The Virtues of Intimate Relationships

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Dissertation submitted in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree
of Doctor of Philosophy in the Department of
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ABSTRACT

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Abstract

My dissertation aims to shed light on the importance and distinctive nature of intimate relationships such as parent-child relationship and friendship by developing my own version of a virtue-ethical approach.

In Chapter 1, I critically examine important contemporary Western theories of filial piety and argue that they do not adequately capture the nature of a desirable parent-child relationship and filial piety.

In Chapter 2, I show why the duty-centered approach to filial piety is inadequate focusing on why it fails to make sense of filial love and argue that filial piety is better understood as a virtue by showing how it can do justice to the normative significance of filial love.

In Chapter 3, I introduce what I call 'gratitude for being' to capture the distinctive type of gratitude we owe to people who have consistent and particularized care for us, especially our parents. I argue that the idea of gratitude for being can best make sense of deep gratitude typically found among intimates who care for each other.

In Chapter 4, I introduce what I call 'relational virtues,' which are virtues required for the participants of a given type of personal relationship and argue that it offers a valuable resource for answering questions concerning the value of intimate personal relationships. Next, I propose my own relational virtue theory of filial piety.

In Chapter 5, I discuss several aspects of the Confucian conception of filial piety—early filial piety, the close connection between self-cultivation and filial piety, and postmortem filial piety—and show how my relational virtue theory can defend and make sense of them. Lastly, I show how my view of filial piety is different from the Confucian view, or at least a version of it.

In Chapter 6, I discuss the virtue of friendship as a relational virtue and show how it can make sense of the nature and value of friendship. In particular, I show why the virtue of friendship is distinct from general virtues such as benevolence or generosity and why it is morally important to have this virtue.

Finally, in Chapter 7, I propose what I call 'relational activity view' on partiality. After critically examining existing views on partiality, I suggest a picture of how special values are transformed, delivered, and created within intimate relationships.

Dedicated to Sandri with love

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Introduction

It is very important for our flourishing life to have good relationships with our intimates such as family members and close friends. My aim here is to shed light on the importance and distinctive nature of intimate relationships by developing my own version of a virtue-ethical approach. For this purpose, I analyze ideal intimate relationships in terms of what I call 'relational virtues,' which are virtues required for the participants of such relationships. The paradigmatic examples of relational virtue include filial piety (i.e., a good child's virtue) and the virtue of friendship (i.e., a good friend's virtue).

Many philosophers have attempted to capture the ethical value and normative significance of intimate relationships (at least 'healthy' ones) in terms of duty. I argue that the theories based on duty fail to capture appropriate inner attitudes that are partly constitutive of filial piety such as love and gratitude toward our parents. I then argue that the idea of a duty to love fails to capture the value and normative significance of our love for our loving parents (or 'filial' love) and show how a virtue-ethical approach can make better sense of it.

Then I introduce what I call 'gratitude for being' to capture the distinctive type of gratitude we owe to people who have consistent and particularized care for us such as our parents. I first distinguish personal gratitude from impersonal gratitude and introduce the idea of gratitude for being as a subcategory of the former. I then argue that the gratitude we owe to those who have long-term care

particularized for us can be best understood in terms of gratitude for being, rather than gratitude for doing.

To improve on existing theories of filial piety, I introduce my relational virtue approach to filial piety. First, a relational virtue involves a special attitude toward particular individuals, which is distinguished from love for humanity in general. Second, a relational virtue is reciprocal because its content may vary with the degree to which the other member is relationally virtuous. Third, a relational virtue is dependent in the sense that its internal goal of engaging in a good intimate relationship cannot be achieved unless the other member is relationally virtuous as well.

I proceed to show how my relational virtue theory can explain some important features of filial piety suggested by Confucianism: filial piety in early childhood, the close relationship between self-cultivation and filial piety, and filial piety after parents' decease. I then show how my relational approach to filial piety differs from the traditional Confucian role-based approach.

Next, I argue that the virtue of friendship understood as a relational virtue can make sense of the nature and value of friendship. In particular, I argue that the virtue of friendship as a relational virtue is distinguished from general virtues like benevolence or generosity. I also show how my relational view can help us better understand friendship.

Finally, I develop a view on partiality towards our intimates in general, which I call the 'relational activity view,' to solve the puzzle of partiality: "Why

should the fact that we share some relationship with someone permits or even directs us to treat her in a partial way?" After critically examining previous views on partiality, I introduce and argue for my own relational activity view as an alternative.

Chapter 1. Theories of Filial Piety

1.1. Introduction

We all have parents or at least someone who has played a parent's role for us. They are very important people in our lives. Fortunate children receive the nurture, support, education, and love from their parents and usually there exists an intimate relationship between parents and children. As P. J. Ivanhoe points out, "While traditional beliefs about filial piety may be out of date, the fact that humans have an enduring, distinctive, and emotionally charged relationship with their parents remains as true today as it was in the past and as true in the West as it is in the East" (Ivanhoe 2007, 297). If so, the following are important ethical questions: What does it take to be a *good child* to one's parents? What is the *normative ground* for being filial? These are central questions of filial piety.[1]

In the Confucian tradition in East Asia, such questions of filial piety have been at the center of ethical inquiries. According to the *Classic of Filial Piety*, for example, the virtue of filial piety is "the *root of virtue* and all [ethical] teaching grows out of it" (Legge 2004, Ch.1).[2] Chenyang Li thus argues, "one cannot understand traditional Chinese culture without understanding the role of filial morality" (Li 1997, 219).

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[1] Just like the case of 'honesty' or 'benevolence,' the term 'filial piety (or filiality; *xiao*; 孝)' may refer either to the *moral norms* concerning being a good child to her parents or to the *virtue* that the good child has, depending on the context.

[2] In citing the *Classic of Filial Piety*, I used James Legge's translation as the base and made some modification of my own when necessary.

Although the issue of filial piety has been relatively neglected in the Western tradition, the idea of good children's morality itself is not new in this tradition either. In Plato's *Crito*, for example, Socrates suggests that parents bestow benefits such as birth, nurture, and education, and thus children owe gratitude to their parents. This idea is also found in the Judeo-Christian tradition. One of the Judeo-Christian Ten Commandments enjoins, "Honor thy father and thy mother," and Thomas Aquinas also argued in *Summa Theologica* that we owe not only respect but also reverence to our parents, saying that they are, next to God, the "closest sources of our existence and development" (Aquinas 1947, Question 101, Article 1). Moreover, in his *Treatise of Human Nature*, David Hume emphasized the importance of having gratitude to one's parents: "Of all the crimes that human creatures are capable of committing, the most horrid and unnatural is ingratitude, especially when it is committed against parents" (Hume 1978, 1, Bk. III, sec.1).

Recently, there have been revived interests in the issue of filial piety among contemporary Western philosophers. The theories of filial piety in contemporary Western literature, however, do not seem to fully capture the characteristic features of a filial child in a desirable parent-child relationship.[3] Most of those theories attempt to explicate what sorts of filial *duties* (or obligations or responsibilities) we have in relation to our parents and to explain their grounds, most of them have been narrowly focused on the question, "What kind of duties do adult children have to their aged

[3] The main focus of this chapter will be the virtue of filial piety. In this dissertation, *parental virtue*, the counterpart virtue of a good parent, will be discussed briefly only in relation to the discussion of filial piety.

parents?"

This question is inadequate at least for two reasons, however. First, the normativity of being filial is not confined to adult children's filial duties to their aged parents. It is also ethically important to discuss the filial piety before the 'children' become adults and after their parents pass away. Second, more importantly, the duty-centered approach tends to distort or miss important features of a desirable parent-child relationship and the nature of being filial. This is mainly because appropriate inner attitudes, not just appropriate external behaviors, is crucial for filial piety. I suggest that we should instead ask "What does the *virtue* of filial piety demand?"

Before starting the discussion of filial piety, I should first clarify what I mean by 'parent,' 'child,' and 'parent-child relationship.' I do not require a certain biological or legal relationship for a parent-child relationship; what I require is a *de facto* parent-child relationship. Many people would find it unreasonable, for example, if someone claims that a person should love and support her biological parents even if, say, she has not even met them for several decades since her birth or they have been extremely abusive to her.[4] Thus, if someone roughly qualifies as what Amy Mullin calls the 'social parent' for another individual, I would assume that it suffices to say that they share a parent-child relationship:

> A social parent (1) has repeated interactions over a long time horizon with a child; (2) takes him or herself and is taken by others to have significant

[4] The importance of biological relationship for filial piety is less emphasized in contemporary societies, especially due to the advancement of biotechnology and diversity of family forms. For a convincing argument against the ethical significance of begetting for filial piety, see Ivanhoe (2007).

> responsibility for the child's health, safety, and overall physical, emotional, intellectual, and moral development; (3) and aims his or her interactions with the child at least in part at the ongoing care and development of the child. (Mullin 2010, 16)

Therefore, in my discussion, people like foster parents or caregivers in an orphanage may appropriately be regarded as parents in the sense relevant to filial piety, while some biological or legal parents may not be qualified to expect any filial actions or attitudes from their merely biological or legal children.[5]

To have a concrete image of what a filial child would be like, let me begin with a story of Chung, who I suggest as an exemplar of filial piety:

> Since her birth, Chung has been raised by her single father, Hak. Although Hak was very poor, he did his best to nurture, support, and educate her with love and care. He put efforts into her education and worked days and nights to send her to a good school. While growing up, Chung largely obeyed what he told her to do and she developed a loving and caring relationship with him. She felt deep gratitude l not only for what he has done or given to her but also for his having been such a caring father. Later Chung became a famous lawyer, which pleased Hak and made him proud of her. In her social life, Chung did her best to become and act as a virtuous person, partly to satisfy Hak's wish that she grows up to be a person who is not only socially successful but also morally exemplary. She always treated Hak with special reverence and courtesy, as well as earnest consideration for him. Especially when he became old and infirm, she gave him all the possible support to him both emotionally and materially. When he was in the hospital, she visited him every day with his favorite dish and took charge of all the hospital expenses. She did all these from special love and care for Hak as his daughter, and neither from a sense of duty nor from a mere general benevolence. After Hak passed away, Chung mourned for months and did not spend time in any amusement for a long period as a tribute to her father. In addition, she annually had a formal dinner with her family as a memorial ceremony for her father.

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[5] I do not deny that there are some cases where people can be properly called 'parents' even if they do not qualify for being *social* parents. For instance, a mother who died protecting her infant child can be properly called a 'parent', although she does not have the chance to be the 'social' parent. I am grateful to Wenqing Zhao for making this point.

Perhaps not all of Chung's features described in this story would be accepted as an essential part of being filial, since the details of what can be legitimately expected from a filial child heavily depend on cultural and other contingent backgrounds. However, I believe most people would agree that, if there is an exemplary filial child, she would share many of Chung's characteristics described here. The point of this story is to give a general sense of what a filial child would be like and to list main desiderata for any plausible theory of filial piety.

To focus on behavioral aspects first, a filial child would largely follow the lead of her parents when she is young, and materially and financially protect, take care of, and support them when she grows up. In the Confucian tradition, other important filial behaviors include producing heirs to continue the 'family line,' bringing honor and glory to the parents and the ancestors (e.g., by becoming a respectable government official), cultivating and exercising one's moral character, and offering a mourning ceremony after the parents' death. A filial child would also be expected to have appropriate inner attitudes toward her parents, such as gratitude, love, and care. Especially in the Confucian culture, reverence (*jing*; 敬) toward one's parents is heavily emphasized as a necessary part of filial piety.

Let me give an empirical example of South Korea—a country deeply influenced by Confucianism—to show how filial piety is actually practiced in a cultural area that heavily emphasizes it as a precious cultural heritage as well as an important ethical norm. An exploratory study by Kyu-Taik Sung (1998) suggests ten

categories of paradigmatic filial actions based on the analysis of the stories of the recipients of the annual Filial Piety Prize which has been awarded by the South Korean government since 1973.[6] Some important types of filial actions recommended and practiced in South Korea involves the following: showing respect for parents (e.g. using honorific language or serving parents first, memorial services to the ancestors); supporting parents physically and materially (e.g., adult children's assuming parent care and meeting the financial needs of aged parents); harmonizing family (e.g., combining family members, especially siblings, into a good relationship so that they can coordinate with each other in taking care of their parents); and showing love and affection (e.g., visiting frequently and delivering warm messages verbally or otherwise) (Sung 1998).

Although some aspects of filial piety emphasized in the Confucian culture like South Korea may not be regarded as important in other cultures, I believe this list includes some important aspects of filial piety that are and should be cherished in most cultures. In Chapter 1, I first critically examine some of the existing theories of filial piety in contemporary Western literature. The focus will be on the notion of debt, gratitude, friendship, and special goods, respectively.

[6] The ten categories actually used in the analysis are as follow (in the order of frequency): Showing Respect for Parents; Fulfilling Filial Responsibility; Repaying Debts to Parents; Harmonizing the Family; Making Filial Sacrifice; Expressing Love and Affection; Expressing Filial Sympathy; Maintaining Family Continuity; Compensating Care; Showing Respect for Other Elders. (See Sung 1998, Table 1)

1.2. Theories of Filial Piety

1.2.1. The Debt Theory

The *debt theory* offers a relatively simple account for the ground of filial piety. According to this theory, since our parents have given us many good things in raising us—including life, nurture, and education—we should somehow *pay back* those goods to them. Like many other contemporary Western theories of filial piety, the debt theory focuses on establishing the ground for adult children's filial responsibility to assume parent care and meet the needs of aged parents. The underlying idea is that, just as a debtor owes the money she loaned to the creditor, we owe the goods that our parents have provided to us. This theory takes the idea of *making repayment* as central to filial piety.

Many theories of filial piety involve the idea of 'debt' or 'owing' in some form. Some philosophers find similarity between Confucianism and the debt theory because both require the child to repay her debt to her parents in a specified manner regardless of the child's character or her attitude toward her parents.[7] One explicit support for the debt theory can be found in William Blackstone's following remark:

> The duties of children to their parents arise from a principle of *natural justice and retribution*. For to those who gave us existence we naturally *owe* subjection and obedience during our minority, and honor and reverence ever after; they who protected the weakness of our infancy and entitled to our protection in the infirmity of their age; they who by sustenance and education have enabled their

[7] For this interpretation of Confucian conception of filial piety, see, for example, Wee (2014, 91-2).

> offspring to prosper ought in return to be supported by that offspring in case they stand in need of assistance. (Blackstone 1857, bk. 1, ch. 16, section1.; recited from Blustein (1982), p. 181); emphasis added)

The apparent appeal of the debt theory comes from the general principle that we owe something to those who benefit us and the fact that our parents normally provide us with enormous amounts of goods. Then, it does not seem difficult for this theory to show us the reason why we should do something good for our parents, assuming that they are at least reasonably good parents. According to this theory, the reason Chung ought to take care of her father Hak when he becomes old and infirm is that she has a duty to repay what she has received from him since when she was young—such as protection, nurturance, material support, and education.

However, although the debt theory has long been regarded as a plausible view of filial piety, it has serious difficulties. First, unlike the case of a creditor-debtor relationship, what we owe to our parents is not entirely determined by *the kind and amount of goods* we received from our parents (see Keller 2006, English 1992 for criticisms to this effect). While what we owe to our parents seem to vary with considerations such as their needs, our ability and situation, and the relationship between us, what the debtor owes to the creditor is typically not influenced by such external considerations. As Simon Keller points out, things you should do for your parents

> do not seem to differ in nature or weightiness depending upon the exact amount of effort and energy contributed by parents; you may have been a healthy and angelic child, undemanding and a delight to nurture, but that does not mean

> that you have any less of an obligation to respect and help your parents than you would have had if you had been sickly and temperamental and very difficult to raise. (Keller 2006, 256)

P. J. Ivanhoe also criticizes the debt theory on the grounds that there is unavoidable asymmetry in the parent-child relationship that makes it unrealistic for the children to repay what they have received from their parents. This asymmetry partly comes from the fact that one's parents "play a central role in the formation of one's character and the development of one's capabilities to live well as a human being" (Ivanhoe 2007, 304). Since we cannot play a comparable role in our parents' lives—such as forming their identity or developing their abilities—there are at least some important goods that we cannot pay back to our parents.

More fundamentally, I share Ivanhoe's concern that "conceiving of the parent-child relationship strictly in terms of bartering is to miss its essential character" (Ivanhoe 2007, 305, note 19). A parent-child relationship, at least a reasonably good one, is based on mutual love and care rather than prudential calculation. I believe the idea of seeing an intimate relationship[8] like the parent-child relationship as something analogous to the relationship of bartering or creditor-debtor relationship stems from an economic exchange view based on an overly individualistic perspective on human beings. In a normal bargaining situation, each party is regarded as a rational agent who can calculate what is good for herself and what is good for the other party, as something totally different from each other. What is presupposed here is the prudence

[8] I use 'intimate personal relationship,' 'personal relationship,' 'intimate relationship,' and 'special relationship' interchangeably, unless noted otherwise.

about what is good for oneself and the ability to see what would be good for the other party. An agent who lacks any of these abilities cannot participate in bartering in an appropriate way.

However, in a 'healthy' intimate relationship, what would be good for one party should be at least part of what would be good for the other party. In the case of a parent-children relationship, good parents would believe that benefiting their child also constitute part of their own well-being. For example, children's development or improvement may give the parents a sense of satisfaction or pride. If certain parents offer these benefits with the self-interested intention to receive external rewards from the children in the future, and not out of concern for the children's well-being, that would evidence defects as good parents in some important respect. Likewise, from the children's perspective, although it is appropriate to have gratitude to their parents for what their parents have done or given to them, it is a mistake to conceive it as a sort of 'debt' understood in a bartering sense.

1.2.2. The Gratitude Theory

Let us move on to the *gratitude theory*, which is perhaps most popular among contemporary Western philosophers (see, e.g., McConnell 1993, esp. Ch. VII). The gratitude theory is based on the general idea that we owe gratitude to those who do good things to us out of care (or benevolence or goodwill). Thus, this theory says that a filial child should express gratitude through appropriate acts in response to what her

parents have done to her from benevolence. It is distinct from the main idea in the debt theory. Jeffrey Blustein points out that the language of "owing" makes us confuse *gratitude* with *indebtedness* (see Blustein 1985, 176f.). It suggests that we should feel grateful, rather than indebted, to our parents for what they have done to us and that the gratitude toward one's parents "is not to be thought of as the price of parental benefits" (Blustein 1985, 184).

The gratitude theory has an advantage over the debt theory. As Keller puts, the "point of demonstrations of gratitude is to acknowledge acts of benevolence appropriately, not to provide repayment" (Keller 2006, 260-1). In our story, Chung is grateful to her father Hak not only for the goods he offered but even more for the love and care underlying his acts. Unlike the debt theory, the content of the appropriate expression of gratitude may vary according to considerations like the parents' needs, children's ability and situations, and their relationship. For example, if you are in a financially difficult situation, you don't have to express your gratitude to a person who bought you a luxurious gift by giving something equally expensive.

Another advantage of the gratitude theory is that it does justice to the importance of the motivational aspect in filial piety. In contrast to the debt theory, the gratitude theory holds that we 'owe' gratitude to our benefactors only when they have done good things to us out of care, and our benefiting them should be an expression of a *grateful attitude*. For example, if someone lends you $1,000 only to gain a good reputation, you owe her $1,000, but not necessarily gratitude. In this case, even if you repay $1,000 to your creditor, it does not have to be an expression of gratitude. Being

filial to good parents involves more than such a 'cold' attitude of a debtor to the creditor; it does involve having a grateful attitude to what our parents have done for our own sake. In this respect, the gratitude theory is in a better position to explain the appropriate motivation of a filial person.

There are serious challenges to the gratitude theory, however. First, it is hard to make sense of why we ought to be grateful for what our parents did for us when we were very young (English 1992, Archard 1996). It is undeniable that most parents put an enormous amount of time and efforts in raising their children. However, given that our gratitude to our parents is largely based on what our parents have done to us when we were too young to make autonomous choices about whether to accept them, it is hard to make sense of this basis in terms of the duty of gratitude. This is because, being too young, we did not *request* our parents to do those good things to us, and we were not in a position to *choose* whether to accept them. Michael Slote shares this worry when he says, "it is difficult to believe that one has any moral *duty* to show gratitude for benefits one has not requested" (Slote 1979, 320; emphasis original).

Another challenge is that, if what our parents did is just a way of carrying out their parental *duties*, it seems hard to explain why we ought to be grateful to someone for merely fulfilling her own duties. If it is not fitting for us to be grateful for what another person has a duty to provide for us, then this seems to pose a challenge to the gratitude theory (see, e.g., Walker 1980 for this view). Blustein responds to this challenge by suggesting two kinds of cases in which one may have "a duty to show gratitude, even though those who provided me with benefits were fulfilling duties that

did not arise out of any express or tacit agreement between us" (Blustein 1985, 179). First, even if someone had a duty to benefit us, we have the duty to show gratitude to her insofar as she benefited me not solely or primarily from a sense of duty but from love and care for us; second, we may have to express gratitude to the benefactor even if it is her duty to benefit us, if fulfilling that duty has been particularly onerous and demanding.

Although I agree that we ought to express gratitude in the cases Blustein mentions, I do not think he adequately justified the claim that we sometimes should express gratitude to someone *for fulfilling her own duties*. His first case suggests that we owe gratitude to someone for fulfilling her duties if she does so from a particular kind of motivation—in his example, love and care. Strictly speaking, however, the duty in question here is *to benefit*, not to benefit *from a particular sort of motivation*. If we owe gratitude to someone who benefits us partly *because* she did so out of love or care for us, then it would be gratitude at least partly for what goes beyond the call of duty, rather than just for fulfilling her own duty.

A similar point can be made about the second kind of case, where the fulfillment of duty in question is unusually onerous and demanding. For example, we say a beach lifeguard has a duty to save people from drowning. However, this 'duty' may not be imposed on a lifeguard if the situation is such that saving the drowning person in question is exceedingly onerous and dangerous. If man-eating sharks appear next to the drowning person, for example, it is not clear whether saving that person in the given circumstance is the lifeguard's *duty* in a strict sense. As Gregory Mellema

points out, "as the level of personal sacrifice becomes greater, it is increasingly unlikely that the act is obligatory for the agent to perform" (Mellema 1991, 197). If the lifeguard does save the drowning person despite the threat, she would rightly be admired for her action and the person rescued would owe gratitude to her. In this case, however, the lifeguard's particular saving seems better described as a *supererogatory* action that goes beyond the call of duty than as an action that *merely* fulfills her duty.

Keller poses another challenge to the gratitude theory, saying, "the extent of duties of gratitude depends upon how much *discomfort*, *exertion,* and *sacrifice* is involved in the provision of the relevant benefit" (Keller 2006, 259; emphasis added). Consider two friends helping you move. One enjoys packing and moving and had nothing else to do at the time of moving; the other hates packing and moving but canceled an important meeting just to help you. It seems reasonable, according to Keller, to say that you have *more* duty of gratitude to the latter, the 'sacrificing' mover, than to the former, the 'effortless' mover, even if they offer an equal amount of benefits to you. If this holds analogously in the case of parent-child relationship, a child would have more duty of gratitude toward a 'sacrificing' parent, who sacrificed a great deal and put a lot of efforts in raising her, than an 'effortless' parent, who did not sacrifice as much and even enjoyed much in raising her. It implies that, in our story, if Hak were rich and raised Chung without much difficulties or sacrifices, it would make sense for her to owe less gratitude to this 'effortless' Hak than to the 'sacrificing' Hak. However, as Keller suggests, Chung's filial duties to look after Hak when he becomes old and

infirm does not seem to be mitigated just because he has enjoyed parenting or has made less sacrifice.

1.2.3. The Friendship Theory

The proponents of the *friendship theory* argue that it can avoid the difficulties of the debt theory and the gratitude theory. According to Jane English's version, the source of filial duties is the *current* relationship between parents and children, rather than what parents have done for the children in the past (see English 1992). Thus, what requires children to take care of and benefit their parents is the on-going friendship between them. Her theory finds its appeal in the fact that "friendship ought to be characterized by *mutuality* rather than reciprocity: friends offer what they can give and accept what they need, without regard for the total amounts of benefits exchanged, and friends are motivated by love rather than by the prospect of repayment" (English 1992, 150; emphasis original). Thus, it is claimed, the friendship theory can make sense of the flexibility in the amounts of goods exchanges and the motivation of love in a desirable parent-child relationship. It can also explain why filial duties generally do not vary with the amount of parental sacrifice, as well as why such duties cannot be discharged once and for all. In addition, the friendship theory also captures mutuality, as opposed to mere reciprocity, in the parent-child relationship, since this theory focuses on the relationship itself, rather than the benefits exchanged within that relationship.

The friendship theory also seems to be in a better position to account for the emotional and affective aspects in a desirable parent-child relationship, which is characterized by feelings of love and affection. In a parent-child relationship, the appropriate motivation in exchanges of goods seems to be *special* love and affection, rather than general or impartial benevolence. Suppose, for example, that Chung takes care of aged Hak from a general benevolence, as if she were taking care of a stranger in need, rather than from a special kind of emotional and motivational attitudes toward him, such as love and affection for him as his daughter. Then, though benevolent she may be in a general sense, she would not be a particularly *filial* daughter. Similarly, if you treat your friend with the sort of inner attitude with which you would treat strangers, it seems reasonable to claim that you are defective as a friend in some important aspect, if you are a friend at all.

Thus, when it comes to explaining the appropriate motivation of a filial child, the friendship theory seems to fare even better than the gratitude theory. Admittedly, it is reasonable to assume that part of the appropriate motivation in benefiting one's parents is a grateful attitude to them. However, you can act out of gratitude to any benevolent benefactors (e.g., an impartial philanthropist), not just to those who share a special relationship with you (e.g., your parents). Moreover, although a sense of gratitude may sometimes be part of an appropriate motivation in helping or benefiting one's parents, it is at best inadequate. The response most parents hope to receive from their children—who they have raised with love and care—would be comparable love and care, not just gratitude. In general, when someone loves and cares for you, your

feeling grateful may not be an ideal response from her perspective; rather, the response desired the most by the lover would be for the beloved to *love back*. Imagine someone saying "I love you" to you and all your response is, "Thank you. I appreciate it." That wouldn't be ideal from the lover's perspective.[9]

The friendship theory has its own difficulties, however. The first concerns English's claim that filial duties would diminish or disappear when the friendship between the parent and the child is gone (e.g., McConnell 1993, 216-217). The problem with this theory is that it allows the children to avoid the requirement of filial piety too easily by choosing to leave the 'friendship' between the parent and the child. In Keller's words, "[y]ou are stuck with your filial duties, in a way that you are not stuck with your duties of friendship" (Keller 2006, 264). Aristotle even says, "a son is not free to disown his father,…[because] a debtor should return what he owes, and since, no matter what a son has done, he has not made a worthy return for what his father has done for him, he is always the debtor" (Aristotle 1999, 1163b20-23).

