

Background for "Who's the Judge Now?"

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August 2026

Overview

This imagined letter in Adam Smith's voice draws almost entirely from *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (hereafter TMS, 1759; citations follow the Glasgow Edition, 6th ed., 1790). Citations follow Part.Section.Chapter.Paragraph.

A note on sources. Smith's fullest treatment of self-command appears in the material he added to the sixth edition of 1790 — Part VI, "Of the Character of Virtue," whose third section is titled "Of Self-command" — but the doctrine is developed across Part III ("Of the Foundation of our Judgments concerning our own Sentiments and Conduct") as well. The letter therefore rests principally on TMS III and TMS VI.iii.

The letter advances the following claims drawn from Smith's writings:

1. Self-command is the master virtue, the one from which the other virtues seem to derive their principal lustre (TMS VI.iii.11).
2. Self-command is not possessed in mature form at birth but is acquired through social discipline, built up over a lifetime in what Smith called "the great school of self-command" (TMS III.3.21–22).
3. Moral self-judgment is the work of an internal figure — the impartial spectator, "the man within, the great judge and arbiter of our conduct" — whose judgments self-command enables us to keep present, adopt, and obey (TMS III.3.4, the verbatim phrase; the close variant at III.2.32; and the same figure described at III.3.25).
4. Passion, when strong or loud enough, does not overrule the impartial spectator's verdict so much as it drowns that verdict out: the judgment of the man within is "so much shaken in the steadiness and firmness of [their] decision" as to be "in a great measure destroyed," and may be "entirely overlooked and disregarded" (TMS III.2.32; III.3.26).
5. Of all the corrupters of moral sentiments, faction and fanaticism are the greatest; amid the violence and rage of contending parties the impartial spectator is at his greatest distance, opponents are, in the letter's courtroom idiom, stripped of "standing," and candour itself becomes a mark of treason (TMS III.3.43).
6. The passion so induced does not feel like the loss of judgment; through self-deceit, a partial view of one's own conduct is experienced as an impartial one (TMS III.4.4–6).
7. The person of real constancy keeps the impartial spectator constantly present and never dares to forget his judgment — which is why the defeat of self-command, however common, is never final (TMS III.3.25).

As in the earlier background papers, I back each major claim with Smith's texts. Every phrase quoted from Smith in the letter is verified to the paragraph level against the Glasgow Edition. Where quotation marks identify the letter's own wording, a contemporary term, or an authorial formulation rather than Smith's text, I identify the relevant basis separately.

1. The Spine: The Defeat of Self-Command as a Business Model

Letter's claim: "They have made the defeat of your self-command their business model." The opening section frames the injury: that "some of the largest enterprises of your age" work directly on the passions "on purpose," growing rich "by keeping your passions lit."

Textual Basis

The spine sentence has two components. The first — that self-command is a faculty of governing one's passions, and that its defeat matters gravely — is thoroughly Smith's, and is documented in Sections 2 through 4 below.

The second — that a modern industry has made the defeat of self-command a business model, deliberately and for profit — is mine. Smith describes the mechanism through which such an industry could operate: violent or clamorous passion overwhelming self-command. But the claim that an industry is systematically manufacturing such passion at scale because doing so is profitable is the letter's own diagnosis, built on Smith's framework rather than drawn from his text.

The empirical premise behind this contemporary claim is not a Smith claim. It rests on two publicly documented facts: many major platforms earn advertising revenue from impressions or user actions and identify user engagement as commercially material; and empirical research finds that moral-emotional language is associated with greater sharing online. I use those facts only to motivate the Smithian extension, not as textual evidence from Smith.

