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The Fiction of Generosity: Disinterest and the Eighteenth Century

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An abstract of
A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the
James T. Laney School of Graduate Studies of Emory University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
in Comparative Literature
2018

Abstract

The Fiction of Generosity: Disinterest and the Eighteenth Century
By Daniel Yu

This dissertation argues that the modern understanding of generosity is a fiction that is produced through eighteenth-century representations of disinterest. As the pursuit of gain is raised to the level of a virtue following the early modern period, the ascetic value of selflessness comes under scrutiny. Novelists and political philosophers respond to growing uncertainty about what a charitable gift is worth or whether a friendship can be valuable if it does not provide a benefit. Eighteenth-century fictions form the discursive space in which the seemingly antagonistic relationship between self-interest and gratuity is worked out over the course of a narrative. The first chapter shows how the ethical rigorism found in modern philosophical writing on the gift can be traced to Bernard Mandeville's *Fable of the Bees*, which expresses skepticism concerning all claims to disinterestedness. The second chapter argues that the economic behavior in Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* is characterized by reciprocal goodwill, not secular industry and rationally organized labor, as later economists believe. A third chapter connects the gratuitous gift with the spontaneous jest in Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* and *A Sentimental Journey*, two novels which celebrate man's innately sympathetic disposition rather than the practice of self-denial. I conclude that eighteenth-century discourses provide the terms for debate over generosity; modern analyses of the gift begin by considering whether individuals are naturally interested or disinterested, eliding the social and symbolic structures which determine forms of exchange.

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Acknowledgments

I thank my advisor, Jill Robbins, for her commitment to rigorous reading, an ethical practice I hope I have learned. I thank Steven Tipton for sharing his breadth of knowledge and for allowing me to take a leading role in his legendary Sociology of Religion courses. I thank Dalia Judovitz for exemplifying philosophy as a way of life and for her hospitality. I thank Paul Kelleher for introducing me to the field of eighteenth-century studies and for his reminders to take self-care seriously.

I thank the Center for Faculty Development and Excellence and Donna Troka for supporting my last year of dissertation writing.

I am grateful to *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* and Eugenia Zuroski for publishing a portion of the chapter on Robinson Crusoe.

It is impossible to adequately acknowledge the debts I owe for the completion of this project, especially to my wife, Elly, and my family.

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Introduction

Literature is replete with suspect gifts. Accounts of hollow horses and grain offerings chasten audiences to be circumspect in giving and receiving. An inadequate or inauspicious gift is shunned, while a cunning present conceals the will to dominate. The challenge of being generous is that there can so easily be too much or too little of a good thing. The difficulty may be most pronounced in times of transition, when established norms are giving way to emerging practices. Writing during the sixteenth-century Wars of Religion, Michel de Montaigne attempts to recover a classical ideal of generosity. He tells of a dying man who leaves his friends the task of caring for his mother and daughter. In allowing his fellows the opportunity to serve him in this way, with no possibility of recompense, he has given them the perfect gift. Montaigne means to emphasize the exceptional calculus at work between friends. A debit is counted as a credit, such that good friends always seek to obligate themselves to others by taking or receiving some benefit from them (100). Literary depictions of gift-giving and receiving often feature a similar inversion. In his autobiography, Jean-Jacques Rousseau asks to be removed from his friends' wills, lest he be guilty of finding pleasure in their demise. His scrupulousness in this regard reflects a modern concern with self-interest and its relation to moral duty. His attempts to resolve conflicts of interest lead to moments of crisis, as when he receives a letter which he knows to contain his inheritance from his father's death. Trembling with anticipation to see the contents of the envelope, he reproaches himself for being unfilial and sets it down above the mantle, where it sits, completely forgotten until the next morning. Rousseau counts this self-induced bout of amnesia among his great moral victories (284-285).

The locus of the chapters to follow is the eighteenth century. Following the groundbreaking work of sociologist and historian Max Weber, the so-called Age of Enlightenment is now strongly associated with the concomitant processes of rationalization and secularization. As a result of these cultural and material developments, modern people must grapple with the notion of a secular or disenchanted gift evaluated on the basis of economic principles. Such a notion would be alien to many of the archaic and historical societies that feature in Marcel Mauss' essay on the gift. For them, to bracket out the religious and symbolic dimensions of gift-giving would be to deny the integrality of "'total' social phenomena," which weave sentiment, power, utility and cosmology into a unified whole (3). Disintegrative modes of analysis come to the fore in early modern debates over whether generosity can be reduced entirely to self-interested motives. The debate is not only endemic to this period; rather, it is one of the legacies that the Enlightenment leaves to modernity. In the middle of the nineteenth century, Soren Kierkegaard will describe a scenario that puts generous intentions to the test. One of a pair of women exchanging snuff near their place of work wishes that she could have but five rix-dollars. An eavesdropper is inspired to play the role of fate and appears, as if by magic, to supply a five rix-dollar note. The story's narrator condemns this act as a mockery of generosity, motivated by a charlatan's desire to meddle in providential affairs. When he ponders what he himself would do, the narrator admits that he too would supply the note—only he would do so under the conviction that he was a humble instrument of divine providence. What separates a good gift from a poisonous one, in this case, is the imperceptible difference between a devilish and a pure intention (12-13).

This indeterminacy at the heart of the gift is also the subject of one of Charles Baudelaire's prose poems. Two men exiting a tobacco shop happen upon a beggar, and each

gives him some coin. The man narrating the encounter remarks that his friend has given the more generous gift, to which the friend replies he gave the beggar a counterfeit coin. The narrator ponders whether his friend meant to derive enjoyment from imagining the random consequences his gift could have but is ultimately confirmed in the opinion that his friend merely sought to be charitable at a discount. Baudelaire's story presents a dizzyingly complex array of possibilities corresponding to conflicting and overlapping responsibilities. One man should not make his friend appear miserly by giving more generously than he. Yet the beggar is due all that one can spare. Would it be possible to conceal the magnitude of one's gift in pretending it to be counterfeit? Even so, the one who carries out such a ploy will be guilty of receiving some gratification from being so generous and so clever. If only there were a way for him to conceal his own intentions from himself, in the process of separating change into "the left pocket of his waistcoat" and "his left trouser pocket" to have the left hand forget what the right hand is doing.

The guidelines for generous behavior have never been entirely straightforward, and they are only rarely made explicit. Navigating the unspoken rules and expectations of gift-giving as the fictional figures of Baudelaire and Kierkegaard do requires a feel for the game. This game sense is not the systematized knowledge of a theoretician but the "insensible familiarization" that may result from the entirety of one's upbringing. This kind of competence is what sociologist Pierre Bourdieu describes in his theory of practice. "This practical sense, which does not burden itself with rules or principles (except in cases of misfiring or failure), still less with calculations or deductions, which are in any case excluded by the urgency of action 'which brooks no delay', is what makes it possible to appreciate the meaning of the situation instantly, at a glance, in the heat of the action, and to produce at once the opportune response" (Logic of Practice 103-104). Outsiders who belatedly arrive on the playing field are necessarily at a disadvantage even after a

period of study. In the contemporaneous diary of his fieldwork in New Guinea, Bronislaw Malinowski records his own ineptitude with gifts as he tries to bribe his native informants with half-sticks of tobacco (Diary 69). To his chagrin, they take the tobacco and leave. A subsequent volume on the Trobriand islanders outlines a system of gifts and obligations. There it is revealed that any member of the tribe who is in possession of more tobacco than he can consume on the spot is expected to distribute it freely. Thus, tribesmen have taken to carrying baskets with hidden compartments in which to store their tobacco (Argonauts 74). Malinowski learns (too late) that special rules pertain to the exchange of tobacco. Works of literature also attest to the exemplary status of tobacco among gifts. The other lesson is that dissimulation is sometimes required if one is not to become totally impoverished. In fact, secrecy and deception go hand in hand with generosity and magnanimity. The gift is an open secret that works through collective misrecognition, Bourdieu implies. It is given with an air of superiority, as if nothing were expected in return. Nevertheless, reciprocity is obligated and enforced by powerful social controls.

These controls are typically religious in nature. Mauss describes the Maori notion of *hau*, which denotes the spirit of every personal possession. Someone who has received a gift from a friend cannot fail to reciprocate without expecting some reprisal from this spirit. For the same reason, a thief who takes an object by guile or force will be subject to the vengeful spirit's judgment. "What imposes obligation in the present received and exchanged, is the fact that the thing received is not inactive. Even when it has been abandoned by the giver, it still possesses something of him. Through it the giver has a hold over the beneficiary just as, being its owner, through it he has a hold over the thief" (11-12). In this society, the force that compels reciprocity is believed to be automatically efficacious, requiring no intervention or disciplinary structures

outside of the object itself: "the copper object speaks," Mauss says, "and grumbles" (45). In some other societies, such as those that practice potlatch, the failure to reciprocate is tied to a punishment: slavery for debt. In every case, insufficient generosity results in a loss of rank and honor. Mauss insists that it is possible to recognize survivals of enchanted notions of the gift in modern societies. The obligation to reciprocate and to be generous, even beyond one's means, can still be strongly felt. He recalls that, in his own childhood, a village family which, for the most part, lived very frugally, brought itself to ruin with its displays of hospitality during feast days (66).

The reasons for a family's readiness to ruin itself for the sake of guests can only be religious. This is not to say that these reasons are irrational or incomprehensible; on the contrary, they are oriented towards a religious or ideal value. In Weber's terms, they are value-rational instead of means-end rational.[1] An adequate description of the motivations for gift-giving would have to account for the beliefs and practices which produce these motivations. Weber's sociological approach to religion provides the remedy to reductively materialist explanations of disinterestedness by accounting for the role of religious ideas as well as that of material interests in determining action. Weber does not go so far as to say that people's conduct can be explained solely or even primarily on the basis of their ideas. However, ideas can significantly alter the course that action takes. "Not ideas, but material and ideal interests, directly govern men's conduct. Yet very frequently the 'world images' that have been created by 'ideas' have, like switchmen, determined the tracks along which action has been pushed by the dynamic of

[1] This distinction is typified by the difference between the Puritan with a religiously grounded sense of calling and the utilitarian specialist of industrial capitalism. Stephen Kalberg remarks on these types in his introduction to *The Protestant Ethic* (43-45).

interest" (Social Psychology 280). A sufficiently cohesive and compelling world image or world view is what allows for the evidently disinterested behavior of the family from Mauss' village.

Such a world image is the result of innumerable cultural processes and could only be partially encapsulated in a cultural artifact such as a text. A literary work can offer a glimpse of the world image which lends itself to the production of that text. On a different level, works of fiction also fabricate the world images which captivate their characters. As literary constructs, characters may engage in selfish and selfless action over the course of a narrative, demonstrating possible manifestations of meanness and generosity. Textual analysis may be able to indicate how traditional or self-contradictory or suggestive to thought these world images are.

The following essays about eighteenth-century literary texts make frequent use of concepts from sociology and social anthropology. Blurring disciplinary boundaries is not without risks; it is necessary to guard against the tendency to treat characters in a narrative as sociological subjects. Products of the imagination do not have motivations identical with those of empirical subjects. Yet the modes of inquiry across disciplines have much in common: whenever sociology deals with a representative "type," it is dealing in fiction. Clifford Geertz has shown how cultures come to be understood through the analysis of symbols, underlining the hermeneutical aspect of anthropology (89-94). Claude Levi-Strauss describes the work of anthropologists as a rhythmic movement between experiment and model, the field and the lab. Based on observations made in the field, they construct theoretical models that account for the phenomena. Returning to the field, they note the data that disprove their model and modify it accordingly. Anthropologists are simultaneously at an advantage and a disadvantage compared to other researchers, Levi-Strauss says. Their experiments, the primitive societies that they study, are ready-made, the product of generations-long developments. Yet these "experiments" allow

for no tampering. The variables cannot be modulated. To test a model against a different set of data, the anthropologist must pick up and go to the site of another experiment (15-16).

The comparative study of literature may bear some resemblance to this method. The novels examined here depict individuals exchanging gifts and favors while invoking a practical rationale, divine inspiration or pure gratuity as the sources of their generosity. It seems possible to construct models of generous behavior from the actions and reflections of these characters. These models will likely align with existing sociological models along certain axes while differing along others. In literary criticism, it is often the case that both experiment and model are in ready supply; an interpretive tradition will claim to have accounted for a text's features, even in their entirety. Occasionally, such claims reflect the tendency, extending beyond the literary field, to minimize anomalies in favor of an elegantly persuasive argument. It may seem unproductive to demonstrate that a subject lacks the consistency which some models grant it, but such investigations may open the discussion concerning the significance of what has been obscured.

1.

The first chapter provides the context for early modern to modern debates concerning the notion of interest. As the religiously grounded condemnation of usury gives way to more accepting attitudes towards interest-bearing loans in the late medieval period, the concept of self-interest also gains in prominence as a way to explain how people act. The term "interest" is used by authors like John Locke and Bernard Mandeville to designate the financial instrument as well as the principle of human action. These related designations intertwine with each other in the eighteenth century as Adam Smith argues that individuals acting in self-interest contribute to

communal prosperity. The triumph of what Louis Dumont calls the "economic ideology" places religion and morality in an adjunctive position with regard to economics, whose principles are, to a growing extent, accepted as the sufficient rationale for human conduct. Weber has argued that the situation of modernity is characterized by the inescapability of capitalist structures, making it largely impossible for individuals to refuse the interminable pursuit of gain. Jacques Derrida demonstrates how this economic totality makes the gift impossible in principle. Generosity would require an escape from this totality which so easily recapitulates attempts at virtue as aspects of its expansive version of self-interest.

The meta-analyses of giving conducted by twentieth-century theorists may seem to have jeopardized the possibility of a sincere and selfless gift; either the gift is a fiction maintained by mutual bad faith (Bourdieu) or it is the energy expended in a moment of madness (Bataille). Yet Emmanuel Levinas reserves a place in his post-war philosophy for a meaningful kind of expenditure which differs in nature from the gratuitous actions that take place in a game. Gratuity, which indicates an attitude divested of self-interest, takes on another meaning when it is directed toward someone who is in need in order to benefit that person. More than that, the directionality of gratuitous expenditure gives meaning to a world which is otherwise dominated by the meaninglessness of a mechanistic and totalizing economy. Much like certain eighteenth-century moralists, Levinas affirms that interest is a constitutive element of being in the world, present before conscious intention and expressed in basic desires like hunger. The all-encompassing totality is the sordid product of everyone's dedication to his and her own interests.

However, as much as money facilitates exploitation, it is also an indispensable mode of sociality. In a curious document written late in his career, Levinas explains how justice is presently unthinkable without money, which by its nature quantifies everything and allows for

reparations. The compensatory justice that money allows interrupts the self-perpetuating destruction that results from the principle of retaliation in kind. While this positive function of money does not redeem its antisocial uses, it points to the broader implications of an economy in which everything has a price. Within such an economy, every resource can potentially be converted into aid or alms for those in need, whose numbers grow indefinitely as the reach of one's responsibility extends beyond the scope of one's intentions. In this late essay dedicated to the analysis of money as well as in earlier works, Levinas characterizes economic totality as a world in which the possibility for wholesale violence coincides with the call to unlimited responsibility, represented by an infinite debt owed to the other. This orientation towards the other suggests an approach to the analysis of generosity that does not have to resort to either self-deception or mania.

2.

In the case of Daniel Defoe's 1719 novel, *Robinson Crusoe*, the tradition long maintained that the novel's protagonist represented the triumph of a utilitarian ideology, with his characteristic traits being industriousness and common-sense rationality. Published early in the eighteenth century and purporting to record events from the end of the previous century, the novel stands at the watershed of capitalist expansion in England. In the decades and centuries following its first appearance, economists and political philosophers make use of the novel either as a demonstration of rational conduct or as the focus of a polemic against illusory notions of natural man. Jean-Jacques Rousseau's adoption of the text in *Emile* paves the way for the evaluation of Crusoe as a rationally motivated, utilitarian individual. Following Rousseau, the name of Robinson Crusoe becomes synonymous with the castaway's survival on the island. The

interpretation of this island motif in economic treatises becomes so widespread that Karl Marx condemns it as the self-delusion of bourgeois society. What both Marx and Rousseau exclude from consideration is all of Crusoe's life leading up to the shipwreck and following his rescue. While he is a part of society, Crusoe's dealings with other adventurers and merchants take on the appearance of disinterested friendships. As capitalists in a softer age of capitalism, the characters in *Robinson Crusoe* prefer to exchange gifts and favors with one another, even if such transactions are highly inefficient and require the careful negotiation of unspoken rules. Tobacco emerges as an ideal gift, suitable to be exchanged between friends not only because it is of one's own produce but also because it signifies luxurious consumption as opposed to necessary sustenance. The gifts between equals turn out to have a hard edge, however, since they conceal and tacitly legitimate the real inequalities which underlie the production of wealth in the eighteenth-century Atlantic trade.

The long history of interpretation has made it difficult to assign the character of Crusoe an appropriate place within the history of capitalism. Weber's study of the Protestant ethic may provide the necessary theoretical tools to determine whether the character is most adequately described as an adventure capitalist, a modern industrialist or an economic traditionalist. The features most characteristic of Defoe's protagonist may in fact be his penchant for speculation and his emotional brand of piety. He is constantly engaged in risky or unproductive ventures, such as a slave-capturing expedition or the resource-intensive manufacturing of earthenware vessels. The spiritual conversion that he undergoes while on the island is precipitated by a remarkable ritual involving the ingestion of tobacco and rum, psychogenic substances which substitute for proper elements. Crusoe's religious experimentation pits him against the polemics against heathenism and idolatry, identifying his religious practice as an aberration from widely

accepted norms. After his ecstatic conversion, he continues to dedicate considerable time and resources to smoking while using his vivid imagination to produce rapturous visions. If Crusoe does not carry the traits of the modern capitalist spirit, conducting business on the basis of good faith and reciprocity, and if his religious ethic is more Pietistic and otherworldly than the active asceticism of Calvinism, his narrative would not moralize on the rationality of economic action in any straightforward way. *Robinson Crusoe* may best be characterized as the narrative of a recalcitrant adventurer whose ecstatic conversion does not completely succeed in effecting a transformation of his habits and work ethic.

3.

The third chapter deals with the novels of Laurence Sterne, focusing on *A Sentimental Journey*, a travel log and prolonged reflection on generosity as a passionate feeling. Sterne's narrator, Yorick, develops an aesthetics of gift-giving appropriate to the age of sentiment, requiring a gift to be gratuitous and spontaneous, prompted by nothing but an effervescence of spirit. The figure of Yorick in *A Sentimental Journey* recalls the parson Yorick from *Tristram Shandy*, who is said to be generous to a fault. That parson comes to ruin due, on the one hand, to his excessive selflessness and, on the other hand, his inability to resist making jokes at the expense of important people. The sentimental traveler also jests, but he insists on the innocence of his jesting, seeking to demonstrate that the disinterested stance of the jester is the most benign, thereby countering the proposal of political philosophers that the merchant who engages in *doux commerce* is the least dangerous kind of person.

Yorick's apprenticeship in the art of gift-exchange is inaugurated by his showdown with a Franciscan monk; the two vie for the attention of a lady and then for the honor of being the

most gracious to the other. Just as in *Robinson Crusoe*, tobacco plays a central symbolic and religious role. Upon exchanging snuff and their snuffboxes with each other, the two contestants form an alliance of friendship constituted by fellow-feeling and mutuality. Yorick keeps the monk's snuffbox as a memento of this pact, identifying it as a uniquely significant religious instrument. Every time he uses it, he is reminded to be generous to others. Yorick's generosity operates primarily in a symbolic register, affirming the sentiments and the humanity of his beneficiaries while doing little or nothing for their material situations. The rationale for this sentimental generosity is delineated in an encounter with a noble beggar, from whom Yorick takes a pinch of snuff while dropping some change in his snuffbox. Ostensibly, the gesture of taking is by far a better gift than the donation, since it honors the beggar.

Sterne's novel presents the case for a competing definition of disinterestedness as gratuity and spontaneity. Rejecting the rigoristic notion of virtue as selflessness and sacrifice, Yorick strives to give in to his best, most generous sentiments. As long as he can remain intoxicated by a sensuous feeling of beneficence, he is able to perform what he judges to be sublime acts of generosity. Whenever he comes down from this high, he reverts to cold and calculating behavior directed by self-interest. For Yorick, the remedy for selfishness is not to deny himself in a rigoristic manner but to embrace the naturally social tendencies inside of himself. Yorick's account also demonstrates some of the dangers and absurdities inherent to a religion of sentimental generosity: the sensuousness of fellow-feeling is constantly confused with sensuality, and Yorick's self-congratulatory moods often provide a jarring contrast to the unchanged condition of his beneficiaries. The novel attests to the challenge, in the latter half of the eighteenth century, of developing a new understanding of generosity detached from the ascetic values of a previous era.

These chapters, while they may not adhere to the conventions of a genre study, approach one and the same object of inquiry, only from a different direction each time. The turn of phrase that organizes the essays, "the fiction of generosity," is not meant to deride gift-giving as illusory. Generosity may indeed be a kind of "polite" fiction, if Mauss at his most critical is to be believed (3). Yet even if the effectiveness of our symbolic life is bought with counterfeit coin, the issue from that transaction is still of substance. Nothing is more real than sociality. Generosity, then, is as much fiction as self-interest—a way to understand and enjoin human action in the context of an enchanted cosmos, rational ethics or economic principles. The fiction of generosity coincides with the fiction of interest if, in the early modern period and the eighteenth century, the two notions come to be defined in opposition to each other. It is this sense of fiction that is most crucial to this study. The fiction of generosity is the making of such a notion—how it has acquired its specific meaning, what it is meant to exclude and how it has come to shape our understanding of ourselves. At a time when self-interest is being raised to the level of a virtue, selflessness and disinterested generosity have become questions that need to be thought through. Novelists, columnists and pamphleteers express their uncertainty about what a charitable gift is worth or whether a friendship can be valuable if it does not provide a benefit. The eighteenth-century discourse and literature of generosity have set the terms for our modern understanding of it; when we consider gift-giving in an analytical context we still use words like "mutual benefit," "utility," "self-interested" and "disinterested." In seeking to better understand how these writers represent gift-giving to themselves, we are simultaneously seeking to understand the possibilities for the practice of generosity in a modern era of instant gratification, mass consumption and self-help.

Chapter 1

Disinterest from Locke to Levinas

Reforming interest

In the conclusion of his essay on the gift, Marcel Mauss constructs the opposition between two notions: "the gift and disinterestedness" and "interest, [the] individual search after what is useful" (75). His assertion in the following passages is that, in the societies and civilizations which have not been assimilated into modern capitalism, interest as we know it is not the motivating force. The individuals, tribes or social strata of those civilizations exhibit some forms of self-interest, but these forms are very different from the modern Western manifestation of interest as an individual's rational calculation of utility. Mauss writes that it was not until Bernard Mandeville that interest took on the meaning of a principle of human action as well as a virtue. Prior to this innovation, the word had a much humbler jurisdiction, being restricted to the contingent residue of economic transactions. Both the modern English and French terms derive from the Latin *interesse*, signifying "to be between" or to be of concern and importance. For the Romans, interest had a restricted sense which had to do with money paid to a lender besides the principal. As *id quod interest*, it was the amount that a debtor would pay to the creditor after having defaulted on a payment of the debt (Divine 3). Under certain circumstances, the creditor was entitled to the recuperation of the missed payment as well as any profits that could have been generated with it. Thereafter, the concept of interest grew in generality, coming to mean first a state's and then a person's well-being or advantage. As a generalizable principle of social or political action, interest came to be viewed as natural and necessary. The restricted economic sense also lost its stigma, with interest-bearing loans became the norm. Whereas

medieval merchants and bankers used to rely on devices such as the triple contract, by the eighteenth century in most of Europe they were able to make and take out loans with interest in the open.

This reversal of attitudes regarding interest is a microcosm of the larger shift in thinking regarding the pursuit of money. Max Weber describes a general shift in early modern Europe from the demonizing of avarice and Mammon to the praise of industry and accumulation. While there were undoubtedly material causal forces that account for the change, Weber emphasizes the role of Reformation ideology in effecting the change. In short, new Protestant churches and sects promoted an ethos which destigmatized the accumulation of wealth. This material effect of religion was already clear by the eighteenth century, as evidenced by the remarks of John Wesley on the tendency of his followers to become rich and irreligious (172-173).

American sociologist Benjamin Nelson provides a critical addendum to Weber's thesis by marking the historical significance of the shift from the Judaic sense of tribal brotherhood, which forbids exploitation in the form of usury among members of the communal group but allows it between members and aliens, to the Calvinistic universal society, which makes no distinction between insiders and outsiders, allowing the unrestricted play of economic activity for everyone. Nelson's decisive finding is that this shift, which is hinted at in Weber's texts but underdeveloped in *The Protestant Ethic*, is a condition for the emergence of modern capitalism (xv-xxi).

In charting the history of the idea of interest, Nelson begins with the Deuteronomic prohibition against usury. He could equally have chosen to discuss the invectives against usurious loans in Greek and Latin texts, including those of Plato, Aristotle and Cicero, but the Hebraic law is unique in that it codifies a separation between two groups of people as they

pertain to the law of interest: in effect, there were Jews, to whom one was not allowed to lend at interest, and there were Gentiles, to whom one could lend and was even perhaps encouraged to lend at interest.[2] The primary passage in the Pentateuch concerning interest-bearing loans is as follows:

> You shall not lend upon interest to your brother, interest on money, interest on victuals, interest on anything that is lent for interest. To a foreigner you may lend upon interest, but to your brother you shall not lend upon interest; that the Lord your God may bless you in all that you undertake in the land which you are entering to take possession of it. (Deuteronomy 23: 19-20)

The interpretation of these two sentences, Nelson demonstrates, has produced a vast literature of glosses and casuistical remarks in the Christian tradition, starting with Jerome and Ambrose and culminating in John Calvin's epochal determination.

Christian interpreters during the patristic period encounter the difficulty of rendering the Deuteronomy passage compatible with the New Testament's pronouncement of universal brotherhood, which does not allow for such discrimination among nations. In the third and fourth centuries, Jerome argues that the distinction between brothers and strangers had been superseded in the Christian era, meaning whoever was once considered a stranger or an enemy is henceforth to be called a brother. For this reason, the prohibition against usury should be understood as having universal extent; there is no one who can be called a stranger, and thus there is no one to

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[2] According to Thomas Divine, "Nowhere in Grecian law do we find interest prohibited, though the legal regulation of the rate of interest becomes fairly common in the later periods." Nevertheless, Plato and Aristotle condemned the practice as detrimental to the harmony between the classes of lenders and borrowers (Divine 11-13). The prohibition of usury on things other than money is enshrined in Roman law with the concept of *mutuum*, which signifies a loan of any good, including money. The letter of the law proscribed interest on the *mutuum,* though workarounds became common practice.

whom lending usuriously is allowed. Just as Jerome is advancing this doctrine, however, Ambrose proposes a competing view: that the prohibition against usury must be understood in the context of the wars that Israel had been commanded to wage against surrounding nations. Usury is not allowable except as a weapon of war, as a way to subjugate and destroy the enemy. It is for this reason that it is not allowed between brothers, that is to say members of the Christian faith and citizens of the Roman state. The disagreement between the two church fathers demonstrates that the concept of a universal brotherhood which transcends boundaries of clan had not yet taken hold in the early church; indeed, it would not be until the late medieval period that the word "brother," as it appears in the Deuteronomy passage, takes on a definitively universalistic meaning. Thus, it is only starting around the time of Thomas Aquinas that a doctrine concerning usury becomes generally accepted. The Ambrosian interpretation falls out of favor as the idea of universal brotherhood gains in prevalence. For Aquinas, the regime under which Jews had been allowed to lend to strangers on interest was abolished by Christ; usury should thus be disallowed to people of all nations (Nelson 3-4, 14-15).

Throughout this contentious history of interpretation, what strikes the modern reader is the resounding agreement on one issue: the immorality of lending on interest, or usury. The modern signification of the term denotes lending at exorbitant interest rates, usually in predatory circumstances. We may consider payday loans which take advantage of the needy by offering them fast money while charging very high fees to be usurious and unethical. However, practically no one objects to the principle of loans at interest; on the contrary, interest is understood to be integral to the functioning of the economy.[3] There is thus a vast difference

[3] David Hawkes makes this point, noting that the modern understanding of the economy as a distinct sphere of society delimits our ability to critique usury. In the introduction to his book, he writes that "Our society lacks an ethical critique of usury as such." He argues that a

between the modern and pre-modern (or even early modern) evaluation of interest-bearing loans. From the Roman *id quod interest* up until the abolishment of the usury prohibition in Europe, merchants and bankers never failed to find ways to make money with money, but the profession of moneylender was denigrated and the activity of lending at interest abhorred.

The turning point for the ethical reception of usury may have been the Protestant Reformation, during which Martin Luther first problematizes the canonical reading of the prohibition of usury without providing a resolution to the problem and Calvin then legitimizes the practice by giving it a clear dogmatic footing. Luther's self-contradictory positions on usury matches the arc of his career as a theologian, beginning with his denouncements of the Catholic Church, which he accused of being lax in its policing of usurers and ending with his alliance to the German princes whose wealth was tied up with usurious bankers. In his early reforms, Luther is fervent in his attacks on all financial devices which resemble usury, including the annuities that the Church had so far allowed. He even goes so far as to express some support for the idea of the Jubilee year, a bicentennial event in Judaic law during which all debts are cancelled and property returned to its original owner (Nelson 44).[4] His radical propositions would not survive his horror of public upheavals following several peasant revolts, however. Nelson describes the changes in Luther's stance over time: "In the first phase of his mission, he had appeared as the

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comprehensive understanding and critique of usury can be found in Renaissance texts which illustrate the paradoxical status of money as both sterile and independently reproductive (Hawkes 2-4).

[4] The jubilee year is described in Leviticus 25 as coming around every fifty years. During jubilee, all people would return to their families (from whatever circumstance of servitude they might have been under), and all property would return to its original owner. This second injunction is made twice, emphasizing its normative import. Luther recognized the value in the principle of jubilee and of the shorter, seven-year sabbatical cycle, which effectively limited the duration of debts and prevented long-term debt slavery. The principle is recognizable in modern statutes of limitations on debt recovery.

inspired champion of national evangelical revolt against foreign domination. His program appeared eventually to promise a drastic reorganization of society in the light of the scriptural injunctions to brotherly love. By the close of 1525, he was indelibly stamped as an ally of the territorial princes and of the annuity-owning creditors in their opposition to the demands of the lower classes and their radical preacher leaders" (35). Shaken by the implications of his own teaching, Luther backs down from the zealous call to bring usurers to account and even, in the end, admits that some loans made at a reasonable interest rate of five or six percent are not inimical to brotherly love. As with his formulation of calling in the world, Luther's pronouncements on usury are too internally inconsistent to support an entirely new perspective. His acquiescence to material exigencies points to the emerging influence of a class of interest-earning financiers who are ready to align themselves with a religious doctrine that would countenance their way of doing business.

In comparison to Luther, Calvin is systematic and unwavering in his interpretation of the Deuteronomic prohibition of usury. For Calvin, the law given to the Israelites was meant to foster brotherly care among them, and so it should be understood as a historically grounded and particular command without universal reach. Indeed, as Calvin understands it, the prohibition of usury cannot be a spiritual (universally valid) law since it allows for the exception of lending to Gentiles. If lending at interest to some is no sin, then usury cannot be sinful in and of itself; it must therefore be lawful. However, in making usury out to be lawful and permitted, Calvin does not go so far as to endorse it. He notes that there are cases in which lending at interest is objectionable and contrary to God's law: when the interest rate is extortionate, when interest is garnered from the needy and when someone makes a habit of this kind of lending, becoming a usurer by custom or profession. Moreover, Calvin argues, since usury is not consonant with the

charitability that should prevail among brothers, it is base in its very nature. For this reason, it should be counted a blessing that God restricted the Israelites from lending among themselves at interest. Yet if it was good for the Israelites to lend gratuitously, why would the situation be any different for Protestants in the sixteenth century? Calvin's answer makes clear that modern forms of association are entirely distinct from those of the ancient Jews: "There is a difference in the political union, for the situation in which God placed the Jews and many other circumstances permitted them to trade conveniently among themselves without usuries. Our union is entirely different. Therefore I do not feel that usuries were forbidden to us simply, except in so far as they are opposed to equity or charity" (Calvin 247).[5]

The political union that Calvin envisions is entirely different from the situation of the ancient Israelites; the difference is evidenced in the fact that Calvin does not believe that his contemporary society would be able to "conveniently" engage in trade without usury. This conviction is more so a judgment regarding economic policy than a theological postulate. Thomas Divine remarks that, in making this determination, Calvin is acting in the role of a city or state administrator and not as a theologian:

[5] The difference between the political union of the Jews and that of Calvin's Geneva marks the distance between what Robert Bellah has called modern religion and religion in the axial age. The axial age is that period in the first millenium BCE during which the systems of thought known as "world religions" emerged. Bellah describes the period of Judaic history in which the laws of Deuteronomy were compiled as a time of unprecedented violence, when Israel's neighbors were pressing in on it from nearly every direction. Assyria had not only subjugated the northern kingdom of Israel but also ravaged the rural areas of Judah, the seat of which was Jerusalem. "Although the countryside was denuded, the population of Jerusalem was swollen with refugees from the northern kingdom after its fall in 722 and from rural Judah from the campaign of 701. Inevitably such drastic population shifts shattered the already weakened kinship ties still further" (Bellah 308). The covenantist religion which arose from these circumstances was one in which the kinship of an entire people was reaffirmed in the strongest sense: as that of a people chosen by God, bound together as both a religious and a political community.

> Calvin's approach to the problem of interest was that of the father of an urban movement writing in the environment not of a self-sufficing economy of peasant farmers and small craftsmen and traders but of a large and prosperous city that knew the advantages of large-scale commercial enterprise. Capital and credit are assumed as normal and indispensable instruments of economic life. The middleman and financier are not extortioners but useful members of society. Profits from finance and trade, the reward of the industry and diligence of the trader, are as licit as the wages of labor and the rents from durable property (87).

Divine's analysis suggests that the material conditions of Calvin's movement, including the class and professional status of his followers, determines to a large extent his interpretation of biblical passages on usury. However, this argument errs on the side of material determinism if it advances the view that the course of moral and legal history would have been largely unchanged without the specific intervention of Calvin's theology.

While it is certainly the case that innovations in accounting and the opening of new trade routes in the early modern period made usury more advantageous and indispensable in commerce, the moral authority of religious institutions and public sentiment itself were strong enough to disallow the open practice of lending at interest. In the centuries preceding the Reformation, the Catholic Church had made limited concessions to the changing economic reality by condoning practices which approximated lending at interest but did so under other names and with extenuating circumstances. For instance, a sea loan was a joint venture between a merchant and a sea captain in which the merchant made a certain amount of capital, in the form of goods or money, available to the captain. Upon the captain's successful return from a trade voyage, the merchant would be entitled to a specified amount beyond the value of his initial

contribution. This surplus value was deemed acceptable as it was compensation for the risk he took on in the venture. The essential difference between a joint venture such as this and a loan at interest was the sharing of risk. As long as the two parties shared in the risk they were taking, the garnishing of a surplus value by the supplier of capital was permitted (Jonsen and Toulmin 185-186). Another well-known device that was used to get around usury prohibitions was the triple contract, also called the German contract or the five-percent contract. Such a contract essentially consisted of three separate contracts: first, two people would go into business together as partners, with one of them (the investor) supplying the capital; second, the investor would buy an insurance contract in order to secure his invested capital; third, the investor would buy an insurance contract to secure a certain return on his investment. In a typical example of the triple contract, the investor would supply his partner with 1000 florins, expecting a 12% return amounting to 120 florins. The insurance that he buys on the principal has a premium of 2%, costing 20 florins, while the insurance on the return has a premium of 5%, costing 50 florins. In the end, the investor pays 70 florins in premiums and, after the return of 120 florins, makes a net profit of 50 florins, effectively earning a five-percent interest on his investment (Jonsen and Toulmin 188, Gil Brodie).

The triple contract in particular caused a great deal of consternation during the Reformation and Counter-Reformation, driving a rift between the Fugger family of Augsburg and the Jesuit casuists who denied them absolution for engaging in what they saw as usury. The debate was not to be resolved until two official commissions, the Third and Fourth General Congregations of the Society of Jesus in 1573 and 1580, confirmed that the triple contract was to be allowed. Since a number of “learned doctors” had rendered probable opinions in favor of the triple contract, it was not to be considered unconditionally immoral, even if the practice was

morally suspect. Thus, under the jurisdiction of the Catholic Church, the economic principles of lending at interest took a torturous path through casuistical argument before being affirmed as ambiguous but permissible.

Since the arguments submitted for and against the practices suspected of being usurious were intelligible to few outside of the jurists themselves, the increased laxity of the Church could not have had much effect on the popular perception of usury. The matter was altogether different with Calvin, whose defense of interest-bearing loans did not rest on the undecidability of moral predicaments but struck at the root of the usury prohibition itself by making it out to be no longer applicable in the modern polity. Calvin's defense of usury not only allowed for the proliferation of modern financial instruments, which the Catholic position did almost just as well, but it also paved the way for the re-evaluation of usury in the popular mind, which would come to accept it as something absolute and inescapable, like taxes.

