

# Repulsive Virtues: Kant, Black Swans and the Responsibilities of Friendship

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**Abstract.** Looking at two well-known discussions of Kant's discourse on friendship, namely, the second half of *Doctrine of Virtue* and his *Lecture on Friendship*, this paper traces the points of overlap and separation whereby, through the paradigm of friendship, the morals and politics of Kant's discourse are reconsidered. In what follows, I will show first, how Kant's theory of friendship plays a role in his conception of social relations and morality and second, how the nature of his concerns with friendship reveals both an insistence on moral duties and, in the spirit of Derrida, a difficult, if not paradoxical, politicization of these same duties. In doing so, I argue that Kant's ideas on friendship are part of a *necessary* yet irreconcilable tension between political and ethical obligations. Friendship is thought necessary for the well-being of political states at the same time that its instrumentalization undermines the heterogeneous nature of ethical responsibilities and the call to particularity which distinguishes it from other forms of associations (ethnicity, gender, nationality etc.). In the end, I argue that Kant's theory of friendship is characterized by a fundamental ambivalence whose contradictions do not pave the way for new possibilities for association, community, nationhood etc., but only highlight its aporetic underpinnings.

**Key words:** Kant, friendship, respect, Derrida, ethics, duty.

When we think about the canon of great thinkers on the concept of friendship in Western philosophy, typically, Immanuel Kant is not a name that instantly comes to mind. What is more, if we want to discuss friendship as a political concept, most tend not to find any explicit discussion points linking friendship, philosophy and politics together in Modern European philosophy (Michel Montaigne's "De L'Amitie" ["Of Friendship"] being the most notable point of reference) in comparison to the great discussions by the Ancients: Aristotle, Cicero and Seneca. Nonetheless, in Jacques Derrida's landmark work on the subject, *Politics of Friendship*, his re-reading of the history of the concept changes how we might come to think of the role of friendship in, not only, our private and public affairs, but also, as an idea of philosophical and political significance. Derrida perceptively points out that theories of friendship have always been characterized by a fundamental but often unacknowledged ambivalence. On one hand, there is a history of discourses on friendship which refer to its secret, private and so-called 'apolitical' character. On the other hand, there is a history of discourses on friendship which refer to its public, testimonial and political character. He argues that, historically speaking, with friendship there are two streams of discourse: "[S]chematically: on the one hand, the secret-private-invisible-illegible-apolitical, ultimately without concept; on the other, the manifest-public-testimonial-political, and homogenous to the concept." (Derrida 1997, 277) In what follows, I propose to pursue the implications of this ambivalence and show how it underscores friendship's place between the contradictory demands of ethics and politics by, in particular, looking at Kant's discussion on the subject.

While it should be made clear that friendship is not discussed as an *explicitly* political concept in Kant, (for example, compared to discussions of friendship found in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*) it nonetheless does play an important role in his discussions on respect, love, trust, personal intimacy, public and private relations and analogically, through his interesting discussion of socialization by way of the laws of physical attraction. In what follows, I will show the manner in which the question of friendship finds a place between Kant's concern for morality and politics, and question the compatibility of Kant's theory of politics with his claims on morality. To do this we will consider, first, how Kant's theory of friendship plays a role in his conception of social relations and morality and second, how the nature of his concerns with friendship reveals both an insistence on moral duties and, in the spirit of Derrida, a difficult, if not paradoxical, politicization of these same duties. In doing so, I argue that Kant's ideas on friendship are part of a *necessary* yet irreconcilable tension between political and ethical obligations. Friendship is thought necessary for the well-being of political states at the same time that its instrumentalization undermines the heterogeneous nature of ethical responsibilities and the call to particularity which distinguishes it from other forms of associations (ethnicity, gender, nationality etc.). Nonetheless, having said that, friendship remains a necessary adhesive for maintaining political commonalities and reimagining ethical responsibility that circumvents relations of use-value. I argue that Kant's theory of friendship is characterized by a fundamental ambivalence whose contradictions do not pave the way for new possibilities for association, community, nationhood etc., but only highlight its aporetic underpinnings.

To begin, let us start with his important discussion of the forces of attraction and repulsion from his *Doctrine of Virtue, Part II of the Metaphysics of Morals* where Kant underscores the duality of forces which comprise his understanding of socialization and further, positions friendship as the ambivalent mediating device between these tensions and demands.

### I. ATTRACTION AND REPULSION

Kant characterizes what is called the social as the negotiation of duplicitous forces of attraction and repulsion. Offering a characterization of the social world that is modeled analogically on the forces of the physical world, Kant writes: "[W]hen we are speaking of laws of duty (not laws of nature) and, among these, of laws governing men's external relations with one another, we are considering a moral (intelligible world) where, by analogy with the physical world, *attraction* and *repulsion* bind together rational beings (on earth)." (1964, §24: 448) From here Kant goes on to couple the force of attraction with that of mutual love and respect with the force of repulsion: "[T]he principle of mutual love admonishes men constantly to come nearer to each other; that of respect which they owe each other, to keep themselves at a distance from one another." (1964, §24: 448) Kant characterizes the social as the site of conflicting forces, whose contrasting nature

cannot be reconciled. Attraction and repulsion paradoxically sustain the social insofar as the interplay of these forces remains irresolvable without necessarily destroying the very force field of the social. That is, its irreconcilable nature both *produces* and thus *contains* the social as it is. Without the interplay of these forces there would be no social bond.

