The Problem(s) with Friends and Family

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PhD Dissertation

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Acknowledgements

When you hand in your PhD people say two things to you, the first is: 'congratulations', swiftly followed by the second: 'how do you feel?'. To this second part it is customary to reply some combination of: 'great/relieved/delighted/nervous/exhausted/proud'. I did feel those things upon handing in this PhD, but I also felt a sadness. This wasn't a sadness about the quality of the work, the fact I had to stop working on the thesis, or even the loss of the *very* generous Aarhus PhD salary. Instead, my sadness stemmed from the knowledge that handing in my PhD meant I had to leave Aarhus and specifically that I had to leave its people. This acknowledgements section is thus a celebration. It is a celebration of, and thanks to, the people who made this PhD possible and who made my time at Aarhus so brilliant. If you are mentioned here (and doubtless I have forgotten some people so even if you are not) know that you played a role in making my last 3 years some of my best, thank you.

I am enormously indebted to the exceptional supervision of Andreas Albertsen and Kasper Lippert-Rasmussen throughout the PhD process. They are both unfailing patient, kind, and outrageously intelligent people. From the moment I started the PhD process they made me feel welcome and that my work and ideas were valuable. Kasper, despite being the world's busiest man, always found time to read and discuss my work – doubtlessly pointing out 5 or 6 new considerations in the process. His capacity to hear a problem I had been fretting over for weeks, stare at the ceiling for a bit, and then provide a pitch perfect solution is truly remarkable. Perhaps Kasper's primary contribution to this thesis in particular is his reply to an email I sent him about halfway through the PhD. I sent him and Andreas an email with a draft of a paper attached saying 'Hi both, here's a draft of a paper it's a little long (12,000 words) but I just can't see what I can cut, any ideas on what can go?' Kasper's simple suggestion? 'Just make it two papers!' Can a supervisor really do more than, with one line of text in an email, *double* the amount of papers you have produced? I personally do not think so.

I was Andreas' first ever PhD student but one of the greatest compliments I can pay him is that there is no way I would have known this without him telling me. Every single question I had, about the PhD process, the University, or about Aarhus and Denmark in general he had an answer for. It was such a comfort to know that if I was stuck on something or didn't know how to answer a question I could knock on Andreas' door and he would be happy to help. He read countless drafts and redrafts and reredrafts of my work and has unfailing provided a litany of helpful comments and reassuring words. Indeed, Andreas was so committed to being an exceptional supervisor that, in order to give the best possible

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I owe thanks to Helene and Christoffer who both tirelessly (and successfully) worked to make the PhD environment a welcoming one, not an easy task during, and in the recovery from, Covid. As someone who not only hadn't studied at Aarhus before but was also not Danish I sent a *lot* of emails asking how to do things during my time as a PhD so I owe a huge debt of thanks to the recipients of those emails who patiently dealt with my many requests with aplomb, they are: Annette, Maj, Olivia, Ruth, Susanne, and Ida. While I did not bombard him with (work related) emails I would especially like to thank Njall for our many chats in the kitchen which made any trip to pick up coffee a welcome break.

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I had the good fortune of being a member of the best section in the department, the Political Theory section and, while not a member, also spent a lot of time with members of the upstart unruly younger sibling of Political Theory - CEPDISC. The sections were (and are!) chock-full of brilliantly clever people who are also great fun to be around: section meetings, retreats, lunches, dinners out, and visits to the pub would be all the poorer were it not for Lydia, Jens , Benedicte (a special thanks for being an excellent office mate), Tore, Ida. N., Claire, Astrid, Marion, Lauritz (a special thanks for being an excellent office mate), Viki, Jonas, Anna (a special thanks for being an excellent office mate), Andreas, Hugo, Joona, Didde, Juha, Bjorn, Ida. V., Diana, Maryana (a special

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My final thanks are owed to the three people who have done the most for me throughout my life, without whom I would not be in front of you right now nervously stumbling through a presentation (I know you're reading this now and not paying attention to me speaking).

It is natural to draw 2 possible conclusions about someone who writes (half) of a PhD about the parent-child relationship and the importance of parental love. The first is that this individual had an, at best, complicated relationship with their parents and at worst an awful relationship, the second is that this individual had (and continues to have) an extraordinarily loving relationship with their parents. Fortunately for me it's the latter. I want to thank my mum and dad for their unfailing love and support throughout my life, it is their numerous sacrifices, and their encouraging of my interests, that has made it possible for me to get to this point and I am exceptionally grateful. Thank you, I love you both very much.

Finally, I want to thank my partner Sarah. Those of you reading this who know Sarah will know the extreme degree to which I have lucked out. Sarah is one of the most brilliant, kind, and supportive people you could hope to meet, as evidence by her decision to come out to Aarhus with me despite being in the last year of her PhD back in the UK. I am so enormously grateful to you Sarah for everything you have done for me and for us (and for our cat Derek). Your capacity to breathe life and enjoyment into even the most mundane Sunday morning is unrivalled. I love you very much and cannot wait to spend the rest of my life with you, it is no exaggeration to say that this PhD would not have been completed without you.

Overview

This PhD thesis consists of this summary thesis and the following four, single author, papers:

1. What's love got to do with it? Parental partiality and parental love
2. Grandparental partiality?
3. Hello darkness my old friend: What's wrong with being friends with people with immoral beliefs?
4. Should we blame our friends for their immoral beliefs?

1. Introduction

This thesis is about relationships. Relationships are an ever-present feature of nearly all individuals' lives. Almost all persons are born into an initial relationship with at least one parent. Most individuals then retain this relationship until at least 18 (and those who don't are likely to establish other relationships in its place). We then spend the rest of our lives establishing and maintaining relationships with siblings, friends, aunts, uncles, grandparents, cousins, lovers, teachers, co-workers, club members, bosses, our own children, our grandchildren and doubtless many more. While some relationships come and go, such as, perhaps, that with a first love, others persist throughout one's life, such as relationships with siblings or lifelong friends. Indeed, even as one comes to the end of one's life, relationships remain of the utmost importance. People often speak, for example, of being 'surrounded by friends and family' on one's deathbed.

The importance of (good) relationships is difficult to overstate. On a day-to-day level, good relationships help make a day enjoyable (or, at least, bearable). Think of the retail worker arriving at work and realising with delight, and relief, that they have been scheduled to work the tills with a friend, or of the school student who looks forward to Tuesdays more than most because that's the day he has lessons with Mrs Gene, the excellent science teacher who really understands him. In a grander sense, it is no exaggeration to say that certain relationships are amongst life's greatest pleasures. A long and happy marriage, a cherished friendship, or a loving and supportive relationship with one's parents all make extremely significant contributions to the enjoyment of one's life.

However, important and valuable as they are, relationships do create problems – and not just for the people in the relationships, but for people outside of them too. Indeed, given how ever-present and significant they are, it is all the more important that potential problems within or as a result of a relationship are identified, understood and resolved. This thesis is a contribution to the task of identifying and resolving tensions caused by relationships. In particular, this thesis addresses the research question:

RQ: How do our personal relationships conflict with morality?

This is a research question that reflects a long line of academic and non-academic interest in this topic. Some of the most well-known cases in political theory (and its cousins political and moral philosophy) consider the possible tensions between morality and personal relationships. I now briefly outline a few of these cases and problems in order to motivate reader's interest in the RQ.

Bernard Williams' 'one thought too many' is perhaps the most famous example of the potential for conflict between morality and personal relationships.[1] Williams offers this view in response to a thought experiment in which one must choose between saving their drowning wife or a drowning stranger (they can only save one). Obviously at its most basic, this example demonstrates the potential for an entirely impartial morality to conflict with the demands (or certainly wants) of our personal relationships. To the extent impartial morality cannot definitively pronounce that one should (and perhaps must) save their wife in this scenario it is surely in conflict with the personal relationship of marriage. Furthermore, as Susan Wolf has argued, Williams' view that considering whom to save is 'one thought too many' also calls into question the oft-supposed *primacy* of morality over other values in life such as those exhibited by our personal relationships.[2]

Wolf herself offers a heart-wrenching thought experiment that is demonstrative of the conflict between morality and values found in our personal relationships, such as love. Readers are asked to 'consider the case of a woman whose son has committed a crime and who must decide to hide him from the police. He will suffer gravely should he be caught, but unless he is caught another innocent man will be wrongly convicted for the crime and imprisoned.'[3] Wolf uses this example to highlight the tension between an (impartial) conception of morality and what some persons will do for those they love. Wolf's claim is that, while she agrees with an impartial conception of morality that renders the decision of the mother to protect her son immoral, she thinks there is something 'worthy of respect and admiration'[4] about the mother's character even if she does so. Even if there exists a clear answer to a conflict between a personal relationship and morality for Wolf, it may 'be hard to say, on occasion, whether, or at least how much, it [the answer] matters' for the individual forced into making a decision about this conflict.[5]

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[1] Though the example itself is actually Charles Friend's. Bernard Williams, *Moral Luck: Philosophical Papers 1973-1980* (Cambridge University Press, 1981), 18; Charles Fried, *An Anatomy of Values: Problems of Personal and Social Choice* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1970), 227.

[2] Susan Wolf, '"One Thought Too Many": Love, Morality, and the Ordering of Commitment', in *The Variety of Values: Essays on Morality, Meaning, and Love*, ed. by Susan Wolf (Oxford University Press, 2015)

[3] Susan Wolf, 'Morality and Partiality', in *The Variety of Values: Essays on Morality, Meaning, and Love*, ed. by Susan Wolf (Oxford University Press, 2015), (p. 41)

[4] Wolf, 42.

[5] Wolf, 44.

T.M. Scanlon offers an interesting case by suggesting that there would be 'something unnerving about a "friend" who would steal a kidney for you if you needed one. This is not just because you would feel guilty toward the person whose kidney was stolen, but because of what it implies about the "friend's" view of your right to your own body parts: he wouldn't steal them, but that is only because he happens to like you.'[6] Scanlon's point here is to suggest that, on at least one form of friendship (and a valuable one at that), we need to recognise our friends not only as friends but also as individual persons with moral standing. This latter acknowledgement places some restrictions on what we may do to or for our friends as well as to others, who also have moral standing. Friendship is a fertile ground for potential clashes between morality and personal relationships (including the potential clash considered in this thesis). Daniel Koltonski (and before him Dean Cocking and Jeanette Kennett) offers a fascinating case as to the interaction between judgements about what morality requires and commitments to one's friends.[7] He considers the old joke, 'A friend will help you move house, but a good friend will help you move a body', and finds that this joke reveals that in some situations the question is not one of morality vs. friendship, but instead a question internal to morality.[8] This is because morality 'requires that one's care for a friend be care for them as an agent, [meaning that] one will sometimes have a duty to defer to them'.[9] It is the case, for Koltonski, that part of being a good friend might mean helping your friend act in a manner that you know to be morally wrong.

