

# THE DIALOGUE OF SOLIDARITIES, OR WHY THE LION SPARED ANDROCLES\*

MICHAEL M. BELL  
*Iowa State University*

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*When properly applied, the gemeinschaft/gesellschaft theoretical tradition can help us understand the problem of collective action. I argue that collective action is most likely in circumstances in which the actors feel both a solidarity of interests and a solidarity of sentiments with each other. I call this interaction of interests and sentiments the dialogue of solidarities, and I suggest that it is the basis of what mobilizes a community across time and space. I use the fable "Androcles and the Lion" to illustrate the workings of this dialogue.*

## PROLOGUE: A FABLE

**T**here once was a slave named Androcles whose master treated him cruelly. Androcles could bear it no longer, and one day he ran away into the forest. There he came upon a roaring lion. At first he was frightened, but then he saw that the lion was crying from pain.

As Androcles drew near, the lion put out its paw. Androcles saw a large thorn in one of the lion's toes and pulled it out. The lion was so grateful, it licked Androcles' hand and led him to its cave. Androcles remained with the lion for some time, and every day the lion caught game for them to eat.

One day, as Androcles and the lion were hunting together, they were both captured. They were taken to the city and put in a circus. For entertainment, Androcles was to be thrown to a lion that had not been fed for several days to make it as fierce and hungry as possible. The emperor himself was coming to watch the show.

On the day of the event, Androcles was led to the center of the arena. Then the lion was let out of its cage. With a terrible roar, it bounded toward the poor slave.

As the snarling lion drew near Androcles, it suddenly stopped, rolled over and licked his hand. The emperor was so impressed by the unusual sight that he called

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Androcles before him to explain. When Androcles told the emperor the whole story, the emperor set him free. He also set the lion free to return to the forest.

And so this story teaches us that a good deed never goes unrewarded.<sup>1</sup>

## INTRODUCTION

One of the most striking features of social life is how we often do not act in our own interests when we act in our own interests. This paradox lies at the heart of a host of social issues. Self-interested actors all too frequently undermine their own self-interest through aggregate effects that spell disaster for all the actors involved, resulting in over-fishing (Ostrom 1991), pollution (Hardin 1968), traffic jams (Elster 1989a), declining main streets (Davidson 1990), divisive politics (Putnam 1993) and failed strikes (Gilbert 1992), to mention only a few of these all-too-common disasters. This vast and, by now, well-known class of dilemmas is what social scientists have come to call the "problem of collective action" (Hardin 1967; Olson 1971 [1965]; Elster 1989; Coleman 1990; Ostrom 1991; Sandler 1992).

The point of this paper is to argue that, when properly applied, the old theoretical tradition best represented by Tönnies's famous distinction between *gemeinschaft* and *gesellschaft* provides an important solution to the problem of collective action. I say "when properly applied" because this tradition has long been, and continues to be, misunderstood by the bulk of sociologists — including the tradition's originators. In this paper, I hope to correct that misunderstanding through a re-reading of the *gemeinschaft* and *gesellschaft* tradition, drawing principally upon the work of Tönnies (1940 [1887]), Durkheim (1964 [1893]) and Weber (1967 [1922]).

It is probably worth pausing a minute here to point out (and perhaps to add to) a potential confusion in the phrases "the problem of collective action" and "the collective action problem." Generally speaking, collective action in "the collective action problem" is seen as a good, a positive opportunity, that, even though it would be of general benefit, is often unattained by the actors involved. The problem, then, is how to get people to act in the collective interest, the interest that will in fact benefit everyone the most. However, there may also be cases in which, through limits in the vision of what the collectivity is — through a kind of us-versus-them understanding of boundaries and benefits — collective action may itself be the problem. Collective action has led to some of the most wonderful and some of the most horrible things that people have ever done. The magnitude of these wonders and these horrors urges us to consider both "problems" of collective action as central problems for sociology, with an eye to seeing either how to encourage collective action or how to redirect it.<sup>2</sup>

What I will argue here is that collective action is most likely in circumstances in which the actors feel both a *solidarity of interests* and a *solidarity of sentiments* with each other — both a *gesellschaft* and a *gemeinschaft*. A solidarity of interests is not enough. Without a sentimental commitment, there will likely be a failure of trust — the trust necessary to ensure that each actor will contribute in turn to the collective action. Nor is a solidarity of sentiments enough. Such sentiments will likely fade if the interests of each participant are not served, leading again to a failure of trust, for a commitment to serving those interests is the most basic sign that a solidarity of sentiments exists. Both solidarities are needed together.

Trust is the essential glue that holds these solidarities together — a glue that the solidarities themselves produce when they interact. What makes trust so essential are two issues that any collective action must confront: space and time. Take, as an example, a couple in a domestic union. Each has interests, such as careers. I sacrifice for my partner's career this year, and my partner does the same for me later. We support each other through college, perhaps, and we make our job choices with each other in mind. The interests of both are served, and a solidarity of interests is the result.

But in reciprocal action, there is almost always a time delay involved. Sometimes I'll have to wait my turn. But how do I know that you, my partner, will come through when it is my turn — when it is your turn to wait? Because of my sense that we have also a solidarity of sentiments. We have affection for each other, perhaps deep enough to call love, and a sense of common commitment to certain norms of behavior. The same process holds solidarities together across the equally ubiquitous problem of space — across what might be termed spatial delays. Our union of interests requires me to have trust in you when you are not in my presence, and you in me when I am not in your presence. We coordinate shopping, housework and childcare; we spend each other's money; we maintain monogamy (if the union is based on that understanding); when necessary, we cover for each other. We cannot keep each other in constant surveillance, nor can we expect that the wider society always will as well. But through our sentimental ties, we trust that our ties of interest will be maintained across the unavoidable spatiality of social life.

The process works the other way too; a solidarity of interests, through trust, supports a solidarity of sentiments. If you do not come through, if you violate my trust or if I violate yours, chances are my affection for you and your affection for me will soon disappear — as well as our sense of a common normative commitment. If you or I regularly fail to support the other's interests across time and space, then our solidarity of sentiments will likely fail as well.

The creation of this trust is an interactive process, a dialogue, what might be termed a *dialogue of solidarities*.<sup>3</sup> This dialogue produces a *solidarity of solidarities* — indeed, it produces solidarities of solidarities, and on all scales: within families, organizations, churches, marketplaces, commons, villages, cities, nations, the species and perhaps the ecosystem too. It produces, in a word, community.

