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What is the Point of Solidarity?

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In response to activist movements like Black Lives Matter and global events such as the Covid-19 pandemic, philosophers have shown a renewed interest in the value and practice of solidarity. However, this surge of interest has also highlighted some notable disagreements in the literature. This article proposes a novel understanding of the practice of solidarity and its value. On this approach, solidarity is characterized functionally as the practice that offers a unique way of bringing into greater harmony our moral and our personal reasons. Under social conditions of pervasive injustice, we often face a conflict between pursuing a flourishing life—e.g., by investing time and energy in personal projects and relationships—and doing what is morally required. I suggest that through solidarity commitments, we align our need to advance morality-given causes with our need to pursue personal projects and relationships. Viewing solidarity through the lens of this 'positive alignment' idea allows us to better understand its unique characteristics. Moreover, the account can clarify (and potentially resolve) some disagreements that have besieged recent debates. Finally, this approach deepens our grasp of solidarity's value and its deontic status, contributing to its recognition as a central ideal in moral and political theory.

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What is the Point of Solidarity?

Juri Viehoff

And he who deserts his fellow equals
only deserts himself!

Bertolt Brecht, *Solidarity Song*

I. INTRODUCTION

Of all the theories for why some revolutions that should have happened didn't, perhaps this is the simplest one: all would-be revolutionaries had other things to do. There are work projects to finish, department meetings to attend, clients to keep happy. More importantly, there are families to care for, old friends to be in touch with, books to be written. These things (at least those in the latter sentence) don't just *appear* important to us. They really *are* important, providing reasons that are, though personal or agent-relative, still objective, weighty, and frequently duty-grounding. Yet tragically, they conflict with heading to the barricades right now.

This article proposes that we understand the social practice of solidarity as a response to this fundamental human predicament; and doing so sheds light on features of solidarity that philosophers have struggled to make sense of. On the view this article advances, solidarity responds to a basic need that people like us have in a world characterized by sharp and persisting injustices: by structuring (some of) our personal projects in line with (and in the service of) our general moral duties, we can, to some extent, reconcile our pursuit of such personal projects with these general moral reasons. And by standing with others in shared struggle, we simultaneously respond to demands of justice and act on our personal reasons stemming from our need to share in valuable relationships. Thus, I argue that committing to particular others and particular struggles in light of who we are—and aspire to be—helps us to promote justice without adopting an alienating conception of ourselves as mere instruments for the realization of some abstract normative goal or principle. In a slogan: "solidarity makes justice personal."[1] I claim that this is the most fundamental, *positive alignment*

[1] This does not mean, however, that solidarity is merely a matter of aligning personal projects with moral duties—an interpretation that would risk collapsing it into a form of virtue in the classical sense. Rather, as the relational aspect of solidarity makes clear, it is fundamentally about standing with others.

function that solidarity practices serve. While there are alternative ways of aligning our ethical life with our general moral reasons and duties (think: charity and pure altruism) alignment can give rise to more or less valuable bonds to other people. I maintain that solidarity is the practice that brings about *positive alignment* by forming distinctly valuable relationships with one's comrades in solidarity, thus serving a human need to stand in such relations with others.

There exists at present a significant gap between theory and practice when it comes to solidarity. Those fighting for social and humanitarian causes—whether *Black Lives Matter* protesters,[2] *#MeToo* activists,[3] or those who fought to contain the Covid-19 pandemic[4]—often attach great importance to the ideal of solidarity, couching calls for mobilization and support in terms of it. By contrast, analytic political philosophy has only recently started to pay close attention to the ideal. The aim of this article is to present an account of solidarity that connects it to existing practices, yet also vindicates it as a theoretically useful and distinctive ideal for moral and political theorizing.

But doing so, I will argue, requires a methodological shift. A natural and thus far dominant way of approaching solidarity as a philosophical topic starts with setting up necessary and sufficient conditions of what the concept is a concept of, or what it designates. It is only after we have addressed the conceptual question that we turn to the justificatory challenge, asking such questions as when solidarity is permitted or required, what social groups must be like to ground duties of solidarity,[5] and what makes solidarity valuable (when it is valuable).[6] Following recent work on complex

[2] "George Floyd: Black Lives Matter Solidarity as England Buildings Go Purple," *BBC News Online*, June 3, 2020, https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-52903747.

[3] "700,000 Female Farmworkers Say They Stand With Hollywood Actors Against Sexual Assault," *Time*, November 10, 2017, https://time.com/5018813/farmworkers-solidarity-hollywood-sexual-assault.

[4] "Covid-19: People Across the Country are Delivering Groceries Free. It's 'Solidarity, Not Charity,'" *The Washington Post*, April 27, 2020, https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/2020/04/27/people-across-country-are-delivering-groceries-free-its-solidarity-not-charity.

[5] This strategy is pursued in most approaches in the literature, notably in Avery Kolers, *A Moral Theory of Solidarity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016); Andrea Sangiovanni, "Solidarity as Joint Action," *Journal of Applied Philosophy* 32, no. 4 (2015): 340–59, https://doi.org/10.1111/japp.12130; Andrea Sangiovanni, *Solidarity: Nature, Grounds, and Value* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2023); Sally J. Scholz, *Political Solidarity* (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 2008); Tommie Shelby, *We Who Are Dark: The Philosophical Foundations of Black Solidarity* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005).

[6] Discussions of solidarity's value include: Jean Harvey, "Moral Solidarity and Empathetic Understanding: The Moral Value and Scope of the Relationship," *Journal of Social Philosophy* 38, no. 1 (2007): 22–37, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9833.2007.00364.x; Sally J Scholz, "Persons Transformed by Political Solidarity," *Appraisal* 8, no. 2 (2010): 19–27; Nicolas Bommarito, "Private Solidarity," *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* 19, no. 2 (2015): 445–55, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10677-015-9640-2; Michael Zhao, "Solidarity, Fate-Sharing, and Community," *Philosophers' Imprint* 19, no. 46 (2019): 1–13; Sangiovanni, *Solidarity: Nature, Grounds, and Value*; Rainer Forst, "Contexts of Solidarity," in *The Virtue of*

social phenomena like knowledge, trust, and blame,[7] the strategy pursued in this article reverses this order: *starting* with the functional question, "What is the point of solidarity?," and laying out core needs to which solidarity practices answer, I delineate the conceptual space of solidarity by reference to its normative functions. Doing so helps to better understand, if not to resolve, a number of disagreements within the existing literature. More importantly, it assigns an attractive and unique normative phenomenon, and one for which we presently lack a clear term, to the ideal of solidarity and explains its inner logic.

My plan is this. Section II locates solidarity by first setting out a few general assumptions about solidarity that are commonplace in the literature. I then sketch, in Section III, some central disagreements and puzzles about solidarity's nature, value and deontic status. Section IV describes the human need to which our practice responds, to wit, the need to reduce the tension that exists between our responsibility to address impersonal demands of morality and the responsibility to lead a fulfilling life that contains valuable projects and interpersonal bonds. In Section V, I demonstrate how solidarity helps to address this need in a unique way through what I call *positive alignment* between personal projects and moral demands. I then show how the same mechanism works in relation to aligning general moral demands with our need to stand in valuable relationships. Section VI describes how the attributed function illuminates some of the central disputes about solidarity's nature. Section VII turns to the puzzles about solidarity's value and deontic status, explaining how a functionalist account provides a convincing explanation of both. Section VIII concludes.

II. LOCATING SOLIDARITY: CORE CHARACTERISTICS

Philosophers writing on solidarity frequently start with examples that they consider paradigmatic and then rely on these to identify necessary and sufficient conditions for

Solidarity, eds. Andrea Sangiovanni and Juri Viehoff (New York: Oxford University Press, 2024); Carol C. Gould, "Rethinking Solidarity through the Lens of Critical Social Ontology," in *The Virtue of Solidarity*, eds. Andrea Sangiovanni and Juri Viehoff (New York: Oxford University Press, 2024); Philippe van Parijs, "Solidarity and the Just Society," in *The Virtue of Solidarity*, eds. Andrea Sangiovanni and Juri Viehoff (New York: Oxford University Press, 2024).

[7] Edward Craig, *Knowledge and the State of Nature: An Essay in Conceptual Synthesis* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999); Karen Jones, "Trustworthiness," *Ethics* 123, no. 1 (2012): 61–85, https://doi.org/10.1086/667838; Miranda Fricker, "What's the Point of Blame? A Paradigm Based Explanation," *Noûs* 50, no. 1 (2016): 165–83, https://doi.org/10.1111/nous.12067; David Shoemaker and Manuel Vargas, "Moral Torch Fishing: A Signaling Theory of Blame" *Noûs* 55, no. 3 (2019): 581–602, https://doi.org/10.1111/nous.12316; Paulina Sliwa, "Reverse-Engineering Blame," *Philosophical Perspectives* 33, no. 1 (2019): 1–20, https://doi.org/10.1111/phpe.12131.

something being an instance of solidarity. I propose to approach solidarity differently. Instead of trying to list individually necessary and jointly sufficient criteria, my initial aim is to collect features generally attributed to solidarity. Only after this general characterization will some examples that have many, but not necessarily all, of these features be used to reveal solidarity's point.

By way of background, I assume—uncontroversially, I hope—that solidarity designates a practice, that is, a human activity governed by certain norms that are partly constitutive of the activity. One basic feature of solidarity is that it is a *social* practice: the activity under scrutiny is directed towards others (one cannot be in solidarity with oneself). But while activities like *imitating* or *threatening* too are social in a superficial sense, solidarity is social in a deeper sense: it is a practice governed by a relational ideal. So solidarity, in my usage, designates a practice fundamentally governed by an ideal: the practice consists in the socially embedded enactments, attitudes, and behaviors, while the ideal designates the interrelated set of values that explains why participants have reason to care about this practice.[8] Explaining the practice of solidarity thus consists (at least in part) in describing the application conditions of this ideal, uncovering its distinctive content, and revealing why its features are what they are. Specifically, I want to draw attention to four core characteristics and show how, in combination, they render solidarity different from other, perhaps more familiar, ideals (and their corresponding practices). While these characteristics are broadly acknowledged in the literature, they also, individually and jointly, give rise to disagreements and puzzles that I will describe.

