

# The Moral in Intimacy\*

Jeremy David Fix

Keble College, University of Oxford

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*Abstract.* Is the exemplar of modern ethical theory estranged from their intimates because the motive of duty dominates their motivational psychology? While this challenge against modern ethical theory is familiar, I argue that with respect to a certain strand of Kantian ethical theory, it does not so much as make sense. I explain the content and functional role of the motive of duty in the psychology of the moral exemplar, stressing in particular how that motive shapes and informs the content of others, including those characteristic of intimacy. I argue that to the extent that a subject does not integrate their motive of duty with their other motives, their moral and intimate relationships are compromised, and on the same grounds, because intimate relationships are interpersonal relationships and the motive of duty just is the motive to respect another person as a separate person.

## 1. Does morality corrupt intimacy?

1.1 Morality and intimacy might seem like strange bedfellows. On the one hand, if all goes well, both draw us out of ourselves and unite us on equal terms. In intimacy, you matter to me as I do, I to you as you do. That is why your taste matters just as mine as concerns what to eat or watch. And so it is with morality. That is why your consent matters just as mine as concerns whether and how to interact. On the other hand, intimacy binds individuals differently, but morality binds everyone the same. I am intimate only with some but a moral subject to all. Intimacy discriminates and is discretionary. Morality does not and is not.

Does morality corrupt intimacy? A common complaint is that the modern moral exemplar has at best alienated intimate relationships because all they do stems from, or at least is conditioned by, the motive of duty. Intimacy seems beyond someone “dominated by a single, all-important value under which all other possible values must be subsumed” because intimates act out of affectionate personal concern (Wolf 1982, 431). To relate to an intimate first as a moral subject as I do anyone and only then as an someone in a particular intimate relationship with me might seem to at best imitate, and at worst parody, intimacy because the affectionate personal concern might seem incompatible with mediation by moral concern. So to “embody in one’s motives the values of current ethical theories is ... to preclude love, friendship, affection, fellow feeling, and community” (Stocker 1976, 461). Morality corrupts intimacy in principle, or so say the critics.

Morality and intimacy are central to a good human life. If morality corrupts intimacy,

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a good life is impossible for us. Moreover, intimacy and morality cannot be compatible merely in that I can have moral relationships with some and intimate relationships with others. I must be able to relate to you morally and intimately in one go without their either undermining the other. So the challenge is to explain how morality and intimacy fit together, not merely in a life but in the particular relationships which most matter in our lives.

1.2 That complaint is about modern ethical theories generally. Different ethical theories construe the function of morality differently, though, and so give different accounts of what it is to relate to another morally. Whether morality corrupts intimacy and, if so, how depends on the correct account of its function and so of the moral relationship.

In this essay, I shall argue that on a Kantian account, morality, far from corrupting intimacy, makes it possible. Morality so construed is about interacting as individuals with equal discretion over our what we do together. It is about recognizing you as a separate person. Moral rules thus specify the *form* of interpersonal relationships. Intimate relationships are interpersonal relationships which are better or worse as what they are in part to the extent that they realize such equality. Intimacy without such equality is degenerate. Without morality, intimacy is corrupt.

I will link the complaint that morality corrupts intimacy with another about Immanuel Kant's discussion of beneficent action in the first section of the *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*. Both say that the role of the motive of duty in the psychology of the moral exemplar interferes with personal concern. I will argue that this complaint is incorrect given what that motive is a motive to do. As it is a motive to acknowledge your independence and discretion over our interaction and as such acknowledgment is part of any appropriate intimate relationship, acting from this motive conditions the possibility of acting out of personal, and so intimate, concern.

Two aspects distinguish my account of that motive. First, I emphasize what it is a motive to do by relating it to an account of morality drawn from the second section of the *Groundwork*. Second, I explain how in the moral exemplar, this motive shapes the content of others. It does not stand outside of and restrict them as a parent restrains a stroppy toddler. It instead informs their content such that all motives of the moral exemplar are for permissible objects, actions, relationships, interactions, and all that jazz.

I shall argue that these aspects of that motive preclude a conflict between morality and intimacy and indeed explain why only an individual so motivated can act out of intimacy. To act out of immoral or amoral affection is to be in principle indifferent to our independence and discretion over our interaction. It is to be open to subordinating your will to mine or mine to yours. The former is domination, the later submission. Neither is a proper form of intimacy because the interpersonal aspect of the relationship is compromised. There is no reciprocity, and reciprocity is a constitutive feature of moral and intimate relationships. It partially defines those types of relationships and is a standard for tokens of those types.<sup>1</sup>

The moral exemplar will only interact with others in ways which acknowledge their independence and equal discretion over the interaction. That is what it is to interact morally. Since to appropriately interact intimately is in part to acknowledge your independence and equal say so over our interaction, to interact intimately is in part to interact morally. Intimate relationships are specific determinations of the moral relationship.

1.3 Four caveats before I begin. First, another complaint about the relationship between morality and intimacy asks whether intimacy fits into the moral life in practice rather than in principle. If the motive of duty conditions all I do, need I defer intimacy to address injustice whenever I can? Given the state of the world, that might amount to a life without love even for someone of limited means and abilities like myself. Since principle precedes practice, though, this objection is separate from and secondary to the complaint that morality corrupts intimacy in principle. I hope to discuss it elsewhere.

Second, I focus on the question about whether I can relate to you as both a moral subject and an intimate at the same time without conflict. I will not consider whether I can relate to you as a moral subject only if I also properly relate to others as a moral subject or whether a compromised moral relationship to strangers implies a compromised moral, and so a compromised intimate, relationship to those dear to me. I suspect that claim is true. I hope to discuss it elsewhere.

Third, I focus on moral and intimate relationships between adult human beings with developed rational capacities. I do not discuss those whose capacities are developing, have deteriorated, or have been hindered or halted in development. While we have moral

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1. I throughout presuppose a form of constitutivism in which the nature of a kind or type sets standards for the particulars of that kind or type. See (Fix [2021]).

relationships with them and can relate to some of them intimately in some ways, I think that such relationships are derivative modes of those possible for those of us with developed capacities because the equality essential to those relationships is compromised. I cannot defend these claims here, though, and so take them as assumptions.

Fourth, although I draw on Kant and his interpreters, this essay is not interpretive. Although the account advocated is Kantian, it deviates in various ways from Kant and from others in the Kantian tradition. My concern is its adequacy, not its fidelity to anyone else.

## **2. Action and alienation.**

2.1 Critics claim that if my fundamental concern is to act morally, other concerns matter only as and when they fit with it. Intimacy, though, is meant to involve personal concern incompatible with such mediation. After all, I do not relate to my intimates first and foremost as individuals among others and only then as intimates in specific relationships with me.

Take these evocative examples:

you are in a hospital ... bored and restless and at loose ends when Smith comes in once again. You are now convinced more than ever that he is a ... real friend ... . You are so effusive with your praise and thanks that he protests that he always tries to do ... his duty ... . [I]t is not essentially because of you that he came to see you, not because you are friends, but because he thought it his duty ... . (Stocker 1976, 462)

Lisa ... has been profoundly depressed. ... Only now is she able to talk openly with friends about her state of mind, and she turns to her oldest friend, Helen, who was a mainstay throughout. ... . 'You don't have to thank me, Lisa,' Helen replies, ' ... We're friends, remember? And we said a long time ago that we'd stick together no matter what. Some day I'll probably ask the same thing of you, and I know you'll come through. What else are friends for?' Lisa wonders whether Helen is saying this simply to avoid creating feelings of guilt, but Helen replies that she means every word ... .

