MORAL REQUIREMENTS AND PARTIALITY

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Abstract

My thesis defends an account of partiality justified in terms of relationships. I develop the view that relationships are inextricably linked to wellbeing, and I defend the idea that morality must be concerned with our wellbeing. I try to make sense of this account of partiality with the idea that morality carries a requirement of impartiality. If wellbeing is an important part of morally right actions, and if acting in accordance with reasons of partiality (qua relationships) sometimes promotes wellbeing better than impartiality, then some reasons of partiality lead to morally right actions.

The first chapter introduces the three main views of partiality – the projects view, the relationships view, and the individuals view. I then explore some of the views of impartiality and the ways it has been conceptualized in relation to partiality. The second chapter surveys the approaches to relating impartiality and partiality, and I identify three main approaches – the reconciliatory approach, the bifurcating approach, and the revisionist approach. This leads to a discussion of the pervasiveness of moral requirements, and outlines some worries which the revisionist approach can address. I then argue that the most cogent conceptualization of partiality is as a source of "sui generis" moral requirements. The third chapter begins assessing each of the three views of partiality from the first chapter, putting particular emphasis on Simon Keller's version of the individuals view. Drawing the strengths and weaknesses of each view, I then sketch a version of the relationships view which maps onto the revisionist approach, and I suggest a view of looking at relationships as having a similar structure to shared projects in that relationships are directed towards some mutual end or result (qua objective wellbeing). I argue that relationships must have a "special" value in order to be phenomenologically accurate and do

the proper justificatory work needed for sui generis moral requirements of partiality. This way we can locate the requirements of partiality within the relationships view and make sense of this within the backdrop of the requirements of impartiality. The closing chapter teases out the normative implications of viewing the requirements of partiality as inextricable with our wellbeing. I then clarify three main objections. Finally, I suggest some avenues for further ethical theorizing. The main upshot of this new relationships view of partiality is that it secures a place for some kinds of partiality as morally right.

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Contents

Introduction

In trying to live a good life, we come across small scale tragedies beyond our control, and often they take the form of practical conflicts between things we care about.[1] One of these conflicts involves a tension between partiality and impartiality. Being partial towards loved ones comes naturally to us – loved ones are special, and we want to bestow a special love and care to them. On the other hand, impartiality and the ideals associated with it (like justice, fairness or equality) are also extremely important to us. We might admire an impartial judge for applying the law without bias; moreover, we would be indignant if the judge made special exceptions for their children or showed personal bias. The tension between partiality and impartiality is not always apparent, but it often underlies many of our difficult choices. Consider Agamemnon's historical dilemma between sacrificing his daughter (Iphigenia) and guaranteeing the victory of the Trojan War; here, Agamemnon's role as a father demands he prioritize the life of his daughter, but there is also a competing demand from Agamemnon's community that he act impartially in order to win the Trojan war.[2] It is not always clear what the right thing to do is. Both partiality and impartiality are important to us, but they seem to pull us in opposite directions.

In the first chapter, I survey three main ways to think about partiality – that is, in terms of projects, relationships, and individuals. The ways we think about partiality have consequences

[1] Nussbaum, 1986, P. 33-38

[2] A similar dilemma can be found in the dialogue *Euthyphro*. Socrates is shocked to find that Euthyphro is taking his own father to court for the murder (although it is more likely manslaughter) of one of the family's servants. The family servant fell into a "drunken passion" and killed another domestic servant, then Euthyphro's father took the murderous servant, "bound him hand and foot and threw him into a ditch" where he was left for dead. Euthyphro finds that his father's murder of the servant was "unjust," and that justice requires that Euthyphro bring charges against any murderer, "even if the murderer lives under the same roof with you and eats at the same table." Here, we see Socrates shocked to find that Euthyphro would prosecute his father; after all, if anybody deserves partial treatment, it should be one's father. Euthyphro resists this idea by appealing to the impartial justice required by the higher piety of the gods.

for the way we think about impartiality because the conceptualizations of partiality and impartiality are inextricable. This becomes more obvious as we survey conceptions of impartiality, especially as requirements or overriding reasons; in the process, we discover that there are a number of conceptions of impartiality with varying levels of strictness and demandingness which it imposes on conceptions of partiality. We are left with a puzzle of how we relate these two concepts, or how we should understand partiality and impartiality in a coherent way (and the solution will give us a way of navigating through issues in practical reasoning).

The second chapter proposes three "approaches" to coherently fitting partiality and impartiality together. The first approach uses a derivation relation, and we focus on the priority of impartiality over partiality. The second approach denies the relation and splits them into two domains. The third relation modifies the conception of partiality and impartiality in order to fit them together without deriving or splitting them. I argue that this third approach is the most plausible, but (unlike other approaches) it takes partiality to be a source of requirements of their own kind. This leads to a worry of how we are to think about partiality as morally required.

The third chapter revisits the ways to think about partiality and tries to square it with the (third) approach of reifying the requirements of partiality. The view of partiality in terms of relationships is the best candidate to match this approach. An explication of this view leads to a closer look into the nature of relationships, and I try to construct a view of relationships which generates a new species of requirements of partiality. This involves investigating the role of valuing, seeing how requirements are generated within the relationships, and building our account around the function of requirements in general. This last claim is construed to be a

question of morality, and the resultant view resembles a neo-Aristotelian account of morality centered on wellbeing.

In the concluding chapter, I consider the main objections and look into the implications of my account of partiality. My ultimate aim is to build an account of partiality which makes sense of our requirements of partiality, especially with respect to our competing requirements of impartiality. Although this account cannot dissolve any practical dilemmas in an obvious way, it suggests a way of justifying our action when we act in accordance with partiality. By and large, this scheme underlies many contemporary ethical theories (*e.g.* care ethics, contractualism, virtue ethics), but I suggest a novel line of justification whereby competing conceptions of partiality and impartiality count as a negative argument for the plausibility of a more robust view partiality.

Chapter 1

Partiality: Surveying the Terrain

The meaning of "partiality" is not easy to pin down. It is clear that we treat some people in our lives differently from strangers, like when you help your friend move to a new home or when you take care of your aging parents – these are common and sometimes even praiseworthy forms of partiality. There are also trivial forms of "partiality" – for instance, you might be partial towards milk chocolate over dark chocolate. More interestingly, there are forms of "partiality" you might condemn – for instance, being partial towards hating a particular racial group. The status of partiality is not clearly defined. Partiality seems right in some contexts and wrong in others. What seems to unite partiality in all these different contexts are the special reactions, feelings, and beliefs towards those we are partial towards. We often cite special *normative* reasons[1] (call them "*reasons of partiality"*) for acting in these ways, the "right" and "wrong" kinds of partiality can be tracked onto the kinds of reasons they are and how they are classified.

The general domain of normativity is rich and complex. Normative claims "tell us what to think, what to like, what to say, what to do, and what to be." (Korsgaard, 1996, p. 22) We often cite reasons of different kinds for our actions (*e.g.* etiquette, prudence, aesthetics, morality, etc.). Some of our reasons have greater weight ("priority," "intensity," etc.), and they *override* other reasons quite regularly. Let us call reasons which take this structure, "*requirements*."[2] A failure to respond to requirements carries unique attitudes of failure and guilt, like when you

[1] The language of "reasons" is typical used in the philosophy of action and we will use it here to analyze normative claims.

[2] Analogous terms which denote a difference in normative force include "obligations," "duties," "constraints," "rights," and so forth. I contrast these with more generic "reasons," which might be understood through the language of "permission" or "supererogation."

break a promise or cheat on a test. Often requirements are employed in discussions of morality and what is "*morally required*," but let us set this aside for now and focus on the general property some reasons possess which give them an overriding quality. Why this is the case, and why some normative claims have a stronger hold on us is contentious, and they are often tangled up in questions of *defining* morality.[3] Steering away from these contentious matters, we can proceed with the premise that our common practice assumes that at least *some* reasons take the form of requirements, and that there are some requirements (e.g. rational, social, legal, "moral," *etc.*) we are bound to (or conform our actions to). This means that some reasons are not optional and they make claims on us which we cannot ignore. For instance, we often make appeals to absolute restrictions on brutal bodily harm or attacking the innocent – in such cases, we normally believe we lack the authority to ignore such requirements and they bind all agents regardless of preference. In the same vein, we also regard some of our *reasons of partiality* as taking the structure of requirements.

Consider the following scenario:[4] with no risk to yourself, you can save one of two people in equal danger (say, they are drowning or trapped in a burning building), your spouse or a stranger. It seems clear that our reasons of partiality towards our spouse in this case takes the structure of a requirement – that is, if you saved the stranger over your spouse, you have failed some sort of requirement owed to your spouse. These basic normative judgments which understand partiality as a source of requirements extend to more commonplace examples, like

[3] Again, this is not an investigation into the status of moral norms and how they come to have legitimate authority over us; for now, we only need to say that we act as though some reasons really do have authority to command our actions.
[4] Cf. Williams, 1981, p. 17

concern for your children or caring about your friends.[5] Still, these putative attitudes of taking partiality as *required* needs some unifying thread if they are taken as the "right" forms of partiality. There needs to be a principled distinction which separates the praiseworthy instances of partiality from the blameworthy instances of partiality. A part of understanding the *requirements* of partiality involves scrutinizing the many different *reasons* of partiality, and clarifying what it is about some reasons of partiality which make the requirements. This leads us into an investigation into the *nature* (or its origins) of the reasons of partiality.

Reasons of partiality seem to have a variety of sources. We often cite our *projects* as grounding reasons of partiality, like the importance of completing your paper as the reason you work on it daily instead of doing something else. Similarly, we might cite our *relationships* as grounding our reasons of partiality, like the strength of your marriage as the reason you put up with your spouse's annoying in-laws. Finally, we sometimes cite *individuals* as grounding our reasons of partiality, like the value of your child as the reason you stepped in front of a bullet. The grounding of partiality is especially important because it is the currency for *justifying* (as the "right" action to take) partiality against other (impartial) reasons. Although philosophers have a variety of accounts of the sources of reasons of partiality, I will consider three general categories: projects, relationships, and individuals.

The Projects View

The projects view, broadly speaking, takes facts about the agent as the origin of our reasons of partiality. One way of thinking about our lives is in terms of projects – your *projects* can be as basic as searching for food and shelter, or as nuanced as wanting to be a famous artist.

[5] Navigating through these basic judgments is more complicated than it seems. For instance, it might seem irrational to cheer for a sports team who has not won in over 50 years, or it might be unfair to support your friend through financial troubles but not your mailman, or it might be unusual to donate an organ for a close family member.

Projects are distinctively *yours* in the sense that they are valuable to you and that you want to be the one to bring them about. Projects give us reasons to act in ways that are conducive to the projects themselves. For instance, my project of completing a philosophy paper gives me reasons to work on that philosophy paper. In the same vein, we might think of partiality in terms of projects, and we might then think that our projects of partiality give rise to our reasons of partiality. The success of your marriage, for instance, might be an important project for you, and your partial treatment of your spouse (or, your "reasons of partiality") can be traced back to the fact that it is conducive to your project of a successful marriage. Fundamentally, projects make reference to the self and center around the agent; even in cases where projects are other-regarding, the projects are conceived and located in the self. This is a very general sketch of the projects view, but many writers redefine the scope of concepts like "projects" and sketch substantially different pictures of the view.

More narrowly, some proponents of the projects view identify reasons of partiality with more crucial projects. Bernard Williams takes this approach in his idea of "*ground projects*," or a "set of projects which are closely related to his existence which to a significant degree give meaning to his life." (Williams, 1981, p. 208-209) According to Williams, ground projects are so essential to a person's life that taking away from such projects is like taking away from a person's very identity. This sets more significant projects as the origins of our reasons of partiality. For example, cleaning your house might be considered a "project" in a very loose sense, but cleaning your house is not a motivating force which gives you a reason for living. On the other hand, it is plausible to think that being a good parent to your child is an essential commitment which contributes to who you are and what gives your life purpose, and this would definitely count as a ground project. Ground projects carry distinctive attitudes, values, and goals

which can be directed towards the special people in our lives, and thereby generate reasons of partiality. If reasons of partiality are generated by ground projects, then reasons of partiality carry the same importance of ground projects insofar as they are essential to our being and identity.

The Relationships View

The relationships view locates the origins of our reasons of partiality in relationships. We have relationships of various kinds and these relationships give us reasons for action. You might, for instance, describe the kind of relationship with your fellow compatriots as very generic – you do not know their names, do not know who they are, and do not even interact with them – nevertheless, perhaps you tune in and cheer on your national team at the World Cup. In contrast, you might describe the more intimate relationships with your friends and family as "*special*," and these special relationships can affect your actions in more profound ways. Your relationship with your spouse, for instance, might entail reasons to dance with your spouse even though there are other dancers on the floor. The relationships view traces such reasons of partiality back to the relationship. This broad sketch leaves room to fill out what exactly is meant by "special relationships,"[6] but our aim (for now) is merely to outline distinct class of views which thinks about partiality in terms of relationships.

Samuel Scheffler is one proponent of the relationships view,[7] and he fleshes out his account of our reasons of partiality to explicitly fit them into our moral psychology. He starts with the claim that humans are "valuing creatures," (Scheffler, 2010, p. 100) and it is a matter of fact that we fundamentally value relationships (in their own right). He then explains that to value

[6] *E.g.* the ontological status of relationships, parsing out the different kinds of relationships, how relationships generate reasons…
[7] cf. Scheffler, 1997; 2010

something implies that we see it as a source of reasons, and our valuing of relationships is the explanation for our reasons of partiality. The next move is elegant: since our reasons of partiality stem from the fact that we are valuing creatures, rejecting our reasons of partiality is to reject our nature as valuing creatures, and this rejection makes "morality" [8] an "incoherent enterprise." (Scheffler, 2010, p. 100) Any moral theory must then conform, at least to a certain degree, to the fact that reasons of partiality have a direct moral significance for us as valuing creatures. This brief overview of Scheffler's argument provides a sample of how a relationships view proponent might go about justifying reasons of partiality as a moral requirement.

The Individuals View

The individuals view says that reasons of partiality do not originate from the special relationships you share with individuals; rather, reasons of partiality originate from the *individuals* themselves. The intuitive appeal is that special *people* seem to be the object of our reasons of partiality. For instance, if asked you why you gave your kidney to your friend, your response will probably be something like, "because I love *her*" – not "because I love how she fits into my *projects*," and not "because I love our *relationship*." The "specialness" of individuals might be spelled out in a number of ways: perhaps they contribute something to your life and the lives of others, or perhaps you value them arbitrarily. You might also say that some people are special *for you* and not special for me (while other people are special *for me* and not special for you), yet the "specialness" produce reasons of partiality of the same *type* – for instance, your reasons to give your friend a kidney are the same type of reasons as my reasons to give my kidney to my friend. A less complicated way of understanding the "specialness" of individuals is

[8] By "moral," Scheffler seems to refer to reasons (which he attaches to values) which have a "normative force" that is "nearly unavoidable." (Scheffler, 2010, p. 100)

as something universally primitive (and not subject to further analysis). In any case, the core commitment of the individuals view is that there is something morally significant about the individual which explains our reasons of partiality.

To clarify, a proponent of the individuals view need not be committed to the idea that the "specialness" of an individual is some austere intrinsic quality. Some do indeed purport some "mysterious" and "manifestly impossible to define" (Frankfurt, 1988, 170) quality to love and the beloved. However, Keller offers a concrete account of the reasons of partiality whereby they are generated from the special "goods" individuals offer. [9] His discussion focuses on the notion of filial duty and how we should think about our moral reasons to take care of our parents. A "special" good, for instance, might ground such reasons of partiality. A special good is something that is provided by a special set of people or persons – for instance, the good of *your child* smiling at you, or the good of *your spouse* knowing how to cheer you up when you have had a bad day. So the reason to be partial towards special people is simply because they are the only ones who can provide this special good. This is an interesting claim because it also brushes shoulders with the issue of *justifying* partiality. For Keller, the reason why some individual is special *to you* is justifiable to others (who do not share your reasons) only insofar as the reasons of partiality are not arbitrary (*viz*. they offer special goods).[10] Keller has more to say about this story, but a brief sample of this view is enough for now.

[9] cf. Keller, 2006; 2007

[10] Defending against the claim of egoism (i.e. merely using people as a means to attaining the special good they offer), Keller adds that this extrinsic or instrumental way of valuing special people must go hand-in-hand with our intrinsic value of the individual.

Taking Stock…

With sketches of the three main views of partiality now in place, we seem to have some resources for conceptualizing the requirements of partiality. Reasons of partiality are of deep normative significance, and when we are confronted by reasons to act in accordance with partiality we "to some extent feel ourselves moved to do it." (Korsgaard, 1996, p. 47) It is still unclear what the "right" forms of partiality are, or what exactly makes them right or wrong. Even our putative beliefs about partiality are suspect. Our concern now is whether our inclinations of partiality (*e.g.* taking them as requirements) are justifiable. If they are a product of a psychological flaw, then it is possible that there are no right forms of partiality. It is a repeated psychological fact that we are vulnerable to bias, influenced by passions, and are fallible in reasoning. Perhaps all forms of partiality are vices we ought to altogether avoid: reasons of partiality may be akin to states of weakness of will, like reaching for the chocolate bar when we really ought to be caring about our future health. We need to consult the rest of the terrain of normative reasons.

We have reasons in opposition to reasons of partiality – or, reasons to be *impartial* – and often these reasons *not to be partial* also take the form of requirements. Consider again our supposed paradigm case of a requirement of partiality: saving your spouse over the stranger. We can draw our attention to the importance of *impartiality* by altering the scenario. Imagine that the choice now was between saving your spouse and ten strangers. Is saving your spouse still required? How about a thousand strangers? Surely at some point the importance of impartial justice or fairness will override the importance of your ideas of being partial towards your spouse. If not, and if you choose to save your spouse over a countless number of strangers, you have some explaining to do. We can again apply the lesson from this scenario to similar

dilemmas we frequently face. For example: Why spend money to send your child to private school when that money could go to feed numerous starving children around the world? Could it be that your inclination to be the doting parent is clouding you from making good moral judgments? Perhaps what we ought to set our partiality aside and act in accordance with the requirements of impartiality.

Taking Impartiality Seriously: Problems in Conceptualizing the Requirement of Impartiality

The idea of impartiality is fundamental to morality (or whatever we consider "required" action), and it is often associated with notions of equality, justice, or fairness.[11] However these abstract notions of impartiality are realized – whether in substantive law, religious doctrine, or personally held ideologies – the idea of impartiality has a regulative role directing our treatment of others and informing our conception of what is required of us (even in actions which impact others in more indirect ways). For instance, we might think that the most fundamental principles of justice ought to be conceived in an impartial manner. John Rawls strives for impartiality by employing a "*veil of ignorance*," which requires us to abstract from particular circumstances (such as sex, race, or social class) and think in strictly impersonal terms. (Rawls, 1999, p.118) For Rawls, impartiality is important for reaching a fair agreement to principles (which structure the basic institutions of the state). An underlying presumption is that each person is free and equal, and impartiality is employed to give everybody the same concern with respect to benefit or harm.[12] The requirement of impartiality functions to maintain a minimal standard of respect

[11] A rigid definition of "impartiality" is similarly difficult to pin down, and the aim here is to capture the broadest notions of impartiality; as such, narrow definitions are not particularly useful for our purposes.
[12] This Kantian idea can be expressed in a number of different ways: perhaps it is a person's value as a rational (and autonomous) agent, or their value as a part of aggregate welfare, or the value of their capacity to flourish.

(reverence, dignity, etc.) owed to all persons, spelled out as a standard of equal moral worth.[13] In this sense, relating to others morally means to respect (and not violate) their moral worth regardless of whether or not they are intimates, strangers, or criminals (thereby upholding the requirement of impartiality). The commitment to the equal worth of all persons binds us to a requirement of impartiality.

Thomas Nagel parses out the "subjective" and "objective" standpoint, and understands the core idea of impartiality as an objective "view from nowhere." (Nagel, 1986, p. 151) The objective standpoint is detached, impersonal, and abstracts away particular features to "search for generality." (Nagel, 1986, p. 152) The recognition of our own moral worth can be generalized to all other persons. By recognizing reasons from our own subjective standpoint, we also recognize the nature of reasons as applying to other subjects in the same way that it applies to our own. For instance, you might hesitate to purchase your daughter a sports car because you can imagine a general point of view from which you might empathize with the point of view of distant starving strangers. [14] Impartiality similarly requires us to treat our own interests as a third party (or from a point of view outside of our own) such that our own interests do not have any special status just because they belong to us. [15] This recognition of the objective standpoint understands impartiality through the idea that "no one is more important than anyone else." (Nagel, 1986, p.

