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editors

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PUBLIC AND PRIVATE IN THOUGHT AND PRACTICE

Perspectives on a Grand Dichotomy

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"Two Different Sorts of Commerce"—Friendship and Strangership in Civil Society

Allan Silver

Personal Is Private, Impersonal Is Public

In modern sensibility, personal relations are widely understood to inhabit and define a distinctive domain of private life, the special preserve of valuable moral qualities such as intimacy, affection, generosity, and trust. Thus, a discussion of exemptions from the legal requirement to provide testimony about the words and conduct of others argues:

> Although one can imagine [that] . . . individuals might come to trust or love one another without communicating privately . . . [p]rivacy permits people to share intimacies and ideas on their own terms, and thus to establish those mutual reciprocal relinquishments of the self that underlie the relations of love, friendship and trust. Without a reserve of privacy, we would have nothing to share and, hence, nothing to build upon in our human relationships save fear, mistrust and combatitiveness. The ability to shield ourselves from public view permits the exchange of intimate confidences necessary to establish a secure love or trust. The right to privacy is thus an inseparable aspect of our humanity.[1]

Personal relations are prevailingly defined and experienced as antipodal to the impersonal structures of modern society—the domains of market exchange, legal contract, bureaucracy, the state. Poets and economists, in their separate fashions, have elaborated this great divide of modern life. An interwar poet, Christopher Caudwell, puts the idea in a romantic, quasi-Marxist version of which Tonnies is the classic instance:

> As . . . [commodity] relations produced industrial capitalism and the modern bourgeois State, it sucked the tenderness out of all social rela-

This essay owes much to Jeff Weintraub's exceptional mix of warm empathy, detached acuity, and tireless perseverance. It has also benefitted from a careful reading by Samuel Fleischacker. Unattributed translations from the French are mine.

1. Thomas Krattenmaker, "Interpersonal Testimonial Privileges under the 'Federal Rules of Evidence,'" *Georgetown Law Journal* 64 (1976): 615.

> tions . . . [L]ove and economic relations have gathered at two opposite poles. All the unused tenderness of man's instincts gather at one pole and at the other are economic relations, reduced to bare coercive rights, to commodities.[2]

In the late-nineteenth-century's major treatise in neoclassical economics, Alfred Marshall offers a dispassionate variant: " 'Business' . . . includes all provision for the wants of others . . . made in the expectation of payment. . . . It is thus contrasted with . . . those kindly services which are prompted by friendship and family affection." [3] In both culture and theory, "love, friendship and trust," the "tenderness . . . of social relations," and "kindly services . . . prompted by friendship and family affection" are most commonly understood as historical survivals in a modern world dominated by impersonal economic and bureaucratic institutions, survivals whose fragility renders them the more precious. Historical and anthropological scholarship has barely affected this vision's hold not only on many romantics, Marxists, and conservatives both religious and cultural, but on some liberals as well.[4] The idea persists that there is an incompatible tension in modern life, ranging from incongruity to antagonism, between the private domain of the personal and morally generous on the one hand, and the public domain of the impersonal and instrumental on the other—and that the former historically precedes, and is antipodal to, the latter.

This essay argues, instead, that this domain of the private, however suffused by historical imagery, is less a historical survival than a distinctive creation of the impersonal order central to modern economies and polities. The private sphere understood as the ideal arena of love, tenderness, and "kindly services" requires the very impersonality of the public world of bureaucratic administration, contractualism, and monetized exchange against which it is culturally distinguished. This analysis is not new.[5] It dates seminally to the Scottish Enlightenment of the eighteenth century, which proposed that market society

2. Christopher Caudwell, *Studies In a Dying Culture* [1938] (London: Bodley Head, 1948), pp. 153, 156–57.

3. Alfred Marshall, *Principles of Economics* [1890] (London: MacMillan, 1927), p. 291.

4. As in Cooley's influential treatment of the "primary group." See chapters 1 through 5 of Charles Horton Cooley, *Social Organization* [1909]. See also chapters 8 through 11 of Fred Hirsch, *Social Limits to Growth.*

5. For anthropological and historical expressions, see, respectively, Robert Paine, "In Search of Friendship: An Exploratory Analysis in Middle Class Culture"; and Michael Anderson, *Family Structure in Nineteenth Century Lancashire,* and "The Impact on the Family Relationships of the Elderly of Changes Since Victorian Times in Governmental Income Maintenance Provision," in Ethel Shanas and Marvin Sussman's edited volume, *Family, Bureaucracy and the Elderly.*

and the administered polity, far from being in tension with personal relations valued for their anti-instrumental qualities, are key to their essential attributes. The theoretical contribution of the Scots—Adam Smith, David Hume, and others—remains so powerful that to recover it, far from being an antiquarian exercise, bears centrally on current interpretive concerns.

Smith, Hume, and other contemporaries argue that "commercial society" [6] introduces a historically unprecedented distinction between self-interested relations and personal bonds that are normatively free of instrumental and calculative orientations. On this view, market society has constitutive significance for the emergence of a new sphere of the private characterized by new forms of personal relations, the ethos of which is quite distinct from that of market exchange. This newly "private" world of personal relationships is not residual, fragile, fugitive, or interstitial, but is rather made possible by the new "public" world of commerce, contract, and impersonal administration.

In the dominant understanding, cultural tensions between the domains of the personal and private and of the impersonal and public originated in the nineteenth century, when industrialization, urbanization, and commodification broke what Walter Bagehot called the "cake of custom." [7] But while nineteenth-century liberals contested the claims of contemporary socialists, conservatives, and reactionaries, their predecessors engaged an Old Regime very much in place. The paradigmatic shift of liberal theory in analyzing the mutual bearing of personal and impersonal relations is more powerfully displayed in the social theories of the eighteenth than in those of the nineteenth century, which were often derivative, reactive, or sentimental. To grasp the force of the Scots' argument requires recovering their historical account. However, it is necessary first to offer a concept of personal relations appropriate to this

6. "Commercial society" or "commercial countries" are phrases used by Adam Smith and many contemporaries to refer to what is later called market society. These terms emphasize the universal imperative of exchanging, of buying and selling, caused by the pervasive division of labor that it also stimulates. Smith's definition occurs early in *The Wealth of Nations:* "When the division of labor has been once thoroughly established, it is but a very small part of a man's wants which the produce of his own labor can supply. He supplies the far greater part of them by exchanging that surplus of his own labor, which is over and above his own consumption, for such parts of the produce of other men's labor as he has occasion for. Every man thus lives by exchanging, or becomes in some measure a merchant, and the society itself grows to be what is properly a commercial society" (Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* [1776], p. 37). In contrast, "capitalism," a word Smith never uses, stresses the transformative effects of the movement of investment capital among opportunities for profit. The writers of the Scottish Enlightenment are often concisely called, in context, "the Scots," and are so named in this essay.

7. Walter Bagehot, *Physics and Politics* [1872], p. 29.

task, and for this purpose friendship serves usefully as a prototype of the larger category of personal relations.

THE EXEMPLARY SIGNIFICANCE OF FRIENDSHIP

IN MODERN SOCIETY, kinship, marriage, the family, and erotic relations all inhabit this private domain of personal life. In this respect, romantic marriage and the "routinized romanticism" of the modern friendship ideal are equally distinctive to modern society. Friendship, however, is a prototypically "private" relationship, in the specifically modern sense of this notion.