Not all collections of people successfully mobilize into solidarities of solidarities, however; not all communities have community. This is plain enough. The question is, what makes those that do successfully mobilize in the collective interest different?

One answer that is heard with increasing regularity is social capital (Coleman 1990; Portes and Sensenbrenner 1993; Putnam 1993 and 1995).<sup>4</sup> The economic cast of this terminology is not accidental, for these writers draw their theoretical sustenance from the deep well of rational egoism. Indeed, the entire collective action literature is dominated by rational choice perspectives (for example, Olson 1971 [1965]; Hechter 1987; Elster 1989a, 1989b, 1989c; Ostrom 1991; Sandler 1992). The rational egoist who stands at the center of these images of collective action generally acts only with a solidarity of interests in mind. These interests are "embedded" within a social context, as Granovetter (1985) has usefully argued; consequently, interests are subject to normative constraints (Elster 1989a; Portes and Sensenbrenner 1993) and depend on social networks and trust (Putnam 1993, 1995). But even with these important qualifications, the image remains that of a social actor moved by interests alone. This

rational actor follows norms, but only because he or she is constrained to do so. Trust and networks are also necessary for the reformed rational egoist, but the origin of these rests on the self-serving ground of interest.

Something is still missing. In order to understand both senses of the problem of collective action — in order to understand the origin of social capital and the trust, norms and networks that support it — we need a fuller account of human motivation. It is to this end that I argue for the importance of the dialogue of solidarities. In what follows, I will first explore the *gemeinschaft* and *gesellschaft* tradition and the place of the dialogue of solidarities in it. Next, I will address the important (and indeed age-old) question of whether humans are ever motivated by anything other than interest, and thus whether a solidarity of sentiments is a useful construct, or even a possible one. I will then apply the dialogue of solidarities to the problem of collective action and answer the question of why the lion spared Androcles.

### REREADING GEMEINSCHAFT AND GESELLSCHAFT

The notion that social relationships can be divided into two broad categories — those based on what I am terming here “sentiments” and those based on what I am terming here “interests” — is very old in social science. In 1821, Georg Hegel called it “family-society” and “civil-society”; in 1887, Ferdinand Tönnies called these categories *gemeinschaft* and *gesellschaft*; in 1893, Emile Durkheim called it “mechanical solidarity” and “organic solidarity”; in 1922, Max Weber called them “traditional authority” and “legal-rational authority.” Simmel, Marx, Comte and others made related observations of the difference between, on the one hand, relationships based on friendship, kinship and neighborliness, religion and ethnicity, all closely tied to land and place, and on the other hand relationships based on contracts, rational calculation, legal codes and, most importantly, money.<sup>5</sup> Although definitions and applications varied, in some interesting and important ways, the gist of all these authors’ categories was quite similar (Nisbet 1966).

Moreover, pretty much all of the categorizations sought to explain the same phenomenon: the coming of the manners of living we typically call modern, industrial and urban. Living in the midst of what seemed a substantially different mode of society than had existed before, these authors sought to find a language to describe this new mode and the one it seemed to be replacing. They offered the *gemeinschaft* side of the division to describe the communal lives they thought more typical of traditional, non-industrial and rural life and the *gesellschaft* side to describe the individualistic life of money, industry, cities and the state.

This much is well known. What is often forgotten, though, is that these ideas were never meant to be empirical descriptions; rather, they were ideal types. Tönnies and Durkheim argued that both sides of the division can potentially be found co-mingled — to varying degrees, to be sure — in all types of human relations, whether these relations be in the past or the present, the country or the city, the bedroom or the boardroom. As Tönnies (1940 [1931], p. 18) put it, “the essence of both *gemeinschaft* and *gesellschaft* is found interwoven in all kinds of associations.” Durkheim (1964 [1893], p. 129), speaking of mechanical solidarity and organic solidarity, said it this way: “They are two aspects of one and the same reality, but none the less they must be distinguished.”

This is especially important to remember since this approach has often been criticized as polarized, particularly with regard to placing these contrasting relationships on a rural-urban axis.<sup>6</sup> Although it would be correct to say that a Tönnies or a Durkheim would expect to find more *gemeinschaft* and more mechanical solidarity in a rural village than on the trading floor of an urban stock exchange, they recognized that the trading floor of a rural livestock auction echoes with much the same means-ends individual rational calculation. And they also recognized that traders on the stock exchange floor maintain networks of friendship and kinship among each other, even as they watch the ticker tape — and just as rural folk do, even as they size up the cattle for sale. Thus, the considerable body of empirical work that finds *gemeinschaft* in urban villages, bars and workplaces and *gesellschaft* in rural farms and small towns would not have come as a surprise to the classical theorists of the *gemeinschaft/gesellschaft* tradition.

Still, this has been a hotly contested point. At issue here is the argument that many of the ills of modern life stem from the loss of what most observers have interpreted the *gemeinschaft* side of the line to refer to: community. Many have argued that this loss is real and dangerous. Others have argued that it is either not real or not dangerous — indeed, that it may even be beneficial — and that it is certainly romanticized.<sup>7</sup>

The negative tone with which Tönnies generally described *gesellschaft* makes it clear where he stood with regard to the loss of *gemeinschaft*: that this loss was both real and dangerous.<sup>8</sup> Durkheim sought a bit of theoretical and moral balance and, interestingly, switched the metaphors first used by Tönnies to describe each side. Tönnies called *gemeinschaft* a more “organic” kind of relationship, pointing to its common bases in blood and land, and he called *gesellschaft* “mechanical” for it was an unfeeling, means-ends sort of tie. Durkheim, though, saw both as kinds of “solidarity,” and thus both as varieties of community, although the communality they create have different origins. Probably so as to distance his position from that of Tönnies, as well as to critique it, Durkheim called a solidarity based on similarity — similarity of place, kinship, religion and norms — “mechanical,” and a solidarity based on interdependence among people who may be completely dissimilar — interdependence through contracts, markets and the state — “organic.” He evidently also had in mind a greater complexity in the ties he termed “organic.”<sup>9</sup> But although he saw both as forms of community, Durkheim did worry that there were “abnormal” forms of organic solidarity that would lead to a loss of the moral integration — and thus a feeling of *anomie*, as he famously termed it — that he argued came from mechanical solidarity. The result would be a widespread sense of lack of purpose, as well as “incessantly recurrent conflicts, and the multifarious disorders of which the economic world exhibits so sad a spectacle” (Durkheim 1964 [1893], p. 2).<sup>10</sup>

