SOLIDARITY AND SOCIAL MORAL RULES

Abstract

The value of solidarity, which is exemplified in noble groups like the Civil Rights Movement along with more mundane teams, families and marriages, is distinctive in part because people are in solidarity over, for or with regard to something, such as common sympathies, interests, values, etc. I use this special feature of solidarity to resolve a longstanding puzzle about enacted social moral rules, which is, aren’t these things just heuristics, rules of thumb or means of coordination that we ‘fetishize’ or ‘worship’ if we stubbornly insist on sticking to them when we can do more good by breaking them? I argue that when we are in a certain kind of solidarity with others, united by social moral rules that we have established among ourselves, the rules we have developed and maintain are a constitutive part of our solidary relationships with one another; and it is part of being in this sort of solidarity with our comrades that we are presumptively required to follow the social moral rules that join us together. Those in the Polish Revolution, for example, were bound by informally enforced rules about publicity, free speech and the use of violence, so following their own rules became a way of standing in a valuable sort of solidarity with one another. I explain why we can have non-instrumental reasons to follow the social moral rules that exist in our own society, improve our rules and even sometimes to break the otherwise good rules that help to unite us.

When we have established among ourselves what might be called social moral rules, which are informally established and socially enforced standards that members of a group generally treat as properly regulating their conduct, what kinds of reasons (if any) do we as members of the group have to follow them? A natural response is that maintaining and enforcing social moral rules can help us, individually or as a group, to stay connected, survive in a dangerous environment, garner a valuable reputation, or bring about shared ends. This explanation, I argue, does not do full justice to the value of existing social moral rules and the non-instrumental reasons such rules can provide.
One way of putting my question is: Are the prevailing social moral rules of a group – or, more specifically, the complicated complex of attitudes, dispositions and actions in virtue of which social moral rules exist in a group – valuable for their own sake, apart from any instrumental value there may be in having those rules; and if the social moral rules that exist in a group are valuable in this non-instrumental way, do they give us non-instrumental reasons to follow the prevailing rules? It may seem strange to talk about the value of rules, but doing reminds us that the rules at issue exist in the real world, in our clubs, professions and societies, and these socially enacted rules have often been regarded as mere means of social control, whereas I aim to show that they can have a more central and basic role to play in our moral lives.

The utilitarian tradition has been at the forefront of discussions about the nature and value of prevailing social moral rules. History has shown, Mill thought, that the existence of certain commonly affirmed, but not necessarily legally codified, social moral rules about theft, promising, beneficence, etc. are essential for us to enjoy even a minimally decent standard of living.\(^1\) There is little doubt that a moral code can be instrumentally valuable but is this the only sort of value it can have? Act-utilitarians tend to think so. For them, when social moral rules exist, they are at best just heuristics, rules of thumb, means of coordination or tools of social control that can for the most part cause us to act better than we otherwise would. Many of us

strongly resist the implication, however, that commonly accepted social moral rules about lying and torture, for instance, must be broken, perhaps even secretly, every time this would produce slightly more good overall. Those who nonetheless favor sticking to the rules, however, are accused of ‘fetishizing’ or ‘worshiping’ rules because they leave unexplained why we should always comply with the rules even if it makes sense for our group in general to maintain and support them.²

² The problem of ‘rule-worship’ was forcefully pressed against rule-utilitarianism by Smart, J. J. C. and Williams, Bernard Arthur Owen (1973), Utilitarianism; for and against (Cambridge [Eng.]: University Press). The more general puzzle, of why (if at all) we should follow an otherwise good rule when the reasons for having the rule do not obtain in a particular occasion, persists in contemporary discussions, including Gaus, Gerald F. (2011), The order of public reason (New York: Cambridge University Press); Marmor, Andrei (2009), Social conventions (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press); Raz, Joseph (1990), Practical reason and norms (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press); Raz, Joseph (2001), 'Reasoning with Rules', Current Legal Problems, 54, 1-18; Raz, Joseph (2005), The practice of value (Rev. edn., The Berkeley Tanner lectures; Oxford: Oxford University Press); Regan, Donald (1987), 'Law's Halo', in Jules L. Coleman and Ellen Frankel Paul (eds.), Philosophy and law (Oxford Oxfordshire ; New York: Basil Blackwell for the Social Philosophy and Policy Center); Schauer, Frederick F. (1991), Playing by the rules (Oxford: Oxford University Press). A common element among their worked-out proposals (with the exception of Marmor) is that the reasons we have to follow the rules as such are all instrumental, either to our own wellbeing (following the rules as such allows us to avoid sanctions of various kinds), or to morally good ends (following
One of my aims is to offer a new and non-consequentialist account of the value of having and following social moral rules, one that explains why we should sometimes follow prevailing, but perhaps defective, rules independent of the instrumental benefits there may be in doing so.

