
Phyllis VANDENBERG

Abstract. Looking closely at Adam Smith's account of the spectator perspective – along with the compatible spectator accounts in Hutcheson and Hume – is especially helpful to understanding one of the main themes of the Scottish Enlightenment. The Scots in response to Hobbesian egoism described a morality that does not need to overcome a human nature that pits individuals against each other. Rather each of the three Scots describes the empirical formation of our humanity and our moral sentiments in the context of relating to and observing others. The three spectator accounts of Smith, Hutcheson, and Hume clearly describe this involvement of others in the formation of morality. Adam Smith explicitly gives an accounting of the importance and, in fact, necessity of others in the formulating of not only our moral evaluations but also the very possibility of understanding one's humanity and having an idea of morality at all. In this paper, I explain Smith's account specifically along with its similarity to Hutcheson's and Hume's and argue that these empiricists ground moral sentiments in person to person relationships. For the three Scots, being human and developing a morality is begun in interactions with others. We formulate who it is we are and can be and determine acceptable ways to interact in the company of others.

Keywords: Ethics; Moral foundations; Impartial spectator; Spectator perspective; Scottish Enlightenment; Empirical foundations of morality; David Hume; Francis Hutcheson; Adam Smith.

Developing moral foundations does not involve isolating individuals or individual human agency for Hutcheson, Hume, and Smith. What they do describe is an essential interrelating that involves people necessarily with each other so that we can understand ourselves and make moral evaluations. Specifically this person to person relating is an integral part of their spectator perspectives to moral evaluations.

1 Philosophy Department 1 Campus Drive G.V.S.U. Allendale, Mi 49401 - 9403 USA
E-mail address: vandenbp@gvsu.edu
The influence of others develops as a theme for the eighteenth-century Scottish sentimentalists, Hutcheson, Hume, and Smith. The specific point made in this paper is that Adam Smith’s spectator account reflects this idea of other involvement already made by Hutcheson and Hume. Adam Smith explicitly gives an accounting of the importance and, in fact, necessity of others in the forming of not only our moral evaluations but also the very possibility of being human and having an idea of morality at all. Without contact and interactions with others there is no possibility of being human or having even the vaguest idea of morality, for Smith. We formulate who we are and can be and determine the acceptable ways to interact in the company of others. This paper fleshes out this idea of other involvement in Adam Smith’s spectator perspective and in doing so makes the case for the theme of individuals relating to each other as a necessary ingredient to the understanding and development of humanity and morality. This paper also includes correlations drawn from Smith’s account of the moral process to those of Hutcheson and Hume specifically as related to their respective spectator perspectives. Throughout this discussion the necessity of people involved with one another as individuals in the determination of humanity and morality becomes increasingly understood as integral to the moral theories of these Scottish Enlightenment philosophers, specifically in their respective spectator accounts. The paper is organized as follows. First of all, characteristics of the impartial spectator as given by Charles Griswold in Adam Smith and the Virtues of Enlightenment are listed. Using this list as a base and organization, each characteristic is explained and compared with the spectator perspectives in Hutcheson and Hume. This second step also includes how the idea of the involvement of others permeates all of these spectator accounts.

These characteristics are not given specifically as a list by Griswold but were developed from his discussion of the impartial spectator and are used as a way to organize the discussion of Smith’s impartial spectator. The characteristics are as follows:

The impartial spectator is:

1. the latter of the agent/spectator duality phenomenon as described by Adam Smith in The Theory of Moral Sentiments (TMS) (Griswold 108, 81-2).

---

2 The term sociability used by many Scottish enlightenment scholars misses the type of interrelating that is being described by Smith, Hume, and Hutcheson as necessary for the development of humanity and morality.
2. within the breast of each individual and acts as an evaluator (91), a type of conscience (133).
3. a necessary condition for knowledge of self or of being a self at all (105-7, 109).
4. the necessary condition for the possibility of moral agency and therefore is normatively prior (106) and as our internalized judge privileged (107) in moral evaluation (103,107-8) and the source of morality and moral evaluations (104,108).
5. impartial when “properly sympathetic and informed” (104), at least relatively detached and critical but not indifferent (135-6) and yet, allows some partiality within moral judgment (119) while countering selfishness (91).

