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Love, Friendship and Moral Motivation

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Abstract

The love that we feel for our friends plays an essential role in both our moral motivation to act towards them; and in our moral obligations towards them, that is, in our special duties. We articulate our proposal as a reply to Stephen Darwall's second-person proposal, which we take to be a contemporary representative of the Kantian view. According to this view, love does not have a necessary role neither in moral motivation, nor in moral obligation; just a complementary one. Yet this proposal faces three difficulties: a psychological problem, a practical problem, and a theoretical problem. In contrast, we argue that both moral motivation, and moral obligations emerge from our interpersonal relations with particular others. We further argue that obligations in the context of friendship are moral because they come with a feeling of obligation and have been internalized. Thus, the three problems raised to the Kantian position are clarified, and the role of love is emphasized in both our moral motivation, and our moral obligations towards friends.

Keywords: Friendship; moral motivation; moral obligations; special duties; second-person standpoint

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Public Significance Statements

Contrary to the Kantian approach, which strongly separates love from morality, we defend that the love that we feel for our friends plays a crucial role in morality. We feel motivated to act towards our friends differently than we do towards strangers; and we have moral obligations towards them which are different than moral obligations as traditionally described.

Declarations

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“It is the time you have wasted for your rose that
makes your rose so important”

(Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, *The Little Prince*)

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In the middle of her morning news show, the journalist Robin stands up, picks up her stuff and hastily leaves. She has received a call telling her that her friend Ted just had a traffic accident and is at hospital by himself. Watching this scene from the sitcom ‘How I Met Your Mother’, we as the audience assent, consider that as a valid reason, and approve her action. She feels that she cannot but go; it is her friend, she *ought* to go. The fact that a person that she loves is in trouble moves her; and it also counts as a valid reason for her to abandon her work responsibilities. Furthermore, we would consider it morally reproachable if she decided to stay despite her friend’s need of help. This is indeed what happens with another character who decides to stay at his appointment meeting. Were Robin to act like this, her friends would feel resentment towards her, and she would probably feel remorse, and guilt.

There are two aspects worth considering in cases like this one: a motivational, and a normative one. Regarding the motivational aspect, Robin leaves because she feels strongly motivated to help her friend Ted. We are not surprised by her reaction, because we can expect it given the situation, and the tight bond between them. Regarding the normative

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aspect, the fact that Robin's friend is in trouble counts for her as an overriding reason to evade her responsibility to host the news show. We also consider it a valid reason, one that justifies her behavior. The fact that her friend is in trouble both motivates and justifies Robin's leaving the set.

The question that arises from cases like this is: why does Robin have both a motivation and a justification to help her friend in need? The first reply that comes to mind is "because Robin loves her friend", that is, both her moral motivation and her moral obligation have to do with the relationship between her and her friend. In these scenarios, by "love" we mean a minimal notion of interpersonal love, understood as an affective state directed at another person for the sake of being *that* person. In Greek terms, this kind of love is referred to as *philia*; which originally referred to the affectionate regard we have towards friends, family members, business partners, and even a country (Helm, 2013). This is the kind of love which is at stake in our relationships with our siblings, our family relatives and, importantly, our friends¹.

In this sense, love is constitutive of our interpersonal relationships with others, and it has both a motivational and a justificatory force. However, not everybody agrees on this interpretation about moral motivation, and moral obligation. For example, a distinguished view originating in Kant says that although Robin loves her friend, what should motivate her to act is her sense of duty, and not her love for Ted; and that what justifies her

¹ Notice that this notion of love is different from a kind of universal love to humankind, such as sympathy, compassion, or concern. Claims about the moral function of such a kind of love have already been made (Blum, 2010; Held, 2006; Nagel, 1970; Noddings, 2010; Slote, 1999), and the classical Greek term related to that would not be *philia*, but *agape*.

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behavior is that it derives from the moral law, not that she is acting out of love. Kantians especially insist on this separation between the domain of duty, and the domain of love.

In this paper, we ask ourselves whether the love we feel for our friends² plays any role in either our moral motivation to act towards them; or in our moral obligations towards them, that is, in our special duties³. Contrary to the Kantian approach, we argue that love plays an essential role in both. We articulate our proposal as a reply to Stephen Darwall's second-person proposal, which we take to be a contemporary representative of the Kantian view. In section 2, we briefly consider Kant's view to spell out its continuities and discontinuities with Darwall's view. According to the Kantian view, love does not have a necessary role neither in moral motivation, nor in moral obligation; just a complementary one. In section 3, we raise three difficulties for this view: a psychological problem, a practical problem, and a theoretical problem. We develop each of these problems in sections 5, 6 and 7, respectively. In section 8, we defend that both moral motivation, and moral obligation emerge from our interpersonal relations with particular others. In section 9, we further argue for our claim that obligations in the context of friendship are moral, as they come with a feeling of obligation, and have been internalized. Thus, the three problems raised to the Kantian position are clarified, and the role of love is emphasized in both our moral motivation, and our moral obligations towards friends.

Moral Motivation, Moral Obligation, and Love in Kant's Picture

²For the ease of the discourse, we will only talk about friends. However, the same reasoning applies to siblings, partners, relatives and the like, as far as we love them as we love our closest friends.

³In the literature, the duties or obligations that stem from a particular relationship have been called "special duties", or "special obligations" (Jeske, 2014). We indistinctively use "special duties", "special obligations" or even "moral obligations towards friends".

