

The Morality of Commerce: The Foundation of Civility

and the American Culture War

To articulate the features of an agreeable society has been a primary project of philosophy since the beginning of philosophy. The Enlightenment is now regarded as the point when freedom and equality were identified as the highest social values, but “freedom to do what?”, and “equality in what respect?” were not precisely answered in the Enlightenment. Now, with the culture war in America, “creedal passion” is again aroused and basic questions of social philosophy are front and center for all Americans, not just philosophers. The word “civility” is used; *e.g.*, if only vitriol and acrimony were replaced with civility, then America would satisfy the Enlightenment ideal of an agreeable society. By dictionary definition, the word “civility” means “formal politeness and courtesy”; these can be indicators of respect but are only superficial attributes of behaviour that can conceal genuine disrespect. It’s possible to be formally polite and courteous while committing hideous villainy, and villainy is not a feature of an agreeable society, at least not to the victims. Formal politeness and courtesy might not mitigate the present culture wars. “Civility” then is not the perfect word to describe the cultural characteristic that makes a society agreeable, but with a modification to the definition and in the absence of an alternative, I think the word can serve. In my usage, civility refers not to superficial formal politeness and courtesy, but to genuine adherence to equal individual freedom.

In my thesis, Enlightenment freedom and equality derive from commerce, an inherent and uniquely human form of social interaction involving the consensual exchange of commercial goods. A society is civil to the extent that the morality of equal individual freedom has expanded from the commercial domain to the larger domain of all arm’s length interactions.

Here’s a bare-bones précis of my thesis. After this, I’ll flesh out the bones and make the argument.

1. All human societies are patriarchal, with masculine competition for status.
2. Different levels of civility in different societies derive primarily from the different cultural definitions of masculinity.
3. Masculinity involves dominance and the highest achievement of the masculine ideal is to be the patriarch (king, president, leader, founder, etc.). The cultural definition of masculinity determines the means by which a person can respectably become, and maintain his position as, patriarch – the rules of the competition for status.
4. Until recently, all societies were patriarchies where dominance was achieved and maintained by coercive force. Most societies still are. Each culture has its own standards of respectability for the use of force.
5. Any stable culture is governed by a moral system that defines individual success and failure, and determines the cultural definition of masculinity.

6. Morality is a fundamental feature of individual humans. Morality is not a set of universal rules of behaviour, but is rather, at base, a personal emotional phenomenon.
7. Commerce is a very specific type of social interaction peculiar to humans. Within a commercial exchange (the basic unit of commerce), commercial counter-parties relate to one another as equally free based on a morality of equal freedom. Without equal freedom, there can be no commerce. Furthermore, equal freedom is not just an incidental prerequisite of commerce; rather, commerce is the demonstration by which we have come to understand the immense value of the morality of equal freedom in a much larger social domain than commerce.
8. Commerce is at least as old as civilization (about 12,000 years) and maybe much older. There is scholarship about the historical development of commerce. That scholarship is unsettled and may always be. Modern commerce is only a few hundred years old even if the potential for civil commerce has always been inherent in the human character. What characterizes modern commerce is the huge number of commercial exchanges that people routinely make in markets with others regarding whom they feel no prior obligation or influence (arm's length relations).
9. By the time of the Enlightenment, around say 1750, a few countries in North-West Europe had achieved break-out affluence through commerce. In those countries, commerce occupied a much larger domain within social life than any place else at that time, but that commercial domain of equal freedom sat uneasily beside the older domain of stratified social organization. Now, in the liberal democracies, the domain of commerce is even larger – but there are other domains, as for example, the domain of parent/child relations, in which the morality of equal freedom does not apply.
10. History demonstrates that commerce is the sole route to general affluence.
11. The philosophical debates that constituted the Enlightenment identified freedom and equality as the highest social values, but those debates did not define freedom or equality and did not explain how or why freedom or equality developed. A minor theme of the Enlightenment was the significance of commerce: an acknowledgement that those societies that experienced the most commerce also experienced the least social turmoil in addition to a higher standard of living, hence the term “sweet commerce”. To the extent that there is a reasoned debate at the moment, freedom and equality are still considered the highest social values but they are considered to be opposing values that “trade off” against one another; *vis*, the more freedom there is in a society, the less there will be equality, and vice versa. For generations, the left has favoured equality, the right has favoured freedom, and the debate now concerns the proper border between freedom and equality. Today, most participants on both sides of the public debate consider commerce to be an immoral evil, perhaps a necessary evil until social philosophers devise something better, but nevertheless, a demonstration of inconsiderate greed and a source of “inequality” and acrimony. This is a bum rap.
12. Freedom and equality are essential features of commerce, a uniquely human and ancient capability. To understand the fundamental characteristics of freedom and equality, we can look to the actual practice of basic commerce, and we see there that freedom and equality are not opposing values, but are merged into the single value of equal individual freedom. Equal individual freedom necessarily requires each individual to take responsibility for the choices he

makes in the exercise of that freedom; otherwise, the burden of responsibility falls on someone else and violates the equality of that person's freedom.

13. The domain of commerce in modern affluent liberal democracies is huge, but the domain of the morality of equal freedom is even larger and includes not just commercial interactions, but all interactions between individuals "at arm's length". The prevalence of the morality of equal freedom in the large domain of arm's length relations is what we call "civility" -- our most important cultural characteristic.
14. The fundamental difference between, on the one hand, a stratified patriarchy governed by coercive force, and on the other hand, our affluent liberal democracies characterized by civility, is the different cultural definitions of masculinity. In all societies, masculine success is to achieve and maintain status in competition with the other men, each of whom also wants to achieve the highest status for himself. Each society has its own principles of competitive respectability. In a traditional patriarchy governed by force, which is thought to have been universal and is still the most common form of governance, it is honourable within the cultural definition of masculinity for the strongest man to win the patriarchy by coercive force. But in a civil society, masculine honour requires status to be achieved in compliance with the morality of equal freedom. The morality of equal freedom has spread from its limited domain of commercial interactions to the much larger domain of all arm's length relations. Both definitions result in a meritorious patriarchy: in a patriarchy of coercive force, the merit is skill in dominating by coercion; in a civil patriarchy, the merit is skill in winning the consent of the individual members of society. Either way, male status derives from competitive success. Before Adam Smith noticed that it had already happened, one could never have predicted that men could accept a definition of masculinity that repudiated the achievement of status by coercive force.
15. Present American cultural turmoil is characterized by a grand schism: left vs. right; equality vs. freedom; Democrat vs. Republican. Each side considers the other to be immoral, not merely mistaken. From their different rhetorical ideologies at the moment, the theme on the left is to enforce general compassion for the suffering endured by specific "oppressed" groups so as to make everyone more equal; the right is reacting to the left theme with contemptuous outrage towards weak losers. Without articulating it, the left is advocating its own cultural definition of masculinity according to which the highest masculine ideal is exquisite effeminate sensitivity to even the micro-sufferings of the oppressed groups, and the right is reacting with a clumsy ham fist.
16. The super-sensitivity advocated by the left amounts to "moral superiority of victimhood and glorification of the downtrodden" -- an echo of Christian and socialist ideologies at different times. But contrary to that ideology, today's left advocates are no more compassionate than Renaissance popes were chaste and poor. The compassion is phoney, a thin hypocritical veneer covering normal political opportunism -- a fig leaf that serves to camouflage violations of the morality of equal freedom. Phoney compassion is effeminacy. The reaction from the right is a normal masculine attempt to dominate by force, including its own violations of equal freedom. The effeminate definition of masculinity advocated by the left violates a fundamental feature of meritorious masculinity: in the competition for status, winners win and losers lose. This feature of masculinity is not a modifiable cultural phenomenon; rather, it is a feature of all cultures

within our species -- it inheres in our nature. But even if it were culturally modifiable, cultural development is incrementally slow and follows its own logic, not ideology or legislation. Nevertheless, history offers many examples of normal masculine patriarchal ambition overlaid by hypocritical fig-leaf ideological veneers of compassion – most have been short lived but some have endured. If history is a guide, a fig leaf of compassion is a poor substitute for real civility based on equal freedom.

17. Civility, our greatest cultural achievement, is at stake.

1. All human societies are patriarchal with masculine competition for status.

Like most species of mammals of which we are only one, humans are sexually dimorphic; that is to say, all members of our species share fundamental features but they are divided into two sexes which are distinguished by distinctive physical and psychological characteristics. To be sure, there are rare examples of individuals who do not neatly fit into one or the other of the male or female sexual categories. This is also true in many mammalian species, where deviants (sexually or otherwise) are shunned, excommunicated, exiled, or worse, and in the result, the deviants do not proliferate. Consequently, the broad social organization of these species reflects only the two sexes. Every mammalian species seems to have a distinct social organization defined by the relations between the sexes and between the generations derived in turn from their sexually dimorphic characteristics. If we were discussing, say elephants or baboons, we would presume their particular species-wide social organizations to be genetically determined. Human societies have a large variety of forms but all are patriarchies and this suggests (but doesn't conclusively prove) that patriarchy is inherent in the human character, whether genetically determined or otherwise. This, in turn, suggests that any different form of social organization is outside the range of possibility, at least within the time scale of social philosophy.

Every human society has a patriarch – a king, leader, founder, dictator, big boss man, etc. The patriarch usually earns his position by some competitive meritocratic means, and he chooses his queen or queens by the exercise of his discretion. The expression of human dimorphism gives males superior hunting and fighting physiques and psyches compared to females who are more suited to gathering and child-rearing. One can imagine pre-civilization societies (basically families) where our dimorphic character supported a division of social roles that was advantageous for survival and proliferation. That pre-civilization phase of human evolution was orders of generations longer than the present civilized phase, and even though the earlier dimorphic social roles may now seem archaic and even problematic, nevertheless, we retain our particular dimorphic character which limits the range of social possibility.

Males compete with one another for the position of patriarch within the social group and the result is a male status hierarchy. Male status concerns fighting ability (whether hunting, warfare, or simple physical dominance) but also includes organizing strategic alliances to compete against other alliances.

Male mating privileges follow the competitive outcome. For females, their most important attribute is being attractive to males as their status derives from their attachment to male mates. Females exercise some measure of choice of mates but are attracted to males largely in proportion to the male status derived from males competing with one another, and females are the primary caregivers to young offspring. It's my impression that all of recorded history demonstrates continuity of these fundamental features of masculinity and femininity. The characters described in the oldest documents can be easily understood as though they were living today. Men are taciturn, thick skinned to minor insults but can explode with anger, determined when striving for a goal, and have no sympathy for weakness in their competitors. Masculinity involves strength, courage, independence, leadership, single-minded determination in the achievement of goals with great bursts of short-term energy, and an aggressive enthusiasm to take on great challenges. Young men especially look for fights where they can demonstrate their ferocity and independence from overriding authority; *i.e.*, young men look for opportunities to demonstrate their capability to dominate. Femininity involves gentleness, empathy, humility and sensitivity, dedicated subservience to a man and to the cause of raising children, and great endurance. Women connive and gossip and can take offence at the slightest perceived insult. Of course, not all men are brutal nor are all women gentle. Every person has the capability to demonstrate all these characteristics, but on average, more men demonstrate masculine characteristics than women, and vice versa. These are not my own characterizations. They are imprecise and incomplete stereotypes with significant overlaps, but they seem to be universal stereotypes across different societies and historical periods, and that suggests they are, in some sense, inherent. But whether inherent or not, they broadly and vaguely define social expectations and personal identity. Personal identification as male or female is the most important feature of self-identify.

Apart from the masculine/feminine characteristics just outlined, which I consider matters of substance, there are also characteristics of pure style that identify masculinity and femininity. Masculine or feminine characteristics (whether of substance or style) seem to pervade an individual's entire persona. Each society has its own stereotypical definitions of masculinity and femininity, but they all conform to the fundamental characterizations just described. Femininity in women is appealing to most men, as is masculinity in men to most women. There is a fundamental difference between femininity and effeminacy. The mimicking of feminine characteristics by men, and particularly mincing exaggeration, is effeminacy, and is repulsive to most men.

The word "patriarchy" implies a male patriarch, but that is not the usage that I intend. In my usage, a patriarch is a person who attained and maintains his position of dominance by sheer force of competitive character, and that person can be female. Dominance in this masculine sense means the imposition of the dominator's will against the will of opponents (the dominated). The dominated folk accommodate the patriarch out of fear and respect. A patriarchy is a hierarchical social organization based on competitive masculine prowess in which every competitor would usurp the position of patriarch if he thought he could succeed. Katherine the Great and Margaret Thatcher are examples of females who attained and maintained domination within their societies in competition with all opponents most of whom were men. By contrast, a matriarchy is also a hierarchical social organization but it is not based on dominance. A matriarch's authority derives not from a dominant character but from superior wisdom or empathy or some such. A matriarch does not impose her will on opposing subjects, because her subjects do not oppose her will and are not

continually motivated to usurp her position; instead, they comply with her direction out of love and gratitude. The overall organization of human societies is universally patriarchal. Matriarchies exist as substructures within an overall patriarchal structure, as for example, within some families and for some purposes. In my usage, patriarchy involves domination (the imposition of the dominator's will against opposing wills) and this is a masculine characteristic, not exclusively but predominantly demonstrated by men.

- 2. Different levels of civility in different societies derive primarily from the different cultural definitions of masculinity.**
- 3. Masculinity involves dominance and the highest achievement of the masculine ideal is to be the patriarch (king, president, leader, founder, etc.). The cultural definition of masculinity determines the means by which a person can respectably become, and maintain his position as, patriarch – the rules of the competition for status.**
- 4. Until recently, all societies were patriarchies where dominance was achieved and maintained by coercive force. Most societies still are. Each culture has its own standards of respectability for the use of coercive force.**

All stable societies have cultural definitions of masculinity and femininity but all cultural definitions of masculinity value high placement within the competitive hierarchy, and all cultural definitions of femininity value attachment to a high-ranking male and motherhood. The primary differences between one society and another concern the culturally respectable means by which a person can achieve and hold a position in the hierarchy.

