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# From one form of sympathy to another: Sophie de Grouchy's translation of and commentary on Adam Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments*

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## 0. Introduction

Sophie de Grouchy's translation of and commentary on Adam Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments*<sup>1</sup> (1759) was published in 1798. Her translation was not the first attempt to spread Smith's moral philosophy across France. However, the previous two French translations had not met with success. The first, by Marc-Antoine Eidous and entitled *Métaphysique de l'âme* (1764), was unanimously criticized for its poor quality. Smith himself held it responsible for the poor reception of his work across the Channel.<sup>2</sup> The second translation (1774–45) by Jean-Louis Blavet was also considered mediocre and does not seem to have been widely distributed.<sup>3</sup> In stark contrast, Grouchy's translation was praised for its accuracy from the moment it was published. It was so successful that it has been viewed for two centuries as the definitive French translation of the *TMS*.<sup>4</sup> Grouchy is even sometimes considered “Smith's best-known contemporary translator” (Britton, 2009: 72).

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<sup>1</sup>TMS henceforth. All citations are from the Glasgow edition of Smith's work.

<sup>2</sup> See Letter 130 to Mme de Boufflers, dated February 1772, in Smith (1977: 161).

<sup>3</sup> See Faccarello & Steiner (2002) for an exhaustive survey of French translations of Smith. See Dawson (1991) on the reception of Smith's *TMS* in France.

<sup>4</sup> A new, more literal translation by M. Biziou, C. Gautier, and J.-F. Pradeau was published by Presses Universitaires de France in 1999. Even so, Dawson could write in 1991 that Grouchy's translation “is considered

Its intrinsic qualities apart, the enduring success of Grouchy's translation might be attributed to three other factors. The most obvious of these is the celebrity of Sophie and her husband, Nicolas de Condorcet, as a couple. Their salon, attended by many French philosophers and foreign visitors,<sup>5</sup> was one of the most prominent and progressive in Paris from 1786 until the Reign of Terror (see Badinter, 2010: 111). Next, Grouchy's was the first translation into French of the definitive version of Smith's moral philosophy (Biziou, 2015). She translated the posthumous seventh edition of the *TMS*, which was identical to the sixth edition published in 1790 and the last published during Smith's lifetime and in which he had made substantial revisions and additions. Lastly, and most importantly for our present purpose, Grouchy's work is more than a mere translation since she added a critical commentary on Smith's analysis written in epistolary style<sup>6</sup> and entitled *Lettres sur la sympathie*.<sup>7</sup> This critical commentary is composed of eight letters addressed to an anonymous "Mon cher C\*\*\*", who was presumably her stepbrother, the physiologist and philosopher Pierre Jean Georges Cabanis.<sup>8</sup> Thus, as Brown and McClellan (2008)<sup>9</sup> point out, Grouchy deserves attention from

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to be so close to the author's original language and intent that no French translator has ever attempted to improve upon it" (Dawson, 1991: 161).

<sup>5</sup> Despite beliefs to the contrary (see Dawson, 1991, 158), Smith was not received by the Condorcets during his stay in Paris (Badinter, 2010: 107; Pisanelli, 2015: 25-26). Sophie de Grouchy was born in 1764 and Smith stayed in France from 1764 to 1766. Pisanelli (2015) states there is no clear evidence even of any meeting between Smith and Sophie's husband, Nicolas de Condorcet, who was some twenty years her senior.

<sup>6</sup> The epistolary style was highly fashionable in the eighteenth century, as reflected by the success of works like Montesquieu's *Lettres Persannes* (1721), Richardson's *Pamela: Or, Virtue Rewarded* (1740) and *Clarissa: Or the History of a Young Lady* (1748), both of which were translated into French by Prévost, Rousseau's *Julie ou la Nouvelle Héloïse* (1761), Brooke's *History of Emily Montague* (1769), Goethe's *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers* (1774), or Laclos' *Les Liaisons dangereuses* (1782). Marie-Jeanne Riccoboni, a *salonnière* who became acquainted with Smith during his journey in France, also published several successful epistolary novels (*Lettres de Mistriss Fanni Butlerd* 1757, *L'Histoire du marquis de Cressy* 1758, *Lettres de Milady Juliette Catesby à Milady Henriette Campley, son amie* 1759, etc.). On the epistolary form of Grouchy's commentary, see Britton (2009: 73-76).

<sup>7</sup> *Letters* henceforth. For all citations, we refer to Brown and McClellan's English critical edition. In footnotes, we reproduce the French original text (Grouchy, 1798) and refer to Bernier and Dawson's edition (2010). In the rest of the paper, this French original text is referred to as *Lettres*.

<sup>8</sup> Lagrave suggests that the anonymous C. could have been Sophie's husband, Nicolas de Condorcet (see Grouchy, 1994: 67), while almost every other scholar agrees that it was more likely Cabanis. In the 1860 edition of the translation, Grouchy's *Letters* were renamed *Lettres à Cabanis sur la sympathie*. Britton (2009: 74, 92) mentions both interpretations but does not come down on either side.

<sup>9</sup> Brown and McClellan (2008: xiii); see also Bernier (2010: 5).

academics not only for her translation of the *TMS* but also for her own scholarly and philosophical contribution.

There is quite a substantial body of literature (about twenty academic articles) on Grouchy's work. This literature falls into four categories: (i) monographs on specific but broader topics such as Grouchy's life and works, the French translations of Smith, or the general context of translation in the eighteenth century;<sup>10</sup> (ii) contributions dealing almost exclusively with the *Letters*;<sup>11</sup> (iii) conversely, contributions focusing on the different features of the translation with no regard for the commentary;<sup>12</sup> (iv) and, more rarely, contributions seeking to relate both dimensions of Grouchy's work.<sup>13</sup>

Curiously, then, scarcely any attempt has been made to use Grouchy's *Letters* to account for her choices of translation. Even more surprisingly, none of these contributions, including the ones from category (ii), explicitly questions the marchioness' reading of Smith such as it appears in her commentary.

Now, if Grouchy's translation of the *TMS* is not literal, as most contributions from category (iii) maintain, it might be precisely because her interpretation of Smith's moral philosophy is not always faithful. This is the path that we are going to explore in this paper.

Our starting point is the translation. We first present its main features through a critical review of the literature (1). This allows us to underscore the acknowledged qualities of Grouchy's translation (including its faithfulness to Smith's original text) (1.1). However, we recall that despite its faithfulness, it is not completely literal (1.2). The departures that the marchioness

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<sup>10</sup> Badinter (2009), Facarello and Steiner (2002), Forget (2003 ; 2010).

<sup>11</sup> Ando (1983), Bernier (2009; 2010), Dawson (1991), Dumouchel (2010), Forget (2001), Lagrave (1994), Malherbe (2010, 2015), Pageau (1994), and Tegos (2013).

<sup>12</sup> Biziou et al. (1999), Schattschneider (2003), and Seth (2010a, 2010b).

<sup>13</sup> Biziou (2015) and Britton (2009). Malherbe (2015) starts his paper by discussing the translation and then focuses on the *Letters*, but never really explains the former by the latter.

sometimes makes with respect to Smith's vocabulary have been variously interpreted. Most interpretations focus on contextual explanations (1.3). Although we concur with interpretations emphasizing the differences in literary standards between France and Britain at the time,<sup>14</sup> we think that they might be supplemented by a closer look at what Bizou (2015) calls Grouchy's "subjective project", and more specifically by reappraising her reading of the *TMS*.

This is why we next turn to Grouchy's commentary (2). As observed by several scholars,<sup>15</sup> her intention in the *Letters* is to find a "rallying point"<sup>16</sup> between the Scottish and French philosophy of her times, namely, sensualism and sentimentalism. This would supposedly consist in integrating the role of reason into Smith's sentimental explanation of morals (Bizou, 2015). Less noticed is the point that this was also the intention of other French thinkers within her circle such as Pierre-Louis Roederer (see Van den Berg, 2009). The idea underlying such a project is that sensualist philosophy may be consistent with sentimentalist philosophy. And it seems to have been thought that Smith could have reconciled the two. However, for Grouchy, this presupposes filling in some gaps in his moral philosophy. She accordingly levels a series of criticisms at Smith. As shall be seen, her criticisms reveal a questionable reading of the *TMS* influenced by a sensualist perspective (2.1). Closer scrutiny reveals three major differences between Smith and Grouchy that the latter tends to overlook concerning (i) reason, (ii) imagination, and (iii) self-love in their respective systems of sympathy. Beyond the fact that these variances rule out any reconciliation between the two authors' philosophies (and between the sensualist and sentimentalist traditions more

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<sup>14</sup> See, for instance, Forget (2010).

<sup>15</sup> See, for instance, Bizou (2015) and Malherbe (2015).

<sup>16</sup> "Ces Lettres ont paru propre à tracer la ligne qui sépare les deux écoles de philosophie française et écossaise ; ou plutôt à leur servir peut-être de point de ralliement" (*Lettres*, Avertissement : 27). Unfortunately, Grouchy's foreword is not translated nor reproduced in the English critical edition of Brown and McClellan (2008).

generally), it shall be seen that they may account for the way Grouchy's terminology in her translation sometimes distances itself from Smith's in two crucial instances: her carelessness with respect to Smith's "vocabulary of movements", on the one hand, and her failure to distinguish between the English terms "self-love" and "selfishness", on the other hand (2.2 and 2.3).

## 1. An integral but not literal translation

### 1.1. A Unanimously Praised Translation

Elegant, precise, simple, refined... praise has abounded among reviewers of Sophie de Grouchy's translation ever since it was first published in 1798, as attested by laudatory chronicles in the *Journal de Paris* and the *Décade Philosophique*. Some of the contributors (such as Pierre-Louis Roederer) were, it must be recalled, members of the Condorcet couple's entourage. But compliments came also from scholars who did not maintain the best relations with Grouchy. Morellet, whose own plan to translate the *TMS* was overtaken by Grouchy's, Humboldt, who notoriously held her in low esteem, and Madame de Stael, her main rival in Parisian circles, all praised the quality of her work.<sup>17</sup> In his preface to the 1860 edition of Grouchy's translation, Professor at the College de France Henri Baudrillart (1860: xiii) considered that "Condorcet's translation reads without any trouble" and that "Smith's thought is constantly rendered with exact precision". Closer to us, the authors of the new French translation, published by PUF in 1999, acknowledge Grouchy's elegance and "the pleasure of a refined language which (...) has the great advantage of being contemporary to that of Smith" (Biziou, Gautier & Pradeau, 1999: 10).

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<sup>17</sup> On all the above-mentioned biographical information, see Badinter (2010: 125).

The first and most outstanding quality of Grouchy's translation is its faithfulness to the plan, order, and titles of the parts, chapters, and sections of Smith's original work. This point is worth emphasizing since, as Forget (2010: 655-656) observes, in the absence of international copyright law, authors of the time (or, in the present case, their literary executors) could exercise no legal control over the final content of the translations, most of which were published without their consent. It was therefore common practice for translators to alter the original work as they wished, modifying the plan, deleting parts or chapters, or adding passages of their own. None of this with Grouchy whose translation closely follows Smith's plan, with nothing added and nothing taken away. It is thus an integral translation of the original work, which "respects the anatomy of Smith's essay" (Seth, 2010a: 69; Seth, 2010b: 135).

