

INTRODUCTION

Adam Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments* begins with the discussion of the notion of sympathy. This issue is central to the philosopher's moral considerations and it is present not only in his major ethical work, but also plays a role in *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, as well as in *Of the Affinity between Music, Dancing, and Poetry* and *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres*. Describing sympathy properly is a challenge itself, as Smith provides the readers with numerous examples in which sympathy operates and the definition he assumes is quite wide and vague. Moreover, the Scottish thinker mentions natural sympathy and discusses the role fellow-feeling plays in moral judgments and building social harmony. One of the aims of this paper is to present a summary of the ways of understanding sympathy within the framework of Smith's philosophy. I shall also address a question concerning the roots of sympathy and whether they need to be searched for within the framework of Smith's thought.

VARIOUS ASPECTS OF SYMPATHY

Adam Smith commences his *Theory of Moral Sentiments* with a chapter devoted to sympathy, focusing on one of the most important notions of his moral theory from the very beginning. He uses the terms *sympathy* and *fellow-feeling* interchangeably, providing the reader with a statement saying that:

Pity and compassion are words appropriated to signify our fellow-feeling with the sorrow of others. Sympathy, though its meaning was, perhaps, originally the same, may now, however, without much impropriety, be made use of to denote our fellow-feeling with any passion whatever.²

¹ The research was financed from the assets awarded by The National Science Centre, Poland, for the post-doctoral internship upon the decision no. 2016/20/S/HS1/00071

² Smith, A.: *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (TMS). Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1982, p. 10.

Such a wide definition suggests a spectrum of feelings that one can sympathise with. English language suggests that sympathy would be mostly directed towards sadness and pain, close in its meaning to compassion. Yet, in the *Theory of Moral Sentiments* it refers to all kinds of feelings (though there are limitations³). One of the important factors is also intensity of the feeling: the thinker mentions that the fellow-feeling is stronger when concerning small joy or great sadness than small sadness or great joy⁴.

It might seem that sympathy in its meaning is close to today's understanding of empathy. However, such an interpretation is controversial, although there are scholars who argue in favour of such a view⁵. Contrary, T.D. Campbell understands empathy rather as an almost automatic transfer of feelings, in which what an observer and an agent feel is almost identical. He considers therefore the notion of empathy to describe Hume's theory of sympathy better than Smith's.⁶

It would be worth noting that the author of the *Theory of Moral Sentiments* mentions that

Whatever is the passion which arises from any object in the person principally concerned, an analogous emotion spring up, at the thought of his situation, in the breast of every attentive spectator.⁷

Such a statement would suggest that this analogous, automatic response towards agent's feeling is one of the basic meanings of sympathy. Especially that this sympathy is directed, in the examples Smith gives us, towards quite physical experience:

When we see a stroke aimed and just ready to fall upon the leg or arm of another person, we naturally shrink and draw back our own leg or our own arm; and when it does fall, we feel it in some measure, and are hurt by it as well as the sufferer. The mob, when they are gazing at the dancer on the slack

³ Smith notes that it is hard to sympathize with physical pains (we rather admire those who suffer and do not show their suffering, according to Smith we rather sympathize with the fear of someone who is in pain than with the pain itself, he even mentions that people tend to quickly forget the pain they have suffered) and pleasures, passion, hunger (we rather sympathize with sadness and fear who accompany hunger) or even with someone who is in love (TMS, pp. 27-34). According to the Scottish philosopher fellow-feeling is much easier when it concerns feelings that come from our imagination. Moreover, people who experience e.g. love tend to be exaggerating, therefore, although it is pleasurable to us to look at a couple in love, their delight and admiration towards each other may even seem ridiculous, especially that love is in fact a mixture of different feelings and, according to Smith, may have numerous negative consequences for people in love.

⁴ TMS, pp. 40-44.

⁵ e.g.: Zabieglik, S.: *Adam Smith*, Warszawa: PW "Wiedza Powszechna", 2003, p. 42.

⁶ Campbell, T. D.: *Adam Smith's Science of Morals*, New York: Routledge, 2012, p. 95.