In modern culture, the essence of the "personal" is understood to inhere, not in formal roles and obligations, but in subjective definitions of the situation. Not normatively constituted by public roles and obligations—indeed, often constituted in distinction from them—friendship is, in principle, the "purest" and most widely available instance of personal relations in this sense. Spouses, lovers, kin, and colleagues are "friends" to the extent that they treat the objective conditions of their bond as collateral or inessential. Friendship, as a continuous creation of personal will and choice, is ungoverned by the structural definitions that bear on family and kinship and, unlike erotic relations, may ignore gender. It is an ideal arena for that individualized conception of personal agency central to modern notions of personal freedom.[8]

Normatively, friendship is grounded in the unique and irreplaceable qualities of partners, defined and valued independently of their place in public systems of kinship, power, utility, and esteem, and of any publicly defined status. The privacy of friendship is not only cultural but formal. No body of law and administrative regulation brings sovereign authority to bear on friendships; correspondingly, friendship is unprotected by law—for example, friends do not enjoy immunity from testifying about each other in court, unlike physicians about patients, clergy about congregants, and spouses about each other.[9] Culturally, others may pass censure or render judgment, but

8. The core idea is well expressed by a modern theologian: "As compared with marriage and the ties of kindred, friendship has no generally recognized rights, and is therefore wholly dependent on its own inherent quality. It is by no means easy to classify friendship sociologically. . . . Marriage, labor, the state and the Church all exist by divine decree. . . . Friendship belongs to the sphere of freedom. . . . Within the sphere of . . . freedom, friendship is by far the rarest and most priceless treasure, for where else does it survive in this world of ours, dominated as it is by the three . . . decrees?" See Dietrich Bonhoeffer's *Letters and Papers from Prison,* pp. 192–93. See also David L. Norton, *Personal Destinies: A Philosophy of Ethical Individualism;* and Ralph Turner, "The Real Self: From Institution to Impulse."

9. In the words of a judicial opinion: "The statements made by Burger to which Spurling testified were not made by Burger in 'professing religious faith, or seeking spiritual comfort' or 'guidance,' but were conversational statements to Spurling who was his friend and frequent companion, of his intent to kill his wife and her lover. The ministerial privilege

friends have the right and capacity to ignore them, for only friends themselves are effectively and normatively competent to judge the extent to which they meet the moral demands of their friendships.[10]

It is not peculiar to modern society that ideals of friendship express some of the "noblest" potentials of human association.[11] But an ideal of friendship so quintessentially "private," so contrary to the forms of association that dominate the "public" domain, is distinctive to our times. Explicit contract, rational exchange, formal division of labor, and impersonal institutions define the public world of the "Great Society"—as Graham Wallas and John Dewey, two quintessential liberals, referred to modern societies no longer understandable as aggregates of personal relations, local communities, and corporate orders.[12] The inverse of the Great Society—its contractualism, monetized exchange, impersonal administration—defines those ideals constituting friendship understood at its morally best. Especially in the urban, educated core of Western society, friendships are judged of high quality precisely to the extent they

[of immunity from the requirement to testify] was not applicable" (*Burger v. State,* 238 Georgia (1977), 171, 172, 231 S.E.2d 769, 771)—quoted in an interesting analysis of the general issue by Sanford Levinson, "Testimonial Privileges and the Preferences of Friendship."

10. This account is a selective compound drawn from the literature and my own work. For earlier statements, see my "Friendship and Trust as Moral Ideals: An Historical Approach," and "Friendship in Commercial Society," from which parts of this essay are drawn. See also Graham Allan, *A Sociology of Friendship and Kinship,* and *Friendship: Developing a Sociological Perspective;* Sanford Levinson, "Testimonial Privileges and the Preferences of Friendship"; Kaspar Naegele, "Friendships and Acquaintances: An Exploration of Some Social Distinctions"; Robert Paine, "In Search of Friendship"; Gerald Suttles, "Friendship as a Social Institution," in George McCall, ed., *Social Relationships;* Friedrich H. Tenbruck, "Freundschaft: ein Beitrag zu einer Soziologie der personlichen Beziehungen"; Ralph Turner, "The Real Self"; and Eric Wolf, "Kinship, Friendship, and Patron-Client Relations in Complex Societies," in Michael Banton, ed., *The Social Anthropology of Complex Societies.* The most seminal sociological writing on friendship is embedded in broader discussions by Georg Simmel; see Kurt Wolff, ed., *The Sociology of Georg Simmel,* pp. 118–28, 307–44. Discussions by contemporary philosophers that address the same themes as the sociologists include Elizabeth Telfer, "Friendship"; Jeffrey Reiman, "Privacy, Intimacy and Personhood"; Lawrence Thomas, "Friendship"; Neera Kapur Badhwaar, "Friends as Ends in Themselves"; and David B. Annis, "The Meaning, Value, and Duties of Friendship."

11. For a survey of medieval and Renaissance friendship ideals as reflected in literature, see Laurens J. Mills, *One Soul in Bodies Twain: Friendship in Tudor Literature and Stuart Drama.* For the classical world, see Gabriel Herman, *Ritual Friendship and the Greek City;* Mary Whitelock Blundell, *Helping Friends and Harming Enemies: A Study in Sophocles and Greek Ethics;* and Horst Hutter, *Politics as Friendship: The Origins of Classical Notions of Politics in the Theory and Practice of Friendship.*

12. Graham Wallas, *The Great Society: A Psychological Analysis* [1914] (London: Macmillan, 1936); and John Dewey, *The Public and Its Problems* (New York: Holt, 1927).

invert the ways of the public domain. They are grounded in open-ended commitments without explicit provision for their termination—unlike contractual relations, prior stipulation of the conditions that legitimately end a friendship cannot be constitutive of friendship. In such an ideal, friendships are diminished in moral quality if terms of exchange are consciously or scrupulously monitored, for this would imply that the utilities derived from friendship are constitutive, as in market relations, rather than valued as expressions of personal intentions and commitments. Friends are normatively oriented to the intentions and subjective meanings that give rise to each others' acts, not the public meaning or import of acts.

Since relations other than friendship are to some extent constituted by public or ascriptive statuses, or legitimately regulated by public authority and agencies, friendship—though not necessarily the most emotionally intense—is the most prototypically personal of relationships. At this point we reach the core of the idea of a "personal relationship." In modern sensibility, the domain of the "personal" is often held to be constituted by emotions and values that set it apart from the impersonal. However, the genotype of the personal, as Simmel has subtly argued, lies not in its emotional content but in the structural attribute of "substitutability."[13] That is, the extent to which the replacement of others is consequential indicates the extent to which a relationship is "personal." In times past, personal ties in this sense were deeply embedded in structures and codes not of the parties' making and inescapably implicated in practical imperatives. Thus, the relationship between lord and serf is structurally more "personal" than that between employer and wage laborer—not because capitalism has diminished "tenderness," to use Christopher Caudwell's term, but because person and station are less separable in premarket and prebureaucratic society.[14] In modern societies, with their unprecedented depersonalization of economy, polity, and administration, concerns for personal safety and the advancement of competitive interests are addressed—to an extent not earlier imaginable—by impersonal means. This degree of impersonality in modern society, which frees us from dependence on particular others for a host of practical needs, is precisely what creates the possibility of personal

13. Georg Simmel, *The Philosophy of Money* [1907] (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978), pp. 292–303.

14. In a brilliant, but brief and little-noted analysis of this point in the *Grundrisse* (pp. 161–65), Marx surpasses the neoromantic aspects of his earlier, abundantly cited formulations in such writings as the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844* and *The German Ideology*. See also the classic paper of Marcel Mauss, "A Category of the Human Mind: The Notion of Person; the Notion of Self," in the edited volume by Michael Carrithers et al., *The Category of the Person: Anthropology, Philosophy, History*.

relations valued as expressions of inner intention and commitment, apart from practical agendas and formal obligations.

Modern friendship thus has exemplary significance as the prototype of the personal. The historical transformation of friendship illuminates the larger processes that have helped to produce the characteristically modern distinction between the "private" world of personal life and the "public" world of the Great Society.

Friendship in Classical Liberalism

A passage from Hume illustrates the Scottish Enlightenment's awareness of a new distinction between personal and public domains associated with the advent of commercial society:

> Although self-interested commerce . . . begins to dominate in society, it does not abolish the more generous and noble intercourse of friendship and good offices. I may still do services to such persons as I love, and am more particularly acquainted with, without any prospect of advantage. . . . In order to distinguish these two different sorts of commerce, the interested and the disinterested, there is a certain form of words invented for the former, by which we bind ourselves to the performance of any action. This form of words we call a *promise,* which is the sanction of the interested part of mankind.[15]

"Commerce," which now denotes only economic activity, had in the eighteenth century a broader meaning: "to . . . converse, hold communication, associate" *(Oxford English Dictionary).* Similarly, an older meaning of "promise" as formally sanctioned undertaking and contract, Hume's usage, is preserved in legal terminology, but in ordinary use the word now largely applies to personal and informal situations.[16] Thus, the phrase "two different sorts of commerce" points both to the historically prevalent coexistence of practical agendas and personal obligations and also, by contrast, to the sharp distinction

15. David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature* [1749], edited by L. Selby-Bigge, revised edition by P. H. Niddich (Oxford: Clarendon, 1978), p. 521.