The impartial spectator:

6. uses imagination and sympathy to access other people’s worlds (85-8,116) and seeks harmony with its agent in sentiments and also sympathy with others because to have harmony is pleasurable (102, 120-1). The agent instinctually seeks their own impartial spectator's approval of their actions, behaviors or characteristics (102, 112, 120-1). The agent also seeks consensus or mutual sympathy with the “man in the breast” of others (103) instinctively trying to avoid the pain of solitude (122).
7. has a critical perspective and estimates praise or blame that is due (136) and the agent in this duality described by Smith as explained by Griswold wants to avoid being blamed for what he/she finds blameworthy in others (120-2, 131).
8. feels, has emotions and sentiments (136) and lacks only emotions like self-love that interferes with good judgment (136).
9. makes judgments that can be improved (137) by education, habit, reflection etc. (139).

An analysis of these characteristics will show that Smith’s impartial spectator described by Griswold from his reading of the Theory of Moral Sentiments (TMS) definitely involve others in the process of developing humanity and moral evaluations. Smith explicitly articulates the necessity of individuals being in relationship with others in order to be human and have a moral system. According to the Griswold reading of Smith, the “man in the breast” is the source of not only moral evaluations but of the idea of morality. Everything connected to or pertaining in anyway to
morality comes from the impartial spectator or the “man in the breast.” Even more than this last claim, Smith, according to Griswold, also argues that without this internal spectator there is no possibility to have knowledge of one’s self or even of being a person at all. The necessity of having a “man in the breast” in the process of the human self-development is, for Smith, without qualification.

According to Griswold’s interpretation, Adam Smith’s impartial spectator is the latter of an agent/spectator duality phenomenon as described in Smith’s *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (81-2, 108). *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (TMS) is itself written from the perspective of the spectator, according to Griswold (82). This makes sense since all moral conversation needs to be between spectators. It is the relationship between the agent and spectator within each individual that is described in Smith’s book along with the functions and roles each play in the individual. This duality of agent and judge that Smith describes are profoundly separate aspects yet parts of the same person.

Hutcheson makes a separation within an individual also. Hutcheson separates the moral evaluation function at least from the self-interested aspect of the individual. In Hutcheson, moral approvals and disapprovals are done in what he calls “the moral sense, by which we perceive virtue or vice, in ourselves or others” (Hutcheson, Essay, SB 394, #433). Hutcheson also uses the judging language in connection with the moral sense, “we judge of our own affections, or those of others by our moral sense…” (Hutcheson Illustrations, SB 409, #457). This aspect of the individual may not be as dramatic or specific as Smith’s personification of a spectator but it is very similar. It is Hutcheson’s moral sense that is a part of the individual but not the individual. Hume also has an aspect in the individual that makes moral evaluations. Hume’s moral sense, though not as clearly articulated as Hutcheson’s, does seem to be along the same type of pattern. Along with a moral sense, Hume also describes a

---

3 Smith 2000, 164-5, III, 1.6
4 According to David Appelbaum, Hume did not think defining the moral sense was necessary. Appelbaum explains that, for Hume, “to define the sense is no more necessary to philosophy than to define ‘mass’ or ‘point’ is to physics. Inasmuch as the meaning is made known by its function in human life, everyone who reacts approvingly or disapprovingly to a display of character (one’s own or another’s) possesses meaningful data on the moral sense…” (Appelbaum 1996, 38). So, for Appelbaum, Hume’s neglect to thoroughly articulate the workings of the moral sense was intentional. Hume simply, again according to Appelbaum, thought a thorough description unnecessary.
sentiment of humanity, general point of view, and common point of view. All of these operate in the manner of an impartial spectator. All of these aspects of Hume’s morality are up to the task that Smith attributes to his impartial spectator. Yet, most importantly for this project all of the three Scots implicitly or explicitly put relationships with others as integral to the development of the individual moral evaluating function in spite of the name each of them give the process.

