

approach may well add only more fine words to a debate that is already by no means short of loud, empty drums.

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REFERENCE

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D.D. Raphael, *The Impartial Spectator*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2007. 143 pp.

D.D. Raphael is the dean of Adam Smith scholarship. His edited versions of *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (TMS) and *Lectures on Jurisprudence* are now considered definitive, and his 1985 *Past Masters* volume, *Adam Smith*, the dominant introductory text for two decades, is a well-balanced work for generalists and specialists alike. In 1972, in a short essay titled “The Impartial Spectator,” He argued for a “genetic” approach to interpreting Smith: one must look at the development of Smith’s spectator theory over time, Raphael insisted, and not exclusively at the end result. Smith’s first book, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* went through six editions in his lifetime. The second edition contained small but significant changes to his argument, including responses to criticism from David Hume and Sir Gilbert Elliot, and the sixth edition included both important and philosophically substantial alterations – Raphael calls them “drastic” (5). It contained an entire new section, Part VI, running fifty-three pages.¹

Raphael’s newest book, *The Impartial Spectator*, shares both the title and methodology of his earlier essay but his argument is wider in scope and more detailed. In it, he argues that even some of the most important scholars have misrepresented Smith’s positions by quoting various editions to suit their interpretations. This is problematic because the philosophical differences between Smith’s early and late positions are significant (5).

The great achievement of Raphael’s 1976 edition of TMS is the comparative work. Every alteration, deletion, and addition amongst the six editions is documented and cross-referenced, both with TMS

¹ All references advert the Glasgow Edition.

and Smith's other writing. The text itself is annotated with bracketed references to grammatical changes and, of course, Raphael and his co-editor provide detailed explanation of Smith's references and allusions. The sheer magnitude of this project is overwhelming, and it is a testament to their accomplishment thirty years ago that the *Glasgow Edition* was only recently completed in 2001, with publication of Knud Haakonssen and A.S. Skinner's *Index to the Works of Adam Smith*. Given Raphael's long history of textual work, it is reasonable to conjecture that no one alive knows Smith's words better than he and, consequently, his new full-length account of Smith's philosophy is a welcome addition to contemporary discourse. Certainly, Raphael's ability to compare the different editions of *TMS* is unequalled and his attention to rhetorical and philosophical shifts makes his new book unique in contemporary Smith studies.

The Impartial Spectator is a short book, the body runs only 135 pages, but it is efficiently written and remarkably clear. It is transparently a book written by a scholar late in his career. Its scope is much wider than its size would suggest. The arguments are persuasive, fluid, and well-grounded in the text. Yet, characteristic of this type of book, Raphael's position on controversies are sometimes presented as if they are not controversial at all, and his mistakes are casual; sometimes he seems to trust his long-standing interpretations so much that he writes as if he knows Smith's own mind. In certain ways, *The Impartial Spectator* reads like John Rawls's later works. While its narrative is more fluid and unified than either *Political Liberalism* or *Justice as Fairness: A Restatement*, its conclusions are bolstered by the calm rhetoric of advanced mastery of the field.

The Impartial Spectator is largely a book of interpretation disguised as a contribution to the history of ideas. Therefore, the reader may become jarred, when eighteen pages into the text, Raphael writes that one of Smith's positions is "far fetched," and that the philosopher was suffering from "a rhetorical lapse" (18). Even more shocking is his conclusion that Smith's claim that "every faculty in one man is the measure by which he judges of the like faculty in another" is, in Raphael's words, "simply wrong" (20).

Contemporary readers of secondary scholarship on Smith have become used to interpretive discussions that are either neutral in their claims regarding Smith's veracity or apologies for his long-forgotten positions. Because Smith's moral philosophy had been left behind so forcefully, and because the caricatures that pass for accounts of *The Wealth of Nations* have been so damaging, Smith scholars often play the role of boosters. Only if Smith is taken at his best, we seem to think, will he be regarded as a suitable interlocutor for Hume, or Kant, or Aristotle, for that matter. Raphael's lifetime of scholarship seems to have given him permission to get past this cheerleading, and to treat Smith as he would likely have wanted to be treated, as a fallible scientist who hopes to be correct in his assessment (Smith describes his project in *TMS* as a matter

of fact, not a matter of right (TMS II.1.5.9)). Frankly, as a reader immersed in the literature, Raphael's shift comes as a relief.

