

Solidarity in Kantian Moral Theory

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Critics of Kantian moral theory worry that it denies, downplays, or misrepresents the role of friendship, community, and other loving relationships in the moral life.¹ My aim is to describe a new and unorthodox way for such theories to incorporate and justify the status of certain relationships as permissible, obligation-generating, and worthy of promotion, protection, and respect.² Contrary to what most defenders and critics of Kant usually believe, I argue that one theme in his thinking is that human persons have intrinsic rational interests in forming, maintaining, perfecting, respecting, and promoting relationships of solidarity.³ Part of being a rational, or as we might say, a rational and reasonable, person is to be concerned with relationships of this sort apart from any natural desires and feelings we might have.

Attributing these “interests of reason,”⁴ which are ends, drives, concerns, dispositions, or needs of reason itself, to human persons provides us with rational grounds for what we could rationally will as universal law or for what we would agree to as rational legislators in a kingdom of ends. Understood as a principle of justifiability, the Categorical Imperative requires us to conform to laws that are rationally justifiable to everyone, but many of its formulations share a common

¹ Williams (1981), Wolf (1992, 2012), Annas (1984), McDowell (1994), Held (2006, 97-99).

² I am grateful to Tom Hill, Mark Timmons, and audiences at the 2021 WINE conference and the 2021 Central APA for their feedback on this essay.

³ I do not claim that this theme is part of Kant’s considered philosophical theory or the best interpretation or rational reconstruction of it; nor do I take a position on its status, relative priority, and relationship to other themes in Kant’s thinking.

⁴ e.g., G 4:460n; MM 6:212-13; A462/B490-A476/B504; A741 /B769; CPJ 5:223; NF 18:274. In some places, Thomas E. Hill, Jr. gestures towards a more expansive set of rational interests that help to determine how his ideal legislators deliberate and legislate (Hill 2000, 139, 150-1, 2002b, 152-3). Rawls (1999, 312-13) also claims that persons have intrinsic rational interests in promoting and protecting their rational powers to form a conception of the good and to act from principles of justice. A few other Kantians, including Ferrarin (2015, 24-34), Kleingeld (1998), Yovel (1986), Raedler (2015, 12-15, 60-66), Velkley (2014), have noticed and discussed Kant’s claims about reason’s interests.

need to specify criteria that determine whether putatively rational laws are rationally justifiable to persons. Our rational interests in solidarity provide some of these criteria. By analogy, much as a rational being “cannot possibly will” a universal law of nature not to develop his natural talents because “as a rational being he necessarily wills that all his capacities in him be developed,” rational people could not, for example, agree to a universal law that prevents them from having relationships of solidarity with others because such a law conflicts with their rational interest in being part of such relationships.⁵

My plan for this chapter is as follows. First, I highlight several moral dimensions that, in commonsense, loving relationships seem to have. Second, I explore the charge that Kantian moral theories cannot adequately capture and explain these ordinary moral judgments and argue that this objection is graver than many of Kant’s detractors and defenders seem to think. Third, I describe an underappreciated theme in Kant’s thinking, which appears in his main published works as well as his other writings and lecture notes, namely that the faculty of reason in each of us has its own substantive and intrinsic interests that help to determine what moral principles it legislates. Fourth, I draw on and abstract from Kant’s discussions of various relationships to characterize a kind of solidarity. Fifth, I provide some reasons for thinking that, according to Kant, each of us has rational interests in establishing relationships of solidarity with other people, maintaining and perfecting ones we are in, promoting such relationships among others, and respecting relationships of solidarity themselves. Fifth, I consider what specific kinds of *prima facie* moral principles might be justifiable to all rational people in light of their rational interests in solidarity. I end by briefly noting how Kant’s conception of a morally perfect world or Kingdom of Ends includes and partially consists of many kinds of solidary relationships.

I. Moral Dimensions of Loving Relationships

Let’s begin with some examples that illustrate several kinds of apparently moral dimensions of loving relationships.⁶

⁵ G 4:423. I will refer to Kant’s works with these abbreviations followed by standard Academy volume and page numbers. AB - (Kant 1998), Anth - (Kant 2007a), CPJ - (Kant 2000), CPrR - (Kant 2007b), Eth-C - (Kant 2001c), Eth-H - (Kant 2001b), Eth-V - (Kant 2001a), G - (Kant 1996a), L-Anth - (Kant 2013), L-Log - (Kant 1992), MM - (Kant 1996b), NF - (Kant 2005), Ped - (Kant 2007c), Rel - (Kant 2001d), TP - (Kant 1999a), TPP - (Kant 1999b), WOT - (Kant 2001e).

⁶ Although our ordinary moral judgments about these cases might vary somewhat and depend on further details, the examples exhibit several apparently moral aspects of many loving relationships.

A. Forming Loving Relationships

David lives alone on a secluded mountaintop where he has no friends, family, spouse, or other personal relationships; he mainly sees his limited interactions with others as ones of convenience or utility; and he is, by his own lights, quite content and well-off in his social isolation. David does not hate people in general but instead scrupulously respects the rights of everyone, pays his taxes, donates to charity, treats others with politeness, and otherwise fulfills his standard moral duties. Yet it seems that David should not cut himself off from others in this way and should seek out friendships, romantic attachments, community ties, or other loving relationships.

