

## KANTIAN NEIGHBORLINESS AND QUARRELSOMENESS

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### **Abstract**

*This paper explores Kant's notion of 'love thy neighbor' from *The Metaphysics of Morals* and 'quarrelsomeness' from the *Idea for a Universal History* as a way of contending with the hyperpolarization currently riddling conversations on college campuses, online, and in everyday experience. I argue i) that Kant's moral anthropology can provide a useful framework for coping with our current crisis in communication, and ii) that Kant's rigoristic ethics has an application to addressing that crisis. This paper focuses on the natural inclination toward 'quarrelsomeness' as one aspect of Kant's notion of unsocial sociability. The antagonism inherent in quarrelsomeness is not to be overcome but, rather, is to be sculpted with actions motivated by rational moral principles. Framed this way, moral principles may temper and commingle with our natural inclinations. I propose that bringing awareness to the tension between love of neighbor and quarrelsomeness will serve us well in mitigating hyperpolarization.*

**Keywords:** *Kant, moral, neighborliness, quarrelsomeness, hyperpolarization, metaphysics, ethics, anthropology, virtue, manners*

We are currently facing a communication crisis in which extreme polarization is silencing public debate on nearly every topic from politics to religion. Greg Lukianoff introduced the term "hyperpolarization" in his 2002 book *Unlearning Liberty: Campus Censorship and the End of American Debate* to describe this phenomenon.<sup>1</sup> Since the 1990s, hyperpolarization has been seeping out of the university and into the media and everyday conversations. It has silenced individuals and put neighbors at odds. This has spawned a further repercussion. Biases in politics, science, religion, philosophy, and other disciplines have been accepted as truths, and the holders of these opinions have become self-proclaimed stewards of the Good. The time of debating ideas – between liberals and conservatives, vegans and meat eaters, capitalism and socialism, religion and science and issues around gun control, vaccinations, and global warming – has ended. This has had the trickle-down effect of silencing free speech rights in order to protect people – especially the marginalized – from feeling offended by views contrary to their own or to what they perceive to be their vital, existential interests. While much of this may have developed from good intentions, it has had some rather nega-

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<sup>1</sup> Greg Lukianoff, *Unlearning Liberty: Campus Censorship and the End of American Debate* (New York, London: Encounter Books, 2014).

tive consequences. People are afraid to have opinions outside the popular opinions of their neighbors, and it is impossible to be neighborly under these circumstances. To love thy neighbor, we sometimes need to quarrel.

Hyperpolarization is playing out in at least two ways. Firstly, rather than talking through differences of opinion, people are attacking each other personally (the ad hominem fallacy) or isolating themselves and harboring hate toward those with contrary opinions or beliefs. Secondly, people are turning to meditation, yoga, and other methods for quieting the mind instead of using their minds to deal with the discomfort.

In this paper, I shall argue that Kant's moral anthropology can provide a useful framework for addressing our current crisis in communication. To achieve this, I shall describe Kant's moral anthropology and discuss recent scholarly work on the topic. Next, I will explain the key role of Kant's notions of "love thy neighbor" as one aspect of Kant's moral philosophy, and "quarrelsomeness" in relation to his notion of unsociable-sociability. Finally, I will bring all of this together to put moral anthropology into practice to address some of the challenges hyperpolarization presents.

### **MORAL ANTHROPOLOGY**

In *The Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant describes "moral anthropology" as the counterpart to the metaphysics of morals, the two parts of the whole of practical philosophy that would like to deal with,

the subjective conditions of human nature that hinder or help them in fulfilling the laws of the metaphysics of morals.<sup>2</sup>

In other words, moral anthropology is the application of moral philosophy to real life, to everyday experience. While metaphysics is not favored in many academic circles today, Kant thought metaphysics the one true philosophy.<sup>3</sup> Metaphysics deals with what is possible. For Kant, metaphysical possibility is measured by what is morally possible,

that which is possible according to the rules of morals, and does not conflict with the general laws of freedom.<sup>4</sup>

Freedom, for Kant, is the most important concept. This is essential to mention at the opening of this paper because Kant's moral philosophy is often criticized for the alleged limits to freedom it imposes with its immutable moral laws and obligations. This can seem like a ploy for pervasive, strong moral convictions that might radicalize people along the lines of identity, politics, religion or science, therefore, precluding them from freedom of choice. However, Kant's moral philosophy, properly understood, cannot lead in such a direction. It does not

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<sup>2</sup> Immanuel Kant, *The Metaphysics of Morals*, translated by Mary Gregor (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 6:217.

<sup>3</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Logic*, translated by Robert S. Hartman and Wolfgang Schwarz (New York: Dover Publications, 1974), p. 37.

<sup>4</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Lectures on Metaphysics*, translated by Karl Ameriks and Steve Naragon (Cambridge, UK; New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 166; 29:812.

operate on laws of morality but rather provides maxims of actions that are categorical in theory, yet, in our imperfect everyday experience, the individual is free to act in accordance with or in opposition to these maxims.<sup>5</sup> The maxims of actions that are derived with the categorical imperative assume the freedom of the individual not to change the maxims but rather to choose his/her actions.<sup>6</sup> I will continue to develop this point throughout the paper.