In a way, Marx made much the same argument as Durkheim. Marx also found moral value in the *gesellschaft* side of collective action or, in his terms, class-for-itself. Indeed, he often described the *gemeinschaft* side negatively, arguing that the life of the city was potentially far more revolutionary — a place where a class-in-itself could come to recognize its common interests and become a class-for-itself — than the “stagnatory and vegetative” character of rural life (Marx 1972 [1853], p. 582). But although he found more collective revolutionary potential in urban workers than in the “plodding idiocy” he and Engels saw in rural life, he recognized the existence of, or

at least the opportunity for, powerful forms of communal association and cooperation in both (Marx and Engels 1968 [1847]).

Thus, for Durkheim and Marx, "community" lies on both sides of the *gemeinschaft/gesellschaft* line, a point that has been frequently missed in this centuries-long debate. The whole corpus of scholarly work that sought to show that there was just as much *gemeinschaft* in the city as in the countryside, in the present as in the past, and therefore as much "community" too, was consequently misplaced.

But although community lies on both sides of the line (and indeed depends on both sides, as I will argue), this does not mean that all human relations constitute communal solidarities. We need to avoid the frequent, often subtle, association of *gesellschaft* and equivalent terms with all instances of humans acting on what they take to be their interests and a parallel association of *gemeinschaft* and equivalent terms with all instances of human sentiment. The categories of the *gemeinschaft/gesellschaft* division do not encompass all forms of human behavior. Rather, they refer to all forms of cooperative, reciprocal and complementary human behavior and to two basic foundations on which these build. They refer to solidarities. There is, of course, much human behavior that is neither cooperative, reciprocal nor complementary, much that does not constitute solidarity.

In part to distinguish what I want to say from the common misassociations of *gemeinschaft* and *gesellschaft*, I refer to these social foundations of community as a solidarity of sentiments and a solidarity of interests. The mere existence of interest, or sentiment, on the part of a social actor does not describe what I am talking about. There must be a solidarity, a cooperative reciprocity or complementarity, of sentiments and interests. The sentiments and interests involved must be plural, not singular. We should not doubt that a self can exist with interest and sentiment that are not part of a solidarity. What I would like to explain is the circumstances in which these solidarities do come into existence.

And what I will argue is that each is most likely in the company of the other — indeed, that they interact and construct each other. This is something that, apparently, none of the classical writers in the *gemeinschaft/gesellschaft* tradition recognized, or at least paid much attention to. This suggests some continuing truth in the charge that these writers tended to over-polarize *gemeinschaft* and *gesellschaft*, although not in the way that has often been argued. Even though most of the classical writers recognized the co-presence and co-mingling of the two forms of solidarity, they did not emphasize that this association goes even further — that they in fact mutually support each other. Even when those writers saw *gemeinschaft* and *gesellschaft* coming together, they missed the interactiveness between them.

### SENTIMENTS AS A REALITY *SUI GENERIS*

Before I develop the argument that solidarities of interests and sentiments mutually support each other, I need to establish first that sentiments exist. The language I will use will be quite deliberately rationalist, despite my own doubts about this theoretical language. I have these doubts because rationalism is a language whose very tone has obscured the existence of what I am trying to establish: sentiments. But if an argument for sentiments can be made using such a traditionally hostile theoretical approach, their theoretical existence will be that much more secure.

I will begin the argument as follows: In the eons of pondering the basis of human motivation, few have doubted that interests — things we want for ourselves — exist, and that we act on them. Weber (1967 [1922]) called it *zweckrational*, or “instrumental-rational” action. Tönnies (1940 [1887]) called it *kürwille* or what is usually translated as “rational will,” but what is more directly translated as “choice will.”<sup>11</sup> And many writers in the rationalist tradition today call it “rational choice” (Hechter 1987; Elster 1989a; Coleman 1990; Anand 1993; Sobel 1994; Dowding and King 1995; Schmitz 1995).<sup>12</sup>

Some (for example, Olson 1971 [1966] and Coleman 1990) have gone further and said, or nearly said, all human action is so motivated, for why would an actor do anything that is not, to the best of his or her knowledge and understanding and in a particular context and moment of decision, in his or her interest? We all have reasons, and thus interests, for doing everything we do — even reasons that others might consider insane. Therefore all human action is rational, interested action.

There is an obvious objection to this totalizing account of human motivation: It is not very helpful. Such a perspective, as Neil Smelser has observed, has the “capacity to explain everything and hence nothing (1992, p. 400).”<sup>13</sup> It is, in a word, a tautology. Ultimately, all it says is that people have reasons for doing whatever they do. It is more useful to ask, what are those reasons? Are they of the same sort? Do they — and how do they — overlap, interact and coexist?

One important sort of reason is, I do not doubt, the pursuit of personal gain, of self-interest. But along with Tönnies and Weber, I would like to make the case that there is something more to human motivation. Weber called it *wertrational* or “value-rational” action, action “which is determined by a conscious belief in the value for its own sake” and enacted according to reasoned, means-ends thinking (1968 [1922], p. 24).<sup>14</sup> Tönnies called it *Wesenswille* or “natural will,” but what is again more directly translated as “being will.” This “will,” Tönnies explained, “means nothing more than a direct, naive and therefore emotional volition and action . . .,” an uncalculated attitude based on tradition, affection and normative allegiance. Tönnies also argued that “. . . intellect and reason belong to natural will as well as to rational will,” contrasting with the many who have argued that motives based on something other than the interests of the self are unreasonable (for they must be unreasoned) and thus irrational (1940 [1931], p. 17).<sup>15</sup>

I am not convinced that either of these formulations exactly captures what that other kind of motive is, but I very much agree that there is something there. My agreement is moved by what I believe to be a completely obvious fact of social life: that it often pleases us to see others get what they want. Moreover, we get pleasure out of doing well by others, both because it causes us to think well of ourselves (which is, no doubt, a form of self-interest) but also because it pleases us that others we care about have gained some benefit. Friends are pleased to hear that friends are doing well and disappointed to hear that they are doing badly. Partners in a domestic relationship take pride in working for the family benefit, in making “sacrifices” of many sorts for the family. People are saddened to hear of the political and environmental tragedies that befall others and take pleasure in doing small things that may help, like sending charitable contributions. Of course, this often does not happen in practice. And when it does, we may be motivated in large measure by the instrumental end of maintaining a good self image. But even here, it is important to note that we do not see this self

image solely in terms of acting in our own narrow self-interest. We also want to see ourselves as caring about how others, at least some others, do.