Locke, Mandeville, Smith

In England, the influence of Calvinism and of the offshoots that came to be known as Puritanism is demonstrated by the fact that, by 1571, interest had already been legalized under Elizabeth I, with the maximum rate set at ten percent (Divine 92). Living by the religious ethic of inner-worldly aestheticism, the ideal-typical Puritan endeavored to put money to work in making more money, in violation of the Aristotelian principle that money is sterile. By the close of the seventeenth century in England, interest-bearing loans had become inoffensive enough to be favorably compared to land rents. In his treatise on interest and the value of money, John Locke poses the question: Is not the same principle behind the charging of interest on money and the charging of rent on land? If the value that a farmer receives from making use of a piece of land

exceeds the rent that he pays, he is justified in paying the rent, and the landowner is justified in demanding it. In the same way, Locke argues, if someone who engages in business can procure a profit given a certain amount of capital in excess of the interest he pays to borrow the capital, both he and the lender are justified in the transaction. Moreover, the interest-bearing loan is generally more favorable to the borrower than a lease to a rentier, since it is easier on average for the borrower to overcome the deficit, Locke says. "It follows that Borrowing Money upon Use is not only by the necessity of Affairs, and the Constitution of Humane Society, unavoidable to some Men, but that also to receive Profit for the Loan of Money, is as equitable and lawful, as receiving Rent for Land, and more tolerable to the Borrower, notwithstanding the Opinion of some over-scrupulous Men" (55-56). Locke's treatise thus defends the practice of usury on two fronts by arguing both that it is necessary in the present state of affairs, echoing Calvin's pronouncement of a new kind of polity, and that it is less onerous than the well-established institution of land rents. From this position, where the economic practice of lending at interest is viewed as necessary, expedient and typically innocuous, there is only one further step before the encompassing notion of self-interest is vindicated in the same manner.

Locke's stance on usury is altogether consistent with his derivation of legitimate authority in the *Two Treatises of Government*, which is before all else a refutation of Robert Filmer's patriarchalism. While Filmer, Locke's contemporary, posits that the authority of kings should be traced back to the dominion that God granted to Adam over the earth, Locke interprets the Genesis account to mean that Adam, representative of the human race, was granted common proprietorship over the rest of creation. In Filmer's view, Adam's right to rule extends over human subjects; his sovereign authority depends on a divinely ordained hierarchy according to which some men have a subordinate status in relation to other men. By contrast, Locke argues

that Adam was granted neither dominion over other men nor exclusive proprietorship over the rest of creation. For Locke, what is denoted in the first chapter of Genesis is a common right to proprietorship that forms the basis of the original equality of humanity, from which any legitimate government must derive its authority. "To conclude, this text is so far from proving Adam sole proprietor, that, on the contrary, it is a confirmation of the original community of all things amongst the sons of men, which appearing from this donation of God, as well as other places of Scripture, the sovereignty of Adam, built upon his 'private domain,' must fall, not having any foundation to support it" (Two Treatises 33).

Anthropologist Louis Dumont marks this polemic between Filmer and Locke as the triumphal moment in which a theory of *Homo aequalis* is forcefully asserted against the traditional dogma of *Homo hierarchicus*. For the latter, adherence to hierarchy and the "conformity of every element to its role in the society" are of primary importance; for the former, equality and individual liberty are decisive (4). With Locke's articulation of *Homo aequalis*, the relations between politics, morality and economy are reconfigured. Economics can no longer be subsumed by politics if the equal right to proprietorship is deemed the basis of legitimate government. In this scheme, it is politics which accepts a subordinate position while economy emerges as an independent and original category. Dumont writes:

> To insist on the wholesale aspect of the transformation (whether the transformation was or was not entirely Locke's invention is immaterial) concerning social and political life in general, a holistic view centering on subordination and encompassing what we call economic phenomena has been replaced by a view centering on property—that is, on the individual and on economics—and reducing politics to an ontologically marginal adjunct to be constructed by men according to their lights. (49)

Another way of construing this transformation is to say that economic relations take on the aspect of what is naturally or supernaturally given, while political structures and social distinctions are reduced to the status of human constructs. A consequence of undercutting the dogmatic foundations of subordination is that the social values which were externally represented in hierarchy must subsequently be internalized by individuals in the form of moral obligation. In an increasingly individualistic society, "it is moral obligation that prevents liberty from degenerating into mere license" (Dumont 54). The task of moral philosophers during this period of transformation and transition would be to reconcile an understanding of human nature which takes proprietorship and a concern for one's estate as first principles with the deeply rooted religious bias against the accumulation of wealth.

When the word "interest" (or *interesse*) entered into the moral vocabulary of French and English theorists in the sixteenth century, its scope was broad enough to include not only aspirations of wealth but also a person's concern for conscience, honor and health, among other things (Hirschman 39). The term designated the reasonable self-love that was thought to motivate human action and was considered less capricious than the unpredictable passions. As long as it carried the connotation of measured, rational decision-making, it was useful to moralists and political theorists who promoted it as a stay against vice. Princes were said to be ruled by the interest of the state, which was designated the tyrant of tyrants (Hirschman 35). This generic understanding of interest as a principle of calculated reason or utility is close to the modern usage, which allows expressions such as "my best interests," which could idiomatically refer equally to a person's psychological well-being or the person's prospect of gain. However, this usage in fact differs from that which became prevalent during the period in which the theorization of interest was most decisive in moral philosophy. Albert Hirschman gives a brief

history of the semantic evolution of the term, noting that at some point after its injection into moral discourse, it lost its universal scope, becoming strongly and almost exclusively associated with the pursuit of profit. By the eighteenth century, in both France and Britain, interestedness could be used as a synonym for avidity or the desire to possess wealth. Hirschman makes some speculations regarding this semantic drift, noting that it could possibly be attributed to the affinity between economic activity and the element of rationality understood to be inherent in interest. Another possibility that he mentions is that, since a person's most obvious avenue for self-improvement lies in the person's material circumstances, self-interest came to signify material interest alone. One other explanation for the semantic drift of the term "interest" which Hirschman briefly mentions and seems to discard out of hand is the association with the older meaning of interest as the price for the use of money. Despite the little credence given to it, this explanation may be the most apt because it corroborates the historical account of the practice of usury in early modern Europe. Just as "usury" fell out of fashion as a way to describe the fee that a lender charges a borrower, "interest" was gaining currency as a way to describe both the economic institution and the principle of human action. It is not at all surprising that, since the word, in both senses, was on the lips of seemingly every moralist, jurist and theologian, the two meanings would become conflated.[6]

The ease with which one meaning of the word slips into the other is demonstrated by Bernard Mandeville's *The Fable of the Bees*, a 1714 treatise in which the author uses first one and then the other meaning without taking precautions against the confusion the ambiguity might cause for the reader. It is taken for granted that the context of each instance suffices to establish

[6] For example, Locke's 1691 treatise primarily uses the term "interest" to denote the price paid on loans. "Usury" per se does not appear in the text, but Locke very frequently refers to "Use" as a synonym for interest.

the sense it is supposed to have; moreover, each term's double has a complementary effect on itself, enriching its own signification. This dual signification is surprising given that the concern over usury was not historically limited to the financial realm. The proliferation of meaning was as much a problem as the proliferation of coin, Marc Shell argues in *Money, Language, and Thought*. The effort to limit usury is indicative of the desire for stable signifiers, be they monetary or linguistic. The strong expression of this desire through the prohibition of financial and verbal usury distinguishes the modern from the medieval period. Shell writes:

> To my knowledge, no one since the medieval era has devoted attention to the category of verbal usury in jurisprudence, rhetoric, and philosophy. (The phrase "verbal usury" has been consistently overlooked even by compilers of dictionaries.) Yet "verbal usury" is an important technical term in the Jewish Talmud, in the Christian church fathers, and in the Islamic Traditions. There it refers to the generation of an illegal—the church fathers would say unnatural—supplement to verbal meaning by use of such methods as punning and flattering. (Shell 49)

If Mandeville uses the term "interest" to signify the interrelatedness of two wholly different concepts, this literary practice would mark a departure from the medieval concern over verbal usury.

In his prose remarks, Mandeville argues that the human behaviors which are commonly cited as examples of selflessness are actually motivated by selfishness; he explains that the affected manner called modesty is not, as some might suggest, self-denial in practice. When in the company of others, a gentleman of refined manners will pretend that he does not revel in the praise that comes his way and that he would prefer to hear others being praised. In Mandeville's words, modesty is that faculty "by which we would make others believe that the esteem we have

for them exceeds the value we have for ourselves, and that we have no disregard so great to any interest as we have to our own" (69). Interest, in the sense that Mandeville employs here, designates that general principle of rationality which informs decision-making. The charge that he brings against the praise of modesty is that, as a rule, human beings do not act in a way contrary to their own interests, and so any semblance of doing so is necessarily a deception. In fact, Mandeville says, the modest man is the one who best understands that everyone has the greatest regard for his own interests and that everyone hates seeing his neighbor being praised instead of himself; thus, a prudent individual pretends modesty in order to deflect the envy of others and to elicit their gratitude for having rejected the praise which they would like to be heaped upon themselves alone. Mandeville explains how this manner of cunning is ultimately advantageous for the one who engages in it:

> After this manner it is that the well-bred man insinuates himself in the esteem of all the companies he comes in, and if he gets nothing else by it, the pleasure he receives in reflecting on the applause which he knows is secretly given him is to a proud man more than an equivalent for his former self-denial, and overpays to self-love with interest, the loss it sustained in his complaisance to others. (Mandeville 71)

Mandeville's assertion is that modesty is always self-serving. Even if the audience for whom the display of modesty is performed refuses to recognize the gesture; even if the affect procures no materially evident benefit, the psychic pleasure of being able to pat oneself on the back is more than enough to offset the price paid. It is in this sense that Mandeville invokes the economic meaning of interest: self-denial borrows against self-love in pretending to be modest but repays the debt with added interest in the form of self-gratifying pleasure.

Mandeville first published his allegorical poem, *The Grumbling Hive: Or, Knaves turn'd Honest,* in 1705, but the standalone piece of doggerel verse in iambic tetrameter (thus differentiated from the more dignified pentameter in which Dryden and Pope wrote their heroic couplets) did not attract very much attention from either proponents or detractors. Even when, in 1714, he attached an essay on the origin of moral virtue and several lengthy prose remarks to the poem, publishing the whole as the volume entitled *The Fable of the Bees*, he still received little recognition for his work. It was only in 1723, when Mandeville attached two more essays to the volume, one on the nature of society and the other on charity schools, that he came under the severe scrutiny of public censors and thus established his reputation as a renegade thinker. From that point on, he was to suffer an outpouring of criticism and condemnation from more traditional moralists but also the adoration of those who styled themselves free thinkers. The actual poem contained in *The Fable of the Bees* represents English society through the transparent conceit of a beehive gently ruled by constitutional monarchy and pervaded by vice and fraud. Though business in the beehive is booming and unemployment is low (there being "more Work than Labourers"), there are some in the population who pine for a more honest society. An act of God grants them this wish by banishing every vice from the entire hive. The unexpected result of this miracle is that industry grinds to a halt and everyone is reduced to a state of poverty. The explicit moral to the fable, expressed in the subtitle of the book, is that private vice contributes to the public's benefit and that wishing for universal virtue is tantamount to wishing for a destitute nation.

While this thesis presented in verse drew its fair share of denouncements, its original expression could not have been what instigated the vehement response from critics and censors, since they only arrived in force upon the third installment of the text. J. Martin Stafford

speculates that the additions made to later volumes of the book, as well as the appendage of the subtitle, "Private Vices, Publick Benefits," were designed to increase the book's notoriety in view of increasing its sales (Stafford xii). These later additions not only doubled down on the promotion of private vice as advantageous to society but also elaborated on the moral perspectives which led Mandeville to his contrarian opinions. In particular, his prose additions seem to espouse a form of ethical rigorism which infuriated his detractors. Ethical rigorism, Stafford explains, consists in the belief that all of virtue is essentially self-denial. It is tied to the Christian dogma of original sin, according to which the nature of every human after the fall of Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden is predisposed to evil. According to this point of view, being virtuous means going against one's fallen nature, namely one's tendency to be self-serving. Only the unqualified denial and renunciation of one's sinful self counts as blameless virtue. Mandeville mobilizes the doctrine of rigorism to attack his moralizing contemporaries, the ones analogous to the bees crying out for a more honest beehive. Those who make public pronouncements about the destitute children who need to be put in charity schools are not in fact virtuous, but perniciously self-serving. If they do not receive some political benefit for their charity work, then they do it for the approbation they know their actions will garner. Even supposing these philanthropists were doing charity in secrecy and anonymously, Mandeville says, they still at least accrue the reward of assuaging their own consciences knowing they have done some good for the needy. For this reason, none of the work should be deemed virtuous, and none of it is in reality laudable in itself.

Even eighteenth-century readers of Mandeville faulted him for the rigoristic distinction he drew between impassioned vice and dispassionate virtue. If, as Mandeville argued, virtue was only legitimate if it was motivated solely by the rational ambition to do good, then it was entirely

impracticable. Adam Smith, in his measured critique of the work of his predecessor, explains that Mandeville commits the great fallacy of finding every passion to be entirely vicious, whereas in fact each passion is only vicious if it is in excess of propriety. Mandeville's entire argument, Smith says, rests on the outmoded conception of virtue as asceticism. It is on the basis of this foundation that Mandeville makes everyone out to be a charlatan and thus promotes a system which authorizes vice. Smith writes: "Some popular ascetic doctrines which had been current before [Mandeville's] time, and which placed virtue in the entire extirpation and annihilation of all our passions, were the real foundation of this licentious system" (Theory of Moral Sentiments 369). Smith's analysis of the ethical presuppositions in Mandeville's system shows how Mandeville stacks the odds in his own favor. If virtue consists in the entire extirpation of all passion, no one could ever rightfully claim to be virtuous. Thus, it seems that Mandeville argues his point in bad faith, since the ascetic doctrines to whose authority he appeals are not accepted as valid even in his time. Smith suggests that Mandeville surreptitiously injects the elements of an outdated discourse into his own to give his argument the appearance of logical necessity.

The conceptual framework that Smith puts forth in *The Wealth of Nations* represents, in several regards, an updated version of Mandeville's beehive. Though Smith finds fault with the licentiousness of a system which promotes vice in the name of public benefits, he relies on Mandeville's key insight in constructing his own economic model. Vicious self-love cannot be said to be the motivation behind every moral action, since morality must admit differences based on degree; if self-interest is only a peripheral consideration in an otherwise laudable act, then the act is deemed virtuous. With regards to economic action, however, Mandeville's maxim seems entirely adequate. In a well-known passage, Smith writes that "It is not from the benevolence of

the butcher, the brewer, or the baker that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own interest. We address ourselves, not to their humanity but to their self-love, and never talk to them of our own necessities but of their advantages" (Wealth of Nations 11). With this example, Smith draws the distinction between two types of behavior. The first he calls the "trucking disposition," unique to humans, who enter into contracts with one another, and the second a "servile and fawning" disposition to which puppies and men with no other means must resort. The advantages of trucking are clear: the relationships entered into on its account are durable and the benefits that each party receives are reliable because each depends on the other's self-interest, which is not so capricious as charitable sentiment. Thus, the overwhelming majority of our wants is supplied in appealing to the regard that others have for their own interests.

Smith also considers the edge case of beggars who rely on the benevolence of passers-by. He acknowledges that a beggar relies on the generosity of the rich: "The charity of well-disposed people, indeed, supplies him with the whole fund of his subsistence" (Wealth of Nations 11). However, Smith argues, the beggar still has the task of transforming this fund into the actual objects which will supply his wants. He takes the money which people give him and buys food to eat; he exchanges one set of clothes for another that fits him; or, he exchanges it for a place to stay. In this sketch of a beggar's strategies of subsistence, Smith separates the realm of moral behavior, in which charity takes place, from the realm of economic action, in which only trucking, exchange and barter are legitimate. The distinction is drawn with exaggerated clarity for the purpose of demonstrating the pervasiveness of self-interested dealing. The picture of the beggar does not account for the possibility of generosity in exchange, as when the baker gives the beggar a discount, or when a pedestrian pays the beggar an inflated fee for directions around town. Unlike Mandeville, Smith does not go so far as to deny that self-denial is a practicable

virtue. The description of the market transactions through which everyone, even the beggar, procures sustenance merely demonstrates that self-interest is a more reliable guide of socially oriented action than self-denial. Smith does not need to speculate on whether the philanthropist who funds the beggar's dinner is principally motivated by selfish or selfless impulses, since a combination of the two is possible and even likely.

The aesthetic movement of sentimentalism characteristic of the latter half of the eighteenth century sought to reconcile spontaneous feeling with moral obligation, so Mandeville's rigorism must have been all the more apparent to the author of *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*. Even in Mandeville's time, a strict rigorism such as what Mandeville professes was antiquated, as Smith points out. It is indeed the case that ascetic doctrines which equate virtue with self-denial are more typical of the seventeenth century in England, whose signature cultural monuments include *The Pilgrim's Progress* and the sermons of the Puritan divines.[7] In *A treatise of self-denial*, the nonconformist Richard Baxter describes self-denial as "half the essence of sanctification," of which the second half is charity. Self-denial, he says, is integral to both the first and last commandment, the commandment to love God and the commandment to love the neighbor, since the first requires that one deny the self "as opposite to God and his interest," while the second requires that one deny the self "as opposite to our neighbor's good" (363). For Baxter as for others in his time, virtue is defined not only negatively as a denial of one's self but also positively as a reorientation towards God's interest and the neighbor's good. The charge against Mandeville is that he appropriates the dictates of this earlier

[7] Though when it comes to charitable giving, Thomas Hobbes is less of a rigorist than Mandeville purports to be. He allows a transfer to be called a free gift or grace even if it is made with the expectation of future benefit as long as that expectation is not formalized as a condition of the transfer (89).

doctrine of ascetic virtue without the disposition of its practitioners. Within Baxter's community of Puritan virtuosos, the proclamation that all fall short of the ideal of virtue resonates as a call for repentance and sanctification. For Mandeville, according to his critics, the same proclamation allows him to reduce all virtue to vice and to scoff at every campaign against immorality or corruption.

Postmodern rigorists

What Smith called Mandeville's great fallacy may not have received the censure that Smith thought it deserved, since it has continued to appear in discourses on virtue and charity even into the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. In their treatises on the gift, Jacques Derrida and Jean-Luc Marion examine the idea of a pure gift that precludes any reciprocity or benefit, whether material or psychological, that redounds on the giver. So stringent is this requirement in Derrida's schema that the conditions of possibility for the gift become the conditions of its impossibility (Given Time 12). The gift must not only be free from any expectation of profitable return but it must also be a secret kept from both the donor and the recipient. Derrida makes the Christian foundation of this concept of charity explicit by referring to the passage in the book of Matthew which admonishes the alms-giver to keep his left hand from knowing what the right hand is doing (Gift of Death 107). The one who gives must not see or recognize the gift: "otherwise he begins, at the threshold, as soon as he intends to give, to pay himself with a symbolic recognition, to praise himself, to approve of himself, to gratify himself, to congratulate himself, to give back to himself symbolically the value of what he thinks he has given or what he is preparing to give" (Given Time 14). The argument follows the same course that Mandeville lays out, insisting that one-sided anonymity is not enough to ensure the purity of the gift. No one

must know about the gift, and no one must have any intention of giving for there to be the possibility of a gift.

Were this hyperbolic requirement of secrecy to be transposed into eighteenth-century parlance, it would appear as a warning against the vice of pride and a reminder not to confuse actions motivated by base passions such as pity for noble virtue. What issues from such admonishments is an exceedingly low opinion of charitable giving, particularly when it comes to alms given to the poor. Thus, Mandeville paints a vivid picture of poor beggars on the streets who assault the sensibilities of passersby in an attempt to extort charity from them. The people who are thus assaulted try to escape but are sometimes unsuccessful at avoiding the beggars' display. "They turn their eyes, and where the cries are dismal, some would willingly stop their ears if they were not ashamed. What they can do is to mend their pace, and be very angry in their hearts that beggars should be about the streets" (292). When the beggars pick up the pace to match, the victims are forced to acquiesce to their demand. "Thus thousands give money to beggars from the same motive as they pay their corn-cutter, to walk easy" (293).

Derrida offers a similar assessment of the persecutory profession of begging: "A beggar always looks threatening, incriminating, accusatory, vindictive in the absolute of his very demand" (Given Time 139). This description of the scene of charitable giving is substantially compatible with Mandeville's version of it. Moreover, Derrida's conceptualization of charity in this instance shows a significant affinity to ethical rigorism, especially in its reliance on the Christian paradigm of grace. Yet Mandeville's rigoristic text demonstrates a clearly prescriptive dimension that opposes at least the public's demand for the expansion of charitable institutions, whereas Derrida's frustrates any attempt to draw a prescriptive conclusion from it. What can be said about the Derridean almsgiver is that this almsgiver must respond to the beggar's inexorable

demand and is ill at ease as long as this demand subsists. The paradoxical aspect of this scenario as described by Derrida is that the demand represents a normative or ethical obligation, but the fulfillment of the obligation is counted as a self-interested or self-preserving reaction to persecution rather than as virtue. Thus, the almsgiver either fails to meet an obligation which is absolute in its (normative) exigency or submits to the base impulse to avoid suffering; there seems to be no winning way to play the game. Rather, in the event that one encounters a beggar, one always ends up proving oneself less than virtuous. This fatalism of Derridean charity, in which virtue worthy to be congratulated is practically out of the question but is nevertheless always enjoined, thus contrasts with the cynicism of Mandeville, for whom every presumption to virtue is the dissimulation of a self-interested individual.

It seems that, as long as self-interest (and material interest in particular) is recognized as the principle of human action, the virtue of generosity suffers in reputation. A political theorist may take the standpoint of ethical rigorism, but such a standpoint fails to provide because it does not seek to provide an orientation towards virtuous action. At least this is the most common objection leveled against the phenomenology of the gift as proposed by Derrida and Marion—that their insistence on absolute purity removes every observable object or event from consideration. In summarizing these contributions to theories of gift-giving, Frank Adloff writes:

> The theoretical decisions by Marion and Derrida cannot enlighten us about actual social practices as long as one has to characterize all of them either as exchange (because they do not correspond to the ideal model of the gift), or one has to absurdly search empirically for gift phenomena that make do without the giver, the gift, and the recipient.

> Thus, at this point, Derrida and Marion cannot help us; to a large extent they present a speculative adventure.[8] (Adloff 30)

Adloff's remarks stem from his belief that a rigoristic analysis of generosity, which supposes that the slightest addition of self-interest into the mixture completely adulterates the whole, reduces every empirical instance of the gift to exchange. Thus rigorism, invoked in this alien context, serves to demonstrate the impossibility of charity rather than its worthiness or perfection. Absent a supporting discourse and a specific habitus, an uncompromising view of disinterestedness (as the absolute negation of self-interest) is little more than an exercise in contradictions.

However, it is not for no reason that Derrida and Marion closely examine the rigoristic approach to the analysis of the gift; by relegating the gift to the realm of the impossible, they emphasize the extent to which modern societies are encompassed by an economic totality. If the disinterestedness of gift-giving and the interestedness of economy are opposed to each other, as Mauss's formulation suggests, their adjacency means that the one is liable to slip into the other. Specifically, it is the pure gift which is always in danger of becoming the impure, economically motivated act. Marion describes the precariousness of the gift by noting that when reciprocity of any kind enters into the equation, givenness dissolves:

> It should have seemed absolutely evident that the gift (or, more exactly, givenness) disappears as soon as reciprocity transforms it into a system of exchange . . . As soon as the economy absorbs the gift, it turns givenness into economy. By annexing givenness,

[8] Adloff maintains that the phenomenological approach is irrelevant for his "social-scientific" approach, which is interested in precisely those commonplace gifts which Derrida's and Marion's analyses would exclude. The difference in approach can be illustrated in the fact that Adloff wants to investigate the actual and empirical, while the phenomenologists see the gift's impossibility as gesturing to what lies beyond the realm of convention.

> the economy dispenses with it. In its place it immediately substitutes calculation, interest, utility, measure, etc. (Marion 82)

What is at stake in this account of givenness is a diagnosis of modernity's condition, a condition which makes everything out to be reasonable, continuous and logically deducible. An economic totality is that from which there is no escape, which is why it is able to absorb the gift as well as anything else that erupts from its level surface. In an age of interest and free-flowing capital, when money has become the abstract equivalent of almost any good and service, the theoretical reduction of all gifts to exchange seems less absurd. Aside from the moral judgment that one such as Mandeville would use to differentiate between selfless gift and self-interested exchange, there is the fundamental difference between phenomena which conform to the logic of causality and those which break with it: true non-sequiturs, unforeseen events such as a totally unprecipitated act of donation. Marion explains: "No moral consideration must interfere here with a pure difference between the regimes of different phenomena: if there is givenness, it must break completely with the principle of sufficient reason, that of identity and of quadriform causality, which the economy follows in its metaphysical regime" (ibid). In describing givenness as a feature of certain phenomena, Marion locates within the gift a principle opposed not only to individual self-interest but also to rationalism. In this way, Marion goes further than Mandeville's ethical rigorism, requiring from the gift not only the superhuman but also the supernatural.

The disagreement between two cohorts of Mauss's readers stems from their differing construals of the opposition between interest and disinterestedness, with the more sociologically oriented side seeing it as the opposition between individualism and sociality. The group known as M.A.U.S.S., the *Mouvement anti-utilitariste dans les sciences sociales*, whose most prominent

member is French sociologist Alain Caillé, promotes a convivialism which it deems to be lacking in modern capitalist society. In taking Mauss at his word, Caillé and others endeavor to tip the balance in their communities from self-interest to generosity and disinterestedness. The group takes a brief article by the American anthropologist David Graeber as its semi-official statement of purpose. In the article, Graeber suggests that the group's ambition is to realize the admonitions and suggestions in the "Moral Conclusions" of Mauss's essay on the gift:

> Work could be co-operatized, effective social security guaranteed and, gradually, a new ethos created whereby the only possible excuse for accumulating wealth was the ability to give it all away. The result: a society whose highest values would be 'the joy of giving in public, the delight in generous artistic expenditure, the pleasure of hospitality in the public or private feast.' (Graeber)

Graeber admits that Mauss's language, which he quotes, may seem naive in today's environment, but he insists that our incredulousness also points to the extent to which economic thinking has come to dominate our perception of reality. For these Maussians (or *Maussequétaires*, per the translation of Graeber's piece), disinterestedness is only an impossibility in the sense that it is impossible to imagine without a reorganization (and revitalization) of society. The group's practical agenda is to chart the path toward such a reorganization. It is in this sense that Mauss could be said to represent an alternative to Marx.[9]

It is in a very different register, then, that Derrida and Marion speak of Mauss's opposition as that between totality and aporia, the self-same and the other. In describing the gift

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[9] Graeber's premise is that Mauss wrote *The Gift* in reaction to Lenin's 1921 concessions to market commerce. In Graeber's view, Mauss realized that modern society could not do away with market transactions entirely. His proposals are more focused on cooperation and mutuality between those who still engage in buying and selling rather than the abolition of capitalism (which, even so, remains the "accomplishment").

as an event or an interruption, the philosopher necessarily makes the leap from economics or politics to religion. Thus, when an interviewer asks Derrida about the limits of forgiveness—who deserves to be given a pardon and whether forgiveness is an individual or collective matter—, Derrida must answer that, *in principle*, there is no limit to forgiveness. Any kind of conditional forgiveness, which promises to forgive only so much and no further and only if some reparations are made, is therefore not worthy of the name (Le siècle et le pardon). Yet guilt, just like forgiveness, is also without limits. Even before one has done anything wrong, in the mundane sense, one is already guilty of not having done enough good or not having given enough. Derrida narrates this hyperbolically guilty conscience: "I always have to be forgiven, to ask forgiveness for not giving, for never giving enough, for never offering or welcoming enough. One is always guilty, one must always be forgiven the gift" (To Forgive 22). Since the injunction to give—to annhiliate self-interest—always exceeds one's capacity to give, one is always in a deficit with regards to giving. The paradox reaches even farther, since giving does not even diminish this deficit.

> And the aporia becomes more extreme when one becomes conscious of the fact that if one must ask forgiveness for not giving, for never giving enough, one may also feel guilty and thus have to ask forgiveness on the contrary, for giving, forgiveness for what one gives, which can become a poison, a weapon, an affirmation of sovereignty, or even omnipotence or an appeal for recognition. One always takes by giving. (To Forgive 22)

For the postmodern and early modern philosopher alike, giving amounts to a taking because consciousness, as much as the reality of an economic totality, converts every expenditure into a profitable return.

Levinas

In 1986, the Belgian Savings Banks Association, the Groupement Belges des Banques d'Épargne, turned 25. To celebrate the anniversary, the officers of the association published a book about the world of banking and specifically about the world of Belgian savings banks. In their preparations for compiling the material for the book, they decided to approach a rather prominent philosopher, already in the twilight of his career, to ask him to write an introduction to the philosophy of money for their publication. The philosopher, Emmanuel Levinas, bafflingly enough acceded to the request and promised to write the introduction. In recounting the story of this interchange, Roger Burggraeve notes that Levinas "freely accepted, all while underlining from the beginning and over and over that he had reflected too little on the topic" (v). Moreover, Levinas made clear that it would be difficult for him to employ some of the notions that the association would have liked him to employ and encouraged him to mention, such as the value of money and the value of savings. Indeed, Levinas is not known to be a philosopher of money or savings, though in his own estimation, his philosophy has always been concerned with the neighbor, the other to whom the self is responsible, and presumably money has something to do with the other. There is also a significant symbolic affinity with the subject matter throughout his work, in which he often employs economic metaphors to describe the ethical relation. More often than not, the metaphors are negative—negative in the sense of insolvency, as when someone finds himself indebted to his neighbor in a debt-obligation that he does not remember contracting and that he can never hope to repay. For Levinas, this kind of indebtedness can nearly stand in for ethics itself, but one imagines that the metaphor would not be quite as evocative for an association of savings banks, and subsequently it does not feature in any of the writing he presented to the association. Besides this rich figurative use of the concept of money that runs

consistently through his work, Levinas also published an essay early in his career that has to do with money as an instrument of justice; the essay has been translated into English as "The Ego and the Totality," and the sentiments that he expressed in it regarding money remain for the most part unchanged over time, though he did not often reprise the topic. Thus the apprehension that Levinas expressed when he was first approached by the association did not come from an exaggerated sense of humility, but likely a genuine concern and perhaps not a little puzzlement. Nevertheless, the association persisted despite his objections and caveats and sent delegates to interview him as a first step toward the completion of the study. A few months after the preparatory interview, Levinas gave notice to the association that he in fact would not be able to finish the study by the deadline given him, requesting that Roger Burggraeve, a professor from the Catholic University of Louvain who had assisted the interview, write the introduction instead. Thus as a result of this tardiness on the part of Levinas, it is Burggraeve's report that is featured in the original volume published by the Groupement Belges des Banques d'Épargne, although Levinas did ultimately complete his study, which we will have the occasion to look at more closely and which was published the following year in an addendum to the association's anniversary volume.

The circumstances surrounding the text's commission and delivery are worth noting, especially with regard to the subject matter of the study, which he titled "Sociality and money," its distinctive style and diminutive length. Without putting too much emphasis on these external circumstances, I will point out that for the simple reason that the study was commissioned, nothing about it is gratuitous—first, that is to say, the work does not spring from an open consciousness free to direct itself toward whatever topic it likes in whatever fashion it finds suitable. Rather, the author of this study writes at the behest of someone else, an association, not

of philosophers or academics, with whose conventions the author would be familiar and with whom the author would form an intimate society, but of bankers and executives. Moreover, Burggraeve emphasizes the fact that Levinas, according to his custom, refused the honorarium for his belated article; nonetheless, for a week he had been the privileged guest of the association in Brussels. If such hospitality that includes a royal reception at the palace of the king of Belgium counts for something, it must be said that following his stay in Brussels, Levinas was obligated and even indebted to the association. He had received payment of a kind, however informal, on credit, since the study was yet to be completed. Despite this advance, what happens is that the author of the study finds himself unequal to the task assigned to him and in fact fails to keep his end of the bargain, even passing off the duty he contracted to a third party, Roger Buggraeve. We might ask to whom does Levinas owe an apology or a debt and from whom could he ask forgiveness: the association? Burggraeve? In this situation as in every other, the author finds himself in a totality where justice and injustice are economic, where to seek pardon from one is to do injustice to another and where the incomparables submit themselves to comparison and thus are reduced to immanence while at the same time escaping it. Levinas' untimeliness is also the untimeliness of money itself, which as the concrete instrument of justice aims to compensate fully for damages but always finds itself unequal to and incongruous with what it attempts to pay back.

A glance at the published study is sufficient to conclude that, despite the fact that it was commissioned as a topical introduction, it would not be able to find a wide audience of non-specialists. The syntax is peculiar, and the technical terms all have resonances beyond their colloquial usage. A comparison between this piece and the introduction that Burggraeve wrote as a substitute just makes this difficulty all the more glaring. Burggraeve's introduction is more

balanced, better referenced, more accessible and quite a bit longer than Levinas'. It begins by painting the Levinasian critique of ontology in broad strokes, recapitulating the themes that recur in Levinas' work: the encounter with the other, the face of the other and the responsibility to give. Each of the sections in Burggraeve's piece is organized according to a thematic which is expressed in a descriptive title, whereas in the paper that Levinas submits, the titles are as short and opaque as the text is enigmatic. If there is rigor in thought and expression in Levinas' piece, it would have to be found elsewhere than in the conventional criteria of philosophical treatises. Its value would have to reside with the peculiarity of its turns of phrase or the ways in which it resists the easy temptations available to it: pandering to officials on the one side and demagoguery on the other. The texture of the essay's language would have to be what makes it something else besides an exposition commensurable with money or a product of one's labor to be sold at market value.

Adding perhaps another measure to its incommensurability, Levinas submits his essay to the association by way of a handwritten copy in May of 1987, more than six months too late. He begins the essay with an apology of sorts, referring not to the delay in its completion but to a deficiency in its contents, recognizing that a philosophical reflection on money should by right include a more in-depth consideration of the historical account of the phenomenon. Nevertheless, he feels it is still right to proceed because it is "perhaps neither impossible nor useless" to render some reflections specifically about the moral aspects of money (Socialité et argent 79). These reflections will potentially be of some use, but both their use-value and their feasibility are tentative; it may turn out that the reflections are impossible to accomplish or that they serve no purpose at all. However uncertain the outcome of this foray is, what is certain is that the topic deserves serious attention. Money, in its indelibility, has carved something out in the moral

consciousness of man, Levinas says in the first paragraph of the essay. This carving occurs by way of two sources of inspiration, the Biblical tradition and Greek philosophy. Already, Levinas confronts us with a duality in the development of money, though this duality is not yet the decisive one, since it is reducible to the accidents of history and geography. The more essential ambiguity in money is one that derives from its function of exchange and allows it to be, as Levinas says in the preparatory interview assisted by Burggraeve, both Mammon and *l'aumône*, Mammon and alms-giving (Entrétien préparatoire 45). Money owes this fundamental amorphousness to its status as a philosophical category: the category of mediation, of which the empirical form of money is the example par excellence because it would be liquidity itself.

In the essay, Levinas writes that money, in principle, can be exchanged with all goods and all services, establishing homogeneity across these two heterogeneous orders, each with heterogeneous values within them. Money flattens this heterogeneity, reducing even the dignity of human labor to wages and thus allowing the man with money to come into the possession of the men who labor. The laboring man sells himself at a price that he associates with his economic value. And why should he not? In this world homogenized by money, if man enters into exchange is it not because he is for himself in an "originary attachment of the living to life" (Sociality and money 204)? Free to do whatever he wants, man occupies himself with providing for his own needs and wants the best way that he knows how. Levinas describes this preoccupation with one's own interests:

> Originary valorisation that articulates itself in those needs called natural or material: attachment to the existing, to the event of being, to the very esse that matters to men and about which they worry, to which they fix themselves and where, in the world, they are fixed: originary, natural and naïve interestedness. Interestedness as immanence: appetite

> for existence or hunger for being by means of the fruits of the earth, but already breathing in the atmosphere, living on this earth and perceiving it by means of knowledge of things and places; seizure and takeover of beings by beings. (Sociality and money 204)

Valorisation, attachment, interestedness, appetite: these phrases conjoined in a breathless manner of speech, strung along as a series of appositives, one right after the other, each one perhaps as good or as bad as the other, indeterminable because interchangeable, substitutable. And despite the confluence of terms, nothing is posited, nothing predicated—first of all, there are no predicates. What judgments can be made about these wholly unpredicated concepts?

In the preparatory interview with Burggraeve, Levinas heralds the end of predication, which is also the end of *prédication*, the end of preaching (Entrétien préparatoire 54-55). Levinas rejects even the predication in the maxim that posits virtue as its own reward. "It is necessary to take my own formula," he says. "Do the virtuous thing even when there is no reward. But it is very difficult to ask this of the other" (ibid 55). The end of predication means first that doing good is not predicated on any end or reward, whether it be self-reflexive or not. It also means that there is no more preaching goodness to the other. Perhaps bank executives could do with some preaching, but Levinas will not be the one to supply it. Preaching is easy, anyway; bankers and politicians preach at each other all the same. What is more difficult, even "very difficult," is to ask the other to do something for no reason and no reward. Even when we begin with this task in mind, it is too easy to slip into predication in order to persuade or cajole. It would be necessary to maintain constant vigilance over one's diction and especially one's syntax to avoid this slippage.