Yet another example of the tension between morality and personal relationships (which, along with Williams' 'one thought too many', is perhaps the most famous case) is Michael Stocker's case of an individual who visits their friend in hospital.[10] When their friend thanks them for the visit, the individual replies that they came to visit out of duty. This raises the question of whether the individual is truly acting as a friend if they visited because they thought it was their moral duty. Can we really have friendships (and other personal relationships) if

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[6] T. M. Scanlon, *What We Owe to Each Other* (Belknap Press, 2000), 165.

[7] Daniel Koltonski, 'A Good Friend Will Help You Move a Body: Friendship and the Problem of Moral Disagreement', *Philosophical Review* 125, no. 4 (2016): 473–507; Dean Cocking and Jeanette Kennett, 'Friendship and Moral Danger', *The Journal of Philosophy* 97, no. 5 (2000): 278–96.

[8] Koltonski, 'A Good Friend Will Help You Move a Body: Friendship and the Problem of Moral Disagreement', 474.

[9] Koltonski, 505.

[10] Michael Stocker, 'The Schizophrenia of Modern Ethical Theories', *The Journal of Philosophy*, 73.14 (1976), 453–66

the reasons one carries out supposed acts of friendship are based on a sense of moral duty rather than being motivated by the friendship itself?[11]

A potential conflict between morality and personal relationships that has seen recent political attention is whether marriage conflicts with morality. Clare Chambers suggests that, in the case of state recognised marriage at least, there are many potential problems with marriage.[12] To highlight just one, of many, issues Chambers raises, where there are benefits to being married, e.g. tax breaks, then the non-married are treated in an inegalitarian manner by their state even if they are in long-standing relationships (perhaps even longer-standing than those in marriages). This problem is particularly troubling in states that do not extend the right to marry to persons beyond heterosexual couples. For these reasons, and many others, Chambers argues that state-recognised marriage should be abolished.

Samuel Scheffler raises a potential conflict between one's relationships (including, but not limited to, one's personal relationships) and morality by articulating what he calls the '*distributive objection* … [which is] an objection on behalf of those individuals who are not participants in the groups and relationships that are thought to give rise to associative duties'.[13] On this occasion Scheffler does not provide the sort of eye-catching examples that I have previously listed, but the problem is a pressing one. The distributive objection asks why, when one is in a group (in our case a personal relationship), they are justified in granting priority to fellow members of the group, even where this works to the disadvantage of those not in the group (especially because those in the group likely enjoy their membership and therefore seem to be doubly benefitted by being a member of the group).[14]

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[11] See Christopher Heath Wellman for a similarly critical perspective on the idea of duties of friendship: Christopher Heath Wellman, 'Friends, Compatriots, and Special Political Obligations', *Political Theory* 29, no. 2 (2001): 217–36.

[12] Clare Chambers, *Against Marriage: An Egalitarian Defence of the Marriage-Free State*, Oxford Political Theory (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2019).

[13] Samuel Scheffler, *Boundaries and Allegiances: Problems of Justice and Responsibility in Liberal Thought* (Oxford University Press on Demand, 2002), 56.

[14] Scheffler also raises the *voluntarist objection,* which argues that, far from being beneficial, some group membership, and specifically the associative duties of group membership, is burdensome, and in many cases these duties were not voluntarily incurred. This objection raises questions over whether it is right that one can be burdened with an associative duty involuntarily and thereby offers an example of the tension between relationships and morality from an alternative (essentially opposite) point of view to the *distributive objection*. I do not mention this objection in the main body of the text because most personal relationships are entered into at least somewhat voluntarily

These examples are some of the most prominent or eye-catching instances of the potential for conflict (or at least of theorist's scrutiny of the potential for conflict) between personal relationships and morality. Of course, these examples are only brief illustrative snippets of the wider conflicts these authors address. However, my hope is that these examples trigger responses in readers and help to demonstrate the variety and depth of the potential conflict(s) between personal relationships and morality, and the importance of subjecting these potential conflicts to close scrutiny.[15] Sadly, a complete exploration of the ways in which personal relationships and morality might conflict lies beyond this thesis's reach. Instead, in this thesis I contribute to this rich and important tradition by focusing on two particular relationships: the parent-child relationship and friendship. Discussing the potential for these relationships to conflict with morality is particularly interesting because of their ubiquity and importance. These two relationships are familiar to the vast majority of persons on earth. Most individuals have or did have a relationship with their parent(s), and a significant number of persons will have experienced the other side of relationship by having children of their own. Further, I would venture that nearly everybody has experienced having, and being, a friend at some point in their lives. Moreover, not only will most persons have found themselves in such relationships; they will have also found them immensely important. A potential conflict between these relationships and morality is thus of great importance, given that these relationships are so common and valued – finding out that they conflict with morality may have serious implications for the relationships or morality (or both).

My findings on potential conflicts between morality and personal relationships are to be found in the four papers produced during the course of writing the thesis. These are:

(and thus one can argue the duties of the relationships are also voluntarily accepted). However, some personal relationships do lack this voluntarily element, such as the filial relationship (a child is born into their relationship with their parents involuntarily from the child's point of view) and thus the *voluntarist objection* may well have to be wrestled with in these cases.

[15] Of course, one need not endorse the actual arguments the theorists listed above offer in response to these potential conflicts in order to believe that there is significant potential for conflict between personal relationships and morality. I raise the examples as illustrative rather than with the assumption that readers (or indeed myself) will necessarily agree with each example or the arguments behind them.

1. What's love got to do with it? Parental partiality and parental love
2. Grandparental partiality?
3. Hello darkness my old friend: What's wrong with being friends with people with immoral beliefs?
4. Should we blame our friends for their immoral beliefs?

This thesis proceeds in the following way. In Section 2 it begins by highlighting one clear conflict with morality that exists in the parent-child relationship: the problem of parental partiality. It highlights just how far-reaching parental partiality might be and why this is a problem for morality. The section then proceeds to outline in turn how two of my four papers address this issue, namely *What's love got to do with it? Parental partiality and parental love* (henceforth *What's love got to do with it?*) and *Grandparental partiality?* Section 2 ends with a brief summary of how these two papers, when taken together, contribute to answering the research question. In Section 3 I introduce a potential conflict between morality and friendships – that of the possibility of it being wrong to be friends with people with immoral beliefs. I outline in turn the remaining two papers – *Hello darkness my old friend: What's wrong with being friends with people with immoral beliefs* (henceforth: *Hello darkness my old friend*) and *Should we blame our friends for their immoral beliefs?* – and the ways in which they grapple with this potential conflict. As with Section 2, this section also offers a brief outline of how the two papers come together to address the research question. Section 4 outlines the methods I have used to conduct this research. In Section 5, I conclude the thesis with some thoughts about the four papers' contributions to the research question and an overall consideration of the contributions of this thesis.

2. The parent-child relationship

They tuck you up, your mum and dad,
They read you Peter Rabbit, too.
They give you all the treats they had
And add some extra, just for you.

They were tucked up when they were small,
(Pink perfume, blue tobacco-smoke),
By those whose kiss healed any fall,
Whose laughter doubled any joke.

Man hands on happiness to man,
It deepens like a coastal shelf.
So love your parents all you can
And have some cheerful kids yourself.[16]

There is a significant literature addressing children, childhood, and the parent-child relationship.[17] This thesis focuses primarily on one potential conflict between the parent-child relationship and morality, parental partiality. This is

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[16] Adrian Mitchell, 'This be the worst' *All Shook Up: Poems 1997-2000* (Highgreen, Tarset, Northumberland: Chester Springs, PA: Bloodaxe Books Ltd, 2001).

[17] For a selection see: Colin MacLeod, 'The Family', in *The Oxford Handbook of Distributive Justice*, ed. by Serena Olsaretti (Oxford University Press, 2018); Colin M. Macleod, 'Just Schools and Good Childhoods: Non-Preparatory Dimensions of Educational Justice', *Journal of Applied Philosophy*, 35.S1 (2018), 76–89; Jurgen De Wispelaere and Daniel Weinstock, 'Licensing Parents to Protect Our Children?', *Ethics and Social Welfare*, 6.2 (2012), 195–205; David Archard, *The Family: A Liberal Defence* (Springer, 2010); David Archard, *Children, Rights and Childhood, Second Edition*, 2nd edition (London; New York: Routledge, 2004); Matthew Clayton and David Stevens, 'School Choice and the Burdens of Justice', *Theory and Research in Education*, 2.2 (2004), 111–26; Gideon Calder, *How Inequality Runs in Families: Unfair Advantage and the Limits of Social Mobility*, First Edition (Bristol Chicago, IL: Policy Press, 2016); Anca Gheaus, 'What Abolishing the Family Would Not Do', *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy*, 21.3 (2018), 284–300; Anca Gheaus, 'Arguments for Nonparental Care for Children', *Social Theory and Practice*, 37.3 (2011), 483–509; Anca Gheaus, 'Is There a Right to Parent?', *Law, Ethics and Philosophy*, 2015, 193–204; Anca Gheaus, 'The Best Available Parent', *Ethics*, 131.3 (2021), 431–59; Liam Shields, 'Parental Rights and the Importance of Being Parents', *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy*, 22.2 (2019), 119–33;

when a parent affords their own child special attention over others. At first glance, the idea that there could be *anything* wrong with this seems laughable. A parent being particularly attentive to the needs and wants of their own child, rather than the child four doors down, seems so fundamentally a part of parenting that it might be thought that a parent who did *not* do this would have little claim to be a parent at all, or certainly not a good one. However, parental partiality, even where seemingly quite mundane, can and does conflict with morality. Indeed, that such partiality is seemingly so commonplace in the parent-child relationship makes it all the more worrying from the viewpoint of morality.

The primary tension, from the point of view of morality, is with equality of opportunity. Consider the following example*:* Priti and her partner Michael have a child, Boris. They read a report that shows that Britain's most powerful people (senior judges, permanent secretaries, lords, diplomats, newspaper columnists, members of the news media etc.) are five times more likely to have been privately schooled.[18] Moreover, they read another study that shows that privately schooled pupils earn 35% more than state-educated pupils by the age of 25.[19] They also notice that little Boris has been interested in politics from a very young age. They know that of the 57 UK prime ministers, only 11 have attended non-fee paying schools, while 20 attended the elite private school

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Liam Shields, 'How Bad Can a Good Enough Parent Be?', *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, 2016 https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/00455091.2016.1148306 [accessed 24 August 2023]; Liam Shields, 'Won't Somebody Please Think of the Parents?', *Ethics*, 133.1 (2022), 133–46; Serena Olsaretti, 'Liberal Equality and the Moral Status of Parent-Child Relationships', in *Oxford Studies in Political Philosophy, Volume 3*, ed. by David Sobel, Peter Vallentyne, and Steven Wall (Oxford University Press, 2017); Serena Olsaretti, 'Children as Public Goods?', *Philosophy & Public Affairs*, 41.3 (2013), 226–58; Patrick Tomlin, 'Saplings or Caterpillars? Trying to Understand Children's Wellbeing', *Journal of Applied Philosophy*, 35.S1 (2018), 29–46; Samantha Brennan and Robert Noggle, 'The Moral Status of Children: Children's Rights, Parents' Rights, and Family Justice', *Social Theory and Practice*, 23.1 (1997), 1–26. For good edited collections see: Anca Gheaus, Gideon Calder, and Jurgen De Wispelaere, *The Routledge Handbook of the Philosophy of Childhood and Children* (Routledge Abingdon, 2019); David Archard and Colin M. Macleod, *The Moral and Political Status of Children*, 1st edition (Oxford University Press, 2002).