The point is, we take pleasure in the successes of others even when we expect no one to know of our pleasure and to reward us for it. It can be pleasing in itself to hear of the success of a friend — a thriving business, a sports victory, a child's birth — or even an imagined friend (someone we do not actually know) from a novel or a news item.<sup>16</sup> It can also be pleasing in itself to contribute to these successes by shopping at the store of a friend, by cheering on a friend's team, by taking care of the child of friends while they rush to the hospital for the birth of another. In fact, even in situations in which there are instrumental rewards for one's self image, this other kind of pleasure in the well-being of others may be simultaneously present; at least, social theory cannot discount this possibility out of hand.

Yet this is a point that collective action theorists, and others, have continually overlooked. So pervasive is the rationalist and egoist framework that even those theorists who have considered the role of norms and doing well by others have generally envisioned these as constraints on the actor required to maintain sociality. The problem of social order, as it used to be called by Talcott Parsons, suggests that people would not otherwise choose to get along were they not integrated into values that, evidently, must contradict their actual desires. Even Max Weber in describing his concept of "value-rational" action wrote that "value-rational action always involves 'commands' or 'demands' which, in the actor's opinion, are binding on him" (1967 [1922], p. 25). But what of the possibility that actors may *like*, in some circumstances at least, to cooperate and perhaps even to help others with little thought of their own benefit, including the "self-image" motive that I spoke of above — that they may find this experience not binding or constraining but (sometimes at least) positively pleasurable?

Let me try a little systematic reflection on the motives of my own self. The methodology of self-reflection is hazardous, I know, but my own self is the source I know most intimately (although perhaps not the source I know best).

I recognize that, as I go through my day, I am constantly pondering what I ought to do. I am always thinking, to use the language of rational egoism, of what would benefit me most, of what my interests are in whatever situation I am considering. Indeed, it is rather unavoidable to consider it otherwise; when I am thinking about my actions, I must be thinking about what I am to do, and thus what my interests are. But here again is the rational egoist tautology: Rational egoist thinking covers everything I think about and is therefore only a way of restating that I am thinking about what I am to do when I am thinking about what I am to do.

We can escape this tautology, and be more empirically accurate to boot, if we also consider something else about common (or so I imagine them to be) thought processes. Not only am I constantly thinking about my interests and benefits, I am also constantly thinking about what actions would benefit others, something I may think about in terms of what is right for me to do. Indeed, I often find myself reconsidering my first thought of what my actions ought to be because of this.<sup>17</sup>

Does this mean that my interests have changed as I have engaged in this moral balancing act? We could say yes, for if I have changed my mind I must have rationally recalculated what my overall interests indeed must be, weighing the egoist desire for,



say, power against the social reality represented by my understanding of moral norms. Thus, following norms is a part of interest.

Or we could say no, for I may still desire that last chocolate cookie in the household cookie jar, that cash in the company vault that I feel I could safely steal, or some other illicit gain that no one would find out about. My interests have not changed, but I experience moral constraints that limit my following them.

Or we could say something else. Let us think not of the constraints on my interests but of the motives behind my interests. I am motivated, to be sure, by my own self-serving interests — more cookies, more money and a better self-image through normative compliance. These are what we could call, in the language of rational egoism, *internal interests*. But I am also motivated by my other-serving, sentimental desires (a form of interests, tautologically speaking, I grant) to see those I care about do well. We might term these desires *external interests*. It is not enough to me to gain my various internal benefits. I also desire that those I care about do well and I am pleased when the things I do help them.

Now, perhaps the conventional rational egoist will respond that I am only so pleased because then those others will come to care for me, and that they will therefore see to it that my internal interests are satisfied. It is true that I do want their help and care and in fact that I need their help and care in gaining my internal interests. But it is not true, I submit, that this is the sole motive I have. I would argue, from the hazardous (and possibly self-congratulatory) grounds of my own experience, that I do not always think through this possible eventual benefit to my own self. I care about others in part because it simply pains me to see them do badly.

Cynics may guffaw at such a claim.<sup>18</sup> But were this untrue I would not be able to congratulate myself for caring about others. If I saw myself as motivated purely by a desire to be self-congratulatory, then I could hardly congratulate myself for having non-self-serving desires. Were this untrue I could not expect others to have motives of care concerning me — not if I doubted the possibility of such motives in myself. And I do want their help and care in gaining my internal interests.

Moreover, were this untrue I would only feel pleased for myself and not for others when they do well — only pleased because I know them, or because I helped them, or because I project myself into their situation and thus experience their gains as a version of my own. It could be that is what is “really” going on, of course. But it is not, I believe, how I experience it — at least not always.

And experience is important, for that is the evidence that I will bring to bear on my decision making. If I experience sentimental ties, it does not matter that there may be some hidden, self-serving agenda behind that experience. As long as that agenda is hidden from me, those ties will in themselves be an important source of my pleasures, of what it (tautologically speaking) interests me to do.

I should also point out that there is no way of knowing that that hidden agenda always exists, for, after all, if it does exist, it is often hidden. Therefore, social science would do better to dwell on what experience tells us does exist. And that is, that our interests, as we experience them, are both self-serving and other-serving, both internal and external. We are often moved by what we experience as being the pleasure of gaining our own internal interests, and we are often moved by what we experience as being the pleasure of observing others gaining theirs. There may be special pleasure, special gain, in acts which move us toward both ends at the same time.

The former experience — the pleasure of gaining internal interests — is the basis for what I would term a solidarity of interests. When two or more people organize themselves so that each obtains her or his internal interests, we may say that a solidarity of interests exists. The latter experience — the pleasure of gaining external interests, that is, the pleasure of observing others gaining their internal interests — is the basis for what I would term a solidarity of sentiments. When two or more people share external interests in the internal interests of each other, than we may say that a solidarity of sentiments exists.