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In *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* (1785), in *Critique of Practical Reason* (1788), and in *The Metaphysics of Morals* (1797), Kant does not envision another necessary source of proper moral motivation than the feeling of respect; neither does he envision another source of moral obligation than universalizability. According to Kant, we humans should feel motivated to act morally because of the feeling of respect (5:73, 75); and we are justified to do it, that is, we must do it, if and only if the maxim we are acting upon is universalizable (4:421). In other words, under the ideal of moral perfection, motivation is supposed to flow from justification of obligation.

In more detail, in the Kantian framework, moral motivation should be the result of a twofold intellectual process: the awareness of the moral law; and the drive to act according to it. As for the awareness of the moral law, i.e., our moral duty, it should take place through the practical dimension of the pure reason; through what Kant calls “the fact of reason” (5:31). According to Kant, the mere recognition of the moral law should be sufficient to motivate the holy will to act morally (5:32). Yet even Kant was aware that in non-holy wills the awareness of the moral law might not be enough. As pathologically affected wills, we humans are moved by our subjective desires (4:454). Our natural inclinations do not always follow the verdicts of reason; therefore, we need a drive that motivates us to act according to those verdicts. We find this second aspect of moral motivation in the feeling of respect. Due to the moral feeling of respect for the moral law (5:75), we are aware of the greater value of the moral law, in comparison to our happiness, and feel motivated to act accordingly. Thus, both the awareness of the moral law, and the

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drive to act according to it through the feeling of respect motivate us to act morally, in Kant's account.

Despite his idealistic project, Kant acknowledged that humans might come short of the ideal of morality that he drew, and hence accepted that human morality might not be ideal. Kant understood that, in the case of humans, the awareness of the moral law and the feeling of respect might not be strong enough to make us humans act according to what we are justified to do. Because of the limits of humans' moral capacity, he realized that sometimes we end up doing what is correct because of other motivations, or "moral endowments" (6:399), such as "moral feeling, conscience, love of one's neighbor, and respect for oneself (self-esteem)" (6:399). One of those motivations is love or, as Kant called it, "mutual love" (6:449), "love of one's neighbor" (6:399) or "benevolence" (5:82).

According to Kant, love has an indirect or secondary role in moral motivation: it is part of those "subjective conditions in human nature that [...] help [people] in fulfilling the laws of a metaphysics of morals" (6:217). It is one of those "moral endowments" (6:399) which make us feel motivated to act morally. However, as love is capricious, changeable, transitory, and biased; it is unreliable as a moral motive (6:470). Therefore, according to Kant, love has a role in moral motivation, but it is just a compensatory one. It can make us do the right thing when the sense of duty, or the feeling of respect, fails to properly motivate us to act morally (shame on us); but it is neither sufficient, nor necessary for moral motivation.

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Neither does love ground moral obligation; that I love somebody is not the kind of reason that can make helping her the right thing to do. When acting out of love, I am acting based on partiality, and self-interest; because “love is not anxious about any inner refusal of the will toward the law” (5:84). Consequently, according to Kant, Robin’s justification to help her friend is not that her friend is involved but rather that it is someone who needs her. The maxim of helping a person in need might be a universalizable one which derives from the moral law. Being aware of this justification should move her to help her friend. Only if this motivation fails, love can help so that the right thing is carried out after all.

Moral Motivation, Moral Obligation and Love in Darwall’s picture

Stephen Darwall’s proposal is particularly relevant in this discussion. He is a representative of a contemporary Kantian proposal (Darwall, 2009), and he focuses especially on relations, interactions and emotions (Darwall, 2013, 2016, 2017, 2019; Dill & Darwall, 2014). His proposal might be interpreted as an attempt to integrate the sentimentalist impartial spectator within the Kantian framework (Isern-Mas & Gomila, 2020). Hence his relevance in the matter of morality, and friendship.

In *The Second Person Standpoint* (2006), Stephen Darwall reinterprets the Kantian morality from the second-person standpoint. The second-person standpoint is “the perspective you and I take when we make and acknowledge claims on one another’s conduct and will” (Darwall, 2006, p.3). The paradigmatic example of such a perspective is the one where a person steps on someone’s foot. The person whose foot has been stepped on has a claim; they can hold the other accountable. The person who stepped on the others’ foot has the

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responsibility to comply with the legitimate demand of the other. Both the right to demand, and the responsibility to comply come from the awareness that any member of the moral community would endorse such dynamics. According to Darwall, it is this perspective which is at the core of most of our moral notions, such as moral motivation or moral obligation. Consequently, Darwall grounds both moral motivation and moral obligation not in the individual awareness of the moral law, as usual in the Kantian position, but in the intersubjective dynamics of accountability. As we will see in this section, according to Darwall, we are both motivated and justified to act morally because we are aware of what others, and we ourselves, can hold us accountable for not doing. The role of love is not necessary in these dynamics, and therefore it is not necessary for moral motivation, neither for moral obligation.

Darwall also follows Kant in his understanding of love as a kind of beneficence, yet he gives an interpretation of it based on the second-person standpoint. According to Darwall (2006), love is a second-personal phenomenon. It takes place in interpersonal relationships; it gives reasons to act; it is addressed to persons; it seeks reciprocity; it implies certain duties and expectations; and it presupposes a second-personal relationship between the interactive parties. Love, as an attitude of the heart, is part of “that aspect of the human psyche through which we are heartened or disheartened, inspired or deflated, encouraged or discouraged, filled with hope and joy or deflated with despair, emptiness, or sadness” (Darwall, 2017). It helps bonding and seeks reciprocity. Therefore, both Kant and Darwall see love as an affective attitude that can be directed at any person for the sake of being a person.