II.A. Unity and Fellowship

Solidarity is constituted by a form of unity or fellowship among those who are part of some collective. This feature structures both the application conditions of the ideal and its specific content. Unity is essentially a matter of how we see ourselves relative to others and how these others (can) see us relative to them. Some authors have characterised unity in terms of a desire to form or maintain a first-person plural "we," or a disposition to feel and act from such a perspective.[9] Whatever the exact details, in solidarity, there prevails some sense of belonging *together*. (Notice, negatively, how

[8] Thomas Scanlon describes such an ideal as the sum total of those norms that, for those aspiring to the ideal, should count as appropriate dispositions (to act, feel), intentions, reciprocal expectations, and "considerations that [participants] are disposed to accept as reasons." Thomas Scanlon, *Moral Dimensions: Permissibility, Meaning, Blame* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2008), 132.

[9] Steinar Stjernø, *Solidarity in Europe: The History of an Idea* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 17.

conflict and competition, but also mere indifference, render it inappropriate to speak of the members of a collective being in solidarity.) I say unity *and fellowship* because some paradigmatic forms of interpersonal *unity* (e.g., between parent and child) do not register as paradigmatic cases of solidarity. Solidarity, it appears, has built-in constraints on how each participant must (be able to) think of her co-participants in solidarity relations, namely as *comrades* or *fellows*.[10] Beyond the case of parent and child, additional data points sometimes mentioned are the absence of solidarity as an ideal for relations between current and future generations and, more controversially, the impossibility of solidarity relations between humans and (at least some) animals.[11] The negative conjecture here, implicit in many writings, is that solidarity is somehow restricted to relations where those whose cause is advanced can in at least some way participate in their own struggle.[12] It is often said that it is relational constraints like these that distinguish solidarity relations from charity or beneficence motivated by mere compassion or pity: these latter contain (or at least permit) certain asymmetries between "agent" and "patient" that solidarity rules out.[13]

II.B. Will-dependence

Relational ideals come in many different forms. Some, such as those governing our relations to parents or siblings, apply to us independently of our own volition or state of mind. Yet other relationships, most notably friendships and love relations, are *will-dependent*: we are in them, and their specific relational demands exert their normative force on us, when and insofar as we voluntarily form certain attitudes and will these bonds to exist. Solidarity too, most authors agree, is *will-dependent* in two important ways. First, we come to be in solidarity not by occupying a role, but through choosing to adopt a certain stance towards others that continuously informs our practical deliberation.[14] Second, in solidarity, like friendship or love, reasons for which one acts

[10] Harvey, "Moral Solidarity and Empathetic Understanding," 22. The notion that (the possibility of) fellow feelings is a central element of solidarity holds both for internal ("solidarity among") and external ("solidarity with") cases: if the person standing in solidarity cannot think of those towards whom solidarity is directed as having sufficient agency to participate in their own cause, or if they are categorically incapable of reciprocating "had our positions been swapped" (van Parijs, "Solidarity and the Just Society," 60), then we rarely speak of solidarity.

[11] For more discussion of interspecies solidarity, see Section VI, footnote 73.

[12] I thank an associate editor for helping me to formulate the condition in this way.

[13] This does not imply that solidarity cannot exist among members of a group some of whose members are weaker, or less able, or in some other dimension unequal to one another.

[14] "Support can be occasional. It can be given and just as easily withdrawn. Solidarity requires sustained, ongoing commitment." bell hooks, *Feminist Theory from Margin to Center* (Boston: South End Press, 1984), 64.

figure in the demands of the ideal: whether one acts solidaristically depends on one's motives and actual reasoning, not merely one's outward performance.[15]

II.C. Integration of Self- and Other-Regarding Interests

We often distinguish among actions in terms of their self- or other-regarding motivation. Yet solidarity cuts across this distinction in interesting ways. Various authors note that actions that are either *exclusively* self- or *exclusively* other-regarding are, for that reason, not instances of solidarity.[16] As a consequence, it is difficult to locate solidarity in terms of whether it should count as prudential or altruistic: many paradigmatic cases of solidarity (say, participation in a strike from which one benefits) incorporate both prudential and altruistic motives. So, contrastively, solidarity can neither be fully assimilated to exclusively other-motivated acts nor to wholly self-regarding ones, but is located in an interesting space between these poles.[17] More suggestively, solidarity is described as not just lying between, but as in some sense *integrating* self- and other-regarding motives. For example, an illustrious group of philosophers, summarizing current thinking on solidarity, notes that "the most distinctive, attractive, and challenging feature of solidarity is that it seems somehow to transcend the very dichotomy between altruistic and egoistic motivations."[18]

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[15] Reasons of solidarity, we might say, require compliance and not just conformity. Joseph Raz, *Practical Reason and Norms*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, USA, 1999), 41.

[16] Arto Laitinen and Anne Pessi, "Solidarity: Theory and Practice. An Introduction," in *Solidarity: Theory and Practice,* eds. Arto Laitinen and Anne Pessi (NY: Lexington, 2015), 2; Christian Arnsperger and Yanis Varoufakis, "Toward a Theory of Solidarity," *Erkenntnis* 59, no. 2 (2003): 157–88, https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1024630228818.

[17] Mariam Thalos, "Solidarity: A Motivational Conception," *Philosophical Papers* 41, no. 1 (2012): 57–95, https://doi.org/10.1080/05568641.2012.662807.

[18] Henry S. Richardson, Erik Schokkaert, Stefano Bartolini, Geoffrey Brennan, Paula Casal, Matthew Clayton, Rahel Jaeggi, Niraja Gopal Jayal, Workineh Kelbessa and Debra Satz, "Social Progress: A Compass," in *Rethinking Society for the 21st Century: Report of the International Panel on Social Progress,* ed. International Panel on Social Progress (IPSP) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 32. Relatedly, Waheed Hussain suggests that in "solidaristic associations," "each member must give the successes and failures of any other member a functional role that her own success and failures should play in her practical reasoning." Waheed Hussain, "Pitting People Against Each Other," *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 48, no. 1 (2020): 95, https://doi.org/10.1111/papa.12158. And for Joel Feinberg, in solidarity, "each member's integrated set of interests contains the integrated interest set of each of the others" and "because of the way their interests are related, the success and satisfactions of one radiate their benefits to the others." Joel Feinberg, "Collective Responsibility," *The Journal of Philosophy* 65, no. 21 (1968): 677, https://doi.org/10.2307/2024543.

II.D. Cause-Mediation

The idea that self- and other-regarding motives can merge is not unique to solidarity. But unlike love, friendship and affect-based communal ties in which self- and other-regarding motivations are also hard to disentangle, solidarity's bond with specific other people is typically *mediated*: we are in solidarity *with* others, but our solidarity is *over* some cause. And paradigmatically, the cause is not some diffuse, idiosyncratic aim, but one provided by considerations of what justice or morality demands.[19] Unlike friends or lovers, those with whom we are in solidarity are frequently defined in terms of a social role tied to unjust social conditions or adversity: our solidarity is with "workers" (under capitalism), "women" (under patriarchy) or "the black community" (under systemic racism).[20] So thinking about solidarity again contrastively, we see that, in frequently picking out one's comrades *de dicto* through a cause, it differs from relations like love and friendship that are essentially tied to particular persons *de re* and mandate loyalty to concrete people. In the words of Christian Arnsperger and Yanis Varoufakis, solidarity "pertains to instances of sacrifice and generosity motivated by 'worthy causes,' rather than by an altruistic urge to contribute to specific individuals."[21]

III. DISAGREEMENTS AND PUZZLES

Despite a recent surge in philosophical interest in solidarity, there remain deep philosophical disagreements and significant puzzlement about the practice. These can be located at three levels: in relation to solidarity's nature, its value, and its deontic status.

Solidarity's nature. Despite the widely shared assumptions about solidarity's core characteristics just listed, there is not even agreement among theorists about what solidarity, fundamentally, *is*. Some—call them *minimalists*—think that being in solidarity can require little more than a stable desire (e.g., for unity) and an intention (e.g., to accept costs to realize it).[22] Others—call them *maximalists*—hold that "real"

[19] Though the demands of justice are especially central to many paradigmatic examples of solidarity, I do not think that solidarity only arises in response to the demands of justice. It can also arise in response to other general moral demands. For discussion, see: Samuel Dishaw, "Solidarity and the Work of Moral Understanding," *The Philosophical Quarterly* 74, no. 2 (2023): 528, https://doi.org/10.1093/pq/pqad080.

[20] Robin Zheng, "Reconceptualizing Solidarity as Power from Below," *Philosophical Studies* 180, no. 3 (2023): 893–917, https://doi.org/10.1007/s11098-022-01845-y.

[21] Arnsperger and Varoufakis, "Toward a Theory of Solidarity," 185n9.

[22] Zhao, "Solidarity, Fate-Sharing, and Community"; Bommarito, "Private Solidarity"; Niko Kolodny, *The Pecking Order: Social Hierarchy as a Philosophical Problem* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2023), 265ff. Kristi A. Olson suggests that "we stand in solidarity when and only when each individual is willing to make the sacrifices [...] necessary for each to stand in the shoes of a free and equal individual." This rendering too is minimalist in the sense that no joint action is required. Kristi Olson, *The Solidarity Solution: Principles for a Fair Income Distribution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), 63.

solidarity is a complex type of joint action. *Maximalists* often make highly specific and demanding assumptions: e.g., that solidarity entails *mutual* identification, *shared* goals and intentions, *mutual* trust, and related ideas.[23] Minimalists and maximalists disagree, for example, about whether a silent act of individual sacrifice can be as paradigmatic an instance of solidarity as organised, large-scale political action.

But even among maximalist accounts that tie solidarity to shared agency and joint action, there is little agreement about which features are central and, relatedly, which cases are paradigmatic. Some see external solidarity ("solidarity with"—e.g., where a privileged non-member joins a disadvantaged group in its struggle against oppression) as central, and appeal to the fact that such solidarity requires *deference* to the disadvantaged as fundamental to the practice.[24] Others consider internal solidarity ("solidarity among"—e.g., workers striking together to combat their oppression in the workplace) as more paradigmatic, and see norms of reciprocity and "fate sharing" as solidarity's conceptual core.[25]

Solidarity's value. The fact that solidarity is both cause-mediated and, like love or friendship, contains elements of self-other-integration raises a fundamental puzzle about its value. We often distinguish between purposive and non-purposive relationships. Purposive human relationships, say between a lawyer and her client, are typically instrumentally valuable: they help to secure certain relationship-independent goods. By contrast, non-purposive (or perhaps "open-ended") relationships, say friendships or romantic life partnerships, are non-instrumentally valuable.[26] Solidarity's value appears ambiguous in that, unlike non-instrumentally valuable open-ended relationships, its value is often taken to depend on the cause that defines it.[27] For example, many would deny that solidarity among Nazis or members of the Mafia has non-instrumental value.[28] And yet it seems that one would fail to

[23] Shelby, *We Who Are Dark*; Kolers, *A Moral Theory of Solidarity*; Sangiovanni, *Solidarity: Nature, Grounds, and Value*.