Equating attraction with mutual love and repulsion with respect, friendship is thought to be the middle ground for the mutual concurrence of these forces. Kant discusses love as a necessary cause and effect of friendship but at the same time makes a crucial distinction between the two. This is because the wrong kind of love is thought to spoil friendship and the balance of respect and mutual accord integral to the social world. Love is positioned as a kind of social toxin disrupting the harmony of human relations. Yet Kant makes it clear that it is not love *as such* that is the problem. It is rather the unbalance that occurs when friendship as mutual love is confused with sensual love. Hostile to relations whose basis is sensual, friendship for him is always a question of duty and as a consequence, must be guided by principles not feelings. His mistrust of sensual love is similar to Aristotle insofar as loving the other must proceed from the right motive with the right ends in mind. For Kant, this means that loving another must *not* be predicated on emotions, feelings or pleasures but rather based in a “maxim of benevolence,” which he writes in parenthesis to be *practical love*, insofar as its aim is the beneficence of others (1964, §25: 449).

The problem with love in Kant’s discussion is that it does not necessarily follow from a shared and mutual confirmation. This is because the performative declaration of love can take place without trust and mutual self-disclosure. Love does not necessarily confer the capacity to share secrets with the other, or the possibility of sacrificing something for the other’s sake like what Kant considers a sign of merit and exemplary friendship. Love sometimes appears as friendship but to have a trustworthy and principled relationship such as Kant describes would require what he calls an “identity of personality” (1963, §27: 54, n.1).<sup>1</sup> For him, love is unprincipled, or based in principles whose motives are the wrong things. While the concept of love figures into his discussion, it is nonetheless separated from friendship on the basis of trust and respect. Consequently, what differentiates friendship from love is the combination of upstanding principles whose basis is respect and a drive for equal and mutual regard.

Between attraction and repulsion Kant claims that the primary adhesive of sociality is a bind of non-sensual love. The non-sensual love whose basis is respect permits friendship because it is not motivated by feeling. In a practical sense, respect keeps in check our pride with regard to human affairs and never attempts to instrumentalize another in the name of our own ends, or detract “from the worth that the other, as a man, is entitled to posit in himself” (Kant 1964, §25: 449). Maintaining that we have a duty to actively participate

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1] Similarly in *Politics of Friendship*, while Derrida does not discuss Kant’s friendship as an identity of personality he suggests that Kant’s discourse calls for a virile community of the congeneric. For Derrida, the fraternal bonds of friendship “remain linked to sensible or imaginal fraternity, to the *virility* of the *congeneric*” Derrida (1997).

in the fate of others, Kant insists that we measure our actions in relation to the rule of the moral law and not feeling (§27: 359). This means that thinking and acting are to proceed out of love and respect without feeling it. Intimacy is cautioned at the limit of respect because if the relation becomes too deep “it detracts from worth” (§27: 685).<sup>2</sup> While Kant will argue that friendship is never a safe relation, he suggests that it is especially in danger if it is allowed to rest on feelings as opposed to principles.<sup>3</sup> Because of what I will call the Kantian mean, the antagonistic forces of the social world find their harmony in the space between the attractive force of love and the repulsive force of respect which maintain the social bond.<sup>4</sup> Kant holds out against a politics of love or a politics based in affectionate ties. Instead, he opts for an intimate regard for others that is synonymous with an intimate regard for respecting others. Respect is to be respected insofar as it is a regard for the mean in human affairs whose basis is principles which are based in the right things. Hannah Arendt’s conception of respect in politics confirms this position: “Respect, not unlike the Aristotelian *philia politikē*, is a kind of ‘friendship’ without intimacy and without closeness; it is a regard for the person from the distance which the space of the world puts between us, and this regard is independent of qualities which we may admire or of achievements which we may esteem.” (1958, 243) If intimacy is to be thought of as a political concern, it must be aligned with respect rather than feelings.

In Derrida’s reading of Kant, he rightly questions why Kant is suspicious of tenderness, gentleness and what are thought to be softer relations of sociality. For Derrida, the answer is clear: Love in its excess “separates, interrupts, and threatens the social bond” (1997, 256). An excess of love “leads to rupture where attraction becomes the quasi-symptom of repulsion” (256). According to Derrida, for Kant, love is to be held in check out of respect for the other, “[N]ot because love is the enemy, but because, in the excessive attraction unleashed by love, enmity and war are allowed to take place.” (256) Rightly, he emphasizes that it would be a “principle of (non-natural) perversion at the heart of the natural law of attraction and repulsion” (256). Taking Kant’s argument one step further he argues: “if this is indeed the case, friendship would then be at one and the same

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2]In addition it should be noted, it is not our duty to sympathize with others, since a community of sympathizers may give way to a community based in pity. Kant clearly states that this is an insulting kind of beneficence. For Kant, pity should not have a place in human affairs. This is because our concern ought to be man’s practical affairs qua reason and virtuous. See also his discussion of pity in Kant, *The Doctrine of Virtue, Part II of the Metaphysics of Morals*, §46: 469.

3]“Yet friendship is something so delicate (*teneritas amicitiae*) that it is never for a moment safe from interruptions if it is allowed to rest on feelings and if it this mutual sympathy and self-surrender are not subjected to principles or rules preventing excessive familiarity and limiting mutual love by the requirements of respect.” Kant, *The Doctrine of Virtue, Part II of the Metaphysics of Morals*. §46:470.

4]Uncertain of how Kant can maintain the possibility of friendship between the forces of attraction and repulsion, Hent de Vries, suggests that the third person, in the spirit of a certain Levinasian trope, could prevent excessive familiarity from becoming a reality that would disrupt the balance of the political. For the entirety of his discussion of Kant and friendship in light of Derrida’s analysis in *Politics of Friendship* see Vries 2001, 370-88.

time the sign, the symptom, the representative of this possible perversion, yet also what protects us from such perversion. The evil and the remedy for the evil.” (256) Friendship would thus be a limit condition pulling the social bond in opposite directions. On one hand, that which preserves the social world and, on the other, that which prefigures and haunts the social as the sign of its possible undoing. As it were, friendship exists between attraction and repulsion, keeping in check the possibility of its becoming-excessive while nonetheless remaining the spectre looming over our social relations.

