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Functionalist Socialization, Family and Character*

Abstract: According to functionalism, the family internalizes and transmits society's supposed value consensus from one generation to the next, and such socialization explains morality, social order, and cultural uniformities. I present three investigations that challenge the concept of functionalist socialization, and propose alternative theories that may better explain observations. First, I present evidence from developmental psychology based largely on American subjects and an ethnographic report from Burkina Faso which suggest that the characters of children are not formed by parental socialization. Second, I report data from Europe which suggest that the weaker is family and its supervision, the stronger is character and internalized morality. Third, I report an account of European modernization which suggests that weaker family ties broaden extrafamilial associations and generalize moral orientation. Finally, I suggest that Schelling's game-theoretic account of social conventions is a better explanation of cultural continuities and discontinuities than is functionalism.

1. The Family as the Factory Which Produces Individual Character

Family is the basis of a successful society. Children are taught rules of morality by their parents, on behalf of society. Poor character is due to poor parental effort. Families used to be large and important, and raised virtuous children; now families are small and unimportant, and raise less virtuous children. Strong families make for more moral societies. The decline of family and the decline of marriage contribute to a galloping individualism that undermines both morality and happiness. I can think of few propositions so uncontroversial. I once affirmed all of them myself. Yet, I shall argue, each of them is false.

Before going to the details I want to establish, in principle, that it is possible for widely held and cherished beliefs to be false. This is easy to see with respect to beliefs about the physical world. We understand why our ancestors believed that the earth was the center of the universe, and we understand why they were wrong. Consider some beliefs about social life that were once widely held. The

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thinkers of European Christendom were virtually unanimous that proper religious conviction was necessary for personal morality and for social order. John Locke, for example, believed that the atheist has no incentive to keep promises and so does not deserve toleration. The mercantilists believed that the pursuit of gold would increase the national wealth. The consensus of responsible opinion in the 19th century was that the universal franchise would result in destructive mass expropriation of property. Much of social science was born of a dread that mass urbanization was an unstable regression about to bring civilization to a crashing conclusion. Many Europeans believed that their material bounty was due to an innate biological superiority rather than to accidents of geography (Diamond 1997). Each of these beliefs was plausible, perhaps even likely in prospect, but each of them turned out to be wrong.

It seems though that a person's beliefs about the working of her own society are privileged. Most of us believe that family is the basis of our society, and who should better know than the people who make up a society? What would a Samoan know about American culture, for example? Perhaps nothing. But if the Samoan undertook a rigorous investigation of American culture, there would be many things apparent to the Samoan not apparent to the ordinary American. The fish does not know that he lives in the water. Their problem, as they say in the jargon of comparative politics, is that there's no variation in the dependent variable. To the ordinary person, most cultural counterfactuals are unimagined, so that it is too easy to mistake one's received way of life for the only and natural way of life. This is one reason why insiders do not necessarily have correct beliefs about their own culture.

Further, our beliefs about how European-origin societies work are somewhat influenced by the fact that we live in formerly Christian societies, shaped by a religion of the book. Morality, and prudence, tend to be conceived of as a set of rules written in a book. Such rules are inscribed in the souls of children by the discursive efforts of their elders. Margaret Mead, for example, defined culture as "the systematic body of learned behavior which is transmitted from parents to children" (quoted in Harris 1998, 183). Culture is bible school writ large. If the page were left blank the person would not know what to do. Moral behavior, at least of a circumscribed sort, seems to be a human universal (Brown 1991, 139), and is perhaps part of the life of many species of social mammals (de Waal 1996). Morality as a set of discursive generalities transmitted from parent to child is not universal, however. There are nonliterate groups whose members act morally yet which lack a canon of discursive moral generalities (Fernandez 1982). Other theological residues in our discourse about society are the ideal of lifelong monogamy, and the supposed correspondence among proper family order, proper social order, and proper heavenly order.

Parsons' structural-functionalism secularized such beliefs, whence they migrated into popular understandings of sociology: society is a system which functions to survive and to reproduce itself, and is integrated by value consensus. Supposed subsystems, such as the economy, politics, and family are investigated in terms of their functions in the survival and reproduction of the social system. 'Socializing' new members of the society is one of the major functional prereq-

quisites of a society. The “central focus of the process of socialization lies in the internalization of the culture of the society into which the child is born” (Parsons/Bales 1955, 17). Family, the primary agent of socialization, internalizes and transmits value consensus from one generation to the next, and this explains both social order and cultural uniformities across time and space. Family does not function on behalf of society directly, but rather indirectly, on behalf of personality structure, according to Parsons and Bales (1955). Personality refers to the value orientation of the individual, we might say, to her motivational structure, to her moral character. If personality were biological, there would be no need for families, Parsons and Bales continue (16). Parents carry values from their own upbringing, and from their involvement in nonfamily roles. Major value-orientation patterns are laid down mostly in childhood and are not subject to drastic alteration in later life; indeed, family socialization prepares its target for secondary socialization in peer group, in school, and in new family formation (Parsons 1951, 207, 227–30). In short, “families ... are factories which produce human personalities” (Parsons/Bales 1955, 16).