The second characteristic follows along these same lines and makes the specific point that the impartial spectator is within the breast of each individual and acts as an evaluator (Griswold 91), a type of conscience (133). Griswold cites Smith’s TMS (III, 2. 32) to make this point. Smith explains that humankind are their own judges but in the sense that they appeal to a “much higher tribunal, to the tribunal of their own consciences, to that of the supposed impartial and well-informed spectator, to that of the man within the breast, the great judge and arbiter of conduct” (Smith 2000, 185, TMS III, 2. 32). This placing of the spectator in the breast is completely compatible with both Hutcheson and Hume. All three of these sentimentalists not only attribute the making of moral evaluations to the sentiments but also use this same image of the breast to make this point. It is the location of the breast that is in direct opposition to placing all moral deliberation in the head and reason. On this point the agreement between the three Scottish empiricists is without qualification. It doesn’t matter what or who it is residing in the breast for this point. It can be called a spectator, moral sense, sentiment of humanity, or common point of view without changing this aspect of morality being made in the sentiments, the breast. None of the three, Hutcheson, Hume, or Smith, however, excludes the very integral influence of reasoning necessary to inform the operations of the sentiments in the breast. Morality is a complex process involving the sentiments informed by both experience and reason.

The third characteristic that the impartial spectator is a necessary condition for the knowledge of a self or of being a self at all (Griswold 105-7, 109) most specifically comes from Smith’s use of the mirror metaphor when describing how we learn about ourselves. Smith explains that without others a person cannot know himself. With no one to relate

5 For Hume, according to Cohon, the moral point of view is “general or common not in the sense of being a broad view, but rather in the sense that it is a view available to every reflective person and the same for all who adopt it [the general or common point of view]” (Cohon 14).
to a person has “no mirror which can present them [his character, mind, face] to his view” (Smith 2000, 162, TMS III.1. 3). Yet, according to Smith, when this person is brought into society, “he is immediately provided with the mirror which he wanted before” (ibid). Smith uses the image most clearly to make a claim for the only way humankind can know themselves. They must see themselves through the eyes of another. Hume according to Penelhum also attributes a person’s self-image and development of qualities to relationships with others. Penelhum speaks of Hume’s psychology wherein the qualities that are admired in others are desired and those despised in others are ones that a person is ashamed of in him/herself. Penelhum calls others “the co-creators of my self-image,” he adds that “to understand the character of my self-concern it is necessary to take the measure of the society of which I am a member” (Penelhum 1993, 142).

The fourth impartial spectator characteristic given by Griswold and as listed above has two parts. The first is that the impartial spectator or the ‘man in the breast’ is the necessary condition for the possibility of moral agency and therefore is normatively prior (Griswold 106). There are no prior normative rules or standards that need to be found that are external to the impartial spectator’s own operation. An informed impartial spectator’s moral judgments are both normative in of themselves and prior to any types of rules that are made. Any rules would be as a result of a spectator’s observations. When Griswold writes of the internalizing of the judge he misses Smith’s claim by a bit. It is true that there is internalizing that goes on which is the information and development of the spectator perspective. Yet the person does not internalize the judge, itself. People are naturally born with an intact judge that develops in its ability to see itself and others through the eyes of others. So the internalizing done is the developing of the judge not the judge proper.

Other than the normative priority the spectator as the internal judge is also privileged (Griswold 107) in moral evaluation (103,107-8). Smith explains this privileged position of the spectator judge.

We suppose ourselves the spectators of our own behavior, and endeavor to imagine what effect it would, in this light, produce upon us. This is the only looking-glass by which we can, in some measure, with eyes of other people, scrutinize the propriety of our own conduct” (Smith 2000, 164, III.1.5).

Smith is pointing to the singularity of the spectator’s judgment. For Smith, there is no other way to morally measure our actions and characteristics. The impartial spectator is the only source of morality and
moral evaluations (104, 108). It is because of the impartial spectator that morality is even possible. Of course, it follows that without the involvement with others in order to see ourselves and therefore develop the spectator, there can be no judgments or moral considerations at all. The spectator makes the very possibility of morality a reality. The things necessary for morality, according to Smith, are that there is a person with the duality of an agent and spectator and then that this person relates with and observes and is observed by other people. This is how the very idea of morality starts and the only process by which subsequent moral evaluations can be made.