To meet this challenge, Nicholas Dixon offers a revised version of the friendship theory, according to which duties of friendship can outlive the relationship itself. He calls the duties to one's former friend's *residual duties* and claims that its moral basis is "*respect* for our former friendships, our former friends and ourselves" (Dixon 1995, 79; emphasis original). If we stop treating someone as a friend as soon as

[9] This is not to say that the love in question is conditional on the beloved's loving back. It is just to say that it would be *better* for the lover to be loved back than not. Also, it is plausible that loving parents may say to their children something like, "I don't need you to take care of me when I become old. I just want you to become a really good person and give all the love and help to other people around the world." Again, what I am saying is just that it would be better for the parents to be loved back by their children, other things being equal.

the friendship is gone, he says, this failure to respect our relationship makes us doubt the genuineness of the former friendship in the first place.

I am not sure Dixon's response is adequate, however. Of course, if someone changes the attitudes to a (former) friend *as soon as* she breaks off the friendship, it would give us a good reason to question the depth of friendship. But if enough time passes, even the residual duties will diminish or disappear someday. Moreover, we usually receive an enormous amount of benefits from our parents—including protection, nurturance, and education—which is almost incomparable to the benefits we receive from our ordinary friends. This fact, rather than respect for the former friendship, seems to explain why we would still be 'stuck with' our filial duties even when the friendship disappears. For example, suppose that Chung disconnected her 'friendly relationship' with her father Hak, say, due to the difference in their political views. It seems that she would still have reasons to provide life-saving medical treatment if he desperately needs it and she can provide it without too great a cost from her side. It seems implausible to argue that all those reasons stem from her respect for the former friendship between them. We do not seem to have comparable reasons to provide the same medical treatment when our former friends are in a similar situation. Those reasons seem to have something to do with what Hak has given to Chung in some sense.

The second difficulty concerns the disanalogy between parent-child relationship and friendship. The main issue is that the parent-child relationship is different from friendship in morally significant respects. It is true that, like in

friendship, there usually exist affection and intimacy between parents and children, and it seems to constitute a desirable parent-child relationship that parents and children have positive emotional attitudes toward each other. However, the criticism goes, unlike friends, a parent and a child are *not equal* within their relationships in important aspects (See, e.g, Kupfer 1990, Ivanhoe 2007).

As Ivanhoe points out, at least until the children fully grow up, parents are normally superior in their status, power, and abilities. This asymmetry tends to limit the children's autonomy and independence, which are crucial for a healthy friendship between those who are similar in their status, power, and abilities. Even if they become adults, it "does not erase their earlier history, which should and does inform even the nature of their later friendly activities and relationship" (Ivanhoe 2007, 307). It is the dramatic asymmetry in power, he says, that gives the parent's love and care for the child a special ethical significance, since "acts of parental love express the priority of care and sacrifice over power and prerogative" (ibid.). Joseph Kupfer (1990) goes far enough to claim that the *lack* of friendship between a parent and a child is a constitutive feature of a desirable parent-child relationship, rather than an undermining one.[10]

1.2.4. The Special Goods Theory

Let us now examine Keller's *special goods theory*, which he proposes as an

[10] Both Ivanhoe and Kupfer believe that the main ground for the asymmetry is the fact that parents heavily influence the formation of who the children will become.

alternative to the theories discussed above. He claims that these accounts fail mainly because they try to explain the parent-child relationship and filial piety by analogy to other moral relationships. This is not surprising, he says, given that the "kind of relationship that you have with your parents—how you think about them and the place they have in your life—does not have much in common with relationships that you are likely to have with anyone else" (Keller 2006, 265). Although I have a more reserved opinion about whether filial piety should be treated as a *sui generis* moral issue, I agree at least that adequate account of filial piety would require more careful examination of the parent-child relationship itself, rather than appeal to some other kind of moral relationships.

Keller's *special goods* theory focuses on the 'special goods' that arise within a desirable parent-child relationship. He says that the goods of parenting or those of having a healthy relationship with a parent are special in that they are "unique in kind, meaning that there are no other sources, or not many easily accessible other sources, from which they can be gained" (Keller 2006, 265). Thus, he says, there are two kinds of goods that can come from a healthy parent-child relationship: "generic goods, which could in principle be received from anyone, and special goods, which the parent can receive from no one (or almost no one) but the child, or the child can receive from no one (or almost no one) but the parent" (Keller 2006, 266).

On this taxonomy, the examples of generic goods include medical care, financial support, or physical help, since these goods can also be provided by someone other than your parent or child. In contrast, special goods in a parent-child relationship

are something you can receive (almost) exclusively from your parent or child. For example, special goods you can get from your child include "the good of having your child, the one you raised, love and care about, make an effort to keep in touch. Similarly, there is, beyond the good of having people around for Christmas, the good of having your children around for Christmas" (Keller 2006, 266). According to Keller, having someone who has such a special concern for your well-being and needs is a good that is special to the parent-child relationship, since it occurs naturally within such a relationship while is hardly found in other relationships.

Keller argues that the ground for your filial duties to your parents is the fact that you share a relationship with them in which they have provided you with special goods as your parents, and that you are now uniquely placed to provide them important special goods as their child. On this view, you ought to provide special goods to your parents when the following conditions are met: your parents have provided or continue to provide special goods to you, they need some special goods from you, and you can provide those special goods.

The special goods theory, Keller argues, can avoid the main difficulties of the theories discussed above. First, this theory can avoid the problems of the debt theory, since, according to this theory, filial duties are not discharged once and for all because what matters for filial piety is not whether the 'debt' is paid back but whether the three conditions mentioned above are met. Moreover, you do not have to worry that there are goods that we would almost never be able to return to your parents. For example, on this theory, even though you can neither give birth to your parents nor contribute

to the formation of their identity in a comparable way, what you are required to do for your parents is not to give them back what they gave to you, but to give them the goods *you* are uniquely placed to give them. Thus, instead of, say, trying to educate or nurture your parents as they did to you, you are required, say, to contact and visit them frequently—given that they want it—and make them proud to have you as their child.

The special goods theory can also avoid the difficulty of the gratitude theory. For example, whether your parents raised you effortlessly or laboriously does not directly influence the content of what you are required to do to your parents. Even if your parents raised you effortlessly with great enjoyment, they would deserve to receive special goods from you insofar as they have provided (or keep providing) special goods to you as parents. The nurture, support, and love your parents have provided you do not become less of goods just because it was relatively easy and enjoyable for them to give those goods to you.

Moreover, unlike the friendship theory, the special goods theory can explain why we cannot avoid the requirement of filial piety simply by choosing to leave the parent-child relationship. This is because the theory claims that you ought to provide them special goods, insofar as you can do so, your parents need them, and they have provided special goods to you, and whether these conditions are met is not simply up to your choice.

I find Keller's special goods theory insightful in pointing out that the goods given by one's intimates are special so that even the same generic goods offered by,

say, strangers cannot be comparable to those offered by intimates. Hugs and kisses from your parents, for example, cannot be the same kind of good as those from a stranger. I also agree that the parent-child relationship is the source of various special goods that uniquely contribute to our well-being.

However, the special goods theory has its own difficulties. The first difficulty concerns Keller's claim that filial duties are "duties to provide the special goods to your parents, within the context of the *reciprocal relationship* that you and your parents share" (Keller 2006, 268; emphasis added). As Brynn F. Welch points out, Keller's requirement of the 'reciprocal relationship' has some problems (see Welch 2012, 727-9, and Welch 2015). If this requirement means only that the parent-child relationship is or was mutually beneficial, then it may entail that the current state of the relationship is not directly relevant to filial obligation insofar as the parent has provided the benefits to the child already. But this would be inconsistent with Keller's claim he made in the context of criticizing the debt theory that "[y]our duties to your parents also vary according to the state of your relationship with them" (Keller 2006, 256). If, on the other, the requirement demands an *on-going* parent-child relationship of mutual benefit, it may imply that your filial duties cease to exist when your parents become unable to maintain the relationship by providing special goods to you. Either interpretation seems to have counterintuitive implications.

Moreover, it is not clearly explicated how the *specialness* of the special goods is supposed to be related to the relationship in question. I agree with Keller that the goods exchanged in a healthy parent-child relationship are *special* in the sense that

there hardly is any other kind of source for such goods. However, the way he distinguishes special from generic goods seems misleading. In my view, what he calls 'special goods' are special not because they themselves form a distinctive category of goods, but because they are exchanged *within a special relationship*. In other words, the special goods are special not because it happens to be such that only the child is in a position to provide certain goods that could have been provided by other people; rather, they are special because its specialness is based on the intimate relationship itself.

In principle, for example, a sick old lady can receive physical care from professional caregivers, not just from her own child. However, even if the treatments and materials—which Keller would describe as *generic* goods—the caregiver and her own child provide to the lady by the caregiver and the son are the same, those that are provided by her own child is something *special* to her. That is, the fact that they are given by the child makes a difference and renders it hardly replaceable. The sources of the specialness are the history of their relationship and the attitude the child has when giving the care. In this sense, the medical treatment itself is not special goods even if it happens so that the child is the only one who is in a position to provide it to her parents. For it could well have been provided by the government if the policy was made in that direction.

1.3. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have attempted to show the limits of the existing theories of filial piety in contemporary Western literature. I have argued that, although the debt, gratitude, friendship, and special goods theories have their own strengths, they do not address various issues related to filial piety adequately. One common feature shared by these theories is that they adopt a duty-centered approach in understanding filial piety, where being filial is understood as doing what 'filial duties' requires to do. I believe this duty-centered approach is at least partly responsible for the inadequacy of the theories examined above. In the next chapter, I examine the problems in understanding filial piety—solely or mainly—in terms of duty and argue that it is better understood in terms of virtue.

Chapter 2. Duty, Virtue, and Filial Love

2.1. Introduction

Many, if not most, of contemporary Western philosophers who worked on filial piety have attempted to understand it in terms of *duties* (or obligations or responsibilities).[11] That is, their attempts have focused on explicating the nature and ground of filial duties we have in relation to our parents. On the other hand, some inner attitudes, such as love for one's parents (henceforth, 'filial love'), are an important part of being a filial child. It seems hard to do justice to the normative significance of such inner attitudes if we understand them as an object of duty.

The aim of this chapter is to argue that the normative significance of the inner aspects of filial piety—in particular, filial love—is better captured when we understand it as a part of the virtue of filial piety rather than as an object of duty. First, I examine the valuable aspects of filial love, comparing it with other altruistic emotions. Next, I argue that the idea of a duty to love one's loving parents faces serious difficulties in making sense of the normative significance of filial love. Finally, I show why the virtue-ethical approach to filial love, which views filial love as a constitutive part of filial piety understood as a virtue, can do justice to the normative significance while avoiding the difficulties.

[11] See, for example, Blustein (1985), Sommers (1986), Jecker (1989), English (1992), Dixon (1995), Archard (1996), Keller (2006), Welch (2012), and Wee (2014).

2.2. The Value of Filial Love

There is little doubt in the claim that a certain kind of outer behaviors—e.g., taking care of one's parents when they are old and infirm, visiting them frequently, and offering financial support if necessary—are important components filial piety. However, having appropriate *inner attitudes* (i.e., emotional and motivational states) toward one's parents also seem to be an important component of filial piety. Although people may disagree over the specific contents of appropriate filial inner attitudes, I believe it can be largely agreed that filial piety involves more than outer behaviors.[12]

We can find an emphasis on the importance of appropriate inner attitudes in filial piety in Confucius's famous passage in the *Analects* 2.7:

> Ziyou asked about filial piety. The Master said, "Nowadays 'filial' means simply being able to provide one's parents with nourishment. But even dogs and horses are provided with nourishment. If you are not *respectful* (reverent; *jing*; 敬), wherein lies the difference?" (Confucius 2003; emphasis added)[13]

As Edward Slingerland interprets, the "focus here is upon the importance of *internal involvement* when it comes to virtuous behavior, 'respect' (*jing*) encompassing both a manner of behaving and an *emotional attitude*" (Confucius 2003, 10; emphasis added). Consider a person who regularly gives a great deal of money to her parents from a mere sense of duty but has neither gratitude nor love for them. We may

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[12] For an interesting recent work on the importance of the inner life, independently considered, in evaluating a person's character, see Bommarito (2017).

[13] In citing Confucius's *Analects,* I used Slingerland's translation as the base and made some modifications of my own.

legitimately say that this person is defective as a filial child in at least some aspect.

It seems reasonable to think that being filial constitutively involves having appropriate inner attitudes as well as appropriate outer behaviors. Then what would be the candidate for such *filial* inner attitudes? P. J. Ivanhoe claims that the true basis of filial piety is "the sense of *gratitude*, *reverence*, and *love* that children naturally feel when they are nurtured, supported, and cared for by people who do so out of loving concern for the child's well-being" (Ivanhoe 2007, 299; emphasis added). The intuition that love for one's parents is required for being filial is supported by the proponents of the friendship theory (see, e.g., English 1992, Dixon 1995). That gratitude is an important part of filial piety is the intuition that the proponents of the gratitude theory endeavored to capture (see, e.g., Blustein 1985 part II, ch. 3, Sommers 1986, Jecker 1989, Wicclair 1990, and McConnell 1993, esp. Ch. VII). I assume that filial inner attitudes include at least *love* and *gratitude* for one's parents, broadly construed.

Love for one's parents, or 'filial' love, is valuable in several different senses. Let us examine its multi-layered value. In analyzing filial love, I take inspiration from Lawrence Blum's view on the intrinsic value of altruistic emotions (Blum 1980, Ch. 7). After clarifying what I mean by filial love, I elaborate on Blum's distinctions to better understand the different aspects of the value of altruistic emotions. I then argue that we need to distinguish two different senses of 'intrinsic value' of altruistic emotions according to whether the given emotion is expressed or unexpressed to the recipient. Next, I examine the intrinsic value of filial love when it is sufficiently expressed to one's parents. I also explore the distinctive value of a particularized altruistic emotion

such as filial love, as opposed to general altruistic emotions such as human sympathy and compassion. Then I examine the sense in which filial love as a particularized altruistic emotion has value even when it neither motivates beneficent actions nor is expressed to its recipients, namely, the parents.

Blum analyzes the value of various altruistic emotions including both general human sympathy and compassion and more particularized ones such as love and friendship. Among different kinds of altruistic emotion, I focus on the distinctive value of the special emotions among intimates—filial love in particular—as opposed to the value of general altruistic emotions such as human sympathy and compassion. I roughly understand filial love as involving care and concern for the well-being of one's parents for their own sake, as well as a range of relevant emotional states (e.g., warmth and favorable affection for them or joy with their weal and sadness with their woe). It is important to note that filial love is a version of altruistic emotion directed at *particular* individuals, namely, one's parents, not at people in general. Love of this kind involves a *special* sort of care and concern for those we love that we do not have for strangers or mere acquaintances.

With the given understanding of filial love at hand, let me examine the different aspects of its value. First of all, filial love has *conative* value in the sense that it disposes or motivates a person to engage in behavioral acts of helping and benefiting her parents. For example, other things being equal, a person who loves her parents is more likely to offer them financial and material support than one who does not. Insofar as such beneficent actions for one's parents are morally valuable, filial love, which

involves the care and concern for the parents' well-being for their own sake, has a value as a stable source of motivation to perform those actions. Given that care and concern for the parents' interests, it is also likely to perform such filial actions in the future as well.

This conative value, however, does not capture the distinctive value of filial love. This is because some other motivational states, such as a sense of duty, can be equally stable and effective in giving rise to beneficent actions for one's parents. Consider the act of offering sufficient amount of financial support to one's sick parents to cover their medical expenses. Other things being equal, the external good of such financial support for the parents remains the same whether it is offered from a sense of duty or from love for the parents. That is, the parents will be financially benefited by their child to the same degree regardless of which motivation underlies the beneficent action.

The value of filial love—just as that of altruistic emotions in general—goes beyond its conative value of motivating beneficent actions to one's parents. As Blum aptly points out, "the emotion itself is often part of what makes the act the morally right or appropriate one in a given situation" (Blum 1980, 142). He emphasizes that the role of altruistic emotions goes beyond causing morally valuable actions:

> the motive of the action cannot be separated from the action itself, when one is considering the act as the morally appropriate act of beneficence which it is….For the beneficence which is appropriate to the situation will require more than an overt act, externally described; it will also require certain emotions accompanying the act, or, rather, *emotions as integral parts of the*

action as a whole. (Blum 1980, 143; emphasis added)[14]

Blum's point is that, at least in some cases, the same outer behavior can convey greater good to the recipient when it is performed from a particular kind of emotion and expressive of that emotion because the emotion itself is part of the good which the actions brings about to her.

When it comes to an intimate relationship like a parent-child relationship, the role of appropriate emotion for each other is particularly important. Consider someone's caring behaviors toward her parents such as visiting them on a regular basis. A visit from a sense of duty cannot provide the good that a visit from filial love can provide. In this sense, a person is not giving the 'full package' of the good to her parents if she acts to benefit them while lacking appropriate emotions.

Harry Frankfurt makes an insightful point that clarifies the difference between one who acts out of duty and one who acts out of love:

> This is part of what *essentially constitutes* loving: namely, a lover takes the fact that an action would be helpful to his beloved as being *ipso facto* a reason for performing the action….His taking it as a reason is a constitutive aspect of his loving: to love a person *is* essentially (in part) to take the fact that a certain action

[14] Walter E. Schaller makes a similar point: "[W]hat is required in such circumstances is not some external good or service—which could be supplied by persons acting from duty, or even from self-interest—but sympathy itself (or love, compassion, or some other altruistic emotion)" (Schaller 1990, 200). He adds, "To speak of the motive as distinct from the action is in these cases misleading, for the action confers a good only because it is done from that motive. If carried out from, say, the motive of duty, the good to the recipient would be far less" (Schaller 1990, 206). See also Nancy Sherman's remark: "the emotional tone of conduct morally matters. So, for example, we value the emotional dimensions of altruism—for example, expressions of sorrow and joy in others' lives, assistance conveyed to others in a way that is warm and caring—not simply as optional trim, but as *partial constituents* of the altruistic acts themselves" (Sherman 1999, 297; emphasis added)

> would be helpful to that person as a reason for performing it. (Frankfurt 1998, 9; emphasis in the original)

This is the feature, according to him, that distinguishes a loving person from a merely dutiful person. Chung, a loving daughter, would be motivated to help her father Hak whenever he needs, just because he needs it. In contrast, Gil, a (merely) dutiful child, the fact that an action would be helpful to his mother would count as a reason for him to perform the action because he considers himself as *having a duty* to help her (see Frankfurt 1998, 8-9).

It seems reasonable to say that, other things being equal, a loving child is more filial—i.e., better as a child—than a (merely) dutiful one. When it comes to Gil the dutiful child, the fact that helping his mother in need is his duty serves partly as a reason that accounts for his readiness to respond to her need by attempting to alleviate it. In contrast, Chung the loving child's readiness to try to alleviate her father in need is accounted for by her love for him, not by any further mediating reason. Benefiting and helping our parents *because* they are duties would be at best a second-best motivating reason.

Blum takes a step further to claim that "altruistic emotions can be of value to—can convey good to—their recipient *even when they do not lead to any act* towards that person" (Blum 1980, 146; emphasis added). To illustrate his point, he gives an example of Joan the astronaut. (Blum 1980, 146-149). One day, Joan finds a problem with her life support system and she reports it to the control headquarters. As her friends Manny and Dave learn about the situation, they both explore every possible way to

save her life. But they are finally convinced that there is no way to save her. While there is no difference in their outer behaviors, they show different emotional responses. Manny acts from a sense of duty, and when he finds that it is impossible to save her, he "feels that he has done what he could and so has lived up to his obligation to his friend" and "turns his energies and attention to other matters" (Blum 1980, 146). In contrast, Dave has deep care and concern for Joan, and he "continues to be taken up with thoughts and feelings for Joan" (Blum 1980, 147), even when he reaches the conclusion that there is nothing he can do to save her. Blum's point in this example is that, although both performed the same behavioral acts, Dave's response to the situation has more value because it "involves a certain good to Joan which Manny does not, namely the good of the emotions of care and concern from a friend" (Blum 1980, 147).

Blum seems to successfully distinguish the value of altruistic emotions from their conative value by showing how it can be valuable even when they fail to lead to any beneficent actions. But note that Blum calls the moral value of altruistic emotions considered independently of their conative value their 'intrinsic' value (Blum 1980, 148), even if it seems to rely on the *good effect* of the given emotion to the recipient when he appeals to the good that will be *conveyed* to the target of the emotion. In his example, the value of Dave's emotional response still seems to rely on the good effects it brings about to Joan at least to some extent. To see this point, note that Blum adds the assumption that "Joan, in her last hour, is able to think about some of her friends, and that because Manny's and Dave's reactions in the situation are *so characteristic of them,*

Joan believes, even knows, that they are reacting in the way they in fact are" (Blum 1980, 147; emphasis added).

Here we can see that Blum's argument relies on the fact that Joan somehow "believes, even knows" that Dave has such care and concern for her. I think we can reasonably admit the fact that it is "a great benefit just to know that you are loved and that you matter to someone in this way" (Richards 2010, 232). For example, Joan would have felt warmth or a sense of satisfaction thanks to his care and concern that she felt. However, suppose that Joan *did not* know that Dave has such care and concern for her. Would his emotional response still have the 'intrinsic' value that Blum is discussing here? To explain the *intrinsic* value—or value *in itself*—of such care and concern in a strict sense, it should be shown how this altruistic emotion would still be valuable even when it fails to be expressed or conveyed to Joan, thereby failing to bring about good effect in Joan's heart. Labeling such value as 'intrinsic value' may hide another important value of altruistic emotion that is valuable independently of its effect on its intentional object. Thus, we need to distinguish the value of an altruistic emotion when it is expressed or conveyed to the recipient and its value when it is not.[15]

With the distinction between the value of expressed emotions and that of

[15] Here I'm not dealing with the issue whether any well-pretended love can do the trick and give the good to the recipient that genuine love would give. First, I believe it is extremely hard, if not impossible, to consistently give the impression of love over a long period of time: "Genuine love cannot be feigned over the long haul of a parent-child relationship; neither can the emotional tone of love be manufactured in the absence of love" (Solheim 1999, 7); "The language of facial expression, body language, tone of voice, availability, and comfort with physical contact is communication enough for even the youngest of children to read emotions" (Sherman 1999, 299). Second, what is at issue here is not the actual effect but what emotional attitude is expected or hoped for by the recipient. Third, when it comes to the *unexpressed* intrinsic value, the actual effect on the recipient is not considered anyway.

unexpressed emotions, we can now examine in more detail the value of filial love when it is expressed to one's parents. First, we can say that filial love is valuable even when it fails to motivate or be part of an action that benefits the parents, insofar as the genuine loving emotion is somehow *expressed* or *conveyed to* them. Many (good) parents would be satisfied with their child's attitude even if she is not in a position to actually benefit them insofar as her attitude toward them expresses genuine filial love. For example, suppose that we fail to send money to our parents or visit them due to some circumstantial reasons—e.g., our own financial difficulty or an emergency. Even in such a case, a phone call to explain the situation and say "I love you" may suffice to communicate our loving emotion toward them. Parents would not feel that their child does not love them or feel grateful to them insofar as the loving emotion is successfully expressed to the parents. When properly expressed, some emotional attitudes that do not lead to any beneficent act towards that person can deliver distinctive goods to them without external goods such as money.

Moreover, filial love as a particularized altruistic emotion can elevate the parent's *sense of self-worth* when it is successfully expressed. As Blum points out, "it is a good to us simply that someone else care about our welfare, be sympathetic to us, have compassion for us when we are suffering. Concern from another is an affirmation that one's well-being matters to that person, and that therefore one has some kind of importance to him" (Blum 1980, 150). The sense that I matter to someone else elevates my sense of self-worth. The value of intimate feeling such as filial love goes beyond this good of general altruistic emotion. Special care and concern directed at particular

individuals give a special sense of 'mattering' that goes beyond the sense that one is valuable as a member of humanity. It gives the sense that one is of special importance at least to some particular individuals. Other things being equal, a person who is loved by someone—e.g., family members, friends, or lovers—in this way would a higher sense of self-worth than a person who is not. In this sense, the parents would have an elevated sense of self-worth by knowing their child's concern and care for them.[16]

Filial love, when properly expressed, can also contribute to the alleviation of the parents' *loneliness*, which can be best achieved within a loving relationship. Generally speaking, the fact that someone cares about me and is concerned about my weal and woe would alleviate my loneliness to some extent. For example, if a saint is in my neighborhood and she will also care about me on top of all other people, that would be better than the case in which no one really cares about me at all. However, this kind of human sympathy and compassion is different from care and concern from a special kind of love. As Barbara P. Solheim points out, "Intimacy in relationships tends to hold loneliness and isolation at bay" (Solheim 1999, 3), and love from one's child is an important source of intimacy. It is when we realize that someone we love regards us as someone special and loves us that our loneliness is alleviated to the greatest degree. This good does not follow from its conative value as a stable disposition to help and benefit one's parents when they are in need. The parents' loneliness would not be alleviated that much, if at all, even if they know that a person

[16] There can be a debate about whether love is *appreciation* of the existing value of the beloved or a *bestowal* of value to her. But my point does not depend on this issue. This is because, either way, the beloved would have the sense of 'special' mattering through someone else's love for her, either by recognizing one's existing value or by receiving the value by the lover.

dispatched form an insurance company will reliably help and benefit them from a sense of obligation whenever they are in need. Unless that person has any personal care or concern for them, they wouldn't feel less lonely although they may feel more secure.

If an altruistic emotion like filial love can have value even if it fails to be expressed or conveyed to the recipient, what kind of value would that be? I would like to argue that such care and concern for other people is intrinsically valuable as part of a good character, or *virtue*. That is, independently of its role of motivating beneficent actions and of its role of giving rise to positive feelings in the recipient's heart when expressed properly, love for someone else has value as a constituent of the agent's virtuous character.

Having appropriate emotions is an important part of being virtuous and loving one's parents—at least insofar as they are loving parents—seems to be an appropriate emotion to have as a filial child. Let us examine how filial love instantiates virtuousness even when it cannot be expressed. First, insofar as "it is morally good to be concerned with the good of others" (Blum 1980, 164), filial love is morally valuable as a particularized version of an altruistic emotion since parents are 'others,' strictly speaking, and not literally identified with oneself. If, as Nicolas Bommarito points out, emotions "are virtuous or vicious when they manifest morally important cares or concerns (or a lack of such concerns)" (Bommarito 2017, 91), and if care and concern for one's parents are morally important, then it would be plausible to say that filial love is virtuous.