(Railton 1986, 135-6)

The individuals in these examples seem estranged. As Bernard Williams puts it when

discussing a case drawn from Charles Fried, the subjects seem to have “one thought too many” (Williams 1976, 18; Fried 1970, 227). The criticism is not that they inadvisably deliberate or have too many thoughts. Nor is it that they act incorrectly. The objection is that although their histories and the relationships with their intimates partially determine both what they should do and what they in fact do, they seem to regard their intimates just as an occasion to satisfy a generic moral duty. Their histories and relationships with their intimates seem like facts which merely modify the content of that duty, not its form.

Putting the point in terms of motivation, the criticism is that my fundamental motive is to do my duty, and my motive to be with you merely derives from it given my situation, including the facts of our relationship. Putting it in terms of justification, the criticism is that our friendship does not justify how I act but instead influences how I am to act as might any feature of my circumstances given an independent justification for acting. If, as I explain in a bit, these ways to put the point come to the same thing, the criticism is that ‘because you are my friend’ cannot fully explain why I am with you. I cannot act some way simply because you are my friend, where that is the ‘because’ of rational basing, because I relate to you fundamentally as I do to any moral subject, not as an intimate. I instead act in some way because it is my duty, and our friendship influences which way to act is my duty as might anything. To use a metaphor, I seem to look *up* to the moral law, not *over* to you as an intimate should.

Compare morality to self-interest here. Imagine that I act with you as would an intimate but out of self-interest. Maybe I help in times of need and spend time with you otherwise for the praise I get, for the reputation I earn and its benefits, or to luxuriate and bask in the envy of others who wish to be close to you. If you discover my basis for acting, you will feel betrayed and estranged from me. You might wonder if you even know me, and you might reconsider our past and indeed our very relationship. To invoke the same metaphor, I seem to look *into* myself, not *over* to you.

As I am alienated from my intimates if I act out of self-interest, so I am if I act out of duty. In both cases, you show up as a chance for me to achieve something else which matters to me. That is why articulating my motive changes your understanding of everything between us. It reveals that I think of my intimates as significant to me not primarily as individuals in particular relationships with me. So to act out of self-interest is to act out of basic concern not

for you but for myself, to act out of duty is to act out of basic concern not for you but for the moral law, but to act out of intimacy is to act out of basic concern for you. Metaphorically, the first looks *in*, the second *up*, but only the third looks *over* to you. Insofar as you fail to register for me in the appropriate way because my motive does not feature you or our relationship as the rational basis for my action, I am alienated from you. That is why your discovering my motivation might surprise and disappoint you and potentially lead to your rejection of my action and renunciation of our relationship. So goes the criticism.<sup>2</sup>

2.2 Critics level this charge independently of the details which distinguish ethical theories. Yet different ethical theories construe the function of morality, and so what the motive of duty is a motive to do, differently. Consider two rough ways of rendering that function:

For consequentialists, morality is about securing good states of affairs and preventing bad ones. Moral rules specify which states I must or may secure. Utilitarians, say, claim that an action is right if and only if, and because, it brings about the greatest balance of pleasure over pain of all actions open to the moral agent. I must realize the state of affairs with the maximal amount of pleasure over pain and prevent all others.

For deontologists, morality is about interacting as independent individuals. Moral rules specify what to do to secure our independence. Kantians, say, claim that an action is right if and only if, and because, the moral agent does not unnecessarily interfere with a moral patient developing or exercising their will. I may act in ways compatible with but not necessary for your development or exercise of your will, I must not act in ways incompatible with it, and I must act in ways necessary for it.

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2. Whereas Kantians think that an action constitutively involves an act and the intention with which the subject acts which reciprocally depend on each other, most ethicists think that the act and intention are independent existences from each other. This view in the philosophy of action influence views about the proper topic of ethical evaluation. So Christine Korsgaard thinks that morality requires certain intention-act pairs and so moral evaluation is about them (Korsgaard 2008). T.M. Scanlon, in contrast, thinks that morality requires only acts and moral evaluation concerns only them; evaluation of intentions involves a separate concern for your character which is not the proper province of deontic moral evaluation (Scanlon 2008). The fact that discovery of my motive leads you to reevaluate my action and not just my character supports the view that my intention is a constitutive part of the action, not merely an independent cause of it. After all, when I discover that you act as an intimate would but out of self-interest, I do not respond to you by saying that you did the right thing but from the wrong motive but that you might as well have not done it at all if that is your motive. My criticism is not of your intention or act in isolation but of their unity.

Focusing on interpersonal morality, whereas on the former type of theory, my aim is to do good for you, on the latter type, my aim is to do right by you. On the former type, I focus on what I can do *for* you. On the latter, I focus on what I can do *with* you.

Let me say more about the latter type of theory. Take Kant's second formulation of the categorical imperative, the so-called *formula of humanity*, which says to so "act that you use humanity, in your own person as well as in the person of any other, always at the same time as an end, never merely as a means" (Kant 1785, 4:429). By 'humanity', Kant means reason broken "forth into *practical use*" in whose exercise I think and act as I take to be legitimate (ibid. 4:395).<sup>3</sup> So the command is to not interfere with our exercises of practical reason. Less grandly, it is to let each other live as we see fit by giving each other discretion over what we do, including whether and how we interact. So you and I may interact if and only if, and because, we will to do so.

A rough contrast between Utilitarianism and Kantianism again helps. Human beings are moral agents and patients with respect to each other. For me to be a moral agent with respect to you is for me to be able to do right or wrong by you, and for you to be a moral patient with respect to me is for you to be able to be done right or wrong by me. Kantians and Utilitarians agree that sufficiently developing practical reason such that we can act on rational bases makes us moral agents. That is why we are moral agents but the other animals are not. So possessing practical reason, the capacity to act self-consciously or as the subject understands is legitimate, in a sufficient state of development makes for moral agency.

Kantians and Utilitarians disagree, though, about what makes for our moral patiency. Kantians say that it is practical reason, utilitarians that it is our capacity to feel pleasure and pain. Neither ignore the capacities emphasized by the other. Still, for utilitarians, the significance of practical reason of the moral patient depends on its relationship to our capacity to feel pleasure and pain as for Kantians, the significance of the capacity to feel pleasure and pain of the moral patient depends on its relationship to practical reason.<sup>4</sup>

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3. See (Fix and Pendlebury forthcoming) for more on Kant on the rational will. I develop this view, which I call *practical cognitivism*, in a contemporary key in (Fix 2018; 2020<sub>B</sub>; 2022<sub>A</sub>).

4. See (Fix [MS<sub>A</sub>]) for a unified Kantian account of the moral patiency of animals, including human beings. Roughly, the idea is that possessing a will makes for moral patiency generally. Practical reason is the self-conscious will, which makes for our moral patiency, and the other animals have non-self-conscious wills which makes for theirs. The differences between types of wills of the moral patients explains the differences between the moral relationships with them.

This difference in the bases of moral patiency tracks the difference in the accounts of the function of morality. Utilitarianism is about securing good states of affairs. Utilitarians interact with others in certain ways to the extent that and because it secures those states. That is why they focus on what they can do *for* you. Kantianism, in contrast, is about interacting with others on equal terms. Kantians interact with others in certain ways to the extent that and because each wills to do so. That is why they focus on what they can do *with* you.

2.3 The formula of humanity is an imperative addressed to rational animals which specifies the proper bases for exercises of practical reason. It commands animals with practical reason to interact in certain ways. I will discuss its details in a bit. What matters now is that it functions as a criterion of correctness and a decision criterion. A criterion of correctness says which actions are right and why. A decision criterion says how to decide what to do.

These criteria must specify the same actions as the answers to questions about which action is right and which action to perform. Otherwise, the theory will miss its theoretical aim to account for which actions are right and why or its aim to account for how to decide. The easiest way for them to give the same answer is for the same principle to function as the criterion of correctness and the decision criterion. Ethical theories, though, can separate these roles so long as the principles which perform them are extensionally equivalent.