Love and Moral Motivation in Darwall's picture

Darwall takes the rational individual deliberation that Kant proposes and interprets it in terms of the second-person theory. In Kant's account of the fact of reason, we come to recognize the moral law through moral deliberation and, consequently, we recognize our autonomy as lawgiving wills. However, according to Darwall (2009), this "deliberative standpoint alone" (p. 148) only gives us reasons to act according to the moral law, but it does not explain its motivational force: "the most that (first-personal) practical presupposition arguments can show is that a deliberating agent must treat the moral law (and the dignity of persons) as normative reasons for compliance" (p.142). According to Darwall, when these reasons are seen as intersubjective demands, they get an additional authority on us because we feel the responsibility they involve, i.e., we feel accountable or answerable for non-compliance. Hence Darwall's project of the second-person standpoint.

Indeed, moral motivation is defined as "an intrinsic desire to comply with moral demands to which one may be legitimately held accountable, or equivalently, to comply with one's moral obligations" (Dill & Darwall, 2014, p.14). Consequently, he explains moral motivation as a consequence of an implicit understanding of the practice of holding others accountable. The moral subject feels the sense of duty, and it is motivated by it, because he is aware of the possibility of being held accountable, even by himself, if he fails to act morally without excuse (Darwall, 2006). This awareness needs not to be explicit, and it can be implicit in the subjects' emotions, or "reactive attitudes" (Strawson, 1974), such as guilt, remorse or indignation.

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Accordingly, what makes the difference for Robin between staying at the set and helping her friend Ted is that she acknowledges what we, and other members of the moral community including herself, would have the authority to demand that she so behave. If she stayed at the set, she would consider our indignation, and Ted's resentment justified. According to Darwall, Robin's moral motivation comes from her second-personal reasoning about what she could justifiably be held accountable for not doing. Hence, moral motivation emerges from accountability, but not from love.

Darwall follows Kant in that love has a complementary role for moral motivation; and that love is neither sufficient nor necessary for moral motivation. Yet Darwall has a more detailed justification for that position based on the difference between respect, and love. According to Darwall (2016), the key difference between the feelings of love and respect is that they are differently related to accountability, and hence they have different roles in moral motivation. Respect is part of the realm of mutual accountability, whereas love is part of the realm of mutual openness. In Darwall's view, love mediates forms of personal attachment and connection that are not essentially deontic; that is, it takes place in relationships where justification does not have an essential role.

For instance, when I resent the person who is skipping in the line, I implicitly demand apologies from that person. By feeling resentment, I hold that person accountable, and ask from that person a recognition of my claim; and compliance with their duties towards me as a person. I expect from them to reciprocate the recognition I have shown them, and that they had violated by skipping in the line. This case is different from the case where I help a

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friend. When I help a friend in trouble, I do not ask for any attitude in response. I expect that they will reciprocate, but I cannot demand it. As Darwall's emphasizes, love is a freely given attitude, it cannot be claimed; therefore, in my helping them I am neither responding to a legitimate demand, nor demanding anything from them in return. As we can see, both kinds of attitudes are similar because they both seek reciprocity. Yet this reciprocity is of a different kind, according to Darwall. In love we expect reciprocity in the good relationship, the attachment, and the mutual presence; in respect we expect reciprocity in the form of mutual respect, and in mutual accountability.

Therefore, Darwall agrees with Kant that love cannot be neither a necessary nor a sufficient source of moral motivation because it is not related to accountability. It only has a complementary role, as Kant says, when the sense of duty comes short in motivating humans because of our imperfect moral psychology. Focusing on the case of our moral motivation towards friends, we might feel motivated to help them as persons qua persons, and hence out of a sense of duty; and also as friends, and hence out of love. Yet, according to Darwall, in both cases the feeling of respect is sufficient to motivate us to act according to our moral obligations; love only helps us to feel motivated when the feeling of duty is not enough, as a sort of deviant cause.

Love and Moral Obligation in Darwall's picture

Darwall also denies the role of love in grounding our moral obligations. According to Darwall, a moral obligation is "what we are (morally) responsible for doing, what members of the moral community, including we ourselves, have the authority to demand

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that we do, by holding us accountable second-personally" (Darwall, 2009, p.149). In other words, it is "what the moral community can demand (and what no one has the right not to do)" (Darwall, 2006, p.20). All the members of the moral community, for the sake of being members of the moral community, can hold another member accountable for incomppliance without excuse. Consequently, my moral obligations are what any member of the moral community can hold me accountable for not doing, even if that person is not directly affected by my wrongdoing.

One might say that Darwall's account of moral obligation implies that both the victim and the witness of a moral transgression have the same right to hold the transgressor accountable (Wallace, 2007). Yet Darwall acknowledges that circumstances put people in different positions to claim, and hence under different obligations. If I am in a crowded meeting and I step on someone's foot, this person has a distinctive second-personal authority to ask me to remove my foot, as a person whose foot I stepped onto. Consequently, I have a special obligation towards that person to compensate for the pain I might have caused them. They have an authority upon me which other members of the moral community lack.