In the remainder of the paper I present an alternative to functionalism, and I present three investigations meant to dispute the functionalist view that the family is a factory which by rote socialization of infants produces individual character. The first investigation reports evidence from developmental psychology that, contrary to the functionalist account, the characters of children are not formed by parental socialization. I also relate an ethnographic report which suggests that the functionalist assumption of parental socialization is merely Eurocentric. Second, I present an alternative model of game-theoretic Schelling conventions, capable of explaining as many cultural continuities as does functionalism, but also capable of explaining discontinuities that functionalism cannot. Third, I report data from Europe to the effect that the weaker is family the stronger is character as internalized morality. I explain this relationship as an unintended byproduct of conventional and originally arbitrary features of family structure. In traditional Northwest Europe late female age of marriage and small families invite prospective marriage partners to develop unsupervised and internalized trustworthiness. In traditional Southeast Europe early female age of marriage and large families rely on supervision and the external assurances of honor, I argue. Fourth, I observe that weak family ties in traditional Northwest Europe both require and enable individuals to form broader associations, which extends the boundary of moral concern; the ensuing multiplication of roles further individualizes persons but further broadens associations and generalizes morality. I endorse an argument that the successful Quaker campaign against slavery originated in emerging individualism, generalizing associations, and related increases in the spatiotemporal span of organizational control. I conclude that the functionalist socialization is an inadequate account of morality and social order.

2. Parents Do Not ‘Socialize’ Children

Parents rear children. It is in the parents’ interests to teach their children morality, self-control, and solidarity in order to carry out the productive and reproductive purposes of the family unit. The family is the crucible of character. This morality spills over to benefit the rest of society, the story goes (see, for example, Coleman 1990, 297–8). The functionalist account would add that ‘society’ somehow intends this beneficial spillover that is perhaps unintended by the family. The problem with this story is that it is just as easy for parents, and in some circumstances even more in their interests, to teach children to love and to be honest with immediate family members, but to despise and to cheat everyone else whenever they can get away with it. This can and does happen. Recall the “amoral familism” that Banfield claimed to find in a peasant village, where people acted as if they followed the rule: “maximize the material, short-run advantage of the nuclear family; assume that all others will do likewise” (Banfield 1958, 83). Generally, in a clannish society many economic and social transactions take place within the family and few take place between families. Trust outside the immediate family is absent. Feuding is prevalent. Honor and satisfaction accrue to those who do the most harm to outsiders. Violence in such a place arises not from too much heterogeneity, but rather from too much homogeneity: you know that your neighbor hates you because you know that you hate him. Thus, even if residential family were the fount of moral sentiments, there is no sociological imperative that this morality should extend beyond the horizon of the residential family. It is psychologically more difficult (but definitely not impossible for some people) to be honest about one thing and dishonest about another, say, honest in business but dishonest in sport; but it is psychologically easier, unfortunately, to be decent to one kind of human being but indecent to another (just consider how some Republicans feel about Democrats, or some Labourites about Tories). Indeed, much sorrow in the world seems to come from moralistic aggression by insiders against outsiders.

What is the evidence that parents make children? Judith Rich Harris (1998) calls the idea that the child’s development and character are determined by parental upbringing “the nurture assumption”, and devotes a book to the question. Her notorious answer is that the assumption is wrong. Character is influenced by biological inheritance and by peer interactions, but there is no evidence that parents strongly influence character when the first two factors are taken into consideration, according to Harris. She is a former writer of child development textbooks who happened to have two daughters (one adopted) much unlike one another, although they were raised in the identical home environment. I have seen such dramatic variation among the children of my friends. Harris asks, if parents are the determining factor, why then do the children of immigrants speak in the language and the accents of their peers rather than of their parents? Further, referring to certain British traditions, why does a boy who spends his first eight years with a nanny and the next ten years in a boarding school turn out to be the replica of his father?

There are thousands of studies that demonstrate correlations between parental

traits and offspring traits. We know, however, that the various traits and qualities of children are the product both of biological inheritance and of experience and learning in the environment, perhaps in roughly half and half proportion, but of course varying according to the trait in question. It turns out, says Harris, that whenever biological relatedness is controlled for, the supposed environmental effects from parents to children vanish. Parents have no environmental effects on their children. Biology is far from everything: identical twins are considerably different from one another. Identical twins who are reared together are just as different from one another as those who are reared apart, however. Again there is no parental effect. So, whence the environmental variation? According to Harris, children are powerfully attracted to groups of peers, and it is the highly conformist peer group that accounts for environmental variation among siblings. A striking example of such influence isolated is the complex deaf culture in America, which possesses its own fully developed language, literature, and mores. Deafness is rarely inherited, so this robust culture is plainly created and maintained by peer influence rather than by parent-to-child transmission. Just as it is not identification with one's parents that motivates driving on the left side of the road when visiting England or speaking the local language in another country, so does the newcomer adopt the conventions of the deaf community. Neither highway traffic nor the deaf community is a supra-individual entity functioning to survive and reproduce itself, nor is society.

What is denounced as superstition in other cultures is often rational within the constraints and information set that adherents inhabit, yet is obviously wrong to the outsider in possession of a broader information set. Among some groups that practice clitoridectomy everyone believes that for a man's penis, or for a baby in childbirth, to touch an intact clitoris would result in death. However this belief originated, for any one individual to test it would be pure folly on his or her part. It is only by going outside the culture that the error becomes apparent. The Fulani in the Futa Jallon told me that they never realized that there is a causal connection between female genital cutting and negative health consequences such as bleeding, infection, and obstructed labor. Since everyone was cut there could be no comparison of outcomes between women who were cut and women who were not, and thus the negative consequences were attributed to other causes. When they learned that uncut women did not suffer these consequences, and were informed of the causality, they immediately recognized the connection, and organized a coordinated abandonment of the practice (see Mackie 2000 for background). In contrast, the Fulani, according to Riesman (1992), do not believe that parental effort determines a child's character and destiny. Further, Riesman claims to show that although FulBe and RiimaayBe child-rearing practices are indistinguishable from one another, nevertheless the adult personalities of FulBe and RiimaayBe are quite distinct from one another (196). The point of his ethnography is to dispute the Western concept of socialization, to dispute that "one of the most important factors shaping the personality is the way the parents raise the person from the very beginning of childhood" (8). "Among [Americans], parents are producers of children who are independent social entities. For the Fulani, parents and children form a unit

and parents do not see themselves as producing their children for 'society' to consume, as it were." (176) Notice the direct contradiction of Parsons' factory metaphor.