Hume also takes the moral sentiments to be privileged in morality. Cohon reads Hume as describing the “common point of view … [as] a privileged position from which to make moral evaluations” (Cohon 20). Brand also explains, for Hume, that “only when a quality is ‘consider’d in general’ does the approving and disapproving sort of sentiment emerge” (Brand 114). Hutcheson also stresses the normative priority and privileged position of the moral sense approvals and disapprovals. Hutcheson speaks of obligation as involving the moral sense. Hutcheson also refers to the moral sense as being superior. Mark Strasser also makes the case that, for Hutcheson, the moral sense is the privileged and only position from which to make moral evaluations. Strasser writes that, according to Hutcheson, the only way to be able to morally approve or disapprove of something “we must have a moral sense” (Strasser 35).

This brings this discussion of the Griswold characteristics to the two parts of number five. They are, first, that the impartial spectator, for Smith, is impartial when “properly sympathetic and informed” (Griswold 104), at least relatively detached and critical but not indifferent (135-6). Secondly, the impartial spectator allows some partiality within moral judgment (119) but counters selfishness (91). The spectator part of the individual is the impartial part at least as impartial as it can be. According to Griswold, the spectator may not be properly informed or not able to sympathetically enter into the situation being judged. In these two cases there may not be the proper impartiality necessary to make an impartial moral judgment (136-7). Smith’s spectator is not different in its impartiality than the moral sentiments of Hutcheson and Hume.

Hume’s general and/or common points of view also both designate and point to an impartial standpoint. According to Brand, for Hume,

---

6 Hutcheson, Illustrations, SB 409, #456.
7 Hutcheson Inquiry, Section I, SB 72, #72.
“the general point of view is what corrects the partial morality generated from the immediate sympathetic judgment” (Brand 118). Brand explains that, for Hume, taking the moral point of view means to consider “what promotes the interest of all individuals; reference to one’s own interest is excluded…” (Brand 122). Yet, Brand explains that, for Hume, complete impartiality is not actually possible. Brand puts it this way that, “impartiality, in any strict sense, without reference to oneself, either actual or sympathetic, lies outside the science of man” (Brand 123). Brand cites the following passage from the Treatise to support his case. “In general, it may be affirm’d, that there is no such passion in human minds, as the love of mankind, merely as such, independent of personal qualities, of services, or of relation to ourself” (T III.1, SB481). Yet according to Brand taking the position of Hume’s “impartial spectator is to exclude from consideration one’s pleasure, interest and spatio-temporal location with regard to the object of evaluation” (Brand 121).

Brand adds that “for Hume, the feeling of approval is a calm feeling of love, one felt with little emotional intensity. It is … pruned of the factors that make it partial and regulated according to the factors that are relevant from an impartial point of view” (Brand 113).

Hutcheson describes a cultivated man who is the most capable of moral impartiality. Hutcheson also writes of the impartiality of the moral sense while acknowledging some partiality as possible. First on the moral sense’s impartiality Hutcheson writes that “our sense [moral] shall operate even where the advantage to our selves does not hold” (Hutcheson, Inquiry, Section I, SB 82, #85). Hutcheson sees the moral sense as making determinations that precede any advantage to one’s self. Hutcheson also notes that a person judged to be virtuous is operating from other than self-interest.