Similarly, on the question of love, Hannah Arendt argues that its excessiveness jeopardizes the socio-political bond. Excessive love is something that only survives in the realm of the private, for it “is killed or rather extinguished the moment it is displayed in public” (Arendt 1958, 51). For Arendt, love is an excessive force that “by its very nature, is unworldly, and it is for this reason rather than its rarity that it is not only apolitical but antipolitical, perhaps the most powerful of all antipolitical human forces” (1958, 243).<sup>5</sup> For her, both the publicization and hence, politicization of love allows for the perversion of its intimate and particular form, when it comes to be “used for political purposes such as the change or salvation of the world” (1997, 52). Consequently, she denies the compatibility of love and politics while nonetheless insisting that sociality is made possible by these very bonds of attraction. Instead, of calling upon the necessity of love in human affairs, Arendt discusses love as a force which threatens the social bond. Rather than enable a politics, the friendship found in excessive love complicates its possibility.

Friendship as a relation between incompatible tensions suggests, once again, the duplicity of the question of friendship and its negotiation with the socio-political realm. Kant’s discussion of friendship remains clear inasmuch that its basis is not the fusion of each other’s interests into a unified whole. However, this is not to say that the call for universality is the same as fusional unity. While Kant concurs, “it is sweet to feel a mutual possession that approximates to a fusion into one person,” the “excessive familiarity” of mutual love must be held in check by our duty to respect the other (1964, §46: 470). Good friendship requires distance which means a proper spacing, since the “excessive familiarity” of the other is an immoral regard for the other and as a consequence threatens to undo the respect we ought to maintain towards others –lovers or strangers alike. The fear with an excess of love is a lessening of the respect, which, Kant says, is due to others. This leads him to ask: “[A]nd how can he be sure that if one of the friends is more ardent in his love he may not, just because of this, forfeit something of the other’s respect?” (§46: 469). Kant’s suspicions double when he asks if equality in friendship is indeed possible: “[D]oes not all this mean that love and respect on the part of both friends can hardly be brought subjectively into that balanced proportion which is yet necessary for friendship?” (§46: 469). Kant carefully heightens our suspicions of the grounds on which we can claim that equality, respect and mutuality can ever be known in our relations with

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<sup>5</sup>See also Beardsworth 2006. For a discussion of a future politics made possible by love see Hardt and Negri 2004.

others. At the same time however, he insists that these concerns take precedence in our relations with others. Kant confirms this obstacle of friendship as that which makes it unattainable, since nothing can ensure equal giving and giving equal. Kant's conception of perfect friendship rests on a combination of reciprocity and equality. Yet, while such an experience lacks measurability, he insists that it still ought to orient the impossible test of the best friendships. As much as Kant calls for a friendship grounded in mutuality and equality (as the only true possibilities of friendship) he nonetheless stresses the inherent difficulty of arriving at such a state of mutually assured affairs.

Kant's social physics of attraction and repulsion find their fulcrum on the grounds of respect, thus leading the way to a spatial-temporal conception of Kant's ethics. As much as respect requires a proper distance -and thus in Kant's terms, a certain degree of repulsion- it also is something that happens over time. Here, I argue that where respect is a matter of space, trust is a matter of time. The test of friendship remains that the necessity of distance is doubled. On one hand, one needs to keep the distance between one and the other out of *respect* for the other, while, time itself, operating as a distancing effect, serves to judge the merit of such relations. Without distance in both senses, friendship can be undone. Distance is thus part of this duty.<sup>6</sup> Unlike what we might assume, a degree of repulsion in our relationships with others, in Kant's discourse, is a good thing. The harmony of the social world itself is dependent on balancing proximity and distance between oneself and others, subsequently reinforcing the stakes of Kant's theory of attraction and repulsion.

Consequently, friendship takes place between attraction and repulsion and owes its virtue to its principles of trust and respect. The interplay of attractive and repulsive forces serves as an analogy for the tension between friendship and politics and the impossibility of its reconciliation. Each finds their possibility -and the limit of these same possibilities- in the tension between these contrasting forces. Kant's characterization of friendship underscores that it is both productive of the social bond while also, potentially destructive in cases of excessiveness -whether it be a cases of love or hate. With this in mind, let us now turn to his discussion of friendship and the demands of duty in order to understand the tensions between morals and politics and what the stakes of these demands are.

## II. FRIENDSHIP AND DUTY

It is not entirely clear that Kant's discourse on politics and friendship can be partitioned on the grounds of choice and duty. In fact, it will be shown that there are instances where this division cannot be maintained.<sup>7</sup> The distinctions between these

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[6] Geoffrey Bennington suggests that there is a paradox of distance which sustains the best of friendships. Admittedly he discusses the friendship of Montaigne and Etienne de La Boétie as an example of this rather than Kant's theory of attraction and repulsion (Bennington 2000, 112-113).

[7] H.J. Paton recognizes the differences of Kant's concern in each part of his *Metaphysics of Morals*. For Paton, the *Doctrine of Right* has more to do with "continental jurisprudence" (134). He writes: "It is concerned with the law of *external* freedom and so with legal obligation" whereas the *Doctrine of Virtue*, where

realms do permit overlap and do, I add, extend the problem of contradictory demands, (which until now I have discussed in relation to his theory of attraction and repulsion) onto the question of duty. In one sense, this is because there is a duty in friendship which one can never adequately grasp nor live up to.<sup>8</sup> In another sense, it is because Kant suggests duties towards others should be obligated but insists that they cannot be obligated by legal enforcement.<sup>9</sup> Consequently, what marks the separation as much as the inseparability of morals and politics is how to obligate a virtuous regard for others without seeking recourse to a system of law. That is, how to insist on duty while maintaining individual liberties.