16. "Promises" are treated in liberal theory as paradigmatic for contractual relations; on promise as contract, see Allan E. Farnsworth, "The Past of Promise: An Historical Introduction to Contract," and references cited in Thomas L. Haskell, "Capitalism and the Origins of Humanitarian Sensibility, Part 2," pp. 553–56. Hume uses "interest" with attention to the historically new clarity with which interests are calculated and perceived in commercial society—what Hirschman calls the "interest paradigm," dating from the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries in the most commercially advanced regions of Europe. See Albert O. Hirschman, *The Passions and the Interests: Arguments for Capitalism before Its Triumph,* especially pp. 32–33, 42–56.

between them in commercial society. Hume argues that distinguishing friendship from instrumental concerns creates a distinctive moral domain for personal relations:

> It is remarkable that nothing touches a man of humanity more than any instance of extraordinary delicacy in love or friendship, where a person is attentive to the smallest concerns of his friend, and is willing to sacrifice to them the most considerable interest of his own. . . . Such delicacies . . . [are] the greatest trifles: but they are the more engaging the more minute the concern is, and are a proof of the highest merit in any one . . . capable of them.[17]

On this understanding, the moral quality of friendship is enhanced precisely because it is not implicated in "self-interested commerce."

Adam Smith's study of the moral order, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments,* offers a vivid historical contrast with this sort of friendship:

> The necessity or conveniency of mutual accommodation very frequently produces a friendship not unlike that which takes place among those who are born to live in the same family. Colleagues in office, partners in trade, call one another brothers; and frequently feel towards one another as if they really were so. . . . The Romans expressed this sort of attachment by the word *necessitudo,* which . . . seems to denote that it was imposed by the necessity of the situation.[18]

The displacement of *necessitudo* by commercial society brings with it what Smith regards as a morally superior form of friendship—voluntary, based on "natural sympathy," unconstrained by necessity. It is superior also, Smith argues, because unlike such forms of personal solidarity as fictive kinship and clientage, it is not exclusivistic, but reflects the new universalism of civil society.[19]

Adam Smith does not share the view—dominant in anticapitalist criticisms

17. Hume, *Treatise of Human Nature,* pp. 604–5.

18. Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* [1759, 1791], edited by D. D. Raphael and A. L. Macfie (Oxford: Clarendon, 1976), pp. 223–24.

19. "Of all attachments to an individual, that which is founded altogether upon the esteem and approbation of his good conduct and behavior . . . is, by far, the most respectable. Such friendships, arising not from a constrained sympathy, not from a sympathy which has . . . [become] habitual for the sake of conveniency and accommodation; but from a natural sympathy, from an involuntary feeling that the persons to whom we attach ourselves are the natural and proper objects of esteem and approbation; can exist only among men of virtue. . . . [They] need not be confined to a single person, but may safely embrace all the wise and virtuous, with whom we have been long and intimately acquainted" (*Moral Sentiments,* pp. 224–25).

of modern society, both radical and conservative, and in contemporary "exchange theories"—that the ethos and principles of market exchange pervade and explain personal relations. As a seminal instance, consider Tonnies's account of "conventional society life" in *gesellschaftliche* society:

> It consists of an exchange of words and courtesies . . . [in which] in reality everyone is thinking of himself, in competition with the others. For everything pleasant which someone does for someone else, he expects, even demands, at least an equivalent. He weighs exactly his services, flatteries, presents, and so on, to determine whether they will bring about the desired result. Formless contracts are made continuously, as it were, and constantly many are pushed aside in the race by the few fortunate and powerful ones.[20]

In contrast, Smith argues that practical imperatives of calculation were more pervasive before commercial society and impersonal administration instituted a sharp normative distinction between self-interested and personal relations. Indeed, attributing calculative exchange in personal relations solely or largely to market society is palpably unhistorical. European notions of what later sociological theory considers "instrumental" exchange were deeply formed by practices and institutions preceding the modern market—for example, deference, clientelism, honor—and were therefore embedded in cultural understandings antipodal to both bureaucracy and commercial society. Norbert Elias's analysis of social interaction at the court of Versailles illustrates aspects of the Old Regime to which the Scots were deeply averse:

> To make the dealings of people . . . calculable . . . an analogous means was used to that by which a work process is made calculable in economic society. . . . [I]t was possible to define exactly the prestige-value of every step in court society, like money-value in capitalist society. The intensive elaboration of etiquette, ceremony, taste, dress, manners and even conversation had the same function. Every detail . . . was an . . . instrument in the prestige struggle. . . . Bourgeois-industrial rationality is generated by the compulsion of the economic mesh; by it power-opportunities founded on private or public capital are made calculable. [In] court rationality . . . people and prestige are made calculable as instruments of power.[21]

Elias's "court rationality" differs from the rationality of modern markets and bureaucracies, in part, because at Versailles calculative conduct legitimately

20. Ferdinand Tonnies, *Community and Society (Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft)* [1887] (New York: Harper & Row, 1957), p. 78.

21. Norbert Elias, *The Court Society* [1969] (New York: Pantheon, 1983), p. 111.

and necessarily pervades many personal interactions. Smith's thorough rejection of "court rationality" is shared, of course, by other classical liberals. One among many expressions of this aversion frames Smith's celebrated account of the conduct of butchers, brewers, and bakers in terms of "interest" and "self-love." Frequent quotation of these lines has obscured the condemnation that precedes and follows them of the "servile and fawning attentions" by which persons must often induce others "to act according to [their] inclinations" when unable to obtain resources by impersonal market exchange.[22]

Smith's theory of personal relations is based on the dynamics of sympathy, not of self-interested exchange. Sympathy is central to Smith's model of social control in two complementary applications—to the new form of friendship and, equally important, to its logically implied opposite, "strangership." Both are constitutive elements of a new, universalistic sociability. For Smith, sympathy makes possible the creation and coordination of moral action in an individuated society no longer morally governed by princes, clergy, notables, and landlords.[23] It is a procedural mechanism, without intrinsic emotional or moral content.[24] Smith argues that people moderate their behavior to attract others' sympathy, forthcoming only if others "sympathize" with their ideas and conduct—if, to evoke the acoustical metaphor of sympathetic vibration with which Smith introduces the idea, they are sufficiently in tune with others to produce, if not the "unison" impossible in a society of individuals, then that "concord" required for "the harmony of society."[25]

In the Scots' historical vision, the space between friend and enemy was not occupied, prior to commercial society, by mere acquaintances or neutral

22. Smith, *Wealth of Nations,* pp. 26–27.

23. Joseph Cropsey, *Polity and Economy: An Interpretation of the Principles of Adam Smith,* pp. 35–36.

24. "Pity and compassion are words appropriated to signify our fellow-felling with the sorrow of others. Sympathy, though its meaning was, perhaps, originally the same, may now . . . be made use of to denote our fellow-feeling with any passion whatsoever" (Smith, *Moral Sentiments,* p. 10). As a comment by Morrow well summarizes: "To say that Smith's ethics is based upon sympathy does not mean that sympathy is the content of morality, but means rather that sympathy is the principle of communication between individuals which makes possible the moral judgment" (Glenn R. Morrow, *The Ethical and Economic Theories of Adam Smith,* p. 29). See also the excellent discussion by Cropsey in *Polity and Economy,* pp. 11–22. In Cooley and others of the "social control" school, "sympathy" is intrinsically cooperative and mutually enhancing—a quasi-romantic idea, in Cooley's case influenced by Emersonian transcendentalism (Vernon Dibble, "Transcendentalism and Sociology: The Case of Charles Horton Cooley"), quite different from Smith's. For some vicissitudes of "sympathy" in nineteenth-century culture, see Barbara Jane Friedberg, "Sympathetic Imagination as an Intellectual Ideal in Victorian Literature and Controversy."