If Levinas succeeds in avoiding predication it is due in no small part to his syntactical deftness, exemplified by the passage concerning originary valorization but evident throughout

the essay. This particular passage does not attribute its characterizations to anyone in particular, since it is not bank executives only who see their own reflection in these words. Moreover, the words themselves are not altogether an indictment, since valorization and interestedness are the for oneself of being, prior to savings banks, prior even to money—they are natural and naïve, healthy even, at least as long as they do not get carried away, as long as they does not forget the originary aim of existing. To be interested means to have a stake in one's own existence, to have cares and to be concerned. The zest for life is an appetite for material things first of all: the fulfillment of the needs that are deemed natural. This appetite empowers the human to make use of the world by acquiring knowledge of it and taking ownership of it. Everyone is always already engaged in this self-empowerment, since just as man eats, breathes and lives, he is for himself in this originary axiology of concern for oneself—something that might already put the banker's conscience at ease.

However, this healthy and naïve interestedness, is it as innocent as it is naïve? Levinas poses a question to which we might presume to know the answer but which the text itself refuses to stoop to answer, instead following it with another question and more substantive clauses, again anything but predication. "Hard univocity of inter-estedness that has become hatred," Levinas says, "imitation between men, rivalry and competition to the point of the cruelty and tyranny of money and the bloody violence of war" (Sociality and Money 204). When did this healthy interestedness become hatred, and what is this hardness of univocity? In fact, the interestedness of being has been from the beginning a forgetting or a thematization of the other that inoculates oneself against the disconcerting nudity and poverty of the other. In that sense it is univocal, because it speaks only of one's own needs, to the exclusion of the needs of others, against which it hardens itself. Only within such an enclosure, buffered from outside concerns,

can interestedness endure. This endurance or perseverance within the self refuses to open itself up to others, leaving them to suffer on their own, so it is indifference to their plight; moreover, it resents the claim that the other makes on what it considers its own; in another word, it is hatred. Hatred in turn spreads itself like a communicable disease, with men imitating what they see in other men, striving against each other in rivalry and outright war.

In the context of this interestedness-become-hatred, money only extends the reach of violence, such that violence can be done to the very freedom that the other enjoys. "Freedom, independence of the rich," Levinas says. "And, for the others, the possibility of provisional and precarious independence for hours, days or years, released in the light of the 'in itself and for itself' through pocket money, through 'money in your pocket', through money in the bank" (ibid 205). The freedom that one can aspire to in a world governed by money extends as far as one's purchasing power. Children who have reached an age of sufficient responsibility are given pocket money so they can exercise the power of choice as adults do, but adults themselves are constrained by the necessity of making money, of lining their pockets or replenishing their bank accounts with money. Independence would be the end that freedom envisions: not having to work, not having to make the fulfillment of one's desires contingent on the fluctuations of a market economy, freedom as the inexhaustibility of one's purchasing power.

Power is in fact what is at stake in the interestedness that wields money as a weapon or a whip. Levinas, in his early essay "The Ego and the Totality," distinguishes between two types of violence that correspond to two modalities of power. This dual possibility of violence is perceptible in the present work as well. The first possibility is "the violence of the sword," exercised through force of arms, and second is peacetime violence, or exploitation. Peacetime violence is distinguished by the fact that it "conserves the freedom it coerces," while the violence

of the sword destroys freedom by putting human beings to death (The Ego and the Totality 39). The violence that conserves is even more total than the one that puts to death because it takes place within the economic totality to which being has been reduced. Every hour of every day as well as every morsel of bread is worth its measure in gold, for which it can be exchanged. Dignified things lose their dignity in the ruthless homogenization by way of which everything becomes countable and thus comparable. Man does not work and does not eat without first consulting his pocketbook. In this way, exploitative violence attacks the will. Thus, "The will is something one mistreats, violates, forces—to the point of making it forget its being for itself, making it feel the force that bends it as its own inclination. One can do anything with man" (ibid). When this violence is achieved, interestedness has indeed become hatred, even hatred of being, since the will is no longer even engaged in the naïve business of caring for oneself. It becomes an interest in the "accumulation of money to the detriment of others" (Socialité et argent 83). This phrase in "Sociality and money" echoes an earlier one: "it is hence love of one being to the detriment of another" (The Ego and the Totality 31). However, the drive to accumulate money lacks the redemptive quality that even the solipsistic love for another retains, since in acquisitiveness money itself takes the place of the object of love, eliding thereby the last reference to the human being.

In the economic totality, the memory or promise of human dignity is reduced to just this: the value of each person's labor as it is determined by competition in the marketplace. Could there be anything more deplorable? Yet even at this juncture, or perhaps especially at this juncture, what is mammon is still also *l'aumône*. In the essay Levinas asks, "Does the totality of an economic order not contain a whole in which men in possession of money and purchasers integrate themselves into the commodity but at the same time—in having and possessing—do

not exhaust themselves—do not lose their souls?" (Sociality and money 205). Something paradoxical happens in the realm of money. First of all, buyers and sellers, simply as a result of the fact that they possess money, goods and marketable skills, cannot resist integration into the economic totality; no action that they take can extract them from it, because the power of money is such that it accommodates resistance as well as acquiescence. And yet, these buyers and sellers do not altogether lose their souls—that is to say, something in them escapes the totality, something the totality cannot incorporate. If they do not lose their souls, it is because there is another possibility than that of buying and selling, the exchanging of goods and services through the mediation of money; it is an astonishing possibility, says Levinas. This possibility would be man himself, the possibility of man's giving up his place, of his sacrificing himself for the other and dying for the stranger. "Are we ever surprised enough," Levinas asks, "at this extravagant possibility of the 'human animal,' stronger than any ontology, where in the human—in the face of the other man, before all Scripture—silent call or order, holiness makes itself heard . . . ?" (Socialité et argent 84). This possibility is both astonishing and extravagant because it exceeds the very order of possibility; it exceeds the possibilities that being or ontology delimits. The holiness that makes itself heard in the face of the other person is not of the same order as the dignity that succumbs to economic integration. That dignity looked to ontology to defend it, having recourse only to the ideal of freedom as independence and to the impartiality of law. Holiness, on the other hand, comes before the written law, transcribed in the other's face as the irrecusable command to give. According to the extravagant possibility opened up, there would be something other than interestedness; there would be disinterestedness, which is the possibility of giving, and it is only with regard to giving that money takes on another sense.

This disinterestedness that takes the place of the for oneself of being is not to be confused with the nihilistic negation of existence typified by aloofness; rather it is a reorientation toward the other. Everything in fact takes on a new seriousness. “Henceforth, a taking seriously the needs of the other, of his interestedness and of money to give” (Socialité et argent 84). Prior to disinterestedness, the other’s needs did not appear in all their gravity, and charitable giving could be looked at as an inessential activity, but in disinterestedness, the other’s concerns become a matter of non-indifference, and giving is no longer trivial. Levinas asks, “Should we insist on the importance that accrues to the financial activity concerned with giving?” (Sociality and money 205). Now a certain importance or significance accrues to financial activity. It is only in being offered up as alms that money takes on this significance which is beyond its role as a totalizing medium, and it is only as *l’aumône* that money, mediation par excellence, recalls the event of exchange “of which money is a part, from where it starts out its mediating role and to which it never ceases to refer” (ibid 203).

Thus, it would not be the case that giving eradicates the order of money; alms still come in the form of money; rather, it would more so be the case that everything becomes alms. Every hour of every day and every morsel of bread can be converted into the money that is good for alms-giving. If in the interestedness become hatred, money only exacerbated violence, in the disinterestedness of alms-giving, money exacerbates the exigency of the other’s demand. Nothing would be able to escape the scope of this demand, precisely because everything, even time, is comprised in the economic totality or society that money brings about. Levinas points out this encompassing quality of money both in “Sociality and money” and in his early work, where he writes, describing money, “A universal power of acquisition, and not a thing one enjoys, it creates relationships which last beyond the satisfaction of needs through the exchange

of products. It belongs to men who can let their needs and desires wait. What is possessed in money is not the object, but the possession of objects" (The Ego and the Totality 45). The form of money signifies a delay, since the one who has money does not need urgently to satisfy his needs. But this delay means that the one who has money has both time and means on his hands, and thus he has more to give. Money is also the very possibility of possession, a formula that Levinas is enough enamored with that he reprises it in the commissioned study, in the sense that money is the power to possess whatever it can buy (in principle, anything), so as long as one has even the possibility of having, he has yet to give enough.

Thus money, in its avarice, demands that one make no delay in giving, since time is money too, such that having time is also having yet to give. There is no time to consider the expenses, no time for strict bookkeeping, Levinas says elsewhere (Otherwise than Being 125). However, bookkeeping, paradoxically, is precisely what money inaugurates and makes inevitable. The sociality of money, its overreaching totality, ruptures intimate society, which is exemplified by the relationship between two lovers that excludes the economic world. In the straightforward language of his earlier essay, Levinas writes: "To love is to exist as though the lover and the beloved were alone in the world. The intersubjective relationship of love is not the beginning, but the negation of society" (The Ego and the Totality 30). Money makes loves problematic—in the sense that it opens it up to the larger society, which is the economic totality. The lovers that shut the world out and only care for each other must recognize, once money is concerned, that the world also makes its demands on them. In "Sociality and money," Levinas puts this issue forward not in terms of love but in terms of the ethical relation and the third, and rather than making assertions he poses a question:

> Is this advent of the human and of dis-inter-estedness in being, from me to the other, not lack of concern for the third? Ignorance of the third and of all those who, alongside the third, are numerous humanity, united, in a fashion, in an economic totality on the basis of money, but in which each one also remains to me as 'other', unique in its uniqueness, incomparable, and should concern me or, already a face, as one says should be 'looking at me'. (Sociality and money 206)

The economic totality instituted by money unites the whole of humanity in such a way that responsibility finds itself extended beyond the boundaries of the intimate society, where the only concern is for the other. Exclusive concern for the other is ignorance of the third—and alongside the third, so many others for whom I am just as responsible. The totality extends responsibility beyond even the scope of the intention (The Ego and the Totality 33). However much I intend by my gift or action the good of the other, I cannot know or predict its ultimate outcomes, since the infinite circulation of money is subsequently the indefinite proliferation of the meaning of my intention. My charitable gift to the neighbor is passed on in the form of spent money to places I cannot envision. In this society united on the basis of money, I recognize that I am responsible not only for what I intend, but also for what comes of my intention, which money prolongs beyond the boundaries of proximate space and time. This would be the sense in which money recalls an inter-human proximity, making me recognize my responsibility not only to the neighbor as the first comer but also to numerous humanity, of which each one is unique and incomparable.

The difficulty that money makes apparent is that "the third," as Levinas says, "is also my neighbour and my neighbour's neighbour" (Sociality and money 206). Responsibility extends to the third, which means I must take care of his needs. Moreover, my responsibility to the neighbor

is not mitigated in any way by my responsibility to the third; in fact when the third comes onto the scene my responsibility to the neighbor increases, because now I am responsible for my neighbor's responsibility to the third. With the arrival of the third person, even the heretofore straightforward acts of mercy and charity become a complicated matter. Before I charitably give to another or show mercy to him, I must consider the fact that a third person "can have been the victim of that very one I answer for and that I approach in the mercy and charity of dis-inter-estedness" (ibid). The distention of my responsibility makes pardoning the other for a wrong he has done me a dangerous proposition since I am never the only one who has been harmed. In the first place, if I do not seek reparations for what has been taken from me, I may not have the means to pay my debts to my own creditors. Thus my debt to these creditors obliges me to exact payment from everyone who owes a debt to me. To proffer someone forgiveness then would be falsely to enclose the self and the other in a society of two, ignoring the third who is nonetheless affected at every turn by what I and the other do. Moreover, to freely pardon a crime is to encourage more crime. Levinas points out this danger inherent in the pardon in a preliminary draft of "Sociality and money" that he delivered at a conference held by the bank association. He notes that "the forgiveness of crime is an encouragement to crime and, consequently, a possibility for the third to fear" (L'ambigüité de l'argent 76). The third does not want there to be pardon; he fears it because it would incite the criminal who has wronged him to commit the same and more crime against him, because now it is clear that he is helpless. What the third wants, what every third wants in principle, is justice, or reparation, which takes the concrete form of the eye-for-an-eye, the *lex talionis*.

Levinas elaborates on the economic justice implied in the *lex talionis* in the interview with Burggraeve. An eye for an eye means, above all, that one must pay for one's crime. If you

gouge out someone's eye, you must pay reparations to him. First of all, he will not be able to make as much money without his eye, so you must compensate him for his lost wages. Second, you must pay for his medical bills. Third, you must pay for the money he does not make while he recovers. Fourth, you must pay for his suffering, and fifth, you must pay for the fact that he is now less handsome (Entretien préparatoire 50). Levinas expresses his surprise at this last category in particular, which he makes out to be an idiosyncrasy of France. However, the point is that money aims at a total compensation of the damages incurred. Money, because it is infinitely divisible and exchangeable, can in principle balance the scales of justice with an exact precision, and this balance is what the *lex talionis* aims at; an eye for an eye means money; it means equivalent compensation. Money is what allows for non-retributive, non-violent pay back. It substitutes itself, Levinas says, "for the infernal or vicious circle of vengeance or the universal pardon which is always an inequality with regard to the third" (L'ambigüité de l'argent 76). Neither vengeance nor pardon, money accomplishes pay back without perpetuating crime. Moreover, it does not attend only to the neighbor as first comer to the exclusion of the third, but hears both of their claims and effects a fair distribution of goods between them.

Yet if the law of just compensation means money, why is it expressed as an-eye-for-an-eye? The answer is that even if we pay with money, "nothing is erased" (Entretien préparatoire 50). Otherwise, Levinas says, following his teacher Monsieur Chouchani, a rich man could go around gouging everybody's eyes out—Rothschild could go around gouging everybody's eyes out. Nothing is erased because money only pretends or at best aspires to make right the crime that has been committed. Every crime, if it is a real crime, is irreparable on the basis that it is a crime against someone, a "real wound" or violence properly speaking that no compensation can erase. This kind of crime should be distinguished from the wrongs committed in intimate society,

in which the wronged party can simply forgive his friend. This kind of forgivable offense that is "undergone by a victim who is capable of annulling it is not properly speaking violence," Levinas says. "It does not encroach upon the offended freedom, which, as quasi-divine, retains wholly its power to absolve. Violence in intimate society offends, but does not wound" (The Ego and the Totality 31). Thus the violence that can be annulled through forgiveness is not real violence. Similarly, the crime that can be erased through reparations is not real crime. More paradoxically still, no loss can be made good through reparations, despite the fact that the very function of reparations and the role of money in a system of justice is to make good on a loss. The aim of money in justice is always to repair suffering, but even at its best and despite its vaunted divisibility it always falls short because, it turns out, not everything is encompassed by the totality instituted by money; something, namely the human, escapes it.

To think that money can make right a crime against another is to reduce the incomparable to the order of homogeneity. In "The Ego and the Totality" as well as the conference draft of "Sociality and money," two works separated by more than thirty years, Levinas makes reference to a verse in Amos, which reads: "Thus says the Lord: For three transgressions of Israel, and for four, I will not revoke the punishment; because they sell the righteous for silver, and the needy for a pair of sandals" (Amos 2:6 RSV). The terrible transgression for which punishment cannot be revoked is the buying and selling of man. Levinas finds a related sentiment in Marxism, writing in the concluding paragraph of "The Ego and the Totality," published in 1954, "We cannot attenuate the condemnation which from Amos II, 6 to the *Communist Manifesto* has fallen upon money, precisely because of its power to buy man." The equivalent formulation appears in the conference paper of 1986, again at the end of the composition. "I think that nothing would be able to attenuate of course the condemnation which from Amos II, 6 weighs on

the conception of man as a market reality" (L'ambigüité de l'argent 76). Levinas speaks of the same condemnation in both instances, and it is this condemnation that cannot be attenuated, even by the institutions of justice that money brings about, because at base money cannot repair the violence of which it is the instrument. Thus the goal is not to recuperate money by pointing to its ambiguity; money is irrecuperable. However, the failure of money to achieve what it aims at also shows up the same failure in the institutions of justice, the first of which is the liberal state.

Organized by the association of savings banks and held at the congressional palace in Brussels, the conference of 1986 was more or less a celebration of economic liberalism. Thus the difference between the paper given at the conference and the earlier work is not surprising; in the conference paper, Levinas drops the reference to communism. A laudatory gesture toward communism would hardly seem appropriate in a paper addressed first to the Prime Minister and then to the Minister of Finances and delivered in the last days of the Cold War. On this point, Levinas is even more judicious than the conciliatory Burggraeve, who felt compelled to note in the introduction he submitted to the association Levinas' lack of antipathy toward Marxism. In the more intimate setting of a 1983 interview, however, Levinas is more explicit about his evaluation of Marxist political ideology, objecting to the assertion that it is a philosophy of conquest. "No, in Marxism, there is not just conquest; there is recognition of the other. True enough, it consists in saying: We can save the other if he himself demands his due. Marxism invites humanity to demand what it is my duty to give it" (Philosophy, Justice, and Love 119). The recognition of the other is perhaps the highest ideal to which the state can ascribe, so this is no faint praise from Levinas. However, the historical developments of Marxism in the twentieth century in particular are cause for disappointment, since what began with generosity ended in Stalinism. "That is finitude!" Levinas exclaims (ibid 120). Of course, this same finitude is

characteristic of the liberal state in the West as well. If in his addresses to the bank association Levinas does not directly make the unfavorable comparison between liberalism and Marxism, he still ventures a critique, however elliptical.

Chapter 2

The Strange, Surprising Crusoe

Perhaps no other modern work has received as much comment from political theorists, economists and sociologists as Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*. In the decades following its publication in 1719, the adventure novel crossed the English Channel, becoming a central part of European as well as British culture. In the chapter on primitive society in *The Social Contract*, Jean-Jacques Rousseau could refer to Robinson on his island in the same breath as Adam and Noah; it was understood that each, due to his solitary condition in the universe, was the uncontested sovereign of the realm (157). A century later, Karl Marx would decry the tendency among his contemporaries to use *Robinson Crusoe* as the mythological basis for their theories, effectively making it the "Adam or Prometheus" of modern capitalism (268). As an event in the history of literature, Defoe's work has been singled out by Ian Watt as the very first novel, meaning the first fictional narrative which focused on the daily life of an ordinary person (74). In this peculiar concurrence of the content of the work with its legacy, *Robinson Crusoe* lays claim to being the first of its kind just as the protagonist thinks himself the first to step foot on his island; alone in the world and having been granted dominion over beast and field, he is the Adamic figure who stands at the beginning of the epoch of individualism.[10]

[10] The primary concern in this chapter will be the first *Robinson Crusoe* text, not simply because it was the most widely read but also because it has received by far the most critical attention. Specifically, the motif of the solitary economic individual is dramatized almost exclusively in the first text, though *The Farther Adventures of Robinson Crusoe*, published in the same year as the first installment, and *Serious Reflections*, published the year after, provide some valuable indications toward Crusoe's character and disposition. For this reason, the footnotes make reference to these sequels.

The picture of Crusoe as the self-sustaining economic individual is the one most familiar to students of literature and cultural history. It is largely the product of a longstanding debate between two camps with opposing readings of the novel. The first of these has its roots in classical and neoclassical economics, some of whose most prominent voices make frequent reference in their texts to the figure of Crusoe on his island. While Adam Smith and David Ricardo only allude to the story in their generic descriptions of an original state of society, later economists who adopted some of their tenets evoke the specific contents of Defoe's novel in order to demonstrate the principles of value and utility in the pristine conditions of nature. Though not closely associated with this tradition, Jean-Jacques Rousseau has an indelible impact on the interpretation of Robinson Crusoe as the economic individual. For Rousseau, the narrative is the ideal pedagogical tool, one which could teach a boy everything he needs to know about the world and nothing else. For readers of this persuasion, Crusoe, the everyman, alone in the universe, tells the truth about what is necessary and expedient for man's existence.

Pitted against this notion is another camp of readers following the cues of Karl Marx, who repudiates the claim that *Robinson Crusoe* or any of the Robinsonades which followed the aesthetic trend it began is a meaningful demonstration of the idyllic conditions of a primitive economy. It is little more than a farce, Marx argues, to think of Crusoe as an isolated individual who can only rely on his own capacities to survive. Crusoe comes to the island already having the socialized behavior and training in productive skills he needs. Moreover, he is only ever able to become self-sustaining after he raids the wrecked ship's stores, benefiting from vast amounts of material, tools, guns and ammunition. Afterwards, he increases his economic capacity by subjugating another human being. Thus, it is obvious to readers in this camp that *Robinson*

Crusoe demonstrates little more than the propensity of an ascendant middle class to justify its place in the world.

The irony of this bitter opposition between the two camps is that their conclusions about the novel converge on an essential point. For readers on both sides of the divide, Robinson Crusoe is a truth-teller whose story explains the basis of capital accumulation. One camp sees rational self-interest and ingenuity at the origins of the modern economic totality, while the other insists that the first steps towards modern capitalism are colonial violence and exploitation. Both are wedded to the hypothesis that Crusoe represents economic man.

Since the latter half of the twentieth century, however, literary critics have taken up the cause of *Robinson Crusoe* as a religiously resonant narrative, making the character out to be a wandering pilgrim who finds redemption during the punitive time he spends on an island. Defoe's text also deserves another look from the perspective of economic practice. Historians of the early modern period have offered a much-needed corrective to the belief in an idyllic origin of capitalist economy, showing that market transactions and the structure of credit from the sixteenth to the late-eighteenth centuries were messy affairs in which social status and reputation were implicated. Crusoe's adventures show an extension of the moral imperatives of commerce beyond respectability, to generosity.[11]

[11] Craig Muldrew shows that the markets of early modern England relied on intricate networks of credit. Casual debts were as much about sociability and neighborly trust as they were about utility. Craig Muldrew, *The Economy of Obligation: The Culture of Credit and Social Relations in Early Modern England* (London: Macmillan Press, 1998), 123-147. I will argue that Crusoe's economic relationships begin with a gesture of generosity without the expectation of reciprocity; this good-faith economy differs from an economy of obligation in which debts are explicit and expressed, even if casual and informal. It would only be in a very tenuous sense that Crusoe's benefactors could be said to extend credit to him in their acts of charity.

This chapter begins by offering a brief sketch of the use that economists have made of *Robinson Crusoe*, either as a demonstration of rational conduct or as the focus of a polemic against illusory notions of natural man. I argue that Rousseau made a critical intervention which paved the way for the evaluation of Crusoe as a rationally motivated, utilitarian individual. Following Rousseau, *Robinson Crusoe* becomes synonymous with the castaway's life on the island to the exclusion of the rest of the novel. The use of this island motif in economic treatises draws the ire of Marx, who sees it as the self-delusion of bourgeois society. The second part of the chapter deals with what Rousseau wishes to exclude: all of Crusoe's life leading up to the shipwreck and following his rescue. It is remarked that Crusoe's dealings with other adventurers and merchants take on the appearance of disinterested friendships. As capitalists in a softer age of capitalism, the characters in *Robinson Crusoe* prefer to exchange gifts and favors with one another, even if such transactions are highly inefficient and require the careful negotiation of unspoken rules. These gifts turn out to have a hard edge, however, since they conceal and tacitly legitimate the real inequalities which underlie the production of wealth in the eighteenth-century Atlantic trade. It is only after the maturation of the rational capitalist ethos that the gift, which intersects both interest and gratuity, becomes a problematic. The chapter concludes by addressing the difficulty involved in assigning the character of Crusoe a place within the history of capitalism. With help from Max Weber, I argue that Crusoe can be most adequately described as an adventure capitalist, rather than a modern industrialist or an economic traditionalist. The features that are most characteristic of Defoe's protagonist happen to be his penchant for speculation and his emotional brand of piety. Since Crusoe does not carry the traits of the modern capitalist spirit and since he conducts business on the basis of good faith and reciprocity, the novel cannot be said to moralize on the rationality of economic action in any straightforward

way. Rather, it tells the story of a recalcitrant adventurer whose conversion almost succeeds in effecting a transformation of his habits and work ethic.

The economic reading and Rousseau's influence

Marx famously alleges that the figure of Robinson Crusoe is all too often the starting point for some insipid analysis that economists make of the state of nature. He names Smith and Ricardo as the first culprits of this popular crime (267). Marx's indignation is, in this case, probably misdirected, since an examination of the corpus of the classical economists reveals that the Robinsonade trope appears quite infrequently there, and direct references to the novel are nowhere to be found. Only later in the nineteenth century do allusions to the novel pick up steam until it becomes a veritable common-place in the literature of neoclassical economics. William S. Kern accounts for this discrepancy by noting the different problems that economists faced in their respective eras. The earlier group of economists dealt, for the most part, with questions of policy. For them, "The purpose of economics was to demonstrate the impact of the growing labor force on the output of the economy as a whole" (Kern 64). The fictional setting of *Robinson Crusoe* is obviously ill-suited to such an endeavor. Stranded on an island with essentially no one around, Crusoe has the greatest significance for theorists of economic individualism, while an economist like Smith is likely to be more interested in a thicker social context.

Despite his reputation, Smith conceives of the human as an irremediably social being. *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* begins by establishing the social force which intertwines the interests of individuals through the pleasure they take in each other: "How selfish soever man may be supposed, there are evidently some principles in his nature, which interest him in the

fortune of others, and render this happiness necessary to him, though he derives nothing from it except the pleasure of seeing it" (Smith 11). This early work by Smith proceeds through an analysis of sympathy, an affective faculty, and imagination, a creative one, to account for the social tendencies of human beings. Social action is described not as the result of rational calculation but as arising from a pre-deliberative impetus. Even in the *Wealth of Nations*, as Kern points out, Smith continues to insist on society as the necessary context of human existence. He writes: "In civilized society he stands at all times in need of the cooperation and assistance of great multitudes . . . man has almost constant occasion for the help of his brethren" (Kern 65). In this later text, Smith places a larger emphasis on the utility and moral meaning of social bonds, permitting the interpretation that man resides in society because he decides it is in his best interest. Even so, as long as man in his natural condition is understood to be a member of a collective, the island myth of *Robinson Crusoe* makes no sense as a starting place for an investigation of economic action.

The matter is altogether different for the neoclassical economists of the later nineteenth century, for whom Crusoe became a central device. Kern writes that "While Crusoe was scarcely mentioned by the leaders of classicism, in contrast, the number of leading neoclassicists who at least mention him is exceedingly long" (65). The newfound interest in using bits and pieces from *Robinson Crusoe* arises from neoclassicism's orientation toward microeconomics, which isolates the decisions that economic actors make in a given situation. While the classicists suppose that wants and needs differ between societies, which can be more or less advanced, the theory of marginal utility emerging in the nineteenth century stipulates that the value of a given good is determined solely on the basis of an individual's subjective analysis of his or her need for it. Thus, marginalists are able to do away with the external reference points that classical

economists use to identify needs and focus exclusively on the situation of an isolated individual (White 18; cf. Ghosh, "Robinson Crusoe, the Isolated Economic Man" 73). Pioneers of marginalist theory such as Böhm-Bawerk and Wicksell use passages from *Robinson Crusoe* to illustrate how resources are allocated and commodities exchanged in a controlled environment like a virtually uninhabited island. This brand of economics understandably gravitates towards the island myth because both Crusoe's needs and the resources available to him are exceptionally well-bounded. During most of his time on the island, he does not encounter the problem of a dynamic labor supply, and when he does, he resolves it with the logic of the spoils of war. He even shows himself capable of overcoming the tremendous psychological stress of isolation, providing evidence towards the assertion that sociality is not indispensable to an individual's survival.[12]

The meticulous style of Crusoe's journal and record-keeping allow for short anecdotes from the novel to be featured in illustrations of economic principles. For a nineteenth-century historian such as Francis Montague, the clearest demonstration of Crusoe's utilitarian mindset comes from his assessment of the value of currency (White 21). Since Crusoe is trapped on the island, money is utterly worthless to him, and he remarks on this reversal one day when he comes across a cache of coins and precious metals: "I smil'd to my self at the Sight of this Money, O Drug! Said I aloud, what art thou good for, Thou art not worth to me, no not the taking off of the Ground, . . . I have no Manner of use for thee, e'en remain where thou art, and go to

[12] Novak reflects on the pain of exile as depicted in the Robinson Crusoe novels, describing the protagonist's "longing for another human being to fill the void of his isolation" as extreme. Yet Crusoe can mostly muster up the fortitude to carry on: "During his island exile, Crusoe, for much of the time, was able to conquer the pangs of isolation that beset him before the arrival of Friday." Novak, "Defoe's Ambiguity toward Exile," *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 50 (2010): 601-623.

the Bottom as a Creature whose Life is not worth saving" (Defoe 50). In this pensive moment, Crusoe smiles wistfully and knowingly, since his circumstances have broken the thrall over him which money has on members of society. Having been exiled, he now sees the coin – "some *European* Coin, some *Brazil*, some Pieces of Eight, some Gold, some Silver" – as mere stuff with no intrinsic value. Crusoe's apostrophaic address to Money can be understood as an illustration of how a rational actor might evaluate the worth of different things in the absence of opportunities for exchange. He comes to the quick conclusion that all the money he finds is not worth the effort of bending over to pick it up. The language he uses to describe the situation invites the comparison between his ruminations and systematic economic analysis. He considers what "good" the coin is, how much or how little it is "worth" to him, and he determines that he has no "Manner of use" for it. These are the judgments that a rational actor would be expected to make when deciding upon a course of action, so the fact that Crusoe records them so clearly and sequentially makes him the epitome of utilitarian principles.

However, this economic interpretation of the novel encounters difficulties once it strays from its selective reading. Even this iconic passage does as much to undermine the claim that Crusoe acts rationally as it does to substantiate it. The proliferation of mercantile language is matched by an affective discourse which runs alongside it. The very form of the second-person address shows what a lively relationship Crusoe has with his addressee, a position conventionally inhabited if not by a person then by some force of nature such as death or old age. Having judged the coin to be worthless, Crusoe should not have given it another thought, but instead he goes so far as to condemn it to the "Bottom," a euphemism which belies his repugnance for the abominable "Creature." If his actions are to be weighed against his words, Crusoe comes to resemble an addict more so than a rational agent. He recognizes the money as a drug, an object

which has lost its value, and strongly condemns it, but in the end he takes the worthless matter with him.[13] In doing so, he forgoes the opportunity to scavenge potentially more useful items from the shipwreck. Four years later, it is still in his possession and his thoughts upon it signify his largely unchanged disposition: "Alas! There the nasty sorry useless Stuff lay" (110).

This disparity between Crusoe's professed animosity toward money and his actual keeping of it complicates the neoclassicists' picture of the castaway in an idealized economic setting. The only way to maintain the myth of the economic Crusoe would be to attribute the imperfections in his reasoning and his various eccentricities to the time he spent in society. His failures with regard to economic action must be explained as artifacts of society's persistent influence on his behavior. Thus, the use that neoclassical economists make of *Robinson Crusoe* relies on a bracketing of societal influence. Inherent to the idealized figure of Crusoe on the island is the presumed absence of social factors, and the figure's value to the neoclassicists lies in its very abstraction from historical contingencies. Since the island approximates a sterile environment suitable for controlled experiments, Crusoe speaks to the aspiration of economics to join the natural sciences in their empirical authority; the idea of an isolated Crusoe is useful in that it allows for the abstracting of a pure individual from the societal noise which otherwise obscures him from view.[14]

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[13] A definition of "drug" current during this period was: "A commodity which is no longer in demand, and so has lost its commercial value or has become unsaleable" *OED Online* (Oxford University Press). This definition is the most apt given the context of the utterance, though Crusoe's affinity for tobacco gives the word an additional semantic charge.

[14] Frank Knight, who uses the Crusoe motif unsparingly (and in this regard is a holdover from the earlier neoclassicists), begins his economic treatise on *Risk, Uncertainty, and Profit* thus: "Economic, or more properly theoretical economics, is the only one of the social sciences which has aspired to the distinction of an exact science. To the extent that it is an exact science it must accept the limitations as well as share the dignity thereto pertaining, and it thus becomes like physics or mathematics in being necessarily somewhat abstract and unreal" (3). In the 1933 preface to the work, he doubles down on this formal and abstract approach, emphasizing that

This methodological individualism which emerges in neoclassical economics is what draws criticism from Marx in the posthumously published introduction to "A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy" (also included as the introduction to the *Grundrisse*). For Marx, the idealized setting of *Robinson Crusoe* is the conceit of an ahistorical approach to an essentially historical problem, that of human production. Contrary to what the neoclassicists suggest, Marx writes: "Production by isolated individuals outside of society – something which might happen as an exception to a civilized man who by accident got into the wilderness and already dynamically possessed within himself the forces of society – is as great an absurdity as the idea of the development of language without individuals living together and talking to one another" (Marx 268). The idea that the economists' Crusoe stands in for every economic actor makes no sense because no one is like him, Marx says. Everyone is already situated within society and does not take on the task of reinventing language but is rather born into a mother tongue. The use which economists make of the shipwrecked sailor to describe production in isolation is absurd because production, in the form that it takes in capitalist society, develops from the relations between individuals. Crusoe, even if he is shut off from all society, still possesses within himself the instruments of production which are the fruits of a continuous socialization since infancy. He is already possessed of the skill of his hands and a semi-rational approach to labor, even if that mental capacity required the catalyst of his conversion to manifest itself. Marx's charge against the Robinsonade also diagnoses a historical condition which, he says, has its roots in the sixteenth century but only comes close to full maturation in the

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"price-economics deals with a social system in which every individual treats all others and society merely as instrumentalities and conditions of his own *Privatwirtschaft*, a mechanical system of Crusoe economies" (xii). Frank Knight, *Risk, Uncertainty and Profit* (New York: Sentry Press, 1964).

eighteenth. The historical development is that of bourgeois society which is inclined to view the individual as an isolated agent who enters into social bonds only as a means to secure his private ends.

The target of Marx's critique is not only the intellectual progeny of Smith and Ricardo but also that of Rousseau, whose denunciation of modern society, Marx says, rests on the fantasy of returning to a natural condition unencumbered by the ponderous baggage of civilization. Marx specifically decries Rousseau's conception of humanity as composed of naturally independent individuals who come together only after entering into an agreement with each other.[15] One would be mistaken, Marx says, to view Rousseau's naturalism as a salient reversal of civilization's trend toward over-refinement. In fact, he argues, the nostalgia for a bygone state of nature in which individuals were independent of one another mistakes a modern phenomenon for the primordial past. The figure of the "isolated hunter or fisher" is only imaginable following the political and economic developments leading up to the eighteenth century; these developments allowed the individual to make his own destiny. To a larger extent than ever before, he (always he) was to determine his own occupation, religious association and political allegiance. The myth of original independence lent legitimacy to this form of social organization by associating it with man's supposed natural condition. As Marx notes, however, the untethered individual is in reality the culmination of a long process. "The further back we go into history, the more the

[15] Yet Rousseau cannot be taken as a straightforward individualist. Louis Dumont demonstrates that it is Marx who adopts a predominantly individualistic view of man, while Rousseau's view is more holistic (125, 128). In *The Social Contract*, Rousseau insists that man's constitution must be altered in such a way that he receives his life and his being from the greater whole (181). However, Marx reinterprets this stance in his early essay "On the Jewish Question." There, Marx implies that the altering of man's naturally individualistic constitution represents an alienation which must be corrected. Dumont suggests that Marx's individualistic bias prevents him from seeing the holistic and socially integrative aspects of Rousseau's text.

individual and, therefore, the producing individual seems to depend on and constitute a part of a larger whole: at first, it is, quite naturally the family and the clan, which is but an enlarged family" (267). For Marx, there can be no state of nature in which humans are not already bound to one another. Marx takes up the Aristotelian description of man as a *zoon politikon* to argue that not only is he a social animal but it is only in society that he can develop into something resembling an individual.

For this individuating process to reach its highest point, material forces must be joined by ideological forces pointed in the same direction. Thus, Marx attributes the rise of the individual to seminal events such as the dissolution of feudalism and the construction of free markets but also remarks on the contribution of certain prophets of the eighteenth century, whose role is to imagine and depict the ideal individual in nature. Marx writes:

> In this society of free competition the individual appears free from the bonds of nature, etc., which in former epoch of history made him a part of a definite, limited human conglomeration. To the prophets of the eighteenth century, on whose shoulders Smith and Ricardo are still standing, this eighteenth century individual . . . appears as an ideal whose existence belongs to the past; not as a result of history, but as its starting point. (Marx 267)

This description of the eighteenth-century "prophets" shares in the skepticism with which Marx treats religion in general, having called it an "inverted world consciousness" (Tucker 53).[16] These secular prophets are the ones who herald the coming of bourgeois society, preparing its

[16] More famously, and almost in the same breath, Marx labels religion "the opium of the masses." His point is that the masses find some relief from this unjustifiable suffering in the tenets of religion. This is to religion's credit, though at best religion is no more than the unfulfilled promise of a better material reality.

way with parables of individualism. Rousseau and Defoe, at least after the appropriation of his novel by economic theorists, are among these prophets. Their heresy is to have imagined the isolated individual as the beginning of history rather than the culmination of a long historical process which includes the dissolution of feudalism and the middle class's slow ascendancy.