Although moral obligations are shaped by the circumstances, as described, Darwall contends that they are still impartial and universalizable. They are what any member of the moral community in that particular situation would have the right to demand; they could be endorsed from a "perspective that we can all share as free (second-personally competent) and rational" (Darwall, 2006, p.276). In the case where I step onto someone's

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foot, any person in the position of the person whose foot I stepped onto has the right to demand that I remove my foot. Any member of the moral community, including myself, would make that demand, and therefore my moral obligation to comply is universalizable, and impartial. Even more, in Darwall's schema there is no need for anybody, not even me, to effectively address the demand for the obligation to exist. His project is analytical, not psychological.

In Darwall's picture, then, there is room for special duties, derived from the relationships particular agents get involved in. From this point of view, love might be relevant to our moral duties if it may give rise to special duties. Our love might change the circumstances of the people we love, and hence affect our moral obligations towards them. But Darwall does not view love as grounding any duties at all. If we have special obligations towards the people we love, it is not because of love itself; but because our loving them places them in a position which gives them special authority over us. Darwall calls these special obligations "obligations of loving relationship" (2016, p.172), or "duties of relationship" (2016, p.177). They are obligations which are shaped by the loving relationship between the people involved in the dynamics of making and acknowledging claims on one another; and they address the other as "a-person-who-happens-to-stand-in-that-specific-putatively-normative-relation" (2006, p.270).

These special obligations are not actually grounded in love; they are still grounded in accountability. For instance, the justification of Robin's obligation to help Ted is not that she is obliged to help those she loves, but rather it is that any member of the moral

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community, including herself, could justifiably hold her accountable if she failed to do it without excuse. Furthermore, despite being shaped by love, according to Darwall, these special duties are still universalizable and impartial. They are what any person in that relationship should do. Accordingly, the person or moral member of the moral community who occupies the position of being Robin's friend has certain authority for the sake of that position which other members lack. Consequently, what explains Robin's special obligation towards Ted is not love, but the existence of a historical relationship between Robin and him. In this relationship, love changes the moral obligations of both Robin and Ted, yet it does not justify them. Their justification is identical to any other duty.

The Case of Barney

As we have seen, the Kantian position contends that love only complements moral motivation, without being necessary; and that it only shapes moral obligations, without justifying them. Against this view, we present the case of Barney from the sitcom 'How I Met Your Mother' as a case study. We slightly change the plot for argumentative purposes so that it resonates with Lawrence Blum's (1980) contraposition between Manny and Dave (p.146-8); and with Kant's example of the man who helps others out of duty because he cannot sympathize with them (4:398). We use this case to raise three concerns to the Kantian view of moral motivation and moral obligation in the context of love and friendship: a psychological problem, because it is psychologically inaccurate; a practical problem, because it is undesirable in practice; and a theoretical problem, because it is implausible.

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Imagine now that instead of calling Robin, Ted calls his friend Barney to ask for help. In the sitcom, Barney frequently treats his social interactions as a game, for which he has laws, rules, and theories. One of Barney's theoretical inventions is what he calls "the Bro code", a set of rules regulating how "bros", good friends, ought to act to one another. And also imagine that, even though Barney loves Ted as much as Robin does, when he acts to help him, he does not do it out of love, but out of duty. He spends time with Ted, and he treats him with due care, as Robin does. Yet Barney does not do it "because it is Ted", as Robin does, but "because that is what the Bro code prescribes", or similarly "because that is what friends do". This acknowledgement of what is the moral thing to do towards friends is what motivates Barney to act as a friend. Now, when Ted is in trouble, Barney knows what he is required to do; he recognizes his special obligation towards his friend as a friend and, from this recognition, he feels morally motivated to help Ted. He acts genuinely out of duty; he recognizes his moral obligation, and this motivates him to act.

For the sake of the argument, we will assume that the difference between Barney and Robin is that Barney acts purely out of duty, whereas Robin seems to need the feeling of love to comply with what the moral law requires from her. Both Robin and Barney feel morally motivated to help Ted, and both recognize their moral obligation towards him. Yet Barney does not need love to be motivated, neither to recognize his moral obligations. Therefore, in agreement with the Kantian position, love would not be necessary to feel motivated to act morally towards friends, neither to recognize our special duties towards them. Furthermore, if the only reason and motivation that Robin had was love (as we assume), she would help Ted not because that is the right thing to do, as Barney does, but

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because that is a good thing for her friend, independently of the value of that maxim as a moral law. As moral actions must be motivated and justified by moral considerations, Robin's reason is hence a reason of the wrong kind to act morally.

Specifically, it follows from Darwall's view that Barney's moral psychology is possible. Although Darwall does not give this example, he defends that love is not necessary to motivate us to help friends in trouble; and that love is not what justifies our moral obligation to do so. In both cases the sense of duty is sufficient. This is a consequence of the required "moral point of view" of the Kantian approach, which "involves abstracting from one's own interests and one's particular attachments to others" (Blum, 1980, p.2). Even if the aim of the Kantian approach is not to describe human relationships, but to assert how these should be; it needs at least to assume that rational and free agents, and a universal and impartial point of view are both possible.