Imagine a society consisting of one nomadic family dominated by a patriarch who has several wives and several siblings with their spouses and children living in a very harsh environment where subsistence is difficult. This family is vulnerable to raids by other families for theft and enslavement and this family does its own raiding and predation, which is important for men to get wives. Polygyny of high-status men is far more common throughout history than monogamy or polyandry. One feature of polygyny involves competition for succession between half siblings supported by different mothers – warfare deriving from our particular inherent dimorphic character. In this family, patricide and fratricide might be common means of succession of the patriarchy and the relations between the sexes would probably be similarly oppressive by our standards. This is not a farfetched example – there are still a few societies organized along these lines but within historical memory, many were, and at points during the long precivilization period, maybe all were. Compare that to, say, Putin's Russia where competition for dominance is by also by force, but there is an electoral pastiche, and corrupt control of the electoral process is a respectable means of achieving dominance. It's not clear that Putin could hold his position if he lost control of the corrupt electoral process the way Lukashenko did in Belorussia. Would Putin be, in the words of Xi Jinping, "man enough to stand up and resist", demonstrating the masculinity of socialist oppression. In Russia and Belorussia, elections are not demonstrations of equal freedom but of coercive skill in controlling the electoral theatre, and in both of those cultures, that is considered legitimate competition albeit not unanimously. All candidates are trying to do the same. The definition of respectable masculinity in any society determines not just the respectable

means by which the patriarch attains his position, but also determines the rules governing the competition between men for status throughout the society. Each patriarchy by force has its own standards defining the circumstances where force may be used respectably and the types of force, and in the result, there is a huge variety of culturally different expressions of the same basic social structure. But there is only one form of social organization that has persisted over more than a few generations that has repudiated force as a respectable means of achieving masculine status in a large society: that is the model based on equal freedom described below. In our civil system, genuine electoral success is the only respectable means to achieve the patriarchy itself, but most high-status positions within the competitive masculine hierarchy are achieved by commerce. Use of force is contemptible as a competitive tactic in liberal democracies. The same fundamental masculine inclination to compete for status underpins the huge variety of patriarchies by force as well as the single type of patriarchy that repudiates force.

In my conception of the relations between the sexes, the cultural definition of femininity has an ancillary character. Men chose which women to mate with and a woman's status derives primarily from the status of the male to whom she is attached as mate. No doubt the cultural definition of femininity is very important, but I am not aware of any examples where it overrides the overall patriarchal character of any society, even where the position of patriarch is occupied by a woman. In modern commercial societies, women demonstrate full competence in commercial skill but they still bear and raise children and, in the result, very few women achieve the highest commercial status. Women compete with each other for attachment to particular males and for the advantage of their children, but that feminine competition does not typically change the overall masculine hierarchical organization.

- 5. Any stable culture is governed by a moral system which defines individual success and failure, and determines the cultural definition of masculinity.**
- 6. Morality is a fundamental feature of individual humans. Morality is not a set of universal rules of behaviour, but is rather, at base, a personal emotional phenomenon.**

All liberal democracies have laws articulated in legislation including punishments for breach. There is some violation of legislation, but people largely obey laws and these societies are properly characterized as "law abiding". Legislation governs only a small part of the total behaviour of individuals in liberal democracies or any other society. Most behaviour of individuals is governed instead by unwritten and unarticulated rules or cultural norms, and once again, individuals in liberal democracies largely comply with these unwritten rules as well. Punishments for violating rules are only a small part of the explanation for general compliance. Even when there is something to be gained by violating a rule but no chance of punishment, people nevertheless follow the rules for the most part. Why would a person forgo a benefit with no burden of punishment? Answer: Because he would suffer emotionally otherwise. Legislation is a new phenomenon in human society, but no person anywhere or any time can escape the emotional punishment for violating his own morality. Where a high percentage of the moralities of the individuals in a society cohere, then the society can be said to be governed by that prevailing morality. But fundamentally, morality exists only at the individual level.

The huge effort spent to understand morality over the course of history has been a serious intellectual failure. Thankfully, and like other areas of intellectual failure addressed in this essay, morality continues to operate according to its own principles notwithstanding being unarticulated and misunderstood. Here is my description of morality in general. The particular morality of civility that prevails in liberal democracies is addressed later.

In *The Elements of Mentality*, I describe the elemental components of which subjective life consists – all are different types of subjective experiences. One type is emotions, of which there are twenty-two. Emotions have four properties: (1) The experience of an emotion is caused by the experience of a particular concept. A concept is a different type of elemental subjective experience. (2) Each emotion has a distinct feeling in the same way that there are distinct smells (olfactory experiences are a third type of elemental experience). The distinct feeling of each emotion is either good or bad. (3) Each emotional experience includes a particular strategic desire how to behave with respect to the concept that gave rise to the emotion, and (4) bodily changes appropriate to the strategic desire which are experienced as a fourth type of elemental experience. One of those twenty-two emotions is shame. The concept that causes shame is “personal failure”. If one conceives that one has failed in the attempt to achieve a goal, one experiences shame, a bad experience. When the personal failure results in harm to another person, the experience of shame is called “guilt” – the same emotion with a different name. Immorality is the name we give to behaviour that constitutes a personal failure and causes harm to another person, provided that the behaviour was intentional (or reckless as to the harm). Immorality then has three elements: (1) personal failure, (2) harm to another person, and (3) intention.

To understand morality, the important question is what constitutes a personal failure. Each person knows what he is attempting to achieve (even if he can’t articulate it) and knows when he has failed, but how does one person judge that another person has failed? How does one person judge another person’s behaviour to be immoral? In the course of growing up, each person develops a concept that he is one member of a society of other individual members. It is an essential achievement of youth for each person to develop an understanding of the structure of his society (the relations between people) including an abstract image of what he considers to be a successful person within society, *i.e.*, someone he would respect and emulate. That image is based on a set of principles that each person creates for himself to define respectability and also disrespectability (contemptibility). To achieve personal respectability is everyone’s social goal – respectability is the definition of individual success within society; contemptibility is the definition of social failure and forms the basis of immorality. For each person, social life consists of the continuing effort to achieve his concept of personal respectability within his society. To achieve social respectability is the most important of many personal goals. Immorality involves intentional (or recklessly caused) harm to another person in consequence of a failure to behave respectably. Each person judges his own success/failure and the success/failure of others by the same standards, his own standards. He feels shame if he fails to live up to his own standards and feels contempt and hatred for another person who failed to live up to those same standards of his.

Several points:

1. The development of a personal system of morality is a great intellectual achievement that separates youth from adulthood. We don't hold children to the same standards of responsibility precisely to the extent that we presume their moral systems are not fully developed.
2. Different cultures are characterized by different moral norms, but a norm is just a kind of statistical plurality; the development of moral principles happens at the level of individuals and any society may include individuals whose moral principles vary widely from the norm for whatever reason.
3. Immorality involves harm to others and the greater the harm, the greater the immorality, but it does not follow that doing good for others is moral and doing more good is more moral; on the contrary, the analogy is to criminal law where greater harm elicits more serious punishment, but there is no reward for conduct that violates no criminal law no matter how much "good" it causes to others; *i.e.*, an intentional failure that causes harm is immoral, but anything else is morally neutral. Morality does not positively motivate behavior; morality only operates as a restraint on behavior.
4. The previous paragraphs describe the fundamental features of morality. Those fundamental features do not lead to any particular set of principles of moral behavior; instead, every competent individual forms his own principles of morality. No moral principles are right or true or proper or universal even though, to every individual, his own moral principles feel that way (an illusion); instead, each person's moral system is an adaptation to the circumstances the individual has faced in his development.
5. Rather than universal moral rules, what is universal is the inclination and capacity of every individual to identify some behaviors as morally wrong based on the principles just outlined. That inclination and capacity inhere in the human character. Of course, there are a very small number of individuals who do not seem to have moral feelings (Trump?), a psychological deformity analogous to a physical deformity.
6. Immorality occurs at the most basic social level: an interaction between two individuals. In a complex social situation, say, a war between great empires, the morality of that complexity of interactions can only be understood at the most basic level in terms of the behavior of one individual at a time causing harm to another individual however far removed – the complexity arises from the complex interconnections of individual immoralities, not from a change of the features of immorality at its basic level.

Within any society, it is the principles by which men respectably compete for status within the patriarchal hierarchy (the morality of the competition) which primarily determines the cultural definition of masculinity.

7. **Commerce is a very specific type of social interaction peculiar to humans. Within a commercial exchange, the basic unit of commerce, commercial counter-parties relate to one another as equally free based on a morality of equal freedom. Without equal freedom, there can be no commerce. Furthermore, equal freedom is not just an incidental prerequisite of commerce; rather, commerce is the demonstration by which we came to understand the**

immense value of the morality of equal freedom in a much larger social domain than commerce.

Here is my description of the fundamentals of commerce:

All commercial systems and transactions can be analyzed into discrete basic units of commerce, no matter how complex great aggregates of basic units may seem. A basic unit of commerce is an exchange of commercial goods between two individuals who agree to make the exchange, each with a view to maximizing benefit to himself in the full understanding that the other individual (the counterparty) is also seeking to do the same for himself. At the time the agreement is struck, each party thinks he will be better off after the exchange. Each party makes that determination for himself according to his own principles, and both parties might be right in that. There is no contradiction between each party making the transaction for his own improvement, and both succeeding in doing exactly that.

It's hard to imagine that anyone could take objection to the simplest commercial exchange between willing counterparties; however, this simple basic unit of commerce carries a number of very important unstated potentially controversial implications. The first concerns property. When two parties consider making an exchange, each considers himself the owner of the goods he is willing to give, and each considers the other the owner of the goods each wants to get in the exchange; that is to say, they each recognize their own and the other party's property rights in the goods to be exchanged. In the legitimacy of their property rights, they regard each other as equals. The second concerns freedom. Each party considers the other free to make the exchange or not, each in his own unfettered discretion. In their freedom to do the exchange, they regard each other as equals – equally free. If they don't do the exchange, then each recognises the other's freedom to exchange the goods with anybody else on whatever terms they might choose. The fact that they didn't make the exchange does not diminish the freedom they had before considering the exchange. In this freedom, they are equal. If they do make the exchange, then property in the exchanged goods passes, and they are both equally free to exchange the newly acquired goods as they individually choose without regard to the newly completed exchange just as they were free before the exchange. Again, equal freedom. The equal freedoms that commerce implies derive from the right of property. Ownership of goods implies the freedom to exchange it ... and then to exchange the newly acquired goods, on and on. John Locke's expression "life, liberty, and property" includes the equal freedoms that commercial exchanges of property imply.

What are commercial goods that are capable of being property? Typically, they are physical things the enjoyment of which is necessarily exclusive. For example, my bushel of grain is a commercial good which I can eat or sell if I want – no one else can eat my grain without interfering with me eating or selling it. To protect my right to eat my grain from interference, my property right in my grain entitles me to exclude others from eating it. Over time, the range of commercial goods has expanded and now "services" are treated as though they were goods. Contracts for services mimic commerce in physical goods in many respects, are now thought of as normal commerce, and can be socially beneficent. But not all services are admitted to the ranks of legitimate commerce, *e.g.*, contracts for mercenary or sex

services and such are prohibited in many societies. An even more abstract form of commercial good is so-called “intellectual property”. Unlike my eating another person’s grain, my use of an idea that was first conceived by someone else does not interfere with that other person’s use of that idea. Ideas are not amenable to exclusive use, but lately most governments (in a demonstration of squeezing a square peg into a round hole) recognize a property right in ideas and have prohibited the use of patented or copyrighted ideas except with the consent of the owner of the patent or copyright. It’s an open question whether these new forms of commercial goods will be socially beneficent. In its basic form, commerce in exclusive-use goods is a natural human capability with a limited domain. It also seems clear that the expansion of some aspects of commerce outside this basic domain has been very salutary (especially expansion of the morality of equal freedom), but governments cannot assume that every expansion will be beneficent. Right now, lots of normal commerce occurs by means of the internet and the application of normal commercial rules to buying and selling of goods online is straight-forward, but the internet has also introduced any number of “commercial entities” (I don’t know what else to call them) that are valuable aspects of internet activity but only vaguely recognized or understood, *e.g.*, network effects. This is an expansion of commerce into an unknown realm and the definition of equal freedom in this realm is not yet clear.

It is an inherent feature of commerce that it is competitive. Commerce is only a very small part of the huge universe of biological evolution of which competition (*e.g.*, natural selection) is a governing principle. Competition necessarily produces winners and losers. That does not make competition an immoral evil. To win is precisely why competitors compete. Winning in commerce doesn’t necessarily mean humiliation and defeat for the loser. Each party to a commercial transaction wins in the sense that each thinks the transaction improves his position. But each party tries to give the least and get the most – inherent competition. What is distinctive about commercial competition is that it is cooperative. Throughout the commercial process, the parties respect each other’s equal freedom. Equal freedom defines the rules of the competition and the parties cooperate by following the rules. If one party should fraudulently misrepresent the goods he is offering to exchange, or threaten or coerce the other party to do an exchange, then that violates the other party’s equal freedom to do the exchange in the exercise of his own unfettered discretion. Similarly, if two sellers of grain agree not to sell their grain to third parties below a certain price, that violates the equal freedom of any potential purchaser to freely bargain with anybody else. The entire range of commercial immoralities and crimes can be understood as violations of the equal freedom of commercial participants, a fettering of discretion. Even if equal freedom is strictly respected, the outcomes of many exchanges are likely to be diverse.

There are, of course, all kinds of exchanges of goods between individuals who do not regard one another as equally free. But those are not commerce. They may be coerced exchanges which do not have the socially beneficent effect of normal commerce, or they may be exchanges from parent to child which are socially necessary, or any number of other types of exchanges.

What part does morality play in commercial exchange? A fundamental feature of commerce is its competitive character. Each party is motivated to make the best deal for himself, and each knows the other is similarly motivated; *vis*, each wants to give the least and get the most. Giving least and getting most means that, ideally, each party would give away nothing of his own and get everything owned by

the other party. In the absence of some civilizing counter-incentive, these ideal goals, which are irreconcilable and fully recognized by both parties, are a clear basis for violent warfare. How can one party satisfy himself that the other party will not cheat or commit other acts of war to achieve his ideal goal of giving nothing and taking everything? In the context of these irreconcilable ideal goals, there must be factor which satisfies each party that the other will not resort to warfare to achieve his ideal goal. That factor is the morality of commerce which respects the equal freedom of each party to own and exchange commercial goods. Each party must convince the other that to violate the equal freedom of the other party would be a contemptible failure of his own moral standard of respectability. For those of us who live in a civil society, respect for equal individual commercial freedom is the default norm, and commercial counterparties do not require much proof of each other's moral standards, but it's not hard to imagine that high standards of proof would be required in circumstances where commercial exchanges are rare, and of course there are societies in which theft and commercial villainy are respected. It is the morality of commerce (shame consequent on intentionally violating the equal freedom to acquire and exchange commercial goods) that satisfies each of the counterparties to a commercial exchange that the other party will forgo the ideal goal of giving nothing and taking everything, and instead, be satisfied with the agreed compromise which improves each party's position though less than the ideal. The development of a morality of commerce derives from the beneficence of commerce, *i.e.*, from the individual improvement that both parties feel in consequence of the commercial exchange and from the general improvement of the standard of living. After a history of successful commercial exchanges, the value of respecting another person's equal commercial freedom becomes apparent and commerce becomes a respectable way to improve one's status. A failure to respect another person's equal commercial freedom harms that person and jeopardizes the future benefit of commerce, a failure both immoral (dishonourable) and foolish. In the absence of the restraint imposed by a morality of commerce, the irreconcilable ideal goals would operate as a disincentive to the compromise inherent in commercial exchange. It's my thesis that this morality is a necessary component of commerce.