The charge that Marx brings against Defoe's work is only guilt by later association. Marx is indiscriminate in his condemnation of the period, calling out the Robinsonades in general as belonging to "the insipid illusions of the eighteenth century" (Marx 266). Yet the characteristics and theoretical positions which he finds objectionable are not necessarily evident in Defoe's text. It takes the intervention of an enormously influential reader, Rousseau, to transform the novel into a myth of the modern individual. Book III of Rousseau's *Emile*, a treatise on education, is concerned with the upbringing of an imaginary pupil while he is still a child but no longer an infant; it is during this crucial period that he will learn to speak and read. The learned tutor, however, scorns the kind of education that is gained through books. With unparalleled irony, Rousseau writes, "I hate books. They only teach one to talk about what one does not know" (*Emile* 184). Yet the tutor recognizes that books occasionally have some value and that the medium of the written word is irreplaceable. Rousseau himself had confessed a great weakness for popular romances as a child, suggesting that fiction can effectively seduce the mind. The formidable challenge is to use this power of literature for good rather than ill, to instruct rather than lead astray. Thus, Emile's tutor expresses the crossroads at which he has arrived:

> Is there no means of bringing together so many lessons, scattered in so many books, of joining them in a common object which is easy to see and interesting to follow and can serve as a stimulant even at this age? If one can invent a situation where all men's natural needs are shown in a way a child's mind can sense, and where the means of providing for

> those needs emerge in order with equal ease, it is by the lively and naive depiction of this state that the first exercises must be given to his imagination. (ibid)

The invention to which he alludes is *Robinson Crusoe*. To be sure, Rousseau does not show much appreciation for the aesthetic worth of Defoe's oeuvre. It is appropriate for a young child only because it is lively and naive. It exercises the imagination in a way that a more ornate and sophisticated piece would not. At the same time, the novel does not work as an instruction manual might, by imparting information and procedural guidelines; rather, it stimulates the boy's mind, making it go off in all sorts of directions only hinted at by the book's contents. All of the details of Crusoe's story turn out to be immaterial, since he could be any man at any point of history stranded on whatever island, provided that it be uninhabited. The crucial matter is the invention of a situation in which man comes to reckon with himself, his needs and the faculties with which he can satisfy them.

Because it exercises the imagination, Rousseau considers the idealized setting of *Robinson Crusoe* the perfect one in which to educate a child such as Emile. Anticipating criticism, he acknowledges that the child will, in all likelihood, never find himself in surroundings such as these and that society, rather than isolation, will be the rule in his life. Nevertheless, imagining oneself alone offers the best kind of instruction, Rousseau wants to say.

> This state, I agree, is not that of social man; very likely it is not going to be that of Emile. But it is on the basis of this very state that he ought to appraise all the others. The surest means of raising oneself above prejudices and ordering one's judgments about the true relations of things is to put oneself in the place of an isolated man and the judge everything as this man himself ought to judge of it with respect to his own utility. (*Emile* 184-185)

From this passage it is clear that this tutelage is only meant to be temporary. The abridgement of *Robinson Crusoe* and the severe limit placed on Emile's library serve to prepare the pupil for his later life. While he spends his early childhood in isolation (an island within an island), he is destined to become a member of society. In this sense, individualism is a means to the end of social democracy. During this formative time, however, Emile's task is to isolate himself within the space of his imagination, where he can council with reason unperturbed.

The argument that Rousseau gives in favor of Crusoe's island turns out to be the original form of the ones proffered by the marginalists of the nineteenth century. No one actually claims that the island is verisimilar or a faithful representation of historical circumstances; what it is supposed to offer is a primordial balance scale that allows the reader to evaluate things as they truly are. It is clear that the economists echo Rousseau in their defense of Crusoe's island as an analytical device, arguing that having recourse to Crusoe means being able to get down to the essence of the individual, namely his rational self-interest. As late as the mid-twentieth century, economist Frank Knight writes that imagining ourselves in Crusoe's place is the only way "to get rid by abstraction of all personal relationships, mutual persuasion, personal antipathies, and consciously competitive or cooperative relationships which keep the behavior of an individual in society from being, in any closely literal sense, economically rational. Crusoe would be in this position" (Kern 69). For the economist, the figure of Crusoe on the island is an exercise in abstraction, one designed to remove the inessential manifestations of individual behavior from consideration.

From Rousseau onwards, *Robinson Crusoe* has functioned more as a thought-experiment than a novel, more a method than a literary text. In this respect, Rousseau's reading prolongs the ambition of Renée Descartes' *Discourse on the Method*, enacting a destruction of history and the

tradition in service of unassailable truth. The disembodied Cartesian ego becomes the asocial, unhistorical Crusoe. Both for Knight, the economist, and for Rousseau, the philosopher-pedagogue, the greatest danger in this experiment is that the subject may discover the existence of social relations. Once someone makes that discovery, the purity of individual rationality is lost. From that point on the social being is no longer capable of consulting reason without interference from societal pressures. It is for this reason that a tutor must take the greatest care to hide the notions of social relations from the pupil's mind as long as possible, Rousseau says. Inevitably, there comes a time when the tutor's subterfuge no longer suffices, at which point one adopts another strategy. "But where the chain of knowledge forces you to show him the mutual dependence of men, instead of showing it to him from the moral side, turn all his attention at first toward industry and mechanical arts which make men useful to one another" (186). In the continuing education of the child, utility plays just as large a role as it did when *Robinson Crusoe* was his only reference. With help from his interpretation of Crusoe on the island, Rousseau constructs a dualism of the useful as opposed to the useless. Whatever Crusoe could not do without on his island is necessary, and everything else is not. Therefore, the relations of utility between men are to be privileged over the merely moral relations, without which one can still subsist.

It is no wonder that early proponents of the economic theory of marginalism come to use *Robinson Crusoe* so centrally in their texts. Not only does Rousseau's reading of it make it amenable to the analysis of idealized conditions, but Rousseau also puts forth his own proto-marginalist description of civil society just as he establishes Defoe's novel, in truncated form, as the only text worthy of being read. Marginalism asserts that economic actors determine the value of a good or service based on their need for it and the available supply; if a large quantity of the

good is readily available, each marginal increase in its quantity will be worth comparatively little, even if it is eminently useful or necessary. Seemingly with this precept in mind, Rousseau casts a sweeping glance over the organization of labor in the city and proposes to teach his pupil the fundamental principles of its structure:

> There is public esteem attached to the different arts in inverse proportion to their real utility. This esteem is calculated directly on the basis of their very uselessness, and this is the way it ought to be. The most useful arts are those which earn the least, because the number of workers is proportioned to men's needs, and work necessary to everybody must remain at a price the poor man can pay. (*Emile* 186)

With this explanation, Rousseau provides a resolution to Adam Smith's paradox of value, which contrasted the price of water to that of diamonds. Without resorting to Smith's distinction between use-value and exchange-value, Rousseau gives the reason for an inverted evaluation of labor skill. Artists are more highly esteemed than artisans because their work is in short supply, but it is only in short supply because it is inessential. Meanwhile, the production in which artisans are engaged is critically useful but readily available as it must always be if society is to keep on going.

For the pupil in Rousseau's text, the economic moral to this illustration is that society obfuscates the evaluation of skills and goods. What is esteemed by the population is in truth less worthy than what is taken for granted. The division of labor in society determines the value that society places on each of its members. In this instance at least, Rousseau joins in the critique of bourgeois vanity, which lauds the goldsmith but denigrates the blacksmith. The force of this error is greatly ameliorated, Rousseau wants to say, if a child's tutelage in economics begins with *Robinson Crusoe*.

Good-faith economy

For the tutor in *Emile*, Defoe's novel is both necessary as an education in economy and sufficient as the entirety of his charge's literary upbringing, at least for a good while. Despite his reservations regarding the textual medium and some parts of Robinson Crusoe in particular, he commends the book as the only one worthy to be read by his young pupil. "This book will be the first that my Emile will read. For a long time it will alone compose his whole library, and it will always hold a distinguished place there" (184). In placing this popular piece of English fiction on a pedestal all by itself, Rousseau purposefully provokes his elitist audience. It is more than a goad, however, since Crusoe not only teaches himself to be autonomous in terms of agriculture, animal husbandry and habitat construction but also acquires the capacity to deal with moral, religious and political quandaries in the isolation of his own mind. Reading the novel and nothing else, Emile is destined to become an autodidact as well. This solitary book will be his own island, upon which he will learn to distinguish the necessary from the superfluous. The isolation of the island is precisely what makes for a good teacher, since it leaves the restricted reader and shipwrecked sailor free from social convention and able to determine what things are worth in and of themselves.

Yet Rousseau does not leave his commendation of Defoe's volume without one large caveat, which is that the reader should discard the first and last sections of it since they have to do with Crusoe's time as a member of society. In effect, Rousseau carves out an island within that island which alone composes Emile's entire library. The phrase "island in an island" is one that recurs in Jacques Derrida's lecture on *Robinson Crusoe* in the seminar, *The Beast and the Sovereign II*. Derrida asks: "what is an island (qu'est-ce qu'un îsle / qu'est une îsle)"? His

exploration of the term reveals its connection with insularity and loneliness as well as uniqueness and exception. Derrida describes Crusoe himself as an island in an island, emphasizing the character's individualism, which is only reinforced in isolation. Crusoe's island is also a desert in the sense that society has left it entirely alone. In *Emile*, Rousseau is not content to restrict the pupil's library to one book but magnifies the insularity of his education by abridging the volume. In doing so, Rousseau makes text itself an exemplary island in parallel with its narrative elements: "This novel, disencumbered of all its rigmarole [débarrassé de tout son fatras], beginning with Robinson's shipwreck near his island and ending with the arrival of the ship which comes to take him from it, will be both Emile's entertainment and instruction throughout the period which is dealt with here" (185). Rousseau's bold revision ends up authorizing a train of readings which take Crusoe's island as paramount and the rest of his adventures as contingent. Political economists since Rousseau and literary critics until the twentieth century tended to accept this judgment concerning the novel's rigmarole, preferring to excise it from the "meat" of the narrative.[17] Since the important interventions of Watt and J. Paul Hunter, criticism has grown more attentive to the non-island episodes, treating them as the staging ground for Crusoe's original sin of discontentedness. Even so, the social interactions between Crusoe and his business partners continue to generate relatively little discussion.[18]

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[17] For example, Virginia Woolf glosses over the irrational behavior and numerous indiscretions which lead to Crusoe's shipwreck on the island; she emphasizes instead "his shrewdness, his caution, his love of order and comfort and respectability" (31).

[18] While Marxist readings such as Stephen Hymer's focus on the help that Crusoe receives from others, they tend to discount the generosity of his benefactors as a weapon of class warfare or a plot device. Hymer persuasively argues that Crusoe deals with members of his peer group "on the basis of fraternal collaboration" while being harsher with those excluded from this group but does not remark on the moral and symbolic aspects of generous dealing. Stephen Hymer, "Robinson Crusoe and the Secret of Primitive Accumulation," *Monthly Review* 63.4 (2011: 18-39), 38. Peter Hulme suggests that the function of Crusoe's benefactors is simply to tie the two

In order to construct a social ethic of *Robinson Crusoe*, we must more closely consider the parts of the novel that have conventionally been considered frivolous. Such an examination will demonstrate that Crusoe is in fact a social being, one who relies on the aid of generous benefactors to get him started as an adventuring merchant and to establish himself as a plantation owner in the New World. The time that he spends on the island is not at all the primeval period during which his economic personality comes into being, since money is conspicuously worthless when he is cast away. Rather, it is when he is in Brazil or London or Lisbon that Crusoe acts as a full-fledged economic agent, collecting interest, pardoning debts and drafting contracts. His economic activity paints a striking picture of a speculator who falls into fortune as haphazardly or providentially as he strikes upon misery. The transactions between Crusoe and his friends, partners and servants are always conducted on the basis of goodwill, while the maximization of utility is hardly ever a controlling interest. This "archaic" economy that *Robinson Crusoe* seems to dramatize is facilitated by the exchange of gifts and charitable services. Moreover, the indispensability of the gift in economy is taken as a matter of course; its seemingly paradoxical function of facilitating something inimical to it is not problematized as it will be novels of the later eighteenth century.

At the beginning of his account, Crusoe leaves hearth and home against his parents' vehement objections and in order to seek his fortune. Over the course of this quest, he sells a boy into indentured servitude after having expressed some affection for him, takes a captive on the island and massacres many more following a fit of fury.[19] Despite this overt violence, Crusoe

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ends of life story into a coherent narrative. Peter Hulme, *Colonial Encounters: Europe and the native Caribbean, 1492-1797* (London: Meuthen, 1986), 218-219.

[19] Crusoe falls into a "Fit of Fury" when he finds a group of twenty-one cannibals have landed on the shore close to his domicile about to engage in ritual cannibalism (195-196). He initially resolves to kill all the cannibals, but then questions whether he has the right to enact justice on

cannot be characterized as a sociopath; nor is he asocial, as Rousseau would have it. In his travels, Crusoe in fact forms two strong bonds, both with ship captains who act generously with him. His dealings with these captains rely on generosity and gratitude, eschewing both the book-keeping ethos of modern capitalism and the sense of industry which are supposed to motivate him. What could explain these conspicuously aneconomic relationships, and how do they fit in with the notion of Crusoe as the standard-bearer for *homo economicus*, economic man? The answer to these questions must take into account the fact that Crusoe, in his uttermost isolation, is never quite cut off from society, since the money he leaves behind is always active. When he returns to civilization after twenty-eight years on the island, he discovers that his plantation has been kept safe and sound waiting for him, and not only that. The principal has grown tremendously, thanks to an industrious partner. Perhaps the most peculiar detail is that all this time Crusoe has been away, he has unwittingly been contributing to charity and the welfare of the public. Two-thirds of the profits of his estate has annually been given over to an Augustinian monastery, and one-third to the king of Portugal.

Long before being cast away on the island, Crusoe comes across his first benefactor who makes his seafaring career possible. An English captain gives the young Crusoe a place on his ship and the means to begin his merchant trade. The circumstances of this arrangement are important to note: Crusoe has been at sea a number of times already, but always as a "gentleman" paying for passage rather than a sailor who must do work as a way of earning his

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"People, who had neither done, or intended me any Wrong? Who as to me were innocent, and whose barbarous Customs were their own Disaster" (195). It is only when he discovers that one of the intended victims is a white man that he is filled with sufficient horror to act. Crusoe's wavering on this point and his lines of reasoning are examples of casuistic thinking; G. A. Starr discusses the "thoroughly unsystematic fashion" in which Defoe's characters make moral judgments in *Defoe and Casuistry* (London: Oxford University Press, 1971), viii.

keep; thus, he has never had the opportunity to learn a skill that would be useful to the captain or the ship. What the captain takes an interest in, however, is the young man's "conversation," which is said to be not at all disagreeable. For this alone, it seems, the two are able to enter into an agreement, and nothing about it is so striking as the fact that it is a contract which strictly proscribes any economic considerations. Crusoe recalls that the captain

> told me if I wou'd go the Voyage with him I should be at no expense; I should be his Mess-mate and his Companion, and if I could carry any thing with me, I should have all the Advantage of it that the Trade would admit; and perhaps I might meet with some Encouragement. I embrac'd the Offer, and entring into a strict Friendship with the Captain, who was an honest and plain-dealing Man, I went the Voyage with him . . . (Defoe 16)

The arrangement, which the narrator describes as the captain's "Offer," is a contract insofar as it aligns with Hobbes' definition in the chapter of the *Leviathan* on mutual law and contracts: "The mutual transferring of right, is that which men call CONTRACT" (89). By agreeing to the captain's terms, Crusoe commits himself to the voyage and abdicates his freedom to do otherwise. Simultaneously, the captain transfers the right to food, lodging and the profits of trade. Indeed, the captain's offer is couched in the language of trade but only in order that the considerations of trade be expunged from the agreement. Crusoe will not pay the captain any fee or fare; he will not exchange the value of his labor as a sailor but serve as a companion who adds no practical value; he will not pay the captain with a share of the profits he might make during the journey but rather be obliged to keep all of them to his own advantage. As a way to summarize or give a name to this contract between the two parties, Crusoe says that they have entered into a "strict Friendship." The strictness of the friendship is nothing other than the rigor

of its definition, understood as a measure of purity. They are to be nothing but friends – not partners in a joint venture, nor colleagues (though they do become in a sense master and pupil). In an interesting twist of language, Crusoe and the English captain make a deal not to deal with one another; they arrange for there not to be any arrangements between them except for what arises out of friendship.[20]

In a narrative which is said to be exemplary of economic individualism, such a verbal agreement is of manifest significance. It is the most comprehensive set of terms and conditions given in the novel, encompassing matters of etiquette, occupation and remuneration.[21] Moreover, Crusoe feels obligated to honor the terms of the contract long after the captain's death, extending its benefits to the captain's widow. Even so, this (in many ways aneconomic) relationship between Crusoe and the English captain is not a unique instance. If it were, it could perhaps be dismissed as a momentary lapse in Crusoe's individual economic consciousness, a relapse into an antiquated state of mind. However, besides this English captain there is also a generous

[20] This insistence on the strictness of the friendship between Crusoe and the captain in fact complicates the distinction that Hobbes makes between contract, which is mutual, and gift, which is unilateral. Hobbes writes: "When the transferring of right is not mutual; but one of the parties transfereth, in hope to gain thereby friendship, or service from another, or from his friends; or in hope to gain the reputation of charity, or magnanimity; or to deliver his mind from the pain of compassion; or in hope of reward in heaven this is not contract, but GIFT, FREE-GIFT, GRACE: which words signify one and the same thing" (89). The assertion is that when one party transfers a right without the guarantee of a reciprocal and presumably proportionate gesture from the other party, the transfer is a free gift. Thus Hobbes has a more expansive definition of free gift which includes transfers motivated by the hope or expectation of return. While Crusoe's relationship with the captain is determined by mutual obligation as in a contract, the obligations are nothing other than those of a host toward his guest or a friend toward his friend. Once Crusoe and the captain have entered into (the contract of) friendship, all contract dissolves, leaving the favors that friends do for one another in the spirit of "disinterested Honesty" (Defoe 16).

[21] *The Farther Adventures* makes reference to the matrimonial contract between husband and wife, but in fact no signing of contract takes place between the English men and their native wives; rather, they take part in a ceremony officiated by the Catholic priest (150-160).

Portuguese captain to whom Crusoe is attached. This pair of captains and benefactors presents a pattern of behavior that cannot be considered incidental.

Whereas the first captain charitably takes Crusoe on his ship and under his wing, the Portuguese captain happens upon Crusoe, helplessly adrift, and performs a charitable rescue. Here, as before, the captain is more altruistic than Crusoe could have hoped, asking nothing of Crusoe in exchange for his aid. “It was an inexpressible Joy to me, and I immediately offered all I had to the captain of the Ship, as a Return for my Deliverance; but he generously told me, he would take nothing from me” (Defoe 30). Straight away, the captain makes clear that he does not expect to be compensated for the rescue; he does not hold Crusoe in his debt. The captain gives a twofold explanation for the gratuitousness of his action. The practical and less essential consideration is that Crusoe will need what resources he has in order to start a living in Brazil, where they are headed. However, this line of reasoning is introduced only as an afterthought in the captain’s speech. The primary reasoning that the captain gives is none other than his own articulation of the Golden Rule. He tells Crusoe, “I have sav’d your Life on no other Terms than I would be glad to be sav’d my self, and it may one time or other be my Lot to be taken up in the same condition” (ibid). The Portuguese captain, much like the English one, couches his nascent relationship with Crusoe in the language of contract but only in order to negate contractual obligation. Since the captain would not wish to be rescued under severe terms, he does not impose them on Crusoe. Rather, he places his action explicitly under the aegis of charity.

This second captain, much like the first, makes clear that his relationship with Crusoe is not to be an economic one, in which profit and loss and debit and credit are concerns. Nevertheless, money changes hands between them at various instances, beginning with the rescue voyage and continuing much later into their lives. What is distinctive about these

transactions is that they are conducted on the basis of good faith. During the rescue operation, the captain notices that Crusoe's small boat is a fine vessel and offers to buy it. Crusoe, in his gratefulness, will not give a price for it, leaving its value to the captain. The captain settles upon a price of eighty pieces of eight, which he thinks will be fair to Crusoe. He also grants the addendum that if Crusoe finds anyone in Brazil who will pay more than that, he will make up the difference in full. In this unwieldy negotiation between these two parties it is clear that gestures of courtesy and generosity are reciprocally made. The captain offers to buy what he could justifiably commandeer, Crusoe cedes the right of setting a price, and finally the captain leaves Crusoe with the option of finding a higher bid. The whole scene plays out like the haggling between a street vendor and his customer, only in this case the vendor is the customer's ardent advocate and vice-versa.

Despite appearances, there is also a certain amount of self-interest involved in the transaction, since the captain would not have offered to buy the boat unless he had some use for it, and Crusoe is desperate for some liquidity in the form of Portuguese currency. From the perspective of someone on the outside looking in, the negotiation can be characterized as an operation by which the self-interest of each party is rendered misrecognizable; that is, each gesture (self-interested in reality) takes on the form of a disinterested, generous act.[22] This transformative process of "social alchemy" is what is identified by sociologist Pierre Bourdieu in

[22] The external or theoretical perspective corresponds to the principle of objectivity in anthropological observation. A fully adequate account of the gifts between Crusoe and the captain must complement theoretical vision with a practical understanding of each party's point-of-view. Bourdieu explains that "only a critical awareness of the limits implied in the conditions of production of theory can enable [the theorist] to include in the complete theory of ritual practice properties as essential to it as the partial, self-interested character of practical knowledge or the discrepancy between the practically experienced reasons and the 'objective' reasons of practice" (36). The discrepancy in our example is that between Crusoe's objectively observable self-interest and his practically experienced generosity (or disinterested honesty).

his studies of Kabylian culture. The Kabyle communities in northern Algeria were similar in some important respects to Defoe's milieu: the rapid expansion of industry is seen encroaching on traditional ways of life, creating tension between established practices of exchange and new, namely capitalistic, economic principles. "Archaic," pre-capitalistic societies, Bourdieu argues, do not operate with the same understanding of profit and loss as modern ones do. That is not to say that the distribution and control of resources and currency is unimportant; rather, as Bourdieu shows, the economy in these archaic societies is dedicated in large part to disguising its own operations by lending them a different aspect.

> Everything takes place as if the specificity of the 'archaic' economy lay in the fact that economic activity cannot explicitly recognize the economic ends in relation to which it is objectively oriented. The 'idolatry of nature' which makes it impossible to think of nature as raw material and, consequently, to see human activity as labour, that is, as man's struggle against nature, combines with the systematic emphasis on the symbolic aspect of the acts and relations of production to prevent the economy from being grasped as an economy, that is, as a system governed by the laws of interested calculation, competition or exploitation. (Bourdieu 113)

Bourdieu's analysis of archaic economy recognizes that two generalizable features of pre-capitalistic society prevent it from seeing the totality of values and exchange as an economy. Human activity is not seen as labor, and the relations of production have all-important symbolic meaning. The ritual gift reinforces the meaningfulness of these relations (such as that between a proprietor and his steward), thus legitimating the relations of power while obfuscating the play of interest.

Material interest is unmistakably at play in Crusoe's dealing with the Portuguese captain, who does Crusoe a second large favor by helping him retrieve some of the wealth he left in England. At this point in time, Crusoe has begun to establish himself as a tobacco farmer in Brazil, so the captain's generosity no longer has to do with the duties of charity, only friendship. In fact, the captain refuses payment for his service, both from Crusoe and from Crusoe's proxy in England, the widow of the English captain who was Crusoe's first benefactor. In the end, he half-way relents, as Crusoe says: "my friend . . . would not accept of any Consideration, except a little Tobacco, which I would have him accept, being of my own Produce" (Defoe 33). The exchange, if it can be so characterized, between the two friends is a favor from one for the produce of another. The product of Crusoe's own activity, tobacco, is deemed an acceptable counter-gift precisely because it is not recognized as alienated labor. That tobacco is good for giving is an especially salient fact given its economic prominence at the beginning of the eighteenth century, which marks the rise of the Tobacco Lords in Glasgow, a locale in which Defoe spent considerable time. Beyond its role in colonial trade, the substance also comes to signify the leisure or luxury of camaraderie in literature, as Jacques Derrida notes in *Given Time*.[23] Yet for the happenstance farmer Crusoe, tobacco remains so little a commodity that he can offer it to his friend without risking offense and enough of a mystery that he will use it to induce religious visions during his time on the island.

If the gift of tobacco generally marks a durable bond of amity, it is certainly not out of place between Crusoe and the Portuguese captain, who reunite after Crusoe returns from the

[23] Since tobacco is not consumed for sustenance, it represents expenditure that "goes up in smoke." Derrida makes reference to Baudelaire's prose poem "Counterfeit Money" as well as Edgar Allen Poe's short story "The Purloined Letter," both of which begin with two men smoking together.

island. The narrative arc of his adventure comes to its necessary resolution only when he finds his way back to Europe to discover by way of the captain that the modest wealth he had accrued as a small-time plantation owner in Brazil has grown into a fortune. Before leaving on the voyage which would leave him shipwrecked on the island, Crusoe had willed his property over to the Portuguese captain, who was nonetheless unable to claim it in his absence, since he could not procure evidence of his friend's demise. The captain's relation to this inheritable fortune is best described as a spectral interest, since it belongs to him only if his friend is dead, which, against all odds, Crusoe is not. The settling of accounts which forms the last part of the narrative is witness to the miracle of capital accumulation, made possible through the exceedingly improbable confluence of crisscrossing interests, namely those of Crusoe's business partner, the trustees able to verify Crusoe's identity and the captain, whose personal resources seem to have diminished in proportion to his hope of claiming Crusoe's estate.

Crusoe is himself struck by the exemplary honesty of these gentlemen, who not only give him back what he is due but also volunteer information and funds in excess of their obligations.[24] Seen from this perspective, Crusoe's ordeal on the island is the ultimate test of his friends' honesty, since they have had to maintain the integrity of their accounts, resisting graft, fraud and error against the vanishing possibility of Crusoe's survival after more than a quarter-century. The narrator refers to the story of Job to illustrate the rewards to be had after a long period of perseverance, but in Crusoe's case his friends and associates are not the ones who impugn his righteousness; rather, they are also Job-like, remaining faithful despite temptation (239). As figures in Defoe's narrative, these remarkably sincere agents need not be read as typical

[24] Besides being much moved by the honesty of the Portuguese captain, the narrator also comments on the superlative honesty of the Augustinian prior, who "very honestly declar'd" some undistributed funds which could be returned to Crusoe's account (239).

representatives of eighteenth-century Atlantic trade. Natasha Glaisyer has shown that the respectability of commercial activity was very much in contention in Defoe's time.[25] If that is the case, Crusoe's dealings with his generous benefactors should be regarded as ideal representations of business conducted in good faith. Interpreting their generosity in this way allows for a response to Peter Hulme's assertion that the unaccounted for beneficence in *Robinson Crusoe* is mere "romance wish-fulfillment operating in the economic realm" (218). More than that, the generosity of Crusoe's benefactors is the moral example which demonstrates the invisible hand of Providence aiding the earnest.

The irony of Crusoe's miraculous fortune is that the circumstances of its discovery turn the tables on those involved such that Crusoe becomes, in the end, the generous benefactor. The Portuguese captain, having fallen on hard times during Crusoe's absence, has had to resort to borrowing from his trustee's estate. When the proprietor returns, as if from the grave, to reckon with his steward, the poor captain can only offer a partial payment of the debt and a recognition of the remainder. Crusoe propounds that he is deeply moved by the man's kindness and honesty, and, remembering the past services done in the name of charity, he absolves the captain's debt.[26] Going forward, Crusoe retains the trusty steward as receiver for his holdings in Brazil and grants him a somewhat meager annuity amounting to ten percent of the profits of the estate. Having

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[25] Natasha Glaisyer, *The Culture of Commerce in England, 1660-1720* (Suffolk: The Boydell Press, 2006), 13-18. Glaisyer points out Defoe tried to make the case in *The Complete English Tradesman* that the activity of trade was consistent with the bearing of a gentleman (17). Daniel Defoe, *The Complete English Tradesman, in Familiar Letters; Directing Him in All the Several Parts and Progressions of Trade* (London: Charles Rivington, 1726), 376.

[26] "Honesty" is a term especially laden with meaning in the Crusoe books. In *The Serious Reflections*, the (fictitious) author explains that honesty is not merely a matter of dutifully discharging one's legal obligations. Rather, "an honest man acknowledges himself debtor to all mankind, for so much good to be done for them, whether for soul or body, as Providence puts an opportunity into his hands to do" (7). The author concludes that a miser can in no way be called honest. Thus a term such as "disinterested honesty" is tautologically emphatic.

done this, Crusoe feels that he has requited the old captain who saved his life "a hundred-fold" (Defoe 240). The *Life and Adventures* supplies the reader with this epilogue as if finally to balance the accounts between the two friends in a kind of hereafter. From the beginning, they had been conducting business under the banner of good faith, always leaving it to the other to tabulate his debt and only ever exchanging gifts and counter-gifts rather than payment for services rendered. Despite these representations of reciprocal generosity, however, it is easy to see, from a third-party point-of-view, that Crusoe has gotten the better end of the deal; after not having given his affairs a thought for nearly three decades, he returns at the opportune moment to reap every benefit. One wonders how much less content the Portuguese captain would have been to receive news of Crusoe's demise, after which he would have inherited the entire estate, than news that he still lived.[27]

Of course, the captain is hardly the worst off in the world of Robinson Crusoe. Whereas the narrative finds a clever way to settle the accounts between Crusoe and his charitable benefactor, a more implacable matter is that of the unrequited contributions of an anonymous multitude. Both Crusoe and the Portuguese captain have participated in the trade or transport of slaves and indentured servants, whose labor, in reality, is the basis of Crusoe's fortune. As if in recompense for these transgressions, Providence in the novel decrees that two-thirds of the estate's profits during most of Crusoe's absence be donated "to the Monastery of St. Augustine, to be expended for the Benefit of the Poor, and for the Conversion of the *Indians* to the Catholick

[27] The captain's account shows that he did indeed register Crusoe's will and make a claim to the inheritance, but was unable to take possession of the holdings because he could not verify what had happened to Crusoe (236). The captain's predicament was one in which any news would have been bittersweet: to learn of Crusoe's passing would be to lose a friend, and to learn of his survival would be to lose the hope of inheriting.

Faith" (ibid 235).[28] Despite Crusoe's worst intentions, it seems, his money redeems itself by finding its way into the hands of the poor. That the narrative must resort to such a *Deus ex machina* to justify Crusoe's providential good fortune is evidence of its bad conscience with regard to the exploitative accumulation of wealth. This bad conscience stands in contrast to the one that is supposed to be the hallmark of the mature eighteenth century, which, according to Max Weber, has "above all a startlingly clear conscience – we can say without hesitation, *pharasaically* good – as concerns the acquisition of money" (Kalberg 173). Not yet a Pharisee, Crusoe is not quite at ease with taking advantage of his excessively honest friend and would likely have felt some pangs of remorse for having made himself on the backs of a generation of laborers, had not his inadvertent charitability pre-empted that discomfort. What is clear is that Crusoe's adventures, considered in the larger context that Rousseau elides, do not represent a triumphalist economic individualism. Rather, Crusoe must be said to conduct his affairs largely according to the strictures of a heavily symbolic and highly inefficient good-faith economy which allows him to see himself as a faithful friend and a civic-minded proprietor. The mutually upheld representations of disinterestedness and generosity between Crusoe and the captains make it possible for them to turn a blind eye to the economic forces actually at play in their world of maritime commerce. This practiced blindness is what, as Bourdieu says, guarantees "the complicity of collective bad faith in the economy of 'good faith'" (Bourdieu 114).

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[28] This amount was not to be refunded, since "the Improvement, or Annual Production, being distributed to charitable Uses, could not be restor'd" (235). According to the Portuguese captain, the portion of the plantation's profits given over to the king should have been refundable, but it turns out that the king's steward had donated these profits to another monastery (236). In the end, Crusoe is refunded nothing from the king and only 872 moidores from the Augustinian prior, though of course he retains his ownership stake in the plantation (239).

The distinctive feature of a good-faith economy is that it relies on a collective misrecognition of the self-interested relations which compose it. The individuals imagine themselves as generous donors and grateful recipients rather than rationally calculating actors. It is here that Bourdieu's description of practical, dispositional action or *habitus* is most helpful. Habitus is conceived of as an alternative to the dichotomous opposition between deterministic materialism, which leaves no agency at all to individual actors who are bound by the structures that surround them, and the psychologism of free will, which dispenses with the causal functioning of forces outside of the individual making decisions as if in a vacuum. Rather than subscribing to either of these viewpoints, Bourdieu describes action within a habitus as prereflexive and socially inculcated but simultaneously strategic and oriented, directly or indirectly, toward the actor's self-interest. Individuals existing within the habitus do what they do, not because they have determined it to be the best course of action but because they have a feel for the game and know how to act before having to think about it. In the matters of kinship relations and gift-giving, for example, the unwritten rules are often too complex to be synthesized in a cognitive model, but participants engage in strategically expedient behavior as if it is the only thing to do (Bourdieu 61-65).

Crusoe's habitus requires him to act generously with his fellow seafarers, transfiguring his interested relations with them into disinterested friendships. As a rule, Crusoe eschews purely economic relations, preferring to employ slaves, captives and indentured servants rather than wage laborers. With these varied servants, Crusoe portrays himself alternately as a sovereign and a patriarch, one who protects and rears those in his charge.[29] He must go to great lengths to

[29] In an essay on Defoe's *Captain Singleton*, Roxann Wheeler discusses the desire that men in Defoe's writing have for their subordinates to be not only obedient but also loyal and grateful.

establish and maintain the symbolic dimension of these relations. Indeed, Bourdieu shows that maintaining the symbolism which sustains a good-faith economy is extraordinarily expensive:

> The historical situations in which the artificially maintained structures of the good-faith economy break up and make way for the clear, economical (as opposed to expensive) concepts of the economy of undisguised self-interest, reveal the cost of operating an economy which, by its refusal to recognize and declare itself as such, is forced to devote almost as much ingenuity and energy to disguising the truth of economic acts as it expends in performing them. (Bourdieu 114)

One sees at last that the better part of Crusoe's ingenuity is devoted to disguising the gift of tobacco, the pardon of debt and the taking of a captive as anything but economic. If he only knew better – had he the calculating disposition later ascribed to him – he could economize on the operating costs of the good-faith economy, saving himself those vast expenditures. However, the itinerant Crusoe of Defoe's novel does not yet have the mindset of an industrialist.

Crusoe, adventure capitalist

Literary critics have had longstanding disagreements over which traits find expression in the character of Robinson Crusoe. A dominant strand of interpretation asserts that the protagonist of Defoe's 1719 novel is best described as an individual of practicality and industry, making him the prototype of the modern capitalist. This point-of-view is sometimes at pains to reconcile Crusoe's supposed rationality with the symbolic, unproductive activity filling the pages of his journal. Such economically inclined interpretations have tended to treat Crusoe's religion as an

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Wheeler's analysis of the "love-labour relationship" has much in common with Bourdieu's concept of the symbolic economy.

inessential accoutrement of the predominantly secular narrative.[30] Religiously inclined readings, on the other hand, can fall into the habit of expecting everything to be easily explained by religious ideas and ideal types. The greatest aberrations in Crusoe's behavior are thereby obscured.[31] The tendency to attribute causal efficacy either wholly to material interests or wholly to religious ideas is surprising given how prominently the sociology of Max Weber has been cited in *Robinson Crusoe* studies in the past half-century and more.[32] Weber's approach to religion attends to the influence that religious ideas have on material conditions and *vice versa*.[33] Returning to certain of Weber's concepts regarding the Protestant ethic and its relation to capitalism may show how materialist readings of *Robinson Crusoe* can afford to be more hermeneutical and, equally, how spiritualist readings have not been sufficiently material.[34] In a

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[30] Ian Watt aligns himself with Karl Marx and Charles Gildon in this view. More recently, Hans Turley takes a nuanced approach, arguing that Crusoe's religion is significant in its complicity with his capitalist and imperialist endeavors. Claims that "Crusoe evangelizes in order to profit" and "English Protestantism cannot be separated from a desire for profit – spiritual or economic" are, however, not followed by an examination of the specifically religious sources of this insatiable desire (180, 186).

[31]. J. Paul Hunter's examination of religious allegory in the novel remains the most authoritative. Hunter is able to explain some but perhaps not all of Crusoe's aberrant behavior as part of the process of his spiritual regeneration (175-184).

[32] Watt and Maximillian Novak both engage significantly with Weber in their readings of *Robinson Crusoe*. In *The Origins of the English Novel, 1600-1740*, Michael McKeon notes the tendency for materialist and spiritual readings of *Robinson Crusoe* to mutually exclude each other (319). To present a less extreme interpretation, McKeon argues that Defoe's narrative mediates the contradictions inherent to a secularizing but still religious world view (332-333). Against this "middle ground" approach, John Richetti sees the narrative definitively moving from religious reverence to secular empowerment (58-78, 58-59).

[33] Max Weber, "The Social Psychology of the World Religions," 267-301, 268-270. Weber's *Protestant Ethic* was meant as a corrective to "naïve historical materialism" (*The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* 82). For this precise reason, it errs on the side of idealist explanations of historical phenomena (cf. 178-179).

