

The Kingdom of Friends: Reconstructing Fraternity in Kantian Liberalism

I. Introduction and Background

a. The citizenship critique of liberalism

Although liberalism has become the dominant Western theory of politics, it continues to receive significant criticism about the way in which it lives up to its own mandate: creating a just and sustainable system of governance. A number of critics have attacked liberalism's seeming failure on one front, namely in its tendency to engender rugged individualism that promotes atomistic behavior on the part of liberal citizens. Marxists, for instance, have argued that liberalism lacks the kind of motivating principles that are apparently readily available in collectivism.¹ Instead, Marxists argue that, at minimum, liberalism would require an additional, egalitarian ethos to make the philosophy viable. Likewise, communitarians have argued that liberalism's focus on freedom and equality has led to a destructive conception of the person which bleeds over into the way in which citizens think of themselves.² By promoting strict civil liberties and ensuring basic equality, liberalism has had the perverse effect of encouraging citizens to retreat from public commitments into more-rewarding aspects of private life; after all, if I am just as free and equal as the next person, why dedicate my time to pursuits that do not promote or celebrate my free, equal status?

This criticism – what I call the “citizenship critique” – is not without merit and raises important questions about the role of citizens in liberal societies. At least in the United States, there is growing awareness that citizens are becoming less and less politically engaged.³ And there is some evidence that liberalism, with its emphasis on civil liberty from government encroachment, has prompted citizens to retreat from public life.⁴ Still, a nation's adoption of liberalism is almost certainly not a sufficient condition for citizen disengagement. Recent analysis suggests that, while

U.S. citizens are less engaged than citizens in other developed countries, the list of countries with the most citizen engagement is a mixed assortment of countries that have embraced liberalism's demands for liberty and equality.⁵ It is too strong a claim to suggest that liberalism *must* lead to the kind of rugged individualism that isolates citizens from one another.

As I argue below, liberalism logically permits values that should prompt citizens to be more engaged in public life in a way that is compatible with liberalism's commitments to freedom and equality. Liberalism has historically included the value of fraternity, which evokes notions of citizen brotherhood, unity, and duty. And while modern liberal democracies may have emphasized liberty and equality comparatively well, the 21st Century discussion of civic fraternity is incomplete. In one sense, the citizenship critique is correct: modern liberalism disproportionately emphasizes values that promote individualistic behavior. But, as I demonstrate below, this is not because liberalism is *devoid* of a value that would check rugged individualism. By focusing on one version of liberalism – Kant's liberalism – I argue that liberalism permits and should encourage a kind of "civic friendship" that is compatible with liberty and equality, but which motivates citizen involvement.

b. Why Kant?

In an effort to demonstrate that liberalism requires a form of fraternity, why ground the discussion in the liberalism of Kant? First, the citizenship critique acknowledges that the version of liberalism that has been embraced today is significantly Kantian. For example, Sandel, in making his critique, specifically points out that the version of liberalism he has in mind – that advanced by Rawls – is Kantian.⁶ Others have claimed that, despite seeming incongruities, liberalism today is defined in terms of Kantianism.⁷ Thus, a satisfactory response to the citizenship critique should take into account the foundational, Kantian underpinnings of modern liberalism.

Second, the scholarly literature on fraternity, and specifically Kantian fraternity, is virtually barren. Granted, there is a vigorous debate on the role of love and friendship in Kant's moral theory; at least from the standpoint of virtue, it is uncontroversial to suggest that Kant had a thorough view of the kind of friendship individuals should have in their *private* lives.⁸ But how this relates to Kant's political theory and, particularly, whether there is a kind of civic friendship understood in Kant's theory of right, has not been sufficiently examined.

A few writers have considered topics that indirectly touch on concepts that overlap with fraternity. For instance, Pauline Kleingeld has offered an account of patriotism in Kant's political theory, arguing that commitment to one's own nation is not only consistent with Kant's otherwise cosmopolitan philosophy, but may be considered a limited *duty* of citizens in a liberal democracy.⁹ Likewise, Anna Stilz uses Kant's claim that persons have a duty to enter the state as a basis for her conclusion that citizens have other cognizable duties to the state.¹⁰ Like Kleingeld, Stilz uses Kant's political theory – while drawing heavily from other liberal thinkers – to argue for a kind of constitutional patriotism that provides citizens with the motivation to enter into and continue to participate in public life.¹¹

While Kleingeld's and Stilz's accounts of Kantian patriotism expose the role of a citizen's commitment to his or her *nation*, a deeper account is needed to explain the role of a citizen's commitment to his or her *fellow citizens*. Put another way, patriotism explains how citizens should react when faced with conflicted use of resources at home versus abroad and helps citizens understand how they should act with regard to the state as a legal entity. But it does not explain how and to what extent citizens should be motivated to participate in areas of civic life when that participation conflicts with more-rewarding areas of private life. Only a vigorous theory of

fraternity can offer any insight into how citizens should interact with one another, not just with the state.