[24] Carol C. Gould, "Transnational Solidarities," *Journal of Social Philosophy* 38, no. 1 (2007): 148–64, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9833.2007.00371.x; Avery H. Kolers, "Dynamics of Solidarity," *Journal of Political Philosophy* 20, no. 4 (2012): 365–83, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9760.2010.00391.x; Kolers, *A Moral Theory of Solidarity.*

[25] David Miller, "Solidarity and its Sources," in *The Strains of Commitment: The Political Sources of Solidarity in Diverse Societies*, eds. Keith Banting and Will Kymlicka (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 61–79; Sangiovanni, *Solidarity: Nature, Grounds, and Value*; Sangiovanni, "Solidarity as Joint Action"; Ashley E. Taylor, "Solidarity: Obligations and Expressions," *Journal of Political Philosophy* 23, no. 2 (2015): 128–45, https://doi.org/10.1111/jopp.12035.

[26] Non-instrumentally valuable relationships may of course *also* have instrumental value. What matters is that one would fail to value them appropriately if one cared about them foremost on such grounds.

[27] Dishaw, "Solidarity and the Work of Moral Understanding," 528.

[28] Gould, "Rethinking Solidarity through the Lens of Critical Social Ontology."

fully satisfy the relational ideal of solidarity if one valued one's being in solidarity with others *exclusively* as a means to realizing a cause. Faced with this puzzle, the literature is split between purposive and non-purposive accounts (or "teleological" vs. "loyalty" accounts[29]) of its value. According to the former, it is the realization of these goals that renders solidarity practices valuable.[30] Adherents to such accounts tend to ignore instances of solidarity not aimed at pursuing a goal mandated by justice. By contrast, non-purposive accounts stress how solidarity is partly valuable *independently* of its aims, for example by constituting a type of community among the oppressed or revealing valuable character traits.[31]

Solidarity's deontic status. A final puzzle concerns solidarity's deontic status. Does solidarity give rise to distinctive, novel duties? Our intuitions here seem torn. On the one hand, we can easily think of cases where duties of solidarity seem derivative. Think of co-workers in a strike: here the duties that fall on members of the group, e.g., not to cross the picket line, seem to flow from solidarity-independent obligations, say general duties to fight injustice, or duties of fair play.[32] However, in other cases, it is, at least intuitively, precisely the act of committing to a group/cause that gives rise to new moral demands. Think of an outsider committing to a struggle of one among several disadvantaged groups: specific duties here seem to arise from the fact that one has pledged allegiance. And, perhaps like duties of love or friendship, these duties appear grounded more immediately and non-reductively in the interpersonal bonds formed through one's solidarity engagement.

IV. AN ALTERNATIVE APPROACH: FUNCTIONALISM

I am not the first to remark on these core features of solidarity: nearly every philosophical piece on the topic notes at least some of them and describes how solidarity differs from pure altruism, insurance, group loyalty, and so on. But having noted some of solidarity's complex characteristics, many commentators adopt a strategy of either *exclusion*, *proliferation,* or *elimination*. Those embarking on the first disregard some features as central, thereby reducing solidarity's complexity. Those opting for proliferation either drastically widen the scope of what should count as solidarity, often

[29] Kolers, *A Moral Theory of Solidarity*, 50.

[30] E.g., Shelby, *We Who Are Dark*; Scholz, "Persons Transformed by Political Solidarity"; Sangiovanni, "Solidarity as Joint Action" (but see Sangiovanni, *Solidarity: Nature, Grounds, and Value*, for a revised view).

[31] Simon Derpmann, "Solidarity, Moral Recognition, and Communality," in *Solidarity: Theory and Practice*, eds. Arto Laitinen and Anne Pessi (New York: Lexington, 2015); Bommarito, "Private Solidarity"; Zhao, "Solidarity, Fate-Sharing, and Community."

[32] Forst, "Contexts of Solidarity"; Sangiovanni, "Solidarity as Joint Action."

subsuming just about any pro-social behavior or attitude under it,[33] or, alternatively, stipulate various "kinds," "types," or "senses" of solidarity, often without accounting in detail for why these are all instances of a unified phenomenon.[34] Finally, eliminativists suggest that, once its seemingly conflicting elements are properly defined, solidarity reduces to justice, or community, or some other more familiar concept.[35]

I find these strategies unsatisfactory: solidarity's complex internal structure strikes me not as an aberration that a philosophical analysis of solidarity should either ignore or eradicate by conceptual fiat, but as something that such an analysis should explain. Why is there a need for a practice whose motivational requirements can neither be captured fully in terms of the pursuit of self-interest nor in the pursuit of altruistic motives? Why do each of the internal ("solidarity among") and external ("solidarity with") cases seem especially paradigmatic to some? Why do both purposive and non-purposive renditions of solidarity's value seem plausible? And why does it at least appear both that solidarity can be a source of *sui generis* moral obligations and that some familiar moral obligations can give rise to demands for solidarity?

My suggestion is that we embark on a more ambitious explanatory project that answers these questions by starting from a broadly functionalist perspective. Functionalism pursues the task of explaining a practice through a three-step method. First, we lay out core features of the practice (what I have done above). Second, we formulate a hypothesis about the point of such a practice, by identifying needs or predicaments to which it responds. We then work out this *point* by dissecting the central (and perhaps unique) functions that the practice serves in addressing these needs or predicaments. One way to think about this is in terms of *difference-making*: what would be lost if we lacked such a practice in our lives? For example, a social practice may enable beings like us to form and revise attachments to others and create shared understandings regarding wrongdoing. (This is the point of blame, on certain

[33] For example: Richard Rorty thinks that solidarity is the "ability to see more and more traditional differences [...] as unimportant when compared with similarities with respect to pain and humiliation." Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 192. David Wiggins maintains that solidarity, as a basic form of recognizing others' moral agency, is "the root of the ethical." David Wiggins, *Ethics: Twelve Lectures on the Philosophy of Morality* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), 161.

[34] So there is "robust" vs. "expressive" solidarity, "political" vs. "civic" vs. "human" solidarity, "personal" vs. "social" solidarity. For cases of proliferation, see e.g., Scholz, "Persons Transformed by Political Solidarity"; Kurt Bayertz, "Four Uses of 'Solidarity,'" in *Solidarity*, ed. Kurt Bayertz (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1999).

[35] Klaus P. Rippe, "Diminishing Solidarity," *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* 1, no. 3 (1998): 355–73, https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1009965816147.

functionalist accounts of it.[36]) Or it might help us by improving our epistemic position. (This is the point of testimony, on a familiar view.[37]) My functionalist explanation of solidarity builds on the idea that it is *by* straddling notions like self- and other-regarding interest, duty *and* self-realization, etc. that solidarity serves fundamental human needs. Admittedly, this may sound merely suggestive at this point. But the next section will, I hope, explain the functional value of these complex aspects of our practice.[38]

The expected benefit of first asking "What is the point of solidarity?" rather than "What counts as solidarity?" is twofold. First, we now have at hand a clearer method for addressing questions about solidarity's nature. We can order our intuitions about cases by identifying whether and to what degrees its function is realized. Once we have demonstrated how the practice advances our needs in paradigmatic cases of solidarity we can ask whether, and if so how, these functions are also advanced in more controversial cases. More importantly, second, a functionalist explanation of a social practice offers a principled way of "vindicating" our existing practice. A practice is vindicated when reflection on its function reveals reasons for endorsement—that is, when its shape and purpose can be seen to make sense, and remain justifiable, from the perspective of those who engage in it.[39] Such vindication seems especially valuable for solidarity, which is often treated *reductively*, as something whose practical and theoretical value can be fully accounted for in terms of something else, like justice, equality, or community. By working out its point and providing a deeper explanation of its shape, value and deontic status, we can redeem solidarity's practical and theoretical usefulness.

IV.A. The Predicament of Pervasive Injustice

This section describes the conditions that create the need for a practice that has the distinctive features I have described. By way of a preview though, let me first state my hypothesis about solidarity's core function. Solidarity allows us to establish greater harmony between two kinds of reasons that apply to us, namely, on the one hand,

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[36] Fricker, "What's the Point of Blame?"; Sliwa, "Reverse-Engineering Blame."

[37] John Greco, *The Transmission of Knowledge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020). Greco's work on testimony is inspired by Craig, *Knowledge and the State of Nature.*

[38] Though related, "functionalism" is not meant to follow the technical notion of a functionalist explanation in natural and social sciences (cf. G. A. Cohen, *Karl Marx's Theory of History: A Defence*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978); Philippe van Parijs, *Evolutionary Explanation in the Social Sciences: An Emerging Paradigm* (Totowa, NJ: Rowman & Littlefield, 1981).) My aim is a *normative* explanation, and as such, I need not endorse any claim about the *actual* etiology of our ongoing practice.

[39] Fricker, "What's the Point of Blame?" 165, suggests that we vindicate a practice when we (i) reveal its *point*, i.e., its "most basic role in our lives" and then (ii) show that this point is valuable.

reasons we have as a matter of justice and general morality and, on the other hand, reasons stemming from our personal projects and relationships. The existence of such a function presupposes a certain background image about the conditions we face and the reasons we have.

To describe these conditions, I want to invoke a formulation used by Ronald Dworkin, namely that, qua autonomous agents, we are charged with two kinds of responsibilities, one ethical and one moral.[40] Ethical responsibility is the responsibility to live well, that is, to make our life a success, something that withstands critical appraisal and in which we can take pride. One crucial part of living well consists in appropriately responding to values. Moreover, a life well lived is one in which the person whose life it is authentically chooses what to value from among the universe of things that are valuable and, thereby, shapes her life through her own pursuits. Two aspects of living a successful life are especially important: first, pursuing worthwhile and independently chosen projects and, second, forming and maintaining flourishing relationships. Even if other features can blight a life that contains valuable relationships and projects, it is difficult to imagine a good life that contains neither. Projects and relationships give rise to, or perhaps are partly constituted by, particular kinds of personal reasons. Agents who do not have these projects and relationships may not have these reasons, or, if they do, these reasons may not have the same strength and content for them.[41]

The second responsibility we face is to live our life in accordance with the demands of morality. Morality constrains our actions and pursuits, and it limits the acts whose performance we have reason to value as an expression of our autonomous agency.[42] Many of our moral reasons are general: they flow from the demands that the wellbeing and agency of others impose on each of us. In contrast to such general moral requirements, "special" duties or responsibilities derive from our relationships and prior acts.