This terminology is, I admit, a bit confusing because, in the strict — and tautological — language of rational egoism, both are motivated by interests: The one by internal interests, as I have suggested calling them in order to break the tautology, and the other by external interests. But to say “solidarity of internal interests” and “solidarity of external interests” seems awkward to me. Moreover, my ultimate goal is not to render the sociology of sentiments in the language of rational egoism; rather, it is to argue that it can be done. Therefore, in what follows, the rationalist reader should take the “interests” in “solidarity of interests” to be equivalent to “solidarity of internal interests” and the “sentiments” in “solidarity of sentiments” to be equivalent to “solidarity of external interests.”

It is also important to observe that, just as sentiments can be rendered in the language of interests, so too can interests be rendered in the language of sentiments. Interests are meaningless outside of the sentiments of social life, for without a sentimental life we could hardly know what our interests in fact are.<sup>19</sup> The origin of interests themselves must be explained; they are not given. Or, better put, interests *are* given — given by the sentiments that direct them, as Durkheim and Mauss (1963 [1903]) argued long ago. We may have sentiments concerning ourselves, what might be termed *internal sentiments*, and we may have sentiments concerning others, what might be termed *external sentiments*. The need for a concept of interest thus disappears.

But to make such a case would only be to make a different tautology, a tautology of sentiments. In any event, by either the language of sentiments or the language of interests, we are still left with something to talk about: the difference between orientations toward the self and orientations toward others, internal orientations and external orientations. Western tradition typically has referred to the former as interests and the latter as sentiments. As it is the Western tradition in which I write and to which I mainly direct this paper, I will follow that practice in the analyses that follow.

Some rationalist readers, I imagine, will not agree with the language of sentiments. If they do not, I hope I have at least established the following: If all motivation is to be seen as interests, then we must recognize that there are (at least) two kinds of interests, internal and external, and two solidarities which build upon them.

### WHY THE LION SPARED ANDROCLES

In fact, these two solidarities are closely interrelated — as Aesop well understood. Recall the story: Androcles, an escaped slave, finds a lion in the woods, roaring in pain. Androcles sees the lion has a thorn in a paw, and he pulls it out. This leads to their friendship, and Androcles and the lion live and hunt together in the

woods until one day they are both captured and put into a circus. In order to entertain the audience, which includes the emperor himself, the lion is starved and then released into the circus arena, where stands a defenseless Androcles. But the lion does not eat Androcles; instead, he rolls over and licks his hand. The emperor is so impressed, especially when he learns their whole story, that he frees them both.

So why did the lion spare Androcles? At that moment in the circus ring, as he bounded up to Androcles, the lion could have had no knowledge that Androcles could ever be of further use to him, except as food. The two had been forcibly separated and were unlikely ever to be reunited in the woods. Cold calculation by the lion would make it clear that the solidarity of interests between himself and Androcles was over and unrecoverable. As the lion was extremely hungry, with no prospect of other food in the offing, the only rational thing to do would be to eat Androcles, not spare him.

Aesop's fable traces the lion's response back to Androcles's initial act of pulling the thorn from the lion's paw: a sentimental act. In order to remove the thorn, Androcles had to put himself in grave danger of being eaten or mauled, particularly after the lion regained full use of his paw following removal of the thorn. Such an act of kindness — off in the woods where no one could see it and reward it, nor prevent the lion's predatory or callous response — was not in Androcles's interests. Yet this sentimental act of Androcles, by serving the lion's interests, gained the lion's trust. And when the lion did not respond by eating his benefactor, the lion gained Androcles's trust. Upon this sentimental foundation, Androcles and the lion built a solidarity of interests, hunting together and sharing the resources of the lion's claws and teeth and, we presume, Androcles's opposable thumb.

Were these sentimental acts mere displays calculated only to satisfy interests? Aesop tells us no. Androcles could not have known that a solidarity of interests would form from his initial kind act. A hunting partnership between a lion and a human was without precedent and thus Androcles could have no rational basis for assuming such a thing was possible. The lion perhaps could have, once he had witnessed the wonderful handiness of Androcles's opposable thumb. But later the lion could not know that he would gain his interests from refusing to eat Androcles before the emperor. It was equally without precedent for an emperor to set free a poor slave and his lion friend. Sometime over the course of their interactions, the lion's commitment to Androcles came to be based on something more than a solidarity of interests alone. It came to be based on a sentimental solidarity as well.

Yet these sentimental acts, despite their foundation in motivations other than interests, dialogically served interests. As the tale of Androcles and the lion traditionally concludes, "this story teaches us that a good deed never goes unrewarded" — a moral that holds for the good deeds of both Androcles and the lion.

There are a couple of problems with Aesop's optimism, however. First, good deeds frequently do go unrewarded. The wag's retort that no good deed goes unpunished is a bit extreme, but contains its measure of truth. The striking thing is that we often do these deeds — we often pull out those thorns — anyway, and when we do we are certainly more likely to see some "reward." Aesop, I think, was right to that extent.

Which leads to the second problem: That such optimism runs the risk of reducing sentiment back to interest, the very point that I — and Aesop too, I believe — argue against. It suggests that it is in our interest to be nice, so one should

therefore be nice. This is right in part: It is in our interest to be nice, which is one very important reason to recognize the dialogue of solidarities. Our personal, internal interests will be promoted by recognizing the important dialogical role of sentiments in building solidarity. But this is not what actually motivated Androcles and the lion, according to Aesop. When Androcles extracted the thorn and when the lion licked Androcles's hand in the arena, neither was thinking of Aesop's moral; nor do readers as they inwardly approve of Androcles's and the lion's kind acts to each other, before they learn the moral at the story's end. Although it may promote our self-interests to have sentimental ties — although external interests may lead to gaining internal interests — we are not always thinking about these implications when we ponder and carry out sentimental acts. Often we do think about these implications, of course, but not always. For not only is it in our (internal) interests *generally* speaking (for good deeds do sometimes go punished) to be nice, it is also nice to be nice. There are pleasures in both.