Third and finally, unlike some philosophers like Aristotle, who devoted significant portions of his political theory to discussions of friendship among citizens, Kant never explicitly mentions citizen relationships, except in the context of private interactions. At the same time, Kant's liberalism is markedly universal and cosmopolitan, with its application limited only by the number of finite rational beings in existence. Consequently, as I argue below, Kant's liberalism permits a reconstructed, universal version of fraternity that can be described as "civic friendship" – grounded in Kant's notions of virtue, but having an effect on the doctrine of right. It is precisely because Kant is seemingly silent on fraternity while being profoundly cosmopolitan that his writings make a compelling test case for a response to the citizenship critique: if one can establish liberal fraternity in Kant, then arguably one can do so in other versions of liberalism.

II. Groundwork of Kantian Civic Friendship

In order to fully reconstruct fraternity in Kant, it is necessary to first identify some "rules of reconstruction" that would make fraternity consistent with Kant's broader moral theory. In the next section, I offer such rules and, in the final section, I reconstruct Kantian fraternity as civic friendship. Before doing so, in this section I first provide (a) definitions of key terms. I then discuss three subjects of Kant's writings that serve as a groundwork for developing the rules of reconstruction that I offer. Those three subjects are (b) Kant's philosophy of history, (c) Kant's church/state analogy, and (d) Kant's theory of private, virtuous friendship.

a. Definitions

There are a number of important concepts that Kant uses as terms of art and which will inform how fraternity can be reconstructed in Kant. First, Kant has specific definitions of the

person. A “finite rational being” is an actor which Kant conceives of as having a will, the freedom to choose its own ends, and the capacity to legislate maxims of action.¹² “Obligation” is the necessity of an action, freely made, while a “duty” is an action that someone is bound to do by a categorical imperative and serves as the rational foundation for the legislation of maxims.¹³ A human being or “person” is a finite rational being¹⁴ who can be presumed to be free and equal, and, consequently, to whom actions can be imputed.¹⁵ While there are multiple “goods” to which persons may be striving, the “highest good” or “greatest good” to which reason should be directed is the cultivation of the “good will,” or a will that consistently acts from duty out of respect for the moral law.¹⁶

Second, Kant has particular definitions of the other liberal values of freedom and equality. “Freedom” in Kant’s theory is a practical postulate. Where negative freedom of choice is a finite rational being’s independence from inclinations and sensibility, the notion of positive freedom cannot be demonstrated by observation, but practical reason is permitted to presume positive freedom on the part of finite rational beings.¹⁷ In the context of a civil society, freedom is a right that finite rational beings retain by nature and is a fundamental building block of the political regime.¹⁸ In essence, freedom is the “attribute of obeying no other law than that to which” one has given consent.¹⁹ Similarly, “equality” is the status of individual members of a society with respect to the law and the state. All members can expect commensurate application of coercive law to their particular circumstances, knowing that their neighbors will receive the same treatment.²⁰ This is consistent with significant social and economic inequalities, provided that all members can be conceived of as “equal to one another as subjects” of the state.²¹ In civil society, equality is a person “not recognizing among the people any superior with the moral capacity to bind him as a matter of right in a way that he could not bind the other”.²²

Finally, a person is a “citizen” if he or she possesses both natural and legal independence from control of another. While a person may be “free,” in the practical sense, he or she may nevertheless be subservient to another or dependent in a manner that would reduce his or her political ability. To Kant, women and children do not possess natural independence, while conscripted laborers or artisans may be so economically reliant on an overseer or master as to not possess legal independence.²³ Although the specifics of Kant’s views on dependence are outdated and the concept of natural dependence may be questionable, Kant’s point is still critical: a person is not truly a citizen until he or she possesses freedom and equality and is capable of taking an active role in legislating the ends of the state.²⁴

b. Kant’s philosophy of history

Kant’s vision of human history sets the stage for better understanding the foundations for a civic friendship. Kant acknowledges that history is nothing more than an attempt to give an account of natural phenomena in terms of human freedom.²⁵ Unfortunately, the philosopher is in no position to account for every aspect of natural phenomena, which are often irrational and seemingly contradictory; where conclusive, empirical proof cannot establish a coherent historical narrative, reason is permitted to “attempt to discover a purpose in nature”.²⁶ Kant argues that this presumed purpose cannot be anything other than the eventual realization of the highest good and the development of all the natural capacities of humans.²⁷ In essence, Kant takes a decidedly practical approach to the incongruities of history. Moral agents cannot help but construct a version of history that points toward human progress; practical philosophy demands that we hope for a past that has been progressive, with an eye toward a future of improvement.²⁸ Importantly, this vision of a purposive nature, in which human beings work toward the realization of the greatest

good, is meant to be regulative of individual human action and not a truth-claim about the phenomenal world.²⁹