Pervasive injustice. The distinctions and assumptions just sketched are not, I hope, especially controversial. But the article's first paragraph also conveyed a further point. At least under some circumstances, our moral and our ethical responsibilities can pull us in different directions, leading to practical conflicts. Moreover, such conflicts give rise to emotional and psychological pathologies. The circumstances I have in mind are those of pervasive injustice, understood as the simultaneous persistence of many serious injustices and morally important adversities. An injustice or adversity is serious if any morally decent person would feel compelled to fight it *proactively*, that is, to invest

[40] Ronald Dworkin, *Justice for Hedgehogs* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2011), 191ff.

[41] Samuel Scheffler, "Projects, Relationships, and Reasons," in *Reason and Value: Themes from the Philosophy of Joseph Raz*, ed. R. Jay Wallace (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 248–49.

[42] Victor Tadros, *Wrongs and Crimes* (Oxford University Press, 2016), 41.

time, effort and other resources that, if the injustice or adversity were absent, could permissibly be invested in projects and causes unrelated to meeting moral demands.

The circumstances of pervasive injustice create conflicts among our reasons along two dimensions. First, they can lead to tensions *within* the realm of our moral responsibilities. The coexistence of multiple serious injustices can render it difficult to rationally and consistently discharge general duties. If you cannot simultaneously be involved in the fight against global poverty and domestic police brutality, which one should you pick? Should you switch if one harm becomes more egregious? How quickly? Moreover, our general and special moral reasons may pull in different directions. If, like Sartre's pupil,[43] we cannot both join the *Résistance* against Nazi occupation and take care of our ailing mother, we face a serious conflict. Even if there are no genuine moral dilemmas, widespread and persistent illusions of conflicts of moral reasons should exercise us on epistemic grounds. As fallible reasoners, complex constellations of competing moral considerations make it more likely that we get things wrong. We may end up choosing the wrong cause or violating general reasons to fight injustice because we subjectively but wrongly assess our special moral reasons to cancel or defeat the general ones.

On the other side of the general/special moral reason divide, we might wrongly judge our general reasons to fight injustice to cancel or defeat special ones. Perhaps Sartre's pupil should, all things considered, take care of his ailing mother, but fails to grasp this. The point here is simply that within the realm of our moral responsibility, we have reason to avoid conflicts of the kind provoked by the conditions of pervasive injustice because of the risk of *moral failure*.

A second dimension of conflict is that between living a morally decent life and living well, i.e., between our moral and our ethical responsibilities. In a world of pervasive injustice, we may have to choose between doing things that contribute to our life going well—say investing in intimate relationships and spending time engaging with the projects we value—and doing what morality demands.[44] Just as there are risks of moral failure, so there are risks of ethical failure—failing, that is, to attach appropriate weight to reasons stemming from our ethical responsibility. Maybe we should, every now and then, skip a social justice battle to spend time with a friend—not because that is what

[43] Jean-Paul Sartre, "Existentialism is a Humanism," in *Existentialism from Dostoyevsky to Sartre* , ed. Walter Kaufmann, trans. Philip Mairet (New York: Meridian Publishing Company, 1989).

[44] Of course, one could think, following Aristotle, that doing what morality requires will always make one's life go better compared to its alternatives. For arguments against this view, see: Dworkin, *Justice for Hedgehogs*; Tadros, *Wrongs and Crimes.*

our moral duties of friendship command, but because we have a responsibility to live a life that includes flourishing relationships.

Beyond the danger of failing to grasp and act on the moral and ethical reasons we have, pervasive injustice also gives rise to various negative emotional predicaments and problems of motivation. First, confronted with the endless list of equally deserving struggles, an agent may feel disempowered and aimless, thrown back and forth between causes, unable to choose what to do. Call this feeling *disempowerment*. Second, our failure to abide by reasons that were overruled when moral and ethical responsibilities clash should occasion regret. Clearly, we should feel remorse when we ignored moral reasons and instead made our life go better. But even an agent who sacrifices as much as we could expect from a decent moral person may experience the absence of self-chosen projects and relationships as something she has reason to regret. She would prefer to live in less dark times that would permit her to develop and value endeavours that are, so to speak, less *dictated* by the demands of morality. Call this state, where one feels one is leaving one's ethical self-realization under-fulfilled, one of *disaffection*. Third, imagine an agent who discharges her moral reasons and also cultivates projects and relationships. She correctly responds to the moral and ethical reasons she has. But as a morally virtuous person, she might still *feel* that she should be doing more, and, for that reason, she feels alienated from the relationships and projects she actually has. "If I didn't have that many friends," she might reason, "I could invest so much more in fighting injustice." Call this feeling *estrangement*.

Disempowerment, *disaffection*, and *estrangement* are not mere psychological pathologies, i.e., simply lamentable subjective states. When a person feels powerless and empty because she does not know where to start in her fight against injustice, and all she can ever do is but a drop in the ocean (*disempowerment*), she is not making a mistake, but is, rather, emotionally responding in a way that is, to some extent, reasonable. Likewise, the person who goes beyond the call of duty but experiences an absence of personal relationships and projects of self-realization (*disaffection*) is appropriately sensing that something is missing. Worse even, when a person feels uneasy about whether to care about her projects and relationships as much as she does given the state of the world (*estrangement*), her life does go worse because such an attitude renders it difficult to value one's personal relationships and projects appropriately, to wit, as aspects of one's life that are in certain respects exempt from constant assessment in terms of their contribution to the realization of what is impersonally best. To summarize: conditions of pervasive injustice create a predicament where we face the problems of moral and ethical failure (not doing what we have reason to do), and they give rise to the emotional predicaments of *disempowerment*, *disaffection*, and *estrangement*.

V. THE FUNCTION OF SOLIDARITY: POSITIVE ALIGNMENT

The suggestion in the previous section was that we can approach the question of a practice's function in terms of *difference-making*: what would be lost in our lives if we lacked this practice? We can now sharpen this question for the issue of solidarity: what would be missing in our lives, faced with the conditions I have sketched, if we lacked a practice that has the features described? Pertinent descriptive features of solidarity were (i) unity/fellowship, (ii) will-dependence, (iii) self- and other-interest-integration, and (iv) cause-mediation. We can now ask: what would be missing if we lacked the ability to relate to others in this way?

My answer is that absent such a practice, we would be lacking one crucial way in which we can lessen the force of the predicament characterized by (moral and ethical) *failure*, *estrangement*, *disaffection*, and *disempowerment*. Solidarity enables us to turn morality-given causes into ones that we have additional personal reasons to pursue in distinctive ways. So, solidarity is centrally the practice of reinforcing agent-neutral (justice- or morality-given) causes by aligning our self-chosen personal (project- and relationships-given) reasons with them. In order to spell out precisely how the practice helps us to lessen the force of the predicament described, I will first precisify my earlier characterization of how solidarity requires engagement of one's will. We best understand solidarity's core function if we see it as a distinctive form of attachment that results from a commitment, namely one that responds to reasons stemming from both our moral and our ethical responsibility.

V.A. Solidarity, Evaluative Attachments and Commitments

Solidarity is a will-dependent evaluative attachment, I now want to suggest, in that we come to be in solidarity by *committing* to an object of solidarity picked out through a (general) reason-generated cause. By committing to a cause, we become evaluatively attached to both the cause and the particular people picked out by it. The specific notion of commitment and the resulting attachments that reveal its function require some unpacking. To illustrate it, let me offer three examples:

> *Ava's case*: Ava is a teacher at a secondary school in Tehran. One day she hears from a female colleague about an imminent boycott-protest: teachers and professors will refuse to teach and grade in support of the "*Women, Life, Freedom*" movement that is fighting for women's rights and against the brutal enforcement of public appearances laws by the Iranian state's "morality police."[45] Ava decides to join the protest.

[45] Adam Zeidan, "Woman, Life, Freedom," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, accessed September 20, 2024, https://www.britannica.com/topic/Woman-Life-Freedom.

Bahar's case: Bahar is an affluent student in Canada who reads about *Women, Life, Freedom*. Moved by what she reads, Bahar decides to join a local support group that raises awareness about the Iranian women's struggle against oppression. The group stages sit-ins and teach-ins at universities, protests in front of the Iranian embassy, and organizes concerts the proceeds of which go to imprisoned protestors' families.[46]

Chams's case: Chams is a migrant worker on large construction sites in the United Arab Emirates. He reads about *Women, Life, Freedom* and sympathizes with the women's struggle, but he knows that if he were to openly demonstrate this, he would be fired immediately and could no longer support his family. Yet to stand with the Iranian women's struggle, Chams resolves to not take any breaks during the strike.

Ava, Bahar, and Chams are each, let us suppose, in solidarity with the oppressed women in Iran. The commitments that make such solidarity attributable to each have the following features.[47] First, they are, at the most basic level, results of the exercises of our capacity to change the reasons that we have. When an agent decides to commit and then forms an attachment, the agent comes to have additional reasons that they did not have before.[48] Commitments that lead to evaluative attachments are in this way perhaps analogous to exercises of normative powers (e.g., to promise) which bring about obligations non-causally rather than by causing them via manipulation of the non-normative situation.[49]

Yet unlike normative powers like promising or consenting that plausibly depend on communication to or uptake by others, commitments and attachments of the relevant kind are *internal*. They are more akin to inner resolves or pledges: Ava, Bahar and Chams each acquire additional reasons to feel and act in certain ways relative to the Iranian women's struggle; and these reasons are due to their internal commitments and the resulting attachments to the women's cause rather than some outward behavior. Of course, this is not to say that their internal commitments do not coincide with, cause, or make intelligible outward *moral* commitments. But in order to "be committed" in the

[46] Iran International Newsroom, "Worldwide Rallies Show Unprecedented Support For Iran Protests," *Iran International*, 2022, accessed September 21, 2024, https://iranintl.com/en/202210012118.

[47] Ruth Chang, "Commitment, Reasons, and the Will," *Oxford Studies in Metaethics*, vol. 8, ed. Russ Shafer-Landau (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 74-113.

[48] Though several of the features I highlight here are borrowed from Chang's work on commitments, I want to remain neutral on the exact meta-normative account of how commitments and evaluative attachments ground personal reasons. My discussion is meant to be compatible with all accounts according to which we can alter the reasons that apply to us, whether this occurs through freely forming attachments that ground such reasons or, more directly, through Chang's hybrid-voluntarist appeal to our ability to "create reasons" by simply engaging our will.

[49] Raz, *Practical Reason and Norms*, 94.

sense I am after, one is not at the mercy of other parties. That the kind of commitment at stake is not in the first place *interpersonal* reveals itself by the fact that one can be committed and evaluatively attached not just to relationships with other persons, but also to personal projects.