Second, Grouchy's translation seems in most instances to abide by the spirit of Smith's analysis and properly renders his system of moral philosophy in its broad outlines. An example of this faithfulness is highlighted by Schattschneider (2003) and concerns the translation into French of the English word "propriety", which is recurrent in the *TMS*. In the eighteenth century, the French literal translation of the word, *propriété*, had indeed mostly a meaning equivalent to the English "property", but did not encompass the one ascribed to it by Smith in the *TMS*, where it designates an *appropriate behavior*.<sup>18</sup> Grouchy successfully overcame the difficulty by choosing to translate "propriety" generally as *convenance*, following almost to the letter the spirit of Smith's text. Two centuries later, the PUF translators were to make exactly the same choice. Schattschneider (2003) concludes that

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<sup>18</sup> The definition of *propriété* in the sense used by Smith only appears in the 6th edition of the *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française* (1835) and is confined to language ("L'emploi du mot propre, du terme propre. *La propriété des termes est exactement observée dans tout ce qu'il écrit. Parler, s'exprimer avec propriété.*"). This meaning was to be extended in the *Dictionnaire de la langue française* by Emile Littré (1872).

Grouchy thus contributed to the evolution of the translation of the term into French. “Propriety” is indeed translated as *convenance* in most English-French dictionaries today.

In addition to the excellent knowledge of both English and speculative philosophy which Grouchy reportedly displayed,<sup>19</sup> such quality could also be explained by the care and time she took with the work. While translating philosophical and scientific works in the eighteenth century was a thriving industry making substantial profits (Forget, 2010: 653 and 658), with its unavoidable share of slapdash and sloppy work, Grouchy seems to have devoted a remarkable amount of time to her translation for the period. Although it was only published in 1798, the project was apparently started during Nicolas de Condorcet’s lifetime.<sup>20 21</sup>

### 1.2. Departures from Smith’s Original Terminology

Quality, precision, and compliance with the structure and spirit of the work do not mean literalness. For instance, Seth (2010a & b) notices some relatively frequent switches from the third person singular (“he”, “mankind”, “the spectator”, “the person who feels”, *etc.*) to the first or third person plural (“*nous*” [we], “*les hommes*” [men/people]) in Grouchy’s translation, and concludes that “the intensity of Smith’s singular gets lost in the plurals of her translator”.<sup>22</sup> Similarly there are instances where Grouchy does not translate the word “spectator” literally, although it is essential in Smith’s moral philosophy, preferring instead

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<sup>19</sup> Badinter (2010: 122-123).

<sup>20</sup> Badinter (2010: 124) notes from Grouchy’s correspondence that much of the translation and commentary was already completed by spring 1792, while Lagrave (1994a: 37) and Pons (1994: 10) claim that the writing of the *Letters* was completed in 1793. According to Schattschneider (2003), the translation work was begun in the early 1790s, but its publication was delayed due to Grouchy’s precarious situation under the Jacobin regime. In this connection, it is worth recalling that in June 1790, the *Journal de Paris* announced the forthcoming publication of a new translation of the *Wealth of Nations* by Jean-Antoine Roucher, “followed by notes by the Marquis de Condorcet” (see Faccarello & Steiner, 2002: 24-26; Badinter, 2010: 124; Seth, 2010b: 129; Pisanelli, 2015: 31-32). Although Condorcet never achieved his own plan of commenting on the *WN*, it seems the concomitance of both spouses’ enterprises was not mere coincidence (Seth, 2010b: 129; Badinter, 2010: 124). Both books by Adam Smith featured prominently in discussion in their philosophical salon (Badinter, 2010: 123).

<sup>21</sup> Nicolas de Condorcet was imprisoned in Bourg-la-Reine and found dead in his cell on 28 March 1794.

<sup>22</sup> Seth (2010b: 136).



expressions such as *les témoins* [witnesses], *l'indulgence publique* [public indulgence], and again, the first person plural *nous*.

Britton (2009: 88, 90) considers that Sophie de Grouchy's translation "repeatedly calls into question Smith's figurative language" and "specifies the figurative process that Smith's language frequently masks in metaphor". Britton illustrates this point with several convincing examples where the translator breaks away from Smith's metaphors of embodiment (like "we enter, as it were, in his body", which is a recurrent expression in the *TMS*).

Grouchy might also have encountered difficulties in translating English terms whose correspondence in French was not clearly established in her times. Whereas she sometimes overcame the difficulty (by translating "propriety" as *convenance*, see *supra* §1.1), in other instances the result is far less satisfactory. As noticed by Malherbe (2015: 142), this is the case for the translation of the English word "fellow-feeling", for which there is no corresponding word in French. Whereas it is mostly used as a synonym for "sympathy" in Hume and Smith,<sup>23</sup> Grouchy, as Malherbe rightly points out, does not choose a clear correspondence and translates the term in different words with dissimilar meanings, such as *compassion*, *sympathie* ("sympathy"), *intérêt* ("interest"), *sentiment*, *sensibilité* ("sensitivity"), and sometimes uses periphrasis.

Similarly, Grouchy seems to have experienced many difficulties with Smith's distinction between "self-love" and "selfishness". While Smith uses the latter term sparingly<sup>24</sup> and generally in a pejorative way,<sup>25</sup> "self-love" refers in his writings to the natural care an

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<sup>23</sup> Malherbe (2015: 141) claims that Smith distinguishes between "sympathy" and "fellow-feeling", but we disagree with him and his proof is unconvincing.

<sup>24</sup> Five times in the *TMS* and none in the *WN*. The word "selfish" is used more often (36 occurrences in the *TMS*), but mostly in a technical sense, to designate a category of passions (those passions which interest us to our well-being, halfway between social and unsocial passions).

<sup>25</sup> *TMS*, II, ii, 1, §2: 78; IV, 1, §10: 184; VII, ii, 2, §13: 299; VII, ii, 3, §4: 301.

individual takes with his own interests and well-being, which is not in itself detrimental. Besides, Smith makes repeated references, when he talks about “self-love”, to the early Stoics,<sup>26</sup> who can hardly be characterized as selfish philosophers. Such a distinction is now considered by scholars as essential to understanding Smith. Some of them even see in the confusion between the two terms<sup>27</sup> one of the main sources<sup>28</sup> of the *Adam Smith Problem*.<sup>29</sup>

Biziou, Gautier, and Pradeau (the PUF translators) translate “selfishness” literally as *égoïsme* (and the adjective “selfish” as *égoïste*), and have chosen to render “self-love” as *amour de soi*, referring to a famous category of Jean-Jacques Rousseau. This seems to be an appropriate solution.<sup>30</sup> Conversely, as shown in the following table (#1), Grouchy makes no clear distinction between the two terms. Out of five occurrences in total, “selfishness” is translated in four different ways, while “self-love” is alternately rendered as *amour de soi* (16 occurrences) or *amour-propre* (12 occurrences). As if the two terms were equivalent, which may seem surprising from a would-be follower of Rousseau.<sup>31</sup> With regard to the translation of the adjective “selfish”, she uses numerous variations, but never the literal translation *égoïste*.

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<sup>26</sup> *TMS*, VI, ii, 1, §1: 219; VII, ii, 1, §15: 272.

<sup>27</sup> But also in the confusion between sympathy and benevolence.

<sup>28</sup> See Macfie & Raphael (1976: 20-22), Vergara (2001: 93), Dellemotte (2011: 2251).

<sup>29</sup> This now outdated interpretation stressing the supposed inconsistency between the *TMS* and the *WN* was formulated by the former German historical school. On the *Adam Smith Problem*, see Dickey (1986), Bertrand (1995), Montes (2003), Tribe (2008), and Dellemotte (2011).

<sup>30</sup> Like “self-love” in Smith’s thought, *amour de soi*, in its Rousseauian sense, does not involve pursuing one’s self-interest at the expense of others. In a single case, “self-love” is translated as *amour-propre* in the PUF edition (p. 366), and it is likely to be just a careless mistake.

<sup>31</sup> See *Letters*, Letter IV and V: 144-47, and Rousseau’s famous distinction (Rousseau, 1755: 212).

<i>TMS</i>	Grouchy (1798)	Biziou et al. (1999)
self-love	amour de soi, amour propre (intérêt personnel)	amour de soi
selfishness	égoïsme, amour-propre, amour de soi-même, vil intérêt	égoïsme
selfish	de <sup>32</sup> l'amour de soi, personnel, de l'intérêt personnel (de l'amour-propre, intéressé, privé)	égoïste

**Table 1: Self-love / selfishness / selfish in the *TMS*, and translations by Grouchy (1798) and by Biziou, Gautier, and Pradeau (1999)**

Sometimes Grouchy does not hesitate to make use of surprising circumlocutions. The title of chapter 5, section 2, book 1 of the *TMS*, “Of the selfish passions” is renamed “*Des passions qui ont pour objet l’amour de nous-mêmes*” [Of passions whose purpose is our self-love] in her translation. While chapter 1, section 3, book 7, “Of those systems which deduce the principle of approbation from self-love”, is rendered as “*Des systèmes qui placent le principe de l’approbation dans l’amour de nous-même ou dans l’intérêt personnel*” [Of systems which put the principle of approbation in our self-love or in personal interest]. Which may be interpreted as evidence of hesitation. Amid this indecision, the fact that Grouchy uses several words whose meanings are not altogether similar (*amour de soi, amour-propre, égoïsme*) to translate the single English word “selfishness” seems to us noteworthy. It shows that she does not seem to imagine that the care taken in one’s own interests can vary in intensity from a natural and harmless concern (self-love) to its exacerbated and corrupted form, selfishness (see *infra*, §2.3.).

In Grouchy’s defense, she is certainly not the only reader of the time who failed to grasp the importance of the distinction between “self-love” and “selfishness” in Smith’s analysis. Such

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<sup>32</sup> Or “*qui tiennent à*” / “*qui a pour objet*”. As in the title of *TMS*, I, ii, 5: “*Des passions qui ont pour objet l’amour de nous-mêmes*”.

confusion was to persist in French translations until very recently. For instance, Garnier, the best known translator of the *Wealth of Nations* (1802), renders “self-love” as *égoïsme*, thereby contributing to disseminate in France and Europe a somewhat caricatured view of Smith’s social philosophy.<sup>33</sup> More recently Taïeb, in her translation of the *Wealth of Nations* published in 1995, translates “self-love” as *amour-propre*, a term which, in its Rousseauian meaning,<sup>34</sup> is not in line with the spirit of the text. Actually, it was not until the PUF translation of the *TMS*, and a final translation of the *WN*<sup>35</sup> published by Economica in 2002, that the translation of “self-love” as *amour de soi* was to be clearly established.<sup>36</sup>

There are other cases where Grouchy’s lack of literalness is likely to impede a plain and clear understanding of Smith’s moral philosophy. As emphasized by the translators of the PUF edition<sup>37</sup> (1999: 10), “the elegance of the French translation did not cover the roughness, repetitions, and heaviness of Smith’s style”<sup>38</sup> with the consequence of hiding the “rigorous articulations of the argument” and “the clear-cut precision of his vocabulary”.<sup>39</sup> They illustrate this point with the examples of two types of lexicons used repeatedly by Smith in the *TMS*, the “vocabularies of intensities and movements” (*ibid.*: 11).