Many consequentialists respond to the complaint that morality corrupts intimacy by separating these roles. Although the consequentialist principle in question must be the criterion of correctness, different forms of consequentialism specify different decision criteria. Using utilitarianism as an example, one option is to posit the greatest happiness principle as the criterion of correctness and the decision criterion but to limit its *scope* in its role as the decision criterion to your nearest and dearest because we better maximize happiness if we focus locally (Jackson 1991). Another is to claim that the decision criterion is direct personal concern because we best maximize happiness by developing character traits to feel and decide in ways characteristic of intimacy (Railton 1986).

What matters for this essay is that Kantians cannot so separate these criteria because of their understanding of the self-consciousness of human action. Our action is not self-conscious merely in that I know what I am doing. It is self-conscious in that I know what I am doing through knowing why I am doing it. I act knowingly because what I am doing



depends on why I am doing it. Put otherwise, I act as I understand is legitimate or on a rational basis understood as such, at least when I act properly.<sup>5</sup>

Say I am riding out of this valley down to where the fields are green because we are going down to the river and into the river we will dive to escape, if only for a moment and if only in to tales we tell ourselves when we cannot meet each other's eyes, the dreariness and difficulties of our lives of dreams turned into lies by the tides of time. This explanation is true only if I take refuge and escape as my ground for leaving the valley. That is what it is for that 'because' to be the 'because' of rational basing. This is why Anscombe says that a mark of self-conscious human action is the fact that the agent can answer a question which asks for the ground of the action. The readiness to answer such a question is not a mark of the exercise of our non-self-conscious capacities to, say, digest or circulate blood.

Schematically, to exercise practical reason correctly is to intend to  $\phi$  and thereby  $\phi$  because  $P$ , where ' $P$ ' is what (a) licenses so exercising practical reason and (b) is my basis for so exercising it. For me to exercise this capacity correctly is in part for me to grasp what makes the exercise correct as making it correct. It is for me to take the metaphysical basis of the correctness of my exercise as my rational basis. To do so, though, is for  $P$  to move me to so act in and through justifying so acting.

Given this unity of the motivational and justificatory roles in the Kantian account of self-conscious action, the same principle must function as the criterion of correctness and the decision criterion. Otherwise, I would act on something which I did not take to justify my so acting and so not on a rational basis. Human action would be per se irrational.

Stocker also insists on the unity of the principles which function as the criterion of correctness and decision criterion. He accuses modern ethical theories of 'schizophrenia' because they separate these principles in a way which is incompatible with our wholeheartedly valuing anything. Values play a dual role. They embody our conception of what matters and structure our thought about what to do. They justify and motivate. To separate the principles which function as the criterion of correctness and decision criterion, though, is for me to isolate my conception of what matters from my deliberation and so to

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5. On rational basing, see (Neta 2018; 2019). For similar accounts of self-conscious capacities, see (Moran 2001), (Korsgaard 2009), (Boyle 2011), and (Marcus 2012). This account is of the proper case in which all goes well. For an interpretation of the error condition as a necessary condition on normativity and so on standards for action which fits with the type of constitutivism I assume, see (Fix 2020<sub>A</sub>). For how to accommodate permissible but not obligatory action and practical irrationality such as akrasia, see (Fix 2022<sub>B</sub>).

divorce justification and motivation. It is for me to not value anything fully.

Whether this conception of valuing is correct, and thus whether the gambit of ‘going indirect’ is mistaken, does not matter. What matters is that the Kantian account of self-conscious action prohibits that gambit. Kantians must respond differently. They must take head on the charge that the role of motive of duty in the psychology of the moral exemplar rules out the motivation out of affection characteristic of intimacy.

### **3. The motive of duty and action out of sympathy.**

In this section, I explain the mistake in a familiar complaint about the example of the beneficent person in the first section of the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*. In the next, I apply my response to that complaint to the one about morality corrupting intimacy.

3.1 If the complaint is that the modern moral exemplar is alienated from intimacy because all that they do stems from the motive of duty, a response must explain what the motive of duty is a motive to do and its role in their psychology. As a first step, let me briefly state the structure of the first section of the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*.

The *Groundwork* aims at “the identification and corroboration of *the supreme principle of morality*” (Kant 1785, 4:391). Its first section explicates this principle through a “transition from Common Rational to Philosophic Moral Cognition” (ibid. 4:393). It starts with commonsense moral ideas and ends with a statement of the fundamental principle of morality. The second section elaborates it. The third corroborates it.

Kant begins the first section with the notion of a good will “whose distinctive constitution is ... *character*” (ibid.). Since this notion “already dwells in natural sound understanding and needs ... only to be clarified”, he means to only explicate it (ibid. 4:397). Such explication concludes with the first statement of the categorical imperative in what is, in the second section of the *Groundwork*, its first formulation, the so-called *formula of universal law*, which states that “I ought never to proceed except in such a way *that I could also will that my maxim should become a universal law*” (ibid.4:402).

This explication proceeds by way of the idea of acting from duty. Roughly, a person of good will takes the correctness of acting some way to condition so acting. I so act *because* of what makes it correct, which is to act from the motive of duty or, what is the same thing, to

take the facts which make the action correct, understood as such, as at least part of my basis for acting. If permissible, I so act only if and in part because so acting is permissible. If obligatory, I so act if and because so acting is obligatory.<sup>6</sup>

Kant elucidates the motive of duty through contrast with two other types of motives. To act from *direct inclination* is to act in a way in which I have an immediate interest. To act from *indirect inclination* is to act in a way in which I have a mediate interest given its relationship to something in which I have an immediate interest. In each case, I so act because I want to so act. For example, I eat candy because it tastes nice, or I compliment you to prompt you to say compliment me in return, which flatters. In contrast, to act from the motive of duty is to act as is correct regardless of whether I am inclined to so act. I tell you the truth, say, because you deserve it, even if I get nothing but trouble for my efforts. So the difference between acts from duty and those from inclination is the basis for acting.

Kant uses examples to elucidate the distinction between acting from inclination and duty. The most relevant is the third. It begins with the claim that to “be beneficent where one can is a duty” before noting that some of us are “so attuned to sympathetic participation that even without any other motive ... , they take an inner gratification in spreading joy around them, and can take delight in the contentment of others insofar as it is their own work” (ibid. 398). Someone with an ulterior motive, such as a desire for the praise or popularity it might garner them, helps out of indirect inclination. Someone so sympathetically attuned, in contrast, helps out of direct inclination.

While sympathy is laudable, Kant claims that to act from sympathy,

however it may conform with duty and however amiable it is, nevertheless has no true moral worth but is on the same footing as other inclinations, e.g., the inclination to honor, which, if it fortunately lights upon what is in fact ... in conformity with duty and hence honorable, deserves praise and encouragement but not esteem; for the

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6. I cannot engage the contemporary debate about whether moral motivation is ‘de re’ or ‘de dicto’. My view is that these options do not map onto Kant’s position, or the correct position, because they do not distinguish the form and matter of motivation. The matter will mention the right-making properties de re, but why the subject takes those properties as a basis for action depends on, in Kant’s language, whether their principle of choice, or fundamental motive, is the moral principle rather than the principle of self-love or, in my language, on the state of development of the will (Fix MS<sub>B</sub>). So Kant’s view incorporates aspects of the ‘de re’ and ‘de dicto’ views, the former at the level of the content of the maxim and the latter at the level of its form, as mine incorporates both, the former at the level of the rational basis and the latter at the level of the explanation of why the subject takes that rational basis as a rational basis.

maxim lacks moral content . . . .

(ibid.)