My account can be summarized in this way. When we are in a certain kind of solidarity with others, united by social moral rules that we have established among ourselves, the rules we have developed and maintain are a constitutive part of our solidary relationships with one another; and it is part of being in this sort of solidarity with our comrades that we are

the rules as such improves coordination, the stability of the rules, the likelihood that we will make better decisions quickly with less error than if we had considered the matter anew, etc.). The trouble, as I point out, is that this entire class of instrumental reasons cannot, strictly speaking, solve the puzzle – they are the wrong kinds of reasons – for there is always the possibility of a case in which following an otherwise good rule brings no instrumental good at all (I could break the rule secretly, forget I had done so, etc.), leaving us to wonder why on such occasions we should still follow the rule as such. Perhaps we shouldn’t, but it is important to ask this question, for it bears directly on how we understand the relative moral status of rules, whether we see them as mere means of social control or as something more morally basic and important. If we are to explain why the existence of a rule sometimes gives us a reason to comply with it even when there is no instrumental benefit in our doing so, we must supply a different and non-instrumental kind of reason for following rules as such, of the sort briefly suggested by Schauer (p. 162-3), discussed in general terms by Marmor (p. 144-54), but different from Raz’s exclusionary reasons, which are reasons to believe or take oneself to have reasons to follow the rules but are not reasons actually to follow the rules themselves.
presumptively required to follow the social moral rules that join us together. This kind of solidarity, in which we are bound together by social moral rules, is widespread and often valuable for its own sake quite apart from any propensity to bring about other good ends. It follows that the social moral rules that hold us in solidarity are often valuable for their own sake as well or, more precisely, they are non-derivatively valuable in virtue of being a constitutive part of a relationship that is valuable as an end. And, when social moral rules exist and play an essential role in constituting the intrinsically valuable solidarity of a group, we have non-

instrumental reasons to follow the rules because doing so is often a way of manifesting or expressing these valuable relationships by living up to their requirements. Breaking the rules can be a way of betraying or letting down our compatriots.

I will proceed as follows. In the first section, I discuss in more detail the nature of social moral rules and distinguish them from habits, customs, rules of etiquette, conventions, laws and abstract moral principles. Then, in the second section, I describe solidarity in a way that shows it to be valuable for its own sake, at least in some contexts. I continue my discussion of the value of solidarity in section three by arguing that it is valuable as an end but not in all circumstances – the solidarity among the Nazi’s was not, I claim, valuable for its own sake, but there may be some redeeming value in the solidarity of certain less defective but still imperfect teams, marriages, armies, societies, etc. In section four I explain how relationships of solidarity can be partially constituted by the prevailing social moral rules of a group. I then argue in sections five and six that when social moral rules play this constitutive role in uniting a group in intrinsically valuable relationships of solidarity, such rules (even when they are somewhat defective) are valuable for their own sake and members of the group have non-instrumental reasons to follow them, improve their shared rules, and sometimes even to break the otherwise good rules that unite them.

1. Social moral rules

Mill famously said that we “do not call anything wrong, unless we mean to imply that a person ought to be punished in some way or other for doing it; if not by law, by the opinion of his fellow-creatures; if not by opinion, by the reproaches of his own conscience” (my emphasis).4

4 Mill, Utilitarianism, 5.12
Here are a few more examples the sorts of things I want to talk about, which fall somewhere in between laws and traits of character. Our society accepts social moral rules about giving up bus seats to elderly people or those with disabilities; people who choose to smoke around children are often met with scowls; journalists have an unwritten rule about protecting confidential sources; and police officers generally recognize the “Blue Wall of Silence” not to report the errors, infractions or crimes of one another.⁵

Drawing on similar accounts of social moral rules offered by H.L.A. Hart, Kurt Baier, Richard Brandt and John Rawls, I suppose that, paradigmatically, social moral rules exist in a group when:⁶ (a) the rules are widely accepted as social moral rules in a way that I explain shortly and (b) are generally complied with; (c) the rules are not created by anyone in particular,

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and no one has the special authority to modify or destroy them; (d) the rules are socially enforced in an informal way, which means that social enforcement occurs through the use of unorganized social pressures such as gossip, mockery and shunning rather than by formal institutions having been specifically assigned that task; and (f) it is widely known in the group that these conditions are met.

Someone accepts the social moral rule ‘respect others’, for example, as a social moral rule if she believes (perhaps implicitly) that everyone in her group has good moral reasons to respect others and she is disposed, in light of her belief, to use that rule in her practical deliberations, to feel guilt if she disrespects someone, to condemn, resent and socially pressure others who do so, and to form favorable attitudes towards people who respect each other. In other words, it’s not just that she and the other member of the group happens to converge on a personal rule about respecting others; instead, she sees the rule as appropriately regulating the conduct of the group, not just herself.

7 The rules may conceivably be created by one person, but only indirectly, as when a cult leader proclaims some dress code and his followers obey. But this is not a paradigmatic example of how such rules come to exist.

8 This account of what it is to accept a rule, which I mostly take from H.L.A. Hart, does have the puzzling feature that someone can believe, for example, that those in the church must take off their hats without ever calling that belief to mind, saying it out-loud, etc. But, on reflection, I think this is true for many of our beliefs – someone can, it seems, implicitly believe that the number of planets in our solar system is less than 10, less than 11, less than 19,213 without these beliefs being before our minds. What implicit belief is more exactly, I’m not sure, but perhaps in
Anthropological evidence suggests that the moral codes of most societies have a morally laudable core, which is the part of their code that they are most deeply committed to— it is generally against the prevailing rules of any society, for example, to kill another member of the group intentionally for personal gain without provocation when reasonably favorable conditions obtain, and this part of most any code is not likely to be abandoned easily. One reason for this is that it is very unlikely that a group can genuinely and sincerely believe that they have good moral reasons to follow rules that require or permit those acts of rape, torture, intentional killing, etc. that are profoundly immoral, reprehensible and unjustified. This leaves ample room, however, for stifling, exclusionary, and otherwise imperfect social moral rules that nonetheless manage to forbid acts that are most obviously wrong. Prevailing social moral rules will still vary greatly with regard to what (if any) exceptions they allow general prohibitions on killing, lying, etc., how their most general and widely-applicable social moral rules are to be the case of wearing hats in church, we could say that the person in question would believe the rule authoritative if it were presented to him in the right circumstances (he read it in the by-laws, for example) and also conclude from the way he sneers at those who break the rule, asks them to remove their caps and removes his own, that the best explanation of these actions and attitudes, and maybe the only way to make what he does understandable to us, is to ascribe to him a tacit belief that hats must not be worn in the church.

interpreted and implemented in concrete situations and what non-basic social moral rules they allow for particular groups or restricted areas of life.

