human capital such as theirs and of the programmers of various search engines, such as Google, that makes the social capital of the Internet so valuable.

Although it may sound perverse to put it this way, the central issue in making the web be more richly useful to us, beyond its being a quick research and communication tool. is how to create networks on the Internet that approach the richness of the networks most of us have in our offline lives. So far, the Internet, the biggest network of all history, may have almost none of the value of usual networks. Those who have hoped the Internet might enhance participatory democracy and civic life more generally might be disappointed in its performance so far. Many of us may be happy enough with its powers of research and communication. It is not only a new form of social capital, it is also a new form of network. It is at once extraordinarily extensive and remarkably shallow in its reach.

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Geoffrey Brennan/Philip Pettit

Esteem, Identifiability and the Internet*

Abstract: The desire for esteem, and the associated desire for good reputation, serve an important role in ordinary social life in disciplining interactions and supporting the operation of social norms. The fact that many Internet relations are conducted under separate dedicated e-identities may encourage the view that Internet relations are not susceptible to these esteem-related incentives. We argue that this view is mistaken. Certainly, pseudonyms allow individuals to moderate the effects of disesteem—either by changing the pseudonym to avoid the negative reputation, or by partitioning various audiences according to different audience values. However, there is every reason to believe that a good e-reputation is an object of desire for real agents. Further, although integrating one's reputation under a single identity has some esteem-enhancing features, those features are not necessarily decisive. We explore in the paper what some of the countervailing considerations might be, by appeal to various analogies with the Internet case.

1. Esteem, Reputation and the 'Compounding Effect'

"Nature, when she formed man for society, endowed him with an original desire to please, and an original aversion to offend his brethren. She taught him to feel pleasure in their favourable, and pain in their unfavourable regard."

(Adam Smith 1759/1982, 116)

We assume in this paper, in line with what we have argued elsewhere (Brennan/Pettit 2004), that people desire the esteem of others and shrink from their disesteem. In making this assumption, we are deliberately associating ourselves with an intellectual tradition that dominated social theorizing until the nineteenth century, and specifically until the emergence of modern economics. That tradition includes Adam Smith, Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, the Baron de Montesquieu, David Hume—indeed, just about everyone who is recognized as a forebear of modern social and political theory, whether specifically in the economistic style or not. There is scarcely a social theorist up to the nineteenth century who does not regard the desire for esteem as among the most ubiquitous and powerful motives of human action (Lovejoy 1961). Smith's elegantly forthright formulation, offered as the epigraph to this section, simply exemplifies the wider tradition.

We can think of a minimalist version of the basic esteem relationship as involving just two individuals—an actor A, and an observer, B. The actor undertakes some action, or exhibits some disposition, that is observed by B. The observation of this action/disposition induces in B an immediate and spontaneous evaluative attitude. That attitude can be either positive (esteem) or negative (disesteem). B has this response, we think, simply as a result of her being the kind of evaluative creature that humans are.[1] Crucially for the 'economist might put it, B's attitude is itself an object of A's concern: as the economist might put it, B's attitude is itself an argument in A's utility function—positively valued by A in the case of esteem, and negatively valued in the case of disesteem. In short, A cares what B thinks of him, and is prepared to act in order to induce B to think better (or less badly) of him. To the extent that prevailing values are matters of common awareness, A's desire for positive esteem (and the desire to avoid disesteem) will induce A to behave in accord with those values.

The esteem that accrues and the corresponding behavioural incentive will be greater:

• the greater the likelihood that A will be observed—at least over a considerable range. The significance of the proviso we shall explore in section 4 below;

• the larger the size of the relevant audience;

• and the higher is audience quality—with 'quality' here understood in terms of attentiveness, capacity to discriminate, capacity to provide valued testimony and so on. Audience quality is also a matter of the esteem which observers themselves enjoy in the relevant domain. If more esteemed observers esteem you, that both tends to augment the self-esteem you enjoy and also gives greater credibility and effect to any testimony those observers provide on your behalf.

Now, it should be clear that the Internet is a setting in which observation is assured, where there is a large audience on offer, and where at least some proportion of that audience can be assumed to be 'high quality' in the sense indicated. So, for example, if you post a solution to a difficult software problem on the mailing list of linux-experts,[2] you will immediately have a very large audience, and moreover one composed of highly qualified and highly attentive readers. The technology provides relatively open access to much larger, and more dedicated audiences than are typically available in the 'real' world. This fact immediately suggests that esteem may play an especially important role on the Internet; and that the behavioural incentives to act 'properly', as prevailing values understand that term, will be especially potent in the Internet setting.

There is, however, an interesting feature of Internet relations that might moderate the strength of these audience effects, and is, in any event, worth

[1] In particular, B develops her evaluative attitude independently of any utility gain or loss that she may sustain in enduring the spectacle of A's performance.

[2] The example is Michael Baurmann's.

some detailed exploration in its own right. To focus on what is at stake, it is necessary to say a little about the relation between esteem and reputation.

Reputation in the sense of brand name recognition can clearly materialize without esteem or disesteem. Equally, esteem or disesteem can accrue without any reputational effects. When you behave badly by prevailing standards, observers who witness your conduct will think ill of you whether or not they will be able to identify you in the future, and whether or not you are ever likely to meet them again. And this fact can induce you to behave better—without any reputational effects as such.

