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## **Ethic and Aesthetic Friendship—Francis Hutcheson and Bernard Mandeville's Debate on Economic Motivation\***

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### **Abstract**

This article investigates a much understudied aspect of the Scottish Enlightenment in general and Francis Hutcheson in particular: the conceptualization of friendship or sociability with reference to economic motivation. It illustrates three major claims. First, it argues that Hutcheson introduces economic thinking into moral philosophy, in direct opposition to Bernard Mandeville's doctrine of egoism and antagonism against the Church's appreciation of charity. Accordingly, his economic thought conveys religious sentiments, a fact frequently overlooked by modern historians. Second, departing from a moral philosophy of dualism—in which human nature is simultaneously self-interested and benevolent—Hutcheson argues for the

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importance of virtue, i. e., the beauty of the increasing capacity of benevolence for others' benefits. The Hutchesonian optimistic view of an ethical community separates him from his students, Adam Smith among them. Concerned with economic development, Smith denies charity and benevolence positive places in the economic domain. Third, in keeping with his tenet of increasing virtue, Hutcheson upholds universal friendship. However, this universalism does not fit well into the political and social milieu of the French Revolution, which incubates a Whiggish conservative worldview that considers universalism unwanted.

**Key Words:** Francis Hutcheson, Adam Smith, Bernard Mandeville, friendship, benevolence

## I.

Francis Hutcheson inaugurated his literary career by attacking the doctrine of “unsociable sociability,” that quite instrumental view of human relations outlined by Thomas Hobbes and Samuel Pufendorf. But the champion of the school of egoism in his time was a Dutch-English medical doctor, Bernard Mandeville, notorious for writing *The Grumbling Hive* (1705) and *The Fable of the Bees* (1714). His opponents, said Hutcheson, contended that human beings, prompted by nothing but the cold *raison d'état* of self-preservation, formed groups simply in order to survive. If self-interest lay at the heart of every human relation, friendship was impossible.<sup>1</sup> Cordial relations were little more than various masks of civility and hypocrisy. In opposition to this view, Hutcheson uncompromisingly maintained that ethical community provided the moral fibre of civil society, that friendship had to be perceived as a crucial embodiment of the community, and brushed aside the analysis of Aristotle. Rather than distinguish genuine from counterfeit friendship, Aristotle had identified three types of friendship: that formed for pleasure, for utility, and for virtue (Den & Griswold, 1996: 609-637; Pangle, 2003: 57-64, 159-168; Schroeder, 1992: 203-218; Tessitore, 1996: 73-95). Though Aristotle had crowned virtuous friendship preeminent, in Hutcheson's opinion, associations motivated by pleasure and utility could not be called friendships at all. Friendship, he maintained, looking back to the Greek word *philia*, was love, best defined as “love arising from conformity of virtuous dispositions” (Hutcheson, 1747: 132).

This deep-seated commitment to virtuous friendship, in no significant way different from the traditional Christian ideal, provides the backbone for Hutcheson's moral philosophy. Throughout his life, Hutcheson remained true to his Hellenic ideal,

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<sup>1</sup> Hutcheson described both Pufendorf and Mandeville as modern “Epicureans” or skeptics of social affection (Hutcheson, 1989: 77).

forming intimate friendships only with those who shared his intellectual proclivities and moral tastes.<sup>2</sup> For Hutcheson, friendship could only be disinterested. In an essay published in 1726, he opposed Mandeville's moral philosophy because it was "suspecting [of] all friendship, love, or social affection, of hypocrisy, or self design or fear:" a sort of demoralizing morality that had to come from Hobbes's idea of self-love (1989: 3).

Focused his discussion on Hobbes's notion of laughter as a "sudden glory of the self," Hutcheson insisted that good-natured laughter often arose out of disinterested feelings of friendship.<sup>3</sup> "Laughter," he said, "is none of the smallest bonds of common friendships, tho' it be of less consequence in great heroic friendships" (1989: 37). Friendships might be common or heroic, but both could involve disinterested sociability.

Just as Hutcheson challenged Mandeville's chilly take on friendship, he rejected his thoughts on religion. Appalled by Mandeville's heterodoxy, Hutcheson's subsequent labours on universal benevolence were undertaken in response to the doctrine of egoism propounded most famously by Mandeville.

Friendship entails at least two different categories of morality: the cultivation of selfhood and selfless devotion to others. When Hutcheson defined friendship as "love arising from conformity of virtuous dispositions," he neatly blended these two categories,

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<sup>2</sup> Partly for this reason, he failed to support David Hume in his application for the chair of Ethics and Pneumatic Philosophy at Edinburgh University. On declining Lord Minto's invitation to act on the Chair, Hutcheson recommended Thomas Craigy, Professor of Hebrew at St Andrew's, and Robert Trail for that position. Letter from Hutcheson to Gilbert Elliot on 4 July 1744, National Library of Scotland MSS 11004, Minto Early Family Paper, f. 57. For the Hutcheson and Hume's friction at this particular event (Scott, 1900: 126-127).