Impartiality is for all three Scots a view that informed, sympathetic persons can take in moral evaluations when judging actions and characteristics of themselves and others. Persons who have developed their sentiments and understandings of others through relationships with and observations of others can remove themselves from their own interests in a sense and take a type of outsider view of themselves. This is impartiality, a two-step process. First it is the ability to move out of or at least away from one’s self-interested emotions and singular view. Moving with the imagination and sympathy, for Smith, benevolence, for

---

8 Hutcheson, Inquiry, Section I, 83, #88.
9 Hutcheson, Inquiry, Section II, SB 94, #105.
Hutcheson, and sympathy, for Hume, into the view of a perceived spectator or the common human point of view, completes this complex concept of impartiality. However, individuals don’t entirely move out of their own view. According to Griswold, Smith allows that the impartial spectator has certain sympathy with the agent’s preference for the welfare of his or her own family and friends (Griswold 142). This would be, though, a consideration that would be given others and, therefore, could be perceived as a common or impartial point of view.

The sixth Griswold characteristic of the impartial spectator describes both its relationship with the agent and characteristics of the agent itself. There is a relationship between these two and between the impartial spectators within other people’s breasts. As explained briefly above, for Smith, the impartial spectator uses imagination and sympathy to access other people’s worlds and views (Griswold 85-8, 116). This allows not only access to a person’s own human world but to the views of others. The impartial spectator seeks harmony with its own agent and also harmony in the sentiments and sympathy with others because to have harmony is pleasurable (102, 120-1). The spectator does not adjust its sentiment as much as the actor or agent does. Griswold continues that the actor’s passion “is reduced to a ‘reflected passion,’ and his whole view of himself changes substantially when he views himself through the eyes of the spectator” (ibid). This process of affecting the actor is the same process that would be the case of the actor evaluating himself in the eyes of others or from the general or common point of view that is essentially the view that the impartial spectator gives the agent. The agent or actor in this duality described by Adam Smith, as explained by Griswold, instinctually seeks the impartial spectator’s approval of their actions, behaviors or characteristics (Griswold 102, 112, 120-1) and instinctively wants to avoid the pain of solitude (122). This solitude is avoided by measuring up to what others expect. We learn what others expect through our impartial spectator that is always working towards achieving a moral stance from an outside point of view. There is also a natural desire on the part of the agent to seek consensus or mutual sympathy with the “man in the breast” of others, according to Smith.

10 The impartial spectator is not as motivated for harmony as the agent is at least not as willing to take as partial a view as may be helpful to create harmony with the more self-interested agent. Griswold explains that Smith is clear in his description of the “process of mutual adjustment between the actor and the spectator. There is a difference in their respective adjustments” (103).
The two desires go hand in hand. The agent wants to be in community with others and needs to be in order to have even the beginning knowledge of their own humanity. The impartial spectator gives the agent the ability to know what behaviors and characteristics are allowed for the acceptance of others and their own internal spectator. It is the desire for this harmony with essentially him or herself and others that gives the internal spectator such a powerful influence in the choice of behaviors made by the agent.

Hume’s common or general point of view, like Smith’s impartial spectator, is also reached using the imagination and sympathy and seeks harmony with its agent and the common or general points of view of others. Rachel Cohon explains the importance of imagination to Hume. According to Cohon, moral judgments, for Hume, come from the sentiments we have after we take—through our imagination—the common point of view (Cohon 11). Cohon also recognizes the influence of sympathy in taking the common point of view. Cohon writes that the moral stance of the common point of view “can be greatly strengthened via sympathy, because it is echoed by everyone we meet” (Cohon 23). Even on the desire of harmony between the internal spectator and agent and with external spectators, Hume is in agreement with Smith. Cohon explains that, for Hume, “once we do adopt the common point of view, our moral sentiments respond to what we imagine: we feel pleasure or uneasiness in contemplating the trait” (Cohon 20). Brand also explains that, for Hume, people are uncomfortable with the contradictions of moral approvals that arise when they allow partial appraisals. Brand writes that, for Hume, overcoming “the discomfort of contradiction and to satisfy the desire for stability and cooperation, the spectator sympathizes from a general point of view (T489)” (Brand 131). So again Hume and Smith are in agreement about the influences of others and the roles that sympathy and the imagination play in determining the views of others. The search for harmony and agreement with others is integral for them both in the developing of humanity and moral evaluation.

