ADAM SMITH ON FRIENDSHIP AND LOVE

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> Democracy does not create strong attachments between man and man, but it does put their ordinary relations on an easier footing.
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> Tocqueville[1]

> The excellent person labours for his friends and for his native country, and will die for them if he must; he will sacrifice money, honours and contested goods in general, in achieving what is fine for himself. For he will choose intense pleasure for a short time over mild pleasure for a long time; a year of living finely over many years of undistinguished life; and a single fine and great action over many small actions.
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> Aristotle[2]

THE CENTRALITY OF "SYMPATHY" to Adam Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments* points to the centrality of love in the book. While Smith delineates a somewhat unusual, technical sense of "sympathy" ("fellow-feeling" for any emotion), his actual use of the term frequently slips into its more ordinary sense of "compassion" or affectionate fellow feeling. This no doubt intentional equivocation on Smith's part helps suffuse the book with these themes, to the point that, without much exaggeration, one could say that the *Theory of Moral Sentiments* is generally about love: our need for love and sympathy, love as friendship, self-love, the love of praise and praiseworthiness, the

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[1] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, trans. George Lawrence and ed. Jacob P. Mayer (New York: Harper and Row, 1969), 2:565.

[2] *Nicomachean Ethics* (hereafter, *NE*) 1169a19-25, trans. Terence Irwin (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1985), 256.

love of beauty.[3] Even in the *Wealth of Nations*, our loves are thought
to be very important in explaining our behavior.[4] Smith is unusual
among modern moral philosophers in according so central a place to
love in this broad sense (a sense that includes friendship), although
of course Christianity made love a central theme in reflection on
ethical life, and philosophers such as Hutcheson (one of Smith's
teachers) made benevolence a key virtue in their ethical systems.
However, it is not our purpose to examine Smith's critique of Hutche-
son[5] or indeed of any of his predecessors. Rather we aim in this
paper to reflect on his treatment of this topic. We shall do so in part
by means of comparisons with Aristotle and Plato, first with respect
to friendship and then with respect to love generally. Smith's writing
is replete with classical references, raising the issue of the degree to
which his thought is "ancient" or "modern." Friendship is arguably
the pinnacle of social relations for the ancients, and thus it provides
us with a useful device for determining the degree to which Smith's
thought embodies classical moral and philosophical principles. The
subtlety of Smith's interweaving of traditions will become visible as
we reflect not just on the ways Smith's thought exhibits classical
conceptions of friendship and love, but also on the ways he departs
from them. For in at least one important respect, love is a closed

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[3] For example, Smith says in his own voice "the chief part of human
happiness arises from a consciousness of being beloved"; Adam Smith, *The-
ory of Moral Sentiments* (hereafter, *TMS*) I.ii.5.2, ed. David D. Raphael and
Alec L. Macfie (Indianapolis: Liberty Press, 1982). The centrality of love to
Smith's moral theory did not escape Thomas Reid, whose lecture notes on
Smith show him to have remarked, by way of explaining the teaching of
the *Theory of Moral Sentiments*: "Sympathy seems to me to be inseparably
connected with Love Affection and Esteem. I cannot possibly love a Man
without being pleased with every good that befals him and uneasy at his
misfortune[.] If you ask me why I take so much concern in his good or bad
fortune it is because I love him"; cited by J. C. Stewart-Robertson and David
F. Norton in "Thomas Reid on Adam Smith's Theory of Morals," *Journal of
the History of Ideas* 45 (1984): 309-21.
[4] At *Wealth of Nations* V.i.b.2, for example, Smith speaks of the tremen-
dous importance to human life of our "love of present ease and enjoyment";
and at III.ii.10, of our "love to domineer" and the importance of that to
the phenomenon of slavery. Of course sexual desire and procreation have
important economic consequences that are discussed at various junctures
throughout the book. See Adam Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, 2 vols., ed. Roy
H. Campbell, Andrew S. Skinner, and William B. Todd (Indianapolis: Liberty
Press, 1981).
[5] *TMS* VII.ii.3.

book from Smith's standpoint, and thus, as it turns out, also at odds with classical friendship.

To reiterate, our purpose is not to provide a *Quellenforschung*, or a historical treatment of Smith's appropriation of the thought of his predecessors.[6] We seek to account for Smith's theory of friendship in light of his somewhat dialectical treatment of love, and do so first by outlining the components of classical friendship as one finds them in Aristotle, since this is the standard by which virtually all subsequent theories of friendship may be judged. We next argue that although Smith is "modern" in many respects, his theory of true friendship has some important structural similarities to Aristotle's conception of friendships of virtue. These similarities allow Smith to gain many of the benefits of Aristotle's theory without having to make the same theoretical commitments. Yet the commitments Smith is unwilling to make and the subsequent implications this has for love in general may, in the end, explain the ambivalence towards classical friendships Smith exhibits. We conclude by reflecting on the possible deficiencies of Smith's synthetic account of friendship and love. Our approach here, like Smith's own thought, is itself dialectical.

<center>I</center>

In an often quoted line, Aristotle says that "no one would choose to live without friends even if he had all the other goods."[7] The reasons Aristotle gives in support of this claim are mostly practical at first, but he tells us soon enough that "the friendship of good people in so far as they are good is friendship in the primary way, and

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[6] We grant that our use here of the terms 'ancient', 'classical', and 'modern' is imprecise but not, we trust, without utility for the purposes of our discussion. We occasionally run together the views of Aristotle and Plato, for example, recognizing that in a paper of a different sort we would start by distinguishing between those views. We do note that Smith is virtually silent about Christian love, and that he enthusiastically endorses various teachings of Plato and Aristotle (as at *TMS* VII.ii.1.11; VII.ii.1.12). Smith is very critical of Hutcheson's restriction of virtue to benevolence and rejects his moral sense theory. Smith's admiration of Hume and Voltaire is indicative of his hostility to Christian theology and virtue theory, as well as to some of their political consequences.

[7] *NE* 1155a5-6.

to the full extent; and the others [types of friendships] are friendships by similarity."[8] Indeed, since the highest form of friendship (so called "character-friendships" or "friendships of virtue") is "the friendship of good people similar in virtue,"[9] and since "only good people can be friends" in this way,[10] there can be little doubt about the moral significance of friendship for Aristotle. Why does Aristotle insist on the counter-intuitive connection between moral goodness and friendship? Some of the reasons he gives are "operative" reasons that tell us little about the essence of the particular moral theory at work. The most common of these reasons is a "stability argument" which can take various forms, but is always in some way related to the idea that moral goodness produces stability in a friendship. The main thesis here is that "bad people find no enjoyment in one another if they get no benefit."[11] Since what we desire or find useful is constantly changing, there can be no stability in friendships among "bad" people or for anyone who looks only to pleasure or utility in his relations with others. Not only is it likely that the interests of the other will change, but more importantly a person driven by vicious desires, feelings, or interests will have no stability within himself.[12] Indeed, it is most often the case that in the books on friendship in the *Nicomachean Ethics* the "bad man" is defined not so much by vicious deeds as by the unsettledness of character that comes from being completely under the sway of pleasure or interest.