How is this purpose to be achieved? The greatest good and the development of human capacities come about through the founding of the civil society.³⁰ Whereas the unrestrained freedom that humans find enamoring leads to the seeming chaos of nature, a civil society redirects that desire for freedom toward advancement of the human being, individually and collectively.³¹ Driving this development, is the systematic expansion of reason; individuals, through greater freedom, exercise their reason in private capacities and this enlightenment can “spread upwards to thrones and even influence . . . principles of government”.³² Put another way, Kant envisions history as a progression of greater toleration of the public use of reason. Because human progression demands the use of reason in a free, public way, humans are forced to communicate with one another (by the “unsocial sociability” nature thrusts on us) and what would normally be purely solitary uses of reason have public consequences.³³

History, then, is a collective narrative: while actual observations of historical events may discount the progressive role of reason, the practical use of reason encourages human beings – all human beings, not just individuals – to think of a purposive account of human development. This has at least two implications. First, an individual human can assimilate this worldview into his or her own behavior. Before ever fully embracing the rest of Kant’s moral theory, the individual human has a positive backdrop against which to begin formulating individual maxims of behavior; the practical postulate that history tends toward progress should give motivation to particular decisions. Second, Kant’s philosophy of history grounds moral behavior in a community enterprise. Without this perspective, moral behavior is strictly individualized – what decisions are facing *me*, what choices do *I* have, and what will be the consequences to *me*. A progressive theory

of history permits all of these self-interested concerns and does nothing to remove them as factors in the moral calculus, but adds an additional layer, namely that my individual decisions are potentially part of a larger tapestry of human development. The individual moral agent can think of himself or herself as another step forward on the march of history. In that way, individual decisions take on significant meaning, as these may not just be part of my own development, but that of the entire human race. This collective aspect of morality is a key addition to a reconstructed civic friendship in Kant.

c. Kant's church/state analogy

In addition to Kant's philosophy of history, Kant's philosophy of religion provides an interesting analogy between his vision of the church and his vision of the state. With regard to the church, Kant believes that there are certain analogous features of the state that provide a pattern for the church. Just as the juridico-civil community (the state) has a constitution and is the unity of human beings under juridical laws, so too the ethico-civil community (the church) has a basic structure and is the unity of human beings under virtue.³⁴ Both communities have their own states of nature prior to their founding, in which human beings exercise their freedom without any external authority.³⁵ The final end of the state is to seek for a federation of states and a cosmopolitan vision of citizenry; the endgame of the church is a universal membership in an ethical community.³⁶ In one direction then, the basic aspects of the state can help inform how we conceive of the church.

Granted, there are important differences between the two communities that Kant emphasizes. First, both communities have a sovereign, but the role of that sovereign is markedly different. The state sovereign is, in Kant's terms, the people as co-legislators, while the church's sovereign is God; although humans also co-legislate the moral law with God, His capacity as an

infinite rational being makes His sovereignty different than the conglomeration of many finite rational beings legislating together.³⁷ Second, while the church is an ethical community which individuals may voluntarily join, the state is a juridical community that can be entered into by force. Kant is careful to infuse this distinction into his discussion.³⁸

Assuming that we respect these important differences, though, the analogy is bi-directional: aspects of Kant's church can help explain or emphasize particular aspects of the state in two ways. First, just as the church aims toward the betterment of the totality of the human race, so too does the state. Kant says that the duty to enter the ethical community is not simply one of an individual person to himself, but of the individual to the entire race; each person is under a duty to enter the church in order to break the cycle of the historically ethical war of all against all *for the good of all human beings*.³⁹ The promotion of the highest good is a common good shared by the human race generally. Thus, although membership in the church is not coercive, it is nevertheless a universal duty and one which is to be desired by all finite rational beings.⁴⁰ This can also be true of the state. Although membership in the state is coercive, it can nevertheless be considered as a good for the entirety of the human race. Just as the desire for a virtuous life is partially individualistic and partially collective, the desire for a community based on right has both an individual and collective component. By entering into a community based on right, I have not only limited the chaotic exercise of individual freedom, but reinforced the public use of reason as co-legislator.

Second, despite the cosmopolitan focus, the church is uniquely personalized and, in practice, leads to highly intimate interactions between individual members; the same can be true of the state. The sum total of members in the ethical community is the church invisible, with the actualized, physical unity of members being the church visible.⁴¹ A congregation is a subset of this

visible church, or a mass of local members united into the greater whole, subordinated under local teachers and church officers.⁴² Teaching and participation in this basic unit is focused on the highest good and the realization of moral capacity.⁴³ By its nature, this congregation is open to all in the immediate community because it is grounded in the use of reason by any finite rational being.⁴⁴ Attending the local congregation serves two purposes: to edify individuals and to promote the collective duty toward the moral law. As to the former, Kant thinks of participation in church service as a public method for individuals to lay firm foundations of principles in one's heart and to erect maxims of behavior.⁴⁵ Because the church/state analogy is bidirectional, the state can also be conceived of as a large entity whose basic unit is the immediate community of members (*e.g.* a parish, province, city, town, incorporated community). Participation in this local unit can be thought of as a way to both edify individuals and to strengthen the membership. And while local officers will in some sense serve hierarchic roles, reason – universally accessible – governs the functions of the local unit.