The Psychological Problem: Friendship implies Motivation to be Partial

The characterization of Barney's motivation to help his friend is not an accurate characterization of our moral psychology. Indeed, the Bro code is presented as a gag, but not as something possible in real life. Furthermore, even if it was possible, it would be rare. Our psychology is shaped in such a way that, in friendship, we feel motivated to act out of love, and not only out of duty (Scanlon, 2000). To put it in a clearer way, in situations involving a friend, we feel motivated to act because of the particular relationship we have to this other person, that is, out of what we will call a "motivation to be partial"; and not just for the norm itself, what we will call "motivation to be impartial".

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In this context, the pair motivation to be partial and motivation to be impartial resonates with the pair agent-relative and agent-neutral reasons (Nagel, 1986; Parfit, 1984). Agent-neutral reasons are reasons for everyone, as they do not include any essential reference to the person who has them; agent-relative reasons might not be for everyone, as they include an essential reference to the person who has them. Whereas these reasons refer to the justification of an action, the distinction between motivation to be partial and to be impartial refers to what motivates it. As Stocker (1976) notices, some moral theories overlooked this distinction, by overlapping both justifications and motivations, and promoted a kind of “moral schizophrenia”. Motivation externalists, such as Railton (1984), are aware that what justifies an action might be different from what motivates it. Relying on this distinction, then, we distinguish justification and motivation, and contend that we might sometimes be motivated by the binding force of the norm; and sometimes out of concern for the person involved, whatever the justifying reason for the action might be.

In the case of Ted’s friends, Robin is moved by the fact that the person needing help is Ted in particular; whereas Barney is moved by the implicit norm, explicit norm for him, that friends ought to help each other. Probably when Robin says that she must go “because my friend Ted just had a traffic accident, and he is at hospital by himself” the emphasis lies in “my friend Ted” rather than in “friend at hospital”. If that is the case, what moves Robin to act is that her friend Ted is involved, whatever the trouble might be. In fact, if someone asked her why she must leave, they would not be surprised by a reply along the lines of “because it is my friend Ted”. This reply is also available to Barney. Yet the difference between him and Robin is that the emphasis in this case lies in “friend at hospital” rather

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than in “friend Ted”. Unlike Robin, what moves Barney to act is the acknowledgement of the norm of what we ought to do for our friends in trouble⁴.

The Kantian position acknowledges that not everyone will act out of duty or, as we put it, out of motivation to be impartial. For instance, we might reject torture out of a motivation to be partial, because we are moved by the pain felt by someone being hurt; or we might reject it out of motivation to be impartial, because we consider it in tension with the moral law. Yet, according to the Kantian approach, even though someone might act motivated to be partial, everyone could, and should, act motivated to be impartial, even in the context of friendship.

In real life this kind of motivation might be found in some institutionalized relationships such as politician-citizen, seller-customer, teacher-student, or doctor-patient. These relationships are based on respect; hence their actions are motivated by the sense of duty and justified by the principles and norms guiding those relations. Yet in our personal relations to others, as in friendship, we hardly establish the kind of rational, abstract relationship that Kant and Darwall consider. Hence, it is puzzling that in real friendship we might be motivated to act only out of sense of duty; neither that we would justify our action appealing to the moral law.

The kind of relationship that binds friends to help each other is not an ideal one; but a particular, and affective one. Interpersonal relationships matter in morality: our moral

⁴ Notice that the content of Barney’s norm might be partial, defending that we ought to treat friends differently. The point is rather that what motivates him is the norm itself, whatever its content might be, and whoever its target.

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judgments change depending on our relationships with those involved in them (Bonnefon et al., 2016; Haidt & Baron, 1996; Lee & Holyoak, 2020), as change our moral obligations towards people depending on our relationships with them (Chalik & Dunham, 2020; Earp et al., 2020; McManus et al., 2020; Rhodes & Chalik, 2013). Furthermore, our moral tendencies evolutionarily come from relational dynamics: specific interactive practices, prospects to cooperate with particular others, reputational consequences, and punishment (Boyd & Richerson, 1992; Gintis et al., 2003; Tomasello, 2016). Given this relational dimension of morality, it makes sense that we might be specifically motivated to act morally towards particular others, especially if they are our friends.

We are often motivated to be partial in acting towards our friends. Friendship involves concern for our friends for their own sake; or, to put it another way, having *de re* attitudes towards them (Alfano, 2017). Besides, as Friedman (1989) notices, the commitment we have with our friends makes us see their interests, ends and values as both justifying and motivating reasons for our actions. Therefore, we end up being motivated to act because of our friends' sake, and we see this acting for their sake as a valid justification for our action.

The Practical Problem: Friendship demands Motivation to be Partial

Not only are we motivated to be partial in acting towards our friends, but we also tend to think that we *ought* to be. Even conceding, for the sake of the argument, that humans could be morally motivated to help friends only out of duty, this is not what we would normatively expect, or demand, from a friend. Indeed, Barney's acting out of the Bro code is presented as an unrealistic element which intends to make us laugh. In real life we

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would be surprised, and even indignant, at Barney's attitude, and Ted would probably resent him. Darwall accepts this as a possible reaction, yet he finds it unjustified. According to him, given our psychology, it is natural that we humans feel sometimes unfitting, or unjustified emotions: such as feeling shame for surviving the Holocaust (Levi, 2017). Therefore, Ted might feel resentment against Barney, but this resentment would not be justified because Barney would have acted morally, for the good reasons.