The first lexicon concerns the intensity of passions, affections, and feelings. According to Smith, we judge the moral conduct of others depending on our sympathy with their apparent feelings. Sympathy refers to the emotional concordance between the spectator who judges and

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<sup>33</sup> All the more so since Smith never uses the term “selfishness” in the *WN* and the adjective “selfish” only three times.

<sup>34</sup> The Rousseauian meaning of *amour-propre* is similar to the English words “pride” or “vanity”.

<sup>35</sup> Edited by Philippe Jaudet and Jean-Michel Servet.

<sup>36</sup> In this respect, to determine the extent to which this loose translation of the distinction between “self-love” and “selfishness” contributed to the dissemination and persistence of the *Adam Smith Problem* in France could make an interesting research program, but goes beyond the scope of our present analysis.

<sup>37</sup> Which is, for once, almost literal.

<sup>38</sup> “Il n’est pas facile, dans une traduction, de concilier la littéralité avec l’élégance.”, *Dictionnaire de l’Académie Française*, sixth edition, 1835.

<sup>39</sup> As Smith wrote to his publisher Thomas Cadell, “I am a slow a very slow workman, *who do and undo everything I write at least half a dozen of times before I can be tolerably pleased with it.*” (*Correspondence*, letter 276, March 1788: 311).

the actor whose conduct is evaluated. To reach such concordance, spectators and actors frequently have to modulate the intensity of their respective passions. The spectator by making an effort to be sensitive, the actor by displaying self-command.<sup>40</sup> Situations of mutual sympathy provide pleasure to the actor as well as to the spectator. For the former particularly, “Sympathy *enlivens* joy and *alleviates* grief” (*TMS*, I, I, 2, §2: 14; italics added). While the PUF translation systematically renders “alleviate” as *atténuer* and “enliven” as *aviver*, Grouchy never uses the same term or expression more than twice (see table 2 below). Smith’s line of argument, therefore, loses a degree of precision.

<b><i>TMS</i></b>	<b>Grouchy (1798)</b>	<b>Biziou et al. (1999)</b>
to alleviate	adoucir, soulager, alléger, affaiblir	atténuer
to enliven	augmenter, accroître, rendre plus vif, rappeler, faire partager plus vivement, animer, exciter, exalter, ranimer	aviver

**Table 2: Terms of intensity used by Smith (*TMS*) and their translation by Grouchy (1798) and by Biziou, Gautier, and Pradeau (1999)**

The second lexicon refers to the process of identification with others on which the mechanism of sympathy is based (see *infra*, §2.2.). Although Smith claims its action precedes any reflection,<sup>41</sup> the sympathetic mechanism actually operates in two movements:

- a first movement from the inside to the outside, by which the spectator, via the imagination, *enters into* the situation and feelings of the actor, *i.e.* identifies<sup>42</sup> himself with the person he observes and imagines what he feels.

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<sup>40</sup> On this property of Smithian sympathy and the search for a “point of propriety” in sentimental interactions, see Biziou (2000: 457-462).

<sup>41</sup> “The effect of sympathy is instantaneous”, *TMS*, I, I, 4, §9: 23.

<sup>42</sup> See *infra*, §2.2.

- a second movement from the outside to the inside, by which the spectator brings *the case home to himself*, and considers whether his own feelings, with regard to the situation, match those he attributes to the actor.

While the PUF translators almost systematically, and literally, render the expression “to enter into”, for the first movement, as *entrer dans*, and the expression “to bring the case home to oneself”, for the second, as *ramener le cas à soi*, Grouchy’s choices of translation are, again, much less faithful to the spirit of Smith’s original text (see table 3 below). By translating most often “to enter into” as *partager* [to share], she does not reflect the first movement from the spectator to the actor by which the former identifies himself with the latter. Besides, Grouchy also frequently translates as *partager* another expression belonging to Smith’s lexicon of movement: “to go along with”, which the PUF translators render instead as *accompagner* [to accompany]. As for the translation of “bring the case home to oneself”, Grouchy takes the opposing view regarding Smith’s vocabulary by translating the expression most often<sup>43</sup> as *se mettre à la place de* [to put oneself in the other’s shoes], which represents a shift from the inside to the outside, from the spectator to the actor, while it describes exactly the opposite movement in Smith’s text.

<b>TMS</b>	<b>Grouchy (1798)</b>	<b>Biziou et al. (1999)</b>
to enter into	partager (concevoir sympathiser, éprouver)	entrer dans
to go along with	partager (14 occurrences), sympathiser (5), approuver (4), adopter (2) not translated (12)	accompagner (27), partager (10)
to bring the case home to oneself	se mettre à la place de (13) not translated / other translations (6)	ramener en / à l’intérieur de soi le cas (19)

**Table 3: Expressions of movement used by Smith (TMS), and their translation by Grouchy (1798) and by Biziou, Gautier, and Pradeau (1999)**

<sup>43</sup> Otherwise she uses periphrasis.

Contrary to Baudrillard's assertion (see *supra*, §1.1), the spirit of the text is here noticeably betrayed, as the French reader is no longer able to grasp that it is precisely at the end of the second movement that the actor's original passion is likely to affect the spectator.<sup>44</sup> And the identification process on which sympathy is based according to Smith appears much less clearly in the translation than in the original text.

### *1.3. Some Interpretations of Grouchy's Choices of Translation*

It is particularly difficult, with the passage of more than two centuries, to interpret why Grouchy departed from Smith's vocabulary.

In a recent paper, Bizou emphasizes the need to consider any translation in relation to two distinct aspects: what he calls its "objective context" and its "subjective project" (Bizou, 2015: 53, 55-56). Here, we rely on this last distinction in order to account for the main interpretations that have been put forward for twenty-five years to explain Grouchy's choices of translation. Most of them offer contextual explanations focusing either (i) on Grouchy's personal context or (ii) on the general context of translation in the eighteenth century; (iii) only a couple of studies deal with the marchioness' subjective project. We are going to deal with each of these three categories of explanations in turn.

(i) Britton (2009: 87-89), who ventures into psychological explanations, is representative of the first category. She focuses on the fact that Grouchy translates "brother" as "*semblables*" in the following excerpt:

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<sup>44</sup> "His agonies, when they are thus *brought home to ourselves*, when we have thus adopted and made them our own, begin *at last* to affect us" (*TMS*, I, i, 1, §2: 9; our italics). Grouchy translates this excerpt as: "Ses souffrances, quand elles nous sont ainsi devenues propres, commencent à nous affecter" [His sufferings, when they have thus become our own, begin to affect us] (Grouchy, 1994: 7). The PUF translation is much more faithful to Smith: "Ses souffrances, quand elles sont ainsi *ramenées en nous*, quand nous les avons ainsi adoptées et faites nôtres, commencent *enfin* à nous affecter" (*TMS*, I, i, 1, §2 : 25; our italics).

Though our brother is upon the rack, as long as we ourselves are at our ease, our senses will never inform us of what he suffers. (*TMS*, I, i, 1, §2: 9)

Qu'un de nos semblables soit sur la roue, nos sens ne nous instruiront jamais de ce qu'il souffre, tant que nous n'aurons pour nous-mêmes que l'idée du bien-être. (*TSM*, I, i, 1: 6; 1798 translation)

Despite the fact that we have here another switch from the singular (“brother”) to the plural (*semblables*, i.e. “fellow creatures”), Grouchy’s choice does not seem to us indisputably significant. Britton conversely interprets it as a “striking revision” and believes that Grouchy’s personal context (the Reign of Terror in Paris and the imprisonment of her husband) forbade her from literally translating “brother” as *frères* concerning an excerpt about torture. But there is no clear evidence that Smith wished to use the word “brother” in its literal meaning in the excerpt in question. Besides, in the eighteenth century, the word “brother” could already cover a figurative sense in English. Thus, this famous excerpt from the *WN*:

In almost every other race of animals each individual, when it is grown up to maturity, is entirely independent, and in its natural state has occasion for the assistance of no other living creatures. But man has almost constant occasion *for the help of his brethren*, and it is in vain for him to expect it from their benevolence only. (*WN*, I, ii, 2: 26; italics added)

Or this other one, taken from the *TMS*:

Nature, when she formed man for society, endowed him with an original desire to please, and *an original aversion to offend his brethren*. (*TMS*, III, 2, §6: 116; italics added)<sup>45</sup>

In order to defend her interpretation, Britton argues that the operation of Smithian sympathy rests on a family basis, while Grouchy wished instead to extend its scope.<sup>46</sup> Britton thus falls into a recurring although misidentified trap, which we might call the “spheres of intimacy” thesis, in reference to a classic article by Nieli (1986).<sup>47</sup> Although he concedes that a family or affective proximity increases the probability of sympathizing, Smith never actually argued

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<sup>45</sup> This plural of “brother”, no longer in use today, was still in vogue in the eighteenth century. It was generally understood in a religious or broad sense (synonymous with “colleagues”, “friends”, “fellow members” ... or the French *semblables*).

<sup>46</sup> “Condorcet expands the potential range of sympathetic response, chops away at the insistence on familial relations in theories of sympathy, and calls for a version of sympathy founded on relationships that rely on neither consanguinity nor metaphor” (Britton, 2009: 90).

<sup>47</sup> On this interpretation and its contradiction, see Dellemotte (2011: 2231-33).



that sympathy in itself requires a personal relationship between spectators and actors.<sup>48</sup> Finally, in the absence of any textual evidence (correspondence, personal notes, *etc.*), interpreting Grouchy's choices of translation from psychological extrapolations which are unverifiable seems hardly convincing.

(ii) A second category of contributions highlights instead the general context of translation in the eighteenth century, which seems to be a less subjective parameter. We have already mentioned the lack of any clear correspondence between some English and French terms, and the instances judiciously stressed by Schattschneider (2003) and Malherbe (2015). From a broader perspective, the differences in literary standards between France and Great Britain at the time may well have had some influence. Hence, Forget (2010) notes that as early as the eighteenth century, various theories of translation were in competition: while some advocated a radical literalism, others<sup>49</sup> argued that translations should adapt to the aesthetic standards of the target language. Although, as has been emphasized, her translation is uncut and, in its main lines, faithful, it may be thought that Grouchy falls, at least to some extent, within the second tradition. Had it been translated literally, Smith's arid and repetitive original text might have proved disconcerting to a French reader accustomed to different aesthetic standards than his British counterpart. Such adaptation to the standards of the target audience was usually considered necessary by translators and publishers alike, in order to ensure the dissemination and commercial success of works in translation.<sup>50</sup> Without explicitly naming Grouchy, Forget sums up an approach with which the marchioness can probably be credited:

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<sup>48</sup> "This concern [*for others*] does not necessarily include in it any degree of those exquisite sentiments which are commonly called love, esteem, and affection, and by which we distinguish our particular friends and acquaintances. The concern which is requisite for this, is no more than the general fellow-feeling which we have with every man merely because he is our fellow-creature" (*TMS*, II, ii, 3, §10: 90).

<sup>49</sup> Forget mentions the German grammarian and critic Johann Christoph Gottsched (1700–1766).