Although some form of a stability argument could be made by both ancient and modern moral theorists,[13] what seems more particular to Aristotle, and we would also suggest to antiquity in general, is the idea that "bad" or base people cannot be character friends with others because they cannot be so with themselves.[14] Since a character-friend for Aristotle just is another self, and such friendships are

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[8] *NE* 1157a30-33.
[9] *NE* 1156b6-7.
[10] *NE* 1157a18-19.
[11] *NE* 1157a19-20.
[12] *NE* 1159b7-9.
[13] In antiquity such an argument is made by Cicero in *De Amicita*, for example. See *Other Selves: Philosophers on Friendship*, ed. Michael Pakaluk (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1991), 89-92; and in modernity a version can be found in Kant's *Lecture on Friendship*; see also *Other Selves*, 213. We shall see shortly that Smith also uses a version of this argument.
[14] *NE* 1166b15-29.

"derived from features of friendships towards oneself,"[15] the base or inadequately self-perfected individual will find nothing inherently lovable about himself and hence nothing inherently lovable about others.[16]

Friendship here is grounded essentially in one's relation to one's self and is therefore only derivatively about one's relation to others. Consequently, while it is conceivable that a base person could admire the goodness in another (although envy and hatred are just as likely), that person could not enter into a character-friendship with the other due to the absence of a settled relationship with himself. The argument here is not, of course, that some degree of mutual good will, shared interests, and affection cannot exist among persons of even low degrees of character development. In Aristotle there are friendships of "utility" and "pleasure" to cover these types of ordinary friendships.[17] Moreover, as C. S. Lewis has noted,[18] people can be companions without being character-friends, even though we are often inclined to confuse the two. What is missing from all these lesser relationships is the connection that exists between friendship and moral excellence—a connection that is made through the relationship one has with oneself.[19]

Moral excellence, however, is surely not an unambiguous concept. Its meaning is often a function of the metaethical framework within which it is understood. From Plato onward, what we are calling "antiquity" saw morality as essentially a problem of

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[15] *NE* 1166a1-2.

[16] In *De Amicitia* Cicero notes: "Now the men who are worthy of friendship are those who possess within themselves something that causes men to love them. . . . Unless this same principle [love of self] is transferred to friendship, a man will never find a true friend, for the true friend is, so to speak, a second self"; as quoted in *Other Selves*, 108.

[17] See Douglas Den Uyl, "Prudence and Sociality," in *The Virtue of Prudence* (Bern: Peter Lang, 1991), for a further discussion of these lower forms of friendship.

[18] See the chapter on "affection" and pp. 64-5 in the chapter on friendship in C. S. Lewis's *The Four Loves* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Jovanovich, 1991).

[19] Lewis himself does not link friendship to morality and in this he is unwittingly modern, despite his claim to classical leanings. The moral component must be brought in from outside oneself which, in this case, means Christianity (see the last few pages of the essay on friendship in *The Four Loves*). It is possible to be classical and Christian (for example, Aquinas is), but Lewis's essay on friendship does not show us how to be so.

self-perfection. In Aristotle's case, the framework for understanding self-perfection could be more completely described as teleological and eudaimonistic. We perfect ourselves by pursuing and then exercising our *telos* or set of final ends that constitute happiness.[20] The exercise of these ends is moral perfection and the ends themselves are the standards by which one measures moral success or failure.

In this sort of framework, the moral value of friendship would be measured in the last analysis by its connection with self-perfection. As the passages from Aristotle already cited suggest, a good deal of self-perfection would have to take place before the best form of friendship could occur. Friends are therefore not so much an aid to self-development as they are an expression of it. What is critical is the fact that the friend is the person in whom one sees one's own virtues and through whom those virtues often find expression. Friends as "other selves" are thus in some sense signs of one's own perfection. It is not, however, the mere similarity of others to oneself with respect to conduct or character that matters to friendship, but rather a shared conception of the principles that render such conduct or character worthy of our aspirations and respect.

Conceivably another conception of "moral excellence" besides the self-perfectionist would provide a different basis for a relationship of friendship. If, for example, human beings had no telos but were ruled simply by their strongest passion in the pursuit of the useful, one might expect the concept of mutual "affection" or cooperation to be central to a theory of friendship. While such is indeed the case in some modern theories,[21] the actual effect of rejecting the

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[20] There is of course a great body of literature and controversy surrounding the meaning and nature of "happiness" or *eudaimonia* in Aristotle. For example, see Den Uyl, *The Virtue of Prudence* (esp. chaps 1-2). *Eudaimonia* is not a psychological state *per se* for Aristotle, but rather an activity. Smith tends to use "happiness" in keeping with its ordinary sense in English to mean a state of feeling pleased. While this is an important difference when it comes to discussing friendships of virtue, for present purposes we have not thought it necessary to focus our attention on it. For some general discussion see Charles Griswold's "Happiness, Tranquillity, and Philosophy," in *In Pursuit of Happiness*, vol. 16 of *Boston University Studies in Philosophy and Religion*, ed. L. Rouner (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995), 13-37. It should be noted that we adopt the inclusive end interpretation of Aristotle on the nature of *eudaimonia*. Hence we speak in the plural of "ends" in this section.

[21] For example, see Francis Bacon's *Essay on Friendship*. As one might expect from an Utilitarian approach, this is also the essence of Eliza-

metaethics of antiquity has been to lessen the moral importance of friendship altogether, rather than simply alter its character. Perhaps because of the focus upon self-perfection, the main problem with the classical model seems to be that it promotes exclusivity, elitism, and particularism. Modern theories in contrast tend to be inclusive, egalitarian, and universalistic. This is because either social cooperation or impersonal universal rules structurally define most modern moral theories. As a result, where personal relations are concerned, one would expect the modern theories to be increasingly inclusive. The classical perspective is, by contrast, increasingly exclusive. As C. S. Lewis has noted in discussing why friendship is so anathema to the modern mind:

> Again, that outlook which values the collective above the individual necessarily disparages Friendship; it is a relation between men at their highest level of individuality. It withdraws men from collective "togetherness" as surely as solitude itself could do; and more dangerously, for it withdraws them by two's and three's. Some forms of democratic sentiment are naturally hostile to it because it is selective and an affair of the few. To say "These are my friends" implies "Those are not."[22]

It is, of course, not the case that the individualism of friendship is antisocial or asocial. It is rather that its sociality is exclusive, with there being no aspirations towards "universality" or general "social cooperation." It is also selective or elitist in that only a few will qualify. The problem with these tendencies from the modern perspective is perhaps best summed up by Kant:

> Friendship is not of heaven but of the earth; the complete moral perfection of heaven must be universal; but friendship is not universal; it is a peculiar association of specific persons; it is man's refuge in this world from his distrust of his fellows, in which he can reveal his disposition to another and enter into communion with him. . . . The more civilized man becomes, the broader his outlook and the less room there is for special friendships; civilized man seeks universal pleasures and a universal friendship, unrestricted by special ties.[23]

Although the loving and cooperative elements of classical friendship would endear it to modern moral presuppositions, it is really

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beth Telfer's contribution to *Other Selves*, 250-67. Many of the contrasts discussed below can be seen in Telfer's essay.

[22] C. S. Lewis, *The Four Loves*, 60.