There are two parts to explanation for why the action of the naturally sympathetic person lacks moral worth. The first says that the motive of sympathy so understood only accidentally or ‘fortunately’ leads the subject to act as is right. The second says that action from sympathy lacks moral worth. Kant grounds both parts with the claim that the maxim of the action lacks moral content.

Kant tries to evoke this response by considering what happens if “the mind of that same friend of humanity were clouded over with his own grief, extinguishing all his sympathetic participation in the fate of others” so that even though “he still has the resources to be beneficent”, “the distress of others does not touch him” (ibid.). The morally relevant features of the situation are the same. You need aid. I can help without cost or risk. However, if my basis for helping you is direct inclination and if, given my despair, the weal and woe of others touches me not, I will not help. I do not want to help.

Just so, were my motive self-interest and were helping to bring viral fame in one case and not in another without any change to your need or my ability to help without cost or risk, I would only help in one case despite the stability of the morally relevant features. Whether I am to help, though, does not depend on whether I want to help or will benefit from helping, at least not always and not in this situation. Whether a subject motivated by sympathy or self-interest acts correctly thus varies independently of the morally relevant features of the situation because their motive to act is insensitive to those features as such. So a subject who acts from sympathy only accidentally acts correctly because what explains why they so act differs from what explains why so acting is correct.

The same motive will on the same grounds also be insensitive to changes in the morally relevant facts. To take an example from Barbara Herman, say that the mob praises me for helping you get a painting into your van (Herman 1981, 364-5). In one situation, the painting is yours, and I help you move. In another, it is not, and I help you steal. If I am self-interested, I will help you achieve your end regardless of the difference of the morally relevant facts. The crowd erupts all the same. Similarly, if my motive is beneficence and if it is not a moralized notion, I will help you achieve your end regardless of the difference of the morally relevant facts. So from the same motive, I will aid you in getting the painting in your

van when it is yours and when it is not and so when it is permissible and when it is not.

Importantly, in these examples, the subject knows the relevant facts. So I do not act incorrectly because of ignorance, whether culpable or not. I act incorrectly because of insensitivity to the morally relevant facts as such given my motives to act. Holding the motive stable, then, whether I aid you seems to vary independently of the correctness of so acting for self-interested and beneficent motives. The problem is that what explains *why* I act is not the same as what explains why I *should* act because the motive from which I act is insensitive to the morally relevant facts as such. The problem is not the inconsistency of correct action but that I lack the correct rational basis, as revealed by this inconsistency under ideal epistemic conditions.

3.2 What is the role of the motive of duty in the psychology of the moral exemplar? Kant tries to clarify it with this variation on the example:

suppose that now, when no longer incited to it by any inclination, he nevertheless ... does the action ... simply from duty; then the action first has its genuine moral worth. ... if nature had put little sympathy in the heart of this or that man ... would he not still find within himself a source from which to give himself a far higher worth than what a mere good-natured temperament might have? By all means! It is just then that the worth of character comes out, which is moral and incomparably the highest, namely that he is beneficent not from inclination but from duty. (Kant 1785, 4:399)

This melodramatic description might misleadingly intimate that an action has moral worth only if motivated solely by duty, as if only a curmudgeon can be kind, only a miser charitable. Consider Friedrich Schiller's sardonic satirical epigram:

Gladly I serve my friends, but alas I do it with pleasure.

Hence I am plagued with doubt that I am not a virtuous person.

To this, the answer is given:

Surely, your only resource is to try to despise them entirely,

And then with aversion do what your duty enjoins.

This epigram mocks the epistemic situation of a Kantian moral agent. Did I help you because it was right or because it flattered me? What was my basis for acting, and does it have any moral worth? However, a parallel metaphysical objection says that the influence of another motive nullifies the moral worth of an action even if duty also motivates. In effect, on this interpretation, Kant thinks that an action has moral worth only if duty alone motivates.

While the epigram is humorous, Shiller intends it as a caricature and recognizes its inaccuracy as an interpretation. The point of the example is that *only motivation by duty* gives an action moral worth, not that *motivation only by duty* does. Isolating duty from other motives is meant to show that the moral worth of the action derives only from that motive, not that the other motives detract from that worth.

What, though, is the relationship between the motive of duty and other motives in morally worthy action? After all, we are not so simple as to only have one motive, nor do other motives disappear when duty calls. Moreover, in permissible but not obligatory actions, the motive of duty alone cannot move us to act. Most actions are permissible but not obligatory, and there are usually many permissible ways of performing an obligatory action. An account of the motive of duty thus must explain its relationship to other motives on pain of putting almost all human actions out of reach.

I will emphasize three aspects of the role of the motive of duty: (a) that it must be strong enough to move the subject to act as morally obligatory and to refrain from acting as is morally impermissible, (b) that it must limit or condition other motives, and (c) that it must inform their content.<sup>7</sup> I do not think that these aspects are independent. I think that they are all ways of saying that in the moral exemplar, the motive of duty infuses all motivation. The first two aspects are helpful routes into the third but not distinct from it.

First, in the moral exemplar, the motive of duty is strong enough to move me to act as is prescribed and to refrain from acting as is proscribed. I do not merely apprehend duty in a detached intellectual act or need to summon additional resources to act as is right. I instead act upon the recognition of duty. So when I recognize that to act some way would wrong you

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7. These aspects are discussed, with various degrees of emphasis, in, among many others, (Henson 1979), (Herman 1981; 1983; 1991), (Baron 1984), (Korsgaard 1989), and (Ebels-Duggan 2023).

because it would violate your freedom of speech, I will refrain from so acting on that basis. What matters here is not that it is my only motive. I might also wish to hear what you have to say because you are so interesting or because I wish to suss out whether you would make a good advocate. What matters is that the motive of duty is enough to move me to act in the absence of supporting motives or in the presence of countervailing motives and that it is necessary for me to so act. After all, if my other motives are enough for me to act as I do without the motive of duty, I cannot act in that way *because* so acting is right. That is why the motive of duty needs its second aspect.

Second, in the moral exemplar, the motive of duty must limit or condition other motives. I do not merely experience an internal clash in which this motive wins the war of all motives against all. It instead has a distinct role in the psychology of the moral exemplar. Conflict with it extinguishes their motive force because they are in effect motives to act in some way only if doing so is morally permissible. So the moral exemplar who desires to eat something sweet does not experience a battle within when they recognize that the last serving of Jam Roly-Poly belongs to another diner. While I might experience disappointment at not getting it and otherwise have affective residue of the desire, I will not need to fight against the temptation to reach out and take the Roly-Poly as might the less virtuous. Indeed, to take the the Roly-Poly would not be to get what the moral exemplar wants, even from the perspective of this other motive. That is why the motive of duty needs its third aspect.

Third, and pulling these threads together, in the moral exemplar, the motive of duty informs and shapes other motives. I do not merely have a mere heap of independent motives whose unity and coherence are a matter of luck and circumstance. The motive of duty is instead the fundamental motive which shapes the content of all motives. So the desire for Roly-Poly will be a desire only for Roly-Poly which I might legitimately eat. I will not be tempted to steal your Roly-Poly or to trick you out of it because the content of this motive, and all others, will be inflected by the motive of duty. I would not get what I desire if I acquire Roly-Poly through illegitimate means. So while John McDowell claims that in the virtuous, the recognition of a moral requirement 'silences' other motives, it is more accurate to say that the motive of duty so infuses others that they sing in harmony (McDowell 1978; 1979; 1980). The other motives need not be silenced because they do not speak against the motive of duty given its role in informing their content. It is not that they disappear. I might

long for Roly-Poly even though I no longer desire yours. I might be sad that I must go without Roly-Poly, and I might wonder about whether I can come into some other Roly-Poly. This longing, though, will be merely the affective residue of a motive whose purpose is also essentially volitional. I will not still be moved to take the Roly-Poly which is in fact yours, and I will not be moved to act at all if no alternative permissible means of acquiring Roly-Poly present themselves.