Within Kantian scholarship, the debate remains as to what role morality plays in his system of politics and whether or not Kant's theory of politics is compatible with his moral theory.<sup>10</sup> For instance, Kant scholar Pierre Hassner argues that it is necessary to recognize the overlap between Kant's moral and political realm but also recognize the manner in which they are to be distinguished. He writes:

The root of the question raised by Kant's political philosophy resides in the ambiguity of morality and politics, each in itself and the two in their mutual relation. That ambiguity makes Kant's own formula that a true politics is the application of his morality acceptable only with some refinement. The difficulty arises because it is true not only that Kant's politics must be understood on the basis of his morality but his morality may be understood on the basis of his politics. Moreover, his politics must also be understood independently of his morality, and his morality, ultimately, depends radically on conditions that lie beyond politics. This ambiguity or contradiction explains both Kant's division and reunion of law and morality and his strange hesitation on the threshold of philosophy of history while apparently according it a place both decisive and tangential. (Hassner 1987, 583)

Adding to Hassner's claims, Hans Reiss understands the distinction between Kant's morality and politics on the grounds of a metaphysics of law and the difference between duty and choice.<sup>11</sup> He defines Kant's theory of politics as an attempt at a public framework

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the question of friendship is discussed, "has more to do with the laws of internal freedom, which, as duties, have to be enforced by each man himself: they cannot be enforced by the physical power of the state" (135). Paton goes on to make the difference clear: "Ethical obligation is concerned, not simply with actions, but with their inner motive or maxim; and because of this there is in our moral choices a certain playroom or latitude, which, if extended to our legal obligations, would cause us trouble with the police. Different kinds of ethical duties are associated with different kinds of virtue and vice." (135) See (Paton 1993, 133-54).

8] Paul Guyer suggests that in friendship there is an irreconcilable tension between duty and feeling. In his discussion of friendship he subjects extreme case scenarios to the rigor of the law of moral duty in order to suggest that Kant's imperative cannot fully account for exceptional limit-situations (i.e. seeing one's wife and a stranger in equal life-threatening danger). See Guyer 1993, 386-93).

9] Alasdair MacIntyre writes of Kantian duty: "The good will's only motive is to do its duty for the sake of doing its duty. Whatever it intends to do, it intends because it is its duty." See the entirety of his discussion of Kant (MacIntyre 1998, 183-91).

10] See Flikschuh 2000; Ellis 2005; Bohman and Lutz-Bachmann 1997, and Timmons 2002.

11] Reiss goes on to place Kant's thought on politics and morality within his work on history and nature. He writes: "Kant's political theory is thus closely bound up with his ethics, though this is not its only affinity; for it is also closely connected with his philosophy of history. On the one hand, ethics and politics

for legislating how to deal with public clashes of interest in a universal manner and Kant's morality as an attempt at a universal structure of principles whose basis are categorical imperatives (1993, §33: 425). On these grounds, there appears to be little difference between Kant's morality and politics. However, it is only when we look at the distinctions between duty and choice that important distinctions between morals and politics become necessary.

The tension between morality and politics stems from the problem of instrumentality and the conflicting nature of legal and virtuous duties. The universal nature of Kant's principles is enforced differently depending on its moral or political context. That is, in a political context the enforceability of one's actions is marked by an appeal to legal duties whereas in a moral context one's actions are marked by an appeal to virtue. Because of the difference between legal and virtuous duties and the problem of their enforcement the question of friendship comes to occupy concerns for both the moral and the political realm while nonetheless having separate and contradictory obligations.<sup>12</sup> Kant's conception of morality, while refusing to posit our actions towards others as merely the application of prescribed duties, derives its political status from its ability to apply itself to what some critics call normative rights of conduct.<sup>13</sup> The problem however is that this very conception of morality -as the application of a normative legal doctrine - troubles the sense in which moral duties towards others are cultivated independent of legal enforcement. Further, this conception of morality troubles the thinking of friendship as a choice-worthy and virtuous activity over and above the mere fulfillment of social duties. In this sense, the ends-based nature of his moral doctrine contrasts with its so-called instrumental application as the basis for political relations. This leaves Hassner to suggest that the distinction between the idea of a moral community and a political community is the result of Kant's differing conceptions of legal and virtuous duty.<sup>14</sup> While virtuous and legal duties appeal to universal frameworks, the key difference remains that Kant's

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overlap. On the other hand moral and political duties are clearly different." (Reiss 1970, 22)

12]Reiss (1970) affirms this view when he suggests a non-passage between Kant's moral principles and political framework. While his discussion is not framed as aporetic, he nonetheless contends that "a complete account of moral practise in all particular instances where the concept of morality can be applied is impossible. What Kant wishes to provide is an approximation to such a system, elaborating the relevant a priori principles" (19).

13]For a discussion of the normative nature of Kantian ethics that focuses on the question of beneficence see Hill 2006, 480-514.

14]"This primacy is made emphatic in the *Metaphysics of Morals*, where Kant distinguishes legal duties and the duties that virtue entails, assigning distinct priority to the legal duties. Legal duties apply to external acts, which are subject to the external constraints of legislation; the duties commanded by virtue apply to the maxims behind the actions, to the internal intentions which are directed toward some end that ought to be a duty but that cannot be constrained from without. Although the duties of legality deal only with the external acts, they take precedence over the duties of virtue, though these are linked to intention and good will, because the duties of legality are themselves of the essence of morality, defining as they do the reciprocity of rights and duties in demanding that every man respect the rights of man both in others and in himself." (Hassner 1987, 592-93)

virtues of friendship are not prescribed as legal duties but practises of good and choice-worthy character, and thus of a moral nature. Moral duties are commanded on the basis of one's respect for our fellow man rather than legalistic principles.<sup>15</sup> Duty in the moral realm is commanded on the basis of adherence to the moral law and not legality as such.<sup>16</sup> As Reiss's reading of Kant outlines: "Moral action can thus be commanded; legal actions, however can be enforced." (1970, 21)

Simon Critchley's discussion of Kant appeals to the same problem: Morality lacks an adequate foundation for motivating others to act without recourse to external authority (2000, 14). Consequently, in the absence of external enforcement or an appeal to reason the link between motivation and universal imperatives falls short of its aim. "The function of the fact of reason in Kant," Critchley suggests, "is to try to close the gap between justification and motivation" (2000, 30).