Kant did not complete the moral anthropology part of his practical philosophy because he ran out of time. While we can only speculate about what Kant's moral anthropology might have looked like, we do have many clues threaded throughout his writings with which to construct a model.

The most recent work in the field of moral anthropology is by Dieter Fassin in his textbook titled *Moral Anthropology: A Critical Reader*. Fassin, however, introduces his moral anthropology as distinct from Kant's and to be developed in the field of anthropology, not philosophy,

However, when proposing the expression "moral anthropology," what I have in mind is a radically different project – if not an anti-Kantian, at least a non-Kantian one.<sup>7</sup>

However, notwithstanding his "radically different project," Fassin concedes that it may well be impossible to do without Kant,

Yet, dismissing the moral dimension of anthropology in its Kantian sense might be less facile to do. The Kantian legacy is indeed more deeply enshrined in the discipline than most of its members would probably admit.<sup>8</sup>

Fassin agrees that it is not only moral anthropology, but anthropology itself which owes a debt to Kant's moral philosophy. While there is much scholarly writing on anthropology and morality, it is most often found in the field of anthropology, not philosophy, and Fassin is an excellent resource for these writings.

One of the reasons Fassin and others have rejected the idea of Kant's moral anthropology is because Kant's rigorist philosophy does not seem applicable to everyday experience. It is often thought to be too ideal or that it is workable only in a perfect world. This is entirely off the mark. Kant was well aware that his moral philosophy was a project in progress because human beings, moral beings, are beings in progress,

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<sup>5</sup> Importantly noted, Kant describes morals as "the laws" and "the rules" somewhat inconsistently. For the purposes of this paper, Kant's moral philosophy will be understood as providing the "maxims of actions."

<sup>6</sup> 1st Formulation of Categorical Imperative Act only according to that maxim whereby you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law. 2nd Formulation of Categorical Imperative - Humanitarian Principle

II. Act in such a way that you treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of another, always at the same time as an end and never simply as a means.

<sup>7</sup> Dieter Fassin and Samuel L  z  , *Moral Anthropology: A Critical Reader* (London, New York: Routledge, 2013), p. 2.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

Virtue is always in progress and yet always starts from the beginning. It is always in progress because, considered objectively, it is an ideal and unattainable, while yet constant approximation to it is a duty.<sup>9</sup>

There is an ever-present tension in Kant's moral philosophy between ideals and what can be realistically achieved in everyday experience. This is not a mistake or shortcoming of Kant's moral theory but rather what makes it a useful moral philosophy for making moral decisions in everyday experience. Kant, however, has been misunderstood on this front. Therefore, it is not surprising that Kant's moral anthropology has been overlooked by Fassin and other scholars interested in moral philosophy.

Rossen I. Roussev, in his paper *Philosophy and the Transition from Theory to Practice: A Response to Recent Concerns for Critical Thinking*, maintains with Habermas "that at any level of the transition between theory and practice, philosophy plays an indispensable role: the role of mediating interpreter."<sup>10</sup> Roussev's term 'philosophical competence' names a much needed space for solving problems and answering questions that, as Aristotle maintains, do not give fixed answers."<sup>11</sup> Accordingly, instead of making efforts to prove expertise in a field such as moral anthropology that is little understood and explored, one may endeavor with philosophical competence to explore the humanistic aspects of the problem I refer to as the deadlock of polarized opinions.

### ***Universal Moral Principles***

At this point, some of my readers might still be wondering, why Kant's and not some other moral philosophy? Firstly, I agree with Barbara Herman that in moral philosophy, it is the best framing we have.<sup>12</sup> Secondly, we need a moral philosophy structured with principles that all people can potentially share. Namely, universal moral principles.<sup>13</sup> Utilitarianism thinks it can know the future. It assumes knowledge of cause and effect. It dictates that one make a moral choice that will result in the greatest good for the greatest number of people. The notion of the "greatest good," however, assumes universal moral principles which is what we get from Kant's moral philosophy. Virtue ethics depends on one having a virtuous character. Virtue ethics uses universal moral principles to determine as to if one has a virtuous character.<sup>14</sup> And, so, yet again, we return to Kant. Most, if not all, moral theories assume universal moral principles. Therefore, Kant's moral philosophy gets at the root of other moral theories and provides us with some very practical tools for applying universal moral principles to everyday experience.

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<sup>9</sup> Immanuel Kant, *The Metaphysics of Morals*, 6:409

<sup>10</sup> Rossen I. Roussev. "Philosophy and the Transition from Theory to Practice: A Response to Recent Concerns for Critical Thinking," *Telos*, Vol. 2009, No. 148 (Fall 2009), pp. 93-94.

<sup>11</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, translated and edited by Roger Crisp (Cambridge, UK; New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

<sup>12</sup> Barbara Herman, Discussion during Q&A after a talk by Dr. Charles W. Mills, *The Racial Contract*, a colloquium featuring Dr. Mills on "Racial Equality," May 2016.