Raphael does not admit to this evaluative project until the end of the book. The first paragraph of the final chapter explains that:

the work of a philosopher of the past may be studied from a historical or from a philosophical perspective. The historical treatment considers the work in relation to the time at which it was written. . . the philosophical treatment considers the work in a spirit of critical debate, just as it might consider a philosophical book of its own time, evaluating the author's arguments and replying to them if found wanting. My approach to Adam Smith's *Moral Sentiments* in this book has mainly taken the philosophical perspective. . ." (127).

As a methodological statement, this dichotomy is problematic. To truly do justice to any book philosophically, one must read it in its proper context – Alasdair MacIntyre has anchored his career by frequently reasserting this point, especially in his *A Short History of Ethics*, and *After Virtue* and its sequels. Treating Plato and Kierkegaard as contemporaries is to distort the discourse, and although, in the end, one simply has to compare their arguments and conclusions, to *get* to those arguments and conclusions one must do the historical work. The irony is that Raphael knows this, and *The Impartial Spectator* is an almost perfect mix of the "historical" and "philosophical." In fact, his very premise, that one must analyze the textual development in order to clarify Smith's conclusions is, by necessity, predicated on the fact that the historical and philosophical are largely one and the same. The only substantive difference between the two is the willingness to assert one's own voice in the critique, but, again, this voice is only authoritative if the historical work creates an authentic and believable interpretation. That which any historian chooses to regard as relevant is itself steeped in philosophical commitments.

In the end, Raphael concludes that the legacy of Smith's moral philosophy is limited to one element of his theory. Not surprisingly, it is the impartial spectator, the imagined entity that anthropomorphizes the interaction between personal and social judgment:

What, then, endures from Adam Smith's moral philosophy? It connects moral judgment with social relationship in a novel way, explaining its origin by reference to the reaction of spectators. The most interesting feature of the account is its application to conscience, judgment about one's own behaviour: it explains this as a complex reaction to the feelings of approval and disapproval by disinterested spectators. This gives conscience a social origin and a social function (135).

Raphael argues that Smith's moral theory ought to be revisited precisely because his theory of conscience is "derived from social relationships, and therefore that the moral use of the word 'ought' is

derived from situations described in purely positive terms. This is a psychological derivation, not logical. . ." (135). The theory's importance for cognitive science, and its superiority to Freud's moral psychology, make it useful to modern authors (48–9). However, Raphael argues, it is *only* the impartial spectator that is worth revisiting, and even then only given a specific interpretation of Smith.

The Impartial Spectator begins by addressing the connection between sympathy – Smith's mechanism for fellow-feeling between spectator and agent – and imagination. But sympathy, what Hume called the "hinge" of Smith's system, is both more complicated and more ambiguous than it might seem at first. As Smith's account is generally described, individuals have a natural predilection for shared emotions and will adjust the pitch of their sentiments to match them to the standards put forth by their communities. Spectators imagine themselves in the circumstance of the moral agents they observe and determine whether they would act or react in a similar manner if they were the agent. If they decide they would, then they are said to *sympathize* with the agent. If they reject that possibility, they do not. Moral agents become aware of social judgments by observing the spectators and then temper their action so as to maximize the possibility of sentiment confluence. As one's moral abilities grow more complex, one need not have *actual* spectators to judge the propriety of acts. Instead, one can imagine an impartial spectator whose judgment approves or tempers acts accordingly. For Smith, the impartial spectator plays the role of a conscience.

Smith is clear that it is not actually the agent's sentiments that inspire spectator reactions, but awareness of the cause of those sentiments. Although it sometimes seems as if emotions are transferred from person to person, the process actually involves two separate passions: event x causes person a to have sentiment y . Spectator b imagines being person a while experiencing event x and feels or does z . If z turns out to be identical to y then sympathy is achieved. If not, y is tempered to be more like z . (Actually, Smith observes that because z is an act of the imagination, it will always be of a lesser pitch than y , so z and y don't have to be identical, just very similar.)