We morally assess others' emotional responses. In the traditional Kantian view, there is no room for moral criticism about emotions, because they are too changeable, and capricious to ever be appropriate. Yet in our daily life we require appropriate emotional responses from others (Blum, 1980, p.27). This is something that Darwall certainly acknowledges; given his emphasis on the role of the reactive attitudes as a way of implicitly holding others accountable. In other words, according to Darwall, we are justified to blame someone if their emotional expressions are inappropriate, or morally wrong; but we cannot do it if those expressions are simply unfitting.

Leaving apart the ethical debate about whether we are justified in resenting our friends for helping us purely out of duty, it seems that the Kantian account is undesirable in practice: it has unwanted consequences, as we certainly would not want our friends to act as Darwall and Kant propose. Hence, the Kantian proposal fails to capture our mutual normative expectations. We do not want our friends to help us because that is the moral thing to do (Keller, 2007; Stocker, 1976). This is too detached a picture of friendship. When

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we ask a friend for help, we want them both to act out of motivation to be partial, and sometimes to do it without further thought.

First, we want our friends to help us because it is us. In friendship we want others to act because we are that particular person in relationship to them, and not because our moral obligations have been shaped by some feature of the situation. Even more, we consider that our friends *ought* to act out for our sake. Therefore, we would feel resentful if a friend told us that he helped us because “that is the right thing to do”. In the case of Ted and his friends Robin and Barney, he would probably resent his friends if they visited him at hospital because they would do it for anyone who happened to be in that circumstance, instead of doing it simply because it is *him*.

Second, we want our friends to act without further thought, and we think that they *ought* to. The fact that our friends are in trouble provides us with “one thought too many” (Williams, 1981). We would not like to know that our friends helped us after a long deliberation about the moral nature of the action; neither that they wondered about it afterwards (Wolf, 2012). As Wolf (2012) puts it, “I don’t want my partner to have to think or be concerned about thinking about moral permissibility in order for him to choose to save me” (p.79), her hope being that “he not care so much about the rulings of morality (in these instances) at all” (p.80). When being helped by friends, we want them to be affected by our needs, and be motivated to act accordingly. Only after that we might accept their wondering about the impartial standpoint. Therefore, not only do we want our friends to

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act because we are the ones in need; but also, we want them to do it without further reflection.

The Theoretical Problem: The Implicit Obligations of Friendship

In our view, the Kantian proposal assumes too strong a separation between the affective domain, and the normative one. According to him, our obligations towards our friends bind us because we are aware that we might be held accountable. Our relationship with them is just a sort of contextual feature which might shape the content, and strength of our obligations, but which does not explain their binding force. Thus, according to Darwall, Barney feels bound to comply with his obligations as a friend because he is aware that he could be held accountable, rather than out of a push to help stemming from his relationships.

We find this picture implausible: our feeling obliged is constitutive of our relationships with friends (Scanlon, 2000; Scheffler, 1997). It goes with friendship that it gives us obligations, whether there is a moral community who can hold us accountable or not. It is hard to conceive how someone can be emotionally bonded with someone else but feel morally obliged by the awareness of the possibility of being held accountable by anyone in the moral community, instead of feeling bound by the relationship itself. We feel that we ought to comply with our obligations towards friends because of our friends; not simply because they are “obligations”, or “norms”. As a matter of fact, there cannot be such a thing as a “bro code” – a set of special obligations between friends –, because special

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obligations depend upon the particular circumstances of each case and the capacities of the agents involved.

The special obligations that we have towards our friends find their binding force in the relationship itself and emerge from it (Scheffler, 1997). Critically, whereas in the Kantian account friendship only turns our obligations into special obligations, which ultimately derive from the moral law; our claim is rather that those special obligations actually emerge from friendship and are later on generalized and understood in an abstract way. Friendship is not simply a feature which modifies the moral picture, but a whole new picture in which two people grow, bound up with each other, and form normative expectations about each other's behavior. Due to the affective bond that links friends, these normative expectations might be felt as specially binding, and hence experienced as implicit obligations, or norms. Therefore, whereas in the Kantian approach our personal obligations in friendship are derived from impersonal obligations; in our approach our obligations in friendship are indeed personal, and only later can be experienced as impersonal.

The binding force, and the constitutive dependence on the relationship of our obligations towards friends is revealed in cases of failure or transgression. This is exactly what we learn from Barney. In one of the episodes of 'How I Met Your Mother', Barney transgresses one of the rules of his Bro code and does something wrong to Ted. As expected, he feels guilty: he does not know how to act in front of Ted, he is anxious, and he avoids some conversations with his other friends. He attributes these bad feelings to the

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fact that he has broken one of the articles of the Bro Code, so he hires his friend Marshall as a lawyer to find a loophole in the code and get him off the hook. What makes the situation funny is that we all know that our moral psychology does not really go like Barney wants, especially in cases where our friends are involved. First, we do not expect our obligations towards friends to be susceptible of being written in a code, as Barney tries. As previously said, our normative expectations towards friends are not like traffic norms, or norms of etiquette, which can be made explicit in a code. They are implicit in our relationships with friends. Second, we all know that what makes Barney feel bad is not that he has broken a rule; was the rule not written in his Bro Code he would still feel bad. What makes him feel bad is that he has not been a good friend to Ted, whatever the Bro code says, and whatever another person in that situation could have done. He feels guilty because of the wrongdoing he has done to his friend, which has damaged their relationship; not because of his failure to comply with a norm that any person in those circumstances ought to follow, neither because he is aware of the justified accountability demands from the community. Therefore, he can only feel better if Ted forgives him, as his friend Marshall tells him:

Okay, this isn't about the Bro Code, and you know it. The reason that you're upset is because what you did was wrong. And the only way you're ever gonna feel any better about it is if you tell Ted what you did.