B. Maintaining Loving Relationships

Miguel and Doreen have been happily married for twenty years. Their marriage seems to include moral requirements that are different from or more demanding than what they owe other people in general, such as ones that concern candor, discretion, fidelity, trust, promoting the wellbeing and self-respect of one another, expressing love and respect, and tolerating, apologizing for, and forgiving certain faults or transgressions. Miguel and Doreen also seem to be required in many cases to prioritize one another's interests over their own or those of other people. For example, it seems that Miguel should save Doreen rather than a stranger in a standard life-boat case; Doreen should defend Miguel from scurrilous and disparaging attacks at some cost to her career; and Miguel should help Doreen to finish her degree rather than donate his time and money to the local food bank. And traditional moral duties that Miguel and Doreen have to people in general seem to include exceptions that occasionally permit them, for example, to lie, cheat, or steal to get needed medical treatment for each other, to refuse to turn in or testify against one another, and to avoid participating in a just war to care for each other.

C. Perfecting Loving Relationships

Ramari is an active member of a thriving teachers union who feels a deep sense of camaraderie with his fellow members based on their shared commitments and joint projects. He also finds, however, that he envies those who have greater influence than he does; he begrudges certain members for past slights; he sometimes loses his temper; and he scorns those who he thinks are not fully committed to their cause. Ramari, it seems, has moral reasons to improve the bonds of solidarity he has with members of his union by striving, for example, to combat and overcome his corrosive envy, to give up many of his grudges, grievances, and resentments, and to keep his cool more often. He and other members also, it seems, have good moral reasons to institute fair procedures for

raising complaints and adjudicating conflicts as well as to employ ceremonies, rituals, and gatherings to express and reinforce their ties with one another.

D. Respecting Loving Relationships

Lisa and June were best friends who recently fell out over a heated series of arguments in which they both said some especially harsh things that they knew their relationship could not survive. Soon after their split, Lisa and June began divulging one another's secrets, such as Lisa's marital problems and struggles with alcohol and June's true political leanings and demotion at work. Lisa and June also tend to focus on and exaggerate the negative aspects of their past friendship, chide themselves for trusting one another for so long, assume that the other person was merely using them, and express these views to others. It seems that Lisa and June should have and show greater respect than this for the thriving friendship they once had by, for example, cherishing and venerating its memory, not regarding their prior relationship as a sham or a waste of time and energy, and not betraying one another's confidences.

E. Promoting Loving Relationships

Finally, Bob sees loving relationships among other people as a weakness he can exploit. He imposes working conditions on his employees that pit them against one another and strain their marriages, fosters envy and enmity among his children, works to alienate his wife from her family, and sows doubt and distrust among his acquaintances. Bob, it seems, should not seek to discourage or prevent those around him from having loving relationships of various kinds but instead should seek to foster such relationships among others.

II. Loving Relationships in Kantian Moral Theory

Can Kantian frameworks appropriately capture and explain these apparent moral dimensions of loving relationships?

Basic features of such frameworks seem to be incompatible with doing so. According to Kantian ways of thinking, all of normativity is ultimately grounded in the nature and operation of the faculty of reason, which determines what things are valuable and worth striving for, what we ought to do, what we have reason to do, and so on. Loving relationships, such as friendships, are not intrinsic values in G.E. Moore's sense; there is not a hodge-podge of independently existing reasons to, for example, promote or maintain them that our faculty of reason merely allows us to recognize and moves us to satisfy; and our natural affections, loyalties, and love for other people do not by themselves make our relationships

with them valuable or ground normative requirements or reasons of any kind.⁷ Any value, requirements, or other normative aspects of loving relationships, according to Kantian theory, must ultimately arise from reason itself.

That faculty, however, seems to be too formal, thin, and impartial to capture and explain many of the reasons and requirements we seem to have to form, maintain, perfect, respect, and promote loving relationships. Reason is the faculty we use to do logical proofs and pursue and organize our ends in consistent and efficient ways. On Kantian ways of thinking, reason also includes a fundamental moral standard with its several formulations that express a universal and impartial concern for all rational people as such and that generate moral requirements about how to treat everyone in general.

Kantians could accept that our frameworks cannot capture and explain many of the apparent reasons and requirements that concern loving relationships. Some Kantians might argue that many of these moral judgments are illusory, point out that it is understandable but unjustified to claim the authority of reason for things we merely naturally care about, claim that our basic philosophical commitments are more firmly grounded than any remaining moral judgments we cannot capture and explain, and emphasize the moral dangers of parochialism and tribalism along with the ideal of a cosmopolitan, universal, and impartial moral standpoint that emphasizes our shared humanity.

How might Kantians nonetheless attempt to capture and explain some of the normative dimensions of loving relationships while still retaining our commitments to the primacy, authority, impartiality, and universality of reason?

A. Duty of Beneficence

One place to look is the duty of beneficence, which Kant characterizes as a wide and imperfect requirement of reason to set the happiness of others as one of our ends.⁸ The duty of beneficence does not specify who, when, or how to help, so, as long as we stay within the bounds of our other duties, we are allowed to direct our beneficence to those we love and to prioritize their happiness over that of others.⁹ Miguel, for example, can choose to save Doreen rather than a stranger from drowning when both options are permissible because the duty of beneficence allows him to save her on the basis of his natural affections and love for her.¹⁰

A problem with this approach, however, is that the duty of beneficence only *permits* us to help and to prioritize the happiness of our loved ones even though it seems that we are sometimes morally *required* to do so.¹¹ It seems that Miguel, for example, should save Doreen from drowning instead of a stranger in a standard

⁷ See Moore (1993) and Scanlon (1998).

⁸ MM 6:388-90, 453-4; Eth-V 27:561-2.

⁹ MM 6:451-2.

¹⁰ See Baron (2008), Herman (1993a), Bramer (2010).