<sup>13</sup> Human beings do not share the same beliefs, opinions, feelings, and sensations. Potentially, however, they can develop a shared rational understanding of each other as world citizens.

<sup>14</sup> Robert B. Louden, "Vices of Virtue Ethics," *American Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol. 21, No. 3 (Jul., 1984), pp. 227-236.

Kant's moral philosophy is not only applicable to everyday experience; it only works in a world composed of imperfect people. With our developing global community, all of its obstacles and differences, it seems only prudent to seek universal moral principles so that all people are included. Those favoring moral relativism might wince at this, but please stay with me at least until the end of this paper as I will propose a way to deal with our differences as well. Kant's moral philosophy is inclusive in ways that have yet to be understood,

The supreme principle of the doctrine of virtue is to act in accordance with a maxim of ends that it can be universal law for everyone to have.<sup>15</sup>

For example, the duty of beneficence extends to all people, not only those who share one's opinions and beliefs. Later in this essay, we will discuss how it is possible to extend the duty of beneficence universally. The point here is that the universality in Kant's moral philosophy unites us and the hyperpolarized path we are on presently is dividing us.

### *Metaphysics of Morals*

In *The Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant lays out his moral philosophy in two parts: "doctrine of right" and "doctrine of virtue."<sup>16</sup> The doctrine of right deals with laws and the doctrine of virtue, ethics. To show what is morally possible, Kant examines both laws and ethics. I have added a third doctrine, the doctrine of etiquette, to maintain and account for differences in social life. For example, eating with a fork and knife or chopsticks. Universal moral principles have no bearing on the differences that do not threaten the moral way of being of our global culture.

The doctrine of right lays out laws for actions that can be coerced. For example, keeping one's promise in signing a contract. The doctrine of virtue does not provide laws for actions but rather gives maxims for actions that cannot be coerced. For example, the duty not to lie. In a court of law, doctrine of right, one can be coerced not to lie. As a moral duty, however, the doctrine of virtue, one cannot be coerced not to lie. Indeed, the fact that one is free to lie (or not to lie) is what determines the action of not lying as a moral action. For Kant, moral actions are never for some particular end such as fear or reward. If one does not lie because one fears punishment or wants for some reward such as praise, it is not a moral action. If one does not lie because it is one's duty as one member of the whole of humanity, it is a moral action.

In this paper, I will only focus on the doctrine of virtue as it addresses the love of thy neighbor. In the doctrine of virtue, Kant lays out two duties: 1. One's own perfection. 2. The happiness of others.<sup>17</sup> While Kant lists the two duties separately, they are intertwined in that the duty of the happiness of others contributes directly to the duty of one's own perfection (and vice versa). The duty to love one's neighbor belongs to the duty of the happiness of others, but as I shall show, the duty to love one's neighbor includes oneself.

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<sup>15</sup> Immanuel Kant, *The Metaphysics of Morals*, 6:395.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 6:386.

### ***Doctrine of Virtue***

In the doctrine of virtue, Kant lays out his ethical theory. “Virtue,” for Kant, is distinct from how it is typically defined as “conformity to a standard of right.”<sup>18</sup> Kant defines “virtue” as the activity of overcoming one’s natural inclinations that tempt one to betray what one knows to be the good,

Virtue is the strength of a human being’s maxim in fulfilling his duty. — Strength of any kind can be recognized only by the obstacles it can overcome, and in the case of virtue these obstacles are natural inclinations, which can come into conflict with the human beings moral resolution.<sup>19</sup>

For Kant, one measures one’s virtue by the obstacles one actively overcomes. Free, not coerced, moral actions define one as morally good, and only the individual can make this determination for him/herself. Furthermore, a moral person, according to Kant, is not passive. Being moral is active. One has the strength of virtue if one is actively overcoming one’s natural inclinations.

As we shall see later in this paper, the two duties in the doctrine of virtue meet with the obstacle of antagonism in social life. This is not, according to Kant, a flaw in human beings but rather that which fuels moral progress. This is reminiscent of a remark Kant makes in the First Critique,

The light dove, cleaving the air in her free flight, and feeling its resistance, might imagine that its flight would be still easier in empty space.<sup>20</sup>

Just as the light dove needs wind resistance to fly, so, too, human beings need the resistance of natural inclinations, and the other challenges that show themselves in social life, to become virtuous. Kant’s moral philosophy as well as his larger philosophical project, the architectonic science of philosophy, is founded upon the notion that conflicts, challenges, and the bumping up against each other of people and things are precisely what makes the world a better place.

The world is . . . a whole of substances, which are in reciprocal connection, and thereby constitute a unity, a whole; a whole of contingent substances, in that they reciprocally determine each other, thus that one limits the other — the most perfect world is thus only a whole that has more perfection than any other thing can have.<sup>21</sup>

In order to progress morally, human beings need to interact with each other, to talk, to challenge, sometimes to offend. Hyperpolarization has not only silenced people, it has inspired a mass fear of saying things that might offend. A want not to offend, in some cases, might be evidence of acting virtuously or with good manners, but this is not what is happening in our

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<sup>18</sup> Merriam-Webster, “Virtue,” accessed March 20, 2018, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/virtue>

<sup>19</sup> Immanuel Kant, *The Metaphysics of Morals*, 6:394.