d. Kant's theory of private, virtuous friendship

In addition to Kant's ideas on history and religion, Kant's views on friendship provide important insights in reconstructing Kantian fraternity. First, Kant's views on friendship drastically expand the universe of individuals that could be friends. The average human being conceives of his or her friends as ones that share private interests; I choose my friends based on hobbies, professions, beliefs, or similar tastes. But for Kant, while friendship *may* be based on such similarities, it *need* not be. Kant is clear that some of the best friendships can exist based on fundamental differences. And, unlike Aristotle, Kant does not believe that we must first be virtuous before we can be friends. Instead, morality can motivate me to be the kind of friend that is worthy of the trust of another. What unites us in friendship could be any number of interests or ideas, but

what preserves our friendship and gives efficacy to it is *my* commitment to morality.⁴⁶ Moreover, our friendship can only be maintained by a commitment to freedom – for instance, in the respect we give one another to freely structure our private lives – and to equality – by never making the gift-giving and benefits of friendship too one-sided.⁴⁷ In essence, then, Kantian friendship can cast a wide net, provided I have done my part to be an eligible friend.

Second, friendship is grounded in reason. Like other concepts Kant examines, friendship is an ideal of reason, difficult to attain, but nevertheless one to which humans should strive.⁴⁸ An intimate relationship like a friendship need not be inconsistent with the idea of obligation; while friendship requires some obligations for the benefit of others, it is also largely an obligation to ourselves to act in such a way that people would want us to be a friend.⁴⁹ Because moral and personal relationships are not inconsistent to Kant, friendship is a good test case for illustrating how our personal interactions can be buttressed by our commitment to the moral law.⁵⁰ In this sense, Kantian friendship can illustrate in very real terms how we are, on the one hand, to obey reason's call to duty while, on the other hand, making those particularized decisions that engender personal commitments.

Finally, true friendship is more than just a desire to help the lives of others, but a recognition of our shared capacities. Kant provides an example that illustrates this fact. Beneficence, on the one hand, is a duty and something to which all finite rational beings should be striving.⁵¹ But to be a “friend of human beings” is something slightly more demanding than mere philanthropy. Friendship demands a recognition on the part of the would-be friend that there is a mutual equality between two people. In fact, friendship is so much about recognizing the equality of all men and women that reason permits the practical postulate of all human beings existing in a brotherhood “under one father who wills the happiness of all.”⁵² This postulate reinforces the role

of duty that Kant puts at the core of his moral theory. Like Kant's misanthrope, when he or she is stripped of all sensibility and inclination – none of which are certain and all of which provide no sure foundation – the friend of man nevertheless finds in duty the kind of beneficence that true friendship would require.⁵³ When I identify that, at the our core, we have mutual equality, then I am more likely to recognize you as a friend.

These three concepts – that friendship can include a large universe of individuals with varied interests, that it is grounded in reason, and that it is brought about by a duty-based recognition that we have similar capacities – are the cornerstone of Kantian friendship. Any version of friendship, private or public, needs to assimilate and make sense of these concepts.

III. Rules for Reconstructing Kantian Civic Friendship

None of this directly demonstrates what Kantian fraternity or civic friendship would look like. Kant's philosophies of history and religion are attempting to answer a different question than Kant's moral theory. Similarly, Kant's discussion of private friendship is rooted in his doctrine of virtue and he keeps it separate from his discussion of the state in the doctrine of right. Yet, with this background in place, there are at least three "rules" one can identify in order to reconstruct what Kantian friendship would look like in the state. I now turn to each of those rules.

a. Rule 1: Emphasize the capacities of finite rational beings

Based on the foregoing background, the first rule of reconstructing Kantian fraternity is that such fraternity must emphasize the capacities of finite rational beings. For example, Kant's philosophy of history highlights the categorization of humans as finite rational beings. It offers a narrative of purpose that, albeit a practical postulate, gives human beings historical justification for seeing themselves as rational. Moreover, Kant's history enshrines humankind's core freedom;

while there may be no phenomenal proof that humans are free, history nevertheless permits a narrative that shows humans acting freely, leading to progressive realization of the highest good.

Similarly, Kant's church/state analogy provides a rubric for the way in which these capacities can be realized. True, in the context of the church, Kant is more concerned with the achievement of virtue, rather than right. But the analogy helps demonstrate that the *totality* of Kant's moral theory aims toward the systematizing of human capacity in the form of actual organizations: for virtue, the church and for right, the state. The analogy permits one to conceive of local units where human capacity can be edified; where the congregation is a forum in which to publicly display one's commitment to virtue, the local unit of government can be a forum in which to publicly display one's commitment to right. In both settings, participants will see human capacity for reason and their status as free and equal beings fully presented.