The opening enumerates three exploited passions — "your anger, your fear, your hunger to belong" — and I should be exact about how each stands to Smith, because they do not stand identically. Anger and fear are, for Smith, the paradigmatic driving passions (TMS VI.iii.3, discussed in Section 4 below). The "hunger to belong" is different in kind. It reaches back to Smith's account of our desire for the approval and fellow-feeling of others — the desire, in his terms, to be loved and to be lovely (TMS III.2.1–7), which the first letter of this series treated at length. I want to be careful here not to overstate a connection: Smith does not say that faction operates by gratifying the desire for praise, and the letter does not claim he does. In Smith, faction is not itself one of the passions in the two-class taxonomy of VI.iii; it is a condition — "the animosity of hostile factions" (TMS III.3.43) — that inflames the passions, chiefly anger, and that corrupts judgment. The desire to belong and the furious animosity of faction are distinct mechanisms in Smith. The letter's contribution is to observe that a modern industry can profitably engage all three levers at once — fear, anger, and the desire to belong — and that the third, belonging, is what turns ordinary anger into the tribal anger of Section 4. That the three can be worked together, and worked for profit, is my synthesis; that each is a genuine motive is Smith's.

2. Self-Command, the Impartial Spectator, and the Mechanism of Defeat

Letter's claim: "By self-command, I do not mean refusing a second slice of cake. I mean the power ... on what you decided in a calm hour, not what you crave in a hot one." "Above it presides a judge, the one I called the impartial spectator: 'the man within, the great judge and arbiter of our conduct.'" "That is what self-command is for: keeping the judge's voice clear when a passion tries to drown it out." "Let a passion grow violent enough, and it overwhelms your self-command — the judge's verdict never reaches you, not defied, simply never heard."

Textual Basis

This section carries the conceptual weight of the letter, and it is well grounded in Smith.

Self-command as acting on cool judgment against present passion. The letter's definition — acting on "what you decided in a calm hour, not what you crave in a hot one" — is fully Smith's in substance. In TMS VI.iii.1, self-command is the faculty by which a man holds to "the rules which he himself, in all his sober and cool hours, approves of," against passions that "sometimes ... drive him and sometimes ... seduce him to violate" them. My "calm hour / hot hour" is a compression of Smith's "sober and cool hours" set against the "solicitations" of present passion (TMS VI.iii.1–3).

Self-command as the master virtue. Documented in Section 3 below (TMS VI.iii.11).

The impartial spectator as "the man within, the great judge and arbiter of our conduct." This is a verbatim quotation, and it is worth being precise about its location. The exact phrase the letter uses appears at TMS III.3.4: "It is reason, principle, conscience, the inhabitant of the breast, the man within, the great judge and arbiter of our conduct." A close variant appears at TMS III.2.32 — "the man within the breast, the great judge and arbiter of their conduct" — but with a different pronoun and "the man within the breast" rather than "the man within." The letter's wording is the III.3.4 wording, and that is the citation. The characterization of this figure as an internal judge is Smith's own governing metaphor: he calls the man within "the great judge and arbiter" of our conduct (TMS III.3.4; III.2.32), and describes the appeal to conscience as an appeal from the man without to "a much higher tribunal, to the tribunal of their own consciences" (TMS III.2.32). The letter's courtroom vocabulary — the judge, the bench, the verdict, standing, the court — therefore develops an image Smith supplies, rather than importing one.

"Above it presides a judge ... this power is not supreme." The letter's ranking — self-command is not the highest thing; the judge presides above it — reflects Smith's actual hierarchy. Smith frames the man within as the higher of two tribunals: an appeal lies from the judgment of "the man without" to that of "the man within," "the great judge and arbiter of conduct" (TMS III.2.32). Self-command is the faculty by which a person brings his conduct and even his sentiments into conformity with that judge (TMS III.3.25). I chose the verb "presides" deliberately: a judge may preside over a court that does not heed him — which is precisely the letter's point — whereas "reigns" or "rules" would imply an authority actually obeyed, the very thing the letter goes on to deny. The word is faithful to Smith's structure: the spectator holds rightful authority whether or not the agent, overcome by passion, actually conforms.