¹¹ For further discussion of the duty of beneficence, including whether it includes some strict requirements to save others from duress, see Stohr (2011), Hill (2002a), Timmermann (2005).

life-boat case, whereas the duty of beneficence merely permits him to save either person, or perhaps no one at all, as he pleases. A related difficulty is that the duty of beneficence cannot adequately explain why we apparently have special reasons to care about, promote, and prioritize the happiness of our loved ones.¹² When Miguel faces a choice between saving Doreen or a stranger, the mere fact that Doreen is his wife seems to be a reason to save her whereas the duty of beneficence implies that both actions are merely instances of doing something good for a person and that Miguel is permitted to apportion his beneficence on non-rational grounds, such as his natural desires, natural feelings, and personal ends. And, in Kant's system of moral duties, the duty of beneficence is strictly subordinated to narrow and perfect ones, which we must never violate when promoting the happiness of others, whereas it seems that we are sometimes morally justified in stealing, breaking promises, and lying for the sake of the happiness of our loved ones.

Perhaps the most significant limitation of appealing to the duty of beneficence to capture and explain the various moral dimensions of loving relationships is that, while the duty of beneficence enjoins us to set the happiness of others as an end, many of the apparent moral reasons and requirements to form, maintain, perfect, respect, and promote loving relationships do not, or do not only, concern or reduce to happiness. David's reasons not to socially isolate himself and to seek out loving relationships with others do not seem fully explained by any increase in happiness that others might get from being David's friend. Miguel and Doreen, it seems, should be faithful to one another, keep one another's confidences, defend one another from disparaging treatment, help one another to develop their natural abilities, and show respect to one another, not simply because of the contributions these make to their happiness. And it seems that, apart from considerations of happiness, Ramari should strengthen the bonds of solidarity with members of his union, Lisa and June should show respect for their past friendship, and Bob should not goad others into avoiding or abandoning certain loving relationships.

In light of its wide latitude, its justification in terms of reciprocal concern among all people or the basic rational nature we all share, its subordination to strict moral duties, and its nature as the most basic rational requirement concerning the happiness of everyone in Kant's framework, the duty of beneficence alone, it seems, cannot capture and explain most of the moral reasons and requirements that loving relationships seem to involve.

B. Instrumentalism

A second strategy for attempting to show that the apparent moral dimensions of loving relationships are part of Kantian moral frameworks is to highlight ways in which such relationships are often effective or essential means for promoting

¹² Sticker and van Ackeren (2018).

moral ends or complying with moral principles.¹³ Kant argues, for example, that establishing, maintaining, and perfecting certain kinds of communities is necessary for human persons to counteract evil influences, enliven our moral dispositions, and otherwise come close to achieving moral perfection.¹⁴ Certain friendships, marriages, associations, and other loving relationships, he also claims, tend to promote enlightenment, peace, morally useful knowledge, general happiness, and the development of our natural abilities.¹⁵

There are standard concerns, however, with instrumentalist forms of justification, such as that they depend on contingent, potentially changing, and sometimes unknowable causal chains, that they can ground opposing reasons and requirements that outweigh ones that seem to exist, and that they can at best justify only rules of thumb unless some attitudes or actions are necessary means for promoting some end. For example, there might be better ways to promote enlightenment, peace, and natural self-perfection than being in loving relationships with others; relationships often engender envy, rivalry, parochialism, and other attitudes and actions that undermine rather than promote various morally good ends; and violating the requirements of relationships is sometimes the most effective way to further such ends.

Even if an instrumentalist approach allows Kantian moral theories to capture most or all of the reasons and requirements that loving relationships seem to involve, a remaining concern is that these explanations do not fully accord with *why* we seem to have these reasons and seem to be subject to these requirements. For example, it seems that David should form loving relationships with others, that Miguel and Doreen owe it to one another to be candid, discrete, and faithful, and that Lisa and June should not disparage their prior friendship whether or not these actions happen to improve their knowledge, help them to develop their natural abilities, or otherwise promote morally good ends. If spilling our friend's deepest secrets, cheating on our spouse, cutting ourselves off from others, and demeaning a past friend were the only ways to promote various moral ends, it seems that sometimes we should nonetheless refrain from doing these things.¹⁶

These doubts about whether the duty of beneficence and instrumentalist forms of justification, together or separately, allow Kantian theories to capture and explain the apparent moral aspects of loving relationships might be overcome, but they

¹³ Cureton and Hill (2018), Stark (1997). A stronger claim that some Kantians defend is that reasoning, rational agency, and standards of rationality are constitutively social in the sense that they presuppose other people who we can give reasons and arguments to, seek their rational consent, and so on (Korsgaard 1996c, lecture 4, Herman 2007, chapter 1, O'Neill 1989).

¹⁴ Rel 6:96-8.

¹⁵ MM 6:473; Anth 7:277; WOT 8:144.

¹⁶ By analogy, if murdering someone were necessary to promote a moral value, such as general welfare, perpetual peace, or even an ideally moral world, then in at least some cases we should not do so, although this might depend in some ways on how much good we can produce by putatively immoral actions.

suggest that a more radical and unorthodox approach is likely needed for Kantians to square our commitment to the primacy of impartial reason with the morally appropriate partiality that such relationships seem to involve.

III. Reason and its interests

Throughout his published and unpublished writings as well as in lecture notes from his courses, Kant explores and develops an underappreciated and potentially fruitful theme concerning the nature of reason, which is that rational nature in each of us has its own interests that help to determine what moral principles it legislates. Although attributing this theme to Kant is likely to meet with significant skepticism from many Kantians, it opens new possibilities for interpreting, reconstructing, or supplementing Kant's moral framework in ways that can capture and explain many of the reasons and requirements that some loving relationships seem to involve.