⁷ TMS, p. 10.

rope, naturally writhe and twist and balance their own bodies, as they see him do, and as they feel that that they themselves must do if in his situation.⁸

It seems that an observer automatically reacts to the events with feelings that are, in fact, adequate to those of an agent. In context of Smith's thought it is an interesting case in which sympathy would equal empathy, even in Campbell's understanding of the term. Moreover, the Scottish philosopher seems to be partly contradicting himself, as he states that delicate people, when looking at beggars who expose their illnesses, "feel an itching or uneasy sensation" in their own bodies⁹. Yet, such an inconsistency can be easily explained with the fact, that such people sympathise rather with the feelings the agent experiences and the image of themselves if they were suffering as well as with outcomes of such a situation than with the physical pain itself.

However, such a transfer of feelings is not the only, and definitely not the most important, way of understanding sympathy in Smith's writings. The philosopher frequently underlines the role of knowledge of circumstances and imagination. The latter one is crucial, as he provides us with a very interesting account of fellow-feeling with those who, in fact, do not experience what the observer sympathizes with. Smith states that

Upon some occasions sympathy may seem to arise merely from the view of a certain emotion in another person. The passions, upon some occasions, may seem to be transfused from one man to another, instantaneously, and antecedent to any knowledge of what excited them in the person principally concerned [...] This, however, does not hold universally, or with regard to every passion.¹⁰

Fellow-feeling does not mean feeling exactly what the other person does, nor does it mean to project one's own feelings on to somebody else. The person who sympathises does not need to have feelings that are analogous to the agent's ones and does not need to base on remembering how he acted in a similar situation¹¹. The feelings of the agent might in fact be unimportant¹² and "...knowledge of the spectator's sympathy does not imply knowledge of spectator's feeling but, rather, knowledge of the way he came by the feeling"¹³. Smith illustrates the thesis that ac-

⁸ TMS, p. 10.

⁹ TMS, p. 10.

¹⁰ TMS, p. 11.

¹¹ Griswold, Ch. L., Jr.: *Imagination*. In K. Haakonssen (Ed.). *The Cambridge Companion to Adam Smith*, Cambridge-New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 33.

¹² Broadie, A.: *Sympathy and the Impartial Spectator*. In K. Haakonssen (Ed.). *The Cambridge Companion to Adam Smith*, p. 167.

¹³ Broadie, A.: *Sympathy and the Impartial Spectator*, p. 165.

cordance of feelings and experience is not necessary to sympathize two significant examples: sympathy with infants or other people who do not understand their situation and sympathy with the dead.

In the latter case we are sad, being sorry for the dead, as we think that being deprived of things they could experience in their life is a great loss. Moreover, our feelings are enhanced by the image of a body decomposing in a grave, a perspective of the fact that the dead will, after some time, be forgotten and by imagining that we will die someday and how bad it would be¹⁴. There is no need for the dead to feel the same way, in order to allow us to experience the fellow-feeling and the fear of death. It is worth noting though that this fear can serve the society, as in case of murder we sympathize with the victim and, subsequently, with the resentment that person could experience – such feelings are prior to the idea of the utility of punishments.¹⁵

The philosopher also mentions those who are unaware of their own situation. These are not only individuals who act in an improper way, but also those mentally ill or little infants, unaware of their serious condition. Even though these people themselves might be happy and have no knowledge of how miserable their situation is, others, who are able to understand their situation, sympathize with what should be felt in such circumstances. Or – as in case of a child and the mother – mother's suffering, apart from sympathy with her child's feelings, is also based on the knowledge of consequences of the illness and from being helpless, whereas the child feels the pain.

There are situations in which Smith describes sympathy in a way close in its meaning to benevolence¹⁶. It is not exactly the benevolence in the sense that we can find in Francis Hutcheson's philosophy, yet, it can be noticed that sympathy is connected to positive, binding feelings. He mentions that our good deeds are usually directed towards our family, friends and members of the same community, yet our benevolence, good will, goes far beyond that, as we desire happiness for all sensible innocent beings.¹⁷ The philosopher uses the notion of natural sympathy which we feel towards the people who are closest to us (family, friends, and, most of all, the children) as well as towards the wealthy (which allows to enforce social harmony¹⁸). We care more about the people with whom we spend more time and about those

¹⁴ TMS, pp. 12-13.