<sup>3</sup> "The opinion of our superiority may raise a sedate joy in our minds, very different from laughter; but such a thought seldom raises in our minds in the hurry of a cheerful conversation among friends, where there is often an high natural esteem" (Hutcheson, 1989: 50-51). For a brief but useful discussion of laughter in early modern Europe, see Skinner (2001).

making the combination a prerequisite for friendship. One would expect Hutchesonian friendship to be a rare and very charitable attachment, for in so defining that noble relation, Hutcheson celebrated a far nobler humanity than that found in the descriptions of Hobbes and Mandeville, even as he acknowledged the difficulty of achieving the universal friendship, for which some orthodox clergymen were calling. One might see Hutcheson's idea of friendship as a compromise between two extremes of moral philosophy: Hobbes's and Mandeville's egoism on the one hand, and Christian charity on the other, a point I shall elaborate on in due course. Suffice it to say for the time being that these extremists generally identified genuine friendship with benevolence or charity. Leaders of the egoistic school of philosophy tended to suppose that society was composed of rational individuals with little in the way of corporate identity, much as the Epicureans saw the world as a somewhat random collection of atoms. According to this philosophical formula, genuine friendship was unattainable, as benevolence and charity were out of the question. By contrast, optimistic clergymen diligently preached that all human beings, collectively the body of the Church, were equal and entitled to free gifts. Benjamin Carter wrote: "In vain shall search for it [i.e., charity] in the Books of [pre-Christian] Moralists. . . . Here Socrates and Plato, Tully and Plutarch . . . are infinitely outdone: Charity is an Evangelical Grace" (1712: 4). He declared godly love of one's neighbor "a noble and universal love, showing from the purest principles, and directed to the highest ends" (1712: 4-5).

## II.

At about the same time that Hutcheson embarked on challenging Mandeville's tenet of egoism, many churchmen, including Benjamin Carter, Timothy Greated, and many others, also came to censure Mandeville, for the latter elaborated his theory of egoism by ridiculing the charity schools project. As we

will see, Hutcheson did acknowledge Mandeville's concern with self-love or self-interest as human instinct for preservation and accordingly tended to envision a moral philosophy of dualism in which humans were by nature benevolent and self-interested at the same time. But the clergymen abovementioned reiterated the Church's conventional assimilation of friendship with charity in a battle of pamphlets over a plan to found charity schools nationwide. They equated friendship and charity: similar etymological connections to love made it all the easier to use the words interchangeably in debates over the charity schools.<sup>4</sup> Since the Reformation, British clergymen and theologians alike had relentlessly addressed the virtue of charity. Isaac Barrow, the famed Cambridge mathematician and divine, and Richard Allestree, the author of the acclaimed *The Whole Duty of Man*, both expressed at considerable length their ideas about bounty and charity, supporting them with idealistic and doctrinal arguments, among them the idea that charity and benevolence were meaningless if not universally practiced (Allestree, 1704: 298-324; Barrow, 1671: 23, 39, 155-156, 164). As the secular state consolidated its power it took over from the Church part of the task of reforming manners, issuing regulations hostile to urban vagrants, adults and children alike. The religious campaign to open charity schools confronted these new government policies with an appeal to the people's charitable impulses.<sup>5</sup> An anonymous pamphlet, emphatically titled *Charity Still a Christian Virtue*, complained that English law tended to assume that "whoever collects charity of any sort, even

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<sup>4</sup> For instance, Allestree noted that Jonathan's friendship with David is a great example, as "he loves him as his own soul." On charity he said, "The second branch duty . . . is charity, or love" (Allestree, 1704: 290, 298). The corresponding Latin passages read: "Cujus praeclarum in Jonothane erga Davidem, quem tanquam animam suam adamavit . . ." "Charitate seu amore comprehenditur" (Allestree, 1704: 258, 265).

<sup>5</sup> To be sure, the charitable ideal was not exclusive to Protestant Britain; it had its roots in the Catholic countries that had undergone dynamic humanistic movements (Slack, 1995: 6-7).

for the relief and education of the poor, is guilty of an unlawful act; and, that the persons for whom such collection is made, are vagrants” (Anonymous, 1719: 10). That said, so immediate was the need that Christian virtue had to trump temporal laws: “It is most certain, virtue is the firmest support of a throne, and penal laws are necessary evils” (Anonymous, 1719: 14). Many determined clergymen took up the cause of the charity schools, part of a movement that led a modern historian to describe the century as “the age of benevolence” (Jones, 1938: 3).<sup>6</sup> But there is no question that this philanthropic scheme would also improve the Church’s access to impressionable young minds when secularism was on the rise (Jones, 1938: 3). In the realm of moral philosophy, the debates over the charity schools had far-reaching intellectual ramifications, stirring up further discussions of the nature of charity, Christianity, friendship, society, and benevolence.

While charity has long been discussed by Christians in the terms of a moral economy, the idea that friendship could be placed in a framework of political economy is recent. In the Greco-Roman tradition, friendship motivated by material rewards or self-interest is discouraged or, even, despised.<sup>7</sup> Only recently have observers come to expect that friendship will be entangled with interests, material or political. When many clergymen identified friendship with charity, friendship was reintroduced into political economy. This permitted the satisfaction of two impulses, the Greco-Roman ideal of equality between friends and the Christian ideal of benevolence.

The reintroduce of charity in the modern commercial society faced a cunning opponent. While clergymen preached the virtues of unrewarded giving, others drew up apologies for trade.

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<sup>6</sup> Jones drew up an impressive list of the charity schools opened in England, Wales, Scotland, and Ireland (Jones, 1938: 351-410).

<sup>7</sup> Some modern scholars argue that the Greek notion of friendship is based on the exchange of gifts. Aristotle’s category of virtuous friendship permits such transactions but does not require them. A recent study is Woodruff (2002: 118-131).

Sounding much like Adam Smith and Samuel Pufendorf, Jeremy Collier suggested that because of “the wants and imperfections of nature” man was naturally sociable in order to be able “to *Barter* with his neighbour” (Collier, 1703: 52). Need and utility became the same thing and determined whether friendships would arise.