Commerce is an exclusively human phenomenon. Different animals exhibit symbiotic behaviours involving choice and competition, including something in the nature of markets, and the case has been made that this is animal commerce equivalent to human commerce. But no animal behaviour demonstrates the legitimacy of property. Animals can possess goods as can humans but the legitimacy of possession by animals derives from competitive power which can be usurped by greater power, *i.e.*, the normal hierarchy of force rather than property rights deriving from the morality of equal freedom which undergirds commerce.

8. Commerce is at least as old as civilization (about 12,000 years) and maybe much older. There is scholarship about the historical development of commerce. That scholarship is unsettled and may always be. Modern commerce is only a few hundred years old even if the potential for civil commerce has always been inherent in the human character. What characterizes modern commerce is the huge number of commercial exchanges that people routinely make

in markets with others regarding whom they feel no prior obligation or influence, *i.e.*, arm's length relations.

- 9. By the time of the Enlightenment, around say 1750, a few countries in North-West Europe had achieved break-out affluence through commerce. In those countries, commerce occupied a much larger domain within social life than any place else at that time, but that commercial domain of equal freedom sat uneasily beside the older domain of stratified social organization. Now, in the liberal democracies, the domain of commerce is even larger – but there are other domains, as for example, the domain of parent/child relations, in which the morality of equal freedom does not apply.**

Liberal democracies are large societies where most commercial transactions occur within large and largely transparent markets between individuals who did not know one another before the transaction and will not likely know one another afterwards. Each party is motivated to make the best deal for himself and neither party is motivated to give a better or worse deal to the other than to any different person considering a similar exchange. The parties have no claim or influence on one another either before or after an exchange and whether or not an exchange occurs. The ideal of equal freedom before, during, and after the exchange is most obvious in that impersonal situation. The vernacular name for that type of relationship between commercial counterparties is “arm's length”. Even if the parties know one another well, they can still interact as though they were at arm's length, but their prior or continuing connection can complicate the equality of their freedoms though it doesn't have to.

I have my own conjectures about the development of commerce within societies. In societies that consist of one or a few families, every individual knows every other intimately. No individuals have much freedom to leave and form new relationships and strangers are reasonably regarded with suspicion. Arm's length relations, where each individual respects the equal freedom of the others, can't realistically exist in small kin-group societies that are organized as hierarchical patriarchies where status is determined by force. Possession and ownership of goods that might have been amenable to commercial exchange in a different society may instead have been determined by force and status, not equal freedom. Societies of this size and form are thought to have characterised the long pre-civilization period of the evolution of our species in which the fundamentals of our character evolved. About twelve thousand years ago, civilization first appeared and the archeological record is full of evidence of commerce. The earliest civilized societies were larger than previously but tiny by modern standards and were also hierarchical patriarchies of force, *i.e.*, what today might be called oppressive slave societies, although scholarly opinions vary. Except for those people who had no freedom, equal freedom did not exist. How then could commerce occur? Answer: Early civilized commerce was between different societies, not necessarily within them. Within a society, the patriarch is always suspicious of ambitious competitors and he would be foolish treat them as equals. But as between him and the patriarch of a different society which is sufficiently remote that neither patriarch threatens the patriarchy of the other, they can treat each other as equals without jeopardizing their own internal status. This is especially so where trade between societies is intermediated by an inter-society professional trader. The patriarchs don't have to meet personally and may not even know each other's

identity. None of the permanently settled societies of early civilization were self-sufficient in the variety of goods they produced: commerce was necessary for subsistence and it delivered abundance. Some societies became great empires. The success of settled civilized societies depended on commerce and that demonstrated the value of treating counterparties as equally commercially free, and that in turn would lead to the morality of equal freedom within the very limited domain of inter-society commerce.

Around 7000 years ago, agricultural commodities became currency, then metals were added. By 500BC coins were used as currency. Shortly appeared coins in denominations small enough for daily or even hourly wages. Each development suggests increasing commercial activity. Small denomination coins (called “deep monetisation”) suggest that commerce occurred among normal folk within societies and that services (labour) had become commercial goods. Deep monetisation also suggests markets. A market is a situation where many potential commercial parties gather, each intending to identify counterparties in order to conclude the optimum commercial exchanges from those available in the market. Markets offer choice; choice promotes competition; competition promotes efficiency; efficiency makes affluence possible. Modern markets offer a degree of transparency: available information about the participants in the market and the commercial goods available for exchange, prices and costs etc.

Holland was the first country to achieve break-out general affluence through both international and domestic commerce followed by England whose superior navy surmounted Dutch supremacy in international trade. England was a monarchy with precisely stratified nobility where status achievement by force was respectable in foreign wars, but less so in domestic wars. The scientific revolution (approx. 1550 to 1650) was enabled in significant part by the sponsorship of the nobility. However, the industrial revolution (approx. 1750 to 1850), which built on the scientific, was powered by commercial enterprise unrelated to the hierarchy of nobility. Somehow, the morality of equal freedom in commerce had insinuated itself into English culture by stealth. The industrial revolution led to enormous wealth created by commercial enterprise governed by the morality of equal freedom between counterparties, a morality that the nobility barely understood as it contradicted their own morality of status by force and birth. By the late eighteenth century, commerce was so common that the morality of equal freedom had become common. It had expanded from the domain of commerce to a larger domain including arm’s length relations outside of commerce but not necessarily to all arm’s length relations. The prior morality of masculine status by force as the governing principle of arm’s length relations was being gradually supplanted by the morality of equal freedom, and the nobility barely recognized that their status by birth was becoming a faded historical anachronism. The cultural transformation was neither smooth nor painless nor quick. As a generator of national affluence and prestige, commerce proved superior to military conquest, although it too required military strength. Had the morality of equal freedom not produced such great general affluence and military capability, the transition might have been different.

In earliest inter-society commerce, the number of individuals who respected each other’s equal freedom was very small: perhaps only the patriarchs of the different societies respected each other’s equal commercial freedom, and they may never have met face-to-face. Athenian democracy was an aristocracy in which the number of equals was a small percentage of the total number of all members of

Athenian society. History has demonstrated the gradual expansion within particular societies of the number of individuals who respected each other's equal freedom and the range of interactions in which they were equally free. Magna Carta enunciated principles of equal individual freedom, but the number of equal individuals was very small. That many individuals are excluded from the ranks of the equally free should not be interpreted as hypocrisy that impugns equal freedom in general, but rather should be seen as a stage of cultural evolution or cultural adaptation whose end point is not necessarily universal equal freedom. Even in the most successful societies, children and the infirm are excluded. Should criminals or illegal immigrants vote? I offer a description of the principles of civility as I see it, but real societies develop according to their own logic.

The words "emerging" and "developing" are used to describe societies around the world now undergoing cultural transitions as they seek to achieve affluence through commerce. No clear pattern of cultural evolution is apparent, but it is clear that a society cannot achieve general affluence through commerce without the general prevalence of a morality of equal individual freedom which contradicts consanguineous or tribal or ethnic identification. Of course, many developing countries also have the more basic problem of a cultural definition of masculinity that respects the achievement of masculine status by force. Both these problems express themselves as pervasive corruption. Even in liberal democracies, the transition to general equal freedom is not yet perfected as governments still struggle to define anti-competitive violations of equal individual freedom and sometimes governments actually create anti-competitive commercial structures. What we call "utilities" are supply systems of commercial goods for which a monopoly of supply sometimes seems to work well if privately owned and to work poorly if operated by government, but nevertheless, there doesn't seem to be clear recognition that the monopolistic privileges government creates can turn into egregious violations of equal individual freedom. The principles by which to identify inefficient government-granted privileged monopolies have never been articulated, even for old utilities with a long history such as water or electric supply or patents and copyrights. But new areas of commerce are continually emerging, such as cable communications and the internet, and it's not clear whether these government supported monopolies are generally beneficent and efficient or whether they burden competition. Particular violations of equal individual freedom are not an inherent feature of commerce that impugns this uniquely human activity; rather, particular violations of equal freedom demonstrate, once again, that eternal vigilance is the price of freedom.

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I have used the word "domain" a number of times, for example, the domain of commerce or the domain of arm's length relations, and I want to elaborate what I mean by that word. I view society as consisting of individuals who interact, with each individual acting according to his own motivations. So far, I've described one type of interaction, commercial exchange, the paradigm of which is the exchange of commercial goods between equally free individuals who have no obligation to one another before or after the exchange, whether an exchange occurs or not, and who make the exchange only if they both agree. I described the parties to that commercial paradigm as "arm's length". That is their relationship.

They relate to one another at arm's length not only at the moment of the exchange but before and after, from the time they first make contact to their last contact. Most people in a large society enter into arm's length relations whenever they make contact with most others. There is an unarticulated set of principles that applies to arm's length relationships, and there are other types of relationships with their own set of unarticulated principles. Some of the principles of the different types of relationships are culturally specific, but some are universal. Every individual is unique and every relationship between individuals is unique but there are only a very few different types of fundamental social relationships, in my view, only four. Here are the four types: (1) family relations; (2) relations between friends; (3) cooperative/competitive (or arm's length) relations; (4) relations between enemies. When any two individuals interact with each other, they may start in one type of relationship, say arm's length, and then transition to friendship or enemies, or family; they may be siblings who do a commercial exchange or try to kill one another in competition for the patriarchy, and in other respects, be the best of friends; one may think they are friends and the other think they are enemies or neither may be sure into which classification their particular relationship falls. But they will always be trying to understand their particular interaction as one or another of these four types, and at different times, the same individuals may relate to one another across the whole range of the four different types. It's as though humans can only conceive of these four types of relationships, a conceptual limitation that limits the range of social possibility. In an echo of the French and Russian revolutions (and presumably many others), some characters on the left today advocate for new social relations as though the range of social possibility were unlimited and amenable to bespoke design. Good luck! When I refer to the domain of commercial interactions, I'm referring to the totality of interactions between individuals contemplating a commercial exchange. The domain of commercial interactions is included in the larger domain of all arm's length interactions which I'll describe shortly but in addition to commercial interaction, the domain of arm's length interactions includes for instance the relationship between drivers sharing a public road, or athletes in competition.

For the purpose of understanding the success of liberal democracy (its affluence and civility, but I suppose military capability is also an essential element of our success), it is most important to understand the domain of cooperative/competitive or arm's length relations. The domain of cooperative/competitive relations includes all the millions of glancing interactions one has with anonymous strangers every day – everyone with whom one shares the public roadway, people waiting in line to get on an airplane, people involved in an anonymous purchase of gasoline, or who pick up one's garbage or treat one's sewage and of course all the individuals with whom one does face-to-face commerce including Uber drivers, or all the individuals who constitute Uber itself, and importantly, with the individuals who make up government to pass laws that effect us even though we never meet them face to face. All of these are judged according to the principle of equal individual freedom. None of these individual glancing interactions is nearly as important to any individual as his relations with family, friends, or enemies, but in terms of sheer quantity, in a large modern society, one has infinitely more arm's length interactions every day than meaningful contacts in the other domains. Furthermore, in a large liberal society, one can subsist without family, friends, or enemies, but one cannot avoid arm's length relations in large numbers. Family, friend and enemy relationships are, in a sense, private to each individual, reflect the individual's character, and can be changed or abandoned; by contrast, arm's

length relationships are public, how individuals relate to the public at large, and reflect the character of the public, the culture. The character and the success of liberal democracies derives primarily from the character of arm's length relations; *i.e.*, the extent to which relations between people who don't know one another personally are governed by the morality of equal individual freedom determines societal success: civility.

Closely related to equal individual freedom is common courtesy. Common courtesy is a vague vernacular idiom but I intend a more precise usage. Common courtesy is an aspect of equal freedom, and equal freedom is a feature of cooperative/competitive relations. Equal freedom is not a feature of family relations, or relations between friends or enemies. But within cooperative/competitive relations, what constitutes freedom? -- freedom to do what? If society consists of individuals, then the equal freedom of each individual consists of his freedom to interact with any other individual who consents to interact with him. Equal freedom implies the freedom to interact with anyone else who consents, but what type of interactions are the consenting individuals free to undertake? Equally free individuals are free to engage in almost any type of interaction provided it doesn't infringe on the equal freedom of other individuals. Every society has forbidden activities and interactions (*e.g.*, prostitution or trade in body parts), but what's important for purposes of affluence and civility is not so much what's forbidden, but whether it is equally forbidden. Is it forbidden to everyone, or is there a privileged class that is permitted to engage in the forbidden interactions? Limitations on the equal freedom of all individuals are fundamentally different from violations of the equality of any particular person's freedom. If everyone, including particularly law makers, or the least fortunate among us, and everyone in between, is subject to the same limitations, then the morality of equal freedom can prevail, and civility and affluence can be the result.

In my conception, a large modern civil society consists of a large number of individuals very few of whom know one another personally but are in close contact, as for instance in a crowded public space, and each of them is going about his own business trying to do the best for himself while carefully not interfering with the others doing the same. A problem is that the manner by which one individual approaches another to propose a particular interaction may itself infringe on the other person's freedom to go about his own business without interference. If one person in this busy public square holds up a sign saying "apples for sale", that doesn't much interfere with me walking to my appointment. On the other hand, if the apple vendor aggressively engages me in conversation and delays my progress to my appointment, that can interfere with my freedom to move through the public square. Common courtesy is the term I use to refer to the unwritten rules that govern how one individual can approach another with an invitation to a particular interaction. And if the particular interaction is a common type, then common courtesy includes rules to conduct the interaction. But the parties are free to make their own rules. What they can't do is violate one another's equal freedom, or anyone else's. Common courtesy varies from culture to culture but the purpose of common courtesy is always to serve equal freedom, not to undermine it. Cultural clashes often concern differing common courtesies.

If the individual carrying the apple sign is a close family member or friend, then I might be obliged to stop and talk, or at least explain why I'm not. That's because family and friends are fundamentally

different types of relations than arm's length – different domains with their own governing principles quite different from equal individual freedom. For instance, parent/child relations have completely different freedoms and responsibilities than equal freedom. The child has no freedom or responsibility and is totally dependent on the parent who has a heavy responsibility. If the parent is irresponsible, the burden falls on the child.

10. History demonstrates that commerce is the sole route to general affluence.

Commerce is necessary but not sufficient for general affluence.