The relation between the judge's verdict and self-command's execution. This is the one place the letter draws a sharper line than Smith draws. Smith does not cleanly separate judgment from execution into two faculties; in his account the two are deeply fused — self-command largely is the habit of judging with the spectator's eyes and conforming one's sentiments to his. At TMS III.3.25 he writes that the wise man "does not merely affect the sentiments of the impartial spectator. He really adopts them. He almost identifies himself with, he almost becomes himself that impartial spectator, and scarce even feels but as that great arbiter of his conduct directs him to feel." The letter's framing — the judge renders the verdict, self-command keeps his voice audible so that the verdict can be heard and obeyed — is a schematic clarification I introduced for a modern reader. It is consistent with Smith and it makes the mechanism legible, but it is tidier than Smith's own account, and I flag it as mine. The letter mitigates the tidiness by casting self-command's task in Smith's own developmental and attentional terms ("keeping the judge's voice clear"); the difficulty is precisely to retain the spectator's view when passion pulls the other way (TMS III.3.25).

The mechanism of defeat: "the judge's verdict never reaches you, not defied, simply never heard." This is the letter's most important mechanical claim. Smith's most exact statement of it is at TMS III.2.32, in the passage on the man within confronted by the clamour of the man without. There Smith writes:

“...the man within may immediately correct this false judgment, and assure us, that we are by no means the proper objects of that censure which has so unjustly been bestowed upon us. But in this and in some other cases, the man within seems sometimes, as it were, astonished and confounded by the vehemence and clamour of the man without. The violence and loudness, with which blame is sometimes poured out upon us, seems to stupify and benumb our natural sense of praise-worthiness and blame-worthiness; and the judgments of the man within, though not, perhaps, absolutely altered or perverted, are, however, so much shaken in the steadiness and firmness of their decision, that their natural effect, in securing the tranquillity of the mind, is frequently in a great measure destroyed. We scarce dare to absolve ourselves, when all our brethren appear loudly to condemn us.”

This is precisely the letter's mechanism: the verdict is not reversed but drowned out — "not, perhaps, absolutely altered," yet its effect "in a great measure destroyed." Smith states the extreme case at TMS III.3.26: overwhelmed by "their own pain and their own fear," most people "could attend to nothing" but the passion, so that "not only the judgment of the ideal man within the breast, but that of the real spectators who might happen to be present, would be entirely overlooked and disregarded." The letter's "never reaches you ... simply never heard" reflects Smith's "overlooked and disregarded," and its auditory framing — the judge "drowned out," his voice kept "clear" or "loud and clear" by self-command — is my image; but "stupify and benumb," "shaken in the steadiness and firmness of their decision," and "overlooked and disregarded" are Smith's, and they authorize the letter's claim that the failure lies in the verdict's reception, not in its content.

3. The Development of Self-Command, and Its Standing Among the Virtues

Letter's claim: "You were not born with this power. You built it, slowly, over a lifetime." Implicit throughout: self-command is the faculty from which the others take their reliability.

Textual Basis

Self-command as acquired, not innate. The claim that self-command is "built ... slowly, over a lifetime" is directly Smith's. At TMS III.3.22 he describes the child's entry into "the great school of self-command," where "it studies to be more and more master of itself, and begins to exercise over its own feelings a discipline which the practice of the longest life is very seldom sufficient to bring to complete perfection." The letter's "built, slowly, over a lifetime" renders "the practice of the longest life" almost exactly. Smith develops the acquisition of self-command through social experience — the child among its companions, then the discipline of the world — across TMS III.3.21–25.

Self-command as the master virtue. Though the letter states this obliquely rather than quoting it, the claim underwrites the whole piece, and it is Smith's most emphatic statement on the subject: "Self-command is not only itself a great virtue, but from it all the other virtues seem to derive their principal lustre" (TMS VI.iii.11). This licenses the letter's stakes: that the defeat of self-command is not the loss of one virtue among many but the undermining of the faculty on which the reliability of all the others depends.