This exchange of offices, when it’s managed with Frankness and Fidelity, excites native Generosity, and improves into Confidence and Affection. But god is all Things to himself: he needs no foreign Commerce to furnish his Happiness. And as he cannot receive an advantage, so neither does his Satisfaction deepen upon giving one. (Collier, 1703: 52)

Faced with this sort of argument, many clergymen and some lay writers rushed to attack modern friendships.<sup>8</sup> Carter, for instance, regretted that friendship was “at present little more than a name in the world” (1718: 1). Taking on the discourse rather than the deed, Greated remarked that vulgar talks of friendship were deceptive, a “mere politick engine, to seduce innocent and well-meaning persons” (1726: 4). Friendship, he said, had to be tested by time and experience: “If a bare union of wills were sufficient to constitute this natural engagement, without any regard to honour and conscience, the devils themselves might claim the character of friends” (1726: 29-30).

In a commercial society, friendship would need to be resilient and inventive to survive the threats posed by long-distance trade, exploration, emigration, and all of the other activities that led the ambitious and the desperate to take leave of family and friends. Jonathan Swift wrote *Gulliver’s Travels* in a period when British colonial enterprises provoked worries and suspicions among many in the educated class. If his famous book expressed some of these

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<sup>8</sup> Thanks to Habermas’s secular view of the public sphere and civil society, readers have lately tended to forget that in the eighteenth century the most powerful medium for addressing large numbers of people was still sermons (Gregory, 2002: 227).



anxieties, Swift also expressed the hope that Parliament would reintroduce Roman consumption laws (Hoppit, 2002: 301).

Swift's reflection on commercial life found resonance among his contemporaries. An essay of 1714 sarcastically argued that friendship among the ancient Greeks might not have been so fine as all that. In a comment that appears to have been meant as a sly jab at British commercial society, where friendships were often contaminated by contact with trade, it remarked, "Thus friendship among the Greeks, is an intercourse of services; a traffic of benefits, which rises or falls according to the degree of the obligation" (Anonymous, 1714: 36). It described an imaginative breakup between Jonathan Swift and Richard Steele—and concluded that little had changed since the time of Socrates:

Thus friendship is bartered between man and man, in several degrees of the word; the friendship of men of a quality to one another, that of the trading part of mankind; of the scholar, the lawyer, and even the priest; all proceed from the same motive, the love of themselves. Nature has so contrived it, that there should be a mutual dependence; an intercourse of benefits: so that though there is not such a thing, in reality, as friendship in the world, yet it's necessary there should be an appearance of it. (Anonymous, 1714: 46-47)

Such a sarcastic attitude resembled Montaigne's famous reflections, but it was not unique.<sup>9</sup> Many religious moralists expatiated on the unfortunate effects commercial society could have upon friendship. Under such circumstances, it is not surprising to find that Cicero's treatise on friendship was frequently reprinted at the turn of the Eighteenth Century.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> To be sure, Montaigne appreciated genuine friendship so highly that he did not think that friendships among many people were possible (Montaigne, 1987: 205-219).

<sup>10</sup> According to Burke, Cicero's famous treatise on friendship was first translated into English in 1481. The dates of its translation accord to renaissance interests in Roman humanism in general and friendship in

When clergymen turned their attention to the question of friendship, particularly the virtuous and needy friendship identified with charity, the model they relied on was the fellowship (or friendship) of Christ (Cheyn, 1718). Advancing from their ambition to reform manners, those church fathers, ministers, and philanthropists proposed universal friendship as the principle that would undergird their plans for charity schools.<sup>11</sup> Sharing and disinterestedness were considered core values of friendship, in contrast to the acquisitive values that “fashionable friendship” promoted. A celebrated minister of his time, Henry Abbot told his readers that Christianity identified friendship as charity: “By charity and friendship the whole world will be united” (1713: 17). Likewise, Matthew Audley complained that “the world is full of enough temporizing friends” and quoted the Old Testament: “Change not a friend for any good” (1739: 21-22). In short, those clergymen were all in agreement with Lewis Stephens, who wrote in 1721, “The principles of charity are born with man, and seem to grow up together with him; therefore this virtue hath been practiced in all ages, and in every nation under heaven” (1721: 9). For them, friendship might serve as a safeguard against the selfish behavior that was fostered by a moral economy increasingly dominated by commerce.

Their opponents were skeptical. Mandeville criticized the charity-school project in an essay he added to a reissue of the latter book in 1724: “An Essay on Charity and Charity-Schools.” Even more than his previous works, this essay incited many of the clergymen and moralists of the day to take issue with the doctor. With his characteristic moral nihilism, Mandeville attacked charity

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particular (Burke, 1999: 262-274). In *The Spectator* and other polite journals friendship was often discussed. For instance, see Bond (1965: 1516).

<sup>11</sup> In that representative work on the reformation of manners, *The Whole Duty of Man*, Richard Allestree enumerated five virtues that accompany true friendship: faithfulness, assistance, admonition, prayer, and constancy—this presentation is doctrinal and authoritative (Allestree, 1704: 289-293).

as hypocritical, a violation of man's true nature. He admitted that humans might sympathize with others, that virtuous men might even feel pity at the news of others' misfortune, but search as he might, a disinterested observer would never find charity in the human heart.

To Mandeville, charity was as illusory as self-love and partiality were universal. For the moral philosopher the charitable heart had to be absolutely free of self-interest, so Mandeville carefully distinguished friendship from charity: friendship had to be based, to some extent, on partiality, on preferring one person over another, so it could never be utterly devoid of self-love. Charity, on the other hand, was supposed to be universal, meaning that it extended to all, including strangers and even enemies.