[13] This minimal standard is expected a required by all simply in virtue of their personhood or their membership within the moral community, which subjects them to demands but also afford them this privileged status.
[14] David Hume (1738) takes a view. Hume argues that a disinterested point of view is the correct way of eliminating one's own sentiments in order to sympathize with the pains and pleasures of others. This contrasts Kant in his first-person approach of deriving rational principles of behavior (i.e. the agent determines whether her principles are consistent with the moral law presented as a categorical imperative).
[15] David Hume (1738) takes a view. Hume argues that a disinterested point of view is the correct way of eliminating one's own sentiments in order to sympathize with the pains and pleasures of others. This contrasts Kant in his first-person approach of deriving rational principles of behavior (i.e. the agent determines whether her principles are consistent with the moral law presented as a categorical imperative). According to John Cottingham, impartiality, in part, implies that "instead of giving preferential treatment to ourselves, or to members of our own particular social group, we should try to adopt a neutral standpoint, detaching ourselves as far as possible from our own special desires and involvements." (Cottingham, 1981, p. 83)

171) This can lead us towards such norms as charity, avoiding self-indulgence, and raising unspoiled citizens – in fact, impartiality can enable us to give such "basic impersonal goods more weight when they come from other people's needs." (Nagel, 1986, p. 172-173) Impartiality might be a necessary condition for achieving these general moral standards by helping avoid the vices of (or the immoral reasons of) partiality in our moral decision procedure. It can further moderate our partiality from going rampant, like abusing others for the advantage of loved ones. More basically, impartiality can keep self-interest in check. In this sense, we treat impartiality as a requirement which constrains our actions, but it is unclear how strict or tight these constraints are. Merely recognizing an impartial standpoint does not lead to a decisive answer on how one ought to act. [16] There remains an issue of whether partiality (or, "the special, personal perspective of agency") "has legitimate significance in determining what people have reason to do," or if we ought to act only in accordance with the considerations of impartiality (or, the "external standpoint"). (Nagel, 1986, p. 180)

One way of mapping this tension between partiality and impartiality is in terms of a distinction between "*agent-relative*" reasons and "*agent-neutral*" reasons. (Parfit, 1984, p. 143) Agent-relative reasons are indexical, or specific to you and nobody else – for instance, you might have reasons to care for your own child, but nobody else would have that reason. On the other hand, agent-neutral reasons are reasons for everyone – for instance, there are states of affairs which are valuable for anybody to promote, like rescuing (at little or no cost) a life from the brink of death. We might understand the tension between partiality and impartiality as a conflict between agent-relative and agent-neutral reasons. Consider again the case of being faced with the choice of either purchasing a sports car for your daughter or using that money to feed starving

[16] Nagel elsewhere remarks, "[…] the problem is not that values seem to disappear but that there are too many of them, coming from every life and drowning out those that arise from our own." (Nagel, 1986, p. 147)

strangers overseas. The reason to purchase the sports car for your daughter is an agent-relative reason since it is only a reason for you and nobody else; conversely, the reason to care for the strangers overseas are agent-neutral reasons because they are not dependent on the reference point of the person who has them. So construed, whether we act on agent-relative reasons or whether we act on agent-neutral reasons is indicative of our commitments to partiality or impartiality. Suppose you think that you are responsible for caring for your daughter over and above caring for any strangers overseas, and you proceed to act on your agent-relative reasons by purchasing that sports car for your daughter; implicit in this choice is a lower degree of impartiality and a higher degree of partiality. If we chose the option of feeding the starving strangers, it reflects a higher degree of impartiality and a lower degree of partiality. This rough sketch can be fleshed out in a number of ways, and the best way to conceptualize the requirement of impartiality is up for debate.

Impartiality: consequentialism

Some conceptualize impartiality as having complete priority over all forms of partiality. Such theories often have the strictest requirements of impartiality and foreclose on practically any degree of partiality. The structure of such theories (what some refer to as "teleological theories") "begin with an independent definition of goodness, and then define rightness as maximizing goodness" (Rawls, 1999, 21-22). This structure underlies consequentialist normative ethical theories. Let us take a look at one species of (what is generally referred to as "direct") consequentialism: act-utilitarianism. Suppose the utilitarian laid out her account of right action like this: the right action is whatever maximizes aggregate welfare. One particularly demanding implication on such strict conceptions of impartiality is that *any* reasons of partiality outside of maximizing aggregate welfare is not permitted. This means that you cannot give any added

weight to personal or relational considerations; in practice, all of your goals and values will likely be jettisoned to instead promote the aggregate welfare. The requirement of impartiality, on this conception, entails that (*ceteris paribus*) everybody has equal value. *Nobody* is special – not you or your loved ones. This strict impartiality demands that you are indifferent or neutral in all of your actions. There is nothing to differentiate the interests of the individual from the interests of the collective, and you are reduced to nothing but an "impersonal utility-maximizer." (Williams, 1981, p. 210) These "impersonal" conceptions of impartiality lead to some more awkward implications.

Williams argues that such impersonal moral theories undercut our moral agency and lead to an absurd account of moral action. The consequentialist view of impartiality is only concerned with the comparative value of states of affairs. By conceiving the moral agents as a series of "causal levers," (Williams, 1981, p. 210) it takes away their ability to generate their own action, invest in their own interests, and distinguish themselves from the single project of maximizing valuable states of affairs. This conception of agency lacks a personal dimension and takes away moral responsibility from an agent's actions. For instance, consequentialism is insensitive to whether or not you brutally murdered somebody in cold blood, or if you let somebody die of hunger overseas due to a lack of charity. [17] Consequentialism (*mutatis mutandis*) would only register the fact that each action led to the state of affairs resulting in somebody's death, and that each action is equally bad without regard for any innate rightness or wrongness of murder. Agents are equally responsible for the things they allow and the things they prevent, and the only relevant consideration we ought to have of agents is how they stand to contribute to maximizing

[17] There is a rich literature on similar cases of "doing" and "allowing" harm, but our focus here is on how such teleological theories understand impartiality as detaching the moral agent from their own agency.

states of affairs. [18] Subscribing to such impersonal features of impartiality dissolves personhood entirely from moral action, and this makes such strict views of impartiality incoherent.

Still, consequences do matter for thinking about how we ought to act. Granted, we should be careful not to conceptualize impartiality in a way in which it is insensitive to *any* forms of partiality – not only would this be overly demanding, but likely beyond psychological possibility. The consequentialist views of impartiality reveal a vital problem. It appears that some forms of partiality (natural to us) attribute too much worth to our intimates and this seems to be in tension with the requirement of impartiality to treat everybody with equal moral worth.[19] On the consequentialist view, we do not take the equal moral worth of strangers quite seriously enough if we treat our intimates better than we treat strangers. It is unclear if there is any sufficient justification for not lowering the degree of partiality (*i.e.* leveling-down the worth of intimates to the level of strangers) if it leads to better consequences for all (despite the cost to us and our loved ones). To put it another way, some reasonable answer is needed to the question Godwin poses: "What magic is there in the pronoun '*my*,' to overturn the decisions of everlasting truth?" (Godwin, 1793, p.83) Or, why arbitrarily be partial when there are good reasons to be impartial?

Impartiality: deontology

Some theories conceptualize impartiality as deontological constraints which restrict some of the ways we can achieve our ends while allowing some reasons of partiality. Rather than

[18] There are many other cases to pump similar intuitions – some involving runaway trolleys, judges convicting innocent people to prevent riots, and doctors harvesting organs. But the main point is that consequentialism allows (or even recommends) injustices, violations of rights, and other morally repugnant behavior if it serves to maximize the overall good.

[19] This is a different problem from merely ignoring the requirements of impartiality and blatantly undermining the equal moral worth of stranger in the name of partiality.

overruling partiality altogether, these conceptions of impartiality try to keep partiality in check. Kantianism, for instance, employs this conception of impartiality through its test of whether a moral judgment can be rationally universalized.[20] A principle which allows us to make arbitrary exceptions for ourselves would not pass the universalizability test, but a principle which allows everybody to care for loved ones (above the care for stranger) might pass the test and serve as a universal law.[21] This conception of impartiality passes the first hurdle of allowing the essential forms of partiality, but any additional forms of partiality must pass the scrutiny of impartiality underlying universalizability. This appears to be a fairly common (and perhaps intuitive) conception of impartiality, but there are some notable issues with the resultant conception of partiality which need to be addressed.

Williams, for instance, argues that while Kantianism seems to preserve "the individuality of individuals against the agglomerative indifference of Utilitarianism," it still imposes an "impoverished and abstract character of persons as moral agents." (Williams, 1981, p. 200-201) Williams's main qualm with Kantianism is again, the lack of priority given for partiality (or ground projects). [22] Whatever space there is for personal projects, they must be given up whenever there is any sort of conflict (or issue of priority) with the impartial moral law. The Kantian tradition associates much of partiality with our self-interested desires, and the moral law is meant to provide agents (subject to temptations of self-interest) with a categorical imperative to guide us towards the right actions.[23] Kantianism can allow the pursuit of our own ends or

[20] The idea here is that every reason to act must be tested "whether we should allow it to be a *law* to us" and we do this by "by asking whether the maxim of acting on it can be willed as a law." (Korsgaard, 1996, p. 76) Moreover, the principles of morality are reached *a priori*, or are inherent in the operation of reason.
[21] Conversely, a strict impartial principle which demands that we treat loved ones and strangers equally would not be universalized.
[22] On the Kantian view, personal projects can be understood as an "imperfect" duty (e.g. an open-ended command to develop one's talents instead of being a couch potato) or they can be understood as a "hypothetical imperative" (e.g. working on a paper in order to publish it).
[23] cf. Kant's Groundwork, 1785

projects, but the moral law always takes priority. By allowing impartial moral laws to frustrate our essential projects (which generate reasons of partiality), Kantianism ultimately provides "too slim a sense in which any projects are mine at all." (Williams, 1981, p. 208) Again, even the weaker sense of priority given to impartiality over partiality is problematic for Williams, especially because it rules out certain reasons outright instead of consulting with what is good for us.

Stepping away from Kantianism, we might look at (Kantian inspired) political theories and their conceptions of impartiality. [24] We should not sacrifice other important features of normativity (legal, social, etc.) in favor of simplicity or some formula for right action. We can start to motivate a more pluralistic (insofar as reasons for action) view of deontological constraints by considering the following case:

"You have an auto accident one winter night on a lonely road. The other passengers are badly injured, the car is out of commission, and the road is deserted, so you run along it till you find an isolated house. The house turns out to be occupied by an old woman who is looking after her small grandchild. There is no phone, but there is a car in the garage, and you ask desperately to borrow it, and explain the situation. She doesn't believe you. Terrified by your desperation she runs upstairs and locks herself in the bathroom, leaving you alone with the child. You pound ineffectively on the door and search without success for the car keys. Then it occurs to you that she might be persuaded to tell you where they are if you were to twist the child's arm outside the bathroom door. Should you do it?" (Nagel, 1986, p. 176)

One way of understanding this scenario is that you have reasons (of partiality towards the other injured passengers) to twist the child's arm, but some impartial principle rules against this act. The impartial principle can be understood as a general requirement not to harm others or to

[24] The aim is to understand impartiality without the "absolute" restrictions, which are the more controversial parts of Kantianism. We still want to restrict actions which lead to harming the innocent, brutal harm or perhaps torture; although, we can be committed to a threshold deontology with a very high threshold for some action instead of be absolute restriction.

respect their natural rights.[25] The foundations for these constraints might be traced back to the child's "rational autonomy" or agreed upon from "their acceptability among free and equal people." (Barry, 1995, p. 194) Understood in terms of political theory (instead of some moral imperative), one of the aims of a political system is to "externalize through social institutions the most impartial requirements." (Nagel, 1995, p. 53) The idea is that citizens give up the labor of making sure that everybody's interests are equally taken into consideration and they transfer to some sovereign, which leaves them free to pursue their own interests.[26] So construed, what constrains your partiality (and stops you from twisting the child's arm) are the impartial principles present in the substantive requirements of the society (and the story of its normative force corresponds to a story of its political authority or social contract).

The conception of impartiality for such deontological approaches is split into at least two levels. First, on the level of the fundamental principles of the society – what some refer to as "second-order impartiality." (Barry, 1995, p. 194) The conception of impartiality here is as a tool for discovering and assessing rules to govern actions and constrain partiality. Although we may want to pursue our own ends (even if it perhaps involves actions like twisting the arms of children), constraints exist so that our pursuits may not lead to injustices or other repugnant behavior. Individuals are not well equipped to moderate their own behavior and discern which reasons of partiality are right or wrong; as such, Nagel remarks, a "way of dealing with the problem is to put much of the reasonability for securing impersonal values into the hands of an

[25] Nagel explains the violation of deontic constraints as relating to the victim in the wrong way (as an instrument instead of as another person). He writes: "Such a constraint expresses the direct view of the person on whom he is acting. It operates through that relation. The victim feels outrage when he is deliberately harmed even for the greater good of others, not simply because of the quantity of harm but because of the assault on his value of having my actions guided by his evil." (Nagel, 1986, p. 184)

[26] Note further that this conception of impartiality is not vulnerable to Williams's critique because it does not undermine agency or personhood.

impersonal institution like the state." (Nagel, 1986, 174) This would leave us free to pursue partiality within impartial constraints.

There is also a second conception of impartiality employed that is worth mentioning. A caveat of such impartial principles is that they are pervasive throughout all of our actions, which means we are not permitted to pick and choose when to apply these principles (because they apply to us all the time). Since we are not permitted to make special exceptions (even if it would, say, benefit yourself and your injured passengers), impartiality often frustrates our ability to act on our reasons of partiality. If we are committed to the idea that some actions are forbidden (like harming innocent children), then impartiality works to rule out special pleading and makes sure we are acting consistently with these ideas.

The puzzle

There is a puzzle with both partiality and impartiality: we take some features of partiality and some features of impartiality to be essential in our normative practices, but how do we fit them together in a coherent way? It seems that some consequentialist theories find themselves emphasizing the impersonal aspects of impartiality, while understanding partiality as a hindrance for maximizing valuable states of affairs. Indeed, we want to acknowledge that we ought to maximize impersonally valuable states, but we also want to give a privileged status to the things we personally consider valuable. On the other hand, deontological theories find themselves emphasizing the constraining aspects of impartiality in order to contain partiality within the boundaries of impartiality. Similarly, we want to constrain our inclinations towards self-interest, but we do not want to exclude the essential forms of partiality that are beyond the boundaries of impartial conduct. In both accounts, partiality seems shortchanged.

The reticence towards partiality seems reasonable given the ways partiality can leads us towards morally questionable actions. For example, taking care of your child might be a virtuous action, but acting on the same reasons of partiality can lead to vices like nepotism. But what makes one action right and the other wrong? A preliminary answer might be that acts of partiality are wrong when they violate impartial commitments of treating everybody with equal moral worth. But there are ambiguous cases which suggest that the boundary between impartiality and partiality are not so clearly defined. Consider again the dilemma of twisting an innocent child's arm in order to save your injured friends. Perhaps those with more "impartialist" sympathies may argue that this violates the basic rights of the child, and those who challenge or revise such ideas of basic rights are saddled with a heavy burden of proof. Conversely, perhaps those with more "partialist" sympathies may argue that your care for your friends is the right action all things considered, and that those who challenge this idea have the onus instead. [27] More generally, partiality seems to entail that we treat some people (ourselves and our loved ones) differently from everybody else, and this is (*prima facie*) in conflict with the fundamental belief expressed in the requirement of impartiality (namely, that everybody – including yourself and loved ones – are of equal importance). Partiality needs some further justification for attributing a privileged status towards some over others. But how far will a justification of partiality take us? After all, if there is some fundamental incompatibility with the concepts of partiality and impartiality, then each side might be passing the buck of justification back and forth. The relationship between impartiality and partiality is vexed – they might "fight it out or reach some kind of individual accommodation within each person." (Nagel, 1991, p. 15)

[27] The arguments and justifications may split further with other, more complicated dilemmas: a mother stealing a loaf of bread to feed her children, a lover saving her beloved over countless strangers, or the son turning his murderous father into the authorities.

In the ensuing chapter, we will consider three ways of addressing the problem of fitting impartiality and partiality together– that is, ways of conceptualizing them into a coherent account. In this chapter, we have hinted at some issues which a comprehensive account must address. A comprehensive account must not make the requirements of impartiality too impersonal or constrain partiality to the point it no longer captures our essential notions of partiality. We must minimally preserve the instances of partiality we hold dear, like familial care and friendship. Moreover, the justificatory work is twofold: any defense of a higher degree of partiality must also defend the corollary lower degree of impartiality, and *vice versa*.

Chapter 2

We have surveyed some ways to understand partiality and impartiality, but further issues arise when we try to fit both partiality and impartiality into a single normative account. They appear to be conflicting concepts, and we need to get clear on what exactly we mean by "partiality" and "impartiality" before we try to fit them together. An alternative method is to start with a general scheme of how these concepts might fit together, and then define them in more detail afterwards. This method is useful for assessing the relation between partiality and impartiality because it makes obvious which parts of the terms of are incompatible. For instance, we have already seen that the consequentialist scheme outlines impartiality as essentially impersonal, and this reveals that personal conceptions of partiality are incompatible with this scheme (and partiality must be conceived impersonally). There is another sense in which such strict conceptions of impartiality are demanding. For instance, the requirements of impartiality (understood through the lens of consequentialism) takes the normative scope of its requirements to be so wide that it blocks all considerations of other reasons and leaves no room for partiality. A crucial starting point for thinking about a general scheme for fitting partiality and impartiality together is the scope of the requirements (of impartiality, but perhaps also partiality).

Another way to understand the scope of requirements is in terms of the "pervasiveness" (Scheffler, 1986, p. 535-536) of the requirements. Rejecting the pervasiveness of ("moral") requirements is to say that "certain areas of human life are simply not subject to moral assessment." (Scheffler, 1986, p. 531) The idea here is to demarcate the domain of requirements (which are understood as reasons which override competing reasons) from other reasons for action. The requirements may still be very "stringent" – that is, "the property of being very demanding within whatever domain it applies." (Scheffler, 1986, p. 535-536) – but outside of the

domain of the requirements, we can allow some space for permissions or the supererogatory. If we accept the pervasiveness of requirements (whether partial or impartial), and since this implies that requirements override all other reasons, then some explanation is needed to account for why the normative force of other reasons is foreclosed. For instance, the pervasiveness of the consequentialist scheme forecloses on essential aspects of partiality, and some explanation is needed to account for such demanding views. [1] Pervasiveness speaks directly to the relation between partiality and impartiality by expounding what their normative force is in our lives.

Pressing forward, I divide the approaches to pervasiveness into three camps: the "*reconciliatory*" approach, the "*bifurcating*" approach, and the "*revisionist*" approach. In broad strokes, the reconciliatory approach is committed to the pervasiveness of either impartiality or partiality, and it derives one from the other – for example, if the requirements of impartiality are understood to be pervasive, the reconciliatory approach tries to capture the essential parts of partiality under the purview of the requirements of impartiality. The bifurcating approach, however, rejects entirely the pervasiveness of either impartiality or partiality, and it tries to understand impartiality and partiality as two separate domains of reasons (and requirements). Finally, I suggest a hybrid approach – called the revisionist approach – which accepts the pervasiveness of both impartiality and partiality by conceiving them both as generating requirements of their own kind, yet also having an area of overlap which connects these two domains of reasons. I unpack these approaches in turn.

[1] *E.g.* "The needs of the many outweigh the needs of the few."

The "Reconciliatory" Approach

The most common reconciliatory approach starts with the requirements of impartiality (realized through substantive principles of ethics, politics, etc.) and aims to derive the reasons (and requirements) of partiality from them.[2] This approach is motivated by the critiques of stricter conceptions of impartiality. Proponents of the reconciliatory approach note that though it is a common belief that such strict conceptions of impartiality are demanded by morality, "and that we must therefore despair of ever being able to meet its demands," (Barry, 1995, p. 234). We would be hard pressed to find anybody who actually defends such a view of morality (perhaps with the exceptions of Bentham or Godwin). These strict conceptions of impartiality might be demanded within certain roles (like being a judge in a court), yet "none of the well-established forms of impartial morality" (Barry, 1995, p. 232) really demand this in everyday life. The requirements of impartiality must be fleshed out in a way that is sensitive to capturing partiality, and conceptions of impartiality must then focus on reconciling its requirements with partiality.

The reconciliatory approach is often taken up by "indirect" ("*rule*," "*motive*," "*virtue*," *etc*.) consequentialist theories. For instance, if our aim is to maximize some valuable state of affairs, we can conceptualize partiality in a way which is consistent with this aim; more specifically, we must say that some forms of partiality promote impartially valuable states of affairs. Robert Goodin gives the example of a parent's partiality towards their child: this form of partiality is consistent with the impartial aim of promoting valuable states of affairs because parents are best situated to meet the needs and promote the welfare of their children. (Goodin, 1985, p. 11) On this view, acceptable forms of partiality are derivative of more fundamental

[2] It is possible to take the opposite approach: start with partiality and derive impartiality from partiality. This is uncommon and contentious, and it will later become clear why this is untenable.

(impartial) consequentialist aims. What appears to have more importance relative to you can be justified only if it coincides with maximizing the value of the general state of affairs. The unacceptable – or "pernicious" (Goodin, 1985, p.1-6) – forms of partiality are inconsistent with the aims of maximizing valuable states of affairs. For example, purchasing a sports car for your child might be impermissible because it undercut ideas of fair distributions and hinder consequentialist aims. Nevertheless, we might shield other agent-relative permissions (like ground projects or supererogatory acts) on the basis that they lead to a sufficiently valuable state of affairs. This approach seems to capture many points of partiality which we hold to be essential.