[18] 'Elitist Britain 2019: The Education Backgrounds of the UK's Leading Figures', GOV.UK, accessed 21 August 2023, https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/elitist-britain-2019.

[19] Francis Green and others, 'Private Benefits? External Benefits? Outcomes of Private Schooling in 21st Century Britain', *Journal of Social Policy*, 49.4 (2020), 724–43.

Eton.[20] Priti and Michael want what's best for Boris, and these statistics show that Boris is far more likely to be successful in his work life, earn a higher wage and take high political office if he is privately schooled. Consequently, Priti and Michael send Boris to private school, happily paying the roughly £46,000 a year it costs to send one's child to Eton.[21] At the end of Priti and Michael's street live a couple who are renting one of Priti and Michael's many homes, Nye and Clare. They too have a child, Angela, for whom they also want the best – Angela is also showing signs that she would like to go into politics. Nye and Clare do not have the finances for private school and therefore are forced to take their chances with the local state school.

Boris and Angela, despite both being children and unable to really shape anything about their lives, are being presented with radically different childhoods, and statistically speaking, radically different adulthoods as well. They are, in other words, being presented with different opportunities. There is an inequality of opportunity between the two, one that does not stem from anything Angela or Boris have done. For those who are minded to think that equality of opportunity is important, this should be disturbing; indeed, even those committed to only a very weak form of equality of opportunity (wherein rampant inequality is allowed to exist once individuals start making choices) presumably agree that *children* not starting on a level playing field is troubling. Boris and Angela's respective parents are both motivated by a desire to obtain the best for their child, but the parentally partial act is only available to Boris' wealthy parents, and their wealth grants Boris a better range of opportunities.

Boris and Angela's differing opportunities are representative of the central puzzle of parental partiality. This is that often when parents are partial towards their own children, they grant them advantages that give their children better opportunities than other children and thereby impair equality of opportunity. Some might think an obvious response to Boris and Angela's inequality is to remove parental partiality in the form of private schooling, but this solution misses the broader problem of parental partiality. Private schooling is merely an instance of parental partiality. Its removal would not stop parental partiality and would not resolve its conflict with equality of opportunity.

Indeed, even when placing private schooling to one side, parental partiality is a remarkably widespread phenomenon. Focusing only on education, parentally partial actions include: bribing various officials to ensure one's child makes

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[20] 'Past Prime Ministers - GOV.UK', accessed 21 August 2023, https://www.gov.uk/government/history/past-prime-ministers.

[21] 'Fees', Eton College, accessed 21 August 2023, https://www.etoncollege.com/admissions/fees/.

it into top universities (as was allegedly the case in the recent College Admissions/Varsity Blues scandal in the United States),[22] private tutoring, moving into a better catchment area for state schools, helping one's child with their homework, and reading them bedtime stories. Each of these actions, when applied only to one's child, are parentally partial and partial in a way that clashes with equality of opportunity – they grant some form of educational advantage to one's child that is unavailable to others. I take it that readers will have different intuitive responses to each of these cases, with some, such as bedtime reading, garnering more sympathy than others.

Parental partiality goes beyond educational inequality of opportunity to other areas as well. Indeed, perhaps the most shocking instance of parental partiality was committed in the pursuit of a cheerleading squad spot. Wanda Holloway, seeing her daughter upset at narrowly missing out on the cheerleading squad, attempted to hire a hitman to murder the mother of her daughter's cheerleading rival. Holloway's thought was that the daughter of the murdered mother would be so distraught that she would have to drop out of the squad, thus creating space for Holloway's daughter. Fortunately, she was reported to the police before anything happened.[23]

Holloway's case is obviously extreme, but many other examples of non-educational parental partiality exist. Gen Z has recently popularised the term 'nepo(tism) baby', by which they mean famous or otherwise successful individuals who owe their success or fame entirely or in large part to their parents.[24] The actions the parents take in these cases – ensuring their children get auditions, book deals, or spots working for the parent's company or political party etc. – are parentally partial actions; they are actions in which the parent shows special treatment to their own child that they do not show to others. Needless to say, the partiality they show their child in these instances leads to the child having opportunities that other children simply do not get. Even amongst the non-famous, parentally partial acts abound, from the mundane to the extraordinary. My giving my child a lift to his music lesson, but not the kid next door, is partiality (as is paying for the music lesson). More drastically, my decision to

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[22] Jennifer Medina, Katie Benner, and Kate Taylor, 'Actresses, Business Leaders and Other Wealthy Parents Charged in U.S. College Entry Fraud', *The New York Times*, 12 March 2019, sec. U.S., https://www.nytimes.com/2019/03/12/us/college-admissions-cheating-scandal.html.

[23] Mimi Swartz, 'The Cheerleader Murder Plot', Texas Monthly, 1 May 1991, https://www.texasmonthly.com/arts-entertainment/the-cheerleader-murder-plot/.

[24] 'What Is a "Nepo Baby"?', The Independent, 21 January 2023, https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/nepo-baby-meaning-og-born-b2265902.html.

give my child my kidney, rather than the stranger who has been waiting for a kidney for much longer, is also a parentally partial decision.[25]

That there are such a vast variety of parentally partial acts and, in some cases, their seemingly fundamental nature as part of parenting is illustrative of the case for the other side of this problem – the parental experience and relationship with one's child. Some parentally partial acts seem so fundamental to what a parent is that forbidding them seems preposterous. Can morality really require, for example, that parents cannot read their child a bedtime story on the basis that this might grant their child unfair advantages over their peers? Surely not – to lose this feature of the parent-child relationship will strike many as morality going too far. It is nevertheless the case that even this parentally partial action conflicts with equality of opportunity.

The question, then, is whether there is a line to be drawn between acceptable parental partiality and unacceptable parental partiality, even where both conflict with morality by impairing equality of opportunity. Further, if a line can be drawn, *why* can such a line be drawn? What makes one equality of opportunity-violating act of parental partiality permissible, while another act is impermissible?[26] Why might private schooling be impermissible, but bedtime story-reading be permissible – given that they both conflict with equality of opportunity? There are, of course, many discussions of partiality and its justification within the literature. To name but a few: Simon Keller offers a defence of partiality because the other individual merits partiality in response to their value; Diane Jeske suggests that intimacy grounds one's special (partial) obligations to oth-

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[25] Atul Gawande a surgeon, public health researcher, and current Assistant Administrator of the United States Agency For International Development for Global Health in his book *Complications: A Surgeon's Notes on an Imperfect Science* offers an insight into how partiality towards family members (presumably including one's children) permeates medical settings:*'[the] first few unsteady times a young physician tries to put in a central line, remove a breast cancer, or sew together two segments of colon. No matter how many protections we put in place, on average these cases go less well with the novice than with someone experienced. We have no illusions about this. When an attending physician brings a sick family member in for surgery, people at the hospital think hard about how much to let trainees participate. Even when the attending insists that they participate as usual, a resident scrubbing in knows that it will be far from a teaching case. And if a central line must be put in, a first-timer is certainly not going to do it.'* Atul Gawande, *Complications: A Surgeon's Notes on an Imperfect Science*, First Edition (New York, NY: Picador, 2003).

[26] One reason is that the actions are impermissible for other reasons, such as the wrongness of murder in the Wanda Holloway case.

ers; similarly, while he does not address the matter of partiality directly, Ferdinand Schoeman advances an argument for familial autonomy grounded upon the importance of intimacy in a familial relationship and the undesirability of a state interrupting such intimacy; Sarah Stroud and (separately) Bernard Williams suggest that partiality is justified because it allows one to pursue one's own projects; Niko Kolodny justifies partiality based on the history and value of the relationship.[27] My focus throughout the thesis is on the most prominent defence of *parental* partiality found in the literature, namely Harry Brighouse and Adam Swift's familial relationship goods view – on which more shortly.[28]

2.1 What's love got to do with it? Parental partiality and parental love

The first paper, *What's love got to do with it?*, grapples with the question of what might justify parental partiality. In order to do this, it considers the most influential attempt to answer the question of when and why parental partiality is justified –Brighouse and Swift's familial relationship goods account, put forth in their book *Family Values*.[29] Briefly, Brighouse and Swift's account focuses on

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[27] Diane Jeske, 'Families, Friends, and Special Obligations', *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 28(4) (1998)527–55; Ferdinand Schoeman, 'Rights of Children, Rights of Parents, and the Moral Basis of the Family', *Ethics* 91(1) (1980)6–19; Simon Keller, *Partiality*, (Princeton University Press, 2013); Williams op. cit.; Sarah Stroud, 'Permissible Partiality, Projects, and Plural Agency', *Partiality and Impartiality: Morality, Special Relationships, and the Wider World*, ed. B. Feltham and J. Cottingham (Oxford University Press, 2010); Niko Kolodny, 'Which Relationships Justify Partiality? General Considerations and Problem Cases', *Partiality and Impartiality: Morality, Special Relationships, and the Wider World*, ed. B. Feltham and J. Cottingham (Oxford University Press, 2010); Niko Kolodny, 'Which Relationships Justify Partiality? The Case of Parents and Children', *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 38(1) (2010)37–75.

[28] Harry Brighouse and Adam Swift, 'Legitimate Parental Partiality', *Philosophy & Public Affairs*, 37.1 (2009), 43–80; Harry Brighouse and Adam Swift, *Family Values: The Ethics of Parent-Child Relationships* (Princeton University Press, 2014); Harry Brighouse and Adam Swift, 'Advantage, Authority, Autonomy and Continuity: A Response to Ferracioli, Gheaus and Stroud', *Law, Ethics and Philosophy*, 2015, 220–40; Harry Brighouse and Adam Swift, 'Family Values Reconsidered: A Response', *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy*, 21.3 (2018), 385–405.