Charity is that virtue by which part of that sincere love we have for our selves is transferred pure and unmixed to others, not tied to us by the bonds of friendship or consanguinity, and even mere strangers, whom we have obligation to, nor hope or expect any thing from. If we lessen any ways the rigour of this definition, part of the virtue must be lost. What we do for our friends and kindred, we do partly for ourselves: When a man acts in behalf of nephews or nieces, and says they are my Brothers' children, I do it out of charity: he deceives you: for if he is capable, it is expected from him, and he does it partly for his own sake: If he values the esteem of the world, and is nice as to honour and reputation, he is obliged to have a greater regards to them than for strangers, or else he must suffer his character. (Mandeville, 1988, 1: 285-286)

Given such a platonic view of charity, Mandeville could only arrive at an ironic conclusion: "As pity is often by ourselves in our own case mistaken for charity, so it assumes the shape, and borrows the very name of it, a beggar asks you to exert that virtue for Jesus Christ's sake, but all the while his great design is to raise your pity" (1988, 1: 291). Mandeville's sarcastic voice rings out loudly as he scourges those too weak to recognize their true natures:

It is hardly conceivable that men should so little know their own hearts and be so ignorant of their inward condition, as to mistake frailty, passion and enthusiasm for goodness, virtue and charity. (1988, 1: 321)

Upon reading this essay Hutcheson promptly drew up a response.

### III.

Shortly after Hutcheson published his well received treatise of *An Inquiry into the Original of Our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue* (1725), he drew up a series of articles in which he attacked Hobbes's and Mandeville's notions of human nature.<sup>12</sup> Whether or not he mentioned Mandeville, Hutcheson seemed always to be responding to the questions his foe had posed. What was society for, aside from securing our animal needs? Was it enough for every individual to work diligently for his own sake and follow the law if he never formed sentimental attachments with others? These questions haunted many of Hutcheson's countrymen, so much so that one could call this, with a nod to J.G.A. Pocock, the Mandevillean moment in Scottish moral philosophy. Among those who mounted a counterattack was William Law, professor of moral philosophy at Edinburgh University (Law, 1724).<sup>13</sup> William Wishart, a minister of the Church of Scotland and the son of the Principal of Edinburgh University, tried to reclaim benevolence and charity for human nature:

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<sup>12</sup> Those articles were published in 1726 and only collected posthumously (Hutcheson, 1989: 77).

<sup>13</sup> For a brief summary of Law's criticism, see Mandeville (1988, 2: 401-406). On the specific issue of charity schools Law remarked, "If you wonder, that I have taken no Notice of the dreadful Evils you charge upon *Charity-Schools*, and the sad Effects which such *catechizing Houses* must have upon a Kingdom that is both *Christian* and *Protestant*; I must tell you that I purposely avoided it. Some things are so plain, that it is yielding too much to offer to defend them" (Law, 1724: 97; emphasis in original).

That there is such a disposition of benevolence, or social affection in Human nature, independent of all deliberate views of self-interest; and exerting itself oft-times without any other prospect of advantage, but the pleasure arising from the view of happiness around us, and seeing others well; is a point, which may indeed be artfully and plausibly disputed by a sort of fashionable moralists, who are for new-molding the human heart; and making a moral world of their own, as a certain philosopher attempted to do a natural one, by resolving all the spring of action in our breasts into either a rash and hasty or a cool and deliberate selfishness. (1731: 7)<sup>14</sup>

Universal benevolence was the key element of charity, and humans were inherently imbued with the sentiment (Wishart, 1731: 6, 10).

Likewise, William Cleghorn, professor of moral philosophy at Edinburgh, certainly had Mandeville in mind when he raised the question in his lectures “whether the private affection can in any sense contribute of itself to the obtaining the ultimate end [i.e., public good]” (1746-7: Doc. 3.3, f. 155). Using Locke to counter those who insisted that humans were essentially egoistic, Cleghorn asserted that “self-affection” (later writers preferred such terms as self-interest and self-love) could and should be brought under control by a mind capable of improvement. While the notes taken by his students are occasionally quite sketchy, the meaning is apparent:

The restraint of this desire & affection: what in proper bounds will on the whole offer more pleasure than when suffered to go beyond bounds or than intemperance &c . . . because in consequence of the many experiments of the insufficiency of these sensible [sensual] gratifications to

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<sup>14</sup> While Mandeville was only Wishart’s foil implicitly, many took him on quite explicitly. Archibald Campbell, Regius Professor of Divinity at St. Andrew’s, expressed himself with remarkable bluntness (Campbell, 1733: 186 ff). Campbell’s work was first published in 1728 under the title *Aretelogia*, with the authorship erroneously assigned to Alexander Innes. See also Mandeville (1988, 2: 25).

procure the ultimate good the mind thinks it has a fairer chance to be happy by restraining the desire of them. Thus the mind becomes more independent on matter & farther qualified for entering into social connection. (Cleghorn, 1746-7: Doc. 3.3, f. 159)

Hutcheson tried a different approach. He took up Mandeville's challenge not via a philosophy of the mind, but through political economy. Hutcheson agreed with Mandeville that friendship was distinct from charity, but it was friendship that incontrovertibly proved that humans could act disinterestedly.

Hutcheson's moral philosophy assumes that human nature is layered and complex. Self-interest co-exists with benevolence: while the former drives us to satisfy our animal needs, the latter drives us to succor the rest of humanity. The basic and "animal" drives prompt humans to act or work, not for friends and families, but for self-preservation.<sup>15</sup> For Hutcheson, friendships embodied civil society. He conceptualized society as a combination of different groups—one's family, one's friends, fellow countrymen, neighbors, and acquaintances—all of whom one ranked differently in terms of natural and moral attachments. Each category in one's set of social relations received a different kind of attention and care. But ultimately human beings had only two ethical institutions—family and civil society. It is true that Hutcheson shrank from using the term "civil society," instead ranking the different types of human relations to provide an ethical definition of society. This moderate course, not quite the pessimistic analysis of human selfishness yet far from the unelaborated claims that humans possessed marvelously virtuous natures, was something new. It avoided the weakness shared by both the egoistic heterodoxy and the Christian orthodoxy, which reduced human relations and their attendant sentiments into self and non-self.

