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THE THEORY OF MORAL SENTIMENTS AND THE INNER LIFE

Emma Rothschild

The *Theory of Moral Sentiments* has had a long and involuted history, over the two hundred and fifty years since its first publication in 1759. I would like to suggest that it is also an historical work, in three different senses: first, as a work which depends, to an extent which increased over the successive editions, on historical illustrations; second, as a work in which historical information is of importance to moral judgements; and third, as a work which is suggestive, or inspiring, for historical scholarship.

The celebration of the *Theory of Moral Sentiments* at the University of Oxford is itself odd, and even eery, from the historical perspective of Smith's own life. Smith encouraged his readers to sympathize with the dead, and there is no evidence that he changed the dismal view of Oxford that he expressed to his family at the age of seventeen, reiterated in the *Wealth of Nations* in 1776, and returned to once more in the entry he included in the index he added to the *Wealth of Nations* in 1784; '*Oxford*, the professorships there, *sinecures*.'¹ There is some evidence, even, that Smith's views were reciprocated by the university, to the extent that the university had a corporate point of view. It is certainly the case that the Clarendon Press, the Oxford University Press which is now the custodian of so much of Smith's continuing renown, undertook a small but diligent vendetta against Smith, over the entire period from the publication of the *Wealth of Nations* to his death in 1790. The Vice-Chancellor of the time, George Horne, was the leading figure in the campaign, with a celebrated open letter to Smith, published by Clarendon Press in

1777, about his account of Hume's death; Smith wrote later that this had brought upon him 'ten times more abuse' than the *Wealth of Nations*.² The Vice-Chancellor's letter was republished in second and third editions in 1777, and in a fourth edition in 1784. In his subsequent *Letters on Infidelity*, also published by Clarendon Press, Horne was identified on the title page as the author of the letter to Smith; in this later work he added a very good and slightly paranoid description of Smith, as 'wary and modest' (Horne 1784: 8).

The Clarendon Press continued the vendetta in 1790, in a pamphlet in opposition to the essayist Vicesimus Knox, who had followed the *Wealth of Nations* in describing the university's professorships as 'Sinecures' -- 'I believe Europe cannot produce parallels to Oxford and Cambridge, in opulence, buildings, libraries, professorships, scholarships, and all the external dignity and mechanical apparatus of learning. If there is an inferiority, it is in the PERSONS...' -- and who was accused of participating in the 'common errors of Voltaire and of Smith.' (Knox 1781: 356; [Anon.] 1790: 5). The minor Oxford publishers contributed to the common enterprise, and so did the larger milieu of Oxford printing. One of the most effective of all Smith's early critics, the poet William Julius Mickle, was the proof-corrector for the Clarendon Press, and his brother was an Oxford printer. Mickle's dissection of Smith's writings on the East India Company was published in Oxford, buried within a long historical introduction to his translation of the Portugese epic, *The Lusiad* (Mickle 1778: clxi-clxxxi, [Anon.] 1794: xxxvii.) Smith's writings on Hume were in particular, for Mickle, something like the sounds of a frog: 'And Smith, in barbarous dreary prose,/ Shall grunt and croak his praise.'³

The *Theory of Moral Sentiments* is at first sight the least historical of all Smith's writings. Smith's enduring preoccupation, in Dugald Stewart's account, was 'the study of human nature in all its branches, more particularly of the political history of mankind' (Stewart 1980: 271). The *Wealth of Nations* is a notoriously historical work, full of pieces of information about the price of wheat in 1202, or the copper content of coins during the second Punic war; 'particular facts,' or 'long digressions' about 'the history of a law, or an institution', in Jean-Baptiste Say's description. For Walter Bagehot, it was 'a very amusing book about old times.' (Say 1803: v-vi, xxv; Bagehot 1881: 295; Smith (1976b) WN, I.xi.p.10, V.iii.61.) The *Essays on Philosophical Subjects*, published posthumously by Smith's friends in 1795, is also, in large part, a work in the history of science, or on the principles of philosophical enquiry, 'illustrated by the history' of astronomy, ancient physics, ancient logic and metaphysics (Smith 1980, EPS, title pages, 31, 106, 118.) The two extended series of Smith's lectures which were published as the *Lectures on Rhetoric* and the *Lectures on Jurisprudence*, are historical surveys, of language and law; the *Lectures on Rhetoric* are in part a guide to 'historicall Composition,' and to the 'History of Historians' (Smith 1983, LRBL ii.31, ii.45).