It may be helpful to clarify this paradigm by contrasting it with some other things, while keeping in mind possible overlaps in their content. First, shared habits, behavioral regularities, fads and other normal or typical behaviors of a group exist in virtue of being generally complied with, whereas social moral rules must also be generally accepted. Second, social moral rules are a subset of social rules, which include conventional and more or less arbitrary rules of politeness and etiquette. In order for social moral rules to exist, there must be the widespread belief that everyone has good moral reasons to follow them along with corresponding dispositions to have certain appropriate moral emotions when these rules are followed or broken by oneself or others. Third, constitutive or practice-based rules are ones that make up a practice by defining certain actions, offices, moves, and excuses.¹⁰ Constitutive rules can be social moral rules – perhaps those governing promising and marriage are examples – but they need not be, such as constitutive rules of certain games. Fourth, a social convention, in the typical way it is understood by philosophers, is basically a pattern of mutually beneficial, self-enforcing behavior that is normally exhibited by a group of people who do their part in the pattern because they believe it to be in their interests to do so and they expect most everyone to conform to it as

¹⁰ Rawls, Two Concepts of Rules, op. cit. Compare ‘bunting’ or ‘breaking a promise’, which presuppose the existence of rules, and ‘swinging an oddly shaped stick’ and ‘killing someone’ which do not.
Even though social conventions and social moral rules share certain similarities, they differ in the following ways: (a) accepting a social moral rule involves having certain moral beliefs and attitudes whereas someone in the grip of a social convention can regard his participation in it as just a matter of prudence; (b) an existing social moral rule may not be mutually beneficial or self-reinforcing in the way that social conventions are; and (c) social moral rules are socially enforced whereas social conventions can be stabilized in other ways.\(^\text{12}\) Fifth, *positive laws* are created, changed, annulled and enforced by formal institutions whereas social moral rules depend for their existence on being widely accepted, complied with, socially enforced and so on. Finally, accepting a social moral rule is often thought to be different from simply acting on one’s moral beliefs, for it seems that someone can genuinely believe that some act is wrong but have no disposition to blame, punish or socially pressure others who do it.\(^\text{13}\)


\(^{12}\) Social conventions are by their nature such that among the reasons for accepting them are that the others do so as well – if most others began to accept a different social convention about right of way then my reasons for holding to the first convention would be greatly diminished. Some conventions, such as those about promising or property, are also social moral rules, but not all social moral rules are conventions because our grounds for accepting a social moral rule may have nothing to do with whether others accept them as well.

\(^{13}\) A different, and not implausible, view would be that accepting a moral rule forbidding x is the same as genuinely believing that x is wrong.
When social moral rules exist, we can ask what sort of value, if any, they have – what sorts of reasons do members have to maintain, support, and follow them? Here is a brief survey of a few of the ways to think about the value of existing social moral rules.

One is to deny that social moral rules, when they exist, have any value. Rules of that sort, it may be argued, are merely part of the morally neutral background norms and understandings against which a moral agent in our world must act. Good moral judgment requires thinking and deciding for ourselves on the basis of the particularities of the individual cases we face. Because of vast moral complexity, it is impossible to codify a simple set of moral principles or to formulate a reasonably accurate and useful decision procedure for ethics. Indeed, preoccupation with principles and rules, it is sometimes thought, can even distort our moral judgments by obscuring morally relevant features of a situation and encouraging rigidity in our moral thinking, leading us to stick to the rules in cases in which we should not do so.

Another possibility is that social moral rules can be valuable, but only instrumentally, as heuristics, rules of thumb or means of coordination. Given certain persistent features of human

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15 Virtue ethicists and particularists, however, may admit that, like laws, social moral rules can be useful social devices.
nature, particularly our susceptibility to social pressures of various kinds, establishing and maintaining rules that we socially enforce in each other can have tremendous instrumental value in helping us, for example, to coordinate our behavior, give and receive assurances, etc. On this conception of social moral rules, the existence of the rules can only give us instrumental reasons to follow them. Sometimes we have good reason to follow the rules when they are serving a useful social role and when doing otherwise would risk undermining general confidence in them; at other times the strong social reprisals we would face for breaking the rules gives us sufficient reason to do what they require. The general hunch, however, is that social moral rules are of secondary importance because they are just another means of social control that can encourage, prod, guide and goad us into acting as we should.

Rule-utilitarians have developed and emphasized some very good ideas about the nature and function of social moral rules. On their basic view, (1) the fundamental moral value is welfare, which is the sort of thing that is to be promoted; (2) welfare is the only basic moral value; and (3) the justification of every action depends on its being in accordance with the social moral rules that, if they were generally accepted, would maximize overall welfare. Rule-utilitarians appeal to aggregate wellbeing as a common currency for evaluating social moral rules and for resolving potential conflicts among them – one rule is better than another, they think, if general acceptance of the one would produce more overall utility than would general acceptance of the other. They conceive of morality exclusively in terms of rules and leave largely unexplained why we should comply with rules when we can produce more good otherwise.