The third aspect is in effect the complete realization of the first two aspects. In the moral exemplar, the motive of duty herein has motive force not merely in its operation in isolation from other motives but indeed in their operation as well. Their motive force is in part its motive force because of how it shapes their content. It also does not merely condition or limit these motives from outside of them but instead limits or conditions them from inside. Their content is in part its content because of how it shapes their content. Action from them is thus in part action from it in the moral exemplar.

Contrast this account with what Christine Korsgaard calls the ‘Good Dog’ model of moral motivation. On this model, the moral exemplar has “desires and inclinations ... so perfectly trained that he always does what he ought to do spontaneously and with tail-wagging cheerfulness and enthusiasm” (Korsgaard 2009<sub>B</sub>, 3). Korsgaard complains that this model treats the phenomenon of necessitation by the motive of duty as if it is a mark of imperfection. Yet she questions whether it is an imperfection because “necessitation is so characteristic, so utterly commonplace a feature of human experience” (ibid. 4).

While the model of moral motivation criticized by Korsgaard is inadequate, my account of the motivation of the moral exemplar differs from it in two ways which matters. First, Korsgaard treats the desires and inclinations of the exemplar as constitutively independent of the motive of duty, though disciplined to always line up with it. It is as if the exemplar just acts on appropriately shaped appetites without regard for duty. In contrast to the Good Dog model of moral motivation, I deny that the motive of duty is idle in ideal motivation. Since it shapes the content of other motives and is bound up with them, it is active in all action for the moral exemplar.

Second, the frequency of necessitation is not evidence against its being an imperfection. Nobody is perfect. All sorts of imperfections are commonplace and familiar. Akrasia, weakness of will, temptation, laziness, idleness, and all the rest of our inadequacies



pop up all the time. We are finite and always liable to imperfection. Despite their frequency, we recognize them as imperfections because we understand those cases against the background of the proper case of the motivation of the moral exemplar in which ideal motivation involves the non-accidental harmony of the motive of duty and other motives through the shaping of those motives by the motive of duty. And so it is with action from motives not informed and shaped by the motive of duty as well. In the proper case, necessitation in the sense of disciplining discordant motives does not happen because the motives harmonize, not because the motive of duty is silent while the others latch onto the right action without regard for the properties which make it permissible or obligatory as such as in the model of motivation criticized by Korsgaard.

In the moral exemplar, then, the motive of duty is in a sense not a separate and superior motive but is instead a ubiquitous motive because it is united with all others. All motives are in effect for the permissible versions of their objects because all in effect have the content 'for X only if all else involved agree'. That is what it is for it to have a unique role in the psychology of the moral exemplar.

3.3 To understand how this account of the role of the motive of duty in the psychology of the moral exemplar plays out, return to the example of beneficent action from sympathy. An important aspect of it is that sympathy, as Kant understands it in the example, is not moralized. It is a motive to help others achieve their ends regardless of the end in question. That is why whether this motive moves me to act as is permissible might not vary when the morally relevant facts change and might vary when they do not change. The problem is not the variance but the lack of a correct basis which explains the variance. What explains why the action is correct is not what explains why the subject so acts because the motive in question tracks different facts than those which make the action correct. Beneficence from sympathy lacks moral worth because it does not express recognition of the morally relevant facts as such. So in the character in Kant's example, the motive of duty is not enough to prompt action when action is required, it does not condition others motives, and it does not inform their content.

Here is how sympathy functions in the moral exemplar, which tracks closer to an ordinary understanding of it. As a motive infused with moral content, the moral exemplar

does not aid others in the pursuit of just any end. I instead aid when you need help, where ‘need’ is a morally significant notion which rules out helping in pursuit of immoral ends or by immoral means. In this sense of ‘need’, a thief does not *need* help even if they cannot lift the painting on their own, and the mover does not *need* help if the only way to aid is to steal a forklift. Sympathy instead is morally infused such that the moral exemplar can only achieve the object of the motive if the actions in question are permissible. Of course, there might be remainders in difficult cases. The doctor who must let a patient die because the only dose of the cure has been allocated to another patient also in dire straits will wish to do more and feel resignation and frustration at the lack of options. These are the affective residue of a motive, infused with moral content, which is also essentially volitional and so in this case is inefficacious because the action in question is inappropriate.

In the better case, though, a subject acts from a sympathetic motive because the other person is in need. To so act just is acting from the motive of duty because it has shaped and formed the content of the sympathetic motive. Motivation by duty and sympathy, then, are not mutually exclusive. The moral exemplar instead acts from a morally infused sympathetic motive bound up with the motive of duty. So there is no in principle incompatibility with acting from the motive of duty and from other motives when it comes to actions with moral worth because to act from other motives, in their mature and correct form, just is in part to act from the motive of duty.

3.4 A caveat before I continue with this argument. I write as if these motives are simply functioning within the subject, which might seem odd given the Kantian emphasis on our freedom and certain contemporary understandings of it in terms of a certain independence from our affective selves. For example, a canonical way to express our freedom is in terms of the metaphor of our ability to ‘step back’ from our inclinations to decide whether they in fact give us reasons to act (Korsgaard 1996, 93; McDowell 2010, 6). Such an account might seem incompatible with the idea that moral action can be action from a motive, however understood.

While I do not doubt that we have this reflective ability, I do not think that it is essential to acting freely or in the way characteristic of a rational animal. What characterizes us is the ability to act on a rational basis appreciated as such, which we can do in reflective

modes but also in engaged modes (Boyle 2011; Fix 2021, 655-6; Moran 2022). What characterizes moral actions is that we act on the proper rational basis. Our motives, such as the motive of duty, are in effect the dispositions to act which constitute my character or, what is the same thing, the state of development of my will (Fix MS<sub>B</sub>, §5). In the moral exemplar, this state of development involves the unity of all other motives with the motive of duty and thus involves a disposition to always act only as is morally permissible. As dispositions of the will and so dispositions to act on certain types of rational bases, these states are tendencies to notice certain facts and act on them. That is why the “proper shaping of desires and emotions (since they too consist partly in distinctive patterns of evaluative attention) is the way in which sensuously affected rational agents—or, more to the point, humans—come to have praiseworthy maxims” (Brewer 2002, 567). There is thus no conflict with these motives playing certain functional roles in our psychology and our freedom in action. Indeed, free action and action from these motives are one and the same—the exercise of the dispositions which constitute my character or, what is the same thing, of the state of development of my will.

#### **4. The motive of duty and action out of intimacy.**

In this section, I explain what the motive of duty is a motive to do. I then show not only that acting from it is compatible acting out of intimacy but that action out of intimacy without duty violates the strictures of the moral and intimate relationships between the individuals, and on the same grounds. In the next section, I broaden my discussion to the intimate relationship itself rather than specific actions within such relationships.

4.1 I have not yet discussed what the motive of duty is a motive to do. Different ethical theories will fill it in differently given how they construe the function of morality, which will lead to different versions of the puzzle about the relationship between morality and intimacy.

Kantians say that the function of morality is to secure our independence. As the basis of our moral agency and patiency is our possessing practical reason, this function requires us to permit each other to develop and exercise that capacity without undue interference. We must not unnecessarily muck up our pursuits.