<sup>50</sup> "Translations were never completely transparent and faithful to the original. These translations are, in fact, popularizations (...) A good eighteenth- or nineteenth-century translation is a translation that attracts many

Paying less attention to linguistic theory than to the need to appeal to readers, translators continued to subject translated texts to the norms of the destination language. (...) Publishers recognized the need to appeal to readers, and texts were transformed in order to attract readers. Scholars who translated, and often wrote weighty translators' prefaces, usually identified the need to make transformations in order to better communicate the author's intent. (Forget, 2010: 661)

Compared to the remarkable transformations which some translated works might suffer at the time, the changes made by Grouchy seem only minor.<sup>51</sup> Anyway, it can be argued that the will to avoid repetitions, which were considered unaesthetic by French standards, could explain why she sometimes translates the same English word in different ways. For instance, this may partly account for her abandonment of Smith's original vocabulary of intensities, while conversely, the PUF translators claim that their own faithfulness to this vocabulary was the price to pay for Smith's empiricism to be recognized and identified.<sup>52</sup>

(iii) Biziou (2015) makes one of the few contributions that try to read Grouchy's translation in the light of what he calls her "subjective project". He identifies two main dimensions which allegedly derive from the marchioness' objective context, marked by the Terror and her rationalist intellectual environment (Biziou, 2015: 59):

- the first dimension concerns her normative political ambition, which would be to bring to the French public, in the context of the Terror, a work which shows how society might be stabilized and avoid violence thanks to the harmonization of individual moral judgments;
- the second dimension, which appears through the *Letters*, relates this time to Grouchy's intellectual project. It is said to consist in rendering Smith's sentimental moral philosophy consistent with French moral rationalism.

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readers and spurs commentary and imitation. Arraying translations along a scale from 'more faithful' to 'less faithful' with the intent of the original author as the sole criterion of quality is, at best, an anachronism" (Forget, 2010: 664-665).

<sup>51</sup> Moreover, Seth (2010b: 136) notes about some of these changes (modifications of the order of some sentences, recourse to periphrasis) that it is not superfluous to "recall that Germanic languages, generally, are more concise than the French".

<sup>52</sup> Biziou, Gautier, and Pradeau (1999: 11).

“[B]earing in mind all [these] general remarks [...] about the objective context and subjective project of [Grouchy’s] translation”, Biziou (2015: 60-61) interprets several switches made by Grouchy compared to Smith’s original text:

- The substitution, on some occasions, of the English term “mind” (“*esprit*” in French) by the French word *intelligence*. Such substitution would make Smith’s text “deviates towards a rationalist interpretation” closer to the marchioness’ outlook.
- The disappearance, on several occasions, of the adjective “impartial” (in Smith’s recurring concept of the “impartial spectator”). According to the commentator, this means that, for the rationalist philosopher, being reasonable is more important than being impartial.
- The rewriting of Smith’s definition of sympathy<sup>53</sup> as “the faculty to share others’ passions, whatever they be”.<sup>54</sup> Because it conceals the description of sympathy as a process, this definition testifies to the normative content of Grouchy’s project: a faculty is likely to be developed either by education or by the work of reason.
- Similarly, Biziou (2015) notes that Grouchy misses the *semantic field of measures and proportions* that can be found in the original text: “measure” is thus translated as *règle* (rule), “out of proportion” as *sans raison* (without reason), “point of propriety” as *caractère de convenance* (character of propriety), when other original Smithian terms, such as “height”, “level”, or “pitch” are simply omitted. Without further details, Biziou interprets this as the result of a misapprehension. Grouchy seemingly failed to understand the specific character of Smithian sympathy as a balancing process of

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<sup>53</sup> “a fellow-feeling with any passion whatever” (*TMS*, I, i, 1, §5: 10).

<sup>54</sup> “La faculté de partager les passions des autres, quelles qu’elles soient”.

intensity of feelings between actors and spectators, which converges towards social norms.

Britton (2009) constitutes, at some points, another attempt to link Grouchy's choices of translation to her philosophical project.<sup>55</sup> For instance, the commentator considers that the marchioness's inflection of language towards Smith's metaphors of embodiment is in accordance with her opposition to the Scottish philosopher's claim that sympathetic response to moral pain is greater than that to physical pain (see *infra*, §2.2.).<sup>56</sup>

Although the insistence on Grouchy's "subjective project" to highlight her choices of translation is promising, it stands as a rather isolated phenomenon in the literature. In what follows, we further explore the path opened by Britton (2009) and Biziou (2015) by focusing on what may be considered as a materialization of Grouchy's "subjective project": the *Letters on Sympathy*. More specifically, we focus on her appreciation of Smith's moral philosophy, and highlight some consequent divergences between their respective systems of sympathy. This will allow us explaining, for instance, her abandonment of Smith's "vocabulary of movements" and her failure to distinguish between the English expressions "self-love" and "selfishness".

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<sup>55</sup> Aside from this, Britton (2009) tends to favor Grouchy's personal and political context in order to explain her choices of translation.

<sup>56</sup> "In Condorcet's letters, Smith's rejection of sympathetic response to physical suffering is a subject of critique; in the translation, particularly in the examples I address below, Condorcet renders his figuratively embodied sympathy as more literal and representational" Britton (2009: 93-94).

## 2. Grouchy's Letters: the Missing Part of Smith's Moral Philosophy?

### 2.1. Sensualism versus Sentimentalism

Grouchy begins her *Letters* by criticizing Smith's *TMS*. This is the opportunity for her to announce the ambition of her critical commentary:

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 how sympathy must belong to every sensible being capable of reflection. You will see how I had the temerity to fill in these omissions. (*Letters*, Letter I: 108)<sup>57</sup>

Thus, the aim of the *Letters* is more to fill in a supposed gap in Smith's moral philosophy than to object to his ideas.<sup>58</sup> Grouchy claims to make good Smith's omissions by going back to the primary cause of sympathy, which Smith purportedly failed to identify.<sup>59</sup> Now, in her first letter, Grouchy does not provide any rationale for her criticism. One has to wait until letter VI to grasp what is involved. This rationale takes place when she tries to explain the genesis of our moral ideas (our ideas of virtue and justice):

Smith [...] shows that the first intimations of the just and the unjust are the focus and fruit of an unmediated sentiment, and he claims that our knowledge of the just and the unjust and of virtue and vice derives in part from their harmony or disharmony with a kind of internal sense, which he presupposes without defining. However, this kind of internal or inward sense is hardly one of those first causes, whose existence can only be acknowledged but never explained. It is nothing other than the effect of sympathy which our sensibility allows us to experience. (*Letters*, Letter VI: 162-3)<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> "Vous savez que le sujet des premiers chapitres est la sympathie. Smith s'est borné à en remarquer l'existence, et à en exposer les principaux effets : j'ai regretté qu'il n'eût pas osé remonter plus haut ; pénétrer jusqu'à sa première cause ; montrer enfin comment elle doit appartenir à tout être sensible et susceptible de réflexion. Vous verrez comment j'ai eu la témérité de suppléer à ces omissions." (*Lettres*, Lettre I : 30)

<sup>58</sup> This opinion was shared by her uncle Dupaty, who wrote in 1785: "on a pas assez réfléchi sur ces affections sympathiques ou antipathiques (...) Smith a ouvert la mine, mais ne l'a pas creusée." (Cited by Lagrave, 1994a, note 10: 20-21)

<sup>59</sup> The major consequence would be that Smith failed to show that all human-beings are capable of sympathy, or in Grouchy's words, of showing "how it must belong to all sensitive beings able of reflection". For an interpretation of how Grouchy attempts to articulate physical sensation, intellectual reflection, and sympathy (see Forget, 2001: 323).

<sup>60</sup> "Smith [...] établit que ces premières perceptions sont l'objet et le fruit d'un sentiment immédiat, et prétend que notre connaissance du juste et de l'injuste, de la vertu et du vice, dérive en partie de leur convenance ou de leur disconvenance, avec une espèce de sens intime qu'il a supposé sans le définir. Cependant, cette espèce de sens intime n'est point une de ces causes premières dont on ne peut que reconnaître l'existence et jamais

Here, the marchioness provides a criticism commonly leveled by French sensualist thinkers (including by her husband, Nicolas de Condorcet<sup>61</sup>) at the Scottish moral philosophers such as Hutcheson (see Van den berg, 2009).<sup>62</sup> She charges Smith with grounding our morality in an innate ability (what she calls an “internal sense”). Now, the sensualist philosophers, influenced by Condillac who defend a more radical empiricism than Locke, not only reject innate ideas but innate abilities as well (see Orain, 2012). According to them, sensations of pleasure and pain are the only sources of our ideas. It is from this perspective that Grouchy criticizes Smith. She claims the author’s mistake was to make an internal sense the primary cause of our morality. Such an internal sense would not be the cause of our moral ideas but the effect of the sympathy which she depicts throughout the previous letters and which is itself rooted in the sensations of pleasure and pain (see *infra*, §2.2).<sup>63</sup> It is in this regard that Grouchy claims to supplement Smith’s moral philosophy.

However, closer attention to the Scottish philosopher’s project calls into question the marchioness’s reading of the *TMS*. It seems that her interpretation relies on a chapter of the book entitled “Of those Systems which make Reason the Principle of Approbation” (*TMS*, VII, iii, 2). It is true that, in some passages of the chapter which Grouchy almost paraphrases, Smith writes that our first perceptions of virtue and vice are the object of an “immediate sense and feeling” (see *TMS*, VII, iii, 2: 320-1). Yet, as recalled by Van den Berg (2009),

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expliquer l’existence. Il n’est autre chose que l’effet de la sympathie dont notre sensibilité nous rend susceptibles.” (*Lettres*, Lettre VI : 84)

<sup>61</sup> “Cependant en Ecosse d’autres philosophes ne trouvant point que l’analyse du développement de nos facultés réelles conduisît à un principe qui donnât à la moralité de nos actions une base assez pure, assez solide, imaginèrent d’attribuer à l’âme humaine une faculté nouvelle, distincte de celles de sentir ou de raisonner mais se combinant avec elles, faculté dont ils ne pouvaient surtout l’existence en prouvant qu’il était impossible de s’en passer” (Condorcet, 1793: 384-5). On this point see J-N. Rieucau (1997: 213). W. von Humboldt also shares this criticism of Scottish philosophy in his *Journal parisien (1797-1799)*: “Elle [Grouchy] considère *avec justesse* que le sens moral anglais n’est pas un principe, qu’il ne se laisse qu’admettre, point expliquer.” (Humboldt, 1797-1799: 176; italics added)

<sup>62</sup> Among the sensationist thinkers who criticize the moral sense theorists, Van den Berg (2009) mentions Delisle de Sales, the Baron d’Holbach, and Achilles Nicolas Isnard.

<sup>63</sup> As noticed by Biziou (2015), “Grouchy roots sympathy in a sensualist physiology, thus ascribing to the psychological process a bodily basis” (Biziou, 2015: 59).

*immediacy* is not the same thing as *innatism*. Whereas immediacy refers to unreasoned operations, innatism denotes instead faculties inherent in our nature. Far from being of secondary importance, this distinction is crucial in order to grasp Smith's project.