<sup>20</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, translated by Norman Kemp Smith (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1965).

<sup>21</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Lectures on Metaphysics*, 28:212.

hyperpolarized culture. Greg Lukianoff and Jonathan Haidt wrote about this in their article “The Coddling of the American Mind,”

Something strange is happening at America’s colleges and universities. A movement is arising, undirected and driven largely by students, to scrub campuses clean of words, ideas, and subjects that might cause discomfort or give offense.<sup>22</sup>

Common questions such as “Where are you from?,” have been deemed offensive not only on college campuses, but in everyday experience. Lukianoff and Haidt well describe this movement. Their conclusion, however, is that the students are in the wrong. By taking this position, they are polarizing themselves against the students. And, the students do have valid concerns. For example, in a conversation with my students about the right not to be offended by the question “where are you from?,” one of my students explained why she supported this as an offensive question. She grew up in downtown Los Angeles in the center of gang and drug wars. To escape this mayhem, she and her boyfriend moved to a new city. Six months into living in their new neighborhood, they were out for dinner and a seemingly kind stranger asked she and her boyfriend where they were from. Having dropped their guard, they answered. They were then beaten nearly to death. My student showed me the deep scar she wears from being stabbed. So, when someone asks her where she is from, it triggers her trauma. She might describe the experience as being offended or and being triggered by a question. Words and phrases that trigger trauma are real and a cause for concern. Using Kant’s moral anthropology, we can recognize that when someone is traumatized, it is a duty to care for the person’s moral happiness by being careful with words and questions. Also, be being aware of, as a friend, family member or professor, how what is said, asked and taught affects others. By not dealing with both sides of any issue or movement, polarization develops. By only siding with the students, a sanitized culture comes into being. This kind of silence halts moral progress.

***Moral Endowments – that for which one does not have a duty***

Kant describes two kinds of love in *The Metaphysics of Morals*: “Benevolence” is the natural moral endowment to love human beings, and “beneficence” is the duty to love one’s neighbor. I shall start with benevolence.<sup>23</sup>

Kant’s ethics, the doctrine of virtue, begins with three moral endowments that everyone has if they are to be counted as moral beings, which for Kant is precisely what it is to be a human being.<sup>24</sup> The three moral endowments are moral feeling, conscience, and love of one’s neighbor,

All of them are natural predispositions of the mind (*praedispositio*) for being affected by concepts of duty, antecedent predispositions on the side of feeling.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Greg Lukianoff and Jonathan Haidt, “The Coddling of the American Mind,” *The Atlantic* (September 2015), p. 8.

<sup>23</sup> Kant sometimes uses benevolence as the duty of beneficence. He points out that there are two contexts in which he uses these terms. Firstly, as moral endowments which are natural. Secondly, as duties of pure reason. Laid out this way, there is no contradiction.

<sup>24</sup> Importantly noted, Kant refers to this section, doctrine of virtue, as his ethics.

<sup>25</sup> Immanuel Kant, *The Metaphysics of Morals*, 6:399.

Moral endowments are feelings that validate concepts of duty. They are not sensations or emotions but rather naturally occurring inclinations of mind. All people, according to Kant, have natural feelings about what is right and wrong.<sup>26</sup> These feelings, however, are not duties but rather these feelings are affected by our duties. While human beings do not have a duty to have the three moral endowments, human beings do have a duty to cultivate them.<sup>27</sup> According to Kant, one cannot have a duty to have moral feeling, conscience or love of one's neighbor because "every human being (as a moral being) has it [these moral endowments] in him originally." Moral endowments do not dictate behavior. If they did, we would all be good, and there would not be a need for moral philosophy. Moral endowments, instead, validate our moral duties. Furthermore, the measure of one's virtue is by one's strength to overcome one's less favorable natural inclinations. "Virtue signifies a moral strength of will." Therefore, if there were not challenges, virtue could not be measured.

A description of how Kant uses the term "conscience" will be useful in elucidating what Kant means by "love of one's neighbor." As is the case with all three moral endowments, all people have a conscience. "Every human being, as a moral being, has a conscience in him originally."<sup>28</sup> In some cases, due to negative experiences, trauma, lack of education, etc., a person might appear to lack a conscience. However, it is not that the person is without a conscience but rather "he pays no heed to its verdict."<sup>29</sup> This is a rather hopeful aspect of Kant's moral philosophy in that it presumes all people can become morally better,

The duty is here only to cultivate one's conscience, to sharpen one's attentiveness to the voice of the inner judge, and to use every means to obtain a hearing for it.<sup>30</sup>

Kant's description of conscience is distinct from how it is typically defined: "a feeling of obligation to do right or be good."<sup>31</sup> Conscience, for Kant, "is practical reason holding the human being's duty before him for his acquittal or condemnation."<sup>32</sup> While conscience is a natural predisposition of mind and, therefore, prior to the conscious awareness of concepts of moral duties, it does not give one the feeling of obligation to do right or to be good, instead, it provides the subject with a means for drawing a verdict about one's moral choices and activities. Conscience affects what is given prior to experience by the moral law within, i.e., the synthetic a priori principles of morality. In Kant's moral philosophy, the three moral endowments validate our moral duties. They are natural predispositions of the mind, and, yet, human beings do not become conscious of the moral endowments until after they have encountered moral duties in thought or action.