The reconciliatory approach also underlies many deontological theories (Kantian, social contract, pluralistic, *etc.*). The general idea here is that the requirement of impartiality is to be applied at the level of assessing substantive moral rules, and any resultant forms of partiality must pass this assessment. For example, take the impartial standard that everybody has the same moral standing (*i.e.* we are imagining that this is the content of the requirement of impartiality), and compare the following two rules: (1) "Do not break promises," and, (2) "Green people can break promises." The requirement of impartiality is employed in assessing each rule. The first rule has the stamp of impartiality because it is consistent with the impartial standard that everybody has the same moral worth. The second rule would not be a suitable moral rule because it fails the test of impartiality; specifically, it is partial towards green people in the wrong way (*i.e.* the property of being green is an arbitrary and irrelevant consideration). Consider now a rule which captures partiality: "Parents ought to take special care of their own children." This again passes the standard of impartiality and is an acceptable rule. By and large, we can capture the

reasons (and requirements) of partiality by assessing them using some more fundamental requirement of impartiality.

It is worth noting that the requirements of impartiality are always conceived to be pervasive on these reconciliatory approaches; in fact, the pervasiveness is the distinctive trait of this approach. With this in mind, it is incorrect to think of the requirements of impartially as "constraints" on partiality. A part of what it means for impartiality to be pervasive is that it constrains everything. On this view, there simply is no partiality outside of impartiality, and all forms of partiality must be reducible (or generalized) to impartiality. This is why the reconciliatory approach steers away from stricter conceptions of impartiality: the stricter conceptions of impartiality (*ipso facto*) rule out any conception partiality; if this kind of impartiality is all there is, there is no partiality left to reconcile.

The fallacy of impartiality

Although the reconciliatory approach is a more nuanced view of impartiality, there remains a residual worry it does not capture partiality correctly. It is often thought that impartiality is commonplace in our moral practice, so the place of impartiality is sometimes assumed as a starting point without justification. This is understandable given the dominance of impartiality in discussions of morality. The reconciliatory approach takes impartiality as being more primitive in our moral thinking, and pushes partiality into a secondary role. The partiality relevant to morality must be understood in reference to a broader, impartial context; whenever there is an ambiguity as to whether our reasons of partiality are morally acceptable reasons, we have to determine their acceptability by assessing them in terms of the requirement of impartiality. This is advantageous in the sense that we can clearly distinguish the good forms of partiality from the bad forms of partiality – that is, all good forms of partiality are the ones

endorsed by impartiality. Still, a looming worry is that the resultant conception of partiality is deficient and incomplete.

It seems even with this reconciliatory approach to impartiality there persist issues with giving impartiality priority over partiality. Consider a case of a parent treating their child's asthma. Perhaps the requirements of impartiality can account for this instance of partiality – for example, the parent treating their child's asthma is the "morally" right action all things considered. [3] Nevertheless, it is odd to think of this act in terms of impartially promoting aggregate good or following some moral principle. This would be "one thought too many." (Williams, 1981, p. 18) Although this may be a useful way of thinking about some abstract maximization of good or some fundamental principles of justice, this does not reflect the way we act towards loved ones. The parent does not first abstract away from personal circumstances and think about the requirements of impartiality. These are the wrong kinds of reasons.

Michael Stocker suggests that the defects with these reconciliatory approaches is "not that they do not value love (which, often, they do not) but that they do not value the beloved." (Stocker, 1987, p. 459) Stocker notes a self-effacing quality to reconciling impartiality with partiality – namely, an agent's fundamental motivations for acting towards partiality cannot be reconciled with the requirements of impartiality (since impartiality rejects these external motivations of partiality). This leads to a psychological disharmony – or "schizophrenia" – since we must act in accordance with impartial principles and our own reasons of partiality are not really the basis of our own actions. (Stocker, 1987, p.453) From the impartial perspective, the child is just one of many children; however, this is it absurd to think that parents ought to have

[3] The "morally" right action is often identified with the requirements of impartiality, and the "fact that the relation between morality and partiality is seen as problematic testifies in part to the influence within modern moral philosophy of highly universalistic moral theories," and this makes the "relation between moral norms and particularistic loyalties and attachments appeal problematic to one degree or another." (Scheffler, 2010, p. 99)

this attitude towards their own children. The incongruity is that thinking of partiality in impartial terms makes morality largely insensitive to the content of partiality – namely, a special care that is above and beyond the requirements of impartiality. The normative force of a parent taking care of their child is not derived from of the requirements of impartiality; in fact, the motive to act on the requirements of impartiality occludes the motivation for partiality and demands its suppression. Partiality is being restricted from being fully expressed beyond the bounds of the requirements of impartiality. Something has gone awry with the way we reconcile the requirements of impartiality with partiality; mainly, we went too far in the direction of impartiality and failed to take partiality seriously.

Others call this problem by different names and emphasize different features of a broader issue – for the sake of simplicity, let us call this general problem the "*fallacy of impartiality*."[4] The priority given to impartiality over partiality is the root of this problem. It is unclear what the justification is for committing ourselves to impartiality, especially in cases where the prioritization of partiality seems warranted. Such cases of blind faith in the requirement of impartiality seem like a case of "superstitious rule-worship." (Smart, 1956, p. 349) It is true that partiality is often associated with reprehensible behavior, but impartiality is just as guilty of such acts. For instance, imagine giving your child asthma medication merely in order to follow some requirement of impartiality – such callousness and insouciance is abhorrent and seems almost pathological for a parent. Some have suggested that being so preoccupied with following such requirements for the sake of following requirements (instead of being motivated by the good

[4] Conversely, we can imagine a "fallacy of *partiality*," which many "partialists" tend to make. Just as it is fallacious to jettison all forms of partiality by the mere stipulation of prioritizing impartiality, it is equally as fallacious to jettison all forms of impartiality and give *ad hoc* priority to partiality.

ends) displays a kind of "fetishism" towards following requirements. [5] It is fallacious to think that impartiality will always reliably lead to right action.

The reconciliatory approach has no explanation for its faith in the requirement of impartiality to always give the right answers. On the contrary, we should not expect it to give us the right answers, particularly with respect to questions of partiality. To put it another way, just because an instance of partiality cannot be reconciled with the standing conception of impartiality, it would be "no more reasonable" to eliminate such reasons of partiality "than it would be to eliminate all facts that cannot be assimilated to physics." (Nagel, 1986, p. 187) If our starting point is with impartiality and we let our impartial theorizing dictate (or, supposedly, "reconcile") the terms of partiality, it will of course be insensitive to the full range of the essential reasons of partiality. In fact, this is exactly what we are left with: an incomplete conception of partiality. Moreover, if we claim that this faulty reconciliation provides us with binding requirements, the requirements will have awkward results in areas dealing with the considerations of partiality it missed. According to Peter Railton, this leads to a "form of alienation in moral practice, the sense that morality confronts us as an alien set of demands, distant and disconnected from our actual concerns." (Railton, 1984, p. 135) By and large, the fallacy of impartiality is a family of problems, but they resemble each other by a mistaken belief of prioritizing impartiality over partiality.

The preoccupation with the requirement of impartiality might be entangled with some subtle assumption that our ultimate aim is moral perfection. It might be a good thing for us to be perfectly impartial if we also had perfect knowledge, perfect control of our emotions, and were all-powerful. Unfortunately, we are not the type of beings who can be (or should attempt be)

[5] Cf. Smith, 1994, p. 71-76

perfectly impartial; we are not omniscient or angelic beings, and our conception of impartiality will also be flawed. Indeed, a fully impartial morality "is not a plausible human goal." (Nagel, 1986, p. 185) It is evident from the disagreements in the conception of impartiality that our evaluative standards are colored by our presuppositions and gaps in knowledge. Even if we collectively came to a consensus on what our conception of impartiality ought to be, there is no guarantee that it will be completely comprehensive and will account for all forms of partiality. If the challenge is coming up with a conception of impartiality which reflects what is really demanded of us, then it is entirely possible that we may not be able to live up to such standards. It is not obvious how far we should go "outside ourselves" in our impartial theorizing without going too far away from our "essential material," or, "the forms of life in which values and justifications are rooted." (Nagel, 1986, p.186) We can try our best, but our bounded rationality will limit how far we can take our theorizing. Rather than trying to achieve some impossible ideal, we need to take a more modest approach and be sensitive to our limits and capabilities.

We can tie this fallacious glorification of impartiality to Susan Wolf's critique of "moral saints."[6] Wolf agrees that "philosophically popular moral theories" hold us to an ideal which is not "particularly rational or good or desirable for a human being to strive." (Wolf, 1982, p.419) The perfectly moral saints are not people to emulate nor are they people we want around us. They seem largely insensitive to partiality. Following Williams's line of critique, Wolf argues that the moral saint lacks some of the desires and goals which seem necessary for "an identifiable, personal self" (Wolf, 1982, p. 424), and a normative theory which tries to make

[6] I should note that (*pace* Wolf) this connection between the fallacy of impartiality and moral sainthood is not the view that Wolf holds (cf. Wolf, 1992, p. 243). I borrow her term to illustrate a further feature of the fallacy of impartiality: namely, its undesirable practical implications. I want to be careful not to misrepresent Wolf's view; in any case, her actual view of morality, and the function of "moral saints" in her own argument, becomes apparent in the next section.

everybody into some version of a moral saint indicates some deep problem within the theory. The moral saint is insensitive to what we have identified as essential parts of partiality – traits like "personal bearing, or creativity, or sense of style" (Wolf, 1982, p. 433). Moreover, the moral saint is an unstable ideal, especially when they come across scenarios which require partiality instead of impartiality. If we diagnose the moral saint as somebody who commits the fallacy of impartiality, then it is correct to say that "a person may be perfectly wonderful without being perfectly moral." (Wolf, 1982, p. 436) If impartiality is all there is to morality, and we are forced to reconcile the remaining pieces of partiality into this picture, then it is reasonable to question "the assumption that it is always better to be morally better." (Wolf, 1982, p. 438) This leads to a second approach to fitting impartiality and partiality together, which separates the two instead of trying to reconcile them.

"Bifurcating" approach

The bifurcating approach denies the pervasiveness of (either only impartial or only partial) requirements, and the domain of normative demands becomes bifurcated. Wolf is one proponent of this bifurcating view of morality. Wolf thinks it is wrongheaded to take reasons of partiality ("goals, relationships, activities, interests…") as secondhand permissions of impartial morality. (Wolf, 1982, p. 436) To be clear, Wolf does not think the fallacy of impartiality is the problem; rather, she thinks that "morality as a whole is being expected to do too much." (Wolf, 1992, p. 243) This "deflation" (*à la* Williams) of moral requirements lowers the elevated normative status of moral requirements to the level of non-moral reasons (and requirements).[7] The idea is that the domain of moral requirements is a useful guide for how we ought to act, but it is not the only domain which pervades and guides our actions. It is not the place for morality

[7] Cf. Wolf, 1987

(or impartial requirements) to have a pervasive role over all our reasons (particularly our reasons of partiality). Wolf develops her own account of "moderate impartialism," (Wolf, 1992, p. 246) which readily admits that impartiality ought to have some practical impact on our lives (like giving attention to our imperfect duties) – such as "on one's politics, on one's activities, on one's choice of how to spend one's money" (Wolf, 1992, p. 246) – yet makes no strong claims on how we should act upon our reasons of partiality. According to Wolf, it is more accurate to think of our reasons of partiality as being in an entirely separate category of value from morality, and consequently reasons of partiality do not need to be reconciled with (or justified in terms of) the requirements of impartiality. Rather than trying to reconcile the moral requirements of impartiality with our reasons of partiality, Wolf insists that we should separate the two entirely.

This bifurcating approach is largely inspired by the theoretical merits of the Kantian division between the moral and the non-moral. Compared to the reconciliatory approach, the bifurcating approach allows us to have a fuller conception of the range of reasons for both partiality and impartiality (*i.e.* we are not forced to contain one within the other). Nevertheless, this approach can accommodate some conceptions of impartiality as deontological constraints, like the requirement that one ought to "hold herself to the same standards that she expects of others." (Wolf, 1992, p. 246)[8] But we might still act upon our non-moral reasons of partiality, and it is up to us to adjudicate our reasons and proceed to act (all things considered). Following Williams, Wolf is ultimately concerned with the end of living a meaningful life; while a systematic account of morality can be a useful tool for teasing out important considerations for a meaningful life, it cannot guarantee this end.

[8] This is inspired by contractualism: namely that "any set of principles for the general regulation of behavior that no one could reasonably reject as a basis for informed, unforced, general agreement." (Scanlon, 1998, p. 153)

The emerging conception of partiality and impartiality with the bifurcating approach is vulnerable to some criticism. This approach is motivated by a lack of regard for partiality (put forth by popular moral theories), but it seems to go too far in the opposite direction and undermines impartiality in the process. A relevant phrase sometimes thrown around is that "morality demands what it demands." The idea is that even if the requirements of morality are very demanding, we must nonetheless fulfill them. This comes into tension with Wolf's deflationary view of morality because it is possible that morality really is very demanding (perhaps the strict consequentialists were right all along). Wolf does engage this issue to some extent when she considers the case of the mother who hides her murderous son: here, we see that the mother's (non-moral) reasons of partiality to save her son are prioritized over the impartial (moral) demands of justice to turn her son in to the authorities. Wolf admits that this is the "strongest motivating thought behind partialist morality," (Wolf, 1992, p. 254) or counting reasons of partiality as moral instead of non-moral. The tension here is that it is hard to imagine that hiding a murderer, even if it is your son, can be a reasonable moral standard. Even if our judgments "may legitimately differ from others" and we acknowledge "that some reasonable people have more lenient views about the degree to which impartial concerns should prevail," (Wolf, 1992, p. 252) hiding a murderer seems to clearly violate impartial morality. We might sympathize with the mother's actions, but it would be difficult to justify this as the "right" action. Wolf bites the bullet and argues that, "even to act immorally, is compatible with the possession of a character worthy of respect and admiration." (Wolf, 1992, p. 255) So, on Wolf's view, the demands of impartial morality and the demands of partiality (or "love") can genuinely conflict; nevertheless, one can be a "decent" (Wolf, 1992, p. 254-255) person without being a "moral"

person. It is possible that the two domains generate incommensurable values which cannot be rationally adjudicated. This is certainly a plausible view.

The "overridingness" of requirements

The problem with Wolf's solution – and the bifurcating approach in general – is that it trivializes the notion of "requirements." Sarah Stroud reminds us that it is a part of our common moral practice that we to commit ourselves to the "*overridingness*" of requirements – namely, we think of requirements, "at least in part, a constraint on the pursuit of our aims." (Stroud, 1998, p. 176) For instance, even if it would be convenient for you to break your promise of meeting somebody for coffee and take a nap instead, you set aside your selfish aims of taking a nap to fulfil your promise. Indeed, you treat your promise as a defeater to your claims to a nap, and choosing to keep your promise over napping is not a mere preference. (Stroud, 1998, p. 176) Moreover, if your friend Ayn asks why you did not pursue your selfish aims of taking a nap, pointing to your moral requirement to keep promises is a sufficient explanation of your actions (at least, to those committed to such moral requirements). (Stroud, 1998, p.177) Finally, our popular moral theories – especially the absolutist and anti-consequentialist views (Stroud, 1998, p. 177) – seem to presuppose the idea that we have "compelling reason not to do what is morally impermissible." (Stroud, 1998, p. 172) It seems the notion of "requirements" is essential to our normative practices.

An implication of taking seriously the overridingness of requirements is that we must also be committed to the pervasiveness requirements. Since a part of what we mean by a "requirement" is that it overrides all of our other reasons, it is meaningless to posit some separate domain of reasons which the requirements do not override. This is why the bifurcating approach deflates the meaning of "requirements" to a defeasible reason – that is, the bifurcating approach could not

proceed to give equal import to both domains of reasons if one of the domains overrides the other. If the bifurcating approach took on this notion of requirements and pervasiveness, then it would collapse back into the reconciliatory approach. Where the reconciliatory approach fallaciously prioritizes one camp by fiat, the bifurcating approach lacks the resources to address dilemmas and leaves agents in a precarious state of wondering how to adjudicate between partiality and impartiality. The "collision between subjective and objective points of view" (Nagel, 1986, p. 180) leads to a practical dilemma between partiality and impartiality. If the role of partiality and impartiality both play a significant role in guiding our normative practices, it is unclear how to prioritize them when they come into conflict.

Yet Wolf's deflation of morality takes the teeth out of what is "required," and requirements no longer have an overriding authority over our other (non-moral) reasons. This problem is a product of the deflationary outlook towards requirements. By undermining the overriding normative force of ("moral") requirements, requirements can only function to "show the source of the tension and help us live with the regrets that are unavoidable." (Jeske, 2008, p. 149) This certainly gives the agents more control over their actions since nothing really overrides their own choices, and it seems to be a tenable view when given supplementary argumentation.[9] It is true that simplistic generalizations for our decision making processes do not work and that the particular nuances context matter greatly for our final judgments, but it is far from obvious that we are better off without general requirements (or "principles") regulating our actions.

We leave the bifurcating approach with some useful notes. We want to capture the full range of the reasons of partiality, but we also want to keep the notion of requirements as

[9] Perhaps as long as we take "the process of practical justification as far as it will go in the course of arriving at the conflict," we can choose either partiality or impartiality "without irrationality." Perhaps we can employ our (Aristotelian) practical wisdom, "which reveals itself over time in individual decisions rather than in the enunciation of general principles." (Nagel, 1979, p. 135)

overriding competing reasons. We return to the same crossroad which motivated the bifurcating approach: we want to avoid the fallacy of impartiality, yet we also want to preserve the importance of impartiality. As such, discovering the right degree of partiality is part and parcel with how we conceive the requirements of impartiality – the stricter the constraints of impartiality are, the less room we have for partiality. Wolf presents the options as such: "Either we must change our moral theories in ways that will make them yield more palatable ideals, or, we must change our conception of what is involved in affirming a moral theory." (Wolf, 1982, p. 419) It is clear that she took the second route by deflating our conception of a moral theory and rejecting our notion of "requirements" as overriding. Let us then consider Wolf's other option: rather than deflating our ("moral") requirements, we can revise them so they are more palatable.

The "revisionist" approach

The revisionist approach works with the assumption that requirements (whether partial or impartial) are pervasive in the sense that they override all other reasons. This overridingness of requirements might be thought of as unduly demanding – for instance, the requirements of impartiality might override all competing reasons of partiality.[10] It seems true of partiality and impartiality that they (in part) have some normative force which manifest as requirements. We need to retain this feature and not rule it out from the start by deflating the very notion of what is "required" – nonetheless, the bifurcating approach does raise a real concern about the demandingness of "requirements." For instance, the requirements of impartiality appear so

[10] A requirement of partiality can also be demanding (e.g. putting yourself at financial risk to support your parents), but these instances are arguably less demanding than instances of impartiality because we often have an interest in promoting partiality (e.g. you might already have a disposition to support your parents, whereas you would not be similarly inclined to impartially help a stranger).

demanding that we are unable to meet them for the most part; perhaps our failure to meet such demands "just shows that people are not, in general, morally very good." (Scheffler, 1986, p. 531) Yet this defeatist approach leaves us in an awkward position of striving for moral sainthood (which we have little motivation to do) or discarding morality altogether. It seems something has gone wrong with the way the requirement of impartiality has been conceptualized that has made such requirements too demanding. If such demands are unreasonable, the conception of the requirements is unacceptable and "we should seek a less demanding one." (Scheffler, 1986, p. 531) We need a "new comprehensive viewpoint" (Nagel, 1986, p. 138) whereby requirements (understood as pervasive and overriding all other reasons) are not unreasonably demanding. This is the starting point for the revisionist approach.

An initial worry with adjusting requirements (in order to make them less demanding) is the charge of moral laxness. Perhaps morality really is demanding and adjusting them is our way of shirking what is really required of us. We then run the risk of not showing the proper reverence for what our requirements ("morally") ought to be (the bifurcating approach also faced the same problem of "morality demands what it demands"). As Nagel warns, "we must guard against self-deception and the escalation of personal claims simply to resist the burdensome moral demands."[11] (Nagel, 1986, p. 187) Perhaps it is possible to modify the requirements of impartiality in a way which takes seriously the demandingness of requirements.

A demanding requirement might be modified just enough so that it is not "more divorced from the practical realm than it really is." (Lichtenberg, 2010, p. 126) We need to bridge the theoretical demands (underlying the requirement of impartiality) with our various other practical reasons. Since requirements override all other reasons in our deliberative process, the sensitivity

[11] Nagel takes this to be a problem in our practical reasoning insofar as how we ought to act after considering all the perspectives – that is, deliberating from both our subjective and objective points of view.

to these other reasons must be built into the requirements themselves. This means that we do not want the requirement of impartiality to crudely override our other reasons as some external demand; rather, we want the requirement of impartiality to coincide with our deliberative process and our own internal commitments to impartiality (*e.g.* the equal moral worth of persons). The challenge then is finding the appropriate middle ground (for conceptualizing requirements) between the overly demanding and an overly lax. We need to incorporate impartiality (and "the detached, impersonal will that chooses total outcomes"), while including a full view of partiality (and "the full range of reasons that apply to creatures like us"). (Nagel, 1986, p. 185) A principled way of proceeding with the revisionist approach is considering what a "reasonable" demand is, and thinking about what the stipulations are for something to be "required." Principally, if something required, it must be possible to execute it through action (*i.e.* "ought implies can").