Actually, Smith considers the *TMS* as the endpoint of the sentimentalist tradition; a tradition which aims to show that our moral judgments are grounded in our sentiments so that they are supposedly *immediate* (see *TMS*, iii, 2: 318). But even though he shares the same lineage as sentimentalist authors such as Shaftesbury and Hutcheson, unlike them, Smith views the idea of a moral sense as irrelevant in explaining the immediacy of moral judgments. He devotes an entire chapter to criticizing those who found our morality on a peculiar faculty such as a moral sense (see *TMS*, VII, iii, 3: 321). He even goes as far as to say that the moral sense hypothesis formulated by Hutcheson leads to consequences which he considers "a sufficient confutation of it" (see *TMS*, VII, iii, 3: 322-3).<sup>64</sup>

From this perspective, Grouchy's criticism seems quite surprising.<sup>65</sup> Ultimately, for Smith, as for Grouchy, our first perceptions of virtue and vice do not rely on a moral sense but on sympathy, which the Scottish philosopher also depicts as "sufficient to account for all the effects ascribed to this peculiar faculty" (*TMS*, VII, iii, 3: 321).

The fact remains that Smith is not explicit about what the marchioness calls the "first cause" of sympathy. But, as Malherbe (2015) observes, although this issue is central for a sensualist philosopher like Grouchy, it is irrelevant for Smith whose "intellectual way of ideas was

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<sup>64</sup> In substance, Smith identifies various possible approaches to the moral sense, criticizing each of them. There are the systems which found the principle of approbation "upon a peculiar sentiment which answers this one particular purpose and no other" (*TMS*, VII, iii, 3, §11: 324). This is precisely the kind of system that Grouchy ascribes to Smith when she claims that he derives our first moral ideas from an intimate sense. The other system that Smith identifies correspond to Hutcheson's which founds the principle of approbation upon a power of perception that is analogous to the external senses such as the qualities of sound, taste, odor, color (see *TMS*, VII, iii, 3, §4-10: 321-4).

<sup>65</sup> Ando (1983: 335) takes up Grouchy's criticism without questioning it, whereas Malherbe (2010, note n°8: 155) rightly notes that it is surprising and unfaithful to Smith.

‘Newtonian’” (Malherbe, 2015: 144).<sup>66</sup> This suggests that Grouchy analyzes Smith’s thinking in the light of a philosophical framework into which he could not enter. This is what we are going to show now.

In addition to calling into question her reading of the *TMS*, the marchioness’s criticism of the book reveals a fundamental opposition between Smith’s philosophy and hers. This opposition concerns the role of reason in their respective systems.

Grouchy begins the above-mentioned criticism with the following comment:

Smith recognized that reason is indisputably the source of general rules of morality, and yet he found it impossible to deduce from reason the first ideas of the just and the unjust. (*Letters*, Letter VI: 162-3)<sup>67</sup>

She also claims, a few lines before, that “[o]ne cannot say that morality is founded on sentiment alone, since it is reason that shows us what is just or unjust” (*Letters*, Letter VI: 162).<sup>68</sup> <sup>69</sup> This suggests that for her, our “first ideas of the just and the unjust” derive from reason. In others words, Grouchy’s sympathy implies the exercise of reason, which would be impossible from a sentimentalist perspective which stresses the immediacy of moral sentiments.

As we have seen (see *supra*, §2.1), she believes that our first moral ideas arise from sympathy which she defines as “the disposition we have to feel as others do” (*Letters*, Letter VI: 108).<sup>70</sup>

According to her, the sight of others’ pleasure and pain arouses similar sensations within us

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<sup>66</sup> “in a ‘Newtonian’ context (...) deduction follows from induction, since the principles or elements cannot be known by themselves, but must be inferred from phenomena. The true method must start with phenomena, which are effects, and science has to inquire into their causes; which means that causes are known only as being the causes of their effects. (...) Thus, sympathy is not to be considered as a primitive faculty of the mind; it is the most general principle from which we can deduce all moral sentiments (...) It is a process, an operation, the connection between cause and effect.” (Malherbe 2015: 144)

<sup>67</sup> “Smith, reconnaissant que la raison est incontestablement la source des règles générales de la moralité, et trouv[e] cependant impossible d’en déduire les premières idées du juste et de l’injuste.” (*Lettres*, Lettre VI : 84)

<sup>68</sup> “On ne peut pas dire [...] que la morale soit fondée sur le sentiment seul, puisque c’est la raison qui nous montre ce qui est juste et injuste.” (*Lettres*, Lettre VI: 84)

<sup>69</sup> On Grouchy’s criticism of Smith’s insufficient use of reason, see Dawson (2004) and Van den Berg (2009).

<sup>70</sup> “la disposition que nous avons à sentir d’une manière semblable à celle d’autrui” (*Lettres*, Lettre I: 31).



(see *infra*, §2.2). These sensations that we feel by sympathy are even stronger when we are the cause of others' pleasure and pain. This is why Grouchy writes that "the pleasure of contributing to the happiness of others is always more intense than being [its] passive witness" (*Letters*, Letter V: 148; our addition).<sup>71</sup> And, of course, she believes that the same goes for pain.

Now, the "pleasure of doing good" and the "pain of doing a wrong" give rise to two other sentiments which are more personal and distinct, this time, from the particular kind of the others' sensation: respectively, the "satisfaction of having done good"<sup>72</sup> and the "sentiments of regret and remorse" (*Letters*, Letter V: 148 and 150).<sup>73</sup> The marchioness insists on their long-lasting nature by contrast with the pleasure and the pain from which they arise:

[j]ust as the satisfaction of having done a good integrates itself into our existence and makes us feel good, so, too, the recognition of having done something wrong attaches itself to us and upsets our existence. It produces sentiments of regret and remorse that bother us, afflict us, disturb us, and make us suffer. (*Letters*, Letter V: 150)<sup>74</sup>

Most importantly, she states that they constitute the foundation of morality:<sup>75</sup>

The satisfaction associated with good actions and the terror created by the memory of bad ones are two effective motivators for shaping all our actions. These two sentiments are universal. They constitute the principles and the foundation of morality for the human species. (*Letters*, Letter V: 150)<sup>76</sup>

However, they do not necessarily arise from moral actions. They can be the result of actions guided by what the marchioness calls a "particular sympathy",<sup>77</sup> that is, a sympathy founded on relations of utility. Indeed, Grouchy asserts that we are more inclined to sympathize with

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<sup>71</sup> "le plaisir de contribuer au bonheur des autres est plus vif que le plaisir d'en être témoin" (*Lettres*, Lettre V: 69).

<sup>72</sup> "la satisfaction de l'avoir fait" (*Lettres*, Lettre V: 70).

<sup>73</sup> "un sentiment de regret et de remords" (*Lettres*, Lettre V: 71).

<sup>74</sup> "Comme la satisfaction d'avoir fait du bien s'unit à notre expérience pour nous en rendre le sentiment délicieux, de même la conscience d'avoir fait du mal s'y attache pour la troubler ; elle produit un sentiment de regret et de remords qui nous importune, nous afflige, nous inquiète, nous fait souffrir." (*Lettres*, Lettre V : 71)

<sup>75</sup> On the role of the satisfaction of having done good and of remorse and regret in Grouchy's moral philosophy, see Forget (2010: 326-8).

<sup>76</sup> "La satisfaction attachée aux bonnes actions, et la terreur du souvenir des mauvaises, sont deux motifs efficaces pour déterminer toutes nos actions. Ces deux sentiments sont universels ; ils composent les principes et le fondement de la morale du genre humain." (*Lettres*, Lettre V : 71)

<sup>77</sup> "sympathie individuelle" (*Lettres*, Lettre III, 47) ou "sympathie particulière" (*Lettres*, Lettre V : 73).

the sensations of “individuals we value because of the utility or pleasure they bring us”<sup>78</sup> than with strangers’ sensations, though “similar or equal” (*Letters*, Letter II: 117-119).<sup>79</sup> Now, such sympathy does not contain any moral dimension since it may lead to favoring people with whom we have “particular” relations and to neglecting others:<sup>80</sup>

When, for instance, we impart to someone a pleasure that is only momentary and that will have no effect upon his life as a whole, we will have less satisfaction, except if a particular sympathy is involved, than if we had given someone a pleasure that would remain a long lasting possession. (*Letters*, Letter V: 151)<sup>81</sup>

In order to become moral, our actions must be guided not by a particular sympathy but by what Grouchy calls a “general sympathy”.<sup>82</sup> Whereas the former prompts us to “obey, as if by instinct, the leanings of our *heart*” (*Letters*, Letter V: 151; italics added),<sup>83</sup> the latter leads us to go beyond this thanks to the operation of *reason* which allows us to weigh up the consequences of our actions in terms of self-satisfaction and remorse:<sup>84</sup>

If we follow a general sympathy, being often indifferent with respect to the choices among several good actions or undecided between the choice which our inclination inspires in us and a greater good towards which we are not so inclined, then we weigh within ourselves which of the two actions must do the greater good to others, and we decide for the one that will give us, perhaps not the greatest immediate pleasure, but the most lasting satisfaction. Thereafter, our actions that were merely benevolent and human acquire a moral goodness and beauty. From this is born the idea of virtue, that is to say, *actions that give others a pleasure approved by reason*. (*Letters*, Letter V: 151)<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> “les individus auxquels nous tenons par des rapports d’utilité ou de plaisir” (*Lettres*, Lettre II : 42).

<sup>79</sup> These individuals are those: (i) “who contribute directly to our happiness or who help us to satisfy our needs [*qui contribuent à notre Bonheur ou qui nous aident à satisfaire nos besoins*]”; (ii) “whom we can regard as a resource or support in the face of calamities that may threaten us [*que nous pouvons regarder comme un secours ou un appui dans les accidents qui peuvent nous menacer*]”; (iii) who are brought together by their tastes and habits [*entre ceux qui sont rapprochés par leurs goûts et leurs habitudes*]” (*Letters*, Letter II: 42).

<sup>80</sup> Though not moral, actions guided by such a particular sympathy are still considered by Grouchy as “benevolent and human [*bienfaisantes et humaines*]” (*Letters*, Letter V: 151).

<sup>81</sup> “Quand nous procurons, par exemple, à un homme un plaisir qui ne sera que momentané, qui n’aura point d’influence sur sa vie entière, si ce n’est pas une sympathie particulière qui nous détermine, nous aurons moins de satisfaction que si nous avons fait à quelqu’un un plaisir qui serait encore un bien d’une longue durée.” (*Lettres*, Lettre V : 73)

<sup>82</sup> “sympathie générale” (*Lettres*, Lettre V : 73).

<sup>83</sup> “nous obéissons, comme par instinct, au penchant de notre cœur” (*Lettres*, Lettre V : 73).

<sup>84</sup> Similarly, Nicolas de Condorcet, in his *Fragments of the Tableau Historique*, explains how we go from a “bienveillance particulière [*particular benevolence*]” to a “sentiment général d’humanité [*general sentiment of humanity*]” (Condorcet, Fragment 3, 1772-1794: 838-840).