4. The Passions That Defeat Self-Command: Drive, Seduce, and Faction

Letter's claim: "Outrage sells — and of all the passions, it is best at shouting down the judge." "What keeps it lit is tribal anger — the fury of your tribe against the other." "That is the oldest and most complete silencing of the judge within ... 'faction and fanaticism have always been by far the greatest.'"

The section then develops the two-fold corruption: tribalism "strips others of their humanity" and, more deeply, makes one "no longer judge for yourself."

Textual Basis

This is the letter's climax, and it rests above all on TMS III.3.43, the richest single passage in Smith for the letter's purposes.

Anger as a driving passion; the two classes. Smith divides the passions into two classes at TMS VI.iii.2–3: those "which it requires a considerable exertion of self-command to restrain even for a single moment," and those "which it is easy to restrain for a single moment ... but which, by their continual and almost incessant sollicitations," mislead us over time. "Fear and anger ... constitute the first class. The love of ease, of pleasure, of applause, and of many other selfish gratifications, constitute the second." Smith's summary line is exact: "The former set of passions may often be said to drive, the latter, to seduce us from our duty" (TMS VI.iii.3). The letter draws on this taxonomy only lightly — it takes anger and fear, the driving passions, as its focus, because these are what the modern industry amplifies — and it does not attempt to walk through both classes. My compression "raw anger burns out" is not Smith's; it is a bridge from generic outrage to the sustained tribal outrage that is the letter's real subject.

The grandfather contrast. The letter's claim that "your grandfather's anger, when it came, was largely his own," whereas the reader's is "manufactured, aimed, and delivered — all day, chosen just for you," is my contemporary observation, not a claim from Smith. It is not a claim about the quantity of provocation earlier generations faced — Smith's own century had ample faction, war, and public rage — but about its character: that modern provocation is engineered and personally targeted. The qualifier "largely" is deliberate, conceding that no one's anger is ever wholly self-generated. This is illustration.

Faction as the greatest corrupter. "Faction and fanaticism have always been by far the greatest" is verbatim from TMS III.3.43. Smith's full sentence: "Of all the corrupters of moral sentiments, therefore, faction and fanaticism have always been by far the greatest." The letter's rendering is exact. Its use of "moral judgment" for Smith's "moral sentiments" in the surrounding prose — never inside the quotation — is discussed in the note on terminology below.

Faction drives the impartial spectator to his greatest distance. The letter's claim that tribalism produces "the oldest and most complete silencing of the judge within" renders Smith's claim at TMS III.3.43 that "the real, revered, and impartial spectator ... is, upon no occasion, at a greater distance than amidst the violence and rage of contending parties. To them, it may be said, that such a spectator scarce exists any where in the universe." The letter quotes both "the violence and rage of contending parties" and "scarce exists any where in the universe" verbatim. Smith's point — that faction, more than any other condition of human life, removes the impartial vantage — is exactly the letter's.

The first wound: stripping opponents of their standing. The letter's first wound — that tribalism strips the opposing side of its humanity, so that "the strangers across from you, however wrong ... believe themselves in the right, exactly as you do," cease to be granted "standing" — renders Smith's account of how faction dehumanizes the adversary. At TMS III.3.43, Smith observes that to the party man, opponents become merely "those unlucky persons, who, when things have come to a certain degree of violence, have the misfortune to be of the weaker party" — rebels and heretics whose standing as fellow creatures deserving candid judgment has been withdrawn. The letter's rendering — the opponent becomes "the enemy ... figures to be beaten, not minds to be understood" — compresses this. The specific legal term "standing" (the right to be heard in court) is mine, chosen to extend the letter's courtroom imagery;

the underlying claim, that faction withdraws from the opponent the fair hearing the impartial spectator would grant, is Smith's.