Raphael takes this description and turns it on his head. He challenges the notion that the confluence of z and y is sympathy at all. Instead, he argues that "Smith distinguishes between the feeling of sympathy, the observation of correspondence, and a consequent emotion which is the feeling of approbation" (19). In other words, Smith scholars are wrong to identify sympathy as the comparison of the spectator and agent's sentiments. Sympathy is instead the feeling *inspired by* this convergence, not the convergence itself. Thus, sympathy must be necessarily connected to the imagination because it is caused by passions that the imagination creates.

Ultimately, for Raphael, the imagination is "more pervasive" than feelings of sympathy because it plays "a double role" (15), a direct

challenge to most accounts of Smith. Spectators have to imagine what other actors feel and they have to imagine an impartial spectator, therefore it is the imagination that holds the moral edifice together. Raphael justifies this by emphasizing Smith's comments at *TMS* I.i.1.13 that people sympathize with the dead. Since there are no passions to actually sympathize with, he explains, the imagination must play the more important role.

By comparing Smith's response to Hume in edition two with a more ambiguous statement in the first edition, Raphael attributes the traditional misunderstanding of sympathy to a "rhetorical lapse" on Smith's part. While "intended to emphasize the necessity of the connection between sympathy and approval," Smith became overly exuberant and misdirected his readers (18). The consequence of this mistake is that the role of argument gets lost if sympathy is regarded simply as passions set at an equivalent pitch. In actuality,

[Smith] reasonably says, . . . that he approves of another man's opinion if that opinion has been reached by attention to argument which he himself finds convincing. So the ground for approval of the other person's opinion, as for his own acceptance of the opinion is that there is (what he takes to be) sound argument for the opinion not the mere fact that he himself shares the opinion (20).

After re-conceiving sympathy, Raphael sharpens his attack. Citing an early passage in *TMS*, he argues that Smith "lets himself be carried away into a ridiculous generalization of the concordance view." As I alluded to above, Smith had written the following:

Every faculty in one man is the measure by which he judges of the like faculty in another. I judge of your sight by my sight, of your ear by my ear, of your reason by my reason, of your resentment by my resentment, of your love by my love. I neither have, nor can have, any other way of judging about them (*TMS* I.i.3.10).

Smith argues that other people's passions are only explainable in reference to someone's own passions because all of one's faculties and capacities can only be understood in reference to one's own experience. Rejecting Smith's claim (and, apparently, Protagoras's as well), Raphael responds that being short-sighted himself, he would never judge another person's sight by his own. Further, he adds that one can judge someone's faculties by one's own different faculties: "When my neighbour sees a firm straight edge when I see a fuzzy one, I can check by touch. If he hears a sound I do not, I can check by consulting a third person. . ." (20).

By being willing to condemn Smith for "rhetorical lapses" instead of working to see how the assertions might be made to fit into the argument – Charles Griswold calls this the principle of philosophical charity – Raphael stops giving Smith the benefit of the doubt. In doing so,

he disregards the metaphysical and epistemological subtext that permeates *TMS*.

The imagination is important to Smith because of the physical realities of human existence. Individuals are first and foremost discrete entities. We are physically and fundamentally separate from one another and can therefore only know one another's emotions via induction. I myself also have poor eyesight, and I have had it from birth. I therefore have no conception of what it is like to see the world with 20/20 vision other than grasping conceptually that people see *more* detail from farther away than I do. I did not even understand how much I couldn't see until I got my first pair of glasses, comparatively late in life after my sophomore year of college. It is not that I don't understand sight, it is that I don't understand *better sight*, and therefore have no means to judge whether this difference is quantitative or qualitative. It is not that I can't supplement my information via the other senses – Raphael is surely right about that – it is that the other senses work with my imagination to create an understanding that by nature is limited by my capacities. I judge your sight by my sight because my imagination builds on my own experiences only, and insofar as my abilities allow. In chapter six, Raphael takes Rawls and Roderick Firth to task for, among other reasons, suggesting that Smith offers an "ideal observer theory." He is right to do so, but the very reason that Smith could not possibly have suggested this is because, as Raphael himself acknowledges, the impartial spectator is limited by the imaginative capacities of the person who created it. The imaginer judges the impartial spectator only by his or her spectating.