<sup>85</sup> “si nous suivons une sympathie générale, souvent indifférents entre plusieurs biens à faire, ou incertains entre celui que nous inspire notre inclination, et un plus grand auquel elle ne nous porte pas, nous balançons en nous-mêmes, laquelle de ces deux actions doit faire le plus de bien aux autres, et nous nous déterminons pour celle qui nous donnera [...] la satisfaction de la plus grande durée. Dès lors, nos actions qui n’étaient que bienfaisantes et

Similarly, Grouchy assumes that reason leads us to discern, for instance, that a lesser evil done to an individual may prevent others from suffering a greater one. She claims this is how “we acquire the idea of moral evil, that is to say, *of an action harmful to another which our reason repudiates.*” (*Letters*, Letter V: 151)<sup>86 87</sup>

As a result, for Grouchy, sentiments alone are not sufficient to found morality since she believes that there is no moral perception without reason. As observed by Tegos (2013), such a conception of morality is similar to that of the philosopher Claude-Adrien Helvétius.<sup>88</sup> But it definitely dismisses the possibility of reconciliation between her sensualist approach and Smith’s philosophy. As we have seen, Smith belongs to the sentimentalist tradition; a tradition built in opposition to the philosophers who ground our morality in reason (the rationalist authors represented by Hobbes but also by the French philosophers of the eighteenth century<sup>89</sup>). And Smith is no exception on this point. As shown by his chapter on “those Systems which make Reason the Principle of Approbation” (*TMS*, VII, iii, 2), he was a fervent opponent of the rationalist tradition. Admittedly, Smith grants a role to reason in the formation of the general rules of morality:

[t]he general maxims of morality are formed, like all other general maxims, from experience and induction. We observe in a great variety of particular cases what pleases or displeases our moral faculties, what these approve or disapprove of, and, by induction from this experience, we establish those general rules. But induction is always regarded as one of the operations of reason. From reason, therefore, we are very properly said to derive all those general maxims and ideas. (*TMS*, VII, iii, 2: 319)

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humaines, acquièrent une bonté et une beauté morales : de là naît l’idée de la vertu, c’est-à-dire, *des actions qui font aux autres un plaisir approuvé par la raison.*” (*Lettres*, Lettre V : 73)

<sup>86</sup> “l’idée du mal moral, c’est-à-dire, *d’une action nuisible à autrui et que notre raison désavoue.*” (*Lettres*, Lettre V : 73)

<sup>87</sup> Malherbe concludes that, for Grouchy, “deliberation is an act of reason which dictates what is to be preferred” (Malherbe, 2015: 149).

<sup>88</sup> Here, it is not superfluous to recall that Pierre-George Cabanis, who was presumably the “Cher C\*\*\*” to whom the *Letters* are addressed, was patronized by Anne-Catherine Helvétius, the widow of the writer of *De l’esprit* (1758), who was considered one of the leaders of the self-interest tradition in the eighteenth century.

<sup>89</sup> See Biziou (2015: 237).

But, whereas for Grouchy, reason allows a moral calculus to be performed, for the Scottish philosopher, its operations are limited to induction:

*though reason is undoubtedly the source of the general rules of morality,<sup>90</sup> and of all the moral judgments which we form by means of them; it is altogether absurd and unintelligible to suppose that the first perceptions of right and wrong can be derived from reason, even in those particular cases upon the experience of which the general rules are formed. These first perceptions, as well as all other experiments upon which any general rules are founded, cannot be the object of reason, but of immediate sense and feeling. (TMS, VII, iii, 2: 320; italics added)*

Thus, the marchioness's ambition to supplement Smith's moral philosophy shows that she overlooks the incompatibilities between her sensualist system and Smith's sentimentalist one. Contrary to what she claims, she cannot supplement Smith's analysis because her moral philosophy typically corresponds to the rationalist system of morality of the kind Smith criticizes.

Now, this is not the sole incompatibility between the two authors' systems. This is what we are going to show in the following subsections focusing on their respective principles of sympathy.

## *2.2. How Do People Sympathize? The Role of Imagination*

Grouchy's fourth letter is again an opportunity for her to "take issue with a few of Smith's assertions" (*Letters*, Letter IV: 133). The letter deals with our disposition to sympathize with different kinds of pleasure and pain. For readers of the *TMS*, this echoes Smith's development from the second section of part I. In this section, he establishes a classification of the different passions of human nature according to our disposition to sympathize with them (*TMS*, I, ii: 27). Grouchy takes up this classification, point by point, reversing Smith's hierarchy of passions, on the basis of what she puts to the fore in the previous letters. Though she seems to consider this set of criticisms of secondary importance with regard to the one discussed above

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<sup>90</sup> Notice that Grouchy paraphrases this sentence in the Letter VI (*Letters*, Letter VI: 162-3).

(see *supra*, §2.1), we think that it again reveals fundamental differences between Smith's system and hers. As we are going to show, a major difference lies in the necessity or not of an identification process for the emergence of sympathy. And we believe that Grouchy's minimization of this difference might explain, to some extent, why she overlooks the importance of Smith's "vocabulary of movements", in her translation (see *supra*, §1.2).

The marchioness begins her fourth letter with the following claim:

[W]e sympathize with physical pains and pleasures in proportion to the knowledge we have from our own experience of their force and effects. Similarly, we sympathize in general with moral pains and pleasures, accordingly as we ourselves are susceptible to them. (...) This opinion is contrary to that of the illustrious [*sic*] Smith, and here I am again going to take issue with a few of his assertions. (*Letters*, Letter IV: 133)<sup>91</sup>

Here, Grouchy endorses a classical distinction, for the sensualist philosophers, between two kinds of pain and pleasure: (i) "physical pains and pleasures", on the one hand, and what she calls (ii) "moral pains and pleasures", on the other hand.<sup>92</sup> But beyond this distinction, she maintains that we sympathize with others' (both physical and moral) pleasures and pains according to our own experience of them. Now, as she herself recognizes, this is clearly not the case for Smith since he asserts that we can sympathize with a man who has lost his reason though we have right mind (*TMS*, I, i, 1, §11: 12); a woman in child-bed though we are a man (*TMS*, VII, iii, 1, §4: 317); and the dead though they actually feel nothing at all (*TMS*, I, i, 1, §13: 12).<sup>93</sup> However, Grouchy does not mention these striking examples from the *TMS* to illustrate her opposition to Smith. She focuses instead on a set of assertions from the second section of part I of the book.

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<sup>91</sup> "[N]ous sympathisons avec les peines et les plaisirs physiques, à proportion de la connaissance que nous avons, par notre propre expérience, de leur force et de leurs effets: de même nous sympathisons en général avec les peines et les plaisirs moraux, suivant que nous en sommes nous-mêmes susceptibles [...] Cette opinion est contraire à celle qu'illustre Smith, dont je vais combattre encore ici quelques assertions." (*Lettres*, Lettre IV: 57).

<sup>92</sup> For instance, this distinction was already present in Condillac's philosophy (see Orain, 2012).

<sup>93</sup> This is what Smith calls cases of "illusory sympathy" (*TMS*, II, I, 2: 71).

We are going to emphasize just one of her criticisms as it seems representative of the differences between Smith's sympathy and hers. This criticism is related to our disposition to sympathize with "physical pains", on the one hand, and (ii) "moral pains", on the other.

According to the marchioness, "[o]ur sympathy for physical suffering is stronger, more general, and more deeply felt than for moral sufferings".<sup>94</sup> As she rightly points out, "Smith establishes the contrary proposition" (*Letters*, Letter IV: 134).<sup>95</sup> Using a somewhat different terminology, he also distinguishes between two categories of passions: (i) passions originating in the body such as physical pains and (ii) passions originating in the imagination such as moral pains. But, contrary to Grouchy, he claims that our sympathy is stronger with the latter than the former:

[The passions which take their origin from the body] excite either no sympathy at all, or such a degree of it, as is altogether disproportioned to the violence of what is felt by the sufferer. It is quite otherwise with those passions which take their origin from the imagination (*TMS*, I, ii, 1, §5-6: 29)

Though Grouchy identifies this difference between Smith's system of sympathy and hers, she does not mention its real origin. She criticizes the Scottish philosopher for having:

justifie[d] [his proposition] by saying that the [theatrical] imitation of corporeal pains hardly moves us; that such aping is an object of ridicule rather than compassion, whilst the imitation of moral sufferings awakens more intense impressions in the soul. (*Letters*, Letter IV: 134)<sup>96</sup>

However, Smith's reference to "theatrical imitations" serves just as an illustration of his proposition, not as a justification. Actually, the author's justification comes a few lines later. Smith claims that our sympathy with moral pains is generally stronger than our sympathy with physical pains because:

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<sup>94</sup> Note that Condillac asserts the opposite (see Orain, 2012: 111).

<sup>95</sup> "She could not agree with Smith's contention that moral pain is more capable of eliciting our sympathy than physical pain", Dawson (1991: 160). See also Britton (2009: 91-92).

<sup>96</sup> "Smith établit la proposition contraire, et croit la justifier en disant que l'imitation des douleurs corporelles n'émeut point; qu'elle est un objet de ridicule plutôt que de compassion, tandis que l'imitation des peines morales porte à l'âme les impressions les plus vives." (*Lettres*, Lettre IV: 57-8)

our imaginations can more readily mould themselves upon [the other's] imagination, than our bodies can mould themselves upon his body. (*TMS*, I, ii, 1, §6: 29)

Far from being trivial, Smith's justification reveals a specific feature of his principle of sympathy which implies the role of the imagination: *it relies on an identification process* with the person with whom we sympathize. The need to base sympathy on identification appears from the first lines of *TMS*. It derives from our inability to feel directly the impressions felt by others' senses:

As we have no immediate experience of what other men feel, we can form no idea of the manner in which they are affected, but by conceiving what we ourselves should feel in the like situation. (*TMS*, I, i, 1: 9)

As a result, it is only with the help of the imagination that we can conceive of other's feelings. The process that Smith describes is the following: "by the imagination we place ourselves in his situation" (*TMS*, I, i, 1: 9). In this way, we form a conception of his situation which gives rise to the emotion that we would have felt if we had truly experienced it:

For as to be in pain or distress of any kind excites the most excessive sorrow, so to conceive or to imagine that we are in it, excites some degree of the same emotion. (*TMS*, I, i, 1, §2: 9)

Smith claims that there is sympathy when this emotion concords with the others' emotion.<sup>97</sup>

Now, our disposition to sympathize with others varies with the ease with which we can identify with them. For instance, as it is easier to identify with someone feeling a moral pain than with someone feeling a physical pain, then our disposition to sympathize with the former is the stronger of the two.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> On the meaning of concordance in Smith's system of sympathy, see Bréban (2016).

<sup>98</sup> "A disappointment in love, or ambition, will, upon this account, call forth more sympathy than the greatest bodily evil (...) The loss of a leg may generally be regarded as a more real calamity than the loss of a mistress. It would be a ridiculous tragedy, however, of which the catastrophe was to turn upon a loss of that kind. A misfortune of the other kind, how frivolous soever it may appear to be, has given occasion to many a fine one." (*TMS*, I, ii, 1, §6-7: 29).

Of course, imagination also plays an important part in the marchioness's sympathy.<sup>99</sup> However, it is not the source of an identification process from which our feelings of sympathy supposedly derive. According to Grouchy, these feelings of sympathy originally arise from our sensitivity to our own pains and pleasures:<sup>100</sup>

The first causes of sympathy derive from the nature of the sensations that pleasure and pain cause us to experience. (*Letters*, Letter I: 113)<sup>101</sup>

More specifically, she claims that our sympathy is rooted in our sensitivity to physical sensations since it enables us, first, to sympathize with physical pains and pleasures (see Forget, 2001: 323). The process that she describes is the following. According to Grouchy, physical sensations are composite. They contain a local component, instantaneously affected by the cause of the sensation. But they also contain a general component, a general impression, which affects all our organs and which can persist after the local sensation ceases (*Letters*, Letter I: 108).<sup>102</sup> Grouchy's sympathy relies on this last component. Its main feature is to replicate itself at the mere idea of our past pleasures and pains. Thus, just like remembering our past sensations, to see someone affected by pains and pleasures renews within ourselves the general impression of them (*Letters*, Letter I: 109).<sup>103</sup> This is what Grouchy actually calls sympathy with physical sensation. And this is possible thanks to the imagination, which enables us to receive and keep in mind the ideas capable of renewing these sensations (see *Letters*, Letter I: 109-110). Now, without further detail, she asserts that the same process is at work when we sympathize with moral sensations:

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<sup>99</sup> On Grouchy's sympathy, see especially Forget (2001) and Dumouchel (2010). For a contextual study of the concept of sympathy in the eighteenth century, see Forget (2003).