A rational interest or interest of reason is a goal, aim, or need that the faculty of reason, on its own, endorses and moves us to satisfy. Reason, according to Kant, is an active mental faculty with its own needs, objects, and ends that differ from and sometimes conflict with one another and with our natural desires and chosen ends. The things that reason takes an interest in acquire their normative status by the nature and operation of reason itself. This basic feature of reason accords with ordinary ideas of a fully rational and reasonable person who, as such, seems to care about certain things apart from what she might otherwise happen to want or choose.

One rational interest, according to Kant, is in doing our duty from duty, which is an aim of the faculty of reason and something it moves us to do. The faculty of reason, Kant sometimes suggests, also has interests in explaining and systematically unifying things, making them consistent and harmonious, preserving, protecting, developing, and exercising rational nature, protecting freedom, promoting happiness, acquiring knowledge, communicating with other people, respecting them and showing them respect, self-development, equality, autonomy, and, as I will suggest in the next section, a kind of solidarity among people.¹⁷ These are innate, intrinsic, and potentially conflicting interests that each of us, Kant claims, is moved by our faculty of reason to satisfy for their own sake apart from whatever natural desires and feelings we might also have.

In addition to providing a novel way to interpret some of Kant's ideas and to address longstanding philosophical questions regarding the nature of reason and what it is to be a rational or reasonable person, ascribing these and perhaps other

¹⁷ e.g., A307/B364, A305/B361, CPJ 5:294, Rel 6:58, WOT 8:146n, Anth 7:265; MM 6:237, CPrR 5:61; G 4:430, A644/B672, MM 6:471-2, CPrR 5:77, G 4:423, MM 6:237-8, WOT 8:145, and Eth-C 27:429, respectively.

interests to the faculty of reason itself also suggests a possible structure for Kantian moral theories that allows them to capture and explain a wider variety of reasons and requirements than they otherwise could. Assuming that the Categorical Imperative is interpreted as a principle of justifiability to all, these rational interests provide standards and criteria for whether each of us could rationally will a maxim as a universal law or whether everyone would rationally legislate a candidate principle for an ideal Kingdom of Ends. In addition to standards of rational prudence that Onora O'Neill, Christine Korsgaard, and Barbara Herman regard as standards of rational willing, my radical suggestion is that these standards also include our many formal and substantive rational interests.¹⁸

The theme I have partially sketched needs further elaboration, defense, and textual support. One way to develop it is by focusing on specific interests of reason that Kant describes. Let's consider, in particular, a rational interest in a kind of solidarity and examine whether that interest, combined with a principle of justifiability to all, can ground reasons and requirements to form, maintain, perfect, respect, and promote relationships of that kind.

IV. Solidarity

We can begin to explore rational interests in solidarity by first considering the nature of solidarity. Kant's discussions of loving relationships, such as friendship, marriage, family, and community, are scattered, often incomplete, and sometimes apparently contradictory, but we can draw and abstract from these discussions to characterize a general type of solidarity that includes some relationships of those other kinds.¹⁹ This conception of solidarity has four paradigmatic features.

A. Shared Rational Commitments

The first paradigmatic feature of solidarity is that a group of people each share an effective commitment that is favored by reason. Commitments are stable choices that include ends, maxims, policies, plans, and projects. Someone has an effective commitment only if she tends to live up to it. Two or more people share a commitment if they are committed to the same thing, such as a common goal or principle. And the faculty of reason favors commitments if they serve one or more of our rational interests, such as interests in consistency, harmony, communication, happiness, acquiring knowledge, and affirming and acting from moral principles.

¹⁸ O'Neill (1989, 91-93), Korsgaard (1996b), Herman (1993b, 121-2)

¹⁹ For further discussion of Kant's accounts of various kinds of relationships, see Denis (2001), Korsgaard (1996a, 215-16), Paton (1993), Guyer (2011), Ebels-Duggan (2009), (Wood 1999, chapter 8), Herman (1993a).

Miguel and Doreen, for example, are committed to promoting one another's happiness.²⁰ The faculty of reason favors this shared commitment because of its intrinsic interests in the happiness of all. Ramari's teachers union is a group of people who endorse many of the same genuine moral principles and goals, who aim for all of them to live up to those commitments, and who work together to eliminate obstacles, to help one another develop strength of will, and to excite "the moral incentives of each individual."²¹ Before their split, Lisa and June shared an effective commitment to open communication with one another that the faculty of reason favors because of its intrinsic interest in communication as well as its derivative interest in communication as a means for promoting knowledge and correcting errors.²² David could join a community orchestra that is committed to developing the musical abilities of everyone in their group.²³ Bob might be preventing his employees from forming relationships based on their shared commitments to advancing and promulgating the scientific research that their company produces.²⁴ The faculty of reason favors these commitments because of its intrinsic interests in natural perfection and in promoting knowledge.²⁵ And, more generally, the faculty of reason, in at least one respect, favors shared commitments as such because of its formal interests in unity, which includes interests in promoting and maintaining convergence among the commitments of different people, whatever those commitments happen to be.²⁶

B. Trust in Shared Rational Commitments

The second paradigmatic feature of solidarity is that each of the people trusts that they all share an effective commitment that reason favors.²⁷ To trust that someone has a commitment of this sort, according to Kant, is to judge with conviction that she endorses and will likely maintain and live up to an end, aim, project, or principle that serves an interest of reason. Trust of this kind can be reasonable in two ways.