Judith Lichtenberg provides a useful analysis of "ought implies can," which helps us understand in what sense a requirement might be too demanding. A moral requirement might be too demanding if it demands something we cannot do. Lichtenberg gives us ways of understanding what we "can" do, or what it is possible for us to do. Minimally, there is the logically impossible, "such as find a married bachelor." (Lichtenberg, 2013, p. 126) More interestingly, there are physical and psychological impossibilities for most (except for the extraordinary) people, like running a four minute mile or strangling a baby. (Lichtenberg, 2013, p. 126-127) This is usually what we have in mind when we think of an ethical theory as being overly demanding. Likewise, there are impossibilities "relative to a certain scope or domain," where certain things are possible for some people but impossible for others – for instance, being able to perform certain medical operations due to affluent conditions and technological advances.

There are ambiguities that arise from how we understand possibility and impossibility in these different ways. Crucially, it is "the problem of distinguishing the impossible from the merely very difficult." (Lichtenberg, 2013, p. 128) Lichtenberg teaches us that we may be more individually limited in our capacities for meeting moral demands than those physically or psychologically gifted (or those in privileged circumstances). We need to be careful in our generalization of what is reasonable to expect from a person because it will vary person-to-person by contingencies (like circumstance or constitution). This is something to consider in our characterization of moral laxness or shirking moral requirements. Requirements must be reasonable for us to follow, and it is unreasonable to demand that we divorce ourselves from the contingencies of moral luck. Partiality is often saddled with accusations of moral laxness, and Lichtenberg clears the way for building a fuller account of partiality within the revisionist approach.

A fuller account of partiality must elevate its importance (as Wolf suggests), but it must do so without denying the pervasiveness of what is required (as Wolf does). We can do this by viewing both partiality and impartiality as sources of requirements of their own kind. Although it is reasonable to think that the requirement of impartiality demands priority over some reasons of partiality (like selfishness, nepotism, and other "immoral" types), it is fallacious to assume (without justification) that the requirements of impartiality overrides (and forecloses) other reasons of partiality (like parental care, filial regard, and other "moral" types). Recall that the reconciliatory approach couches the requirement of partiality within a more general requirement of impartiality.[12] Here, the essential parts of partiality – the "values, interests, and desires"

[12] For instance, your requirement of partiality as a parent can be understood as a more general requirement of impartiality, say, to be a good citizen (i.e. the requirements of being a good citizen entail requirements for the subset of citizens who are parents). The generality of the requirements of impartiality makes it widely applicable to many

(Wolf, 1982, p. 436) – are cut off and lost in order to fit them into the framework of impartiality. The bifurcating approach reintroduces the full body of partiality, but it does so by denying the pervasiveness of the requirement of impartiality (and their overriding force over other reasons) by encapsulating them within their own domain. The revisionist approach can go the opposite direction of elevating partiality so that both partiality and impartiality have the same normative status (that is, as a "requirement"). This conception of partiality requires a new perspective – the "point of view of individual perfection" (Wolf, 1982, p. 437) – which "yields judgments of a type that is neither moral nor egoistic."[13] (Wolf, 1982, p. 436) The idea is that impartiality is not the only class of requirements, and that reasons of partiality generate their own robust set of norms (of its own kind or species, but are requirements nonetheless).

"Sui generis" requirements of partiality

The reification of the requirements of partiality must be understood within the broader context of the revisionist approach. The requirements of partiality must be defined by carefully calibrating both the reasons of partiality and the reasons of impartiality such that we do not undercut the essential parts of either conception. As such, this new way of conceptualizing the requirements of partiality must be a joint effort between partiality and impartiality. We can still maintain the premise that requirements are pervasive without completely bifurcating partiality and impartiality by conceiving of an area of overlap between them. This results in a conjoined view of the relation between partiality and impartiality where we posit both distinctive

cases, but this comes at the cost of the sensitivity to context and the more specific nuances captured by partiality (which are only applicable to specific cases within specific contexts).

[13] N.B. Wolf is "pessimistic" (Wolf, 1982, p. 439) about the success of such comprehensive solutions, and thus sticks with the bifurcating approach.

requirements of partiality (thus far, this has been ignored) and distinctive requirements impartiality (thus far, this has been the norm).

R. Jay Wallace calls these distinct requirements of partiality "*sui generis*" (Wallace, 2012, p. 176).[14] He enters the discussion by critiquing the "reductionism" of the reconciliatory approach; more specifically, the idea is that moral requirements of partiality (sometimes called "special obligations" or "duties of love") should be understood in terms of the requirement of impartiality (like duties of vulnerability, duties of trust, duties of reciprocity or gratitude, or a general duty of beneficence). (Wallace, 2012, p. 175-179) Wallace argues that there is no "theoretical economy" (Wallace, 2012, p. 188) achieved by reducing the requirements of partiality into the more general requirement of impartiality. In fact, the reductionism of the reconciliatory approach does not have the explanatory power to account for reasons of partiality as we fully experience them. This counts as a positive point in favor of the *sui generis* view of partiality. Recall that impartial requirements are not a sufficient explanation for a parent taking care of their child. *Sui generis* requirements of partiality seem to make sense of such cases; that is, we have a further requirement (outside or independent of the requirement of impartiality) to those we care about, and this requirement of partiality coincides with our motivations.

Sui generis requirements of partiality have the same "deontic structure" as requirements of impartiality in the sense that they override our other reasons in the same way.[15] Again, you might set aside your selfish aims of taking a nap to take care of your sick child; moreover, you do not treat your choosing to take care of your child instead of napping as a mere preference, but

[14] Scheffler appears to be another proponent of this view, as he comments: "My ultimate conclusion is that any coherent morality will make room for partiality, not merely in the sense that it will permit or require partial behavior in some circumstances, but also in the sense that it will treat reasons of partiality as having direct moral significance." (Scheffler 2010, p. 100)
[15] Cf. Wallace (2013)

you treat it as a defeater to your competing self-interested claims to nap. Furthermore, you can point to your *sui generis* requirements of partiality as a sufficient explanation for your actions. There is a resonance between what you are required to do and what you believe is the right action to take (*tout court)*. To be clear, the notion of requirements we are working with (thus far) does not imply that it cannot be overridden by other competing requirements. I am not suggesting that the *sui generis* requirements of partiality always override requirements of impartiality. For now, I only want to establish that we have defeasible (*pro tanto*) requirements of partiality which are independent of the requirements of impartiality. It is entirely possible for requirements to clash, and this predicament also leaves us wondering how we ought to act.

By viewing some reasons of partiality as *sui generis* requirements, we seem to have made the tension between partiality and impartiality even worse. Now any conflicts are clashes between two incompatible requirements. This requires us to address a tension in practical reasoning between the requirements of partiality and the requirements of impartiality. If they both have the same normative force, it may be permissible to choose either. But this choice itself entails (some higher-order) normative deliberation, and it is not clear how we are to prioritize our requirements. At this point, one might point to this conflict as a further issue with viewing partiality as *sui generis* requirements. Others instead address this issue (in practical reasoning) by introducing modifiers and thinking of our reasons as more *intense* or *weighty* in certain scenarios.[16] After all, degrees of attitudes seem to fit better our moral practices – for instance, many people feel more intense shame at their own moral faults than those committed by others, or we may give a weightier value to promoting the interests of loved ones. This position resembles the structure of the bifurcation approach and echoes Wolf's deflation of the notion of

[16] Cf. Keller (2013)

requirements as overriding other reasons. Again, this is a plausible view (sometimes referred to as "moral particularism"), but again we want to take seriously the premise that some requirements of partiality have a general overriding quality. Modifiers are a useful way to think about the conflicts between reasons, but not between requirements. Some reasons are stronger (more intense or weighty) than others given by virtue of context or the nature of the reason. But strong reasons are different from requirements.

Requirements are supposed to override all other reasons in our deliberative field and provide an *all things considered* reason for action. With this in mind, it seems absurd to have two (partial and impartial) "requirements" which purport all things considered reasons for action if the two requirements push for different final actions. It is a bit confusing because requirements are the type of reasons which override other reasons, but what does it mean to have multiple overriding reasons? For instance, if partiality required that you hide your murderous son, and impartiality required you to turn him in, it is unclear what final action is "required" of you (insofar as an all things considered action). This role of a final adjudicator is given to morality. We must get clear on what it means to understand partiality (and impartiality) as a "moral" requirement.

"Morality" and requirements

The meaning of morality is quite vexed and there is a lot of ambiguity around the term. Incidentally, a vague notion has been brewing in the background of our discussion, especially in our talk of "requirements." Again, we have been using the word "requirements" to denote a special (overriding) normative force, and this word is often used in the context of morality to mean what is "morally required." But just as we have reasons of many kinds, we can have corresponding requirements of many kinds (*e.g.* rational requirements, legal requirements,

etc.).[17] Our discussion of requirements needs further clarification, especially when we are talking about multiple requirements. We will mostly stay away from any substantive accounts of morality, but some comments about the normative structure of moral reasons are needed. Specifically, we need to look closer at *all things considered* reasons for action, and what this means for requirements.

Moral requirements have the privileged status to override the deliberative processes and skip to becoming all things considered reasons for action. For instance, a moral requirement to tell the whole truth overrides any considerations to lie for personal gain (or other prudential reasons), and telling the truth becomes the all things considered action. [18] This is a loosely Kantian view of rationality in that requirements provide practical reasons for (all things considered) actions provided they are deliberating correctly about reasons. [19] We acknowledge the normative force of morality and this respect for morality regulates our motivations to act in accordance with morality (overriding other non-moral concerns). Otherwise, if moral requirements did not coincide with our own deliberation, then there would be a dissonance in our motivations between what we take to be the rational all things considered action and what morality insists is the required all things considered action. The view is that rational deliberation

[17] Scheffler writes, "Like other forms of regulation, morality simultaneously constrains and legitimates. On the one hand, not only does it limit what may be done in service of our projects, relationships, and group affiliations; it shapes our understanding of what counts as a worthy project or relationship or association in the first place." (Scheffler 2010,P. 128)

[18] This conflation of normative significance and moral judgments whereby moral reasons are not just one our other reasons to choose from (or non-overriding) closely resembles Michael Smith's "internalist" view of moral motivation. (cf. Smith, 1994)

[19] Kant holds that the fundamental principle guiding our moral requirements is the categorical imperative. Our other reasons (non-moral) are what Kant calls hypothetical imperatives, or a command which exercises our rational will towards an antecedently willed (not desiring or wanting, but actively choosing) end. The domain of morality binds all inescapably, and the normativity of non-moral reasons is entirely different (as Kant suggests) from moral reasons.

will always properly align with moral requirements; in other words, recognizing the overriding nature of moral requirements is a part of deliberating correctly. Moral requirements are the end product of our rational deliberative process, and it coincides with what one believes is the correct all things considered reason for action. On this view, all moral requirements are synonymous to all things considered reasons.

To be clear, not all moral reasons are requirements, nor do all moral reasons override all non-moral reasons; rather, the idea is that we give a special status to a special subset of moral reasons (the kind which overrides all other reasons and requirements). Morality can demand things we do not want to do, or things that are contrary to our immediate interests. The special status of moral requirements is not immediately obvious to us: “morality can coherently be challenged from the point of view of self-interest, and self-interest from the point of view of morality.” (Korsgaard, 1996, p. 63) We can be selfish, prejudiced, influenced by culture, and vulnerable to many psychological biases. This is why we need further deliberation of what count as moral requirements. The requirements of morality can demand that you do certain actions and override other more immediate reasons. It is like stopping you from reaching for the chocolate bar when we ought to be caring about our future health, and instead demanding that you eat some vegetables. As Stroud notes, overridingness does not imply that each of us "has overriding reasons to be a moral saint, or to perform supererogatory acts of extraordinary virtue, or to be morally perfect." (Stroud, 1998, p. 172) We cannot discount weakness of will or failing to act on our rational deliberation; that is, it is possible to make moral judgments and fail to act accordingly.

A confusion to avoid is thinking that moral requirements are just particular cases of *contingently* weighty moral reasons. Moral reasons which take the form of requirements do not

contingently override other considerations, rather they do so *necessarily*. Some claim that moral reasons are just one of a plurality of reasons, and that "moral requirements" are just the moral reasons which happen to override other reasons in a given circumstance. This is the wrong way of understanding moral requirements. On this view, morality is not given an elevated status but competes with our other reasons; that is, it denies the overridingness of moral requirements and instead opts for some other way of achieving an all things considered reason (like the bifurcating approach, this view allows one to rationally choose a non-moral reason). Again, the problem with these kinds of views is that the denial of the overridingness of moral requirements lowers the status of morality. Moral requirements are special and they are not just one kind of reason among other non-moral reasons from which we deliberate from.

It is up for debate why we give morality a special status – perhaps it is rooted in our identity or self-conception, or perhaps it has something to do with the way we interact with each other, or perhaps it is a primitive notion subject to no further analysis.[20] One convincing view is that morality acts as an exclusionary reason, or a "second order reason to refrain from acting for some reason." (Raz, 1990, p. 39) On this picture, morality may block the normative force of some other competing reasons even before they enter our rational deliberation, just as a parent would not consider the impersonal good of treating their child's asthma. Others who deny the normative significance of some fundamental moral claims (*e.g.* treating others as free and equal persons, or respecting the rational autonomy of agents) may demand that some justification is needed for morality to override their own initial desires. Such a skeptic might try to collapse the external demands of morality into internal reasons of prudence in order to derive the motivation

[20] I leave open questions of what wellbeing entails (it could be hedonistic, satisfying desires, or some objective list); moreover, the moral psychology, the decision procedure that determines "right" action, and the nature our practical reasoning are all important areas which I cannot get into.

to act morally from their own interest to promote their prudential reasons. This sort of extreme skepticism (of altruism) cannot be dissolved entirely.[21] To take a more systematic approach, the parameters of our inquiry starts with the minimal descriptive claim that at least *some* of our fundamental "moral" beliefs – even though we do not know how they are attained – are naturally and universally taken to be normatively significant to all agents.

This explication of our practice of holding moral requirements as overriding our other reasons is a good starting point. The upshot is that we can properly focus our attention on moral requirements and set aside our other reasons for the moment (since they would be overridden anyway). If both partiality and impartiality are constituent elements of what is required *by morality*, then we must get clear on what the requirements of partiality and the requirements of impartiality are in order to have a clear understanding of the totality of our moral requirements. Keeping all this in mind, we need to build our account of partiality around an account of impartiality (since they are both parts of the unified whole of morality), and then revisit our common acts of partiality to assess the account's plausibility.[22] The right view of partiality must explain how partiality fits into these basic ideas of moral impartiality.[23]

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[21] If the skeptic is genuinely convinced that the partiality displayed between mother and child is wrong, then the skeptic should have the burden of proof to show why we should be skeptical about such foundational beliefs. Against the skeptic, we can reply, "It requires but very little knowledge of human affairs to perceive, that a sense of morals is a principle inherent in the soul, and one of the most powerful that enters into the composition." (Korsgaard, 1996, p. 61)

[22] A lot of attention in moral theory has been devoted to impartiality and what it means to treat persons with equal moral worth. Morality demands a respect of this special status of persons (their dignity or rational autonomy), and reasons turn into requirements (and override other reasons) when they involve the "special" status of people. Moral impartiality can demand that nobody is privileged arbitrarily or without good reason because they are the same reasons (and requirements) for everyone. The requirement of impartiality is needed to keep partiality away from such dangers as the parent showing unfair nepotism in the workplace or the Nazi pushing an agenda of racial nationalism of the Aryan race. An account of partiality that fails engage with the requirement of impartiality would not know how far partiality ought to be taken. The danger is that this insensitivity to impartiality might blind us from being just or fair, especially in cases of love and care (which delude us into thinking that we are acting morally right). If reasons of partiality are to be understood as proper moral requirements, then some argument is needed to explain how and why partiality is compatible with morality.

[23] This will guide our answers to some of the following questions: Why do the requirements within relationships need to be understood as *sui generis* requirements? How do we understand these requirements in terms of relationships? What are the relevant considerations within the relationship for requirements of partiality?

In the next chapter, we will take a closer look at the requirements of partiality, and this will bring us back to the three views of partiality. This time, however, we will consider how we can map them onto our revisionist approach, and whether they might be conceived as sui generis requirements. We will assess each view of partiality, but I argue that the requirements of partiality are best understood in terms of relationships. In order to better understand how relationships can ground requirements of partiality, I explore the nature of relationships while trying to make sense of this account of partiality within the backdrop of the requirement of impartiality. The revisionist approach makes sense of how partiality (*qua* relationships) can fit together with impartiality by retaining the pervasiveness of requirements (the best feature of the reconciliatory approach); moreover, it is in equal standing with impartiality by reifying sui generis requirements of partiality (the best feature of the bifurcating approach). It is a story about the normativity of requirements, and its normativity is gained by morality. This means that our (partial and impartial) requirements are informed by "morality" in the sense that what is "required" is defined by morality. By and large, my aim is to provide a general structure which is compatible with various substantive normative theories. More specifically, I suggest a view of moral partiality which starts with relationships and is buttressed by a substantive normative theory involving wellbeing.

Chapter 3

An assessment of the three views of partiality (*viz.* projects, relationships, and individuals) will show the strengths and weaknesses of each view. With this, I construct a new view of partiality based on the relationships view.[1] There are two dimensions to consider for the right view of partiality: first, the phenomenology dimension of partiality, or capturing the subjective valuing (the "specialness") of the individual; second, the justification dimension of partiality, whereby the special value of the individual is explainable in objective terms (*i.e.* so you can justify your partiality to somebody else). I argue that relationships must be understood as objectively valuable, and an account of relationships as a shared project (directed towards mutual wellbeing) establishes this claim. This objective value defends the requirements of partiality from charges of arbitrariness by providing support for the claim that the beliefs associated with partiality (*e.g.* about the special value of intimates) are perfectly rational. The relationship understood as a shared project additionally preserves the "specialness" of the (intimate) individuals, which captures the phenomenological dimension of partiality. Finally, to justify this view of partiality as having an equal normative standing with the requirements of impartiality, I suggest that the ultimate function of both partiality and impartiality (and the resultant picture of morality) is based on wellbeing.[2]

[1] The relationships view manifest in different ways depending on the approach, and a part of the argument for the revisionist approach is its justificatory merits and its theoretical cogency for some accounts of morality.
[2] The account of partiality *qua* relationships must work with the question of justification. The requirements of partiality can be justified as an all things considered reason for action if and only if it is also what morality requires. The resultant justification of prioritizing partiality must be understood with reference to a particular conception of morality as essentially linked with wellbeing (which can be construed as an aim, essential component, or even as a necessary implication of relationships).

Assessing the Three Views of Partiality

We have some idea of how to fit partiality and impartiality into one coherent account (*viz.* reconciliatory, bifurcating, and revisionist), but we must also consider how they make sense of the views of partiality. This is not as straightforward as just instantiating a particular view of partiality within one of the approaches. Some combinations are outright incompatible – for instance, the reconciliatory approach would have a hard time fitting any of the views of partiality. We are looking for the right combination. I have argued that the revisionist approach works best; now I argue that the relationships view works best with the revisionist approach.[3]

Method of Assessment

The task now is to discern which view of partiality is the most plausible view. The ultimate aim here is to have some account of conceptualizing partiality as proper (*sui generis*) requirements. This means that the right view of partiality must be able to correctly identify the required, forbidden, and irrelevant forms of partiality. But why should we understand reasons of partiality as a *moral* requirement? For the requirements of impartiality, we can appeal to commitments of the equal moral worth of persons which we hold to be rationally (for internal consistency) required or perhaps it is "morally" (*e.g.* for interacting with others) required. There is no obvious analogous appeal that the requirements of partiality can make.

The general method of assessment used here follows the spirit of Rawls's "*reflective equilibrium*." (Rawls, 1971, p, 18-22; 1993, p. 8, 28, 45) The aim is to resolve discrepancies between our judgements about particular cases and abstract principles (or other considerations) until we arrive at a consistent and coherent equilibrium. For instance, we might be strongly convinced that religious and racial intolerance is unjust (Rawls, 1971, p. 19), and any principle

[3] I also concede that the individuals view works well on the bifurcating view.

conceiving such intolerances as just might be "pruned or adjusted." (Rawls, 1971, p. 20) We might understand "unjust" in this case to coincide with the requirement of impartiality, and that intolerance is incompatible with the idea of the equal moral worth of persons. This methodology is used to justify moral judgments for particular cases and general rules by assessing their implications and how consistent they are with other existing judgments, but the existing judgments are also put under scrutiny against new judgments.

This method of reflective equilibrium needs to start with some salient set of beliefs (even if they are later abandoned). Let us call these beliefs "*foundational*." While we do not need to commit ourselves to some comprehensive epistemology, we do need a closer look at what the general conditions are for a belief to be counted as knowledge (or pass our assessment). Some beliefs are true because they are evident from our other beliefs, but other beliefs are "basic"[4] and rely on some foundational (axiomatic) beliefs. For instance, the belief that your child exists in front of you is a basic belief insofar as it does not arise from a series of inferences (*e.g.* extrapolating from a belief about your visual faculties or deducing the existences of other minds). The point is that basic beliefs do not need further evidence or justification if they are derived from reliable foundational beliefs. As long as the foundational belief (*e.g.* the proper function of our faculties) is held to be generally reliable, they can be counted as sources of knowledge until we face some defeater (*e.g.* the belief that we ingested some hallucinogen).