The *Theory of Moral Sentiments* which was published in 1759 was by contrast an almost entirely unhistorical work. The reader of the first edition had to proceed as far as page 58 before arriving at a proper noun; and another few pages before coming to the name of an historical figure (the royalist poet Cowley, with his 'grave, pedantic and long-sentenced love') (Smith 1759: 62). The work is not particularly abstract. It is full of stories, or descriptions of sentiments. It is even 'a little too diffuse,' as Edmund Burke wrote to Smith, with all its 'easy and happy illustrations

from common Life and manners.⁴ But the illustrations are for the most part not historical. The word 'history' occurs only three times in the book; twice in relation to the experience of reading history, and once in the last paragraph, in which Smith announces his own future inquiry into the history of jurisprudence (Smith 1759: 164, 267, 551).

It is this unhistorical sense which changed, I would like to suggest, in the course of the thirty years over which Smith added to, subtracted from, and in general deconstructed the book. The *Theory of Moral Sentiments* became a substantially more historical work, in a sequence of revisions which is associated, in interesting respects, with Smith's ideas of the inner life.

The omnipresent metaphor of the *Theory of Moral Sentiments* is of vision or seeing, as Vivienne Brown and others have shown (Brown 1994.) Smith used the words 'eye' and 'eyes' thirty-eight times in the 1759 edition; he referred sixty-seven times to the verb 'to see,' and thirty-one times to spectators. The image of moral experience, in the book, is of looking or glimpsing, at oneself or at others. But there is a related metaphor, of insiderness or interiority, which is also omnipresent. The experience of moral judgement consists of looking at the inner life; of seeing inside, or seeing that which cannot be seen. The inner life is within, and therefore invisible. To have moral sentiments is to have looked, in as clear a light as possible, at the outside events of life, and to have imagined the life within.

The image of light and vision is ubiquitous in eighteenth-century philosophy, and the image of trying to see the unseeable, or that which is in darkness because it is within, was one of the continuing preoccupations of the critics of the French enlightenment. The philosophers of the French Revolution, for Joseph De Maistre, were like a child, who when he is given a toy, 'breaks

it, *to see inside*. It is thus that the French have treated the government; *they have wanted to see inside*.⁵ But for Smith, too, the related metaphors of seeing and insideness posed continuing difficulties. These difficulties were associated, in part, with the overall enterprise of the *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, of founding a system or science of morality (in Burke's description) on the 'whole of Human Nature.'⁶ A system in which morality was founded on powers of judgement which were placed inside individuals by God, who is all-seeing, would pose no such problems; and Smith's *Theory*, to the extent that it was understood, as it clearly was by Dugald Stewart and Sophie de Condorcet, as attempting to provide an unmetaphysical 'foundation of Morals,' can be included in the works of enlightenment which De Maistre so disliked.⁷ But there were other and less metaphysical difficulties which Smith encountered, in relation to the image of seeing inside, and they were difficulties to which he returned in all his successive revisions of the *Theory*.

Smith altered the *Theory of Moral Sentiments* in many different ways, of which the most conspicuous was the sub-title that he added in the fourth edition of 1784: *Or, An Essay towards an Analysis of the Principles by which Men naturally judge concerning the Conduct and Character, first of their Neighbours, and afterwards of themselves*. This was an odd adjustment, in respect of an 'essay' which extended to 551 pages in 1759, and had increased to 898 pages in 1790. It is an example, to use the Oxford expression, of Smith at his most 'wary and modest.' But it established several important characteristics of the work: that it was about human nature; that it was concerned with both outside or visible events ('conduct') and inside events ('character'); and that it asserted a sequence over time in moral judgement, in which individuals start by judging other people, and then judge themselves. In the new advertisement to the 1790 edition, Smith

explained that 'a good many illustrations' of his doctrines had 'occurred' to him over the preceding thirty years, and the changes he made were for the most part illustrations; illustrations, in particular, of the judgement or evaluation of the inner life.