11. The philosophical debates that constituted the Enlightenment identified freedom and equality as the highest social values, but those debates did not define freedom or equality and did not explain how or why freedom or equality developed. A minor theme of the Enlightenment was the significance of commerce: an acknowledgement that the societies that experienced the most commerce also experienced the least social turmoil in addition to a higher standard of living, hence the term “sweet commerce”. To the extent that there is a reasoned debate at the moment, freedom and equality are still considered the highest social values but they are considered to be opposing values that “trade off” against one another; *vis*, the more freedom there is in a society, the less there will be equality, and vice versa. For generations, the left has favoured equality, the right has favoured freedom, and the debate now concerns the proper border between freedom and equality. Today, most participants on both sides of the public debate consider commerce to be an immoral evil, perhaps a necessary evil until social philosophers devise something better, but nevertheless, a demonstration of inconsiderate greed and a source of “inequality” and acrimony. This is a bum rap.

12. Freedom and equality are essential features of commerce, a uniquely human and ancient capability. To understand the fundamental characteristics of freedom and equality, we can look to the actual practice of basic commerce, and we see there that freedom and equality are not opposing values, but are merged into the single value of equal individual freedom. Equal individual freedom necessarily requires each individual to take responsibility for the choices he makes in the exercise of that freedom; otherwise, the burden of responsibility falls on someone else and violates the equality of that person's freedom.

13. The domain of commerce in modern affluent liberal democracies is huge, but the domain of the morality of equal freedom is even larger and includes not just commercial interactions, but all interactions between individuals “at arm's length”. The prevalence of the morality of equal freedom in the large domain of arm's length relations is what we call “civility” -- our most important cultural characteristic.

In retrospect, historical periods are often given neat characterisations that gloss over what was messy and complex at the time. And so it is with the Enlightenment. It lasted over a hundred years and fed into American independence, and the French revolution. The main actors in these great historical events were influenced by Enlightenment debates concerning the proper principles of social organization. The Enlightenment included many different and contradictory views. The give-and-take was an ongoing project without resolution. Nevertheless, from our perspective over two hundred years later, the Enlightenment represents the recognition that freedom and equality are the highest values of social organization. This is a neat over-simplification but, to this day, freedom and equality continue to be recognized as the most highly valued features of developed democracies. The Enlightenment is now regarded as the moment when Moses descended from Mt. Sinai with the Ten Commandments. Even dictatorships such as Russia and Cuba adopt formal ideology recognizing the importance of freedom and equality despite blatant violations of both. I look back at the Enlightenment as an inspiring period of intellectual history but the Enlightenment was unfinished business, particularly as neither freedom nor equality were defined. At that time, of course, hereditary social stratification was widely considered normal and proper (ordained by God) and so the identification of a different social regime was a great advance. Defining freedom and equality with precision was not important then. But now, the question isn't whether freedom and equality should displace hereditary social stratification; rather, the question now is whether social practices and government policies implement freedom and equality or violate them. And to answer that question, precise definitions are essential. The issues now are not the philosophical ones addressed by Enlightenment thinkers; rather, the issues now concern the nuts and bolts of practical application. Imprecise definition now allows Russia and Cuba to claim freedom and equality as their own but also allows all manner of violations even in liberal democracies. The absence of clear definitions of freedom and equality during the Enlightenment is understandable, but the continuing absence, in the face of Orwellian torturing of those terms by numerous governments and activists, and in the face of the current cultural turmoil, is another serious intellectual failure.

A minor theme of the Enlightenment was commerce. Sweet commerce, as it was called, was recognition that the societies that experienced least turmoil were also those that experienced most commerce. Was that purely coincidental and would that coincidence continue as commerce created more and more wealth? The Enlightenment offered no resolution. Enlightenment ideas about the significance of commerce were every bit as conjectural as was Karl Marx's speculation that capitalism would inevitably lead to socialism. Certainly, no Enlightenment philosopher recognized that commerce was based on the morality of equal freedom or that that morality had the potential to expand to a much larger domain within society. To the extent that there is philosophical discussion at the moment, freedom and equality are considered opposing values that "trade off" against each other: The more freedom in a society, the less people will be equal. And vice versa. The left claims to be the champion of equality, the right of freedom. As for commerce, there is grudging recognition that our affluent level of consumption requires commerce, but the grudge comes from the mistaken idea that commerce is essentially immoral: Commerce is insensitive to the inequality it causes, and inequality causes social acrimony. Not only are these charges false, they are the exact opposite of the proper characterization.

What allows these charges to ring true to many people is the absence of precise definitions of freedom and equality. It is true that commerce often (maybe always) results in inequalities of wealth and that commerce is insensitive to those inequalities. That is as it should be. "Lady Justice" is a popular name for the statues representing justice in many American court houses. She is blindfolded precisely so that she will be blind to whether one of the parties before her is rich or poor, black or white, or anything unrelated to the morality of the particular interaction she is judging. Justice requires that she be insensitive to inequalities of wealth. The typical statue of Lady Justice shows her holding a balance scale but it's not clear what the scale is measuring. What it's not measuring is precisely those irrelevant factors that the blindfold is supposed to remove from the adjudication, including inequalities of wealth. What the scales should measure is the morality of the interactions in question: has the equality of anyone's freedom been violated. Lady Justice is not a parent comforting an injured child with love; if she is adjudicating a dispute arising out of an arm's length interaction, then she is a dispassionate inspector of sanctity of equal individual freedom. If she were influenced by the wealth inequality of the parties to adjudication before her, then justice would not be the outcome. It would be wrong for her to be sensitive to the wealth of the parties before her, and for exactly the same reasons, it would be wrong for the morality governing an arm's length interaction to change according to the relative wealth of the parties to the interaction.

Another reason commerce is denigrated is that it exemplifies greed. Greed is another fundamental feature of the human character. It is an emotion. It can never be eliminated. It is ugly to see in another person, but exhilarating when enjoyed oneself. (Like erotic enjoyment.) Greed is a strong motivator that contributes to personal achievement. The socialist ideological ideal is person without greed, motivated only to benefit society in general and no one in particular – a one-dimensional fictive caricature akin to Renaissance popes, or sainthood in general. The project should not be to eliminate greed but to confine its expression to moral respectability. And that is precisely what commerce and the morality of equal freedom do. A beneficent combination.

I've already described equal individual freedom, but the importance of precise definitions of freedom and equality warrant repetition, as they are the foundation of general civility. The paradigm of a modern commercial interaction is the exchange of commercial goods between individuals at arm's length, who didn't know one another before the exchange and will probably not remember the exchange or know one another afterwards. Whether an exchange occurs or not, when each of the parties considers whether he wants to do the exchange, he operates on the understanding that his ownership of his commercial goods (including his right to exchange them) is equal to the other party's. Each party has equal property rights in commercial goods and equal freedom to acquire and exchange his goods in his own interest. It is only in the recent history of large modern liberal democracies that equally free arm's length relations have achieved predominance; that is to say, there are orders of magnitude more arm's length interactions governed by the morality of equal freedom than other types of interactions. The morality of equal freedom has expanded from the domain of commercial interactions (where equal freedom is necessary as there could be not commerce without it) to the much larger domain of all interactions between people who don't know one another, and then expanded even from that domain to include interactions between people who do know one another but choose, for a

particular interaction, to relate to one another according to the morality of civility as though they were at arm's length. Parties at arm's length have no obligation to one another before, during, or after an exchange, or whether an exchange occurs, except (and this is most important) not to interfere with each other's equal freedom or the equal freedom of anyone else. Each person is obliged only to respect the equal freedom of everyone else. What then is the proper definition of freedom within the morality of civility: it is the freedom of every individual to enter into interactions with other individuals to which they both consent. What then is the definition of equality: it is the equal freedom to enter into such consensual interactions, including interactions that others might consider foolish or mistaken or wrong. Within the morality of civility, freedom to interact is not unlimited but everyone's freedom is equally limited, nor are the parties to interactions equal in any respect except in their equal freedom. Equal freedom and the morality of civility apply to individual interactions, and have nothing to do with the aggregate outcome of many, many commercial or arm's length interactions, *e.g.*, wealth inequality.

Within the morality of equal freedom, inequality of wealth is not, in itself, immoral. Of course, the accumulation of wealth might involve the commission of immoralities in the form of violations of equal freedom, but (1) it is the violations that constitute the immorality, not the amount of wealth, and (2) great wealth is not itself evidence immorality.

There is no moral difference between commercial competition and competition in sports. Both are consensual arm's length interactions in which the parties are equally free to compete in their own discretion, but if they decide to compete, there are rules (the common courtesy specific to the sport) which prevent the participants from improperly interfering with one another. The rules of non-interference are much clearer in modern competitive sport than commerce but that is an intellectual failure of government, not a feature of commerce. We are not in the least troubled by the great wealth in Olympic medals that a small country like Jamaica has accumulated in sprinting. We do not consider that particular wealth inequality to be evidence of immorality. Furthermore, inequality of Olympic medals does not cause rancor and acrimony in the losers. On the contrary, the world exults in the brilliant athletic performances even if they do suggest racial superiority. No one would seriously want to redistribute Jamaica's Olympic medals to achieve some kind of contorted "equality", unless maybe we discovered a national Jamaican effort to cheat, like Russia and China did with performance enhancing drugs. It's not inequality of wealth that we abhor, it's cheating, violating individual freedom. But mistakenly, current thinking presumes wealth to derive from immorality inherent in commerce. It is hard to imagine a more inappropriate characterization.

Commerce ought properly to be characterized as a fortuitous beneficent golden goose that inheres in our fundamental make up, the source of general affluence and the paradigm for general civility. Without commerce, we might never have learnt of the beneficence of the morality of equal freedom. Social philosophers could not ask for anything more wonderful for our species at this time. Sweet commerce, emphatically. When the morality of equal freedom is the default standard governing all interactions between individuals at arm's length, the result is what we call civility: the equal freedom of each individual to decide what is in his interest and to go about achieving it without interference from anyone else so long as he doesn't interfere with their pursuit of happiness. Civility results from the cultural prevalence of the morality of equal freedom. General social civility is the End of History in the

sense that Fukuyama meant: the most agreeable form of social organization possible; not the inevitable outcome of cultural development or even a necessarily durable cultural current for the present, but only the most agreeable theoretical limit. If the end of history is civility, then commerce is its origin and root. Individuals will always act in their own interest and there will always be some individuals who will be unhappy with their lot, but that does not reflect defects inherent in commerce or in the morality of equal freedom.

Liberal democracies are large dense societies in which normal interaction between individuals consists of innumerable glancing contacts between people who don't know one another – they are at arm's length. Normal life is analogous to a crowded public space, say a public highway crowded with cars moving at high speed. The rules governing the interactions of the cars are the same for all cars and every car is free to travel to its own destination – equal freedom. The rules establish “rights of way” which are blind to such matters as the newness or power or shininess of the cars, to the destinations of the cars or the ethnicity or wealth of the drivers, or the “importance” of the destination to the individual driver. In advanced liberal democracies, the public highway systems are fabulous achievements of general cooperation and civility even though each driver is trying to get to his destination as fast as he can and the presence of other cars is an interference. Each driver is in competition with the others to get to his destination as quickly as possible. An essential requirement of the smooth functioning of the highway system is that every driver is constantly consciously careful to avoid collisions with the other cars. Collisions are dangerous to the health of the occupants of cars and to the cars themselves which are very expensive and troublesome to repair. In addition, collisions interfere with the flow of traffic and with each driver's objective to get to his destination as fast as he can. But each person understands that it is better for him, both to avoid danger and to get to his destination quickly, if everyone respects everyone's equal rights of way. This point deserves emphasis: Even the greediest driver recognizes that he can best achieve his greedy objectives if he and all other drivers respect the equality of each others' rights of way. Equal freedom doesn't eliminate or even reduce individual greed; rather, equal freedom harnesses greed for the general welfare, and the result is civility: competitors cooperating for individual benefit. Adam Smith recognized that individual self-interest resulted in general benefit in the domain of commerce where the general benefit was a rise in the standard of living. But exactly the same effect operates from the expansion of the commercial morality of equal individual freedom to the much larger domain of all arm's length relations where the benefit is cultural civility, a much more important cultural characteristic than great affluence.

Taking care not to interfere with anyone else's equal freedom is the essence of civility, and the prevalence of that ethos determines whether a culture is civil. So prevalent is that ethos in our vehicular traffic culture that we consider it normal for huge numbers of cars to move on the highways at high speed without interruption and we are annoyed when traffic slows because of the number of cars on the highway. We do not appreciate what a great cultural achievement is our ethos of civility. Traffic would be completely interrupted if only a few drivers didn't cooperate. Of course, there will always be some misguided individuals who break the rules and it's very important for government to punish violators. Otherwise, civility would be reduced, and traffic would not flow. “Rule of law” is an essential feature of civility, provided of course that the laws themselves are blind to individual peculiarities.

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How does the morality of equal freedom apply to government? In liberal democracies, members of government are just ordinary individuals who have been elected to office. Liberal democracies consist entirely of ordinary individuals whose freedom to engage in consensual interactions with others is equal to everyone else's. Individuals are the elementary

social constituents. An election consists of some individuals being candidates and some being voters. Very few of the voters know any of the candidates personally or have any obligation to them, and none of the voters know more than an insignificant proportion of the other voters. Becoming a candidate is an arm's length interaction between the candidate and each of the potential voters. And voting is an arm's length interaction between the voter and each of the candidates and each of the other potential voters. None of these individuals has any obligation to any of the others concerning the election – no doubt they have all kinds of obligations on unrelated matters like family relations. The morality of equal freedom requires that every individual have equal freedom both to be a candidate and to vote. After the election when the successful candidates assume offices within government, they remain at arm's length with the voters and population at large. A governmental office has high social status and it confers specific authority to participate in the legislative or executive processes, but it does not elevate the freedoms of the office holder above the equal freedoms he shares with every other individual in society. Government office does not give the office holder a privilege to violate the equal freedoms of any other individuals even if he follows proper legal legislative procedures. An office holder is bound by the same moral requirement to respect the equal freedom of all individuals that applied to him before he became an office holder and will apply when he vacates the office. The same moral requirement applies to his actions as an office holder, as a candidate, as a voter, and as an ordinary individual going about his business – he must respect the equal freedom of every other individual. He is morally bound not to use his office to pass laws that violate the equality of individual freedom.

From this it follows that for societies consisting of individuals whose primary identification is tribal or racial or ethnic may not have a prevalent morality of equal freedom and consequently cannot be civil. There can be no general civility if a plurality of individuals respects the freedoms of members of their own groups differently than the freedoms of members of other groups.