However, reputational effects do serve to increase the esteem stakes. If the observer can recognize you in the future, then you stand to enjoy esteem (or suffer disesteem) not only at the point of actual performance but also later when you are recognized as 'the person who did X'. And further, if your identity is communicable to others, then you can be recognized as 'the one who did X' by all those within the community of discourse, and specifically those who were not witnesses of the original action. Both properties—future recognition and communicability—are involved in reputation. In this sense, reputation serves to extend the time frame and the effective audience over which the esteem/disesteem can be sustained, and to magnify the corresponding esteem incentive to behave in accord with prevailing values.

In what we take to be the 'normal case', esteem and disesteem, *and* reputation good or bad, will accrue in a process in which the individual's identity is clear and unproblematic. But the Internet is often—perhaps typically— not a 'normal case' in this sense. For it is a routine feature of many forms of Internet interactions that individuals develop *Internet-specific* identities. That is, many people choose to operate on the Internet under an alias, 'virtual' identities, which are distinct from their 'real' identities. And this phenomenon of multiple identities is something of a puzzle in the esteem context, because it seems to stand against what we take to be an important feature of the structure of esteem. This feature we shall term the 'compounding effect', and we turn immediately to explain what it is.

Esteem and disesteem accrue to the actor by virtue of performance in one or other of the entire range of evaluated dispositions or actions. One is esteemed for one's benevolence, or one's courage or one's musical prowess or one's putting ability. Reputations are similar: one develops a reputation *for* something. Esteem and reputation, both, are activity-specific. This does not mean, though, that we cannot give sense to the idea of the esteem a person enjoys in toto, or to his reputation overall. The esteem acquired in each field will be aggregated in some way to form overall esteem. The reputation in the various domains will add up to the person's overall reputation. The precise way in which these activity-specific reputations aggregate to form overall reputation is an important matter; and the specific assumption we shall make in this connection is this: *other things equal, positive (and negative) reputations compound across domains*. So if A enjoys a fine reputation within his profession, and a fine reputation in the particular sporting and artistic avocations he pursues, and has a reputation for honesty, generosity and so on, then his overall reputation will be

better by virtue of the variety. Each element in his reputation serves to augment the other elements in such a way that the whole tends to be larger than the sum of the parts. Obversely, if A's reputation in a range of areas is negative or merely mediocre, these reputational elements will also tend to be mutually supportive, though in a negative direction.

It might be helpful here to think of overall esteem or overall reputation in terms of a functional form that reflects the relevant property. So let A's total reputation be Ω_A, where:

$$\Omega_A = R_A(X) + R_A(Y) + c \cdot R_A(X) \cdot R_A(Y) \qquad (1)$$

where $R_A(X), R_A(Y) > 0$

and c is some positive constant.

A person who had a positive reputation in some domains and a negative one in others would have the positive and negative elements separately combined as in equation (1) and simply added.

The force of this assumption in the current context is that it creates a presumption in favour of A's having a single identity for reputational purposes. Having a positive reputation for X somehow maintained separately from the positive reputation for Y involves forgoing the benefits associated with the final term of (1)—the 'compounding effect', as we denote it. Of course, the benefits of compounding may be offset by other considerations in special cases. But our formulation means that these 'other considerations' have to be specified.

The problem we face is to explain how it could make sense for people on the Internet to multiply their identities in this way, putting out a variety of personas in place of their real, universally identifiable self. The problem, in particular, is to explain this under the assumption that people desire esteem and reputation. Is the phenomenon to be explained by technical features of the Internet? Or does it have a larger life in the economy of esteem? Whatever its source, what effect does multiple identity have on the behavioural incentives associated with esteem? These are the questions with which this paper will be concerned.

Our strategy in addressing them is somewhat indirect. We begin by considering three cases in which identity is an apparently critical factor, but where the distinctive technical features of the Internet are not present. This task occupies us in section 2. We then examine in some detail the variety of motives that seem to be in play in those cases. In section 3 we explore the use of (or effects of) anonymity as an insurance strategy; in section 4, the use of anonymity as an esteem-optimising strategy; and in section 5, a variety of other considerations that seem to be in play when anonymity is invoked. In section 6, we seek to examine the relevance of this analysis drawn from these cases for the Internet case specifically; and draw some appropriately tentative conclusions.

2. Three Cases Somewhat Analogous to the Internet

The cases we consider all involve identity and reputational issues; but are not subject to the technical peculiarities of the Internet setting. The cases are:

- the use of the pseudonym;
- the resort to name change;
- and the creation of a secret society.

Of these, the pseudonym seems to offer the closest analogue to what happens on the Internet. But the case of name change is similar in some respects and may offer some insight into motives for use of pseudonyms on the Internet. And as we shall try to show, consideration of the secret society cases, though somewhat removed, can also offer some insight into motives for, and/or the consequences of, the use of Internet pseudonyms.

2.1 Pseudonyms

The characteristic feature of the pseudonym case is that individuals operate under a variety of names simultaneously. Each of these names can give rise to a reputation and each of those reputations can be a source of public esteem. There is, in fact, an interesting variety of cases; and it will be useful here to provide some examples.