Both Blum and Bommarito find the intrinsic value of one's special emotional attitude such as filial love in their care and concern for other people, that is, its being *altruistic*.[17] However, I believe there is a distinctive moral value in the special care and concern one has to one's intimate, which even the most genuine altruistic emotion for a human being as such cannot generate. Although some might claim that special love is not as morally admirable as a general altruistic emotion, the former has a special value that constitutes a good human life, the value that differs from the value of the latter.

My point is that such a special emotional attitude constitutes a valuable intimate relationship, the value of which is hard to be found elsewhere. Aristotle says that friendship is "most necessary for our life" and that "no one would choose to live without friends even if he had all the other goods" (Aristotle 1999, 1155a4-6).[18] If this is right, we can say that the special emotional attitude has some value that is not replaceable even by the impartial general altruistic emotions. Visiting one's friend in the hospital has a special significance because it is done out of special care and concern as a friend, rather than out of general human sympathy and compassion. A saint's visit out of such general sympathy and compassion, although meaningful in its own right, would not have a special significance that a friend's visit has.

Note that I'm not saying that such a special emotional attitude as filial love is

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[17] Aaron Ben-Ze'ev also makes a similar point: "In the moral context, the personal emotional perspective addresses, among other things, the concern for the well-being of others." (Ben-Ze'ev 2001, 257)

[18] By 'friendship,' Aristotle means to cover a wide range of intimate relationship including parent-child relationship.

more valuable than general altruistic emotion. At least in some cases, helping someone in need out of general human sympathy and compassion may have more value than helping one's beloved because one loves her. It might be more *admirable* in the sense that it is a sign of being generally virtuous to help a person even if she does not share any personal relationship to oneself. My claim is just that it may not always be morally better for someone to help someone purely out of human sympathy and compassion than to help someone out of love and friendship.

2.3. Filial Love and Duty

I have shown various aspects of value that filial love has. If I am right, filial love has moral value and is an important part of filial piety. As Keller says, a filial child would "do things for the parent willingly, out of love, not out of a motive of duty" (Keller 2006, 255). Being filial involves not just performing filial actions motivated by such 'filial' emotional attitude as love, but also *having* those emotions toward the parents considered independently of their motivational role. Other things being equal, a person who performs filial actions motivated by love for her parents would be *more filial*—that is, better as their child in some sense—than one who does the same from a sense of duty, and a person who have filial love would be more filial than one who lacks it.

Love for one's parents has special normative significance at least insofar as the parents have loved one and one has accepted and encouraged it in some sense. Of

course, if the parents have been consistently unloving—e.g., abusive, cruel, or indifferent—it seems to generate a good excuse for the child not to love them, no matter how great a good filial love is for the parents.[19] However, if one has received and accepted the parents' love, one seems to have an extra normative reason to love them. In a similar vein, P. J. Ivanhoe also says, that the "only appropriate response [to the parents' love] is to keep in mind the nature of their love and, in the warmth of this light, to cultivate reciprocal—yet distinctive—feelings for them" (Ivanhoe 2007, 304-305). If so, an adequate theory of filial piety needs to make sense of this normative significance of filial love. That is, a good theory should offer the normative ground of loving one's (loving) parents to explain why it is morally important for filial piety to have filial love and to be motivated by such love in acting for them.

To do justice to the moral importance of filial love, some philosophers make an appeal to the idea of *duty to love*. They claim that a child loved by her parents and accepted it has a duty to love them. They list this duty among the filial duties. Norvin Richards has a view along this line. According to him, if we have "accepted a place in our parents' affections and encouraged them to continue to love us, when we were young and under their care," then we have a duty "to give our parents a roughly similar place in our own affections" (Richards 2010, 240). If you have met this condition, he says, then "you do owe some degree of affection in return, partly because to have a central place that you welcome in the affections of another person is so great a good"

[19] For more discussion on this point, see Ivanhoe (2007): "Parents who are consistently and uniformly bad do not perform the kinds of acts and manifest the love that are the true basis of filial piety, and so their children are under no obligation to cultivate reciprocal feelings and undertake the care of such parents" (Ivanhoe 2007, 310).

(Richards 2010, 236). Simon Keller also seems to support the idea of duty to love when he explains how the duty to be loyal to one's parents involves duties of feeling, including a special concern for them (Keller 2007, Ch. 6). S. Matthew Liao is another philosopher who argues in favor of the idea of duty to love in his recent works (Liao 2006, 2015, Ch. 4).[20] I will argue that there are serious difficulties in the idea of duty to love one's parents, as well as in the general idea of duty to love.

One of the common objections to the idea of duty to love—or the general idea of duty to feel a certain kind of emotion—is the *commandability* objection. According to this objection, loving someone cannot be a duty because having emotions like love toward a particular person is not sufficiently controllable—i.e., not something we can bring about at will—and therefore not commandable. It seems largely agreed that love involves feelings that are not under our voluntary control at the given moment and that it may also be beyond our power to cultivate over time. The point is that what is not sufficiently controllable cannot be a duty at least insofar as the familiar principle of 'ought' implies 'can' holds.[21] Barbara Solheim, for example, offers a version of the commandability objection as follows:

> Our ability to love (or to generate love) involves numerous variables, from our temperaments and personalities, to the fund of role models and background experiences we have (or lack), to our ability (or inability) to be fully attuned to others. Although it is true that over time, some who have difficulty loving can learn to love, doing so still involves variables that are to some extent *beyond our control*. Because of this, *love cannot be required as a duty*. (Solheim 1999, 14;

[20] Since Ch. 4 of Liao (2015) is an updated version of Liao (2006), I will focus on the former in the current discussion.

[21] Here I assume, following Liao, that the 'ought' implies 'can' principle holds. For recent attempts to argue against this principle, see Henne et al. (2016) and Henne et al. (2018), for example.

emphasis added)[22]

If she is right, it seems to pose a serious challenge on the idea of duty to love.

There is an additional difficulty related to controllability that is specific to the idea of duty to *love one's parents*. The difficulty is that whether and to what extent a person can love her parents largely depend on how they treated and educated her while raising her. That is, it is to a large degree the parents' responsibility to raise their child as someone who can love other people with a genuine heart. Richards even says that "it is a parent's obligation to enable his or her child to see that love is to be reciprocated" (Richards 2010, 240). When the parents fail to raise their child properly, she may become a person who is skeptical about the value of love or lacking emotional resources necessary for loving and caring for someone else. If so, she may grow up to be a person who cannot love another person, including her own parents, through no fault of her own.

It may be responded that only the parents who do not love their child fail to enable their child love other people and that this is not a problem for the idea of duty to love one's parents since a child does not have a duty to love such *unloving* parents. Richards may respond along this line since he claims that whether you have a duty to love your parents "turns…on how much they loved you: on how central a place you had in their affections….[Filial duties] require us to give our parents a roughly similar place in our own affections." (Richards 2010, 234). However, even if we narrow down

[22] In a similar vein, Kant also famously says, "[l]ove is a matter of sensation, not of willing; and I cannot love because I would, still less because I should (being obligated to love). Hence a duty to love is nonexistent" (Kant 1995, 60–61, Sec. 401–402).

the scope of the duty to love to *loving* parents, the worry remains. For example, even loving parents may spoil their child so that she grows up as an egoistic person who is incapable of loving and caring about someone other than oneself. Therefore, the fact that the parents' way of upbringing has a major impact on the child's ability to love gives us an additional reason to believe that loving is not sufficiently controllable to be a duty.

Many philosophers, however, hold that we can have control of emotions like love at least to a reasonable degree (e.g., Solomon 1973, Sommers 1986, Sherman 1999, Keller 2007 Ch. 6, Richards 2010, Ch. 11, Liao 2015, Ch. 4). Although they admit that we do not have direct control over our feelings and emotions or the ability to have certain feelings of the moment at will, they still reject that we are absolutely passive in terms of our emotions and have *no* control over what we feel. They argue that we can have sufficient control over our emotions like love because our efforts can affect our emotions over time. We can, according to them, at least indirectly contribute to how we feel through our long-term efforts. For this reason, Nancy Sherman argues that we have some sort of "emotional agency" in this sense: "We nurture our capacity for intimate love in the context of ongoing relationships and a will to love in certain ways; we often know how to nip unjustified anger in the bud; we can catch overweening pride and curb it" (Sherman 1999, 294).

Based on this assumption, Liao argues that the affective aspect of love *is* sufficiently controllable, and thus commandable (Liao 2015, 101-113). He suggests various ways in which we can intentionally bring about or promote the emotional

aspect of love. According to him, there are at least three ways to bring about particular emotions: giving ourselves reasons to have those emotions, reflecting on the reasons why we tend to have particular emotions in particular circumstances, or deliberately placing ourselves in such circumstances. Suppose that, as Liao argues, parents have a duty to love their children.[23] Then, for example, we may bring about our love for our children by giving ourselves a reason to love them, say, that "children need this emotional aspect of love in order to develop certain fundamental capacities necessary to pursue the basic activities"; we may reflect on the fact that "our antipathy toward the child is due to the fact that the child was unplanned and that the child was born at a time when we already had too many children"; or we may try to "have enough sleep each night so that we would be more loving toward the child" (Liao 2015, 111). In a similar vein, Keller presents examples of how we can use our agency to develop a particular feeling about our parents:

> If I have not spoken to my parents for a long time, or if we have been irritating each other or disagreeing about something, then my deciding to call, make an effort to be friendly, or organize an enjoyable day out together can not only cheer them up, but remind me of the things I love about them and reinvigorate my feelings of filial loyalty. By deciding not to make the effort to call, or deciding to be surly or let the disagreement fester, I can increase the chances that we will become further distanced from each other, and that my feelings of love and loyalty will begin to fade. (Keller 2007, 143)

Given the various possible ways to affect our emotional aspect of love, it seems

[23] In his works, Liao focuses on parents' duty to love their children rather than children's duty to love their parents. However, since undermining the general idea of duty to love can lend support to my argument against duty to love one's parents, I will discuss his view as well when relevant.

reasonable to acknowledge that our love is controllable at least in some sense. The remaining question to ask is whether love is controllable in the right way to ground the alleged duty to love. Solheim denies that it is: "Since our efforts to cultivate an emotion do not guarantee our success, to say that we have a responsibility to try to cultivate an emotion is plausible, but to say that we have a responsibility to succeed is not" (Solheim 1999, 12). In response, Liao first points out that "it is not necessary that in order to have a duty to V, V must be something one can bring about with guaranteed success, supposing that certain reasonable background conditions obtain" (Liao 2015, 115). For example, he says, while it seems reasonable to say that professional chefs have a duty to make good dishes, no chef can *guarantee* that their dishes will be good, although they are normally good. Similarly, he argues, a duty to love can exist even if the efforts to bring about emotional aspects of love do not promise guaranteed success.

I agree that guaranteed success in bringing about V is not necessary for there to be a duty V. However, there is a problem in the attempt to argue in favor of a duty to love based on the possibility of raising the likelihood of loving someone. One serious problem is that a duty to V is being conflated with a duty to *cultivate the ability* necessary to V. Strictly speaking, the actions aimed at producing an occurrent loving emotion or cultivating a disposition of loving someone are not themselves part of *loving*. Rather, the fact that one has to put so much efforts to love that person may be a sign that one does not love her, at least not yet. Loving is the *end* that those effortful actions aim at.

Compare belief. Suppose that there is a duty to believe X. Just like the case of

love, since we cannot simply *decide* to believe something at a given moment, this duty cannot be a duty to *believe* something at a particular moment. On the other hand, we can choose a course of actions in ways that affect our beliefs, we may have a duty to make choices in ways that are likely to form the belief that the duty requires. For example, one can put oneself into a situation under which she is more likely to form the required belief and try to expose herself more openly to the evidence in favor of that belief.[24] If so, if there is such a thing as a duty to believe X, it should mean a duty to do things that tend to raise the likelihood of believing it, rather than the duty to believe it, period. Putting efforts to believe X, is not part of believing X. Thus, if there is a duty to believe X unless one actually forms this belief, one entirely fails to fulfill this duty no matter how hard she tried to believe it. Similarly, as we cannot simply decide to love our parents, what one can do is just to *try* to love them, that is, doing things that tend to raise the likelihood of loving them—such as visiting and contacting them more frequently, reminding herself of good memories they shared, focusing on positive qualities of one's parents, and so on.

The point is that *loving* is not an activity that consists of putting one's efforts to generate the emotional state and succeeding in it. It seems to me that the proponents of duty to love, including Liao, conflate the alleged duty to love with a duty to *produce the disposition to feel loving emotion*. Loving *begins* when the efforts to produce loving emotion ends. Once such an emotional disposition is formed, then what the subject

[24] Keller discusses some strategies to manage our beliefs in relation to the duties of beliefs that may spring from the norms of friendship (Keller 2007, Ch. 2).

does and feels afterward would begin to constitute her loving for the first time. In other words, it is only after the *success* of these efforts to love that loving begins. Those efforts are not part of fulfilling the alleged duty to love at all, regardless of whether they succeed in bringing about the targeted emotion. Rather, they are fulfilling the duty to produce the disposition to feel love.

I acknowledge that, in reality, most people's love has its ups and downs and thus it is not so mechanical that first you make the effort and then you love. At least sometimes, you love, but you are also making the effort to keep yourself in the position to love in the face of changing circumstances and changes in people. Still, the efforts to *keep loving* someone, just like the efforts to cultivate the love for the given person, are not themselves part of *loving*, although they might be important to protect the loving relationship.

2.4. Filial Love and the Virtue of Filial Piety

I have argued that the idea of duty to love one's parents has serious problems. In this section, I would like to argue that a virtue-ethical approach to filial love can give us a theoretical advantage. I agree with P. J. Ivanhoe that "[s]eeing that what is called for is a certain critically informed attitude or state of character shows why *filial piety is best thought of as a virtue*" (Ivanhoe 2007, 305; emphasis added). Virtue involves having the right kind of feelings, not just the right kind of actions. A virtuous person acts motivated by appropriate inner states rather than acting out of a sense of duty all

the time. From a virtue-ethical perspective, feeling appropriate emotions partly constitutes living a good life as a human being, as performing appropriate actions does. As virtue ethics advises us to live a good life, feeling and cultivating the disposition to feel appropriate emotions have normative significance. Thus, I would like to suggest that filial love can be best understood when it is viewed as part of virtue, in particular, filial piety.

I suggest that we understand filial love as partly constitutive of filial piety as a virtue. If so, a person who lacks love for her parents for their own sake or other constitutive emotional or motivational inner attitudes would lack full virtue of filial piety. Other things being equal, if one child loves her parents while the other doesn't, we can say the former is *more* filial—or more virtuous as a child—than the latter at least in that regard. There are two aspects of filial love that need to be explained. On the one hand, although there are some ways to raise the probability of producing filial love, feeling appropriate emotional states seems to be beyond our direct control. On the other, at least insofar as our parents have loved and cared about us, loving them does not seem to be just morally optional. That is, it seems that a person who lacks filial love for one's parents deserve at least some sort of negative *moral* evaluation or 'moral criticism.' As Lawrence Blum says, "what has moral significance goes far beyond what can be made an object of duty or obligation" (Blum 1980, 159).[25]

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[25] Blum further emphasizes the moral importance of emotional and motivational aspects of life: "The good which is brought about by altruistic emotion is morally desirable, and sometimes even morally appropriate, but it is not therefore morally obligatory…. [T]he moral merit of friendship could not be appreciated within moral framework in which the notion of the *morally obligatory* retains a certain place…. [T]he acts stemming from altruistic emotion are not generally, and are not regarded by the agent to be, morally binding on him…. [M]oral

I believe it should be explained why a person who fails to love her loving parents deserves some negative *moral* evaluation. Let me begin by introducing two different kinds of moral evaluation: the evaluation of *blameworthiness* (or praiseworthiness) and that of *viciousness* (or virtuousness). While one may be *blameworthy* only for something that is under her voluntary control at least to a reasonable extent, one can be criticized as being *vicious* or *not being virtuous* even for what is not under her voluntary control.[26] Based on this distinction, Nicolas Bommarito shows how emotions can be subject to the latter kind of moral evaluation:

> Even if we cannot be blameworthy for involuntary states, such states can still make one a morally worse person. Even if someone with involuntary racist emotions is not *blameworthy* for those emotions, they still reflect poorly on his moral character. He would, after all, be a *better* person if he did not have those emotions. Learning that someone feels racial contempt, greed, or envy leads us to revise our assessment of their moral character even if we know that they can't help but have such feelings…. Blame and viciousness are distinct moral evaluations. If nature has made it so that I cannot help but have sexist attitudes, nature has thereby made me vicious. If I truly have no control over my attitudes, I may not be responsible for such attitudes. But that is a separate question; in any case, such attitudes are a blemish on my moral character, and I would be a better person without them. (Bommarito 2017, 90; emphasis original)[27]

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philosophy needs to be concerned with more than overt actions. It must concern itself with our whole human response to situations and to other persons' weal and woe, which includes an emotional dimension." (Blum 1980, 159-160)

[26] There seems to be a general agreement on that blameworthiness presupposes voluntariness. For example, Lawrence Blum holds that "To say that someone is to blame for something, seems to [Blum] to imply that he could have brought it about through his will that he did otherwise" (Blum 1980, 189). For a possible exception, see, for example, Watson (1996), where Gary Watson argues that what he calls *aretaic blame* consists of evaluation of the agent's "excellences and faults – or virtues and vices – as manifested in thought and action" (Watson 1996, 231). However, it may be just a matter of verbal difference, since what he calls *aretaic blame* seems to roughly correspond to what I call the evaluation of viciousness.

[27] Gregory W. Trianosky makes a similar distinction between two different kinds of negative judgments: *deontic* and *aretaic* (Trianosky 1986, 28-9). Negative *deontic* judgments are those about the *wrongness* of the agent's performing or omitting some particular act. On the other

According to this view, a certain kind of emotion or lack thereof can be a ground for negative moral evaluation of the agent's character—i.e., the evaluation of viciousness—independently of whether her voluntary actions or omissions are responsible for having or lacking such emotions. We can apply this point to filial love. If the virtue of filial piety involves loving one's loving parents, then lack of filial love would provide us with the ground to judge that the subject in question is at least *less than fully* virtuous—or *incompletely* virtuous—as their child. (It would sound too harsh to say that a child is *vicious* for lacking filial love.) Inability to love does not always set the given agent free from moral evaluation, insofar as the basis of the inability is her own character. That is, if the defect in character is the reason for the inability, then the character is subject to moral criticism.

If so, we can explain why it is morally important to have filial love without relying on the idea of duty to love one's loving parents. Filial love is important because it serves as a ground for the moral evaluation of one's character regardless of whether having it is within one's control. Julia Driver also seems to support this point when she says, "a child may have not duty to love a parent (as opposed to a duty to feel gratitude), but failure to love under some circumstances can reveal something very bad about a person's character that may still warrant negative evaluation" (Driver 2014, 9).

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hand, negative *aretaic* judgments presuppose a "judgment about the viciousness of some standing trait is a judgment about a vice, or a general flaw in the agent's moral character" (Trianosky 1986, 29).

It is true that emotional states unexpressed in actions are hard to detect. I think this is why it is relatively hard to observe a case where someone gives a moral criticism to another for merely *having* such emotions. However, moral criticism on having a certain kind of emotions is part of our common experience since we often make such criticism on *ourselves*. For example, if we have an emotion that we judge to reflect viciousness, we tend to feel shame or even self-disgust. The issue is not necessarily about whether they are likely to lead to any wrong actions. The criticism is made just on feeling an inappropriate emotion or lacking an appropriate one. For example, one may feel ashamed of not feeling grateful to one who has been supporting her both financially and materially, while acting as a grateful person would act, though out of a sense of duty. Similarly, one may feel ashamed of not feeling the loving emotion for one's parents.

When we are ashamed about ourselves for feeling or failing to feel a certain kind of emotion, the object of shame is not necessarily what I have *done* (or failed to do) to bring about or eliminate that emotion. It is about the fact that the emotion is felt *out of one's character*, which speaks badly of one's character. Whether a person is subject to moral criticism for X is not entirely determined by what is within her control or whether X is voluntary. It only distinguishes whether one is subject to the evaluation of blameworthiness or that of viciousness, both of which are moral evaluations. Rather, whether a given person is subject to moral criticism for X is determined by whether X reflects her *value commitment* or not. If a person lacks what a virtuous person would have due to some factor that has nothing to do with her value commitment, then she

would not be subject to moral criticism. For example, if a person fails to feel grateful to her benefactor just because she is an ungrateful person, then she is still to be criticized for being vicious, in particular, for being ungrateful. In contrast, if the agent fails to feel grateful because of her mental illness related to memory loss, then she would not be subject to moral criticism.

It might be argued that filial love's role as a ground for a negative moral evaluation, in particular, that of viciousness, does not adequately capture its *normative* significance. This sort of evaluation, it might be claimed, is not very different from merely *aesthetic* evaluation in its normative force, given that it loses its connection with the agent's voluntary agency, which seems to be central to anything that has normative significance. The claim may be that, although both evaluation of blameworthiness and that of viciousness are both *value* judgments, the latter, like purely aesthetic evaluation, does not have sufficient normative implication. For example, the judgment that someone is not beautiful is a value judgment but does not necessarily imply that the agent ought to do something to make some change about it. Similarly, it might be argued, the judgment on lack of filial love that someone is less than fully virtuous as a child does not necessarily imply that she ought to do something about it, especially in the cases where the agent is *incapable of* loving her parents.

My first response is that having or lacking a certain kind of emotions is relevant to our evaluation of the agent's *moral* character, while her appearance is not. That is, although neither kind of value judgment presupposes the agent's voluntary control, the evaluation of viciousness seems to fall under the category of *moral*

character while the evaluation of beauty does not. I believe the view that morality only concerns the aspects that are under our voluntary control is a myth, given that our life and character involve much more than what we do through a voluntary agency.

Moreover, if filial love is understood as a constitutive part of virtue, in particular, of filial piety, there is a sense in which we can say that filial piety *demands* the agent to love her parents. Thus, if the agent fails to respond to this demand of filial piety by failing to love her parents, she is subject to a kind of negative *moral* evaluation. I believe this is how the virtue-ethical approach can do justice to the normative significance of filial love without relying on the idea of duty to love.

Let me clarify what I mean by saying a virtue *demands* something. By saying that a virtue V *demands* an agent A to X in a given situation S, I mean that an agent with the full virtue of V would (characteristically) respond to the situation S by X-ing. This understanding of a virtue's demand is inspired by Julia Annas, who understands the guidance in terms of virtue as "guidance as *demand*. That a certain action is the brave, or considerate or generous thing to do creates a demand that it be done, and if it is the action that I am in a position to do, it creates a demand that I do it" (Annas 2015, 611). Annas illustrates how a virtue makes a demand as follows:

> Suppose, to give an example, that I come across picnic litter in a scenic place. I do not want to pick up the litter; I take it that nobody does….[T]o the extent that I am a considerate person I will feel that picking up the litter is the right thing to do, that I ought to do it, should do it. (Annas 2015, 611)

In this example, according to her, "[the virtue of] considerateness demands that I pick up the litter, which is why it is the right thing to do for me to do" (Annas 2015, 614).

This is what she calls a "*demand of virtue*," and I think it can be extended to cover what the agent *feels*, as well as what she does. Filial piety demands that I feel love and gratitude to my loving and caring parents. If I fail to feel these emotions to my parents, then I would be less than fully filial to that extent, just like when I fail to act to help and benefit them.

Note that the demand of virtue does not necessarily imply that it is *felt* as a demand by the agent. A fully virtuous person feels it almost as if it were her 'second nature,' and, as Annas points out, it will "normally be *felt* as a *demand* by the learner and the incompletely virtuous" (Annas 2015, 612). If an agent fully possesses the virtue V, then she would not feel the demand of V as a demand. Then a fully filial person, who loves her loving parents already, normally wouldn't feel loving them as demand and wouldn't even think about the possibility of not loving them.

One advantage of the virtue-ethical approach to filial love is that we can make sense of its normative significance appropriately considering how virtuous the given agent is. That is, virtue ethics makes a different command according to the level of the virtuousness of the agent in question. Virtue ethics commands the agent to do whatever she *can* to cultivate and exercise her virtue. That is, what it commands the agent is to do what one can at the moment to get as close as possible to living virtuously. Thus, both a non-loving child who struggles to love her parents and acts as if she does and a loving child who acts for her parents out of love are doing their best to achieve the ideal of living as a filial child. Given the difference in the ability to love their parents at the moment, it is inappropriate to blame the non-loving child for

failing to fulfill any *duty* or for *doing* anything wrong, insofar as she is doing her best under the given condition. This is why I think the virtue-ethical approach to filial love can avoid the commandability objection.

Virtue ethics demands a non-virtuous person to act as a virtuous person would act. There two important points in this demand. First, a non-virtuous person can become more virtuous by imitating a virtuous person's act, since, as Aristotle famously says, a person becomes virtuous by performing virtuous actions: "we become just by doing just actions, temperate by doing temperate actions, brave by doing brave actions" (Aristotle 1999, 1103b1-2). In this sense, acting as a loving child would act is an effective way for a not-yet-fully-filial-person to cultivate filial love. Acting as a loving child would act, unlike actually feeling the emotion of filial love, is something even a non-loving child can do.

Moreover, acting as a loving child would act can count as meeting the minimal demand to perform beneficent actions for our parents, although those actions would have had more ethical value if they were motivated by filial love. Benefiting or helping one's parents is an important behavioral aspect of filial piety, which has a significance that goes beyond mere imitation or cultivation of virtue. For example, actions such as offering financial support or medical care to our parents have moral significance independently of the underlying motivational state. Thus, for a person who is not able to feel love or be motivated by love in benefiting and helping her parents at the moment of action, performing those actions from any available motivation for her at the moment would be the *best* she can do to get closer to living as a fully virtuous

person would do.

Thus, from this perspective, virtue ethics can advise even to a non-loving child to try to love our parents and act as a loving child would act. This is true regardless of whether she can actually love them since she can at least *try* to love them or act *as if* she does. In the case of a fully virtuous person, virtue ethics tells her to *exercise* the virtue she already has. It is likely that this demand of virtue to feel and act appropriately would not even be perceived as a demand since her inclination is already in line with what it demands. If a person already has the full virtue of filial piety and thus loves her parents, then there is no need for any further normative requirement, since all she ought to do is to feel and act *from her character*.