When asked what a father's obligations are to his child, the Fulani man answers, "First, find your child a good mother". He does not mean a woman who is herself good in some sense but rather a woman from a good, that is, successful, family. They believe there is no relationship between parental care and character of children. A mother of bad moral qualities, however, might bear children of bad qualities, *not* arising from the nature of her care, but rather through the mother's milk (an approximation to heredity). The Fulani are said to take wonderful care of their children, and, unlike Europeans and Americans, reportedly never use force against children below the age of social reason (6 or 7). Westerners make their young children eat foods, make them stop playing, make them share, make them go to bed, make them stay with other caregivers, and so on, 'for the child's own good'. When informed of our practices, Fulani are horrified. The central value of the Fulani is self-control, which adults display in abundance, according to Riesman, despite their indulgent early childhood, and he believes they display on average more self-confidence and zest for life than Americans. For the Fulani, our belief that parental effort makes children what they are is a superstition with painful consequences. If this interpretation of the Fulani is correct, then structural-functionalism is centered on a European superstition.

If direct parental effort has little to do with how children turn out, is that a license for parents to do as they please? Absolutely not. One has an obligation to be kind and supportive to one's children because they are dependent and deserve such treatment, not because by doing so one would be doing a favor to society. If good care does not influence their future welfare, it certainly does influence their present welfare, and thus must not be neglected. Parents are not helpless, either. They can design the environment so as to steer children to beneficial peer groups and away from detrimental ones.

3. An Alternative Account: Schelling Conventions

Structural-functionalism predicts that societies are stable, well-ordered, and successful; each is its own best possible world. Observations in societies of change, disorder, failure, or organized reform are difficult to reconcile with the functionalist account; indeed, this difficulty is thought to be the greatest weakness of the approach. A maxim for choice among theories is that, all else equal, a theory which explains more observations is to be preferred to one which explains fewer observations.

Schelling (1960) says that the coordination game lies behind the stability of institutions and traditions, yet can also explain rapid change (material in the next five paragraphs is adapted from Mackie 1996; 2001). Such a model appears to possess more explanatory scope than the functionalist model. How can the same mechanism explain both stability and change? Look at a sample

coordination game, as in Figure 1B. (Generally for the games in Figure 1: there are two players, each player has two strategies, the lower left payoff in any box is that of player Row-Chooser and the upper right payoff in any box is that of player Column-Chooser; assume that the players can't talk to each other; and that they play pure strategies, not a probabilistic mixture of strategies.) If Row-Chooser chooses row one and Column-Chooser chooses column one, then they coordinate on R1C1 and carry home a payoff of two each; the same is true if they coordinate on R2C2. If coordination fails, say they choose R1C2, or R2C1, then each gets nothing. The usual illustration of this is whether to drive on the left side of the road or the right. It doesn't matter which side I drive on, so long as everyone else does the same.

Figure 1

Game Matrices

* = Equilibrium Choices

		A		B	
		C1	C2	C1	C2
R1		2 *	0	2 *	0
		2	0	2	0
R2		0	-1	0	2 *
		0	-1	0	2
		Single Equilibrium		Coordination: Indifferent Equilibria	
		C		D	
		C1	C2	C1	C2
R1		2 *	0	2 *	0
		2	0	1	0
R2		0	1 *	0	1 *
		0	1	0	2
		Coordination: Ranked Equilibria		Coordination Conflicting Equilibria	

Consider now the game in Figure 1A. Here, only R1C1 is an equilibrium choice. Figure 1A does not represent a coordination problem; for that, there must be at least two proper coordination equilibria, according to Lewis (1969). Figure 1B does represent a coordination problem. So does Figure 1C. In 1C, R1C1 is better for each player than R2C2, and R2C2 is better for each player than the miscoordination at R1C2 or R2C1. If people are stuck at inferior equilibrium R2C2 they may lack a concerted way to move to superior equilibrium R1C1. Figure 1D also represents a coordination problem, but now with a bargaining aspect. Here, Column Chooser does best at R1C1, while Row-Chooser does best at R2C2, and each likes either of these coordination equilibria better than miscoordination at R1C2 or R2C1; this game has all the ingredients of power and tragedy. Any game with two or more proper coordination equilibria represents a coordination problem.

Singling out a coordination equilibrium is a matter of concordant mutual expectations. If there are two of us and we can talk, then we can each promise to choose either right or left, and the promise is self-enforcing. If there are hundreds of us, express agreement is difficult. Many conventions suggesting a single choice of equilibrium in a coordination problem are not expressly agreed to, rather, they are tacit. Schelling urges that there is no logical solution to the tacit coordination problem; rather, solutions are suggested by their psychological salience. The salient choice is not uniquely *good*, just noticeably *unique*. It all depends on what the players believe about each other. In novel play of game 4C, absent credible communication, superior R1C1 stands out as the salient choice for most people. But in a recurring game, precedent is strongly salient. If we played the same game 1C yesterday at R1C1, then R1C1 is the salient choice today. If the choice yesterday was inferior R2C2, R2C2 is weakly salient today; and if R2C2 was the result in our last ten games, it is strongly salient on our next. Coordination by precedent is convention.