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<sup>15</sup> As we will see, Hutcheson had described the duality of human motivations from the outset of his career. *A System of Moral Philosophy* is in this regard an attempt to produce a more cohesive and systematic accounting of this.

When we look at how Hutcheson related one group to another, inconsistencies appear. Typically Hutcheson likened friends to the closest relations, such as family. In some cases, however, he suggested a resemblance between friends and neighbour (Hutcheson, 1993: 102). This no doubt resulted from Hutcheson's demarcation of human relations into family and civil society. A schema in which human relations existed along a continuum implies that partiality exists in human nature and life experiences, and the very existence of friendships confirmed that partiality and love coexisted in human nature. Self-preservation itself had a natural connection to human relations: all that was done to earn a living and protect one's interests was for the benefit of family and friends (Hutcheson, 1747: 93).

Since it is manifestly necessary to the common interest of all that large numbers of men should be joined together in amicable societies, and as this is the sum of all our duties toward men that we promote their happiness as we have opportunity; it must follow that all actions by which any one procures to himself or his friends any advantage, while he obstructs no advantages to others, must be lawful; since he who profits one part without hurting any other plainly profits the whole. Now since there are many enjoyments and advantages naturally desired by all, which one may procure to himself, his family or friends, without hurting others, and which 'tis plainly the interest of society that each one should be allowed to procure, without any obstruction from others, (since otherways no friendly, peaceful society could be maintained) we therefore deem that each man has a right to procure and obtain for himself or his friends such advantages and enjoyments. (Hutcheson, 1747: 108)

The partiality felt for family members and friends differed qualitatively from self-love. Favoring a cousin or a brother was a natural impulse, hence more egoistic than one's feelings for friends—self-love was thought to act without reflection, while

friends were chosen. Loving and caring for friends showed that humans, as rational creatures, were capable of a certain measure of disinterest that they did not show in relations with family members. From this departure point, Hutcheson optimistically suggested that “universal calm benevolence” was a plausible ideal for human society as care for others was extended beyond the limit of family and friends to include neighbors and acquaintances.

Hutcheson insisted on a basic difference between the forces that animated self-love and the selfless love one felt for others. The former was driven by sensation, while the latter could not exist without reflection (Hutcheson, 1999: 19-20, 24-25).<sup>16</sup> Because human beings were endowed with reason, reflection was to be encouraged, although some might not bring their reflective capacity to full blossom, setting limits on their ability to sympathize with those distant from them, ensuring that they never achieved their virtuous potential.

It may be necessary to say something about the mental processes Hutcheson discussed. By “reflection,” he meant the Lockean notion of reflection on sensations, not on the sharp stimuli of pain and pleasure. Reflection was based on “calm” sentiments, not volition. Hutchesonian reflection does not imply self-denial or sacrifice. In Mandeville’s universe of self-interested men, any act of apparent benevolence was taken as an investment made in the hope of future rewards; to the extent that true benevolence existed it had to be based on a fundamental denial of human nature (Mandeville, 1988, 1: 369). Because Hutcheson believed that benevolence was natural, an innate part of the self, the cultivation of benevolent sentiments had nothing to do with self-sacrifice. Hutcheson’s duality of human nature is an optimistic view indeed.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> This point marks a disagreement with Cleghorn’s philosophy of mind.

<sup>17</sup> William Law differed slightly from Hutcheson on this point. “An Action is not good, or virtuous, because it is *Self-denial*, but because it is according to Duty; and he who thro’ long habits of Goodness, has made the Practice of



The ideal of universal friendship, “the civil society as an ethical community,” suggested a moral world quite different from the natural one. Sounding somewhat like Isaac Newton, Hutcheson compared the continuum of the great chain of human relations in the moral world with the variety in unity found in the natural world. Insisting on his ranked model of human relations, he declared it “natural” that the strongest human attachments were reserved for self and family. This partiality had nothing to do with reflection. As with Newton’s attractive forces, the closer the relation the stronger the personal attachment. As absolute as this natural law was, it was countered by a moral law just as absolute: the more natural a relation, the less virtuous the benevolent sensation. More reflection and self-denial was involved in good works done for fellow citizens than those done for kin. Even more effort was needed—and more virtue involved—in caring for those whose existence was far removed from one’s own. In short, the world of virtue developed in inverse ratio of the world of nature.

And yet the common interest of the whole, which both the nobler desires of the soul, and our moral sense chiefly recommends to our care, plainly requires that each one should more peculiarly employ his activity for the interest of such whom the stronger ties of nature have peculiarly recommended, or entrusted to his care, as far as their interests consist with the general good, and that his ordinary occupation should be destined for their benefit. The bulk of mankind has no ability or opportunity of promoting the general interest any other more immediate way.