We also have foundational *moral* beliefs. For instance, the belief that impartiality leads to the morally right action – barring some defeater (which are often fallaciously ignored), we generally count such beliefs as moral knowledge. Turning to partiality, it is clear that we have *particular* moral beliefs about partiality (*e.g.* taking care of your children is good), but it is

[4] Cf. Plantinga, 1993

unclear what *general* (or reliably foundational) moral beliefs unify these specific cases of partiality. One such general belief might be that *care* (or love) leads to morally right action, and we can argue that this care is distinctively a belief about *partiality*. We might think that caring about others can be understood in impartial terms (*e.g.* a parent cares about all of their children equally), but recall that this way of understanding care is inaccurate and leads to a "schizophrenic" motivation for action. The phenomenology of caring for somebody is specific and well-defined whereby the focus is solely on a particular target.[5] Care is essentially a belief about partiality because it sets somebody a part as the special target of care. This kind of special care is incompatible with ideas of impartiality, especially if we understand "giving special care" to mean giving *more than equal* care to someone over everyone else. We can even tie the idea of care to self-care:[6] as many writers have suggested, we have fundamental agent-relative moral beliefs (*e.g.* we care more that we are not the channels for evil or vicious actions, and it matters a great deal to us that we are the origins of certain goods). [7] We can take this general epistemological approach for taking some forms of partiality (taken as putatively true beliefs) as warranted knowledge.[8]

Still, there might be a looming worry about the reliability of our beliefs in partiality in general. This worry about partiality comes from a more general skepticism about the theoretical

[5] To say that we "care" for humanity or mankind is a misleading way of speaking, and it does not reflect the practice of "caring" we are talking about.

[6] Jeske takes the reasons we care about intimates to be analogous to the reasons we care about our future self. She argues that the relationship we have to our future self is "the type connection that results from private projects, projects which are their statement involves an essential reference to the agent whose they are." (Jeske, 2001, p. 340)

[7] Scheffler (2003) calls it an "agent-centered prerogative," whereas C.D. Broad calls it "self-referential altruism" (1985). They both suggest a general commitment to have a privileged regard for one's self.

[8] A more general worry with this epistemological approach is that it is circular. If some beliefs (the starting point for reflective equilibrium) are taken as knowledge in virtue of the reliability of other more foundational beliefs, then the reliability of the foundational beliefs is taken dogmatically or there is a regress of even more foundational beliefs. We might suggest that the reliability of the foundational beliefs is taken by a process of reflective equilibrium, too; however, this just pushes the problem back again. This is a general problem for "coherentist" epistemology. I do not think that the problem of circularity and the problem of regress make this epistemological approach spurious; after all, even if it is circular, it might be a "virtuous" circle which leads us to new knowledge.

currency of phenomenological judgments. For instance, the special love you feel towards your children might be an unreliable belief (perhaps objectively false). Often subjects are vulnerable to cognitive biases and irrationality, so there is a general skepticism towards beliefs that rest on phenomenological data. Not only would this cast doubt on our initial beliefs of partiality, it would affect the whole method of reflective equilibrium; that is, we might end up being justified in having wrong beliefs. But we should not start by poisoning the well on some judgments just because they are phenomenological. We often trust the testimony of others given their general reliability (or lacking any defeaters), even if know that this can lead to false beliefs. You might trust your colleagues in their area of expertise just as we might trust others in their expertise of their own phenomenological experience of partiality.[9] Your foundational beliefs pertaining to your colleague might be the existing body of beliefs that your colleague is a reliable source of testimony in their area of expertise. By the same token, there is a sense in which phenomenological facts are perfectly objective: "one person can know or say of another what the quality of the other's experience is." (Nagel, 1974, p. 442) We can generalize our phenomenological beliefs to others who share the same modes of realizing these phenomenological beliefs (*i.e.* the perceptual faculties shared by humans). This means that we have some warranted foundational (or universal) notion of partiality that we start with, and then we can proceed to subject them to scrutiny by comparing them with other cases or new data sets.

With respect to Rawls, he identifies foundational beliefs through an "*overlapping consensus."*[10] Rawls appeals to this idea to address the worries associated with pluralism, but we can apply his approach for reasonable disagreements about partiality. The general idea of an overlapping consensus is that people can share or agree upon the same evaluative concepts. We

[9] Cf. Nagel, 1986;1995
[10] Cf. Rawls, 1987

might all agree that (say) taking care of your own children is an essential form of partiality; moreover, we might arrive at this conclusion from a plurality of worldviews (or "comprehensive doctrines"). For example, a Spartan warrior's worldview may vastly in differ specific ways from a modern Christian's worldview, but their separate worldviews may have an overlapping area where their general beliefs coincide (*e.g.* showing partiality towards their children). The suggestion is that there is some overlapping consensus in what we take to be essential features of partiality (even if there is a number of different worldviews). The appeal to objective (universally shared) beliefs makes partiality justifiable to other.

What we are using for justification is abductive reasoning – often coined as the "inference to best explanation." The cumulative body of prior beliefs of partiality from specific cases gives us a general (defeasible) reliability in our faculties of discernment for new cases of partiality. We can jettison beliefs about partiality if there are sufficient defeaters, but we can reasonably hold onto our general beliefs about partiality and tentatively shift the burden of proof to the skeptics. Nevertheless, any extreme result in the direction of either partiality or impartiality is cause for alarm as these extremes do not hang together with our common moral beliefs. A part of this task is descriptive: what we are doing when we compare the three views of partiality is clarifying what counts as a shared belief about partiality. [11]

The Projects View

The projects view does not cohere well the phenomenological aspect of partiality, and it suggests an odd view of motivations (or our conation). Recall that the projects view says that our reasons of partiality are generated from our projects and we are accordingly motivated to act in

[11] Those who still insist on denying the normativity of may then approach this section while taking reasons of partiality as a counterfactual: "If there were instance of partiality – of which I am unconvinced really exist in the actual world – they would look like this..."

ways that promote our valuable projects. For example, completing my thesis is a valuable project to me, and this motivates me to work on it a little bit every day, even if I could be running or dancing instead. We can explain why I choose to work on my thesis (instead of a million other things) in terms of the subjective value of my project, and we can account for my reasons of partiality towards my thesis in this manner. More generally, valuing something triggers your motivations and provides reasons for action – for instance, valuing the taste of chocolate gives you a reason to eat the piece of chocolate. But this explanation seems too crude and simplistic. Reasons of partiality are more nuanced than reasons associated with projects, so they cannot be fully explained in terms of projects.

An essential part of partiality is its other-regarding focus (or target of value), but the projects view seems inherently self-regarding (sometimes referred to as "prudential"). Imagine the following dilemma: you must either take an opportunity of a lifetime overseas or stay home and take care of your sick mother.[12] This appears to be a genuine dilemma – on first glance, there is no obvious answer – but the solution is not very difficult on the projects view. This is an odd result. According to the projects view, you must merely consider which project is more important *for you*; thus, if your filial project is not particularly conducive to your identity or reason to live, then your reasons of partiality towards your career project outweigh taking care of your sick mother. This insouciance is unacceptable. We can clearly distinguish between the reasons of partiality around my personal projects and the reasons of partiality around my loved ones. We would not think visiting our sick mothers would play some role in or promote some valuable project (like being a good son or daughter).

[12] Cf. Sartre (1946)

Even more, our motivations seem to take an entirely different form when we compare projects (which make essential reference to ourselves) to moral actions (which are completely other-regarding). According to the projects view, however, the visit to my mother must be attached to some project, and the difference in motivation between my projects and my mother must be explained as a matter of the degree of importance between projects. But this explanation seems insufficient, especially when we think about what really compels us to visit our mother. The projects view seems insensitive to the special (intrinsic) value of persons. It seems odd to frame your reasons for visiting your sick mother as stemming from some project you undertake. A filial project may be one class of reasons, but it is not the relevant action guiding reason. There seems to be an entirely different motivating force, and your focus is directed at something other than how people fit into your projects. The projects view fails to explain our reasons of partiality in a way which excludes the relational aspects of partiality.

The projects view runs into the further problem of fitting impartiality into its picture. One explanation the projects view can give is that we can take a reconciliatory approach by thinking of projects as a part of an aggregate project of promoting the impartial good. Unfortunately, this explanation not only results in an odd account of our motivations (as self-regarding), it also results in a deficient account of partiality. Many forms of partiality are incompatible with promoting the impartial good (*e.g.* going to the movies instead of doing charity work), so many ground projects would be ruled out. Another approach might demarcate the requirement of impartiality from our projects, and it might claim that our projects are encapsulated within a separate domain from what is required. The problem is that projects do not give rise to other-regarding ("moral") requirements. For example, I may ostensibly have reasons of partiality towards my mailman and send him a Christmas card, but he does not play into any ground

project of mine; similarly, I ought to finish my thesis for my own projects, but I have no overriding requirement to finish it.[13] This means that the projects view cannot generate the requirements of partiality. One may bite the bullet and hold to these conclusions, but this view of partiality in terms of projects leads to a radical moral theory (reminiscent of something like ethical egoism or Ayn Rand's objectivism). Still, there seem to be theoretic benefits of conceiving our valuing of projects as *sui generis* values, but the projects view lacks the machinery for a comprehensive picture. Although taking projects as a starting point is incoherent, there is more work left to be done in understanding how self-regarding forms of partiality are to be integrated in our conception of partiality. In sum, viewing the moral requirements of partiality as an extension of our self-interested projects is deeply problematic.

The Individuals View: A Critique of Keller's individuals view

An advantage with the individuals view is that it seems to be the most phenomenologically accurate view in terms focusing on the right value. The individuals view correctly reports that our reasons of partiality are produced by the special value of the individual. Indeed, our motives are different towards an intimate as opposed to a stranger. Consider again the example of visiting your sick mother. The motivation seems to stem from the (intrinsic) value of your mother (instead of the value of the relationship or the value of the role she plays in your projects). Keller writes that individuals are the proper bearers of value as they have the "power to change the normative situation of other agents." (Keller, 2013, p. 100) They have states of affairs that are valuable and provide you with reasons to care about them. This corresponds with our phenomenology of partiality and accurately reflects our motivational schema.

[13] Cf. Keller (2013) p. 27-28

However, a related weakness of the individuals view is that it has trouble justifying the subjective (phenomenological) value in objective terms. When asked why we show partiality towards a particular individual rather than anybody else, the individuals view says that something about the individual makes them distinctively special enough to direct our focus towards them. For example, you might have reasons of partiality towards your wife because she is beautiful, shares a history with you, and has the unique ability to cheer you up when you are feeling sad. You might initially argue that these valuable qualities are the source of your reasons of partiality towards your wife; after all, these valuable qualities can be explained in objective terms since everybody can recognize the value of these qualities. This also means you have a good justification for your partiality: you have reasons of partiality towards your wife and not towards some stranger because only your wife has these qualities. This kind of argument is specious. It seems that the value of external qualities is objective, but it is too unstable. What if somebody who can cheer me up even better comes along – should you then trade up and show partiality towards that person instead? What if her beauty fades – should you up and leave?[14] External properties of individuals are too volatile to be the only grounds for partiality. Even when facts about an individual (or our attitudes towards an individual) change, we are still partial towards that individual instead of anybody else; in these cases, we cannot come up with a good explanation as to why we do this strictly on the basis of the individual. In the end, our partiality

[14] Keller is correct in that we are often not conscious of the process when entering a relationship. We are often driven by desires and do not stop to analyze our actions in much depth. As a matter of fact, superficial qualities for loving somebody are important – for instance, you might be attracted to your lover's eyes, admire your friend's tenacity, or see your father as a role model (simply in virtue of the fact that he is your father). These are extrinsic qualities are a part of the "specialness" of our intimate, or else we are left loving a "Lucite globe." (Hurka, 2010, p. 153) But these features cannot ground *moral* partiality.

is attached to something other than valuable extrinsic qualities, and it seems the reason we value certain individuals over others is largely arbitrary. [15]

This arbitrariness may be morally culpable in the sense that there may be more important considerations which make strangers more deserving of our partiality. Keller attempts to patch up many of these worries with the peculiar claim that individuals are comparable but incommensurable – or, in Keller's words, a person is like "a beautiful garden or magnificent oak." (Keller, 2013, p. 104) Keller identifies this approach with Kantianism (Keller, 2013, p. 95) and argues that this view coheres well with the individuals view.[16] He explains that, with respect to the value of the individual, "you cannot properly appreciate it while also weighing up its demands against the demands made by others." (Keller, 2013, p. 95) Although Keller's aim is not to explicate the specific content of our requirements of partiality, one wonders if his account of partiality has any room for impartiality.[17] For one, it seems to crudely exaggerate the demandingness of our requirements of partiality. When special reasons of partiality are enabled, it seems all bets are off for our other impartial reasons. Does that mean you ought to ignore your own interests and focus only on the interests the special individual? Should you ignore charity overseas or your local community, and instead shower lavish gifts to special individuals while ignoring strangers in need? Even more problematically, should you be so concerned with a special individual's wellbeing that you ought to lie, cheat, and steal from other not-so-special

[15] Sometimes this problem is characterized as why we would not "trade-up." For instance, imagine an exact copy of your child, except this child is a bit more courageous or smart.
[16] This leads one to wonder if the individuals view endorses some version of the bifurcating approach.
[17] The individuals view is completely incompatible with the reconciliatory approach. Keller states that "there does not appear to be any plausible impartial principle from which the moral standards of partiality, as we actually find them, can be derived." (Keller, 2013, p. 110)

individuals?[18] The most serious issues are with the individuals view's approach to impartiality, and how it can justify its partiality without circularity.

Although most people take partiality to be a common sense part of ordinary moral practice, others disagree and argue that partiality is far from commonsensical and needs to be justified. Keller does not really respond to the question of how partiality gains its place at the table as a *moral requirement*; rather, Keller just digs his heels deeper and asserts the primacy of partiality. To put it more succinctly, when Godwin asks what magic there is in the pronoun "my," Keller's answer is that *it just is magical*.[19] Keller calls this the "primitivist strategy." He explains, "At some point, we need to say that certain moral standards of partiality simply do exist." (Keller, 2013, p. 111) This statement itself is vague and far from self-evident.[20] It is true that some beliefs are foundational, but beliefs about the specialness of individuals are not foundational beliefs (in the same way beliefs about equal moral worth of persons are). Some further argument is needed to justify beliefs about partiality or to connect such beliefs to more reliable foundational beliefs. Keller stops the explanatory buck too fast.[21]

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[18] Keller takes this step in anticipation of a counterargument towards the phenomenology of partiality which asks if all of our partial moral norms are subjective. For example, if our phenomenology of partiality was oriented towards our neighbor's child rather than our own, would we have partial moral norms towards our neighbor's child? In response, Keller says that this would be wrong in virtue of the fact that society is structured in a way that deems this inappropriate. (Keller, 2013, p. 110) Furthermore, Keller claims that the morality of partiality is "fragile." (Keller, 2013, p. 106) This grounding in historical contingency teeters on the edge of cultural relativism – for example, if we imagine something like Plato's communal parenting society, parents would not any special obligations to their biological child. This leaves the requirements of partiality unjustified and it is unclear what makes them *moral requirements*.

[19] This is similar to the reconciliatory approach, but it start with partiality which is an even more problematic starting point than impartiality.

[20] Further issues come to light when we consider the fact that Keller's account appropriates a version of "particularism." (Keller, 2013, p. 99) This contrasts the view that general principles or requirements are needed to dictate our actions. The basic story is that the specific relation to a special individual "enables" a special set of motives and reasons towards that special individual. (Keller, 2013, p. 68) Oddly, Keller adds that "it is possible to know that a reason exists without knowing what that reason is." (Keller, 2013, p. 89)

[21] Keller is apprehensive towards taking a revisionist approach to partiality. It is hard to establish more robust requirements of partiality without positing more robust value to special individuals, but the individuals view lacks the resources to do so. Despite these issues with the individuals view, Keller maintains that the value directed

The Relationships View: problems

The relationships view seems to have issues with capturing the phenomenological aspect of partiality. It might not seem so odd to cite our relationships as moving us to act in accordance with our reasons of partiality; indeed, it is common parlance to refer to "*our* marriage," or, "*our* friendship," as motivating factors. But language is sloppy and can lead to confusions. Keller suggests that we are wrong in assuming that there is a "tight conceptual connection" (Keller, 2013, p. 32) between relationships and reasons of partiality, and that relationships do not straightforwardly generate the right reasons of partiality.[22] (Keller, 2013, p. 42) Indeed, the appeal to the relationship as the moral justification ends up with an odd moral motivation (or focus): it seems to take relationships as instrumental and detaches the personal aspect of relationships, like the love and care for the individual (the projects view also faces this problem). Unlike the individuals view, the relationships view seems to put the focus of the individual in the periphery, and it seems more concerned with preserving the relationship (or something gained from the relationship) above and beyond the special individual. To put it another way, when we think about the phenomenology of partiality, our intentional states are directed towards the individual instead of the relationship. Again, the right explanation for visiting your sick mother is your love and care towards *her*, and not to preserve the relationship (or discharge some moral

towards the individual (rather than the relationship) "does generate a set of a set of demands." (Keller, 2013, p. 105) The primacy of the value of the individual appears to give a coherent picture of how the norms generated are directed at the proper source of value. This requirement is, Keller continues, "a duty to respond in particular ways to the demands generated by the special value of a particular person..." (Keller, 2013, p. 105) This is a plausible view, and perhaps Keller has the modest goal of uncovering partiality (without any justificatory or normative force). Despite the fallibility of intuitions, it is true that requirements must still be sensitive to our context and they must make reference to our human nature. Perhaps Keller is less concerned with what the content of these moral norms are, and is more concerned with establishing their justification on their own right (like the reconciliatory approach starting from partiality instead of impartiality).

[22] For example, if a stalker has reasons of partiality towards their victim, do we have to admit that there is something "special" about the stalker's relationship with the victim which begets motives and reasons to act? If not, how do we explain the stalker's actions? Other problem cases include exploitive or oppressive relationships, and distant relationships (like with in-laws or ex-lovers). It would be silly to think that these kinds of thin relationships generate the same reasons of partiality as I would have with my spouse or friend.

requirement generated by the relationship). It seems our clumsy way of tying reasons of partiality to relationships mistakenly attributes the specialness to relationships instead of the individual. The relationships view puts relationships on a pedestal while ignoring the members involved – as such, Keller suggests that the relationship view is "misanthropic." (Keller, 2013, p. 54) The relationships view, minimally, must address this odd implication of shifting the focus from the individual towards the relationship itself.

A second problem relates to the problem of justification and how relationships generate requirements: what is it about relationships that generate moral requirements? The relationships view explains that we are partial towards a particular person because we share a special relationship with that person. One move then is to appeal to a (seemingly innocuous) factual premise that relationships are (objectively) valuable; after all, relationships promote goods, like exercising virtues, mutual flourishing, or social stability. So, the argument is this: reasons of partiality are justified towards (special person) P because the relationship shared with P begets valuable thing Q. This general formula can be used to sketch more nuanced views of how moral requirements are generated. Questions of value are closely tied to our reasons for action, and we need to get clear on the conceptual scheme by which reasons for actions are conceived as moral requirements.[23] There is a *special* value individuals have within a relationship, and this value

[23] We follow the so-called "value-based" view. Here we might distinguish between "reasons fundamentalism" and "value-based" views, and these are distinct ways of approaching the status and relation of reasons and values. (Keller, 2013, p. 45) The "reasons fundamentalism" (e.g. Scanlon, Parfit, Jeske) might look more elegant in that they come closer to commonsense or distances itself from abstruse theories of value, but it commits itself to realist and intuitionist metaethics (which is a lot of theoretical baggage). The reasons fundamentalism takes reasons as fundamental and not subject to further analysis; obviously, this is controversial, but there is less to assume. Proponents of this value-based view have in-house disagreements on what count as relevant considerations for justifying partiality and the resultant consequences. For instance, Raz takes our ontology to be relevant in taking relationships as fundamentally valuable, where as Scheffler and Kolodny couch valuing in a particular psychological picture. Additionally, Raz and Scheffler have a view which results in values begetting robust moral duties. The value-based views share starting points in that value is always prior to the reasons, but they take entirely different directions in their views which cannot be crudely lumped together. By and large, the relationships view succeeds in providing an answer to the issue of justifying partiality.

generates reasons for action (which take the form of the requirements of partiality). But this special value must be justifiable to others in the same way the requirements of impartiality are justified to others – namely, in terms of values we all hold, like the value of persons (as equal moral agents).

This leads to a proposal for a modified version of the relationships view. Of course, any novel view must deal with the challenges raised in this chapter. These worries will be carried on and addressed through a closer look into the nature of relationships. There is undoubtedly something special about individuals, but this specialness is not enough to ground the requirements of partiality. Further justificatory patchwork is needed to build an account of the requirements of partiality around the specialness of individuals. My aim is to continue this line of justification in light of the machinery relationships have to offer; more precisely, I argue that relationships explain why acting on the special value of an individual is justified. The whole aim of establishing a new relationships view is to build a new conception of partiality (and its requirements) that is compatible with revisionist approach (of relating partiality and impartiality). I try to carve out a place for (*sui generis*) requirements of partiality and explain why intimates are in a separate normative class where strangers are not.