¹⁵ TMS, pp. 72-73.

¹⁶ Ossowska, M.: *Motywy postępowania. Z zagadnień psychologii moralności*. Warszawa: Książka i wiedza, 2002, p. 176.

¹⁷ TMS, p. 235.

¹⁸ Although Smith mentions also negative effects of such a situation. It can be noticed in the *Wealth of Nations* and later editions of the *Theory of Moral Sentiments* that Smith's views have evolved and the philosopher pays more attention to drawbacks of such a respect: the wealthy do not have to be moral, social position can be obtained without no merit and the effects of respecting crooks could be devastating for the morality.

who we love or like. We strive to make not only ours, but also their lives better and more comfortable. However, there is also another factor that plays a role: when we spend a lot of time with certain people, we know them better, therefore it is easier for us to sympathise with them¹⁹.

Adam Smith discussed the respect towards the wealthy and the great both in the *Theory of Moral Sentiments* and the *Wealth of Nations*. People tend to have positive feelings towards the rich and the aristocrats, idealise their situation and experience fellow-feeling, imagining their wonderful lives: “We could even wish them immortal; and it seems hard to us, that death should at last put an end to such perfect enjoyment”²⁰. People transfer the pleasure caused by beautiful objects, thanks to the power of imagination, on to the owner of the goods, yet the fact we adore the great does not come from our expectation of them to help us, but from natural admiration.²¹

The key role played by fellow-feeling is its importance for learning morality and giving moral judgements. John McHugh even states that “Unlike Hume, who employs his sympathy theory to explain the concern for others that makes moral judgement possible, Smith employs his sympathy theory as his theory of moral judgment”²². Both sympathy and imagination are crucial in the process. Using those two faculties we need to place ourselves in the shoes of an agent and, getting to know the circumstances, imagine how one should have acted in such a situation. When judging our own actions, we need to go even a step further and try to understand how an observer would have judged us if he had placed himself in our situation. As argues Jack Russell Weinstein:

‘Sympathy’ is the term Smith uses to denote the means by which moral actors consider normative rules and empirical facts to determine propriety. It is a complicated process, involving both inborn faculties and learned skills. It is fostered and impaired by cultural norms and practices, and Smith himself emphasizes that both sympathy’s accuracy and motivational power diminish as cultural and physical distance between individuals increases.²³

Sympathy is therefore a basis for individuals’ morality.

¹⁹ TMS, p. 219.

²⁰ TMS, p. 52.

²¹ TMS, p. 52.

²² McHugh J. W., Relaxing a Tension in Adam Smith’s Account of Sympathy. *Journal of Scottish Philosophy*, 9, (2), 2011, p. 191.

²³ Weinstein, J. R.: *Adam Smith’s Pluralism. Rationality, Education and the Moral Sentiments*. New Haven-London: Yale University Press, 2013, p. 68.

WHY IS SYMPATHY UNIVERSAL?

At the very end of the XVIII century Sophie de Grouchy marquise de Condorcet translated the *Theory of Moral Sentiments* into French. To her translation, she enclosed the *Letters on Sympathy* where she developed her concept of sympathy. At the starting point of her considerations a significant criticism towards Smith can be found – addressing C*** (the recipient of the *Letters*) she writes:

You know that the subject of the opening chapters of Smith's book is sympathy. Smith limited himself to noting its existence and to showing its principal effects. I regretted that he did not dare go further, to penetrate its first cause, and ultimately to show to how sympathy must belong to every sensible being capable of reflection. You will see how I had the temerity to fill in these omissions.²⁴

Therefore she presents her own views, stating that "Sympathy is the disposition we have to feel as others do"²⁵ and explains how sympathy is developed, basing on experience coming from physical pain.