These seem to be general rules of estimation in this matter. The stronger that the natural impulse is in any narrower ties of affection, the less there is of moral beauty in performing any supposed offices; and the greater is the moral deformity of omitting them. The stronger the moral obligation is to any performance, or

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Virtue to have less of Self-denial in it, is the most virtuous Man” (Law, 1724: 33; emphasis in original).

the *right* by which others claim it, the less laudable is the performance, and the more censurable and injurious is the omission or refusal of it. (Hutcheson, 1747: 133; emphasis in original)

Beautiful forms existed already, the creations of the Deity, while virtuous forms, that is, benevolent actions, could not be realized without human exertions. Moral beauty could not blossom without cultivation. In other words, by acknowledging the virtue of friendship, Hutcheson replaced the hard-core biblical mandate “love thy neighbor as thyself” with a soft-core moral philosophy: benefiting one’s neighbor was not evil, it was an act of moral beauty. Hutcheson maintained that everyone who had the “opportunity” should contribute toward the general “interest of society,” which meant, at least, contributing toward the interest of friends and family (Hutcheson, 1747: 124).

As he grew older, Hutcheson became increasingly bold in his universalist aims. In his previous writings he had hinted that the claims of duty extended only as far as one’s neighbors and acquaintances. But in his posthumous work, *A System of Moral Philosophy*, he also considered the moral beauty of helping strangers—he had become a true universalist. Beginning with the “Mandevillean moment,” Hutcheson devoted his philosophical career to rescuing the Christian ideal of universal friendship by means of a humanist language.

Tho’ the duties of mere humanity to persons under no special attachment should give place to the more special ties, yet when they can be discharged, consistently with more sacred duties, they have great moral beauty, and are of more general importance, than one at first imagines. Such offices raise high gratitude, and by the example encourage the more extensive affections: they give amiable impressions of a whole nation, nay of the human species. Thus courtesy and hospitality to strangers, a general civility and obligingness of deportment, even to persons unknown, are justly esteemed high evidence of sweetness of temper, and are

the more lovely, that they are unsuspected of interested views. (Hutcheson, 2000, 1: 307)

The inverse ratio between virtue and nature is a key concept in Hutcheson's moral philosophy: other Scots clergymen embraced it. Patrick Cuming, a leading clergyman in Edinburgh during the Jacobite upheaval, reiterated Hutcheson's words while he preached his famed sermon against the Jacobite rebellion.

Benevolence is in the Moral World, what the Principle of Gravitation is in the Natural: As the Law of Gravitation extends to all Bodies, so does Benevolence to all rational Beings, and, like it, increases as the Distance decreases, as Men are more nearly connected by Acquaintance, Relation, Beneficence, and Friendship. (Cuming, 1746: 5)

Hutcheson's universal benevolence should be conceived within the idea of friendship, a Janus-faced tie that involves both partiality and benevolence. It should also be seen as a phenomenon of civil society because it is, *de facto*, a feeling cultivated among acquaintances. While Hutcheson could not accept the rigid doctrine that human beings were doomed to corruption, he conceded that they were threatened by a new form of corruption caused by an over-indulgence in self-love—the antidote to which was social affection. Friendship, “the confirmation of virtues,” immunized the moral constitution. “But a mixture of the moral pleasures is what gives the alluring relish; ’tis some appearance of friendship, of love, of communicating pleasure to others, which preserves the pleasures of the luxurious from being nauseous and insipid” (Hutcheson, 2004: 166). In this passage we can hear the reverberations of Hutcheson's collegial duties: he did all he could to keep his students from excessive indulgence and insipid manners (Hutcheson, 1738: f. 4). In his own life, he cultivated friendships with men and women who shared his commitment to virtue: naturally not every acquaintance, neighbor, or family member became his *bona fide* friend, and he refuted any form of politics of

friendship. As to political friendships or party factions, he believed that these were formed to secure the interests of groups by displaying a political passion for the right cause and obedience to potential patrons (Hutcheson, 1770: 21-36).<sup>18</sup>

In a moral community human virtues are described using aesthetic terms, including “beauty”; in civil society they are described in the language of natural law. Returning to his Newtonian imagery, Hutcheson observed that humans had two types of rights. He charged government with protecting the people’s “perfect rights,” that is, those that were guaranteed to all. As to “imperfect rights,” they were weaker and could at best be called “claims.” The right a beggar has to our assistance is not a perfect but an imperfect right or claim. That is to say, refusing such a claim could not be the cause of an official charge or punishment. Imperfect rights, Hutcheson remarked, could have “the greatest consequence to the happiness and ornament of society” (Hutcheson, 1747: 122). The satisfaction of an imperfect right depended not on obligations but on conscience and virtue.

The weakness of Hutcheson’s formulation, he conceded, was its simplicity: in practice rights existed, like nature and virtue, along a continuum.<sup>19</sup> By using both the language of ethics and that of natural law, Hutcheson made the ethical community and civil society mutually permeable.

Yet the boundaries between perfect and imperfect rights are not always easily seen. There is a sort of scale or gradual ascent, through several almost insensible steps, from the lowest and weakest claims of humanity to

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<sup>18</sup> What the eighteenth century called “friendship politics” must be distinguished from the Aristotelean idea of political friendship: it meant political patronage. For a history of political patronage, see Tadmor (2001: 167-271). For Aristotle’s idea of political friendship, see Schwarzenbach (1996: 97-128).