A full account of the function of morality is unnecessary for this essay. I shall

emphasize three aspects which matter for the account of the relationship between intimacy and morality. First, with respect to an action of yours, I must not unnecessarily hinder you. If you are climbing a mountain, I cannot throw barrels at you from the top, cannot water the route so it turns to mud, and cannot otherwise try to disrupt your ascent. Second, with respect to that action, while I must not hinder you, I need not help you.<sup>8</sup> So long as I stay out of your way, I can go about my life. Third, with respect to that action, if I wish to help, I may do so only if you agree. After all, it is your action, and if you wish to climb without aid or advice, for me to do so would hinder you. It would undermine your authority to pursue your ends as you choose, at least so long as your doing so does not undermine the same ability of anyone else. On the flip-side, you cannot demand my help, at least so long as you are not in dire straits. It would undermine my authority to pursue my ends as I choose, at least so long as my doing so does not undermine the same ability of anyone else. To use the language from earlier, whereas according to consequentialism, I must do good for you, according to Kantianism, I may do good for you only if it is compatible with doing right by you, and I can permissibly not do good for you if not doing so is compatible with doing right by you.

So with respect to this action, you and I have equal discretion over whether and how we interact. If either of us decide against interacting, we must not, though we still must avoid hindering each other. If we decide to interact, though, we can do so in ways agreeable to both of us. Maybe I can offer you advice about how to navigate a tricky pass but cannot continue with you further. Maybe I can climb with you and carry your pack for part of the journey. It is up to our equal discretion, then, not only whether we interact but how.

Why I wish to interact with you and why you wish to interact with me does not matter. Maybe we are both hiking enthusiasts and want to share our passion. Maybe we are intrigued by each other. Whatever the case, we must respect our say so over whether and how we interact. In effect, we must acknowledge that we will interact if and only, and in part because, we each consent to it because the function of morality is to secure independence and we establish and express independence through exercises of practical reason.

Given that account of the function of morality, the motive of duty is a motive to

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8. I do not mean that I am never required to help. Generally, we must help others secure the goods, skills, and freedom constitutive of, contingently necessary for, or otherwise importantly contributory to their independence from others. An account of these positive duties and their basis in the Kantian account of morality, though, is unnecessary for this essay because the intimate relationships of interest are discretionary.

secure that independence and thus to respect exercises of practical reason. It is a motive to recognize and respect that you have say over whether we interact as do I and that I treat your say so as a necessary condition on my so acting with respect to you. To take your consent as a necessary condition on my so interacting with you need not prohibit other interest in the interaction anymore than taking the lack of meat as a necessary condition on my eating a meal prohibits having other interest in the meal. It only requires that those other motives are informed by the motive of duty in the psychology of the moral exemplar.

Since we only imperfectly realize integration of other motives with the motive of duty, we are imperfectly virtuous or, what is the same, partially vicious. Such are the perils of finitude. Still, imperfection is no excuse for immorality. For me to override your authority and disregard your refusal of consent would be for me to do wrong by you as for you to do the same to me would be for you to do wrong by me. Indeed, even if you consent, for me to be so motivated to aid that your refusal of consent would not make a difference would be for me to do wrong by you. The same variation as before, wherein the motive is held stable and yet whether I act as I should changes with variations of the non-morally relevant facts or fails to change with variations in the morally relevant facts, is possible. Once again, the problem is that I fail to act on the proper rational basis because the motive of duty does not fully realize its role in my psychology.

For me to act properly with respect to you, then, is for you to act properly with respect to me because it is for each of us to acknowledge our discretion over whether and how we interact. To be clear, I do not mean that my only concern about you in intimate interaction is with whether you wish to interact with me in some way. The moral exemplar also concerns themselves with what is good for their intimates as they concern themselves with what is good for themselves. Although what is good for us sometimes depends on what we will, it does not in general (Fix 2023). Yet my concern for your good must be tempered by my acknowledgment of your independence from me and so your discretionary authority over whether and how I interact with you, including whether and how I assist you in pursuit of what is good for you (Ebels-Duggan 2008). If you do not wish for me to involve myself, I cannot permissibly do what is good for you. The motive of duty is the motive to so acknowledge each other and so to establish and express our independence through exercises of practical reason in which whether we interact and, if so, how depends on whether we each

will to do so. It is the motive that takes proper interaction as its object.

4.2 That discussion is about particular interactions between you and me. Interpersonal relationship, including intimate ones, constitutively involve interactions. Just try it without them. So the same points apply to specific actions within intimate relationships.

Consider interactions which embody different ways the motive of duty might stand with respect to a sexual motive:

VICE. Your partner wants to have sex. They lack the motive of duty. So they can satisfy their sexual motive absent your consent, and it does not dissipate when consent is refused. This person is bad. Even if you consent, action from this motive is not a paradigm of action out of intimacy because they do not acknowledge your discretion over the interaction.

INCONTINENCE. Your partner wants to have sex. They have an independent motive of duty which is not strong enough to put an end to the motive force of their sexual motive. So they can satisfy their sexual motive absent your consent, and it does not dissipate when consent is refused, though another motive conflicts with it and produces tension without putting an end to its motive force. This person is better but still bad. Even if you consent, action from this set of motives is not a paradigm of action out of intimacy because they do not acknowledge your discretion over the interaction.

CONTINENCE. Your partner wants to have sex. They also have an independent motive of duty which is strong enough to put an end to the motive force of their sexual motive. So they can satisfy their sexual motive absent your consent, and it does not dissipate on its own when consent is refused, though another motive conflicts with it and keeps them from acting on it. This person is better but still imperfect. Action from this set of motives is not a paradigm of action out of intimacy even though they acknowledge your discretion over the interaction because they still partially relate to you in a improper way.

VIRTUE. Your partner wants to have sex. Their motive of duty has been integrated with their sexual motive. So they cannot satisfy their sexual motive absent your consent, and it dissipates on its own when consent is refused. This person is good, and acting from this motive is a paradigm of action out of intimacy because it acknowledges your discretion over the interaction and they in no way relate to you improperly.

In the first two cases, the motive of duty lacks all characteristics of its role in the psychology of the moral exemplar. These vicious and incontinent intimates are bad persons and bad intimates. They act immorally and in a way which betrays their partner just as a person who acts as would a friend but out of self-interest is a fraud and betrays your relationship with them. You fail to register for them as a subject with discretion over the interaction. To the extent that this action is from intimacy, it is a compromised and imperfect form recognizable only because of its slight resemblance to a true action out of intimacy. They do not look *over* to you in the right way.

In the third case, the motive of duty lacks its third aspect, which is the full realization of the first two. The continent intimate is good though not fully virtuous and is a good though not perfect intimate. They act morally and in a way which reveals that they are a true intimate just as someone who only goes for a walk with you on the condition that you agree acts as a true friend. Within the context of the action, you register for them as a subject with equal discretion over your interaction. Still, they are imperfect. They are moved towards action even though they recognize its inappropriateness—they want to have sex with you regardless of your lack of consent, though they are able to control themselves given their independent motive of duty. Someone who wants sex and could get what they want even without the consent of the other party has a vice which compromises them not merely morally but also as a lover. Even if we cannot blame or condemn them so long as they do not act on that motive, we can criticize their character. Indeed, were you to learn of this motive, you might wonder about how they understand you and your relationship with them. They are flawed, though not vicious or even bad.

In contrast, in the fourth case, the motive of duty has all characteristics of its role in the psychology of the moral exemplar. It shapes and informs the content of the sexual desire. The virtuous intimate acts with you well as a person and an intimate. They act morally and in

a way which reveals that they are a true intimate just as someone who takes your interest into account equal to theirs when discussing which film to see acts as a true friend. Within the context of the action, you register for them as a subject with discretion over the interaction. Unlike the continent intimate, though, this respect infuses the content of their sexual motive. If you refuse consent, they will not act on that motive because they cannot get what they want, from the standpoint of that motive. In the same way, a desire for something sweet does not move me to act when I realize that the Jam Roly-Poly in front of me is plastic because I cannot get what I want, from the standpoint of that desire. Someone who wants sex but cannot get what they want without the consent of their partner is, with respect to that aspect of their character, virtuous and beyond criticism in deed and character.