The second wound: the surrender of independent judgment, and the hatred of candour. The letter's second and "deeper" wound — that in the grip of the tribe "you no longer judge for yourself: the verdict you follow is the tribe's," and that "to form your own is disloyal — a betrayal your people will not forgive" — is the letter's most important connection to its own thesis, and it is grounded in Smith's treatment of the party man's hostility to candour. The relevant passage (TMS III.3.43) is worth quoting in full, since it carries two of the letter's quotations and the substance of a third:

"In a nation distracted by faction, there are, no doubt, always a few, though commonly but a very few, who preserve their judgment untainted by the general contagion. They seldom amount to more than, here and there, a solitary individual, without any influence, excluded, by his own candour, from the confidence of either party, and who, though he may be one of the wisest, is necessarily, upon that very account, one of the most insignificant men in the society. All such people are held in contempt and derision, frequently in detestation, by the furious zealots of both parties. A true party-man hates and despises candour; and, in reality, there is no vice which could so effectually disqualify him for the trade of a party-man as that single virtue. The real, revered, and impartial spectator, therefore, is, upon no occasion, at a greater distance than amidst the violence and rage of contending parties. To them, it may be said, that such a spectator scarce exists any where in the universe. Even to the great Judge of the universe, they impute all their own prejudices, and often view that Divine Being as animated by all their own vindictive and implacable passions. Of all the corrupters of moral sentiments, therefore, faction and fanaticism have always been by far the greatest." (TMS III.3.43)

The letter's language of loyalty and betrayal is not Smith's vocabulary here, but it names what Smith describes: the party's demand that its members' judgment conform to the party, on pain of being held "in contempt and derision, frequently in detestation." That the candid individual is treated as a kind of traitor — disqualified from "the trade of a party-man" by "that single virtue" — is exactly the dynamic the letter compresses into "disloyal." The letter's "you take your side's ruling and call it your own" is my modern formulation of the resulting condition; it is the hinge on which the final section's "crowd-command" turns, but the condition it names — judgment surrendered to the party — is Smith's.

Why the surrendered judgment feels like clarity: self-deceit. The letter claims, in "The Business of Your Anger," that "the manufactured rage does not feel like losing your judgment. It feels like clarity — like finally seeing who the villains are." This is the letter's subtlest psychological claim, and Smith supplies its ground in the chapter on self-deceit (TMS III.4). There Smith writes that "so partial are the views of mankind with regard to the propriety of their own conduct, both at the time of action and after it," that it is extremely "difficult ... for them to view it in the light in which any indifferent spectator would consider it" (III.4.5).

Worse, we actively feed the passions that mislead us: rather than see our own conduct honestly, "we too often, foolishly and weakly, endeavour to exasperate anew those unjust passions which had formerly misled us; we endeavour by artifice to awaken our old hatreds, and irritate afresh our almost forgotten resentments" (III.4.4).

Smith calls this "self-deceit, this fatal weakness of mankind ... the source of half the disorders of human life" (III.4.6). The letter's claim that manufactured rage feels like clarity is precisely Smith's self-deceit: a partial view of one's own cause, experienced from the inside as an impartial one.

This is crucial: the letter's most unsettling line is fully grounded in Smith's account of self-deceit (TMS III.4).

The business incentive, and the counterfeit judge. The section "The Business of Your Anger" returns to the letter's contemporary extension (Section 1). The claim that a business that "profits from your attention and finds that nothing holds it like fury, fear, and tribalism has a standing interest in keeping your passions enraged — and the judge drowned out" is my application of Smith's mechanism to a modern commercial incentive; it is not a claim in Smith. It is, however, consistent with Smith's general account of how self-interest operates in a commercial society, and with his psychology of faction: an interested party profits by keeping the impartial spectator at a distance.

The one image in this section that clearly exceeds Smith is the counterfeit — "a louder voice that speaks with perfect confidence and always agrees with your anger." Smith describes the impartial spectator as driven to a distance and drowned out (III.2.32; III.3.43); he does not describe a rival voice installed in the spectator's place. The "louder voice" is my embellishment, faithful in spirit to the self-deceit of III.4 (the party man is left with a confident, partial substitute for fair judgment) but not a Smith formulation, and I flag it as mine.