[34] Including Weber's own. Manuel Schonhorn's article on the influence of Weber and Watt on readings of *Robinson Crusoe* admirably emphasizes Weber's insight regarding the significance of ascetic restraint for the development of capitalism (55-60). Schonhorn's larger point that "Defoe's narrative is subordinated to the larger perspective of a whole life, and this perspective is integrated into an evangelical frame that gives meaning and order to that experience" may be

material account of Crusoe's religion, I examine the circumstances that precipitate and ensue from his conversion on the island, focusing on the role of tobacco as a sacred substance. Crusoe's unorthodox rituals and unproductive habits may point to his unsuitability as the ascetic progenitor of modern economic man.

In *The Rise of the Novel*, Ian Watt argues that the mariner Crusoe is just one of many instances of Defoe's economic individual (60). Crusoe's heroes typically belong to the "middle station of life," which they abandon very early on, either by choice or fate. Watt points out that Crusoe himself identifies his "original sin," the source of all his misfortunes, as his dissatisfaction with the lot that he has been given in life. His parents enjoin him to continue in his father's trade, but the younger Crusoe refuses to take their advice, preferring to set off on his own in search of riches. Watt explains that Crusoe could only have abandoned his family in such a way because the pursuit of money was so great a passion that it eclipsed every moral tie. Watt writes:

> The hypostasis of the economic motive logically entails a devaluation of other modes of thought, feeling and action: the various forms of traditional group relationship, the family, the guild, the village, the sense of nationality – all are weakened, and so, too, are the competing claims of non-economic individual achievement and enjoyment, ranging from spiritual salvation to the pleasures of recreation. (Watt 63)

In his footnotes, Watt cites Max Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* as his authority on this historical development. The devaluation of modes of thought and weakening of forms are part of a larger historical process accompanying the advent of modernity that Weber

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taking for granted how integral and coherent Crusoe's religious development is, overlooking his enduring lack of restraint and adventurous disposition (59).

describes. Weber considers these changes in their relation to religious meaning and seeks to demonstrate that the worldly calling espoused by Calvinists in the sixteenth century develops into an accumulative drive with little to no theological referent in the eighteenth. During this process, the medieval prejudice against money and the pursuit of it was largely extinguished; in its place came an attitude that not only sanctioned money-making but elevated it to the place of moral duty because the fruit that it bore was evidence of one's election. The capitalist that emerged from this period was uniquely indefatigable in his pursuit of money. Weber takes a sober approach towards the insatiable accumulative drive which belongs to the spirit of capitalism, recognizing how money and material possessions have come to rule their owners.

Weber also reminds his readers that the spirit of capitalism was not always the dominant mode and that it had to overcome a very strong and rooted predilection, which he names economic traditionalism. The representatives of this kind of traditionalism were the early modern piece-rate workers who reacted to a pay increase by working less because they would only work as much as they had to in order to maintain their usual way of life (Protestant Ethic 84-85). The ardent defender of economic traditionalism in Defoe's novel is Robinson's father, the elder Crusoe, who extolls the virtues of the middle station (5-7). The stance represented by the elder Crusoe is essentially what Weber describes as a way of living and working that hews close to common sense, seeing work as the necessary means for obtaining one's wants in this life. That the young Crusoe does not heed his father's words could suggest that he is on the way to surpassing the traditionalist frame of mind, which is precisely the obstacle that capitalism has had to overcome in cementing itself as a social force in the history of Western Europe. Following Weber, readers of *Robinson Crusoe* have often supposed that Defoe's novel figures this overcoming in Crusoe's daring flight from his home. This reading is rooted in a passage from

Weber's *Protestant Ethic* that explicitly characterizes the protagonist of Defoe's novel as a harbinger of secularization. Relying heavily on a secondary source in his interpretation of the novel, Weber construes Crusoe as a rational economic individual without regard for textual evidence to the contrary.

While describing the secularizing effects of wealth in the final chapter of *The Protestant Ethic*, Weber invokes *Robinson Crusoe* to exemplify the process of disenchantment through which the religiously grounded ethic of worldly calling developed into a materialistic spirit of capitalism. He writes: "In the popular imagination, if we follow [the Irish scholar of English and French literature Edward] Dowden [1843-1913], 'Robinson Crusoe'—the *isolated economic man* (who is engaged in missionary activities in his spare time)—now took the place of Bunyan's 'pilgrims' scurrying through the 'amusement park of vanity' on their solitary spiritual quest for God's kingdom" (173).[35] Weber draws from the analysis of Edward Dowden, who contrasts *Robinson Crusoe* with John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* to illustrate the shift that occurs between two eras.[36] The essential difference that Dowden sees is that the hero of Bunyan's work is engaged in a religious struggle to overcome the world and find salvation, whereas the hero of Defoe's work is engaged, by and large, in mundane activity such as procuring food and shelter or trading with the savages whom he also proselytizes as an afterthought. Thus, Dowden argues, Bunyan and Defoe represent the tenor of their times, that of the former being suffused with theological passion and that which came after being driven by scientific curiosity.

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[35] The bracketed comments are supplied by the translator, Stephen Kalberg.
[36] The author of the literary study *Puritan and Anglican*, Dowden was an important resource that informed Weber's conception of Puritanism. In an article on Max Weber's idea of Puritanism, Peter Ghosh notes that Dowden's books are among the most often cited secondary sources in *The Protestant Ethic* (204).

Dowden describes the change that occurs between the eras as a shifting landscape: "After the jagged precipices and forlorn valleys – scenes of spiritual exaltation or despair – a table land was reached – safe, if unheroic – where men might plough and build" (275). The age of Defoe, he argues, is unheroic compared to the previous one, whose constant turmoil demanded superhuman qualities from its leaders. Dowden's ascription of heroism to the Puritan of the seventeenth century prompts Weber's own lofty estimate of the religious faction. The heroism of the Puritans consisted in their dedication to the extraordinarily strict discipline that faith required but did not reward. As trailblazers, they could not do what was natural but had to suspect everything of nature. Weber marvels at the figure of Bunyan's Christian plugging his ears against the cries of his wife and children who cling to him as he flees the City of Destruction crying "life, eternal life" (Protestant Ethic 121).

The heroism of the early Puritan is not just an evocative motif that Weber saw in Dowden and applied to his own religious typology. Rather, it is an essential part of the story of capitalism's development and the mixture of material and ideal interests. Overcoming the entrenched institutions of economic traditionalism required heroic effort from carriers of the new rationalist spirit. Whoever wanted to transform a cottage industry by hiring workers selectively and catering to the demands of the market would meet vigorous, sometimes violent, resistance from all sides. This meant that "only an unusually firm character could protect such a 'new style' employer from a loss of his calm self-control and from economic as well as moral catastrophe. In addition, clarity of vision and strength to act decisively were required" (Protestant Ethic 91). This clarity and strength arises from the usurpation of a set of disparate interests by one overarching interest, namely salvation, aptly described by Charles Taylor as a hypergood (63). Protestantism's destruction of magical avenues toward salvation placed intense focus on

attaining certainty of one's elected status and called for a heroically ascetic way of life. In time, the religious heroism of the Puritan shopkeeper translated to the economic resoluteness of a bourgeois industrialist and innovator.

For Weber and Dowden, this age of heroism was short-lived, already on the wane by the time Bunyan wrote his spiritual allegory – Dowden remarks that Samuel Butler's mock epic *Hudibras* is a better representative of the age than the *Pilgrim's Progress*. By Defoe's time, according to this argument, there could be no doubt that the religious fervor had died away, leaving work as the pursuit of money for its own sake. If the vestiges of religion still remained, they took a back seat to the concerns of the world in an ironic but inevitable reversal of the previous paradigm. Dowden describes this new frame of mind which he thinks *Robinson Crusoe* occupies: "To make the best of both worlds was the part of prudence, and of the two worlds that on which our feet are planted is, at least, the nearer and the more submissive to our control. Divine providence is doubtless to be acknowledged, but it is highly desirable to supplement Divine providence by self-help" (275-276). These sentences are the ones to which Weber refers when he identifies the principle of the period as "making the best of both worlds." The idiom connotes a rough equivalence of the spiritual realm and the world rather than the radical superiority of one over the other. In addition, one hears the conventional wisdom of a businessman who conspires to have his cake and eat it too. Instead of choosing one and forsaking the other, which is the heroic sacrifice of Puritanism, Crusoe can apply himself to the pursuit of profit and moonlight as a missionary when he feels so inclined.

Weber concurs with Dowden's assessment of *Robinson Crusoe*, which does not stray from the conventional understanding of Crusoe as proto-capitalist and would be familiar to a reader of Marx. Regrettably, Dowden's interpretation falls into some of the same traps that have

ensnared readers since Jean-Jacques Rousseau abridgement in *Emile* (184-185). Characterizing the novel as "the English prose epic of self-help," Dowden repeatedly emphasizes Crusoe's mastery over nature, pointing to the invaluable but unexceptional capacities which allow him to provide for himself on the island while eliding the protagonist's reliance on and submission to divine providence (275-276). While there can be no doubt that the idiosyncratically pious Crusoe is a departure from Bunyan's devout Christian, religious sentiment is still detectible in Crusoe's thinking, motivating him more often and more completely than the preoccupation with economic gain. Crusoe may not a Puritan hero held over from the seventeenth century, but neither is he the soulless husk that remains when a religious storm has passed.

Weber's study of the rise of capitalism in the West actually offers much more for the analysis of Defoe's novel than this cursory evaluation would suggest. A sustained examination of Crusoe's disposition reveals that the ideal type that should be assigned to him is not at all that of the industrial capitalist.[37] After all, how could it be if, in all his adventures, he never held to a

[37] It may be important to note here how Weber uses the theoretical tool of the ideal type. What he calls an ideal type is an abstract (hence ideal) construct which is not a straightforward description of reality but one that accentuates the most characteristic features of a phenomenon for the purposes of conceptual clarity. Readily admitting that messy reality never corresponds with neatly defined types, Weber writes that "In its conceptual purity, this mental construct cannot be found empirically anywhere in reality" (Methodology 90). What this means is that nothing empirical will perfectly conform to the ideal type with which it is associated. A Protestant sect or city economy may be identified with a particular type because it shares essential traits with others of the same genus, but this does not preclude it from also resembling other types in a secondary or tertiary fashion. One might wonder why Weber bothers with a methodological apparatus which is destined to be imprecise. What necessitates its use is the project of determining the influence that religious ideas have had on the development of economic forms. The difficulty of such a task resides in the disparity between the official teaching of a religion and the psychological effect of the teaching on the initiates. Since Weber wants to ascertain the practical effects that ideas have had on a society, he must be able to refer to the most salient forms in which the ideas find expression. He explains the necessity in this way:

> We can only proceed by examining the religious ideas as ideal types, namely, as constructed concepts endowed with a degree of consistency seldom found in actual history. Precisely *because* of the impossibility of drawing sharp boundaries in historical

steady vocation but rather shunned every stable profession? What should not be denied is that Crusoe is indeed a capitalist, someone who seeks profit through various endeavors. The decisive matter is what kind of a capitalist he is.

In his texts concerning the uniqueness of Western industrial organization and rational science, Weber distinguishes between a type of capitalism that is universal, that can be detected in civilizations around the world and throughout history, and a type that first appears in the West following the medieval period. The first type is the adventure capitalist, which, Weber says, "has existed throughout the world. With the exception of trade, credit and banking businesses, his money-making endeavors have been mainly of a purely irrational and speculative nature or of a violent character, such as the capture of booty. This has taken place through warfare or the continuous fiscal exploitation of subjugated populations" (Protestant Ethic 240). Weber emphasizes that this kind of capitalist in no way represents a break with the traditional economic mindset, not only because it has appeared everywhere and in all ages but more significantly because it is not a carrier of the rationalist attitude toward the organization of work. The modern, Western form of capitalism that emerges in the seventeenth century, by contrast, "took as its foundation the rational-capitalist organization of (formally) *free labor*" (ibid). This type of capitalism is also distinguished by its "orientation to *market* opportunities, rather than to political violence or to irrational speculation" (ibid 241). Weber eventually terms this second type a

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> reality, our only hope of identifying the particular effects of these religious ideas must come through an investigation of their *most consistent forms*. (Protestant Ethic 115)

The lack of clear-cut distinctions in the empirical history of religions means that ideal types are indispensable for their analysis. The same must be said for the different economic ethics that Weber examines, since they are just as diffuse.

"middle class industrial capitalism," since it is essentially founded on the organized employment of wage laborers by a middle class.[38]

A contrast that Weber draws between the two types of capitalism will make clear the relevance of the distinction for Robinson Crusoe, the merchant, slave trader and tobacco farmer. The comparison is transposed from the northern American continent rather than the southern, where Crusoe's adventures originally take him, but the principle applies with the same exact force. Weber writes: "A similarly sharp polarity ran through the earliest history of North American colonization between the 'adventurers,' who wanted to build plantations with the labor of indentured servants and to live like feudal lords, and the middle-class frame of mind of the Puritans" (Protestant Ethic 171). Crusoe fits the description of the adventurer with perfect precision, in both the material and spiritual aspects. He employs indentured servants on his Brazilian plantation when he cannot obtain slaves and later lords himself over the island on which he is stranded, styling his hideout the castle of his domain.

The motivations that Crusoe exhibits from the beginning are those of an adventurer, and it is no mistake that the text is called *The Life and Strange Surprizing Adventures of Robinson Crusoe of York, Mariner.* The frontispieces which adorned the volume early in its publication history prominently feature the protagonist wrapped in furs and taking the stance of an *avanturier* (White 28-29). Throughout the narrative, Crusoe's methods of procuring labor as an employer are also indicative of the adventure-capitalist type. His first servant is the Muslim boy

[38] Gerth and Mills, editors of *From Max Weber*, make further distinctions between political capitalism, adventure capitalism and booty capitalism (65-69). In my interpretation, Weber uses these terms together as a contrast to modern industrial capitalism. Adventure capitalism, as the most typical form of pre-industrial capitalism, represents the generic category which encompasses the other. In the passage referenced above, Weber ascribes both the capture of booty and political manipulation to adventure capitalists.

Xury, who comes under his protection after surrendering his life and swearing loyalty to Crusoe. This bond of fealty is made, literally, at gunpoint, with Crusoe threatening, "I'll shoot you thro' the Head" if he does not do what he is told (21). In Brazil, when Crusoe lacks laborers, his good friend brings him a "Servant under Bond for six Years Service" (ibid 33). In addition to this, Crusoe purchases "a Negro Slave, and an *European* Servant also" (ibid). These actions all indicate the temperament of an adventure capitalist with the ambition to live like a feudal lord rather than that of an industrialist or "economic man."

These few observations are perhaps sufficient to indicate that Crusoe retains some of the traits that characterize the adventure-capitalist type. Weightier than these, however, is Crusoe's own judgment concerning his character. He recognizes within himself the tendency to abandon rational avenues to wealth; this disposition is what leads him on every disastrous journey he takes, starting from the first. As a proprietor whose stock is on the increase in Brazil, Crusoe has the opportunity to establish himself and multiply his capital, but this safe prospect is repulsive to him. "I was gotten into an Employment quite remote to my Genius, and directly contrary to the Life I delighted in, and for which I forsook my Father's House, and broke thro' all his good Advice; nay, I was coming into the very Middle Station, or upper Degree of low Life, which my Father advised me to before" (32). Even at this point in his itinerant life, Crusoe remains unrepentant in his prodigal flight from home.[39] He is in fact never reconciled with his parents, who die while he is on the island, and he utters hardly a word of regret for their sakes. What he recounts with the most regret is the failed expedition which results in his fateful shipwreck. Crusoe was persuaded to join this expedition to illegally procure slaves from Africa and bring

[39] In *The Farther Adventures*, Crusoe experiences "a deep Relapse of the wandring Disposition," which he describes as inhering in his blood and endowed with irresistible force" (7).

them to the New World; the regret he expresses is either for that flaw in his character that inclines him toward speculative ventures or for the moral degeneracy involved in the capture of slaves.

If Crusoe is an adventurer with so little sense of industry, he is probably not the role model which the eighteenth-century readers of fiction were meant to follow. Maximilliam E. Novak proposes that, given the narrative frame of the novel and the circumstances of its publication, *Robinson Crusoe* should really be understood as a conservative warning to all Englishmen who, like the young man of York, were tempted to leave their stations in life to pursue extravagant riches. Novak applies the conclusions of both Weber and R. H. Tawney concerning the Lutheran concept of calling to his understanding of Crusoe's character and fatal flaw. The "original sin" of Crusoe is specifically his refusal to stay within his calling, and the adventures amount to a cautionary tale which supplies in vivid detail all the ways in which God punishes those who are not content to make their living as they are meant to make it.[40] This pattern of God-ordained calling and refusal to comply recapitulates Jonah's attempt to flee from God's command to go to Nineveh. Crusoe, Novak says, "is continually running from this world. He views his story as a struggle between his reason, which tells him to follow his calling, and his triumphant passions, which force him to wander" (Original Sin 29). Novak's description of Crusoe struggling to subdue his passions is thus able to account for those inclinations in Crusoe's

[40] Novak draws from another eighteenth-century text, Bernard Mandeville's *Fable of the Bees*, to mark the difference between diligence and industry, arguing that Crusoe's father is diligent, dutifully performing the tasks that are assigned to him in his profession, though not industrious, since he does not thirst after gain and constantly desire to improve his condition. Meanwhile, Robinson Crusoe is neither diligent nor industrious. For the most part, Crusoe does not demonstrate the tendency to work hard or save money, nor is he incessantly motivated to improve his lot in life. Novak's position is that Crusoe is punished not for his lack of industry, which he shares with his father, but for his flaunting of diligent work in one's divinely ordained calling, which, by contrast, is a grave sin (25).

persona that are opposed to the unchecked pursuit of profit as well as his tendency to engage in risky ventures.

The association of *Robinson Crusoe* with a Lutheran ethic also places the novel at a further remove from modern capitalism. Noting the *anemic* effect that Lutheranism has on the rational organization of work and life, Weber aligns it with traditionalism because the Lutheran idea of calling advocates resignation to one's present state of affairs: "Thus, Luther's conception of the calling remained tied to economic traditionalism. As a divine decree, the calling is something that must be *submitted to*: persons must 'resign' themselves to it" (*Protestant Ethic* 104). Weber goes on to say that this emphasis on resignation overshadows the active implications of a calling in the world. One's duty is more so to passively resign oneself to a divinely ordained station than to actively perform a task or function as a tool of God. In the end, Lutheranism "did not involve an ascetic notion of duty. Hence any possibility for a surpassing of the routine morality of daily life was eliminated" (ibid). Capitalism would have to wait for the arrival of Calvinism, in which could be found a truly active asceticism.[41]

In opposition to the Lutheran resignation to one's calling and to the toil and injustice of earthly conditions, the Calvinist, specifically Puritan, outlook makes work the privileged way to testify to one's state of grace. The fruitfulness or profitability of one's endeavors indicates the favor that God shows his chosen people. For this reason, the Puritan must not resign himself to an occupation that does not make the most of his capacities. Weber considers it typical of the Puritan habitus that whoever does not take the opportunity to increase profits by laboring in another profession is viewed as refusing God's gift. To let such an opportunity pass is to "cross

[41] Cf. *Protestant Ethic* 136.

one of the purposes of your calling" (Protestant Ethic 163).[42] Puritanism's active asceticism, which Weber sees as carrying the seeds of a secularized work ethic, never finds consistent expression in the character of Crusoe, who seeks adventure over steady profit. On the other hand, as Novak points out, the narrative frame of *Robinson Crusoe* can justifiably be interpreted as endorsing the ethic of traditionalism corresponding to Lutheranism. In other words, the economic ethic that the novel espouses is closely tied to a Protestant understanding of calling but not to the specifically Puritan worldview that makes worldly activity paramount.

Conversion and communion

The specificity of Crusoe's spirituality may also be determined on the basis of his religious activity and mannerisms. In *Defoe and Spiritual Autobiography*, G. A. Starr argues that *Robinson Crusoe* adopts the formal conventions of late seventeenth-century Protestant self-writing. Like the Presbyterian minister James Fraser, whose memoirs were written around 1670, the narrator of Defoe's novel reports his spiritual journey in a measured way, eschewing the "rhapsodic religious fervor" evident in earlier texts by sectarian Quakers and Baptists (Starr 39). According to Starr, the account of Crusoe's conversion shows considerable literary restraint, indicative of the embarrassment that Defoe's contemporaries felt toward the more earlier, more fanatical iterations on the genre.

The precise moment in the novel of Crusoe's conversion is nevertheless presented as an ecstatic ebullience: "I threw down the Book, and with my Heart as well as my Hands lifted up to

[42] Weber is quoting Richard Baxter, though his interpretation of the passage partially misrepresents the admonition. Baxter insists that the primary consideration in one's choice of calling is not profitability but goodness. Weber's point stands, however, since Puritan teaching allows and advocates the switching of occupations.

Heaven, in a Kind of Extasy of Joy, I cry'd out aloud, *Jesus*, thou *Son of David, Jesus, thou exalted Prince and Saviour, give me Repentance!*" (83). This "Extasy of Joy," Starr argues, is not yet evidence of Crusoe's religious enthusiasm or fanaticism. Starr cites *The Family Instructor*, in which Defoe states his position on spiritual ecstasies, stipulating that conversion might be accompanied by ecstasy and "strong impressions of the Spirit of God" while still being far from "*Enthusiastick*, or affected" (Family Instructor 227-228). In the record of his conversion, Crusoe primarily presents his own words and bodily movements, dwelling minimally on his emotions. Thus, Starr argues, the moderation of Fraser's gentlemanly memoir is also exhibited in the account of Crusoe's conversion. They are both characterized by "quiet deliberateness," being "analytical, not agitated; reflective, not rapturous" (Starr 41).

The element that escapes this analysis is tobacco, which, in the events that directly precipitate the conversion, Crusoe ingests in almost every way possible: through inhaling the smoke, chewing the leaf and swallowing the liquid infusion. In the days prior to his conversion, Crusoe suffers from a debilitating illness that he is at a loss to treat. It occurs to him that native Brazilians use tobacco as a panacea of sorts. Guided by divine providence, he opens one of the chests salvaged from the shipwreck and finds in it a roll of tobacco as well as a Bible: "a Cure, both for Soul and Body" (80).[43] Ignorant of the methods which natives employ with regards to the tobacco, Crusoe experiments with various means. "I first took a Piece of a Leaf, and chew'd it in my Mouth, which indeed at first almost stupify'd my Brain, the Tobacco being green and strong" (80). Afterwards, he takes some more tobacco after steeping it in rum, and then forces himself to inhale tobacco smoke for as long as he can stand it. While under the influence of the

[43] I retain the chiastic construction of Defoe's phrase: "for in this Chest I found a Cure, both for Soul and Body, I open'd the Chest, and found what I look'd for, *viz*. the Tobacco; and as the few Books, I had sav'd, lay there too, I took out one of the Bibles which I mention'd before . . ." (80).

tobacco, Crusoe picks up his Bible and attempts to read it, though he is too intoxicated to read for long. In this state, he happens upon lines from the Psalms which make an impression on him: "*Call on me in the Day of Trouble, and I will deliver, and thou shalt glorify me*" (81). These words cause him to reflect deeply on the possibility of his deliverance from the island.

As he prepares to go to bed, feeling the soporific effects of the tobacco, Crusoe prays. "I did what I never had done in all my Life, I kneel'd down and pray'd to God to fulfil the Promise to me, that if I call'd upon him in the Day of Trouble, he would deliver me; after my broken and imperfect Prayer was over, I drunk the Rum in which I had steep'd the Tobacco, which was so strong and rank of the Tobacco, that indeed I could scarce get it down; immediately upon this I went to Bed . . ." (81). For the first time, Crusoe prays in this specific manner. The specificity may reside in the kneeling posture or the particular contents of the prayer. It is not the first time that he had appealed to God's mercy.[44] Moreover, the narrator seems to be unsure of what to call it, since he describes a later prayer of repentance, the one delivered in the "Extasy of Joy," as his very first prayer "in the true Sense of the Words" (83). He deems this later prayer true because it is said in the knowledge of human sinfulness and with the hope of redemption. In contrast, the narrator probably understands the bedside prayer for deliverance, said under the influence of tobacco and fear of death, as an inchoate attempt at adequate prayer, preparing the way for the fully cognizant prayer that occurs less than a week later.

Crusoe's proto-prayer may be imperfect for another reason besides his incomplete understanding of his condition. Crusoe kneels down and prays for deliverance. After praying, he takes the rum, which is infused with tobacco. The performance of these actions in sequence

[44] After setting out from Hull, Crusoe's ship is caught in a storm. Crusoe "made many Vows and Resolutions, that if it would please God here to spare my Life this one Voyage, if ever I got once my Foot upon dry Land again, I would go directly home to my Father . . ." (9).

mimics the Eucharist. As a principal rite of both the Protestant and Catholic traditions, the Eucharist typically involves a period of prayer during which one prepares oneself to partake in communion. When ready, one receives the ritual elements, wine and bread, and consumes them. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in England, the rite was a constant source of contention, with dissenters objecting to aspects of its performance in the conforming church, including the use of a common prayer book as opposed to extemporaneous prayer or scripted bodily movements like bowing before the altar and kneeling to receive the bread and wine.[45] The dissenters found these aspects reminiscent of medieval superstition and the doctrine of transubstantiation, according to which the body of Jesus is made present in the wine and bread. In 1623, the church courts in York excommunicated a man for refusing to kneel while receiving communion, demonstrating the seriousness of divergence from ritual prescriptions.[46]

The debates surrounding proper performance of the rite intersected with those surrounding the use of tobacco. Almost from the moment it arrived in the Old World, tobacco was implicated in the ongoing polemic against idolatry and illegitimate religion. In a book on *Sacred Gifts, Profane Pleasures: A History of Tobacco and Chocolate in the Atlantic World*, Marcy Norton shows how sixteenth-century writers associated tobacco with idolatry, thereby affirming the legitimacy of Christian conquest (56). The use of tobacco in ritual to induce a trance state marked native religion as counterfeit since it relied on this indispensable external and material aid. In seventeenth-century England, Anglican authorities continued to decry the use of tobacco as "barbarous and beastly" while also implicating their religious opponents in Europe. In his "Counterblaste to Tobacco," King James I satirizes Catholic superstition and Puritan self-

[45] James F. Turrell, "Anglican Liturgical Practices," in *A Companion to the Eucharist in the Reformation*, 273-292, 282-283.
[46] Ibid., 268.

righteousness in the same breath: “O omnipotent power of Tobacco! And if it could by the smoke thereof chace out devils, as the smoke of Tobias did (which I am sure could smel no stronglier) it would serve for a precious Relicke, both for the superstitious Priests, and the insolent Puritanes, to cast out devils withall.” In this document, the use of tobacco, particularly for religious purposes, indicates counterfeit religion both in the uncivilized world and in Christendom.

Mounting an offensive against tobacco consumption was necessary because its homologies with communion threatened the sanctity of the rite. European ethnographies depicted native American tobacco use as an inverted sacrament in which the barbarians communed with the devil instead of God. Norton writes: “The association of tobacco as a diabolical sacrament originated with New World chroniclers’ efforts to make sense of native Americans’ ritual consumption of tobacco; like the consecration of bread and wine that allowed transubstantiation, shamanic ingestion of tobacco allowed a union with the divine” (248). The anxiety surrounding this proximity between the diabolical and the divine resulted in a 1642 papal bull that prescribed excommunication for anyone taking tobacco within or near a church (Norton 232).

The episode in *Robinson Crusoe* extends the parallels between tobacco consumption and Christian communion but without depicting it as an inverted sacrament. The prayer for deliverance is “broken and imperfect,” yet it is never repudiated or condemned as sacrilegious. In the aftermath of the prayer and his consumption of the makeshift elements, Crusoe is delivered from his life-threatening illness, suggesting the tacit approval of Providence. In the context of Crusoe’s spiritual journey, the tobacco-fueled prayer could be understood as indicating a primitive superstitious stage which the protagonist transcends after his conversion and gradual regeneration. Tracing such a trajectory through the narrative would be too simple, however. In

fact, Crusoe never leaves tobacco behind, continuing to cherish his smoking pipe above almost everything else. Tobacco, the sacred substance that catalyzes Crusoe's conversion, persistently reappears in the narrative as a reminder of the material basis of his religion and its dangerous proximity to heathenism.

The preoccupation with material goods and objects in *Robinson Crusoe* has been taken as a mark of the narrative's secularity rather than its potentially transgressive religiosity. Virginia Woolf describes the novel as lacking soul and sublimity where one would expect to find them: "We read, and we are rudely contradicted on every page. There are no sunsets and no sunrises; there is no solitude and no soul. There is, on the contrary, staring us full in the face nothing but a large earthenware pot" (31). Woolf concentrates on an earthen vessel that Crusoe is at pains to manufacture, demonstrating the utter mundanity of this adventure story. There is no solitude on the island in the sense of an existential dread or descent into madness – both of which are rather brought on by evidence of company, the footprint in the sand. There is no soul, Woolf says, because Crusoe considers everything from a common-sense or matter-of-fact perspective, subduing even Providence to the laws of reason. "He is incapable of enthusiasm," Woolf says in a remark that might have pleased Defoe (31). The earthenware pot, as the only marvel in all of the adventures, stands as the symbol of Crusoe's utilitarian perspective.

Against Woolf's hyperbolic assertion that there is nothing but the earthenware pot, Defoe's narrator plainly states that there is both a pot and a pipe. The subject of earthenware first comes up in a discussion of Crusoe's two great wants that he has yet to fulfill, and the context of this discussion shows Crusoe to be capable of a kind of sublimity after all (92). His first want is a pot with which to make broth and stew meat; while such a vessel is not critical to Crusoe's survival, since he has other methods to cook food and store liquids, neither is it an extravagant

luxury. Lydia H. Liu explores the significance of Crusoe's experiments with earthenware, arguing that that the pot alludes to Chinese porcelain, which Britain was unable to produce at the beginning of the eighteenth century. The account of Crusoe's invention poses the question: "Was porcelain not a *type of earthenware* that a British man could have invented all by himself?" (738). Manufacturing the earthenware pot fulfills a practical purpose, but it also serves a symbolic one, in demonstrating the fantastical autonomy of the British subject.

Crusoe's second want is a pipe for smoking tobacco, which is harder to justify from the point of view of practicality. Yet it is the second vessel which Crusoe dedicates the most effort to making and with which he is most enamored in the end. He remarks on his creation, the design of which he had to invent on his own: "I was never more vain of my own Performance, or more joyful for any thing I found out, than for my being able to make a Tobacco-Pipe. And tho' it was a very ugly clumsy thing, when it was done, and only burnt red like other Earthen Ware, yet as it was hard and firm, and would draw the Smoke, I was exceedingly comforted with it . . ." (122). If the description of the pipe cannot but register as phallic to the modern reader, then the analysis of Woolf and Liu regarding the earthenware pot is even more pertinent with regards to the pipe, which neither explicitly mentions: Crusoe's "fixation on the solidity and earthiness of the pot takes on an aura of fetishism . . . The pot can thus be read as a fetish, though not a primitive's fetish but a modern man's, because it carries the symbolic burden of human intentionality that threatens to subdue the natural elements to his design" (Liu 729). Not the pot but the pipe is most appropriately termed a fetish because tobacco and smoke are in fact the ritual elements that accompany Crusoe's religious initiation. In another facsimile of communion, the earthen vessel that draws smoke becomes a sacred implement, destitute of practical value but nevertheless providing "exceeding" comfort.

Apart from its earthenware construction, the aesthetic features of Crusoe's tobacco pipe also find parallels in "idolatrous" Chinese culture.[47] A polemic in the *Serious Reflections*, the final volume of the Crusoe trilogy, denounces the Chinese practice of idol worship, remarking how senseless it is to bow before something "ten thousand Times more disfigured than the Devil" (137). The error consists in paying reverence "not to the Work of Mens Hands only, but the ugliest, basest, frightfullest things that Man could make; Images so far from being lovely and amiable, as in the Nature of Worship is implied, that they are the most detestable and nauseous, even to Nature" (135). The ugliness of the idol, it seems, compounds the sin of idolatry by making it not only irreligious but also unnatural. Even if Crusoe does not exactly prostrate himself before his ugly, clumsy tobacco pipe, his adoration for it is suspect. Despite its deformity, Crusoe's creation remains his most coveted, perhaps for no other reason than that it reifies the religious transports which he first experienced in the events leading up to his conversion.

Passive contemplation

While Crusoe's most distinctive religious traits persist through his conversion, it nevertheless represents a pivotal moment in his spiritual development. The narrative account provides indications that Crusoe's ecstatic experience has an appreciable impact on his way of life. Following his conversion, Crusoe begins to regulate some of his habits and behaviors in a way that suggests rationalization, thereby bringing him closer to the model of ascetic

[47] Swetha Regunathan notes the semantic resonance between "idol" and "idle" in an article on Crusoe's polemic against China. The earthenware pipe combines idolatry with idleness, if the unproductive activity of smoking is also irreligious (Regunathan 45-47).

Protestantism.[48] The changes are intermittent, leading some critics to suggest that Crusoe's wavering, including his ethical failures in dealing with natives and captives, is evidence that his religiosity is shallow and his conversion less than genuine. By contrast, J. Paul Hunter maintains that the inconsistencies in Crusoe's ethical behavior and daily activity should not be received as a lack of seriousness, since his religion is that of the Everyman. Because he is not a saint, he is prone to lapses in judgment and temperament during his spiritual regeneration (Hunter 176). Hunter instead argues that the systematizing effect that Crusoe's conversion has on his life is proof enough of his sincerity. During the first year of his stay, Crusoe listlessly moves about on the island. His scavenging attempts are haphazard and mostly unfruitful. The conversion that he undergoes has the effect of imposing some order on his way of life: he consciously (and conscientiously) endeavors to make his "Way of living" as regular as possible, and to this end he divides his time into regular intervals. Hunter suggests that this transformation in Crusoe's character indicates spiritual growth, since the wayward and violent tendencies are turned into peaceful and productive ones (172-175).

The methodical and systematic manner that Crusoe *partially* adopts is indeed that which is propagated by the ascetic ethic of what Weber calls the historically decisive types of Protestantism. The religiously motivated transformation of Crusoe's way of life, if it can be said to have achieved a high level of consistency, would be the strongest argument for his adoption as the mythic progenitor of modern capitalists, since the rationalization of life is crucial to the overcoming of economic traditionalism. Yet if Crusoe rationalizes his life and work only to a

[48] The process that Weber calls rationalization of life occurs when all of one's daily activity becomes systematically oriented towards a goal, namely the attainment of a sacred value. "In general, all kinds of practical ethics that are systematically and unambiguously oriented to fixed goals of salvation are 'rational' . . ." (Social Psychology of World Religions 294).

limited extent, leaving much of his activity to be directed haphazardly, then the kind of religious experience that he undergoes may not necessarily be aligned with the development of utilitarian individualism or modern capitalism. His experience may very well constitute an obstacle to this development, since an emphasis on religious feeling can tend to vitiate the active asceticism that a rationalized sense of calling requires.

Unlike Weber's typical Puritan, Crusoe is not primarily motivated by an unceasing drive to work hard in his calling in order to testify to his status as one of God's elected; rather, he is motivated by intense but momentary revelations and religious feelings. This is the kind of motivation that Weber subsumes under the type of German Pietism, which, when compared to Calvinism, the type *par excellence* which contributes to the propagation of the ascetic work ethic, requires less of a systematic approach to daily life.[49] Weber's description of German Pietism, drawn from his reading of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century ecclesiasts Francke, Spener and Zinzendorf, occupies a marginal position in his larger argument, serving only to explain some relatively small variations in the adoption of capitalist forms in northern Europe. It is, however, instructive for the analysis of religion in *Robinson Crusoe*; Crusoe, after all, is the son of immigrants from Bremen, a Hanseatic city, and their German name, before it was Anglicized, potentially points to the family's journey toward redemption (Ayers 405). The father's inclination towards economic traditionalism, which values abiding in one's station, along with his appeal to the comforts and pleasures of a middle-class way of life, confirms that the religious upbringing in the household was not that of the strict, asceticist Calvinism which

[49] The reason that Calvinism implies such strong systematization whereas Pietism does not "is that the inner motive [in Calvinism], deriving from the thought of having to testify over and over again from the beginning to a state of grace that gives security for an eternal *future*, has in Pietism been redirected onto the *present* as a result of its orientation to the believer's feelings" (Protestant Ethic 144).

Weber judges to be historically decisive. Crusoe's claim that, before his conversion experience, he had never prayed in such a fashion also suggests a laxity in spiritual matters during his youth. The account of Crusoe's conversion and the ecstatic address which is accompanied by emphatic gestures of the body are further indications that his religiosity resembles that of Pietism more than strict Calvinism.[50]

While it is true that, shortly after his conversion, Crusoe makes an orderly division of his time, dedicating portions of it towards utilitarian endeavors, it is equally true that he spends a seemingly inordinate amount of time on unproductive activities. He makes use of certain imaginative reflections to help him fend off discontent with his situation on the island. Thus, he devotes himself to a kind of meditation in which he cultivates feelings of gratitude towards God by imagining how his life could be worse. "I spent whole Hours, I may say whole Days, in representing to myself in the most lively Colours, how I must have acted, if I had got nothing out of the Ship" (111). According to Crusoe's recollection, he goes days at a time doing nothing but contemplating disasters that could have been. This inactivity is the work of imagination and fictional representation rather than work that garners a profit through toil.[51]

The picture of Crusoe spending entire days imaginatively ruminating on the disasters that might have befallen him is evidently a departure from Weber's description of the anxious

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[50] The dual typology that is most proper to Defoe's text is, of course, Puritan and Anglican. Hunter argues that Defoe's conciliatory tone in *The Family Instructor*, designed to appeal both to dissenters and the Church of England, is also the one he takes in *Robinson Crusoe* (Hunter 176). This would not preclude that Defoe's charting out of a third way might take him through unexpected territory.