In theatrical and cinematic circles, the practice of the 'professional stage-name' is so familiar as to be unremarkable. Indeed, operating under one's original birth-name seems to be the exception. In some small number of cases, the reason for adopting a stage-name (different from one's birth-name) is that the birth-name is already in use as a stage-name by someone else. So for example, James Stewart (birth-name) adopted a screen-name (James Cagney) because Jimmie Stewart was already an established screen personality. In general, however, the motivation is quite different: it is to secure a name with the right combination of salience and associative properties, much like the choice of brand name or name for a new product. In the screen cases, the screen persona is such a dominant aspect of the actor's life, and so constitutive of the actor's reputation, that the individuals are usually known by their screen-names off-screen as well as on. The choice of pseudonym in such cases is then more like a name-change, and ought probably be considered in that setting.

The literary context is another in which the use of pseudonyms is common—or at least has been so at some periods of literary history. But here the specifically *multiple*-identity property seems more relevant.

In the eighteenth century, the practice of writing under a nom-de-plume (interestingly a 'nom-du-guerre' in French) seems to have been the rule rather than the exception—though more for novelists than for poets.[3] Just how extensive a

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[3] Perhaps because poetry-writing was itself more prestigious. The case of Walter Scott might seem to lend support to this consideration. We deal with Scott's case in some detail below.

practice this has been can be gauged by consulting one or another of the several dictionaries of pseudonyms that are now available— dictionaries that run to hundreds of pages and contain thousands of entries. See, for example, Carty (1996) and Room (1989).[4]

Some examples will serve to illustrate the variety:

- Throughout the eighteenth century most commentators on political affairs, including the authors of much significant political theory, wrote under pseudonyms. Hamilton, Jay and Madison writing as *Publius* is only one notable example of a very widespread practice. The so-called *Cato* letters are another. John Adams wrote as *Marcellus* (among the eighteenth century political essayists, classical names, even invented ones, were popular). In many such cases, the authors were themselves political figures—and the pseudonym might have served partly to protect them in their political roles from criticism associated with their published views.

- Female novelists through eighteenth and nineteenth centuries frequently wrote under male pseudonyms. So, for example, the famous cases of Maryann Evans ('George Eliot') and the Bronte sisters writing their early efforts as the brothers Bell—Acton, Currer and Ellis. It is natural to think that the motive here was primarily to avoid gender prejudice. However, interestingly, Jane Austen published *Sense and Sensibility* under the authorship of 'a Lady'—specifically not 'a Gentleman'—indicating the presence of other considerations. Perhaps to be identified as an author was not a source of positive esteem in all the quarters in which Austen moved.

- Walter Scott wrote his first historical novel *Waverley* anonymously, and his next few efforts in the genre were published under the epithet 'by the author of Waverley'. At the time Waverley appeared, Scott had already something of a reputation as a writer of heroic and romantic poetry, and is reputed to have been concerned that the historical novels might tarnish his reputation in the poetic field. In the same spirit, Thomas Hardy's early novels *Desperate Remedies*, and then three years later *Far From the Madding Crowd*, were written anonymously—again at a time when Hardy aspired to a reputation primarily as a poet.

- David Cornwell, a civil servant in the British foreign office, through the 1960's and 1970's, wrote his espionage novels under the pseudonym, John le Carre, presumably to protect his employers from any taint of association.

- Charles Dodgson, Oxford mathematician and precursor of modern social choice theory, published his literary inventions, told originally as stories to the daughter of friends, under the pseudonym Lewis Carroll.

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[4] The Room volume deals with name changes as well as pseudonyms, and includes accounts of the circumstances and possible motivations for the name choices in the entries. There is also a set of interesting brief essays on various aspects of name-choice at the beginning of the volume.

- Especially interesting in the current context are the cases of Stendahl and Voltaire. Voltaire (real name Francois Marie Arouette) wrote under no fewer than 176 different pseudonyms. Stendahl (Marie Henri Beyle) had as many as 200, including that of Henri Brulard, under which he published his autobiography! Among English novelists, Thackeray probably holds the record, with a portfolio of pseudonyms running to about seventy or so (but clearly well short of the Stendahl/Voltaire standard).

In lots of these cases, the motives for the use of pseudonyms have been matters of (subsequent) public disclosure by the authors involved. But of course such disclosures are not always to be taken at face value. And in many other cases, the motives remain mysterious and can only be the object of speculation. In particular, the use of a very large number of pseudonyms, all for writings that are essentially alike in audience and character, seems bizarre. It is as if the author wished to set aside the benefits of esteem and reputation—for any of the individual personas adopted. Presumably in some cases, the multiplicity of names is just evidence of a playful spirit. In some, the choice of authorial persona becomes itself an element in the entire fictional effort: author name operates as a kind of imaginative framing of the larger narrative. Nevertheless, there is a puzzle here for the analysis of esteem, especially in cases where the esteem attached to the pseudonym is considerable.

2.2 Name Changes

Name change is different from the use of a pseudonym, because the pseudonymous person operates by the original name in at least some circles. A pseudonym involves in that sense 'multiple identities' among the various publics in which the individual operates. Name change involves the choice of a new identity. A few illustrative examples will again be helpful.

- Joseph Stalin [Iosif Vissarionovich Dzhugashvili], perhaps following Lenin's example, altered his name—probably with an eye to the reference to steel ('stal'). Salience and memorability are relevant characteristics in a name for an over-weaning ambition, whether on stage or in politics.

- The British Royal family altered their names during the First World War— from Wettin to Windsor, Beck to Cambridge, Battenberg to Mountbatten— to distance themselves from their German cousins (and common grandfather). In fact they did so remarkably late in the war—after American entry—and reportedly with great reluctance and only after considerable political pressure had been brought to bear.