25. Smith, *Moral Sentiments,* p. 22.

strangers, but was charged with uncertain and menacing possibilities.[26] The new universalism implies, for Smith, a society of indifferent strangers—indifferent not in a rhetorical, but in a technical sense. Unlike the prevailing condition in other settings, strangers in commercial society are not either potential enemies or allies, but authentically indifferent to each other—an indifference that enables all to make contracts with all. In Smith's account, strangers are "impartial spectators" of each others' behavior, with whom persons reflexively interact through a mechanism of universal human nature, that of sympathy.[27] The new "strangership" of commercial society is well described in terms of a

> stranger [who] is not a friend from whom we can expect any special favor and sympathy. But at the same time he is not an enemy from whom we cannot expect any sympathy at all. Everyone in society is as independent of every other as a stranger, and is equal with every other [because] they can [imagine the] exchange [of their] situations. The famous impartial spectator is no one else but the spectator who is indifferent.[28]

These are not the strangers who inhabit modern society as described by Tönnies, Simmel, and many others until the work of Erving Goffman. The exis-

26. For a social-scientific account of the tensions associated with strangership in traditional society (though not focused on precommercial Europe), see Julian Pitt-Rivers, "The Stranger, the Guest and the Hostile Host," in J. G. Peristiany's edited volume, *Contributions to Mediterranean Sociology.* On the contrasting texture of acquaintanceship in modern civil society, see Suzanne B. Kurth, "Friendship and Friendly Relations," in George McCall's edited collection, *Social Relationships;* Claire Bidart, *Les semblables, les amis et les autres: Sociabilité et amitié;* and Jean Maisonneuve and Lubomir Lamy, *Psycho-sociologie de l'amitié.*

27. Smith's account of the social psychology involved is subtle and elaborate—this condensed excerpt cannot do it justice: "In order to produce this concord, as nature teaches the spectators to assume the circumstances of the person principally concerned, so she teaches this last in some measure to assume those of the spectators. As they are continually placing themselves in his situation, and thence conceiving emotions similar to what he feels, so he is as constantly placing himself in theirs, and thence conceiving some degree of that coolness about his own fortune, with which he is sensible that they will view it. As they are constantly considering what they themselves would feel, if they actually were the sufferers, so he is as constantly led to imagine in what manner he would be affected if he was only one of the spectators of his own situation. As their sympathy makes them look at it, in some measure, with his eyes, so his sympathy makes him look at it, in some measure, with theirs: . . . and as the reflected passion, which he thus conceives, is much weaker than the original one, it necessarily abates the violence of what he felt . . . before he began to recollect in what manner they would be affected by it" (Smith, *Moral Sentiments,* p. 220).

28. Hiroshi Mizuta, "Moral Philosophy and Civil Society," in Andrew S. Skinner and Thomas Wilson's edited volume, *Essays on Adam Smith,* p. 110.

tence of numerous indifferent strangers does not, for Smith, weaken the moral order but rather helps define it.

This historical transformation of "strangership" is summed up by the changing meanings of "strange" and "stranger" traced in the *Oxford English Dictionary.* These words once predominantly denoted one who is "foreign, alien; of a place . . . other than one's own; who belong[s] to others"; who is "unfriendly . . . distant or cold in demeanour . . . uncomplying, unwilling to accede to a request or desire." An example from Shakespeare illustrates this usage: when Othello is described as "an extravagant and wheeling stranger / Of here and everywhere" (I.i.137–38), the implication is that one who wanders ("extravagant") without attachment to a fixed abode ("wheeling") is permanently a stranger, an outsider whose marriage to a Venetian is anomalous. The *OED* remarks that these meanings, when not obsolete, are "now somewhat rare . . . [replaced by such] recent examples" as: "A new comer who has not *yet* become well acquainted with the place, or . . . one who is not *yet* well known . . . an unknown person whom one has not seen before . . . [and] with whom one is not *yet* well acquainted" (emphases added). These examples nicely capture the status of the modern "stranger" in well-ordered civil society as one who participates in the same society as oneself, who shares common ground in the literal and metaphorical senses of the phrase, and with whom there exists the pervasive possibility of becoming acquainted or allied.

In commercial society, Smith argues, the dynamics of sympathy create the possibility of friendship across the boundaries of social station and the constraints of *necessitudo.*[29] Individuals inhabiting civil society contribute by their natural behavior towards something like a civic fund of good will, a background of routinized benevolence, diminishing the historically prevailing imperative to form exclusivistic personal attachments. No one need suffer, Smith writes, if one's "beneficence" towards another does not elicit commensurate "kindness" or "gratitude": "No benevolent man ever lost the fruits of his benevolence. If he does not gather them from the persons from whom he ought to have gathered them, he seldom fails to gather them, and with a tenfold increase, from other people."[30] Smith applauds the new forms of personal relations not because they abolish royal or mercantile constraints on market exchanges, but for their contribution to a civil society ideally free of exclusivistic and mutually hostile or suspicious personal associations.

In contrast to the categorical distinction between friends or allies or citizens

29. T. D. Campbell, *Adam Smith's Science of Morals,* pp. 87–107; Nicholas Phillipson, "Adam Smith as Civic Moralist," in Istvan Hont and Michael Ignatieff's edited collection, *Wealth and Virtue: The Shaping of Political Economy in the Scottish Enlightenment.*

30. Smith, *Moral Sentiments,* p. 225.

on the one hand and strangers and enemies on the other, Smith establishes the moral basis of commercial society in the associations of private individuals meeting in a social space not shaped by institutional constraints. The mutual control of behavior that results, through a complex play of interacting and reflexive mechanisms, is both source and prototype of moral conduct. Sympathy moderates ideas and conduct and distributes fellow-feeling in an essentially democratic spirit. The exclusivistic bonds defined by custom, corporate group, station, and estate are dissolved. Sympathy generates a kind of social lubrication throughout civil society, and is key to a deinstitutionalized moral order no longer authoritatively sustained by religious, economic, and political institutions.

The Scots understand commercial society as limiting instrumental exchange to the newly distinct domain of commercial dealings. On this view, the logic of exchange in personal relations is pervasively compelling before, rather than in, commercial society. Adam Ferguson's critique of personal relations before the rise of commercial society is similar to many later made of capitalist culture by its hostile critics:

> In societies where men are taught to consider themselves as competitors, and every advantage they gain as comparative to that of some other person, the conscientious [man] may be faithful and true to his engagements . . . ; but . . . interested and sordid [men] make no allowance for good or ill offices that neither empty nor fill the pocket.[31]

Such societies do not offer the possibility of disinterested relations, insulated from the clash and calculation of interests; the development of the market does so—in those domains falling outside the market itself, and therefore newly distinguishable from the interplay of interest. Before the ascendancy of impersonal means of administration and exchange, the purpose of friendship, as the Scots see it, was to help friends by means of defeating enemies—indeed, helping friends and hurting enemies were indistinguishable acts.[32] Where vital resources are not created and distributed impersonally by markets and bureaucracies, one has no choice but to be, in Ferguson's disapproving phrase, "inter-

31. Adam Ferguson, *Principles of Moral and Political Science,* 2 vols. (Edinburgh: Creech, 1792), vol. 1: 376.

32. In one of his dialogues, Plato ascribes to an average Athenian citizen this description of prevailing values and practices: "The *arete* [worth, virtue, success] of a man is to be capable of taking an active part in politics and, while doing so, to be capable of helping one's *philoi* [friends, allies] while harming one's *echtroi* [enemies within the city], while taking care to suffer no harm oneself at their hand" (*Meno,* 71E 2ff; quoted in A. W. H. Adkins, *Moral Values and Political Behavior in Ancient Greece,* p. 131). For a general discussion of this theme in ancient Greece, see Blundell, *Helping Friends and Harming Enemies.*

ested and sordid" in all interactions, concerned only with whether they "empty [or] fill the pocket," because in such settings it is largely by what modern culture and theory consider personal relations that vital resources are obtained. In contrast, the Scots understand commercial society as one in which personal relations can benefit those involved at no cost to others; friendship becomes a private virtue that contributes to the public good of civil society.