[51] The liveliness of Crusoe's imagination is reprised at the beginning of *The Farther Adventures*, where he loses himself in reveries about the island from which he was rescued. Crusoe recounts: "But this I know, that my Imagination worked up to such a Height, and brought me into such Extasies of Vapours, or what else I may call it, that I actually suppos'd myself upon the Spot . . ." (3).

Calvinist tirelessly applying himself to a worldly calling in order to secure the certainty of his salvation. Moreover, it differs from the attitude of watchful suspicion over one's naturally wayward thoughts that the Puritan divine Richard Baxter imparts to his flock. Weber, well-versed in the seventeenth-century nonconformist's writings, explains that Baxter clearly devalues meditation in comparison to work in the world. Weber writes: "Because every hour not spent at work is an hour lost in service to God's greater glory, according to Baxter, time is infinitely valuable. Thus, inactive contemplation is without value and in the end explicitly condemned, at least if it occurs at the expense of work in a calling, for it pleases God less than the active implementation of His will in a calling" (Protestant Ethic 160). In a footnote, Weber remarks that it is on this point that Puritanism differs sharply from Pietism, since for the latter the valuations are reversed, such that one's dedication to a worldly calling is reprehensible whenever it distracts one from God (373).[52] Crusoe evidently values inactive contemplation very highly, placing him at odds with the tenets of Puritanism, or English Calvinism, but in league with the Pietists.

When compared to Baxter's brand of Puritanism, Crusoe's religiosity shows itself to be more contemplative than diligent, more imaginative than vigilant and more oriented toward ecstatic feeling than purposeful labor. Unlike the Puritan whose work in a calling is directed towards a transcendental end, Crusoe generally labors in order to satisfy a present need. He completely fills up his hours so as not to let them go to waste, yet he seldom has a consistent

[52] Weber overstates the case with regard to the condemnation of inactive contemplation, which, in Baxter at least, is held in relatively high esteem. In fact, a closer look at Baxter's work reveals that Weber's portrayal of it generally exaggerates the importance of turning a profit and plays down the religious motivations which always constitute the basis for action (cf. The Practical Works 245). However, a certain amount of leeway should be permitted Weber in his representation of Puritan teaching, since his object is to locate the practical effects it had on the lives of congregants. Moreover, Weber's argument is logically consistent in its assessment of the different points of emphasis in Puritanism and Pietism as ideal types.

rationale for his choice of occupation. He illustrates how far he is from seeing the earthly realm as the proper arena of God-willed action when he proclaims: "I look'd now upon the World as a Thing remote, which I had nothing to do with, no Expectation from, and indeed no Desires about" (109). By his fourth year on the island, he has come to recognize that its natural resources are enough to supply him with each of his wants, so he no longer desires to increase his store by producing more corn or lumber than he can use at any given moment (110).

These contrasts should not be understood as categorical but as representing tendencies which, taken together, constitute distinct attitudes towards work and life in the world. That much of the difference between the exemplary teaching of Baxter and the novice Crusoe is a matter of degree and consistency in no way invalidates the conclusions drawn from such a comparison. Indeed, Weber differentiates between the offshoots of Calvinism precisely on the basis of the consistency with which they brought about a systematic attitude toward work as a calling. Thus, he considers Pietism, whose traits Crusoe seems to carry to a large extent, "a vacillation and instability in regard to the religious anchoring of its asceticism. The anchoring of Pietism in asceticism is considerably weaker than the iron-clad consistency of Calvinism's grounding in asceticism" (Protestant Ethic 144). While Hunter attributes the vacillation in Crusoe's religious disciplining of his life to his everyman disposition, this tendency to waver finds an alternative explanation in the type of religiosity Crusoe expresses, namely one in which feelings of ecstasy, rather than public testimony and solemn acknowledgment of God's sovereignty, form the basis of one's conversion. The ethic associated with this religiosity has a weaker, though not altogether insignificant, impact on the rationalization of work and life. Furthermore, the asceticism that it demands is less stringent, allowing Crusoe to enjoy, at various reprieves, the pleasures of culinary delicacies and idle contemplation.

Through a consideration of Crusoe's economic ethic starting from his prodigal flight from patrimony through to his drug-induced religious activity on the island, we arrive at the conclusion that Defoe's protagonist is improperly held to be a Puritan ascetic and the archetypical figure of the modern capitalist spirit. The most that can be said for Robinson Crusoe as "economic man" is that he undergoes an incomplete apprenticeship in asceticism and the rational organization of work while he is on the island. Even so, he shows too much vacillation in this regard to be positively identified as a carrier of the work ethic which is inextricably tied to the expansion of capitalism.

The mischaracterization of Crusoe as a harbinger of modern capitalism may be due in part to a reductive understanding of Western capitalism in its historical specificity. Weber remarks that the form which capitalism has taken in the modern world must not be taken as the simple product of an acquisitive drive akin to greed or what was polemicized as Mammonism in the Middle Ages, since this drive is not unique to modernity. He makes this point as forcefully as he can, bringing apparent antinomies together to clarify the connection between them:

> This naive manner of conceptualizing capitalism by reference to a 'pursuit of gain' must be relegated to the kindergarten of cultural history methodology and abandoned once and for all. A fully unconstrained compulsion to acquire goods cannot be understood as synonymous with capitalism, and even less as its 'spirit.' On the contrary, capitalism *can* be identical with the *taming* of this irrational motivation, or at least with its rational tempering. (Protestant Ethic 237)[53]

[53] Schonhorn writes that Weber's insight regarding asceticism and capitalism is "only a passing thought" (58). In fact, Weber elaborates on this thought not only in the "Prefatory Remarks to Collected Essays in the Sociology of Religion," but also in the chapter of *The Protestant Ethic* on "Asceticism and the Spirit of Capitalism" (esp. 169-170), in *The Sociology of Religion* (esp. 182-183, 218-222, 269) and elsewhere. Whenever Weber uses the term "inner-worldly

In effect, modern capitalism must be recognized as being preceded and conditioned by an ethic that curtails spontaneous impulses, bringing them to heel under a regime which makes hard work in one's worldly calling the highest of spiritual obligations. When readers of *Robinson Crusoe* heed this description of modern capitalism, they may quickly discover the mass of untamed, untempered motivations upon which the novel's protagonist acts, even following his dramatic conversion on the island. A pious convert of a contemplative-ecstatic brand of religion as well as an adventurer whose pattern of indiscretions does not constitute a complete reversal of his father's economic traditionalism, Crusoe makes small inroads towards a rationalized work ethic during his time on the island, but the improvised religion he adopts does not provide him a foundation firm enough to make his habits permanent. The picture of Crusoe as the isolated economic man is one that readers inherit from the philosophers and economists since Rousseau, who appropriated a sliver of the text as a model for individualism. This limited picture obscures from view all of the ways in which Crusoe's actions resist the utilitarian interpretation. His ritual use of tobacco and penchant for inactive contemplation are not the exception but the rule of his behavior, before and after his conversion.

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asceticism" (*innerweltliche Askese*), he is referring to the rational tempering of drives which is the precondition for modern capitalism.

Chapter 3

The Disinterested Jester

Laurence Sterne's *A Sentimental Journey* (1768) is, like *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), a novel about travel, but whereas Crusoe's primary objective in shipping off is to escape a life of domesticity, the main concern of Sterne's narrator during his travels is how best to give. He is not well off enough not to encounter difficulties in distributing his wealth to the beggars and monks he meets along the way, and so he must devise novel strategies to meet his charitable obligations. This is a problem that the adventurous Crusoe does not have to deal with, which does not mean that the character is comparatively ungenerous or that Defoe's narrative is unconcerned with charitable giving. However, the obligations expressed in Defoe's texts are straightforward: giving and receiving freely, openly and practically are not conceptually challenging. Goodness in giving meant honesty, which required nothing more or less than moral uprightness. If a man treated his fellows justly and generously, Providence would reward him by increasing his share in the present and the time to come. The contextual understanding of the practices for giving makes up a comprehensive and well constituted whole.[54] For Sterne's narrator, by contrast, things are more confused. Yet they are not so for lack of contemplation. It is merely that, by Sterne's time, the changing intellectual, moral and economic milieu in which gifts are situated had made giving less self-evident. As political economists from Mandeville to

[54] In examining the informal support systems that are characteristic of family life in early modern England, Ilana Krausman Ben-Amos finds evidence of the survival of a comprehensive set of giving practices well into the eighteenth century. Ben-Amos, *The Culture of Giving: Informal Support and Gift-Exchange in Early Modern England*, 4. With respect to commerce, Craig Muldrew depicts the essential role that lending and borrowing played in the determination of social status and reputation. Muldrew, *The Economy of Obligation: The Culture of Credit and Social Relations in Early Modern England*, 2-5.

Smith touted the virtues of self-interest over self-denial in an increasingly capitalistic society, moral behavior became more a matter of aligning one's private impulses with the common good.[55] Yet there was the suspicion that satisfying one's own sentimental urges to give amounted to nothing more than self-pleasuring. Attempting to resolve these difficulties of meaning-making, Sterne's narrator, Yorick, presents a moral theory of gratuity, making the case that the spontaneity of his jests and gifts renders him a charitable person. He resorts to the fetishizing of a horn snuff-box in an attempt to capture and represent the spirit of fellow-feeling. Treating the snuff-box as a sacred object which mobilizes the sociable forces within him, he institutes a religion of sentimental generosity that succeeds in opening his heart in several directions. The subsequent challenges presented by the lure of formalism and self-justification are typical of those faced by a practitioner of religion.

The affinities between the aesthetics of Defoe and Sterne are not entirely self-evident, and to readers of their works it may even seem little more than accident that the two figure in the same century. The plain style of Defoe's novels, evoking the common sense and practical knowledge of the shop-keeping middle class, contrasts sharply with the expansive wit in Sterne which is scornful of pretended erudition. In narrative style, Robinson Crusoe's adventures are described straightforwardly, whereas Tristram Shandy's autobiography doubles back and curls up on itself at every juncture. In matters of religion, Defoe was a passionate amateur, while Sterne was an ambivalent professional. Furthermore, there is little reason to believe that *Robinson Crusoe* had a profound impact on Sterne's writings besides in its capacity as a

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[55] Louis Dumont describes the process whereby, through the intervention of Locke, Mandeville, Smith and others, the economic realm breaks off from and eventually subsumes politics and religion. Following this revolution in thought, material interest becomes the principle understood to determine human action. Dumont, *From Mandeville to Marx: The Genesis and Triumph of Economic Ideology*, 49.

forerunner of the sentimental novels of Richardson and Fielding. The purpose of juxtaposing Defoe and Sterne cannot merely be to draw out the similarities between their thematics but to determine the meaning of the gulf that separates these two corpuses whenever they touch on matters of generosity and the gift.

Sterne, along with his literary representative, Yorick, has a more complicated relation with both religion and vocation than either Defoe or the middling Crusoe. Sterne was brought up in a situation not too dissimilar from Defoe's: a middle-class household, with moderate expectations placed on his future prospects. Early on he takes the path of the scholar and then of the clergyman, after finding some success in his studies. It seems clear that the most influential factor in his choice of occupation is simple expedience; the picture of Sterne that arises from his correspondences is not that of a prophet whose claim to religious authority resides in personal revelation and charisma but rather someone who makes a living by applying his talents.[56] Even though he is gifted intellectually, he has no luck procuring preferments, official recommendations for clerical positions. His lack of success in this matter suggests a certain lack of social finesse. In order to climb the ranks, he has to rely on a familial connection, his uncle Jacques, who is a prominent member of the Church (Ross 6-7). This avuncular generosity has the outward appearance of selfless sharing; the middle-class family is that place, after all, where love

[56] Ian Campbell Ross describes the ambivalence with which Sterne approached his clerical career in "Laurence Sterne's life, milieu, and literary career." Especially later in life, when his literary aspirations were being realized, he treated his appointments within the church as little more than sinecures. Weber remarks that prophets are those who instituted a new relationship of man to the world, while "priests systematized the content of prophecy or of the sacred traditions by supplying them with a casuistical, rationalistic framework of analysis, and by adapting them to the customs of life and thought of their own class and of the laity whom they controlled" (Sociology of Religion 69). Whether he is adapting the thought of John Locke or John Calvin, Sterne primarily occupies this priestly role. It is only as an evangelist of sentiment that he steps into the role of the prophet.

and charity reign to the exclusion of self-interested dealings—this is the paradigm of the increasingly important social unit, the eighteenth-century bourgeois household as described by Jürgen Habermas (45-47). Yet the picture does not match reality, since Sterne's uncle expects him to repay the favor by writing political pamphlets of such vitriol that the younger Sterne later feels the need to recant. This reversal earns him a long-lasting enemy and casts a pallor on his career among the clergy. From that point on, professional advancement becomes difficult.

Multiple Yoricks—gratuitous jest

Sterne dramatizes the failure of calling in *Tristram Shandy*, his first novel and the first to include a character by the name of Yorick. In the initial volume published in 1759, Yorick is introduced as a provincial parson who encounters many of same obstacles as Sterne did in climbing the clerical ladder. For Yorick, the failure to adhere to one's calling is not given transcendental meaning as the original sin for which errant man must atone. Yorick's failure is notably mundane—it is a failure to make the right connections, shake the right hands or stroke the right egos. By embodying mundane failures in attaining to the highest, or the most spiritual, calling, Yorick puts on display some of the absurdities of the religious institution. Though he cannot be described as assiduous, the parson is not particularly prone to vice, and perhaps the worst that can be said about him is that he is at times half-hearted. The most characteristic feature of parson Yorick is his generosity; he has a particular way of giving which always seems to end poorly for himself. His giving is characterized by interiority and secrecy; the recipient of his gifts is not always aware that a gift has been given and is not often privy to the intention of the giver. These practices and features are demonstrated in a peculiar anecdote towards the

beginning of the volume which refers to the parson by no other designation than the Hero, since he has not yet been named.

The parson is introduced as the rider of an extraordinarily destitute mount. Described as the brother of Don Quixote's Rocinante, the horse provides a spectacle that brings work to a standstill wherever it appears: "Labour stood still as he pass'd—the bucket stood suspended in the middle of the well, —the spinning-wheel forgot its round, ——even chuckfarthing and shuffle-cap themselves stood gaping till he had got out of sight" (Tristram Shandy 19).[57] It suffices to say that all of the parson's parish shared in the amazement and mirth of seeing the horse and rider, neither with an ounce of flesh on their bones, saunter down the street "centaur-like." Yet the hero does not mind that his parishioners are able to jest at his expense, and joins in with them with full vigor. Neither does he remind them of the reason he carries on with such a miserable mount, preferring to deflect by making something up and keeping the truth to himself: "In short, the parson upon such encounters would assign any cause, but the true cause, —and he with-held the true one, only out of a nicety of temper, because he thought it an honour to him" (21). In fact, if the truth were widely known, he would be due significant honor, but his temperament is such that he never advertises it.

The fact of the matter was that the parson had, in years past, been very fond of fine horses, and always used to keep one of the best in the parish. Precisely because he had such a fine horse, his parishioners would ask to borrow it on every occasion, and thus the horse would quickly deteriorate as a result of overuse. The parson would be forced to replace his mount every nine or ten months, and he finally decided that the expenditure was too great: "and upon

[57] The odd lengths and divisions of the dashes in the cited texts follows the notations of *The Florida Edition* of Sterne's works edited by Melvyn New (1978-2002). The lack of uniformity in typography is characteristic of the novels in particular.

weighing the whole, and summing it up in his mind, he found it not only disproportion'd to his other expences, but withall so heavy an article in itself, as to disable him from any other act of generosity in his parish" (22). Upon making this judgment, he resolves to stop replacing the old horses with new ones, and he contents himself to ride whatever half-dead and broken creature he is left with.

The episode in the parson's life has the contours of a parable, and the picture of the parson certainly represents the caricature of a nobility that the populace fails to recognize. The gracious parson does not take his own interest or enjoyment into account in the mental measurements that he takes; instead, he is concerned with how to maximize the effect of his charitable contributions. He is quite thorough in his reflections and calculations, considering both the possible good he might do and the potential recipients of his giving:

> Besides this he considered, that, with half the sum thus galloped away, he could do ten times as much good; —and what still weighed more with him than all other considerations put together, was this, that it confined all his charity into one particular channel, and where, as he fancied, it was the least wanted, namely, to the child-bearing and child-getting part of his parish; reserving nothing for the impotent, ---nothing for the aged, ---nothing for the many comfortless scenes he was hourly called forth to visit, where poverty, and sickness, and affliction dwelt together. (22)

The parson is remarkably conscientious about his charity, exhibiting a sense of fairness which is offended by the notion that the neediest benefit the least from his generosity. The aged and impotent are unlikely to borrow his horse, and so to dedicate such a large portion of his expenses to that vehicle would be prejudicial to them. This account prefigures a later one in which another

Yorick considers competing claims on his charity. In each case, the sentimental nature of the deliberator means that the parties with the most visible and abject afflictions win out.

The parson's actions in response to this predicament are perhaps only half as telling as what he decides not to do. In refraining from certain courses of action, the heroic parson exhibits a selflessness which borders on the whimsical. First, he decides against simply refusing his parishioners' requests to borrow his horse (the narrator tells us that he did not have the heart to refuse). Second, he decides against telling the story that would explain the condition of his mount and also be greatly to his own credit: he chooses "rather to bear the contempt of his enemies, and the laughter of his friends, than undergo the pain of telling a story, which might seem a panygeric upon himself" (23). The narrator's lofty commentary elevates an otherwise comical tale to the level of spiritual allegory, with the hero making a Christ-like sacrifice. The parson's tale, which also serves as an origin story, one that is representative of his entire character as it unfolds in Tristram's narrative, never quite forsakes the realm of comedy, however. The name of the parson is Yorick, and the narrator gives an account of the parson's lineage which strongly suggests that his patriarchal ancestor was none other than the king's jester in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, also named Yorick. Thus, destiny would have it that the parson be a man of infinite jest.[58]

The Yorick of *Tristram Shandy* revels in jesting; he joins in laughter with his friends who make fun of his horse and matching attire, but he is also fond of giving out his own *bon mots* when the occasion calls for it. What is unfortunate for him is that he lacks the discretion to keep certain comments to himself, and that "he had but too many temptations in life, of scattering his

[58] The morbid irony of the phrase is reprised in David Foster Wallace's novel, *Infinite Jest*. Inherent to the trope is not only the blending of tragedy and comedy but also the sense that excessive mirth is punishable by death.

wit and his humour, —his gibes and his jests about him" (29). His improprieties, like Sterne's, are his professional downfall, keeping him from preferment in the Church. Though it is not illustrated as vividly in the text, this aspect of the parson's character is as much an integral part of him as his outlandish generosity. In Yorick are combined the figures of the consummate philanthropist and the consummate jester. Neither is complete without the other, and, in Sterne's writing, the one entails the other to such an extent that they turn out to be impossible to distinguish.

Jest and gift run through Sterne, and to properly investigate the apparently paradoxical connection between them, it is necessary to endure a moment of double vision. The Yorick of *Tristram Shandy* is evidently not the same Yorick as the one from *Hamlet*, if ever such a person existed in medieval Denmark (the narrator seems convinced that one did) —at most, the English parson is a distant descendant of the Danish jester. The connection between the parson and a third Yorick is perhaps just as tenuous, this third claimant to the name being the itinerant narrator of Sterne's satirical travelogue, *A Sentimental Journey through France and Italy*.[59] This Yorick, who embarks on a grand tour of the continent in the course of which he finds opportunities to exercise his wide array of sentiments, differs from the heroic parson in some material respects. He seems relatively unencumbered by marital obligations, setting out from home for an indefinite period and engaging in various liaisons with women of diverse backgrounds. In spirit, however, the Yoricks in Sterne's two novels are remarkably alike. Both are jesters in the

[59] Yorick is also the pseudonym that Sterne uses in his letters to Eliza, which he never sent but were posthumously published as the *Journal to Eliza*. Furthermore, the collection of sermons which Sterne published in the intervals between volumes of *Tristram Shandy* are attributed to Mr. Yorick. For a discussion of the rhetorical connection between the Yoricks of the novels and that of the *Journal*, see Elizabeth Goodhue's "When Yorick Takes His Tea," pp. 51-53.

hallowed tradition of the first to bear the name, and both are prone to idiosyncratic gestures of gift-giving.

The Yorick who narrates *A Sentimental Journey* is a traveler who aspires to ever-greater liberality in his finances. On multiple occasions, he fails to live up to this aspiration and ends up being the miser who clutches what little wealth he owns rather than the ideal of a man who "pulls out his purse, and holding it airily and uncompress'd, looks round him, as if he sought for an object to share it with" (5). In his best moments—that is to say, when he is completely swept up by sentiment and no longer controlled by self-interest—, he is magnanimous to a fault. As a wit, he earns a reputation for his off-hand remarks, which he claims to make only in order to please. In other words, Yorick's gifts succeed as gifts when they share a quality with his jests: gratuity. Rejecting the premise that an international traveler should conduct himself with business-like seriousness, he saunters across the Continent, delivering gibes at all convenient targets. An episode from the narrative will help to clarify what this kind of gratuitous jesting has to do with giving.

Yorick's travels through France are interrupted early on by an officer of the law who demands a passport from the Englishman. In setting off straight away with hardly a thought given to where he would go or stay, Yorick had let slip from his mind that England and France were still at war. Now with the prospect of being thrown into the Bastille, which he first judges not to be so bad before arriving at his self-preserving sense, he endeavors to seek out a nobleman who will vouch for his conduct and bring him under his protection. With this purpose in mind, Yorick arrives at the abode of a certain Count de B—, who just so happens to be idly flipping through a set of Shakespeare's works. Yorick explains his situation to the count, who listens very

good-naturedly, and they enter into an amicable discussion, towards the end of which the count asks whom he has had the pleasure of entertaining.

Up to this point in the travel journal, the narrator has in fact given no indication as to his name, so the scene serves to identify him both to the count and to the reader, serving, in this sense, the very function of a passport. He selects one of the volumes of Shakespeare and, upon finding the passage, places his finger on the name of the late court jester in *Hamlet* (the name comes up in Hamlet's discourse on poor Yorick's skull). This self-identifying gesture by Sterne's narrator is itself a jest of sorts, or at least a pun, since Hamlet's Yorick is evidently not the one standing before the count. Yet the oblivious count becomes the victim of the joke in that he misinterprets the gesture, understanding that Yorick means either that he is the actual character from the play or, only slightly less absurd, that he is the king of England's jester. In his confusion, the count takes Yorick's case as a matter of urgency and political import, and he wastes no time in procuring papers for his safe passage. "Had it been for any one but the king's jester, added the Count, I could not have got it these two hours" (115). At this point, Yorick interrupts him to correct the mistake, and the ensuing dialogue demonstrates his characteristic style of wit. "—*Pardonnez moi*, Mons. Le Comte, said I—I am not the king's jester. —But you are Yorick? —Yes. —*Et vous plaisantez*? —I answered, Indeed I jest—but was not paid for it—'twas entirely at my own expense" (115). The exchange is evidently rife with puns, which, along with a certain slippage between the languages of French and English, are the generative force of the infelicitous discourse. The first slip is that between the proper name and its relation to the professional station. After Yorick plainly states that he is no king's jester, the count, now incredulous, asks Yorick if he is joking: "Et vous plaisantez?" The French expression collapses the present and present-habitual tenses, causing Yorick to hear, no doubt willfully, "Do you

joke?" instead of "Are you joking?" Thus he answers that he does indeed joke, but he is not a professional. His jokes are at his own expense, meaning at once that he does not get paid for them and that he is always the victim of his own jokes.

Despite having been played for a fool, the count has a certain amount of reason on his side. The justification for granting Yorick exceptional status was not in fact that he claimed to be a particularly qualified jester but only that he did jest. The count had conferred with his colleague, the duke, who he says is as good a prophet as he is a statesman. And here is what the duke proclaimed: "*Un homme qui rit . . . ne sera jamais dangereuz* [a man who laughs will never be dangerous]" (115). This prophetic pronouncement alone, it seems, is what grants Yorick, the man who laughs, the right to a passport. The reader is not privy to the deliberations and can only speculate that the duke appreciates the craft of comedy. As the opinion of a statesman, however, the duke's pronouncement is a permutation of a maxim that gained currency during the eighteenth century. The maxim, in its original form, applied not to the man who laughs but to the man who makes money. According to James Boswell's biography, Samuel Johnson put it this way: "There are few ways in which a man can be more innocently employed than in getting money" (Hirschman 58). Starting in the eighteenth century, an increasingly influential cadre of political philosophers postulated that greed was good; at least, it was better than the alternative. Alfred Hirschman describes the strategy of statecraft as that of the countervailing passions. It was proposed that greed could be put to use in order to countermand more dangerous vices. Hirschman makes note of the commonly invoked epithet of *doux commerce*, which, as it appears in the works of Montesquieu and others, intimates the gentleness of the pursuit of money. Cupidity, avarice or miserliness were together considered quite harmless as far as vices went. Indeed, the best quality of greed, one that took on an entirely different valence after the triumph

of economism, was its insatiability. A merchant could always be counted on to chase after profit; thus, as a victim of this vice, he was utterly predictable. Directors of the state found what in theory would allow them to exert reliable control on an otherwise unruly populace.

Sterne, writing in the latter half of the eighteenth century, already has the benefit of some hindsight, and the novel makes light of this all-too-simplistic postulate of statecraft. He makes his narrator-jester quite unpredictable when it comes to the economic motive, since, much to the chagrin of the political theorists, he is prone to sudden reverses of sentiment. Compared to the imaginary agent motivated purely and incessantly by self-interest, he is a wild card. Yet the tendency to oscillate between these two poles does not, in the end, make Yorick a subversive. Even on the contrary, if the credulous French nobles from whom Yorick procures his papers are to be believed. The duke's revision of the political maxim stands as Yorick's best claim to gentleness: a man who laughs is never dangerous. Yorick willingly takes on the mantle of the gentle jester, and he is so confident in this role that he rejects the protection of the economic motive, telling the count that he is nobody's jester, that he does not jest to pay the bills. This description of a jest which retains a kind of purity because it comes only at one's own expense introduces the criterion of gratuity: first and foremost, he jests *gratis*. Congruent with his sentimental nature, the impetus for jesting derives not from an expectation of wages but spontaneously, responding to the moment. In another sense, his jest is gratuitously self-referential, since the topic of his humor is humor itself. Joking about jokes amounts to so much navel gazing (or the other self-absorbed activity that another Yorick likes to bring up).

The spontaneity and gratuity of the jesting which is done only at one's own expense is precisely what makes it akin to the charitable gift. Both of these phenomena are constituted by the representation of disinterestedness. They are supposedly unmotivated, flowing freely from

the individual who seeks no benefit (and perhaps even expects some harm) from it. Of course, Yorick's claim to disinterestedness comes at a moment of essential self-interest, when his very freedom is in jeopardy. In addressing his alternative plea to the French officials, he shows this disinterestedness to be a flimsy pretense. Nevertheless, the pretense is necessary for an adequate jest, just as it is for a gift. The count is surely duped but does not consider himself so, and his revelry in Yorick's jokes does not suffer for the fact that the jester makes them to save his own skin. The parting words of the count show his appreciation for a good joke: "*Voila un persiflage!* cried the Count" (115).

The claim that Yorick's jesting is entirely at his own expense can then be evaluated on two levels. First, does Yorick jest for pay, in order to gain some kind of advantage, be it monetary or symbolic, or does he jest for jesting's sake, in a gratuitous fashion? Second, does he ever make others the victim of his jokes or is he himself always on the receiving end? It has already been suggested that Yorick makes the Count de B---, his benefactor, the victim of his joke, so Yorick's claim to jest entirely at his own expense is immediately suspect. However, such an evaluation fails to acknowledge the peculiar calculus used in tabulating the credits and debits involved in a jest. When Yorick makes a jest concerning one person or another, the target of ridicule accrues a credit, and Yorick is in that person's debt. At some point in the future, probably at the exact moment when the debtor is least able to make it good, this debt will be called in. Thus, the creditor, or the one at whose expense the jest is initially made, has the last laugh, while the jester is left to regret his mirth. With this reversal of fortunes, it is clear that jesting is not to the jester's advantage; rather, it is very much to his detriment. Equally, from this point of view, the practice of jesting is neither strategic nor economic, but rather self-destructive and even in a way self-renunciatory.

This jester's calculus which plays with basic principles of obligation and reciprocity is only properly elaborated in another passage from the previous text; it is thus necessary to shelve the traveler in *A Sentimental Journey* and, endeavoring still to maintain a double vision, return momentarily to the heroic parson of *Tristram Shandy*, whose ill-advised jesting always costs him dearly. A short paragraph contains the conceit which explains a strange method of accounting:

> The *Mortgager* and *Mortgageé* [sic] differ the one from the other, not more in length of purse, than the *Jester* and *Jesteé* do, in that of memory. But in this the comparison between them runs, as the scholiasts call it, upon all-four; which, by the bye, is upon one or two legs more, than some of the best of *Homer's* can pretend to; —namely, That the one raises a sum and the other a laugh at your expence, and think no more about it. Interest, however, still runs on in both cases; ----the periodical or accidental payments of it, just serving to keep the memory of the affair alive; till, at length, in some evil hour, ---- pop comes the creditor upon each, and by demanding principal upon the spot, together with full interest to the very day, makes both feel the full extent of their obligations. (30)

The analogy between mortgage and jest is one that Sterne's narrator is particularly proud of, since it works on more levels than some of Homer's best; accordingly, it deserves some extended unpacking. In the terms of a mortgage, a mortgager is the one who wants to raise a sum of money, usually to purchase a property. The mortgagee agrees to supply this sum of money on the condition that the mortgager repay the debt with interest at certain intervals over a certain period of time. A further condition is that if the mortgager defaults on the debt, the mortgagee may take ownership of the property which was purchased. In the terms of a jest, on the other hand, a jester is the one who wants to raise a laugh *at the expense of* another person, who is named the jestee. The premise of the analogy is that jesters must pay for their laughs in the same way that

mortgagers must pay for their houses. They are both obligated to repay the principal with interest added. More than that, jesters and mortgagers are prone to the same psychological error; once they have raised their laughs and their sums, they give little thought to the deal they have made. Periodical payments (in the case of a mortgage) and accidental payments (in the case of a jest, when the jester makes apologies or suffers minor reprisals) serve as intermittent reminders, but do not allow the jester or mortgager to prepare for that "evil hour" in which "pop comes the creditor upon each." Like a balloon payment at the end of an amortization schedule, the creditor's visit is a nasty surprise that crushes the debtor under the debt accrued so long ago.

Tristram Shandy's parson Yorick is described as the unpolished buffoon who raises a laugh at the expense of the wrong people. His good friend Eugenius warns that his carelessness of heart has made him a good deal of enemies who will eventually band together and enact revenge on him, and this is indeed what happens—they collude to make sure that Yorick does not get the preferment that he was sure of getting. The poor parson is struck so hard by this blow and others of the same kind that he eventually dies of the wounds to his soul (besides his long bouts with consumption, mentioned in later volumes), though not before uttering one last jest. He learns too late what his friend had been trying to tell him, that a jest at another's expense always redounds upon the jester.

The extent to which this wisdom is imparted on the other Yorick from *A Sentimental Journey* is difficult to substantiate. While the traveler insists on what the poor parson should have known, the tone of his utterance does not seem to indicate a full appreciation of its meaning. When he remarks that he jests entirely at his own expense, it is possible that he means only that no one is obliged to pay him for jesting; to clarify his meaning, he might have added that he would pay for them in the end. The ambiguity in the expression serves to underscore the

indeterminacy of the obligations incurred: to whom is payment owed? When, if ever, will the debt be called upon? In the practice of jesting, what appears to be freely given is actually costly for the one who gives. Giving in general turns out to be a hazardous activity, as the parson's example demonstrates. First, his generosity in lending his horses out impoverishes him, then his scrupulousness in keeping the story a secret earns him ridicule, and finally his liberality with jests ruins his livelihood. The characters in Sterne's novels wrestle with the concepts of giving as strenuously as Robinson Crusoe wrestles against his calling and the forces of nature arrayed against him. The ease with which he gives and receives gifts and the self-evidence of the rules of gift-giving are replaced by the bewildering calculus of credits and debits which Sterne's various Yoricks struggle to negotiate.

The sentiment of generosity

Among the bourgeois English like Yorick, the confusion concerning generosity began in earnest with its reclassification as a passion or sentiment instead of a virtue. In describing the obligations that Christians had towards each other, the Puritan divines writing in the previous centuries still emphasized the necessity for self-abnegation. By the latter half of the eighteenth century, their influence in both Anglican and Nonconformist circles had waned, giving way to the Latitudinarian and Methodist message of pious sentimentality. Partly as a reaction against the Hobbesian view of man as a selfish creature and partly in lockstep with it, the latter divines promoted the latent sympathy in man which needed only to be cultivated and expressed. Barker-Benfield summarizes the historical development: earlier "Protestantism had disconnected the Christian from communal and 'natural' controls, to agonize over his or her feelings but, under the aegis of Latitudinarian preaching, ultimately he or she was able to enjoy them" (Barker-

Benfield 68-69). The discourse of sentiment which emerged in novels and weeklies gained traction alongside this religious shift in tone, providing the outline for a new understanding of moral feeling. No longer was it necessary to check one's self-interested impulses in order to do justice to the poor and needy; sentimentality suggested it would be better to give oneself over to one's naturally benevolent feelings. The new doctrine resting on a belief in natural benignity constituted a decisive reversal of earlier conceptions of self-denial as a virtue. As carriers of a new creed, the sentimental novels of the period took on the task of elaborating a praxis of giving which would correspond to their view of sociable man. Elaborating a set of best practices also meant identifying the pitfalls of sentimental generosity, and thus the novels' protagonists were sometimes sincere heroes of sentiment and sometimes ironic figures of sentimental excess. The example of Henry Mackenzie's *The Man of Feeling* demonstrates the difficulty involved in differentiating between the two, with contemporary readers taking the novel as a celebration of sensibility instead of a warning against its excess.[60]

Thus it is as part of a larger discourse that *A Sentimental Journey*, the last of Sterne's works to be published in his lifetime, begins and ends as a meditation on what a peculiar affect generosity makes. The peculiarities commence with the utter contingency of Yorick's travel plans and the aimless wandering of his thoughts from one scenario to another. He sets off on his European tour for no other apparent purpose than to win an argument with his manservant. As he imagines how his journey will unfold and morbidly meditates on his possible demise abroad, he launches into a tirade on how uncharitable the king of France would be to invoke his legal right to the effects of travelers who die within his domain: "Ungenerous! —to seize upon the wreck of

[60] Mackenzie's professed intention was to depict in Harley how unrestrained sensibility makes a man unfit for masculine duties. Barker-Benfield, *The Culture of Sensibility*, 144.

an unwary passenger, whom your subjects had beckon'd to their coast—by heaven!" (3-4). The narrator's vehement objection to this inhospitable law contains some irony, since he is about to voyage into France with neither an invitation nor a passport.[61] Nevertheless, Yorick does not hesitate to loudly lament the dissonance that the act of appropriation would create between the stereotype of the sentimental Frenchman and the covetousness of his monarch. "SIRE, it is not well done; and much does it grieve me, 'tis the monarch of a people so civilized and courteous, and so renown'd for sentiment and fine feelings, that I have to reason with—" (4). Yorick does not finish his sentence, and in fact experiences a change of heart as he decides to pardon the sovereign for his imagined crime. As if to embody the very opposite of the French king's miserliness, Yorick then drives himself into a such a frenzy of goodwill that he becomes literally intoxicated with the spirit of generosity; he feels a suffusion upon his cheek, different from and nobler than the kind that results from drinking, but even more affecting. It is in these moments when he is carried away by fellow-feeling that the Englishman finds himself capable of philanthropy. He exclaims, "When man is at peace with man, how much lighter than a feather is the heaviest of metals in his hand!" (5). The implication is that charity flows naturally and freely from such states of equanimity; no effort is required on the part of the benefactor who sympathizes with his neighbor.[62]

Sterne's novel opens with this effusion of sociable sentiment only to turn it on its head. If charitable actions and generosity flow forth from internal states of feeling, what happens when

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[61] Stephanie DeGooyer's analysis of the droits d'aubaine shows how Yorick's objection to the French legal system is a matter of being excluded from the rights of citizenship. As a sentimental traveler, Yorick attempts to use sentimental self-identification as his passport. DeGooyer, "The Poetics of the Passport in *A Sentimental Journey*," 204-205.