Hutcheson does not write of using sympathy or the imagination to access other viewpoints. Yet Hutcheson is clear about the desire for agreement with others and of internal harmony of the agent and the moral sense. On the external agreement with others, Hutcheson is clear that being well thought of by others is important. We can even come to value that which is valued by others and feel pride and shame in

---

11 Hutcheson Inquiry, Section V, SB 137, #154.
proportion to what others value. Hutcheson thinks that agreement amongst people is pretty uniform when informed properly. Hutcheson also writes of the internal natural desire for harmony between the moral sense and the agent or will to act. All of their accounts of motivation are similar in the sense that an internal and external harmony is naturally desired by individual agents and internal spectators.

The Griswold characteristic cited in number seven explains that the blame found in others is applied to our own agency. The agent or actor in the Smith account wants to avoid being blamed for what he/she finds blameworthy in others (Griswold 120-2, 131) and the spectator takes a critical perspective and estimates praise or blame that is due (136) to themselves or to their agency as a reflection of what is seen to be blameworthy in others. This process of judging ourselves in light of what we find objectionable in others is the job of the impartial spectator. Our self-blame is not only compatible with our blame of others but the whole process occurs naturally according to Smith. As is explained above, it is through sympathy with others and the ability to imagine the feelings and sentiments of others that we can learn about where to assign blame. The spectator through this sympathy and imagination moves to the imagined sentiments of the other and also to the judgment of other impartial spectators. The spectator takes then the perceived position of others to judge the action or character as blameworthy or praiseworthy. This process happens whether the agent is one’s self or an actual other. The impartial spectator applies the same determinations on him or her self as on actual others.

All of this moral evaluation is done by the sentiments that are in the breast and informed by reason and our experiences with others. The impartial spectator as listed in number eight feels, has emotions and sentiments (Griswold 136) and lacks only emotions like self-love that interfere with good judgment (136). The spectator’s sentiment is a human sentiment not unlike that which Hume calls the sentiment of humanity and certainly not unlike the sentiment felt by Hutcheson’s moral sense. All three Scots exempt one emotion from the aspect of the individual that makes moral evaluations whether it is called a spectator,

12 Hutcheson, Inquiry, Section V, SB 135-6, #153.
13 Hutcheson, Illustrations, SB 415, #463.
14 Hutcheson, Inquiry, Section VII, SB 153, #166.
15 The strength of or the rationale for this desire for harmony is disputed by Gilbert Harmon.
sense or sentiment. This commonly exempted emotion is that of self-interest. The moral sentiment maintains and actually increases all other aspects of humanity other than self-interest. To have these moral sentiments is for the three Scots integral to being human. Griswold explains that according to Smith “emotions not only embody judgments; they guide judgment, by informing it [judgment] as to what matters and what does not” (Griswold 137). There could not be morality without feelings or emotions. Hutcheson, Hume, and Smith are completely in accord on this issue. Of course these moral feelings are, again for all three, well informed by reason and our experiences especially with others.

The next step in this project is to understand the influences that affect and develop the spectator. Griswold’s characteristic listed as number nine claims that the impartial spectator makes judgments that can be improved (Griswold 137) by education, habit, reflection, imagination, and experience (137-9). These all do impact the views of the impartial spectator’s moral judgments. However, as the Griswold discussion surrounding these five stated influences suggests, all of these influences are under girded by relationships with and observations of others. It is education about others, experiences with others, habits formed in the company of others, imagination to put one’s self in the place of another, and reflections on the points of view of others that inform and influence the determinations of the impartial spectator. Relationships with and observations of others are integral to Smith’s impartial spectator’s moral judgments and to the very possibility of developing and informing this naturally occurring spectator in the human breast at all. This other involvement is also the case with Hutcheson’s and Hume’s moral processes. The ability to improve on what humankind morally approve and disapprove of is commonly attributed to Hume and not so often to Hutcheson. However, Hutcheson’s description of the cultivated person sounds very much like Hume, at least it is not incompatible with Hume’s account of the possibility of moral progress. For Hutcheson, the most natural state of