Even if there is such a thing as a duty to love, it seems to sit very awkwardly with both non-loving and loving children. For a non-loving child, it would be to require something she cannot do at least at a given moment, thereby rendering the requirement of duty futile. For a loving child, on the other hand, it would be requiring something she is already doing or inclined to do (or feel), thereby rendering the requirement of duty redundant. It is interesting that neither a non-loving nor a loving child can simply decide to love or not to love at will, though in different senses. A non-loving child cannot simply summon up loving emotion at will. A loving child cannot simply remove this emotion at will. In this sense, love is non-voluntary even if producing the disposition to love may be voluntary to some extent.

To do justice to the value of filial love, we need to shift our focus from rightness of actions to virtuousness of character. If we approach filial love in terms of

the idea of duty to love, we would end up focusing on what we can *do* to bring about filial love. I think the discussion of what a child can do to love her parents is a red herring. As mentioned above, whether or not a child loves her parents heavily depends on how her parents have raised them. So the discussion of filial love goes up from what the child can do to bring it about to what the parents can to bring about it and to deserve it. If the parents are abusive and indifferent, for example, it would be hard for her to love them even if she tries hard. That is, the way parents raise their child can deeply affect the scope of filial piety that can be controlled by the child herself. Therefore, to cover the ethics of the wide range of the relevant parties, the discussion should focus on the virtuousness of filial love, and then spread out to ask what all the relevant agents—which include not just the child herself but also the parents, educational institutes, and the government, etc.—can do about it.

My suggestion has been that lack of filial love deserves negative moral evaluation not because it signifies a failure to fulfill one's duty but because it reflects on one's defective *character*. In my view, a person is less than fully virtuous as a child to the extent that she lacks filial love for her parents. This point can be made independently of whether she is capable of loving her parents or not; regardless, it is an important part of being filial. I have said that it is inappropriate to blame a child for not loving her loving parents insofar as it is through no fault of her own. She has done her best to be a filial child but failed because it was beyond her control, and thus she is not responsible for the lack of filial love. As she does not have the full virtue of filial piety, what she can and ought to do at this moment is to *try* to love rather than to love

her parents.

Note that I am not claiming that there is no such thing as filial 'duties' at all. I admit that there can be various kinds of duties and rights involved in a parent-child relationship. My view is just that, even if filial duties or parental rights exist, they at best serve as 'fall-backs' or 'constant constraints' as understood in Jeremy Waldron's discussion of the marital relationship (Waldron 1988, 629).[28] Waldron admits that love and affection are often sufficient enough to generate desired acts between the married partners. However, he says, rights, and thus the correlative duties, as spouses are still necessary as 'fall-backs' in case the relationship collapses. For example, suppose that a husband does not love his wife—who has no income—enough to pay for her basic living expenses. If he did not have a duty to offer minimal financial support to his wife and if she did not have a right to the support, then she would be vulnerable to poverty caused by her husband's whim. In this sense, the relevant duties and rights serve to constrain the actions of the spouses to prevent the worst-case scenario in which they not only lack love and affection but also omit actions minimally required for legal partners.

A similar point can be applied to a parent-child relationship. Filial duties and parental rights are no more than fallbacks in the sense that they come into play only when the parents or the child or both lack the desirable emotional and motivational attitudes—e.g., love and concern—and thus their intimate relationship collapses. I

[28] Cowden (2012) also applies Waldron's idea of 'fall-backs' or 'constant constraints' to parent-child relationship.

suspect that the majority of contemporary Western theories of filial piety are focused on filial *duties* because the main motivation behind them is to discover what adult children owe to their old and infirm parents as the moral basis for legislation and public policies related to how the adult children *ought to treat* their parents. Such a duty-centered approach fails to capture the emotional and affective aspects of filial piety such as love and gratitude, which are a crucial part of an ideal parent-child relationship. It is this kind of inner attitudes that distinguishes a parent-child relationship from a mere creditor-debtor relationship or benefactor-beneficiary relationship, and that gives the former distinctive kind of value.

Also, I do not deny that there can be duties somehow related to love. While I denied a duty to love, I have admitted that there may be duties such as a duty to *try* to love and a duty to act *as* a loving child would act. There being such duties is not incompatible with my view on filial love. Unlike duty to produce filial love, duty to try to love can be fulfilled even if the agent ends up failing to love insofar as she does her best to love the object in question. This duty can be understood as a part of the duty to pursue the moral ideal of filial piety as a virtue. In general, part of being virtuous is to have appropriate emotional and motivational states, in addition to acting in an appropriate way. These duties would not be subject to the commandability objection, since even a person who does not or even cannot love her parents may still *try* to love them or *act* as if she does. This point is also compatible with the intuition that we could not be blamed for failing to love particular people if we had put our utmost efforts to love them. Those duties naturally invite us to view filial love as part

of virtue. A virtue-ethical approach normally suggests what an ideally virtuous person would be like and sets becoming like them as a goal to pursue. If an ideally filial person loves and cares for her loving parents and acts accordingly, then what the agent ought to do, according to the virtue-ethical approach, is to do whatever takes to get closer to living like them.

2.5. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have argued that filial love is morally significant and that its nature and value are better understood as a part of the virtue of filial piety rather than as an object of duty. I believe this lends support to the view that important constituents of filial piety are better captured by understanding filial piety as a virtue rather than merely as a source of duties to one's parents. In the next chapter, I will discuss the gratitude that a filial child has in relation to her parents or 'filial' gratitude. In particular, I will introduce a new category of gratitude that captures the characteristic gratitude we typically owe to our caring parents.

Chapter 3. Gratitude for Being

3.1. Introduction

Gratitude, roughly put, is an appropriate attitude to have in response to some benefit offered from someone else. We owe gratitude to people for many different things.[29] Philosophers have mainly focused on gratitude for specific actions or for beneficial objects considered independently of what kind of person the benefactor is and how she is related to us. However, the idea of gratitude for specific deeds and goods is not adequate to capture the gratitude we owe to people who have consistent and particularized care for us such as our parents and friends.[30] We sometimes seem to express gratitude to our intimates for being who they are to us. On Mother's Day, for example, it is not uncommon to give a card saying, "Thank you for being such a caring mother to me!" The gratitude to such people seems to go beyond what they have done and given to us and is directed at those people themselves and how they are related to us.

The aim of this chapter is to argue for a new category of gratitude—which I call 'gratitude for being'—to capture the distinctive type of gratitude we owe to people

[29] When I say, 'A *owes* B gratitude' or 'B *deserves* A's gratitude,' I mean 'gratitude is an *appropriate attitude* for A to have to B' in the sense that A's lack of gratitude to B shows some defect in A's moral character.

[30] McConnell (2017) also examines the gratitude in special relationships, especially in parent-child relationships. However, he focuses mainly on the ground for the gratitude we owe to our parents and actions we are required perform and does not focus on the distinctive characteristics of gratitude involved in such caring relationships.

who have consistent and particularized care for us, especially our parents. In considering the grounds of gratitude, I shift the focus from specific actions or beneficial objects to the benefactor herself and her relationship to the beneficiary. I first distinguish personal gratitude from impersonal gratitude and then introduce the idea of gratitude for being as a subcategory of the former. I argue that the gratitude we owe to those who have long-term care particularized for us (typically intimates) can be best understood in terms of gratitude for being, rather than gratitude for doing. I use gratitude we owe to caring parents as a paradigmatic example of gratitude for being.[31] After addressing two possible objections, I conclude that gratitude for being is a distinctive type of gratitude that can make the best sense of deep gratitude typically found among intimates who care for each other.

3.2. Personal Gratitude and Impersonal Gratitude

Gratitude can be divided into what we can call *personal gratitude* and *impersonal gratitude*.[32] While the former involves a particular targeted *person* that deserves gratitude, the latter is directed at *a state of affairs* and does not necessarily involve such a person. Personal gratitude is typically expressed as a three-place relation: A is grateful *to* B *for* x (e.g., "I'm grateful to Ewan for helping me!"). Here B is a person and x is some benefit. Personal gratitude is a concept appropriate for making

[31] Although I use the gratitude to one's parents as the main example, the gratitude we owe to close friends or spouses may also be suitable for the category of gratitude for being.
[32] See, for example, McAleer (2012), Walker (1980), Card (1988), and Roberts (2004) for similar distinctions between different kinds of gratitude.

sense of the expressive interaction in an interpersonal context since it involves at least two persons—the benefactor and the beneficiary. On the other hand, impersonal gratitude is typically expressed as a two-place relation: A is grateful *that p* (e.g., "I'm grateful that the weather is good today!"). Since impersonal gratitude does not involve a particular targeted person to whom we feel grateful, many philosophers observe that this kind of gratitude is better understood as mere *appreciation* or *gladness* rather than as gratitude in a proper sense. (see, e.g., Carr 2013, Gulliford, Morgan, and Kristjánsson 2013, and Manela 2016).[33]

I do not seem to owe (personal) gratitude[34] to someone unless she benefits me out of *care* directed at me for my own sake. By 'care,' I mean a broad range of favorable attitudes toward a person such as benevolence, goodwill, sympathy, compassion, and concern, as opposed to non-favorable attitudes such as indifference, egoistic calculation, and malevolence. To leave open the scope of the favorable attitude that merits gratitude, I use 'care' as a placeholder for any such favorable attitude. The proper target of gratitude, I believe, should be a person or someone capable of *caring*. As Nicolas Bommarito aptly distinguishes, the *care for a particular person* is not exactly the same as the desire for the states of affairs that promote her health or happiness: "My care is aimed more directly at *her*, the person sitting in front of me. Though we often care about how the world is, we also care about people in a more direct way" (Bommarito 2017, 27). Thus, now we can characterize the gratitude in a proper

[33] I remain neutral as to the issue of whether impersonal gratitude is *identical* with appreciation or gladness. See Manela (2015a) for more on the taxonomy of gratitude.
[34] Henceforth, unless noted otherwise, I will use 'gratitude' to refer to personal gratitude.

interpersonal context as *an appropriate response to the benefactor for the benefit offered out of care for us for our own sake*.[35]

Now let us turn to the *relational* aspect of personal gratitude. Any form of personal gratitude is relational in the sense that it presupposes at least a certain kind of *benefiting-out-of-care* relationship between the benefactor and the beneficiary. In other words, A's benefit from B should be offered *out of care for A* to deserve gratitude. The condition captures the intuition that, if I owe gratitude to someone, "*I* must have been an object of concern to that person" (Jecker 1989, 74). Compare praise, which does not presuppose any such relationship. As Claudia Card observes, "Gratitude…is not praise. Anyone—beneficiary or not—can praise an admirable effort or achievement. In giving the Good Samaritan credit for helping the stranger, I pay tribute but do not acknowledge a debt of gratitude. Only the stranger, if anyone, has such a debt. (If others also are grateful, perhaps they *identify* with the stranger)" (Card 1988, 119).

In contrast, not everyone is warranted to have gratitude toward someone for an action or a quality that deserves gratitude. Only those who are somehow *benefited from care* by that person are in an appropriate position to have gratitude to her. For example, when you watch a passerby saves a drowning girl, who is a total stranger to you, it would not be 'fitting' for you to be grateful to the savior *for saving the girl* if that neither gives *you* any benefit nor expresses any care for *you*. I am not saying that there is anything ethically inappropriate about an unrelated person's feeling or expressing

[35] I acknowledge that one may benefit another from *mixed motives*. For example, a paid coach may teach her students partly to improve them for their own sake and partly to make money by doing her job. For simplicity, I will not consider such cases in this paper.

gratitude; rather, I'm just saying that the situation would not warrant feeling or expressing gratitude, given the relational nature of gratitude.

3.3. What is Gratitude for Being?

In considering gratitude in an interpersonal context, the focus has usually been placed on the cases where the benefits offered are specific *actions* (or *omissions*[36]) or *beneficial objects*—e.g., we are grateful to someone for helping us move, saying kind words, rescuing from drowning, and so on. Let's call gratitude appropriate for such cases *gratitude for doing*. However, there are reasons not to limit the ground for gratitude on actions or beneficial objects. For example, we may be grateful to someone for her failed attempt to benefit us, for her offer of a benefit that we refuse to accept (Camenisch 1981), or even for mere "heartfelt benevolence" toward us that is "without physical results" (Kant 1999, 573). Norvin Richards also mentions a case in which gratitude is owed for something other than actions:

> Suppose we ask why a grown child should be grateful to his parents *for the place he had in their affections*. Having that place was a great benefit to him, of course, and not only because of what they did for him. It is also a great benefit just to know that *you are loved and that you matter to someone in this way*. (Richards 2010, 232; emphasis added)

Moreover, sometimes we seem to owe gratitude to someone even without

[36] Saul Smilansky (1997) argues that A may sometimes owe gratitude to B for *abstaining* from harming A, at least if, for example, B's omission goes beyond the call of duty or involves effort and sacrifice.

being able to identify particular actions or beneficial objects we are grateful for, especially when it comes to a person very close to us like our parents. As Terrance C. McConnell points out, "typically one's parents have given one so much over so long a period of time that it boggles the mind even to ask what a commensurate return might be" (McConnell 1993, 230). Indeed, our gratitude to such people seems to go beyond the specific actions they have performed for us or beneficial objects they have given to us.

To such people as caring parents, we owe not just gratitude for doing, but also what I call *gratitude for being*, or so I shall argue. Gratitude for being helps to explain what distinguishes the gratitude we owe to those who are a caring relationship with us from the gratitude we owe to strangers. Gratitude for being is a kind of personal gratitude we owe to someone for *being a certain kind of person to us* (i.e., a caring one) or *who she is to us*, rather than just for specific things she has given or done to us. Sometimes, whether someone deserves our gratitude for being is not just a matter of her specific beneficial actions or just about the kind of occurrent emotional or motivational attitudes she has toward us. Rather, it is about the given person's stable disposition to act, feel, and think in a favorable way in relation to us. In this sense, it is about what kind of person she is in relation to us. The category of gratitude for being properly keeps gratitude we typically owe to people like caring parents as a case of personal gratitude, while showing how it is different from gratitude to a stranger.

3.3.1. Consistent and Particularized Care

Not all cases of benefit out of genuine care warrants gratitude for being. For B to deserve A's gratitude for being, B's care for A should be sufficiently *consistent* and *particularized*.[37] Let me explain this in more detail. The first condition for A to owe gratitude for being to B is that B has and expresses *consistent* care for A for A's own sake, which is to be distinguished from the cases of episodic or occurrent caring attitude for A. In this sense, our gratitude for being owed to someone for her *stable disposition* to care for us for our own sake. Recall the typical format of personal gratitude: A is grateful *to* B *for* x. In the case of gratitude for being, x is B's consistent care for A as a long-term disposition, as opposed to B's specific actions, beneficial objects, or occurrent attitudes.

One might wonder how we can owe gratitude to someone for her *long-term disposition*, especially given that personal gratitude presupposes a benefiting-out-of-care relationship between the benefactor and the beneficiary. With regard to gratitude for doing, beneficent actions are gratitude-worthy in the sense that they are *expressions* of the benefactor's care for the beneficiary. The case of gratitude for being satisfies this condition in a different way. B's favorable disposition in relation to A involves care for A in the sense that the disposition itself is the *embodiment* of care. That is, B deserves A's gratitude for being insofar as B's stable disposition to act, feel, and think in favor of A embodies care for A. Being good parents, for example, involves having a long-

[37] The issue of *how* consistent and *how* particularized a given case of care admits of degree. However, we can still make a meaningful distinction between the kind of care that warrants gratitude for being and the care that does not, just like we can distinguish a person who we can properly call a friend from a total stranger despite the vague nature of friendship.

term disposition that embodies care for the child in question, and thus their such caring disposition warrants gratitude for being.

Moreover, B's consistent care for A should also be sufficiently *particularized* for A. It means that the care involves the attitude of regarding A as an individual person who is *special and particularly precious to* B. It is important to distinguish between unparticularized care and particularized one, which roughly corresponds to Fred Berger's distinction between *general* and *specific* forms of benevolence:

> Someone who cares about humanity (supposing this to be possible) may be motivated to act because he wishes to help people. I just happen to be the object of his largess by virtue of my humanity. On the other hand, it may be *me* he cares about, independently of any concern for humanity. (Berger 1975, 301, note 4)

Given this distinction, the particularized care condition implies that not all long-term dispositions that involve care—such as benevolence or kindness—serve as appropriate grounds of gratitude for being.

Suppose that Ben is a benevolent person who has a stable disposition to care for people in general. One day, he happens to encounter a homeless person Holly and gives her money out of benevolence. Although his care for her is genuine, it is not particularized in the sense that he would have done the same no matter *who* the person in need in front of him would have been. To borrow Nancy Sherman's expression, there is a "kind of anonymity" in Ben's response to Holly because his sympathy goes out to her "because of the circumstances he happens to find himself in, and not because of who the specific individual happens to be." (Sherman 1987, 601). In this case, we do not need the idea of gratitude *for being* to adequately describe the type of gratitude

Holly owes to Ben. The idea of gratitude for doing would suffice since the deeper source of the care—i.e., whether it is coming from a stable disposition or from a whimsical change of mood—is irrelevant to the gratitude appropriate in the situation insofar as the care is genuine. In other words, the reference to his being a benevolent person is not necessary for the full description of his attitude toward her and of the gratitude she owes to him in the given situation. Although we may admire the benefactor's general benevolence *and* also feel grateful for the benefit-out-of-care, this general benevolence does not warrant gratitude for being unless it embodies care for us as particular individuals.

In contrast, when the care is particularized, "We act out of a more specific concern for a *particular* person, and because it is *that* person who is in need (and not another)" (Sherman 1987, 601). Unlike the case above, gratitude appropriate for consistent and particularized care is not fully captured in terms of gratitude for doing and thus needs the idea of gratitude for being. Take the example of Philly's gratitude to her caring parents. Her parents have taken care of her with love and care for a substantial amount of time, consistently treating her as someone very special to them. Their care is not just directed at people in general but embodies a special kind of concern for her. In this case, what grounds the gratitude Philly owes to her parents is their consistent and particularized care for her and who they are to her.[38]

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[38] I believe there can be *indirect* gratitude for being, as well as direct one. Suppose that Philly's friend, Aaron, cares for her enough to *identify with* her in some sense. In this case, it seems fitting for him to have gratitude to her parents for *being caring parents to her*, even if their being so provides no direct benefit to him. While the gratitude Philly owes to her parents for being caring parents to her is direct one, the gratitude *Aaron* owes to her parents for being such parents *to her* would be indirect one.

It is important to distinguish *impartial* or *fair* care from *unparticularized* care in my sense. Particularized care does not imply favoritism. Suppose that Prema is a caregiver working at an orphanage. While she has a genuine care for each of the forty-five children that she is taking care of, she never favors any one particular child over others and tries her best to be impartial and fair towards all those children in distributing goods and expressing care and concern for them. Still, she feels that every single child in the orphanage is very special to her as a particular individual in the way that other children she is not familiar with are not. In this sense, impartial and fair care does not imply unparticularized care.

I should also add that, for A's gratitude for being to B to be warranted B should *actually* have consistent and particularized care for A. Suppose that Patricia puts her first son, Mike, for adoption for some unavoidable reasons. A few years later, she gives birth to another son, Chris, who she raises herself for a substantial amount of time with love and care. On my account, Chris owes gratitude for being to Patricia while Mike does not. This is because she is not a caring parent *in relation to Mike*, no matter how caring a parent she is *in relation to Chris*. This is so even if she, being a generally caring person, *would have developed* consistent and particularized care for Mike *if* she had actually raised him, since no one deserves gratitude for merely hypothetical care.

It is difficult, if not impossible, to develop such consistent and particularized care for one's child without the actual history of parental activities. Any relationship of consistent and particularized caring would require at least a reasonable amount of exchanges between the parties. It is through sufficient interactivities between persons

that such a relationship—in this case, a parent-child relationship—is established. Although those interactivities consist of specific 'doings' (e.g., protecting from dangers, sharing amusing times together, and offering medical care), once such a relationship is established, a child's gratitude to her parents *for being* caring parents to her can be warranted without relying on specific actions. Again, this form of gratitude would be based on who they are to her—i.e., the parents who have consistent and particularized care for her. In this sense, the proper ground of A's gratitude for being is B's consistent and particularized care for A.

One might claim that B may deserve A's gratitude for being even if B's consistent care for A is not sufficiently particularized in the sense I described above. For example, suppose that Taiji is my favorite musician and he has consistent care for his fans. Although his care is not particularized for me, he has provided me joy and solace over the years with his music. One might claim that it is appropriate and philosophically cogent to say that Taiji's unparticularized yet consistent care should be able to ground my gratitude for *being*—e.g., for being who he is, for his presence in the world and in my life, for who he is to me and for what his music means to me.

However, I do not think it necessarily requires the idea of gratitude for being to capture the grateful attitude I have or owe to Taiji in this example. That is, it can be adequately explained in terms of impersonal gratitude, gratitude for doing, and personal attachment. First, insofar as his care for me is unparticularized and 'anonymous,' the gratitude I have in relation to him seems to be very close to a kind of *impersonal* gratitude. That is, what is fitting in such a case is the gratitude *that* he is

such a great musician who comforts and pleases me with his music or *that* such a musician exists. Moreover, the gratitude I have to Taiji for what he *does* can mostly be captured in terms of gratitude for doing, as I have shown in the case of Ben and Holly. Lastly, a personal attachment (e.g., love or affection) to Taiji may explain why I feel like I have gratitude for being to that person. But they are distinct from each other. For example, although both cases involve the *desire to benefit* the targeted person, the underlying reasons seem to differ from each other. While gratitude for being involves is a desire to *return* the benefit, a personal attachment does not necessarily involve such a desire. Sometimes my personal attachment may also mislead me to believe that the given person's care is particularized for me and thus that my gratitude for being is a fitting response. Just as we sometimes personify some inanimate objects—e.g., a doll or a game character—as if they are persons capable of caring, so we sometimes mistake a person's unparticularized care for particularized care for us. This is more likely to happen when we have a strong personal attachment to that person.

My point becomes even clearer if we consider whether I would *owe* gratitude for being to Taiji even if his care is not particularized for me. Although the belief that I *have* something close to gratitude for being to him is psychologically understandable, it does not seem very plausible to claim that I *owe* him gratitude for being just like I owe it to my caring parents.

3.3.2. Further Considerations

It is important to note that A may not owe gratitude for being to B, despite B's consistent and particularized care for A, unless it counts as *beneficial* from A's side. Although a person's long-term disposition to care for us normally counts as a benefit, indeed a great one, not all cases of consistent and particularized care are beneficial for us. Consider a case of Werther's unwanted one-sided love for Charlotte. Although he has consistent and particularized care for her, it does not *benefit* her because, being a married woman, his such love and care are no more than a burden and a source of anxiety for her. Indeed, Charlotte wants him to stop caring for her. In this case, it seems inappropriate to say that Werther deserves her gratitude for being, let alone any kind of gratitude. As this case shows, for B's consistent and particularized care to ground A's gratitude for being for B, it should be reciprocated or at least *accepted* as a benefit from A's side.[39]

This is one reason why people to whom we owe gratitude for being are typically—though not exclusively—those who share an *intimate relationship* with us (e.g., parents, spouses, or close friends). Consistent and particularized care is usually what underlies desirable intimate relationships, one paradigmatic example of which is the parent-child relationship. It does not mean, however, that gratitude for being is grounded only in a healthy intimate relationship where such care is reciprocated. In

[39] In a similar vein, Simmons (1979) claims that A does not owe any gratitude to B if the 'benefit' is forced on A against A's will.

some cases, one may *owe* gratitude for being to someone else even if one does not desire to return the benefit insofar as the consistent and particularized care *is* a benefit for one. For example, Yumi would still owe gratitude for being to her parents if they consistently support and care for her, regardless of whether she has corresponding care and concern for them or whether she does have gratitude for being to them. In this sense, a relationship that grounds gratitude for being can be unilateral, just as other benefactor-beneficiary relationships can be.

One might wonder if deserving gratitude for being is a matter of playing a *role* excellently, as most of the examples I use are role-bound—e.g., parenthood, being a daughter or son, etc. However, I do not think gratitude for being can be fully understood in terms of roles for the following reasons. First, there are many different kinds of roles and playing a given role excellently may not involve consistent and particularized care for a person. For example, one can play the role of a mechanic excellently without care for any person. It is true that, for example, a parent may deserve her son's gratitude for playing her role as parent excellently. But it would be based on the contingent fact that the role of a good parent inherently involves consistent and particularized care for one's own child. This care is what actually grounds gratitude for being. It is not clear whether some *professional* roles—e.g., those of a good colleague, a good teacher, or a good physician—involves having consistent and particularized care for the people associated with the role (e.g., colleagues, students, and patients.). It seems to me an open question and whether a person who takes up such a role deserves gratitude for being would depend on whether she has

consistent and particularized care for them, regardless of whether it is part of playing her role excellently.

Suppose that a teacher, Hannah, consistently helps her student, Tim, with feedback, advice, etc. out of care for him. In this case, whether the student owes gratitude for being would depend on what kind of care the teacher has for him. Suppose, first, that Hannah's care for her students is unparticularized and thus the way she helps Tim is not very different from the way she donates money to Oxfam to help *whoever* is in need. Her care is not *particularized* for Tim and he is not regarded as someone special to her in any sense. In this case, Tim may well owe gratitude for doing to her, but not gratitude for being. Suppose now Hannah takes Tim as someone special to her and helps and supports him out of her consistent and particularized care for him. In this case, Tim would owe gratitude for being. So I do not exclude the possibility that a good professional may deserve gratitude for being from a person who is associated with the role.

Let me finish this section by adding one important feature of gratitude for being itself. Since it is to be understood as an appropriate response to such a long-term disposition, it should also be a long-term disposition, rather than occurrent emotional or motivational attitudes.[40] But to say that a child owes gratitude for being to her parents for consistent and particularized care for her is not to say that she should have the occurrent emotional state of feeling grateful at every moment. Rather, it is to say

[40] For a general conceptual distinction between gratitude as an episodic emotion and that as a long-term disposition, see, for example, Roberts (2004).

that she is disposed to act, feel, and think in an appropriate way in relation to her parents as the given situation requires. For example, a grateful child would tend to buy a thoughtful gift on her parents' birthdays, write 'thank you' cards to them occasionally, and take care of them when they become old and infirm *out of care and grateful feeling*. In this sense, gratitude for being is not an occurrent attitude but a kind of long-term disposition directed at the targeted person.

One might point out some difficulty in understanding gratitude as a long-term disposition, as opposed to an occurrent emotional or motivational attitude. In fact, the attempt to understand gratitude as a virtue, which is a sort of long-term disposition, has encountered some theoretical challenges (see, e.g., Wellman 1999). One alleged difficulty is that it does not seem natural to characterize gratitude as a general and global virtue such as benevolence or temperance, because often "people are not grateful or ungrateful *tout court*, but grateful only vis-à-vis certain people, and ungrateful vis-à-vis certain others" (Manela 2015a, see also Carr 2013). My account of gratitude for being, however, can avoid this difficulty because of its relational character. Gratitude for being is a long-term disposition to act, feel, and think in a certain way *in relation to* the particular person to whom we have this kind of gratitude, rather than to people in general. Thus, whether a given person has an appropriate kind of gratitude for being to a given individual does not rely on whether it makes sense to say that she has gratitude as a general, global virtue.