[62] This description of fellow-feeling shares in Adam Smith's idea of sympathetic imagination as the natural faculty which motivates social action. Smith, *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, 12.

people are not disposed to sympathize with one another, for whatever reason? Such failures of sentiment would induce and even authorize antisocial behavior.[63] Yorick is acutely aware of this danger, and for this reason he strives to keep himself caught up in feeling. He speculates: "if ever I do a mean action, it must be in some interval betwixt one passion and another: whilst this interregnum lasts, I always perceive my heart locked up -- I can scarce find in it, to give Misery a six-pence" (44). Yorick attributes his every mean or miserly action to a lack of sufficient passion, and since his greatest passion is for the feminine sex, the practical meaning of this correlative property is that he is only ever mean when he is not passionately in love.[64] Thus sentimentality, especially of the erotic variety, and miserliness are at odds—the one banishes the other.[65]

Somewhat paradoxically, however, miserliness is not a dispassionate condition; rather, it is a vicious passion that pits people against each other, the very opposite of refined and delicate sentiment. This antinomy between the two kinds of passion is made clear as Yorick recounts his excruciating experience of purchasing a chaise from a chaise dealer, not so different from what

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[63] Sentiment also fails when it turns the misfortunes of others into mere fodder for itself. Thomas Keymer describes Yorick's various failings as a sentimentalist. Keymer, "*A Sentimental Journey* and the Failure of Feeling," 90-92. The objects of Yorick's sentimental discourse do not benefit from his outpouring of emotion, but only serve as vehicles for his "euphoric self-validation."

[64] For a reading of this passage and an overview of Sterne's place in the eighteenth-century discourse that identifies heterosexual eroticism with generosity and fellow-feeling, see Paul Kelleher's *Making Love: sentiment and sexuality in eighteenth-century British literature* (2-5). Kelleher unpacks the layers of irony in Yorick's self-praise: "regardless of whether pleasure is sought for its own sake or enjoyed as morality's silver lining, the experience of pleasure raises the possibility that Yorick (and perhaps any sentimental subject) remains enclosed within the boundaries of the self, no matter how benevolent or amorous—no matter, that is, how seemingly *other*-directed—his character seems to be" (5). (Kelleher)

[65] Elizabeth Kraft has analyzed the problematic connection between erotic desire and piety in the narrative, suggesting that, for Yorick, the one entails the other. Kraft argues that Sterne's novel steers a middle course between a mechanistic understanding of bodily sensation and the overly refined culture of sensibility. Yet Yorick is, if anything, a character of excesses and not one of moderation. Kraft, "The Pentecostal Moment in *A Sentimental Journey*," 307-308.

the modern consumer endures at a car dealership. At first, he imagines that he is about to face the salesman in a duel to the death and views his opponent with the greatest animosity. Yet he eventually recognizes that he is being uncharitable for no good reason, since the most he could gain or lose in negotiating a price still amounts to very little. He asks himself: "And is all this to be lighted up in the heart for a beggarly account of three or four louisd'ors, which is the most I can be overreach'd in? —Base passion! said I, turning myself about, as a man naturally does upon a sudden reverse of sentiment—base, ungentle passion! Thy hand is against every man, and every man's hand against thee—" (20). Yorick's reversal of sentiment signifies his switching over from one side of passion to the other. He realizes that there is nothing more base than the beggarly because it serves only to expedite the pinching of pennies; more than that, it is ungentle because it marshals such disproportionate hostility to its cause. Thus he proclaims that every man should raise his hand in opposition to it.[66]

Taking up arms against greed is easier said than done, as Yorick's worst failures testify. He hardly has time to finish his encomium on generosity before his mettle is tested. "I had scarce utter'd the words, when a poor monk of the order of St. Francis came into the room to beg something for his convent" (7). Here it may be appropriate to consider what others have said about the event of happening upon a mendicant; it is at once an unpleasant circumstance that strains one's sentiments and an altogether calculable risk that one takes when one goes down a certain road or makes a tour of foreign nations. "Everyone knows that the encounter with a poor man and with a poor *beggar* (since every poor man does not demand and every demand does not beg) is never absolutely aleatory in a given social space. The beggar occupies a determined place

[66] Jean-Christophe Agnew shows how the antagonism between buyer and seller is a feature characteristic of modern, but not archaic, markets. Agnew, *Worlds Apart: The Market and the Theater in Anglo-American Thought, 1550-1750*, 3.

in a social, politico-economic, and symbolic typology" (Derrida 134). For Yorick, at least, this is true: The Franciscan by the name of Father Lorenzo is a figure that he must have seen coming and that he knows precisely how to place. His reaction to the monk is so ready that it is not as much a reply or a response as a pre-emption so quick and tight that the mendicant cannot get a word in sideways.

Rather than an event, this encounter between the two individuals is a complete non-event, anticipated in its entirety. The gaze with which Yorick views the mendicant has no difficulty in interpreting his cloister's habits and supplicating stance; there is no opacity to the beggar's being, which is to say that Yorick sees right through him. "The moment I cast my eyes upon him," he says, "I was predetermined not to give him a single sous; and accordingly I put my purse into my pocket—button'd it up—set myself a little more upon my centre, and advanced up gravely to him" (7). The movements which Yorick makes with his body indicate that he is preparing for a struggle. He had very recently opined that, in times of peace, a man should be so generous as to hold his purse out in the open and share its contents. Yorick is not on peaceful terms with the monk, whom he sees as a threat. Thus, instead of waiting for the beggar to accost him, Yorick steps forward and delivers the first blow. Having the benefit of the opening move is decisive in this match between the beggar and the tourist, Yorick knows, since he would otherwise cede the advantage to the one whose clothing and air would lend his demand a dangerous pathos.

Yorick and the Franciscan monk are in a state of competition or war. The scarce resource that is the object of their contention is the money in Yorick's purse, which the beggar demands with his mere presence, without having to utter a word (Yorick says he feels the "full force of the appeal" that the coarse habit and balding head make). It is in the interest of the preservation of

his property that Yorick despises the monk and delivers a discourse that credits himself with righteousness and discredits his antagonist. His discourse concerns charity and justice; it is full of indignation, but equally full of logical lapses. Yorick begins his argument by representing himself as the champion of the truly needy, "the lame, the blind, the aged and the infirm" as opposed to those (like the monk) who have no apparent infirmity. His insinuation is that charity should be restricted to the visibly deformed or dilapidated, and that the monk's demand is illegitimate because it arises not from the condition of his body but from his dress. In this instance, Yorick's sentimentality is a weapon with which he can fend off a beggar's advances. With great emotion, he describes "the captive who lies down counting over and over again the days of his afflictions" and who "languishes also for his share" of the world's charity as a way to delegitimize the monk's plea (9). If there are those whose suffering is so much more lamentable than his, how can he dare make a case for himself?

The monk's dress is a further blemish on his claim to charitable funds, Yorick argues, because it indicates that the funds will go to support the members of his mendicant order rather than the more deserving poor. He promises that a different monk from an order dedicated to serving those poor would have been more successful in his petition: "and had you been of the *order of mercy*, instead of the order of St. Francis, poor as I am, continued I, pointing at my portmanteau, full chearfully should it have been open'd to you, for the ransom of the unfortunate" (9). Yorick indicates both the illegitimacy of the Franciscan monk's selfish claim and the insufficiency of his own funds, arming himself with two independently valid reasons not to give. Then, immediately retracing the steps of his argument, he goes on to say that even if the monk were begging for the benefit of the needy, his first obligation is to the poor of his own native England: "but of all others, resumed I, the unfortunate of our own country, surely, have

the first rights; and I have left thousands in distress upon our own shore—" (9). Now, Yorick is at several removes from the monk's presumed demand: first, it is an unjust claim, since he is begging for his own idle order, whose members have the audacity to live on the fruits of honest men's labor, instead of for the truly needy. Second, Yorick claims to be poor himself, the proof of this condition being his modest portmanteau. Lastly there are already those who make their claims on what remains of his wealth, namely those whom he has literally left upon their shore in travelling to a foreign country. This last justification is the ultimate one for the sentimental traveler, since it inoculates him from every charitable demand made upon him outside of home. In this way, Yorick transforms a grave demerit into a merit of sorts. The extravagant debt that he owes to those left upon the shore makes him impervious to the claims of every other. Having been so callous as to ignore their pleas, he cannot justify listening to the pleas of anyone else.

Yorick's argumentation plays upon the tropes of treatises on charity and casuistical manuals which describe the various conditions under which one is or is not obligated to give. The surplus of excuses that he allows himself demonstrates that he is never short on reasons not to give; what his discourse shows is that reason can perpetually delay (and thus, in effect, oppose) giving by pointing toward ever better and worthier opportunities to give. Yorick takes on the task of justifying his unwillingness to give, and he goes even further in chastising the monk for making a request in the first place. In fact, not only does he mount an attack on the monk's impropriety in begging, but he also condemns his entire way of life as one which unjustly takes from the provisions of the needy in order to allow for an indolent and self-indulgent existence. He exclaims at the monk, who is still and will be for a while yet speechless: "we distinguish, my good Father! betwixt those who wish only to eat the bread of their own

labour—and those who eat the bread of other people's, and have no other plan in life, but to get through it in sloth and ignorance, for the love of God" (9-10).

This is where Yorick's discourse on charitable giving ends, and it concludes at a point where Yorick himself feels too far gone. He first set out to steel himself against the inevitable foray that the monk was to make, but instead he ends up indicting his opponent on charges of theft, sloth and impiety. The excessiveness of these charges redounds unto himself, of course, since the reader never sees him laboring throughout the novel, yet he always has enough bread to spare. Thus, in a return to sentimental form, his heart condemns him for his outburst once the monk has exited the room and shut the door behind him. He acknowledges that he is truly at fault for having said such mean words—not, of course, for having denied the monk's (presumed or imagined) request for alms, but for having broken the peace with his antagonistic discourse. Yorick is remorseful about his lapse in manners and wishes now for someone else to defend him, after he has defended himself too ardently. "I would have given twenty livres for an advocate—," he muses, entirely certain about his liberality when it comes to the matter of his own innocence. "I have behaved very ill; said I within myself; but I have only just set out upon my travels; and shall learn better manners as I get along" (11). Indeed, Yorick's first encounter on French soil is not propitious, but he is not to be blamed if, as he says so himself, his nobler sentiments are contingent upon the presence of woman. Once woman enters upon the scene, Yorick ends the war with the other man and enters with him into an alliance whose patron is woman and whose symbol is the exchange of tobacco. The thorny discourse on justice gives way to a discourse of kindness, but as Eve Sedgwick has noted, there is already a logic of sacrifice at work in the scene of feminine sentimentality.

Reconciliation

By contrasting the generous Yorick that sometimes appears in the novel with the miserly one the lips of whose purse are sewn shut, Sedgwick finds a character struggling to overcome the egoistic passions which cause him to antagonize a mendicant such as the Franciscan monk. "These puritanical, nationalistic, constricted sentiments represent a repressed Yorick of whom the manifest, expressive Yorick is deeply ashamed" (Sedgwick 75). Yet these sentiments which pit man against man can only be dissipated with what a woman provides—Yorick has said as much in his praise of Eros, but Sedgwick shows that this use of woman is not restricted to his narrative. Yorick's reconciliation with the monk, presided over by a seemingly grief-stricken lady, is just one instance that conforms to a common type: "The scene wherein male rivals unite, refreshed in mutual support and definition, over the ruined carcase of a woman, will occur seriously again and again" in the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century novels that Sedgwick examines (76). In these literary representations, the figure of the woman serves as the "lubricant" that dissolves the friction between men of differing social and political status. Between men like Yorick and the monk or Yorick and the count whose protection he seeks, woman acts as an intermediary.

Sedgwick's paradigm of this triangular relation amongst men and a woman is simultaneously a development and a critique of the Lévi-Straussian description of the traffic in women. In his analysis of kinship relations in primitive cultures, Claude Lévi-Strauss finds that what constitutes marriage is not an agreement between a man and a woman but the transfer of the woman from one man, typically the father or the brother, to another, the son-in-law or brother-in-law. The transfer has the function of tying two clans or sibs together in a mutual obligation which crosses generations, since the male offspring of the marriage is indebted to his

mother's clan (Lévi-Strauss 113-114).[67] Sedgwick recognizes the validity of this assessment but condemns the "celebratory treatment" that Lévi-Strauss gives it (25-26). In her readings of the novel, she illustrates how this elementary structure of exchange develops diachronically, through the complex transformations that society has undergone in the modern period. The compelling argument prompts us to be particularly circumspect in the analysis of any scene of homosociality. Where woman is absent, the conspicuousness of her absence might point to an erasure. If the traffic in women is the original form of the lasting reciprocal bond, we should be able to locate its survivals or analogues in modern representations. Particularly in *A Sentimental Journey*, a narrative whose male characters continuously struggle to negotiate the shifting boundaries of class, it is clear that woman is as indispensable to male homosociality as Yorick claims, though not for the reasons he suggests.

The woman who eventually intercedes for Yorick with the monk is a member of the nobility with a secret sorrow, and just as he does with every woman that he sees even from a distance, Yorick very quickly falls in love with her. As a matter of consequence, however, the first time that he sees her, she is "in close conference" with the monk whom he has so recently mistreated (602). In fact, her apparition in the narrative is doubly tied up with the figure of the monk, in that this apparition is described twice, and the first description makes her incidental to Yorick's state of mind, which is much more concerned with the monk whom she happens to be near. He finds the prospect of having to face this person whom he had offended so disagreeable that he resolves to lock himself up in the one-person carriage that he has occupied. His other

[67] Lévi-Strauss begins his analysis of kinship structures with a reconsideration of the universally valid incest prohibition; he concludes that biological imperative cannot account for the prohibition and that only the principle of reciprocity adequately explains it. Marcel Hénaff provides a penetrating and exceptionally clear reprisal of this episode in anthropology in the first chapters of his book on Lévi-Strauss (see especially Hénaff 48-57).

option would have been to make company with the master of the hôtel, and he chooses solitude: "—but Monsieur Dessein being gone to vespers, and not caring to face the Franciscan whom I saw on the opposite side of the court, in conference with a lady just arrived, at the inn—I drew the taffeta curtain betwixt us" (12). This first account of the lady's arrival at the inn makes her seem unimportant except as an accomplice to the monk, and in a sense this is what she remains, even after the revision made a few pages later, following the interruption of a preface that Yorick writes in his solitary condition.

In the second account, this seeming complicity between the lady and the monk has not disappeared. There is merely the addition of the lady's striking figure, which is supposed to move Yorick's heart towards a nobler sentiment, as he predicted. However, his attraction to the woman does not immediately do away with and in a way accentuates the budding rivalry between him and the monk. Seeing the monk and the lady together causes him a great deal of unease, Yorick says. "Suspicion crossed my brain, and said, he was telling her what had passed: something jarred upon it within me—I wished him at his convent" (22). For Yorick, the unfortunate circumstance is that the monk has gotten to this lady first; in their own exchange, Yorick was the one who had the initiative, but here the monk has regained the advantage by being the first to appeal to the woman. Each one in fact has his turn, since after this private interlude between her and the monk, Yorick also has his interview with the lady. All the while that he is speaking with the lady, and notwithstanding the romantic ecstasy that he feels as he takes her hand in his, he cannot get the monk out of his mind. The two are content to hold hands as they wait for an errand to be done, and, Yorick says, "in the mean time I set myself to consider how I should undo the ill impressions which the poor monk's story, in case he had told it her, must have planted in her breast against me" (25). Up until this point the reader still has not

heard an actual word from the monk, but the figure that he strikes in Yorick's mind, first as a seeker of alms and secondly as a rival for the lady's approval and affection, makes him out to be a villain. Thus after both Yorick and the monk have had the opportunity to present themselves or their case to the lady, they find themselves all together, and the scene of reconciliation and giving finally takes place.

Reconciliation, as well as friendship, begins with tobacco. The lady, now a common acquaintance to both parties, provides the occasion for their reconciliation but only presides over the meeting as if to arbitrate their ensuing transaction. The men, still at odds with one another, do not make peace by engaging in an archaic practice such as the exchange or sacrifice of a woman. Rather, the monk's first gesture is to bring out his snuff-box in order to offer Yorick some snuff. Yorick, in appreciation of the monk's gesture, brings out his own box of snuff and offers from it in exchange.

Snuff, a paste or powder made of ground-up tobacco leaves, is a form of smokeless tobacco that held a certain prestige in the early eighteenth century, when it functioned as a status symbol for the wealthy and the nobility, since commoners usually smoked their tobacco. At the apex of its popularity, snuffing had an entire culture of its own, with the various mannerisms that one displayed when taking snuff serving as indications of one's level of refinement. Those who aspired to raise their social capital enrolled in schools to be taught the most fashionable ways to take snuff. The equipment that was associated with snuffing was always highly prized for its ceremonial flair, though as the manufacturing of snuff became more sophisticated, many of the accessories became obsolete. One item that retained its use and symbolic value was the snuff container: "Snuff-boxes, nonetheless, maintained their position as the snuffer's essential fashion accessory and were so lavishly produced—often made from gold and silver and inset with

precious stones—that they were considered items of jewelry and exchanged as gifts among the aristocracy" (Hughes 548). Since each one was unique and a work of craftsmanship, snuff-boxes circulated among the elite as distinguished symbols of a luxurious lifestyle. As the centerpiece of a cosmopolitan fashion trend, a commodity in trade and an addictive substance, tobacco touched on just about every facet of life for the eighteenth-century gentleman, including his charitable activity. And while a person's method for taking tobacco may have signified the social stratum to which that person belonged, the meaning that it took on in gift and exchange seems not to vary across its various morphologies. Whether as bales of leaves in Crusoe's case, as fine powder in Yorick's or through the medium of a peace pipe in Thomas Jefferson's, the substance, in changing hands, marked a pact between two parties.[68]

The exchange of tobacco between Yorick and the monk, ostensibly spontaneous but already resembling or presaging ritual action, is enough to perform a minor miracle of alchemy, transmuting the bitter rivalry between the two men into a provisional bond of friendship. What accounts for the potency of this drug, that it is able to achieve so much in so little a space? Jacques Derrida asks this question in his essay on the gift: "What is tobacco? . . . It is a pure and luxurious consumption, gratuitous and therefore costly, an expenditure at a loss that produces pleasure . . . A pleasure of which nothing remains, a pleasure even the external signs of which are dissipated without leaving a trace: in smoke" (107). Without resolving the mystery of the substance, Derrida indicates some of the properties which make it so unusual. The first that is worth mention is its luxuriousness, that is, its excess in relation to natural need. Tobacco is not

[68] The Portuguese captain accepts Crusoe's gift of tobacco because it is of his own produce: Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe*, 33. Thomas Jefferson, in a speech to Indian chief Jean-Baptiste Ducoigne, prevails upon him to honor the pact made when they passed the peace pipe: Jefferson, "Speech to Jean-Baptiste Ducoigne."

food; it is ultra-culinary since it is neither consumed raw nor cooked (Lévi-Strauss in Derrida 112). One prevalent manner of consuming tobacco involves burning it in order to produce the fumes which one inhales, leaving only ash as a remainder. In the case of snuff, the taker bypasses the orality of tobacco altogether. In either case, tobacco apparently exists outside the realm of direct competition for the resources necessary for survival. Derrida infers from this that in the literary instances when men partake of tobacco, the characters are represented as being beyond the realm of animal need—need and greed—and when they partake alongside other men, pinching the snuff or passing the pipe, they form an alliance of civility, the kind that is the precondition for any symbolic activity, even language itself. "Tobacco is a symbol of this symbolic, in other words, of the agreement, of the sworn faith, or the alliance that commits the two parties when they share the two fragments of a symbolon, when they must give, exchange, and obligate themselves one to the other" (Derrida 111-112). If tobacco is the promise and the guarantee of this alliance between men who share it, it is no wonder that the monk is able to approach Yorick with such certainty, "in a world of frankness," even after the ill-treatment he had suffered at his hands.

The monk does not offer snuff to the woman, of course, since the tobacco pact exists exemplarily between men and since he only needs to be reconciled with Yorick, who alone can be his adversary.[69] The offer of snuff is the peace offering that ushers in the realm of giving between the two men, since there is only liberality among allies. Yorick recognizes that, in order to seal the pact, he must make a reciprocal gesture of generosity. Yet, according to the rules of

[69] However, it is not inconceivable for the gift and exchange of snuff to be enacted between women, as an early passage in Kierkegaard's Either/Or II demonstrates; in it, two women share snuff and a bystander offers a gift of unexpected money. Tobacco sets the scene for unexpected generosity and the aleatory effects of a monetary gift (Kierkegaard 12).

gift-exchange, the return gift must not be identical to the opening gift, since giving back exactly what one has been given is tantamount to rejecting the gift.[70] Yorick is sensible enough not just to offer the monk a pinch of snuff, which would be utterly commensurate with the monk's offering. Raising the stakes of their interaction, he places his entire snuff-box into the monk's hands and asks him to keep it as a token of his reformed goodwill. "Then do me the favour, I replied, to accept of the box and all, and when you take a pinch out of it, sometimes recollect it was the peace-offering of a man who used you unkindly, but not from his heart" (26). Yorick makes the terms of a lasting peace explicit with the offer of his snuff-box, which is to serve as a memento of the conciliatory event.

The snuff-box religion

The snuff-box differs from its contents in that it is a permanent possession which is not consumed when it is used. In this respect, it represents an advancement in the long-term efficacy of the gift. It has been noted that tobacco's special qualities make it an exemplary gift: it resides outside the realm of ordinary sustenance and leaves practically no remainder after it is consumed. The gift of tobacco is thus suitable as a provisional token of goodwill between two parties. Anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski confirms this function of tobacco in his study of indigenous Melanesian culture when he describes the kind of relationship which corresponds to the gift of tobacco: "8. *Relationship between any two tribesmen.* —This is characterised by payments and presents, by occasional trade between two individuals, and by sporadic free gifts of tobacco or betel-nut [another mild stimulant] which no man would refuse to another unless

[70] Knowing to play by these rules requires a feel for the game, what Pierre Bourdieu calls "habitus." Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, 105.

they were on terms of hostility" (148).[71] The gifts of tobacco must be sporadic and occasional precisely because they leave so little residue; though the exchange signals the cessation of hostilities, the memory of the peace agreement must continually be maintained through intermittent giving. Yorick's gift of the snuff-box, however, is the aspiration of a perennial gift, one that refreshes itself every time it is used. In petitioning the Franciscan monk to accept the gift, he asks him to keep it as a perpetual reminder of their accord.

The monk acquiesces to Yorick's request, but only upon offering his own snuff-box in return. The exchange of snuff-boxes takes place on a level beyond that of the exchange of snuff. The latter's symbolism is exhausted in the moment of reconciliation, extending not much further than the instant. The snuff-boxes, by contrast, are not commensurable objects which can be unceremoniously exchanged for one another. Yorick describes his box as "a small tortoise one," while the monk's is a horn box which he brightens by rubbing it on the sleeve of his tunic. The unique qualities of each, along with the special care taken by their handlers, make these boxes akin to the ceremonial objects of the Kula ring that Malinowski observed in the early twentieth century. Trobriand islanders maintained a strong distinction between common trade, or barter, and the exalted trade, in which people gave each other gifts of vaygu'a, valuable bracelets and necklaces. Acquisitiveness and meanness were absolutely proscribed from the realm of the vaygu'a, though in fact these ornaments were the most precious possessions a person could have. Malinowski describes the symbolic potency of these objects and the effect they had on their

[71] Malinowski also confirms the extra-culinary and ephemeral qualities of the tobacco gift. In describing examples of what he calls the free gift, he writes: "Also, any special luxuries in food, or such things as betel-nut or tobacco, he will share with his children as well as with his wife . . . In fact everyone who possesses betel-nut or tobacco in excess of what he can actually consume on the spot, would be expected to give it away" (137). For Trobriand islanders, a store of tobacco dissipates as fast as it is accumulated, so it does not accrue.

owners: “In all this there is a clear expression of the mental attitude of the natives, who regard the *vaygu’a* as supremely good in themselves, and not as convertible wealth, or as potential ornaments, or even as instruments of power. To possess *vaygu’a* is exhilarating, comforting, soothing in itself. They will look at *vaygu’a* and handle it for hours; even a touch of it imparts under circumstances its virtue” (403). For Trobrianders, the significance of the vaygu’a does not reside in their efficacy as technological implements, nor are vaygu’a prized for their value in exchange. However, they have a potent influence on their owner’s affect, and they have the power to impart their virtue upon whoever comes in contact with them.

The gifts of snuff and snuff-boxes in Sterne’s novel resist interpretation by conventional economic means. They cannot be adequately explained in terms of commodity and commerce, nor in terms of the free or “pure” gift. In a chapter on “Sterne’s Snuffbox,” Lynn Festa makes clear that this gift Yorick receives acquires its unique meaning through sentimental exchange. The snuff-box takes on a different mode of being as a sentimental object, something which is both inalienable and non-interchangeable. “By establishing a personal communion between subject and object, owner and possession, the sentimental creates a value separate from the economic . . . It renders certain things exempt from exchange, as if they were extensions of a self provisionally free from market relations” (Festa 74). Festa also finds a contradiction inherent to the sentimental: while sentimental objects and texts purport to testify to the particularity of the individual’s experience, they are susceptible to being bought, sold and reproduced. In this way, the sentimental is destabilized by the very market forces against which it is supposed to be a hedge. There can be no doubt about Yorick’s sentimental attachment to the objects and substances he exchanges with others, nor about the pitfalls of naïve sentimentalism. Yet the failure of a symbol to guarantee the authenticity of experience is not a dilemma specific to

sentimentality; rather, it is an integral part of the religious dialectic between ritual form and spontaneous expression. From the moment of its first articulation, Yorick's religion of generous feeling participates in this dialectic, which assures neither the failure nor the triumph of the religion. The only assurance is for the tension between an original revelation and the ritualization which follows. An analysis of Yorick's snuff-box spirituality will need to account for both its moment of inspiration and the development of its formal features.

Yorick describes the snuff-box which he receives from his newfound friend in affective and explicitly ritualistic terms. As prone as he is to miserliness, he keeps the box with him as a conduit of the gentle monk's virtue. "I guard this box, as I would the instrumental parts of my religion, to help my mind on to something better: in truth, I seldom go abroad without it; and oft and many a time I called up by it the courteous spirit of its owner to regulate my own" (27). The "instrumental parts of [one's] religion" is a stock phrase which, in Sterne's writing, is usually accompanied by admonitions against the morally and spiritually bankrupt manner that some individuals take towards religion.[72] *Tristram Shandy's* Parson Yorick warns his parishioners against the thought that going to church twice a day and minding the sacraments can substitute for a clean conscience.[73] The rhetoric of instrumental religion participates in the larger Protestant polemic against the formal and sensory elements of Catholicism and Judaism. In this context, "instrumental religion" evokes both the mysticism of the Catholic and the legalism of the Jew.[74]

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[72] The notes to the *Florida Edition* refer to two instances of the phrase or a related one in *Tristram Shandy* and two more in the *Sermons*. In the sermon on the "Pharisee and publican in the temple," Sterne warns against overvaluing the instrumental or external parts of religion, but he still recognizes their limited importance as a means to the end of moral sanctity. Sterne, *A Sentimental Journey*, 259-260.

[73] Sterne, *Tristram Shandy*, 159.

[74] For a twentieth-century perspective on the survivals of this polemic in modern religious self-understanding, see Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*, 18.

Given the narrator's namesake, orthodox religious practice is conspicuously absent in *A Sentimental Journey*. The Anglican parson Yorick of *Tristram Shandy* is unorthodox in his own way but still presided over mass and delivered sermons and moral admonitions to his parishioners. The sermons that Sterne published under the pseudonym "Yorick" in the intervals between volumes of *Tristram Shandy* were typical of his period and social milieu; contemporary reviews found it scandalous that sermons could be advertised as diversionary reading, but the content itself would not have been shocking. The theology espoused in them showed an affinity to the latitudinarian faction of divines from the Restoration period who defined themselves in opposition to deists on the one hand and strict Calvinists on the other (Parnell 66-67). Therefore, to take up a horn snuff-box as the instrument of one's religion is a departure from this pattern of general adherence to popular religious opinion in Sterne's texts. Without explicitly abandoning the Anglicanism of his home country, the narrator of *A Sentimental Journey* heretically idolizes the Franciscan monk's gift to him, treating it as an object imbued with power. In doing so, he also runs against the late eighteenth-century current of religious apologists from Kant to Schleiermacher who were attempting to isolate the natural or rational elements of religion by removing myth and magic. Yorick goes in the opposite direction when he imagines the snuff-box as being possessed of its own power.

It would not be totally anachronistic to say that Yorick fetishizes the snuff-box, since the term "fetish" gained currency in the eighteenth century as a way to describe certain religions of Africa thought be inferior to (Protestant) Christianity. In his lectures on the *Philosophy of History*, G.W.F. Hegel argues that African religion had not reached as high a level of attainment as the revealed religions and that its practice remained tied to individualistic representations of power. The representations, or images, were the fetishes of African religion. Hegel writes:

> The second element in their religion, consists in their giving an outward form to this supernatural power—projecting their hidden might into the world of phenomena by means of images. What they conceive as the power in question, is therefore nothing really objective, having a substantial being and different from themselves, but the first thing that comes in their way. This, taken quite indiscriminately, they exalt to the dignity of a 'Genius'; it may be an animal, a tree, a stone, or a wooden figure. This is their *Fetich*—a word to which the Portuguese first gave currency, and which is derived from *feitizo*, magic. Here, in the Fetich, a kind of objective independence as contrasted with the arbitrary fancy of the individual seems to manifest itself; but as the objectivity is nothing other than the fancy of the individual projecting itself into space, the human individuality remains the master of the image it has adopted. (Hegel 112)

Hegel's charge against the fetish is that it lacks objective independence; it is already imperfect in that the representation is an arbitrarily chosen thing as opposed to a rationally conceived idea. Moreover, the fetish lacks any independent force beyond the fanciful projections of the religious initiate. When Yorick calls upon his snuff-box to deliver him from his own miserly tendencies, he is perhaps appealing to his own fancies, rather than the spirit of the box's previous owner. When it works, the power of the object is confirmed, and when it does not, the fault is attributed elsewhere. The choice of icon is not altogether arbitrary in this instance, however, since the box serves as a metonymic reminder of the first offer of peace. Yorick's religious engagement with his horn snuff-box mimics practices which the colonial powers were coming into contact with in Sterne's time; some aspects of his religion bear a closer resemblance to these examples than others. In general, Yorick clings to magically potent rites and objects while theologians and philosophers were ready to propose an agenda of demystification in the name of science and

progress. The affective states which the snuff tobacco and snuff-boxes are able to induce in him are evidence of the effectiveness of these symbols, which work by way of a shared mythology and the charisma of religious practitioners.[75]

Almost from the moment it arrived in the Old World, tobacco was implicated in the polemic against idolatry and illegitimate religion. The public's perception of tobacco's symbolic qualities was the object of contention for centuries following its introduction into Europe. Marcy Norton shows how sixteenth-century writers associated tobacco with idolatry, thereby affirming the legitimacy of Catholic conquest. Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo y Valdés linked tobacco to the natives' "abominable customs and rites," interpreting their high mortality rate as punishment for their sinful use of it (Norton 56). Norton writes that tobacco, along with chocolate (to a lesser extent), "became ensnared in efforts to reassure European states of the moral, ethical, and legal basis of conquest in the Indies, hinging on the existence of hard lines dividing the civilized from the savage and Christian from heathen" (53). More specifically, the use of tobacco in ritual to induce a trance state marked native religion as counterfeit since it relied on this indispensable external and material aid. In seventeenth-century England, Anglican authorities continued to decry the use of tobacco as "barbarous and beastly" while also implicating their religious opponents in Europe. In his "Counterblaste to Tobacco," James I satirizes Catholic superstition and Puritan self-righteousness in the same breath: "O omnipotent power of *Tobacco*! And if it could by the smoke thereof chace out devils, as the smoke of *Tobias* did (which I am sure could smel no stronglier) it would serve for a precious Relicke, both for the superstitious Priests, and

[75] Lévi-Strauss explains how symbols can be effective in, for instance, reducing pain and calming anxiety in women giving birth. A shamanic ritual practiced in South America is used to induce difficult childbirth; Lévi-Strauss shows how a narrated sequence of images and events produces bodily effects (Lévi-Strauss, Structural Anthropology 188-198).

the insolent Puritanes, to cast out devils withall." In this document, the use of tobacco, particularly for religious purposes, indicates false religion both in the uncivilized world and in Christendom.

Yorick's evocation of instrumental religion as it pertains to the horn snuff-box reverses the terms of the negative valuation of ritual, suggesting not only a rapprochement between the English traveler and the French monk but also between Protestant and Catholic. The new instrument of religion is not a cross or chalice but another symbol of grace, the monk's snuff-box gift. Like other religious instruments, the snuff-box is not automatically efficacious, as a technological device might be. Though it is kept constantly by Yorick's side as a ward against his own selfish tendencies, it very often fails to perform its function. On more felicitous occasions, he remembers that the snuff-box is in his possession and recalls the gentleness of the monk he insulted, and the recollection of their reconciliation opens his heart to future acts of generosity. The object's capriciousness in this regard does not deter Yorick from his continued reverence of it, nor is he at any point unconvinced of its power. This manner of taking up the horn snuff-box as an affective instrument of religion is a departure from the anti-ritual prejudice which, along with antitheatricality, characterized much of the moral and religious discourse in the previous century. By instrumentalizing and revering Father Lorenzo's snuff-box gift, the narrator of *A Sentimental Journey* enacts a religious practice oriented towards the material and the corporeal. The affirmation of instrumental religion is not without irony, since Yorick's piety manifests itself precisely in his apparently spontaneous effusions of sentimental generosity. It would be too simple to say that the novel favors form over spontaneity or the material over the conceptual. Rather, Yorick's religion destabilizes the priority of spontaneity over form and convention. Even if religious forms have the tendency to fall into empty and inauthentic ritual, as

the example of the snuff-box suggests, without them there would be no permanence to the original revelation and no possibility of another's participation in it.[76]

The alliance between Yorick and the monk brought about and guaranteed by their ritual exchange of tobacco paraphernalia is the one that Yorick has dreamed of since he set off from England: the peace between men that, when he is reminded of it, causes him to pull out his purse and look around for others amongst whom he can distribute its contents. What he does not recognize until the monk demonstrates it to him is that this peace requires an initial offering of tobacco before it can be further secured. An apprentice in the manners of a foreign country but also in charitable feeling, Yorick must learn this lesson several times over before he is well-versed enough to teach it to others. The lesson is thus reiterated for his benefit when he encounters a group of beggars in Montriul—this time they are veritable beggars, the lame and infirm that Yorick spoke of when he first chastised the monk for being a beggar in costume only. He finds himself in a moral predicament when he is confronted with a corps of beggars numbering eight men and eight women with only eight sous to spare. Yet this arbitrary sum to which Yorick limits his charity is seemingly chosen for the precise purpose of testing his skill in casuistic reasoning. Once again, he loudly laments the impoverished extent of his funds, but this time he knows to pay close attention to the reactions of those who would depend upon them. One of the beggars withdraws his hand and gives his place to another, and Yorick gives his approval to this graciousness in the form of two sous. Another beggar, however, performs an act of even greater circumstance. The dwarfish beggar, as Yorick describes him, "took his snuff-box out of his pocket, and generously offer'd a pinch on both sides of him: it was a gift of consequence, and

[76] Johann Georg Jacobi's disillusionment with the cult of Lorenzo which he chartered stems from his inability to negotiate the terms of this religious dialectic. For a detailed account of Jacobi's involvement, see Festa, 76-78.

modestly declined—The poor little fellow press'd it upon them with a nod of welcomeness—Prenez en—prenez, said he, looking another way" (48). The dwarf's diminutive stature only accentuates how large his heart must be for his fellow beggars who are too modest to accept a gift the first time it is offered. His generosity and civility in mixed company is beyond measure, and Yorick expresses a hope that the dwarf's box of snuff will be equally bottomless. He learns from the dwarf the affect that accompanies the gift of tobacco; it is a welcomeness and a feigned blindness: the dwarf turns the other way so that he will not see how much each of his comrades takes from him.

This gift of tobacco, since it resides in the realm of luxurious excess, does not stoop to the mundanities of accounting. The dwarf turns his head to signal that he will keep no records of who owes him what. Everyone can take without fear of incurring a debt, except, perhaps, insofar as honor obligates one to return the favor. Everything about the gesture is liberality, a trait which Yorick so much admires that he feels compelled to reward it by dropping some coins into the dwarf's proffered snuff-box. However, he also has enough sense to take as much as he gives: "so I put a couple of sous into it—taking a small pinch out of his box, to enhance their value, as I did it—He felt the weight of the second obligation more than that of the first—'twas doing him an honour—the other was only doing him a charity—and he made me a bow down to the ground for it" (48). The exchange that occurs between Yorick and the dwarfish beggar is as complex as any other, and Yorick complicates matters even further by giving his own account of favors shown and obligations incurred. The sequence of events is described as follows: first, Yorick places a couple of sous into the beggar's snuff-box—this is a generic charitable action which obligates the beggar to Yorick as to every other benefactor who gives him change. Then, Yorick takes a pinch of snuff from the beggar's snuff-box, remarking to his reader that this taking enhances the

box's contents and that by taking from him, he does the beggar a very fine favor. Indeed, if Yorick's report is accurate, the beggar himself is honored by the gesture and bows low to acknowledge the weighty obligation placed upon him. How is it that by taking from a beggar, Yorick obligates the beggar to himself? The beginning of the episode demonstrates the conventional logic of giving, according to which to give is to obligate. Then, this logic is turned on its head as Yorick demonstrates how he can obligate by taking.