---

16 Hutcheson, Inquiry, Section I, SB 80, #83.
17 James Moore sees a difference between Hutcheson and Hume on this point. Moore claims that this instinct to care for others and therefore ground moral evaluations in the moral sense can be expanded according to Hume and not according to Hutcheson. According to Moore, Hutcheson does not think our created nature can be improved upon.
18 See chapter eight of this dissertation for a thorough discussion of moral progress in Hume’s moral theory.
mankind is the “most cultivated” (Mautner 132). The state of mankind “prior to all culture...should properly be called an *uncultivated* state...” (ibid). Hutcheson sees the cultivated state as natural to mankind and in accord with the divine purpose for humankind. Again, for Hutcheson, the moral sense itself precedes education or upbringing but is strengthened and cultivated. Hutcheson claims that the feeling of benevolence is the source of happiness and the feeling of it can be enlarged and will serve this happiness. Hume also uses the cultivated image when discussing the correcting of our partiality. Again there is throughout the writings of these three Scots, this dependence of human development and moral evaluations on relationships with others. This profound influence of relationships with others that informs their moral making faculties is a recurring theme and can be seen as the similarity in their moral processes and their accounts of humanity.

Smith is clear. The “man in the breast” begins as a natural possibility but can’t be known or accessed without relationships with or observations of others. The “man in the breast” is a phenomenon that is enlarged as we see ourselves in another’s eyes and seeing others in the company of others. Yet, this can be called the sociability instinct actualized. Griswold calls it the necessity of sociability in humankind. Yet, a person can be part of a society, walk the streets, eat in cafeterias, ride busses but unless another individual sees them and interacts with them the sociability cannot work to develop their own “man in the breast.” Interaction, specific interaction is a necessary part of the development of the “man in the breast.” This is the part of each individual that makes connections possible and then that vice versa connections feed upon. It is from these interactions that the spectator is informed and becomes and develops the only humanity that is possible, for Smith.

19 Hutcheson, “Inaugural lecture on the nature of man,” (Mautner 132).
20 Mautner 132-3.
21 Hutcheson, Inquiry, Section VII, SB 155-6, #168.
22 Hutcheson, Inquiry, Section III, SB 115-6, #130).
23 Gill claims that it is Hume’s principles of association that can account for a change in relation to others According to Gill, “it is the principles of association that move us from an uncultivated partiality that is ‘confin’d to ourselves’ (T489) to a cultivated impartiality that encompasses the ‘public interest’ (T500)” (Gill 100). See this Gill article for a complete discussion on how Hume’s principles of association serve to correct our partiality.
This same overall claim can be seen in Hutcheson’s and Hume’s intersubjective spectator accounts. This same idea of the profound influences of others on not only our understanding but also the very development of our humanity and on our moral approvals and disapprovals is clearly there and articulated. Hume’s spectator account can include his discussion of the sentiment of humanity, the general point of view, the common point of view, and moral language. All of these aspects are put under the same name in Smith’s account and that makes his account seem so much clearer. Hume does not combine them as clearly but they are all pointing to the same type of human phenomenon described so well by Smith. The same type of thing can be said of Hutcheson but most of the categories are within the moral sense for Hutcheson. In Smith, the spectator develops and is still the spectator. In Hutcheson, the moral sense is a faculty given and is developed in the “cultivated man.” Hutcheson’s cultivated man is simply a well-informed impartial spectator.

In conclusion, the Scottish sentimentalists describe the idea of the profound and necessary influence of our relationships with and observations of others to our humanity and developing a morality. Humanity and morality starts in the naturally occurring ability to observe and morally evaluate ourselves and others and then this ability develops as a result of our relationships with others. Knowledge of our humanity and morality cannot begin without relating with and observing others. Then as a result of that interrelating we come to be human and see ourselves as the possibilities we are before we see ourselves. It is an intersubjective development of humanity and of morality. There are no frameworks or given models for being human that precede human interaction. There is no standard that we are looking for to understand morality. We are becoming our own model of humanity in every relationship and observation we make. The well-informed sentiment of humanity in our breast knows what it likes and what it doesn’t like. Watching each other and continually making those judgments the “human in the breast” determines our progress in becoming human and our progressive development of morality.

References