Smith returned again and again, in the revisions, to the double metaphor of seeing and insideness. The idea of the 'man within' is not present in the 1759 *Theory of Moral Sentiments*. It is introduced in a small way in the 1761 edition, and in an ostentatious way in 1790, where there are twenty-two references to the 'man within,' together with various demi-gods, judges, vicegerents, and other 'inmate[s] of the breast.'⁸ The idea of 'other people' -- Smith uses the expression an amazing eighty-four times in the 1790 *Theory* -- is also far more important in the later editions. He tinkered almost obsessively with the language of vision and insight. There is an awkward reference to eyes -- 'we must look at ourselves with the same eyes with which we look at others' -- which he removed in the second edition; and a passage to do with mirrors -- 'Unfortunately this moral looking-glass is not always a very good one' -- which he also removed (Smith 1759: 257, 260.) There are more eyes in the 1790 than the 1759 edition; almost twice as many. The two 'Raskolnikov' passages in the Theory -- where Smith describes the remorse of the criminal, for whom 'solitude is still more dreadful than society,' and who 'could not think without terror and amazement even of the manner in which mankind would look upon him, of what would be the expression of their countenance and of their eyes' -- were revised and rearranged.⁹

The cumulative effect of Smith's revisions and additions is to make the *Theory of Moral Sentiments* a far more diffuse and more historical work; a work with more 'illustrations,' as he announced. If the substantial new passages added to the 1790 edition (the passages to which

Smith draws attention in his advertisement) are considered as a distinct work, then it is a work which is very much more full of people and events than the 1759 *Theory*. I counted eighty-eight proper nouns of persons in the 1759 edition, with a preponderance of references to ancient and modern philosophers; and ninety-five additional proper nouns in the principal new passages of 1790, many of them the names of historical persons of modern times. Smith added the names of Queen Anne, Catherine de Medici, Isabella of Spain, Joanna of Castille, and the novelist Mme. Riccoboni, among others, as well as Idame, Jocasta, Niobe, Olympia and Venus.¹⁰

There are explicit references to history and historians in the new additions: the disregard of 'contemporary historians' for the lives of the 'obscure and insignificant,' including 'men of letters;' the propensity of later historians to fashion their 'narratives' without recourse to 'authentic documents;' the responses of observers to historical painting (or historical engraving, the illustrations of illustrious men); and the uses of history in moral reflection ('examine the records of history', and the lives 'you may have either read of, or heard of, or remember') (TMS III.3.31, VI.iii.5, VII.ii.1.31). But the change is most evident in Smith's style; his 'copious and seducing composition,' in Dugald Stewart's expression, or the 'variety and felicity of his illustrations' (Stewart 1980: 291-292.)

Smith's historical turn can be understood within the changing circumstances of his own life, and of the philosophical universe in which he lived. In moving from theory to historical inquiry, and from a *Theory* to an *Essay*, or to an *Inquiry* (the *Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*) he was making much the same move as David Hume, in his *Treatise*, his *Essays* and his *History of England*. The Scottish 'science of man,' as Nicholas Phillipson and

J.G.A.Pocock have shown, evolved from a natural to an historical science.¹¹ Historical inquiry was itself becoming a more elaborate, and, in Smith's opinion, a more venal subject.¹² His closest associates, including Hume, William Robertson and Adam Ferguson, as well as Voltaire, Turgot, Condorcet and others of his French acquaintances, wrote works of history; essays on history or sketches of history. In the years following the initial publication of the *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, Smith was deeply involved in thinking about historical composition and historical evidence, in connection with his lectures on rhetoric of 1762-1763, and in writing historically, in his *Essays*, in the *Wealth of Nations*, and in the ever-impending history of jurisprudence.¹³

But there is a more specific sense, as well, in which Smith's historical turn in the *Theory of Moral Sentiments* can help to illuminate his understanding of moral judgement; and was one of the ways, even, in which he tried to understand the complicated idea of insight into the inner life. For Smith was collecting names and stories because he was concerned, as he said in his advertisement, to provide more illustrations of his theory, or his analysis. But he was also providing a description of the moral judgements which individuals make. Individuals, in Smith's description, make judgements, in their own lives, on the basis of illustrations. They observe their friends and relations, and they also trade places in fancy with mythical or fictional or historical people, people they have heard about or read about, in 'history or romance' (TMS III.4.9.) The 'illustration' of historical stories is itself a kind of illumination, or light; a light in which it is almost possible to see, or to imagine, the interior darkness of the inner life. There is something of Wittgenstein's gaze, in the 1759 *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, or of the Wittgensteinian eyes of the owls in the Antwerp night zoo, in W.G.Seбалd's description: 'the fixed, inquiring gaze found

in certain painters and philosophers who seek to penetrate the darkness which surrounds us purely by means of looking and thinking' (Sebald 2001:3). But there is also light; in Smith's own expression, 'the day-light of the world and of society' (TMS III.3.39).