[23] Kant, "Lecture on Friendship," in *Other Selves*, 215, 216.

not the social characteristics of friendship that give it its distinctive properties. The distinctive and decidedly nonmodern qualities of friendship mentioned above would seem to flow more easily from a theory which measures success in terms of self-perfection rather than social cooperation. In contrast, a theorist whose standard of morality was ultimately rooted in social cooperation would tend to want to be more inclusive and broad based. We turn now, however, to a significant, if partial, modern exception to these tendencies: Adam Smith.

II

It is important to note at the outset that Smith is no Aristotelian when it comes to the basic principles of his ethical theory. By the same token, the theory, when applied to friendship, often results in Aristotelian conclusions. It is precisely this derivation of Aristotelian conclusions from an essentially non-Aristotelian metaethic that makes Smith's theory interesting. To begin with the differences, the final object of Smith's theory is not the self-perfection of the individual (as in Aristotle) but rather social cooperation. The sentiments nature has given us, for example, are themselves oriented towards that end. Smith's discussions of the central virtues of his system— justice, beneficence, and prudence—indicate the propensity of these sentiments toward social cooperation as well as how the virtues themselves are justified in that light. As Smith points out with respect to justice:

> Justice . . . is the main pillar that upholds the whole edifice [of society]. If it is removed, the great, the immense fabric of human society, that fabric which to raise and support seems in this world, if I may say so, to have been the peculiar and darling care of Nature, must in a moment crumble into atoms.[24]

And although in his discussion of beneficence, Smith notes that we are recommended to our own care first, even that is justified in terms of social cooperation:

> That wisdom which contrived the system of human affections, as well as that of every other part of nature, seems to have judged that the interest of the great society of mankind would be best promoted by

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[24] *TMS* II.ii.3.4.

> directing the principal attention of each individual to that particular
> portion of it, which was most within the sphere both of his abilities
> and of his understanding.[25]

Prudence likewise is largely oriented towards social cooperation:

> The desire of becoming the proper objects of this respect, of deserving
> and obtaining this credit and rank among our equals, is, perhaps, the
> strongest of all our desires, and our anxiety to obtain the advantages
> of fortune is accordingly much more excited and irritated by this desire,
> than by that of supplying all the necessities and conveniences of the
> body, which are always very easily supplied.[26]

We can say, therefore, that the sentiments we have been given
by nature, as well as the conduct that results from their interplay in
practice, are all ultimately justified in terms of social cooperation.
Yet even though it is true that the central features of the theory are
rooted in the social nature of the human animal, it would be false to
read Smith as being in any direct way a Utilitarian.[27] Indeed, in Part
IV of the *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, which seems devoted to giving
utility some role in ethics, one finds instead that the value of utility
is discussed in terms of the contribution it makes to beauty rather
than as the measure of value in its own right. Here, as elsewhere in
Smith, utility seems quite abstracted from the business of ethics as
it is actually practiced. Utility is of interest to the theorist who may
come to appreciate how mechanisms of social order are developed
through the interplay of the sentiments. The acting moral agent,
however, pays relatively little attention to utility.

It would be mistaken, then, morally to evaluate any concrete
action or motive on the basis of its relative contribution to social
cooperation. As for Aristotle and Kant, the principle upon which an
action is based is the critical moral factor. The central principles of

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[25] *TMS* VI.ii.2.4.

[26] *TMS* VI.i.3.

[27] What is said here is not conceived as settling the debate over whether
Smith is a Utilitarian. There are sophisticated defenses to that effect, as in
David Levy's "The Partial Spectator in the *Wealth of Nations*: A Robust
Utilitarianism," *European Journal of the History of Economic Thought* 2
(1995): 299-326. Rather, the point is that even if such a defense of Smith as
a Utilitarian can be made, he would not look exactly like modern Utilitarians
and the route to such a defense would certainly be circuitous.

Smith's system all center around issues of propriety.[28] Thus while
principles of propriety may themselves be conducive to social coop-
eration, that is a separate matter from the way in which moral judg-
ments are and ought to be made in practice.[29] The worthiness of an
action in the eyes of the impartial spectator, and not any expected
contribution to social utility, is what serves as a standard of conduct
for acting agents. The differences that may exist between Smith and
Aristotle are counterbalanced, then, by two important practical simi-
larities: that virtue includes the appropriate development of character
and that propriety is in some significant way concerned with the
agent's own character as well as with action.[30] Both of these points
are melded together in Smith's discussion of praise and praisewor-
thiness.

Perhaps because of the legacy of Bernard Mandeville, Smith
seems especially preoccupied with the issue of approval. We might
recall, for example, the surprising claim Smith makes in the *Theory
of Moral Sentiments* to the effect that people pursue wealth not pri-
marily out of need or for the pleasure it will bring them, but for social
approval.[31] This claim is reminiscent of Mandeville's position that

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[28] It is true that the *TMS* has sections devoted to topics other than
propriety, such as merit and duty, but we would argue that all these things
are themselves dependent upon propriety (which is why that section opens
the book and, we believe, grounds the theory).

[29] One may want to argue that the moral theorist would care little about
the "intermediary" step of propriety if all eventually resolves into the degree
to which social cooperation is enhanced. However, this objection betrays
what might be called the "Utilitarian fallacy," namely, supposing that the
connection between consequences and moral propriety is isomorphic; see
TMS IV. Moreover, Smith is more like Aristotle, and unlike Mill, in holding
that it is the perspective of the agent (whether as spectating agent or not)
rather than the philosopher that ultimately matters in ethics. From that
perspective it is the appropriateness of the action, not its consequences,
that determines moral worth.

[30] In *TMS* VII.ii.i.12-13 Smith links Aristotle's theory of virtue to propri-
ety of conduct, but also notes that for Aristotle "virtue may be considered
either as a quality of an action, or as the quality of a person." Smith has a
great deal to tell us about virtue in the latter sense in *TMS* VI, entitled "Of
the Character of Virtue." He introduces his history of earlier treatments of
virtue by stating that "the different accounts which have been given of the
nature of virtue, or of the temper of mind which constitutes the excellent
and praise-worthy character, may be reduced to three different classes.
. . . According to these authors [of the first class], therefore, virtue consists
in propriety"; *TMS* VII.ii.intro.1.

[31] *TMS* I.iii.2.1. Aristotle mentions something similar at *NE* 1124a17-20.

virtually all of human action can be explained by vanity or the love of praise. Smith, however, is determined to counter the Mandevillian thesis by drawing a sharp and decisive distinction between praise and praiseworthiness.[32] Individuals are not, in the end, moved only by the love of praise, but also by the desire to be praiseworthy.[33] As Smith says, "Man naturally desires, not only to be loved, but to be lovely; or to be that thing which is the natural and proper object of love."[34] Indeed, for morality to be a meaningful enterprise for the individual, this distinction must hold. Otherwise, moral principles would not be pursued for their own sake, becoming instead a kind of rationalization for other motives.