Likewise, Kantian friendship emphatically demonstrates that any would-be reconstruction will have to incorporate a rigorous view of human capacity. Kant simply does not see how it is possible for one to have true friendship without recognizing the free and equal status of the person who is the object of friendship. Because friendship is duty-based, a friend must be prepared to understand his or her own nature and then to build upon that nature to be the kind of person that others would want to have as a friend. Without the foundation of human capacity as a foothold, friendship will immediately slide into a relationship based on taste or inclination – and so, one that can be easily destroyed or modified as tastes and inclinations change. Thus, all three areas of interest demonstrate the need for emphasizing Kantian capacities.

b. Rule 2: Stress the importance of unity

The second rule of reconstructing Kantian fraternity is that such fraternity must stress the importance of unity. Both Kant's philosophy of history and his philosophy of religion demonstrate

that unity is at the core of social interaction. On the one hand, Kant's historical narrative demonstrates that all human beings come out of nature having the same capacities for reason and the exercise of their freedom. Civil society is created to give order to this nature. Rational agents are permitted to presume the practical postulate that all humans are united in the collective realization of the highest good. On the other hand, Kant's religious writing – particularly his church/state analogy – brings this cosmopolitan vision of humanity down to earth in local, real terms. Where the congregation is a unified community of virtuous believers seeking shared edification, the local unit of government, in whatever form it may take, can also be a unified community of law-abiding citizens seeking social order. Thus, both philosophies underscore a theme that Kant revisits again and again: that finite rational beings have the potential to be much more united than they would be separate.

Kant's theory of virtuous friendship also demonstrates the importance of unity in a somewhat different way. Where Kant's philosophies of history and religion emphasize the collective unity of a mass of people, his theory of virtuous friendship shows how unity can be promoted by the individual. As explained above, the would-be friend must do something more than simply identify shared tastes or inclinations. Likewise, a would-be friend need not identify *any* shared tastes or inclinations in order for a friendship to be formed. The unifying factor that an individual must assimilate into his or her calculus is the mutual equality that is at the core of all human nature as finite rational beings. At the same time that Kantian friendship expands the universe of possible friendships, it demands from the individual that he or she abstract from individualizing traits (*e.g.* tastes and inclinations) to a core feature of human nature (*e.g.* equality).

c. Rule 3: Highlight the role of duty

The third rule of reconstructing Kantian fraternity is that such fraternity must highlight the role of duty. It goes without saying that a reading of Kant that is inconsistent with duty would be unpersuasive. But beyond simply acknowledging duty, the foregoing background demonstrates that duty with regard to social arrangements must have a prominent position. Kant's view of history, for instance, puts duty in a collective position. Human beings, in a state of nature, in which raw freedom is exercised without regard to its impact on the use of freedom by others, have a duty to create a civil society that breaks the cycle of natural chaos. As his history implies, even if the state of nature were ultimately pleasant and a state of peace, the failure to leave this natural state and create the civil state is a violation of duty prompted by reason. In fact, when viewed broadly, Kant's account of history has as its fulcrum the collective decision on the part of finite rational beings to achieve this duty. Thus, from a historical perspective, duty is the beginning of the shift toward progression.

Additionally, Kant's church/state analogy brings the role of duty in history to the present day. On the one hand, congregations of virtuous believers have a duty to continue to join one another in fellowship and, to use Kant's term of art, to edify themselves through public displays of faith. On the other hand, one can make the claim that, if Kant's analogy is bidirectional, participants in local units of government likewise have a duty to participate in community organization in order to strengthen their commitment to right. In both settings, duty to participate is the motivational component that gives stability to and perpetuates the community.

Finally, Kant's theory of friendship dramatically underscores the need for respecting duty as a Kantian principle. The typical conception of friendship is one built on desire and individual interests; two friends who meet through a shared interest of music or art will undoubtedly have a

rich relationship, but will build their friendship on a less-than-certain foundation. When the interest disappears or is modified, then the end shifts and the means becomes moot. The only way to avoid this problem is to base friendship on a *duty* to be the kind of person one would have as a friend. The end of such a relationship is the magnification of one's capacity for friendship and the satisfaction of duty. Because reason demands that this duty never be removed, the friendship that is the target of this duty can exist in perpetuity.

IV. Reconstruction of Kantian Civic Friendship

Given this background, the question now remains whether Kantian liberalism permits a form of fraternity that tempers the individualizing effects of rigorous freedom and equality. At least on the surface, Kant's commitment to freedom and equality seems insurmountably inconsistent with a collective "brotherhood" of citizens, since Kantian freedom and equality permit individuals to structure their lives in whatever ways they choose provided that the political structure is sound. I now argue that Kantian liberalism does permit a rich and substantive form of fraternity called civic friendship, the formulation of which is as follows: citizens of a liberal state are (a) under a duty to engage in political activities (b) in a manner that promotes unity, and (c) the motivation for doing so is respect for the shared capacity of fellow-citizens. I now explore each of these elements in turn.

a. Citizens of a liberal state are under a duty to engage in civic friendship via political activity

First, there is a Kantian duty to engage in civic friendship within a liberal state in the form of political activity. As explained above, citizens have a unique place in the Kantian state: on the one hand, they are all members of a regime that imposes coercive law on their actions, but, on the other hand, they are legislators of this law to which they have freely given consent. Thus, in Kantian liberalism, the citizenry is forced to seek a balance between two competing ideals: the

order of the society and the freedom/equality of its members, including that of a single, individual citizen. Rather than strictly promoting unrestrained freedom and equality, Kantian liberalism from the outset requires that these concepts be tempered by the moral law.