BROTHERS TO OTHERS: DOES COMMERCIAL SOCIETY DIMINISH FRIENDSHIP?

A SUGGESTIVE, HISTORICALLY INFORMED discussion of friendship somewhat at odds with that just outlined is offered by Benjamin Nelson.[33] According to Nelson, Enlightenment thinkers, preceded by practical spokesmen for the merchant class in the seventeenth century, attacked strenuously elevated forms of friendship, associated with aristocratic milieux, because these inhibited efficient markets and orderly polities. Noble friendship ideals, centered on honor, glory, and personal loyalties, contributed to feuding, rebellion, and endemic war. Aristocratic allies and friends were also often obligated to stand surety for one another should one need ransom, aid in legal causes, or loans. In standing surety for a friend out of solidaristic obligation and personal honor, rather than in terms of business, the person whose risks are reduced by a friend's surety is encouraged to undertake commercial enterprises on bases other than market rationality; and the chances of one who stands surety falling into ruinous debt, unjustified by rational calculation, are increased. Thus Daniel Defoe's success manual of 1726, *The Complete English Tradesman,* sternly warns merchants against the "frequent ruin" occasioned by " 'striking hands with a stranger,' or one tradesman being bound for another. . . . Would the tradesman [contemplate the dangers] . . . when he is called upon to do the frequently fatal office of being surety for his friend, he would not easily be drawn into any snare on that account." [34] Defoe's oscillation between describing suretyship among merchants as a relationship of "strangers" and of "friends" captures exactly the transitional moment Nelson describes.

According to Nelson, attacks on noble ideals of friendship, promoting the development of rational markets, involved a "lowering of the moral standard," one step in an historic process by which friendship ideals moved from "tribal brotherhood" to the "universal otherhood" of liberal society:

33. Benjamin Nelson, *The Idea of Usury: From Tribal Brotherhood to Universal Otherhood* [1949] (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969), pp. 155–64.

34. Daniel Defoe, *The Complete English Tradesman* [1726] (New York: Franklin, 1970), pp. 85–87.

> The road from clan comradeship to universal society is beset with hazards. When two communities merge and two sets of others become one set of brothers, a price is generally paid. The price . . . is an attenuation of the love which had held each set together. It is a tragedy of moral history that the expansion of the moral community has ordinarily been gained through the sacrifice of the intensity of the moral bond, or . . . that all men have been becoming brothers by becoming equally others.[35]

Nelson's analysis permits us to move beyond the simplistically invidious dichotomies inherited from nineteenth-century thought, whether liberal, conservative, or socialist. However, the Scots have a vivid sense of the problematics inherent in "clan comradeship" that escapes Nelson's seductively resonant distinction between brotherhood and otherhood.

Brotherhood

The Scots understand the solidaristic and heroic forms of friendship in precommercial society as inescapably contaminated by calculations of interest, in contrast to the personal and civil friendship possible in commercial society. Here is Adam Ferguson reflecting on these matters:

> We are told of a maxim . . . : "Live with your friend as with one who may become an enemy." This maxim is prudent in the occasional cooperations of interest or party. The person who supports me today because it is in his interest to do so, may wish to overthrow me tomorrow, if an opposition of interest should take place. It may be prudent, therefore, not to furnish him as a friend with arms, which he may afterwards turn against me as an enemy. But this maxim, applied to the case of parties united by mutual conviction of unalterable worth, entire affection, and unlimited confidence, would be altogether preposterous, and cannot be adopted without discontinuing the connection of friendship, or stifling the affection in which it consists.[36]

The maxim Ferguson cites derives from the long history of friendship as an essential but troublesome resource in risky undertakings in war, economy, and politics. In these settings, loyal friends were indispensable lest, according to a Tudor document, one "remain as a hoop without a pole, live in obscurity,

35. Nelson, *The Idea of Usury*, p. 136.

36. *Principles of Moral and Political Science* 2:363. In other, better-known writings, especially his *Essay on the History of Civil Society* [1767], Ferguson expresses esteem for the heroic virtues, and reservations about the "polite" manners of commercial society. Ferguson and Francis Hutcheson, unlike Smith and Hume, are not thorough liberals, but this essay focuses on their protoliberal aspects.

and be made a football for every insulting companion to spurn at." However, according to another text of the late sixteenth century:

> These days there is such unsteady friendship among many, that it is hard to find a perfect and trusty friend: for now friendly words are common but when friendship cometh to the touch of proof, the alteration is marvellous: yea, and sometimes so dangerous that of friends in words they will become enemies in deeds.

In 1607, for example, Sir William Wentworth warned in an "Advice" to his son that a friend "may become your enemy, a thing very common in these days"—the very situation addressed by the "maxim" Ferguson finds so distasteful.[37]

Indifferent or benign neutrality was a difficult accomplishment in precommercial societies, certainly not a background condition that could be taken for granted. Necessitous friendships were indispensable to make one's way in the world and guard against dangers, but such friendships—however much they aspired to total mutual confidence—were subject to tensions originating, not in human imperfection or emotional ambivalence, but in the logic of the situation.[38] In ideal and practice, necessitous friendships inextricably fused Hume's "two different sorts of commerce, the interested and the disinterested."

By the eighteenth century, however, the meaning of friendship encompassed both older and modern meanings. The word "could mean a distant or close relation, a patron or a client, an individual to whom one was tied by mutual sponsorship, or someone attached by warm affection."[39] In mid-

37. These quotations are drawn from Lacy Baldwin Smith, *Treason in Tudor England,* pp. 46–47; see also Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England, 1500–1800,* pp. 97–99.

38. While modern friendship culture would be offended by explicit stipulations against betrayal, oaths of institutionalized friendship often warn against betrayal and specify punishments for disloyalty, as illustrated by two very disparate instances. The blood-brotherhood oath of the Azande: "If you do me an injury, may you die from the blood. If you commit adultery with our wives . . . may you all perish, your father, your mother's brothers, all your kin will die. . . . If you speak ill of me to the chiefs, may you die" (E. E. Evans-Pritchard, "Zande Blood-Brotherhood," pp. 377–78). And: "A formal contract of friendship between scholars . . . written in Cairo on January 2, 1564 . . . [specifies that] they will lend each other any book they might possess . . . and will never conceal from each other any book they have" (S. D. Goitein, "Formal Friendship in the Medieval Near East," p. 488).

39. Stone, *Family, Sex and Marriage,* p. 97. For a fuller description of eighteenth-century "friends" as "all those who expected or, reciprocally, from whom one could expect, the benefits of patronage," see Harold Perkin, *The Origins of Modern English Society, 1780–1880,* pp. 46–51. An account of the similar system in prerevolutionary America is offered in part 1 of Gordon S. Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution.*

century, Dr. Johnson's dictionary defined a friend as "one who supports you and comforts you while others do not," someone "with whom to compare minds and cherish private virtues." In precommercial society, to treat friends as if they might become enemies—the maxim Ferguson so dislikes—is an unhappy but prudent counsel; but to treat friends thus when political and economic arrangements were becoming unprecedentedly impersonal, and with friendship turning, in Dr. Johnson's terms, on comparing minds and cherishing private virtues, was "preposterous" because this would "[discontinue] the connection of friendship" and "[stifle] the affection in which it consists."

We have seen that the Scots perceive commercial society, far from "contaminating" personal relations with instrumentalism, as "purifying" them by clearly distinguishing friendship from the calculation of utility, and founding friendship on sympathy and affection. While the ties of friendship in liberal society, on this view, lack the noble and sacral character of what Nelson calls "brotherhood," they are free of those intrinsic tensions and suspicions that inevitably derive from the historically prevalent implication of interest and friendship before commercial society.[40]

Otherhood

These classical liberals ardently desire the new sociability, based on the universalism of sympathy, to dissolve older, intense forms of exclusivistic relationships. This change is driven, not only by the division of labor and commercial exchange, but also by the emergence of impersonal and pervasive political administration. Thus, Smith observes how the stability afforded by efficient and uniform law and police entails the decline of what he calls relations of *necessitudo,* and Nelson calls "clan brotherhood":

40. While the phrase "precommercial society" reflects the Scots' historical vision, we must avoid the impression that, prior to modern commercial society, all friendship patterns were homogeneously "necessitous," constituted by objective obligations rather than inner feelings. For example, some types of friendship based on personal affect appear in ancient Greece and Rome, especially in the context of highly developed civic institutions, despite the continuing importance of clientelism in both cases. On the other hand, even in these cases there is no parallel to the sharply anti-instrumental thrust of the modern friendship ideology. See, for example, David Konstan's analysis of the semantic fields of *philos* and *philia* in "Greek Friendship," his treatment of "the shift in the discourse of friendship between the classical Athenian democracy and the Hellenistic and Roman states" in "Friendship and the State: The Context of Cicero's *De Amicitia*," and his "Patrons and Friends." Here it is enough to note that the Scots were evidently reacting most strongly to the contrast between practices prevailing in commercial societies and the historical alternatives closest to them—feudalism, aristocratic milieux, court life, and the warrior culture of the Scottish clans.