<sup>19</sup> Hutcheson seemed to suggest that there was a third kind of rights, “external rights,” which fell outside of conscience or virtue. But he said virtually nothing about this type of right (2004: 122).

those of higher and more sacred obligation, till we arrive at some imperfect rights so strong that they can scarce be distinguished from the perfect, according to the variety of bonds among mankind, and the various degrees of merit, and claims upon each other. Any innocent person may have some claim upon us for certain offices of humanity. But our fellow-citizen or neighbour would have a strong claim in the like case. A friend, a benefactor, a brother, or a parent would have still a stronger claim, even in these things which we reckon matters of imperfect obligation. (Hutcheson, 2004: 123)

Hutcheson's moral philosophy is emancipatory: it consistently encourages humanity to free itself from the bondage imposed by natural impulses and embrace the horizon of modern morality. Modern writers keenly observed that Hutcheson's ideas about universal benevolence anticipated the French Revolution. My point would be that Hutcheson's universalism appears more trenchantly in his Newtonian theorem of human relations and moral duties than in his famous utilitarian adage, "That action is best, which produces the greatest happiness for the greatest numbers" (Radcliff, 1993: 225). More importantly, there is no revolutionary suggestion in Hutcheson's universalism, despite many assertions to the contrary. Hutcheson duly confirmed that every innocent person may have some claim upon us for certain offices of humanity, as suggested a morally gradualist universalism for it was conditioned by partiality of ethical identity.

#### IV.

Partly because of Mandeville's explosive pronouncements, the landscape of British moral philosophy lost forever its native and naïve beauty. If the efforts of Hutcheson and Cuming did stem the erosion by praising universal benevolence, they tended to be read through an egoistic or nationalistic lens—this was particularly true

when turmoil encouraged such readings. For instance, Hugh Blair emphatically argued that benevolent sentiments toward others germinated first in ethical communities. As to universal friendship, it was wild wishful thinking. As Britain girded her loins in the wake of the French Revolution, the idea of moderate universal benevolence enabled Blair to present the nation as an ethical community.

It may be proper to take notice of the speculations of some pretended philosophers, who represent the love of our country as hardly entitled to any place among the virtues. They affect to consider it as a mere prejudice of education, a narrow attachment, which tends to operate against more enlarged interests. We ought, say they, to view ourselves as citizens of the world, and extend our benevolence equally to all nations and all mankind. —Nothing can be more empty and futile than such reasoning. The wisdom of our Creator hath kindled the ties of natural affection, first to our families and children; next to our brothers, relations, and friends; then to our acquaintance, and to the several societies and communities to which we belong. By instincts implanted in our nature, He has formed our hearts to enter readily into their interests; and has thus directed our benevolence to act primarily within that sphere, where its exertion can be most powerful and most useful. (1820, 5: 101-102)

Fourteen years later Blair's sentiment was echoed by Sydney Smith. In an early-nineteenth-century debate on the role of Christian missionaries in India, Smith explained why it made more sense for the directors of the East India Company to distribute a portion of their wealth to their family members rather than giving the same sum to "five hundred paupers in China or Peru":

Our parents and children are nearer to us than the people of India or China; that the good we can do for them, if smaller in amount, is more certain, and the gratification to be derived from it more constant and

secure. Therefore it is that we say, that our duties to our families, to our neighbours, and to our country, are *set before us* by God himself; and that we are not at liberty to desert them in order to gain a remote chance of conferring greater benefits on strangers at a distance. (1808: 170-171)

The meaning of the word *neighbours* in the foregoing passage is likely *friends*.

But the most interesting and intriguing case is probably to be found in Adam Smith. Smith duly acknowledged his intellectual debt, praising “the never forgotten Hutcheson.” Of the generation that succeeded Hutcheson’s, Smith was the most perceptive critic of Mandeville. He did not produce a treatise on friendship but he routinely discussed it in the contexts of an ethical community and polite culture. Using the device of the “impartial spectator,” Smith described how the relations among human beings shaped situations: “We expect less sympathy from a common acquaintance than from a friend: we cannot open to the former all those little circumstances which we can unfold to the latter” (Smith, 1976b: 23). Smith emphasized the sentimental demarcation between friends and non-friends. And as he outlined the relative love human beings feel for themselves and others he developed the idea that while self-love may trump all other loves, propriety ensures that this preference does not lead human beings to harm others. But when misfortune strikes “our parents, our children, our brothers and sisters, our intimate friends” the reaction is something beyond propriety (1976b: 142).

Like Hutcheson, Smith believed that distance decreased the compassion felt for fellow human beings. If an earthquake of unprecedented force were to kill all Chinese men, women, and children, a “man of humanity in Europe” would certainly react with deep sorrow. But once this European had finished grieving, “he would pursue his business or his pleasure, take his repose or his diversion, with the same ease and tranquility, as if no such accident had happened” (1976b: 136). A recent commenter has

pointed out that this illustrative example was no doubt suggested to Smith by the great Lisbon earthquake of 1755. By setting his fictional example in China, Smith emphasized the inverse ratio between benevolence and distance. But by emphasizing the distance, Smith ran the risk of sounding like a moralist he deeply disliked: Bernard Mandeville.

In his attack on charity Mandeville had remarked:

When we hear that three or four thousand Men, all Strangers to us, are kill'd with the Sword, or forc'd into some River where they are drown'd, we say and perhaps believe that we pity them. It is humanity bids us have compassions with the sufferings of others, and reason tells us that whether a thing be far off or done in our Sight, our sentiments concerning it ought to be the same, and we should be ashame'd to own that we felt no Commiseration in us when any thing requires it. (1988, 1: 256-257)

To appreciate why Smith expressed views so close to those of Mandeville, we need to focus on what he wrote about friendship: he viewed the friendships that arose in aesthetic and sentimental life quite differently from those that arose in economic life.<sup>20</sup> Smith elaborated on Hutcheson's calm universal benevolence and moderate universal benevolence, but was more conscious of distinguishing friendship born of aesthetic virtue from that born of benevolent virtue. In other words, Smith was more vigilant than his former tutor in preventing discussions of friendship from slipping into the realm of political economy. Neither Hutcheson's "hospitality for strangers," the clergymen's charity, nor universal friendship was viable in Smith's political economy. His view of universal friendship can be gleaned, with some effort, from a curious sentence that appears in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*

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<sup>20</sup> Unlike Hutcheson's idealism, Smith's moral philosophy was fundamentally utilitarian. He believed, like Mandeville, that giving things away to others was a kind of self-denial (Smith, 1976b: 23).