Kant's conception of duty necessitates a concern with internal freedom insofar as he suggests that what "the duties of virtue have in common is that for either practical or moral reasons they cannot be coercively enforced through a legal system of justice (1963, §6: 406-7).<sup>17</sup> The duties of virtue turn out to be simply all of our moral virtues that are not properly subject to coercive enforcement.<sup>18</sup> Kant suggests that because friendship falls within the providence of virtue it cannot be enforced by law, but only by duty. Again turning our attention to Kant's insistence on virtue, the duty of friendship is a duty of reason which also functions as a duty of honour: "It is a duty imposed by reason –not, indeed, an ordinary duty but a duty of honour," even though it is a "mere Idea which cannot be achieved in practice." (1963, 46: 469) While Kant suggests the impossibility of friendship coming to be in its perfection this does not forfeit his interest in the subject. Instead, he its impossible ideal is presented as a necessity. He insists that we act out of regard for the most complete kind of friendship imaginable. Subsequently, this leads to what I am calling an inadequation between the practical and the ideal possibilities of friendship or what is referred to as the distinction between perfect and imperfect duties.<sup>19</sup>

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15] See Reiss's important point of distinction on the formal nature of Kant's moral duties. "Kant is again not concerned with delineating the content of relations between individuals (i.e. the ends which they desire or ought to desire), but only with the form. What matters is the arrangement which establishes that the free actions of one individual 'can be reconciled with the freedom of others in accordance with a universal law.'" (Reiss 1970, 22).

16] See Marguerite La Caze 2007. La Caze suggests that the relation between virtue, right and duty offers grounds for separating Kant's politics from Kant's ethics. She writes: "For Kant virtue is that part of morality or ethics that cannot be enforced or made part of politics. Thus, the accusation that Kant thinks one can deduce politics from ethics, understood as politics deduced from virtue, is inaccurate. Kant did not think that virtue and right were necessarily co-implicated but instead had a hope that people would live according to the virtues of love and respect once right restrained politics." (794)

17] Kant, *The Doctrine of Virtue, Part II of the Metaphysics of Morals*, §6: 406-07.

18] For other discussions of Kant's distinctions between juridical and ethical duties see Gregor 1963 and Herman 1993.

19] See La Caze 2007.

Like Thomas McCarthy's reading of Kant, "nothing in experience can correspond to regulative ideas, they are not representable in and of themselves, but only in relation to the practises they regulate" (1988, 647). We are dutiful to 'friendship (in its perfection)' but our dutifulness is always inescapably and perhaps regrettably undutiful because there remain an inadequate relation between the duty of friendship and its ideal realization. What is interesting about this claim is that it does not bring about a nihilistic turn in Kant's work. Instead, it calls forth the necessity of negotiating between the virtuous and choice-worthy aims of friendship with the practical implications of our duty towards others. For Critchley, this tension is what marks his call for a "universal pragmatics" (2000, 24).

With that said it would be a mistake to disregard the political implications of Kant's conception of duty because the law does not prescribe it or because its perfection remains impossible. Kant insists that there remains a moral duty to have our actions "make the ends of other human beings our own" and thus act out of regard for universal moral imperatives (Tenenbaum 266).<sup>20</sup> On one hand, Kant brings together a theory of moral actions which consolidates the particular with the universal. On the other hand, commentators such as H.J. Paton (1993) and Paul Geyer (2006) argue that he remains unable to fuse the divide between a generalized framework and particular responsibility for the moral law. Similarly, Peter Fenves rightly suggests that Kant's insistence on moral duty is political insofar as "whatever hinders the execution of this duty is illegitimate," (1999, 138) and Susan Meld Shell calls attention to Kant's insistence that there is a moral duty as social beings not to isolate ourselves from the social world (1996, 160). While she does not draw attention to the aporetic structure of Kant's theory of moral and political duty, she does offer a way in which to see Kant's theory as negotiating a double-register of oneself and the whole for which one forms a part. She writes:

Here, in public intercourse, is the appropriate setting for that "reciprocity" and "openness" to others, the cultivation of which is a duty. For here, the individual can be the 'fixed center' (*Mittelpunkt*) of his principles and yet regard this circle drawn around him as 'part of an all-inclusive circle' that constitutes the cosmopolitan mentality (*Gesinnung*). Such a community of agreeableness (*humanitas aesthetica et decorum*) is, it seems, the closest we can come 'without leaving the world' to being parts of a noncoercive whole while remaining whole ourselves."<sup>21</sup> (160)

With Shell, we see that there is an integral link between the well-being of the social (political) world and its concern for friendship that must be addressed. In agreement with Fenves, there is no doubt that the bettering of the social realm goes hand in hand with a respect and encouragement of the virtues of friendship. However, as these commentators suggest, how to instrumentalize virtue as a public duty without legal enforcement remains the keystone question for Kant's ethical discussions.<sup>21</sup> Their failure to establish a

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20] Tenenbaum 2005, 266. This, of course, is also an allusion to Kant famous maxim: "Act in such a way that you treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, always at the same time as an end and never merely as a means to an end." (Kant 1993, §31: 424-25)