3.4. Possible Objections

3.4.1. Gratitude for Being vs. Impersonal Gratitude

I have discussed how to understand gratitude for being and argued that consistent and particularized care is required to warrant it. There might be objections to my idea of gratitude for being as a distinctive category of personal gratitude. I will address two possible objections here. The first is that gratitude for being is a case of *impersonal gratitude*, not personal gratitude. If gratitude for being is a kind of impersonal gratitude, it would amount to a response to a state of affairs that just happens to involve the particular person (e.g., the caring parent) rather than an appropriate response to the person as a proper target of gratitude. If this is right, it may imply that gratitude for being fails to capture the gratitude typically found among intimates who care for each other

However, I do not think that gratitude for being is a kind of impersonal gratitude for the following reasons. To begin, the target of the gratitude is the *person* herself, not the state of affairs. As Tony Manela rightly points out, it is important not to conflate "the *focus* of some gratitude proposition with an entity *to whom* gratitude is properly due" (Manela 2016, 286). It would be to make such a conflation to claim that gratitude to one's parents for being caring parents is just another kind of impersonal gratitude. First, while gratitude for being presupposes that the targeted person *cares* for the beneficiary for her own sake, impersonal gratitude does not presuppose such a caring person. Even a state of affairs without any person capable of caring can be an

object of impersonal gratitude (e.g., "I'm grateful *that* the weather is good.").

Moreover, while gratitude for being is typically marked by the grateful person's *desire to make a return* to the targeted person, impersonal gratitude is not.[41] Of course, unlike the case of gratitude for doing, the desire to make a 'return' in the case of gratitude for being to the targeted person is embodied as a desire to *be* or *become* a caring person to her as well. Though the form may differ from gratitude for doing, the desire to make a return to the targeted person is a characteristic feature of gratitude for being that is not necessarily found in the case of impersonal gratitude.

Consider the case of Yumi the ungrateful daughter to see the difference between impersonal and personal gratitude. While she is grateful *that* her parents are loving and caring, she has no desire to be a good daughter for them and totally indifferent to their weal and woe. For example, she never helps them when they are in need even if she can easily do so. This seems to be good evidence that she lacks personal gratitude to her parents for being caring parents, but it seems compatible with her being grateful *that* she has such parents.[42] This impersonal gratitude is not directed at her parents but at the state of affairs that happens to involve them. In contrast, her parents' being caring parents to her is embodiment of their consistent and

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[41] See, for example, Walker (1980). There are views that deny the conceptual relationship between gratitude and a desire to return the good. Manela (2015b), for example, claims that there are some cases in which gratitude requires abstaining from acting, not returning a favor, in order to protect the benefactor. Another example is Thomas Scanlon (2009), who holds that gratitude is not fundamentally a matter of making a return but of coming to care for the benefactor in a broader sense. Even these philosophers, however, would not deny that impersonal gratitude is distinct from the gratitude that they are describing.

[42] This example is inspired by the example of Yoshi in Manela (2016, 282). But his example was focused on gratitude for doing and my version is modified to show how Yumi lacks gratitude for *being*.

particularized care for her, and thus gratitude for being is an appropriate response *to* the persons, i.e., her parents, rather than to the state of affairs involving them. To say, "I am grateful to my parents for being such caring parents," is much more than just to say, "I am grateful that my parents are caring parents." To treat a caring parent (a target of gratitude in a proper sense) as if one treats a luckily discovered treasure (a target of impersonal gratitude or mere gladness) would not be an appropriate response of a person who understands what gratitude to a person is.

3.4.2. Gratitude for Being vs. Gratitude for Doing

The second possible objection is that the concept of gratitude *for being* is not significantly different from that of gratitude *for doing* or even that the former is reducible to the latter. Let me address this concern. First, a large part of my gratitude for being I owe to my intimate is directed at how she *feels* and *thinks* about me. Who you are is hardly reducible to how you tend to act since it also involves how you tend to feel and think. Similarly, who a particular person is *to me* is affected not only by how she tends to act in relation to me but also by how she tends to feel and think in relation to me. Thus, the object of gratitude for being covers more than actions. For example, when I have gratitude to my mother for being a caring parent, my gratitude is largely grounded by the care and concern for me in her mind. I am grateful for the way she tends to feel and think in relation to me: as a caring parent, she would feel sad about my frustration and glad about my success; she would also think about me and wish

for my well-being occasionally even if I live far apart.

Moreover, having a caring emotion and related attitudes toward someone is not *doing* something in the same sense that, say, helping someone move or giving financial support is. First, we do not have full control of whether or not to have caring emotions in relation to a particular person. When we are in a caring relationship, we tend to be grateful to the person in question for being a person who cares for us. It does not matter whether she *voluntarily* feels or thinks in such ways, insofar as those feelings and thoughts manifest her consistent and particularized *care* for me. Even if her caring emotions toward us are spontaneous and not out of a rational will or intention to care for us, we may be grateful to her *all the more for that*. Thus, someone's caring for us seems to be a good reason to feel grateful to that person, and caring involves much more than actions. The idea of gratitude for being, as opposed to that of gratitude for doing, offers a useful conceptual tool to make better sense of such phenomena.

One might still argue against the idea of gratitude for being on the grounds that we cannot make sense of someone's consistent and particularized care for us without *referring to* 'doings.' Gratitude for being is not sufficiently distinct from gratitude for doing, the objection may continue, because we can find no case where gratitude for being is clearly owed even though no gratitude for doing is owed, especially in the case that involves caring parents. I do admit that gratitude for being *relies on* gratitude for doing in the sense that it requires a lot of actions to *become* a person who deserves gratitude for being. Gratitude for being is grounded in a

relationship of consistent and particularized care, which is typically developed through the exchange of such actions.

However, acknowledging the close connection between gratitude for being and past actions in no way diminishes its distinctiveness. The object of gratitude for being is distinct from that of gratitude for doing, although 'being' relies on 'doings.' To see the point more clearly, compare the relation between virtue and action. As Aristotle says, the cultivation of virtue requires repeated performance of virtuous actions: "we become just by doing just actions, temperate by doing temperate actions, brave by doing brave actions" (Aristotle 1999, 1103b1-2). No one is *born* virtuous. So it is hard, if not impossible, to find a case of a person who possesses courage but has seldom performed courageous acts in the past. But it does not necessarily render the distinction between virtue and virtuous actions meaningless, as virtue is a long-term disposition that involves the right kind of feelings and motives, as well as behaviors. Similarly, even if we fail to find a case where gratitude for being is owed without gratitude for doing is, it does not imply that the distinction between them is not significant.

Moreover, past actions are important to gratitude for being, not just to gratitude for doing, since they express and thus evidence the agent's consistent and particularized care. By evidencing such care, those caring actions provide one with security and peace of mind, which a benefit that typically comes from intimates such as parents, close friends, and spouses. Although those actions themselves are not the object of gratitude for being, they do give rise to this kind of gratitude by repeatedly

evidencing the agent's consistent and particularized care. In this way, my introduction of gratitude for being does help us to see the difference between gratitude to strangers and gratitude to intimates: while the former is principally gratitude for doing, the latter is for the consistent and particularised care evidenced by past actions.

3.5. Conclusion

I have argued for gratitude for being as a new category that can make sense of the distinctive sort of gratitude we typically owe to our intimates such as parents and close friends. We tend to feel deeply grateful to those who have consistent and particularized care for us for being someone who is so disposed in relation to us. They do and give many good things for us. But as their care for us becomes sufficiently consistent and particularized, our feeling of gratitude seems to be directed at something that goes well beyond what they have done and given to us. This is, I have argued, how their consistent and particularized care for us itself becomes the ground of gratitude. In this sense, we owe gratitude to them for *being* who they are to us.

We may not feel or express gratitude for being very often, especially compared to how frequently we feel or express gratitude for doing. I believe this is, first, because we normally have a limited number of people who have consistent and particularized care for us, and second, because we need some particular occasions that remind us of the value of the special care they have for us. We often forget how much gratitude we owe to those who are close to us for their care because we tend to take their being

around us for granted. So we tend to lose numerous opportunities to feel or express our gratitude to them for being who they are to us. Perhaps this is why we usually express our gratitude for being on special occasions such as Mother's Day or a friend's birthday (what an appropriate occasion to express gratitude for *being*!). I believe the point of establishing such special days is to give us an opportunity to think about those who deserve our gratitude for being and express it to them appropriately. A relationship in which each person is grateful to the other for her being who she is would be an important source of human flourishing. The idea of gratitude for being, I believe, can help us to make better sense of this valuable source.

Chapter 4. Relational Virtue and Filial Piety

4.1. Introduction

In this chapter, I argue that filial piety is to be understood as what I call *relational virtue*. I first introduce the concept of relational virtue and argue that it is an important subcategory of virtue. In particular, I argue that it offers a valuable resource for answering questions concerning the value of intimate relationships such as parent-child relationship or friendship. After briefly sketching what I mean by relational virtue, I show why it is a virtue and in what sense we can meaningfully distinguish it from other sorts of virtue. I then describe some distinctive features of relational virtue in more detail and discuss their implications. Next, I show why it is best to understand filial piety as a relational virtue by proposing what I call relational virtue theory of filial piety. I argue that filial piety is to be understood as a child's being filial is required as an appropriate response to the parent's being virtuous as a parent. That is, I show how filial piety should be understood in relation to its corresponding virtue, parental virtue. I then conclude by responding to some possible objections.

4.2. What is a Relational Virtue?

Most of us have people who are near and dear to us. Human lives are woven together, and we rarely live in isolation. The relationships with our intimates—such as

family members and friends—are an important part of our well-being and living a good human life. But not all intimate relationships are equally good. While some intimate relationships make our lives more enjoyable and meaningful, others are exhausting or even destructive. Still, we can at least say that engaging in 'healthy' intimate relationships is partly constitutive of human flourishing. Then, what makes an intimate relationship a good one of its kind? I suggest that an ideal intimate relationship is one in which each participant has the corresponding *relational virtue*. Filial piety is a paradigmatic example of relational virtue. An ideal parent-child relationship, for example, is one in which the child is filial, and the parent is parentally virtuous. We can call the virtue of a good child 'filial piety' and that of a good parent 'parental virtue.'

So, what is a *relational virtue*? Roughly put, it is a virtue required for an individual as a participant of the given type of intimate relationship. A relational virtue cannot be fully understood without reference to the particular type of intimate relationship that it presupposes and can be properly cultivated or exercised only within that relationship. The examples of relational virtue in my sense include filial piety, parental virtue, or the virtue of friendship (i.e., a good friend's virtue). Filial piety, for example, presupposes a parent-child relationship, since one can be filial only to one's parents, not to anyone else. Relational virtues are to be considered centrally in evaluating a given intimate relationship since an ideal intimate relationship of a kind would be one in which each of those involved in the relationship has the corresponding relational virtue. There are various ways in which a relationship can go

defective. A parent-child relationship, for example, can be defective in some respect if the child is extremely defiant or the parent is abusive or both.

4.2.1. Is it a Virtue?

One may ask whether what I call relational virtue is a *virtue* at all. I believe relational virtues are virtues because they have features that are typically attributed to a virtue. Let me begin with introducing Christine Swanton's definition of virtue, which is intended to be neutral with respect to a wide variety of virtue theories and virtue ethics: "A *virtue* is a good quality of character, more specifically a disposition to respond to, or acknowledge, items within its field or fields in an excellent or good enough way" (Swanton 2003, 19). Here the *field* of a virtue "consists of those items which are the sphere(s) of concern of the virtue, and to which the agent should respond in line with the virtue's demands" (Swanton 2003, 20). On this definition, a relational virtue can be understood as a virtue that has one's intimates and the relationship with them as its field. Just as courage and justice are virtues whose spheres are, respectively, fear of important damages and distribution of limited resources, so can filial piety be understood as a virtue whose sphere is the relationship with one's parent.

P. J. Ivanhoe also argues that filial piety should be seen as a virtue:

> If, as some argue, virtues are *traits of character that help one fare well in the face of a common set of human challenges, defined in terms of particular spheres of activity*, then filial piety should be a central concern. For in one way or another, as human beings, we all have to work our way through the special relationship we have with our parents. While traditional beliefs about filial piety may be out of date,

> the fact that humans have an enduring, distinctive, and emotionally charged relationship with their parents remains as true today as it was in the past and as true in the West as it is in the East. (Ivanhoe 2007, 297; emphasis added)[43]

Within the sphere of the parent-child relationship, there are better and worse ways to be someone's child. Being a good child in relation to one's parent is a matter of excellence within the given sphere. This excellence has normative significance insofar as it enormously affects one's own and the parent's flourishing. A similar point can be made about other relational virtues such as parental virtue or the virtue of friendship since human beings typically have to deal with various intimate relationships such as parent-child relationship and friendship.

Relational virtue also has other central features of a virtue. First, it is often claimed that a virtue should *benefit its possessor* (e.g. Hursthouse 1999). A relational virtue does have a tendency to benefit its possessor at least in some sense. It seems reasonable to suppose that having a good relationship with one's intimates make an important contribution to one's living a flourishing life as a human being. Assuming this, if a relationship is good to the extent that each participant is relationally virtuous, having the relevant relational virtue would contribute to having a good relationship with the given person. In turn, thus formed relationship would contribute to one's own flourishing. Therefore, there is an obvious sense in which relational virtue benefits its possessor.

Moreover, many believe that virtues are supposed to be *intrinsically admirable*

[43] Ivanhoe acknowledges that he owes this conception of virtue to Nussbaum (1993).

in some sense.[44] There are stories about parents who sacrifice themselves to save their children or people who trust their friend even in adversity. We tend to admire those people and their character traits independently of whether they serve to promote any goods that are external to their relationships. We tend to admire a filial daughter or trustworthy friends at least partly for their deep commitment to their intimate relationship.[45] Note that this sort of admiration is distinct from one that we feel in relation to skills unrelated to virtue such as excellent athletic abilities. In this sense, the intrinsic admirability of a relational virtue is that of a *moral* virtue. Thus, it seems reasonable to believe that a relational virtue has some sort of intrinsic admirability.

Relational virtue also fits with the claim that virtue is a *stable disposition* of character, as opposed to a short-term attitude, which means that the disposition is expressed across a range of different situations, even in adverse conditions. A filial child, for example, is one who is stably disposed to feel certain kinds of emotions—typically love, gratitude, and respect—toward her parents and act in a way that expresses such emotions. Those filial attitudes and actions should come from her stable character rather than whimsical mood or feeling. If someone has such 'filial' attitudes only when she is in a pleasant mood or her parents give her valuable gifts, it would be inappropriate to attribute the virtue of filial piety to her. In this sense, filial piety and other relational virtues seem to be a kind of stable disposition.

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[44] For example, Julia Annas claims that virtues are "dispositions worthy of a distinct kind of admiration, which inspire us to aspire to them as ideals" (Annas 2011, 6).

[45] Of course, on the assumption that their commitment does not violate general moral requirement for others. But this would be a requirement for *any* admirable person's story. One may admit the possibility of admirable immorality, but that possibility does not undermine point here.

4.2.2. Is it a Distinctive Kind of Virtue?

Let me address the challenge from a different side. Assuming that relational virtue *is* a virtue, someone might still wonder if it is a *distinctive* kind of virtue that merits a separate inquiry. My answer is yes. A good justification for a claim that a certain quality of character is a virtue of a distinctive category that merits its own name would be to show how such a separate treatment can enhance our understanding of it. I am proposing the category of virtues called relational virtue because in that way we can better understand the ethical importance and remarkable characteristics of the virtues in this category. For example, I believe we can enhance our understanding of filial piety by seeing how it is different from virtues in other categories such as benevolence, kindness, and justice. Thus, let me focus on highlighting the distinctive features of a relational virtue, rather than on offering some metaphysical ground that separates it from other kinds of virtues. In fact, for those who are committed to the thesis of the unity of virtue—i.e., the thesis that if you have one virtue you have all the others—*any* categorization or individuation of virtue would have no metaphysical grounds. While I remain neutral with respect to the thesis of the unity of virtue, I would like to emphasize that introducing the category of relational virtue has a meaningful theoretical advantage.

It would be helpful to begin by considering the familiar distinction between self-regarding and other-regarding virtues. A self-regarding virtue like temperance

neither requires any other person as its intentional object nor implies benefiting someone else in any way. By contrast, an other-regarding virtue like generosity conceptually requires some other person as its intentional object, and the success in exercising this sort of virtue depends on how the target person is affected. While relational virtues can be seen as a kind of other-regarding virtue, not all other-regarding virtues are relational in my sense. Interestingly, what I call 'other-regarding virtues' fits the description of what Shirong Luo calls 'relational virtues' in the context of comparing the ethics of care and Confucian ethics (Luo 2007, 102-107). So it would be helpful for clarifying my conception of relational virtue to compare it with the one Luo uses. He understands a 'relational virtue' as one that requires someone else as its intentional object. Thus, it cannot be fully understood without reference to another person(s) and cannot be properly cultivated or exercised without their existence. For example, generosity requires someone else who needs a certain kind of good and thus one cannot have the virtue of generosity without any potential recipient of good that one gives.

By contrast, I reserve the term 'relational virtues' to refer to a distinct subcategory of other-regarding virtues. Unlike such *unilateral* other-regarding virtues, relational virtues presuppose particular *intimate relationships* between the virtue-agent—i.e., one who exercises the virtue—and the virtue-patient—i.e., the intentional object of the virtue. Relational virtues in my sense require more than the minimal relation of virtue-agent and virtue-patient as its target. They are appropriate for certain intimate relationships, such as parent-children relationship or friendship, and cannot

be fully understood without reference to particular relationships and can be properly cultivated or exercised only within those relationships. So understood, relational virtues form a subcategory of virtue that is significantly different from both self-regarding virtues and other sorts of other-regarding virtues.

Relational virtues can also be distinguished from *general* virtues. By general virtues, I roughly mean the virtues that concern the disposition in relation to people in general—such as benevolence or generosity—as opposed to particular people. The distinctiveness between being virtuous to people in general and being *relationally virtuous* or virtuous to one's intimates is supported by the observation of familiar examples around us. It is not hard to find people who are virtuous in relation to people in general but not in relation to their intimates, or those who are virtuous to their intimates but not to others. We can imagine someone who is very selfish and callous to strangers but very altruistic and caring in relation to her own family and friends. Don Vito Corleone in the movie, *The Godfather*, is one example of such a person. While he is quite caring and just within his 'family,' he is callous and even cruel outside of this narrow circle. On the other hand, it is also not hard to find the case where someone is very generous and altruistic to strangers but not very nice and kind to one's own intimates. For example, Mahatma Gandhi, who is widely admired as a sage-like figure by his country and even by the world, was known to be a bad father to his own son.

These and other similar cases show that being relationally virtuous is not the same as being a good person in relation to people in general. If so, an adequate ethical theory should be able to distinguish the virtue in relation to one's intimates from

general virtues and explain the distinctive feature of the former. This is, I believe, a part of the reason why the discussion of relational virtues, as opposed to general virtues, can make a new contribution to ethics. Especially insofar as such cases are prevailing around our everyday life, we need some conceptual tool to shed light on the distinctive nature and value of the virtue that a good intimate has. I am proposing the relational virtue as such a conceptual tool.

4.2.3. Characteristic Features of Relational Virtue

I have argued that relational virtues *are* virtues and that they are meaningfully different from other types of virtue. There are some further features of relational virtues that are not shared by other sorts of virtue. Many of these features are to be understood in terms of the characteristic features that good intimate relationships have. In this section, I highlight some such features of relational virtues by examining what constitutes a good intimate relationship and what a relationally virtuous person would be like.

Some characteristic features of relational virtue can be understood in terms of *particularity*. Being relationally virtuous involves acting, desiring, and feeling appropriately with regard to particular persons to whom you bear the relevant intimate relationship. In this sense, one's relational virtue is 'indexed' to a particular person or persons who hold the intimate relationship in question—we can call them 'intimates.' Laurence Blum makes a similar point about friendship: "What we do for

our friends is very particular to our relationship to them, both in the sense of being particular to friendship as a type of friendship, and in being particular to a particular relationship with a particular person" (Blum 1980, 56). This point shows the sense in which cultivation and exercise of relational virtues presuppose particular relationships with particular individuals. In contrast, general virtues like generosity can be cultivated and exercised in relation to any other person in need, no matter whether that person is your parent, friend, stranger, or enemy.[46]

Above I mentioned that a relational virtue, like other virtues, is a stable disposition. For example, a filial person would help and support her parents even when it requires a substantial amount of time and efforts from her side, not just when it is to her own advantage or when she is in a good mood. However, a relational virtue like filial piety does not require—at least not directly—stability across various *targets* since it is 'indexed' to a particular person or persons. Thus, for example, filial piety itself does not demand the agent to treat a stranger with love and gratitude.

The next characteristic feature of relational virtue is *specialness*. A relational virtue demands the agent to regard and treat the intimates in question as someone *special*, that is, as someone who shares a special relationship with the agent herself. A relational virtue involves having a special kind of emotional and motivational attitudes toward the intimate in question. For example, parents want *filial* love from their child, as opposed to impartial altruistic care, which she can have towards any

[46] David Solomon also hints the possibility of a virtue with exclusive object: "A virtue must be somewhat general, but this generality need not entail that the virtue be impersonal, much less dispassionate, nor need it preclude exclusivity with regard to its object" (Solomon 2005, 87; emphasis added).

other person.[47] Suppose that Alicia takes care of her sick father from a merely *altruistic* motivation—that is, that she serves him purely for his own sake without ulterior motives. But insofar as this benevolent act is done out of general human sympathy and compassion for him merely as *another human being* in need, not as her own father who is special to her, there seems to be something missing in her motivation as a *filial* person.[48] I believe one merit of introducing the concept of relational virtue is that it helps us to capture the admirability of character traits in those who are regarded as, say, good friends or good children, which is distinct from being benevolent or generous in a general sense. If, for example, we understand Alicia's hearty care for her sick father as just another case of benevolence, we would miss the distinctive admirability involved in her filial piety.

There seems to be something distinctively valuable in this special kind of motivation. If the agent does something in favor of the object not because she takes him or her as someone special to her (e.g., father or friend), but because of some *impartial* considerations, then this specialness would evaporate. Take Michael Stocker's famous example. If you visit your friend in the hospital not because you think of her as your friend (i.e., as someone special to you) but because you think that it would be the best way to maximize the general happiness or to fulfill your moral duty, then your friend would be rightly disappointed by your motivation to visit her (see Stocker 1976).

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[47] Lawrence Blum makes a similar point about friendship: "In friendship one desires and acts for the good of the friend, not simply because he is another human being but precisely because he is one's friend." (Blum 1980, 44)

[48] There may seem nothing lacking from a 'moral' point of view, where 'morality' is understood as involving other-regarding concern, there something lacking from an 'ethical' point of view, which includes all important things concerning 'how to live'.

Other distinctive features of relational virtue concern its *dependency*. Part of what makes a relational virtue a virtue is the fact that it is constitutive of virtuous relational activities in intimate relationships. By relational activities, I roughly mean interactivity between intimates *qua* intimates, broadly construed—such as exchanging gifts, helping each other when either is in need, and so on. Without other participants, however, one cannot even engage in any relational activity at all, let alone a virtuous one. Moreover, the mere existence of intimates is not sufficient to engage in a virtuous relational activity; the excellence or 'virtuousness' of a relational activity also depends on how relationally virtuous the participants are. If the other participant lacks relational virtue, one's being relationally virtuous would not be sufficient to make the relationship an ideal one.

To show these points more clearly, let me use a soccer analogy. An excellent soccer player is one who has the ability to make her team more likely to win. First, one cannot even play soccer at all, let alone winning the game, without other team members to play in the game. But if she is the only one who plays well and other players are far below her in their skills, her individual skills may not be sufficient to make the team win the game. Of course, she alone may be able to show impressive individual performance. But that would be pointless for her *as a soccer player* insofar as it is not sufficient for the aim of winning the game.[49]

Similarly, without the other participant, we cannot engage in any relational

[49] Note that, by contrast, if she were a tricks-soccer player, whose internal aim is performing exquisite soccer tricks for entertainment, her individual skills would be sufficient for achieving that aim.

activity at all and the excellence of the relational activity is partly determined by that other participant. If virtuous activities are constitutive of human flourishing and virtuous relational activities are an important part of them, it implies that an important aspect of human flourishing is fragile in a distinctive way. That is, the flourishing of a participant in the relational activity is dependent on and thus vulnerable to the other participant's character and agency in a significant way. For example, if your parents are abusive, cruel, and indifferent to you, you will be deprived of an important opportunity to engage in virtuous relational activities with your parents.

Note that a virtuous relational activity in a good intimate relationship is neither one-sided nor based on a prudential give-and-take mentality. First, a one-sided relationship is at least less desirable than its reciprocal version. Thus, for example, unrequited love is not sufficient for virtuous relational activity. One-sided love is not enough for an excellent relational activity, and this point is confirmed by the very fact that what the person in one-sided love wants is precisely to have a reciprocal loving relationship with the one she loves.

Second, a prudent give-and-take mentality does not constitute a virtuous relational activity, either. Although relationships based on such a mentality involve some sort of reciprocity and interactivity, that is not enough to make an ideal intimate relationship. In particular, such relationships would not be intimate, perhaps not even personal. Consider a business partnership. What is going on between business partners is the calculation of gain and loss and interaction based on it. It may be possible that two persons are business partners and friends at the same time. But what

makes their relationship go beyond business partners to reach friendship is precisely that their interaction involves more than mere prudent give-and-take.

4.2.4. Possible Objections Against the Idea of Relational Virtue

I have argued that a relational virtue is a virtue and that it is of a distinctive kind. Some might claim that what I have introduced is not really a new category of virtues but something that is already familiar to us, namely, *loyalty*. Let us take the concept of loyalty suggested as its working definition in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*:

> [Loyalty is] a practical disposition to persist in an intrinsically valued (though not necessarily valuable) associational attachment, where that involves a potentially costly commitment to secure or at least not to jeopardize the interests or well-being of the object of loyalty. For the most part, an association that we come to value for its own sake is also one with which we come to identify (as *mine* or *ours*). (Kleinig 2017, sec. 2.)

One might argue that loyalty understood in this way can capture a number of properties I offered as characteristic features of a relational virtue such as particularity and specialness. However, I believe that a relational virtue is different from loyalty in several important aspects.