At 5:00 A.M., Sunday, September 22, 1967, Sweden switched from driving on the left to driving on the right (Ullmann-Margalit 1977; Hardin 1988). Sweden, or at least its authorities, saw driving on the left as more like the game in 1C than the one in 1B. The rest of continental Europe drove on the right, so as international traffic increased, visitors to Sweden caused accidents by driving in the wrong lane as did nonchalant Swedes abroad. So, Swedes would be better off driving on the right, moving from R2C2 to R1C1 in something like game 4C. Even if the millions of Swedes were each convinced that driving on the right would be better, they could never spontaneously, by some invisible hand, get to the better coordination equilibrium. Convention is self-enforcing: any one person driving to the right to demonstrate its advantages would end up dead. In left-driving Pakistan a local religious party decreed that the pious must drive on the right. The decree was rescinded in two weeks following a number of serious accidents (Bedi 1994).

The most necessary and deeply interdependent choices a human makes have to do with reproduction. Moreover, many crucial aspects of courtship, marriage and childrearing are a matter of coordination. This gives rise to what I call conventions regulating access to reproduction. Elsewhere, this concept allows me

to explain two perplexing practices as coordination games in which populations are trapped in welfare-inferior equilibria. Female genital mutilation in Africa persists despite modernization, public education, and legal prohibition. Female footbinding in China was nearly universal for a thousand years, but ended in a single generation. I show that each practice is a self-enforcing convention, regulating access to reproduction, and maintained by interdependent expectations on the marriage market (Mackie 1996). I predicted that the methods used to end footbinding in China—coordinated abandonment organized by a critical mass of parents within the intramarrying group so as to preserve marriageability of daughters—would work in the African case. A variety of interventions based on functionalist reasoning have had little or no effect on behavior across Africa, but a program based on the convention model has led to several hundred thousand abandonments in Senegal over the last four years, including among the Fulani I interviewed (see Mackie 2001).

Game theory is no panacea for the social sciences, and I must emphasize that although the Schelling convention model might usefully account for many cultural regularities, it certainly could not account for all of them. Nevertheless, these simple models yield considerable insight. The coordination game with indifferent equilibria (*B*) helps us to understand arbitrary conventions, such as whether to drive on the left or the right, or whether to label the intriguing creature *a cat* or *un gatto*. The coordination game with ranked equilibria (*C*) shows us how everyone in a group can be caught in a welfare-inferior equilibrium, such that no individual can escape on her own; that extant social practices are not necessarily optimal, yet that a critical mass can organize and precipitate rapid and universal change, as with footbinding. The coordination game with conflicting equilibria (*D*) shows us how greater numbers, or greater power, can enforce a reluctant bargain on minorities or the weak: if I were to move to Italy I would prefer its inhabitants to learn English, but they would prefer that I learn Italian, and they would prevail.

We observe cultural continuities, and cultural disruptions. I suggest the convention model as an explanation for some such observations. We observe social morality and social immorality. I suggest that humans are naturally moral, but unfortunately that morality is confined to insiders, and its reference group can range from immediate family to broader affiliations to the impersonal and generalized inclusion of all humanity. Next, I shall argue that strong parental supervision may discourage more internalized and more generalized morality.

4. The Weaker is Family, the Stronger is Character

I mean by *character* an internalized morality that constrains temptations to make others worse off; and trustworthiness, I say, is a consequence of such character. If parental socialization forms character, as in the structural-functionalist account, then the stronger, the larger, the more supervisory the family, the stronger the character of the children, it would seem to me. Evidence from Europe, however, supports the conclusion that the weaker, the smaller, the less

supervisory is the family, the stronger is the character, morality, trustworthiness of its children. For the functionalist, more identification with family means more character, and a given society will be found at a conformist equilibrium of sorts, a values consensus, which is its best possible arrangement. My rational-choice approach to culture (defined as the distribution of beliefs within an intramarrying group) portrays it as constraints on individual action arising from local interdependencies of action, and permits that the equilibrium in force may be worse for all than an alternative but unrealized equilibrium. I will argue that the pattern of weak families in traditional Northwest Europe is a Schelling convention, and that character as internalized morality and associated cultural regularities are unintended byproducts of this convention; and similarly that the cultural pattern of strong families in traditional Southeast Europe is also a Schelling convention, and that the comparative absence of character as internalized morality and associated cultural regularities are unintended byproducts of that convention.

The cultural contrast between countries on the North Sea and countries on the Mediterranean—admittedly exaggerated, stylized, riddled with exceptions, and on the verge of disappearance—has been frequently remarked on. Machiavelli (170/1519), for example, was puzzled by the contrast between German Europe and Roman Europe in terms of trust. In Germany citizens are trusted to contribute voluntarily their share of taxes and they do so, such is their goodness and respect for religion, he writes. Italy (except for his native Tuscany), however, is corrupt above all other lands; France and Spain are corrupt as well but each is united by a king constrained by the rule of law. At one pole we have northern latitude, more equality, independence from parents, individualism, nuclear families, more associational memberships, earlier democracy, earlier development, and higher trustingness; at the other pole we have southern latitude, more inequality, obedience to parents, parochial collectivism, extended families, fewer associational memberships, later democracy, later development, and lower trustingness (Inglehart 1990; 1997; Hofstede 1991). Autonomy in the Northwest and obedience in the Southeast are often ascribed to religious values, for example, in Davies' authoritative history of Europe: "Unlike the Protestant preachers who stressed individual conscience and individual probity, all too often the Catholic clergy seemed to urge their flock to blind obedience." (Davies 1996, 502) My view is that those religious values are a consequence, not a cause; that differences in traditional family pattern are causally prior, and influence the remaining contrasts, but not in the manner that one might first expect.