21] For a discussion on the reconciliation of politics and ethics in Kant's *Perpetual Peace*, see Bennington 2011.

universal pragmatics for moral and political action does not allow our social duties as such to disappear. Rather, it suggests the irresolvable but on-going negotiation between morals and politics. The problem remains a question of balance between social responsibility and instilling a motivation for action independent of selfish pursuits. (Hassner 1987, 583)

Paul Guyer makes clear that what Kant calls the 'duties of love' are also duties to have specific feelings towards others, and act towards them in certain ways (2006, 255). Nonetheless, what must be maintained by our duties towards others is an economy of trust and respect as our essential bond. The duty of man in relation to each other is to maintain this respect entitled to man *qua* man, even in the name of the most inhuman of acts. For "I," Kant says, "cannot withdraw at least the respect that belongs to him in his quality as a man, even though by his deed he makes himself unworthy of his humanity" (1963, §39: 462). While he, the other *qua* bad (immoral), may turn his back on his singular and, at the same time, universal duty to love and respect others, each being *qua* man cannot turn away from my singular duty towards him. In one sense, this is an astonishing statement on the duty to forego vengeance on those whose actions have done harm to the social realm. Each man who participates in the realm of human affairs is obligated to act in the name of non-sensual love and respect, regardless of another perpetrating the greatest disrespect on humanity.<sup>22</sup> Regardless of the crime, Kant beseeches us not to turn our back on his fellow man in good or, especially, in bad times. Each man is obligated to respond in the way that one can and the way in which one's sees right in the face of injustice. Kant's ethical framework for acting with justice in mind is very similar to Aristotle's conception of acting just. Although I do not have room to go into a full discussion of Kant's ethical regard for the other, Kant asks: "How should one behave, for example, to men who are morally pure or depraved? To the cultivated or the crude?" (1963, §46: 469). Kant answers, both beautifully and simply: "These questions do not yield so many different kinds of ethical obligations (for there is only one kind - that of virtue as such), but only so many different ways of applying [the one principle of virtue] (corollaries)." (1963, §46: 469) Duty, it should be understood, is inseparable from a respect for principles.

What we see here is how Kant's conception of moral duty becomes an unconditional political duty towards others that cannot be circumvented. Kant commands a certain respect for respect that, in essence, emerges as a non-negotiable and unconditional duty. The duty to respect our fellow others cannot be compromised. This point reinforces the grounds in which the morals and politics of Kant's friendship permit separation

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22]As a subsidiary concern, it would be interesting to consider whether or not the dangers which correspond to excessive love are also dangers of excessive duty. That is, if duty is coupled with respect for Kant what would too much respect for the other mean? What are its consequences for the social? Does Kant's discussion of respect accommodate the possibility of excessive duty? These questions would be particularly interesting in relation to an examination of political and religious institutions and the question of faith and devotion. Here I can only suggest that Kant would caution excessive duty because of the toil it would take on the practise of critical reasoning as a result. See Guyer's discussion of Kant's duties of love and questions of respect for humanity. See Guyer 2006, 255-60.

and inseparability. Here, Kant says little of how such respect can be politically enforced other than to suggest that as citizens we have the duty to be dutiful; that is, the duty to respect *respect*. Without proper legal enforcement, respecting the other operates as a non-negotiable duty (which is thought *instrumental without being enforceable*) for the well-being of the socio-political bond. Its basis is moral because it lacks legal coercion, and I add, could never be made possible by legal enforcement without sacrificing individual freedoms.

### III. BLACK SWANS AND PARTICULAR FRIENDSHIPS

Any discourse on friendship or community cannot overlook the basis of inclusion/exclusion in friendship and our duties towards others. Nonetheless, what remains understated in his discourse are the contradictory demands that mark the universalizing of the moral law in relation to the demands of *particular* friendships. Yet his concern with the tension between particularity and generality in friendship calls for a reconsideration of the limits which are said to distinguish one from the other and the ethics of these distinctions. In particular, I would like to return to how Kant frames a concern for respect and responsibility in our relations with the other in order to understand how they “intersect in the ethics or the virtue of friendship” and suggest ways in which an ethics of a singular friendship can be coupled with an ethics of the universal.<sup>23</sup> In his *Lecture on Friendship* he writes:

Friendship is not of heaven but of the earth, the complete moral perfection of heaven ought to be universal; but friendship is not universal; it is a peculiar association of specific persons, it is man's refuge in this world from his distrust of his fellows, in which he can reveal his dispositions to another and enter into communion with him. (Kant 1997, 206-7)

Here Kant argues that friendship is a particular concern thought in remove from the distrustful realm of political and economic relations. Where the world does not offer such trustworthy alliances, friendship offers a safe space to communicate one's thoughts without fear of reprimand. In reality, Kant's political subject cannot say whatever he wants to just anyone; “he cannot risk it: partly because the other person, while prudently keeping back his own judgments, might use this to harm him, and partly because, as regards disclosing his faults, the other person may conceal his own, so that he would lose something of this other's respect by presenting himself quite candidly to him.” (1997, 138)

What remains understated in Kant's political writings is the link between duty and secrecy.<sup>24</sup> As Derrida suggests, the question of the secret secretly organizes the role and

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23]La Caze's work on Kant and Derrida is important in this context. Insisting on the difficulty of conceiving a model of ethical politics, she claims that Derrida does well to advance Kant's scholarship on the grounds of the question of virtue and respect. See La Caze 2007.