There is much to learn from these views about the limits of rules, the need for good moral judgment when applying them, the significant instrumental value they can have when they exist, and the kinds of social roles they can play, but I will now try to show that none of them offers a
complete explanation of the value that social moral rules can have when they exist and of the types of reasons we can have to follow them.

2. Solidarity

Solidarity, in general, is a matter of a group of people being united or at one with regard to something (sympathies, interests, values, etc.), having genuine concern for each other’s welfare, respecting others as group members, trusting one another not to intentionally undermine or free ride on the group, taking pride in the group as a whole, being ashamed of its failures and suffering loss or betrayal if members of the group do not live up to the requirements that the group places on itself, and perhaps having certain other affections for one’s compatriots.\(^\text{16}\)

\(^{16}\) The general account draws from Feinberg, op. cit., 234-6, Ronald Dworkin’s discussion of what he calls ‘true communities’, op. cit., chapter 6 and Émile Durkheim’s, op. cit., discussion of solidarity. One might wonder whether solidarity is the sort of relationship that can be analyzed into constituent parts and, if it can, whether it should be regarded as primarily or exclusively an emotional or affective sort of relationship. I think there are severe limits to how far a philosophical analysis of solidarity can go. For one thing, I argue that solidarity cannot be reduced to mere pleasure or happiness. Instead, solidarity is an extremely complicated complex of dispositions, beliefs, and emotions. The boundaries between various components are also overlapping and vague; emotions themselves are notoriously difficult to understand; and there are interactions among the parts that a philosophical analysis must take account of. But, keeping these limits in mind, it is worth asking what is distinctive about solidarity and exploring how relationships of solidarity differ from other relationships, such as those between friends, parents and children, co-workers, etc. My approach, of relying on paradigmatic examples of solidarity,
One of the distinguishing features of solidarity, at least in its paradigmatic form, is that people are in solidarity over, for or with respect to something. For instance, we can be in solidarity over a shared loss, such as when a child falls down a well or Martin Luther King, Jr. was killed, or in solidarity with respect to common oppression or suffering, as exemplified by African American slaves and soldiers in times of war. We may be in solidarity with those in our family or ethnic group; or in solidarity over religious beliefs. Solidarity can be a matter of sharing certain goals with others, such as fighting breast cancer; we can be united in solidarity by cooperative activities, as sometimes happens in amateur orchestra; or we can be united with others by religious beliefs or rituals. In practice, however, there are usually overlaps among these different ways of being in solidarity – the recent “Jasmine Revolution” in Egypt involved counteracts the tendency to reduce and simplify phenomena. While I do not attempt a full account of solidarity, my emphasis is on one of its characteristic features, which is that we are in solidarity with regard to something (shared oppression, common causes, and, I argue later, shared moral rules).

17 For a wonderful discussion of solidarity among African Americans, see Tommie Shelby’s book, op. cit.

18 See, for example, Fraser, George MacDonald (1993), *Quartered Safe out Here: A Recollection of the War in Burma* (London: Harvill).


20 Durkheim, op. cit., 59.
shared ends and projects along with elements of religious affiliation, ethnic identity, and common oppression.

Being united with others in these ways provides the basis for the formation of the solidary bonds that I just described, which involves respecting one another as group members, caring about each other’s wellbeing, taking pride in the group and so on. These relationships are not just seen by participants as instrumental to individual goals or as mere means to common ends. Rather, members of the group regard their relationships as valuable in themselves, and when this is widely known, it provides further support to the cohesion of the group. They take themselves as having reasons to be loyal to others in the group, trust them, care about them, etc. Over time, members may even begin to identify themselves with the group, seeing its aims along with their joint projects and the corresponding relationships as part of who they are as persons.\textsuperscript{21}

Ties of solidarity can be powerful motivators. Members are strongly inclined to live up to the expectations of others, avoid betraying them, letting them down or losing their trust, and otherwise supporting and maintaining the valued bonds that exist among them. Solidarity can be intentionally undermined when these relationships are targeted. This can happen when someone tries to engender intra-group conflict by playing on individual interests, regional conflicts and sub-group affinities to lead people to focus on differences among themselves rather than their shared aspirations, activities, religious beliefs, etc.

\textsuperscript{21} Reflecting on the nature of our solidary relationships from the inside can strengthen these bonds, cement their value to us, expand our self-understanding once we find that our solidarity with various groups is indeed part of who we are, and explain why we are often moved as much by our brothers and sisters in arms as we are by the cause that unites us.
In order to explain and exhibit the nature and value of solidarity more fully, I want to highlight one particularly worthwhile sort of solidarity in which people are united both by *shared ends* and *cooperative activities* in support of those ends. Consider some examples.

First, on August 14, 1980 workers at the Lenin Shipyard in Gdańsk, Poland called a peaceful occupation strike, demanding that the communist government there provide guarantees of freedom of the press, freedom of speech, freedom of worship, the right to organize and maintain trade unions, and better working conditions.Soon thereafter delegates from strike committees at 200 or so other factories, mines and shipyards across Poland, along with members of the intelligencia and the Catholic Church, began arriving at the Lenin Shipyard ready to offer their support. After securing substantial concessions from the government that ended the strike, these groups quickly organized themselves into *Solidarność*, or Solidarity, which became a nationwide labor union of 9 to 10 million members. Solidarity employed highly coordinated tactics such as general strikes, worker slow-downs, and hunger marches in support of the shared values that bound its members together. As one observer wrote: "What we had in mind were not only bread, butter and sausage but also justice, democracy, truth, legality, human dignity, freedom of convictions, and the repair of the republic." He continues that the ‘‘intense unity of thought and feeling which previously had been confined to small circles of friends – the intimate solidarity of private life in Eastern Europe – was now multiplied by millions’.  