First of all, one can be loyal to almost anything one can be attached or committed to—from persons or personal collectives such as social groups to non-persons such as principles or causes. In contrast, the target of a relational virtue is persons exclusively. Even if we focus on loyalty to persons, loyalty is different from a

relational virtue in that it can be unilateral and does not presuppose an interactive relationship between the persons in question. For example, one can be loyal to a pop star while that pop star is not even aware of one's existence. In this sense, loyalty would be appropriately categorized as a unilateral other-regarding virtue rather than a relational virtue.

Because of this unilateral nature, nor does loyalty adequately capture the properties of dependency I ascribed to a relational virtue above. One might worry that these features of a relational virtue make our ability to engage in virtuous activities a matter of luck to a greater extent than we should feel comfortable with. Although I do understand the 'vertigo' one might feel when one realizes how big a role luck plays in our lives, I think this is just a reality that we need to admit, and an adequate ethical theory should be able to embrace it. That is, I believe that important aspects of human flourishing are vulnerable to the element of luck and the introduction of a relational virtue shows how.

A relational virtue is also different from loyalty understood as a character trait, that is, as "a tendency to form particular bonds of loyalty and act in their light" (Keller 2007, 155). When we say someone is a "loyal" person in a general sense, what we usually mean is that loyalty plays a significant role in her life. However, loyalty understood this way is significantly different from a relational virtue. First of all, I have said that a relational virtue is 'indexed' to particular individuals and thus in this sense *local*. In contrast, loyalty as a character trait is general in that it describes a general tendency to be loyal to the targets who happen to build a special relationship to the

agent herself. Thus, it neither presupposes a special intimate relationship nor is indexed to particular persons.

Moreover, there are reasons to think that loyalty as a character trait is not a *virtue*. Simon Keller, for example, denies that loyalty understood in this way is a virtue for the following reasons. First, according to him, we would not want our child to have this character trait since it may incline the child to be "too quick to commit herself emotionally to projects or individuals that she would be better to avoid" and become someone who is undiscriminating (Keller 2007, 157). Another reason why loyalty is not a virtue is that a complete lack of it does not seem to be a legitimate ground to blame the person who lacks it. We would rather pity the person who lacks this trait for lacking important human goods such as genuine friendship rather than having a "distinctively *moral* complaint" against her (Keller 2007, 159).

In contrast, a relational virtue is clear of such worries. First, there would be only a few, if any, parents who would not want their child to have filial piety as a character trait. In fact, I believe most parents would be glad to find that their child is filial not necessarily for the prudential reason that it is good for themselves to have a filial child, but because their child has grown up as someone who knows how to return, say, love and gratitude for what they have received. Moreover, when one shares an intimate relationship with someone, lacking the corresponding relational virtue would be morally condemnable. For example, if a person does not take care of her parents in their old age, given that they have been at least decent parents, would be a good reason to morally blame her. Thus, a relational virtue, unlike loyalty as a character trait, seems

to pass Keller's two 'tests' for a virtue.

4.3. Filial Piety as a Relational Virtue

With this new concept of relational virtue at hand, let me propose my own version of the virtue-centered theory of filial piety, which I call the *relational virtue* theory. As the name suggests, my theory understands filial piety as a paradigmatic example of relational virtue. It fits the description of what a relational virtue is. Filial piety is a virtue required for a child as the participant of her parent-child relationship. It cannot be fully understood without reference to the parent-child relationship and can be properly cultivated or exercised only within this relationship. The child can be filial only in relation to her parents, not others. A desirable parent-child relationship is one in which the child is filial, and the parent is parental (or parentally virtuous). If the child is not filial, then the parent-child relationship in question is defective in that regard. I think my theory has an advantage in capturing the relational aspect between the parents' parental virtue and the child's filial piety. It can avoid, I submit, the main difficulties with the existing theories of filial piety.

4.3.1. Parental Virtue and Filial Piety

So far, it has been assumed that the parents in question *deserve* their child's filial piety. One may ask, what if the parents are not 'good enough' parents, and thus

do not deserve to have a *filial* child? It seems unreasonable to claim that a child should have love, gratitude, and respect, no matter how terrible her parents are. My relational virtue theory, which emphasizes the reciprocal nature of filial piety, does not impose such an unconditional requirement on a filial child. According to my theory, a child's being filial is required as an appropriate response to the parent's being *parental*. In other words, the normative ground for the requirements of filial piety is the relational virtuousness of one's parents.

One might think that my theory thus recommends us to *refrain from* being filial to the extent that the parents are defective as parents, keeping the exact proportionality between parental virtue and filial piety. This is not what my theory implies, however. It only suggests that the requirements of being filial can vary depending on the degree of the parents' relational virtuousness and the relationship between the child and the parents and that one would have a reasonable excuse for not being filial if one's parents are extremely vicious as parents. It is true that most parents in the real world are neither exemplary nor despicable as parents. It is also true that my top-down approach focuses on describing ideal cases, where the parents are parentally virtuous and the child is filial. However, my theory has rich resources to give answers or at least guidance to questions concerning the normative ground of filial piety in non-ideal cases, where parents are not perfectly parental.

To begin, a relational virtue as I understand it involves *reasonable forbearance* that enables the agent to keep caring about the intimate in question even if the intimate's character is defective in some respect. This implies that a truly filial child

would try to care about her parents even if they are not perfect as parents. Such forbearance would be an important part of filial piety in a non-ideal parent-child relationship. First, it is needed in the process of forming the intimate relationship between the child and parents. Second, as far as the parents are not extremely vicious as parents, such forbearance would play an important role in helping them to become more parental. Given that the goal of filial piety as a relational virtue is to have a good relationship with parents and engage in virtuous relational activities with them, and that such activities require both participants to have corresponding relational virtues, it would be reasonable to hold that filial piety involves reasonable forbearance in relation to one's parents at least in a non-ideal case where the parents are not fully parental.

In addition, my relational virtue theory is compatible with other possible reasons—perhaps the reasons that do not directly stem from the demand of filial piety—to be filial to one's parents even if they are defective as parents. For example, suppose that Dan's parents provided him with material and financial support motivated by self-interest, not by love for him. In this case, Dan has a reason to repay what he has received from his parents, say, by providing material and financial support when they become old and infirm, just as a truly filial child would do to her loving and caring parents. However, *his* reason to support his parents derives from the general principle that we ought to pay back what we owe to someone, not from filial piety in particular. In this sense, Dan's supporting his parents is not an expression of the virtue of filial piety but just fulfilling the general duty to repay to one's creditor.

Still, it gives him a reason to act as a filial person would do to her loving and caring parents, although Dan's reason for doing so would differ from hers.

Also, consider the case of Chan. Although his parents have not been extremely abusive or cruel, they did not offer adequate protection, nurturance, and support to him. It is not because they are in financial difficulty or physically incapable, but just because they care more about their enjoying luxurious leisure time than taking care of their son. That is, they failed to act parentally due to the defect in their character. However, Chan may have a reason to act filially to his parents as if they have been fully parental to him. He may act filially—e.g., pay for his parents' hospital expenses and contact them frequently—just because he felt a general feeling of sympathy for someone in need or because he wanted to set a good example of filial piety to his own daughter. Although these reasons may not be properly called the reasons *of* filial piety in a strict sense, it is compatible with my theory to recommend to act as a filial person would act for such reasons.

Of course, according to my theory, a truly filial person is one who acts filially out of gratitude or love, not merely for reasons external to filial piety. In an ideal case, the parents would be parentally virtuous, and the child would be filial. Thus, in non-ideal cases—where parents lack parental virtues—it would be hard to realize a desirable parent-child relationship just based on the efforts from the child's side. Still, it is one thing to say that the failure of being filial to imperfect parents is excusable, and it is another to say that being or trying to be filial even to such parents is not morally recommendable or praiseworthy. My theory can acknowledge that it is

morally recommendable or even admirable for the child to keep trying to be filial to her parents even if they do not fully deserve it.

4.3.2. Avoiding Difficulties

I believe my theory can avoid the main difficulties of the existing theories of filial piety. One challenge against the gratitude theory of filial piety is to make sense of why we owe gratitude to our parents for what they have done to us even if we were too young to request or agree to receive them. This challenge assumes that only something that is received by the agent's request or choice can be an appropriate object of gratitude. My relational virtue theory can avoid this challenge because it holds that the kind of gratitude appropriate for a filial child is the gratitude to her parents for *being* caring parents, rather than just for what they have *done* or *given* to her. Sharing an intimate relationship with someone is not simply a matter of request or choice; rather, it is what happens as a result of a substantial history of favorable and meaningful interactivities.

Moreover, my theory does not have to explain why we owe gratitude to our parents if our parents were just fulfilling their *duties* as parents. In my view, being a good parent is a matter of cultivating and exercising parental *virtue* in relation to one's child, not just a matter of fulfilling their *duties*—e.g., providing protection, support, and education. Thus, filial piety requires some sort of *reciprocity* between the relational virtues in question—i.e., parental virtue and filial piety—rather than that between

goods or favors exchanged. If so, since being a good parent is not just a matter of fulfilling one's duty, my theory can avoid the challenge that there is no reason to be grateful to someone when she is just fulfilling her duties.

What about the challenge that the degree of the parents' sacrifice does not seem to affect filial duties while it does affect the gratitude we owe to them (see Keller 2006)? The issue is this. It seems that a child has more duty of gratitude toward her parents when they have sacrificed a great deal and put a lot of efforts in raising her, than when they did not sacrifice as much and even enjoyed much in raising her. However, the requirement of filial piety to look after one's parents when they become old and infirm does not seem to be mitigated just because they have enjoyed parenting or has made less sacrifice.

I believe my relational virtue theory can address this issue. First, according to my theory, the goods, efforts, and sacrifice the child owes to her parents is not fully determined by the goods, efforts, and sacrifice from the parent's side. Rather, what is importantly relevant in terms of the requirement of filial piety is *how parentally virtuous* the parents are; that is, the child should be filial to her parents at least to a degree insofar as they are or have been reasonably decent parents. Thus, on my theory, whether and how a child should be filial is not simply determined by the amount or quality of goods given or the efforts and sacrifice made by the parents. It implies that, if parents are reasonably virtuous as parents, even if they have actually provided only a few goods to the child, the child may be required to be filial to them. If the parents are or have been abusive or violent as parents, on the other hand, then the child may

not owe to be a filial child to them at least in some extreme cases.

Even if some parents fail to give their children a decent upbringing, however, this fact does not directly imply that the child is thereby mitigated in or exempted from the requirement of filial piety. We should ask the *reasons* why the parents failed to give a decent upbringing. For example, if it is due to the poor social arrangement or lack of sufficient materials through no fault of the parents' own, it does not by itself make them *vicious* as parents. On the other hand, if the reason for the poor upbringing is the parents' vicious character as parents—e.g., abusive, derelict, or oppressive—then it can provide the child with a reasonable excuse not to be filial to them. What is important here is whether the parents in question tried hard enough to offer the goods their children need in the given situation and whether they are parentally virtuous such that they *would have provided* the child the goods if the situation allowed.[50] If the parents are sufficiently virtuous as parents, then the child in question would be legitimately expected to be filial to her parents and offer them the goods they need.

A similar point can be made about parents' efforts or sacrifice. Suppose that Hak in our story was rich enough to raise Chung without great efforts and sacrifice from his part. Other things being equal, does Chung owe less gratitude to this 'effortless' father than she would to the 'sacrificing' father? Again, what matters here is whether Hak is sufficiently virtuous as her parent. This can be gauged by

[50] In a similar vein, Richards claims that the measure of the gratitude we owe them, should not be the sacrifice your parent actually makes for you, but "the sacrifices he *would* make for your sake *if* he were called upon to make" (Richards 2010, 232; emphasis added). However, my view is different from his because, while this counterfactual consideration in my view is to evidence the parent's *parental virtue*, in his view, it is to indicate the place the child has in her parents' *affections*.

considering whether he *would have sacrificed* for Chung if the circumstance were unfavorable, not necessarily by considering whether he actually made the sacrifice. Then, at least to that extent, Chung would be legitimately expected to be filial to Hak and offer him the goods he needs in the situation that is actually given.

People who support the duty-centered approach on filial piety may try to accommodate the intuition in this response by appealing to the concept of *counterfactual* or *hypothetical* duties.[51] However, I am not sure if this kind of duty makes sense. For example, while an actual promise generates a duty to keep the promise, a merely hypothetical promise does not. Similarly, while the actual sacrifices of parents for the child may generate a duty of gratitude, merely hypothetical sacrifices do not. At least, it seems hard to explain the sense in which it is a duty. In contrast, my relational virtue theory can make a better sense of why the parents who did not *actually* provide certain goods or make sacrifice still deserve their child's filial piety—including gratitude. This is because what it requires of the parents is their having and exercising parental virtue appropriately in the given context, rather than performing specific kind of actions or providing specific kind of goods.[52] Note that being virtuous as parents does not necessarily require particular types of action unless the situation calls for

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[51] Mark R. Wicclair mentions the possibility of these sorts of duties (or obligations): "For example, although I did not have polio as a child, since my mother would have been willing to make substantial sacrifices to help me if I did, it might be claimed that I should be willing to make substantial sacrifices for her if she were to develop Alzheimer's. If there are such obligations, they cannot plausibly be construed as duties (of gratitude) that are generated by (actual) past parental sacrifices, and they are therefore beyond the scope of this paper" (Wicclair 1990, 188, note 24).

[52] See Christopher Wellman (1999) for a view that gratitude in general is better understood as a virtue rather than as a source of duties or obligations.

them, just as a courageous person would still be a courageous person even if she had hardly any opportunity to express it because the world has been 'too' peaceful.

Moreover, my relational virtue theory also avoids the main challenges against the friendship theory of filial piety. One challenge against the friendship theory is that it implies that there is nothing the child ought to do to her parents when the loving relationship between is gone, which makes it too easy to be exempted from the 'burden' of filial piety. According to my theory, as far as the parents have been parental to the child, she cannot become free from the requirement to be (or at least try to be) filial just by choosing to leave the relationship. The existence of the current loving relationship per se is not necessary for filial piety in my theory. At least insofar as the parents have been parental, the requirement of filial piety cannot be avoided simply by choosing to leave the relationship since the child is required to be or at least strive to be filial to them in response to their virtuousness as parents.

4.4. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have argued that relational virtue is a distinctive kind of virtue that has an ethical significance and introduced some characteristic features of relational virtue. Then I have proposed my own relational virtue theory of filial piety, according to which we should be filial to our parents at least to the degree that they are or have been virtuous as parents. I have also shown how my theory can avoid some main challenges against the existing theories of filial piety. In the next chapter, I

introduce some important aspects of filial piety that are emphasized in the Confucian tradition while neglected in Western culture. I also attempt to show how my relational virtue theory can accommodate those aspects as important elements of filial piety.

Chapter 5. Confucian Filial Piety and Relational Virtue

5.1. Introduction

In this chapter, I examine the Confucian conception of filial piety, which heavily influenced my own view, since it has particularly rich resources on this issue. After briefly introducing the Confucian view of filial piety, I discuss several aspects of filial piety that are emphasized in the Confucian tradition but not in contemporary Western literature on filial piety. Then I show how my relational virtue theory can defend and make sense of them as an important part of filial piety. Lastly, I show how my relational virtue theory is different from the Confucian view on filial piety, or at least a version of it.

5.2. Confucian Filial Piety

Early Confucians regarded filial piety (*xiao*; 孝) as a cardinal virtue that is crucial in cultivating one's character and growing into an exemplary person (*junzi*; 君子), not merely as a collection of duties we have toward our parents. In *Analects* 1.2, Confucius even says, "filial piety and respect for elders constitute the *root* of humaneness (or *ren*; 仁)" (Confucius 2003; emphasis added),[53] and *The Classic of Filial*

[53] In Confucianism, *ren*—which is also translated as benevolence, compassion, or perfect goodness—refers to a comprehensive virtue characterized by a strong sense of compassion and

Piety introduces filial piety as "the *root of virtue* and all [ethical] teaching grows out of it" (Legge 2004, Ch.1; emphasis added).

Confucians put great emphasis on the virtue of filial piety mainly because they believed that the family plays a crucial role in forming foundational moral emotions and moral capacities. They understand family as the place where one's basic ethical character begins to be cultivated through the experience of building meaningful relationships with the immediate family members, especially with one's parents: "We cultivate ourselves through reinforcing and expanding our human-relatedness, and our human relatedness starts with our relationship with our parents" (Li 1997, 223-4). Through the practice of filial piety, according to Confucians, one can go beyond the self-centeredness and develop moral feelings such as genuine love, care, and gratitude. This is why filial piety is regarded as the 'root' of becoming a virtuous human being. In this sense, as Tu Wei-Ming aptly points out, the purpose of filial piety as Confucians see it is *human flourishing* and "an essential way of learning to be human" (Tu 1998, 13). Moreover, filial piety is not a mere means to cultivate the more general virtue of humaneness or *ren*; rather, it is its central constituent. Mencius says, for example, "The most authentic expression of humaneness is serving one's parents" (Mencius 4A27).[54] In other words, in Confucian ethics, being filial is at the heart of being a good human being in general, and serving one's parents well is an essential part of living a good human life. In this sense, successful cultivation and exercise of filial piety is an

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empathy with other people.

[54] In citing *Mencius,* I used Irene Bloom's translation as the base and made some modification of my own.

important part of human flourishing.

Thus understood, the Confucian conception of filial piety provides a rich resource to shed light on important aspects of being a good child that have not received much attention in the Western tradition. Although some aspects of filial piety emphasized in the Confucian tradition might be viewed as outdated and unfit for contemporary societies, among them are important aspects that deserve our refreshed attention and further defense, or so I believe. Here I focus on three such aspects Confucian filial piety: filial piety in childhood, the close relationship between self-cultivation and filial piety, and filial piety after the parents' death. I then suggest how to make sense of them based on my conception of filial piety as a relational virtue.

5.2.1. Early Filial Piety

It is noticeable that contemporary Western duty-centered theories of filial piety mostly focus on *adult* children's filial piety to their old parents.[55] The parent-child relationship holds even between a *young* or *immature dependent* child and parents, not just between an adult child and parents. By 'young children,' I roughly mean, following Mullin, "children who are in the process of moral development and who have not yet reached moral maturity" (Mullin 2010, 152).[56] We may call the filial piety

[55] Amy Mullin (2010) is one of few notable exceptions. In her paper, she discusses the filial responsibilities of *dependent* children.

[56] Of course, we may have to discuss parent-*infant* relationship separately, since such a relationship is better understood as a unilateral nurturing relationship, rather than a full-fledged *personal* relationship. To the extent that the child is incapable of functioning as a person,

of young children *early* filial piety.

Most contemporary theories of filial piety focus on adult children's filial duties and do not address the issue of early filial piety. There are several possible reasons for this neglect. First, some of those theories do not have adequate conceptual resources to deal with young children's filial piety due to the overly rationalistic conception of duty—mostly influenced by a Kantian conception of duty. It is hard for them to make sense of young children's *duties* to their parents in a proper sense since young children are not equipped with the rational agency, material resources, or independence, which are required to be subject to full-fledged moral duties. For example, in arguing against the idea of children's duty of obedience, Michael Slote denies the possibility of any duty for young children:

> "[I]t is difficult to believe that one has any moral duty to show gratitude for benefits one has not requested…. [I]t seems entirely gratuitous to suppose that *very young children have any moral obligations at all, even to their parents*. Such obligations, it would seem, exist, if at all, only when moral concepts are firmly implanted…. Young children seem to be too young to have any obligations or duties of obedience or anything else" (Slote 1979, 320; emphasis added).

Second, even assuming that young children can have moral duties or obligations, they may not yet be able to appreciate how much of gratitude their parents deserve from them and to express it properly. Immaturity is the hallmark of childhood, rather than its aberrant defect. If someone seriously claims that young children have duties to express their gratitude to their parents, it would be too rigorous a demand for them given their age and capacity. Nor are they old enough to be bound with their

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it is hard to call this relationship a *personal* relationship in a strict sense.

parents by so-called 'duties of friendship,' which typically hold among *equals*. It is hard to deny that there exists dramatic asymmetry in status, power, and abilities between parents and young children, which undermines the idea that they can share friendship (see, e.g., Kupfer 1990, Ivanhoe 2007).

I believe early filial piety should be treated as an important part of filial piety. It is usually when we are young and dependent that we spend the most time interacting with our parents. Also, the 'sprouts' for adult's full-fledged filial piety are cultivated and shaped during this early childhood, which is one important reason why early filial piety has been taken very seriously in the Confucian tradition. Although young children lack full autonomy, independence, and rationality, it seems meaningful to talk about filial piety of young children, given that they are reasonably competent agents who can make at least some kind of choices based on their own ends. Let me show how a virtue-centered approach—especially my version of it, the relational virtue theory—can make sense of early filial piety and its importance.

First, early childhood is an important period of time in which one can develop the *emotional* and *motivational* aspects of filial piety toward one's parents who are reasonably virtuous as parents. Mencius said, "There are no young children who do not know enough to love their parents" (Mencius 7A15), suggesting that people can begin to develop loving affection for their parents even in early childhood. Moreover, given that our emotional disposition is largely formed during early childhood and more plastic during that period, it is crucial for the child to acquire filial emotional and affective disposition from early childhood. Thus, early filial piety importantly involves

the cultivation of a loving and caring attitude toward one's parents.[57] The attitude of loving one's parents as someone special is an especially important part of filial piety as a relational virtue.

Early filial piety also involves behavioral requirements. It is likely that young children are not yet equipped with the appropriate inner attitude such as gratitude and love, which are required for full virtue of filial piety. In this sense, what those immature children do to their parents may not qualify as exercise or expression of the virtue of filial piety. However, early filial piety can require young children to perform filial actions—i.e., what a truly filial person would do to her parents—despite their immature filial piety. For young children's filial actions help them *develop* or *cultivate* their virtue of filial piety. We can reasonably claim that, following Aristotle, that just as a person becomes just by performing just actions (Aristotle 1999, 1103b1-2), so becomes a child filial by performing filial actions. In this sense, although young children may not have filial *duties* in a proper sense, they are indirectly required—in an evaluative sense—to perform filial actions by the virtue of filial piety.

There is another sense in which filial actions in childhood can contribute to one's process of *becoming* filial. That is, what the young children do for and feel about their parents can be understood as a process of building the *on-going intimate* relationship between them. This is especially important in cultivating filial piety as a relational virtue since relational virtues presuppose such intimate relationships. In

[57] Given the child's young age, it is also an important part of parental virtue to help her young child to cultivate inner attitudes appropriate for filial piety.

other words, those 'filial' actions, which sufficiently resemble what a truly filial person would do, themselves give rise to the intimate parent-child relationship which serves as the basis of the corresponding relational virtues—i.e., parental virtue and filial piety. Thus understood, they are part of the process that opens the 'channel of intimacy' between the parent and the child. Furthermore, although the young children may not have sufficient abilities and resources to have filial duties, we can plausibly say they have filial responsibilities in a weaker sense to "strive to contribute to forming a positive relationship with their caregivers," rather than "accepting devotion to their own needs and interests as their due" (Mullin 2010, 164).

5.2.2. Self-Cultivation and Filial Piety

Another important aspect of the Confucian conception of filial piety is that it is closely related to *self-cultivation* in important senses. The self-cultivation in question here is not limited to the cultivation of the disposition to do for and feel about one's parents in an appropriate way. It also involves becoming an overall virtuous person, which is a crucial part of filial piety. First of all, as mentioned above, Confucians regard the virtue of filial piety not only as the 'root' of general virtuousness (*ren*) but also as itself an important virtue central to becoming an exemplary or virtuous person. In this sense, in the Confucian tradition, becoming a filial person is an essential part of self-cultivation.

There is another important sense in which self-cultivation is closely related to

filial piety, however. That is, cultivation of one's character can itself be understood as an important part of filial piety. Insofar as good parents wish their children well *in all respects*, it seems reasonable to say that they would be concerned with their *moral* well-being—i.e., being *virtuous*—not just with their physical or mental well-being. The idea that being good parents involves concern for one's children's having virtue can find support in the Confucian tradition.[58] Concerning filial piety, for example, Confucius says in *Analects* 2.6, "Give your parents no cause for anxiety other than the possibility that they might fall ill" (Confucius 2003). Although there can be various interpretations of this passage, many scholars take it to mean that a child should not cause her parents to have undue worry by maintaining her moral, mental, and physical well-being except in the situation of illness, which is out of her control. Yong Huang, for example, reads this passage as suggesting the following:

> According to *Analects* 2.6, since parents are happy if their children are doing well but will worry when do not do well, a filial son ought to avoid doing anything that his parents will be ashamed of and do only things that his parents can feel proud of…. [F]or Confucius, *to be virtuous person oneself is also an important aspect of filial piety*, because parents all wish their children well in all aspects. (Huang 2013, 128; emphasis added)

[58] Noticeably, we can also find a similar idea in the Western virtue-ethicist Rosalind Hursthouse's view: "Good parents have their children's interests at heart. They want to do what is best or good for *them*, the individual children, to enable them to live well, be happy, make a success of their lives. But, having their children's interests at heart, it does not occur to most of them to bring them up to be entirely self-interested and immoral. On the contrary, they see the natural childish impulses to self-gratification and self-indulgence as impulses that need to be modified and redirected, and their natural impulses to love and generosity and fairness as impulses that need to be developed; they see the naturally self-centred perspective of children as something that has to be enlarged—for the child's own sake" (Hursthouse 1999, 175).

He adds:

> The reason that filial piety is connected with all these virtues is precisely that parents desire their children to be virtuous, and children's being virtuous brings honor to their parents, while their being vicious brings disgrace to them. Thus *an important task of a filial person is to go through self-cultivation to become a virtuous person*. (Huang 2013, 131; emphasis added)

This point can be further supported by my relational virtue theory, which understands being filial as the appropriate response to the parent's virtuousness as parents. If being virtuous as parents involves being concerned with the child's being virtuous, and if being filial involves making sure to realize what the parent is (reasonably) concerned about her, then it would be plausible to claim that being virtuous, as well as being happy, is an important part of filial piety. The Confucian conception of an ideal parent-child relationship puts emphasis on parents and children making each other morally better persons. In such a relationship, if one participant does not care about the other's moral character, this indifference would make her defective as a parent or as a child.[59] Therefore, filial piety as a (relational) virtue involves self-cultivation with respect to overall virtuousness.