24]Here one should also recall how the question of secrecy figures into Michel Montaigne's discussion of friendship. Kant articulates the necessity of the secret in friendship much more forcefully than Montaigne because he emphasizes its political and moral tensions. See Pakaluk 1976.

place of friendship between morality and politics. He argues that “the political stakes of Kant’s claims are obvious” (Derrida 1992, 257). In fact, for Derrida, “[A] reflection on the Kantian ethics and politics of friendship should in fact organize itself around the concept of secrecy. The concept seems to (secretly) dominate this *Conclusion of the Elements of Ethics*, and to mark problematically the ideal of friendship *qua* communication (*Mitteilung*) or egalitarian sharing.” (257)<sup>25</sup> The desire for unreserved communication with others stands in direct relation to the need to be cautious in what we reveal to others. Like the balance between attraction and repulsion previously discussed, communication requires a balance between publicity and privacy. In this sense, what we can reveal to others is as much a question of freedom as trust. For Kant, one must have confidence that the other can be a confidante. The difficulty is that rarely is a person found that we can entrust with our secrets:

The necessary combination of qualities is seldom found in one person especially since the closest friendship requires that this understanding and trusted friend be also bound not to share the secrets entrusted to him with anyone else, no matter how reliable he thinks him, without explicit permission to do so. (1963, §47: 471)

The question of secrecy is equated with the question of trust insofar as Kant desires the possibility to speak with others about political concerns without fear of punishment. In this sense, one *needs* friends, but more so, friends in which what you say cannot be of use by others against you. Consequently, such friendships have a *use* and an *advantage*: the conferral of one’s opinions on social, political and philosophical matters without being judged adversely or having these opinions misused against oneself. On this point, he also makes a call to rarity. Such friendships, Kant adds, are a rare thing to find. He likens such a friend to that of a “black swan” arguing that “if he finds someone understanding – someone who, moreover, shares his general outlook on things – with whom he need not be anxious about this danger but can reveal himself with complete confidence, he can then air his views” (§47: 461). Uniting the practise of philosophy, politics and friendship within one constellation, Kant reasons that such a friendship allows him “not to be completely *alone* with his thoughts, as in a prison, but enjoy a freedom denied to him with rank and file, with whom he must shut himself up in himself” (§47: 461).

If it is not possible to be friends with everyone in the same way at the same time in the same place, consequently, the articulation of the universal must transpire within particular relations. The particular must double as the manifestation of the universal. Here I argue

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25] Likewise Allen W. Wood argues for the importance of mutual communication in the ethical thought of Kant. While Wood does not explicitly call Kant’s conception of the social order aporetic, he ends his discussion of Kant noting a foundational blockage which defines human sociability: “Our sociability gives us a desperate need to be ‘wholly in society; yet our unsociable nature frustrates this need in manifold ways. So in relation to others we must forever pretend to be the friend that both we and our friend know we can never be. Kant therefore finds the deepest trust about friendship in a saying sometimes attributed to Aristotle: ‘My dear friends, there are no friends.’” Wood 1999, 276-82. See also Wood 1991 as well Baron 2002.

for an aporetic consideration of Kant's universal imperatives. His theory gives way to a paradoxical esteem of friendship; what I contend to be a *universal duty without universalism*. Kant writes:

I can be a friend of mankind in general in the sense that I can bear good-will in my heart towards everyone, but to be a friend of everybody is impossible, for friendship is a particular relationship, and he who is a friend to everyone has no particular friend. And yet there are men of the world whose capacity to form friendships with anyone might well earn them the title of everybody's friends. Such citizens are rare. They are men of a kindly disposition, who are always prepared to look on the best side of things. The combination of such goodness of heart with taste and understanding characterizes the friend of all men, and in itself constitutes a high degree of perfection. But as a rule, men are inclined to form particular relations because this is a natural impulse and also because we all start with the particular and then proceed to the general. A man without a friend is isolated. Friendship develops the minor virtues of life. (1997, 209)

This claim echoes Kant's most famous claim about friendship in his analogy to its rarity in the figure of the *black swan*.<sup>26</sup> For him, the rarity of friendship based in principles and mutual respect and esteem does not mean it is impossible, just rare to encounter, let alone experience. Kant never discounts the possibilities of the two extreme poles of his discussion of friendship – on one hand, extreme singularity (i.e. the black swan) and on the other, extreme generality (i.e. the friend of man). Instead, he carefully distinguishes its conceptual from its practical possibilities. This means that for Kant, conceptually, the question of friendship is unlimited, while, in practise, it is subject to limitations.

We can see how this difference takes shape in his distinction between the 'friend of man' and the philanthropist (1963, §47: 471-72). Kant recognizes the rarity of both figures and the manner in which each attempt to reconcile friendship with universality. However, Kant is clear that the difference between the former and the latter finds its basis in the problem of equality. Whereas the friend of man sympathizes with the well-being of man, the philanthropist loves his fellow man, but in a way in which inequality remains the condition of his love.<sup>27</sup> For Kant, the essential distinction is that the friend of man

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<sup>26</sup>]Kant credits his use of this term to a passage in Juvenal's *Satires*: "a bird that is rare on earth, quite like a black swan." See Kant 1964 §6: 472.

<sup>27</sup>]Following a reading of Fenves on Kant, the difference between the brother and the father in Kant's account of universalism ought to be likened to the difference between the *Menschenfreund* and the philanthropist. Fenves writes: "According to Kant's account, the friend of the human being, unlike the philanthropist gives only to those whom he owes; more exactly, he gives only to those whom he feels 'in his heart' that he owes even though no explicit contract, agreement, or promise stipulates that he owes anything at all. Only a community whose members acknowledge a mutual and yet entirely implicit debt to one another is fraternal: a debt that amounts to a universally shared secret. Because the depth of the debt is limitless the friend can represent his fraternity as extending ad infinitum. The sister, the mother, and even perhaps the lone father –to name only these three –would presumably be figures for other economies." (1999, 137) For an important discussion of the linguistic history of *Menschenliebe* (love of human beings) in German literature and philosophy see Fenves 1999, 149n2, 152n15. See also Fenves 2003 for a similar discussion. In Kant's discussion of equality, love and rectitude he writes: "Equality means that the natural