It goes without saying that all persons, as finite rational beings to whom actions can be imputed, have a duty to seek the highest good in legislating their other maxims. The bulk of Kant's moral theory is devoted to addressing this fundamental point. But civic friendship requires modification of this status. When persons are instead conceived of as citizens, their duty can also be redefined as the duty to seek the highest good for the state, and not simply the "highest good" generally. At least at one level, all citizens incur a modified duty that is specific to citizens, but which works in tandem with their private duty to seek after the cultivation of the good will. So, Kant believes that all citizens are under a duty to obey coercive laws; because the doctrine of right aims toward realization of the highest good by making public regimes most conducive for virtue, persons who become citizens have a duty to ensure that right *is enforced*, in addition to the duty *to obey*. But Kant also believes that a "spirit of freedom" should pervade the actions of citizens. An individual citizen may find herself unsure of her course of conduct with regard to a particular law. Other citizens, possessing a "spirit of freedom," will communicate with that citizen in "what concerns people generally" to ensure that the citizen does not take self-contradictory actions.⁵⁴

It is here that the duty for civic friendship arises. If we start with the Kantian premise that all finite rational beings are under a duty to seek after the highest good (the good will) and the premise that reason imposes a duty on finite rational beings to leave the state of nature, then additional duties follow. Once out of the state of nature, a person's general duty of seeking the highest good becomes the specific duty of seeking the highest good *of the state*. This specific duty has two parts, the first of which is the promotion of order through obedience to coercive laws. The

second part, civic friendship, requires a spirit of freedom that seeks to promote obedience and right *on the part of fellow citizens*. The duty of civic friendship is, thus, derived first from the general moral law for all persons, then the duty as citizens of states, and, finally, as the duty of citizens toward other citizens through the spirit of freedom.

This aspect is consistent with the rules identified above. Any would-be version of fraternity in Kantian liberalism must be duty-based and, ultimately, trace its lineage to the duty to promote the highest good. Kant's history and religion demonstrate that duties can shift depending on the context; as the promotion of human progress and the building of the religious congregation demonstrate, duty plays a role in even the most minor of concepts. Moreover, Kant's theory of virtuous friendship illustrates the fact that duty-based friendship is possible. Consequently, deriving a duty of citizens to act for the promotion of their fellow-citizens is not antithetical to Kant's general theory.

b. Civic friendship seeks to promote unity

Second, Kantian civic friendship has as its primary goal the promotion of unity among fellow citizens. Civic friendship is *not* collective, in that individual interests are not to be subordinated to the state or the community; this would be entirely inconsistent with Kant's moral theory. But civic friendship is also not agnostic as to how fellow-citizens perform their duties in the state. The concept of a state presumes that its members will be "united through their common interest in being in a rightful condition."⁵⁵ In fact, it is *the* key step to leaving the state of nature for a person to acknowledge his condition and to desire to unite with others in a new, coercive condition.⁵⁶ Once organized, the state (and, by extension, all citizens) are under a duty to seek for its own well-being through "that condition in which its constitution conforms most fully to

principles of right.”⁵⁷ Thus, my knowing that I am a citizen and that I have certain duties is sufficient for my knowing that other citizens share in those duties with me.

Moreover, civic friendship in the state is a kind of “restatement” of Kant’s kingdom of ends, but in a specific context. Under the moral law, all citizens *qua* citizens are members of a state-based kingdom of ends. Where the kingdom of ends considered broadly is the universe of finite rational beings who are ends in themselves, a state can be considered a subset of this universe: finite rational beings who possess freedom, equality, and independence (the hallmarks of citizenship) in a geographic locale. As a citizen, I not only know that I am a member of the state as a legislator and, because I am free, have freely given my consent to laws; I also know that my fellow citizens, because they are equal with me, are also in the same position as I am.⁵⁸ Thus, the practical postulate of freedom that is the core of the kingdom of ends not only helps me know that I am a member of an intelligible world of finite rational beings, but the civil actualization of freedom helps me know that I and my fellow citizens are members of the state, a subset of the intelligible world whose purpose is to bring about the highest good.⁵⁹

It is not difficult to see how this type of unity, provided that it is the goal of citizens, would temper the effects of freedom and equality. When Kant speaks of the unity of members and the unity of the “will,” he has in mind precisely this balance of freedom and equality, on the one hand, against the cohesion of the members of the state, on the other hand.⁶⁰ Were membership in the state simply an excuse to enjoy one’s own freedom and ignore the actions of neighbors out of an extreme sense of equality, it would essentially be no different than Kant’s version of the state of nature. But where inalienable freedom and equality are brought under co-legislated law, in which all are under the same rules and all have consented to them, then the unity of co-legislators as citizens who communicate with one another will minimize the individual self-interest of members.