The pleasures of dialogical solidarity are particularly important at moments such as the one Androcles and the lion faced in the circus arena. Because of the twin issues of space and time, the dialogics of all solidarities will occasionally face moments that threaten to dissolve the glue of trust. The incident in the arena represented just such a *trust-busting moment*, a moment with both spatial and temporal dimensions. Androcles and the lion had been both spatially and temporally removed from the woods in which their dialogue first solidified, and from a non-dialogical point of view there was no reason to attempt to continue their partnership. It is at precisely such moments of potential trust-busting that trust has the potential to become strongest — or to disappear altogether. If Androcles had any doubts about the lion's commitment to him before, these doubts were certainly transformed into the strongest of epoxies of trust by the lion's actions in the arena. There were thus two important dialogical results of the lion's continuing commitment across this trust-busting moment: Their interests were served by their eventual gaining of freedom and their sentimental ties to each other increased.

It is worth taking a moment to consider more precisely what a sentimental solidarity covers, for I mean something rather broad by it, but also something narrower than the view that sees all as motivated by self-serving, internal interest. I mean affective ties, of course, ties of simply liking another (which actually is not a simple matter, for it is by no means clear what "liking" really means). The lion's actions in the arena are an example of this. I also mean moral commitment, ties of normative solidarity. Conceivably, the lion could as well have felt it was simply wrong to eat Androcles or any other slave that had been thrown into a circus arena — but this kind of sentimental solidarity, I confess, is rather unlikely for a hungry lion. But it is not always unlikely. When Androcles withdrew the thorn from the lion, he could not have been motivated by affection for the lion, at least that particular lion (as opposed to lions in general), as he had no previous experience of the lion. His motives were those of a generalized sympathy, the sense that pulling out the thorn was the morally right thing to do. Indeed, we may distinguish affective and normative commitment at least on this basis: Normative commitment has its roots in generalized sympathy, while affective commitment has its roots in a sympathy that has become specific.<sup>20</sup>

Did Androcles feel his normative commitment to relieving the lion's pain as a constraint, as a moral bind on the hedonistic ego's desires for the pleasure of self-gain? While norms may be experienced purely as an external constraint, and thus a matter of interest and not of sentiment, I do not think that is so in this instance.<sup>21</sup> Androcles found pleasure in doing good, in following the sentimental solidarity of his moral understanding and his generalized sympathies. Strikingly, and fortunately, this sentimental solidarity of moral allegiance led eventually to the lion's affective sentiment for Androcles and, we must presume for the fable gives no direct evidence of this, of Androcles's own love for the lion — particularly after the incident in the arena.

But it may not have. Actual affection is not a necessity (although it is a likely outcome as well as a likely foundation) for building a solidarity of sentiments. Although active dislike may be a hard barrier to cross, especially given that it probably has roots in a failure to uphold either a solidarity of interests or sentiments, it is possible to have sentimental ties of moral allegiance and sympathy with those we dislike. It is even more possible to have such ties with those we simply have no affective feelings for. Androcles did not need to know and like this specific lion in order to do well by him.

Without sentiment in either its specific or its general form (and in Aesop's fable there was both), the solidarity of interests between Androcles and the lion would not have lasted long. Despite the virtues of Androcles's thumb, the lion might have decided to eat his partner at almost any time while they lived together in the forest, perhaps after a string of unsuccessful hunts, for example. Androcles was no slave to the lion and similarly may have decided to try his luck elsewhere at some point, slipping away while the lion slept (a common opportunity with lions). Nor would their solidarity of interests have resulted in the incredible rewards that it did without their sentimental ties. The point is that Androcles, through his initial sentiment act, began the sewing of a fabric of trust between the lion and himself, and thereby wove a stronger solidarity than self-interest alone could ever have achieved.

### THE ECONOMICS OF SENTIMENT

The dialogue of solidarities is not a mere fable, however. In the city where I used to live is a wonderful little food market much loved by the neighborhood residents. A family-owned and operated business, there are frequently three generations working there at the same time. It has a parking lot big enough for only four cars, but it is always packed with people nonetheless. Even though it has just fifteen hundred square feet of floor area at most, it pulls in a retail volume sufficient to support ten full-time staff, plus numerous part-time workers. It is not the cheapest place to shop, traffic jams in the crammed aisles are a frequent annoyance, and it closes at 6 pm, but this store does satisfy the neighborhood's interests in having a store that provides such a wide range of quality goods so conveniently located.

Yet it is not a matter of a mere solidarity of interests — convenience for the residents in solidarity with cash for the store — that has kept this small independent grocery going in an age of warehouse retailing. People genuinely like "little Nick" (the current owner), "big Nick" (the current owner's father, who in his early eighties still works at the store he has now turned over to his son), and "baby Nick" (the current owner's son). They like the way little Nick greets them at the door, often by name, and

does the bagging at busy times so that he can talk to customers. While I usually wished he wouldn't offer my son a lollipop whenever we went in together, I appreciated the gesture very much. Neighborhood residents enjoy bumping into each other (literally — the aisles are that tight) as they shop, and passing the time. This store is a place not only of interests, but also of sentiments.

Up the street was another store of similar size (actually a bit larger) and similar product lines that was even more centrally located. But this store was generally empty. This meant, of course, that shoppers didn't have the same kind of wait to get to the cash register as in Nick's place, where around 5:30 the line usually stretched to the back of the store. But the meats were not as good, and the prices always seemed a bit higher. And as well, somehow it was not an inviting place. No one greeted the customers at the door. No one offered lollipops or asked after the children's health. No one I knew in the neighborhood even knew the owner's name. It was not a place of sentiments, which meant fewer people shopped there, lowering the sales volume and forcing the owner to maintain higher prices and have meat which was less fresh, which kept still more people out of the store. The failure of a solidarity of sentiments led to a failure of a solidarity of interests, and most people in the neighborhood used to think it would only be a matter of time before these failures ultimately led to the failure of the store itself. We cannot discount the likely equal dialogical importance of the converse, of course — that part of the reason why this store was not a place of much sentimental solidarity is because it did not serve anyone's interests very well (owners or customers) despite its size, location, and shorter lines. The connection between solidarities of sentiment and interest is a two-way street.

One of the few people I knew who regularly shopped at this less-popular store did so because of a fight she had had with Nick over a check she bounced. In fifteen years of shopping at Nick's, she had never bounced a check. But one day she did, and Nick refused to take her checks after that. She was so upset that Nick's trust in her was apparently so superficial that she lost all trust in him and swore she would never shop at his store again. With this tear in their fabric of trust, their solidarity of sentiments and their solidarity interests dialogically collapsed.