What Marshall is assuming is that obligations in friendship are of a particular nature: they are constitutive of friendship, and implicit in it.

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This implicit nature of our obligations towards friends puts them in a blurry area between normative and descriptive expectations. More specifically, special obligations towards friends combine what a friend is expected to do and what they should do. They are between the traditional moral judgments, which explicitly apply norms to particular circumstances, prescribing what someone *should* do; and the empirical, descriptive, or statistical expectations, which simply describe what someone *will* do. Despite this fuzzy nature, they are still normative because, as we have seen, their transgression involves a kind of reproach which can be either explicit through verbal speech, or implicit through reactive attitudes. Barney's guilt, or Ted's resentment towards Barney are just some examples showing that a normative expectation is at stake, and hence that in friendship we assume certain norms and obligations, only that implicitly.

Moral Motivation, and Moral Obligations in Friendship

We have argued that the Kantian account of love as void of deontic implications does not capture our moral psychology. The difficulties we have raised for this account in the previous section can therefore be avoided when our moral psychology is considered. In what follows, we propose a more accurate picture of the special obligations that love and friendship ground.

Affective relationships need time to develop. Love emerges out of positive interactions and gets reinforced through them. These interactions can be of multiple kinds: we might coordinate for a joint enterprise, we might share interest in some event or circumstance, or we might jointly move. By default, intersubjective interaction is rewarding. The result of a

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trajectory of interactions is an increased, or decreased, affection for each other. This loving affection motivates us to include the interests of our friend as part of our own interests. In this way, we become prosocially motivated. Sometimes, we experience this motivation as deontic: we feel that it is our duty to do what is in our hand to help our friends and expect them to do the same for us. This is what friendship consists of.

In friendship, then, friends might perceive particular circumstances of difficulty or need of the other as a source of a moral obligation to help and feel motivated to act accordingly because of the relationship itself. Were it not for the affective bond between Ted and Robin, and between Ted and Barney, they would not feel motivated to act in a particular way towards each other, and they would not feel guilty when failing to act according to their recognized duty. It is when Ted and Robin see each other as friends that they mutually adjust to each other, feel motivated to do it, normatively expect it from each other, and react if the other does not comply. It is not that they share a code of mutual obligations; what they share is a commitment to be sensitive to each other's needs and circumstances, given their capabilities and conditions.

The Kantian view does not match our moral psychology. There is no such a thing as "obligations of loving relationship" (2016, p.172), or "duties of relationship" (2016, p.177). It is the particular circumstances of the situation that might license the acknowledgement of an obligation and the motivation to carry it out. This is especially the case when the protests for incomppliance are endorsed by an uninvolved third-party (Isern-Mas & Gomila, 2018). Different friendship relationships may license different duties (Scheffler,

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1997), and thus those might be differently sanctioned by a third-party. For instance, back to the sitcom “How I Met Your Mother”, at least twice in the show Ted feels the duty to provide a shelter to Robin, even if nobody else would go that far in helping her, and even if nobody would blame Ted for not doing so. Furthermore, he might feel the duty to provide a shelter to his friend Robin, after she loses her job or after she breaks up with her partner, because nobody else is in a position to help her, whereas he does not feel so motivated when it is his friend Barney who loses a job or who goes through a break-up, as he can count on several other helpers.

Darwall’s view of love as independent of accountability also overlooks the fact that duties of friends are generally not demanded or claimed but should be recognized anyway. Special duties, for Darwall, are viewed as duties, but moral obligation in friendship works differently. Friends might not hold each other accountable for their actions or omissions. They need not address each other demands. A friend is one that is sensitive to their friend’s needs. If one is not so sensitive, friendship goes away.

In other words, love, and affective relationships in general, entail a deontic dimension. This does not mean that there exists a right to be loved or to have friends (Darwall, 2016; Liao, 2015), but that friendship partly involves experiencing duties towards particulars others and be sensitive to their claims and demands. Darwall contends that these duties do not go with love itself, but stem from accountability relationships. Yet friendship is not so well structured and defined; it is not possible to provide a closed list of duties of friendship.

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On the other hand, given this influence of the kind of relationship in the emergence of moral motivation, and moral obligation, the role of love is essential. Especially in the context of friendship, love is not just a feature that adds to the picture, and slightly changes the motivation to comply, or the kind of obligations which are already present. Rather is it part of the context in which those motivations, and obligations emerge. In other words, it is not that motivation to be partial, and special obligations come from a slightly change in motivation to be impartial, and moral obligations, as the Kantian approach contends. In the context of friendship, those are the original forms in which obligation and moral motivation emerge in the first place. Ted's, Robin's and Barney's motivations and obligations towards each other do not derive from abstract principles, and a general motivation to act morally. Only after several second-personal interactions, among them, and among many other persons, and after observing, and endorsing those dynamics in others, they can get a sense of what motivation, and moral obligations one ought to have in the context of friendship. In other words, only from being motivated to be partial, and from following special obligations can they later be motivated to be impartial and follow some general obligations.