23 Garton Ash, op. cit., 32.
Second, many Jews had a special bond with African Americans who were fighting against the oppression of the Jim Crow South.\textsuperscript{24} As active participants in the Civil Rights Movement, many Jews engaged in marches, Freedom Rides, boycotts, sit-ins and legal actions alongside African Americans. These people were moved in part by analogies they saw between the treatment of African Americans and the German persecution of Jews. As one person put it: “I felt that the most important thing that I could do is to work in the Black movement. If anything happened, then somebody didn’t have to say to me, what did you do?”\textsuperscript{25}

Third, for as long as anyone can remember, the town of Odessa, in West Texas, has been fiercely devoted to its Permian High School football program.\textsuperscript{26} Children are raised admiring the Panthers, as many as twenty thousand fans from a wide variety of backgrounds attend home games, a great many of them travel with the team and regularly attend practices, the booster club organizes very successful fundraising events and is the largest social club in town, Panther apparel is widely worn and their symbols are commonly displayed by local businesses, the marching band, cheerleading squad and dance team are first rate, coaches and trainers relentlessly strategize and prepare for opponents and the players themselves devote extraordinary time and effort to workouts, practices and games. As one fan describes the pride the town takes in its football team and the meaning it has for their way of life: “There is nothing to replace it.


\textsuperscript{25} Schultz, op. cit., 24.

\textsuperscript{26} \textit{See Bissinger, H. G. (2004), Friday Night Lights: A Town, a Team, and a Dream} (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press).
It’s an integral part of what made the community strong. You take it away and it’s almost like you strip the identity of the people.”

These examples are very complicated, but they are real-world scenarios in which, it seems, valuable relationships of solidarity formed among people from a diverse range of religious, ethnic and cultural backgrounds who we may not otherwise think of as being united or at one with one another. When we reflect on what is valuable in the examples, then, part of the answer is that they involve relationships of solidarity among members of a group of people who are cooperating together in support of shared ends and valuing for their own sake the solidarity relationships that form on this basis.

The shared ends that can unite people in solidarity are their values, ideals, aspirations and the like, although these things need not actually be valuable – while the aspirations of the Polish Revolution and the Civil Rights Movement were certainly worthwhile, the shared goal of high-school football success is arguably not all that valuable, at least for its own sake. The ends are shared because there is public knowledge in the group that they are generally affirmed, and the group generally takes responsibility for these ends by taking them on as their own and as worthy of their respect and support.

Bissinger, op. cit., 24. One might wonder whether the Permian Panthers and their fans really care about one another’s wellbeing for its own sake. Although I do not know all of the historical details, I think it is likely that they did, and exhibited this with such things as: food drives for members of the group who are in need, Habitat for Humanity builds for them by fans, players and coaches, outpouring of support for members of the “Panther-nation” who are deployed by the military, diagnosed with cancer, or need money to attend a prestigious college, etc.
The cooperative activities undertaken in support of those ends may involve taking steps to promote them, manifesting and showing respect for them, interpreting them in action, honoring them or participating in them. The joint-projects of the group are not just seen as ways of coordinating their behavior; rather, those involved in cooperative activities do so freely, on mutually agreeable terms, and each enjoys a basic moral standing – none of them is treated as a slave, animal, or mere tool, for example, and the group gives some priority to each of their interests and concerns.

The cooperative activities of the group can be quite organized and structured, or relatively informal. The particular roles that group members play can vary widely, with some of them actively engaged “on the front lines”, others supporting their efforts, while still others using symbolic gestures or protests to express their support for the cause. We may not even know or meet the people with whom we are cooperating, and some of the details of our joint-projects may be hidden from us, but in general the group knows that they are working with others and know in broad outline the nature of the cooperative activities in which they are taking part. This is true even when the larger project is carried out by a series of interlocking subgroups, who may have their own bonds of cooperative solidarity in addition to the ones that bind everyone as a whole. We may also be engaged in cross-time projects involving the efforts of those in the past and the future. Cooperating with these people in on-going endeavors involves, for example, trying to respect their wishes, show gratitude for their sacrifices, refrain from belittling their accomplishments, and so on. The various parts of a joint project of this sort may not be perfectly integrated, but those in the group know that they are all part of a larger pursuit in support of their common aims.
These three things – cooperation, shared ends, and solidarity – are clearly very different from one another and each can occur without the others, but my suggestion is that when they exist together in the way my examples highlight, when what unites us in solidarity is not just our culture, religion or history but our organized activities in support of our shared ends, the result can be an extremely valuable sort of solidarity. The sort of solidarity I am now emphasizing is an “organic unity” in the sense that the non-instrumental value of the whole is not equal to the sum of the non-instrumental value of the parts. From a commonsense perspective, there is often an exponential progression of value in the following: An individual by herself promotes, manifests or otherwise supports her ends; a group of individuals coordinates their activities so as to support their common ends more effectively; these people freely choose to cooperate together in support of shared ends on the basis of mutually agreeable terms that afford everyone a basic moral standing; they come to value for their own sake the relationships of mutual concern, reciprocity, pride, loyalty and trust that form on the basis of cooperating with one another in these ways; and the ends that they are supporting together are themselves morally valuable. Odessa was galvanized by their collective support for the Permian football team, but these relationships of solidarity appear to be valuable even though their shared ends were arguably not moral ones. The coordinated efforts of those in the Polish Revolution and the Civil Rights Movement were enormously valuable in their own right because of the way they promoted and manifested laudable ends, but it seems even more worthwhile that these people were also cooperating together on mutually agreeable terms and forming lasting bonds with one another.

\[28\] See Moore, op. cit., 27-28, 96.
that were based in their shared vision for a better world and their desire to take concrete steps
together in support of it.