First, we might know that someone endorses a commitment if our judgment is based on mental states that represent grounds that indicate that the judgment is probably true, such as credible testimony from others or first-hand experiences. And, second, we might reasonably hope that someone has a commitment on the basis of non-representational mental states that arise from our faculty of reason

²⁰ Eth-C 27:425.

²¹ Rel 6:197; cf. Rel 6:93, 95, 124, 151; MM 6:469; Eth-V 27:677, 682.

²² Eth-V 27:683.

²³ Eth-C 27:428; Eth-V 27:679.

²⁴ L-Anth 25: 702, 1347.

²⁵ Kant emphasizes that we have no *duty* to promote the natural perfection of others, but this is compatible with reason nonetheless taking an interest in the natural perfection of all.

²⁶ Eth-V 27:681-3, 703; Eth-H 27:50; Eth-C 27:429.

²⁷ Eth-V 27:681; Eth-C 27:429.

itself, such as ones that might lead us to judge with conviction that, without good evidence to the contrary, other people are honest and good.²⁸

Developing reasonable trust among a group of people often requires them to show one another that they endorse the same commitments. An orchestra might express their shared commitment to developing their natural abilities by practicing together for long hours, choosing complicated pieces, mentoring younger members, and visibly taking pleasure in the group's achievements. Lisa and June showed their commitment to open communication between them by progressively sharing more of their thoughts with one another. And the members of the teachers union developed a "moral bond" with one another by, in part, each ensuring "that his actions not only furnish a negative example, in containing nothing evil, but also provide a positive one, in possessing an element of good."²⁹

Social structures, such as norms, rules, laws, formalities, ceremonies, observances, and traditions, can also provide ways for people to develop trust in one another. For example, Ramari's teachers union regularly holds public assemblies in which their common cause is "loudly proclaimed and thereby fully shared"; they maintain "this fellowship through repeated public formalities which stabilize the union of its members;" and they use ceremonies and instruction as ways of "transmitting" their shared commitments and trust "to posterity through the reception of new members."³⁰ Their leaders regularly make speeches "in the name of the whole" group in order to make its shared concerns "visible as a public issue" so that the wishes of each person in the group are "represented as united with the wishes of all toward one and the same end."³¹ And they establish and enforce rules that they trust one another to follow.³² Miguel and Doreen also use rules, ceremonies, and other social structures to maintain and enhance their trust in one another by, for example, regularly cooking together, calling ahead when one of them will be late, celebrating holidays and anniversaries, and spending Sunday afternoons together.

Developing and maintaining trust that someone else shares our commitments can nonetheless be difficult because we might not be sure whether she is sufficiently self-aware to know her own commitments, whether she has the commitment or is merely pretending to have it, and whether she endorses it on rational grounds. David, we can imagine, came to lose trust in his ex-wife when he discovered that they affirm "quite different principles" and realized that he is "utterly opposed to" some of her basic values and commitments.³³

²⁸ L-Log 24:246.

²⁹ Eth-C 27:412.

³⁰ Rel 6:193.

³¹ Rel 6:197.

³² MM 6:307.

³³ Eth-V 27:682.

C. Love

A third paradigmatic feature of solidarity is that each of the people is committed to the happiness of the others for their own sakes because of their reasonable and mutual trust that they all share an effective commitment that reason favors.³⁴ A commitment to the happiness of others for their own sake includes adopting it as a non-instrumental end, tending to prioritize that end over the happiness of other people, and regularly choosing to act in ways that promote it. A group of people might be committed to one another's happiness on other grounds, but this special practical love for one another arises from and is sustained by their reasonable trust in the shared rational commitments of one another.³⁵ Union members, for example, might have a love for one another for their own sake that is derived from their trust in one another to support the cause, but if this trust disappears then they lose this commitment to the happiness of their comrades while still perhaps maintaining their general love for other people as such.

An effective and easily recognizable way to implement our commitment to the happiness of someone we are in solidarity with is to advance, promote, or live up to the shared goals, principles, projects, or other commitments that provide the bases for our mutual love. Each of us in a relationship of this sort began with a commitment that reason favors, but the love for one another that arose on the basis of our trust that we share this commitment can provide an additional ground for endorsing and maintaining that commitment as a way of promoting the happiness of our comrades. These additional grounds might increase the priority we give to the commitment as compared to others we endorse and lead us to resist, for example, undermining or violating the commitment because doing so would hurt and betray those we care about. How much priority to give to promoting the happiness of a comrade over that of other people or even over our own happiness can also vary "because the limits here are not defined, and there can be no indication of degree as to how far I ought to care for myself, and how far for others" so that the measure of solidary dispositions "is not determinable by any law or rule."³⁶

D. Trust in Love

And a fourth paradigmatic feature of solidarity is that each of the people reasonably trusts that they all share a commitment to one another's happiness for its own sake on the basis of their mutual trust that they all share an effective commitment that reason favors.³⁷ It is "in itself reassuring to be able to count on...assistance" from a comrade, to "confidently count on the other's help...in

³⁴ MM 6:469, 471; Eth-V 27:676-7, 682-4; Eth-C 27:424-5.

³⁵ MM 6:452; Eth-C 27:424.

³⁶ Eth-C 27:424.