[29] Brighouse and Swift, *Family Values: The Ethics of Parent-Child Relationships*. Of course, Brighouse and Swift's account is not without its detractors; for criticisms of (versions) of the Brighouse and Swift partiality view, see for example Archard, *The Family: A Liberal Defence*; Paul Bou-Habib, 'The Moralized View of Parental Partiality', *Journal of Political Philosophy* 22, no. 1 (2014): 66–83; Clayton and Stevens,

the relationship between parent and child and the goods this creates for the child (and the parent). Here, goods are not tangible objects; rather, they are contributors to a child's upbringing physically, cognitively, emotionally, and morally – as well as contributors to the child's happy life *qua* child. These goods are known as familial relationship goods (FRGs). The FRGs are at the core of Brighouse and Swift's account of the parent-child relationship generally speaking, but also with respect to the question of permissible parental partiality. The authors suggest a *prima facie* right for the parental freedom required in order to have a parent-child relationship that generates core FRGs, where a parentally partial act is required for realising core FRGs, it is therefore permissible. The difference in permissibility between the acts of sending one's child to private school and reading one's child a bedtime story is thus that the former (generally) does not generate core FRGs while the latter does. There are, of course, many more complexities and nuances to the Brighouse and Swift argument, but the core idea is that parental partiality that clashes with equality of opportunity is permissible where it is necessary to realise these important relationship goods.

What's love got to do with it? challenges this account for its reliance on *relationship* goods.[30] It argues that a focus on FRGs fails to capture some equality-violating parental partiality that we think is intuitively permissible. Consider:

> *Abducted parents:* An individual's parents are abducted and imprisoned by a despotic regime when the individual is young. The individual is then given to a family upon whom the regime looks favourably, with the individual's genetic parents (or original adoptive parents) prevented from contacting them.[31]

I argue that if some mechanism existed in which the estranged parents could be parentally partial towards their child (say by financially supporting the child from afar) then this partiality would be intuitively permissible. Importantly, this intuitively permissible parental partiality cannot be captured by Brighouse and Swift's reliance on FRGs because there is no FRG-generating *relationship* available in this case. Before suggesting an alternative account of what might justify

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'School Choice and the Burdens of Justice'; Olsaretti, 'Liberal Equality and the Moral Status of Parent-Child Relationships'; Daniel Engster, 'Equal Opportunity and the Family: Levelling Up the Brighouse-Swift Thesis', *Journal of Applied Philosophy* 36, no. 1 (2019): 34–49.

[30] Here the paper builds upon Engster, 'Equal Opportunity and the Family: Levelling Up the Brighouse-Swift Thesis'.

[31] This case, from *What's love got to do with it?*, is an adapted version of a real life case Niko Kolodny provides. Kolodny, 'Which Relationships Justify Partiality? The case of Parents and Children', 2010.

parental partiality, I also question other features of Brighouse and Swift's argument, such as their idea of a 'core' FRG versus a more general-advantage FRG. One of my objections to this divide is that the differences between the two types of FRGs are under-defined; but, broadly speaking, general-advantage FRGs are reliant on a pre-existing core FRG-generating relationship, such that any valuable general-advantage FRG derived from general attempts to advantage one's child relies, and is parasitic, on pre-existing core FRG-generating relationships. For the authors, only core FRGs are sufficiently weighty to justify parental partiality; hence, very general attempts to advantage one's child (by sending them to private school, for example) are not justifiable even if they generate FRGs because these FRGs are general-advantage FRGs, not core FRGs. In the paper I suggest this divide is difficult to maintain because it's not clear *why* general-advantage FRGs should be less weighty even if they are parasitic. Further, it is not clear that the value in acting partially towards one's child is only distinctively valuable where the particular type of parent-child relationship the authors have in mind is in place.

Instead of focusing on relationships and the goods therein, I suggest that those looking to justify parental partiality should be concerned with partiality that is required to preserve parental love. In an ecumenical effort, I offer no overarching definition of parental love, instead suggesting the relevant concern for parental partiality are three love-based phenomena: believing one is loved by one's parents, being loved by one's parents, and one's parents believing they love their child.[32] I then demonstrate that each of these phenomena have intrinsic and instrumental value and that parental partiality is often required to preserve parental love (in these forms) and its value. I contrast this account with the FRG account in order to demonstrate its capacity to cope with cases like *Abducted parents* as well as the FRG paradigm case of bedtime story-reading.

In the final section of the paper, I discuss the practical implications for a defence of parental partiality where it protects parental love. I suggest that some of the love-based phenomena, and their connection to partiality, are reasonably easy to ascertain, such as a parent's belief that they love their child or their actually loving the child. I cede that the child believing they are loved is a more difficult practical case because of its inherent reliance on a child's unreliable and often over-demanding belief – I do not want the account to be held ransom

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[32] The literature on love is a large one, for selected readings on love and parental love see: Luara Ferracioli, 'The State's Duty to Ensure Children Are Loved', J. Ethics & Soc. Phil. 8 (2014): iv; Niko Kolodny, 'Love as Valuing a Relationship', The Philosophical Review 112, no. 2 (2003): 135–89; Hichem Naar, 'A Dispositional Theory of Love', Pacific Philosophical Quarterly 94, no. 3 (2013): 342–57; Norvin Richards, The Ethics of Parenthood (Oxford University Press, 2010).

to a child demanding ice cream for dinner each night because otherwise they won't feel loved. In an attempt to avoid such scenarios, I argue for a retrospective account in which the child's belief they are not loved is assessed by the child *qua* child and *qua* adult – for an act of partiality to be required in order to protect the love-based phenomenon of the child believing they are loved, this lack of belief would have to held by child *qua* child and *qua* adult.[33] I argue that adoption of this retrospective account therefore negates the vast majority of cases where a child's over-demanding belief holds parents ransom.

What's love got to do with it? offers two interesting contributions to the broader research question. The first contribution is a critical discussion of the most prominent solution to one of the foremost conflicts between morality and the parent-child relationship, namely the problem of parental partiality and its clash with equality of opportunity. The second contribution is of an alternative approach to the problem of parental partiality. Taken together, the two contributions highlight a way in which a personal relationship might conflict with morality and propose a possible way of ruling on this conflict while casting doubt on an alternative prominent attempt.

2.2 Grandparental partiality

Grandparental partiality also has as its chief concern the permissibility of parental partiality. However, in *Grandparental partiality* I do not argue for a solution to the parental partiality dilemma. Instead, I consider the case for extending a relationship goods view (using Brighouse and Swift's view as an exemplar) to persons beyond parents.[34] In a sense, this paper is aimed at those who are not convinced by my earlier critiques, and replacement, of the FRG view. It gives the benefit of the doubt to the FRG view's claims about the permissibility of parental partiality that is required for FRGs, but in doing so questions the scope of this claim. Recall that Brighouse and Swift's view centres on *familial* relationship goods, by which they mean the goods generated by the parent-child relationship. These goods typify the value of the parent-child relationship and, per the authors, justify some parental partiality. In *Grandparental partiality,* I consider whether these goods could be generated by persons other than parents. I argue that they can and that this has significant implications for both distributive justice and the role of the parent.

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[33] The most notable use of retrospective consent in regard to children (though for a different purpose) can be found in: Matthew Clayton, 'Debate: The Case against the Comprehensive Enrolment of Children', *Journal of Political Philosophy* 20, no. 3 (2012): 353–64.

[34] Brighouse and Swift, *Family Values: The Ethics of Parent-Child Relationships.*

In order to establish whether persons other than parents could generate FRGs, the paper sets out the conditions Brighouse and Swift think make the parent-child relationship able to generate these goods. For example, one such condition is a fiduciary duty over the child: the parent is required to look after, and meet the needs of, the child. The paper then discusses whether individuals other than parents are capable of having these features in their own relationships with a child. It notes that parental figures and multiple (i.e. more than 2) parents are obviously capable of having these features (points Brighouse and Swift seem to accept as well). The paper then considers other members of the family (stepparents, grandparents, aunts and uncles) and finds that these individuals frequently have all the features of the relationship that Brighouse and Swift think generates FRGs. Returning to the case of a fiduciary duty, it is not difficult to see that there will be occasions where these extended members of the family have these duties (especially so in situations where parents are absent or inadequate), for example.

The paper then turns its attention to persons not in the child's family. I argue that neighbours, family friends, babysitters, sports coaches, and teachers could, and in some cases do, have the sort of relationship required to generate FRGs on Brighouse and Swift's view. Again, taking the fiduciary duty as an example, this is hopefully clearly present in the case of teachers, sports coaches, and babysitters, each of whom is charged with looking after a child for a period of time (as well as, in the case of teachers and sports coaches at least, many other duties). It is also very plausible that a neighbour or family friend could have temporary fiduciary duties over a child, e.g. where a parent cannot get home until late and asks a neighbour to keep an eye on their child, or when the child attends a sleepover at a family friend's house. The paper thus concludes that certain members of the listed persons will have each of the FRG generating features in their relationship with a child that is not their own and that consequently quite a significant number of persons with varying roles in the child's life have the capacity to generate FRGs on Brighouse and Swift's own definition of relationships that generate FRGs. This is, I think, a significant enough conclusion on its own – that the goods thought to typify the value of the parent-child relationship can be provided by persons other than parents is significant. Nevertheless, the paper explores two implications of this extension, specifically its effect on distributive justice and its effect on the role of the parent.

The paper argues that if the generation of FRGs can be extended to non-parent others, this is likely to have significant implications for distributive justice in two ways. First, the increase in persons who *can* be permissibly partial (where FRGs are at risk) implies a more general increase in partial actions taken and thus an increase in possible violations of equality of opportunity. Second,

there will now be a new possible supply of FRGs (from those other than parents), and this means that those who previously did not have their fair share of FRGs may now get their fair share.

With regard to the first distributive justice point, I argue that this is a bullet we should bite because failing to do so would entail endorsing one of a few undesirable arguments. Moreover, and more positively, biting the bullet is appealing for three reasons. First, it affirms the idea that parental partiality is permissible in at least some circumstances; second, the idea of FRGs grounding parental partiality coheres with a wider intuitive claim that we can be partial to others (friends, spouses, etc.) because of the goods we can generate for them; and third, it grants greater legitimacy to those non-parents who can and do provide FRGs. Regarding the second distributive justice point, I note that it is good to have a new source of FRGs because many individuals may not get enough FRGs from their own parents. However, I also suggest one potential problem with this approach which is that if one does not receive enough FRGs from their parents then, comparatively speaking, they are less likely to be in an environment in which non-parents can provide them with FRGs in comparison to someone whose parents provide them with enough FRGs. This is problematic because it suggests that the extension explored by the paper may worsen inequalities of FRGs rather than lessen them because those who already received more FRGs than others would now get even more from non-parents. I suggest a solution to this dilemma would involve identifying when someone has their 'fair share' of FRGs and preventing partial acts towards said individual where this partiality would normally have been justified by appeal to FRGs. Such a solution would diminish potential inequalities of FRGs and also diminish potential inequalities more broadly because less equality-violating partiality would take place.