Raphael falls back on the rhetorical lapse argument a second time while discussing Smith's "astonishing statement" that, "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 (90, *TMS* iv.1.10). Here Smith is discussing the importance of the invisible hand and how, as a force of nature, it results in equal distribution of the necessities of life amongst all people, "which would have been made, had the earth been divided into equal portions among all its inhabitants"

Raphael asks, "Can Smith have really believed that?" (90), pointing out that the passage was originally written for the first edition when Smith was young and "destined for the ministry." But Smith kept the passage for the 1759 edition, after he had written and revised the *Wealth of Nations*, so, Raphael suggests, "perhaps he thought it too fine a flourish to be lost, or perhaps he remained genuinely ambivalent." There is nothing in Smith to suggest ambivalence, so the reader must accept the first answer. According to Raphael, Smith concludes that nature gives all people equal access to happiness because it is a pithy line. This, it seems to me, is no answer at all.

Raphael is correct that this is an astonishing statement and it is, no doubt, highly dubious. But if it is defensible at all – and it might be – it rests on an understanding of Smith's whole system, including that fact that (a) Smith is discussing necessities and not what he calls "conveniences" or "luxuries;" (b) this statement is a component of his argument that the rich confuse "baubles and trinkets" with happiness and the beggar does not do this; and (c) he is likely describing a system of "perfect liberty" that he outlines in the *Wealth of Nations*. It is not my intention to defend Smith's view here. What I am saying instead, is that regardless of whether Smith is justified in his claim, Raphael's explanation for its inclusion is fundamentally unpersuasive.

It is odd that Raphael is willing to fall back on claiming Smith makes rhetorical lapses because at another point he uses Smith's literary acuity as proof of his personal commitments. Raphael argues that "Smith himself certainly believed in God" (63), a tremendously controversial statement. He revisits this again, saying that Smith "was not a practical atheist" (79) and then elaborates on his belief on pages, 98, 101–102, and 104. In each instance he offers textual evidence, some of which may be convincing and some of which may not. However, the argument that Smith was a believer rests significantly on a passage that appeared in the first edition, remained through the fifth, and was kept but revised for the sixth. Raphael's conclusion: "Smith writes with such eloquence about this article of faith that it must represent his own view" (99). Given the argument so far, it is *this* statement that is astonishing. By this logic, Smith must have believed his assertion about the beggar as well, since that too is a tremendously powerful piece of writing. But Raphael seems unwilling to accept this possibility at all. In short, the problem with Raphael's rhetorical evaluation of Smith is that there is no consistent standard as to what counts as evidence for a belief and what does not. If I am right, than Raphael ends up no different than the scholars he chastises for not being attentive to the difference between Smith's early and late writing.

Raphael asks what Smith was trying to do. His answer:

[Smith's theory] was meant to provide a satisfactory alternative to rationalist a priori accounts of conscience and morality generally. Like Hutcheson and Hume before him, Smith was a good empiricist. All three aimed at giving an explanation of ethics in terms of 'human nature' – empirical psychology we would say today. But Smith appreciated that the theories of Hutcheson and Hume were inadequate to account for the peculiarities of conscience. . . in due course he came to see (no doubt influenced by Hume) that the use of empirical methods required one to explain, not just to assert, the existence of peculiar qualities. . . both phenomena, the moral sense and its character of authority could be explained as the natural effects of ordinary experience, notably in the use of the imagination. (49–50).

Again, we see an emphasis on the imagination. Smith's empiricism depends upon its use, both Raphael and I would agree, but for Raphael, this fact is indicative of another failure on Smith's part. The fact that Smith requires spectators to be themselves and yet enter into another perspective, or, to be themselves while imagining impartial spectators who are somehow independent of the agent, who then, as that persona, enter into the original agent impartially to judge an act in lieu of social feedback is, to put it in his terms, "too complicated to be acceptable" (51). "While not impossible" he argues, the impartial spectator simply cannot be "a common experience" (52).