5. Crowd-Command: The Result and the Stakes

Letter's claim: "It is the power to look at your own life and say, calmly, this is right, that is not. An industry has discovered it can take that power from you — at great profit." "Self-command becomes crowd-command." "Every hour you spend in that state is an hour you are not free." "He is drowned out — which means he can be heard again, as he is in the person who has kept him close: 'The man of real constancy and firmness ... thoroughly bred in the great school of self-command ... has never dared to forget for one moment the judgment which the impartial spectator would pass upon his sentiments and conduct.' ... The only question is whether you will listen."

Textual Basis

The value at stake: judging one's own life. The letter's claim that the most valuable thing one owns is "the power to look at your own life and say, calmly, this is right, that is not" is a plain-language rendering of the office of the impartial spectator — the internal capacity for moral self-judgment that Smith makes the center of TMS Part III (see especially III.2.31–32 and III.3.4). That this capacity is what distinguishes considered, self-governing conduct from conduct driven by external forces is Smith's throughout Part III.

"Self-command becomes crowd-command." This is my coinage. It compresses a claim that the preceding sections establish from Smith: that when self-command fails and the impartial spectator is drowned out, moral judgment does not cease but is instead supplied by the surrounding party or crowd (TMS III.3.43).

"An hour you are not free." The letter identifies the loss of self-command with the loss of freedom, and the identification follows directly from Smith's definition of the faculty. Self-command, for Smith, is the capacity to act on "the rules which he himself, in all his sober and cool hours, approves of," rather than on the passions that "drive" or "seduce" him (TMS VI.iii.1). To lose that capacity — to be moved instead by passions an interested party has induced — is to lose a kind of freedom in a plain and exact sense: one is no longer the author of one's own conduct, but is acted upon. The word "free" is mine, and the claim is not about political liberty in the narrow sense of votes and offices; it is the more basic claim that a person governed by manufactured passion has surrendered self-government at its root. That rests on Smith's

account of self-command (VI.iii.1) together with the faction analysis of III.3.43, where judgment is surrendered to the party.

The recoverability of the judge, and the person of real constancy. The letter's hopeful close — that the judge "is not gone" but only "drowned out," and so "can be heard again" — is grounded in Smith's portrait of the person of settled character at TMS III.3.25. The closing quotation is verbatim from that paragraph, with two marked elisions: "The man of real constancy and firmness ... thoroughly bred in the great school of self-command ... has never dared to forget for one moment the judgment which the impartial spectator would pass upon his sentiments and conduct." The first ellipsis compresses "the wise and just man who has been" (a doubled descriptor); the second compresses the intervening clauses ("in the bustle and business of the world, exposed, perhaps, to the violence and injustice of faction ... maintains this control of his passive feelings upon all occasions ... he has often been under the necessity of supporting this manhood"). Both elisions are marked, and neither distorts Smith's meaning.

Here is the whole of TMS III.3.25:

"The man of real constancy and firmness, the wise and just man who has been thoroughly bred in the great school of self-command, in the bustle and business of the world, exposed, perhaps, to the violence and injustice of faction, and to the hardships and hazards of war, maintains this control of his passive feelings upon all occasions; and whether in solitude or in society, wears nearly the same countenance, and is affected very nearly in the same manner. In success and in disappointment, in prosperity and in adversity, before friends and before enemies, he has often been under the necessity of supporting this manhood. He has never dared to forget for one moment the judgment which the impartial spectator would pass upon his sentiments and conduct. He has never dared to suffer the man within the breast to be absent one moment from his attention. With the eyes of this great inmate he has always been accustomed to regard whatever relates to himself. This habit has become perfectly familiar to him. He has been in the constant practice, and, indeed, under the constant necessity, of modelling, or of endeavouring to model, not only his outward conduct and behaviour, but, as much as he can, even his inward sentiments and feelings, according to those of this awful and respectable judge. He does not merely affect the sentiments of the impartial spectator. He really adopts them. He almost identifies himself with, he almost becomes himself that impartial spectator, and scarce even feels but as that great arbiter of his conduct directs him to feel." (TMS III.3.25)