The final discussion of the paper is devoted to the role of the parent in light of this possible extension. It is important to stress that this paper is not seeking to put forward an entirely revisionist understanding of the role of the parent, I am not here making the claim that *because* a non-parent can generate FRGs they are awarded the role and title of parent. Further, the paper's claims are compatible with both dual-interest and child-centred theories of parental rights. The paper's arguments do, nonetheless, have interesting implications for the primacy of the parent. One implication is that if a parent is worse, or even only equally as good, as a non-parent at generating some FRGs there is nothing *internal to the idea of FRGs* that should prioritise the parent over the non-parent in the generating of these FRGs for the child.

The paper considers a potential response to this claim that purports to establish a reason to prioritise parents over non-parents in the generation of FRGs, this is the generation of FRGs *for the parents*. These are goods *the parents* get from the parent-child relationship. Parental FRGs might be thought of

as a kind of tiebreaker. Where both parents and non-parents could generate FRGs for the child, the possible generation of FRGs for the parent might be thought to justify priority for parents. I am sceptical of this view for two reasons. First, I think it might *only* be available as a tie-breaker view when both parents and non-parents could provide the child FRGs at equally competent levels. In cases where the two parties are unequal in their ability to provide FRGs, it is unclear (even on Brighouse and Swift's original view) why parental FRGs should be given priority over the (more) successful provision of FRGs for the child. I take it that those concerned about the (lack of) primacy for the parent would not be satisfied with parental primacy only being available in these tie-breaker cases. Second, it is not clear that *parental* FRGs could only be experienced by the parent. I argue that the features that supposedly generate these FRGs (detailed in the paper) are plausibly present in the relationships that non-parents have with children that are not their own.[35] I finish the paper by pointing out that the role and primacy of the parent can still be maintained even if one accepts the extension the paper presents. This is the case if the primacy and role of the parent is defended on grounds not derived from FRGs or, if it transpired that empirically parents were best placed to reliably and successfully generate such goods.

Grandparental partiality's primary contribution to the research question of morality's potential conflict with personal relationships is by revealing the true scope of the possible conflict between equality of opportunity and the parent-child relationship where parental partiality is involved. It reveals that adoption of the most prominent approach to parental partiality might actually expand the number of personal relationships in conflict with morality because, rather than only parents coming into conflict with equality of opportunity due to a feature of their relationship with their own child, *non-parents* will also enter into this conflict.

Taken together, the two papers provide a significant contribution to the literature on one of the ways in which the parent-child relationship can conflict with morality – parental partiality's conflict with equality of opportunity. *What's love got to do with it?* considers the most prominent attempt to reconcile these two conflicting features, suggests some potential problems with the account and proposes a different account. *Grandparental partiality* can be understood in conjunction with *What's love got to do with it?* as suggesting that even if one remains sympathetic to a relationship goods account, there are fur-

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[35] Here I am in step with: Shields, 'Parental Rights and the Importance of Being Parents'.

ther bullets to bite with such an account with regard to the parent-child relationship and morality, such as those that come with accepting the extension of the account proposed in *Grandparental partiality*.

A final point on these two papers taken together is to note their compatibility. If it transpired that other types of love were as valuable for the child as parental love (or if parental love could be offered by non-parents), then nothing I have written requires limiting partiality based on the protection of (parental) love to only parents. Indeed, much of what is good about biting the bullet of extension in *Grandparental partiality* for distributive justice is replicated if we extend the pool of persons who can provide (parental) love to a child, assuming (as I think is plausible) that love is a matter of distributive justice to some extent.[36]

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[36] Though, as Anca Gheaus notes, even if love is a matter of justice, it is difficult to see whose duty it is to remedy this. Anca Gheaus, 'Love and Justice: A Paradox?', *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, 47.6 (2017), 739–59.

3. Friendships

Well, over there, there's friends of mine
What can I say?
I've known 'em for a long long time
And, yeah, they might overstep the line
But you just cannot get angry in the same way.[37]

With the paper's addressing the potential for conflict between the parent-child relationship and morality set out I turn now to the other relationship explored by this thesis – friendships. Good friendships are nearly unanimously agreed to be an essential part of a happy and fulfilling life. When asked to think back on some of your happiest memories, it is likely you will cite at least some occasions spent with friends, be those memories of your eighth birthday or your retirement party. We go to friends when our other relationships are not going well, or when they are going very well. Think here of the frustrated teenager whose parents just don't understand her, and who stays at her best friend's house for a couple of days as a sign of protest; or think of the delight one takes in telling their friends that they are considering proposing. Friendships play a significant role in our lives, typically from a very young age until death.

Friendships are not, however, without their issues. Arguments with friends are commonplace, and friends often place burdens we would rather not have. It is thus perhaps unsurprising that friendship, and its potential to clash with morality, has received significant attention from theorists (some of which I highlighted in the introduction). There are of course vast literatures, stretching all the way back to Aristotle, over the nature, limits, and potential problems of friendship.[38] These literatures are interesting and address important questions

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[37] Alex Turner, 'A Certain Romance', *Whatever People Say I Am, That's What I'm Not* (Domino Record Co., 2006).

[38] See for example: Elizabeth Telfer, 'Friendship', *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, 71 (1971), 223–41; Laurence Thomas, 'Friendship', *Synthese*, 72.2 (1987), 217–36; Alexis Elder, 'Why Bad People Can't Be Good Friends', *Ratio*, 27.1 (2014), 84–99; Karl Ameriks and Desmond M. Clarke, *Aristotle: Nicomachean Ethics* (Cambridge University Press, 2000); Diane Jeske, 'Friendship, Virtue, and Impartiality', *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 57.1 (1997), 51–72; Diane Jeske, *Rationality and Moral Theory: How Intimacy Generates Reasons* (Routledge, 2008).

about friendship itself and its capacity to clash with morality. This thesis's contribution is aimed at a specific potential conflict between morality and one's friendship, namely the prospect of a friendship with someone who holds immoral beliefs.

Have you ever been in the pub with a friend and noticed them making the occasional sexist comment, or perhaps attended a birthday party where another individual's race was remarked upon in disapproving tones by a friend? Maybe you have a friend who uses *gay* as a synonym for bad or undesirable. If you have found yourself in a scenario such as these, then you probably also found yourself vehemently disagreeing with your friend's underlying relevant beliefs. You might also have wondered whether *you* were doing something wrong by continuing your friendship with this person despite their sexism, racism or homophobia. Is there a conflict here between my morality and my friendship? Is there something wrong with my friendship with someone with immoral beliefs?

In the third paper of the thesis, *Hello darkness my old friend,* I tackle the question of whether there is something wrong with being friends with people who hold immoral beliefs and suggest that it is not necessarily wrong to have such friends. This answer is a significant contribution given that it stands in contrast to the prevailing views expressed in the literature, the most notable of which are Cathy Mason's view that the badness of such friendships is in taking the immoral beliefs of one's friends seriously and Jessica Isserow's view that befriending such an individual shows an error in one's moral priorities.[39] The answer to this question is an important one in order to address the research

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For good collections on friendship see: Neera Kapur Badhwar, ed., *Friendship: A Philosophical Reader* (Cornell University Press, 1993); Diane Jeske, *The Routledge Handbook of Philosophy of Friendship* (Routledge, 2022). For a discussion of the role (or lack thereof) of partiality towards friends see: Jonathan Seglow, *Defending Associative Duties* (Routledge, 2013); David B. Annis, 'The Meaning, Value, and Duties of Friendship', *American Philosophical Quarterly* 24, no. 4 (1987): 349–56; Mark Bernstein, 'Friends without Favoritism', *J. Value Inquiry* 41 (2007): 59. While not necessarily a moral conflict, there is also an interesting question of whether one need be *epistemically* partial towards one's own friends – whether one should be more inclined to (or even must) believe certain things about our friends. This sort of consideration is behind the intuition that we should be willing to give our friends more of the 'benefit of the doubt' when hearing something negative about them. See Sarah Stroud for a thorough discussion of this idea: Sarah Stroud, 'Epistemic Partiality in Friendship', *Ethics*, 116.3 (2006), 498–524.

[39] Cathy Mason, 'What's Bad about Friendship with Bad People?', *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 51, no. 7 (2021): 523–34; Jessica Isserow, 'On Having Bad Persons as Friends', *Philosophical Studies* 175, no. 12 (2018): 3099–3116.

question of this thesis because it reveals that what many might think is a conflict between morality and one's personal relationship (friendship with someone with immoral beliefs) need not in fact be a conflict.

While I argue that friendships with persons who hold immoral beliefs are not necessarily wrong, and thus not necessarily in conflict with morality (at least not in virtue of the friend's immoral beliefs), the intuition that *something* should be done about our friends' beliefs is a strong one. I pursue this intuition in the fourth and final paper of the thesis, *Should we blame our friends for their immoral beliefs?* I argue that, in some scenarios, the something that should be done is to blame our friend for their immoral beliefs.

3.1 Hello darkness my old friend

In *Hello darkness my old friend,* I tackle the question of whether friendship with persons who hold immoral beliefs is necessarily wrong. I argue, contra other views in the literature, that it is not. In the paper I offer a few preliminary points in order to clarify the nature of the paper's argument; most notably, I specify that you know for certain your friend really does have these beliefs and that these beliefs are of the kind that we *know* are wrong. In clarifying these points, I remove fringe or ambiguous cases.

In establishing that such friendships are not necessarily wrong, the paper first identifies and expounds the strongest arguments available for the claim. The paper begins by considering arguments that attempt to sidestep any need to establish that these friendships are wrong by instead denying that these friendships are indeed friendships at all. I suggest such arguments are unconvincing given their immensely revisionist implications and that, even if we accepted these arguments, we might instead consider the question of whether there was anything wrong with 'friendship 2' with persons who hold immoral beliefs, where friendship 2 has all the traits of friendship, *including* the possibility of being friends with persons who hold immoral beliefs, but a different name.

The paper then briefly discusses and dismisses some arguments that seem obvious candidates for justifying the intuition that there is something wrong with such friendships. For example, it rejects the notion that such people *deserve* something bad to happen to them because even if this were true (a claim I am sceptical of), it is far from clear that the removal of our friendship need be that bad thing (as opposed to some other bad thing). A further example of a potential argument offered and then rejected is that our friendship necessarily expresses approval of their immoral belief. Consideration of more mundane friendships reveals this argument's flaws. That I am friends with someone who

prefers ale over lager does not seem like a good reason for others to draw a similar conclusion about me – nor, as the expressionist must argue, does it mean that my friendship expresses to others that I prefer ale over lager.