<sup>100</sup> On this particular aspect of Grouchy's system of sympathy, see Malherbe (2015).

<sup>101</sup> "Les premières causes de la sympathie dérivent de la nature des sensations que nous font éprouver le plaisir et la douleur." (*Lettres*, Lettre I: 36).

<sup>102</sup> According to W. von Humboldt, in his *Journal Parisien (1797-1799)*, P-G. Cabanis would have been sceptical about the distinction between the local and the general physical pain applied to moral sentiments: "Cabanis ne voulait rien savoir même de la différence entre la douleur physique locale et la douleur physique générale appliquée aux sentiments moraux" (Humboldt, 1797-1799: 193).

<sup>103</sup> Grouchy develops her argument by focusing on pain but says at the end of the letter that pleasures follow the same laws.



We suffer in watching [another human being] suffer. And, the idea of his pains likewise becomes troublesome for us because a similar pain would make us suffer, too. It is therefore evident that what we said of physical pain is also true of moral pains, as soon as we are capable of experiencing them. The sight or recollection of the moral pains of another affects us the same way as does the sight or recollection of his physical pains. (...) the sight or memory of the moral or physical pains or pleasures of others [are] accompanied by pain and pleasure in us. (*Letters*, Letter III: 132)<sup>104</sup>

In short, for Grouchy, we sympathize with others' (physical or moral) sensations in proportion to our own experience of their force and effect (see *Letters*, Letter I: 109). This explains, for instance, why, unlike Smith, she asserts that our sympathy with physical pains is stronger than our sympathy with moral pains. According to her, the former are by nature stronger and have more dramatic effects than the latter (see *Letters*, Letter IV, p. 134). And we know this from our own experience. As a result, seeing someone feeling a physical pain elicits a stronger sensation than seeing someone feeling a moral pain.

Thus, contrary to Smith, for Grouchy, it is not identification with others that produces sympathy but our own sensitivity to pleasure and pain and the experience that derives from it. This supports Bernier's interpretation of the divergences between the two authors (see Bernier, 2009, 2010). Bernier claims that Grouchy challenges "the idea according to which sympathy proceeds from imaginary representations" (what we call identification here). And we believe that this might go some way to explaining why Grouchy distanced herself from Smith's vocabulary of movement, which refers to the spectator's identification with the actor, in her translation (see *supra*, §1.2.).

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<sup>104</sup> "Nous souffrons en voyant souffrir [*un autre être*] ; et l'idée de ses peines en est une pour nous, parce qu'une pareille peine nous ferait souffrir nous-mêmes. Il est donc évident que ce que nous avons dit des peines physiques, est vrai aussi des peines morales, du moment que nous en sommes susceptibles. La vue, le souvenir des peines morales d'un autre, nous affectent comme la vue et le souvenir de ses peines physiques [...] le spectacle et le souvenir des peines et des plaisirs moraux ou physiques des autres, sont accompagnés en nous de peines et de plaisirs." (*Lettres*, Lettre III : 56)

### 2.3. Sympathy as a “selfish principle”?

Another major difference between Grouchy’s and Smith’s systems of sympathy lies in the role attributed to self-love. Unlike Grouchy’s, Smith’s concept of sympathy refers to the point of view of the other.<sup>105</sup> In part VII of the *TMS*, while addressing the “[s]ystems which deduce the Principle of Approbation from Self-love” (*TMS*, VII, iii, 1: 315), Smith provides a critical specification of the identification process or, what he calls the “imaginary change of situation” from which sympathy derives:

But though sympathy is very properly said to arise from an imaginary change of situations with the person principally concerned, yet this imaginary change is not supposed to happen to me in my own person and character, but in that of the person with whom I sympathize. (*TMS*, VII, iii, 1: 317)

Thus, through identification, “I not only change circumstances with you”, says Smith, “but I change persons and characters” (*TMS*, VII, iii, 1: 317).<sup>106</sup> Positively, this implies that we imagine the way we would be affected if we were the other person experiencing their situation, so that, the sympathetic emotion which derives from this process refers entirely to the point of view of the other.<sup>107</sup>

By contrast, Grouchy’s sympathy never refers to the other’s point of view since it consists merely in the renewal of an individual’s own past sensations.<sup>108</sup> Whereas in Smith, through the action of sympathy, I become the other by thought and suffer – or feel pleasure – *for him*, in Grouchy, I conversely project the other’s pain on myself and, through sympathy, *this is my*

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<sup>105</sup> Strictly speaking, the recognition of the power of self-love is not what distinguishes the two authors. It can be assumed that there is also, logically, an irreducible individual basis to the working of sympathy in Smith. Genealogically, the very possibility of sympathizing with others presupposes the existence of self-love: if I were indifferent to my own pains, pleasures, and feelings, it is hard to imagine how I could be sensitive to those of others. In other words, the past experience of my own pains and pleasures is a prerequisite for sympathizing with other’s pains and pleasures. The probability of sympathizing is thus favored, in both authors, by past experience of situations and feelings comparable to those that I perceive, or believe I perceive, in others. But the parallel stops there.

<sup>106</sup> “We enter as it were into his body, and become in some measure the same person with him” (*TMS*, I, i, 1, §2: 9).

<sup>107</sup> See Fontaine (1997: 266), Sugden (2002: 75), and Montes (2004: 48-9).

<sup>108</sup> This is probably why there is no place in the *Letters* for cases of illusive sympathy.

*own suffering that I fantasize.*<sup>109</sup> Hence the marchioness goes as far as to characterize the sympathetic phenomenon as a movement of affection directed towards ourselves:

At the sight of pain reflection reminds us that we, like the downtrodden being we perceive, are subject to the tyranny of death, and so reflection draws us closer to the sufferer *by means of an inward emotional and affective turn* that leads us to be concerned with his pains. (*Letters*, Letter II: 115; italics added)<sup>110</sup>

More generally, Grouchy reduces most manifestations of sympathy to the exercise of self-love. This is true for “particular sympathy” which, as we have seen, relies on relations of utility and pleasure (see *supra*, §2.1). But this is also true for “general sympathy” which leads to moral actions. For instance, promoting the welfare of others is a self-centered action. Not only “a selfish pleasure necessarily follows” from “the idea of another’s pleasure or well-being, when we bring these about in others”<sup>111</sup> (*Letters*, Letter V: 147) but it also supposes we choose the action that procures the greatest self-satisfaction (see *supra*, §2.1). The marchioness goes as far as to admit that even among those “whose sensitivity is deeper and more thoughtful”, the pleasure of doing good is “more often mixed with vanity [*amour-propre*]” (*Letters*, Letter V: 153).

As a result, Grouchy’s conception of sympathy seems altogether inconsistent with Smith’s. In the *TMS*, the Scottish philosopher spares no effort to distinguish his own system of sympathy from the kind of system developed by the marchioness that he considers as founded on self-love:

But whatever may be the cause of sympathy, or however it may be excited, nothing pleases us more than to observe in other men a fellow-feeling with all the emotions of our own breast; nor are we ever so much shocked as by the appearance of the contrary. Those who are fond of deducing all our sentiments from certain refinements of self-love, think themselves at no loss to account,

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<sup>109</sup> Our position contrasts with Brown and McClellan’s (2008: 36) according to which Grouchy’s sympathy is a “relational disposition” whereas Smith’s concept is more “individualistic”.

<sup>110</sup> “C’est la réflexion qui, à la vue de la douleur, nous rappelant que *nous sommes sujets de ce tyran destructeur de la vie*, comme l’être que nous en voyons opprimé, nous rapproche de lui *par un mouvement d’émotion et d’attendrissement sur nous-mêmes*, et nous intéresse à ses maux.” (Grouchy 1798, Lettre II : 38; italics added)

<sup>111</sup> “Il résulte nécessairement de la satisfaction que nous fait naturellement éprouver le spectacle ou la seule idée du plaisir, ou du bien-être d’autrui, *un plaisir pour nous-mêmes lorsque nous leur en procurons.*” (*Lettres*, Lettre V : 69-70; italics added)

according to their own principles, both for this pleasure and this pain. Man, say they, conscious of his own weakness, and of the need which he has for the assistance of others, rejoices whenever he observes that they adopt his own passions, because he is then assured of that assistance; and grieves whenever he observes the contrary, because he is then assured of their opposition. But both the pleasure and the pain are always felt so instantaneously, and often upon such frivolous occasions, that it seems evident that neither of them can be derived from any such self-interested consideration. (*TMS*, I, I, 2, §1: 13-14)

Sympathy, however, cannot, in any sense, be regarded as a selfish principle. When I sympathize with your sorrow or your indignation, it may be pretended, indeed, that my emotion is founded in self-love, because it arises from bringing your case home to myself, from putting myself in your situation, and thence conceiving what I should feel in the like circumstances. But [...] [w]hen I condole with you for the loss of your only son, in order to enter into your grief I do not consider what I, a person of such a character and profession, should suffer, if I had a son, and if that son was unfortunately to die: but I consider what I should suffer if I was really you, and I not only change circumstances with you, but I change person and characters. My grief, therefore, is entirely upon your account, and not in the least upon my own. It is not, therefore, in the least selfish. (*TMS*, VII, iii, 1, §4: 317; italics added)

Beyond sympathy strictly speaking, Grouchy's interpretation of the observation of the rules of justice again reflects the gap that separates her from the author of the *TMS*. While Smith was keen to answer this issue with an explanation totally independent of any calculation in terms of self-interest, and even of any consideration in terms of public utility (through a famous discussion with his friend David Hume),<sup>112</sup> Grouchy connects the two types of considerations:

*Personal interest further amplifies this sentiment* [produced by injustice], for everyone possessed of rights cannot witness another's rights being violated without immediately thinking *the disagreeable thought that his own may be violated*. Furthermore, injustice presupposes fraud or violence in those who commit it. It proclaims an enemy to be feared by all. It also produces unsettling feelings of mistrust and fear.<sup>113</sup> (*Letters*, Letter VI: 160; italics added)

Actually, the whole discussion about justice in letters VI and VII is centered on the idea of a “calculation of interests”. If Grouchy considers that man is, in his natural constitution, neither bad nor corrupt, and carries within himself a general ground to be good to his fellows, it is precisely to denounce the harmful nature of bad institutions which, according to her, *offset the self-interest to be just with that of not to be so* (*Letters*, Letter VI: 164). She details in letter VII the various motives which, in society, lead men to have an interest in infringing the law:

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<sup>112</sup> See *TMS*, II, ii, 3 : 85-91.

