author of Nature addresses to our eyes' ('Of the External Senses' 60, EPS: 156; cf. para 62, p. 158). There is much more to say about how Berkeley's theory of the relation between sight and conception might fit with Smith's appropriation of the metaphor to characterize the impartial spectator's sympathetic knowing.
- 16 Darwall notes that 'It is ironic, and not a little misleading, therefore, that the term "impartial spectator" originates with Smith (and not with either Hutcheson or Hume), since the perspective of moral judgment, according to Smith, is not strictly a *spectator's* standpoint at all' (Darwall 1999: 141). Smith's theory requires abandoning spectatorial detachment and sympathetically entering into the situation of the actor 'as any one of us' (Darwall 142, italicized in the original). That is accurate, but Smith *does* talk as though his is a spectator theory; and more importantly, from Rousseau's standpoint, talk about entering into the world of another 'as any one of us' imports the detachment and limitation of vision that characterizes spectatorship. Rousseau would strongly endorse Darwall's words 'ironic' and 'misleading', but would read their implications for Smith's theory rather more critically and deconstructively.
- 17 It would be very interesting to examine Rousseau's use of and comments about ocular metaphors for knowing. By way of preliminary observation, I note the superiority of touch to vision indicated in *Emile* (see Rousseau 1979: 138, 140, 143), though the context of those remarks – the early stage of Emile's education – would have to be taken into account. In addition, the metaphor of vision is used in the passages from the *Second Discourse* quoted above (but in a way that suggests that out of sight is out of mind!). Consider also Rousseau's comment in the *Essay on the Origin of Languages* (which Smith knew):

But when it is a question of moving the heart and enflaming the passions, it is an altogether different matter [than observing visually]. The successive impression of discourse, striking with repeated blows, gives you a very different emotion from the presence of the object itself, which you have seen completely with a single glance. Assume that someone is in a painful situation which you know perfectly well: you will not easily be moved to cry in seeing the afflicted person, but give him time to tell you everything he feels, and soon you will burst into tears. Only in this way do the scenes of a tragedy have their effect. ... The passions have their gestures, but they also have their accents, and these accents, which make us tremble, these accents, from which we cannot shield our organ, penetrate by it to the bottom of the heart, ... Let us conclude that visible signs convey a more precise imitation, but that interest is aroused more effectively by sounds.

(Rousseau 1998: 291–2)

Rousseau's views about the link between language and music (given the latter's deep connection to accent and rhythm) may also shed light on the power of narrative to affect and instruct (I am indebted to Julia Simon for pointing this out to me).

- 18 One could contend that the line of argument just presented is in fact Smith's own, as is suggested by his analogizing sympathy in life to sympathy in literature, his talk about spectators having emotions (I.i.2.6) and adjusting their sympathy in light of the actor's situation (I.i.4.8), and the seemingly contextualized character of sympathizing (I.i.4.7). Yet that defence of Smith would in turn underline a tension within Smith's thought, as I am about to suggest, given his insistence on the impartial spectator's sympathetic vision. For a humorous but pointed comment on the impossibility (for epistemic reasons) of a man pitying a woman in child-birth, see Diderot (1959: 17–19).
- 19 The striking phrase 'philosophical chemistry' is used by Hume in the second Appendix to *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*, precisely in the context of objecting to the attempt by an 'Epicurean or a Hobbist' to 'explain every affection to be self-love', even one such as friendship. See Hume (1989: 296–7).
- 20 At the end of Part I of the *Second Discourse*, Rousseau refers to his account as based on 'conjectures' but adds:

not only do such conjectures become reasons when they are the most probable that can be derived from the nature of things and the only means available to discover the truth, it also does not follow that the consequences I want to deduce from mine will therefore be conjectural since, on the principles I have just established, no other system could be formed that would not give me the same results and from which I could not draw the same conclusions.

(Rousseau 1997b: 159)

- 21 At LRBL i.150–1 Smith is reported as saying that "There are two different Sorts of facts, one externall, consisting of the transactions that pass without us, and the other internall, towit the thoughts sentiments or designs of men, which pass in their minds. The Design of History, compounded of both of th<ese> is to relate the remarkable transactions that pass in different nations, and the designs, motives and views of the most remarkable men in those times, so far as they are necessary to explain the great changes and revolutions of States which it is intended to relate".
- 22 I am not claiming that this insight is original. See for example McKenna (2006). For a dissenting view, see Brown (1994, ch. 1).

- 23 For example, Smith comments that modern historians tend to be more 'didactic' than the ancient because there are 'now severall sects in Religion and politicall disputes which are greatly dependent on the truth of certain facts' (LRBL ii.40). In other words, historical narratives compete for political and social authority, and carry the corresponding agenda. As to the meaning of 'narrative' for Smith, he remarks at LRBL i.149: 'Every discourse proposes either barely to relate some fact, or to prove some proposition. In the first ... the discourse is called a narrative one. The latter is the foundation of two Sorts of Discourse: The Didactick and the Rhetoricall'.
- 24 The next two paragraphs are drawn from Griswold (2007, ch. 2.viii). The reader will find a much more detailed discussion of narrative in those pages. I have, however, departed from that version in the use of the terms 'story' and 'chronicle'.
- 25 For some helpful comments on both points, see Goldie (2003: 215–18).
- 26 Goldie's reference to Gadamer is to *Truth and Method*, trans. Weinsheimer and Marshall.
- 27 I owe the boxing match example to Peter Goldie. Elsewhere, he suggests the example of buying someone a birthday present; perhaps the worst way to make the right selection would be to put oneself in the shoes of the recipient (Goldie 2002: 202). I may come to know what you would want in all sorts of ways without entering your world through putting myself in your shoes and then attempting to adjust for perspective.
- 28 Rousseau asserts the ineluctable role of perspective in historiography in *Emile*, Book IV (Rousseau 1979: 238–40).
- 29 Wolmar remarks:

My only active principle is a natural taste for order, and the right concurrence of the play of fortune and of men's acts pleases me exactly like a beautiful symmetry in a tableau, or like a well-contrived play in the theater. If I have any ruling passion it is that of observation. I like to read what is in men's hearts; as my own little deludes me, as I observe composedly and disinterestedly, and as long experience has given me some sagacity, I scarcely err in my judgments; and that is the whole compensation for self-love [*amour propre*] in my continual studies; for I do not like playing a role, but only seeing others perform. I enjoy observing society, not taking part in it. If I could change the nature of my being and become a living eye, I would gladly make that exchange. Thus my indifference for men does not make me independent of them; though I care not about being seen, I need to see them, and though I do not cherish them I find them necessary.

(1997a: 403)

On p. 305, Julie refers to her husband as a person whose 'greatest predilection is for observation', which task he discharges with 'the most perfect impartiality'.

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