If we are moved by the desire to be praiseworthy, and praiseworthiness is determined by the motives or forms of conduct sanctioned by the impartial spectator, then we can pursue moral virtue for its own sake. For remember, it is not the praise we now seek (and thus we are not praiseworthy so as to obtain praise), but worthiness which, if justly considered by others, would result in praise (but in fact might not). As Smith puts it,

> Nature, accordingly, has endowed him, not only with a desire of being approved of, but with a desire of being what ought to be approved of. . . . The first desire could only have made him wish to appear to be fit for society. The second was necessary in order to render him anxious to be really fit. The first could only have prompted him to the affectation of virtue, and to the concealment of vice. The second was necessary in order to inspire him with the real love of virtue, and with the real abhorrence of vice.[35]

Notice how the distinction between praise and praiseworthiness requires the impartial spectator. If such a spectator did not exist, then love of praiseworthiness would indeed have to reduce to the love of praise, since worthiness could be measured in no other way than by garnering actual praise. Instead, our ability to imagine what ought to be approved, without regard for what may actually be approved, allows us to separate actual praise from the approval that would be

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[32] *TMS* III.2.

[33] The desire not to appear blameworthy is also included here, and it may even be a stronger desire. So as to retain the parallelism of our argument, however, we shall focus on praiseworthiness.

[34] *TMS* III.2.1.

[35] *TMS* III.2.7.

given by an impartial and fully informed observer.[36] To seek the approval of the impartial spectator first, therefore, means that actual praise comes second. As Smith puts it, "so far is the love of praise-worthiness from being derived altogether from that of praise; that the love of praise seems, at least in a great measure, to be derived from that of praise-worthiness."[37]

Worthiness is a responsibility that falls squarely on the shoulders of the individual. In Smith's moral philosophy, the individual does not get lost in some Utilitarian aggregate or placed at some distance from a noumenal self in which all the real work of morality gets done. On Smith's view, if actual individuals do not pursue conduct that is praiseworthy, then the spectator is idle and the whole system collapses. One spectates impartially about conduct and motives for Smith, however, not principles. There is no sense in Smith that the impartial spectator is confused about principles or makes judgments between them. Consequently, the impartial spectator does not focus upon abstract philosophical issues so much as upon concrete matters of conduct and motives. Were individuals not to act, the impartial spectator would have no purpose.

Differently put, while it is perhaps tempting to think of the impartial spectator as being equivalent to the moral theorist, it would be seriously mistaken to give into this temptation.[38] In the first place, the theorist judges between principles or systems of principles, the impartial spectator does not. For this reason, the theorist may see what the impartial spectator does not (and does not care about in the first place), namely, why the judgments of the impartial spectator are conducive to social order. Those judgments are conducive to social order not because, if followed, they will produce harmony, but rather because they already signify a kind of harmony that exists as a result of each individual's endeavor to estimate what is worthy in consort with others doing likewise. To suppose that the impartial spectator and the theorist are the same would be to remove the ne-

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[36] Of course, what is likely to be actually approved in the long run is probably what is conducive to social cooperation (for example, *TMS* V.2.16), although here again dread of blame may complicate the picture.
[37] *TMS* III.2.3.
[38] That Smith does not think the two are the same is clear from passages such as the following: "The judgments of the man within the breast, however, might be a good deal affected by those reasonings [that of philosophers]"; *TMS* VII.ii.47.

cessity for practical action (the endeavor towards worthiness) in determining moral principles. This seems to be a problem with present day Utilitarianism as normally understood, for it needs only the presence, not the practice (or production) of preferences, and can thus be safely conducted from the theorist's arm chair. For Smith, unless actual individuals are seeking to be worthy, the principles of worthiness (which may take the form of what Smith calls "general rules") themselves cannot be known even though preferences may be in no way lacking. The principles of worthiness evolve from the interaction of individuals and not from the theorist's aggregations or weightings of pre-existing preferences.

The distinction between praise and praiseworthiness and its importance as a motivating factor in our conduct turns out to be the key to the Aristotelian quality in Smith's theory of friendship. The Aristotelian character of the theory derives from the direct connection between praiseworthiness and "self-approbation." We have already noted the importance of praiseworthiness to Smith's theory, and it remains only to notice the central significance of self-approbation. Consider these passages:

> It is not the love of our neighbor, it is not the love of mankind, which upon many occasions prompts us to the practice of those divine virtues. It is a stronger love, a more powerful affection, which generally takes place upon such occasions; the love of what is honourable and noble, of the grandeur, and dignity, and superiority of our own characters.[39]

> No action can properly be called virtuous, which is not accompanied with the sentiment of self-approbation.[40]

> To obtain that approbation where it is really due, may sometimes be an object of no great importance to him. But to be that thing which deserves approbation, must always be an object of the highest.[41]

> In the common judgments of mankind, however, this regard to the approbation of our own minds is so far from being considered as what can in any respect diminish the virtue of any action, that it is rather looked upon as the sole motive which deserves the appellation of virtuous.[42]

The centrality of self-approbation flows from the idea that individuals seek praiseworthiness. Praiseworthiness supposes the ability to feel

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[39] *TMS* III.3.4.
[40] *TMS* III.6.13.
[41] *TMS* III.2.7.
[42] *TMS* VII.ii.3.13.

justified in one's own conduct even if others fail to offer signs to the effect that the conduct is so justified. Furthermore, being worthy in our own eyes is what motivates us to continue to seek worthiness itself. For if we did not see our own conduct as justified, we would have little incentive to continue to promote that sort of activity.

We should note here as well that for Smith there is a necessary connection between self-approbation and self-command. As he puts it, "where little self-command is necessary, little self-approbation is due."[43] The centrality of self-approbation and self-command is further indicated by the concluding section of Part VI which is itself the end of the positive part of Smith's ethical theorizing.[44] Not only is the topic of that section self-command, but also a good portion of it is devoted to the problems of self-estimation. Correct self-estimation would, of course, be necessary for accurate self-approbation.

The emphasis upon self-command and self-approbation allows us to link Smith's theory of friendship to Aristotle's and thus to establish the classical dimension of Smith's theory. While Smith makes no attempt formally to discriminate types of friendships as Aristotle does, one of his most important statements about friendship supports the connection to Aristotelian friendship that we have been claiming. Given its importance to our point here, it is worth citing at length:

> But of all attachments to an individual, that which is founded altogether upon the esteem and approbation of his good conduct and behavior, confirmed by much experience and long acquaintance, is, by far, the most respectable. Such friendships, arising not from a constrained sympathy, not from a sympathy which has been assumed and rendered habitual for the sake of conveniency and accomodation; but from a natural sympathy, from an involuntary feeling that the persons to whom we attach ourselves are the natural and proper objects of esteem and approbation; can exist only among men of virtue. Men of virtue only can feel that entire confidence in the conduct and behavior of one another, which can, at all times assure them that they can never either offend or be offended by one another. Vice is always capricious; virtue only is regular and orderly. The attachment which is founded upon the love of virtue, as it is certainly, of all attachments, the most virtuous; so it is likewise the happiest, as well as the most permanent and secure. Such friendships need not be confined to a single person, but may

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[43] *TMS* III.3.26.
[44] *TMS* III.6.13. The *Theory of Moral Sentiments* actually concludes with a Part VII, but that is a critical assessment of other theories that presupposes Smith's own. Consequently, it is fair to say that Part VI ends the positive portion of Smith ethical theorizing.