- Countless immigrants to the US had name-changes thrust upon them by immigration officials impatient with the eccentricities of 'unpronounceable' names. Presumably, some victims were complicit in this process, seeking to establish a more 'local' identity. The practice of Jews changing their names is not unfamiliar and the motivations for doing so presumably reflect a desire for assimilation into 'mainstream' society.

- The ecclesiastical practice (mainly Roman) of individuals changing names as they enter orders, or become popes, is worth noting here. In this context, the name change is taken to be sacramental: it signifies the new identity associated with the 'new life' on which the individual is taken to be embarking. Presumably a similar symbolic element is at stake in the (increasingly contested) practice of women changing surnames at marriage: the change is designed to signify the 'new life' that the partners take on in their joint enterprise. Currently common variants involve both parties altering their names to some amalgam of the originals—often a simple hyphenated version of both surnames—or, occasionally, the male partner taking his wife's surname. This latter practice indicates that, although the tradition of the female partner's identity being absorbed into the male's is now often identified as objectionable on gender-equity grounds, the practice of name change as such can have independent significance.

2.3 Secret Societies

The case of the secret society may seem to be rather different in character from that of individual pseudonyms and name changes. But from an esteem perspective there are some significant similarities. Societies, like individuals, can bear reputations; and members often derive significant esteem (or disesteem) from the associations of which they are part. When the membership of the society is secret, however, the esteem connections to members are blocked. So, by 'secret' here, we have in mind the case in which the *membership* of the society is secret—not the case in which the *existence* of the association is secret.

In the case of societies that have a negative reputation, or that have essentially underhand activities to pursue, the reasons for secrecy are clear enough. Members prefer to avoid the disesteem that would attach to them if their membership of the society were known. But not all secret societies are the object of disesteem.

Take two examples. 'The Apostles' at Cambridge University is a society of the putatively most clever and accomplished students at the University. It is a very considerable honour to be a member. But the membership is entirely secret. At least on the face of things, members would seem to do better in the esteem stakes if their membership were to become public. If the desire for esteem is ubiquitous, as we have claimed, why would the individual Apostles rationally forgo esteem they might otherwise accrue? Why would they vote to retain rules of secrecy? The case is, on the face of things, puzzling.

Or consider the Bourbaki case. 'Nicolas Bourbaki' was a collective pseudonym adopted by a group of French mathematicians writing during the 1930's, 40's and 50's. To the scholarly community, it appeared that Bourbaki was a single scholar—and one of very considerable distinction, since much foundational work in algebra was perpetrated at 'his' hands. As in the Apostles' case, Bourbaki enjoyed a very distinguished reputation and the individual mathematicians who constituted the Bourbaki membership seem to have forgone much esteem that would have been on offer had their identity been made public. If, as we have claimed, esteem is indeed an object of desire, why the secrecy?

This question seems a serious puzzle for the esteem account and so we shall want to address it in greater detail in the ensuing three sections. Before doing so, however, it is worth emphasizing that not all name-modifications connect to anonymity, either partial or total.

Many name changes seem to be either a quest for something memorable (as in the film-star or Stalin examples) or a desire to dissociate from an earlier identity (as in the assimilation cases or more mundane cases of ex-convicts—the Jean Valjean case, to take a literary example). Equally, the desire to associate specifically with a new identity—as in the papal or marital examples. All of these cases can be explained in reputational and esteem terms; they clearly present no challenge to the esteem account.

Equally, where one operates pseudonymously because the activity in which one is involved is likely to reflect poorly on one's reputation in some other more significant arena, there is no esteem-related puzzle. This is simply a case of partial secrecy, where the secrecy can itself be explained as an esteem-augmenting strategy.[5] The puzzle arises only where the activity is a (possibly significant) source of positive esteem, and yet the pseudonym is retained. This case seems more like the secret society case, and demands further exploration.

3. Anonymity as an Insurance Strategy

The first line we take in resolution of the question raised is to observe that seeking anonymity, whether in the pseudonym, the name change, or the secret society cases, can have important value as an insurance strategy. We illustrate the idea with reference to the pseudonym though it clearly extends, with obvious amendments, to the other cases.

Whatever the precise motives for adopting a pseudonym, it is clear that doing so has certain consequences; and one of the more important of these involves attitude to risk. Consider the case mentioned above of Walter Scott. As he embarks on *Waverley*, it is not that he is convinced that the admirers of his poetry will necessarily think that historical novels are an inferior genre. They may; but he just doesn't know. More generally, he doesn't know how the novel will be received. It is an experiment. If it works well, it will doubtless redound to his credit. But if it works badly, his reputation will suffer.

The pseudonym is a mechanism for managing this risk. If the novel is poorly received in general, or if it is poorly regarded by Scott's literary peers in particular, he can simply give up writing novels and stick to poetry, with no effect on his reputation one way or the other. Or he may continue to write the novels but do so anonymously or pseudonymously (as 'the author of Waverley'). If on the other hand, the novel is a huge literary success, he can declare his identity and turn to novel-writing in a more public way. There is a potential up-side benefit if successful; but no down-side loss if not. The pseudonym (or anonym) oper-

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[5] Of course, the secrecy does moderate esteem incentives in the performance domain. In the absence of access to pseudonym, the individual would have been more constrained by prevailing norms.

ates as an insurance policy. Like most insurance policies, it costs something. In Scott's case, for example, his reputation as a poet may well have been expected to sell a few more copies of the book. Forgoing this market advantage is a price that pseudonymity imposes; but it is a small price to pay to avoid the possibility of ridicule from one's peers.