3. More on the value of solidarity

I have tried to describe solidarity in a way that exhibits the sort of value it is, in much the
way that one could argue for the value of friendship by giving detailed examples of such
relationships that most of us would, on reflection, recognize as intrinsically valuable.

In this section I continue my investigation of the value of solidarity by examining its
structure – (1) is solidarity merely an instrumental good or is it also good as an end? And (2) If it
is good as an end, is it always so?

(1) Merely instrumental or good as an end? One might think that solidarity is merely
instrumental for promoting other valuable ends. There is nothing worthwhile about solidarity for
its own sake, on this view, but given our social conditions and psychology, such relationships
may useful for bringing about laudable aims and purposes. The solidary relationships of those in
the Polish Revolution, for example, moved them to undertake greater personal risk then they may
have been willing to accept otherwise, so those relationships helped them to achieve their shared
moral ends more effectively.

The instrumental value of solidarity should not be underestimated, but there are good
reasons to think that this cannot explain all that is worthwhile about it. First, from a
commonsense perspective, solidarity can be valuable when it involves acting in ways that do

My account, as far as possible, is meant to be agnostic about metaethical questions concerning
the ultimate grounds of moral value, and in particular whether values are, for example, natural or
non-natural.
little or nothing to promote or bring about good ends. The Polish Revolution may have been more successful at achieving some of its goals if it had empowered a strong executive to make decisions for the group, but many of us respect them for mostly resisting this temptation and generally conducting themselves on the basis of their liberal and democratic ideals out of their sense of solidarity with one another. And flying flags and wearing buttons and armbands probably had very little impact on the overall success of the Polish Revolution, so part of what explains why we think these practices were worthwhile is the value of standing in solidarity by showing solidarity, whether or not there is any instrumental benefit in doing so. Secondly, we can imagine cases in which solidary relationships are counter-productive but still seem valuable. There was a time in the Polish Revolution in which it seemed likely that the Soviet Army would have invaded Poland if the Solidarity trade union had not disbanded and ceased their cooperative activities. Luckily this did not happen, but there would have been something admirable, I think, if the union members had chosen to stand their ground out of a sense of solidarity with one another in the face of impending doom for themselves and their hope for a democratic Poland. Finally, the instrumentalist view fails to explain the ways that the people in solidarity see the value of their own joint-projects and mutual relationships. From their perspectives, these things are valued for their own sake and not just as means to anything else, whereas the instrumental account denies this, regarding their attitudes as mistaken but perhaps useful. When we take ourselves to be fighting for worthy social causes or supporting common ends, for example, it may seem that the relationships we form are secondary to the good we are doing or goals we are achieving. However, what we most value about these activities may not be apparent to us ‘in the moment’. After some deep reflection, however, we may find that what we valued most was the cooperative solidarity we enjoyed with our brothers and sisters who were working alongside us,
which may be revealed in the sacrifices we were willing to make, our feelings of guilt and shame and how we choose to remember our experiences and recount them to others.

(2) Good in all circumstances or not? If solidarity is good as an end, a natural next question is whether those who are united by repugnant ends, immoral cooperative activities, oppressive religious views, etc. can stand in solidarity and, if they can, whether their relationships are valuable in the same way as those of the Polish Revolution or the Civil Rights Movement. In other words, what about the Nazi’s? There are several ways one might try to handle this concern – we might hold that the Nazi’s were indeed in solidarity and so had some reason to be loyal to one another but any value these relationships may have had is overwhelmingly counterbalanced by the evils they involved; we might build in more moral content into the notion of solidarity by requiring, for instance, that what unites the group must be morally valuable or at least permissible, which would disqualify the Nazi’s from standing in solidarity; or perhaps the Nazi’s did indeed stand in solidarity, it’s just that the intrinsic value of solidarity is conditional on the group being united by morally valuable or permissible ends, projects, etc. My view is that there is no easy and general answer to these questions. Rather, we should draw on some themes from traditional virtue ethics, Kant and Moore (specifically his idea of organic unities) and say that solidarity is valuable for its own sake but only conditionally so, but the conditions under which it is valuable depend on how solidarity fits together with other moral values. Ultimately what will determine the value of solidarity (if any) as exhibited, for instance, by the Nazi’s or in less extreme cases such as those who are united against school bussing or by the exclusionary scientific community of the 1800’s, is how widely shared and mid-level moral values of freedom, equality, respect, solidarity and the like are collectively and correctly interpreted, rendered determinate and applied to our social circumstances.
4. Social moral rules as constituent parts of cooperative solidarity

So far I have described the nature of social moral rules, given an account of solidarity and argued that solidarity is often valuable as an end. Now I want to return to my original question, which was about the sort of value existing social moral rules can have and the reasons they can provide, and try to answer it by examining some possible connections between solidarity and social moral rules. My view is that when our group is in a valuable sort of solidarity, and our social moral rules are a constitutive part those relationships, then our rules are valuable for their own sake and give us new (but potentially defeasible) reasons to do what the rules require.