The second suggestion I want to make has to do with what Dugald Stewart called the 'foundation of Morals' (Stewart 1980: 290.) The foundation of moral judgement, in all the successive versions of the *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, is to be sought in the world which surrounds the individual: conversation, society, intimate friendships, family relationships. Smith emphasised the intimacy of moral society in his new sub-title of 1774; how men judge the 'Conduct and Character, first of their Neighbours.' But a moral theory which is founded on local and intimate relationships is subject to two serious criticisms, both of which were apparently made to Smith in 1759 by Hume's friend Sir Gilbert Elliot. Elliot was one of the sources of the Deist Cleanthes, in Hume's *Dialogues concerning Natural Religion*, and his objections to Smith, in a letter which has been lost, seem to have been, first, that a morality which is entirely without unworldly foundation is fickle and insecure; and second, that a morality founded on intimate observations -- the observations of one's own society, or one's own neighbours -- is inevitably a local or parochial morality, in which even virtue is a condition of 'public opinion.'¹⁴ The two objections are related, in that if the principles of moral judgement are placed in nature by God, who is all-seeing, then God can place a universal or un-local morality in all individuals. But the second objection, about parochialism (or relativism, in modern terms), is serious even in respect of an entirely unmetaphysical morality, and it is one with which Smith seems to have been much

concerned.

The multiplicity of references to 'other people,' almost all of which Smith added in the 1790 edition of the *Theory*, provide one way of averting the dangers of local morality. So do the references to distance; 'to view ourselves at the distance and with the eyes of other people' (TMS III.1.5). Smith's description of the uninterrupted custom of infanticide, and its influence on the 'imagination' of Athenians, is an illustration of the ways in which even philosophers come to tolerate horrible inhumanity, with the support of 'far-fetched considerations of public utility' (TMS V.2.15). The story that Smith added to the *Theory of Moral Sentiments* in 1761, about the response of a 'man of humanity in Europe, who had no sort of connexion with that part of the world,' to the news that 'the great empire of China, with all its myriads of inhabitants, was suddenly swallowed up by an earthquake,' is an illustration of the faintness of moral sentiments, over large distances in space and time; the man of humanity would take his repose or his diversion, and sleep 'with the most profound security.' The experience of moral judgement, in Smith's description, consists in observing and being observed, imagining and being imagined, in the easy exchanges of daily life and manners. But it is not at all easy to observe or even to imagine the 'hundred millions of [our] brethren' in China; or a distant moral world. (TMS III.3.4, Smith 1761: 211-214.)

These questions of distance and judgement were of intense interest to Smith and Hume, in their own little society of enlightenment. The *Theory of Moral Sentiments* was published, two hundred and fifty years ago, at a moment of virtually worldwide war, in which the British, after the *annus horribilis* of the early defeats of 1758, in the Seven Years' War of 1756-1763, were

entering a new age of distant empire. Smith's and Hume's enlightened Scottish friends were deeply involved in the new settlements of the postwar world, from East and West Florida to Grenada, and to Bihar, Bengal and Orissa. They lived in a new world of information about distant societies, and of influence on the lives of distant individuals. It was a world, too, in which the philosophical questions that Smith asked in 1759 and 1761, about uninterrupted custom, and connections to distant catastrophes, were of new and immediate consequence.

There were dozens of Scottish officials, within Smith's and Hume's closest circles of friends, who were the rulers of slave societies, and the owners of slaves; even the owners of slaves at home in Scotland.¹⁵ Smith was interested in the politics of slavery (and anti-slavery), and the very first controversy, in print, over the *Theory of Moral Sentiments* -- the first work in which Smith was named in the title -- was a defense of the continental colonies, by the American publicist Arthur Lee, published in London in 1764, in which Smith was accused of having 'exalted into heroes' the African slaves, and 'debased into monsters' the American colonists (Lee 1764: iv, v, 13, 30).