Kant's historical and religious writings, as explained above, make the goal of unity among citizens an obvious proposition. On the one hand, histories aim – or, at least, the aim that reason is permitted to impute to history – is the methodical progress of the human race. History reinforces the idea that finite rational beings have, in the past, left the state of nature, imposed coercive laws on themselves, and worked toward unity of the state. On the other hand, religion permits belief that what a citizen is doing now for his or her state and countrymen will ultimately work out for good, that the end goal is reachable, if distant. The church/state analogy that Kant develops further underscores that, just as a church congregation can be a public forum for religious edification, so too participation in government can be a public forum for political edification. A voter, a juror, a taxpayer, or a member of a community outreach group can take heart in knowing that civic participation will promote the unity of citizens.

c. The motivation for civic friendship is respect for the shared capacity of fellow-citizens

Third, Kantian civic friendship is motivated by respect for the shared capacity of fellow citizens. At its core, Kant's moral theory assumes that the highest good will be motivation enough. As Kant emphatically states in laying out the parameters of his moral theory, the concept of duty alone should provide motivation for any action.⁶¹ At least in one sense, civic friendship should have its own motivation. Because, as explained above, it is a duty imposed on every member of the state as a citizen and is derived from *the* duty to seek the highest good, citizens should already have sufficient motivation to engage in civic friendship. Such a strict claim is consistent with Kant's theory generally.

Still, citizens may require additional motivation for performing their duty. To that end, citizen motivation can have two additional, motivating components. At one level, citizens have the knowledge that all finite rational beings are members of the state and citizens can be assured that

their fellow citizens share their capacities. After all, to be a citizen is, by definition, to be a person that possesses freedom, equality, and independence, and who is a rational finite being.⁶² A virtuous friendship is one that is built on the foundation of a person first being the kind of individual one would want as a friend; as Kant points out, friendship is not about *quid pro quos* but about fashioning one's life in such a way that, despite differences, one can earn the trust of a friend and preserve the core equal humanity that stabilizes friendship. In the same way, citizens may be motivated toward civic friendship by knowing that they need only *be the kind of citizen who could promote unity* and not necessarily a literal companion of every other citizen. This is consistent with promoting the capacity of fellow citizens as finite rational beings. As I reinforce my own rationality through my behavior as a citizen, I respect the rationality of my fellow citizens and their fundamental humanity.

At another level, like virtuous friendship, civic friendship permits a certain kind of practical postulate. Although it is not empirically true, Kant argues that reason permits one to conceive of his fellow finite rational beings as “brothers” who have a common “father” who desires their happiness.⁶³ As a practical postulate, an individual can use this concept as a motivating factor in identifying those to whom he or she could be a virtuous friend. In the same way, citizens *qua* citizens are permitted the practical postulate that they are all siblings of a common parent, in this case the state:

As natives of a country, those who constitute a nation can be looked upon analogously to descendants of the same *ancestors (congeniti)* even though they are not. Yet in an intellectual sense and from the perspective of rights, since they are born of the same mother (the republic) they constitute as it were one family (*gens, natio*), whose members (citizens of the state) are of equally high birth and do not mix with those who may live near them in a state of nature, whom they regard as inferior.⁶⁴

Here, Kant uses almost the exact same language to describe citizen relationships with one another as he does to describe an individual's relationship with would-be private friends. While Kleingeld convincingly cites this language in support of her argument for Kantian *patriotism* and citizen allegiance to *the state* as parent,⁶⁵ this language is equally supportive of the notion of *civic friendship* and allegiance to *fellow citizens* as siblings. One's status as citizen of a state means that one has been "born" into a family. To Kant, it does not matter that this is an analogy, since, in all the ways that matter (*i.e.* "from the perspective of rights"), citizenship is a rebirth to a mother who affords her children freedom, equality, and independence. These citizens can be motivated to work for the good of one another knowing that they are siblings to the mother-state. Those who are not citizens and who continue in the state of nature without freedom, equality, and independence, do not share in the privileges of brother- and sisterhood. In this patriotic form of government, all citizens can be practically conceived of as a "family"⁶⁶ who originate from a "commonwealth[']s] . . . maternal womb."⁶⁷ While I may differ from my fellow citizens in terms of my religion, ethnicity, birthplace, gender, or ideology, those difference *do not* matter when it comes to membership in the state; so long as I can recognize my own freedom, equality, and independence and recognize the same in my fellow citizens, practical reason permits me to view those fellow citizens as brothers and sisters of a mother-state.