Occasionally, as when facing a military emergency or pandemic, individual members of government may think it proper for government to assume the role of parent with superior wisdom and equal love for all his children. In those types of circumstance, as for parent/child relations, the morality of equal freedom does not apply. A different morality applies to parent/child relations than to arm's length relations. Thankfully, those situations of national emergency are rare in liberal democracies and most actions of government concern mundane matters where the moral standard is the arm's length one. Sadly, governments in liberal democracies frequently presume a superior wisdom and assume a parental posture where it is inappropriate even if they were superior in wisdom (they typically are not), and

governments often make claims of parental morality to justify violations of equal freedom, *e.g.*, entitlements. Most countries, contrary to their public ideology, are patriarchies of force where patriarchal succession is determined by force as is the hierarchy of masculine status. For most of them, the public adoption of the language of freedom and equality is only a few generations old -- the morality of equal freedom might govern the comparatively small domain of commerce, but it certainly has not had time to expand beyond commerce to arm's length relations generally in most countries. It is not surprising that masculine advancement by force is common, nor that episodic use of force in violation of equal freedom occurs even in more developed countries. Even in the most developed countries, masculine advancement by violations of equal freedom occurs occasionally but usually out of sight. In liberal democracies, intentional violation of the equal freedoms of other individuals is contemptible as a strategy for advancement and violators will try to conceal their immorality. When Benjamin Franklin said "A republic, if you can keep it." he was concerned about the threat of patriarchal usurpation by force as were social philosophers during the Enlightenment. Call that the threat to civility from the right. But now, in liberal democracies, the greater threat to civility is from the left in my view. But whether greater or lesser, civility is so important that all threats to civility are serious.

Equal freedom includes the freedom to make foolish or erroneous choices, but equal freedom also implies that individuals must take responsibility for their choices, *i.e.*, they must accept the outcome of their own free choices. Equal individual freedom necessarily implies equal individual responsibility -- two sides of the same coin. If the choices of one person don't work out as he might have hoped, he nevertheless has to take responsibility for himself; he can't reverse the exchanges that led to his position, nor can he violate (or ask government to violate) the equality of someone else's freedom in order to benefit himself. If some of the burden for his unfortunate choices falls on somebody else, then the freedom of that person has been reduced by the amount of the burden, and the first party is privileged by the same amount. I cannot overemphasize the correspondence of equal individual responsibility to equal individual freedom. Freedoms cannot be equal if the burden of one person's exercise of his freedom falls on another person. If, in the exercise of his own freedom, one person faces hardship because of his own foolishness or just bad luck, and the government decides to ease his hardship by awarding him an "entitlement" (a commercial privilege in the form of a direct payment to him or a payment to someone else for a commercial benefit to him such as medical care), then someone else has to pay for that entitlement because there's no free lunch. The payment may be by taxes or inflation, or some other cost in the form of a reduction of the standard of living etc. but the payor (not identified at the time the privilege was created) would not have consented had he been asked. The burden of that payment reduces the freedom of the payor not just by the amount of the privilege but also by the cost to administer the entitlement system. The entitlement reduces the freedom of the payor and privileges the freedom of the beneficiary: both are violations of equal individual freedom. But the more insidious significant effect of government violations of equal individual freedom (under the guise of reducing the hardship of the least fortunate among us, or whatever) is that it undermines the cultural prevalence of the morality of equal freedom, *i.e.*, it undermines cultural civility.

The August 16, 2021 issue of *The Economist* contains an article by invitation by Ryan Holiday who advocates a Statue of Responsibility to balance the Statue of Liberty. The idea of one's own freedom is

appealing to everyone and the idea of America as the paradigm of a free society is as inspiring as is the sight of the Statue of Liberty. While the importance of freedom is generally celebrated, the equal importance of responsibility is nowhere expressly even recognized. A Statue of Responsibility is, to my thinking, a wonderful idea, but what was Ryan Holiday's idea of responsibility that the statue would represent? It isn't clear from his short article, but it ends with the phrase "responsibility for others". And that seems to be the universal posture of the intelligentsia now in liberal democracies including most reasonable thinkers who do not identify either with the extreme left or right. In my view, responsibility for others at arm's length violates their equal freedom. For equal freedom, it is necessary and sufficient for individuals at arm's length to be responsible only for themselves. Within families or friendships (which are not arm's length relations), different principles apply. On most issues, members of government stand at arm's length with the population at large, and taxing (burdening) one person to benefit (privilege) another, violates both of their equal freedoms.

Entitlements now occupy the largest part of government spending in all large liberal democracies, and entitlements benefiting the "least fortunate among us" (e.g., the elderly or any number of groups purportedly suffering economic hardship) is commonly regarded as a mark of civility. Entitlements are enacted ostensibly to relieve the hardship – a demonstration by the government of compassion for the suffering individuals. The correct description of compassion for another person's suffering is pity (another fundamental emotion), and helping to relieve another person's suffering is properly called charity. But for a person to be given charity out of pity is tantamount to a declaration of that person's personal failure, a humiliation. There was a time in our culture when people routinely refused charity, even in the guise of government-granted entitlements, because the ethos of personal responsibility and self-reliance was culturally prevalent. Not anymore! Now, no one has any qualms about taking government hand-outs because it's not considered charity by the recipients. The fig leaf called charity and compassion does not conceal the full opportunism and greed on the part both of the members of government who enact entitlements and of the recipients. The legislators use the rhetoric of compassion and their compassion might be genuine if they used their own money anonymously. Instead, they use the power of government to violate the freedom of unidentified individuals by imposing the burden of the cost of the entitlement on them, and they create a privilege in the beneficiaries. For the legislators, their motivation is to win the next election by buying votes with money extorted from unknown individuals; the beneficiaries don't have to think of who's paying for their good fortune because, well, they're entitled. It's not charity and they're not piteous because everybody does it, even the most successful individuals. Thus, the morality of equal freedom, the basis of our civility, is incrementally undermined.

The big entitlement programs are spun as compassion for beneficiaries who are in need, as charity to which the beneficiaries are entitled. But it's important to be clear what real charity is. Real charity is voluntary self-sacrifice to benefit a poor wretch. It's not charity for a legislator to give away another person's money after extorting it. The legislator is acting out of greed, not compassion: taking property belonging to someone else and using it to buy political alliance. And the beneficiaries are also acting out of greed: taking property they know properly belongs to someone else. On both sides, greed hides under a thin hypocritical disguise of compassion. Legislators spin themselves as Robin Hoods. Steal

from the rich and give to the poor. The character Robin Hood is a fictional myth. There are no Robin Hoods in our real world. There have been many career criminal thieves who, at some isolated point in their criminal history, have given a token of compassion to someone in need. In the Robin Hood myth, all the rich victims of his theft were greater criminals than he, and all the beneficiaries were wretched but saintly -- a neat set-piece fable that has no current analogy. There are no Robin Hoods in our world because there can't be -- career thieves act out of immoral greed for their own benefit, and that fundamentally contradicts the self-sacrifice necessary for charity. There is, of course, real charity. Some people give away their own money to help the poor. Certainly nothing immoral about real charity, but the givers get no bonus points for economic wisdom. Giving money to strangers in need in the hope that it will do good is a self-indulgence that a person is entitled to enjoy with his own money. Giving money to a family member in need is a much more realistic scenario for charity. ("Charity begins in the home.") When one brother helps another in need, it's not an entitlement. The recipient has to demonstrate gratitude. Real charity is assistance to someone who is suffering hardship but is making his best effort to deal with the hardship. The charity is to assist the beneficiary to continue to make his best effort, not to relieve him of the effort or to become the primary support. And then, if the beneficiary stops making his best effort or if he's not genuinely grateful, he can be cut off. In our society of equally free individuals, genuine charity comes with strings which contradict entitlement. There might be isolated examples of redistribution by government under the rationale of charity that work out well, but for the most part, entitlements violate the morality of equal individual freedom and completely contradict the supporting rhetoric of compassion.

Nowadays, charity is big business. Charitable institutions receive huge quantities by way of donations. One reason is that tax laws encourage these donations to charities and that raises separate moral considerations. People donate to charitable institutions with only the vaguest idea of what the institutions do with the money and no idea who might be the ultimate beneficiaries. Maybe there is some scholarship on the subject but my impression is that at least some donors to charities do get some genuine satisfaction from their donations precisely because they don't know who the beneficiaries are, because that allows them to fantasize that the beneficiaries will be grateful, and are worthy, and are making a genuine effort at self-help. They prefer to donate indirectly to anonymous beneficiaries because they are realistic that anyone they might actually know wouldn't be worthy, *i.e.*, wouldn't be grateful and wouldn't make a real effort at self-help. Most important, if they donate to someone they know, they would see if there were sincere gratitude and self-help effort, and if there weren't, then they would have to cut off the charitable flow and be seen as miserable scrooges. And so, if a person makes a charitable donation to someone he knows, he's likely to end up (1) resented by the beneficiary as a scrooge instead of appreciated as a generous benefactor, and (2) being a fool in his own mind for naïvely believing the donation would turn out well. It's easy to avoid that risk by donating to anonymous beneficiaries through a faceless corporate charity. Then you can relax in the fantasy of someone's gratitude, and besides, you get a tax deduction which you wouldn't get if you just donated the same amount to somebody you know who happens to be suffering hardship. It's my conjecture that this cultural peculiarity concerning charity is largely driven by tax law.

14. The fundamental difference between, on the one hand, a stratified patriarchy governed by coercive force, and on the other hand, our “affluent liberal democracies” characterized by civility, is in the different cultural definitions of masculinity. In both types of society, the ideal of masculine success is to achieve and maintain the patriarchy in competition with the other men who all want the same. Each society has its own principles of competitive respectability. In a traditional patriarchy governed by force, which is thought to have been universal and is still the most common form of governance, it is honourable within the cultural definition of masculinity for the strongest man to win the patriarchy by coercive force. In a civil society, masculine honour requires the patriarch to achieve his position in compliance with the morality of equal freedom. The morality of equal freedom has spread from its limited domain of commercial interactions to the much larger domain of all arm’s length relations. Both definitions result in a meritorious patriarchy: in a patriarchy of coercive force, the merit is skill in dominating by coercion; in civil patriarchy, the merit is skill in winning the consent of the individual members of society. Either way, male status derives from competitive success. Before Adam Smith noticed that it had already happened, one could never have predicted that men could accept a definition of masculinity that repudiated achieving success by coercive force.

Masculinity always involves serious competition for status and the result is a status hierarchy of men. Women derive their status from the men to whom they are attached as mates. The competition is open and women are free to compete for position in the male status hierarchy, but they very rarely do. Whatever the reason women don’t compete (whether because it would violate their definition of femininity or because men collude to exclude them, or for other reasons), it is a universal feature of human social organization, proven by the very rare exceptions. This is not to advocate for that or any other form of organization but only to recognize that its overwhelming prevalence, like the prevalence of specific social organizations of many animal species, probably derives from inherent features of our species’ character. Within the evolutionary time scale of many thousands of generations, the fundamentals of human character and social organization may change, but within the time scale of philosophers or intellectuals or practitioners of government, the dimorphic character of our species is fixed – change of fundamental competitive ambitious masculine character is outside the realistic range of present social possibility.

Men compete for status, and the highest status is the patriarchy. It’s my conjecture that for much of human evolution, and the evolution of our ancestral species, the form of competition has been physical fighting, as it is for many other species. Physical fighting between competitors is the simplest means to achieve dominance by force. Fighting between representatives of the competitors introduces a complexity. Fighting between representative armies is a further complexity. Genuine fighting involves the use force by one competitor to cause pain (or death) to another and ultimately capitulation. The intentional infliction of pain without sympathy for the suffering is called “cruelty”. Fighting for status has its cultural features. In many species, displays of force sometimes substitute for actual fighting but genuine fighting is the ultimate resort. Different human societies around the world display different

fighting characteristics. Consider the recent Arab Spring and particularly the behaviour of ISIS. There seems to have been no restraint in the cruelty demonstrated by ISIS. I imagine ISIS fighters would have been even crueler if they had conceived how to achieve it, or maybe they were restrained in their own way. And their cruelty was not restricted to enemy soldiers but included women and children as victims. What was the point? It was a demonstration of masculine ferocity and determination not to be distracted from the objective of victory by feelings of compassion for the victims or of personal pain. Pity is feminine; masculinity gets the job done without the distraction of sympathy or personal suffering. It was no coincidence that sex slavery was part of the ISIS campaign for the patriarchy. Like many revolutionaries, ISIS did not have time to develop a real culture with established workable, practical norms; rather, it was a short experiment in moral philosophy during which there were no restraints in the masculine competition for dominance, where the highest status derived from greatest cruelty to the enemy, although in-fighting was also common. As odious as it was to watch, it was a natural expression of masculinity. And if the ISIS phenomenon was the least restrained demonstration of masculine ambition in recent times, the numerous massacres in the Sahel right now are only marginally more restrained. Compared to these, the Yugoslav wars of the last generation were almost gentlemanly although they were savage by recent European standards. I'm not aware of any scholarship that seeks to quantize the level of cultural cruelty, but I have an impression that even equally cruel cultures nevertheless have their own styles or features or characteristics of fighting. It's my thesis that each culture has its own set of rules which guides (respects, approves, admires) its men to express their masculine fighting cruelty. And this cultural characteristic is part of what I have called the cultural definition of masculinity. Of course, competitors don't always scrupulously follow their cultural norms, and when a competitor becomes the patriarch by illegitimate means, he's not considered a legitimate patriarch. The legitimacy of the status hierarchy is the stuff of constant cultural debate within any society.

Between the most cruel cultures and the least, there are any number of gradations. The drift (the arc of history) seems to be in the direction of decreasing cruelty and increasing civility. Now, many patriarchies that have been achieved or are maintained by the use of coercive force try to present themselves as democracies because real civil democracies have achieved great prestige through wealth and military success over the last few hundred years.

Fighting is only one aspect of masculinity (perhaps the most important in some cultures), but men also are husbands and fathers and businessmen and athletes and the full cultural definition of masculinity would include these other aspects as well. No doubt women play an important part in fighting and cruelty and some may even be full participants, but overwhelmingly, women play a subsidiary role.

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Only among affluent liberal democracies has the use of coercive physical force (whether directly between competitors or between their representatives) been repudiated as a legitimate competitive

means to achieve the status. Force is, of course, still a perfectly legitimate competitive strategy in, say, competitive sports where great athletes are greatly respected. Manny Pacquiao and Vitali Klitschko, both professional boxers, sought public office based on public admiration of their success in the use of force in the ring while aspiring to national civility. The Philippines and Ukraine are both countries I would characterize as only superficially civil, but successful professional athletes have become elected lawmakers in the most liberal democracies. Great athletic achievements involving the use of force are fully respectable in liberal democracies because the athletic competitors undertook their athletic interactions as an exercise of their equal freedom, not a violation of it. They played by the rules of athletic competition and the outcome, though the consequence of the use of force, violated no one's equal freedom to engage in consensual interaction. What this demonstrates is that force itself is not generally repudiated, only forceful violations of equal freedom. In liberal democracies, all violations of equal freedom are abhorrent, whether they involve the use of force or not. Force is just one means of violation, not a violation itself. In liberal democracies, masculine honour requires adherence to the morality of equal freedom whereby any violation of another person's equal freedom is a contemptible failure to maintain the prevailing moral standard. Within the morality of equal freedom, to lose a civil competition (say an election) is less contemptible than failing to maintain the standard of equal freedom. Trump is the exception that proves the rule.