The natural moral endowment I am focusing on in this paper is the love of one's neighbor, i.e., the moral feeling of love for human beings. Kant describes this natural moral

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<sup>26</sup> Feelings for Kant are distinct from sensations and emotions and are properly associated with the mind.

<sup>27</sup> Immanuel Kant, *The Metaphysics of Morals*, 6:401.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 6:401.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 6:401.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 6:401.

<sup>31</sup> *Merriam-Webster*, "Conscience," accessed March 20, 2018, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/conscience>.

<sup>32</sup> Immanuel Kant, *The Metaphysics of Morals*, 6:401.



endowment as it applies to others as “love of human beings,” and as it applies to oneself as “self-respect.”<sup>33</sup> For him,

1. Love of human beings is a subjective moral feeling to do good to others.
2. Respect for oneself is a subjective moral feeling to have self-esteem, “a confidence and satisfaction in oneself.”<sup>34</sup>

Human beings, as in the description of conscience above, become conscious of the feeling of love for human beings upon encountering the duty of beneficence. Framed in this Kantian way, one becomes conscious of moral feeling, conscience, and benevolence (love of others and self) when one thinks about or acts on one’s moral duties. Further, and at the same time, these moral endowments validate one’s moral duties, e.g., beneficence, gratitude, and sympathetic participation.

Benevolence inspires one to do good to other human beings and to treat oneself respectfully. The moral endowment of benevolence inclines human beings to treat each other benevolently because it brings “satisfaction in the happiness (well-being) of others,”<sup>35</sup> and it gives one delight and a feeling of well-being,

Love is a matter of feeling, not willing, and I cannot love because I will to, still less because I ought to (I cannot be constrained to love); so a duty to love is an absurdity. But benevolence (*amor benevolentiae*) [beneficence] as conduct, can be subject to a law of duty.<sup>36</sup>

Human beings have a natural endowment of mind, a feeling that inclines them to love others. It cannot be a duty because one cannot have a duty to do what one naturally feels. The moral feeling of benevolence, however, affects the duty of beneficence. In other words, one becomes aware of the moral endowment of benevolence when one thinks about or acts in accordance with (or in opposition to) the moral duty of beneficence. Kant makes it very clear that actions motivated by love are not necessitated by moral duties. “What is done from constraint is not done from love.”<sup>37</sup> There are, however, duties to love of which we shall examine next.

### ***Duties to Love – that for which one has a duty***

As a reminder, the second duty in the doctrine of virtue is the [moral] happiness of others. Within this duty, Kant provides three duties of love,<sup>38</sup>

beneficence  
gratitude  
sympathetic participation

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<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 6:400.

<sup>34</sup> *Merriam-Webster*, “Self-Esteem,” accessed March 20, 2018, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/self-estateem>.

<sup>35</sup> Immanuel Kant, *The Metaphysics of Morals*, 6:452.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 6:401.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 6:401.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 6:452.

In this paper, I will examine only the first, “beneficence.” The duty of beneficence is everyone’s duty,

Beneficence is the maxim of making others’ happiness one’s end, and the duty to it consists in the subject’s being constrained by his reason to adopt this maxim as universal law.<sup>39</sup>

The universality of beneficence also includes oneself, which is to say that I have a duty to treat myself beneficently. It must be universal, also, because one cannot conceive of a duty that is universal, i.e., to treat all people beneficently without holding it reciprocally for oneself and all other people.<sup>40</sup> Also, in Kant’s moral philosophy one’s duty is also one’s end. In other words, I do not treat others beneficently because it delights me. I treat others beneficently because it is my duty as one member of the whole of humanity,<sup>41</sup>

In speaking of laws of duty (not laws of nature), and, among these, of laws for human beings’ external relations with one another, we consider ourselves in a moral (intelligible) world where, by analogy with the physical world, attraction and repulsion bind together rational beings (on earth).<sup>42</sup>

Underlying Kant’s moral philosophy is an awareness of the tension between the duties human beings have to one another and natural feelings that sometimes conflict with them. Kant insists that human beings have a duty of beneficence to even the most unlovable people,

benevolence [beneficence] always remains a duty, even toward the misanthropist, whom one cannot indeed love but to whom one can still do good.<sup>43</sup>

This is particularly difficult when dealing with someone one finds deeply contentious or malicious. Often a knee-jerk response is to deem the person immoral. For example, on college campuses today the claim that “Everyone can succeed in this society, if they work hard enough” is considered a racial microaggression “because it is like saying “People of color are lazy and/or incompetent and need to work harder.”<sup>44</sup> If a professor makes this claim and a student of color takes offense, the student might think the professor immoral. If we apply Kant’s moral anthropology to this example, it might play out differently. Same story, but with this new analysis, both professor and student recognize the duty of beneficence. Therefore, the student and the professor respond differently. Instead of attacking the person (professor) and assuming a racial microaggression, the student might come to recognize the phrase as merely an off the cuff remark of a professor who means well yet perhaps lacks in manners? Or, the student might come to recognize the professor does not have an under-

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 6:452.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 6:451.