Social trust—how much a person trusts other people in general—is a crucial variable. Social trust, which implies a capacity for collective action, is strongly correlated with democracy and with economic development in several major surveys (Inglehart 1990; 1997; Putnam 1993). Fukuyama (1995) argues that there is an important relationship among family structure, trust, and national prosperity, but a surprising one. Fukuyama dubs the surprise "the paradox of family values": in an informal but instructive cross-national comparison, he finds that the stronger and larger the family, the lower is social trust and national

prosperity (1995, 61–127). Fukuyama reports this association, but does not adequately explain it.

Many people believe that the nuclear family and its small household are a recent development, and that our ancestors inhabited much larger and probably happier households full of grandmother and grandfather, mothers and fathers, brothers and sisters, aunts and uncles, and cousins. For example, Davies (1996, 514) states that, “In earlier times, neither the nuclear family nor the age of childhood had been recognized as distinct entities. All generations lived together in large households.” Idealization of the large, warm, moral peasant family can be traced to conservative sociologists of the 19th century who, like the rest of the elite at the time, felt threatened by the apparent disorder or freedom of accelerating urbanization (Seccombe 1993, 57). That there never was such a family in Northwestern Europe, and that villagers are usually more suspicious than city-dwellers, escaped their attention.

The research of Peter Laslett and the Cambridge family history group dispelled the myth of the large pre-industrial family. By examining parish records in England, they discovered that women married quite late, in their mid-twenties (26), and that people lived in small nuclear-family households (4.75 in 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries) back as far as the Black Death, if not farther (Laslett, e.g. 1983; see also Macfarlane, e.g. 1978). This pattern has been confirmed in much of Northwestern Europe. Indeed, Tacitus observed that German customs of family life differed considerably from those of the Romans, including primacy of the nuclear family, lack of clans or lineages, probably monogamy, and possibly late marriage (“the young men were slow to mate ... the girls too, are not hurried into marriage”, quoted in Goldthorpe 1987, 10). The Northwest European pattern of late age at first marriage of women is “quite remarkable and unlike anything elsewhere in the world” (Seccombe 1992, 56). Whereas it was once believed that the nuclear family is a consequence of industrialization, the received view now is that the Northwest European nuclear family was rather one of the factors contributing to early industrialization. Adapting Seccombe, since several societies achieved technological capacities as good or better as those of Northwestern Europe, only to stagnate or regress, the unique marriage pattern must be suspected as a necessary factor in the initial transition to modern society.

My analysis of Eurobarometer surveys shows a gradient of social trust, highest in the northwest of Europe and lowest in the southeast (Mackie 2001). The social trust gradient corresponds to the broad categorization of traditional European family structures by the Cambridge family historians Hajnal (e.g. 1983) and especially Laslett (1983). Laslett discerns four broad types of family household in traditional Europe. The first type is found in the northwest where the family is weak and small, the second is intermediate, the third (‘Mediterranean’) is in the southeast where the family is strong and big, and the fourth, which I shall not discuss, is eastern Europe (beyond the EC-12).

The first dimension of contrast has to do with household formation. The tendency in the northwest is for neolocal residence: the newly married couple sets up residence on its own. The tendency in the southeast is for the newly

married couple to stay in the father's household; new households fission off from the joint household for reasons unrelated to marriage. Neolocal

residence implies a large proportion of nuclear households, generally limited to parents and unmarried children. Patrilocal (groom's father's) residence implies a large proportion of joint households, including grandparents, adult brothers, and grandchildren. A second dimension that distinguishes the north-west European marriage pattern is late age at marriage, especially late age at first marriage of women. This implies a narrow age gap between spouses and a late age of first birth of children. This is supposed to follow structurally from neolocal residence, because the couple has to work and save to afford marriage. The southeast, in contrast, tends to experience early age of female marriage, implying a large age gap between spouses and early maternity. Also in north-west Europe, the proportion of permanently celibate individuals never marrying is comparatively higher. The third important tendency is dubbed 'addition to household of life-cycle servants', which means that in the northwest youth left home to work as temporary servants in outside households, especially households at the stage of having to care for young children. This seems to follow structurally from neolocal residence: the couple with young children need help (recall, these are the days of peasant subsistence), and the servant youth need to earn money in order to establish their own households ('save for their nest egg'). Life-cycle service is 'very common' in the Northwest and 'not uncommon' in the Mediterranean. But, in parts of southern Italy and Greece, it is 'shameful' to work for non-kin. Assume that residence, age of marriage, and service are stable conventions, in Schelling's sense, that happen to regulate access to reproduction (Mackie 1996; 2001).

Folk sociology says that Japan is a collectivist society and thus should have higher trust than individualist American society. The Japanese social psychologist Yamagishi (e.g., Yamagishi/Yamagishi, 1994) demonstrated robust cross-cultural differences in trust between Americans and Japanese in anonymous social-dilemma experiments and by attitude surveys: Japanese subjects are *less* trusting than American subjects. Yamagishi's experiments showed that high trusters are better able to predict the general trustworthiness of strangers they encounter but are not any better at detecting who likes whom. In contrast, the highly suspicious are better at detecting who likes whom, and at the same time are trusting with insiders but distrusting of outsiders. It appears that each of these two types of social intelligence is learned, and also exclusive, since each requires investment in different skills and each results in different, but self-confirming, learning opportunities.