> In pastoral countries . . . [the] association [of families] is frequently necessary for their common defense. . . . Their concord strengthens their necessary association; their discord always weakens, and might destroy it. . . . In commercial countries, where the authority of law is always perfectly sufficient to protect the meanest man in the state . . . [families], having no such motive for keeping together, naturally separate and disperse as interest or inclination may direct . . . [I]n a few generations, they not only lose all care about one another, but all remembrance of their common origin.[41]

The Scots approve this change as one aspect of the movement, to use their vocabulary, from barbarity and rudeness to politeness and polish, indispensable to forming the new civil morality appropriate to commercial society.[42] They do not hold, as does Nelson, that this advance involves the "attenuation" of moral bonds. A more pressing problem, for them, is reconciling the Christian imperative of universal love with the moral social psychology of commercial society.

Christian theology has long addressed the problem of "preferential friendship"—friendship offered to one or some, but not to others or to all—in the light of the Christian obligation to love all humanity according to the demands of agape, and in imitation of divine love. In the classic theological accounts, friendship ought to reflect divine love in a spirit of *imitatio dei,* not social interaction.[43] Francis Hutcheson, however, analyzes friendship in a naturalistic and functional spirit, deploying an elaborated metaphor drawn from the most advanced science of the day, Newtonian physics:

> The *universal benevolence* toward all men, we may compare to . . . *gravitation* which . . . increases as the distance is diminished. This increase, on nearer approach, is . . . necessary . . . [f]or a general attraction, equal in all distances, would by the contrariety of such multitudes of equal forces, put an end to all regularity of motion, and perhaps stop it altogether. . . . These different sorts of love to persons according to their nearer approaches to ourselves by their benefits,

41. Smith, *Moral Sentiments,* pp. 224–25.

42. Cropsey, *Polity and Economy;* Hirschman, *The Passions and the Interests;* Mizuta, "Moral Philosophy and Civil Society"; Nicholas Phillipson, "Adam Smith as Civic Moralist."

43. The problematic of "preferential friendship" in Christian doctrine is described, from varying perspectives, by Gilbert C. Meilaender, *Friendship: A Study in Theological Ethics;* Anders Nygren, *Agape and Eros: The Christian Idea of Love and Its Transformation,* passim; and Paul J. Wadell, *Friendship and the Moral Life,* chapter 4. For a brilliant sociological application of agape to social interaction see Luc Boltanski, *L'Amour et la justice comme competences,* pp. 137–254.

> is observable . . . in all the strong ties of friendship, acquaintance, neighbourhood, partnership; which are exceedingly necessary to the order and happiness of human society.[44]

The utopia of universal Christian love, of agape, is rejected as leading to a chaos of "contrariety." Benevolence is distributed preferentially, gradated according to proximity but not withheld from anyone with hostile or suspicious intent. In place of both the utopia of agape and the historically prevalent trichotomy of friend/enemy/stranger, Hutcheson envisions a moral order in which the prospect of what Nelson calls "attenuation" is compensated by local gravitational fields, as it were, of intense benevolence arranged in a manner contributing to "the order and happiness of human society."

Adam Smith's version of Hutcheson's gravitational model was unoriginal in its time and later became a cliché: the individual in the innermost of a series of concentric circles, family and friends at the center, widening in successively weaker circles to include all humanity.[45] Friendship emerges as one of a variety of benign social bonds, like family, neighborhood, and the routine contacts of individuals in civil and commercial society; no longer constituted in terms of station, corporate group, and political and economic imperatives (as in the Romans' *necessitudo,* or Tudor nobles' need for trustworthy allies), it is understood as shaped by propinquity and sympathy, an account adumbrating that offered by modern social psychology.

Thus, for these classical liberals, modern friendship exemplifies the new world of private life and its increasingly sharp distinction from the public domain. They seek to show how personal relations, such as friendship, can no longer be governed by formal codes, whether those of religion or noble concepts of honor. But they are equally concerned to show that private relations of friendship cannot be regulated by those principles of exchange that prevail in the new, public world of commercial relations—that "self-interested commerce . . . [beginning] to dominate in society."

Adam Smith remarks on the formlessness of personal obligations in commercial society and their insusceptibility to precise calculation:

> The general rules which determine what are the offices of prudence, of charity, of generosity, of friendship . . . admit of so many exceptions

44. Francis Hutcheson, *An Inquiry into the Original of Our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue. Treatise II: An Inquiry Concerning the Original of Our Ideas of Virtue or Moral Good* [1725, 1738], in D. D. Raphael's *British Moralists, 1650–1800* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1969), 1:290 (emphasis in original).

45. Morrow, *Ethical and Economic Theories of Adam Smith,* pp. 55–56; Smith, *Moral Sentiments,* pp. 219–37.

> . . . that it is scarce possible to regulate our conduct entirely by a regard to them. . . . The actions required by friendship, humanity, hospitality, generosity are . . . vague and indeterminate.

Contrary to modern "exchange theorists," Smith rejects the applicability of the exchange model, drawn from the impersonal market, to personal relations:

> That as soon as we can we should make a return of equal or superior value to the services we have received, would seem to be a pretty plain rule. . . . Upon the most superficial examination, however, this rule . . . appear[s] in the highest degree loose and inaccurate, and to admit of a thousand exceptions.

The "thousand exceptions" are occasioned by circumstances unique to the varieties of personality and circumstances—in short, to the essentially private nature of friendship:

> If your friend lent you money in your distress, ought you to lend him some in his? How much ought you lend him? When ought you lend him? Now, or tomorrow, or next month? And for how long a time? It is evident that no general rule can be laid down, by which a precise answer can be given. . . . The difference between his character and yours, between his circumstances and yours, may be such, that you may be perfectly grateful and yet justly refuse to lend him a half-penny; and on the contrary, you may be willing to lend him ten times the sum which he lent you and yet justly be accused of . . . not having fulfilled the hundredth part of the obligation you lie under.[46]

The emergence of impersonal markets in the economy, far from providing a normative or theoretical model for personal relations, rather clarifies the distinction between the two domains. In Smith's account, market exchange theory cannot address the new forms of personal relations—private, uncodified, informal, idiosyncratic—that commercial society facilitates.

This distinction evokes the so-called Adam Smith problem—namely, the apparent inconsistency between *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* and *The Wealth of Nations* raised by German scholars in the late nineteenth century. It gave rise to an extensive literature taking it as problematic that the author of the seminal classic on market theory also elaborated a morality centered on sympathy and benevolence.[47] What is the conceptual relationship between

46. Smith, *Moral Sentiments,* p. 174.

47. See August Oncken, "The Consistency of Adam Smith," pp. 443–50, for a formulation of the original "problem." Of the abundant literature on it stimulated by the bicentenary of the publication in 1776 of *The Wealth of Nations,* the most relevant for this essay is Richard Teichgraeber III, "Rethinking *Das Adam Smith Problem,*" especially pp. 115–23.