In the virtuous intimate, the motive of duty does not 'silence' the sexual motive. That is how it works in the continent intimate. The motive of duty is instead so bound up with the sexual motive and, in the perfectly virtuous person, all others that there is no countervailing voice to silence. Of course, the sexual motive might persist in some form. Perhaps they long for someone who wants them back, and perhaps they opt to otherwise find sexual satisfaction. Perhaps they are simply sad at the refusal, and maybe they worry about their sexual desirability. It will not, though, continue to impel the virtuous intimate to interact in the denied way. They will not pester their partner, mope in a way which implies that they have been refused something to which they have a rightful claim, or otherwise act so as to respect in letter but not in spirit the refusal of consent, as the continent intimate might if their character flaws find expression.

This account solves a puzzle which exercised Kant about the permissibility of acting on sexual desire. Sexual desire can seem to take another human being as an object to be used in order to satiate that desire as hunger seems to take an apple, say, as object to be eaten to satiate that a desire for food. Indeed, in vicious, incontinent, and continent intimates, sexual desire relates to you as an object without relating to you in the way distinctive and characteristic of a relationship between human beings. It is not that they think of you as a mere object and not a subject at all. That would be to attribute to them a confusion on the order of thinking you were a sex doll and not a human being. It is instead that from the standpoint of their sexual motive, they are indifferent to the distinctive aspects of your subjectivity which distinguish your moral patiency from that of the other animals for whom



consent and its refusal are impossible. The vicious, incontinent, and continent intimates thus regard you as sexually delectable, at least from the standpoint of the motive which prompts their interest in interacting with you sexually.

The virtuous intimate, though, incorporates in sexual desire the interpersonal and reciprocal aspect of an appropriate moral and intimate relationship. Only in them is the exercise of the discretion of the other person part of the object desired rather than absent entirely, as in the vicious intimate, or present because of an independent motive, as in the incontinent and continent intimates. So only in them is the act, and their character expressed and established in that act, without flaw because the motive of duty so thoroughly informs their sexual motive.

Such complete incorporation is an ideal to which we aspire even if we are unlikely to ever achieve and even if achievement needs constant vigilance to maintain. It is possible, though. We need only think about how hunger never prompts us to consider eating each other except in the most dire of straits. We are almost all of us virtuous when it comes to our gustatory desires in relationship to other humans. It is more difficult in human relationships to recognize the equal authority of the other, but it is possible. Indeed, it is part of the nature of these types of relationships and so part of the standard by which particular relationships of these types are good or bad, perfect or imperfect, as such.<sup>9</sup> That is why they are interpersonal relationships and not merely convenient opportunities for exploitation and ravaging for the sake of personal enrichment.

4.3 Given this account of what the motive of duty is a motive to do and of its role in the psychology of the moral exemplar, motivation by it is compatible with, and indeed essential to, motivation out of direct personal concern. Indeed, it is only through motivation by it that I look *over* to you in the relevant sense because it is the motive in which I acknowledge that you are an independent person with discretion over our interaction. Without it, I will be open to your dominating me or my dominating you, neither of which are appropriate intimate interactions. With it, I am open to interacting with you if and only if, and because, we each will to so interact with each other. If you are likewise open to interacting with me on those conditions, we interact as equals jointly authoring our action together.

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9. Compare (Korsgaard 1989, 194-6).

While subordination and domination can involve forms of violence or coercive control, they also need not be anything extreme or dramatic. The lover who treats their beloved as if they are to be coddled and doted upon like a child or to be admired and appraised like an artwork subordinates the other as does the one who bullies and dismisses and abuses. A friend who always makes decisions about what to eat and what film to see dominates the other as much as a friend who always belittles and mocks. While the severity of the wrong varies with the severity of the mistreatment, the basis of the wrong is the same. That basis is that the partners do not express and establish through their conduct the equal say so of all involved in the interaction. They do not acknowledge our independence and discretion over whether and how we interact.

The moral exemplar, then, does not relate to their intimates primarily as a moral subject and only secondarily as particular individuals in particular intimate relationships with them because to relate to you as an intimate just is in part to relate to you as a moral subject. It just is in part to relate to you as another person, which just is in part to relate to you morally, at least when done well. Intimate interactions are interpersonal interactions, and the motive of duty just is the motive to express and establish our independence such that we interact as separate persons. Not only is there no conflict between acting from duty and acting from affection, but acting from affection without duty shaping it is incompatible with true acts of intimacy. Indeed, an intimate interaction is imperfect to the extent that and because the subjects do not interact with each other as moral subjects, not merely on standard of evaluation with respect to the moral relationship between them but on one with respect to the intimate relationship between them. That is not the only type of failure within intimacy, but it is a central type.

This account of the functional role of the motive of duty in the psychology of the moral exemplar responds to the a recent worry pressed against Kantians that their account of the motive of duty is inappropriately self-regarding (Tarasenko-Struc 2020; Samuel forthcoming). The worry is that Kantians think that the ‘the source of normativity’ is the individual will of the moral agent, the moral patient will only appear as part of the context which explains their duty, not as a originating source of claims on the moral agent. Whether this criticism applies to the type of Kantian Constructivism which is its intended target, though, it does not make sense as against my account of the motive of duty. The moral agent

and patient are equally the source of the normative relationship between them, including the basic mandatory moral relationship between them and any further discriminatory intimate relationship between them. The motive of duty is about maintaining the equal discretionary authority essential to those types of relationships and so normative for tokens of those types. Each is equal authority for the other, and equal must acknowledge and establish that authority through interaction with the other. That is what it is for each to be originating sources of claims on the other.

## **5. Moral relationships and intimate relationships.**

5.1 That discussion is about specific actions within the context of intimate relationships. Parallel points apply about the relationships themselves. After all, you do not just happen to be in an interpersonal relationships such as friendship or romance as you can just happen to be in a spatial relationship such as being to the right of me or a temporal relationship such as being younger than me. Whether we are in an interpersonal relationship, and so whether we are in an intimate relationship, and, if so, the contours of that relationship depend on our willingness to stand in it, again when all goes well. To the extent that they do not, the relationship is bad morally and as a token of that type of relationship.

Consider first the question of whether to enter or exit an intimate relationship. Although the question usually only comes up explicitly in romantic relationships, we have discretionary authority over friendships and all the rest of them as well. I may not conscript you as a friend any more than I may conscript you as a romantic partner. Nor may you me. Certainly, some refusals to enter a relationship are prudential mistakes and do something bad for the other as well. Perhaps, though I doubt it, you can do wrong by me by refusing to enter into an intimate relationship with me. Regardless, it is up to you as it is to me whether we enter such a relationship, and your refusal would be verdictive as would mine.

Similarly, I may not hold you hostage in a relationship. To 'reject' your attempt to break up with me, say, would be to do wrong by you by taking you to lack the discretionary authority over our relationship which I claim for myself in this rejection. It would be to subordinate your authority to mine and to dominate you. To recognize your equal authority, though, just is to relate to you morally.

Of course, few our of intimate relationships, except most commonly at the beginning

and end of a romantic relationship, involve explicit discussion about their status or their contours. Still, this form of negotiation, with the requisite recognition of our reciprocal authority over the relationship, is part and parcel of ordinary interaction. Take a developing friendship. Perhaps we have been spending more time with each other. While in the past, we stuck to professional topics, we have begun to chat about other aspects of our lives. Still, we have not known each other for long, and I am unclear what topics are within bounds. I can just outright ask you a question about them—‘Are you in an open relationship?’, ‘Do you never go home for the holidays because you do not like your family?’, ‘Why did you two break up, and how are you moving on?’, and so on.<sup>10</sup> I can instead talk about these types of things in my own life with the implication that I am open to hearing about them in yours. Or I can just ask you whether you want to talk about these types of things, thereby expressing consent to this type of conversation and soliciting yours. All might work, at least in the context in which you know that you have the right to respond to my direct questions with ‘I would prefer not to talk about that stuff’. All also involve the risks of overstepping, of indicating I wish for more intimacy than you wish to return, and all the rest of the vulnerabilities brought on by the whirl of life together with other humans. In these ways and more, in conversation and otherwise, we negotiate the contours of our relationship, offering and accepting or rejecting, opening up and shutting down, drifting closer and pulling away, vulnerable to each other because we each have equal say so over our relationship.

