

Immanuel Kant on Solidarity (GMM 4:423)

Yet a fourth - for whom it is going well, while he sees that others have to struggle with great hardships (with which he could well help them) - thinks: "What has it to do with me? Let each be as happy as heaven wills, or as he can make himself, I will not take anything from him or even envy him; only I do not want to contribute to his welfare or to his assistance in distress!" Now to be sure, if such a way of thinking were to become a universal law of nature, then the human race could well subsist, and without doubt still better than when everyone chatters about sympathetic participation and benevolence, and even on occasion exerts himself to practice them, but, on the contrary also deceives wherever he can, sells out, or otherwise infringes on the right of human beings. But although it is possible that a universal law of nature could well subsist in accordance with that maxim, yet it is impossible to will that such a principle should be valid without exception as a natural law. For a will that resolved on this would conflict with itself, since the case could sometimes arise in which he needs the love and sympathetic participation of others, and where, through such a natural law arising from his own will, he would rob himself of all the hope of assistance that he wishes for himself.