The dictionaries of pseudonyms do not record (the probably vast) number of authors whose pseudonymously written books sold only a few copies and who sank into obscurity. There must have been many. We do not know of them, precisely because their failures as authors were not matters of which they themselves ever made much ado—for good esteem-based reasons. The great advantage of the pseudonym is that it can be discarded should things not work out. Perhaps the failing author will try again under another pseudonym: it can be no advantage to advertise one's work as by the author of some notorious flop. The best strategy seems to be to just move on to another persona until one of one's works takes off. And if no works do take off, we will never hear of the pseudonym, or the real identity that lies behind it.

Of course, once the reputation has been secured, whether pseudonymously or otherwise, the propensity to take risks is largely removed. The pseudonym provides an insurance policy only in the case where one has nothing to lose by failure. Once the reputation is established, a failure costs something in terms of diminished reputation. Even if the reputation attaches only to the pseudonym (so that the author's real identity remains undisclosed), that reputation is still valuable to its generator and still a source of genuine esteem. If one is seriously worried about the success of one's newest book, then one might well choose to write it under a different pseudonym from one's earlier successful efforts; but then one forgoes the *ex ante* reputational advantages for sales. Once the reputation is established, that particular pseudonym cannot act as an insurance policy any further. One might, though, having established a reputation under one pseudonym, use another for one's next book. One can always announce ex post that pseudonym 1 and pseudonym 2 are the same person, even if the real identity remains undisclosed.

There remains an obvious question however. Why not disclose the real identity? It is hardly surprising that, in cases like Scott's and Hardy's where the risky action paid off, anonymity was immediately discarded. When an insurance policy no longer protects you, it is not sensible to continue to pay the premiums. So though insurance motives can explain the adoption of a pseudonym, they cannot explain the retention of one. For that, we have to look to other considerations. And we shall explore some further possibilities in the ensuing sections.

In the meantime however, we should emphasize that the pseudonym encourages much action that would not be undertaken. We do not know whether Scott would have embarked on the Waverley novels and their sequels if he had not had the protection of doing so anonymously. If prevailing regulations or literary conventions had required total disclosure of authorship, it seems at least conceivable that those novels would never have seen the light of day. In this way, the protection of reputation against failure that the pseudonym provides

may well be responsible for much genuine creativity. The pseudonym liberates the author from low-level inhibitions. Of course, the fact that access to the pseudonym strategy can be good for literature does not explain its use by the authors concerned: such explanation has to look to the individual authors' motives—including specifically, their concern for esteem. On the other hand, the good consequences of pseudonimity in certain contexts might explain why institutional-designers and policy-makers might want to establish or support the availability of that option.

4. Anonymity as an Esteem-Optimizing Strategy

In many, perhaps most, cases in which esteem is attached to an activity, it is somewhat disestimable to be seen to be pursuing that activity for the express purpose of securing the esteem. "The general axiom in this domain", as Jon Elster (1983, 66) puts it, "is that nothing is so unimpressive as behaviour designed to impress". Elster's formulation is, we think, extreme, but there is a partial truth here that needs to be acknowledged. The esteem-maximizer will do well to disguise his motives in lots of cases.

There are several reasons why this may be so.

• It may be that the esteem attaches not only to an action but also to the disposition to undertake that action. So, for example, someone who acts beneficently may be esteemed both because she so acts, and because the action reveals that she is a benevolent person. Suppose we discover of a particular actor that she is acting beneficently mainly to secure esteem. We might, for example, discover that she is much less likely to act beneficently when she believes she is not being observed. She would then receive less esteem from us, and may receive no esteem at all. This may be because we approve of beneficent action and want it to be counterfactually robust (and not just dependent on whether there are people around to applaud). Or it might be that be are attracted to personal qualities intrinsically. Either way, the best strategy for her to maximize her esteem may be for her to disguise her esteem-motives.

• Alternatively and somewhat independently, it may be that people think less well of you when you show off, or blow your own trumpet. A charming modesty is more estimable than an over-weaning self-aggrandisement. The eighteenth century satirist, Edward Young, puts the point very neatly: "The Love of Praise, howe'er conceal'd by art, Reigns, more or less, and glows in every heart: The proud, to gain it, toils on toils endure; The modest shun it, but to make it sure." (Young 1968, 348-49)

If either of these considerations are in play, then the management of one's pursuit of esteem requires some subtlety. If there is literally no audience at all, ever, then one's esteem is restricted to self-esteem. That cannot be best for the esteem-seeker if her performance is such as to justify positive esteem in observers.

On the other hand, maximal publicity might not be best either. If one were to be discovered acting in a beneficent way in circumstances where the ex ante chances of detection were low, then the esteem that accrued might well be considerably larger, because observers will believe you to be genuinely benevolent or modest or both. If so, then you have grounds for preferring contexts with somewhat *less* than maximal publicity. Clearly, some trade-off between actual publicity and ex ante probability of being observed is involved here.

A simple model will make the point. Suppose that, in all cases, the probability of being observed is a context-specific parameter, P, and that this probability is always going to be a matter of common awareness. Now, the value of the esteem that will accrue if you are observed is E, and E is negatively related to P: you get more esteem, E, if you act in an environment where you are less likely to be observed. Suppose that as P tends to zero, E takes value A and that when P is one, E takes value B. We take it as given that A > B. That is, the esteem that is forthcoming if you are observed is larger the smaller the likelihood ex ante that you would be observed. On this basis,

$$E = A - (A - B) \cdot P$$

This equation is consistent with our stipulation that when $P = 0$, $E = A$; and when $P = 1$, $E = B$.