Second, commitments and attachments are, as Ruth Chang puts it, the kind of thing that can be the object of "conscious and deliberative" decision-making.[50] Ava, Bahar and Chams each voluntarily and deliberately *choose* to attach themselves to a particular morality-related cause through some object, and the moment at which they relevantly are "in solidarity" is the moment at which, having *willed it* to be the case that the cause or object takes on a special significance for them, the cause or object is one to which they are now attached.

Third, commitments and evaluative attachments can generate their own rational support. At least in some situations where there are both good reasons to commit and not to commit to a specific project, person or cause, the individual agent's making the commitment and forming the attachment make it the case that she subsequently has additional reasons. Think, for example, of Bahar: we can fill out details such that it would be equally reasonable for her to choose a different, perhaps more local or even more justice-advancing cause than the distant women's struggle for equal rights and against police brutality. It is in this sense that solidarity "need not be compelled by reasons:"[51] something else would have been equally reasonable for Bahar to do. Yet, once committed/attached, she has new reasons that bind her to this particular struggle. But this does not mean that it is *always* up to the agent whether or not to commit. The balance of reasons may heavily or even decisively weigh in favor of some commitments and attachments over others, in which case it is not "up to us" whether we ought to commit.

Finally, commitments and attachments are important in that they *settle,* for practical contexts, what we have reason to do and feel, at least for some domain and some time: when you have committed to a project or relationship, you will not be derailed from it by just any ordinary new countervailing consideration that comes along.[52] This is the case at least in part because in committing, we adopt higher-order goals about how

[50] Chang, "Commitments, Reasons, and the Will," 79. For discussion and criticism, see: Cory Davia, "Reasons, Weight, and Hybrid Approaches to the Metaphysics of Practical Normativity," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 60, no .3 (2023): 221–36, https://doi.org/10.5406/21521123.60.3.01; Jason Kay, "The Normative Insignificance of the Will," *Philosophical Studies* 182 (2025): 891–909, https://doi.org/10.1007/s11098-025-02287-y.

[51] Chang, "Commitments, Reasons, and the Will," 80.

[52] In the language of Raz and others, commitment reasons are "protected" reasons. Raz, *Practical Reason and Norms.*

we will form and retain goals and plans in the future. As Cheshire Calhoun notes, "a commitment is both an intention to engage with something (a person, relationship, goal, activity, identity, etc.) and a preparedness to see to it that that intention to engage persists."[53] So we protect that to which we are committed by anticipating and managing other goals, wishes, and desires.

To sum up: one comes to be in solidarity by forming commitments and evaluative attachments that create reasons that often settle what to feel and do. This characterization of the mental act involved in solidarity is crucial for understanding how solidarity helps to address the predicament I have sketched.[54]

V.B. How Solidarity Alleviates the Predicament: Personal Projects

How does solidarity alleviate moral and ethical failures, estrangement, disaffection, and disempowerment? The first way in which committing to a solidarity project helps us is by improving our ability to meet our general moral reasons and advance moral aims, that is, to avoid *moral failure*. One perhaps obvious aspect of solidarity commitments consists in how they provide motivational reinforcement. It was explained earlier how commitment renders one vulnerable to certain emotional attitudes concerning the object of one's commitment, and these attitudes are motivationally effective. For example, let us assume that based on various moral considerations, e.g., reciprocity or fairness, Ava *already* has a strong moral reason to do her part in the Iranian women's struggle. Their cause is, after all, one from which she stands to benefit and one that she could damage by failing to comply. So, she ought to participate in the strike whether or not she turns this justice-given cause into one that provides her with additional reasons over and above the ones she has independent of her commitment. Yet once she commits—once this is *her* chosen cause—she is more extensively emotionally involved in the struggle, which makes it more likely that she will do what she has independent moral reason to do.

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[53] Cheshire Calhoun, "What Good Is Commitment?," *Ethics* 119, no. 4 (2009): 613–41, https://doi.org/10.1086/605564.

[54] Does this rule out solidarity with *unchosen* groups of which we are members, such as family, inherited religions, or ethnic groups? No. Even though the initial membership in these groups does not flow from a voluntary commitment, solidarity can nonetheless emerge. However, in such cases, solidarity must be distinguished carefully from mere group loyalty or norms of community membership. What turns unchosen membership into genuine solidarity is precisely the evaluative attachment through which individuals voluntarily and deliberately accept a general moral reason that picks out standing with this group as important. For instance, one might involuntarily belong to an ethnic or religious group, yet only come to solidarity with fellow members through an endorsement of certain moral reasons—such as combating injustice that specifically affects this group. It is this moral commitment to the group as picked out by a moral cause, rather than mere membership itself, that constitutes solidarity.

A second way in which solidarity commitments help us meet our moral duties can be gauged from Bahar's case: we can fill out the details in such a way that she could have equally good reason to do something else. This does not, of course, imply that she could permissibly have done just anything instead. More plausible is the thought that because many of our duties to fight injustice are imperfect, she was free to choose a different one among various options. It is part of the predicament of pervasive injustice that the choice of how to discharge imperfect duties is a daunting one because of the many injustices and moral emergencies we face. It is, moreover, one that we are bound to face over and over again. How can we manage rationally? And how can we manage *without* succumbing to the sentiment of powerlessness described above? The fact that, through commitments and willingly formed attachments, we create new reasons, including exclusionary reasons not to constantly reconsider our choices, clearly helps us in this respect: once we have settled on a solidarity cause, we have, to some extent, "perfected" our imperfect duty, and we now have personal, exclusionary reasons that guide us over time to comply with some of morality's demands.

There are two ways of ensuring that our ethical and our moral responsibilities do not conflict, which I will call negative and positive alignment respectively. In "negative alignment," we ensure that our ethical responsibility and our special duties and permissions do not outstrip and crowd-out our general moral requirements. Much of the existing literature has focused on negative alignment. One broadly Rawlsian strategy of negative alignment involves discharging duties of justice at a collective-institutional level, thus making room for personal projects and relationships at the level of individual choice.[55] (This is often called the liberal "division of moral labor" view.[56]) Yet another—if you will "ascetic"—negative alignment strategy is to limit the breadth and stringency of ethical demands on us: to abstain from forming close personal friendships, or from adopting personal projects and goals. By contrast, solidarity commitments offer an alternative, "positive" alignment solution, namely the option of making the course of action that ethical and moral responsibility recommend one and the same: when fighting against the subordination of women in Iran *is your project*, then you can happily invest time and energy without compromising your moral responsibility.

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[55] John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, rev. ed. (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999); Samuel Scheffler, *Equality and Tradition: Questions of Value in Moral and Political Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010) chap. 8.

[56] Thomas Nagel, *Equality and Partiality* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991); Liam Murphy, "Institutions and the Demands of Justice," *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 27, no. 4 (1998): 251–91, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1088-4963.1998.tb00071.x; Samuel Scheffler and Véronique Munoz-Dardé, "The Division of Moral Labour," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, Supplementary Volumes* 79, no. 1 (2005): 229–84.

So far, I have indicated how we can improve our *moral* performance by attuning our personal projects to our general moral reasons and duties, thereby turning them into something that we also have personal reasons to care about. But another way in which solidarity's positive alignment helps us is the—somewhat surprising—reverse mechanism: by hooking our ethical responsibility onto something that we have moral reason to do, we stand to better (more robustly, more consistently, etc.) advance our personal projects and live well. I said that this is "somewhat" surprising, because, upon reflection, it is a mechanism taken up and developed in various social and institutional practices. Think about the point of pledges to overcome addiction, as among members of *Alcoholics Anonymous*: by making public promises, rendering oneself accountable to a particular "sponsor," etc., the person trying to overcome addiction "launders" a primarily self-regarding, prudential project (let us assume), thus turning this prudential project into something that the person now has additional, moral reason to comply with. The hope is that this form of "moralizing" and (literally) "personalizing" the prudential project of sobriety will improve how well they succeed.

The analogy to solidarity is this. Imagine that Bahar is already heavily committed to various moral causes, so that we would generally say that she is free to invest time in some purely self-regarding project, say singing in a local choir or learning to play the tuba. But of course, she is equally free to commit to another justice-advancing activity, say editorial work for a local newspaper written by a group of homeless youngsters. Bahar could now reason as follows: by tying my personal project to the activity of which I know that, once I have made the commitment, I will have moral reinforcement reasons to complete these activities, I can ensure that I will stick to my goal of pursuing a valuable project in the long-term. (Another way to put it is this: committing to a prudential project that is also a moral one allows us to "raise the stakes" of failure, thereby improving compliance.) So solidarity commitment is not just something that we have strong moral reason to do, but it can also be something that is prudentially advisable for us to engage in because it improves our chances of conforming to project-given reasons.

Relatedly, aligning personal and general reasons in this way has the potential to lessen the experience of alienation from our ethical projects, i.e., what I earlier called *estrangement*. While we may still feel crushed by the amount of injustice that confronts us, the thought that our justice-advancing commitments should feel worthless is less intuitive compared to the feeling of worthlessness of our purely private endeavours. What strikes me as even clearer is the fact that commitment to solidarity projects alleviates *disaffection* and *disempowerment*. Take disempowerment first. Committing to a solidarity cause is instrumentally helpful because it resolves, at least to some extent,

the original conflict of reasons (i.e., not knowing where to begin) and the associated psychological state. Recall that I suggested that commitment reasons are exclusionary and, within a domain, *settle* deliberation on what to do. It is because of this feature that we can feel less thrown back and forth between valuable causes once we have committed to a specific one. I think the issue runs even deeper still. Chang suggests that "when we create reasons for ourselves to become this kind of person rather than that [through commitment], we wholeheartedly become the people that we are."[57] So, when we choose one among different options that are of equal justice-advancing character—are hence equally permissible to pursue—we can, in a specific way, give expression to being the authors of our own lives and morality-related endeavours.

The idea that we should choose our commitments deliberately and wisely is commonplace. We experience this most pungently when we realize that we have failed in doing so, for example when we have overcommitted and cannot live up to all the commitments we have. But as one aspect of solidarity, commitment presents itself as a central function through which we can mitigate the shadow that injustice casts over the value of our ethical lives.

V.C. How Solidarity Alleviates the Predicament: Interpersonal Bonds

My focus up to this point has been on commitments to morality-given causes and how such causes become projects of self-realization. But this constitutes only half of solidarity's function. Our ethical responsibility, recall from Section IV, is not exhausted by our projects, for a good life also requires us to have attachments to other people in the form of valuable interpersonal bonds. Such valuable bonds can take the form of (direct) relationships, but also of membership in socially salient groups.[58] One important feature of such bonds—one that renders them different from personal projects—is the fact that even though we are responding to a fundamental ethical need when we establish and maintain them, such bonds typically also give us special moral demands. And these demands can come into conflict with our general moral reasons. The next step of my functional explanation turns on how solidarity both facilitates positive alignment between living up to morality's general demands and sharing in such valuable interpersonal bonds, and how it helps us to avoid, up to a point, conflicts between our general and our special moral reasons.