The morality of equal freedom does not eliminate or even mitigate the seriousness of the competition for status which, in my thesis, is inherent in masculinity. Status within a large society will always be determined by success in competition, and victory in status competition will always have the flavour of masculine characteristics: determination, ambition, focus, bursts of energy, insensitivity for the opponents' suffering (cruelty), dominance etc. Serious competition for the patriarchy and status is universal even if the rules of respectable competition differ from culture to culture. The appearance of equal freedom as the prevalent principle of competitive respectability in liberal democracies stands out for (1) its recent rise in only a few societies in the last few hundred years, (2) its spectacular level of affluence, and (3) its military success. The achievement of respectable individual status always requires serious individual competitive effort. There is no escaping individual effort to succeed and some will fail. But civility respects individuals of very modest status who maintain a personal standard of respect for equal individual freedom. History demonstrates no enduring form of social organization that allows individuals to effortlessly coast to respectable status.

Commerce seems to have been ubiquitous in all settled human societies and therefore the morality of equal freedom on which commerce is based has always been within human potential. Commercial exchanges have always occurred in the past, if only in peculiar and comparatively rare circumstances. But in the last few hundred years, the pure quantity of commercial exchanges has increased and continues to increase exponentially so that all individuals in large commercial societies are increasingly familiar with the morality of equal freedom within the domain of commercial exchanges. It's my conjecture that the advance of technology with the industrial revolution supercharged the increasing prevalence of commerce, including commercial morality and resultant affluence and civility. This development was not inevitable nor is its continuation in the future. By the time scale of individuals, cultural change is very slow even if everyone agrees, *e.g.*, slavery, despite its legal abolition in America

over 150 years ago remains partially unresolved as a cultural phenomenon even though virtually every one agrees that slavery was evil. Absent the success of commerce in raising the general standard of living and military capability, it is hard to imagine any cultural development that would repudiate fighting as a legitimate means to achieve masculine status, but by the time of the Enlightenment, it had significantly already happened in parts of North West Europe. In a triumph of social science, Joseph Henrich, in *The WEIRDest People in the World*, describes a plausible course of development of cultural civility over the time scale of a millennium.

Many societies have adopted popular election as the competitive procedure to determine the patriarch. But superficially civil procedures like elections do not alone make civility. As I write this over forty years after the cold war, Western intellectuals decry a retreat of democracy (exemplified by illiberal democracies like Poland and Hungary and socialist dictatorships like Venezuela and Nicaragua), as though electing a patriarch amounted to civility, or at least the first step towards civility. Even in the least civil societies, individuals understand the morality of equal freedom in the domain of simple commerce, but genuine civility derives from the cultural prevalence of the morality of equal freedom in the much larger domain of all arms length relations. China is the clearest example of thriving commerce within a limited domain juxtaposed against unequal freedom outside the commercial domain. Superficially civil procedures like elections are important but are no substitute for the fundamental foundation of civility, *i.e.*, the prevalence of the morality of equal freedom in the large domain of arms length relations. Corrupt elections are only marginally morally closer to civility than no elections. It took many, many generations for the liberal democracies to develop the prevalence of the morality of equal freedom. It may not take that long for what are called “developing” or “emerging” societies to develop civility since they have the example of the success of liberal democracies to emulate, but cultural change seems to be very slow and capricious. Japan seems to have achieved civility and maybe also Taiwan, Singapore – it’s too soon to say but the present shows promise.

The choice of patriarch by coercive forceful masculine competition must have been an efficacious form of social organization through most of the course of human development. In small societies consisting of families, the best fighter is efficiently identified. But even the strongest individual is no match for an alliance of individuals who are individually only marginally less physically capable. As societies became larger, the skill to form alliances presumably became more important than individual combative skill. Multiple competitive alliances are a natural development within larger societies. Any individual growing up in a hierarchy of coercive force larger than a few families would understand society to be a mosaic of competing alliances, each with its own internal competition for status. It seems to be inherent in the human character (and many species) that parents protect and take care of their children during their youth, and so blood relations (degrees of consanguinity) are a natural basis for alliance. To this day, where the morality of coercive force prevails (most societies), individuals primarily self-identify first by sex, but then by alliances based on blood relations, *i.e.*, family, kin group, tribe, race. These groups with which individuals self-identify are the basis for alliances which offer a competitive advantage against other groups. This is the natural consequence of the combination of (1) parental care and (2) coercive force as the means to achieve social status: a morality based on dominance of one alliance over non-members. Social organization based on self-identify by alliance fundamentally contradicts social

organization based on equal individual freedom which ignores group membership. Civility produces individuals who are individualistic as opposed to individuals who self-orient in alliances based on remote consanguinity.

Group identity and allegiance fundamentally contradict the equality of individual freedom that civility requires. The cultural shift from (1) moral allegiance to one's identity group to (2) the morality of equal freedom for all individuals regardless of group membership is an enormous shift that cannot be accomplished in one or two generations, nor by the adoption of superficially civil procedures. The adoption of electoral procedures by many societies was an inspiring development that optimists interpreted as immanent peace on earth and goodwill toward men. With hindsight, it is clear that a change in ideology in those societies did not change their fundamental organizing definitions of masculinity; similarly, the recent retreat of democracy (sad as it is to witness) demonstrates the continuation of cultural characteristics that have prevailed throughout. Cultural change, like tectonic development, happens very slowly and according to its own logic, apparently unrelated to ideology or individual effort to affect its course. The more we, in the liberal democracies, try to understand cultural development, the more helpless we seem to influence it, and the more grateful we should be for our good luck to be here now.

The great sweep of cultural development over history follows from a basic principle: Inherent in the dimorphic character of our species is masculine competition for status. That sweep offers different examples of the creative adaptation of that principle to the peculiar prevailing circumstances of each. For most of cultural history, the great historical events are understandable as expressions of that principle by the use of coercive force even though commerce, which contradicts and repudiates coercive force, has always occurred as an expression of the same principle, though submerged in the apparent background of the coercive interactions. The on-going scientific and industrial revolutions over the last few hundred years are considered a "hinge of history" which fundamentally improved the human condition thereafter; however, it's my conjecture that the repudiation of coercive force as a respectable means to achieve status and its displacement by the morality of equal individual freedom over the last millennium amounts to a moral revolution that ought properly to be included with the scientific and industrial revolutions as a necessary component of that hinge. Without the moral revolution, the scientific and industrial revolutions would not have had their enormous effect and might not have occurred at all. The displacement of coercive force by civility occurred not because civility is morally superior to coercive force according to some universal morality (both coercive force and civility have their own moralities which are equally compelling to their adherents); rather, the displacement occurred because, in our peculiar circumstances, civility is more effective. The current cultural momentum may seem to be increasing, but hinges can swing both ways and the moral component is presently the weakest.

Masculine competition for status has costs. Even competitive winners bear costs but for losers in coercive competition, the costs are catastrophic. And since coercive competition has been prevalent throughout history, it's understandable that philosophers would contemplate ideal forms of social organization to avoid these catastrophic costs. Social philosophy has produced a huge variety of approaches, all of which involve some type of repudiation of masculine ambition. Ascetic hermitage is

the simplest and most extreme strategy to avoid causing harm. I imagine almost every society has some ideological utopian elements that glorify modesty of personal ambition as a theoretical ideal despite a contrast between that ideal and the actual prevailing ethos of competition. In modern liberal democracies, there is grudging acceptance that our high living standard requires commerce, but that (1) commerce would be less morally reprehensible if it were less competitive and (2) our highest moral ideal repudiates commercial greed altogether. My reading of contemporary social philosophy is far from complete but I have yet to come across any discussion of the abstract principles involved in our success that does not identify “inequality” of commercial outcome (wealth or income) as the consequence of the immorality inherent in commerce. Current attitudes are not as simple or extreme as ascetic hermitage, but at the level of abstract analysis, we have not advanced since the earliest philosophers. The notion that commerce is immoral and that wealth inequality reflects victimhood reflects a misunderstanding of the basic natures of both commerce and morality – but that notion pervades current intellectual discussion and is a founding article of faith of today’s left. It is true that masculine ambition expressed through coercive force can have terrible consequences for the losers and heavy costs for the winners – and so it makes good sense to think about how avoid those downsides. But the left idea, expressed most simply and originally by ascetic hermits, to excise a fundamental feature of our character, is as simplistic now as it was in the time of ascetic hermits and for the same reasons. Changing our fundamental character is not an option. Moreover, commercial competition does not have the same downsides as coercive competition. Modest status in a liberal democracy affords a very high standard of affluence and social respect compared to the catastrophe of coercive defeat, and besides, equal individual freedom holds open the possibility of increased status to anyone.

The fundamental principle of the left today (that commercial competition and unequal success constitute immoral oppression) contradicts the basic natures of both commerce and morality. As for commerce and consequential wealth inequality, the left bases its claim on its (mis)interpretation of the Enlightenment identification of equality as the highest social value while ignoring the principle that freedom is an equal Enlightenment value. The left can make this claim because the Enlightenment project was incomplete; even yet social philosophers have failed to define freedom and equality with any precision. As for morality, philosophy entire offers no clarity.

Part 2

Civility and the Present American Culture War

The foregoing is my thinking on the fundamentals of civility in general and, in my hypothesis, describes principles of social organization that have enduring importance. What follows are my thoughts about the present American cultural turmoil which is local and hopefully temporary, and has been in development for only a few generations.

15. Present American cultural turmoil is characterized by a grand schism: left vs. right; equality vs. freedom; Democrat vs. Republican. Each side considers the other to be immoral, not merely mistaken. From their different rhetorical ideologies, the theme on the left is to enforce general compassion for the suffering endured by specific “oppressed” groups so as to make everyone more equal; the right is reacting to the left theme with contemptuous outrage towards weak losers. Without articulating it, the left is advocating its own cultural definition of masculinity according to which the highest masculine ideal is exquisite effeminate sensitivity to even the micro-sufferings of the oppressed groups, and the right is reacting with a clumsy ham fist.

For the last few generations, America has been characterised by conflict between left and right. Not long ago, the majority of individuals were not committed to either side. Only one generation ago, partisans competed to win the votes of the uncommitted majority, and in that competition, political partisans restrained themselves from taking extreme positions for fear of alienating the uncommitted. But now, it seems as though a majority are committed to one side or the other. The current political strategy on both sides is not to convince uncommitted voters (of whom there seem to be few – at least few are vocal) but instead to “bring out the base”, and for that purpose, restraint in taking extreme positions has been abandoned. Allegiance to one side or the other now seems more important than the ostensible issues under dispute. I’m reminded of the fictional issue in the Lilliputian war in *Gulliver’s Travels*: which end (large or small) of an egg shell should be broken to access the inside of the egg. It’s hard to imagine a less important issue to be fighting over, and that was Jonathan Swift’s sarcastic allegory of the ostensible issues people fought over in his time. One imagines most individual Lilliputians would not have cared which end of the egg shell was broken; nevertheless, even for an individual who could not care less, it would have been crucially important to make the correct strategic allegiance to one side or the other in the war. To be on the losing side would be disaster even for individuals who had no opinion about the proper side of the egg to open. The issues in the present cultural turmoil are genuinely important, but nevertheless, individual allegiance to one side or the other seems more strategic than issue-driven. One can imagine that the rulers of the warring parties in *Gulliver’s Travels* went to war for their own reasons and the egg issue was just a rhetorical pretext, the ostensible but not the real concern of the rulers. The ostensible issues in the present cultural conflict do not explain the intensity of the conflict. In my view, the real conflict that underlies all the individual issues concerns the cultural definition of masculinity, a subject that is neither identified nor even mentioned in the tangle of current polemics but, in my view, the conflict over the definition of masculinity explains the intensity of the conflict.

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When left and right now enter a room, they will take diametrically opposing positions on any subject that arises, but at the moment the major areas of policy conflict are these: the position of blacks in society, the position of women in society, illegal immigration, the position of LGBT in society, economic distress of specific groups, and gun crime. Of course, Trump is now a central figure but I don't see him as a policy issue; rather, I see him more as a manifestation of the underlying issue, the definition of masculinity. On any of these areas of ostensible conflict, it is impossible to articulate the left or right positions with any precision. There is a large range of opinion on each side and, as I said, for most people, evaluating the issues is less important than the allegiance to one side or the other. Neither of the two sides is organized with official spokesmen who articulate positions. The Democratic Party in America is identified with the left and the Republicans with the right, but even within each of the parties there is a large variety of opinions. Vocal politicians are intentionally imprecise – they need the flexibility to shift with the political winds. But governmental politics is only one forum of many in which the conflict plays out. The position of each side on any of these issues is amorphous and nebulous. In the result and even though these policy issues are important, trying to analyze the opposing positions on these matters of policy in any depth is a silly exercise when each side can easily (and reasonably) claim that its position has been misstated or distorted. And if the Jan. 6, 2021 riot/insurrection demonstrates the thinking of the extreme right, judging by what they say in public, most “insurrectionists” understand clearly which side they're on but seem only vaguely aware of the policy issues. Social scientists try to determine currents of opinion and some of the results are very interesting, but I remain skeptical of surveys by questionnaires that seem crafted by the social scientists to “quantize” their own impressions with an appearance of objective scientific rigor. I don't want to disparage social science because I think it's the best set of tools we've got, but it's a blurry lens at best, and liable to severe distortion on contentious issues. Rather than attempting an analysis of these policy issues (which I see anyway as merely ostensible issues that cover the real underlying issue), I'm just going to give my own broad-brush impressions of the black/white race issue because it illustrates features common to the policy issues that result in conflict over the American cultural definition of masculinity.

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The “civil rights movement” of the 1960's is the paradigm effort on the left to change a significant cultural feature. It's the paradigm in the sense that since then, all of the efforts at social change on the left have been crafted to emulate Martin Luther King's civil rights effort because it rang morally true then, and now is admired as an expression of the core American character. King succeeded by revealing a potential in the American character to feel guilt about the suffering of blacks in America beginning with slavery and continuing to the present. Slavery was ubiquitous for most of history and was common around the world when America was founded. America was among the first wave of countries to ban it. By the cultural standards of America's early days, slavery was not a sin and we ought not now to convict an antecedent culture more than ten generations ago of immorality based on our present standards.