Sophie de Grouchy's claim cannot be easily dismissed. It is true that Smith neither provides us with a proper explanation of the sources of sympathy nor does he attempt to give arguments proving that it is in fact a universal feature. Yet, Smith explains that sympathy can be perfected by individuals within the society and he does seem to treat it as common to all human beings, "a universal human capacity"²⁶ as Jerry Evensky phrased it. I believe Smith supposes it was obvious that people do sympathize with each other. What is more – we do find sympathizing pleasurable and seek others to sympathize with us.

Adam Smith assumes the existence of feelings common to all people, as already in the first paragraph of the *Theory of Moral Sentiments* he states that:

That we often derive sorrow from the sorrow of others is a matter of fact too obvious to require any instances to prove it; for this sentiment, like all the other original passions of human nature, is by no means confined to the virtuous and humane, though they perhaps may feel it with the most exquisite sensibility. The greatest ruffian, the most hardened violator of the laws of society, is not altogether without it.²⁷

Unlike his translator into French, Smith feels no need to investigate the roots

²⁴ de Grouchy, S.: *Letters on Sympathy*. Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 2008, p. 108.

²⁵ de Grouchy, S.: *Letters on Sympathy*, p. 108.

²⁶ Evensky, J.: *Adam Smith's Moral Philosophy. A Historical and Contemporary Perspective on Markets, Law, Ethics and Culture*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009, p. 39

²⁷ TMS, p. 9.

or mechanisms leading to using sympathy. His great predecessors²⁸ have mentioned the subject, yet, the author of the *Theory of Moral Sentiments* seems to be concerning this feeling that underlies his whole moral theory as so obvious and universal, that it requires no explanation of how it exactly appears or where does it come from.

The investigation could stop at this point, yet, I believe, we are able to find a couple of arguments explaining why sympathy needs to be treated as an inborn universal faculty within the framework of Smith's philosophy. Fonna Forman-Barzilai notices that "On Smith's account, sympathy was not an innate human disposition that discharges mindlessly and spontaneously..."²⁹, however, such a statement seems quite controversial in the light of the philosopher's discussion of an automatic response in case of certain events – as in the example of the dancer on the slack rope. In case of such a danger, the audience reacts without thinking, their bodies respond automatically – which can serve as a prove of an inborn sympathy operating in this case. It seems to be a rather spontaneous reaction based on innate sympathy. Yet, in the context of Smith's theory of moral judgement, reflection and imagination play a significant role and sole fellow-feeling is not enough.

Another situation is the case of natural sympathy (that itself is natural, therefore should be common to all people) in which it is close in its meaning to benevolence and love: care for one's children – Smith mentions that it even did not need to be listed within ten commandments³⁰ (unlike respect for parents). The philosopher assumes that the closest and most intensive feelings we have for our family and friends. Yet, people care the most about the children, who require assistance of the adults for the first years of their lives. Even to those who have no relation to a child, child's suffering and death appears as an extreme tragedy. As another argument may serve the assumption that, although most people rather follow general rules of morality, we are able to construct the impartial spectator. And in order to do that sympathy and imagination are necessary.

It is worth mentioning that although Adam Smith, as well as some other Scottish philosophers, was an inspiration for Immanuel Kant (Smith was even considered to be one of Kant's favourite philosophers³¹). Their influence on Kant's understanding of sympathy was quite substantial³². Yet, in terms of the abovementioned

²⁸ Francis Hutcheson presented his theory of moral sense showing its mechanisms, David Hume when describing his views on sympathy also provided us with a mechanism thanks to which it operates.

²⁹ Forman-Barzilai, F.: *Adam Smith and the Circles of Sympathy. Cosmopolitanism and Moral Philosophy*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010, p. 62.

³⁰ TMS, pp. 142-143.

³¹ Frazer, M. L.: *The Enlightenment of Sympathy*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2010, p. 112.