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[57] Ruth Chang, "Hard Choices," 2014, accessed February 2, 2024, https://fs.blog/2014/06/ruth-chang-hard-choices/.

[58] For a discussion of both these categories, see: Samuel Scheffler, "Membership and Political Obligation," *Journal of Political Philosophy* 26, no. 1 (2018): 3–23, https://doi.org/10.1111/jopp.12125.

Solidarity is not going to help us to alleviate any conflicts between our general moral reasons and those special moral reasons stemming from relationships we already have: to return to an earlier example, it does not resolve the conflict faced by Sartre's pupil. But it can alleviate the potential for morality-internal conflicts between general and special reasons in another way, namely by guiding us, prospectively, to form interpersonal bonds and relationships that, while advancing our ethical need, also align with those general moral demands. Solidarity relationships respond to our fundamental ethical need to share valuable interpersonal bonds with others, but the object and the content of these bonds are set by the general moral demands that we face.

Let me home in on this issue by responding to a worry. Understood very abstractly, the alignment problem I sketched can be solved in many ways. One could, for example, simply make it one's individual project to do, very generally, what justice requires, or to alleviate the suffering of the world's poor. These seem like highly valuable projects to have, and they would allow me to advance my moral and my ethical responsibilities. At the same time, I could stand in a (valuable) relationship to another person, say P, and we could together make it our goal to benefit some victim of injustice or suffering, call her V. My relationship with P, as well as several other things I could do (e.g., make a pledge, promise to be there, etc.), might be able to provide me with additional reasons to help to fight for the victim, thus creating a sort of alignment between my personal pursuits (both projects and relationships) and the demands of morality. For example, think of somebody who joins a charity that aims to safeguard the natural beauty of the Grand Canyon. Suppose they make friends there, which in turn makes it easier to do their bit in this valuable endeavour. Now I hope that you will agree that even though the scenario I described realizes a form of *alignment*, it is not solidarity.

But why not? Working this out reveals a core point about solidarity: it fundamentally involves forming a valuable interpersonal attachment or bond *to V* (that is, those people picked out by the chosen cause). Moreover, and crucially, this personal attachment has a specific, two-fold, *content*. First, it is dedicated to the purpose of standing up for V's interests and addressing V's plight in particular. Second, the attachment is to share a valuable interpersonal bond with V. Why is this special structure important, and especially apposite for dealing with the alignment problem? Because this structure realizes a distinctive congruence between our personal reasons (especially those reasons stemming from our need for valuable bonds) and our moral reasons: we have personal reasons to care about the interests of those with whom we stand in the relationship (here, V); and we have moral reasons to care about the interests of the victims of injustice (V). So, solidarity achieves alignment, not just in the "abstract" way that

the other solution did: it also achieves alignment at a deeper level because I now have personal reasons to care about your interests qua *comrade*; and I have moral reasons to care about your interests qua *victim*; and these reasons have the same object: *your interests*. It is this unique congruence between our relationship-given and our moral reasons that mitigates the conflict between our moral and ethical responsibilities.[59]

We can further illuminate this issue by inquiring into the reasons that interpersonal attachments give rise to, and contrasting the effect of having such reasons, in the case of solidarity, with cases that, though they bring about alignment, do not give rise to these distinctive relationship-given reasons. When I am evaluatively attached to you through solidarity, then I have personal reasons of at least two kinds. First, I care about you and how your life goes, such that how you fare shapes, at least up to a point, how I fare. However, second, I also independently care about *our relationship* (or, in more expansive settings, our group-mediated bonds), and thus recognize as important considerations that bear on both its continuation and its overall character.[60]

It is here that we can see the fundamental difference between charitable and solidaristic behavior. Imagine scenarios where our interest in another person's wellbeing and our interest in standing in the right sort of relationship to them come apart. For example, a person acting from charity might realize that the best way to improve the life of those about whom they care as a matter of charity is advanced by acting paternalistically, thus impairing the value of any relationship in which they may stand. In such a scenario, we are still speaking of altruism and charity. Now contrast this

[59] An associate editor, using the below example, pointed out to me that my having two different reasons to care about your interests does not give me two reasons to care about the same thing: if I am your piano teacher and your friend, then, qua teacher, I have a reason to care about you making progress as a musician (one of your personal projects), and, qua friend, I have a reason to care about your wellbeing and health. These reasons may come into conflict, for example, when I need to choose whether to let you practice more scales or ask about your partner. While I think that the fact that we encounter one another in different roles (e.g., teacher/friend) can lead to our reasons supporting different courses of action in the way the example highlights, I am less convinced that such divergences are likely to occur for the specific dual "roles" of encountering another *qua* victim of injustice and *qua* comrade. Having said this, we will encounter complex situations of potentially competing moral and ethical reasons when we engage with one another both as solidarity-comrades *and* as friends/lovers, etc. Imagine, for example, that Peter and Paul fall in love while jointly fighting against an oppressive regime. This significantly complicates the ethical and moral reasons they each have. Qua comrade who shares the overarching goal of ending oppression, Peter has reason to want Paul to stand in the first line of the protest and face the riot police. But qua romantic partner whose wellbeing matters more than that of other comrades, he does not want him to be in this kind of danger.

[60] Niko Kolodny, "Love as Valuing a Relationship," *The Philosophical Review* 112, no. 2 (2003): 135–189, https://doi.org/10.1215/00318108-112-2-135.; Samuel Scheffler, "XIV—Partiality, Deference, and Engagement," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 122, no. 3 (2022): 319–41, https://doi.org/10.1093/arisoc/aoac012.

with somebody who claims to be in solidarity with those suffering an injustice but treats these people's agency (and hence their relationship with them) as irrelevant to what to do. The benefactor simply tries to maximize the good of those picked out by the cause. But whether or not this is what the person should do, it seems clear that paternalistic interventions of this kind upend *solidarity*. The reason why solidarity cannot be had if you see a cause only as a "moral project"—without aiming to establish a valuable interpersonal bond with those picked out by it—is that the resulting alignment is at best ambivalent. While you advance a worthwhile goal, you also (re)produce a certain relational structure that is ethically and morally imperfect, if not dubious.[61]

In closing this section, let me briefly comment on the limits of the *positive alignment* idea. Not all of our personal reasons are up to us. Some of our relationship-given reasons we have as a result of occupying particular social and familial positions (as parents, brothers and sisters, sons and daughters, etc.). That we did not choose them does not diminish their reason-giving force on us. Likewise, some of our personal projects are the product of our upbringing and our basic inclinations—and once we have them, they exert reason-giving force on us. It would be alienating to have to surrender them, perhaps already to ceaselessly inspect them from the perspective of their usefulness for the purpose of advancing general moral aims. What this shows is that we cannot fully resolve the practical conflict at the heart of the predicament I have described. But this should not distract us from the fact that a great number of the personal projects and interpersonal bonds we have are *not* of this kind: they have their reason-giving force as a consequence of our commitment to them. Since we can choose to create some personal reasons for ourselves via commitments/attachments, we have strong reason to conduct our due diligence before making commitments not merely in light of our already-existing relationships and projects, but also in light of our general moral reasons. This is what solidarity's function of *positive alignment* amounts to.

VI. "FORM FOLLOWS FUNCTION": SOLIDARITY'S NATURE

I now turn to some of the disagreements and puzzles surrounding solidarity noted in Section III. In this section, I focus on the questions of solidarity's nature. My suggestion is that a functional account provides a helpful and principled way of assessing disagreements concerning solidarity's core aspects and outer boundaries. For reasons

[61] Cf. R. Jay Wallace's discussion on charity: "the benefactor's act of generosity, though it confers a clear benefit on you [the beneficiary], also takes something away from you, namely, your active role in shaping the relationship with the benefactor on common terms." He later characterizes this state of affairs as a "disequilibrium of dependency and agency" that demands recalibration. R. Jay Wallace, *The Moral Nexus* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019), 202.

of space, my discussion is not comprehensive, but only points out how the functional idea of positive alignment illuminates central disputes.

Minimalist vs. Maximalist. We noted earlier that there is disagreement about solidarity's basic form. Test cases here are cases of silent solidarity like *Chams's*, where (putative) acts of solidarity do not form part of shared agency. Since there is no reciprocal fate sharing, or mutual trust, or even knowledge of each other between the person acting and the group picked by the cause, maximalists claim that such cases are either not cases of solidarity at all, or, if they are, they constitute much less paradigmatic ones (Andrea Sangiovanni calls them "latent").[62] Thinking about solidarity in terms of alignment can help us better understand both the reasons underpinning the minimalist's affirmative stance and the maximalist's scepticism about such cases.

Positively, acts of silent solidarity succeed to some extent in creating exclusionary reasons. Once Chams has resolved to support this particular cause, he has engaged in an act of self-authorship that, from his perspective,[63] *matters* and serves the moral goal of standing with the women in Iran. Yet in support of the maximalist's skepticism, we can note that, first, it is harder to see which distinct agent-neutral moral values exclusively private acts of solidarity are advancing. Secondly, and to my mind more importantly, because silent commitment remains exclusively internal, it fails in the reverse functional purpose of reinforcing the person's ethical aims through a moral concern. It is, in a way, like an addict picking a sponsor, but then not communicating her decision to that person. The decision *itself* may have some force in the addict's sobriety project, but the distinctive additional element that comes with "personalizing" projects through reciprocal interpersonal bonds cannot (yet) succeed.

But doesn't this vindicate the maximalist position because it makes instances of silent solidarity *less paradigmatic* than cases where shared intentions, trust, and joint

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[62] Sangiovanni, *Solidarity: Nature, Grounds, and Value*, 63. For criticism, see Rainer Forst's comment in the same volume.