Now, what value of P_t would maximize expected esteem? On the one hand, esteem is higher if the probability of being observed is lower; but then there is a chance that you won't be observed at all, and then you will get no esteem. So it can't be the case that it is best for you when P is zero. But equally, expected esteem is not necessarily maximized when the probability of being observed is one.

Expected esteem is:

$$P \cdot E = P\{A - (A - B)P\}$$

which is maximized: either when $P = 1$; or when $P = A/2(A - B)$, which value of P we denote P*.

In this latter case, the optimal value of expected esteem is A/2. In the former case, the value of esteem is B. So if $B > A/2$, then it will be desirable to have P as high as possible. But if $B < A/2$, then there is a range where expected esteem and probability of being observed are inversely related.

A diagram may help here. Consider Fig 1. On the horizontal axis we show the value of P, ranging from zero to one. On the vertical axis we depict both the value, E of the esteem accruing, if observed, and the expected value of the esteem—the product of P and E. We can see by appeal to the diagram that if $B < A/2$, we have an interior solution, with P* less than 1. If $B > A/2$, we have a corner solution in which the highest expected esteem occurs when P is 1. In Fig 1, we have shown the former case.

So far, we have taken it that the probability of being observed is an exogenous factor. But individuals can work to alter the probability of being observed: they can thrust themselves into the light—they can blow their own trumpet.
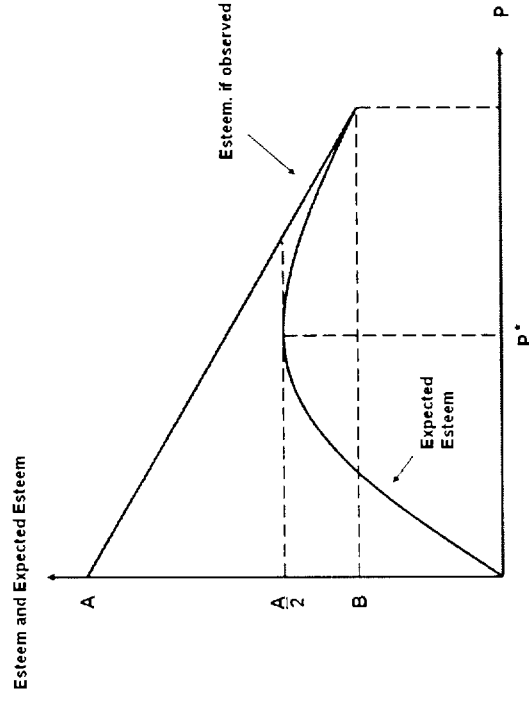
Figure 1: Optimal Probability of Being Observed

Or they can hide their light under a bushel, or modestly change the subject when their accomplishments become the topic of conversation. These strategies are themselves esteem-relevant: modesty tends to be positively esteemed; self-aggrandisement and bragging tend to be disesteemed.

This fact introduces a further complication. Consider, for example, the case where P happens to fall precisely at P*. Then the esteem-maximising individual reason will act to *reduce* the probability of being observed, because his modesty will earn him further esteem. Indeed, those incentives will be operative even if P is originally somewhat below P*, provided that P lies not too far below.[6] At the same time, if P is low, it will pay the esteem-maximising individual to work to increase observability, despite the esteem cost of the self-aggrandising actions involved.

These considerations explain why it may be in the (esteem) interests of an individual to court some measure of secrecy, even when the acts undertaken are esteem-worthy ones. There is no puzzle involved when a person who engages in scurrilous conduct seeks secrecy: such a person has an interest in minimizing the likelihood of discovery. But the thought that secrecy can be an esteem-maximising strategy in cases where the action reflects credit on the actor is

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[6] These considerations also bear in the case where $B > A/2$ and hence $P* = 1$.

a mildly puzzling one. This possibility is, however, perfectly consistent with plausible assumptions about the nature of esteem and its pursuit.

Consider in the light of this discussion, the situation of a person who writes under a pseudonym and acquires thereby a first-class reputation as an admirable writer. It is not self-evident that the best strategy in maximizing esteem is to declare one's 'true identity' immediately. Perhaps people will think that you are self-aggrandising. Perhaps they will be less inclined to buy your books once it is revealed that their author is just grey old you. Best, of course, if people come to discover that you are the 'famous author' more or less by accident—or later, when you are ready to retire and have built up a reputation not just for your writing but, by implication, for your modesty. After all, you always have the option of revealing your identity at any point. You can, if you choose, keep your esteem in reserve—stored at the bank rather than spent, as it were. It need not be the best strategy to go public immediately.

5. Anonymity as an Ad Hoc Strategy

Apart from the general considerations related to insurance and modesty, there are a variety of more or less ad hoc reasons, some more relevant in one of our three sorts of cases than in others, why people might be prompted to seek anonymity; in particular, why they might be prompted to seek anonymity out of a concern for their esteem and reputation. We look at two.