³² Hanley, R. P.: *Adam Smith and the Character of Virtue*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011, p. 72.

tioned general rules of morality, Smith and Kant had quite opposite views. One of the two thinkers' starting points is similar: general rules exist, because they are effective and limit the probability of self-deceit. Yet, "...in emphasizing that general rules are the product of experience and not reason, Smith reiterates his distance from Kant's a priori mandates. Second, Smith reveals his distance from even non-Kantian forms of deontology in insisting that general rules, however derived, are not unto themselves the principal standards of morality".³³

If proper usage of sympathy, as I understand Smith's theory, requires an effort, a question "why bother?" appears. An interesting answer is given by Alexander Broadie. He emphasizes that "...sympathy always gives pleasure"³⁴. Fellow-feeling with somebody's happiness or pleasure is pleasant. If an agent experiences pain – someone sympathizing brings a partial consolation. Any accordance of feelings brings pleasure therefore we are motivated to make an effort, seeing additional positive feelings as an effect of the process. Moreover, we want to do the right thing, so we are even ready to sympathize with our enemy or with someone we dislike, especially that soothing a conflict might end up in mutual sympathy that brings them satisfaction³⁵.

I believe that as sympathy seems to be a universal, inborn faculty – it can serve as one of the bases for discussing similarities between Smith's works, together with other aspects of man's nature and it cannot be treated as non-existent in other works. This way it also affects the discussion concerning the famous *Adam Smith Problem*³⁶. There are numerous arguments undermining the validity of the *Problem*, out of which one is the critique of the fact that it assumes that Smith must have changed his views somewhere between writing the *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759) and the *Wealth of Nations* (1776). There were suppositions that Smith's visit to France (1763-1766, as a tutor of duke Buccleuch) and influence of the French physiocrats changed his philosophical views. First of all, such an assumption does not take into account later editions of the *Theory* in which Smith introduced changes up to the last one – published in the year of his death³⁷.

³³ Hanley, R. P.: *Adam Smith and the Character of Virtue*, p. 73-74.

³⁴ Broadie, A.: *Sympathy and the Impartial Spectator*, p. 170.

³⁵ Broadie, A.: *Agreeable Connexions: Scottish Enlightenment Links with France*. Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2012, p. 137.

³⁶ The *Adam Smith Problem* was formulated by German thinkers – Buckle and Skarzynski. Its primary formulation assumed that a description of a man in the *Theory of Moral Sentiments* is based on a feeling of sympathy, quite similar to benevolence, whereas in the *Wealth of Nations* people are primarily motivated by self-interest and egoism.

³⁷ An interesting account of the *Adam Smith Problem* understood as the *TMS 1759 vs Wealth of Nations 1776 vs TMS 1790* was presented by Maria Pia Paganelli in her paper (*Theory of Moral Sentiments 1759 vs. Theory of Moral Sentiments 1790: A Change of Mind or a Change in Constraint* In W. L. Robison – D. B. Suits (Eds.). *New Essays on Adam Smith's Moral Philosophy*, Rochester – New

Moreover, discovery of Smith's students' notes, later published as *Lectures on Jurisprudence* proved that his ideas presented in the *Wealth of Nations* were already shaping when he gave his lectures – at the same time preparing the third edition of the *Theory of Moral Sentiments*³⁸.

Defining sympathy is quite important in terms of discussing the *Adam Smith Problem*. Stating that it is simply fellow-feeling is not enough. Being aware of the full spectrum of meanings of the notion of sympathy can help us not only understand why the initial definition that underlines the problem is too narrow, but also to discuss it going beyond the opposition of altruism versus egoism. Moreover, it allows us to reach towards other Smith's works: e.g. when discussing instrumental music, the Scottish philosopher mentions that it sometimes can cause effects similar to sympathy. Skilful composers and musicians are able to show a wide range of feelings through music and even cause the listener to have original emotions that are excited by the music, but are not an effect of imitation or sympathy³⁹. Those feelings enforce social harmony and relations between people⁴⁰. In Smith's philosophy people are considered to be social beings and the roots of sociability and social harmony can be found in sympathy – this way it is present in all Smith's writings. The only people that would be deprived of sympathy – if such an interpretation was correct – were psychopaths, who would be, this way, unsocial and it would be difficult for them to give moral judgements (though they could follow the general rules of morality, as learned by heart).

It needs to be remembered that although people are social beings in Smith's philosophy, neither sociability nor benevolence or altruism are necessary in creating an operating society. The philosopher mentions the possibility of a society of villains, thieves or murderers who could function as a group, if only they obeyed the laws – just as merchants, cooperating not because of benevolence but for mutual benefits⁴¹. Although sympathy generates social harmony, it is rather justice that plays here a crucial role.