The cultural stratification that placed blacks at the bottom of the status hierarchy during slavery continued after emancipation had ended legal slavery, demonstrating that cultural change is tectonically incremental and follows its own logic, not legislation. By the time of Martin Luther King's civil rights movement about one hundred years after legal slavery had ended, black oppression was still common even though the morality of equal freedom was prevalent in most areas unrelated to race. King's claim for blacks to be included as equals complied with that prevailing morality and resonated with most Americans. He advocated a cultural change to comply with prevailing morality. He did not ask for a moral change. To be sure, there was resistance, particularly in the South, and there were ugly scenes but this was overwhelmed by an enthusiastic majority of individuals who valued equality. In my impression, King was careful not to ask for anything more than equality, nothing in the nature of compensatory privilege that would burden anybody else, but he died before his mission was completed. He's now venerated as an American saint, properly so in my view. As I said, his efforts revealed a potential in the American character to feel guilt for the suffering of blacks – whether Americans actually felt a concealed guilt that King brought out or whether he created or amplified it, his public persona exuded nobility and dignity and strength without being threatening. He was able to combine these potentially contradictory characteristics by never asking for more than equality. His moral clarity rang true. Same with Nelson Mandela.

During King's time, there were many whites (maybe a majority) who agreed completely with his effort and there were no blacks who opposed so his only opponents were white. Only in that sense could the position of blacks then be characterized as white oppression of blacks. It's now two generations since King's death and my clear impression is that oppression of blacks by whites is past. No doubt many blacks suffer hardship, but not because their equal freedom is systemically violated by whites. Nevertheless, new black "leaders" have tried and continue to try to emulate King's persona and generate a public following but none have earned general adulation as King did because they demonstrate no moral clarity. Their goal is not equality; rather, their motivation is normal political ambition and scam. The only feature of King's project that remains is the strategy to exploit the national guilt that some Americans seem amenable to feel for the suffering of blacks, but instead of King's claim for black equality based on prevailing morality of equal freedom, today's black leaders make claims for privilege based on pity and guilt – a completely different objective and moral basis. In King's time, conservatives on the right recognized that his claim for equality complied with their own morality of equal freedom: today, the conservatives altogether reject this new morality of guilt and pity leading to privilege as it contradicts equal freedom.

Efforts on the left since King to create privileges for blacks have been very successful; *e.g.*, the huge variety of official affirmative actions: lower standards for university admission under the guise of "diversity", lower standards for mortgage loans, seats on government and corporate boards reserved for blacks. Compliance with non-discrimination laws and policies can only be satisfied with positions reserved for blacks. Race quotas. In a demonstration of unintended consequences, government policies intended to increase black home ownership resulted in the collapse of the American housing market in 2007 – 8 which, in turn, led to the global financial crisis and global recession. The list of privileges is long but they are all counter-productive to the advancement of blacks because they encourage resentment

and operate against self-improvement. When Barak Obama was elected president, black “leaders” were quick to declare that his election did not mean white oppression of blacks had ended. Not at all. By their reasoning, American culture was saturated with systemic racism, therefore the struggle against “white privilege” should be pursued with increased vigour. They were not about to abandon a successful business model. So strident now are these claims that non-blacks make public displays of contrition and compassion (displays of guilt and pity) – watch any main-stream media or public statements of government. Unless non-blacks are actively and publicly “anti-racist”, they are part of a system of oppression, and their (unconscious) implicit bias makes them as guilty as intentional oppressors. Even young white children in elementary school are made to feel guilty, and black children resentful. For a white to be neutral on this issue is to be guilty.

For myself, the morality of King’s effort rings true, but all the left efforts since King to blame whites for black hardship are fallacious; phoney scams intended for political advantage. Nevertheless, many non-blacks submit, plead guilty and pledge pity, and charity, and sensitivity. Submitting, in my impression, is mostly a Lilliputian strategic alliance, not a sincere posture. Strategic Lilliputian choices are made by people who don’t much care about the ostensible issue but who are very afraid of being on the losing side; *i.e.*, strategic choices are made by passive followers, not leaders. The advocates on the left, the leaders, who force this choice on folks who wouldn’t otherwise take a strong position, are today’s real systemic oppressors. Oppression is an expression of masculine domination. Submission is emasculation. The phoney pretense of pity and sensitivity is effeminacy.

Non-blacks who reject effeminacy and emasculation (and plenty of blacks) also reject the whole characterization of present black hardship as caused by white racist oppression. For them, there is a foreign inner city black culture, created entirely by blacks, that is responsible for present black hardship. On the one hand, black music and vernacular style and athletics are admired and emulated around the world. On the other, there is crime, parental irresponsibility, educational and career irresponsibility – Daniel Patrick Moynihan’s darkest fantasy of unrestrained black teenage masculinity run amok in the absence of irresponsible fathers who may be in prison. And then there are the riots, lately triggered by police violence against blacks. The legitimacy of the trigger is beside the point because the riot will consist of wide-spread, indiscriminate, and wanton destruction of property and of looting, which demonstrate that the rioters were not motivated by some kind of sympathy for a victim of oppression, but were primarily motivated by normal criminal opportunity. The importance of these riots is not only that they happened, but also that the government allowed them to run their course without significant interference from the police. This restraint by the government to subdue black rioting amounts to unspoken official acknowledgement (1) that the rioting was justified in the sense that any reasonable person would be so outraged by the triggering event that he could not restrain his irrational destructive behavior and (2) that police are incapable of subduing such large and passionate groups. The main-stream left describes these riots as understandable “protests” which some left-wing whites lately join. The refusal of government to restrain the black “protest” riots amounts to another privilege. It’s my impression that the impunity of the “protest” rioters has inspired the recent spate of looting crimes by organized criminal gangs. Maybe that’s a stretch, but rioters on the right had reason to think that they too would be met with governmental restraint. Claims from the left that the Jan. 6, 2001

riot/insurrection was unprecedented and unAmerican seem silly when juxtaposed against the simultaneous numerous black “protest” riots. What was unusual was that the rioters were right wing whites and the target was the federal government rather than local agencies or police.

As for the events that triggered the protest riots, many were captured in video and it’s my impression that the courts have properly convicted the guilty and acquitted the innocent. (That said, the poor lady cop who mistook her gun for a taser in the heat of the moment and shot the career-criminal kid trying to escape arrest should have been acquitted.) The protest/riots can not be characterized as vigilante justice responding to official abdication. The triggering events have served as the rhetorical basis for Black Lives Matter as though police are quicker to kill blacks than whites because, to police, black lives don’t matter. All the mainstream news coverage of black deaths at the hands of police will refer to the “disproportionate” killings of blacks by police. “Disproportionate” is the word *du jour* invoked by the left to describe any suffering endured by one of its favoured groups. In the Black Lives Matter case, the disproportion cited is the number of blacks killed by police as a percentage of the total number of blacks compared to the number of whites killed by police as a percentage of the total white population – an inappropriate comparison. A better comparison would be the number of blacks killed by police as a percentage of violent black criminals compared to the same percentage of whites. An even better comparison would be the number of blacks killed by police as a percent of the number of blacks who tried to escape arrest and threatened arresting police with weapons compared to the same percentage for whites. While these statistics would be interesting, these killings are really not appropriate for statistics at all – each is separate event and should be judged individually. In the news coverage, there is never mention of the fact that the overwhelming majority of gun homicides are black on black gang murders. Police have good reason to be more afraid when arresting young black men than whites. To the accusation implied by the expression “Black Lives Matter”, is this answer: black lives don’t seem to matter much to blacks, who do most of the killing of blacks, except as a pretext for protest and resentment. Black Lives Matter advocates seem to regard the police and criminal law in general as an unwanted and foreign intrusion into the authentic inner-city black culture. To Black Lives Matter, it would be an improvement if the police were “defunded” – that would amount to official recognition of inner-city black no-go zones for police. I don’t believe most blacks want the police to withdraw, but their left-wing advocates seem to. If they were serious about reducing police killing of young black men, they would make an effort to teach young black men (particularly gang members) how to be polite and respectful when talking to police. There’s no effort on the left to restrain the masculine defiance of young black men when they talk to police.

Right wingers reject the idea of white responsibility for black hardship. The right wingers have been bombarded for so long with accusations of their guilt and have seen such huge effort and expense dedicated to inner-city black improvement with no beneficial effect that they are numb to the hardships that inner-city black culture implies for its members. Right wingers regard inner-city black culture as foreign. They do not understand it. They are pessimistic about improvement. To the right, the unspoken explanation is that maybe blacks are genetically inferior, savage, uncivilized. The problem for the right with that explanation is that there are too many blacks who are genuinely successful and admirable for it to be true.

To be sure, there is a small number of black intellectuals who disapprove of privileges for blacks but their voices are overwhelmed in mainstream media by demands from King's successors. King's claim for equality was successful because it was based on the prevailing morality of equal freedom, but in a thorough distortion of King's position, his successors' demands for privileges violate King's morality and are based on a different morality that is not prevalent. They have succeeded in winning privileges but have failed to improve black status. They have won individual battles (and personal success) but are badly losing the war. In King's time, there were no black privileges, but the privileges won by his successors have created white resentment and served to vindicate black resentment. Lose, lose.

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There are differences between the issue of the position of blacks in society and the other ostensible issues of the present cultural divide. They are all worthy of serious discussion, but I have outlined my impressions of the black issue because it illustrates important features that it shares with the other claims from the left, and that's why I've called it the paradigm. The most important common features are (1) pitiable "hardship" falsely blamed on the mainstream majority, (2) over-reaching claims for privilege rather than for equal freedom (3) pressure to shift prevailing morality from the morality of equal freedom to the morality of guilt and pity and (4) the consequent pressure for change in the definition of mainstream masculinity. I don't propose to elaborate my impressions of the other issues except for abortion and gun control because they don't fit the paradigm well.

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The history of social attitudes toward abortion makes for interesting reading. Suffice it to say that two generations ago, abortion was illegal and was generally disapproved by both men and women as a type of homicide. The suffragette movement for the women's voting had morphed into a generalized social movement concerning any number of areas where women could be said to endure hardship that men did not, and those included the prohibition of abortion. The current campaign to legalize abortion is based on oppression of women by men but I consider that a mischaracterization as many women oppose abortion and many men favour it. If there is a law of cultural change, it is that fundamental change occurs very slowly despite efforts for change and even laws. My conjecture is that the current resistance to abortion reflects cultural inertia.

The left advocates for a pregnant woman's right to terminate her pregnancy as a matter of freedom; the right advocates abortion prohibition as if it were a homicide. In contrast with the other issues, in the abortion issue, it is the left that wants freedom (for pregnant women) and the right that wants equality (for the foetus). The culture evolves on its own without regard for these rhetorical positions. For

myself, I do not see abortion as creating a privilege or a burden. By the morality of equal freedom, abortion is morally neutral since no one can claim his equal freedom has been violated by a woman aborting her pregnancy. A foetus can make no claims itself and no one has any standing to speak for it to override the wishes of the mother who has the greatest interest in the potential child and should be presumed to know what is in the child's best interest. The rhetoric turns on the meaning of personhood: is a foetus a person who is murdered by an abortion, and at what stage of foetal development does it become a person; on the other hand, if a foetus is not a person, then no person's rights or freedoms have been violated by abortion. This is a false dichotomy. The pseudo-science of foetal sentience and the question of independent viability are irrelevant distractions. If a foetus is not a person, then abortion is not homicide and is not immoral; on the other hand, if a foetus is a person, it has no greater right than anyone else to parasitize a woman without the host's consent. Prohibiting abortion forces a pregnant woman into involuntary servitude, a violation of her equal freedom (a burden she bears and a privilege to the foetus/person) and contrary to the US constitution. These arguments do not affect cultural momentum but the end of abortion restriction is imminent anyway because (1) any woman who wants an abortion can get one by going to a state where it's legal though that may involve some inconvenience, and (2) abortion by pill delivered by mail will soon be readily available. The warring parties are so entrenched that the war may continue even after abortion pills become universally available.

My own view is pro-abortion, not just pro-choice. I think every pregnant teen-age girl who is a drug addict and doesn't know who is the father and has no realistic hope of exercising responsibility in carrying a foetus or raising a child should be affirmatively encouraged to abort her pregnancy – for the benefit of herself, the potential child, and society at large.

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The left advocates prohibition of gun ownership by individuals despite its having been legal throughout the country's history. The left articulates no precise rationale but ties its position to gun crime and particularly gun homicide. Nowhere in the left's advocacy for gun prohibition is any mention that most gun homicides are committed by blacks and the victims are blacks in the course of black gang warfare, using guns that are possessed illegally. Making gun ownership illegal would probably not affect existing illegal gun ownership or reduce gun homicide. Nor does the left advocate punishing gun crime severely because that would put more blacks in prison and the left considers the "proportion" of blacks in prison to be already too high because of white oppression. What is the explanation for the left being in such a contorted position? The left's abhorrence of gun possession is not really based on the damage caused by gun crime. The left is outraged that large numbers of Americans enjoy possessing guns. Guns are a symbol of masculine coercive force and the possession of such a capability is enjoyed by a large proportion of Americans. To possess decisive coercive force is a masculine fantasy that men (and some women) enjoy indulging. The left is revolted by this whole-hearted masculine fantasy because it so

definitively contradicts the left's object of effeminate masculinity. Gun prohibition would be emasculation of a masculine fantasy. It would be tantamount to repudiation of masculine combative strength even in fantasy -- an echo of Jimmy Carter's confession of guilt for the fantasy of adultery that he indulged in private contemplation. Without articulating it, the effort on the left for prohibition of guns is an expression of the left's revulsion of the enjoyment of the fantasy of masculine coercive power. That revulsion is directed towards the objective of effeminizing the cultural definition of masculinity.

There have also been mass casualty gun crimes which I consider fundamentally different from the much more common gun crimes. These I categorize under the social issue of mental distress. There are a few spectacular mass gun killings every year where a mentally distressed person will try to kill as many people as he can before he is stopped, usually being killed either by the police or by himself. When one of these spectacular mass killings occurs, the killer becomes the most important person in the country: media immediately drop coverage of anything else, and full coverage is devoted to discovering the most minute aspects of the killer to understand his motives. None of this (over-) coverage has ever led to a better understanding of how future mass killings by distressed persons might be prevented in the future. Nevertheless, main-stream media on the left will treat each spectacular mass killing as a demonstration of the immorality of private legal gun ownership as though legal gun ownership were the cause of the deaths. My conjecture is that it is precisely the media coverage (the recognition of the importance of the killer) that is the decisive motivator for the killer: better to go out with a glorious display of importance than to live in miserable insignificance. From the perspective of the killer, the mass killings are a glorious suicide. If the left really wanted to reduce the number of these spectacular episodes, it would ignore them. When modalities other than guns are used with the same spectacular strategy (*e.g.*, the Boston marathon bombers used pressure cookers and Islamists used trucks to run over as many people as they could), the left then seems to recognize that the killer is responsible, and the implement used for the killings is irrelevant.