(1759): “As to love our neighbour as we love ourselves is the great law of Christianity, so it is the great precept of nature to love ourselves only as we love our neighbours, or what comes to the same thing, as our neighbour is capable of loving us” (Smith, 1976b: 25). Though Smith’s wariness of universal friendship necessitated the proviso “that our neighbour is capable of loving us,” his remark is, in my view, quite close in its implications to moderate universal benevolence.

Smith was always quick to emphasize the partiality of friendship over benevolence, especially in his works of political economy.

The lowest ordinary rate of interest must . . . be something more than sufficient to compensate the occasional losses to which lending, even with tolerable prudence, is exposed. Were it not more, charity or friendship could be the only motives of lending. (Smith, 1976a: 113)

Like Smith, modern moralists could look to political economy for their new orientation, endorsing the quest for wealth and discarding the apologetics of poverty. While William Law had maintained that “*Sickness, Poverty and Distress*, have a natural Tendency to correct our Follies, and convert our Minds towards our true Good” (1724: 46), Smith’s logic of economic development treated charity and friendship as anomalies.

In a frequently quoted sentence, Smith pointed out the limits that friendship would impose on universal wealth. While friendship belonged to the personal and subjective realm of aesthetics, universalism could be conceived only in terms of objective and impartial mechanisms of exchange. Markets were not built on friendship or benevolence, but on self-interest.

In civilized society [the individual] stands at all times in need of the cooperation and assistance of great multitudes, while his whole life is scarce sufficient to gain the friendship of a few persons. . . . But man has

almost constant occasion for the help of his brethren, and it is in vain for him to expect it from their benevolence only. He will be more likely to prevail if he can interest their self-love in his favour. . . . 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. (1976a: 26-27)

A full evaluation of the tension between friendship and universalism in Adam Smith's thought would demand a lengthy essay. I will content myself, for now, with noting that while charity and universal friendship are both rejected in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* and *The Wealth of Nations*, both works duly acknowledge the sweetness of friendship and brotherhood. While reason was of paramount importance in civil life, friendship provided the sentimental support so important in such a world. As Cicero wrote long ago, without friendship life was not worth living.

Smith feared that those who indulged too deeply in friendship might blind themselves to the logic of the world, confusing justice and benevolence, equity and friendship. I see Smith's great works as admiring but hardly loyal reconsiderations of Hutcheson's ideas of friendship and universal benevolence, written for the post-Mandevillian age.<sup>21</sup> All who followed would emphasize the limits of charitable sentiments. They certainly believed in the existence of benevolence, but they were not as optimistic as Hutcheson: they could believe in universal benevolence. When Hutcheson wrote that the beauty of virtue between friends resembled the moral beauty of universal benevolence, Smith read a paradox. For Hutcheson, moral perfection was not out of the question.

This circumstance in our constitution, that the standard of moral good is set so high, tho' it is apt to give the mind an unfavourable impression of our species as very

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<sup>21</sup> I shall elaborate this issue in a separate essay.

corrupt, is yet very necessary and useful, as it is a strong restraint from every thing injurious or vicious, and a powerful spur to a continual advancement in perfection. Indeed without such a standard we could not have any idea of perfection, nor could there be any formed intention in the human mind to make progress in virtue. (Hutcheson, 2000: 1: 192-193)

In so many ways, Francis Hutcheson was the father of the Scottish Enlightenment (Campbell, 1982). As in any story of a father and his sons, the relationship between Hutcheson and his followers is marked by complexes, complications, and radical rebellions. The complication partly results from Hutcheson's dualism of self-interest and benevolence that are not readily conciliatory. As illustrated above, Hutcheson offered no theoretical solution for the dualism, but hoped to escape from its inherent contradictions by promoting moral edification—the better human benevolence was comprehended and practiced, the greater moral beauty would be achieved. In such an educational vision, civil society based on commercial transactions and self-interests would be gradually replaced or covered up, as it were, by an ethical community.

The generations following Hutcheson grew up after the world he took for granted was smashed. They were imbued with a belief in progress, the spirit of the age. They were concerned most not with ethical or aesthetical developments or the refinement of virtue, but the sociological development of institutions. Likewise, to them, natural progress of economy overrode charitable sentiments attached to economic motivation. Accordingly, while some literati theorists of the Scottish Enlightenment were unwavering in their determination to undo the damage done by Bernard Mandeville, others expressed their filial sentiments by salvaging some bits and pieces that the new world would accommodate.

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## 友誼之倫理學與美學： 哈其森與曼德維爾對經濟動機的辯論

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### 摘 要

哈其森介入經濟思想與曼德維爾批判宗教界社會慈善事業息息相關，哈其森的經濟思想也因此有其宗教意涵。哈其森相信人類天性或道德不但具有自私因子，同時也具備利他因子；此外，他的道德雙元論在他的學生輩中激起反應。他以基督教的慈善概念訓解非基督教的友誼概念，並鼓勵利他德性。哈其森認為，利他情操越是礪揚，其道德美感越強。順此理論，哈其森得出普世友誼的結論。然而在法國大革命期間，哈其森的普世友誼論受到嚴重的挑戰。蘇格蘭輝格主義者發展出保守的國際政治觀點，而遠離了早期蘇格蘭啓蒙的普世主義價值。

**關鍵詞：**法蘭西斯哈其森、亞當史密斯、伯納曼德維爾、友誼、慈善