Sympathy itself, even treated as an inborn universal faculty, is not just simply used the same way by all the people. It is a kind of a social process, fellow-feeling is developed within social framework, established and perfected within society⁴².

York: Rit Press, 2012) where she focuses on three “motivating centers”, the role of the wealthy and approbation that unifies all three mentioned books.

³⁸ Broadie, A.: *Sympathy and the Impartial Spectator*, pp. 164-165.

³⁹ Smith, A.: *Of the Nature of that Imitation which takes place in what are called The Imitative Arts* (IA). In W. P. D. Wightman – J. C. Bryce – I. S. Ross (Eds.). *Essays on Philosophical Subjects with Dugald Stewart's Account of Adam Smith*. Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1982, p. 198.

⁴⁰ IA, p. 192.

⁴¹ TMS, pp. 85-87.

⁴² Forman-Barzilai, F.: *Adam Smith and the Circles of Sympathy*, p. 63.

We learn how to be moral beings through observation and experience (we look at the reactions of other people to certain deeds and infer rules on that basis) as well as through feelings we experience (Smith mentions cases in which we feel that given rules are wrong, even though they are established and accepted within a group⁴³). We in fact learn how to be moral beings and how to judge other people's actions. Experience allows us to make this process easier. Moreover, natural sympathy towards our family and friends results with the fact that it is easier for us to fellow-feel with them. Not because we love them, but because we know them better, we are better rooted in their situation and it is easier for us to understand their motivations. Therefore sympathy acts in a more refined way when it is not only perfected and reflected on, but also when it concerns people close to us. Obviously such a situation has also drawbacks – an eye of an external observer is also precious, as we tend to be more favourable towards those we love. On the other hand, we tend to expect more sympathy from the closest ones than from strangers⁴⁴.

Stating that in Adam Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, sympathy is in fact universal, common to all people and inborn does not answer fully the question how does the mechanism work. Yet, unlike in Sophie de Grouchy's considerations, it does not have to be derived from a different power, feeling or state (as it is based on experience of pain in her philosophy), as it seems to be one of the basic characteristics of human nature. What we need to remember though is that sympathy, as a feeling (or, possibly, an actualisation of a disposition)⁴⁵, is closely bound with imagination, as the two play together a crucial role in forming moral judgements, learning morality and creating an impartial spectator.

CONCLUSIONS

The notion of sympathy in Adam Smith's philosophy is nuanced. It refers to a wide range of situations and can be understood not only as benevolence, natural attachment to our family and friends or compassion. It is usually used by the philosopher within the context of giving moral judgments or considering the moral value of certain actions. In fact, sympathy tends to coexist with imagination, since together the two allow us to place ourselves in the agent's shoes and approve or disapprove of the action in question. Both sympathy and imagination

⁴³ Smith provides us with an example of little children being left to die, a practice which was acceptable in ancient Athens (TMS, pp. 209-211).

⁴⁴ Zúñiga y Postigo, G.: Adam Smith on Sympathy: From Self-Interest to Empathy. In D. Hardwick – L. Marsh (eds.), *Propriety and Prosperity. New Studies on the Philosophy of Adam Smith*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014, p. 144.

⁴⁵ Broadie, A.: *Agreeable Connexions*, p. 142.

are also crucial for constructing the impartial spectator who plays an important role in Smith's moral theory. Sympathy also helps us build social harmony and plays a role when we read books, watch plays and even listen to the music. It also makes us feel better – as the concordance of feelings brings pleasure and having someone sympathize with us when we hurt brings solace. Being aware of the whole spectrum of sympathy's roles is necessary in understanding Smith's moral philosophy. It also is crucial for participating in discussion concerning the *Adam Smith Problem*. It would be impossible to understand Smith's philosophy without being aware of the role and significance of sympathy.

Smith never provides us with a detailed account of the roots of sympathy, nor does he describe the metaphysics of the process of sympathising. He uses the notion extensively, but does not bother to trace the origins of fellow-feeling. He rather treats it as common to all people and assumes as obvious that we are able to sympathise with each other. There are certain remarks in his writings that let us accept such an interpretation.