5.1 In-Group Esteem

Consider first the case of the secret society. Within any such society, members operate both as performers and as privileged observers. They earn esteem from each other *and from no-one else*. That is, outsiders cannot provide esteem for me by virtue of my being a member of the Bourbaki group because they don't know that I am one. Keeping membership secret is then a mechanism for declaring to all members that theirs is the only esteem that counts as far as each member is concerned. But this declaration can be a very significant source of esteem to members. It is a commonly observed property of esteem that people especially value the esteem of those that they esteem. Hume (1978, book 2, chapter 9) puts it thus in his discussion of fame: "though fame in general be agreeable, yet we receive a much greater satisfaction from the approbation of those whom we ourselves esteem and approve of, than of those whom we hate and despise."

So I discover, when asked to join the secret society, that my esteem matters to these people who I know I have reason to esteem. And if my esteem matters to them then that is in itself a source of esteem for me. Further, all members are quite special in this regard. These others who I esteem apparently care not a whit about the esteem of outsiders: they seem to care only about the esteem they get from me and the other members.

Return now to the pseudonym case. My identity as 'the famous author' is almost always known to *some* people—my editor, my agent, my inner circle of friends and family. And I always have the option of telling the secret to special

others, of course swearing them to secrecy in the process. Those in the know form a secret society of a kind. It is not just that they are party to a secret—that they know something that others do not know and perhaps would like to know. It is also that when I admit them to my inner circle I declare to them that their esteem is especially valuable to me. Given the reciprocal nature of esteem, this is a signal that I especially esteem them. In this way, secrecy affords me the capacity to give special signals of esteem.

A related benefit of secrecy is that while those who belong with me in a secret society, or those I let know of my fame under a pseudonym, will be bound to respect the confidence involved, they need not be inhibited from speaking well of me more generally. Thus there can be a powerful benefit in the likely testimony that such people will give me for embracing the hidden bonds that bind me to them. And this benefit is the greater because the testimony thus offered is not seen to redound to their own glory.

5.2 Segmented Audiences

The case of segmented audiences invokes somewhat similar considerations to those already canvassed. Consider the case where A is a good performer in two separate arenas where those two arenas appeal not just to separate audiences but to somewhat opposing ones. I am a good author; and also Jewish. I recognize well enough that being Jewish is an object of general disesteem in the population in which I am located, or at least is so among some people. Actually, I despise such people for their prejudice. And I relish my Jewish identity. On the other hand, I want people to buy my books and to read them 'without prejudice' as we might put it. If it became known in the Jewish community that I was writing as if a gentile, then this would not be approved within that community and might be regarded as outrageous by some.

In such a case, the logic of a pseudonym seems clear. I want to segment the relevant arenas in which I can earn esteem. On the one hand, I want to develop my talent and be appreciated simply as an author. On the other, I want to be recognized as a decent committed member of my cultural and religious community.

This situation arguably describes the George Eliot case. MaryAnn Evans was a controversial individual, with a somewhat dubious public reputation. She was living out of wedlock with a married man; she had strongly expressed unconventional religious views. She was not exactly infamous—but might have become so were she to come to more extensive public attention. Better to avert such a risk by writing under a pseudonym. And better to do so under a pseudonym that does not declare itself immediately as such—so precisely not 'a Lady', or 'Boz' or 'Publius' or 'Mark Twain' (a name that would have declared its pseudonymous qualities at least to anyone familiar with Mississippi river boat calls).

Now, it need not be the case that the 'natural audiences' in the two arenas disesteem each other. Perhaps the disesteem is only in one quarter. Or perhaps the disesteem is not general but only occurs within a minority of those involved in one activity or the other. Still, in these cases, it can be esteem-maximising to

segment the audiences; and the pseudonym provides a mechanism for securing that segmentation.

It should also be recognised that audiences sometimes segment naturally. You are, let us suppose, a singer and a golfer, and the overlap between the groups who are expert in these fields and whose esteem is really worth something may be very small. Segmentation of audiences just occurs automatically. Nevertheless, your esteem will be magnified if your golfing colleagues are aware that you have some prowess as a singer, and vice versa. Positive esteem is likely to 'compound', in the sense stipulated in the introductory section. In this kind of case, you will not rationally work to keep the audiences separate unless some of the considerations we have explored earlier (secrecy effects, or risk management issues) come into play—or unless golfers tend to hold singers in contempt (and/or vice versa). On the other hand, segmentation in such cases is unlikely to cost you much. If experts count disproportionately for esteem and expert groups are totally disjoint, the 'compounding effect' does not generate much additional esteem—or more accurately, the additional esteem is not worth very much, coming as it does from a group that is uninformed about one or other of your accomplishments.

6. Back to The Future: The Internet Context

The aim in this paper has been to explore some of the implications of a desire for esteem and for esteem-based reputation, for the operation of Internet relations.

One of the features, we have said, of Internet relations is that they are often pseudonymous: many individuals conduct their most significant Internet transactions via e-specific identities. Perhaps in some cases, the adoption of such e-specific identity is necessary because off-line names contain too many characters or are not unique; but it is increasingly just an emergent convention. Many of the pseudonyms are clearly recognisable as pseudonyms: Names like '#9**ms' or even 'hotchick-in-fairfax' are not for off-line use. But there is scope for use of pseudonyms that might be interpreted as 'real' names, and in this respect scope for some measure of deception. Such deception possibilities may make one generally anxious about Internet relations.

And there are of course contexts in which such anxieties may well be justified. In economic trading settings for example, the rewards to deception can be considerable. And some commentators fear for the long-term viability of e-trading precisely because of these sorts of difficulties with verifying identity.