<sup>41</sup> Reason can be universalized in a way that feelings cannot.

<sup>42</sup> Immanuel Kant, *The Metaphysics of Morals*, 6:449.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 6:402.

<sup>44</sup> Katherine Timpf, “U of Wisconsin Faculty Advised Not to Say ‘America is a Melting Pot’ Because that’s Racist,” *National Review*, July 2015, <https://www.nationalreview.com/2015/07/melting-pot-racist-microaggression/>

standing of her culture and can make an effort to educate the professor. Likewise, the professor, aware of her duty of beneficence, will take care not to offend. One of the liberating aspects of Kant's moral philosophy is that the question as to if other people are moral or immoral is off the table. This assessment belongs solely to the individual. One may judge another for their manners or lack thereof. Also, as to if one has broken the law or not. One may even judge another person's ethical behavior if the expected ethical conduct has been laid out explicitly in the context, in this case, the University. But one person cannot decide as to if another person has acted morally or not. At first this seems stifling but as it turns out it is a burden human beings need not carry. Moral judgments are what one makes for oneself. They are private because the laws are given directly and privately to each individual.

The duty of beneficence necessitates that human beings help each other when there is need. One does not treat others beneficently because one delights in doing so (as in the moral endowment mentioned above) but rather because it is one's duty to humanity to help in ways that one can without oneself becoming needy. If, for example, one sees a homeless person in need of food, one may give the person money, buy them a meal, volunteer at a homeless shelter, etc. Acts of beneficence vary according to the individual acting beneficently and his/her capacity to be of assistance,

to promote according to one's means the happiness of others in need, without hoping for something in return.<sup>45</sup>

In addition, the duty of beneficence is not dependent on getting something in return such as gratitude or repayment.

While one acts beneficently without expectations, one does benefit,

Beneficence is a duty and if someone practices it often and succeeds in realizing his beneficent intention, he eventually comes to actually love the person he has helped.<sup>46</sup>

While it is not a duty to love human beings, acting on the duty of beneficence stirs one's love for the one helped. If Kant is right, then even where love does not naturally arise, acts of beneficence can bring about love artificially – which is not to say inauthentically. Returning to the example of the professor and the student, if they both recognize their duty of beneficence, they can override the emotion charge that comes with being offended. And, thereby, perhaps learn to love where the moral endowment to love had not yet been cultivated. The suggestion here is that perhaps we already have what we need to deal with these new sensitivities that college students are bringing to the forefront. Namely, kindness, love, and respect of one's neighbor. Therefore, perhaps there is not a need for new laws and ethical codes that restrict free speech but rather there is a need to get in touch with moral feelings and the moral duties already writ into the very nature of rational beings, human beings.

A friend of mine recently told me a story about seeing a homeless person begging on the side of the road. Her natural inclination was to roll up her window and look away. In-

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<sup>45</sup> Immanuel Kant, *The Metaphysics of Morals*, 6:453.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 6:402.

stead, she decided to act on her duty to do good to others and offered the woman twenty dollars. They started talking about the coming rain, and when their eyes met, this act of beneficence became love. Another fine example of beneficence begetting love happened in a police station as a friend of mine was picking up a police report. Her daughter had been in a car accident, and while her daughter was safe, my friend was not at ease and a bit shook by the event. As she stood in line, a boisterous man entered the station yelling and carrying on with violence in his gesticulations. My friend was fearful and did not find the man particularly lovable. The man was escorted outside, and as my friend departed for her car, she saw the man. He looked broken, sad, and lonely. He looked back at her and apologized for his earlier behavior, explaining that he missed an appointment due to a job and so had lost custody of his child. Her duty of beneficence is what brought her to pause and lend an ear. This act of kindness brought about love in her for this stranger. She hugged him, and they both felt love. They cried together. It seems Kant is on to something with this framing. Not all human interactions, however, play as they did in these examples and this is not necessarily a bad thing.

The interrelationship between the natural endowment, the feeling of love of one's neighbor, benevolence, and the duty of beneficence is important because it shows that Kant's moral philosophy is not merely rational. This aspect of Kant's moral philosophy and the notion of unsociable-sociability that I shall examine next, have been overlooked. The result is that Kant's moral philosophy is under fire by many prominent academics. In particular, Jonathan Haidt,

Kant was one of the most extraordinary systematizers in human history while being rather low in empathizing.<sup>47</sup>

It is a fallacy to draw conclusions about Kant's moral philosophy based on rumors about his personality. Furthermore, Kant's larger architectonic science of philosophy, of which I can only assume is what Haidt is referring to as "systemizer," is empathetic: "the action of understanding, being aware of, being sensitive to, and vicariously experiencing the feelings, thoughts, and experience of another."<sup>48</sup> Kant's account of the three moral endowments is high in empathizing. Haidt thinks Kant's moral philosophy is built on what he calls the "rationalist delusion,"

Western philosophy has been worshiping reason and distrusting passions for thousands of years.<sup>49</sup>

This is a reductive account of Western philosophy. Instead, of being a valid critique, it provides evidence of Haidt's misunderstanding of moral philosophy in general, and Kant's mor-

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<sup>47</sup> Jonathan Haidt, *The Righteous Mind: Why Good People Are Divided by Politics and Religion* (New York: Vintage Books, 2013), p. 140.