The paper then considers and rejects the two prominent views in the literature that suggest there is a problem with friendship with persons who hold immoral beliefs. The first of these is Jessica Isserow's *Moral Priorities View,* which argues that befriending (her focus is on the formation rather than maintenance of such friendships) such individuals reveals an error in one's moral priorities such that one considers the prospective friend's positive traits (a good sense of humour for example) as more weighty than their negative traits (their immoral beliefs).[40] I agree with Isserow that this is an error in one's moral priorities, but deny that striking up a friendship necessarily requires one to have weighted another's positives over their negatives. Instead, I suggest that the desire to befriend another can be based simply on the fact that you see *something* about them you like, which does not commit you to any view about their downsides and the relative weight of these downsides. Thus one need not get their moral priorities wrong by befriending individuals with immoral beliefs and therefore these friendships are not necessarily wrong.

The second prominent view is offered by Cathy Mason, who suggests that the reason such friendships are *pro tanto* bad, though not necessarily overall bad (she does not use the term *wrong*), is because they require one to take seriously the immoral belief.[41] This is because in order to treat one's friend as an equal, one must take seriously all their deeply held beliefs, and an immoral belief must be deeply held. Taking seriously an immoral belief, in the sense that one considers it as a genuine option amongst many and does not simply dismiss it out of hand, is wrong, and therefore so is the friendship. In response I deny the claim that one must take seriously all deeply held beliefs of their friends, by way of reference to a conspiracy theorist friend. I claim that the action of a friend *is* to dismiss out of hand, rather than seriously consider, the conspiracy theory believed by one's friend. Further, I do not think it is objectionably inegalitarian to dismiss out of hand some friend's deeply held beliefs, as demonstrated when an enthusiastic, but rubbish, home cook gives cooking advice to their professional chef friend. In such a case I do not think it objectionably inegalitarian for the chef to think of, and treat, her amateur friend's cooking views as inferior (and thus unequal) to her own.

The paper's final contribution is a section considering the positive case for the non-necessary wrongness of such friendships. In this section I suggest some

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[40] Isserow, 'On Having Bad Persons as Friends'.

[41] Mason, 'What's Bad about Friendship with Bad People?'

cases in which friendships with persons with immoral beliefs do not even seem to be intuitively wrong, and suggest what might be behind these intuitions on an all-things-considered view. Following this, I give a case in which there looks to be an absence of even *pro tanto* wrongness with such friendships. I end the paper by emphasising that such friendships *are friendships* and thus if we think friendships in general are justified, as common-sense morality suggests, then we should think friendships with persons with immoral beliefs are also justified. I suggest that one reason, beyond common-sense morality, to think friendships are justified is their value.[42]

The paper's broader contribution to the RQ is a clarification of whether there is indeed a conflict between morality and these sorts of friendship, or more specifically, whether there is *necessarily* a conflict. Isserow and Mason's views establish situations in which such friendships *could* conflict with morality this the paper does not deny. It nevertheless does deny that friendships with persons with immoral beliefs *necessarily* conflict with morality. Further, I take it that by establishing that it is not necessarily wrong to be friends with persons with immoral beliefs I also establish, all else equal, that it is not wrong to be friends with those with 'lesser' wrong beliefs or more ambiguously held wrongful beliefs, both of which might characterise the (more common) examples I started the 'friendship' section of this thesis with.

3.2 Should we blame our friends for their immoral beliefs?

Hello darkness my old friend establishes that there is nothing necessarily wrong with friendship with persons who hold immoral beliefs, but it remains the case that the intuition that we should do *something* about such friendships, even where they are not necessarily wrong, is a strong one. In *Should we blame our friends for their immoral beliefs?* I explore the possibility that what we should do to our friends with immoral beliefs is blame them. Importantly, I argue that when blaming one's friend for their immoral beliefs is appropriate, it is so for reasons *outside* the friendship. That blame is rendered appropriate for reasons outside the friendship allows one to embrace the intuition that one should do something in response to a friend's immoral beliefs without needing to label the friendship itself (or one's participation in it) as wrong.

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[42] In the paper I use Thomas Hurka's work to show how one might move from the value of friendships in general to the value, and thus justifiability, of friendships with persons with immoral beliefs: Thomas Hurka, 'The Value of Friendship', in *The Routledge Handbook of Philosophy of Friendship*, ed. Diane Jeske (Taylor & Francis, 2022).

The paper begins by setting out T.M. Scanlon's conception of blame and blameworthiness that I use as a framework throughout the paper (though, as I suggest in the paper, I think the paper's arguments are applicable across a number of definitions of blame).[43] Scanlon's view centres on blame as a response to someone impairing a relationship, where impairing means failing to meet the standards of the relationship. Of course, different relationships have different standards: one can blame their partner for a lack of monogamy, but not a friend for the same offence. When one blames one does so with reference to the standards of the specific relationship they stand in with the blamee. To blame is to revise one's attitude towards another in light of their impairing a relationship and possibly, but not necessarily, to act (or decline to act) in light of this revision.

Importantly, one of the relationships that Scanlon suggests all individuals stand in is a moral relationship. This is roughly the idea that as humans we are all members of the same moral community, and this relationship with others comes with its own standards. While these standards are quite minimal compared to other relationships, the possession of immoral beliefs clearly violates these standards by denying the place of a certain section of persons as equal members of the moral community. As a consequence of this, one should blame an individual with immoral beliefs. Thus, the claim of the paper is that we should blame our friend *qua* person who stands in a moral relationship with them, rather than *qua* friend. That is, the standards of friendship do not necessarily give us reason to blame our friend for their immoral beliefs, but the fact that we stand in a moral relationship with the friend gives us reason to blame them because their immoral belief impairs this relationship (but not necessarily the friendship). Blame is an appropriate response because it is a recognition of the fact we should defend the moral relationship and that someone has impaired it.[44]

The paper thus establishes that we should blame our friends who hold immoral beliefs, but we should blame them *qua* person we have a moral relationship with rather than *qua* friend. Nevertheless, the fact that this person is our friend matters. Factors plausibly constitutive of friendship, such as, for example, loyalty, might weaken the case to blame one's friend, or change the nature of this blame. In addition, specific friendships will come with specific sensitivities which weigh on the appropriateness or nature of blame; knowing one's

43 Thomas M. Scanlon, *Moral Dimensions: Permissibility, Meaning, Blame* (Harvard University Press, 2010).

44 Here I build upon: Christopher Evan Franklin, 'Valuing Blame', in *Blame: Its Nature and Norms* (Oxford University Press on Demand, 2013), 207–23.

friend is prone to self-destruct upon receiving criticism gives good reason for one not to blame, or at least to blame in a form that is unlikely to make the friend self-destruct. However, while these factors might weaken the case for blaming our friend, factors such as the severity of their impairment and our *other* relationships (such as with the targets of our friend's beliefs), may well strengthen the case for blaming our friend. In addition, the paper stresses that we lack the standing to forgive our friend for their immoral beliefs.

The final section of the paper emphasises that its arguments are compatible with the prominent conceptions of blame in the literature, not just Scanlon's account, which I use as an exemplar throughout.[45] Further, this section addresses a potential worry that blaming through a change of attitude is not a sufficient response to one's friend's immoral beliefs. I argue that such a view is misguided if it is underpinned by retributivist or communicative attitudes, as I suggest is likely.

The contribution of *Should we blame our friends for their immoral beliefs?* to the research question is two-pronged. First, in accordance with *Hello darkness my old friend,* it complies with the view that our friendship with someone who holds immoral beliefs need not conflict with morality. Where blame is appropriate for this friend, we blame them because of the nature of our impersonal moral relationship with them, *not* because of our personal relationship with them. However, and this is the second prong, there still exists a significant chance of our personal relationships conflicting with morality. This is because although our reasons *for* blaming our friend do not rest on the fact they are our friend, I suggest that there are reasons stemming from our personal relationships *not* to blame our friend. These are reasons internal to friendship that modify the nature of the blame or render it inappropriate.

Taken in conjunction with one another, *Hello darkness my old friend* and *Should we blame our friends for their immoral beliefs?* offer a thorough treatment of a potential conflict between morality and a type of personal relationship, specifically friendship. *Hello darkness my old friend* establishes that nothing is necessarily wrong with friendships with persons who hold immoral beliefs and that consequently there need not be a conflict between morality and one's

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[45] For alternate accounts of blame see: George Sher, *In Praise of Blame* (Oxford University Press, 2005); R. Jay Wallace, *Responsibility and the Moral Sentiments* (Harvard University Press, 1994); R. Jay Wallace, 'Hypocrisy, Moral Address, and the Equal Standing of Persons', *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 38, no. 4 (2010): 307–41; Peter Strawson, 'Freedom and Resentment', *Proceedings of the British Academy* 48 (1962): 187–211; Smith Angela, 'Moral Blame and Moral Protest', in *Blame: Its Nature and Norms* (Oxford University Press on Demand, 2013).

personal relationships. However, *Should we blame our friends for their immoral beliefs?* provides an argument for the intuition that even if nothing is wrong with these friendships, we should still do something in response to our friend's beliefs – blame them *qua* person who stands in a moral relationship with them. The papers together thus go some way towards addressing whether and how such friendships conflict with morality.

4. Methods

I have now set out the motivation for analysing friendship and the parent-child relationship and detailed the ways in which the four papers address these relationships. I want to end this summary with a few words on the research methods this thesis has utilised throughout.

4.1 Reflective equilibrium

The research for this thesis and its papers was conducted in an analytical style. More specifically it was conducted using a technique common to the discipline known as 'reflective equilibrium', a term first coined by John Rawls.[46] The (grand) goal of reflective equilibrium is to achieve coherence and, ideally, support between one's various beliefs.[47] At its absolute most basic, this involves identifying beliefs that are *obviously* incoherent such that the two cannot be held at the same time. For example, one cannot coherently hold both the belief that the state imposing the death penalty for murderers is wrong and that the state should enact 'an eye for an eye' punishment for murderous criminals. The two beliefs are not coherent and certainly do not support one another, given that the 'eye for an eye' punishment for a murderer *is* the death penalty. In light of this incoherence, reflective equilibrium entails a reassessment of these beliefs until one has beliefs that are not just coherent but, ideally, supportive of one another, either by rejecting one of the beliefs (the death penalty is actually permissible) or modifying one of the beliefs ('an eye for an eye' except in cases where the criminal has killed another person).

This case is a simplistic one because the relevant beliefs operate at roughly the same level (i.e. they are both answers to how the state should punish criminals), but reflective equilibrium is particularly useful as a tool for assessing whether one's deeply held beliefs line up with more surface-level beliefs. Suppose I have reached reflective equilibrium with my beliefs regarding how the

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[46] John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice: Original Edition* (Harvard University Press, 1971).