However, even in these cases, the problems can be overstated. Even in market contexts, agents seem to care about their reputations for trustworthiness and honest dealing as an end in itself (or more accurately, as a means to greater esteem), as well as for economically instrumental reasons. More generally, the Internet seems to be an especially fruitful source of possible esteem. It offers potentially large audiences of an appropriately fine-grained kind. What is crucial, of course, for the effectiveness of esteem on the Internet is that agents care about the reputations that their e-identities secure. The fact that such e-identities are often pseudonymous—and where not, are difficult to check—certainly moder-

ates the forces of disesteem for some range of actions and actors. The kind of anonymity involved means that e-identities that lack reputation have nothing to lose by acting in a disestimable manner. However, the same is not true for e-identities who have established a reputation already: they have esteem to lose. And even those without a (positive) reputation aspire to have one. Behaving poorly on the Internet always means positive esteem for behaving exceptionally well *forgone*.

And there is no reason to believe that real actors do not care about their virtual reputations. That is something that we think the analogy with the use of pseudonyms in literature establishes quite clearly. There is no reason to think that pseudonymous reputations cannot be a source of esteem to the generator of the pseudonymous material. George Eliot has a reputation as an author; people esteem George Eliot in that connection; and Maryann Evans has every reason to care about that reputation and to act in whatever way she can to sustain and augment it. There may be a cost in esteem terms of the pseudonymous strategy, of course: namely, that in the normal case, the esteem that an individual derives from the multitude of activities she engages in tends to be more than the simple sum of the separate pieces. I will esteem you more when I observe your estimable qualities across a wide range of arenas. If this is so, then in the general case esteem considerations would encourage individuals to operate under a single identity. And the adoption of a separate e-identity might on such grounds be seen to take on a sinister cast.

However, as we have been at pains to show in the foregoing discussion, there can be countervailing, esteem-based reasons for maintaining separate identities—and for a separate e-identity specifically.

For example, having a distinct e-identity can be a risk-management strategy, in the sense that one's off-line esteem is protected from the consequences of e-actions. If one's initial e-actions turn out to produce disesteem, the reputational cost is negligible. One can simply jettison that particular e-identity, and begin e-life anew with another. The resultant removal of downside risk can be highly liberating. One can be more adventurous, more speculative, in one's initial e-interactions precisely because one's reputation elsewhere is protected. One's inhibitions are lowered. Rather like the eighteenth century masked ball—an institution that seems to have been invented precisely with the intent of lowering inhibitions and promoting general licence—participants do things they would otherwise not do. But in the Internet setting, at least, there seems no general reason to fear the effects of this removal of inhibition. If our reasoning is broadly right, individuals will be seeking positive esteem in their Internet transactions; they will not in most cases be using the cloak of pseudonymity to do outrageous things. But they may well experiment with things that they would be inhibited from pursuing in offline life, and some of those experiments will prove successful. In these successful cases, e-life can have a quality, and constitute a source of considerable positive esteem, that offline life lacks. And indeed, we would expect that most ongoing Internet relations will have these characteristics: those whose e-life does not have them will have less incentive to maintain their e-life.

Of course, once one's e-life proves successful, there will be some incentive to

integrate reputations—and the maintenance of separate real and virtual identities seems on that basis to represent a residual puzzle. What we have tried to argue in the foregoing discussion, is that this is less of a puzzle than it might seem. Esteem maximization does not always call for identity-integration. And it will be a useful way of summarizing our argument to enumerate the reasons as to why it might not. First, if one's e-reputation is strong and one's off-line reputation lackluster, it may diminish one's overall esteem to integrate on-line and off-line identities. One's on-line reputation may be damaged by one's off-line mediocrity (and a fortiori if one's off-line reputation is a source of disesteem). Better then to keep one's e-reputation unsullied.

Second, there is some presumption that those who develop on-line relations will think that on-line activities are estimable. Not all those who admire you in ordinary life will necessarily share that view. And perhaps not all those who operate on the Internet will think that being a successful stockbroker or a well-reputed clergyman is such a big deal. In all discretionary activities, there is a presumption that those who are involved think the activity to be worth-while and success in it to be highly estimable. But those not involved may have other attitudes. Perhaps it would be better to keep one's audiences segmented.

Third, even in the contrary case where one's off-line and on-line reputations are rather impressive, declaration might seem to be self-aggrandising and therefore serve to diminish one's esteem. Although integration would add to your reputation and esteem overall if it were to occur by accident, deliberate action on your part to bring that integration about, runs the risk of seeming immodest. A little cultivated modesty may be esteem-enhancing.

Finally, retaining separate identities *in general* allows me to share the secret *in particular*. I can admit specially selected e-persons to the inner circle of those who 'know who I really am'; I can reveal to special personal friends my on-line activities. This can be an added source of esteem to me in itself; but it also provides a source of esteem to *them*, and thereby is likely to induce some measure of reciprocal esteem. Effectively, one is creating a kind of small 'secret society' around the dual identities; and secret societies can be the source of special esteem benefits.

The bottom line here is that Internet activities can be a significant source of esteem for those who operate 'well' in virtual space. Agents have reason to care about their e-reputations, even where those reputations attach to a pseudonymous e-specific identity. This being so, the desire for esteem will play a significant role in stabilising decent communication practices and supporting the operation of other social norms on the Internet. In this respect, there is no reason to think that the Internet context will be significantly different from interactions in the 'real' world.

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