<sup>48</sup> Merriam-Webster, "Empathy," accessed March 20, 2018, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/empathy>

<sup>49</sup> Jonathan Haidt, *The Righteous Mind*, p. 34.

al philosophy in particular.<sup>50</sup> Jonathan Haidt's argument against rationalist models of moral philosophy fails with a wider understanding of Kant's moral philosophy. Indeed, it renders his social intuitionist model superfluous.<sup>51</sup> It is important to demystify Haidt's misunderstanding of Kant's and other moral philosophies so that we can benefit from their wisdom.

Kant's notion of unsociable-sociability is yet another essential piece of the Kantian puzzle that is often overlooked when assessing the applicability of his moral philosophy to everyday experience.

### ***Quarrelsomeness – unsociable-sociability***

According to Kant, as human beings have entered into society, they have developed an antagonism toward each other,

Here I take antagonism to mean the unsociable sociability of human beings, that is, their tendency to enter into society, a tendency to be connected, however, with a constant resistance that continually threatens to break up society.<sup>52</sup>

Antagonism, for Kant, is a natural response to our artificial world.<sup>53</sup> People want to connect, to share in life's joys but they also do not want not to be offended or bothered by different opinions. For Kant, this antagonism plays an important role in our development as individuals and as a species. The tension between unsociable sociability and the human being's rational capacity for universal moral principles is what propels change and motivates moral progress,<sup>54</sup>

Without those characteristics of unsociability, which are indeed quite unattractive in themselves, and which give rise to the resistance that each person necessarily encounters his selfish presumptuousness, human beings would live the Arcadian life of shepherds, in full harmony, contentment, and mutual love. But all human talents would thus lie eternally dormant, and human beings, as good-natured as the sheep that they put out to pasture, would thus give their own lives hardly more work than that of their domesticated animals. They would fail to fill the void with regard to the purpose for which they, as rational nature, were created.<sup>55</sup>

Kant goes further to suggest that human beings should be thankful for their quarrelsomeness, jealousy, "competitive vanity, and for their insatiable appetite for property and even power because without them human beings would lounge on the lawn, grazing with the sheep, nev-

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid., p. 34.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., p. 55.

<sup>52</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Idea for a Universal History, Toward Perpetual Peace and Other Writings on Politics, Peace, and History*, edited by Pauline Kleingeld, translated by David L. Colclasure (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2006), 8:20.

<sup>53</sup> As Kant points out, human beings cannot live together for long in a "state of wild freedom." Ibid., 8:24.

<sup>54</sup> One might think the philosopher who has a reputation for never lying and always being on time would not be tolerant of this antagonism.

<sup>55</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Idea for a Universal History, Toward Perpetual Peace and Other Writings on Politics, Peace, and History*, 8:21.

er inspired to develop reason, curiosity, and wonder.<sup>56</sup> The challenge is, according to Kant, how to have a civil society with just enough freedom to antagonize one another and to act morally. It is a delicate ratio that is ever shifting.<sup>57</sup> As a reminder, virtue is the capacity to overcome obstacles. Quarrelsomeness is an obstacle to be overcome but not eradicated. In other words, human beings need their not so favorable characteristics.

Because human beings are competitive and quarrelsome, it is often thought that they are fundamentally malicious. “Hell is other people,” wrote Sartre. Instead, Kant is claiming that unsociable-sociability, while most unflattering, brings out precisely what it is to be human – to love, to create, to make beautiful things, to advance technologically, to improve politics, economics, and medicine. Our present communication crisis, however, is preventing us from bringing out the best of humanity because we have stopped quarreling in the Kantian sense. At the University, the extensive lists of forbidden phrases that are deemed microaggressions, e.g., “Where were you born?”, have created a kind of covert antagonism.<sup>58</sup> The result is neighbors who are suspicious of each other, not neighbors who love. While it may be obvious already, in Kant’s framing, all people are one’s neighbor,

In accordance with the ethical law of perfection “love your neighbor as yourself” the maxim of benevolence [beneficence] (practical love of human beings) is a duty of all human beings toward one another, whether or not one finds them worthy of love.<sup>59</sup>

It is only when we are faced with someone who annoys us, insults us, lies to us, humiliates us or, heaven forbid, has a different political position, that we need to become rational, to rise out of the hate and indifference and treat the other beneficently to “promote the happiness of the other.”<sup>60</sup>

Today, there is much confusion about what it means to be good. For many people, the below-listed sentences all mean “I am good.”