The apparent paradox in this formulation points to a confusion between two orders of value. The first is the material or economic order, for which the accounting is much simpler; a gift of two sous means that the beggar incurs an obligation proportional to that amount. By taking a pinch of snuff from the beggar's box, Yorick diminishes this material debt by the worth of the tobacco, but introduces a symbolic obligation. He does the beggar an honor because he makes himself the beggar's equal by sharing in his tobacco. The class disparities between the gentleman making a tour of Europe and the indigent dwarf are temporarily dissolved as the two share snuff. For a brief moment, the beggar even occupies the position of the benefactor, being so generous as to allow Yorick to take from his snuff-box. Yorick's narration of the event shows that he is convinced there is honor even among beggars—or especially among beggars, who feel it all the more acutely when it is contrasted with charity. The exemplary gift of honor is of course tobacco, given with a blind eye and with the weight of an obligation.

The magnanimity that exudes from this exchange between Yorick and the dwarf extends as far as another episode involving a dwarf, this time in the Paris orchestra house, where Yorick sees this second dwarf being bullied by a corpulent German. Once more, the sentiment of generosity is accompanied by the gift of tobacco; at first, Yorick makes no effort to defend the humiliated dwarf, but his sentimental heart is touched as soon as he takes a pinch from his snuff

box, which now perhaps serves as a reminder both of the poor monk he met at the very beginning and of the generous beggar in Montriul. He recounts his change of heart which leads him to seek aid for the dwarf being bullied at the theater: "I was just then taking a pinch of snuff out of my monk's little horn box—And how would thy meek and courteous spirit, my dear monk! so temper'd to *bear and forbear!* —how sweetly would it have lent an ear to this poor soul's complaint!" (81). In this instance, the implements of Yorick's religion remind him of his duty to be charitable. As he recalls the magnanimity of the Franciscan monk, he receives some of his virtue as if by contagion. He takes action to remedy the injustice suffered by the dwarf, enlisting the aid of a French officer sitting next to him, who also offers Yorick a pinch of snuff after the matter is resolved.

The notion of contagion is particularly apt as it concerns the sacred object of Yorick's snuff-box. In his analysis of the sacred and profane realms, Emile Durkheim proposes a characteristic contagiousness that sacred things share. People and other things that come into contact with them take on a sacred quality of their own, which means that they become set apart; they themselves can only be handled, seen or consumed under special conditions and circumstances. This property of sacredness actually belongs to the larger category of representation in general, since symbols are the vehicles which spontaneously transmit feeling. Durkheim explains that whatever feelings a thing evokes are also evoked by its symbol and that certain symbols are better conductors than others. There are instances in which the thing itself is, by its nature, difficult to comprehend. The symbol is what allows the thing to be grasped more definitively and for the feelings it evokes to be understood. This would certainly be the case with Yorick's conception of sentiment or generosity. Durkheim writes:

> We cannot detect the source of the strong feelings we have in an abstract entity that we can imagine only with difficulty and in a jumbled way. We can comprehend those feelings only in connection with a concrete object whose reality we feel intensely . . . The symbol thus takes the place of the thing, and the emotions aroused are transferred to the symbol. It is the symbol that is loved, feared, and respected. It is to the symbol that one is grateful. (Durkheim 221-222)

For Yorick, the snuff-box gift is the symbol which he loves and appreciates for what it evokes in him. It functions via the property of contagion whereby the handling of it serves to arouse a wellspring of generous feeling. To it he owes not only his most magnanimous moments but also the ability to conceptualize and articulate generosity. In Sterne's text it is also possible to speak of a kind of literary contagion, since wherever snuff or the snuff-box appear there are gifts and charity. In each of these episodic encounters, tobacco appears as that substance which broaches the possibility of a symbolic alliance between men. Whenever Yorick's latent misanthropy threatens to foreclose opportunities for charity, the arrival of tobacco on the scene generates a swift change of heart. Yorick has even found a way to make the palliative effects of the drug last indefinitely, by establishing an affective relation with the durable container of his tobacco. Even on the level of the signifier, snuff gains in its reputation as the extinguishing of the base passions that men harbor in their hearts.

The sacred significance of tobacco and the snuff-box gift indicates a material and magical aspect to Yorick's religion, one that he purposely and self-consciously invokes. In this regard, it amounts to the nostalgic recovery of a more sensuous spirituality by way of what were judged to be primitive forms of religion. In moments of spiritual transcendence, Yorick does not appeal to hagiographic symbolism or the self-evident Word of God but rather to a horn box container. The

gesture participates in the same sentiment as his romanticizing of rustic life, preferring simplicity and innocence over sophistication. Towards the end of Yorick's recorded travels, he observes religion itself reflected in the spontaneous dancing of a peasant family: an old man plays his stringed instrument while his wife sings and his children and grandchildren dance in front of them. For the first song and most of the second, Yorick does not notice anything out of the ordinary, but eventually catches on to something special: "I fancied I could distinguish an elevation of spirit different from that which is the cause or the effect of simple jollity. —In a word, I thought I beheld *Religion* mixing in the dance—" (159). Initially, he suspects that it is only his imagination that is inserting an element of the divine into the jollity of common folk, but the old man later confirms that the family's dancing was its traditional form of worship and "the best sort of thanks to heaven that an illiterate peasant could pay." The elderly peasant humbly makes his case for a religion that can do without the written word and indeed entirely without words. Yorick assents to this judgment, again siding with the unaffected, unschooled piety of the country folk against the proper doctrine and orthodox practice of church religion.

Even when Yorick does not need the crutch of an intermediary icon and is able to pray directly to a universal power of sensibility, his religion retains the dimension of corporeality in its imagery. In a rapturous moment, he delivers an exclamatory address to his divinity:

> —Dear sensiblity! source inexhausted of all that's precious in our joys, or costly in our sorrows! thou chainest thy martyr down upon his bed of straw—and 'tis thou who lifts him up to HEAVEN— eternal fountain of our feelings!—'tis here I trace thee—and this is thy divinity which stirs within me . . . but that I feel some generous joys and generous cares beyond myself—all comes from thee, great—great SENSORIUM of the world! (A Sentimental Journey 155)

Yorick's prayer asserts the divinity of the sentiments and attributes to them the power of fate. The dramatic highs and lows that he depicts are illustrated in the prone position of the martyr's broken body and the glorious ascension of the one taken up to heaven. If Yorick's ritual interactions with his snuff-box hinted at heresy, this prayer further indicates the direction that his spirituality takes. The worship of bodily and imaginative sensation shares in the enthusiasm of early Methodism, which encouraged the practices of singing sentimental hymns and reciting poetry. Barker-Benfield notes the influence that women, especially, had in the development of a culture of sensibility in Methodist circles. They started literary magazines, wrote hymns and popularized the genre of letters written to the dearly departed: "All of these expressions promulgated sensibility. Women's hymns contributed to the movement for the softening of God's face and the elevation of the suffering Son over the grim Father" (Barker-Benfield 266-267). The tenderness with which Yorick addresses the divine Sensorium aligns with the culture of sensibility which originated among the nonconforming Methodists. In this way, his prayer is a further departure from Anglican orthodoxy than latitudinarian moralizing.

The rustic spirituality of the peasant family and the rapturous prayer to sentiment are, on the one hand, in consonance with the fellow-feeling symbolized by tobacco and, on the other hand, diametrically opposed to the cunning use of religion that Yorick sees popularized in the upper crust of French society, the salon-going deists. At least when he is among them, he is equally world-wise as they and capable of making witty remarks at the expense of faith. When a young lady in one of these fashionable salons confesses her deistic inclinations to him, he warns her that any laxity in her religion would be dangerous, insinuating that she must take on the appearance of piety in order to ward off unscrupulous suitors (146-147). The cynically functionalist approach that Yorick recommends earns him a reputation as a person of *esprit*, one

who was able to make such a good case for revealed religion that it could not be contravened by the best skeptics. The skeptical Yorick that emerges during his brief time spent in sophisticated company shows a different side of him, of which he afterwards repents: one that is less credulous and more eager to discern the motives of others. For a while, he operates on the belief that the secret to procuring favors from others is flattery, and he proves to be so good at it that he has no shortage of patrons eager to make him their guest. This lapse in Yorick's sentimentalism hints at the inadequacies in the religion of generous feeling that he elsewhere espouses. It seems that the symbol of tobacco, as potent as it is under certain circumstances, is not enough to subdue the self-doubt that arises from associating with a secular crowd.

Complications

It is clear from the representation of snuff and its constant association with grandiose feeling that it must be considered a sacred substance instrumental to Yorick's unorthodox spirituality. As with all religious symbolism, then, snuff gives meaning to the relations that Yorick has with others during his travels. Yet these relations do not often begin as innocent or equitable. Sharing snuff with monks, beggars and soldiers allows Yorick to atone for insults and to fraternize with members of various classes, but it also allows him justify his position in relation to them. Upon leaving the dwarfish beggar two sous in his snuff-box and taking a pinch to go, Yorick pats himself on the back for having been so delicate with the beggar's sense of honor. His feeling of self-satisfaction leaves no room for questioning the inequalities so evident in the scene. Robert Markley notes how easily the narrative glides over problems such as these, buoyed by sentiment: "The poverty and social inequality that Yorick encounters on the Continent are not described as the result of any specific economic or political conditions, any authoritarian

strategies of repression, or any conscious malevolence abroad in the world; they are simply presented as opportunities for him to demonstrate his 'natural,' innate virtue" (271). Yorick's confidence in the benignity of his sentiment and the solidity of the tobacco pact leaves him unconcerned about and unable to address the structural causes of the suffering that he seeks to alleviate. Following what Patricia Meyer Spacks calls the "theme of feminization," Yorick's sentimentality renders him incapable of enacting real change in the world. Spacks notes this theme which applies equally to Mackenzie's ineffectual Harley as it does to Sterne's Yorick: "Inasmuch as men make virtue their cause, they become, like females, unable to affect significantly the public world" (Spacks 132). As Spacks remarks, however, the sentimental novel fulfills a separate ethical purpose in depicting the challenge inherent to bridging the gap between the self and other.

In such a socially stratified space as Yorick's eighteenth-century Europe, to imagine the gift of tobacco as a complete catholicon is to be not a little ingenuous. Even the association of tobacco with fraternal peace is suspect if one considers the contentious circumstances surrounding its exchange. When Yorick pleads with the monk to accept his gift of the snuff-box, he confesses his previous bad behavior, with both the monk and the noblewoman as witnesses. His confession, whether heartfelt or not, elicits a rebuttal in the form of a compliment, first from the monk and then from the lady, both of whom tell him it is impossible that he could have behaved so badly. Each of the men tries his utmost to pin the blame for the unfortunate first encounter upon himself, and each one is in turn absolved by the woman. The competition is intense, but it is played out with excellent sportsmanship. Yorick describes his happy surprise: "I knew not that contention could be rendered so sweet and pleasurable a thing to the nerves as I then felt it" (26). The contention is sweet because the contenders are interested in making the

other the victor, of giving him the victory. Each is fully engaged in giving the other the right of way or establishing the other in the right. The effect, in this instance at least, resembles a mutual inflation of egos. This ostensibly disinterested contentiousness among friends resembles potlatch, the practice of northwest American Indians well known to sociologists of the twentieth century. Georges Bataille of the *Collège de Sociologie* describes potlatch as a form of exchange that aims to obligate and humiliate the other:

> Potlatch, is, like commerce, a means of circulating wealth, but it excludes bargaining. More often than not it is the solemn giving of considerable riches, offered by a chief to his rival for the purpose of humiliating, challenging and obligating him. The recipient has to erase the humiliation and take up the challenge; he must satisfy the *obligation* that was contracted by accepting. He can only reply, a short time later, by means of a new potlatch, more generous than the first: he must pay back with interest. (Bataille 202)[77]

The only danger that each party seeks to avoid in a potlatch is that of being outdone by one's partner. The side which gives less or shows less magnanimity in giving is the loser. Losing, moreover, has material significance, since not only does the loser lose face for failing in his obligations but he also risks being enslaved for debt (Mauss 42). The resemblance that the encounter between Yorick and the monk bears to potlatch, which in its historical form included the mass destruction of goods and human sacrifice, hints at how the sweet contention between the two gentlemen might mask other forces at play in their mutual giving.

There is in the narrative of Yorick's travels an acute class awareness that is interested in reconfiguring those ties across class that have become unstable. "In short," Sedgwick writes, "the

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[77] For the classic description of potlatch and its connection with the gift, see Marcel Mauss, *The Gift*, 5-7.

struggle to control the newly potent terms of the male-homosocial spectrum depended on mobilizing a new narrative of the "private," bourgeois family—a narrative that was socially powerful because it seemed itself able to make descriptive sense of relations across class" (68). Yorick makes a space for himself within this new male-homosocial realm of the intellectual and the world-traveler. He does so through the sentimental and gendered narrative of private experience, but also through the narrative of a particular form of generosity whose potent symbol is the gift or exchange of tobacco. Yorick shares his snuff with men of all types, and in doing so, he smooths over the class differentials which, in eighteenth-century Europe, have started to become unruly. In the instances of charitable giving, Yorick performs a social alchemy by transmuting real needs and a real class differential into the elements of a symbolic alliance. By performing a give-and-take with the beggar dwarf, to take the most salient example, he devalues the gift of charity and valorizes the gift of honor, which is simply his condescending to partake of the dwarf's snuff. If we only attend to Yorick's donation of two sous and the dwarf's reciprocal donation of snuff as a circular exchange that symbolizes the pact of friendship between equals, then, as Bourdieu remarks, we are "liable to forget the effect produced by the circular circulation in which symbolic added-value is generated, namely the legitimation of the arbitrary, when the circulation covers an asymmetrical power relationship" (216). We are liable to forget—until we recall the image of the beggar bowing down to the ground. The mutually satisfactory give-and-take between Yorick and the dwarf implies that their unequal status is justifiable and indeed acceptable to both parties. Yorick is confirmed in his role as the rightful distributor of funds among the indigent while the dwarfish beggar receives the incalculable honor of sharing his stuff with a gentleman.

In another instance, Yorick comes across the brokenhearted Maria, abandoned by her lover and no longer in the care of her father. The sentimental narrator moves to occupy both of those roles, unabashedly mixing fatherly affection with erotic desire. He assures her that if they were at his home in England instead of in the Italian countryside, he would take her in as his own and make her eat of his own bread and drink from his own cup (152). After hearing her sad tale and walking with her to Moulines, their mutual destination, he takes his leave of her, leaving her as destitute and lamentable as she was at the start. He vows that if only the emotional trauma could be erased from her mind and if he were not already romantically engaged with another woman, he would fall in love with Maria and provide for her needs:

> . . . and so much was there about her of all that the heart wishes, or the eye looks for in woman, that could the traces be ever worn out of her brain, and those of Eliza's out of mine, she should *not only eat of my bread and drink of my own cup*, but Maria should lay in my bosom, and be unto me as a daughter. Adieu, poor luckless maiden! --imbibe the oil and wine which the compassion of a stranger, as he journieth on his way, now pours into thy wounds. (A Sentimental Journey 154)

Yorick reiterates the conditional offer of nourishment which alludes to the sacramental formula that Jesus spoke to his disciples during the Last Supper. It seems that Yorick feels himself ready to make the ultimate sacrifice for such a poor creature as Maria, only the circumstances do not call for it. Neither do they call for oil or wine, two more substances which, in biblical accounts of miracles, flow in supernatural abundance. Yet in this encounter between Yorick and the luckless maiden, no amount of oil, wine, food or drink is offered; instead, they are invoked in discourse to signify an effusion of sentiment. Yorick will pour oil and wine into Maria's wounds: that is to say, he will express his compassion for her and her plight by immortalizing her in this vignette

which features in his travel journal. This episode illustrates most clearly the substitution of material gift by symbolic recognizance. Yorick feels no compunction when he invokes substantive nourishment, which he does not offer, because he deems his sentimental gestures to be worthier as gifts. These gestures, which comprise the aestheticizing of Maria as a figure of sorrow, do nothing to extract her from her position of suffering but rather sustains it so that sentiment always has an object to contemplate.

Even when Yorick's gifts are material or substantive, they have the effect of committing the recipient to his or her position in a social hierarchy. In several instances, it is clear that Yorick's gifts of money work to ensure the finality of his obligations to the recipients of those gifts. On the various occasions when he deposits a couple of coins in the hands or purses of those who strike him as deserving, his gift is a univocal action which does not constrain him in any way thereafter. This kind of patronage marks a contrast with a kind of giving that does not imply a durable relationship. Markley notes this peculiarity:

> In Sterne's sentimental economy, money replaces the reciprocal obligations (at least in theory) of feudal, aristocratic society that to some extent are still resonant in Shaftesbury's kid-gloves treatment of '*the Vulgar*.' The anonymity of his cash transactions serves to distance Yorick from the objects of his charity, like the '*pauvre honteux*,' even as he proclaims his sympathy for them. (Markley 284)

Yorick's beneficiaries for the most part remain nameless, identifiable only through the aspects of their physiognomy which best characterize their impoverishment: thus, the multiple dwarves, the cripples and the fresh-faced *précieuses*. Their identities are unverifiable just as their function in the narrative is to verify the generosity of Yorick's sentiments.

Finally, the tobacco pact excludes woman while at the same time confining her to a role within it. In Sedgwick's words, the mutual generosity between men is preconditioned by the figure of the ruin of woman. Thus, Yorick's religion of generosity not only excludes women from being active participants, but it also legitimates the masculine perception of women as passive objects of sentimental pity. The lady of nobility who suffers from a secret sorrow can be nothing more than the mediating influence that facilitates the reconciliation between the Yorick and the Franciscan monk. Meanwhile, it is the gift of tobacco that is the symbol and guarantee of brotherly or homosocial love, a love and an alliance that purports to transcend the bounds of class. Sedgwick finds in the narrative of Yorick's travels an acute class awareness that is interested in re-establishing or reconfiguring those ties across class that have become unstable. Indeed, Yorick makes a space for himself within this new male-homosocial realm of the intellectual and the world-traveler through the practice of a particular form of generosity whose symbol is the gift or exchange of tobacco. He does so at the cost of being able to recognize the structures of inequality which sentimentality tacitly upholds but, at the same time, cannot abide. Thus, the ambition to institute a religion of sentimental generosity seems to run aground on the complications that arise from a civil society whose members are deemed to have equal worth.

An ambiguity of motive, along with the several failures of Yorick's sentiment, points to the insufficiency of the snuff-box religion to perfect the narrator's moral character. However, this lack in no way amounts to an ultimately negative appraisal of instrumental religion. *A Sentimental Journey* offers little in the way of a moralizing judgment regarding religious forms, and this inconclusiveness is typical of Sterne's tendency to frustrate the desire for complete satisfaction or fulfillment. Donald Wehrs has shown how Sterne, following in the skeptic tradition, prefers to suspend judgment regarding matters of ultimate importance by offering

grounds for conflicting interpretations (Wehrs 130). Sterne's fragmentary narratives show "that the victimization of sex and its compensating pleasures are *equally* real, that acts of charity are *equally* generous and self-gratifying, that words are *equally* infuriating and delightful" (Wehrs 146). The presentation of Yorick's religion in *A Sentimental Journey* participates in this duality by pointing to the inevitable but by no means fatal degradation of religious forms. The ossification of the religion announced in its inaugural moment does not mean it is irredeemable. As with any vital religious tradition, Yorick's snuff-box spirituality vacillates between convention and spontaneity, negotiating the former's permanence and transmissibility with the latter's claim to authenticity. Both sublime expressions of fellow-feeling and symbolic exchanges covering over real inequities can thus emanate from this irresolvable tension within Yorick's sentimental religion.

Conclusion

Post-script on Asceticism and Disinterestedness

The preceding chapters have attempted to describe how generosity and disinterestedness are represented in a few literary works from or pertaining to the eighteenth century, when the concepts underwent significant transformations. Inevitably, aspects of the subject matter that merit greater discussion have only been broached and will require further investigating. Perhaps most significantly, the aesthetic dimension of disinterest calls for a more detailed examination. It has been noted that Laurence Sterne's novels contain an aesthetics of disinterest; Yorick's ideal gift and ideal jest satisfy the criterion of gratuity, being entirely at his own expense and not motivated by the prospect of material rewards. The opposite of gratuity, the obsequiousness of a sycophant is presented as a mockery of generosity. Towards the end of his travels in France, Yorick sees a mendicant who is outrageously successful at extracting money from pretentious ladies who cross his path. Upon further observation, he finds out that the secret to the man's success is nothing but flattery. Taking this lesson to heart, Yorick makes the rounds of French high society, eliciting invitations from the most sought-after *mondains* and living off their dime. He achieves all of this merely by stroking the right egos. After a time, he leaves this world, finding his mercenary conduct unsatisfying and distasteful (144-148).

The relation between taste and disinterest is definitively characterized in Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Judgment*. Kant distinguishes between pure judgments of taste, which are disinterested, and impure judgments, which are ruined by interest. "*Taste* is the ability to judge an object, or a way of presenting it, by means of a liking or disliking *devoid of all interest.* The object of such a liking is called *beautiful*" (53). If someone is asked whether a palace is beautiful,

that person's judgment may be unduly influenced by a number of considerations, such as how comfortable living in it would be. Such a judgment would reflect impure taste. Kant alludes to an account of a group of Iroquois who visit Paris in 1666 and are altogether unimpressed by the elaborate mansions and royal grounds. Instead, they are drawn to the street populated by rotisseries with all kinds of meat on display (45 n. 9). Presumably, the Iroquois are incapable of pure aesthetic judgments because they are ruled by what is pleasing to their palates.[78] The interest that is derived from sensory pleasure is especially to be denigrated because it is the most base, not even rising to the level of rational thought, Kant writes. "All interest ruins a judgment of taste and deprives it of its impartiality, especially if, instead of making the purposiveness precede the feeling of pleasure as the interest of reason does, that interest bases the purposiveness on the feeling of pleasure; but this is what always happens in an aesthetic judgment that we make about something insofar as it gratifies or pains us" (68-69). Thus, a judgment of taste based on the sensation of pleasure or pain is the most impartial and impure; secondarily, a judgment based on the use that reason ascribes to an object is also impure, but to a lesser degree. Continuing along this train of thought, Kant writes: "Any taste remains barbaric if its liking requires that *charms* and *emotions* be mingled in, let alone if it makes these the standard of its approval" (69).

Aesthetic taste, by this definition, is only as pure as it is disinterested. Purity *is* disinterestedness, since interest of any kind is what makes taste impure. The analogy with certain analyses of gift-giving is immediately obvious: the gift, like the judgment of taste, is deemed

[78] Franz Boas can tell of a related experience in which the native informant that he brings to New York pays no attention to the skyscrapers and other modern marvels. Instead, he is enthralled by the dwarves, the bearded ladies and a pair of brass balls that adorn a staircase. Lévi-Strauss recalls this anecdote in *Structural Anthropology Volume II* (27).

pure (or, what amounts to the same, valorized) to the extent that it is devoid of interest. To a modern reader, the movement from purity to disinterestedness comes so naturally that making this equation appears almost tautological. A pure intention has come to be understood as one which is unadulterated by interest. Yet conceiving purity in this way is not so self-evident as it might seem. More basically, the idea of purity has to do with things being where they belong. Mary Douglas has demonstrated that, in primitive and modern religions alike, dirt or impurity is best understood as matter out of place (36). People and things that do not fit neatly into available categories are abominated. Israelites considered pigs unacceptable for eating not because they rollick in mud but because they have cloven feet yet do not chew the cud (56). Thus, for a better understanding of disinterestedness, it would be crucial to determine more precisely how aesthetics, like gift-giving, has come to be constituted as a field in which material interest does not belong.

The investigation of how aesthetic taste has been constituted as the negation of both economic interest and sensual pleasure is a major focus of Pierre Bourdieu's *Distinction*. Bourdieu sees the aesthetic ideology as arising from struggles between fractions within the dominant class of modern (French) society. The dominant fractions of the dominant class comprise the members of the bourgeoisie that have a surplus of economic capital which can be converted into cultural capital, through the purchase of art objects, for example. The dominated fractions of the dominant class, having less economic capital, engage in alternative strategies for acquiring cultural capital—redefining aesthetic values and denouncing the tastes of others as unsophisticated. For these fractions, "in the absence of the conditions of material possession, the pursuit of exclusiveness has to be content with developing a unique mode of appropriation. Liking the same things differently, liking different things, less obviously marked out for

admiration—these are some of the strategies for outflanking, overtaking and displacing which, by maintaining a permanent revolution in tastes, enable the dominated, less wealthy fractions, whose appropriations must, in the main, by exclusively symbolic, to secure exclusive possessions at every moment" (282). The dominated fractions of the dominant class, which include teachers, artists and intellectuals, do the work of defining aesthetic values in such a way as to give themselves an advantage in the acquisition of cultural capital. This work can involve ascribing the status of art to ordinary objects or elevating art objects that have been devalued.

The methods for acquiring cultural capital are ruled by the principle of exclusivity, Bourdieu maintains. The appropriation of a material art object guarantees exclusivity through the laws of personal property. Symbolic forms of appropriation also succeed in generating value by narrowing the circle of ownership. The possession of sophisticated taste is only valuable to the extent that it is exclusive and difficult to acquire. The dominated fractions of the dominant class make the legitimate expression of sophisticated taste a moving target so as to devalue any "naturally" inculcated taste that is not the result of formal or informal training and initiation. In continually denying legitimacy to the predominant and popular tastes, the intellectual is better able to monopolize the acquisition of cultural capital. Thus, Bourdieu argues, the whole of legitimate aesthetics—aesthetics that certain fractions of the dominant class have established as legitimate in opposition to the illegitimate tastes of other fractions and classes—is constructed on the refusal of the base.

> 'Pure' taste and the aesthetics which provides its theory are founded on a refusal of 'impure' taste and of *aisthesis* (sensation) . . . that 'pure taste', purely negative in its essence, is based on the disgust that is often called 'visceral' (it 'makes one sick' or 'makes one vomit') for everything that is 'facile'—facile music, or a facile stylistic

> effect, but also 'easy virtue' or an 'easy lay'. The refusal of what is easy in the sense of simple, and therefore shallow, and 'cheap', because it is easily decoded and culturally 'undemanding', naturally leads to the refusal of what is facile in the ethical or aesthetic sense, of everything which offers pleasures that are too immediately accessible and so discredited as 'childish' or 'primitive' (as opposed to the deferred pleasures of legitimate art). (486)

The refusal of the facile is the aesthetic and ethical disposition towards asceticism that arises as the strategy of the dominated fractions of the dominant class in its struggles to acquire cultural capital. The ascetic tastes and lifestyle of teachers, who like mountaineering but do not dance, represent their claim to moral superiority over members of the professions (219 and notes).[79]

Bourdieu's remarkable insight about the relation of aesthetics to ethics provides important indications for the study of literature. The eighteenth-century debates surrounding the sentimental novel developed precisely from the aesthetic and ethical rejection of sentimentalism's facile appeal to emotion. To the gate-keeping critics, a tear-jerker like Sterne's *A Sentimental Journey* cannot be considered serious because its appeal is too base and too wide. The hard line that Bernard Mandeville takes in opposition to purportedly charitable gifts arises from this same impulse. Constructing a charity-school or a children's hospital in one's own name requires no great sacrifice or heroically ascetic virtue. It requires only that one have the funds—the economic capital—to do so. Refusing to valorize such gifts amounts to delegitimizing this avenue for the conversion of economic capital to cultural capital. Interpreted in this manner,

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[79] Bourdieu uses the demographic of teachers at all levels as the example of "ascetic aristocratism," which is typified by "severe cultural practices" like visits to museums in the provinces as opposed to luxurious activities like hunting and water-skiing (286). Bourdieu deems this asceticism to be aristocratic because it lays claim to exclusive superiority, even if on the basis of merit (or, more precisely, educational certification as a proxy for merit).

Mandeville's essays and fable level the playing field for all those engaged in the pursuit of cultural capital by denying the dominant fractions of the dominant class the advantage that their economic capital would otherwise allow them.

Bourdieu's analysis emphasizes the class dynamics that result in the valorization of ascetic tastes and conduct. This way of looking at the history of moral developments is not his invention, of course. Bourdieu's intellectual predecessor, Max Weber also finds that the material interests of social strata strongly determine the prevalence and direction of ascetic forms in a society. In addition, Weber attends to the role that religious ideas and interests play in the propagation of an ascetic ethos.

As a historian of religions, Weber begins his account of asceticism by looking into the positive evaluation of suffering in various religions (Social Psychology 271). It is no surprise that certain religions have evaluated suffering *negatively*. Someone who suffers ill fortune can be seen as being punished by the gods for misdeeds. A negative evaluation of suffering provides the dominant strata of society the justification for their good fortune; such a doctrine is aligned with both their material interest in securing their wealth and their ideal or religious interest in assuaging their consciences. A negative evaluation of suffering is thus more likely to appear in a society whose religious beliefs are strongly determined by its dominant strata. On the other hand, the explanation for a *positive* evaluation of suffering is less straightforward. Weber asks: what accounts for the glorification of poverty, martyrdom and pain that is found in the world religions? For religions like Buddhism, Islam and Christianity, which Weber calls salvation religions because they promise deliverance from certain conditions, the moral evaluation of suffering has been turned on its head: now, suffering is good because suffering is spiritual.

In explaining this reversal, Weber first submits Nietzsche's concept of resentment. In the *Genealogy of Morality*, Nietzsche explains Christian asceticism as a kind of "slave revolt in morals" (19-22). Those who are materially disadvantaged resent their poverty and their oppressive obligations. Instead of seeking a change in material conditions, however, they glorify poverty and the performance of duties to which they are obligated. In this way they are able to carry a kind of moral victory over their oppressors. Weber remarks that the reversal of the evaluation of suffering in the historical development of religious ethics "carries a certain justification for" Nietzsche's theory (Social Psychology 271).

Yet Weber's account of the positive religious evaluation of suffering is more comprehensive than Nietzsche's. Weber offers an explanation that begins with an investigation of the formation of religious communities. In the community cult, Weber says, abnegation and abstinence have always been tied to the holy precisely because they represent a departure from daily, profane activity. "Numerous forms of chastisement and of abstinences from normal diet and sleep, as well as from sexual intercourse, awaken, or at least facilitate, the charisma of ecstatic, visionary, hysterical, in short, of all extraordinary states that are evaluated as 'holy'" (Social Psychology 271). The positive evaluation of abstinence and self-mortification in ritual conduct arises from this association of ascetic conduct with charismatic states of holiness.

This positive evaluation is subsequently reinforced in salvation religions which promise deliverance from suffering, since the suffering that is common to all members of the religious community is the principle that unites them (Religious Rejections 330). In effect, a religious community which promises deliverance from suffering forms among the masses who have this precise need for redemption. The prophet who institutes a religion is only able to administer the religious good of salvation to these masses receptive to the message of deliverance. What this

means is that the real and ideal interests of religious specialists—prophets, priests and mystagogues whose livelihoods and calling depend on a faithful constituency—align them with the masses that are the most receptive to the services that they offer. This alignment, Weber says, explains why religions of redemption have overwhelmingly been centered around the oppressed strata of society who have the most pronounced need for salvation, particularly from material conditions. Thus, the religious specialists who systematize a religion's beliefs and practices would intentionally or unintentionally cater their message to this audience rather than to the ruling class. Weber concludes that the positive evaluation of suffering and the negative evaluation of leisure in salvation religions is most directly related to the interest situation of these religious specialists.

In this latter aspect of his analysis, Weber arrives at a similar conclusion as Bourdieu. Suffering and ascetic conduct are valorized over and against the luxurious lifestyle of dominant strata, resulting in an increased capacity of the dominated strata to acquire symbolic capital (in this case, religious approbation). Bourdieu makes the parallels between aesthetics and religious ethics explicit, arguing that artists, like the devout, deceive themselves into thinking that their activity is pure and disinterested while it is actually driven by self-interest. This belief in their own disinterestedness is "the true opium of the intellectuals," Bourdieu says. "The analogy with religion is not artificial: in each case the most indubitable transcendence with respect to strictly temporal interest springs from the immanence of struggles of interest" (317). No matter whether he is discussing Kabylian masons or the left-bank avant-garde, Bourdieu's argument regarding disinterestedness is everywhere the same: disinterestedness is disguised self-interest. Interest goes misrecognized as gratuity by those who pull the veil over their own eyes. The disinterested

ethos, like pure taste, must efface the conditions of its genesis so that it appears natural and unaffected (cf. 68). Disinterestedness is essentially bad faith.

Weber is not so categorical. Even while demonstrating the elective affinity between oppressed classes and ascetic dispositions, he emphasizes that the resentment of these less socially valued strata cannot explain the content of religious ideas. "This essentially negative force of resentment, so far as is known, has never been the source of those essentially metaphysical conceptions which have lent uniqueness to every salvation religion" (Social Psychology 277). A negative evaluation of leisure does not by itself make suffering meaningful. The ascetic ethos and its corresponding world view depend on metaphysical conceptions which determine the direction that ascetic conduct takes. These conceptions are not merely the reflection of material interests. In a remark that contradicts the polemic in *The German Ideology*, Weber states: "Moreover, in general, the nature of a religious promise has by no means necessarily or even predominantly been the mere mouthpiece of a class interest, either of an external or internal nature" (Social Psychology 277).[80]

For Weber, the task of interpreting the history of culture and religion always has a dual aspect. If religious ideas do not merely reflect class interest, it is because religion maintains a degree of autonomy from the mundane. Struggles of interest do not fully explain the "primeval" association of ascetic deprivations with charisma. Prestige accrues to those who inflict

[80] Marx writes: "The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas: i.e., the class which is the ruling *material* force of society, is at the same time its ruling *intellectual* force. The class which has the means of material production at its disposal, has control at the same time over the means of mental production, so that thereby, generally speaking, the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it. The ruling ideas are nothing more than the ideal expression of the dominant material relationships, the dominant material relationships grasped as ideas; hence of the relationships which make the ruling one, therefore, the ideas of its dominance" (172-173).

chastisements on themselves because this behavior is recognized as an avenue to the supernatural. By abstaining from food or sex, the devout set themselves apart from the profane world (Social Psychology 271).

This latter description of religious (or, for Weber, magical) asceticism is substantially the same as the one given by Weber's contemporary, Emile Durkheim, in *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. Durkheim makes ascetic renunciations fully half of ritual conduct, comprising the "negative cult," namely the prohibitions and proscriptions that a religion imposes upon its practitioners (306). The negative cult prepares an initiant for participation in sacred activity either by ridding the individual of ritual impurities or by directly imbuing the individual with sacredness. An example from Australian aboriginal religion demonstrates the extent to which an initiant withdraws from contact with the profane world as a way to prepare for entry into the sacred. The novice is directed to live in the bush for a period of several months.

> For him, this is a time for every sort of abstinence. He is forbidden a great many foods, and he is allowed only as much food as is strictly necessary to sustain life . . . In some cases, he must beg for his subsistence. He sleeps only as much as is indispensable. He must abstain from speaking unless spoken to and indicate his needs with signs. He is forbidden all recreation. (Durkheim 315)

The severity of these abstinences corresponds to the heights of sacredness which the novice attains. As he endures the rigors of this period of renunciation, he undergoes such a complete transformation that it is considered a second birth, from which he emerges within society as someone with an altogether different status. Previously, he was only concerned with and was only allowed contact with profane things. Now, as if raised to a higher consciousness, he concerns himself with sacred matters.

Durkheim theorizes that this logic stands at the origin of religious asceticism. Insofar as profane activity is associated with the needs of an individual and the individual's instinctive drives, the cessation of profane activity signifies the subjection of the individual to society's demands. Withdrawing from the world amounts to a movement of transcendence: a movement out of and beyond the dictates of nature. This movement is the precondition for the opening up of religious life: feast, sacrifice, communion. Society's reverence for certain individuals who take ascetic conduct to the extreme is explained by the fact that they serve as models for the rest of the faithful. The great ascetics, who gain the status of the elite, set an unattainably high bar towards which the ordinary person can strive. Regarding their seemingly inhuman behavior, Durkheim writes: "The contempt they profess for all that ordinarily impassions men strikes us as bizarre. But those extremes are necessary to maintain among the faithful an adequate level of distaste for easy living and mundane pleasures" (321). The severity of the abstinences these individuals impose upon themselves is explained by the value their example has for society. Their distaste for pleasure and *their refusal of the facile* does not arise from struggles of interest but from society's need for exemplary models.

Durkheim's understanding of asceticism is distinctly opposed to the analysis that takes it to be an artifact of class interest. For Durkheim, asceticism involves giving up profane interests in the service of religious ends. Furthermore, since "religious interests are only social and moral interests in symbolic form," the essence of asceticism according to Durkheim resides in transforming individual (profane) interests into social interests (321). Through a different sort of alchemy than what Bourdieu describes, society persuades its members to sacrifice their own interests in favor of the interests of the whole. These individuals may be convinced that they are only engaged in a self-serving endeavor to increase their own prestige, or they may be aware of

the benefit their ascetic activity provides to society. What matters is that, through a progression of ascetic forms, a society's members gain the aptitude for self-denial. Thus, Durkheim infers a disciplinary and tutelary function in the suffering that renunciatory rites impose on the practitioners of a religion. "The sufferings they impose are not arbitrary and sterile cruelties, then, but a necessary school in which man shapes and steels himself, and in which he gains the qualities of disinterestedness and endurance without which there is no religion" (320).

Relying on a model of society that sees symbolic activity as essentially integrative, Durkheim concludes that the meaning of disinterestedness has to do with sociality. Whether this analysis in *The Elementary Forms*, which is empirically grounded in societies that exhibit comparatively little social stratification and division of labor, can be extended to the modern world is not entirely clear. Nevertheless, it provides another indication that the basis for disinterestedness in all its forms may not be entirely reducible to bad faith.

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