considers himself on par with the whole whereas the philanthropist's regard is the result of an unequal regard for others.<sup>28</sup> The difference, I contend, is best understood in reference to his discussion of a universal brotherhood under one father.<sup>29</sup> For Kant, equality is analogous to the friend *qua* brother, but while his cosmopolitical impulse calls for a new political imaginary its exclusion of women, sisters and animals has left many to question the rationality that warrants such exclusion.<sup>30</sup> Taking great issue with his uncritical synonymy of friendship with fraternity, Fenves suggests that Kant's call to friendship is paradoxically double. Friendship, he remarks, is the paradoxical negotiation of "a small society of brethren who grow ever closer together and the demand to establish "a large community of brothers which extends itself beyond every established border" (Fenves 1999, 139).<sup>31</sup>

This is similar to Slavoj Žižek's reading (2008) that confirms the paradoxical lean of Kant's conception of the political as well. In his discussion of singularity and universality, Žižek argues that this divide admits paradoxical and irreducible overlaps. Drawing upon parallels with the public-private distinction in Kant's work, Žižek argues that Kant adheres to a logic of difference whereby the distinction between these two realms is not based in an essential identity or an essential common place, but the way in which the singular is necessarily always-already manifestly universal. Žižek's argues that for Kant "the public space of 'world-civil-society' designates the paradox of the universal singularity, of a singular subject, who in a kind of short-circuit, by-pass(es) the mediation of the particular [and] directly participates in the universal" (2008, 122). Purposefully complicating the distinctions between the private and the public, Žižek's reading of Kant is noteworthy because he reads the Kantian political subject as that which is at one and the same time both singular and universal while resisting the impulse to substantiate a political subject on either side of this same divide.<sup>32</sup> It leads us to understand the interrelation between

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man is equal to all others, and they to him, and since moral sympathy is imprinted on all, he has to put himself in the other's place and from this there follows living rectitude." Kant 1963)§27: 65

28]See Fenves' discussion of the relationship between observation and mastery in friendship and how this effects Kant's conception of fraternity. Fenves also calls into question Gregor's translation of *gemeinert* as *mastered* and suggests that Kant is rather discussing friendship in relation to testing (*gemustert*). See Fenves 1999, 137 n. 13; 136-38.

29]While a discussion of Freud's work on structures of fraternity and paternal power would be out of place here, I nonetheless encourage a consideration of the following: Freud 1989; 1985; 1959.

30]Derrida asks the following: "What relation does this domination maintain with the double-exclusion we see at work in all the great ethico-politico-philosophical discourses on friendship: on the other hand, the exclusion of friendship between women; on the other, the exclusion of friendship between a man and a woman? This double exclusion of the feminine in the philosophical paradigm would then confer on friendship the essential and essentially sublime figure of virile homosexuality." (1997, 278-9) For other interesting discussions that attempt to subvert fraternal models of political association see Bingham 2006; May 1997; Kofman 2007.

31]For an interesting study on the Christian call to 'brotherhood,' and in particular the idea of a universal siblinghood see Marc Shell 1993.

32]In Žižek's reading of Kant's 'What is Enlightenment?' Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason, and Other*

the particular and the universal in a different way. More than just reversing the transition from the particular to the universal he suggests a coterminous relation whereby a non-instrumental and non-causal relation between the two emerges. He writes:

The authentic moment of discovery, the breakthrough, occurs when a properly universal dimension explodes from within a particular context and becomes 'for-itself', and is directly experienced as universal. This universality for-itself is not simply external to or above its particular context: it is inscribed within it. It perturbs and affects it from within, so that the identity of the particular is split into its particular and its universal aspects. (129)

This is the manner in which I suggest it would be productive to read Kant's concerns with singularity and universality. That is, what I call for is neither a transition of the particular into the general or the reduction of the general into particularity but its doubling whereby the particular as such gives way to a double-occurrence of that which is irreducibly universal. The problem is not Kant's concern with duty, but the duplicitous and consequently aporetic structure of friendship as the foundation for each and every concern with commonality. Universal friendship is plausible *qua* idea but escapes practicality. The problem remains a question of motivation: How to fulfill such an ethical duty independent of coercion or personal gain? The catch remains as Žižek succinctly states it: "It is not only that every universality is haunted by a particular content that taints it; it is that every particular position is haunted by its implicit universality, which undermines it." (132) In the very least, we can say that the problem of exclusion in friendship is not something that one can get rid of simply by extending its boundaries with open arms.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

Until now, we have looked at Kant's discussion of attraction and repulsion as a metaphor for understanding social relations and the moral conflicts which accompany his thoughts on duty and virtue. What reoccurs throughout each of Kant's discussions are the tensions between choice and duty and the political implications of this distinction. These tensions mark the question of friendship with a fundamental ambivalence whose contradictions highlight its points of tension, undecidability and contradictory demands. However, this is not to disavow the significance of Kant's insights. More importantly, it demonstrates the necessity of giving greater complexity to how we come to discuss the relation between politics, friendship and morality in Kant's writings. The difficulty that remains is how to affirm these paradoxical registers while finding the proper grounds

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*Writings in Moral Philosophy.* Žižek argues: "The paradox of the underlying formula 'think freely, but obey!' (which, of course, poses a series of problems of its own, since it also relies on the distinction between the 'performative' level of social authority, and the level of free thinking where performativity is suspended) is thus that one participates in the universal dimension of the 'public' sphere precisely as a singular individual extracted from or even opposed to one's substantial communal identification – one is truly universal only when radically singular, in the interstices of communal identities." (Žižek 2008, 122)

for integrating the conflicts of duty and choice together without destroying what makes friendship such an important and fundamental part of our personal and social experience.

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