I am a Christian	I vaccinate my kids
I am an atheist	I do not vaccinate my kids
I am a vegan	I am a conservative
I eat only organic meat	I am a liberal

In fact, the above sentences describe biases about what is the truth and what it means to be good. This confusion has led people to conflate, for example, “I am vegan” with “I am

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<sup>56</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Toward Perpetual Peace and Other Writings on Politics, Peace, and History*, edited by Pauline Kleingeld, translated by David L. Colclasure (New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 2006), 8:21.

<sup>57</sup> A host of people today are willing to abandon their rights to free speech to stop the antagonism. In essence, this would be to develop laws to coerce our moral laws, thereby, undermining the necessary freedom that makes morality possible.

<sup>58</sup> UCLA. Academic Affairs. Tool: Recognizing Microaggressions and the Messages They Send. 2014. [https://academicaffairs.ucsc.edu/events/documents/Microaggressions\\_Examples\\_Arial\\_2014\\_11\\_12.pdf](https://academicaffairs.ucsc.edu/events/documents/Microaggressions_Examples_Arial_2014_11_12.pdf)

<sup>59</sup> Immanuel Kant, *The Metaphysics of Morals*, 6:450.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 6:388.

good.” This is not to say being vegan is not good but rather to show that to be vegan is not to eat meat, not necessarily to be good. One can be a vegan and virtuous or not so virtuous. Kant would call a malicious vegan, morality in appearance only. When people are unwilling to engage about different opinions, it is tantamount to not treating one’s neighbor beneficently. None of this entails, however, that one ought to tolerate bullies but rather that one ought not to become a bully in response. As Kant maintains, one must not derive one’s morals from experience,

Experience teaches us what is, but does not teach us that it could not be other than what it is.”<sup>61</sup>

In other words, experience shows us how our world is presently but not how it can be different, better or improved. The possibility of a better world comes to life in the moral activity of human beings and this is not given in experience, yet plays out in everyday experience.

Fareed Zakaria wrote an opinion piece in the Washington Post in June 2017 titled, “This country is frighteningly polarized.<sup>62</sup> This is why.” Zakaria wrote:

People on the other side of the divide are not just wrong and to be argued with. They are immoral and must be muzzled or punished.<sup>63</sup>

Within our current communication crisis quarreling and antagonism seem immoral because the good has been conflated with opinions that are derived from experience. To claim that being a liberal is equivalent to being good is to derive one’s morals from experience. It would also infer that any other political position is immoral. The moral law within does not play politics. The hope is that rights and politics have moral foundations. The reality is that they do not all have moral foundations. Recall that virtue is always in progress and hyperpolarization in a cog in the wheel of change.

Kant’s moral anthropology offers a means for viewing hyperpolarized positions less personally and more objectively. Therefore, it can help us to engage in conversations about sensitive and hyperpolarized opinions in new and fruitful ways. To come together as a global cultural community, we need universally shared principles and Kant provides us with a working toolbox.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, p. 590, A734/B762.

<sup>62</sup> Zakaria has received much criticism over this opinion piece.

<sup>63</sup> Fareed Zakaria, “This Country is Frighteningly Polarized. This is Why,” *The Washington Post*, June 15, 2017, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/we-dont-just-think-the-other-side-is-wrong-anymore--we-think-theyre-immoral/2017/06/15/f218c3e4-5207-11e7-be25-3a519335381c\\_story.html?utm\\_term=.51b5f966b5d6](https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/we-dont-just-think-the-other-side-is-wrong-anymore--we-think-theyre-immoral/2017/06/15/f218c3e4-5207-11e7-be25-3a519335381c_story.html?utm_term=.51b5f966b5d6)

<sup>64</sup> The doctrine of etiquette can account for differences locally, in social life, in customs that are ruled by manners.

## CONCLUSION

### *Politeness and Beneficence*

In the *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, Kant writes: “politeness (*politesse*) is an illusion of affability that inspires love.”<sup>65</sup> In my dissertation, I added the doctrine of etiquette to Kant’s doctrine of right and doctrine of virtue to account for different social practices. While little studied, Kant threads discussions of manners throughout his writings. This makes room for preserving our differences in our social life while uniting our global culture with rational maxims for actions that can be extended to all people. Therefore, nothing is lost, and much is gained.

Perhaps we can start with being polite to those who do not share our opinions and then the natural endowment of the love of thy neighbor may be unburdened and find light in our hearts and minds. And if being polite is not enough, then the duty of beneficence, since it is rational, can be put into play between those of opposing positions. Kant maintains: “do good to your fellow human beings, and your beneficence will produce love of them in you.”<sup>66</sup> While one does not act on the duty of beneficence to attain some particular end, one does achieve something by obedience to that duty, namely, the development of an “aptitude for love,” calling to mind Kant’s remark, “Virtue is its own reward.”<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, translated by Victor Lyle Dowdell (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1978), p. 44.

<sup>66</sup> Immanuel Kant, *The Metaphysics of Morals*, 6:402.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 6:392.