However, another important question needs to be asked at this point: is it really necessary for Smith to explain the roots of sympathy, as suggests Sophie de Grouchy? I believe it is not – a metaphysical or genetic search for the metaphysical roots of sympathy would not contribute significantly to the description of the way people constitute moral judgments nor would it help in developing his arguments. De Grouchy's description of how, basing on experiences of physical pain, we learn to sympathize, would not smoothly fit within the framework of Smith's theory. Searching for a different genesis of fellow-feeling would also indicate that he would have needed to explain why people are sometimes self-interested, sometimes altruistic, why do they seek for praise and for being praiseworthy, as well as what are the origins of all the above. That would mean an extensive description of human nature and a metaphysical theory in creating which Smith seems not to have been interested. P. B. Mehta points out that:

From his earliest lectures, Smith is hostile to the idea that human nature, especially human motivation, can be treated like an object in the physical world whose qualities could be exhaustively described [...] He is not asking: is human nature benevolent or malign?, or is human nature self-interested or benevolent? Smith's questions are rather, what in human nature makes virtue possible?, what in human nature makes morality possible?, and what in human nature makes pursuit of wealth and honor possible? This inquiry does not yield a description of human nature in terms of a singular motive but charts some of its complex movements⁴⁶.

⁴⁶ Mehta, P. B.: Self-Interest and Other Interests. In K. Haakonssen (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Adam Smith*, 2006, pp. 247-248.

We can infer that, in terms of Smith's theory, there is no point in focusing on just one aspect of human nature, nor it makes sense to try to achieve a complex list of features characterising all human beings. I believe that the Scottish philosopher was aiming at a different kind of theory.

Moreover, it is to be remembered that Smith's moral thought is deeply rooted in the Scottish Enlightenment sentimental tradition, where we can find preceding Hume's definition of sympathy as well as Hutcheson's theory of moral sense. Those philosophers provide us with accounts of sympathy and its origins that the author of the *Theory of Moral Sentiments* knew. Adam Smith presents us a rather descriptive theory of individuals existing within society. Searching for what underlies sympathy would, in fact, give us an interesting account, but on a different level of analysis. However, it probably would not have changed much in the theory of sentiments and their role in morality that he actually leaves us with.

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Abstract

Adam Smith and the Roots of Sympathy

The aim of this paper is to characterise Adam Smith's notion of sympathy. The Scottish philosopher provides the reader of the *Theory of Moral Sentiments* with a very wide definition, subsequently introducing numerous examples and situations in which fellow-feeling plays an important role. However, he does not seek to explain the roots of sympathy. The paper addresses a question of whether search for a genesis of sympathy is required in case of Smith's philosophy. It mentions the idea of general rules of morality and the fact that Smith and Kant regarded them in different ways. It also enlists arguments that back up an assumption that sympathy is an inborn feeling common to all people.

Keywords: Adam Smith, sympathy, fellow-feeling

Abstrakt

Adam Smith a korene náklonnosti

Cieľom príspevku je charakterizovať pojem náklonnosti u Adama Smitha. Škótsky filozof dáva čitateľovi *Teórie mravných citov* veľmi širokú definíciu a následne

uvádza množstvo príkladov a situácií, v ktorých dôležitú úlohu zohráva pocit spolupatričnosti. Nesnaží sa však vysvetliť korene náklonnosti. Článok sa zaoberá otázkou, či je potrebné v prípade Smithovej filozofie hľadať genézu náklonnosti. Poukazuje na ideu všeobecných pravidiel morálky a na skutočnosť, že ich Smith a Kant posudzovali rôznymi spôsobmi. Rovnako prezentuje argumenty, ktoré podporujú predpoklad, že náklonnosť je vrozený pocit spoločný pre všetkých ľudí.

Kľúčové slová: Adam Smith, náklonnosť, pocit spolupatričnosti

Dr Anna Markwart

Instytut Filozofii UMK

Uniwersytet Mikołaja Kopernika w Toruniu

Toruń, Polska

markwart.anna@gmail.com