A New Relationships View

The focus of this discussion is on the kinds of relationships which generate *sui generis* moral requirements of partiality. There are many instances of relationships which generate this kind of moral requirements, like friendships, families, and perhaps compatriots. These "special" relationships have a common structural element which unites them (a sort of family

resemblance).[24] We will unpack the structure of these relationships and relate them to our understanding of partiality (as a moral requirement).

The role valuing is central for our account of requirements. The phenomenology of partiality indicates that those we are partial towards have a *special value*. In order to tie the special value of individuals to the claim that they generate *sui generis* requirements, the special value must be understood in a way which can be justified to others. The worry is that if the special value of your loved ones is only apparent to you, then you cannot defend your requirements of partiality from the claim of arbitrariness. I argue that relationships change our epistemic states insofar as revealing the special value of the individual, and this change in our epistemic state is perfectly rational and not arbitrary. Moreover, I argue that relationships are best understood as a shared project which strives towards (objectively valuable) mutual wellbeing. This account provides a phenomenologically accurate (*i.e.* preserves the specialness of intimates) and objectively justifiable (*i.e.* in term of objective value) account of how the requirements of partiality are generated.

Valuing

What sort of "valuing" generates reasons that are *sui generis*?[25] A crucial part of a special relationship is that there is something that has *special value* – it could be the product of a relationship, the relationship itself, or perhaps the people involved. It is important to identify what exactly is of special value in a relationship and what it means to value it. This can help us

[24] The difficultly with finding some unifying thread, in part, has to do with the vagueness of terms like "love," "affection," "attitudes," "disposition," or, "caring" – many times the usages overlap or bleed into one another. For instance, the moral requirements between parent and child would differ from the moral requirements between friends, but they retain the same structure of a *sui generis* moral requirement of partiality.

[25] By "valuing" we can mean something general, like "a complex syndrome of dispositions and attitudes" – including "dispositions to treat certain characteristic types of consideration as reasons for action" including "certain characteristic types of belief and susceptibility to a wide range of emotions." (Scheffler 2010, p. 102)

follow the connection between special values and *sui generis* requirements. We can have various attitudes towards values: we can promote them, honor them, express them, or respect them. In other words, when a person accepts a reason for doing something "he attaches value to its occurrence" in a "means to end relation." (Nagel, 1970, p. 35) The way you value a relationship (or the members of the relationship) provides you with new reasons: reasons to perhaps change your beliefs, reasons to care for each other's interests or wellbeing, reasons to value new things, and so forth. Still, valuing and requirements are not straight forward: just because we value a relationship, and the value generates reasons for action, it does not mean that those reasons for action are (moral) requirements. We need to identify the right kinds of valuing (and the right kind of reasons).

It is also true that relationships have instrumental value – like contributing to psychological (and possibly physical) health, developing certain skills, or perhaps promoting some Aristotelian notion of flourishing. But a core idea of the truly valuable relationships in our lives is that they are valuable *for their own sake,* or must be done unselfishly or without some instrumental end – let us use the term "*intrinsic*" value. [26] The idea is that "if the value is intrinsic it attaches derivatively to what will promote the likelihood of the act." (Nagel, 1970, p. 35) So our reasons to act are generated from our desire to promote these intrinsic values (and some reasons take the form of moral requirements). Relationships are not themselves the thing of value, but their value is derived from the individuals involved. It seems odd to think about relationships as a means for our own gain. [27] Indeed, a part of the phenomenology of partiality

[26] Special relationships are not like two colleagues writing a paper or a divorced couple trying to raise their children – in each of these cases, they have no affective state motivating their value for one another and their subjective valuing seems instrumental (i.e. they use each other for some purpose and nothing else).

[27] As Keller repeats, there are cases where we can have reasons of partiality without relationships and vice versa. For one, being loyal to a coffee shop does not generate duties in the proper sense (Keller, 2013, p. 36); and another, you do not need to have special duties to count somebody a genuine friend. (Keller, 2013, p. 36)

involves caring for individuals for their own sake (or fostering relationships for their own sake).[28]

Diane Jeske provides a helpful way of distinguishing between "objective" and "subjective" values (and corresponding reasons to promote the value). Jeske calls subjective reasons "Humean," and she defines it as such: "We will understand a state of affairs as having subjective value for a given agent x if and only if x subjectively values (desires, has as a subjective goal or end) that state of affairs." (Jeske, 2001, p. 330) This is to say that subjective valuing is inherent in you and nobody else, like the value you attribute to running a marathon. (Jeske, 2001, p. 329) Since *your* subjective valuing of running a marathon is not valuable to anybody else, subjective valuing can be arbitrary or irrational. In contrast, objective (or "consequentialist") reasons do "not depend upon any contingent facts about any particular agent." (Jeske, 2001, p. 333) This means that you can justify your objective reasons (*e.g.* rescuing a drowning child) since they are reasons for everybody (because they are valuable for everybody). We can map these categories of subjective and objective valuing onto *intrinsic* values.

First, subjective intrinsic values are those values which are relative to us. Certain projects are only valuable to the person holding them – for instance, baking the perfect cake or writing private poetry (any corresponding objective value is incidental). In relationships, we often find such cases of subjective valuing associated with some phenomenological aspect of care or positive feeling towards the special individual. We can cast these relational forms of subjective

[28] This is all a very loose way of characterizing special relationships, but any of these claims can be filled out to claim something much stronger or much weaker than what we have here.

valuing under the umbrella of "*affective states*" (*i.e.* emotions, attitudes, dispositions, *etc.*).[29] Affective states are a constituent element of attributing special value, and they elicit different moral emotions within intimate relationships. This can make us feel a special pride at our child's recital, or a special hurt from the betrayal of a spouse; moreover, they trigger other subjective values, like valuing the peculiarities your friend's humor to be charming (when nobody else would), or valuing the superficial imperfections on your partner to be lovable. These often move us to action which sometimes corresponds with moral requirements, but this is not always the case. Indeed, "love is a kind of valuing," (Kolodny, 2003, p. 150) but thinking of our requirements as generated by purely *subjective* value is problematic. We may subjectively value a beautiful piece of art: we may defend or preserve it, but they do not give rise *moral* requirements.[30]

The main problem is the "arbitrariness" of subjective valuing. Affective states are too unstable to ground moral requirements. Subjective reasons (derived from subjective value) are largely constituted by an agent's contingent psychological states. These can be shaky and capricious. For instance, your love for your spouse can fade and your subjective valuing can change at a given moment (*e.g.* if you acquired some depressive disposition), and this would mean that you are no longer bound to follow the requirements of partiality. Conversely, your

[29] Let us avoid further taxonomies of the "specialness" of love (like "agape," "eros," "philia," etc.) and stick with a neutral definition: "to be positively oriented towards something in one's desires, actions, or feelings, or more generally, in one's attitudes." (Hurka, 2003, p. 13) Moreover, let us stay neutral to the role of affective states (some say it is a cause or effect of specialness, others say it one species of specialness, and others say it is the entirety of specialness).

[30] This can also be thought of as dispositional rather than occurrent, like a higher-order volition – for instance, you might be generally committed to the value of studying philosophy even if there is an occasional (and temporary) disillusionment with the value of studying philosophy. A moral emotivist or expressivist might object to this characterization of dispositional states, but these are beyond our current concerns. The claim is not that affective states are not important at all, nor is the claim that strictly following some dispassionate Kantian "good will" is an attractive ideal. Indeed, certain emotional states are needed within a relationship, and a relationship lacking in all affective states is damaged.

love for your spouse might be so intense one moment that you might do evil things for your loved one (*e.g.* to prefer the destruction of the world over a scratch on the little finger of our loved ones). As such, affective states cannot solely inform us of what our requirements are. Again, a mother might feel compassion to prevent the pain of her child's trip to a dentist, but she has stronger reasons to promote the child's oral health. [31] Partiality is "not merely in our preferences or affections but in the reasons that flow from some of our most basic values." (Scheffler, 2010, p. 106) For our purposes, we need to at least be committed to saying that the subjective valuing (associated with affective states) is an important phenomenological feature of care (or love); however, it is not the only feature, or else relationships would be too unstable to ground requirements of partiality. The requirements of partiality must be grounded in more robust values. [32]

Second, objective intrinsic values are the kinds of values which everybody has a reason to promote. There is a sense in which everybody is intrinsically valuable, and we can identify this with impartial value.[33] It is true that we value a loved one intrinsically in an impartial sense; however, we value everybody this way, and there seems to be some additional *special* valuing attributed to intimates. The special valuing tied to partiality cannot be reduced to merely objective value because intimates have claims that are fundamentally different from all others. Fortunately, there is another way of valuing intrinsically and objectively which recognizes the "specialness" of some individuals over others. This way of valuing can be best understood in the subjunctive mood. It is objectively valuable in the sense that it is valuable for everybody if you

[31] The good of a relationship must be different from, say, counting blades of grass or eating saucers of mud.
[32] Jeske also echoes this sentiment: "It is clear, however, that appeal to subjective agent-relative reasons is not sufficient to explain the nature of our reasons to care for friends out of proportion to the objective good of doing so." (Jeske, 2001, p. 335)
[33] e.g. Kantian respect for the dignity of persons as rational or grounded in a person's dignity as autonomous agents (*qua* some responsive, rational capacity to set our own ends)

were exposed to the value, but it is not the case that everybody is actually exposed to this value. Another way to see this point is through the lens of "*situational"* (objective) value: you can have subjective reasons to rescue a drowning child, but these subjective reasons are still impartial in the sense that anybody in your shoes would have the same reasons. (Jeske, 2001, p. 331) They make some reference to the agent, but this reference is not *essential* in the sense that some values are enabled by circumstance. Often, circumstances (like proximity or having particular abilities) make certain (objective) values apparent to you, and only when they are apparent do they give you reasons to act (or not to act) in certain ways. For instance, your proximity to the drowning child can enable you to see the value of the child, and this presents you with reasons to preserve this value by rescuing the child. This situational value is similar to the way we construe the special value of intimates, but a key difference is that we attribute considerably more value to intimates than we do to strangers. It is not obvious how this extra special valuing can be classified as some dormant objective value. This arbitrariness might be a symptom of our capricious affective states and something we ought to avoid, especially because it does not reflect any actual objective value.[34]

The "arbitrariness" problem

A part of what it means for something to have special intrinsic value is that it provides you with some persistent attachment despite costs. [35] We might call this "*loyalty*" (sometimes

[34] Again, what magic is there in the pronoun 'my'? (Godwin, 1793, p.83) The Archbishop might have some objective value, but our chambermaid mother only has subjective value – what answer can we give to Godwin to save our mother over the Archbishop?

[35] This valuing entails a sort of investment or sacrifice – whether it is one's emotional premium (vulnerability, focus, energy, etc.), or the time one spends with each other or more concrete cost (money, personal projects, other relationships, etc.).

also called "reasons of fidelity").[36] This helps us distinguish our attitudes to strangers from our attitudes to intimates by virtue of the special value of intimates. We might say that we are loyal to this special value, but the problem is that seems arbitrary if we are the ones assigning this special value to the ones we happen to care about. For instance, the objective value of buying a gift for your child might be significantly less than using that money to feed starving strangers, yet we are loyal to the special value of our loved ones anyway. The requirements of partiality need to be buttress so that they are not merely based on subjective valuing; rather, they must be values which everybody can recognize, or in a way justifiable to everybody (since this special valuing generate *moral* requirements). This kind of objective justification to makes moral partiality defensible against claims that it is immoral or non-moral. Even though we would like to act upon strictly objective values, our loyalty towards intimates pulls us in a different direction. We can call this the "*arbitrariness*" problem of partiality.[37]

Some may try to justify our subjective valuing in impartial (strictly consequential) terms by pointing to some overall objective value. In the end, perhaps giving gifts to your child promotes some greater objective value than giving that money to starving strangers. We might tell a story about how members of a relationship rely on each other, reveal the deepest parts of themselves to each other, and trust that the other will not harm them. Moreover, requirements might arise from mutual expectations, like some contract (based on vulnerability) that gives the other person the authority to make claims or demands. This way of thinking about relationships

[36] Whatever we conceived to be value-bearers can be the objects of loyalty. This can mean that we can be loyal to one's principles, a particular deity, or professional roles. Underlying sui generis requirements are a distinct type of valuing associated with loyalty. Still, this is not to say that we are loyal to the value, but value is an implicit part of our judgments; in the end, our loyalty is to the person or relationship.

[37] We want to do better than just saying that partiality is "primitive" or just intuitively prior to impartiality (in a question begging way). We need a conception of loyalty which reflects our phenomenology of relationships and also anchors our sui generis requirements of partiality.

seems justifiable to everybody since it does not merely rely on subjective valuing; rather, this view relies on objective features of agreeing to limit each other's freedoms for some transaction that is mutually beneficial. This account of relationships is untenable.[38] Not only is this way of calculating objective value tenuous, the main (*a fortiori*) problem is that we do not think that our loved ones are special through some cost-benefit analysis (it thereby misses what is special about the particular loved one apart from everybody else).[39]

The move then is to appeal to a shared history, or "encounters of aid." (Kolodny, 2010, p. 50) The subjective valuing needs to be somewhere grounded in objective values in order to have some objective justification, and for this we might appeal to some "historical furnishing." (Kolodny, 2003, p. 148) These are objective features which everybody can acknowledge, but they are also situationally objective in the sense that these objective features are contingently exposed to you. Still, it is not clear why a shared history should be thought of as *valuable,* and this poses a problem for grounding moral requirements of partiality. A shared history might

[38] Although the literal idea that love is transactional (like a contract or promise) is deeply counterintuitive, we may still use this model as a useful analogy. We do make agreements throughout relationships, like the vows in a wedding or negotiating where to spend the holidays. We might think that it is inappropriate to think of explicit consent as the basis of our requirements of partiality; however, special relationships involve claims on one another which seem to involve some tacit consent, like making claims to your spouse's time and attention. Relationships are sustained through a series of actions and not a discrete moment; in this sense, they built upon an implicit agreement (it may imply consent but the actions themselves are not sufficient to be a sign of explicit consent). Agreements can be "open-ended" (Kolodny, 2010, p. 51) and subject to change (events in a relationship can influence our actions and beliefs moving forward), and they can stipulate some agreed upon aim. In this sense, "loyalty" is not taken in a restrictive sense of some discrete commitment, but it is taken as a reflection of what we genuinely value.

[39] This brings us back to main critique of the relationships view: it is not phenomenologically accurate. Your reason to take care of your friend is not a freestanding consideration to promote objective value; rather, it is uniquely generated within the context of your relationship. Special relationships are not like the relationships we have with a barista or a doctor, which can be easily replaced or traded – nor are they flimsy or easily dissolved in the same way a contract or business partnership can be. This way of looking at relationships seems egoistic and instrumental, which is an odd way of thinking about valuing loved ones. Although this leads to a view of partiality which is easily reconciled with impartiality, it is too objective and fails to understand our subjective valuing correctly. It seems to fetishize relationships in the sense that its focus is on the relationship as such, instead of the special value of the individuals which the relationship functions to enable. The object of focus (the relationship) seems inappropriate in this case. Relationships indeed have a layer of impartial requirements, but there are more than just the typical requirements reducible to solely objective valuing (e.g. vulnerability, implicit expectations, etc.). There are additional sui generis requirements of partiality on top of the impartiality.

explain why we have relationships with particular people, but it is unclear what justificatory work it can do; in other words, a shared history can be descriptive but not normative. We need some further justification for why our valuing a particular individual (over somebody else) begets requirements to them (and nobody else). History is indeed an objective feature which explains our practice of valuing relationships, but there is nothing objectively valuable about these features themselves. History is just as arbitrary as special (subjective) valuing. Nevertheless, this suggests a potential solution: perhaps subjective valuing can be vindicated from the charge of arbitrariness if the conditions for subjective valuing are not arbitrary.

Sarah Stroud proposes just such a solution by arguing that the valuing practices within relationships are not arbitrary (or "irrational") because intimate relationships have essentially different "doxastic practices." (Stroud, 2006, p. 8) Stroud's view of epistemic partiality can offer a response to the claims of the irrationality or arbitrariness of partiality. Within the context of a relationship, "we draw different conclusions and make different inferences than we otherwise would (or than a detached observer would)." (Stroud, 2006, p.9) Partiality involves an epistemic change (*i.e.* partiality regulates what you ought to believe) which make beliefs about partiality rational. One belief might be that our intimates have special value above and beyond the value of strangers – if such beliefs are rational, then reasons of partiality are not arbitrary. Our intimate relationships with people give us privileged ways of interpreting beliefs, or to "put a different spin on them, highlighting certain aspects..." (Stroud, 2006, p. 11) For instance, "you may possess general knowledge about your friend which can help to place his actions in a different light" and "the additional information you possess seems to improve your epistemic position." (Stroud, 2006, p. 19) This epistemic change seems to be situationally objective because your relationships towards your loved ones place you in a position to change your epistemic states.

This change provides you with a new way of interpreting your belief about your intimate's value. Believing that your intimate has special value is not irrational since you do not have any defeaters to your foundational beliefs; that is, your faculties of reasoning are working properly, and one indication that they are working properly is that we can recognize reasons of impartiality (and subsequently override them). This privileged knowledge is derivative of "general, impartial epistemological principles" and it would vindicate one's "doxastic stance in epistemic terms and cancel the charge of bias." (Stroud, 2006, p. 18) This makes partiality non-arbitrary, and it is consistent with the phenomenological of partiality.[40]

Consider a more concrete case (à la Wolf): a mother hiding her murderous son. Her partiality towards her son may affect her epistemic state in a way that seems more reasonable. [41] First, she might "try to discredit the evidence being presented" (Stroud, 2006, p.12) and try to find a way not to believe that her son committed a crime. If that does not work, then she should accept the "base facts and move to the interpretive level," like trying to put a "different spin on what he did." (Stroud, 2006, p.12) There are different ways of rationalizing or alternative routes of interpretation which are reasonable to take. She might think the action was out of character for her son or see some mistaken reasoning (perhaps he believed the killing was justified as an honest mistake). This takes special effort which we would not care to offer strangers, and "these alternative explanations may not be obvious, and we may need to devote considerable mental

[40] This might be considered circular in the sense that your reasons for taking on "differential epistemic practices" is "not itself a relevant epistemic reason." (Stroud, 2006, p.16) But we understand that one of our foundational beliefs about morality is that we owe something more to our loved ones "than an impartial and disinterested review of the evidence where they are concerned." (Stroud, 2006, p.7) Stroud continues, "A good friend does not defend her friend outwardly (which we earlier agreed a good friend would do) while inwardly believing the worst of her friend. We do not conceptualize the good friend as manifesting a split of this kind between behavior and belief when it comes to her friend." (Stroud, 2006, p.9)

[41] Still, Stroud clarifies, this does not involve "of willfully believing the false, or denying the incontrovertible" or "a total imperviousness to damning evidence." (Stroud, 2006, p.9) This is different from mere affective state because our commitments can be rational; indeed, blind faith or unquestioned loyalty seems like a vice. Moreover, loyalty seems defeasible or able to be overridden by loyalty to others or competing reasons of a sort.

resources to working them up and considering their merits." (Stroud, 2006, p.9) Seeing loved ones as a good people is a basic part of a loving relationship, and we can take this as a basic belief without our beliefs "being continually renewed by objective proofs of that proposition." (Stroud, 2006, p. 15) Special relationships must be understood in terms essentially having different doxastic practices. A part of our fundamental beliefs of partiality is that we see our loved ones as more valuable, and we can use this fact to vindicate partiality from the charge of an unjustified "biased shading of data." (Stroud, 2006, p.14) The change in epistemic state enables the recognition of the special value of intimates and loyalty to this special value is not arbitrary.

It seems to have somewhat pulled apart the charge of arbitrariness from the question of justification. Partiality within a relationship is not arbitrary because it changes our mode of reasoning to reveal the special value of intimates. So construed, this special value is situationally objective in the sense that anybody in the same position (epistemically) would recognize the special value. But even if partiality is not arbitrary, it still looks like it is "largely a function of historical and psychological accident." (Whiting, 1991, p. 23) Even if our beliefs about partiality are not arbitrary, this does not mean that we are *justified* in acting on them. Intimate relationships might provide you with *sui generis* reasons, but it is possible that we ought to ignore these reasons or that morality requires that we follow other (impartial) reasons. We can unpack what is morally required by taking a closer look at the "specialness" of relationships and how moral requirements arise within a relationship.

The structure of relationships: a shared project

It is not clear what it is about a relationship that binds us to requirements of partiality (generated within the relationship). Remember that a justification of partiality must appeal to objective reasons, but it must also capture the essential phenomenology of relationships (which values intimates over and above strangers). To meet all these conditions, we can understand the structure of the relationship as a *shared project*. This makes sense of how requirements of partiality are generated by understanding the special value of intimates in terms of a valuable shared project. [42] Moreover, such a project must be understood as essentially other-regarding: this means that the other individual is the central focus and their wellbeing is intertwined with your own. The main advantages of this account of relationships are that it provides a sufficient justification for the requirements of partiality and that it is phenomenologically accurate.