³⁷ Eth-V 27:676; Eth-C 27:426.

case of need,” and to “have confidence...that he would be able and willing to look after my affairs.”³⁸

Developing this kind of public trust among a group of people often requires them to show one another that they are committed to one another’s happiness. Miguel and Doreen might, for example, assure one another that they stand ready to help in times of need, show concern for one another’s misfortunes, do small favors for one another, give gifts, and promote their common goals. The teachers union uses social structures of various kinds as ways of developing and securing trust in their love for one another, such as rules about supporting members who are on strike or in the hospital, celebrating birthdays, and “a ritual communal partaking at the same table” that represents a kind of “brotherly love” among them.³⁹

There are various difficulties with creating and sustaining this public trust that arise from fears that others are merely using us or even secretly hate us. When they were friends, for example, June regularly demanded Lisa’s help and burdened her with her troubles, which led Lisa to worry that June is “ungenerous” towards her and merely out for herself, does not love her for her own sake, and only aims in their relationship “to secure some attention to [her own] needs.”⁴⁰ Lisa even began to wonder whether June hates her. On some occasions, “in a fit of anger,” June would “consign [Lisa] to the gallows”, heap “coarse rebukes” on her, but also offer “apologies the moment [she] calms down.”⁴¹ June also showed signs of envy for Lisa’s accomplishments and merits that suggested that her aim is to bring Lisa down rather than pull herself up. And June sometimes used Lisa’s confidences against her.⁴² Miguel and Doreen, on the other hand, have an expressed willingness to forgo help from the other person on some occasions, not to “cause trouble” to one another, to “endure [certain of their] woes alone”, and “not make demands” on one another’s help, as ways of showing their love for each other.⁴³

Solidarity is one form of special tie in which we basically share rational commitments with one another, trust that we share these commitments, love one another on the basis of this trust, and trust that we love one another. There is an ideal form of solidarity in which the four paradigmatic features are fully satisfied but also imperfect ones in which these features are satisfied to varying degrees. Various kinds of more specific relationships can be forms of solidarity, such as friendships, marriages, communities, and so on, although these relationships have other features that differentiate them from one another.

³⁸ Eth-V 27:684, MM 6:471, and Eth-C 27:425, respectively.

³⁹ Rel 6:199.

⁴⁰ Eth-C 27:425; cf. MM 6:471 and Eth-C 27:425, respectively.

⁴¹ Eth-C 27:430; Eth-V 27:685.

⁴² Eth-C 27:427.

⁴³ Eth-C 27:425, cf. Eth-V 27:684; MM 6:471.

V. Rational Interests in Solidarity

The faculty of reason, Kant sometimes suggests or implies, has intrinsic interests in forming, maintaining, perfecting, respecting, and promoting relationships of solidarity. He describes some relationships of this sort as “practically necessary” ideas and ideals of reason that make us “deserving of happiness,” that serve “a purely intellectual need” of reason itself, that further interests of “humanity,” and that “should inspire respect.”⁴⁴ These passages, however, concern various competing and fragmentary conceptions of friendship. Kant also valorizes other kinds of relationships, such as marriages, families, and communities.⁴⁵ And he says more generally that the “human being is destined by his reason to live in a society with human beings” and that humans have “a calling to use their reason socially.”⁴⁶

Aside from this explicit textual evidence, which is inconclusive, some of the specific duties that Kant describes seem to presuppose that the faculty of reason has interests in relationships of solidarity. We will consider some of these duties in the next section, but from a broadly Kantian perspective and a commonsense standpoint, it seems that a rational and reasonable person would, as such, favor relationships in which people share rational commitments, trust that they have these commitments, love one another on this basis, and trust that they have this mutual love. Relationships of solidarity incorporate and arrange a variety of other interests that reason has, such as in committing to ends, principles, or projects that it favors, in committing to promoting the happiness of other people, in expressing these rational commitments, and in trusting other people. And attributing this interest to the faculty of reason allows us to capture and explain many of the reasons and requirements that such relationships seem to involve.

Aside from principles of logic, it is notoriously difficult to explain why something is a feature of reason. Kant’s strict, a priori, and transcendental methods for doing so, which he mainly develops in the *Critiques*, might not justify some of the rational interests that he himself describes. Perhaps the best we can do is develop candidate conceptions of reason, draw out their normative implications, and eventually hope to assess them as a whole by how well they capture and explain our considered judgment concerning, for example, the nature of a rational and reasonable person, what kinds of reasons we have, and ordinary ways of speaking, thinking about, and appealing to reason.

⁴⁴ MM 6:469, Eth-V 27:680-2, and Eth-C 27:429, respectively.

⁴⁵ Eth-V 27:493; Rel 6:193; Ped 9:494.

⁴⁶ Anth 7:325 and L-Log 24:151, respectively.

VI. *Prima facie* Laws of Reason

Let's suppose that the faculty of reason has intrinsic interests in each of us establishing relationships of solidarity with other people, maintaining and perfecting ones we are in, promoting such relationships among other people, and respecting relationships of solidarity themselves. What sorts of *prima facie* laws or principles might these interests favor when combined with a principle of justifiability, which requires us to conform to laws that are justifiable to everyone on the basis of our interests of reason? The principles I mention below, which in most cases Kant himself endorses in some form and on some occasions, are *prima facie* principles that reason favors in the sense that, all else equal, each of us could or would rationally will them, or ones like them, as universal laws on the basis of our rational interests in solidarity.