The overlap between civic friendship and virtuous friendship is clear, but it is important to note differences. Virtuous friendship is a concept applicable to all persons who are finite rational beings to whom actions can be imputed. Civic friendship, on the other hand, is more narrow. It applies not to all persons, but to citizens, who are already under a duty to promote the well-being of the state (*i.e.* the highest good of the state). Moreover, while it may not be enforceable by coercive laws, adherence to those coercive laws may require or be attainable by invocation of civic

friendship. Tax-paying and voting *should be* performed out of duty, but *may be* performed out of a desire to promote the unity of the “family” state. For that matter, nothing about Kant’s doctrine of right precludes the systematic *encouragement* of civic friendship among citizens, in the form of civic education, community public works projects, or youth civil service programs. Provided that civic friendship is a duty, such programs might not only be permissible but the most appropriate way for developing civic friendship among citizens.

V. Conclusion and Response to the Citizenship Critique

I have argued that Kant’s brand of liberalism permits a reconstructed concept of fraternity called civic friendship. In its clearest formulation civic friendship is this: citizens of a liberal state are (a) under a duty to engage in state activities (b) in a manner that promotes unity, and (c) the motivation for doing so is respect for the shared capacity of fellow-citizens. How, then, does this address the citizenship critique of liberalism?

First, it demonstrates that liberalism can motivate civic activity. Kant’s theory has a number of motivations for engaging in political activity, including (1) pure duty, (2) the need on my part to become the kind of citizen others can depend on, and (3) the recognition that I am part of a family-state. The citizenship claim that liberalism is missing incentives for citizens to act is patently false. Second, my formulation of Kantian civic friendship underscores that at least one branch of liberalism supports a collective component. Granted, it does not give priority to the community or give the community claim on individual decisionmaking to the detriment of individual self-interest; doing so would completely refashion liberalism into something it was never intended to be. But this formulation does provide a role for community interests that is likely missing from standard liberalism. Finally, and most importantly, my formulation demonstrates that the values of freedom and equality are not at all inconsistent with and can be tempered by a

community-oriented fraternity. Throughout my reconstruction of civic friendship, I have made clear that citizenship in the Kantian state is conditioned on freedom, equality, and independence. Civic friendship, by definition, is a duty for citizens who meet these conditions; it is derived first from the general duty on all finite rational beings to seek the greatest good and second from the specific duty of citizens to ensure the well-being of the state. In essence, not only are freedom and equality respected by Kantian civic friendship, they serve as the building blocks for deriving it.

Notes

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2. Charles Taylor and Ruth Abbey, "Communitarianism, Taylor-Made: An Interview with Charles Taylor," *The Australian Quarterly* 68, no. 1 (1996): 9; Michael Sandel, *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 4-6, 145-48.
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7. Raymond Geuss, "Liberalism and Its Discontents," *Political Theory* 30, no. 3 (2002): 324-26.
8. *Compare* Lara Denis, "From Friendship to Marriage: Revising Kant," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 63, no. 1 (2001): 3-5 and Lina Papadaki, "Kantian Marriage and Beyond: Why It Is Worth Thinking about Kant on Marriage," *Hypatia* 25, no. 2 (2010): 278-80 with Christine M. Korsgaard, *Creating the Kingdom of Ends* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 200-12 and Marilea Bramer, "The Importance of Personal

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11. *Ibid.*, 151-54.
12. Immanuel Kant, “Critique of Practical Reason” in *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant: Practical Philosophy*, ed. Mary J. Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) (hereinafter cited as “*CPrR*”), 159-60.
13. Immanuel Kant, “The Metaphysics of Morals” in *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant: Practical Philosophy*, ed. Mary J. Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) (hereinafter cited as “*MM*”), 377-78.
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15. *MM*, 378.
16. *GMM*, 53-60.
17. *MM*, 375-76.
18. Immanuel Kant, “On the Common Saying: That May Be Correct in Theory” in *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant: Practical Philosophy*, ed. Mary J. Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) (hereinafter cited as “*CS*”), 291; Immanuel Kant, “Toward Perpetual Peace” in *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant:*

- Practical Philosophy*, ed. Mary J. Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) (hereinafter cited as “*TPP*”), 322.
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 21. *CS*, 292.
 22. *MM*, 458.
 23. *CS*, 295.
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 32. *Ibid.*, 51.
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53. *GMM*, 53-54; Henry E. Allison, *Kant's Theory of Freedom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 109-11.
54. *CS*, 303.
55. *MM*, 455, 468.
56. *Ibid.*, 456.
57. *Ibid.*, 461.
58. *Ibid.*, 458; *GMM*, 83.
59. *GMM*, 100.
60. *CS*, 295.
61. *GMM*, 64.
62. *Ibid.*, 65; *CS*, 295; *MM*, 458.
63. *MM*, 587.
64. *Ibid.*, 482.
65. Kleingeld, "Kant's Cosmopolitan Patriotism," 313.
66. *MM*, 460.
67. *CS*, 291.