To not recognize this discretion would be to violate the relationship under negotiation. To continually bring up topics which you have refused to discuss with me, to offer advice where you have clearly indicated aversion to hearing it, and otherwise to force upon you aspects of a relationship which you do not wish to have with me would be to wrong you not only morally but also in the context of our relationship. It would be to be a bad friend or lover as well as a bad person, and on the same grounds.

So intimate relationships, not merely the actions within them, are not merely compatible with moral relationships but indeed only properly formed when they embody an appropriate moral relationship. After all, they are interpersonal relationships if they are

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10. See (Berstler 2023) for an argument that ‘nosy’ questions can wrong when answering them perforce reveals information you would prefer to keep private. I think that there is no fool-proof way to navigate these issues. Any entreaty to deeper intimacy runs the risk of refusal and rejection, with both sides potentially left with a question about whether and, if so, how to continue with the relationship, as is or in a modified form.

anything, and interactions with an intimate are interactions with an independent person with equal say so. We might think that we transcend morality in them, but we must not if we are to avoid liability to domination and subordination. These relationships, in their proper form, involve recognizing our equal discretion over the nature of and conduct within our relationship. They thus are in effect specific determinations of the generic moral relationship. They embody its form, at least when they do not degenerate into submission and domination. Put otherwise, our fundamental relationship to each other is the moral relationship of one individual to another, each with equal discretion over our interaction expressed and established in and through that interaction.

Proper intimate relationships involve exercising that discretion with each other in specific, long-term ways, which are themselves up to our discretion to determine in the conduct of that relationship. They are discretion in a way the moral relationship is not in that we can decide to enter and exit them and cannot be conscripted into them. They are optional. The moral relationship is not. That, though, does not put them in conflict with the moral relationship between us because they are not something other than the moral relationship but the specific shape that relationship takes in this specific case given how each of us wishes to relate to the other. Put otherwise, morality is the form of interpersonal relationships, and interpersonal relationships are specific optional determinations of the generic obligatory moral relationship. While it is up to us whether we relate to each other in any way deeper than the moral relationship, it is not up to us whether we stand in that relationship, and we cannot revoke or qualify it in our discretionary intimate relationship.

I thus agree with Adrian Piper that far from being the source of interpersonal alienation, the proper integration of the motive of duty is in fact the remedy for a certain characteristic moral malady which is the genuine cause of much interpersonal alienation. She calls the form of moral perversity in question *narcissism*, which she defines as a

persisting state of the self characterized by an excessive preoccupation with one's self-image and image in the eyes of others, with one's personal flaws and assets and an unrealistic ideal of perfection against which they are measured, and with a self-oriented conception of one's relationship to others. Moreover, a self is narcissistic if it cannot tolerate others' independence of its expectations and requirements, nor appreciate their

independence as intrinsically valuable. Finally, a self is narcissistic if these preoccupations effectively shield it against unmediated interpersonal vulnerability or contact, and against the trauma of personal growth that frequently results.

(Piper 1987, 108)

Narcissism can come in types common in everyday life or in the type of moral fetishism familiar in ethical theory in which a subject is unduly concerned with their own moral purity and insufficiently concerned with other human beings and other moral patients.

The solution to this malady is not a flight from modern morality or a restriction of it to a circumscribed domain but instead a fuller realization of it within our functional psychology. Piper defines “a *morally integrated agent* as, very roughly, one whose dispositions, prescribed by her moral theory, are sufficiently deeply instilled, preferably in the normal process of socialization, as to be motivationally effective most of the time” (ibid. 117). Given the Kantian account of the function of morality, such dispositions will involve, most centrally, the readiness to engage with others on terms of acknowledged equality as each of you will to engage. Such a disposition expresses itself through us forming “relationships ... that elicit mutual trust, affection, respect” when all goes well, not accidentally but in part out of a concern for acknowledging and establishing the independence between us necessary for those types of relationships to not become forms of subordination or domination as they might in the case of the narcissist (ibid.). It is a way of being with you by interacting with you and doing right by you as you interact with and do right by me. Far from alienating us from each other, it is the condition of us being together in the relevant sense at all. Indeed, the integration of the motive of duty with other motives explains how the embodiment of moral theory in the psychology of the moral exemplar explains how unity of independent individuals through the exercise of our wills is possible not only without extinguishing our personal concern but in fact in and through the development and expression of that concern.

## **6. Intimacy and morality in the good human life.**

Since morality and intimacy are essential to the good human life, they must fit together on pain of consigning us to immorality or isolation. Since both are about our relationships to each other, they must fit together not merely in that it is possible to have both as part of a life

but in that it is possible to stand in both relationships with one person simultaneously. Otherwise, we must choose, in a specific case, whether to relate as moral subjects or as intimates, and again the options present as either immorality or isolation. An account of the good human life cannot consign us to either vice or loneliness.

Morality, on the Kantian account of its function, does not corrupt or preclude intimacy. It is partially constitutive of appropriate intimacy because to relate to another morally just is to relate to them as an independent individual with equal discretion over our interaction. A moral person does not relate to their intimates first as a moral subject and only then as an intimate because to relate to you as an intimate just is in part to relate to you as a moral subject. To embody in my motives the moral relationship and its significance, far from precluding intimate relationships, is a constitutive condition of any of them. To not do so is to be in principle open to forms of domination and subordination which are not only immoral but are corrupt forms of intimacy.

To relate to you morally is not to look *into* myself, as if my basic concern is my moral character, or to look *up* to the moral law, as if my basic concern the law. It is to look *over* to you, as my basic concern is to express and establish our independence through recognizing and realizing our equal discretion over our interaction. It is to look to you as to relate to you intimately is to look to you because intimate relationships are interpersonal relationships and morality is the form of interpersonal relationships. In each, I acknowledge that what we get up to together depends on each of us willing to so interact. Although morality is mandatory and intimacy is option, both involve the same joint authority over whether and how we interact. Morality thus cannot preclude intimacy because it is the form of which every appropriate intimate relationship is a specific determination.

This account does not explain whether morality conflicts with intimacy in practice rather than in principle. It says nothing about whether and how to factor in questions about justice and interpersonal morality across different people, including those with whom we stand in no more intimate interpersonal relationship than the moral one. Still, as principle proceeds practice, to understand whether morality and intimacy can fit together into the moral life requires us to first understand how the standards for these relationships concord in a single relationship between two individuals before we worry about how they fit together across multiples relationships between multiple individuals.

Morality does not corrupt proper intimacy, then, nor does proper intimacy corrupt morality. Moral respect does not rule out intimate personal concern as intimate personal concern does not rule out moral respect because moral respect just is to relate to you as another person and direct personal concern just is in part to relate to you as another person. Morality thus does not corrupt intimacy in principle because moral standards specify the form of any appropriate interpersonal relationship. Moral relationships are obligatory because we must treat all of us as independent individuals with equal say so over whether and how we interact. Intimate relationships are discretionary because we may exercise that authority as each of us decide in determining the nature and contours of our particular relationship. Intimacy without morality thus does not merit the name because it would be a form of subordination and domination of those party to the relationship.



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