There is a "specialness" to shared projects which differentiates them from our other individual projects.[43] Like our other projects, shared projects are goal oriented; however, the ends of a shared project are exclusive and its good aims cannot be found anywhere else. They are a distinct feature of *intimate* relationships, but non-intimate relationships can resemble this model (*e.g.* contracts, professional roles, societies, etc.). A shared project within an intimate relationship is fundamentally irreplaceable: unlike our other projects, we do not (and ought not) jettison shared projects by mere preference (which makes them robust enough to generate requirements), and they are abandoned at high costs to the members. Relationships can have

[42] Again, *objective* value allows me to justify my actions to you, whereas subjective value does not have this feature (if it does, it is only incidental). I may, for instance, claim to have a requirement to purchase a sport car for my child, and I may further claim that this requirement overrides my competing reasons to give money to starving people overseas. But I cannot justify this requirement because the specific reasons (presented to me through my affective states) to spoil my child are subjective (or agent-relative) reasons which you do not share. That fact that it is *you* who does not share this value is not of particular importance; in fact, my justification does not ride on anyone's *agreement*, but that there is some universally held ("objective") value.

[43] We should have in mind something like Williams's ground project.

many specific aims, but the general aim is enhancing the other person's wellbeing (for its own sake). This idea of a shared project must be understood as fundamentally different from two strangers using each other to achieve their own ends. What makes shared projects among *intimates* special is that there is an element of additional good that emerges – what G.E. Moore calls) an "organic unity."[44] This fundamental difference is the answer to the phenomenological problem with relationships: the proper focus of our valuing is not the relationship itself, but it is the objective value of the loved one's wellbeing.[45] Each member must not hinder the interests of others or focus on advancing their own wellbeing; ideally, it must be other-regarding at least insofar as prioritizing the other over the self.

Intimate relationships blur the line between self-regarding reasons and other-regarding reasons. Broadly speaking, we need to be invested in the loved one's point of view and be moved by the same thoughts and feelings – for instance, being sad when they are grieving, or being happy for their success. Some take this a step further and take this account quite literally, where the conceptual difference between *your* interests and *my* interests disappear entirely.[46] A collective action in such cases would include shared mental states; we might not necessarily go this far, but there is indeed some sense of solidarity in the decisions taken towards the mutual end of wellbeing. The upshot here is that the specialness of the other person in the relationship is an extension of the specialness you accorded to yourself.[47] We have a collective focus (or

[44] "The value of a whole must not be assumed to be the same as the sum of the values of its parts." (Principia Ethica, 1903, p. 28)

[45] Scanlon agrees, "We would not say that it showed how much a person valued friendship if he betrayed a friend in order to make several new ones, or in order to bring it about that other people had more friends." (Scanlon, 1998, p. 88-89)

[46] Jennifer Whiting argues that one's moral attitudes to friends should be modeled after "the virtuous person's attitude towards herself." (Whiting, 1991, p. 4)

[47] The advantage here is that some writers will readily admit agent-relative permissions towards one's self, yet are hesitant to permit it for one's intimates. By conflating the interests of one's self and the interests of one's intimates, we can extend agent-relative permissions to our intimates without trouble.

intention) towards the same end, and our requirements towards that end are discretely found in within the particular relationship. This means that our own interests should not be in conflict with our intimate's interests. The relationship (*qua* shared project) is the mode to combine the decision making procedure of the two individuals.

Shared projects have a dimension of intermingling or conjoining agency, and this is crucial for understanding partiality as a *moral requirement*. By having some agreed upon aim, members within a special relationship have their agency bound up with one another. Just like a bee having a collective mind with the rest of the hive, special relationships have a shared agency to pursue a valuable shared project. [48] Since they are responsible for promoting the other's interests, it follows that each member has a combined role in deciding how the other member ought to act in order to achieve the shared end (of mutual wellbeing). This gives both members (within the intimate relationship) authority to override all the reasons confronting the other member, but *only* insofar as it promotes mutual wellbeing. This authority (over the other member) is granted in virtue of their responsibility to promote the other member's wellbeing.[49] This trust in the other member is why we are loyal to them, and it in part explains why relationships contribute to our personal identity; that is, an intimate relationship regulates one's actions and informs one's conception of wellbeing.[50]

[48] They are like "noncontractual role obligations," which are rooted in "our conception of ourselves as citizens and our conception of ourselves as sons or daughters, brothers and sisters, and so forth." (Hardimon, 1994, p. 345)
[49] This authority is necessary when there is a dissonance in shared agency. This dissonance (e.g. caused by faulty reasoning, weakness of will, psychological disorders, etc.) is resolved by appealing to their shared end of mutual wellbeing. For instance, if an intimate develops a drinking problem, and you know that this frustrates their aims of wellbeing, you might make it difficult for them to access another drink; moreover, this paternalism would be justified because you have the responsibility to ensure your intimate's wellbeing. It is possible for you to be wrong about how the other's wellbeing can be best achieved, just as it is possible for your intimate to terminate the relationship and revoke your authority.
[50] Indeed, a large part of our self-conception is built on our relationships – for instance, you might identify yourself as a parent, a partner, or teacher. Moreover, intimates can push your self-conception in different directions, perhaps by introducing you to a new hobby or challenging your character – they change us, and they are a part of our self-identity. Although our identity is partly constitutive of the shared agency, there is still a sense that your own identity

Thus far we have some pieces of what a relationship looks like: it has some impact on our self-conception, it has some special intrinsic value, it has some phenomenological affective state, it has some shared history, and it has some shared aim of wellbeing. We can begin to unify these ideas to tell a story about how requirements of partiality are justified. In order to justify partiality (as a moral requirement) to the requirement of impartiality, we must assess the function of these requirements with respect to morality. The function of the requirements is crucial for determining which requirement to follow – that is, we follow whichever requirement better fulfills the function of morality (e.g. maximizing value, following some maxim, promoting wellbeing, etc.). Taking something as a requirement is indicative of what we are trying to achieve, and this reveals the purpose of taking some reasons as overriding other reasons.[51] For instance, a utilitarian might take the right act as that which promotes the most overall welfare and that donating money will achieve this; as such, she would take the act of donating money as a requirement. However, if we did not know that she was a utilitarian, and we only had the fact that she takes donating money as a requirement, we would need to figure out what the function of her donating money is. In other words, to find out which requirement (partiality or impartiality) is synonymous with what is morally required (*i.e.* the all things considered action), we need to see which requirement (partiality or impartiality) is serving the identical function as morality. This is exactly what we need to do with the requirements of partiality.

is conceptually distinct. You still have your own projects and you are still partly responsible for your own wellbeing.

[51] For instance, the purpose or function of following a diet is to direct me to the valuable state of healthy living – my acting in accordance with a diet is justified because of the value of healthy living.

Morality and Wellbeing

The shared projects account of relationships provides a justification for the requirements of partiality because it ties relationships with wellbeing. The justification for acting in accordance with a requirement is the value it is meant to achieve, and I understand the ultimate value as wellbeing.[52] A requirement of partiality is justified as a moral requirement if and only if it achieves wellbeing. What unifies our judgments about what "morally required" (or the morally right action) is that they instantiate the general property of promoting wellbeing. I understand wellbeing to be the principal aim of what is morally required whereby other requirements (of partiality and impartiality) are more fine-grained ways of instantiating this aim.[53]

Charles Taylor (echoing Aristotle) writes, "Man is a social animal, indeed a political animal, because he is not self-sufficient alone, and in an important sense is not self-sufficient outside a polis." (Taylor, 1985, p. 190) This relies on a descriptive claim about what kind of animals we are and what counts as flourishing or wellbeing for us.[54] This is a crucial premise for the idea that relationships are inextricably with wellbeing, and it implies that the recluse or hermit misses out on an essential part of wellbeing.[55] Wellbeing is a value which everybody can

[52] Take, for instance, Raz's "humanistic principle," which states that "the explanation and justification of the goodness or badness of anything derives ultimately from its contribution, actual or possible, to human life and its quality." (Raz, 1986, p. 194)

[53] "Eudaimonia" is the operative term: it means to "flourish," to "thrive," to be happy, or be an excellent human and lead the best life possible. A life must have some ultimate goal, and this is happiness or wellbeing. (cf. MacIntyre, 1984)

[54] Wellbeing does not have to be monistic in referring to one single thing, but it can refer to a group of things, like pleasure, virtue, achievements, and so forth. Understood in perfectionist terms, each human being has a shared comprehensive goal to "pursue the greatest development of all human beings at all times" (Hurka 1993, 55-60) All things equal, we weigh the wellbeing of others equally with our own, and whatever is left open we use to pursue our own wellbeing. Rawls has a similar idea in what he calls the "Aristotelian Principle" (Rawls, 1971, section 65) in that a part of human psychology is to realize their capacities; moreover, if just institutions are in place, then the desire to act justly will follow from attachments to people and institutions integral realizing one's own good. Note that this is the most contentious part and we need not go this far for our approach to the relation of partiality and impartiality to work. I just find it the most plausible view of partiality.

[55] "A life devoid of such attachments would be flatter, less full, less human than a life with such attachments. It would also be ethically impoverished: a form of life in which an importance ethical dimension was lost." (Hardimon, 1994, p. 353)

recognize simply in virtue of being human. There are essential forms of value we vitally engage in which are "rooted in our nature as social creatures." (Scheffler 2010, p. 107) Some forms of wellbeing can be achieved by following the requirement impartiality, like goods of political life or general charity. However, other forms of wellbeing are discretely achieved within intimate relationships, and this entails following requirements of partiality. Following moral requirements must guarantee wellbeing for us (or it would be unreasonably demanding), and wellbeing is often guaranteed through the requirements of partiality found in intimate relationships.[56]

When the costs of impartiality are too high (against our wellbeing), the wrongness of impartiality (and the rightness of partiality) increases; again, we "can" be impartial only insofar as it is "reasonable for people."[57] We might be universally committed to the impartial equal moral worth of all, and there is some minimal threshold to care for the wellbeing of strangers, but there is a lack of direct responsibility for wellbeing between strangers as compared to intimate relationships. Perhaps we have a moral requirement to defend the direct wellbeing of strangers (*e.g.* save them from immanent death), but not the general conditions of wellbeing (as we do for intimates) Partiality needs special moral protection. You can have reasons to assist a

[56] We can further motivate this view of relationships by exploring the terminating conditions (the reasons for exiting relationships). The terminating conditions of a relationship point to what is going contrary the purpose of a relationship, and this is most revealing to what the aims of our shared projects are. Inherent in the idea that something is going "wrong" is a conception of what it means to go "right." Consider, for instance, the drug addicted parent giving up their child for adoption because they know that they cannot take on the project of caring for the child. In this instance, we see that the child's wellbeing is the reason for terminating the relationship (moreover, perhaps the parent would feel guilt or suffer from failing to raise the child) – the relationship can no longer fulfill its purpose of mutual wellbeing. Next, consider the romantic relationship: often the grounds for termination are phrased as irreconcilable differences, but we can understand this to mean that the relationship no longer contributes to promoting either person's interests. A less loaded example would be a lover who must choose between a flourishing career overseas and staying with their partner: whatever bitter-sweet decision is made, it is made with reference to mutual wellbeing. What buttresses shared projects and gives normative force to the requirements generated is the aim of wellbeing.

[57] As our self-regarding reasons change to other-regarding reasons, and the requirements of morality (i.e. to step away from our self-regarding reasons) become natural to us. This is similar to Rawls's idea of "conception-dependent desires," (Rawls, 1996, p. 82-84) whereby an agent incorporates some principle into ones larger conception, like conceiving oneself as a member of a society and taking on the responsibilities as a part of one's identity.

stranger in their pursuit of wellbeing as a fellow member of the moral community, but you are not morally *required* to give up your own wellbeing (inextricably tied to those more intimate to you) to help a stranger. This would be unreasonably demanding. You may choose to act on these reasons, but you would acting upon requirements you do not really have.

In this chapter, we have developed a view of partiality in terms of the relationship by conceiving of relationships as a shared project directed towards wellbeing. This view of partiality preserves the special subjective valuing associated with the phenomenology of partiality, but it also provides a justification for why partiality ought to have the same normative standing (*i.e.* as *sui generis* requirements) as the requirement of impartiality. The value of the wellbeing generated from a relationship is accessible to everybody, and it is reasonable for everybody who is faced with this special value to act upon the reasons generated from this value. Moreover, within the relationship, some of these reasons of partiality take the form moral requirements (or all things considered actions directed towards mutual wellbeing). Wellbeing ought to guide and inform our moral theorizing. The idea is to integrate wellbeing with the requirements of morality so that it is possible to live a good life, and a necessary component is the *sui generis* moral requirement of partiality (*qua* the relationships view). In the closing chapter, I revisit some objections and consider the resultant moral terrain.

Chapter 4

The view of morality developed here is ultimately concerned with promoting an agent's wellbeing. It is not the case that the requirement of impartiality always leads to wellbeing. Some have reinforced the claims of strict impartiality (as a unifying guide to right action) with claims of a divine creator ensuring that impartial morality coincides with wellbeing.[1] Without a divine commander, we have to appeal to some other objective standard to fix into place what is morally required of agents. Wellbeing can provide the normative force to make actions morally required, and it can guide agents in their decision procedure. For instance, if a putative (partial or impartial) requirement does not promote an agent's wellbeing, the agent can be sure that it is not *morally* required (or else it would be too demanding). Here, I unpack this normative grounding and consider some objections.

Normative Grounding

But to what extent (and by what force) are people compelled to comply with the requirements of morality? Korsgaard calls this "the normative question." (Korsgaard, 1996, p. 23) There is a further issue with the place of *sui generis* requirements of partiality in our practical reasoning.[2] Kant appealed to God to guarantee that following the moral law is good for

[1] Euthyphro's justification for choosing impartiality over the partiality owed to his father is grounded in a divine command theory ethics. This strategy seems to resolve the issues posed to the stricter forms of impartiality by appealing to a divine commander. On this view, the top priority in our life is to obey divine commands, and this is never outweighed by reasons of partiality (what is sometimes called "lexical priority"), like our own projects or ends. Or we might look at Abraham sacrificing Isaac; here, too, Abraham obeys a divine command over his paternal care and love for Isaac. In the New Testament (cf. Mark 3:31-35; Luke 8:19-21), we find similar insouciance to partiality: when Jesus's mother and brother wanted to speak with him, Jesus replies, "Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?" A divine command theory seems to be able to accommodate the stricter forms of impartiality. This strategy, however, is largely absent in contemporary ethics.

[2] Practical reasoning refers to reasons directed towards some action. This involves looking at the relationship between beliefs, conative states, and emotions. The exact role of these mechanisms involved in practical rationality are hotly contested – perhaps some Kantian notion of a "good will" acting as a regulative decision procedure for consistent reasoning, or perhaps it is some Aristotelian deliberation through practical wisdom, or perhaps it is some

humans.[3] We do not have a similar explanation for why following moral requirements guarantees our wellbeing, yet we claim that the value of wellbeing gives us overriding reasons for action. Recall that I identify "moral" required with reasons which are "required" all things considered; that is, if we are reasoning correctly, we would accept that these requirements have overriding authority over us. One solution follows what Korsgaard calls, "the appeal to autonomy." (Korsgaard, 1996, p. 25) This Kantian inspired approach (*e.g.* taken up by Rawls) argues that the normativity of moral claims is founded on the idea that "the laws of morality are the laws of the agent's own will and that its claims are ones she is prepared to make on herself." (Korsgaard, 1996, p. 25-26)[4] This is indeed compatible with the sketch of partiality I have proposed, but it does not help us determine how far we should take our sui generis requirements of partiality. [5] After all, the crux of problem is our inability to determine which requirements (partial or impartial) we should bind ourselves to, and this seems like an impasse in practical reasoning.[6]

The view of normativity which seems more appropriate for our purposes is what Korsgaard calls, "reflective endorsement."[7] (Korsgaard, 1996, p. 25) Rather than concerning ourselves with whether a moral principle is true or false, the reflective endorsement advocate

Humean sentiment or passion which somehow informs our moral judgments. There is no consensus on what the resultant implications for morality are, and the implications bleed into such areas as moral dilemmas, comparing values, and the fundamental questions in moral psychology.

[3] Kant says that being moral often does not lead to happiness but it primes us to be virtuous to be primed for happiness, and God exists for the coexistence and unity for virtue and happiness. Kant argues that God (the "*summum bonum*") must make following the moral law leads to happiness; moreover, Godwin's God (the authority) can predestine our world so that following the legislation of direct consequentialism also leads to an agent's personal wellbeing.

[4] She continues, "This means that the principle or law by which you determine your actions is one that you regard as being expressive of yourself." (Korsgaard, 1996, p. 83)

[5] Korsgaard comments, "It is the conceptions of ourselves that are most important to us that give rise to unconditional obligations. For to violate them is to lose your integrity and so your identity, and no longer to be who you are. That is, it is no longer to be able to think of yourself under the description under which you value yourself and find your life worth living and your actions worth undertaking." (Korsgaard, 1996, p. 84)

[6] "Theoretical requirements say what we must think, and we must conclude from given premises, but it is not clear in precisely what sense they say this." (Nagel, 1970, p. 20)

[7] This is associated with thinkers like Hume, Mill, and Williams.

seeks to show that morality is good for us, or that we have (all things considered) good reasons to accept it. We have grounded our source of morality in our nature as social creatures and we are bounded (or motivated) by morality insofar as it contributes to our objective wellbeing. As Korsgaard notes, "The reasons sought here are practical reasons; the idea is to show that morality is good for us." (Korsgaard, 1996, p. 25) When moral requirements conflict, we need some higher-order aim to resolve this conflict – here we can appeal to a teleological scheme of whatever contributes more to wellbeing.[8] The view argued here is that the right action is determined by how much it promotes wellbeing for the agent (as well as others). So construed, the ultimate aim of impartiality, too, is to promote the wellbeing of all persons. We want some sort of integration between practical reasons and what is moral required, and this involves what one ought to do and what actions make sense in light of our moral judgments. While we have reasons to promote one's own wellbeing (and the wellbeing of one's intimates), we need to take seriously our impartial reasons regarding the wellbeing of strangers (who have claims and are equal members of the moral community as oneself).

Even if there is no "best" (or "rational") option, we can make a decision on grounds of exercising one's will or autonomy.[9] Values are underdetermined in some respects, but we can still make some comparisons on each dimension and make general assessments. As Raz

[8] This has a consequentialist structure of practical reasoning: the good is prior to the right. On the teleological conception of normativity, morality is a distinctively normative domain present in maximizing conceptions of rationality. This contrasts a view which prioritizes right action according to some unifying property (e.g. impartiality). Also, the teleological view can allow deontological constraints (or requirements).

[9] Ruth Chang teaches us that values are quantifiable in the sense of comparing the relative weights. This assumes that we have consulted ethical principles, higher-order desires, or theories of decision procedure. Dilemmas are difficult because they have different dimensions of value which appear incommensurable to us, and it is not a simple matter of summing up the value of each choices and comparing them. (Chang, 2004, 2-3) Some values "hang together" (Chang, 2004 p.4) and other values do not, and the fact that their component "Frankenstein" (Chang, 2004, p. 18) values do not have unity makes them incomparable. It is certainly hard to compare taking care of your sick mother or fighting for your country; certainly, casting them in general terms – principles like children should help their mothers – does not help us much and glosses over the important details in the case (we have a plurality of reasons in each case: fidelity, beneficence, etc.). But it might be a step too far to say that they are incomparable.

suggests, it is crucial to distinguish "incomparability" from "indeterminacy" or the vagueness of value. (Raz, 1986, p. 324)[10] However, our view of the relationship may have the machinery to develop a way of discerning whether or not the requirements of partiality are legitimate and warrants priority over impartial requirements: namely, whether or not it promotes objective wellbeing. This requires subscribing to a view of intimate relationships influencing our epistemic capacities. Sometimes we are justified in the belief that our loved ones are more important than the requirements of impartiality.[11] Morality ought to acknowledge this if it best promotes our wellbeing.

Objections

Some problems arise with this new view of partiality. First, partiality is taken to generate requirements of their own kind, and having additional requirements adds another layer of demandingness to morality. Second, it is not clear that following the requirements of partiality can be squared with many competing definitions of morality; in fact, some results of this new view of moral partiality seem counterintuitive. Third, the common conception of impartiality is undercut by this new view partiality, but many well-established moral theories rely on such conceptions of impartiality. I suggest some preliminary responses to these three objections.

[10] In the case of being offered money to leave your spouse, "what has symbolic significance is the very judgment that companionship is incommensurable with money," and the "belief in incommensurability is itself a qualification for having certain relations." (Raz, 1986, 349-352)

[11] "Even if your intimate did wicked things, you would love them in a way to wish them a better moral person." (Cocking & Kennett, 2000, p. 295)

Are the requirements of partiality too demanding?