Smith's market theory and his moral social psychology? The former is captured in the most famous vignette in social theory:

> It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker, that we expect our dinner, but their regard to their own interest. We address ourselves, not to their humanity, but to their self-love, and we never talk to them of our own necessities but of their own advantages.[48]

The latter, which enjoys no comparably concise expression, is seen at its clearest in the new concept of personal relations developed by Smith and the other Scots. Contrary to the cultural assumptions underlying "the Adam Smith problem," there is no ideological or theoretical tension between the two; on the contrary, they are deeply consistent. In Smith's theory, the moral order is generated by means precisely analogous to the system of market exchange. Persons in commercial society "truck, barter, and exchange" in markets; they thus engage in conduct yielding a result—an increase in the wealth of nations—that individually they do not intend. In the domain of sociability, individuals behave in a precisely comparable manner. Just as the propensity to exchange is a generalized utility-seeking mechanism, so "sympathy denote[s] our fellow-feeling with any passion whatever."[49] Thus, the moral order, like the wealth of nations, is continuously created by an indefinitely large number of acts as individuals encounter each other in a field defined, not by institutions or tradition, but by their own interactions. The causal textures of both branches of Smith's theory, the economic and the social, are identical: desirable aggregate outcomes are the unintended results of an infinity of small-scale interactions by ordinary individuals. In both, the outcome is other and "better" than any they intend. Self-interest in a market system increases the wealth of all; sociability in civil society sustains a universal morality from which all benefit.[50]

Advocates and critics of liberalism have long noted its emphasis on demarcating the "public" domain of state power from the "private" domain of the

48. Smith, *Wealth of Nations,* pp. 26–27.

49. Smith, *Moral Sentiments,* p. 10.

50. This speaks directly to the consistency of Smith's theories of personal and market relations, but only indirectly to the question of why they cannot, in Smith's terms, be unified. On this: "While expressed mainly in terms of friendship, sympathy, and esteem, there is no suggestion [in Smith] that beneficence might not also take the form of material support. Why, then, does not this expression of virtue find a place in Smith's view of the fiscal system? Its absence is explained by the voluntary nature of beneficence, a virtue which will be regarded with sympathy but cannot be enforced." See R. A. Musgrave, "Adam Smith on Public Finance and Distribution," in Thomas Wilson and A. S. Skinner, eds., *The Market and the State: Essays in Honour of Adam Smith,* p. 301.

market and civil society. But liberal thought also celebrates a clear distinction between the domain of "private life," defined by intimacy and personal relations, and the "public" world of impersonal relations epitomized by the market.[51] Optimally, the two domains benignly complement each other. In the ideal liberal commonwealth, the bourgeois polis, the peaceful exchange of equivalent values benefits all; the virtue of exchange is in utility, equivalence, and the creation of new value. Conversely, conditional helpfulness and the explicit exchange of valued services and resources become morally abhorrent in friendship. "If you are right," cries the impulsive Aziz to his friend Fielding in E. M. Forster's *Passage to India,* "there is no point in any friendship; it all comes down to give and take, or give and return, which is disgusting." [52]

As we have seen, aversion to calculative exchange in personal relations is historically based in the transformation of the polity as well as the economy. Indeed, it appears first not as a recoil against commercial society, but rather in the counterculture, so to speak, of the *ancien régime.* The incompatible demands of the *ancien régime*'s personal politics and of personal friendship in the liberal sense emerge in Saint-Evremond's acute analysis of *amitié* at the court of Versailles:

> The usual relationship of kings and their courtiers is a relationship of interest. Courtiers seek fortunes of kings; kings require services from their courtiers. However, sometimes the crush of business, or disgust with splendor, forces Princes to seek in the purity of nature the pleasures they do not have in their *grandeur.* . . . Worn out by suspicions and jealousies, they seek to open a heart that they show to the world as hard. The flatteries of adulators make them wish for the sincerity of a friend, [which] they make of . . . confidants called favorites, persons dear to Princes with whom they relieve the pressures of their secrets; with these, they wish to taste all the pleasures that familiarity of association and freedom of conversation may endow on private friends. But how dangerous are these friendships to a favorite who dreams more of love than of watching his own conduct! Wishing to find his friend, this confidant meets his master; [his] familiarity is punished as the indiscreet freedom of a servant who forgets his place. Courtiers whose conduct is always governed by interest know how to please, and their prudence makes them avoid whatever shocks and displeases. He who truly loves his master does not listen to his [own] heart.[53]

51. Gerald F. Gaus, *The Modern Liberal Theory of Man,* pp. 39–66.

52. E. M. Forster, *A Passage to India,* p. 254.

53. Charles de Saint-Evremond, "Sur l'amitié" [1689], in *Œuvres en prose,* pp. 308–9. Aristocratic circles strenuously created stylized conversational forms avoiding matters of substance in an attempt to create a private domain, distinguished from the pervasive political

Private friendship is no more possible between political friends than, in Tonnies's view, among the bourgeoisie of capitalist society. But, as we have seen, Tonnies's indictment of social interaction in *Gesellschaft*—as contaminated by the capitalist spirit of exchange—is quite unhistorical; as the Scots well understood, it applies more pervasively to the personalized politics of the Renaissance and absolutism than to commercial society.[54]

In Saint-Evremond's account, both prince and confidant yearn for personal intimacy but neither can escape the logic of their stations.[55] Rousseau reflects the same dilemma in contrasting the "two different sorts of commerce" in terms that oppose emotional intimacy, not to market relations, but to the clientelistic politics of the *ancien régime:*

> The only bond of my associations would be mutual attachment, agreement of tastes, suitableness of characters. . . . I would want to have a society around me, not a court; friends, and not *proteges.* I would not be the patron of my guests; I would be their host. This independence and equality would permit my relationships to have all the candor of benevolence; and where neither duty nor interest entered in any way, pleasure and friendship would alone make the law.[56]

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intrigue and competitive struggle. This is analyzed by Simmel in *The Sociology of Georg Simmel,* pp. 40–57; Robert Mauzi, *L'Idee du bonheur au XVIIIe siecle,* pp. 580–601; Daniel Gordon, *Citizens without Sovereignty: Equality and Sociability in French Thought, 1670–1789,* pp. 107–17, and, more intensively, Gordon's "Circular Discourse: The Cult of Conversational Sociability in Pre-Revolutionary France."

54. Tonnies evaluated capitalist society in terms of an antipodal contrast with an idealized image of "traditional" peasantry, but precisely this indictment was made abundantly by analysts of clientelistic and court politics preceding rational bureaucracy and capitalism. Many of La Rochefoucauld's *Maximes* are prototypic—for example, number 83: "What men have called friendship is merely association *[commerce],* respect for each others' interests, and exchange of good offices—in fact, nothing more than a business arrangement from which self-love is always out to draw some profit" (La Rochefoucauld, *Maximes* [1665–78] in *Œuvres completes*). See also chapter 5 of Norbert Elias, *Court Society,* from which a brief passage is quoted on p. 51 above.

55. It is anachronistic to endow the confidant, a political friend, with the emotional intimacy of modern friendship. Thus, Horatio is less Hamlet's friend than an exemplary confidant, sharing and aiding Hamlet's stratagems. Hamlet never shares with him the material of the great monologues, the secrets not of his strategy but of his soul. He rather confides to Horatio his suspicions and tactics, like that of the play-within-a-play, "after which we will both our judgments join" (III.ii.83–84). At the end he commands Horatio to remain alive to "report me and my cause aright" (V.ii.328). Both are resonant of late medieval companions' obligations to offer *consilium* and "maintain causes" as described in Maurice Keen, "Brotherhood in Arms."

56. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Emile* [1762], translated by Allan Bloom (New York: Basic Books, 1979), pp. 348–49.