"The only question is whether you will listen — and if you will not, the crowd is always waiting to decide for you." The closing sentences locate the remaining agency correctly within Smith's mechanism: the judge continues to render verdicts ("Your judge has not stopped ruling"); what is in the person's power is whether to attend to them. This is consistent with the mechanism established in Section 2 — the spectator's judgment is not destroyed but may be drowned out — and the final clause returns to the "crowd-command" theme, closing the letter on the standing alternative to self-government: government by the party. The framing of the choice as ongoing (whether one "will listen," repeatedly) is truer to Smith's picture of self-command as a lifelong and never-completed discipline (TMS III.3.22) than a single turning point would be.

Conclusion

Every doctrinal claim attributed to Smith in "Who's the Judge Now?" is grounded in Adam Smith's writings, and nearly all of the letter's substance is drawn from two concentrated bodies of text: TMS Part III, on the foundation of our judgments concerning our own conduct, and TMS VI.iii, on self-command.

The letter's spine — that an industry has made the defeat of self-command its business model — joins a Smithian mechanism to a contemporary commercial diagnosis.

From that spine the letter (1) defines self-command as acting on cool judgment against present passion (TMS VI.iii.1), and identifies the impartial spectator as the internal judge whose verdicts self-command carries out (TMS III.3.4; III.2.32); (2) shows that passion defeats self-command by drowning the spectator's verdict out rather than by overruling it (TMS III.2.32; III.3.26); (3) identifies tribal anger — Smith's faction — as the most complete such defeat, traces its two-fold corruption of judgment (the withdrawal of standing from opponents and the surrender of independent judgment to the party, with candour becoming a mark of treason, TMS III.3.43), and grounds the claim that the resulting rage "feels like clarity" in Smith's chapter on self-deceit (TMS III.4.4–6); and (4) names the result "crowd-command" and identifies its cost as the loss of the freedom to judge one's own life, closing on the recoverability of the judge and Smith's portrait of the person who keeps him constantly present (TMS III.3.25). The developmental claim that self-command is acquired over a lifetime (TMS III.3.22) and the claim that it is the master virtue from which the others take their lustre (TMS VI.iii.11) underwrite the whole.

A note on terminology. The letter uses "tribalism," "tribe," and "the other side" where Smith uses "faction" and "party." This is deliberate: "faction" has faded from ordinary usage, while "tribalism" is the word a contemporary reader applies to the phenomenon Smith described — the sorting of persons into camps whose loyalty overrides their judgment. The letter accordingly reserves "faction" and "party-man" for the direct quotations from Smith and uses "tribalism" in its own prose, so that the reader may see why Smith's "faction" is the closest Smithian analog to what contemporary readers call political tribalism. The letter's language of "loyalty" and "disloyalty" in the second-wound passage is likewise a modernization: Smith does not use "loyalty" there, but the party's demand that its members' judgment conform to it — on pain of being "held in contempt and derision, frequently in detestation" — is exactly what he describes (TMS III.3.43). The letter also speaks of the corruption of "moral judgment" where Smith writes of "moral sentiments" (TMS III.3.43); this is a minor modernization in the surrounding prose only — Smith's phrase is preserved intact within every quotation — and reflects the letter's emphasis on the faculty of judgment, which for Smith is inseparable from moral sentiment.

A final note on the impartial spectator as "judge." The letter's sustained courtroom imagery — the judge, the bench, the verdict, standing, the court — might appear to be an imposition on Smith. It is not. Smith himself calls the man within "the great judge and arbiter of our conduct" (TMS III.3.4; III.2.32), frames conscience as a "much higher tribunal" to which appeal lies from the judgment of the world (TMS III.2.32), and calls the wise man's inner authority "that great arbiter of his conduct" (TMS III.3.25). The letter develops an image Smith supplies.