Say that in general there is a problem of betrayal. Agent *R* can be made worse off by depending on the action of agent *E* (the problem can also be reciprocal). There are several ways to solve the problem of betrayal. One way is for agent *R* to infer and to depend on the internal motivations of agent *E*. This is *trust*. Another way is for *R* to infer and to depend on the external incentives constraining agent *E*. This is *assurance*. Yamagishi argues that Japan's apparent solidarity depends on assurance, not trust. Japanese society is typified by a particular kind of assurance—mutual monitoring and sanctioning in face-to-face

groups. Japanese subjects are less trusting when choices are *anonymous*, but just as trusting as Americans when choices are public. There are other assurance solutions to the betrayal problem, for example, resort to a third-party enforcer, such as a monarch or a mafioso. Or, by depending on rawly motivated reputation arising from repeated interactions between two people, as in textbook economics.

The proper contrast is not between Japanese collectivism and American individualism, but between Japanese collectivism and American universalism, according to Yamagishi. Not that the collectivist society gives higher priority to group interests, but that in the collectivist society expectations of generalized reciprocity are confined within narrow group boundaries and in the universalist society expectations of generalized reciprocity are comparatively unbounded. The collectivist society is at a low-trust equilibrium and the individualist society is at a high-trust equilibrium. Yamagishi explains it as a matter of circular causation: Low trusters, because of their low trust, tend not to enter transactions requiring trust, and thus do not learn to discriminate trustworthy from untrustworthy circumstances. It is easy to imagine how such a low-trust equilibrium came about all on its own. High trusters, because of their high trust, do tend to enter into transactions requiring trust, and do learn to discriminate trustworthy from untrustworthy circumstances. A high-trust equilibrium may be stable, but how could it come about?

My answer is that, in Europe, variations in traditional patterns of marriage are correlated with variations in social trust, and that one particular collection of marriage-convention equilibria in Northwestern Europe generated as a byproduct high trust or universalism or liberalism. I do not explain the origins of these equilibria, which might be entirely accidental; but I do suggest that they are ancient and persistent, and causally prior to the other variables of interest. In turn, the success and expansion of the high-trust social complex has a slow tendency to displace alternative marriage-convention equilibria elsewhere that don't generate trust as a byproduct (Macfarlane 1986). The Northwest European marriage pattern of late female age of marriage and small, nuclear families in independent households requires potential marriage partners to learn how to detect and how to emit signals of trustworthiness in order to reproduce successfully.

Assume that humans strongly desire to raise successfully their biological children. The various forms and aspects of marriage serve this end. Because of the desire for children, each party prefers marriage to nonmarriage, and thus marriage is a deeply interdependent choice and a coordination problem. Females are certain of maternity, but males are not certain of paternity (who was it who quipped that maternity is a fact, but paternity is an opinion?). In the standard case, the female requires assurances of resource support for the bearing and rearing of children, and the male requires assurances of paternity confidence. The man can fail to support the woman after children are born. The woman can fool the man into caring for a child not actually his own. These are the biggest problems of betrayal most humans face, and those who fail to solve the problem by some means of trust or assurance fail to reproduce. Under conditions of resource

equality, humans compete in conveying the signs of trustworthiness to possible marriage partners. Under conditions of resource inequality, conventions of honor (as male vigilance and as female modesty) emerge as signs of higher desirability. Trust and honor each serve the purpose of guaranteeing the risky marriage transaction, but each is only an effective strategy against its own type—trust with trust and honor with honor.

Under the southeastern marriage system, the modesty of the immature and dependent young bride is guaranteed by the jealous honor of her family, and by vigilant supervision before and after marriage. The resource reliability of the groom is guaranteed by the honor of his family, under whose supervision the couple will reside. The primary negotiators of the marriage are the two families, who will each insist on marrying as well as possible into a family of honor (of course, the couple's wishes can't be denied, but notice how zealously the honor family supervises the introduction of prospects); transgressions are deterred by the prospect of destruction of the family's honor—for an individual member to damage his or her family's honor is to damage his own central interests. It is in the child's interest to be obedient, but avoidance of temptation is unpracticed precisely because of parental control.

The northwestern marriage market is quite different. The mature and independent female and the male are certainly concerned about their reputations. However, these reputations do not follow from direct physical supervision by their respective families, but rather from dispositions cultivated by individuals. They are less family reputations and more individual reputations. The reliability of the female's marriage pledge is guaranteed not by the thorough physical supervision of her family, which is impossible because of its smaller size and her much longer wait till marriage, nor by the broader incentives of the larger patrilocal family to safeguard its honor, but rather by signs of her trustworthiness. The male's potential resources are indicated less by inheritable family resources than by his ability to earn and save in work beyond the parental family; the reliability of his marriage pledge is best guaranteed not so much by the honor of his family but by his own signs of trustworthiness. If parents desire grandchildren, then it is in the parents' interest under this system to teach their children to be trustworthy. But, just as one drives in the left lane in England regardless of whether one's parents drove on the right in America, and just as the child learns the local language regardless of the language of her parents, so does the child learn trust where the marriage conventions require it. Individuals who do not learn to emit and detect signs of trustworthiness do less well on the marriage market, and thus under subsistence conditions those who were in fact untrustworthy tended to be less successful in raising children to adulthood.