[63] This raises a broader question: in judging episodes of solidarity, should we rely on the standpoint and (internal) reasons of those engaging in the practice, or on our assessment of participants' actual reasons? The correct answer, it seems to me, is "both": unless there is some alignment from the agent's own perspective, we are not dealing with solidarity. This explains, for example, why a committed mafioso can be in solidarity with other mafiosi, while an undercover police officer can only *pretend* to be in solidarity with them. So the agent's perspective is essential for whether or not we are, extensionally, dealing with solidarity. But the external perspective plays a role too: how central an episode of solidarity we are dealing with (solidarity's *intension*) turns not just on whether the agent thinks that it brings about alignment, but whether it does, in fact, bring about alignment with the agent's reasons. This explains the intuition that solidarity of the kind we find, for example, during the civil rights movement, is not merely more valuable than mafiosi solidarity, but also, constitutes *a more central instances* of our practice. I discuss this issue in more detail in my "Solidarity and Equality" (ms).

action are present? Not necessarily, or at least not in the sense that *all* instances of solidarity that satisfy the maximalist requirement for "full" solidarity count as *more* paradigmatic than all instances of silent solidarity.

On my account, centrality turns on how well an episode advances positive alignment between an agent's moral and ethical responsibilities. In what we may think of as the "ideal case" of solidarity, an agent's *important* moral duties are aligned with *important* personal reasons and relationships. Cases of solidarity are *less central* if they deviate from this ideal case in one or another way: if, that is, they advance significant moral obligations, but do not add much to our ethical life, or if they significantly advance our ethical needs but only modestly advance important moral aims. At the extreme, episodes that either completely fail to advance the agent's moral reasons or completely fail to advance the agent's ethical reasons barely count as solidarity, if they count at all: bonding together to realize some morally evil end is not a central case of solidarity. And neither are instances of "ultimate sacrifice," in which an agent heroically gives their life to protect others.[64]

How does this bear on the choice between minimalist and maximalist conceptions of solidarity? It is reasonable to assume that maximalist instances of solidarity, which involved relationships of shared agency, mutual trust, etc., nearly always better meet our ethical needs than merely minimalist instances of solidarity, which do not contain such significant relationships. Consequently, the *best cases* of maximalist solidarity will be more central than the *best cases* of minimalist solidarity. Yet it does not follow that *every* instance of maximalist solidarity is more central than *any* instance of minimalist solidarity (e.g., Chams's case of silent solidarity), because centrality depends on *both* the ethical *and* the moral responsibilities at stake. Imagine Chams's silent actions make only a modest contribution to his ethical self-realization but a significant contribution to his moral responsibilities.[65] Compare this with an instance of maximalist solidarity that, though it makes a significant contribution to the participant's ethical life, nonetheless only makes a minor contribution to their fulfilling their moral duties. The latter might therefore be *less* central overall than Chams's silent solidarity.[66]

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[64] I discuss cases of sacrifice and their relevance for solidarity in Juri Viehoff, "Personal Sacrifice and the Value of Solidarity," in *The Virtue of Solidarity*, eds. Andrea Sangiovanni and Juri Viehoff (New York: Oxford University Press, 2024), 139–69.

[65] The weight of our moral reason surely depends not only on the likelihood that our action will make a difference, but also on the magnitude of the wrong that our action aims to oppose.

[66] Beyond the two dimensions of advancing the ethical and moral responsibilities of participants, there is another possible way to grade episodes in terms of centrality. Suppose the agent has one very strong moral duty and adopts a project that gets them half-way towards achieving this duty. Contrast this case, involving *partial* alignment with a *major* moral duty, with another case in which an agent picks a project

Internal vs external solidarity. Another disagreement regarding solidarity's nature, recall, concerned whether the internal ("solidarity among") or external ("solidarity with") variant should count as the central, paradigmatic case. Here too, my functional explanation offers an elegant explanation of what accounts for these differences in assessment and how we might overcome them. A first step is to recall that different constellations can lead to different ways in which we experience a mismatch between ethical and moral responsibilities. For example: when we are already members of a group struggling against oppression, i.e., in instances of *internal* solidarity, then *disempowerment* (not knowing how to choose a cause) does not seem an especially pressing problem.[67] On the other hand, *disaffection* (feeling that morality's demands limit one's ethical self-realization) very well might and is something that our solidarity commitment addresses. Conversely, when—as members of a privileged group confronted by numerous equally pressing injustices—we commit to one specific struggle ("solidarity with"), then solidarity solves a different variant of the alignment problem and can alleviate a different pathology from which we might suffer (*disempowerment*).

On the functionalist account I propose, the more positive alignment an episode creates, the more paradigmatic an episode of solidarity it is. As a result, there may simply not be a definitive answer to the question which variant is more paradigmatic. Internal and external solidarity each help to address the practical conflict that solidarity targets, even if they each do so in somewhat different ways. Sometimes solidarity reduces the tension between ethical and moral responsibility by ensuring that we avoid disempowerment. Sometimes it helps to avoid estrangement or disaffection. What those suggesting that one or the other of these variants should count as more paradigmatic fail to see is that they each fully realize solidarity's point.

The role of deference. A further subject of controversy regarding solidarity's nature concerned the role of deference. Some suggest that one cannot be in solidarity unless one sets aside one's practical judgment on moral matters relating to some cause, and lets another's (in particular, the victim's) judgment guide one's actions.[68] For example,

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that *fully* aligns a *minor* moral duty with a personal project. From one perspective (perhaps we should call it the "local" interpretation), the latter case involves more complete "positive alignment" because the moral duty and the ethical life fully align. But from another perspective (call this the "global" interpretation), the agent has achieved *more* alignment in the former episode because the "sum total" of their moral and ethical responsibilities are each more fully advanced.

[67] This is not to deny that there are difficult questions pertaining to cases involving intersectionality (where agents are subject to several forms of injustice/adversity) or cases where the (internal) cause is outweighed by the importance of addressing injustices not suffered by existing group members.

[68] Gould, "Rethinking Solidarity through the Lens of Critical Social Ontology"; Kolers, *A Moral Theory of Solidarity*; Kolers, "Dynamics of Solidarity."

if you are a white person in the American South in the 1960s, you are in solidarity with the civil rights movement if you follow the instructions of its leaders, not if you do what *you* think best advances racial equality. Avery Kolers generalizes from these cases, suggesting that *all* solidarity is "reason-driven political action on others' terms."[69] And to act on others' terms is to defer to their practical judgments. Others object: Samuel Dishaw argues that deference seems inimical to one central element of solidarity, namely that those bonding together create a shared moral understanding of oppression.[70] And Sangiovanni worries that if we make deference integral to solidarity, we cannot account well for symmetrical cases where equally oppressed agents bond together.[71] For most critics, deference is merely instrumentally required in some cases, as when the best way to advance a cause is to rely on those with expert knowledge, or when a refusal to defer to those with first-hand experience of oppression communicates (anti-solidaristic) disrespect.

Can the functionalist account illuminate this disagreement? As before, we approach the question by asking what role the disputed feature (deference) plays in realizing solidarity's point. Might deference be necessary to live up to our moral and/or ethical responsibilities? Might it help to avoid the pathologies we encounter under pervasive injustice? A first observation concerns the moral domain. Siding with critics like Dishaw and Sangiovanni, I find the idea that we best comply with our general moral reasons by adopting a stance of *strict* deference to a set of people picked out by a structural criterion ("the worst-off") implausible. We must sometimes defer to others—often those with first-hand knowledge of injustice. But we also face scenarios where part of the injustice from which the oppressed suffer is that they are deprived of understanding what would improve their situation. Here, morality requires that we not defer. So, as far as our moral responsibilities are concerned, a categorical demand to defer would not advance solidarity's point.

This leaves our ethical responsibility. It is here that the functionalist explanation attributes an important role to deference. Deference matters here because one core feature of attachments to others is that we are disposed to defer to their understanding of their interests. For example, Samuel Scheffler, discussing what is entailed by valuing one's membership in a group, says that "one's responsiveness to the group's norms [...] involves a posture of deference. In treating those norms as reason-giving even if one disagrees with them, one concedes to the group a degree of authority over the

[69] Kolers, *A Moral Theory of Solidarity,* 50.

[70] Dishaw also thinks deference is unattractive because it imposes unfair epistemic costs on those who are already worse off. Dishaw, "Solidarity and the Work of Moral Understanding," 539ff.

[71] Sangiovanni, *Solidarity: Nature, Grounds, and Value,* 59.

content of one's reasons. Deference, no less than partiality, is involved in valuing one's membership in a group."[72] Since one important part of solidarity is to form interpersonal bonds with those with whom one is in solidarity, and doing so requires an attitude of deference in some instances, deference does play an important role. Yet contrary to those who see deference as one of solidarity's distinctive moral demands, the functionalist approach says that the required disposition is not unique to solidarity, but a corollary of valuing interpersonal bonds. Moreover, the relevant attitude of deference is not strict or categorical; you fail to appropriately value a relationship when you are not disposed to defer to others where their interests are much more affected than yours. But on many other occasions, one does not fall out of solidarity when one fails to defer.[73]

VII. EXPLAINING SOLIDARITY'S VALUE AND DEONTIC STRUCTURE

Let us turn to the puzzle of solidarity's value and its deontic structure. The difficulty we encountered with its value, recall, was that it remained unclear whether the value

[72] Scheffler, "XIV—Partiality, Deference, and Engagement," 329.

[73] My claim that solidarity is fundamentally concerned with establishing valuable interpersonal relationships and bonds might be taken to indicate that the account rules out interspecies solidarity. But I do not think that this follows. Rather, my account can illuminate the issue because it can explain both the positive case for interspecies solidarity *and* some lingering doubts about extending our practice in this domain. The interests of animals ground, no doubt, weighty general moral reasons that we all have. So making the protection of these weighty moral interests our personal project brings about alignment. It is, moreover, undeniable that we can and do form deep, valuable attachments to at least some animals, and we could choose to form such attachments in a way that aims to advance our moral reasons to fight their oppression. All this would indicate that my approach is consistent with solidaristic interspecies relations. So what might account for the more skeptical stance? While some forms of benefitting others ("charity") are compatible with adopting a paternalist stance, solidarity, I argued, is not. But if the right way to relate to animals is indeed a paternalistic one, then this might speak against the use of solidarity here. One response here is to insist that paternalism towards many animals *is* morally deficient: many animals do have agency in the relevant sense and they frequently try to resist their exploitation. We ought to recognise these facts. (This point is made forcefully in Mara-Daria Cojocaru and Alasdair Cochrane, "Solidarity with Wild Animals," *Ethics, Policy & Environment* 26, no. 2 (2023): 198–216, https://doi.org/10.1080/21550085.2023.2200722; and Lori Gruen, "Solidarity with Farmed Animals," in *Solidarity with Animals: Promises, Pitfalls, and Potential*, eds. Alasdair Cochrane and Mara-Daria Cojocaru (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2024).) Alternatively, one could insist that functionally, *justified* paternalistic attitudes do not move us away from solidarity: according to the functionalist logic of alignment, only those instances where paternalistic attitudes undermine an otherwise non-instrumentally valuable relationship do. In response, the skeptic could appeal to the parent-child relation as one that clearly is non-instrumentally valuable, yet not one where solidarity seems to play a central role. Deep asymmetries in agency, they might reason, always preclude solidarity, even where these asymmetries are not inimical to valuable bonds. I unfortunately lack space to develop the relevant arguments with the depth that they deserve in this article. Thanks to an associate editor for directing my attention to this issue and pushing me to address it as an important test case for a functionalist explanation.

of solidarity relations derives exclusively from their contribution to the realization of some further good (per the purposive accounts), or whether solidarity has value that is (at least partly) independent of its aims (per the non-purposive accounts). Based on the functionalist story I have told, it seems that, first and foremost, we should care about solidarity because it facilitates two other things that are of value, namely living a good life and doing what morality requires. So, it seems natural to claim that solidarity is primarily valuable because it facilitates the achievement of independently valuable ends. This is welcome news inasmuch as this allows us to rule out that there is anything valuable about Mafiosi or Nazi solidarity.