> safely embrace all the wise and virtuous, with whom we have been
> long and intimately acquainted, and upon whose wisdom and virtue we
> can, upon that account, entirely depend.[45]

One's immediate impression of this passage is that it seems to be another version of the stability argument. Not only is stability itself mentioned, but a variation of it, namely, security in knowing one will not give offense, is emphasized as well. Yet although stability is certainly an important element of the argument, a more profound connection to classical friendship can be drawn.

In the first place, notice that the type of friendship spoken of here can only exist among persons of virtue. While one reason for this is that virtue lacks the capriciousness of vice, not all this can thus be explained. We are told, for example, that such friendships are the "happiest," and this raises the issue of exactly what it is about relations among the virtuous that makes such friendships "happy" ones. Our suggestion, of course, is that their relations are happy ones because the friend is another self, and only virtuous selves can qualify for that sort of association.

In Smith's case, the virtuous individual is one whose motives and conduct generate self-approbation through the medium of the impartial spectator. This is somewhat of a less stringent standard than Aristotle's, since it does not appeal to the "real" or "true" good but to a perception of oneself. It is possible in Smith's theory, for example, for there to be a variety of communities within larger ones, each of which generate somewhat different normative standards. That possibility in turn means that the standards of self-approbation could differ, although on both counts Smith writes as if this sort of relativism were not applicable. In any case, Aristotle's virtuous man, like Smith's, would necessarily approve of his own conduct. So in spite of the differences at the metaethical level concerning the standards of classical self-perfectionism versus those of modern social cooperation, for both authors there remains a connection between virtue and self-approbation. Both approaches issue in esteem of one's own character and conduct, and that may be all that we need to speak of friends as "other selves."

Friends are other selves because the conduct we approve of in our own case is also that which we approve in others. Yet in order

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[45] *TMS* VI.ii.1.18.

to approve of our own conduct we must first be living up to the standards we judge worthy of approval—that is, we must be virtuous; and if the conduct we are approving in our own case is virtuous, then that which we will look for in others will be virtuous as well, completing the circle between self and others.

It is, of course, possible for us to look disapprovingly upon our own conduct and approvingly upon others, but it is unlikely there could be a friendship there of any significance, if for no other reason than we would fail to gain the approval of the other. If we have no trouble understanding that those whose conduct or attitudes do not seem appropriate are unlikely to be sought out by us as friends, then we should have no trouble understanding that friendship is no more likely to be founded if the direction is reversed (other to self). The possibility remains that another could approve of our conduct even though we ourselves do not (and we might theirs even though they themselves do not), but this seems equally faulty as a basis for friendship. Once each recognizes the discordant character of their principles of approbation, the situation will preclude friendship.

It seems that Aristotle was correct after all: friendship does require virtue, at least as it manifests itself through the medium of self-approbation. In saying this, then, we have solved one leg of the puzzle of why there is a necessary connection between virtue and friendship. The problem still remains as to why the friendship of virtue is better, especially for Smith. Although it is clear from the passage cited above that Smith believes friendships of virtue are superior, the failure clearly to discriminate among types of friendships makes it uncertain as to why such friendships are the happiest, unless we again revert to the stability argument. Yet the passage indicates stable and happy, not happy because stable. What is it about the nature of this sort of friendship that makes it the best, that is, happiest?

It would seem that friendships of virtue are the best sorts of friendships because to be a person possessed of virtue is to be the best sort of person. Yet the influence of Kant has made us sceptical of drawing any necessary connection between virtue and happiness. Consequently, we are not very inclined to think of friendships among the virtuous as being particularly happy—indeed, they might even be viewed as dull and stuffy. However, if we think of virtue in terms of self-approbation, the connection to happiness is more apparent. For individuals sufficiently full of self-approbation there could, almost by

definition, be little in the way of dissatisfaction with oneself. This attitude seems rather close to Aristotle's *megalopsychia* which he describes as the "adornment of the virtues."[46] Is there any reason to believe that a person with a high degree of self-approbation would also be happiest according to Smith's theory, just as on Aristotle's view the most virtuous are also happiest?

The most compelling passage linking self-approbation directly to happiness is the following:

> A great part, perhaps the greatest part, of human happiness and misery arises from the view of our past conduct, and from the degree of approbation or disapprobation which we feel from the consideration of it.

This passage (and one similar to it) were taken out of the sixth edition of the *Theory of Moral Sentiments*.[47] While the deletion might reflect a change of mind on Smith's part, it is equally likely that a host of reasons could explain the change, including reasons that have nothing to do with conceptual issues. It seems to us that Smith continued to accept the basic point of the passage, for we do find statements such as the following in the final edition of the *Theory of Moral Sentiments*:

> The consciousness that it [virtue] is the object of such favourable regards, is the source of that inward tranquillity and self-satisfaction with which it is naturally attended, as the suspicion of the contrary gives occasion to the torments of vice. What so great happiness as to be beloved, and to know that we deserve to be beloved? What so great misery as to be hated, and to know that we deserve to be hated?[48]

This passage is very much like the preceding except that it more directly links happiness to social approval rather than self-approbation alone. Perhaps Aristotle's *megalopsychos* is simply too self-sufficient to be human for Smith. In any case, the connection between

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[46] *NE* 1124a1-2. *Megalopsychia* is sometimes translated as 'pride'. Smith, however, is quite clear that both pride and vanity are vices, at least to some degree (see *TMS* VI.iii.34-53), though he also notes that occasionally, as in Aristotle's doctrine of *megalopsychia*, the term can have a good sense; *TMS* VI.iii.44. This virtually leaves us without another term to apply to the self-approbating individual. Perhaps the other translation often applied to *megalopsychia*—namely, "great souled"—would be suitable for both our authors.

[47] See *TMS*, p. 109.

[48] *TMS* III.1.7.

virtue and happiness through self-approbation is clearly identified by
Smith. Smith's emphasis upon social approval would qualify but per-
haps not destroy the classical dimension of his concept of friendship,
since self-approbation still retains its central place in the theory. As
in the case of most modern theories, the exclusivity and self-suffi-
ciency of friendship would be weakened. In the following sections
we shall consider whether the mixture of classical and modern ele-
ments in Smith's view is stable.

<center>III</center>

Our claim so far has been that Smith's theory of friendship incor-
porates important classical elements. A classical theory is one that
is critically dependent on the presence of virtue for the best sort of
friendship to occur. Our aim thus far has been not only to show that
Smith believed virtue to be important to friendship, but also why it
was important. Classical theories of the Aristotelian type are also
dependent upon the friend being "another self" and thus tend to
require a meaningful sense of "selfhood." We have seen that for
Smith self-approbation is the key both to seeing friends as other
selves, and to linking friendship with virtue.