One of Smith's favourite students, the son of his friend William Cullen, was the counsel for the slave-owner, in the celebrated case, *Knight v. Wedderburn*, that ended slavery in Scotland in 1778. Smith was himself invoked by the counsel for the slave. 'Well has Dr Smith in treating of this subject expressed the Indignation of a generous mind at that Cruelty & oppression which is the disgrace of modern times,' Allan Maconochie wrote in his memorial of 1775 for Joseph Knight.¹⁶ Robert Cullen, on behalf of the owner, argued that the liberal position, in the modern world, was rather to consider the customs of other, distant, and almost universally slave-owning

societies; it was indeed 'illiberal to limit all ideas of justice to the regulations of their own particular society,' and in order to 'correct their local prejudices,' a 'regard became due to the laws of other countries' (Cullen 1777: 51, and see Rothschild 2010).

The foundational difficulty of Smith's system in the *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, or the dilemma of local and intimate morality, was in these circumstances of immediate political importance. For if morality is social and conversational, then how is it possible to be critical, as Smith himself was, of the almost uninterrupted customs of one's own society? If it is illiberal to be concerned only with the ideas of justice of one's society, then is it also liberal to be illiberal? If morality is conversational, how is it possible to have conversations with individuals in China, or to hear their distant cries?

Smith's historical illustrations, I would like to suggest, were part of his answer to these vexing questions. They constituted a sort of virtual conversation, on the basis of ever more information, about the 'other people' of history, geography, theatre and romance. The enduring difficulty of the Scottish science of man was to be at one and the same time a (natural) science of the universal characteristics of all human individuals, and an (historical) science of the particular circumstances in which these characteristics are manifested. It is the same sort of difficulty as the difficulty of universal and parochial morality, and it is a difficulty which Smith sought to resolve, in both instances, with historical illustrations, and particular facts.

The last suggestion I want to make is more speculative. Smith's historical illustrations, his stories and episodes and observations, are of importance, as I have tried to show, to his

understanding of moral judgement as an elaborate, diffuse process of glimpsing, as though through the obscurity of circumstance, the outer and inner lives of other people. I have also suggested that his own method or style, his pell-mell piling up of different kinds of illustrations, is both a way of making a philosophical argument, and a description of the process of moral judgement itself. But this is almost exactly what historical inquiry is like, in the evocation of some of the greatest historians.

The ancient historian Barthold Niebuhr wrote in 1810 that the object of historical investigation was the *Innere*, or the 'inwardness of the ordinary life' of antiquity; an insight into events as they were seen by individuals at the time, as Goethe wrote to Niebuhr in 1812, in which 'the Past can be made present to the inward eye and imagination.' The historian's achievement, in this view, is to dispell the clouds or the mist (the *Nebel*) that separate us from the past, and to make it possible to glimpse, as though in a clear light, the individuals of those other times, 'living and moving.'¹⁷ This metaphor of historical understanding, of seeing how it really was in the past, as though through the clouds of distance, is of importance, still, for modern historians; and Bernard Bailyn has used Niebuhr's language of an 'unglimpsed world,' which is 'obscured from view by clouds,' of the 'depiction of interior worlds,' and their relationship to the 'exterior world' of historical events (Bailyn 1982: 22, Bailyn 1985: 10, 13.)

Smith's theory of sentiments, and his historical, pell-mell method, are in this respect of interest and potential utility to historians. Historians are continually importing theories from other, more abstract subjects, and philosophy is not a particularly sought-after source at the moment. But I would like to propose the *Theory of Moral Sentiments* as a source of these

imports, or exports.

There are various kinds of history in relation to which the *Theory of Moral Sentiments* would be of interest. The most obvious would be the history of the human mind, or of moral sentiments. This sort of inquiry was of intense concern to David Hume, especially in his accounts, in the essays which he published in his *Political Discourses*, and later in his successive collections of essays, of how moral sentiments change with circumstances, and of how individuals, in commercial societies, become milder and more moderate.¹⁸ The history of the 'descent' of the conscience was of continuing interest throughout the nineteenth century: the genealogy of morality (Nietzsche 1994: 4, 12). The anthropologist Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, who was the 'master' of the twentieth-century history of mentalities, was an historian of the development of national consciousness, and of the 'restitution of sentiments,' in respect of the history of moral conscience; morality and the science of morals.¹⁹

But it is not only in respect of these large inquiries into the history of mentalities that Smith's theories may be of interest to historians. For many sorts of historians are involved, as Smith was, in an effort to evaluate the inner lives of other people (in this case past people) on the basis of diffuse and diverse evidence. They are engaged in judging the inner on the basis of the outer, or of the circumstances of ordinary life. Smith's conception of the process of evaluation, in the *Theory of Moral Sentiments* as in the *Wealth of Nations*, has been described as one of tâtonnement, or of arriving at judgements of value on the basis of a multitude of individual and 'inter-subjective' judgements (Rothschild 2001: 235-246, Wiggins 1991: 80-81).²⁰ This is also the historian's procedure, on the basis of evidence which is always incomplete.