However, the functional account allows that appeal to instrumental considerations is only one part of the story. Solidarity, in the way that I have described it, can also be part-constitutive of something that is itself non-instrumentally valuable. To bring this more complex additional feature out, it is helpful to return to the issue of motivation when acting in solidarity. Recall the idea, taken up by many authors, that solidarity somehow integrates self- and other-regarding motivation. While many have noted this feature, there is, to my knowledge, no satisfactory analysis of it in the literature. My suggestion is that explaining this feature is essential to understanding solidarity's value (as well as its deontic structure, which I discuss below). The functional account provides such an explanation: because solidarity's role is to facilitate alignment between two types of reasons, solidarity is always *dually motivated*. It is other-regarding in that it is constituted by a commitment to pursuing the just treatment of those picked out by a cause. But it is also self-regarding in that the person in solidarity, having created personal reasons through commitment, has tied her own self-realization to the achievement of just treatment for others. This is true even for those cases, like *Bahar* or *Chams*, where the one in solidarity is not part of the immediate cause-defined group whose just treatment is advanced. It is the ability of solidarity commitments to turn other-regarding causes into building blocks of one's own self-realization that account for solidarity's ability to "transcend the very dichotomy between altruistic and egoistic motivations."[74]

Now the more complex aspect of solidarity's value is this: while the success of many of our worthwhile personal projects depends on the cooperative activities of others, their cooperation can matter in different ways. For example, in G.A. Cohen's celebrated example, the member of a jazz band "fulfils himself only to the extent that each of the others also does so, and the same holds for each of them," such that the result is a

[74] Richardson et al., "Social Progress," 32.

"concert of mutually supporting self-fulfilments [...]."[75] Yet Cohen—elaborating what he takes to be Marx's view of communism—insists that no delight in the fulfilment of others is required.[76] Other things equal, one is no less accomplished as a jazz musician when one treats the projects of musical self-realization of one's band mates merely instrumentally, for jazz music is not the kind of thing whose value turns on the performer's (self- or other-regarding) *motives*.

By contrast, self-realization of the kind achieved through solidarity fundamentally depends on our *regarding* and *treating* the self-realization of those cooperative others as something that matters non-instrumentally to us. When my act of solidarity (knowingly) contributes to the good of others, then I can understand it as a unique and especially ennobling kind of self-realization, namely a self-realization *with and for others on reciprocal terms*.[77] There is, moreover, a converse element in the domain of impersonal value: the world has gone better when some injustice ends as a result of a mutually committed group of people having made the fight for justice their project. The upshot of this is that solidarity seems to be part constitutive of, first, a uniquely valuable type of reciprocal self-realization for others, and, second, a uniquely valuable way of ending forms of injustice and adversity.

Solidarity's deontic status. Let me finally turn to the puzzle about solidarity's deontic status. Are duties of solidarity genuinely novel duties, or are they, as some have argued,[78] dependent on, or derivative of some more general duties we have, say duties of fair play or beneficence? I will suggest that there is no simple answer to this question: some duties of solidarity derive from general duties we have independently of solidarity, while others are grounded directly in the attachments established through solidarity commitments. Again, my functionalist explanation can help us to better understand why we face this complex condition.

Throughout, my claim has been that what renders solidarity unique is its functional role in helping us to live up to both our moral and our ethical responsibilities. Looking at our moral responsibilities, we find that many—but not all—of the moral reasons that

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[75] G.A. Cohen, "Self-Ownership, Communism, and Equality: Against the Marxist Technological Fix," in *Self-Ownership, Freedom and Equality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 122–23.

[76] Ibid.

[77] There is a connection between my suggestion of how, through positive alignment, solidarity achieves a mutually supporting satisfaction of self-realizations and other-oriented goals, and a strain in the early Marx recently analyzed by Jan Kandiyali, "The Importance of Others: Marx on Unalienated Production," *Ethics* 130, no. 4 (2020): 555–87, https://doi.org/10.1086/708536. According to Kandiyali, Marx's view is that free cooperative production facilitates a distinctive type of action, a self-realization that is especially valuable *because* it is an act of freely and reciprocally contributing to the good of others *and* because both the person performing it and the person for whose enjoyment it was performed can value it as such.

[78] Sangiovanni, "Solidarity as Joint Action."

we have are (or coincide with[79]) moral duties. Often solidarity commitments that we make help us to comply with moral duties we already have on independent grounds. In such cases, those who maintain that duties of solidarity are derivative or conditional on other duties are correct. However, two additional points make matters more complex.

First, solidarity commitments can change the *content* of the general duties we already have. Many of our pre-solidarity duties are duties that require mere conformity. Think, for example, of a duty to do one's fair share in a valuable cooperative endeavour. We discharge this duty when we do our fair share. It does not matter, as far as our duty is concerned, whether we do so because we think that this is what fairness requires or because we fear that others will exclude us from future cooperation if we free-ride on their efforts. But as I noted earlier, the demands of solidarity (like the demands of friendship and other intimate relationships) often require more than conformity. They require compliance, that is, they require us to discharge our duty for some reasons or with some motivation. Take Ava's case: it seems plausible that she already has a moral duty, grounded in fairness, to participate in the strike/protest before she commits in solidarity. But the exact content of the duty changes once she has committed in solidarity and formed an evaluative attachment to those picked out by the cause. The upshot of this is that even when some duty derives from (or is conditional on) some non-solidarity consideration, solidarity can still reshape and precisify what the duty requires.

The second complication is that evaluative attachments can turn "mere moral reasons" into duties of solidarity. How might this occur? Our moral responsibility is wider than what we have a duty to do because some of our moral reasons aren't duties. If the point of solidarity is to help us align our ethical and moral responsibilities, then there will be cases where the moral reasons that solidarity helps us to bring into harmony with our ethical ones aren't duties. However, this does not mean that advancing the cause could not amount to a duty once we have made a solidarity commitment. Let me sketch two ways in which this could happen. Suppose that some moral reason does not amount to a moral duty because it would be too psychologically demanding for the agent to have this duty. But once the agent has committed, the psychological cost of investing time and energy weighs less heavily. After all, the agent has made this particular cause her self-chosen project. Since the "psychological burden" has gone down, doing what the cause requires now *does* constitute a duty. Here is a second scenario: suppose that you have a moral reason, but no moral duty, to help a stranger in moderate need (say with money for bus fare when they have lost their wallet). Yet suppose that you would

[79] I want to remain neutral in this article on the exact relation between reasons and duties. To avoid awkward formulations, I will henceforth write as if duties are a special kind of reason.

have a duty to help a person with whom you share a more intimate connection, say a friend or a colleague, if they found themselves in a similar situation as the stranger. As solidarity commitments create evaluative attachment not just to causes but also to the people they pick out, the personal bonds we create through solidarity can turn strangers into comrades, and hence things we had mere moral reason to do into moral duties.

On the picture of the deontic structure of solidarity I have sketched, the landscape is diverse: some duties are derivative of prior non-solidarity duties, while others are grounded in our solidarity commitments. The functionalist account I have offered provides a persuasive explanation of this complexity.

VIII. CONCLUSION

I began with Bertolt Brecht's proclamation that "He who deserts his fellow equals only deserts himself!" Brecht wrote *Solidarity Song* during the final years of the Weimar Republic as a rallying cry for fellow communists during times of violent struggles against a bourgeoning Nazi movement. So perhaps all that he wanted to get across to his comrades was the adage that "United we stand, divided we fall!"[80] This article has offered an interpretation of a deeper insight about solidarity that Brecht's song might hint at: when you betray your comrades, you betray *yourself*. Through solidarity, you do right by other people—your "fellow equals"—but you also reconfigure your personal projects and build valuable attachments to others. When you betray solidarity, you do more than just wrong your comrades and hamper the success of a morally worthy cause. You also sabotage your own achievement of a life worth aspiring to.

Recognizing the potential for conflict between our moral and our ethical responsibilities is one of the hallmarks of a liberal approach to political morality. Within this tradition, the most elaborate response to this predicament is to advocate for a division of moral labor so that general moral requirements—and, in particular, duties of justice—are discharged by institutions, while we, as individuals, are, in the words of Thomas Nagel, "[left] relatively free to pursue agent-relative values in our personal lives."[81] Solidarity takes seriously the potential conflict between moral and ethical responsibilities, yet offers an alternative solution that avoids two charges often brought against the division-of-labor view.

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[80] John Roemer thinks that the related aphorism "we all hang together or we each hang separately" captures the essence of solidaristic cooperation. John Roemer, "Socialism Revised," *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 45, no. 3 (2017): 307, https://doi.org/10.1111/papa.12089.

[81] Nagel, *Equality and Partiality*, 86.

One criticism, made from more radical perspectives, is that the liberal solution invites a decidedly unpolitical, "bourgeois" vision of our personal reasons and projects. Solidarity highlights, by contrast, that such political passivity does not follow from our need to reconcile moral and ethical responsibilities: we can (and should!) turn justice-given causes into personal projects and bonds, thus *politicizing* our private life.

Second, even among liberals, there may be a lingering doubt that the "division of moral labor" solution cannot offer us much guidance about how to conduct our lives under less-than-ideal circumstances. In the world we actually inhabit, institutions are often manifestly defective. They fall short of their aims unless pushed; they may be abused unless they are held to account. So the on-going success of outsourcing moral labor to institutions depends, under realistic conditions, on our on-going willingness to engage in political activism that keeps these institutions "on track." Under these conditions, solidarity offers a much-needed guiding strategy that, unlike more impersonal-consequentialist alternatives, stays true to core liberal commitments.

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Competing Interests

The author has no competing interests to declare.