However, when we recall the wider Smithean emphasis on the
role of social cooperation, the picture becomes more complex and
more "modern." Friendship in the broadest sense for Smith is endur-
ing mutual affection. This modern and casual use of the term 'friend-
ship' is found throughout the *Theory of Moral Sentiments*.[49] Some-
times Smith will also speak of friendship as akin to agreeable
accommodation and discuss the natural tendencies toward such ac-
commodation.[50] As already noted, one motivation for revising the
classical view would stem from the evident exclusivism of that view,
an exclusivism or elitism which at first appears dependent only on
the rarity of virtue itself. Yet does it seem likely that one would
become friends with every person of virtue one encounters simply
because he is virtuous? Although Smith, too, in the long passage

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[49] For example, in Part I alone see *TMS* I.i.3, 5; I.i.4.9; I.ii.2.5; I.ii.4.1, 3;
and I.iii.1.11-12.
[50] *TMS* VI.ii.I.1-17.

cited earlier, seems to claim that anyone of virtue would qualify as a friend, he notes that "much experience and long acquaintance" are necessary as well. More importantly, the grounding of Smith's theory in sentiment makes it possible to particularize on the basis of the relationship itself and not simply on the basis of the rarity of its occurrence. Consider the following:

> The sentiment of friendship, for example, which we feel for an old man is different from that which we feel for a young; that which we entertain for an austere man different from that which we feel for one of softer and gentler manners; and that again from what we feel for one of gay vivacity and spirit. The friendship which we conceive for a man is different from that which a woman affects us, even where there is no mixture of any grosser passion. . . . But still the general sentiment of friendship and familiar attachment which is common to them all, may be ascertained with a sufficient degree of accuracy.[51]

Sentiment can discriminate more finely among types of friendships, and subtle nuances of sentiment might draw even the equally virtuous closer together or farther apart.

At the same time, although sentiment may provide a practical basis for particularization, the socially mediated nature of moral sentiments pulls in the opposite direction. If, for example, the impartial spectator draws conclusions about motives and conduct on the basis of sentiment, and self-approbation is itself a kind of sentiment, then there is a tendency towards universalism in the sense of the lowest common denominator. An impartial spectator who, confronted with a pluralistic social order, tries to find that sentimental point of correspondence among various divergent groups, is likely to arrive at rather general and minimal rules of conduct. Self-approbation would then be relatively easy to obtain, since most would have no trouble meeting the new generalized standard. Sentiment could still particularize relationships, but degrees of virtue would be essentially absent, and high virtue, assuming its continued rarity, would no longer particularize at all because it would simply be ignored. As a consequence, the exclusivity and demanding standards of classical friendship would be lost. The weakening of the standards for self-approbation in turn undermines the classical elements in Smith's theory because of what one might call the "demotic" view of sympathy that drives the theory; and the demotic character is itself a function of the role

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[51] *TMS* VII.iv.4.

of spectating in Smith's system. The point is best understood if we return once again to the issue of love. To anticipate: Smith's critique of love and eros will make visible his critique of classical friendship, and is the flip side of the demotic view of sympathy.

At the very start of the section of the *Theory of Moral Senti-ments* on the social passions, Smith runs together "generosity, hu-manity, kindness, compassion, mutual friendship and esteem, all the social and benevolent affections,"[52] and argues that these passions are rendered agreeable to the "indifferent spectator" by a "redoubled sympathy." Smith turns to the sentiment of love and praises it too as agreeable to the spectator. His example of love is quite specific, namely, the love between family members. Of this sort of love, Smith is thoroughly approving. For we spectators can sympathize with it entirely, and it is the paradigm, it seems, of social cooperation, of the social passions at their very best. Smith at one point observes that where love, friendship, and the like motivate people to assist one another, society flourishes and is happy; there the "agreeable bands of love and affection" are "drawn to one common centre of mutual good offices."[53]

Earlier in the book, however, Smith provides us with another discussion of love. The degree to which the spectator can sympa-thize with the actor provides one way in which the bodily and imagi-native passions are distinguished, and love is Smith's first example of this distinction between the two types of passion. The spectator's imagination cannot readily enter into another person's physical state; one does not grow very hungry by imagining another's hunger, Smith says; and he implies that one does not fully experience the intensity of sexual desire by imagining "the most furious of all the passions" that unites the two sexes.[54] By contrast, a passion "derived from the imagination" is one into which the spectator's imagination can "mold" itself.

As Smith prepares himself in the next chapter for the long dis-cussion of the passions derived from the imagination, he yet again speaks of the issue of love. Love is the bridge between the two categories of passions, perhaps because the bodily passions may be

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[52] *TMS* I.ii.4.1.
[53] *TMS* II.ii.3.1.
[54] *TMS* I.ii.1.1-2.

"the foundation of [romantic] love."[55] And his argument is surprising, for he claims that romantic love between the sexes is virtually closed to the spectator: "Our imagination not having run in the same channel with that of the lover, we cannot enter into the eagerness of his emotions." If our friend is in love, we cannot change places with him; we cannot appreciate his passion, for it seems to everyone but our friend "entirely disproportioned to the value of the object." Our friend's love for another person, in short, strikes us as laughable and "ridiculous," for we cannot sympathize with it. Hence "though a lover may be good company to his mistress, he is so to nobody else."[56] We can, to be sure, enter into the lovely hopes for eternal friendship entertained by the lover, or the lover's anxieties and distress; but not his or her love proper. Thus insofar as love is treated by tragedies, it is in respect of the "secondary passions" which arise from the situation.[57] We infer that love itself is better treated in comedies, precisely because to spectators it is ridiculous on account of its extravagant disproportion to its object. Of course, lovers qua lovers do not see the disproportion. The reason is that, in Smith's portrayal of both erotic and romantic love, both persons are agents. Neither is a spectator of the other, neither is "outside" the other in the relevant sense.[58] The worlds of the lovers so thoroughly meld together that they live each others' lives. Consequently, they lose perspective on each other. Perhaps we may simply say that the lovers have extended "sympathy" so far as almost to transcend it. Sympathy has become synonymous in this instance with absolute approval and affirmation.[59]

Smith concludes this discussion by returning to the issue of friendship, and explains that for such reasons we must exercise

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[55] *TMS* I.ii.2.2.

[56] *TMS* I.ii.2.1.

[57] *TMS* I.ii.2.2-5.

[58] A somewhat similar point about love and spectatorship in Smith is made by Martha Nussbaum in *Love's Knowledge: Essays on Philosophy and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 344.

[59] Love thus understood is what classical writers would have thought of as perfect friendship. One is also reminded of Montaigne's description in *Of Friendship* of his relationship with La Boétie. The two were so self-enclosed that Montaigne liked to cite the phrase attributed to Aristotle "O my friends, there is no friend" (*Other Selves*, 194) to indicate how much beyond the ordinary was his relationship as well as the extent to which two had become one.

reserve in talking of our friends, studies, or professions—in short, of any of the things we truly love and cherish. Significantly for our purposes, he concludes: "A philosopher is company to a philosopher only; the member of a club, to his own little knot of companions."[60] This remark echoes the earlier point to the effect that a lover is good company only to his mistress. On the one hand, then, love of human kind and sympathy resonate throughout the book. On the other, early on in the book, lust and both love and loving friendship of nonfamilial sorts are characterized as closed off to the spectator, as generally ridiculous or laughable. The love of wisdom in particular seems intelligible to only a small knot of similarly minded lovers. It remains, at least potentially, outside the social web, inaccessible to sympathy, perhaps even antisocial.