On the North Sea, the problem of reproductive betrayal is solved by trust. Those who learn trust with respect to this primary problem of betrayal are as a byproduct able to apply their learning to secondary problems of betrayal. On the Mediterranean, the problem of betrayal is solved by assurance—by honor, the reputation of the family, the prowess of its males, and the modesty of its females. Honor is a substitute for trust, so where honor is high trust is low. The remaining contrasts, such as between more equality and less, or between

more associational membership and less, flow as unintended byproducts from the conventions regulating access to reproduction.

Fukuyama seems rather embarrassed by his paradox of family-values. His weak causal account terminates in neoconservative platitudes that the best way to promote trust and its associated prosperity is by way of less government and more religion (although a little investigation would show that these nostrums have as little association with economic and political development as family values). I think this shows that individualism has been misappropriated by the right, and misunderstood by the left. The family historian Laslett (1988) takes note of the 'nuclear-hardship' of the northwestern neolocal family, its vulnerability to misfortune, its dependence on the broader community, and corresponding institutions of poor relief in England and nearby countries, that later evolved into social democratic institutions. Where the family is strong and large there is less of a need *and* less of a capacity for extrafamilial institutions. Individualism and social democracy depend on one another. It is the social safety net of health, welfare, education provision by the state that *permits* individuals to escape confining bonds of family, locality, and religion, and to take larger risks in their pursuit of happiness in free association with others.

5. How Individualism Yields Wider Humanitarian Sensibility

Next, I turn to Simmel's (1955/1922) empirical reconciliation of individuality and sociality in his essay *The Web of Group Affiliations* (better translated as *The Intersection of Social Circles*). In an undifferentiated society an individual is born into natural relations with a mother and some other caregivers usually including a father within a larger group of individuals known by name. Here a person does not inhabit a role, a person simply is (one role is no role). There are not multiple roles to inhabit, and the absence of opportunity limits the learning of the abilities to play roles and to shift roles with ease. The discomfort is apparent from the social devices found in some such groups. The major role shift in such groups is from childhood to adulthood. This is often marked by elaborate initiation ceremony and instruction, precisely because role-shift is such a rare event and thus of great difficulty. First one is a child, next one is an adult: there is no role-switching from one to the other and back. Often there is considerable sex segregation, and men and women scrupulously avoid one another's culturally designated work. Age-sets are found—men (and separately women) of a similar age are initiated together and thereafter are considered a group for some purposes. Harris detects this same behavior in the formation of children's peer groups, a self-sorting of children into groups of same gender and similar age, and strong motives to conform, precisely groups where role conflict is minimized. The most threatening role conflict would be between that of membership in own family and connection to the family of one's spouse. Perhaps it is because of the lack of experience in role play that the curious custom of mother-in-law avoidance is established.

Kinship is one natural category of affiliation, geographical proximity is another. One is born into such positions, they are not freely chosen, purposive associations. For the formation of purposive associations, there must be the structural opportunity of finding others to associate with, the learned ability to play roles, and the learned ability to detect and to emit signals of trust. Notice that the Northwest European marriage pattern provides the structural opportunity to learn role play, and the incentive (avoidance of reproductive failure), to learn trust. Like everything else, role switching must be difficult at first, but easier to do with practice. Perhaps it begins as in one of Simmel's illustrations: a mother takes the side of her son in his dispute with his wife, but also perhaps she reflects on the similarity of position as women between her and her daughter-in-law, and thereby comes to a more generalized, more impersonalized understanding of the situation, perhaps utters a rule about it. Beyond some critical threshold in the individual and in the population, the skill becomes such that impersonal rather than personal associations are possible. Rawls' (1971) veil of ignorance takes it for granted that an impersonal standpoint of perfectly substitutable individuals is possible, but to imagine this is a learned capacity, not a natural one.

Role-filling capacity and opportunity grow together: "As the [person] leaves his established position within *one* primary group, he comes to stand at a point at which many groups 'intersect'." (Simmel 1955/1922, 141) Whereas before a person was known by her name, her parentage, her village, enveloping natural associations, now she is purposively affiliated to many associations and now it is the very multitude of affiliations that creates the *individual*. Groups are determined by their memberships, individuals by their memberships in groups. The more groups and memberships there are the more likely is it that a person will be uniquely defined, individualized, by a list of her memberships.

The group limits the individual, but the more groups there are, the more freedom the individual has both to realize new facets of individuality or to leave one group for a better one. The multiplication of ties is an emancipation, not a burden. Also, the more groups there are, the more excellence there is in the world: someone gets to be the king of the hoboes. The multiplicity of affiliations makes for internal and external conflicts, which can be reconciled perhaps but never made entirely consistent. The task of reconciliation may generate a sense of inner unity. Those who attain more inner unity can tolerate more conflict in their external affiliations, while those with inner conflict might seek more rigidly consistent external affiliations. External consistency is not automatically virtuous, there are good consequences if, for example, in the fraternal lodge the baker outranks the doctor, or in the reserve army the worker is an officer superior to her boss in civilian life. Inconsistent social rankings from context to context provide sociological reality to the abstract concept of formal equality. Appreciation of the task of reconciliation might increase social tolerance. Simmel's illustration: the Venetian Senate denounced Giordano Bruno as a reprehensible heretic who has said the worst things and has led a devilish life, yet reported that he is also a mighty intellect, a man of rare learning and of spiritual greatness. The multiplication of affiliations might increase social stability (moreso

than the merely ideological glue of Rawls' (1993) 'political liberalism', which is a consequence, not a cause, of the sociological reality). It was Simmel's idea that crosscutting social circles, or uncorrelated affiliations, build social stability. In America, one might be a Polish Catholic, yet go to church with Mexicans, live nearby Jews, work with Baptists, belong to an Irish-led union, marry into Koreans, vote Republican, and so on, such that to war with others is to war with oneself.