Here, I must again recall Alasdair MacIntyre, whose moral theories assert an analogous expectation and have received the same criticism. For MacIntyre, as he explains in *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*, a person who wishes to compare incommensurable traditions must be masters of both and remain with one foot in each tradition to evaluate which one answers its own questions best, and which gives a more convincing response to the other's unresolved "epistemological crisis." (This is, of course, an oversimplification.) His critics assert that this is too much of a burden; that no person could adopt both perspectives at the same time, but as with Smith, the defender must ask, why not? Do we not enter into the perspectives of our loved ones – our spouses, our neighbors, or students – often? Do we not ask ourselves what an objective person might say about our potential treacheries or infidelities and then stop short of acting self-destructively? In terms of MacIntyre's approach, do not expatriates live with one foot in two cultures, or converts with one foot in two religions?

To put it bluntly, here Professor Raphael and I disagree on the most fundamental level. He argues that the impartial spectator is too complicated to be of use, I suggest that it is such an accurate picture of how we all really live, and it is so intuitively convincing that we are apt to believe it independent of the quality of Smith's argument. In the complexity of Smith's divided self that so foreshadows our own modern condition, in the personification of Shaftesbury's soliloquy that Smith calls the impartial spectator, Smith's readers are more apt to say that he has hit a phenomenological bulls-eye than he is off target. He seems, to my experience anyway, simply correct. Raphael thinks that he has rescued the impartial spectator from this complexity by revising Smith's account of approval; thus his rejection of Smith's notion of sympathy. Inductive argument and the psychological power of social influence make the impartial spectator more palatable, according to *The Impartial Spectator*. But I suggest that Raphael need not rescue the impartial spectator at all, that as stated, even with the more traditional understanding of sympathy, Smith, in this regard anyway, is still persuasive.

There is one remaining thread that unifies *The Impartial Spectator* and that is the suggested justification for the sixth edition revision. Why would

Smith have revised his work so significantly? According to Raphael it is because he had to answer his own question. In the beginning of the final section of *TMS* in every edition every published, Smith writes that ethics must deal with two questions: "First, wherein does virtue consist, or what is the tone of temper, and tenour of conduct, which constitutes the excellence and praiseworthy character, the character which is the natural object of esteem, honor and approbation? And, secondly by what power or faculty in the mind is it, that this character, whatever it be, is recommended to us?" (*TMS* vii.1.2) Of these two questions – what is virtue and how do we come to know it – Raphael argues that Smith only answered the second question adequately. The sixth edition is the attempt to remedy this, he argued, thus the addition of part VI. In the end, Raphael suggests, Smith failed. His account of the *content* of morality is unconvincing even if his account of how we come to know moral rules still wields power.

In this spirit, I offer a similar claim regarding Professor Raphael's book. Of his two questions: how ought we read Smith and whether Smith is correct, his first account, that we must juxtapose the six editions in order to truly understand his theory is indisputably correct. It is a major addition to the literature and will be a force in Smith scholarship for a long time to come. Regarding the second, however, as to whether Smith is correct, Raphael is no more persuasive than he thinks Smith is. His challenges are problematic and inconsistent and his objections are, please pardon the pun, unimaginative. What is exciting about this aspect of the book, however, is that it exists in the first place. If the time has come for scholars to critique or defend Smith on his merits then it means that Smith has returned to his rightful place in the canon, and I can think of no more appropriate herald for this announcement than D.D. Raphael.

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Deirdre N. McCloskey, *The Bourgeois Virtues. Ethics for an Age of Commerce*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006. xviii + 616 pp.

Deirdre McCloskey has embarked upon the ambitious project of writing an apology for capitalism. The project entails four volumes of which the first one, *The Bourgeois Virtues – Ethics for an Age of Commerce*, has been published. In this voluminous but comprehensible book, McCloskey does not only elaborate Adam Smith's insight that virtues support the functioning of markets, she also takes a far more radical position, arguing