When people stand in cooperative solidarity with one another other, they often settle on a set of social moral rules to regulate their behavior. The Permian Panthers and their fans, for example, developed informal rules of conduct against betraying or deserting the group, fighting among themselves and cheating; and those who break these rules face harsh criticism, resentment and perhaps ostracism. Similarly, from its inception, the Polish Revolution was fiercely public, non-violent, democratic and egalitarian. They had well-established and socially enforced rules that said, for instance, that negotiations with the government must be broadcast widely, everyone has the right to challenge, discuss and vote on all aspects of the group’s operations, violence is strictly prohibited, and everyone in the group must receive the same basic benefits from any deals with the government.30 Some of these rules were eventually codified into union regulations and formal structures were established to enforce them and to adjudicate disputes, but throughout its history, Solidarity has depended on organic, informal maintenance and execution of these main rules. Those in the Civil Rights Movement had, in addition to some of the ones

30 Garton Ash, op. cit., Chapter 1.
already mentioned, social moral rules reserving leadership roles for African Americans and forbidding white members from being complicit in racist practices. Members of solidary religious groups may establish *rituals* of various kinds that are accepted as morally binding.\(^{31}\) Families like mine have social moral rules about eating brunch on Sundays. And nationalistic groups who are in solidarity can have rules about proper social punishment for betraying or deserting the group, and rules about who counts as a member and who does not.

What role (if any) might the prevailing social moral rules of a group play in relationships of cooperative solidarity? One possibility is that the role of such rules is purely instrumental. Groups that have and enforce social moral rules are generally better at achieving their common ends than those that do not because, for instance, the rules help the group coordinate its efforts more effectively and the rules protect, reinforce and promote bonds of solidarity by diminishing behaviors that would tend to break-up or undermine the group. This is probably how some social moral rules begin in a group, particularly as the size of the group increases and it becomes more difficult to maintain the unity of thought, feeling, action, etc. that is characteristic of solidarity. A group may develop social moral rules that are meant to standardize the activities of the group, minimize variation on certain group matters, provide an easy and public way for members to recognize who the other members are and how committed they are to the group, and so on. Using social moral rules in these instrumental ways can help to support and maintain the solidary bonds of the group even though the rules themselves may not be, at least initially, part of what holds the group in solidarity. An analogy is with some distant friendships, in which we

and our friend may develop rules about correspondence even though we both recognize that accepting and enforcing such rules is merely a good means of staying in touch. But, over time, our rule may take on a new role – it may become a *constitutive part* of our friendship itself, a key element in the sort of friendship we have developed, so that following our rule about checking in every few months becomes a way of manifesting or living out the sort of friendly relationship we have. The same sort of phenomenon, I think, can occur in relationships of solidarity.

Social moral rules can be useful for a solidary group in many ways, but they can also become *constituent parts* of the cooperative solidarity of the group as well. Establishing, maintaining and following these rules can become an *essential component* of the cooperative activities that hold some groups in solidarity. For example, those in the Polish Revolution were strongly committed to ideals of democracy and freedom, and they demonstrated their respect for these values by organizing their joint activities around social moral rules requiring majority rule and publicity on important union matters. These rules were not just means to other good ends, they were part of the cooperative activities that united the group in solidarity. Sometimes social moral rules can be an *essential part* of the shared ideals that unite a group in solidarity. Those in the Civil Rights Movement partially saw themselves as fighting for a better social world, and one aspect of their ideal was a society in which the informal social moral rules were free from racism and prejudice. Social moral rules can be part of the programme of a group – the specific cooperative activities they are employing in support of their shared aims – but they can also be part of its platform – the more abstract values and objectives that they are working for together.

In sum, when a group has united in solidarity by a set of social moral rules that they have instituted among themselves, the rules often come to play a distinctive social role in the group by figuring in the requirements of what it takes to stand in solidarity with one’s comrades.
5. Social moral rules are valuable for their own sake

Given that social moral rules can be a constitutive part of worthwhile solidary relationships, we can now ask what conclusions to draw about the value of existing social moral rules and the reasons we have to follow them.

Consider Aristotle, who thinks that the highest good for human beings, that of ‘happiness’ or *eudaimonia*, is living a life of rational activity in accordance with the virtues.\(^{32}\) Happiness is taken to be the only good that is desirable for its own sake and nothing else; all other goods are desirable for its.\(^{33}\) However, Aristotle defines a third class of goods, the virtues, which are desirable *both* for the sake of happiness and for their own sake.\(^{34}\) Aristotle wonders how there can be goods of this latter sort if happiness is defined as the final, self-sufficient and most complete end. His elegant solution to this puzzle is instructive for how to understand the value of social moral rules. Exercising the virtue of particular justice (e.g. fulfilling promises, repaying debts, etc.) and not seizing what belongs to others (their property, office, etc.)\(^{35}\) is a virtue that stands alongside temperance, courage, etc. For Aristotle, this virtue is often desirable


\(^{33}\) *NE* I.7.1097b21–3

\(^{34}\) *NE* I.13.1102a5–7

\(^{35}\) *NE* X.8.1178a9; VI.13.1144b14-29; X.7.1177a13-19. At *NE* V.1-2.1129b—1130b5 Aristotle distinguishes between these two forms of justice.
as a means to happiness, but being disposed to think, feel and act justly is also desirable for its own sake in virtue of contributing to happiness (at least of the second best sort) in the sense that this kind of happiness partially consists in having the virtue of particular justice.

When it comes to the value of existing social moral rules, there are other ways for a group to be in solidarity that involve different types of rules or perhaps no rules at all. My suggestion, however, is that when a group is in a valuable sort of solidarity and its social moral rules are an essential part of that relationship then the rules of the group are valuable for their own sake in virtue of the role they play in unifying the group in a relationship that is valuable as an end.