[47] Christian List and Laura Valentini, 'The Methodology of Political Theory', *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophical Methodology* , ed. H. Cappelen, T. S. Gendler and J. Hawthorne (Oxford University Press, 2016).I use the term beliefs throughout for ease of illustration, but strictly speaking the coherence sought is between one's principles and one's judgements, where the former are 'relatively general rules for comprehending the area of enquiry' and the latter our general 'intuitions or commitments'. Carl Knight, 'Reflective Equilibrium', in *Methods in Analytical Political Theory*, ed. by Adrian Blau (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), pp. 46–64.

state should punish criminals: I have decided that 'an eye for an eye' punishment is correct and thus revised my previous belief that the death penalty is wrong, I now think that it is not wrong. Suppose that I also have a far more deeply held belief that causing the death of another is always wrong, whether imposed by state or otherwise. I am very sure of this belief; it is one of my most deeply held beliefs. Indeed, when questioned about my belief in the 'eye for an eye' punishment of murderers in particular, part of my justification is my belief that causing the death of another is always wrong and thus the murderer deserves punishment.[48] I take my deeply held belief of it being wrong to cause the death of another to be coherent with *and supportive of* my belief in the 'eye for an eye' punishment of murders. On my view I have reached reflective equilibrium of my two beliefs.

However, as readers have no doubt noticed, upon proper reflection these two beliefs are not actually coherent and do not support each other. My deeply held belief that it is always wrong to cause the death of another is not coherent with a belief in the 'eye for an eye' punishment of murderers. While it is true that the former belief gives me a reason to think the murderer has done something wrong, it also gives me a reason to think that 'eye for an eye' punishment of the murderer is wrong – because it causes the death of another (the murderer). Reflective equilibrium thus requires that I rethink my beliefs. In this case I am certain of my more deeply held belief that causing the death of another is wrong and thus make the decision to revise my belief in an 'eye for an eye' punishment of criminals. This means I can endorse my earlier jettisoned belief that the death penalty is wrong because my reasoning for abandoning this belief (a belief in the 'eye for an eye' punishment of criminals, including murderers) has now been rejected. Consequently, I now have two beliefs: 1) the more fundamental belief that causing the death of another is always wrong, and 2) the more surface-level belief that the death penalty is wrong. Here the two beliefs are not only coherent, but Belief 1 provides support to Belief 2 – I have achieved reflective equilibrium of my own beliefs. Importantly, reflective equilibrium does not require that one always abandon or modify their more weakly held beliefs in favour of their more deeply held beliefs, as was the case here. It might be that an inconsistency of beliefs makes one realise that their more weakly held, or more surface-level, beliefs are right and that therefore their more deeply held beliefs are in need of modification or abandonment. That is, it might have

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[48] I say 'part of my justification' here because one would need to make (at least) one additional argument - that one should be punished if they do something wrong.

been that my commitment to the 'eye for an eye' approach to punishing murderers meant that I modified or abandoned my view that causing the death of another is always wrong.

This thesis, and the papers therein, has attempted to achieve reflective equilibrium throughout. For example, in *What's love got to do with it?* I attempted to achieve coherence between my belief in the importance of equality of opportunity and my belief in the importance of parental love, even where the latter seems in tension with the former. A further example is in *Hello darkness my old friend,* where, simplifying slightly, I sought to establish that it is coherent for one to believe that immoral beliefs are wrong while still maintaining a friendship with someone who holds immoral beliefs.

Reflective equilibrium provides an overall goal for theorists but, on its own, tells us little about how one should get there. Further, even when one thinks they have achieved reflective equilibrium, they may well be wrong, as evidenced earlier with the endorsement of both the belief in the 'eye for an eye' punishment of murderers and the belief that it is wrong to cause the death of another. I now turn to some of the techniques and approaches one can use to attempt to reach reflective equilibrium, or to verify that one has reached reflective equilibrium. This thesis has embraced two major techniques/devices in order to reach its conclusions: intuitions and thought experiments.

4.2 Intuitions

Intuitions can play a number of roles for theorists, the most obvious and common of which is also replicated by persons with no philosophical training. This is that they provide helpful jumping off points from which to start considering a question. When I ask you who you think will win a football match, the red team or the blue team, you may answer that the red team will win, an answer that is available based purely on your intuition – essentially what your gut tells you about the result between these two teams. This is intuition at its most basic – it provides *an* answer to question. The same is true of intuitions in moral quandaries. I'm sure that readers will have had a basic intuition about whether it is in fact wrong to maintain friendships with persons who hold immoral beliefs – I certainly did when I started working on the papers. From this base intuition, theorists and non-theorists alike can begin to build a theory or an argument as to the correct answer to the question. It might be that you remember that the red team are not playing very well at the moment and the blue team's star striker is in great form. As a consequence of this you should probably reject your intuition, but it remained a helpful starting point.

Intuitions are often used to go beyond this very basic role by theorists, myself included. Sometimes intuitions, or rather a clash with our intuitions, are

used as evidence (though not undeniable evidence) that a theory or claim cannot be true.[49] Consider the claim 'All persons who have ever been found guilty by a court of law have done something morally wrong'. On the face of it, this claim seems very plausible – it seems reasonable that being found guilty indicates you have done something morally wrong. Nevertheless, acceptance of such a claim would entail that all those who have ever been found guilty of crimes *under monstrous regimes* have done something morally wrong. It would label those who spoke out against the Nazi regime and who were subsequently found guilty of treason morally wrong. Thus, despite seeming initially plausible, such a claim returns deeply unintuitive results, and we can use this unintuitive result to reject the claim or at least adjust the claim to no longer return this unintuitive result.[50] In other cases, we can use the fact that a theory returns results that cohere with our intuitions as evidence of that theory's validity. I appeal to intuitions in both their uses in *Hello darkness my old friend.* I suggest, first, that it is *un*intuitive to suggest that others should necessarily think that I endorse my friend's belief that ale is better than lager simply in virtue of my being friends with him. In the same paper I also suggest that *it is* intuitive that a good friend should reject out of hand a friend's conspiracy theorist beliefs. In both cases I appeal to intuitions as a way of supporting my own view and casting doubt on other claims or arguments. That a claim is intuitive or unintuitive can thus significantly help in reaching a conclusion or presenting a convincing argument.

4.3 Thought experiments

A further technique I want to highlight is the thought experiment. Thought experiments play a significant role in analytical theory, and this thesis is no exception. Kimberly Brownlee and Zofia Stemplowska define the thought experiment as 'a multi-step process that involves (1) the mental visualization of some specific scenario for the purpose of (2) answering a further, more general, and at least partly mental-state-independent question about reality'.[51] For example,

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[49] List and Valentini, 'The Methodology of Political Theory'.

[50] It is worth stressing the caveat that this is not a perfect science. It could be the case that a theory being unintuitive means we should reject the intuition rather than reject the theory. It is sometimes difficult to know when to do this, but it should always remain an option, not least because intuitions are significantly shaped by one's environment, what is intuitive to me as a straight white man in a western European country will, doubtless, differ from those with differing backgrounds and traits.

[51] Kimberley Brownlee and Zofia Stemplowska, 'Thought Experiments', in *Methods in Analytical Political Theory*, ed. by Adrian Blau, 1st edn (Cambridge University Press, 2017), pp. 21–45.

one could pose the following thought experiment: 'Suppose you can choose between one townsperson being locked in jail and deprived of their freedom and all others in the town being free, or one person being locked in jail and deprived of their freedom and everyone else in your town also being locked in jail and deprived of their freedom. Which should you choose?' In posing this question, the hope is that you will answer that it is better to only lock up one individual – and from this I can make some larger point about the value of equality and its connection with freedom (e.g. despite the increased equality of incarcerating all townspeople this equality does not seem valuable because all involved lack freedom, so equality requires freedom to be valuable). The thought experiment, and your answer to it, is thus used as evidence for some greater argument – your answer to the thought experiment is not *just* your answer to the thought experiment, but is supposed to be a more general affirmation of whatever thesis the paper is trying to put forward. In our example, assume the paper's wider claim is that equality is not valuable without freedom – the author uses your answer to their thought experiment as evidence towards this conclusion. An example of this from the present thesis is my introduction of your conspiracy theory endorsing frogs-are-robots friend in *Hello darkness my old friend*. In introducing this case, I want readers to think that we need not take this individual's views seriously, and as such provide evidence for my wider point that we need not take all of our friend's deeply held beliefs seriously.

Much like other types of experiments, if one wants to use thought experiments as evidence, it is important to isolate as much as possible the relevant considerations. It is no use testing how hot a room must be to make a balloon burst if the room I choose to put the balloon in is filled with drawing pins – I will not be able to use the balloon's popping as evidence of how hot a room must be if I cannot be sure that the reason it popped was not that it hit a drawing pin.[52] If, in the previous thought experiment, the goal is to show that freedom is required for equality to be valuable, it would detract from the evidence-worthiness of the thought experiment, and its answer, if the thought experiment also stipulated that 'the one individual is a remorseless convicted murderer'. The answer to the thought experiment is (likely to) remain the same (better that just one individual is locked up), but now it is not clear whether this supports the overall thesis (equality without freedom is not valuable) or whether it supports

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[52] The same is true of political scientist's experiments, in that if they want to establish that voters respond positively to, for example, a combative campaign style, they need to ensure that other factors that affect voters' responses (big promises on improving the economy, for example) are controlled for.

a thesis that remorseless murderers should be locked up.[53] Isolation is not only an important necessary feature of thought experiments; it is also an important virtue of thought experiments. The capacity to strip away all but what one is interested in is an exceptionally useful way of isolating what is 'doing the work' (i.e. the factor[s] that actually motivate acceptance or rejection of a view) in any given theory. Further, once the initial isolated thought experiment is established, it is possible to add or remove features of the experiment to see whether this changes the result. If it does, then the theorist knows that the feature they added or removed carries at least some weight in their theory.

4.4 Making it all come together

This thesis has utilised these three methods extensively throughout. Given this, it is worth saying a little about how these three work with one another. Before doing so, I want to emphasise that these methods are not just used to convince the reader via the medium of text. *I* have made extensive use of each of these methods, either independently or in discussions with others, in order to convince *myself* of the views I am offering. In this sense the methods I have outlined here are not just tools used to construct arguments for the reader's benefit, but methodologies for constructing convincing arguments and coherent theories in the first place.

Returning to how these methodologies fit together, reflective equilibrium can be considered the broad goal. When I argue that there is nothing necessarily wrong with being friends with people who hold immoral beliefs or that it is parental love that is at risk through a lack of parental partiality, I am trying to present a series of claims and arguments that cohere with and, ideally, support one another. My attempts to *demonstrate* that this is the case are shown through thought experiments and use of intuitions, as well as more general arguments. Further, the connection between thought experiments and intuitions is hopefully clear: thought experiments trade on their capacity to illicit a certain intuition, and in doing so reinforce or challenge an established argument. A thought experiment demonstrating the validity of an argument through its conjuring of the 'correct' intuition can thus be used as part of a larger argument in pursuit of reflective equilibrium.