<sup>113</sup> “*L'intérêt personnel vient encore accroître ce sentiment* [qu'excite l'injustice] ; car chaque homme ayant des droits ne peut voir violer les droits d'autrui sans avoir, d'une manière plus prochaine, *l'idée désagréable de la possibilité de la violation des siens* ; de plus, l'injustice suppose dans celui qui la commet, de la fraude ou de la violence ; elle annonce un ennemi qui est à craindre pour tous ; elle produit aussi le sentiment importun de la méfiance et de la crainte.” (*Lettres*, Lettre VI: 82; italics added)

money, ambition, vanity, and love. And she considers that most of these motives are artificially created and fueled by vicious social institutions and harmful laws when, conversely, “it will not be difficult to show how reasonable laws can *add* to the personal interest of being fair and cement the power of consciousness” (*Letters*, Letter VIII: 95; italics added). In other words, as Pageau (1994: 281) rightly concludes, “the fear of punishment should be sufficient to prevent committing crimes”. Such an arithmetic of passions reveals a Hobbesian vision<sup>114</sup> also shared by the French sensualist thinkers. This is particularly salient in her developments on property rights:

The man who has some property not only feels more strongly that it is just to respect another’s, *but he is checked by the fear of losing his property*, by fear of reprisal, and by the necessity of giving back at least the value of what he has stolen [...] But, will you tell me here, my dear C\*\*\*, what motive and interest would incline someone who has nothing to loose to respect another’s property? (...) if at issue is a craftsman or an established farmer who depends on his own labor for his subsistence, *he has the greatest reason to respect another’s property*, either because without this respect he would soon be unemployed or because even when he has no predictable resources for his subsistence, yet possessing a few garments, some animals, some supplies, and a little furniture, the poorer he is, *the more he must fear the loss of his last resources*. If he lives in abundance, cupidity will exacerbate the fear of being robbed. If he is indigent, this fear must be commensurate with his needs. (*Letters*, Letter VIII: 177-9; italics added)<sup>115</sup>

Such a perspective is entirely at odds with Smith’s and falls again within the scope of his general criticism of authors who “deduce from self-love the interest which we take in the welfare of society, and the esteem which upon that account we bestow upon virtue”. According to him, their “political view [...] cannot possibly be the ground of that approbation and disapprobation with which [we] has always been accustomed to consider those different

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<sup>114</sup> “It is pretending to add Rousseau and Hobbes”, Malherbe (2010, 165) concludes on Grouchy’s views on justice.

<sup>115</sup> “L’homme qui a une propriété, non seulement sent plus fortement qu’il est juste de respecter celle d’autrui, *mais il est retenu par la crainte de perdre la sienne* ; par celle des représailles ; par la nécessité de rendre au moins la valeur de ce qu’il a volé [...] Mais, me direz-vous, mon cher C\*\*\*, par quel motif, par quel intérêt déterminer à respecter la propriété d’autrui, l’homme qui n’a rien à perdre ? (...) s’il s’agit de l’artisan ou du cultivateur établi, que son travail seul fait subsister, *il a le plus grand intérêt à respecter la propriété d’autrui*, soit parce que, sans ce respect, il cesserait bientôt d’être employé, soit parce que même lorsqu’il n’a aucun fonds assuré pour sa subsistance, possédant néanmoins quelques vêtements, quelques bestiaux, quelques provisions et quelques meubles, plus il est pauvre, plus il doit craindre la perte de ces dernières ressources ; s’il est dans l’abondance, la crainte d’être volé doit être plus forte en raison de la cupidité ; s’il est dans l’indigence, elle doit l’être à proportion de ses besoins.” (*Lettres*, Lettre VIII : 97-9; italics added)

qualities [virtue and vice]” (*TMS* VII.iii.1, 316). Of course, sympathy is at the heart of Smith’s criticism which he mischievously concludes with the following words:

That whole account of human nature, however, which deduces all sentiments and affections from self-love, which has made so much noise in the world, but which, so far as I know, has never yet been fully and distinctly explained, seems to me to have arisen from some confused misapprehension of the system of sympathy. (*ibid.*: 317; italics added)

As a result, Smith would probably have considered Grouchy a victim of the same misapprehension. And it is curious that in the *Letters* the marchioness does not defend her system against Smith’s attacks or, at least, say a word about such a major divergence between his and her philosophy.

In the end, Grouchy’s discourse on justice nonetheless symbolizes the opposition between the two authors over the part played by self-interest in their respective analyses, but is also likely to explain why she missed the Smithian distinction between self-love and selfishness.

Although she sometimes uses the French word *égoïste* in a pejorative way in her *Letters* (just as Smith does with the English “selfishness”), Grouchy never explicitly distinguishes between a natural and harmless care for one’s own interest (self-love) and its exaggerated and detrimental form (selfishness). Indeed, it is actually the same “interest” which, in her analysis, can sometimes lead one to be virtuous (to be just) or, on the contrary, vicious (*i.e.* unjust and selfish). And *the very nature of this outcome is in the hands of the legislator* who, by choosing good institutions, is able to promote the “self-interest to be just”, whereas vicious ones produce the opposite effect. Such emphasis on the role of the legislator is altogether consistent with the *normative* and reformist goal of her work.

In Smith, whose purpose is first of all *positive*, self-interest may conversely lead, *without any external intervention*, to virtuous behaviors through the inferior virtue of prudence, the practice of which rests on the will to arouse the impartial spectator’s sympathy. In this perspective, to distinguish between a potentially virtuous kind of self-interest and its

corrupted and vicious form, partly resulting from a lack of self-command, becomes a crucial issue. Grouchy is unconcerned with such an issue, for the simple reason that it is irrelevant to her normative project,<sup>116</sup> and this might explain at least partly why the distinction between self-love and selfishness, so essential in Smith, is neglected, and consequently imperceptible, in her translation.

#### **4. Concluding remarks**

The specific feature of Grouchy's translation of the *TMS* is that it comes with a critical commentary on Smith's moral philosophy: *The Letters on Sympathy*. In this paper, we have considered these two pieces as a whole and built on the marchioness' commentary in order to highlight some of her choices of translation.

This has enabled us to supplement the existing interpretations of Grouchy's choices of translation. More specifically, we have shown that the self-interested basis of her own system of sympathy might explain, at least in part, why she missed the important Smithian distinction between self-love and selfishness. Likewise, we have made the connection between her abandonment of Smith's vocabulary of movements and the absence of an identification process in her own analysis of sympathy.

Of course, our prime use of Grouchy's commentary has been instrumental as we have considered it as the means to shed light on her translation. However, through our investigation, we have made what we believe to be another important discovery: not only is the ambition in the *Letters* to fill the gap between Scottish sentimentalism and French rationalism unsustainable, but Grouchy's philosophy retrospectively leaves itself wide open to

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<sup>116</sup> "The *Theory of Moral Sentiments* is the work of a keen observer and careful reader; Sophie de Grouchy's [Letters] is the work of a social reformer" (Dawson, 1991:161).

Smith's criticisms of his two main opponents: the "rationalist" and the "selfish" systems of morals. And what seems more striking is that Grouchy often tends to overlook these divergences and, in some instances, the inconsistencies between Smith's system and hers.

So it can legitimately be asked why she never makes these crucial divergences explicit in her *Letters*. Was she simply not aware of them? Did she unintentionally underestimate them? Or, on the contrary, did she try to minimize and conceal them on purpose?

The same questions can also be raised about Grouchy's choices of translation. Were they only made for aesthetic reasons? Was she aware of the distances she sometimes takes with Smith's text, and of their consequences: the partial betrayal of its original spirit? If so, did she voluntarily alter Smith's original vocabulary in order to promote her own conceptions?

Unfortunately, all these questions remain unsolved in the absence of reliable information about Grouchy's true intentions. To the best of our knowledge, only three items of evidence provide a basis for conjecture.

The first is an unpublished letter written by Sophie de Grouchy to Roederer (kindly provided by our fellow researcher Nicolas Rieucou).<sup>117</sup> In this letter, sent in 1791 or 1792, the marchioness seems very eager to know whether Roederer is himself preparing a new translation of Smith's *TMS*:

Is it true my dear Roederer, that you have everything ready to publish a new translation of Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments*? My interest in asking you this question is that I am now translating the latest edition, to which I intend to join eight letters on the same subject, which will make at least two volumes. The first is ready to be published [...] (our translation)<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> LED, University Paris 8 - 2 rue de la Liberté, 93526 Saint-Denis.

<sup>118</sup> "Est-il vrai mon cher Roederer que vous ayez tout prêt à faire paraître une nouvelle traduction de la *Théorie des sentiments moraux* de Smith ? Mon intérêt pour vous faire cette question, vient de ce que je fais en ce moment la traduction de la dernière édition à laquelle je compte joindre 8 lettres sur le même sujet, ce qui fera au moins 2 vol. Le 1er est prêt à paraître [...]" (Archives nationales, 29AP10, p. 234, pièce #2).



The second item is another letter from Grouchy to Dumont,<sup>119</sup> dated from spring 1792. This letter gives a clear indication that, by this time, her *Letters on Sympathy* were almost completed. However, the translation of the *TMS* is not explicitly mentioned:

Here are the shapeless manuscripts I have talked about to M. Dumont or rather the unreadable drafts. I have lost the eighth letter on sympathy [...] (our translation).<sup>120</sup>

The third item is the second paragraph of Grouchy *Letters on Sympathy* in which the marchioness implies that she started to write her commentary of the *TMS* before having translated the book:

However, I had not yet read Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments*. I had heard bad things said about the French translation of this famous work, and I did not understand enough English to read the original. I finally dared to undertake this task, but instead of following the ideas of the Edinburgh philosopher, I gave my own ideas free rein. In reading his chapters on sympathy, I concocted others of my own on the same subject. I will write them out for you in turn, so that you may judge me. (*Letters*, Letter I: 108)<sup>121</sup>

All these elements tend to suggest that the *Letters* were completed before the translation and that Grouchy mostly considered the latter as a way to promote her own opinions and very normative project. As recalled by Forget (2010), during the eighteenth century, women were more numerous among translators than in the scientific world,<sup>122</sup> so, for women, translating may have been a “more accessible route to participation in the scientific conversation” (Forget, 2010: 654). From this perspective, it is not completely absurd to imagine that Grouchy could have both distorted Smith's original vocabulary in order to bring the *TMS* more into line with her own opinions and ignored Smith's criticisms of the kind of system that she defends. Now this is only conjecture, and, on these matters, as the French say, “we are walking on eggshells”.

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<sup>119</sup> See Martin (1927: 121).

<sup>120</sup> “Voici les manuscrits informes dont j'ai parlé à M. Dumont, ou plutôt les indéchiffrables brouillons. J'ai égaré la 8ème lettre sur la sympathie [...]” (Martin, 1927: 121)

<sup>121</sup> “Cependant, je n'avais pas encore lu la *Théorie des sentiments moraux* de Smith : j'avais ouï dire du mal de la traduction française de cet ouvrage célèbre, et je n'entendais pas assez l'anglais pour lire l'original : j'ai osé enfin l'entreprendre ; mais au lieu de suivre les idées du philosophe d'Edimbourg, je me suis laissé aller aux miennes. En lisant ses chapitres sur la sympathie, j'en faisais d'autres sur le même sujet : je vous les écrirai successivement, afin que vous me jugiez?” (*Lettres*, Lettre I : 30).

<sup>122</sup> See Forget (2010: 662).

## 5. References

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