A. *Prima Facie Laws about Forming Relationships*

Our rational interest in forming relationships of solidarity leads reason in each of us to favor various kinds of presumptive or *prima facie* laws, including “a duty to oneself as well as to others not to isolate oneself” from all other people.⁴⁷ It also favors a prohibition on hating and “shying away from human beings” in general in ways that make it difficult or impossible for us to develop relationships of solidarity with them.⁴⁸

These laws also forbid more limited forms of misanthropy in which we hate or isolate ourselves from anyone outside of our family, tribe, or community, such as a sect that attempts to “cut itself off from all other peoples and avoid intermingling with them,” because doing so makes it difficult or impossible for us to form relationships of solidarity with those other people.⁴⁹

Misanthropy tends to arise, according to Kant, by over-generalizing from particular cases, such as people like David who have been “cheated,” have been “ill-used for their benevolence” or have observed other forms of vice and immorality and so come to “trust no other human being.”⁵⁰ In light of this tendency, our rational interest in forming relationships of solidarity also favors indirect laws that combat misanthropy, such as ones that forbid our faculty of judgment from overgeneralizing in these ways and that require us to diminish instances that are especially likely to engender misanthropy in others, such as “[f]alsehood, ingratitude, injustice.”⁵¹

These presumptive laws also require us to strive for solidarity with other people by, for example, adopting commitments that reason approves of, searching

⁴⁷ MM 6:473; cf. MM 6:402; MM 6:471.

⁴⁸ MM 6:466; cf. TP 8:307; CPJ 5:276; Rel 6:34.

⁴⁹ Rel 6:184.

⁵⁰ Anth 7:205, Eth-C 27:440, CPJ 5:276; MM 6:466; L-Anth 25:553, and Anth 7:205, respectively.

⁵¹ CPJ 5:276.

for other people who share those commitments, and communicating with them in ways that promote mutual trust and reciprocal love. They require us to develop and express traits that tend to lead others to form relationships of solidarity with us, such as “uprightness of disposition, candour and trustworthiness”, “conduct that is free from malice and falsity,” and “vivacity, amiability and cheerfulness of mind.”⁵² There might be limits, however, to how many relationships of solidarity we can form with others.⁵³

And these presumptive laws require us to treat everyone, including our enemies, as if they might someday stand in a relationship of solidarity with us. Acting from this maxim is “a course of conduct appropriate to the use of reason, and conformable to the laws of morality” because all human beings are worthy of being in these relationships with us, treating them in this way tends to make it more likely that we will enter into such relationships with them, and, if we manage to form such a relationship with someone, “we do a service to mankind, or to humanity” by establishing a relationship that reason approves of. More specifically, we should not, as Lisa and June did, disparage people with whom we were previously in a relationship of solidarity to third parties, not only because we might someday reconcile with our prior comrades, but also because this tends to make “those to whom we say such things” avoid forming relationships of solidarity with us out of fear that “the same might happen to them” if we form a solidary relationship with one another but later fall out.⁵⁴

B. *Prima Facie Laws about Maintaining Relationships*

The rational interest in maintaining and not undermining relationships of solidarity we are in favors laws of various kinds. Relationships of solidarity, according to Kant, ground special duties that the parties have to one another because their shared goals, projects, principles, or other commitments, along with their commitments to the happiness of one another, are “common and simultaneous.”⁵⁵

One kind of duty they have is to maintain and live up to the commitments they share by, for example, promoting and not undermining their common goals, complying with their shared principles, and pursuing their joint projects. For example, if Miguel and Doreen are in a solidary relationship with regard to their shared aim of having and raising a child “as their joint work” then, if they produce a child together, they incur “an obligation...towards each other to maintain it.”⁵⁶ Or “pure sincerity in friendship can be no less required of everyone even if up to now there may never have been a sincere friend, because this duty - as duty in

⁵² Eth-C 27:429.

⁵³ Eth-V 27:673, 685.

⁵⁴ Eth-V 27:680-1.

⁵⁵ Eth-V 27:696.

⁵⁶ MM 6:381.

general - lies, prior to all experience, in the idea of a reason determining the will by means of a priori grounds.”⁵⁷ Friends also have a duty to be candid with one another as a way of living up to their shared commitment to open communication.⁵⁸

A second kind of duty concerns promoting the happiness of our comrades. When people are in relationships of solidarity, there are “certainly duties to which they are obligated,” such as to help one another in times of need, not to wish for or take pleasure in the misfortune of one another, not to “misuse [the] trust” that they have in one another’s good-will, not to allow the other person to help us without being “generous in [our] turn,” and “participating and sharing sympathetically in the other’s well-being.”⁵⁹ In some cases, for example, it is “a duty for one of the friends to point out the other’s faults to him; this is in the other’s best interests and is therefore a duty of love” but in other cases to “uncover his weaknesses” or to “censure his errors” is “contrary to the duty of friendship” because doing so would “injure his self-love.”⁶⁰ Among friends who are committed to complete candor with one another, each of them is “bound not to share the secrets entrusted to him with anyone else, no matter how reliable he thinks him, without explicit permission to do so.”⁶¹ A brother might be under a presumptive law of “kinship” not to serve as a witness against his sibling in ways that would harm him even though he might be under other presumptive laws of greater priority to be candid with the authorities.⁶² And, if a “wife loses her husband, then the grown-up, well-behaved son has the duty incumbent on him, and also the natural inclination within him, to honor her, to support her, and to make her life as a widow pleasant.”⁶³

Maintaining relationships of solidarity also involves not undermining the four paradigmatic features of those relationships, so we “must not”, for example, “seek to diminish” the “well-wishing dispositions” the other person has towards us or the trust the other has in our good-will towards them by, for example, leading them to think that we do not love them or that we are simply using them to fulfill our selfish interests.⁶⁴ Indiscreetly sharing a friend’s secret, for example, likely diminishes her confidence that we love her while violating the moral standards of our community tends to diminish the trust others may have that we share their moral commitments.