6. Reasons grounded in solidarity

If the prevailing social moral rules of a group are valuable in virtue of the constitutive role they play in uniting them in solidarity, what (if any) reasons do the rules provide to the members of the group? Someone may recognize the intrinsic value of his group’s solidarity and the rules that partially constitute it but still wonder what he should do with regard to the rules – must he always follow them, should he publicly support the rules, refrain from undermining them, sometimes break the rules when he can get away with it? What if he recognizes that some of his group’s rules are stifling, inefficient, exclusionary or otherwise defective?

When social moral rules exist and play an essential role in the solidarity of a group, we typically have non-instrumental reasons to follow those rules because doing so is a way of manifesting or expressing these valuable relationships by living up to their requirements. Breaking the rules that hold us together can be a way of betraying or letting down our compatriots.
To explain, let’s look again at what sort of value solidarity is and in particular ask what sorts of reasons it provides. One possibility is that solidarity is valuable for its own sake, but merely in the limited teleological sense that the only reasons it gives have to do with bringing about more and better relationships of that sort, whether we are a party to them ourselves or not. We may need to follow our group’s shared rules as a means of keeping us united, expanding our membership, and setting a good example to entice other groups to form such bonds, but we can just as easily break our rules as long as we would bring about more cooperative solidarity as a result.

This teleological conception, however, fails to capture the sorts of reasons that we think, on reflection, solidarity can provide. When we are in solidarity ourselves, part of our concern may be to expand our group or help other groups unite in worthwhile ways, but what is much more important to those who are in solidarity is that they and others manifest or live out their valuable relationship by complying with the demands it places on them – they are disposed to do such things as care about the wellbeing of their comrades, trust them and work diligently for their common cause if they have one. Solidarity is different from, say, happiness (as utilitarians conceive of it) because it gives us what are often called agent-relative reasons to abide by its requirements and to be a good compatriot, and these reasons are different from the agent-neutral reasons we may have to bring about more relationships of that type. Similarly in the case of friendship, what is most essential about the value of friendship is the set of reasons we have to be a good friend (i.e. to be loyal to the other person, visit her in the hospital, do these things out of
our concern for her, etc.), although we may also have some reasons to bring about more and better instances of friendship in the future.\textsuperscript{36}

When a group in solidarity has organized itself around a set of social moral rules then the rules figure into the demands of those relationships. People in the Polish Revolution, for example, believed that they owed it to one another to do their part in their joint-activities by following their shared social moral rules about, for example, majority rule and publicity in group decision-making as ways of standing in solidarity with their compatriots while they usually saw breaking the rules as ways of betraying or letting down their compatriots. Those who took part in the Polish Revolution had non-instrumental reasons to maintain and follow their social moral rules, not only as ways of supporting their ends, but also as ways of manifesting the valuable relationships they had with one another.

Does my view imply that those in the Polish Revolution should always follow their group’s social moral rules? No, because sometimes solidarity gives us sufficient reasons to break the social moral rules that unite us. Consider Lech Wałęsa, the founding leader of Solidarity, who faced a crisis in March of 1981. A few days earlier, a group of Solidarity members were severely beaten by the communist security services while protesting at a local council meeting. Infuriated, Solidarity readied itself for a general strike to force the government to come clean about the events and punish those who were responsible for the violence there.

Wałęsa correctly feared that if the matter of a general strike were put to a union vote, as was required by a firmly held social moral rule of their intensely democratic organization, the strike would go forward and lead to a civil war and severe reprisals from the Soviet Union that would ultimately destroy the Polish Revolution. Rather than taking those chances, he chose to negotiate directly and secretly with the deputy prime minister (violating another one of their rules about publicity) and, without consulting other members, signed a face-saving agreement to call off the strike if the government conceded to a few watered-down demands. Whether we think Wałęsa’s actions were justified or not, in his emergency situation we should admit that he had non-instrumental reasons of solidarity both to remain true to his group’s shared social moral rules as a way of standing with others in support of their shared ideals and also to break those rules in order to protect the group from disintegration. We should say that it is part of being united in solidarity by social moral rules that we are presumptively required to follow those rules. Typically this presumption will not be defeated by a presumptive requirement of solidarity to break the rules, so from the standpoint of solidarity, we will usually have most reason to follow our group’s social moral rules when they are part of what unites us in that relationship. This leaves it open, however, whether other values, such as respect, freedom, etc., might ground sufficient reasons to break those rules. We see a similar phenomenon with friendship, where being a good friend presumptively requires us to follow shared rules that have become an essential part of our relationship, e.g. rules about correspondence, hospital visitation, or confidentiality, even though that same relationship can give also give us sufficient reasons to break those rules when, for example, doing so would ruin our friendship.

When solidarity requires us to follow our group’s social moral rules, we usually have non-instrumental reasons to do so as ways of standing in solidarity with others, and this is true
even when our rules are not as good as they can be. Perhaps the rules of our group are a bit too rigoristic or they are maintained long past the circumstances in which their inclusion in our moral code originally made sense, but my conception of solidarity explains a common intuition that we owe *some* allegiance to the perhaps imperfect social moral rules that already exist in our group, as long as the rules are not too repugnant. And while solidarity often grounds reasons to follow somewhat defective rules, it also grounds reasons to *improve* our social moral rules as well in order to bring them more in line with our group’s ideals or make us more effective at promoting our shared ends.