The *Theory of Moral Sentiments* is Smith's continuation, as Nicholas Phillipson has shown, of David Hume's great enterprise, in the *Treatise of Human Nature*, of a science of man (Phillipson 2009). It is in the spirit of Hume's injunction, in the prologue to the *Treatise*, to 'glean up our experiments in this science from a cautious observation of human life, and take them as they appear in the common course of the world, by men's behaviour in company, in affairs, and in their pleasures' (Hume 1978: xix). Even moral sentiments, for Smith, were the outcome of the cautious observation of human life; which is also an experiment in historical observation, and historical imagination.

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Notes

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1. Smith 1784, Index, unpag.; Letter 1 to William Smith of 24 August 24 1740, in *Corr.*: 1.
 2. Horne 1777, and see Letter 208 to Andreas Holt of October 1780 in *Corr.*: 251.
 3. 'On the Death of David Hume,' in Mickle 1808: 144:
 For him shall Russell rant and rave,
 In hobbling rumbling lays;
 And Smith, in barbarous dreary prose,
 Shall grunt and croak his praise.
 4. Letter 38 from Edmund Burke of 10 September 1759 in *Corr.*: 46-47.
 5. 'Lettres d'un Royaliste savoisien,' quoted in Descostes 1894: 2, 328.
 6. Letter 38 from Edmund Burke, *Corr.*: 46.
 7. Stewart 1980: 287, 290, and see Rothschild 2001: 68.
 8. Smith 1761: 208, 213, and see the anticipation of the 'man within' in Smith 1759: 132, 281, 283.
 9. TMS II.ii.2.3 and III.2.9, and see Smith 1759: 184-187 and 250-253.
 10. The three proper names of women in TMS 1759 are all of fictional characters: Monimia, Palmira, and Phaedra. TMS 1759: 32, 33, 177.
 11. See Pocock 1999: 199-221, Phillipson 1989: 137-141, and Phillipson 2009.
 12. Smith 1983, LRBL ii.41 and ii. 70, and see Pocock 2006.
 13. Smith also came close, in his correspondence towards the end of his life with the Austrian reformer Count Windisch-Grätz, to the respect for established institutions which was later described as 'historicist;' in this case, the institutions of legal 'style books,' or 'these collections, which are the produce of the wisdom and experience of many successive generations.' See Ross and Raynor 1998.
 14. See Letter 40 of 10 October 1759 to [Gilbert Elliott] in *Corr.*, 48-49; D.D. Raphael and

A.L. Macfie, 'Introduction,' TMS 16.

15. See Emma Rothschild, *The Inner Life of Empires* (forthcoming, 2010).

16. Allan Maconochie, 'Memorial for Joseph Knight' (1775), National Archives of Scotland, CS235/K/2/2, p. 34.

17. 'Einleitung zu den Vorlesungen über die Römische Geschichte October 1810,' in Niebuhr 1828a: 1, 92-93; letters from Goethe of 17 December 1811 and 23 November 1812, in Niebuhr 1852: 1, 345, 358; Niebuhr 1828b: 1, 6.

18. See especially "Of Refinement in the Arts" ("Of Luxury"), "Of Interest," "Of the Balance of Trade," and "Of the Protestant Succession," in Hume 1987.

19. Lévy-Bruhl 1903: 229. On the restitution of 'the state of mind of our ancestors,' and on 'our master Lucien Lévy-Bruhl,' see Febvre 1968: 17.

20. The image of tâtonnement, with its allusion to feeling one's way in darkness, is not entirely well-suited to Smith's own figurative language of glimpsing and light. But the use of the image by economists, since Turgot, has placed an emphasis, rather, on the distinctively Smithian idea of the uncoordinated and uncoerced aggregation of individual valuations (or sentiments.)