And our rational interest in maintaining relationships of solidarity favors laws that require us on some occasions to apologize to our comrades, reaffirm our commitments and love for them, and refrain from quarreling in ways that make

⁵⁷ G 4:408.

⁵⁸ Rel 6:33.

⁵⁹ Eth-V 27:696, Rel 6:33, Eth-C 27:426), and MM 6:471, respectively.

⁶⁰ MM 6:470 and Eth-V 27:685, respectively.

⁶¹ MM 6:472. See Flynn (2007).

⁶² Eth-V 27:493.

⁶³ Anth 7:310.

⁶⁴ Eth-C 27:426.

“mutual trust impossible during a future peace.”⁶⁵ On some occasions, however, “one must break off the association that existed or avoid it as much as possible.”⁶⁶

C. Prima Facie *Laws about Perfecting Relationships*

Our rational interest in perfecting our solidary relationships favors laws that require us to adopt and strive to realize ideal solidarity.⁶⁷ This ideal consists in each of the people sharing exactly the same commitment that reason maximally approves and affording it the same high priority, fully trusting that this is the case, maximally loving each other, and fully trusting that this is so.

In most relationships of solidarity, however, one or more of these elements is not fully realized. We often do not know for sure what exact commitments and attitudes we or others have or what priority we or they assign to them.⁶⁸ Perfecting our relationships of solidarity thus often requires us to “track down...any misunderstandings that hinder agreement; to clear up errors and come together as much as possible” with our comrades as well as to communicate the degree of love we have for one another.⁶⁹ Perfecting our relationships of reasonable solidarity might also involve committing more fully to ends, goals, or principles that we share with others as well as to promoting their happiness and striving to eliminate feelings of anger, resentment, or envy towards our comrades that tend to undermine these commitments.⁷⁰

D. Prima Facie *Laws about Respecting Relationships*

Our rational interest in respecting relationships of solidarity leads it to favor laws that require us to “venerate” relationships of this kind, which “should inspire respect” in us.⁷¹ Respecting relationships of solidarity involves judging that they are good in themselves and not judging that they are merely useful or contemptible.⁷² We are also not supposed to act in ways that express lack of respect or disrespect for such relationships. For example, it is “bad in itself to speak disparagingly” of a previous friend, even if he has become our enemy, “in that we thereby show that we have no respect” for our relationship.⁷³ And we must not show disrespect for “even the memory of a friendship now broken off”

⁶⁵ TPP 8:346; cf. MM 6:471. This quote refers to actions of states during times of war, but many of the Articles of Perpetual Peace seem to have plausible analogues in interpersonal relationships.

⁶⁶ MM 6:474, cf. MM 6:365; Anth 7:294; Eth-C 27:425; L-Anth 25:1390.

⁶⁷ MM 6:469, 471.

⁶⁸ MM 6:471.

⁶⁹ Eth-V 27:685.

⁷⁰ MM 6:471; Eth-V 27:678-9; Ped 9:484-5.

⁷¹ Eth-C 27:429.

⁷² MM 6:479.

⁷³ Eth-C 27:429.

by, for example, “abusing later on the former confidence and candor of the other person.”⁷⁴

E. Prima Facie Laws about Promoting Relationships

Finally, our rational interest in promoting relationships of solidarity among other people leads it to favor laws that require us, for example, not to act in ways that prevent or undermine such relationships. Teachers, for example, “must not prefer one child over another because of its talents but only because of its character, for otherwise resentment develops, which is contrary to friendship.” It is also “wrong” for teachers to oppose friendships among children because “[t]he child must maintain friendships with others and not remain by itself all the time.”⁷⁵ We should not tempt people to violate the duties of their relationships, prevent them from associating with one another, or denigrate their relationships of solidarity. And we should provide opportunities for them to form relationships of solidarity, encourage them to develop traits that help them to do so, and do what we can to encourage mutual trust and love among them.⁷⁶

VII. Relationships of Solidarity in an Ideally Rational World

A longstanding problem for Kantian theory is to reconcile impartial reason with partiality of the moral life seems to involve. I have suggested that the faculty of reason itself has interests in a kind of solidarity that, when combined with an impartial principle of justifiability, generate in a plausible way many of the presumptive requirements and reasons that such relationships seem to involve, including those in the five examples I began with. A fully developed theory of reason along these lines, however, must go on to specify our other rational interests and their relative priorities as well as interpret the principle of justifiability in ways that allow us to adjudicate conflicts among the rational interests of different people.

In a cryptic passage from lecture notes on Kant’s winter 1784-5 course in moral philosophy, Collins reports that Kant said:

Friendships are not found in heaven, for heaven is the ultimate in moral perfection, and that is universal; friendship, however, is a special bond between particular persons; in this world only, therefore, it is a recourse for

⁷⁴ Anth 27:194.

⁷⁵ Ped 9:484-5.

⁷⁶ Ped 9:499.

opening one's mind to the other and communing with him,
in that here there is a lack of trust among men.⁷⁷

If, as Kant sometimes suggests, we have rational interests in solidarity then Kant could have drawn a different conclusion, namely that a fully rational world would include many friendships, families, associations, communities, and other relationships of solidarity as well as itself constitute a “unity of humankind as that of a family” in which there is public knowledge among good people that they love and trust one another on the basis of their shared commitments to the laws and principles of reason itself.⁷⁸

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⁷⁷ Eth-C 27:428.

⁷⁸ Ped 9:494.

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