We can find what can be called the *reflexive structure* of concern for well-being involved in parental virtue and filial piety. That is, doing what is good for oneself is part of doing what is good for one's parents, that is, of exercising filial piety. I think it reveals a very important feature constituting desirable intimate relationships like a

[59] In this sense, Confucian partiality does not necessarily go against the impartial or 'inclusive' morality.

parent-child relationship. They are not relationships in which each participant's interests are to be considered separately; for intimates, the interest of each is part of that of the other. In other words, insofar as the intimate relationship maintains, one's own interests affect the others, so self-interests and those of others are not sharply divided. This is part of the reason why I think the idea of owing or 'debt' to one's parents fails to make sense of the nature of filial piety.

Let me draw an analogy from a self-to-self relationship. Suppose, for example, that Liam at the age of twenty-five (call him Liam25) works very hard to make money to enjoy a comfortable life in his old age. As a result, Liam at the age of 65 (call him Liam65) leads a very comfortable and relaxed life. Here it would be absurd to say Liam65 *owes* anything to Liam25. It is not just because Liam25—who is supposed to be the recipient of the repayment—no longer exists and thus it is impossible to repay; rather, it is because what Liam25 did was in a sense for *his own* sake.

Similarly, suppose that Hak in our story works very hard to promote the well-being of his daughter, Chung. If he is a parentally virtuous father, he would do so not only for her sake but also for his own sake. Hak would deserve Chung's gratitude, all the more for the fact that he enjoyed and became happier by taking care of her. What he did for her is not in the prospect of getting repaid by her—in which case it faces the problem of indebtedness—or from a sense of duty—in which case it is hard to explain why he merits gratitude from her. A parentally virtuous father should be appreciated for his special love and care for his child that transform the purely altruistic act of

helping another person into a partly self-interested act at the same time.[60] In this sense, if Hak lacks love for Chung and her well-being does not make him happier, and raise her primarily from a sense of duty or purely selfish motives, then it means that he is not fully virtuous as a parent. If so, it makes more sense to talk about Chung's repaying a debt to her father, since what benefits her and what benefits him diverge from each other in this case. In that case, however, the intimacy that distinguishes intimate relationships—like a parent-child relationship—from other relationships would be gone. We would end up talking about a benefactor-beneficiary relationship.

Harry Frankfurt touches on a similar idea when he discusses the apparent paradox that love is supposed to be *disinterested* and *self-interested* at the same time. On the one hand, he claims that love is supposed to be disinterested in that a lover "desires the well-being of his beloved *for its own sake* rather than only for the sake of ways in which it might support or promote other interests" (Frankfurt 1998, 4-5; emphasis added). On the other, love is self-interested given that the activity of loving makes the lover's life worthwhile in a crucial aspect and a life without it will be "miserably deprived" (Frankfurt 1998, 7). How are we to solve this paradox, if it is one? Frankfurt argues that this appearance of conflict will disappear once we understand that "what serves the self-interest of the lover is, precisely, the fact that his love is disinterest. The benefit of loving accrues to him only if he is genuinely selfless. He fulfills his own need only because in loving he forgets himself" (Frankfurt 1998, 8).

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[60] In *Nicomachean Ethics* VIII. 12., Aristotle makes a similar point: "A parent…loves his children as [he loves] himself" (Aristotle 1999, 1161b17-18).

I generally agree with Frankfurt's analysis of what loving someone is like. But I would like to add that what makes a lover's life more worthwhile is the loving relationship and the relational activities involved, rather than just the activity of loving, which might be understood in a one-sided sense. This point gets clearer if we consider that every lover prefers being loved back by the beloved to just engaging in unrequited love. If someone prefers unrequited love, we may rightly suspect that it is a case of fetish, not love.

Given this reflexive structure, it makes sense to say that a child's taking good care of oneself and trying to become a child who makes her parents proud is part of being filial. As the line in *Analects* 2.6 suggests, not becoming or not acting like a vicious person is also part of being filial, since a parentally virtuous parent would not want her child to be a vicious person. In this sense, both the parents who take advantage of their child for their own self-interest and those who try to promote their child's well-being even if that involves her becoming vicious, lack full parental virtue.

5.2.3. Postmortem Filial Piety

The last remarkable feature of Confucian filial piety is that it considers acting and feeling in an appropriate way *after one's parents pass away* as a very important part of being filial. This aspect of filial piety, which we can call *postmortem* filial piety, has been heavily emphasized in the Confucian tradition. The following are the passages from *Analects* that shows the emphasis on postmortem filial piety:

1.11 "When someone's father is still alive, observe his intentions; *after his father has passed away, observe his conduct*. If for three years he does not alter the ways of his father, he may be called a filial son." (See also 4.20)

2.5 "When your parents are alive, serve them in accordance with the rites; *when they pass away, bury them in accordance with the rites and sacrifice to them in accordance with the rites*."

17.21 "When the gentleman is *in mourning* [for his parents], he gets no pleasure from eating sweet foods, finds no joy in listening to music, and feels no comfort in his place of dwelling. This is why he gives up these things." (Confucius 2003; emphasis added)

The *Classics of Filial Piety* also describes what a proper postmortem filial piety would be like in more detail:

The Master said, "When a filial son is mourning for a parent, he wails, but not with a prolonged sobbing; in the movements of ceremony he pays no attention to his appearance; his words are without elegance of phrase; he cannot bear to wear fine clothes; when he bears music, he feels no delight; when he eats a delicacy, he is not conscious of its flavour—such is the nature of grief and sorrow.

After three days he may partake of food; for thus the people are taught that the living should not be injured on account of the dead, and that emaciation must not be carried to the extinction of life—such is the rule of the sages. The period of mourning does not go beyond three years, to show the people that it must have an end.

An inner and outer coffin are made; the grave-clothes also are put on, and the shroud; and (the body) is lifted (into the coffin). The sacrificial vessels, round and square, are (regularly) set forth, and (the sight of them) fills (the mourners) with (fresh) distress'. The women beat their breasts, and the men stamp with their feet, wailing and weeping, while they sorrowfully escort the coffin to the grave. They consult the tortoise-shell to determine the grave and the ground about it, and there they lay the body in peace. They prepare the ancestral temple (to receive the tablet of the departed), and their present offerings to the disembodied spirit. In spring and autumn they offer sacrifices, thinking of the deceased as the seasons come around.

The services of love and reverence to parents when alive, and those of *grief and sorrow to them when dead*—these completely discharge the fundamental duty

> of living men. *The righteous claims of life and death are all satisfied*, and the filial son's service of his parents is completed. (Legge 2004, Ch. 18; emphasis added)

Although some specific suggestions—e.g., a three-year mourning period or specific manners of conducting the ceremony—may sound outdated or unfit for certain cultures, at least the basic idea that filial piety requires expressing sorrow, longing, gratitude, and respect for one's deceased parents does not sound implausible. Even if someone supports and takes care of her parents when they are alive, we would have a good reason to doubt her filial piety if she does nothing that manifests her sorrow, longing, or gratitude, when they pass away. If filial piety involves appropriate inner attitudes toward one's parents, there would be filial and unfilial ways to cherish or express them even when they no longer exist. In this sense, what one does and feels when one's parents pass away—not just when they are alive—is a very important aspect of filial piety.

One might argue that, insofar as the point of being filial is a matter of *benefiting* one's parents, postmortem filial piety does not make sense since, when they pass away, people who are supposed to be benefited by the filial actions will be gone as well. This might be the reason why contemporary Western theories of filial piety rarely address postmortem filial piety, narrowly focusing on what the child ought to do for her parents while they are alive. However, for the following reasons, I believe filial piety can still be meaningful even when the parents no longer exist.

First, even if the parents as beneficiaries of filial actions are no longer alive, *cherishing* and *expressing* appropriate filial inner attitudes—such as sorrow and longing

for the parents—can be part of what filial piety as a virtue requires. Some possible ways to do so includes trying to live in a way parents wished us to live, participating in a memorial service for them, or feeling sad about the fact that they no longer exist beside us. Of course, it may hard to say that those activities *benefit* the parents themselves in a strict sense since the people for whom those activities are supposed to be good no longer exist. However, insofar as being filial is not just about the parents but also partly about the child's being a good person, filial piety can still be meaningful even if the parents—the potential beneficiary of filial piety—no longer exist. For example, insofar as cultivating one's virtue is to live as one's parental parents wish one to live, to keep striving to become more virtuous even after the parents' death can also be understood as part of being filial. It can also be a way of bringing honor to one's deceased parents or fulfilling the desire to be remembered and cherished they had when they were alive.

Moreover, the general idea of *postmortem* morality, where the target of moral action or attitude is not alive, is already familiar to us since we are often required to do something *for* someone even if she does not exist anymore. During Memorial Day, for example, people express their gratitude to the soldiers who died for their own country through a moment of silent prayer. Suppose that someone shouts, in the middle of the silence, "What's the whole point of this ceremony? There is no one left to feel honored by this ceremony of silence. Let's just stop it now!" People would rightly blame this person for her ingratitude or some other inappropriate attitude.[61]

[61] One might argue that the actual point of such a ceremony is impact on those who are alive—

Such a ceremony may not be productive or beneficial since it does not promote the good of those who are being commemorated, but it can be meaningful at least as an act that expresses the participant's virtuous inner attitudes—in this case, the respect and gratitude for those who made the sacrifice for their country.

Some might still argue against the normative significance of postmortem filial piety on the grounds that, when the parents pass away, the *parent-child relationship* will be gone as well. Given that filial piety as a relational virtue presupposes a parent-child relationship, this argument seems to have a point. However, as Kathryn Norlock convincingly argues, "the relationships bereaved persons may maintain with the dead are meaningful even when they are no longer reciprocal, and not merely limited to past impressions" (Norlock, 342). For example, "fulfilling the wishes of the dead or forgiving the dead" can be regarded as important aspects of an ongoing relationship (Norlock 2017, 343-344). Sometimes a personal relationship can meaningfully persist even after one of its participants passes away, insofar as it continues to influence the living participant in a way that is sufficiently similar to the way a relationship with a living person would do. Thus, if there can be a meaningful and 'real' relationship between live children and dead parents as she argues, the idea of postmortem filial piety would mean more than mere self-consolation or pursuit of fantasy.

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say, the effect of fostering patriotism of the next generation—rather than expression of gratitude. However, if people have such external considerations in their mind while participating in the ceremony, we may doubt whether they have genuine inner attitude toward the target of the memorial ceremony.

5.3. Confucianism vs. The Relational Virtue Theory

My relational virtue theory shares some aspects of the Confucian view of filial piety. Like the Confucian view, the relational virtue theory regards filial piety as a virtue, emphasizes the close connection between self-cultivation and filial piety, and acknowledges the importance of postmortem filial piety. However, there are important differences that distinguish my theory from the Confucian view. For example, while Confucianism emphasizes the biological relationship between the parents and the child, my theory puts more emphasis on substantial social relationships. Also, while Confucianism views the child's self-abnegation or self-sacrifice as an important part of filial piety, my theory does not require the child's sacrifice per se, insofar as the circumstances are favorable enough to allow her to express special love and gratitude to her parents without suffering genuine loss. Another difference is that Confucianism emphasizes the filial person's reverence and respect toward her parents, while my theory puts more emphasis on spontaneous favorable emotions such as love.

Let me finish this chapter by discussing what I take to be the most important difference between Confucianism and my relational virtue theory. While Confucianism, or at least a version of it, attaches normative requirements on the family *role* such as the role of father and son, my theory focuses more on the particular individuals who occupy those roles and the particular relationship they have. As Roger Ames and Jr. Henry Rosemont observes, "Confucian normativity is defined by

living one's family roles to maximum effect" (Ames and Henry Jr 2011, 19). Confucianism assigns specific roles to the members of the society—family included—and specifies what is legitimately expected from the person who occupies the particular kind of role. For example, in *Analects* 12.11., when Confucius is asked about governing, he says, "Let the king be kingly, the ministers ministerial, the fathers fatherly, and the sons son-like" (Confucius 2003). This remark emphasizes the point that the society will function well when its members play their social roles in a proper way. The virtue of filial piety in Confucianism, then, is to be understood as particular character traits which should be held by an individual insofar as she occupies the role of someone's child in order to flourish within that particular role.

However, on a version of the Confucian conception, *any* child is required to strive to live as a filial child "irrespective of the contingent particularities of the family" (Wee 2014, 91), regardless of how relationally virtuous her parents are to her or whether the parents are in a good relationship with her. Such an aspect of Confucian filial piety can be found in the story of the sage-king Shun, who is admired as an exemplary filial person in the Confucian tradition (see Mencius 5A1-2). Shun's parents were far from being virtuous as parents; they not only hated Shun but even attempted to kill him multiple times by burning the granary when he was on its roof and by asking him to dig a well and then covering it over. Even though Shun's parents were despicable and more than abusive to him, he kept acting filially to them and tried to please then even when he was fifty, and "he did not even hold a grudge against them,

although he suffered [from his parents' hatred] (*lao er bu yuan* 勞而不怨)"[62] (Mencius 5A1).

In contrast, as already mentioned, my relational virtue theory understands a child's being filial is required as an *appropriate response to the parents' being parental*. My view is more flexible than Confucianism in that the requirement of a relational virtue, say filial piety, may vary with the particular qualities of the intimate in question. In particular, the requirement of filial piety on a child can vary depending especially on how parentally virtuous the parents are. Therefore, on my theory, given that his parents are vicious as parents, Shun has a reasonable excuse to be less filial to his parents than those whose parents are more parental.

Thus, according to the relational virtue theory, if the parents are extremely vicious as parents—e.g., abusive, derelict or oppressive—then the child would be at least allowed to be less than fully filial to her parents. For example, if Shun had decided not to take care of his parents after their multiple attempts to kill him, it would have been morally permissible and not blameworthy, according to the relational virtue theory. In contrast, Confucian role ethics, which specifies what the role—say, the role of being someone's child—requires without knowing about the particular individual occupying the role in question, may blame Shun despite his parents' cruelty if he does not support and care for his parents for failing to fulfill his *role as their child*, that is, for failing to act as a filial child.

Note that this aspect of my theory does not imply that a person who is or tries

[62] The phrase "*lao er bu yuan* 勞而不怨" is also found in *Analects* 4.18.

to be filial even to the parents who do not deserve it is not praiseworthy or admirable for that. Such a person is admirable in the similar sense that a victim who forgives and embraces the assailant even if she has a good reason not to do so—that is, the fact that the latter harmed the former. The point here is just that, on my theory, the requirement of filial piety can be alleviated if one's parents are sufficiently vicious as parents. In an extreme case like Shun's, demanding him to love, thank, and revere such vicious parents can amount to demanding him to commit himself to servility and abandon his own self-respect. My theory does not make such a demand.

5.4. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have discussed some important aspects of Confucian filial piety. I have argued that filial piety is meaningful and important when the child is young and dependent and even when the parents pass away, as well as that filial piety should be understood as closely related to self-cultivation. I have also discussed how my relational virtue theory can lend support to those filial practices that have been emphasized in the Confucian tradition. Although there can be controversy over the issue of which particular attitudes and behaviors are manded by postmortem filial piety, we can make sense of filial piety even after parents pass away, especially when filial piety is understood as a virtue. When understood as a virtue, especially as a relational virtue, filial piety's relation to other aspects of our ethical life can be understood more clearly.

Insofar as the parent-child relationship is one of the most important personal relationships in human life, how to become a good child to one's parents and why is a very important ethical issue. I have attempted to suggest a new insight into the issue of filial piety so that we can see the importance and richness of parent-child relationship better. I hope my suggestion can contribute to understanding this complex yet significant realm of morality.

Chapter 6. Friendship and Relational Virtue

6.1. Introduction

In previous chapters, I introduced the idea of relational virtue and explained how we can understand filial piety as a paradigmatic example of relational virtue. This chapter introduces the *virtue of friendship* as another important example of relational virtue. The introduction of the virtue of friendship as a relational virtue has two aims. First, it helps us to see that the idea of relational virtue does not only apply to a parent-child relationship but also to other kinds of intimate relationships such as a close friendship. I chose friendship because it is meaningfully different from a parent-child relationship. Second, the virtue of friendship shows how we can better understand some of the philosophical puzzles concerning friendship.

I focus on showing how friendship and the virtue of friendship are related to morality or moral virtues in general. First, I show that the virtue of friendship is significantly different from virtues involved in a parent-child relationship such as filial piety or parental virtue. Next, I argue that being virtuous to people in general is neither necessary nor sufficient for being virtuous as a friend. Then I argue that friendship is not inherently in conflict with morality and that the virtue of friendship should be weighed against other moral virtues on the same ethical scale.

6.2. Friendship vs. Parent-Child Relationship

Friendship and a parent-child relationship are both paradigmatic examples of intimate relationships. They share central features of an intimate relationship such as mutual caring, closeness, and shared activities. In both relationships, each participant is supposed to have concern for the other for her own sake and care about her as a particular person and as someone special. Despite such similarities, there are meaningful differences that warrant the separate scrutiny on friendship and related virtues. A parent-child relationship and friendship differ in at least two important aspects: hierarchy and voluntariness.

First, while the relationship between children and parents is hierarchical, friends are related to each other as equals.[63] Children are physically and mentally dependent on—and thus unequal to—their parents at least for many years. Until the children grow up to become independent adults, they need to be protected, nourished, cared for, and educated by their parents. Parents give to the children something that children cannot pay back. For example, the children can never give birth to their parents or give them an educational opportunity that will form their identity in the way their parents have given to them. As P. J. Ivanhoe emphasizes, parents "play a critical and decisive role in the formation of the child's character, values, and

[63] Although I use the term 'friendship' broadly enough to cover many different types of relationships—such as romantic partnership and intimate relationships between siblings—I take it to be a relationship between equals. Thus, at least in my usage, it is inappropriate to use the term 'friendship' to refer to a hierarchical relationship such as a master-slave relationship or a teacher-student relationship.

sensibilities" (Ivanhoe 2007, 307). According to Ivanhoe, filial piety "is partially constituted by the sense that the kindness one has received was done by someone who was dramatically more powerful than oneself and who sacrificed substantial goods of their own in order to care for one in these ways" (Ivanhoe 2007, 307). Thus, a child begins the parent-child relationship with the sense of 'owing' something, which grounds the asymmetry in the relationship from the beginning.

In contrast, "friendship characteristically exists between equals or at least between people similar in status, power, and abilities" (Ivanhoe 2007, 307). Except for some special cases, friends are on equal status to each other and they are in a position to give something or some favor back whenever they can do so. In the case of friendship, when one of the friends is always on the giving side and the other is always in the receiving side, there is a danger of transforming the relationship from friendship to the relationship of servility or other deteriorate kind of relationship. Suppose that Aiden always tells his friend Britney about what to do, meddles in all the important affairs, and tries to educate her, as if he is her parent. In this relationship, Aiden would be appropriately charged for his paternalism, and it would be a case of an 'unhealthy' friendship, if it is one at all.[64]

This asymmetry and the dependent relationship give the parents superior status and power at least for a substantial time, which makes it difficult for parents and child to form the relationship of equals. The charge of paternalism does not apply

[64] Note that I am not arguing for strict symmetry in friendship. I tend to agree with Norvin Richards' claim that "every friendship has its own shape, and the shape need not be symmetrical" (Richards 1989, 239). My point is just that even the degree of asymmetry that is normal in a parent-child relationship can be appropriately regarded as a defect in friendship.

to the relationship between parents and young children. In this sense, the relationship between parents and children is *vertical*. In contrast, friendship is *horizontal* in that the relationship between friends is more or less equal.

The second feature that distinguishes friendship from the parent-child relationship is *voluntariness*. We never choose our parents. A parent-child relationship is formed without any choice from the children's side, and usually not with any meaningful choice on the parents' side either (certainly not as to the particulars). The children happen to be born and raised by the given parents and one day they just find themselves being some particular individuals' children. We cannot decide to have different parents even though, in rare cases, we may be able to leave the parent-child relationship. In contrast, friendship involves more voluntariness in the formation of the relationship. Hardly anyone can be forced to be a friend to a particular individual. If someone is actually forced to do so and if that is the only reason why someone is a friend to someone else, then that seems to be a good reason to doubt that they have formed a genuine friendship from the beginning.

By saying that friendship is a matter of choice, I do not mean to claim that friendship is generally formed when both parties consciously decide to be friends at a particular moment. Unlike making a contract, friendship is usually formed gradually over time as the people involved interact with each other. Moreover, friendship may be seen as a result of natural sentiments and emotions, which are not usually within our rational control. Thus, entering into friendship may not as voluntary as it first seems. However, a genuine friendship is a matter of choice in the moderate sense that

there should be at least an implicit agreement or lack of disagreement on both parties' being friends. No one simply happens to find herself in friendship with someone she hates to be friends with.

Making a friend is also a matter of choice in the significant sense that there is a real exit option, which is also symmetrical as between the friends. In other words, there is more freedom in leaving a friendship than in leaving a parent-child relationship. In normal cases, parents have a duty to take care of their child at least until the child becomes an independent adult. Parents' negligence towards their child is often appropriately blamed. It is also not free for a child to break the parent-child relationship with her parents, especially considering what her parents have offered her from her birth. This is one of the main problems with Jane English's friendship view on filial duty, according to which parent-child relationship should be understood as a form of friendship (see English 1992).

In contrast, there is no comparable binding force in friendship. Friendship is formed or at least maintained based on each friend's voluntary—possibly implicit—agreement to be friends. For example, if John decides to break his friendship with Jane for some reason, she cannot maintain it just because, say, she likes him, needs him, or gave many good things to him. As Simon Keller points out, "an important aspect of the value of friendship is its being freely entered into and maintained; one thing that is essential to the good of having friends is their being your friends not out of duty, but because that is what they want" (Keller 2007, 130). One cannot beg or force someone else to be or continue to be one's friend since such lack of voluntariness

disqualifies that relationship as a friendship.

6.3. Friendship and Virtue

As we have seen that friendship is significantly different from a parent-child relationship, we are now in a position to examine the *virtue of friendship* as a relational virtue that is distinct from both filial piety and parental virtue. The virtue of friendship is, roughly put, is a disposition to act, feel, and think appropriately as someone's friend. Note that it is to be distinguished from *friendliness*, which is a disposition to make friends or become friends with other people easily or to be nice and 'friendly' to people in general. Such a character trait would be described more precisely as affability or amiability. In contrast, having the virtue of friendship is a matter of being a good friend in an existing friendship. The virtue of friendship presupposes a friendship with a particular individual and concerns the disposition in relation to that individual. Not all cases of friendship are equal. Some friendships are not desirable or worth having, while others are going very well and greatly contribute to each participant's flourishing. In my view, a friendship is good to the extent that each participant possesses and exercises the virtue of friendship in relation to the other. In other words, the virtue of friendship is the disposition of the friends in question that make the given friendship go well as friendship.

Before analyzing the virtue of friendship further, it would be helpful to briefly discuss what I think makes a friendship good *qua* friendship. Although there can be

various good-making features of friendship, let me introduce just a few of them that are particularly relevant to the current discussion. First, in a good friendship, one cares about the other for her own sake in the way one would not in relation to a non-friend. Thus, if one regards one's friend as a mere instrument to one's own well-being or if one treats her in the same way one treats a stranger, then the friendship in question would be less than ideal to that extent. Relatedly, a good friendship gives a special sense of belonging through each participant's love, care, and trust for the other. This sense of belonging typically contributes to alleviating the participants' loneliness and heightening their sense of self-worth. A good friendship also tends to complement the defects and flaws that its participants have as individuals. Moreover, a good friendship helps its participants become better people or remain to be good people if they are already perfect. Although an individual person's virtuous character may not be a good-making feature of *friendship*, the friendship's tendency to have a positive impact on its participants' character can be regarded as an important factor that makes a given friendship good as friendship.

Now let us discuss how the virtue of friendship is connected to a good friendship. Aristotle hinted the idea of the virtue of friendship as a virtue required for a good friend when he said, "[friendship] is a virtue; or it involves virtue" (Aristotle 1999, 1155a4). However, he does not make it clear whether he understands friendship as a virtue or something accompanied by a virtue such as a passion, a relationship, or a set of activities. He seems to use 'friendship' in different senses in different contexts. But as Kristján Kristjánsson points out, Aristotle does not adequately explain what

friendship as a virtue would be like.[65] One important goal of my introducing the concept of the virtue of friendship is to explain what friendship as a virtue would be like, although the specific contents of this virtue may not be the same as what Aristotle himself had in his mind.[66]

I believe this understanding can help us solve many puzzles with regard to friendship, especially the relationship between friendship and virtue. In what follows, I would like to make two points to show how my idea of the virtue of friendship helps us view friendship in a new light. First, being virtuous to people in general is neither necessary nor sufficient for being virtuous as a friend. Second, the virtue of friendship is not inherently in conflict with morality.

6.3.1. Being Generally Virtuous is Not Necessary for Being Virtuous as a Friend

Let me begin with the relationship between being a generally virtuous person and being virtuous as a friend. Not all friendships are equally good. Some of our friends are better friends than others. I believe a good friendship is one between people

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[65] "Aristotle does not provide the standard description of friendship qua virtue in terms of a golden mean between two extreme forms of excess and deficiency" (Kristjánsson 2018, 16, note 2).

[66] In explaining Aristotle's view on friendship, Kristjánsson seems to have in mind something similar to what I call the virtue friendship: Aristotle understands [friendship] simultaneously as 'a virtue' or a relation between people that 'involves virtue' (1985, p. 207 [1155a1–2])….The capacity to give and receive (a particular kind of) love regularly and in the right way (by both loving and being loved, see 1985, p. 222 [1159a27–29]) would thus constitute a trait-like personal quality, *potentially representing a virtue*" (Kristjánsson 2018, 2; emphasis added). However, Kristjánsson focuses on friendship as a relation and does not further discuss what friendship as a virtue would be like.

who are virtuous as friends in relation to each other. Some philosophers, most notably Aristotle, believe that being virtuous, independently of the friendship in question, is necessary for a friend to form an ideal friendship. I admit that a generally virtuous person—or a person who is virtuous to people in general—is more likely to make good friends and be herself a good friend to them. I also admit that the friendship between generally virtuous individuals is likely to flourish and last longer than one between vicious individuals. However, one does not necessarily have to be a generally virtuous person in order to be virtuous as a friend to someone. It is a myth that the best friendship is one between the best individuals.

Aristotle famously argues that the best form of friendship is a friendship of virtue or "virtue friendship." The friendship of virtue, which he takes to be an ideal form of friendship, is possible only between *virtuous individuals*. It implies that the best form of friendship is impossible if all the participants are already virtuous individuals. This view has some plausibility. At least, I agree with a more moderate claim that "thoroughly bad people cannot be good friends…all things being equal" (Elder 2014, 87). An extremely selfish, unkind, and ungrateful person may not be able to form a good friendship with anyone else, although she may be able to take advantage of other people who she calls 'friends.' If Julia Driver is right to claim that "there is a duty to *not* love someone as a fitting response to that person's bad qualities" (Driver 2014, 5), then we may have a good reason—perhaps even a duty—to leave a friendship with an extremely vicious person.