There may have been more to the story. (I never heard it from Nick's side.) In any event, such incidents are not common at Nick's grocery, and when they do occur they too illustrate the truth of Kenneth Arrow's observation about commerce: "Virtually every commercial transaction has within itself an element of trust, certainly any transaction conducted over a period of time" (cited in Putnam 1993, p. 170). That trust comes from seeing transactions conducted in a cooperative, reciprocal and complementary way over time and the sense that there is some sentimental connection, some transaction of sentiment, also involved. If Nick's store went out of business because of competition from a food warehouse or because his supplier refused to ship anymore to such a small outlet, neighborhood people would not be merely disappointed for themselves: They would be sad for Nick and the other people who work at the store.

These dialogics of solidarity — and the glue of trust they form — are the common features of successful human cooperation over time and space. Without these dialogics, the social capital that many rational choice theorists have described will not persist. Indeed, in the work of at least one such theorist, these dialogics are central to, although still largely implicit in, the analysis. In his justly celebrated study of

regional governments in Italy and why some have succeeded where others have done less well, Robert Putnam (1993) argues that there is a culture of civic commitment — a form of what I would call sentiments — in the most successful regions. Aesop would have predicted as much.

David Gilbert, in his study of the widespread British coal mine strikes of 1926, also found this dialogical connection at the core of the miners' struggles. Although the strikes eventually failed, the miners showed remarkable cooperation in an age where the typical miner's poverty made a strike an especially desperate and shaky collective act. But Gilbert found that their success in holding out for the months they did depended upon the community's sentimental solidarity, built up over time. It showed, in Gilbert's words, "how collective action is strongest where it draws upon the experiences and loyalties of everyday life" (1992, p. 257). Herein lies the truth, as Gilbert (1992, p. 8) noted, of Raymond Williams's' (1989) definition of community: a "resource of hope."

### CONCLUSION: SOLIDARITIES AND BOUNDARIES

I'd like to conclude by discussing a problem of vision, a problem of boundary, in the dialogics of solidarities: Whom do we include in our dialogue? Or better put, how do we include everyone, and everyone's interests and sentiments, in the dialogue? Could it in fact be that the solidarities of which I have been speaking are the direct result of limiting one's sentiments and interests to a small, sharply defined group in which the existence of reciprocal and complementary sentiments and interests are clear and direct? This is the other "problem" of collective action — the problem of the "other" in collective action.

Mancur Olson has long been a thorn in the paw of collective action theorists with his pessimistic conclusion that collective action is easiest when the group is small, largely because people can see the direct consequences of their actions and because they can monitor the actions of others. As Olson famously put it,

Unless the number of individuals is quite small, or unless there is coercion or some other special device to make individuals act in their common interest, *rational, self-interested individuals will not act to achieve their common or group interests.* [Emphasis in the original.] (1971 [1965], p. 2)

Not only is it therefore difficult to serve the public, common good; it may be that collective action itself stands in the way of the common good as we divide into the particularities and peculiarities of a society of small, and small-minded, interest-and-sentiment groups, for these are the only collectivities it is possible for us to maintain without coercion.

But we can pull this thorn out, too. There is substantial evidence, to be sure, of boundaries of solidarity that are narrowly drawn. Yet there is also substantial evidence of such boundaries that are in fact very widely drawn.

The geographer Yi-Fu Tuan gives a good example of this, and perhaps a surprising one. He finds in the city evidence of a distinct "moral universe" of helpfulness. In the urban crowd of strangers, we routinely extend our care for others beyond kinfolk to those we do not know and to those from whom we cannot expect a direct reciprocal or complementary return. There is no coercive law that says I should give space in a line of traffic for another car that is seeking to enter it, but I routinely

do. There is no law that the employees at the roadside restaurant where I ask to use the bathroom — with no intent of buying anything or of ever passing that way again — allow me access, but they probably will. Moreover, as Tuan says, “a close reading of the city scene reveals inconspicuous artifacts of consideration such as telephone booths and wheelchair ramps on sidewalks that symbolize the principles of communication and access” (1988, p. 316). It matters not that there is an interest side to the quarter I need to put in the slot to use the phone or that there are laws about wheelchair ramps. These are “artifacts of consideration” that we want in the urban scene, both for ourselves and for others, and we have organized our social and economic relations so as to ensure that they are there.

Examples of broad boundaries of dialogical solidarity abound, of course, from charitable giving to democratic government, from kindness for strangers to personal commitment for the public good, however hesitant and erratic these motives may often be. We have often been moved, through a broadness of sentiments and interests, to build institutions that perpetuate broad sentiments and interests. Putnam describes it well:

Stocks of social capital, such as trust, norms, and networks, tend to be self-reinforcing and cumulative. . . . These traits define the civic community. (1993, p. 177)

The question is how to get that self-reinforcing civic community going, and in a way that includes us all — even roaring lions.

I have no great wisdom to offer here, except to point out that, for all our failures, we have often attained this broadness of imagination. My guess is that it requires the discovery of a special kind of sentimental solidarity, a discovery of the special pleasure of doing well by someone who will have very little opportunity to return the favor directly. This is, as Aldo Leopold (1961 [1949] and 1989 [1939]) recognized, a root pleasure of the ecological ethic that sees the land itself as a part of our community. It is also a root pleasure of a social ethic of dialogical solidarity. As I noted in the beginning of this essay, it is a striking feature of social life (and it's true of ecological life, too) that our own interests are often not enough to get us to act in our own interests. In these cases, it is sentiments, and usually sentiments conceived more broadly than we had done so before, that must lead us on.

We are fortunate indeed in that most of us have at one time or another discovered this special pleasure. But how this happens may be one of those mysteries a social scientist must be content to admire. At least at this late stage in this essay I must be content to do so, and to end with the following advice: If you meet a strange roaring lion, before you run away check first to see why it roars.<sup>22</sup> Rather than remain slaves to the problems of collective action, we need each to be an Androcles. Maybe then the emperor will set us all free.

#### NOTES

1. I take this version of “Androcles and the Lion” from a children’s book by Black (1991, Pp. 22–24).
2. My use of the “problem” of collective action in the second sense is, I recognize, not common in the collective action literature. Generally the central question in this literature is how to encourage rational,



cooperative action. The political question, however, should not only be how to encourage broad cooperation, but also how to discourage cooperation that is narrow in its participation and distribution of benefits. This narrowness is not a matter of the scale of collective action, but of its inclusiveness within a scale.