Rousseau strikingly proclaims the coming of the modern friendship ideal. However, for almost the two preceding centuries, Montaigne's praise of friendship founded on elective affinity between two unique persons—"If you press me to tell why I loved him, I feel this cannot be expressed, except by answering: because it was he, because it was I"—found incomprehension even in those circles which appreciated La Rochefoucauld's remorseless unmasking of self-interested calculation behind every seemingly generous or selfless act. Appreciation of Montaigne's celebration of personal friendship divorced from station and practical services had to await the flowering of romanticism, in the first third of the nineteenth century.[57] Similarly, Montaigne's celebration of intention rather than result in judging the actions of friends made little sense when the practical utility of friendship was key to its purposes and ethic.[58] Clientelistic and absolutist politics did not, like capitalism, sustain a viable adversary culture, but at most, as in La Rochefoucauld's *Maximes,* one of disillusion.[59]

In contrast, the Scots construct a model of universal sociability in which anti-instrumental personal relations do not play a retreatist role, but pervade society as a source of moral order. According to Adam Ferguson:

> [I]n every instance of good will to men, the effects of a benevolent disposition may reach the object of it in beneficent and positive services; and be considered among the characteristics of a *social attachment,* upon whatever ground of connection it may be formed. Under this title we may consider the relations of consanguinity, of neighborhood or acquaintance, as well as attachments of predilection and choice, more properly termed the connection of friends.[60]

The new friendship does not express a "lowering of the moral standard," as in Nelson's account, but celebrates a moral corollary of commercial society: friendship no longer need benefit those directly involved by attacking or menacing others' interests, and is freed from the dilemmas and tensions of historic forms of friendship that combined Hume's "two different sorts of commerce."

57. Donald Frame, *The Reception of Montaigne in France,* chapter 1.

58. "It is not in the power of all the arguments in the world to dislodge me from the certainty I have of the intentions and judgments of my friend. Not one of his actions could be presented to me, whatever appearance it might have, that I could not immediately find the motive for it" (Montaigne, "Of Friendship" [1580], in *Essays,* p. 140).

59. In Moliere's *Le Misanthrope,* Alceste, in his moral rage against false friendship, hypocrisy, and insincerity, has no choice but to retire from the world. In Madame de La Fayette's novel of 1678, *La Princesse de Cleves,* the protagonist's sensitive sincerity destroys her marriage and life. Marivaux's play of 1739, *Les sinceres,* shows that sincerity itself is not immune to affectation and dissimulation.

60. Ferguson, *Principles of Moral and Political Science,* p. 361 (original emphasis).

For the Scots, the moral quality of exclusivistic bonds was corrupted by the ubiquity of interests stemming from *necessitudo;* "universal otherhood" is not a pale version of historically stronger forms of solidarity. The Scots understand commercial society not as causing an "attenuation of love," as Nelson has it, but as offering new possibilities of personal relations purged of pervasive instrumentalism, creating friendship in the modern sense.

Conclusions and Questions

To summarize briskly the perspective on personal relations of these eighteenth-century social theorists: commercial society—in which "every man . . . lives by exchanging, or becomes in some measure a merchant" [61]—and impersonal and uniform political administration—"where the authority of law is always perfectly sufficient to protect the meanest man in the state" [62]—both facilitate a distinction, without extensive precedent, between sympathetic relationships that normatively exclude calculation and utility, and relationships oriented to instrumentalism and contract. This development enhances the moral quality of personal relationships and frees them from exclusivistic solidarities expressing pervasive competition. Friendship and other sympathetic bonds integrate individuals into the larger society, linking them to successively more inclusive but less intense groupings. Such personal relations are not survivals of earlier historical periods. Only in commercial and impersonally administered society can friendship connect, not some in struggle against others, but potentially all through forms of association that cumulatively contribute to a moralized civil society. Only with impersonal markets in products and services, and impersonal modes of administration, does a parallel system of personal relations emerge the ethic of which is constituted by sentiment and affect rather than calculation and utility.

This grand, if rough, working hypothesis has its weaknesses, but, compared with available alternatives, it emerges as persuasive and rugged. Indeed, much of the contemporary sociology of personal relations descends, if unknowingly, from the Scots' account; however, it shares neither their understanding that anti-instrumental ideals of personal relations are distinctively modern, nor the historical sociology underlying their analysis, nor, indeed, a sense that its task requires an informed sense of history.[63] It largely inherits the unexamined

61. Smith, *Wealth of Nations,* p. 37.

62. Smith, *Moral Sentiments,* p. 224.

63. For its indirect influence on Cooley and others of his seminal generation, see Allan Silver, "The Curious Importance of the Small Group in American Sociology," in Herbert Gans's edited collection, *Sociology in America.* For its expression in subsequent sociological research, see such examples as: Claude Fischer, *To Dwell among Friends: Personal Networks in Town and City;* Mark Granovetter, "The Strength of Weak Ties"; Edward O. Laumann,

assumption that anti-instrumental personal relations are antipodal in spirit, and historically prior, to modern society—an assumption that shapes its understanding of the present. Had sociology drawn self-consciously on a corpus of theory including the Scots, it might not have "rediscovered" primary groups earlier in this century or treated them as historical survivals. That "rediscovery," and the recurrent finding that such relations flourish in modern society, are ungrounded in a warranted sense of how our present stands in relation to those other presents, now past, that constitute history. A presentist misreading of the history of personal relations has dominated in sociology at least since Cooley's assumption of the historical as well as psychological priority of the "primary group."[64] This in turn affects understanding of personal relations today—whether, for example, we are to understand them as "communal" phenomena at odds with the Great Society, or tucked away in its interstices, or as distinctively modern phenomena causally dependent upon it.

Deep difficulties lie in the very concept most readily at hand to address these matters—that of "differentiation." In its ordinary use, the idea tempts us to imagine an "undifferentiated" past as one in which (say) "instrumentalism" and "sympathy" coexisted in the form and substance they have at present.[65] On this view, change consists of these entities, unchanged in essence, coming to inhabit different parts of a social structure. But are these "two different sorts of commerce," to evoke Hume's distinction again, the same in substance and meaning whether or not "differentiated"?

Consider, with a brevity necessarily desperate, a rich complex of ideas and practices that for centuries defined an important range of personal relations among privileged groups in Western history—namely, codes of honor. Men widely considered themselves honor-bound, if need arose, to sacrifice themselves nobly for others to whom they had promised loyalty—and also explicitly expected a variety of palpable rewards and resources from the same associations.[66] Are the intense loyalties, coexisting with the frank expectation of re-

Bonds of Pluralism: The Form and Substance of Urban Social Networks; S. M. Lipset, Martin Trow, and James Coleman, *Union Democracy;* Barry Wellman, "The Community Question: The Intimate Networks of East Yorkers."

64. Cooley, *Social Organization,* chapters 1 through 5.

65. This is not necessarily among the various senses intended by the idea's progenitor, Spencer, or its most influential advocates in this century, Talcott Parsons and Niklas Luhmann.

66. From a large literature, see, illustratively, Merwyn James, "English Politics and the Concept of Honour, 1485–1642"; Roland Mousnier, *The Institutions of France under the Absolute Monarchy, 1598–1789,* 1:99–111; Kristen Neuschel, *Word of Honor: Interpreting Noble Culture in Sixteenth Century France;* Jonathan Dewald, *Aristocratic Experience and the Origins of Modern Culture.*

ward, found in the richly elaborated cultures of honor the same "conceptual stuff" as the loyalties of modern friends and the instrumentalism of market society? Or are they part of a qualitatively different complex of meaning? Is not the sense, setting, and substance of honor so distinctive that the imagery of "differentiation" smuggles the present into the past, and flattens questions that might otherwise be asked, both about past and present?

Such misunderstandings arise, in part, because modern ideals of friendship and personal life create privileged standards by which the quality of experience is evaluated. Only modern society has created a democratized arena of private and elective affinities, in which persons might culturally value each other for their "true," that is, their unproductive, selves. But modern ideals of personal relations, "purified" of practical urgencies, often contribute to a troubled contrast between private and public domains, privileging a personal morality whose ideal attributes need no longer accommodate the imperatives of *necessitudo.* Such ideals seem elevated and pure, compared with the exigencies of the public domain at its best—compromise, calculation, rationing, efficiency, the clash of contending interests. The contrast is gratuitously invidious, to the unmerited disadvantage of the public domain.

The significance of this invidious contrast is certainly greater for the various strains of anticapitalist "adversary culture," including its romantic, conservative, and left variants, than for most people in the context of everyday life. Still, the Scots' characteristic neglect of tensions intrinsic to "commercial society" did not lead them to consider that the emergence of a distinct domain of sympathy and benevolence in civil society might engender a sense of unease with the very world of markets and dispassionate administration they also celebrated. However, that these "two different sorts of commerce" are often at odds in felt experience is properly understood, not in terms of lost ideals of personal bonds eroded by modernity, but as internal to the modern condition.

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