Most of the guns used in black gang warfare are concealable hand guns, but often in the mass killing spectacles, the weapons used are high-powered automatic military-type assault rifles. The left argues that these assault weapons should be legally prohibited because they exceed defensive utility and the right responds that specific prohibition of assault weapons would be the tip of the wedge that would inevitably expand to include all guns. I see merit in both these positions. Either way, spectacular mass killings fall fundamentally into the mental illness category, whether guns are used or truck bombs or letter bombs or pressure cookers or trucks. One should also recognize that the overwhelming majority of gun crimes and killing spectacles are perpetrated by men and that the cultural definition of masculinity is probably a causative factor. That said, cultural definitions of fundamental human attributes like masculinity are not amenable to bespoke design by social activists or philosophers as all cultural designs result from cultural evolution over which no generation has control or understanding, and all designs have problems.

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On most of the ostensible issues, the left identifies hardship suffered by a particular group in consequence of oppression at the hands of the main-stream majority, and the left advocates for a privilege for that oppressed group to relieve the hardship and to establish equality between that group and everyone else. The appeal is for pity for the oppressed and guilt for the oppressors (everyone else) for which the appropriate relief is charity labeled as compassionate generosity: this is the left-wing morality of pity, charity, and guilt in action. Some Lilliputian strategic left-wing followers may actually buy into this morality, but for advocates on the left, for left leaders, it's just a cover story to serve their personal political ambition – no different from communist or socialist ideology in some dictatorships right now, or Christian ideology at different points in history. The right acknowledges the suffering of some groups (*e.g.*, blacks during slavery and Jim Crow and even the social pathology suffered by inner-city blacks today, or would-be immigrants from say Afghanistan, or Syria, Salvador or Honduras or Haiti or a million other places), but the right considers descriptions of that suffering to be exaggerated by the left – the whining of weak or unlucky losers. Most important, the right rejects responsibility for that suffering and refuses to be pressured into relieving and rewarding that suffering by “charity” from government. The right rejects sympathetic sensitivity for that suffering with the normal masculine disregard for the suffering of opponents in competition. The moral foundation for the position on the right is the morality of masculine competition whereby winners win, losers lose, and each person is responsible for himself.

Were left and right discussing similar social issues of some other country, their disagreements would be differences of opinion, amenable to civil discussion. But the American cultural schism is more than an abstract discussion of principles; it is a competition in which the contradictory moral foundations on each side mean that each is immoral by the standards of the other, not merely mistaken. The right sees the claim for “charity” as a normal special interest scam, whereby politicians and advocates for particular special interests try to build a political following by getting privileges from government for their special interest groups. The real motivation is normal political opportunism. The traditional right-wing special interest groups were particular industries or religions or nobility. For the left, the current special interests are the “oppressed” groups I’ve just described. The privileges granted have been egregious on both sides but the privileges on the right are easily revoked with a change of government. Some of the privileges on the left can also be easily revoked, but entitlements are politically impossible to revoke. Recipients of Social Security and Medicare (even right-wing recipients) are addicted. Those two entitlement programs started life as left/right issues that the left won, but they are no longer in real dispute. There are vestigial insults from the right about Obamacare, but no politicians now advocate requiring individuals to be responsible for their own old age or medical treatment because the voting public is entirely addicted even though (1) there is nothing more predictable and (self)insurable than old age and sickness and (2) the national cost of entitlements is far beyond what the country can sustainably afford.

There is now a pattern with left-wing entitlements. They start life as a left/right conflict that the right brands as fiscally irresponsible for government and morally offensive as a reward or incentive for individual irresponsibility or bad luck. Then the left succeeds and a temporary entitlement program is

initiated for a small number of the “oppressed and suffering” special interest group. Then the temporary program is extended in time. Then the categories of privileged recipients gradually expand to include almost everybody. Then the privileges are generally regarded as normal, not privileges at all, and people organize their lives in full dependence at which point it becomes impossible to wean the recipients off their privileges. By the time the privileges are accepted as normal and are no longer the subject of genuine left/right dispute, the left has moved on to identify new areas of suffering that can be exploited for political advantage. In this way, entitlements only expand. When the government is right-wing, the expansion may slow (not reverse), but then the expansion resumes when the government changes.

The most important reason that this pattern of ever-expanding privileges does not meet with overwhelming moral outrage is that the individuals who bear the burden are not identified. For every privilege that increases one person’s freedom in violation of equal freedom, there is always a victim (or many) who bears the burden and whose freedom is reduced by the same amount. But if the cost of the privilege is added to the national debt, it is not clear at the time who will bear the burden or when. The national debt has been building significantly since Ronald Reagan. A significant part of the national debt derives from political and individual irresponsibility and immorality. Greed all round. More important than the painful economic reckoning that will probably come is the undermining of the morality of equal individual freedom, including equal individual responsibility and self-reliance that equal freedom necessarily implies. I say that a painful economic reckoning will “probably” come because it might not. America is very creative and may create new economic value out of pure ingenuity as the information and communication developments are presently demonstrating. But modern commerce can only succeed in a culture where the prevailing morality is one of equal individual freedom. And even if the national debt disappeared in an abundance of newly created value, the damage to the prevalence of the morality of equal freedom is, I fear, severe. The basis of our civility, the morality of equal freedom, is undermined by the continual expansion of privileged groups of which the national debt is an indicator.

The left definition of effeminate masculinity with its exquisite sensitivity to the micro-suffering of privileged groups is on display by talking heads in main-stream left media with every news cast and every public speech by left-wing politicians. Every time the left adds a new category to its list of oppressed groups, the right reacts with masculine contemptuous outrage towards the newest weak and whining losers and towards the hypocritical pretense of compassion. Individuals commit to one side or the other in the culture wars, but the right does not recognize that it too is an addicted beneficiary of the privileges the left won at earlier stages in the culture war. That’s why I say the ostensible issues are just superficial pretexts for the culture war. The real issue is that (1) the left insists that people must feign effeminate compassion for the “suffering” of the groups deemed by the self-described “enlightened” left to have been victimized by mainstream American society while (2) the right rejects the authority assumed by the left (by virtue of its self-declared moral superiority) to determine which groups are worthy of privileges of victimhood; the right rejects the left’s choices of victimized groups; it rejects the privileges the left creates for the victims under the guise of compassion; it convulses in allergic reaction to effeminacy and to the demand that it become effeminate. But in clumsy ham-fisted error, the right accepted Trump as a masculine leader. The mistake is understandable as Trump does

show some masculine characteristics: he's contemptuous of the suffering of opponents and quick to attack, but he's no man. He's a bullshitter and an asshole, a thoroughly dishonourable scam artist, an unmitigated scoundrel. I hesitate to use the words "bullshit" and "asshole" because of their scurrilous flavour, but both represent very important concepts that deserve (and have been given) serious intellectual discussion, and the language offers no respectable alternatives.

People can disagree about abstract forms of social organization and still be civil in debate. Discussing opposing moral principles requires some restraint to prevent vituperation and argument. Civilized discussion between opponents of fundamental features of personal identity, like masculinity, is almost impossible and explains the intensity of the American cultural cleavage.

16. The super-sensitivity advocated by the left amounts to "moral superiority of victimhood and glorification of the downtrodden" -- an echo of Christian and socialist ideologies at different times. But contrary to that ideology, today's left advocates are no more compassionate than the Renaissance popes were chaste and poor. The compassion is phoney, a thin hypocritical veneer covering normal political opportunism -- a fig leaf that serves to violate the morality of equal freedom. Phoney compassion is effeminacy. The reaction from the right is a normal masculine attempt to dominate by force, including its own violations of equal freedom. The effeminate definition of masculinity advocated by the left violates a fundamental feature of meritorious masculinity: in the competition for status, winners win and losers lose. This feature of masculinity is not a modifiable cultural phenomenon; rather, it is a feature of all cultures within our species -- it inheres in our nature. But even if it were culturally modifiable, cultural development is incrementally slow and follows its own logic; it does not follow ideology or legislation. Nevertheless, history offers many examples of normal masculine patriarchal ambition overlaid by hypocritical fig-leaf ideological veneers of compassion -- most have been short lived but some have endured. If history is a guide, a fig leaf of compassion is a poor substitute for real civility based on equal freedom.

The "moral superiority of victimhood and glorification of the downtrodden" was Nietzsche's description of the moral character of Roman society after it adopted Christianity, a variation on Gibbon. Christian morality is modeled on the ultimate glory of Christ in consequence of his passive suffering and victimhood. In Nietzsche's view, prior to adopting Christianity, Roman morality valued masculine coercive power and unapologetic glorious victory over adversaries, and this morality led to Roman imperial success; the shift to soft Christian morality led to Roman decline. I am skeptical of Nietzsche's description that Roman morality changed with Christianity. In my inclination, Roman society was always organized on principles of male status hierarchy based on competitive coercive force, and the official adoption of Christianity did not change that. What Nietzsche identifies as Christian morality was, at most, an official fig leaf over normal masculine ruthless competition for status that prevailed throughout, including in Renaissance Rome a millennium later. Roman cultural history is tied to its

political history with a huge variety of characters. Roman Christians were sometimes as fanatical and cruel in their persecution of internecine heresy and of other religions and ethnicities as were Isis and the Myanmar military more recently. No small part of internecine Roman wars concerned the nuances of Christian “trinity” and “incarnation”, issues even less practically significant than the Lilliputian egg issue. Slavery continued, though not slavery of Christians unless they were prisoners of war. Most important, regicide and military usurpation were normal features of patriarchal succession in both the pagan and the Christian Roman Empire. That was the context of the sack of Rome by Alaric, a Goth but also a Christian himself. It’s not clear to me that Roman Christian morality caused a decline of coercive masculine patriarchal domination or Roman decline in general. I do not regard Nietzsche as a person of great wisdom or a great historian, but his description of Roman morality is an apt description of the hypocritical fig leaf that covers the real prevailing morality of today’s American left.

From our perspective today, it’s hard to understand how everyone did not see through such a transparent fig leaf of gentle effeminate beneficence claimed by, say, the Renaissance popes washing the feet of wretched paupers, but there is a long list of modern emperors who likewise wear no clothes other than ideological fig leaves to cover obvious masculine competitive ambitious coercive oppression. Of course, the hypocrisy of the American left is not nearly as extreme as historical examples, not least because the American left has never achieved dominance sufficient to be seriously oppressive; however, (1) the strategic fig leaf of the moral superiority of victimhood and the inherent sin of greed is the same, but (2) the effeminacy required today to achieve left-wing ideological purity and saintliness is, in my impression, unusual. Russian and Chinese communists made the full effort to humiliate their opponents but they didn’t require effeminate demonstrations of sensitivity to trivial sufferings of “innocents”.

In my thesis, there is a distinction between cultural changes within a society and changes in elemental features of our species upon which all cultures are based. Our species is sexually dimorphic and fundamental aspects of masculinity and femininity are common to all societies and cultures. I’ve defined civility as the prevalence of the morality of equal freedom including a cultural definition of masculinity whereby men compete for status while respecting each other’s equal freedom. No country has yet achieved complete civility, and only the liberal democracies are mostly civil. But in most societies today, the competition for masculine status is still governed by loose principles of coercive power. Each culture defines its rules of masculine competition for status, but in all societies, men seriously compete without compassion for the suffering of their competitors, *i.e.*, the fundamental competitive masculine character is universal. The rules of the competition may change as a matter of culture, but the fundamental masculine competitive character is not culturally changeable. The cultural development of civility took hundreds of generations and the repudiation of coercive force was a great cultural shift, but change of fundamental masculinity would require an evolutionary change in our species over many thousands of generations. Evolutionary change is fundamentally different from cultural change. The change in the definition of masculinity that the left glibly advocates would require more than a cultural change; it would require an evolutionary change. We would need to become a different species: a species of angels. Such a change is beyond the range of cultural possibility. That said, history provides so many examples of oppressive masculinity served by the fig-leaf ideology of

sensitive effeminacy that, by now, we should recognize it for what it is, and not be gullibly and naively seduced to believe that it's genuine, or even possible.

17. Civility, our greatest cultural achievement, is at stake.

A republic if you can keep it. The price of freedom is eternal vigilance. These are canonical aphorisms from the American inception. At the time, the danger was from the right, from someone like Trump who was shamelessly ambitious, selfish, and amoral. Today, in my view, the greater threat is from the left. At least the threat approaches from the left camouflaged by an ideology of benign pity for the suffering of innocents. None of the left advocates (leaders) demonstrates the personal ambition or strength of character of Mao or Castro, Hun Sen or Daniel Ortega, but we know where all of these left-wing saints lead. One way or another, they lead to incivility and oppression. The left leaders say they want what's best for society and that isolated violations of equal freedom (called "social justice") are for the general welfare and are temporary. But the violations only increase. The ultimate outcome is the same whether the threat comes from the right or the left. Left or right only describe the direction from which the threat approaches; the oppression in the end is the same regardless of the angle of approach.

Humans are incapable of becoming angels or saints. History suggests only two forms of social organization for large affluent societies: (1) oppressive patriarchy supported by the morality of coercive dominance, or (2) civility supported by the morality of equal freedom. We have had a taste of civility and its superiority over oppressive patriarchy is apparent: superiority in general affluence; superiority in the proportion of individuals who are satisfied with the morality and legitimacy of their status deriving from universal principles; and superiority in social tranquility -- all deriving from sweet commerce which itself derives from inherent features of the human character. The vague naive fantasy of a form of social organization advocated by the left that is superior to civility is not a genuine alternative. Saintliness is not an alternative. There is no higher social value than the equal freedom of individuals to compete. To try to compensate for ancestral injustice or competitive loss only creates privilege. Everyone has ancestors who were both victims and perpetrators of injustice by our current standards. Equal individual freedom, which includes equal individual responsibility and the inevitability that some people will be competitive losers, may not be heaven for everyone, but it's as good as it gets -- the end of history.

Today, America is addicted to privileges and the left wants to create more. The addictions and the danger of increasing national debt are both serious national vulnerabilities to the standard of living. Does the country have the character to endure a serious reduction in the standard of living? Once a minimal standard of living is achieved, civility is far more important for a culture than more affluence. Would civility survive economic hardship in America? Maybe, but in the absence of equal individual responsibility and self-reliance, it's hard to see how.

Sid Barnett

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