We might worry that partiality, taken as extraneous requirements, constrains our actions even further. This is sometimes referred to as the "*voluntarist challenge*."[12] The worry is that we can only incur duties or obligations from explicit agreement, and many of the moral requirements of partiality thrust upon us. We might accept the normative power of certain general moral ideas (like treating others as free and equal or respecting rational autonomy), but partiality seems to suggest more specific claims. Consider our filial requirements: the moral requirement of partiality to take care of your aging parents seems morally binding even though you did not explicitly agree to them.[13] The requirements of partiality are in this sense more demanding, and they need to be justified – perhaps in terms of prudential (egoistic) desire or derived from our more general moral ideas.[14] The reconciliatory ("reductionist") approach might make sense of this by appealing to a broader duty of gratitude or duty of care owed; however, the ("non-reductionist") *sui generis* view of the moral requirements of partiality needs some further explanation for why these requirements are morally binding.

In response to the voluntarist challenge, we might cite some constituent element of an intimate relationship which confers a sufficient degree of assent to these requirements of

[12] cf. Jeske, 1998

[13] This "atomistic" way of thinking of the self is often implicit in modern views of liberalism (mainly Rawls), and this approach has been criticized by "communitarians" (cf. Taylor, 1985). One takeaway is that we should be careful when thinking about ourselves (and our wellbeing) that we do not detach ourselves from our many communities and social context, nor should we try and think of ourselves as abstract autonomous choosers. We should not obsess over the good of autonomy, and many of the circumstances and goods in our moral lives are involuntary and a matter of luck. Our meaningful relations are an essential ingredient for welfare, and indeed there is some loss of autonomy associated with it; however, this does not have to be a bad thing. For instance, a loving relationship involves promoting wellbeing, which often involves promoting the other person's autonomy; sometimes promoting the other's wellbeing may get paternalistic, but this cost of autonomy may be justified at times for promoting wellbeing.

[14] Nagel writes, "The consequences for any other-regarding morality are extreme, for if one wishes to guarantee its universal application, one must make the presence of reasons for altruistic behavior depend on a desire present in all men." (Nagel, 1970, p. 28) We may (as Hume does) establish "normativity by showing that morality is congruent with self-interest," but we can also (as Williams does) establish normativity by establishing a "congruence with human flourishing." (Korsgaard, 1996, p. 71)

partiality. (Jeske, 1998, p. 531) Or, we might say that such requirements of partiality as "reflectively acceptable," that is, "that one would accept it upon reflection" and judge that such requirements are "(in some sense) meaningful, rational, or good." (Hardimon, 1994, p. 348) Following suit, what I find to be the most convincing reply to the voluntarist challenge is that impartial moral requirements are similarly thrust upon us without complaints; moreover, there are many features of morality which appear involuntary and beyond our control, like one's social institutions, one's relationships, or one's culture.[15] In turn, whatever justification we hold for the normative force of impartial moral requirements can be similarly employed to explain the normative force of (*sui generis*) partial moral requirements.

We might further distinguish a "weak" and "strong" version of this new (relationships) view of partiality. The weak version merely aims to vindicate partiality from the charge that it is morally unjustified. This version rejects the stricter forms of impartiality found in the reconciliatory approach and claims that it is fallacious to assume that impartiality will always direct us towards the right answer. The strict forms of impartiality cannot guarantee the wellbeing for an individual, so these stricter conceptions of impartial morality must be revised. This argument functions as a modest defense for acting partially and serves to vindicate the relationships view from morally suspect cases. This weak view would not purport any extra (*sui*

[15] cf. Scheffler, 1997

generis) requirements, and this view has a number of contemporary manifestations.[16] The stronger version adds more to these claims.[17]

The stronger claim outlined here is that there are genuine requirements of partiality that have equal normative force as the requirements of impartiality. It does this by conceiving of partiality in terms of relationships and grounding *sui generis* requirements in the value of shared projects (oriented towards wellbeing). The general qualms with this *sui generis* approach have to do with the theoretical baggage associated with adding a separate domain of moral requirements. The specific content of the moral requirements of partiality are intentionally left open-ended here. The type of interaction and the relationship can generate quite different requirements. This leaves room for the voluntarists and gives quite a bit of autonomy for negotiating what the requirements within a relationship between two people. The requirements generated within a relationship can be tailored to the agent's particular variation of wellbeing (provided it is actually good for them, or has some objective value).[18] To fully appreciate the normative force of moral requirements, morality must be grounded in wellbeing and the values associated with wellbeing. Moral requirements must be sensitive to our context and must make reference to our human nature and our capabilities – it cannot demand more than we are capable of.

[16] To follow Scanlon, we can make sense of certain requirements by the "value and appeal" (Scanlon, 1998, p. 162) of how we relate to one another, like the need for society, reciprocation, or interdependency. These "relational" views of morality claim that even "moral reasons that appear superficial to be relationship-independent nevertheless have their sources in relations among people, so that moral reasons and reasons of partiality arise ultimately in just the same way." (Scheffler, 2010, p. 114) In addition, Wallace has argued (with Scheffler) that the "deontic structure of morality - the fact that moral reasons present themselves to us in deliberation as requirements or obligations - can be understood by reference to the same kind of reciprocal normativity that characterizes personal relationships, such as friendship, and the reasons arising from them. (Scheffler 2010, p. 113)

[17] Wallace, for instance, outlines a view of the deontic force of morality based on notions of reciprocal or relational normativity; in other words, the same normative overriding force found in relationships is the model for the normative force of all our other moral requirements (in a general sense, outside of our relationships). In this sense, the normativity of impartiality is derivative of the normativity of partiality; although, the fact that one is derivative of the other does not imply that one is prioritized over the other.

[18] As Wallace notes, "it is partly up to individuals to determine for themselves the exact contours of the obligations they fall under in so far as they participate with each other in relationships of love." (Wallace, 2012, p. 189)

Does partiality lead to immoral acts?

One worry with tying our view of morality with wellbeing is that it makes our theory egoistic (or that it is a sophisticated rationalization of egoism). The typical response to the accusation of egoism (say, for virtue ethics) is that the virtuous agent acts fully in an other-regarding manner without inner conflict, and it is a kind of attribution error to claim that their focus is on their own wellbeing. Many of the so-called "social contract theories" are built around the presumption that individuals are egoistic or concerned with their own immediate wellbeing instead of the general community. Broadly speaking, they hold to the view that morality is a set of agreements between those who agree to them, and wellbeing is just one of many moral concepts which an individual can come to agree from. But it is not accurate to call these normatively egoistic theories; rather, they posit a psychological description, like a selfish "state of nature."[19] Ethical egoism, however, assumes that people are egoistic; then, additionally, it tries to appeal to their self-interest in being rational and tries to argue that acting morally is the most rational.[20] Another way of reading the worry might be that relationships and individuals are taken as merely instrumental for wellbeing. There is a paradox to this approach.[21] If you did focus obsessively on wellbeing and saw relationships as instrumental, you would not have a relationship that gave wellbeing. Moral thinking is not self-centered.[22]

Is it then a safer bet just to be impartial by default? A closely related worry is that the idea of *sui generis* moral requirements of partiality is insensitive to immoral actions of partiality

[19] Cf. Hobbes, 1651
[20] Or, "that it is rational to care about what one has reason to do oneself, but not rational to care at all about the reasons of others." (Nagel, 1970, p. 118)
[21] That is, "adopting as one's exclusive ultimate end in the pursuit of maximum happiness may well prevent one from having certain experiences or engaging in certain sorts of relationships or commitments that are among the greatest sources of happiness." (Railton, 1984, p. 141)
[22] The "rational altruist" can simply appeal to the argument, "How would you like it if someone did that to you?" (Nagel, 1970, p. 82)

due to one's ignorance of what contributes to objective wellbeing (*e.g.* thinking that joining a prison gang will enhance one's wellbeing). There certainly are "moral dangers" to special relationships.[23] A caveat is needed: our new relationships view of partiality does imply that we should be indifferent to "each other's moral failings," or expect a lover to "be a mere sycophant and her loyalty be blind." (Cocking & Kennett, 2000, p. 281) Still, a part of a special relationship involves loving when it is difficult to love, even in the face of competing claims of impartial requirements. It is true that "love can be so overwhelming that it is not voluntary." (Cocking & Kennett, 2000, p. 295) But perhaps even when emotions do not block all competing claims, our rational deliberation tells us to still act as if they do.

Consider again the case put forth by Wolf: a mother hides her murderous son instead of turning him in. It seems the mother's impartial requirements push her in the direction of turning her son into the authorities to face justice; however, she has the requirements of partiality which prevent her from doing so, as it would undercut his wellbeing in a morally significant way. Many have qualms with calling her actions "moral," especially since her actions seem selfish or doting in an immoral way.[24] A relationship should not be obsessively concerned with following impartial morality, as this would be a deficient form of a relationship.[25] But this is an extreme view which one need not be committed to in order to accept the relationships view. There might

[23] "Love is risky in that it leaves us vulnerable and potentially morally dangerous in this sense." (Cocking & Kennett, 2000, p. 295)

[24] Cocking and Kennett, speaking of friendships, argue against this: "To be restricted by morality from acting out of friendship in all these sorts of cases might well close off the possibility of our enjoying good and true friendships to a very significant extent. Imagine a friend who would not only not commit any serious moral wrong for you, but who would never place your interests, as such, above her commitment to morality in these other sorts of circumstances." (Cocking & Kennett, 2000, p. 295) A part of a loving relationship involves sometimes breaking impartiali requirements.

[25] On our view, moral blame might be different in the contexts of group agents. Like a corporation, the individual is only blameworthy in virtue of the relationship (which is crucial for distribution blame), so the culpability of the individual changes in the group. So the mother is blamed differently within the relationship with her son, than if she were harboring a murderous stranger.

be an epistemic constraint on the agent in that they do not know the details to know which requirement overrides the other, but this is different from the ontological claim that there really is no answer out there and that such dilemmas are unsolvable. One might be committed to the ontological claim, but this deflates morality: it implies that morality is not coherent or consistent.

In any case, we might take Strawson's approach of humility concerning moral blame (with punishment as a practical aim). [26] Our attitudes express "how much we actually mind, how much it matters to us, whether the actions of other people – and particularly *some* other people – reflect attitudes towards us of good will, affection, or esteem on the one hand or contempt, indifference, or malevolence on the other." (Strawson, 1962, p. 5) People's actions and moral character are not transparent, and we are often ignorant of the context and other constraints. We should be as sympathetic towards others as we are with ourselves and our loved ones. Even if moral judgements seem inappropriate – given that we cannot see the internal reasons of persons (although Strawson's claim is about hard determinism) – moral judgments are essential for the way we interact with each other. Nevertheless, we ought to moderate our moral judgments to reflect our ignorance. We cannot directly infer that she is doing something morally wrong. It is doubtful, on this skeptical view, that we can ever have sufficient knowledge to make that judgement; after all, we do not know what morally relevant factors are at play that are internal to her which led her to make that decision. Still, extrapolating from Strawson, we may hold her culpable for other reasons (say, social stability) but we may never hold her morally wrong by pointing to the mere fact of her being partial.

[26] The idea here is that blame and punishment is prospective (based on deterrence) instead of retrospective (based on desert).

The lesson is that we do not need to go too far in the direction of partiality and take a lax attitude towards the requirements of impartiality. We might make a distinction between ignorance, weakness of will, and rational egoism. What we "should" do differs.[27] Ignorance seems to absolve some culpability – for instance, I can be ignorant to the normative strength of morality, that is, think that morality is less stringent than it actuality is and choose self-interest or some other non-moral reason. Weakness of will, however, admits to some awareness of the fact that you knew you were doing the wrong thing at the time; still, it is difficult to attribute full responsibility, especially since our rational faculties are vulnerable to uncontrollable biases and subtle fallacies. Finally, rational egoism can be conceived as the strongest end of choosing self-interest over moral demands. This is the sort of view that we must avoid attributing because we can never have the privileged knowledge to make that judgment. Our attitudes should be informed by our limited knowledge and the reality of moral luck. To excuse them is not to think of them as deviant or morally undeveloped; such patronizing attitudes are disrespectful, like treating others like children or psychologically deficient). Rather, the idea is that we ought to be understanding of different epistemic standpoints and how they may be affected by reason of partiality. The effect of partiality on our doxastic states constrains the possibility to act otherwise.[28]

[27] One should note the different usages of "should" – one to express modality or the subjective mood, and the other to express normativity. In the modal sense, one has a range of choices to choose from to act in certain ways, but the second normative sense constrains those choices further. Does impartial reasoning involve standing outside yourself in assessing these choices and disconnecting from your particular desires, like some Frankfurt second-order desire? This treads dangerously into metaphysical questions of free will and consciousness.

[28] We can be deluded or have incorrect doxastic states which we ought not to act from. Requirements which undercut wellbeing are immoral and are consequently not real requirements; as a result, a relationship which undercuts wellbeing is not a real relationship. Remember, when we mean "immoral," we have to understand it within the frame of both partial and impartial requirements. Although, another way to understand it is that the morally right thing changes when you enter into a relationship. We may believe we are acting in accordance to some moral requirement when we are not. We can see more obvious cases of delusion, like the false intimacy of battered women, victims of Stockholm syndrome, etc. There is an important difference between "grounding" immoral reasons of partiality in a relationship and saying that such immoral reasons are "requirements."

Less obvious cases are trickier to explain and needs a more substantive account.[29] For instance, buying your child a brand new sports car while strangers overseas are starving to death seems inappropriate, but it is unclear what exactly is inappropriate about these cases. We might still appeal to wellbeing in such cases. Whatever amount of wellbeing a sports car contributes to your child and the relationship you have with your child (which extends to your own wellbeing) would be marginal given that you would be in a financial situation to afford such luxurious gifts (here I am appealing to the familiar economic idea of diminished returns). Rich parents should not indulge their child because it is bad for them, and parents ought to devote attention to distributive justice since that is a part of wellbeing and living a good life. Helping the least well off will have more impact for a stranger and it contributes to one's own wellbeing in the sense that we have a vested interest in being charitable people (as an objective good). Somebody who does not feel good giving to charity (as Aristotle would suggest of virtuous individuals) and does so begrudgingly would have still made their lives better. Within the ideal relationship, the child would recognize this and stop the parent from being epistemically compromised (although, it is hard to imagine such a morally precocious child). There may be other way of tackling such problems, but that is beyond my current aim.

How do we now understand our impartial requirements?

How do our requirements of partiality fare up against our obligations to the poor, displace, and needy around the globe (the environment, animal suffering, social inequalities,

[29] Sarah Stroud argues that if friendship (among our other special relationships) "constitutively involves epistemic irrationality – and, conversely, epistemic rationality precludes friendship – then we ought to opt for epistemic irrationality. […] This response is perfectly coherent, for there is nothing contradictory in the idea that we have most reason overall to do something which is unacceptable from a particular evaluative standpoint." (Stroud, 2006, p.22) This works in some cases, but it is too simple to account for all the complexities of our requirements to be impartial and our requirements to be partial. To say that some of the normative forces are excluded or blocked by fiat is not an ad hoc solution because we have some epistemic justification.

etc.)? Does this view lead to injustice and inequality? We certainly ought to take seriously Peter Singer's spirit of arguing that we must be impartial to considerations of proximity. Singer[30] stresses the need to give impartial consideration on a global scale, meaning that we ought to be impartial to considerations of proximity (or Western standards of living) when we think about our obligations to the needy all over the world. These ideas of impartiality are central to discussions in normative ethics. We are partial in the wrong way to Western economic interests over those exploited and marginalized around the world. The focus on atomistic (and self-interested) ideals (often associated with neoliberalism by "feminist critiques)[31] leads to structural inequalities limiting the wellbeing of the underprivileged. An imperfect requirement (if it can be called that) of humanitarian charity is not enough.

Minimally, my argument is that the requirements of impartiality are not alone the requirements of morality. I am not suggesting that our global morality ought to reflect the requirements of partiality. What works person-to-person often does not work in a constituency (in a constituency, impartiality is definitely more important) – there is a difference between the requirements of political theory (some ideal of a well-ordered society) and moral theory. A part of loyalty is the epistemic constraint in that it asks us to suspend or set aside our own judgment. This kind of loyalty can lead to morally blameworthy actions. It would be wrong to show special

[30] Cf. Singer, 1972

[31] My view seems to cohere best with the ethics of care. (cf. Noddings, 1984) In the broadest strokes, the ethics of care highlights the importance of the relational aspects of morality (like empathy and emotions) instead of abstract rules or principles. Feminist critiques of traditional ethical theories often connect the dominance of males in the discipline to the focus on such impersonal ethical theories. This leads to many of the problems with impartiality. Ethical theory, then, ought to start with a conception of wellbeing with entails caring for intimates and attending to their needs. People become more attuned to these traits as they immerse themselves in relationships. A criticism of care ethics is that it is unclear why partiality should count as a legitimate source of requirements in opposition to impartial requirements. Often, the approach is to turn the tables and argue that partiality ought to be more primitive and that impartiality ought to constrain and be derived from the requirements of partiality. Thus, benevolence and justice to those outside our network of relationships (like starving strangers overseas) must be understood in reference to how we treat those we already care for and extending that out to others in the broader human community.

care to your neighbor's child over your own child, or save the drowning stranger over your wife. To act overly (inappropriately, like the moral saint) impartially is to act from requirements one does not actually have or act on the supererogatory. You may give your own interest and the interests of loved ones a special weight, but not indefeasible weight (they are *pro tanto* reasons). Our view has space to make moral regret or compunction is possible. The idea that you made something bad happen even if it was excusable. It seems many dilemmas are such that no matter what an agent does they still feel like they have done something wrong.

Indeed, morality asks us to sacrifice our wellbeing and an account completely dependent on our wellbeing is not right.[32] It is not clear that we are the type of beings who can reliably give moral judgments. What we take to be the "right" all things considered action may end up being morally wrong.[33] It is not clear that these truths exist as entities, or if we can be virtuous people given our capricious and unstable psychology. If impartial morality does not work for us, then we should go with what works. We also have other problem cases for our view of relationships. There are cases where relationships seem minimally special and it is not clear what they can contribute to wellbeing – for example, the distant old friend, the mother-in-law, the ex-partner, the separated twin, or deceased lover. Moreover, there are cases where the wellbeing seems ambiguous – for instance, a compatriot, an ally in a political movement, or a fellow soldier. We can humbly say that relationships without promoting wellbeing do not generate proper requirements – for instance, the criminal spouse an exploitative friend, or the abusive parent. We

[32] "That would be like protesting a decision that was democratically arrive at - each vote, including yours, counted equally - simply because the decision went against you." (Stroud, 1998, p. 182)

[33] One might then appeal to some "realist" account of moral truths, but there is hardly any agreed upon stance on how we have access to moral knowledge. Another plausible direction might be to appeal to "contractarian" views, which establish the universal standard of what is morally right or wrong by mutual agreement; however, it is unclear how comprehensive the resultant moral theory would be.

can learn from our relationships and our collective responsibility there, and we can extend it to thinner relationships (like a global relation or national relation) to achieve global wellbeing.

Conclusion

Given the diversity of reasons and requirements we are confronted by, it is often difficult to define what is required by morality. We often think that morality requires us to be impartial, especially with respect to ideas of equality, fairness, or justice. Just like an impartial judge, we have a moral requirement to discern and filter out irrelevant facts in our moral judgments. Still, the demand to be impartial is not so straightforward. We are often faced with strong reasons for us to be partial, and these reasons can equally present themselves as requirements. Some shy away from siding with partiality because it can be the source of prejudice, selfishness, and other morally repugnant behaviors. The worry is that if we are like the impartial judge, our reasons of partiality dissolves away completely along with everything we really care about.

I have suggested a loosely neo-Aristotelian approach to normative action insofar as right actions are defined by how well they contribute to wellbeing (to you and to others). I suggest that we value intrinsically certain constituent parts of wellbeing. We noted with the revisionist approach that moral demands given to an agent must reflect what is reasonable given the nature of the agent; moreover, one crucial part of what can be reasonably demanded is that it complies with an agent's wellbeing. We added a further descriptive claim that we are social beings and relationships are essential for wellbeing. This provides a solid foundation for understanding intimate relationships as sources of special value that are universally intelligible; on this foundation, we can fix *sui generis* requirements of partiality.

A promising area to further explore such foundations of partiality is in the direction of evolutionary psychology and naturalistic ethics. There is some evolutionary element of loyalty (especially with familial bonds) which ties our kin together. There is some suggestion that we historically started with smaller groups and impartial morality has an adaptive function for larger

societies.[1] It is unclear if such investigations can inform ethical theorizing or if they are just instances of the naturalistic fallacy.[2] But more work is needed to develop the precise role of impartiality for our picture of morality. Nevertheless, we can be confident that impartiality is untenable if it displaces fundamental projects essential to one's individuality, worth, or meaning.

[1] "Offhand it would seem that if selection is always of individuals and of their genetic lines, and if the capacity for the various forms of moral behavior has some genetic basis, then altruism in the strict sense would generally be limited to kin and the smaller face-to-face groups. In these cases the willingness to make considerable self-sacrifice would favor one's descendants and tend to be selected. Turning to the other extreme, a society which had a strong propensity to supererogatory conduct in its relations with other societies would jeopardize the existence of its own distinctive culture and its members would risk domination. Therefore one might conjecture that the capacity to act from the more universal forms of rational benevolence is likely to be eliminated, whereas the capacity to follow the principles of justice and natural duty in relations between groups and individuals other than kin would be favored. We can also see how the system of the moral feelings might evolve as inclinations supporting the natural duties and as stabilizing mechanisms for just schemes." (Rawls, 1971, p. 503-504)

[2] Cf. Moore, 1903

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