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[53] A separate worry about failing to isolate the relevant factors is that it might simply fail as a thought experiment, in that it does not elicit a response that supports the author's wider claim (or even elicits a response that undermine the author's claim).

5. Conclusion and final thoughts

To conclude, I will first outline how all four papers come together to address the research question and then offer some thoughts about the contributions of this thesis. Taken together, the four papers represent a thorough interrogation of some of the possible conflicts between morality and two of our most important personal relationships: friendships and the parent-child relationship. They find that while some conflicts between personal relationships and morality are very real, such as the problems created by parental partiality, other supposed conflicts are not strictly conflicts between personal relationships and morality, such as friendship with persons with immoral beliefs. Nevertheless, even in these latter cases there are elements of the personal relationship that do come into conflict with morality, such as our reasons not to blame, or to modify the way in which we blame, being influenced by the nature of our friendship with the blamee, even though our reasons *to* blame do not stem from this relationship.

I want to highlight three potential contributions of this thesis with regard to the possibility of conflict between personal relationships and morality. The first is that these conflicts can be very *pervasive*. While not all such conflicts are pervasive (such as the conflict between responsibilities to blame our friend who holds immoral beliefs versus our responsibilities *qua* friend), some are remarkably so. This is best demonstrated by parental partiality. Most, if not all, parents are partial towards their own children in a way that conflicts with equality of opportunity to such an extent that it is difficult to imagine a parent who does not exhibit this partiality and thus come into conflict with morality. Further, it is not simply that most parental relationships exhibit this partiality that makes the conflict pervasive; it is also the fact that most parents will exhibit this partiality *frequently*. If I said to you that the person down your street commits an immoral act at least once a day, perhaps even more than once a day, you would understandably be shocked and appalled; but this is precisely the case with parental partiality. Parents routinely come into conflict with morality when showing partiality to their children. The pervasive nature of this conflict between the parent-child relationship and morality makes attempts to understand and rule on parental partiality's conflict with equality of opportunity, such as those offered in this thesis, all the more pressing.

A second contribution of the arguments in this thesis is that the conflict between personal relationships and morality is *costly*. Some situations, and some relationships, call for us to at least partially fail in our commitment to one value in order to retain the other. I argue in *What's love got to do with it?* that on one side of the parental partiality conflict is parental love, and on the other, equality of opportunity. It is very difficult to pick between these two things – a world

without parental love is a tragic one, but a world without equality of opportunity is also miserable. Parents, to the extent they consciously choose, have to make a very difficult choice when these two values are in conflict – a choice that is bound to be costly whatever they do. Similar is true of the difficulty of respecting one's responsibilities towards one's friends but knowing that one should blame them for their immoral beliefs. We owe it to the potential targets of these immoral beliefs to blame our friend, but it would be churlish to suggest that blaming one's friend in these scenarios is cost-free; one risks permanently altering the nature of the friendship, or perhaps losing the friend entirely. Reprehensible though the friend's belief is, they remain our friend, and presumably losing them as a friend would be a significant loss. To be committed to resolving the conflict in morality's favour by blaming one's friend (where appropriate) might be the right choice, but it is an undeniably costly one.

A final possible contribution is a more speculative one and concerns the role of politics and political institutions in the conflict between morality and one's personal relationships. This is that it strikes me that political institutions could go some way to significantly lessening the conflicts this thesis highlights. Institutional reduction of the conflict between parental partiality and equality of opportunity seems obviously possible where one's motivation for being parentally partial is due to failings of society's institutions. For example, where one wants to send their child to a private school because the local state schools are considered to be awful, then the desire for parental partiality can be mitigated by the provision of better state schools. This suggestion is indicative of a broader thought, which is that political institutions could go some way to eliminating the problems that parental partiality causes, not by stopping parents from being partial, but by stopping parents feeling that they *need* to be partial. When a society fails to offer a promising future for its children, it is not wholly surprising that parents attempt to fill this void with partial actions (and nor is it surprising that failing to perform such actions might be understood as a lack of parental love by one's child). Of course, as I have made clear throughout the thesis and its papers, some parentally partial actions (e.g. bedtime story reading) will remain, even if society and its political institutions make concerted efforts to secure promising futures for all children. However, it remains the case that political institutions could significantly reduce parental motivation to be partial in a number of areas and thereby reduce the problems that parental partiality can cause.

Steps could also be taken to reduce the number of persons with immoral beliefs and thus the number of persons who are forced into a conflict between their responsibilities *qua* friend and their commitment to morality. The specifics of such preventative methods are beyond the scope of this thesis, and beyond

my own expertise, but it is not a stretch to think that one's schooling could contribute significantly to preventing the emergence of such views – classes on the wrongs these views have led to throughout history or classes in philosophy on the lack of foundation for these views would go some way to preventing these views being adopted. Fewer persons adopting immoral beliefs would have the twin benefit of both reducing the number of persons who hold immoral beliefs *and* reducing the likelihood of persons having to make the costly decisions to blame or not blame their friends who hold immoral beliefs. I do not want to pretend that conflicts between one's personal relationships and morality are entirely solvable by political institutions and policies; doubtless some tensions, including some of those focused on in this thesis, would remain, but I certainly think *more* could be done than is currently happening to diminish potential conflicts between personal relationships and morality and the problems and costs associated with these conflicts.

6. Summary

This thesis is an exploration of some of our most important personal relationships – friendships and the parent-child relationship. It is not stretch to say that these relationships are often amongst the most important things in an individual's life. Nevertheless, these relationships can cause problems both for those involved and for those outside the relationship. This thesis considers the potential for conflict between these relationships and morality. In doing so it addresses the research question, 'How do our personal relationships conflict with morality?'. In regard to the parent-child relationship this thesis specifically considers the problems parental partiality poses for morality. Parental partiality is the idea of a parent showing special treatment to their own child that they do not show to others. This common-place and seemingly fundamental feature of parenthood can, and does, have significant adverse effects on equality of opportunity. This is because when a parent shows their child special treatment they often do so in a way that provides their own child with opportunities that are unavailable to other children. This is obviously problematic for those of us committed to some conception of equality of opportunity but, unless we want to fundamentally change the parent-child relationship, it looks unsatisfactory to just ban any form of parental partiality. In this thesis I consider one of the leading attempts to make sense of this dilemma between equality of opportunity and parental partiality. I argue the leading account's description of what makes parental partiality permissible has significant drawbacks. In light of these drawbacks, the thesis provides an alternative account of permissible parental partiality linked to the protection of (some form of) parental love. The thesis also argues that even if one ignored the drawbacks of the leading account, adoption of this account may lead to many non-parents being partial towards children that are not their own.

The thesis considers a separate potential problem for friendships. Have any of your friends ever made a remark that that might betray a belief in something truly reprehensible? For example, they might have said something sexist, homophobic, or racist, something we *know* is wrong. You may well have challenged your friend on their belief at the time, or, at minimum, found yourself fervently disagreeing with your friend's beliefs. You might also have caught yourself wondering whether *you* were doing something wrong even being friends with someone who has such beliefs. This thesis considers whether there is something necessarily wrong with being friends with people with immoral beliefs. It finds that arguments purporting to show that such friendships are, in some sense, wrong do not succeed and that as such friendships with persons with immoral beliefs are not necessarily wrong. However, the thesis does find

that we might be required to blame such friends for their immoral beliefs, not *qua* friend but *qua* person with whom we are in a moral relationship.

7. Danish Summary

Denne afhandling er en udforskning af nogle af vores vigtigste personlige relationer - venskaber og forældre-barn-relationer. Det er ikke overdrevet at sige, at disse relationer ofte er noget af det vigtigste i et menneskes liv. Ikke desto mindre kan disse relationer skabe problemer både for dem, der er involveret, og for dem, der står uden for relationen. Denne afhandling undersøger potentielle konflikter mellem disse relationer og moralske hensyn. Således tager den fat på forskningsspørgsmålet: "Hvordan kommer vores personlige relationer i konflikt med moralske hensyn?". Med hensyn til forældre-barn-relationen ser denne afhandling specifikt på de problemer, forældres partiskhed udgør i moralsk henseende. Forældrepartiskhed er det fænomen, at en forælder giver sit eget barn særbehandling I forhold til andre børn. Dette almindelige og tilsyneladende fundamentale træk ved forældreskab kan have, og har, betydelige negative effekter på mulighedslighed. Når en forælder giver sit barn særbehandling, gør han eller hun det nemlig ofte på en måde, der giver barnet muligheder, som andre børn ikke har. Det er naturligvis problematisk for dem af os, der går ind for lige muligheder, men medmindre vi ønsker at ændre forældre-barn-forholdet fundamentalt, virker det utilfredsstillende bare at forbyde enhver form for forældrepartiskhed. I denne afhandling ser jeg på et af de førende forsøg på at forstå dette dilemma mellem mulighedslighed og forældrepartiskhed. Jeg argumenterer for, at den førende teori om, hvad der gør forældrepartiskhed tilladelig, har betydelige ulemper. I lyset af disse ulemper præsenterer afhandlingen en alternativ teori om tilladelig forældrepartiskhed baseret på beskyttelsen af (en form for) forældrekærlighed. Afhandlingen argumenterer også for, at selv hvis man ignorerede ulemperne ved den førende teori, kan anvendelsen af den medføre, at mange ikke-forældre er partiske over for børn, der ikke er deres egne.

Afhandlingen overvejer et separat potentielt problem for venskaber. Er nogen af dine venner nogensinde kommet med en bemærkning, der afslører dem som havende virkeligt forkastelige overbevisninger? For eksempel kan de have sagt noget sexistisk, homofobisk eller racistisk, noget vi ved, er forkert. Det kan godt være, at du har udfordret din ven på hans eller hendes overbevisning på det tidspunkt, eller i det mindste har været dybt uenig i din vens overbevisning. Du har måske også taget dig selv i at spekulere på, om du gjorde noget forkert ved overhovedet at være venner med nogen, der har sådanne overbevisninger. Denne afhandling undersøger, om der nødvendigvis er noget galt i at være venner med folk med umoralske overbevisninger. Det viser sig, at argumenter, der skal vise, at sådanne venskaber i en eller anden forstand er forkerte, ikke holder, og at venskaber med personer med umoralske overbevisninger som sådan ikke

nødvendigvis er forkerte. Afhandlingen finder dog, at vi kan være nødt til at be-
brejde sådanne venner for deres umoralske overbevisninger, ikke qua deres sta-
tus som venner, men qua deres status som personer, som vi er i et moralsk for-
hold med.

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