Love may be blissful to the lovers, for like the lover and beloved in Aristophanes' comic speech in Plato's *Symposium*, they are restored to unity. Insofar as there is an analogue in Plato to Smith's notion of love, it is here in Aristophanes' speech, not in Socrates' doctrine of eros. Smith sees the Socratic sense of love as a potentially dangerous extension of the Aristophanic. When actors are deeply in love with others like them or with elegant schemes for political perfection or with God, they risk becoming "fanatics." No spectator can influence them; all non-lovers seem to be mere objects to be manipulated as they see fit. The lovers see no reason to moderate their passion, for they are not in a relation of sympathy with spectators. In his discussion of duty, for example, Smith recalls Voltaire's tragedy *Mahomet*, a story in which two young persons who are very fond of one another mistakenly think that God, whom they love with all their hearts, requires them to kill a man they have esteemed greatly.[61] Smith takes this play as a brilliant *reductio ad absurdum* of passionate love.

Analogously, Smith speaks of a "love of system"[62] and provides what might be called a political aesthetics. The lover of system, seduced by "the supposed beauty of his own ideal plan of government," destroys liberty and everyone who stands in his way. In general, religious and political fanatics claim objectivity and perspective, but of this Smith says: "To them, it may be said, that such a spectator

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[60] *TMS* I.ii.2.6.
[61] *TMS* III.6.12.
[62] *TMS* IV.I.11.

[the 'real, revered, and impartial spectator'] scarce exists any where in the universe. Even to the great Judge of the universe, they impute all their own prejudices, and often view that Divine Being as animated by all their own vindictive and implacable passions."[63] Love that cancels the need for sympathy of a spectator is inherently dangerous politically. For it privileges the perspective of the actor over that of the spectator, and thereby loses perspective altogether. Love is once again "disproportioned to the value of its object." Love defined solely from the standpoint of the actor is self-love, and thus in principle is selfish, unsympathetic, and destructive of social concord. Asocial spectating degenerates into narcissism, the flip side of voyeurism. These lovers have no proper self-approbation because they no longer view themselves through the eyes of the impartial spectator; self-approbation and spectatorship ought on Smith's account be inseparable.

The collapse of the love of wisdom in particular into self-love seems linked, strikingly, with the close connection between the love of wisdom and the love of beauty. The love of system and of beauty are explicitly connected by Smith;[64] and insofar as the "sentiment of approbation arises from the perception of this beauty of utility [itself frequently the property of a system]," Smith says, "it has no reference of any kind to the sentiments of others."[65] The love of systematic beauty abstracts from sympathy, thus disengaging us from particulars and from spectating agents.

Recall Smith's repeated criticisms, in Part VII of the *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, of the reductionistic and systematizing impulses of the philosophers. Over and over again, we learn that philosophers are, in effect, lovers of system. They become enthralled by the elegance of a certain conceptual scheme—say, as in the case of Epicurus,[66] one that accounts for all appearances from as few principles as possible; or as in the case of Chrysippus, one that provides a "scholastic or technical system of artificial definitions, divisions, and subdivisions."[67] Lovers of wisdom may observe that "human society, when we contemplate it in a certain abstract and philosophical light,

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[63] *TMS* III.3.43.
[64] *TMS* IV.1.11.
[65] *TMS* IV.2.12.
[66] *TMS* VII.ii.2.14.
[67] *TMS* VII.ii.1.41.

appears like a great, an immense machine, whose regular and harmo-
nious movements produce a thousand agreeable effects."[68] This ma-
chine is "beautiful and noble"; just like the lover who is entranced
by the beloved's beauty, so the lover of wisdom becomes entranced
by the beauty—in the sense of elegance, symmetry, order, and util-
ity—of a conceptual scheme or of a complex whole. Their love of
beauty is dangerous, however; in the case of Stoical teaching, for
example, it can lead to an objectionable doctrine about suicide, a
doctrine Smith labels a "refinement of philosophy."[69]

In the case of what Smith refers to as a "political view" of the
admirable machine that is human society, our love of beauty leads to
an enormous mistake in our account of the grounds of approbation
and disapprobation. As noted in section II above, we do not praise
or blame on the basis of a philosophical view of the matter, nor
should we. The love of wisdom corrupts the ordinary actor's sympa-
thetic grasp of the particulars of a situation. Love, including the love
of wisdom, not only shuts itself off to the understanding of non-lov-
ers, it fails to understand both itself and those uninvolved spectators
sympathetically. Every little knot of loving companions seems, then,
to be a potentially dangerous cabal on Smith's account, both shutting
out and shut off from the ordinary interchange of actors and spec-
tators.

In sum, in physical lust the actors shut themselves off from the
sympathetic understanding of spectators; in romantic love the actors
cease to be spectators of one another; in zealous religious love of
God, the actors identify themselves with their beloved and lose per-
spective on their own selves; in philosophical love, the actors lose
perspective on self and others. In each case, love and spectatorship,
or in different terms, the attachment of love and the detachment of
vision, are severed from each other. This whole spectrum of love is
therefore hostile, on Smith's account, to healthy or "respectable"
love—that is, to love which incorporates spectating.

As a consequence there is also in the end a profound distance
between Smith's view of friendship and classical views, especially
Aristotelian and Platonic, which are based on doctrines of self-perfec-
tion. The noblest friendships of the classical variety (especially the

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[68] *TMS* VII.iii.1.2.
[69] *TMS* VII.ii.i.34.

Platonic) lack the sort of social perspective Smith demands, as does (for the same reasons) the love of wisdom itself.[70] The intensity and single-mindedness characteristic of philosophic eros in the *Symposium* also describes the attitude of classical friends towards each other. The eros which drives each individual towards the good (including truth itself) is the basis for the *philia* they share together. Since their passion for the good or truth is intense, their friendship is proportionately so. In the *Phaedrus* Socrates portrays philosophical friendship as the outcome of the lovers' romantic involvement with one another, a love affair that perfects them through philosophical *anamnesis* even as it renders them unintelligible to the non-lovers or spectators.[71] This erotic love is commended to us as being divine madness, as a true friendship of virtue. From Smith's standpoint, this is altogether too dangerous, too distorting, too susceptible to human madness and loss of perspective, too caught up in self-love.[72] On the classical account, as noted earlier, a friend is a second self, that is, all friendships are modes of friendship with oneself. On Smith's account, this ultimately collapses into self-love and thus self-delusion. That is, the classical ideal of love has here disintegrated into self-interest or self-love on the one hand, and friendship or sociality on the other.

Classical friends do not adopt the social perspective because to a large extent their friendship is measured by the degree to which they distance themselves from social conventions and thus the gaze of the spectator. For this reason classical friends, like lovers, may first appear ridiculous, then dangerous. Unlike lovers, however, there are no public social institutions, such as marriage, by means of which they may be opened to and measured by the spectator's view. Or even if such institutions are created—perhaps the Academy is one such place—the problem of the political place of the love of wisdom

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[70] Were this an essay on classical friendship, we would draw distinctions between Plato and Aristotle here, calling attention to passages such as *NE* 9.7 on the love towards one's works, 8.9 on community as the essence of friendship, and of course the issue of the self-sufficiency of the wise described in 10.7.

[71] 256b-e; 249c-e.