3. I draw the metaphor of "dialogue" from the work of Mikhail Bakhtin (1981 and 1986a; for the best overview of Bakhtin in his own words, see 1986b). The other obvious metaphor to use is that of "dialectics," and in early drafts of this essay I employed dialectics. But, with Bakhtin, I find that dialectics, at least as classically understood, places too much emphasis on "synthesis." A solidarity is not a synthesis but rather must be continually recreated and, in this re-creation, reborn as something at least a little different. Solidarities, for all the human security they may offer, constantly change in form and dimension. Moreover, I find that dialectics over-polarizes the situation. Rather than a unity of opposites, solidarities of sentiments and interests mutually shape each other and their social participants. This mutual shaping may happen through contradiction and conflict — realities of solidarity we ignore at our peril — but it may also happen through less antagonistic means. Dialectics is very helpful for highlighting conflict but does not create much conceptual space for acknowledging less-oppositional relations. Dialogue, however, is conceptually open to both possibilities. For more explanation, see Gardiner (1992), Bell and Gardiner (forthcoming), and Bell (forthcoming).
4. The meaning of the now-popular phrase "social capital" is hard to pin down. See Putnam (1993) for the best treatment of "social capital" as I mean it. Portes and Sensenbrenner (1993, p. 1323) define social capital as "those expectations for action within a collectivity that affect the economic goals and goal-seeking behavior of its members" — a definition broad enough to include actions that do not result in successful mobilization for mutual benefit. From the perspective taken in this paper, such a definition applies equally to what might be termed anti-social capital. The phrase "social capital" has also been used in a significantly different way by Bourdieu (1977).
5. See Nisbet (1966) for the best overview of the historical roots of this tradition.
6. For a comprehensive review of these critiques, see Bell and Newby (1971) and Bell (1994), Pp. 87–90.
7. Ibid.
8. I say "generally" because it depends on which Tönnies you read. Tönnies's original 1887 treatment of the subject in his book *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft* is quite polarized and describes *gesellschaft* in quite negative terms. For example, he wrote that *gemeinschaft* is "the lasting and genuine form of living together. In contrast to *Gemeinschaft*, *Gesellschaft* is transitory and superficial. Accordingly, *Gemeinschaft* should be understood as a living organism, *Gesellschaft* as a mechanical aggregate and artifact" (Tönnies, 1940 [1887], p. 37). Nor does Tönnies discuss in this book the idea that the two forms of relationship can be found together. But in a 1931 overview of his theory that he prepared for the *Handwörterbuch der Soziologie*, he noted that the two always overlap, and as well he used far more neutral language to describe them — perhaps in response to the critiques of Durkheim and others.
9. Note how in the quotation given in the preceding endnote, Tönnies's use of the metaphors "mechanical" and "organic" is the reverse of Durkheim's. Durkheim (1964 [1893], p. 131), justifies his use of the organic analogy as follows:
 

"This solidarity resembles that which we observe among the higher animals. Each organ, in effect, has its special physiognomy, its autonomy. And, moreover, the unity of the organism is as great as the individuation of the parts is more marked. Because of this analogy, we propose to call the solidarity which is due to the division of labor, organic."
10. This line of Durkheim's should not, however, be taken to mean that he was against conflict, as has often been assumed. As Durkheim also wrote, "[I]t is neither necessary nor even possible for social life to be without conflicts. The role of solidarity is not to suppress competition, but to moderate it (1964 [1893]), p. 365).
11. *Kür* is hard to translate, but it appears that Tönnies was drawing on the word *küren*, which my *Cassell's German-English Dictionary* calls an "archaic and poetic" word for "to choose" or "to elect." Tönnies apparently meant to contrast the kind of chosen deliberateness that many have called "rational" action with the uncalculated ties of tradition, love and normative allegiance, what he called (see below) *Wesenwille*.

12. However, they do not do so out of an allegiance with, or a close study of, the work of Tönnies, as the following will make clear.
13. Smelser is far from the first to raise this objection, however. See, for example, the account of Weber's and Tönnies theories of human motivation below.
14. Weber also discusses two additional forms of action that he considered non-reasoned: "Affectual" action that stems from an actor's emotional state, and "traditional" action, which is a matter of unreasoned commitment to custom and habit. As my concern is with reasoned action, I do not consider these terms of Weber here. Interestingly, Tönnies includes tradition and affection within his account of the reasoned action of *Wesenswille*; see the sentences in the main text that immediately follow.
15. For the argument that non-interested, "value-rational" action is best regarded as irrational, see Olson (1971 [1965], p. 162).
16. I am borrowing here from Anderson's (1983) conception of the "imagined community" of nations.
17. I do not mean to imply here that the question of what is right is temporally second in everyday thinking. In fact, I suspect it often comes first. I express it here as second only to set up the points which follow.
18. Indeed such cynicism is likely one of the wellsprings of rational choice theory.
19. Unless, of course, the argument is that interests are rooted outside of social life entirely — in biology. But only the most inveterate socio-biologist could argue that biological interests are not shaped by social life, and thus by the sentiments that infuse social life.
20. It is worth noting that the notion of affective commitment moves the analysis of sentimental solidarity well beyond the Meadian notion of the "generalized other." Mead gives us insight into the character of normative ties but no understanding of the origin of affection. Indeed, the absence of a sociology of affection yet remains a striking oversight in contemporary sociological theory, in my view. It is also worth noting that, in terms of moral philosophy, the distinction between normative solidarity and affective solidarity could be described as the difference between justice and charity. I thank Jamie Mayerfeld for this observation.
21. In other words, norms do not lie only on the side of sentiments. It is only in cases in which normative allegiance arises at least in part out of sympathy that we may associate norms with sentiments.
22. It may be wise, however, to retreat to a safe distance to do that checking. Again, I thank Jamie Mayerfeld for this observation.

Michael Mayerfeld Bell teaches environmental sociology and social theory at Iowa State University. He is author of *Childerley: Nature and Morality in a Country Village* (University of Chicago Press 1994) and *An Invitation to Environmental Sociology* (Pine Forge Press [Sage] 1998). He is also co-editor, along with Michael Gardiner, of the forthcoming *Bakhtin and the Human Sciences: No Last Words* (Sage 1998).

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