By adopting this view, we avoid the three problems that the Kantian project had to face: the psychological, the practical, and the theoretical ones. First, we can explain why we feel a moral motivation to be partial in the case of friendship: motivation to be partial is the kind of motivation which appears first in a real interaction with a particular person. Only after several interactions of this kind, and observation of, and intervention in others' interactions, we can reach a motivation to be impartial. Motivation to be partial is not an

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impulse which comes from our imperfect rationality and which we must overcome; rather it is the first kind of motivation that we acquire in friendship. Only after being motivated to be partial we can generalize and be motivated by impartiality.

Second, our account can explain that we want our friends both to act out of motivation to be partial, and sometimes to do it without further thought. Since moral obligations emerge from friendship, it makes sense that we might have some particular demands in that context that we might not have in others (Scheffler, 1997). We demand our friends be motivated to be partial because this normative expectation is built upon how we normally act towards our friends. We normally act motivated to be partial, then we come to expect that this is how “real friends” ought to be motivated. Hence, we end up seeing this expectation as normative, and further as an implicit obligation in friendship. Whether we are justified or not in claiming this motivation in our friends, our approach helps us understanding why we have such a demand.

Finally, we do not have the theoretical problem because in our proposal the moral obligation, and the moral motivation we have towards our friends develop through interaction with them. When, after several interactions, we become someone’s friends, we also come to grasp which moral obligations we have towards them and come to feel motivated by those obligations. Friendship without moral motivation and moral obligations is not possible.

The Morality of Friendship

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Many would agree that friendship gives rise to special obligations. Yet a controversial part of our argument is the claim that these special obligations are moral. Someone could reject this strong claim on the basis that friendship does not need to ground moral obligations, but simply imperfect obligations (Cocking & Kennett, 2000). Although these obligations might be normative, they do not need to be “moral”⁵.

The dichotomy between moral and non-moral norms is confusing (Kelly et al., 2007). Beyond mere categorization, we are interested in the nature of our obligations in the context of friendship, and their similarities with the so-called “moral” obligations. Our approach is functional. Therefore, by calling both kinds of norm “moral” we aim to highlight that they share a similar phenomenology and a similar underlying psychology.

Moral obligations are those obligations that come with a strong “ought”, that is, with a feeling of duty that strongly motivates us to act (Björnsson et al., 2014; Rosati, 2016; Roskies, 2003; Tomasello, 2019). This is what Darwall and Kant capture either with the fact of reason or with the awareness of what the moral community could legitimately hold one accountable for not doing. When we deliberate about whether we should act morally, we experience a feeling of duty that strongly motivates us to do so. For instance, this feeling is at work when Robin feels so strongly motivated to visit her friend Ted at hospital. What makes her obligation moral is not that it is derived from an abstract moral law, but that it is experienced with a sense of duty.

⁵ We are indebted for this objection to two anonymous reviewers.

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The psychological mechanisms underlying the sense of duty that comes with moral obligations is “internalization” (Gavrillets & Richerson, 2017; Gintis, 2003). Starting from a naturalized interpretation of Darwall’s schema (Isern-Mas & Gomila, 2020), we posit that the feeling of obligation comes from internalization of those expectations that other members of the moral community, including our friends, might hold about our behavior. Importantly, these expectations are built after several interactions with particular others; and become normative once shared, and internalized by the members of the moral community (Bicchieri, 2016; Isern-Mas & Gomila, 2018). When we internalize this kind of anticipated sanction, or blame, we feel the obligation to act accordingly (Tomasello, 2019).

In our obligations towards our friends, we internalize the same dynamics: we anticipate what our friends could legitimately blame us for not doing, based on those normative expectations that we have built along our interactions. We do not simply have an expectation about how we tend to act towards our specific friends; critically, we hold normative expectations about how we should act towards them. Furthermore, we also hold expectations not only on how they might react if we did not act as expected; but we also hold expectations on how they could legitimately react to our wrongdoing. These normative expectations are built both through multiple interactions with our friends, and our internalization of their legitimate reactions. Because of this shared mechanism of internalization, obligations from friendship might be equated to the typically moral ones.

Despite the similarities between our obligations in the context of friendship and the typically moral obligations, their content might be in conflict. The so-called moral

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obligations might be at odds with the demands that emerge from friendship. In some occasions, we might feel motivated to commit a moral transgression to help a friend (Cocking & Kennett, 2000; Koltonski, 2016; Trujillo, 2020). However, as we have emphasized, what makes obligations “moral”, in our view, is not their content, neither the action that they command; rather the fact that they come with a feeling of obligation that comes from the psychological mechanism of internalization (Sznycer et al., 2018). Consequently, although an obligation in the context of friendship and a typically moral obligation might be in conflict, they can still both share a similar psychological structure. Furthermore, the experience of conflict is a widely recognized psychological phenomenon: different obligations might put us in a dilemma, by prescribing incompatible paths of actions (McConnell, 2014). Hence, the possibility of conflict is not specific of the interaction between typically moral norms and norms that emerge from friendship.

Conclusion

Against the Kantian account, we have argued for a constitutive dependence of friendship and moral obligations, and moral motivation. We contend that it is constitutive of friendship that it goes with a motivation to be partial, that is, a motivation to help our friends because they are our friends; the normative expectation of acting out of motivation to be partial; and special obligations which emerge from the relationship itself and which tend to be implicit, but still binding. Therefore, the role of love in our moral motivation and moral obligations towards friends is not just complementary, but essential in giving rise to moral motivation and moral obligation themselves.

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