[72] As if in confirmation of Smith's worries, the famous account of eros in the *Symposium* is delivered by a priestess (Diotima), referred to as an initiation into mysteries, and cast as a narrative about a beloved's induction into mysterious secrets barely intelligible even to Socrates, who is Diotima's student.

in particular remains. As discussed above, in one sense Smith's doc-
trine of self-approbation looks like it is moving towards the sort of
self-love recommended by Plato and Aristotle. Yet, Smith ends up
actually separating self-love from self-approbation, love from friend-
ship of virtue, and finally friendships of virtue from philosophy.
When Smith refers to "men of virtue," he does not mean philoso-
phers. He has in mind what Aristotle would have called "gentlemen,"
persons of outstanding moral virtue for whom theoretical matters are
of comparatively little consequence. Smith rehearses the charge that
Marcus Aurelius neglected the Roman empire in favor of philosophi-
cal speculations; Smith implies this would be a damaging accusation,
for "The most sublime speculation of the contemplative philosopher
can scarce compensate the neglect of the smallest active duty."[73]

At the heart of Smith's "nonclassical" distinction between love
and friendship is a Sceptical view of the love of wisdom itself.[74] There
are multiple unanticipated twists and turns here. As intimated above,
his objection to the dangerous sorts of love is fundamentally that
they close off the possibility of spectatorship on self or other. They
close off perspective, detachment, or what one might call—if one
has in mind both the literal Greek sense of "theoria" as "looking at"
or "viewing," as well as the double sense of "reflection"—"reflective
theoria." Love and "reflective theoria" must always be combined on
Smith's account if love is to be healthy; or more precisely, the actor
must always be beholden to self and always visible through sympathy
to other onlookers. While preserving the classical and especially Pla-
tonic emphasis on the primacy of vision, this account is nevertheless
deeply antiphilosophical, from that ancient standpoint, in that it
closes off the highest sort of "theoria," namely the contemplation
of things that are forever outside of all society—the Forms or self-
contemplating God. These highest objects of love are not like mir-
rors, and contemplation of them is not a way of seeing oneself
reflected, or of viewing oneself. As Plato especially stresses, the
highest form of love consists in the soul's complete absorption in
an intelligible object which does not itself return the soul's gaze, in

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[73] *TMS* VI.ii.3.6.
[74] For discussion of Smith's Sceptical outlook, see Charles Griswold's
"Rhetoric and Ethics: Adam Smith on Theorizing about the Moral Senti-
ments," in *Science, Politics and Social Practice*, ed. K. Gavrolu et al. (Dor-
drecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1995), 295-320.

nonreflective *theoria*. Smith's way of connecting spectatorship and love, by contrast, ultimately subjects theoretical to practical virtue, and thus keeps self-approbation from straying too far from the social. Divine madness is not liberated from moderation. Smith reins in the urge to transcendence so that it stays within the circle of sympathy, within the dialectic of recognition.

All this in turn brings us back to the problem we mentioned at the outset of this section, namely, the tendency towards "universalism" in Smith's account. At the end of the day, what restrains universalism on that account seems primarily to be the practical requirement for long and intimate acquaintance. On what we are calling a classical stance, by contrast, the tendency towards universalism is restrained first by the fact that very few are capable of the love of wisdom, and second that the lover of wisdom is not attached to praiseworthy persons so much as to the divine qualities by virtue of which they are praiseworthy—qualities which it takes a certain amount of wisdom to appreciate in others and to understand in their own right.

<center>IV</center>

We conclude this rather dialectical treatment of Smith's equally dialectical account of love and friendship with a brief coda about the philosophical motivation underlying Smith's scepticism about the love of wisdom as well as about similarly unsocial or unfriendly forms of love. We have seen that in the final analysis, Smith's meta-ethical stance deeply affects his view of love and friendship. Smith's entire moral psychology, with its heavy emphasis on the epistemic and moral priority of particulars and individuals, blocks the move from praiseworthy persons and actions to the praiseworthy as such. The moral and epistemic priority of particulars in his account links up with his emphasis on sentiment rather than philosophical reason for, as indicated above, sentiment is suited on Smith's account to discriminate finely between, and to apprehend, particulars. As we have also intimated above, this priority further links up with his implicit distinction between moral reasoning (understood as impartial spectatorship and judgment) and philosophical reasoning.[75] Smith is

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[75] At *TMS*, IV.2.2 Smith writes: "When a philosopher goes to examine why humanity is approved of, or cruelty condemned, he does not always

not, as noted in section II, a Utilitarian. One could further say, with slight exaggeration, that he is not a moral theorist, if by that is meant a philosopher who seeks to substitute a moral theory for the practice of ordinary moral deliberation guided by educated sentiments and sympathy.

Philosophical theorizing perceives, on Smith's account, not the particulars of the moral situation, but features of a whole, of a system; in particular, the "utility" of this or that train of events or sweep of history or aspect of nature. At the highest level, the most "speculative" philosopher sees that the cosmos is like an enormous self-correcting machine. This cosmos is beautiful; but for Smith, to contemplate its beauty is to abstract from the difference between the morally good and bad. At the speculative level, there seems to be no real difference between good and bad, virtue and vice; each produces the other and balances out over time. Smith's famous comments about the "invisible hand" rather brutally make this point, and those comments are uttered in his voice as speculative philosopher rather than moralist. This hand is sightless, in itself without intelligence, a mere instrument, and invisible; it lacks the attributes of the spectatorship or seeing that Smith finds at the heart of ordinary moral judgment.[76] Thus for Smith, it is the perfect metaphor for the beauty as well as the moral neutrality of an autonomous universe, viewed abstractly or synoptically. The universe embodies Mandeville's teaching writ large.[77] Smith is insistent that we not make the mistake of also writ-

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form to himself, in a very clear and distinct manner, the conception of any one particular action either of cruelty or of humanity, but is commonly contented with the vague and indeterminate idea which the general names of those qualities suggest to him. But it is in particular instances only that the propriety or impropriety, the merit or demerit of actions is very obvious and discernible. . . . When we consider virtue and vice in an abstract and general manner, the qualities by which they excite these several sentiments seem in a great measure to disappear, and the sentiments themselves become less obvious and discernible."

[76] A similar point about the metaphor of the invisible hand is noted by Vivienne Brown in *Adam Smith's Discourse: Canonicity, Commerce, and Conscience* (London: Routledge, 1994), 26.

[77] Smith remarks that Mandeville's system "seems to take away altogether the distinction between vice and virtue" (*TMS* VII.ii.4.6); and that Mandeville sought "to prove that there was no real virtue, and that what pretended to be such, was a mere cheat and imposition upon mankind; and . . . that private vices were public benefits"; *TMS* VII.ii.4.12. For further discussion see Charles Griswold, "Nature and Philosophy: Adam Smith

ing it small in the ordinary offices of moral exchange, precisely be-
cause we must not make the mistake of imagining a continuous line
connecting part to whole, or the good to the beautiful. The unresolv-
able split between the beautiful and the good is at the heart of Smith's
nonclassical metaethical framework, and is ultimately responsible for
the modern flavor of his teaching about friendship and love. In a
final formulation, for Smith the notion of the "noble" has disinte-
grated, and with it, any hope of uniting the spheres of the moral and
the philosophical, and thus of friendship and erotic love.[78]

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[78] This is consistent with Smith's talk (quoted above) of our natural
"love of what is honourable and noble" (*TMS* III.3.4), given his conjoining
of honor and nobility and thus the implied restriction of the noble to the
socially approved.