Again, it is escape from the confines of family that builds character. The emerging individualism also supports a wider humanitarian sensibility. The lived reality of multiple roles is a precondition of a more abstract and impersonal morality. The emerging market and the widespread monetization of value presents as a metaphor, perhaps even as a psychological habit, that diverse values are commensurable in the same currency. The example of monetization has as its analog in the self integrity—a commensurability of value among the diverse roles that the self inhabits. I see virtue where Marx sees vice:

“Money, then, appears as a *disruptive* power for the individual and for social bonds. ... It changes fidelity into infidelity, love into hate, hate into love, virtue into vice, vice into virtue, servant into master, stupidity into intelligence and intelligence into stupidity. Since money, as the existing and active concept of value, confounds and exchanges everything, it is the universal. ... confusion and transposition of all natural and human qualities.” (Marx 1961/1844, 168)

At the same time monetization and the institutions of credit and interest provide models of consistent time preferences for a human creature born with self-defeating and time-inconsistent preferences, devices to help individuals overcome weakness of will (Ainslie 1992). The Northwest European marriage pattern of neolocal residence and late age of marriage culturally enforces longer time horizons that facilitate emergence of credit and enterprise. Market society, as we see now in the former Soviet Union, is more of a cultural process than an economic one.

The bad consequences of individualism and of markets are well known, and I do not deny them now by focusing on some good consequences. Haskell (1998) relates emerging individualism and the abolition of slavery. Was it an accident that the Quakers, those most perfect capitalists, were also responsible for the abolition of slavery? Haskell argues that it was their ability to make and to keep promises and their ability to attend to remote consequences of action (including omission) that led both to their wealth and to abolitionism and its successes. According to my hypotheses, promise-keeping ability and long time horizons emerge from the marriage patterns of neolocal residence and late age of marriage.

Ought implies can. Slavery, if it was not justified, was tolerated as an inescapable evil, perhaps similar to political catastrophes in the undeveloped world today—regrettable, but what can one do about it? The ability to keep promises led to ever more complex enterprise, freely assembled and reassembled to take advantage of the latest opportunity. At the same time competition rewarded the more far-sighted enterprises, and this led to an accumulation of scientific

and especially organizational technologies. The greater reward for attention to distant causal consequences also helps overcome the tendency to undergeneralization from context to context. The slaveowners undergeneralized: although the capture into slavery was unjust, my present ownership of the slave is not, they reasoned. The abolitionist Woolman (quoted in Haskell 1998, 278–9) argued to his brethren:

“Whatever nicety of distinction there may be betwixt going in person on expeditions to catch slaves, and buying those with a view to self-interest which others have taken, it is clear and plain to an upright mind that such distinction is in words, not substance; for the parties are concerned in the same work and have a necessary connection with and dependence on each other. For were there none to purchase slaves, they who live by stealing and selling them would of consequence do less at it.”

The growing complexity and potency of organization suggests to a few competent individuals who are deeply offended by the practice that slavery is now an escapable evil, and they put their skills to work in the long struggle to that end, and eventually they succeed. Opponents of slavery may have existed in other eras, but only with the emergence of individualism were they able both to organize and to persuade.

6. Concluding Reflections

Thus, family relations may create character, but not, as in the functionalist story, in all circumstances, and not by parental socialization of children. Rather, character as internalized morality is originally an unintended byproduct of courtship in the peculiar family circumstances of traditional Northwest Europe, and thereafter accompanies the modernizing influences it has unleashed on the world.

One motivation for my analysis is to dispute a certain discourse, first recorded in antiquity, which perceives accelerating moral decay and in response calls for a return to traditional family values, such as the prohibition of divorce, the denial of birth control, the punishment of adultery, and the confinement of women. In contrast, I portray a strong relationship between individual freedom and internalized morality. I contend that almost everyone is born with morality, and the important question is whether its scope is parochial and thereby destructive, or more encompassing, and as we have seen universalism empirically requires individualism. Historically, however, liberal individualism has tended to reward men at the expense of women. As women now gain recognition, it seems it is at the expense of children and family (more in the hypercapitalist United States than in Europe). Market society has exploited the weaker bargaining positions of those who perform caring activities, traditionally, women (Folbre 2001). As women’s bargaining positions improve, they exit underpaid and nonpaid caring activities, which then become an undersupplied public good, so to speak. There are two possible solutions: either to reduce the freedom of caregivers or to better

reward them for their activities. My view is that public support for health, education, and welfare is a better way to improve the lot of children and family than is curtailment of adult liberties. The kind of individualism I describe in this essay does not demonize public action and social democratic institutions but rather celebrates them as its foundation.

I do not deny the fact that successful marriage, and the raising of children, provide profound and durable satisfactions to the human creature. Family, work and friendship, for most people, are among the true ends of a rightly understood life. Perhaps it is the undoubted value of close family relations that underlies the assumption of their social utility—something that feels so good must do much good as well. That the satisfactions of family are powerful and genuine does not necessarily imply, however, that the family has *further*, beneficial, *sociological* consequences. That would have to be demonstrated, rather than assumed.

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