However, it does not mean that one has to be a generally virtuous (e.g.,

benevolent, honest, caring, etc.) person to form a good friendship with a particular person. For it seems possible and even plausible for someone to be concerned about and kind to a particular friend while lacking general virtues such as benevolence or kindness. In other words, being virtuous to a particular individual does not require being virtuous to people in general. What is necessary for being virtuous as a friend is what Gopal Sreenivasan calls *minimal moral decency*, which indicates "a certain minimum standard of general moral performance before any specific disposition of [the agent] is dignified with the title of 'virtue'" (Sreenivasan 2009, 207). Thus, for example, an agent who reliably acts in a compassionate way would not count as having the moral virtue of compassion if she otherwise fails to show minimal moral decency. This standard can exclude courageous serial killers while permitting compassionate pick-pockets (Sreenivasan 2009, 208). If we accept this idea, a person who fails to have minimal moral decency would not count as having the virtue of friendship. For example, a psychopath cannot be a good friend of anyone while an intemperate person can be.

While my conception of good friendship requires the participants to have minimal moral decency, it does not require them to be generally virtuous as an individual independently of the friendship. In my conception, what goodness of friendship *qua* friendship requires is that the participants have the relevant *relational* virtues in relation to one another, rather than a virtue in general. Being a good friend is possible at least to some extent even for a person who is not, say, generally benevolent or courageous. In other words, a good friendship is one in which each

participant has the virtue of friendship as a relational virtue, not necessarily a friendship of virtue in Aristotle's sense.

Moreover, it seems too quick to claim that friendship between generally virtuous persons is simply *better qua friendship* than one between less-than-fully-virtuous persons just because the participants are better or more virtuous *qua individuals*.[67] To make this claim would be to commit a fallacy of composition. That is, we cannot simply claim—at least not without a separate argument—that the friendship in which perfectly virtuous individuals engage in virtuous activities together is better *qua* friendship than the friendship in which decent individuals embrace and complement each other's imperfection and help one another to become a better person. This is at least partly because there are activities characteristic of a good friendship that are not possible within a friendship between perfectly virtuous individuals.

First, forbearing and embracing the imperfection of one's friend at least to a reasonable degree is an important part of good friendship. If a person harshly criticizes or even break her relationship with her friend for the friend's trivial blemishes—e.g., a moderate degree of laziness, irascibleness, or rashness—then the former would be even more defective as a friend than the latter. We may call an attitude of having an excessively high (moral) standard for other people *moral fastidiousness*. More generally, I think being generous about other people's defects is an important part of virtue for

[67] Blum seems to express a similar idea when he says, "a friendship in which the friend's moral virtue is the grounds of the friendship [is not] necessarily a morally superior form of friendship. Such a grounding does not seem to me what we mean by 'caring for another for his own sake'" (Blum 1980, 216).

human beings, who are, almost by nature, imperfect in many respects. Moral fastidiousness is undesirable in general, and it is an especially bad quality to have as a friend. It seems that being virtuous as a friend involves trying to understand and embrace the friend's defects or faults even if other people in the world condemn her. Therefore, to forbear and to embrace the friend's imperfection to a reasonable degree is an important aspect of a good friendship.

This aspect can be understood as a special case of the general requirement imposed by any virtue. In general, a virtuous person responds to the situation in an appropriate way no matter how unfavorable the given situation is, rather than acting appropriately only in favorable situations. For example, a virtuous person in a battlefield would cope with the given unfavorable situation most appropriately (say, courageously). To use an analogy, a virtuous person is more like an artisan who makes the most out of whatever tools she has than one who works only with excellent tools.

This point can be applied to a person who is virtuous as a friend since sometimes the friend's qualities (e.g., character or personality) may be the factor that makes the circumstance 'unfavorable.' In this sense, the virtue of friendship involves a disposition to forbear and embrace the defects and flaws of one's friend and perhaps those of the friendship itself. For example, a relationally virtuous friend is different from a 'fair-weather' friend in that she has a reasonable degree of robustness in her attitude toward her friend.[68] Insofar as the friend's defects or flaws do not go beyond

[68] There might be some cases where the flaw or vice of the intimate in question is beyond any reasonable forbearance. For example, it may be reasonable or appropriate for me to end the friendship if my friend carries on with my spouse. In such extreme cases, I believe, the virtue of friendship would not demand me to forbear, embrace, or forgive that friend for what he did

a reasonable degree, a relationally virtuous person would remain as such in relation to the given friend *despite* their defects or flaws. Blum hints on this point when he says as follows:

> One does not need to regard someone as a virtuous person in order to care for him as a friend; nor in caring for him for his own sake need one focus primarily on whatever morally virtuous qualities he has. (Blum 1980, 82)

For example, if your friend breaks off the friendship with you upon discovering that you do not have the perfection they expected, it would be reasonable to say that she lacks the virtue of friendship to that extent. Given that the character of one's friend is at least reasonably virtuous, other defects do not necessarily seem to constitute the reason to think that she is defective *as her friend*. Thus, the forbearance to sustain the friendship in the face of some flaws is an important part of the virtue of friendship as a relational virtue.

Another important aspect of the virtue of friendship is the disposition to help one's friend to become a better person. A relationally virtuous person does not stop at merely forbearing and embracing her friend's defects. If appropriate, she would try her best to help the friend overcome the defects and become a better person while forbearing and embracing her just the way she currently is. Insofar as one cares about one's friend in a similar way that one cares about oneself, one would care about and act for the good of one's friend for her own sake. If so, insofar as it is better for the

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and who he is.

friend to overcome or correct her defects, it would be natural to expect her good friend to put efforts to lead her to become a better or more virtuous person by doing so. For example, the virtue of friendship would require one to give objective and accurate advice to one's friend in a right context or even to criticize her in a reasonable way insofar as that is helpful for the friend's own good.

One might suspect that embracing a friend's defects is in tension with helping her correct them. But they are compatible. Embracing the friend's defects means to love and care for her even if she does not change herself in a positive direction. On the other hand, helping one's friend to correct her defects is to do so for the friend's own sake in the belief that such an improvement will be good for the friend herself. Of course, one should not go far enough to the level of paternalism in helping one's friend correct her flaws and improve her character. For example, if someone strongly resists correcting her defects, it would be paternalistic for her friend to force her to change them, even if it is better for the person's own sake to correct them. It is a matter of respecting the given person's autonomy or the ability to determine her own life. Still, the virtue of friendship would demand one to help one's friend correct her defects insofar as it does not reach the level of paternalism.

I believe there is something distinctively valuable in the friendship in which each participant embraces and helps correct the other's defects. We are imperfect creatures after all. That is why we need friendship more than perfect beings like gods or angels do. Then an important inherent function of a good friendship would be to embrace and improve the character of each participant, thereby helping each other to

lead a more flourishing life in a way that would not have been possible without the friendship.

Such value, which is characteristic of a good friendship, is not found in a friendship of virtue or one between perfectly virtuous individuals since it presupposes the friend's defects and flaws as an individual. In other words, if the participants of friendship are perfectly virtuous individuals, then there is no room for mutual forbearance, embracement, or improvement. Of course, there would be a value in a perfectly virtuous person's engaging in virtuous activities together with another virtuous person. However, it does not necessarily follow from this that such activities are *more* valuable than the activities of forbearance, embracement, and improvement in the friendship among imperfect individuals. In this sense, the friendship between perfectly virtuous persons may not be simply better *qua* friendship than one between persons who are not. Sometimes a friendship can be more beautiful when it embraces, complement, and improve the imperfection of the individuals involved in the relationship.

6.3.2. Being Generally Virtuous is Not Sufficient for Being Virtuous as a Friend

I have argued that being generally virtuous is not necessary for being virtuous as a friend insofar as one has minimal moral decency and that some distinctively valuable activities within the friendship presuppose the imperfection of the friend as an individual. Now let me show that being generally virtuous is not *sufficient* for being

virtuous as a friend either.

One might claim that being virtuous as a friend amounts to possessing general virtues—e.g., benevolence, honesty, and kindness—and exercising them in relation to one's friend. However, there are reasons to believe that being generally virtuous in this sense is not sufficient for being virtuous as a friend and therefore that the virtue of friendship is a virtue that is distinct from other virtues. First of all, the virtue of friendship involves having a *special* attitude in relation to the friend in question. As Aristotle acknowledges, goodwill understood as *general altruism* is not sufficient for friendship. Nancy Sherman puts this point clearly when she explains Aristotle's view as follows:

> Thus, friendship goes beyond goodwill, insofar as it is directed toward a specific person, not easily substituted by others (cf. [*Nicomachean Ethics*] *NE* IX.5). So I may have a well-cultivated sense of altruism or even be a friendly sort of person and one who tends to treat my friends well, but the exercise of those virtuous states does not itself secure for me the good of friendship. For that, I have to become attached to a particular person, and another person to me, in a way that displays mutual regard and affection ([*NE*] 1155b28-56a5) as well as a history of shared activities. (Sherman 1987, 602)

Sherman emphasizes that, in Aristotle's view, altruistic sentiments such as goodwill and kindness are different from the sentiment involved in friendship because the former involves what she calls "a kind of anonymity" in the sense that, "in acting out of kindness, our sympathy goes out to an individual because of the circumstances he happens to find himself in, and not because of who the specific individual happens to be" (Sherman 1987, 601). In friendship, in contrast, we "act out of a more specific

concern for a *particular* person, and because it is *that* person who is in need (and not another), what we can do and are willing to do, and what others count on us to do, is often greater (cf. *NE* IX.8 1169a18-34)" (Sherman 1987, 601).

This is an insightful distinction between *particularized* and *general* altruistic sentiments or emotions (or in her term "attachment and wider altruism") that Sherman finds in Aristotle. These are two distinct kinds of emotion as one does not imply the other. General altruistic emotions such as goodwill or kindness do not capture the special love and personal attachment that are an important part of being virtuous as a friend. As Aristotle acknowledges, such general altruistic emotions, which are constitutive of general virtues such as generosity or benevolence, do not constitute the characteristic attitude of a good friend, although they may be "a beginning of friendship" (Aristotle 1999, 1166a4). Goodwill and kindness—which are characteristic of general virtues such as generosity and benevolence—are not sufficient for friendship: "Goodwill…is not friendship. For it arises even toward people we do not know, and without their noticing it, whereas friendship does not" (Aristotle 1999, 1166b30-32).

Being a good friend requires particularized care and concern. If one's attitude toward one's friend is not different from the general kind of goodwill or kindness, then it is hard to see why we should say that they are *friends* from the beginning. This is one reason to think that being virtuous as a friend is meaningfully different from being virtuous in relation to people in general. I am curious why Aristotle did not go on to discuss the virtue that is characteristic of a good friend, which I call the virtue of

friendship. Such a virtue would be distinct from other general virtues such as generosity or benevolence, as they do not involve particularized altruistic emotions that are characteristic of a good friend. Regardless of why Aristotle did not examine the virtue of friendship among the virtues he discusses in *Nicomachean Ethics*, I believe it is a distinctive virtue that merits separate discussion.

Another reason why being generally virtuous is not sufficient for being virtuous as a friend is that the virtue of friendship *presupposes* the existence of friendship. To form a friendship with someone, one needs to engage in substantial interactions with that particular individual. If so, even a person who is generally benevolent, honest, and compassionate may fail to possess or exercise the virtue of friendship if she had no opportunity to develop a friendship with anyone. In this sense, we cannot say that a person has the virtue of friendship unless she is engaged in an actual friendship. This is the case even if she is *potentially* virtuous as a friend—i.e., she *would have been* a great friend *if* she has had any friend. This is different from the potentiality of a person who has the virtue of courage but fails to exercise it because she has been living in a very peaceful town. If a person never had any friend, she cannot even be said to *have* this virtue, let alone exercising it, no matter how virtuous she is in other respects.

I have argued that being generally virtuous is not sufficient for being virtuous as a friend because the latter involves special kind of attitude—e.g., particularized altruistic sentiments—to the given friend and presupposes existing friendship. If I am right, it would be reasonable to understand the virtue of friendship as a *relational* virtue,

as opposed to a general virtue. For it is characteristic features of a relational virtue to involve a special kind of attitude to particular individuals with whom the agent shares an intimate relationship. I believe the idea of relational virtue serves as a conceptual tool that is particularly useful for analyzing what it takes to be virtuous as a friend.

6.4. Friendship and Morality

Some people might doubt that the virtue of friendship is a *moral virtue* at all. First, they might believe that being a good friend is just a matter of personal and private life and is not a matter of morality. This is not true. Insofar as friendship involves at least one other person, being virtuous as a friend affects the flourishing of the friend in question, not just one's own. As Lawrence Blum puts, "acts of friendship are morally good insofar as they involve acting from *regard for another person for his own sake*" (Blum 1980, 67; emphasis added). The altruistic nature of care for one's friend highlights its moral significance:

> [F]riendship (or, anyway, most genuine friendship) involves a substantial concern for the good of the friend for his own sake, and a disposition to act to foster that good, simply because the other is one's friend. In this sense friendship is an altruistic phenomenon, and a locus of the altruistic emotions. (Blum 1980, 43; emphasis added)

The moral significance of being a good friend becomes clearer if we understand how great an impact we can give to our friends, especially to close ones. Friendship is generally founded based on special love, trust, and closeness, among

others. Imagine that you happen to find your best friend speaking ill of you in front of other people. You would feel not just insulted but also feel very disappointed and even betrayed in the way you would not feel if that person was a stranger. On the other hand, your friend can console and comfort you when you are in despair, in the way that no stranger can do for you. As these examples illustrate, being a good friend is very important for the flourishing of both oneself and the friend in question.

Moreover, it is hard to deny that having and exercising those virtuous features only to a particular set of people—i.e., friends—have a moral value of its own, independently of whether she is virtuous to other people as well. Insofar as an altruistic attitude has moral value, we can say genuine care and concern for others' well-being also have moral value even if they are limited within a narrow circle of friendship. In gangster movies (and indeed in reality), we often can find people who are generally ruthless and cruel and yet nice and caring in relation to their family or friends. Their virtuous disposition in relation to their friends is, considered independently, not morally criticizable; to the contrary, they are rather fine and praiseworthy. What they are criticizable for is their viciousness or lack of virtuousness in relation to those who are not their friends—including strangers and their enemies. Thus, other things being equal, people would say someone who is nice and caring at least to one's own friends would be more virtuous and morally better compared to those who are not nice or caring to anyone.

Others might worry that the virtue of friendship clashes with what other moral virtues or morality requires. For examples, Dean Cocking and Jeanette Kennett

worry that "our interest in our close friends can run directly counter to accepted moral requirements" (Cocking and Kennett 2000, 278). The following popular 'joke' illustrates this worry: "A friend will help you move, but a good friend will help you move a body." To address this issue, we should distinguish what the virtue of friendship requires from what morality in general requires. For example, suppose that your friend stole someone's bicycle. What the virtue of friendship demands you would not be to judge that what she did is right or to encourage her to commit the same crime again. Rather, what you need to do as a good friend is to be sympathetic with her and try to convince her to give the bicycle back to the owner or at least not to steal again. If what the friend did does not violate minimal moral decency, and thus you still are a friend of hers, you should try to be with her as her friend.

Consider another case. Suppose that Cian confesses his close friend Diane about the plan to murder someone for a trivial reason and asks her to be an accomplice. She sees no justifying reason for the murder he is planning and is surprised and disappointed by his commitment to such a horrendous crime. Minimal moral decency would require Diane not to help Cian in killing an innocent person, and thus she would be disqualified for the *virtue* of friendship if she joins in his crime. But not joining him only satisfies the minimal negative criterion of the virtue of friendship—i.e., minimal moral decency. If she is truly virtuous as his friend, she would try to convince him to give up his plan. If he remains stubborn and refuses to change his plan, then the virtue of friendship would demand her to say something like, "If you put that plan into practice, we will no longer be friends!" In such a situation, ironically,

threatening to break the friendship may be the last thing she can and should to *as a good friend*. If Cian ends up committing the planned murder, thereby revealing his vicious character, then the fitting response from Diane's side would be to break the friendship. This is because of Cian's failure to satisfy minimal moral decency prevents him from being virtuous as a friend.

The concern about the conflict between the virtue of friendship and morality is structurally not very different from the concern about the conflict between other virtues such as honesty and compassion. For example, there can be a situation in which one should lie to save an innocent person's life. If so, at first glance, compassion seems to be in conflict with another virtue, namely, honesty. Although honesty is widely accepted as a virtue, we should use practical wisdom to weigh the demands of different virtues that pull us to different directions in the given situation. The same applies to the case where the virtue of friendship conflicts with morality. If it is morally wrong to murder an innocent person for a trivial reason, one should not join it just because one's friend asks. It does not imply that what I call the virtue of friendship is not a moral virtue, just as honesty can still be considered a moral virtue even if there are some situations where the right thing to do involves lying.

My main point here is that the demand of the virtue of friendship should be weighed against other virtues such as honesty on the same *ethical* scale. In weighing some competing demands of different moral virtues, for example, compassion and honesty, we should use practical wisdom to make a correct judgment in the given particular situation. This point also applies to the case of the virtue of friendship. Note

that the competition between being virtuous as a friend and being otherwise virtuous is not one between personal preference and moral demand—as in the case where one decides whether to watch a movie or to help a person bleeding in from the box office—but one between two different *moral* demands. A similar point is nicely illustrated in Blum's remark:

> What the presence of the friend does to the moral configuration of this situation is not so much to undercut this moral quasi-demand of attention to the weal and woe of others, but to bring into play another consideration against which it is to be balanced. (Blum 1980, 50)

In other words, this is not a matter of *demandingness*. Just like the case of other virtues, we should weigh the demands of the virtue of friendship with the demands of other virtues. My point is that we should not see this as weighing one's non-moral personal inclination against what morality in general requires, since friendship, too, is an important sphere of ethical value. That is, the point is not that a moral theory that demands one to sacrifice one's friendship is *too demanding*. Thus, insofar as the friendship is still maintained—which implies that the friend in question has minimal moral decency—what the virtue of friendship requires should be weighed against what other moral virtues requires, just as when we weigh the demands of honesty and those of compassion. The virtue of friendship is an important moral virtue and thus should be taken into account together with other virtues in considering what is the right thing to do in the given situation.

6.5. Conclusion

In this chapter, I introduced the virtue of friendship as a relational virtue to shed light on the philosophical puzzles concerning the relationship between friendship and virtue. I have argued that the virtue of friendship is a distinctive virtue that is not simply reduced to general virtues by showing cases in which being virtuous as a friend diverges from being virtuous in a general sense. I have also argued that being virtuous as a friend does not inherently conflict with morality and that the virtue of friendship is an important moral virtue that should be weighed against other moral virtues on the same ethical scale. "What is a good human life?" is a central question in the field of ethics. Being a good friend is surely a crucial aspect of a good human life, insofar as friendship is an important ethical sphere where distinctive values are created and preserved. I believe the virtue of friendship can help us better understand what a good friend is like and how to establish a good friendship.

Chapter 7. Relational Activity View on Partiality

7.1. Introduction

So far, we have examined filial piety and the virtue of friendship as relational virtues. In this chapter, I will develop a view on partiality towards our intimates in general, which I call the 'relational activity view,' based on my previous analysis of relational virtue. It seems reasonable to claim that we should, or at least may, treat those who are near and dear to us in a special way. If someone asks you why you help your parents when their house is burned down, saying "They are my parents" seems to offer a good explanation for what you do. According to the prevailing modern conception of morality, however, each person is equally valuable and thus deserves equal treatment.

So here comes what Simon Keller calls the puzzle of partiality: "Why should the fact that someone happens to share some relationship with you make a difference to how you ought to treat her, or how you may permissibly treat her?" (Keller 2013, 5) He introduces three views that attempt to resolve this puzzle: the projects view, the relationships view, and the individuals view. After examining and rejecting the first two, he argues that the individuals view offers the best solution. In this paper, first, I introduce how Keller criticizes his rival views and defends his own view, and then raise some worries about his view in dealing with the puzzle of the partiality. In the end, I suggest and argue for my own relational activity view as an alternative.

7.2. The Projects View

The *projects view*, according to Keller, holds that the reasons of partiality arise from the deepest commitment of the agent whose reasons they are (Keller 2013, Ch. 2). Bernard Williams, for example, grounds the reasons to give special treatment to those who are in special relationships to us in the fact that our commitment to them is part of our 'ground projects,' which is constitutive of the agent's personal identity (Williams 1981, 12-18). Keller also attributes this view to Susan Wolf, Sarah Stroud, and communitarian political philosophers (Wolf 1992, Stroud 2010). The distinctive feature of the projects view, says Keller, is that it explains why we have reasons of partiality by referring to the agent's own self-constituting commitments.

The strength of the projects view lies in the fact that the *agent-relativity* of the reasons of partiality it generates can explain why we have reasons to give special treatment to our own intimates (i.e., those who are in special relationships to us) although other people have equal intrinsic value. That is, according to the projects view, I have reasons to treat my friend in a special way while you don't have such reasons because the commitment to my friend is constitutive of *my* personal identity but not of yours. Likewise, I do not have special reasons to treat your friend preferentially, even if my friend and your friend are equal in their objective or intrinsic value. If so, it seems that the projects view can give its own answer to the puzzle of partiality: "I have reasons to treat my intimates preferentially because the commitments to them are constitutive of *my* personal identity."

Despite its strength, Keller does not endorse the projects view for the following reasons. First, he says, the projects view fails to capture the *duties* that arise from special relationships. Special relationships seem to generate not only special reasons for preferential treatment but also certain kinds of special duties. For example, the fact that I am my parents' son seems to impose on me the duties, say, to take care of them in their old age. But our ground projects, Keller argues, do not generate such duties in a comparable way. "No matter how great your investment in a project," he says, "it would seem, your investment itself cannot bind you morally to the project" (Keller 2013, 36-37).

Keller considers and rejects two possible responses by appealing to the following example.

> A woman learns that she has inherited a sum of money, and she decides that when the money arrives, she will donate it to a foundation that builds eye clinics in impoverished parts of the world, providing cheap cures for blindness to people who would otherwise not be treated. She informs the administrator of the foundation that she intends to donate the money. Then, her two-year-old son begins to have recurring episodes of breathing difficulty, and he is diagnosed with severe asthma, which will greatly detract from his quality of life. There are things the woman can do to decrease the impact of her son's asthma and the likelihood that he will be harmed by a serious attack—she can take out private insurance that will give him access to better treatment, she can move somewhere where he will not be so exposed to environmental triggers, she can buy emergency equipment and medication to keep at home—but to do these things will be expensive. Given her other financial restrictions, if she is to give her son what he needs to prevent his asthma from being a constant source of suffering and danger, then she will need to use the money from the inheritance and go back on her plan to donate it to the foundation. (Keller 2013, 37-38)

First, he says, the duty of partiality here cannot be explained by its being a *joint* project,

as opposed to personal one, since the baby is "too young to have a self-defining commitment to participating in his own upbringing" (Keller 2013, 38). Second, pace Wolf, the woman's special duty here cannot be accounted for by impartial consideration that she is better placed to benefit and protect her son than other children, because "she is equally well placed to provide greater benefits for the several people who could, if she donates the money, receive treatment for blindness from the foundation" (Keller 2013, 39).

Keller also argues that the projects view fails to do justice to the phenomenology of partiality or "What it is like to be partial" (Keller 2013, 25). His point is that the experience of being motivated by thoughts of your ground projects is quite different from that of being motivated by the thoughts of your intimates. That is, when you think of your own projects, you think about *yourself*; but when you think of your intimates, you think about *them*. If the reasons of partiality the projects view offers cannot be taken as motives to act partially, according to Keller, it would lose much of its attraction. Such discordance between reasons and motives of partiality would render this view revisionist, which undermines its intuitive appeal.

7.3. The Relationships View

Next, Keller examines the *relationships view* as the second candidate (Keller 2013, Ch. 3). The *value-based* version of this view claims that our special personal relationships bear a special kind of value, which is the source of our reasons of

partiality. Proponents of this view ascribe different sorts of value to special relationships (e.g. Joseph Raz (1989): intrinsic value; Samuel Scheffler (2001, 2004): noninstrumental value; Niko Kolodny (2003): final value), but the point they share is that the special relationships themselves hold a sort of value that is not derived from something else. That is, according to them, we should value those relationships for their own sake, not because of the good things they provide. The *reason-based* relationships view, on the other hand, claims that the fact that a certain special relationship holds between me and some other people itself can count as a reason for me to treat them preferentially. Proponents of this version, such as Diane Jeske and Thomas Scanlon, take facts about the special relationships as themselves fundamental reasons, which defy any further explanation by more basic terms (Jeske 2008, Scanlon 1998).

Keller's examination focuses on the generic version of value-based relationships view, according to which "special relationships are intrinsically valuable, and the intrinsic value of special relationships explains why they generate reasons of partiality" (Keller 2013, 49). One of the main reasons he opposes to the relationships view is that relationships do not have any intrinsic value. Let me introduce two of the arguments he offers to support his point.

One of Keller's arguments is based on the view that a "relationship that is no good for anyone is no good at all" (Keller 2013, 57). According to him, there is nothing valuable in a relationship deprived of all its extrinsic values. He asks us to imagine a case of dysfunctional or destructive friendship which "produces nothing but misery

and that it makes everyone involved worse off" and claims that "there is nothing to recommend the relationship" (Keller 2013, 56). I think it is insightful of Keller to take the example of dysfunctional[69] special relationships, which "lack the extrinsic value that relationships of their type ordinarily possess" (Keller 2013, 56). However, the proponents of the relationships view may not hold that *any* relationship of certain types (e.g. friendship and family relationships) have intrinsic value on their own. They may argue that at least *minimally decent* relationships have intrinsic value. For example, they might say, only decent friendships have intrinsic value, and 'dysfunctional' ones do not.

This is analogous to the value of an *action*. One may claim that an action performed from a genuinely admirable motive may have intrinsic value on its own, independently of what it produces. But it does not mean that *every* action has such intrinsic value. An evil action out of ill will would even have a *negative* intrinsic value or *dis*value. Thus, Keller's argument against the thought, "At least it's a relationship," does not seem fair to the relationships view. What the proponents of this view can say is, rather, "At least it's a *decent* relationship." The evaluative property, goodness or badness of a relationship, does not have to be decided only by its extrinsic value.

Keller may reply that this argument implies that the value then rests in whatever makes the relationships decent (e.g., that friends wish each other well for the other's own sake or that they enjoy each other's company.) But insofar as these

[69] The term 'dysfunctional' relationship seems to assume the view that relationships have certain intrinsic function, which implicitly incline us toward the view that their value is only extrinsic. To avoid this surreptitious impact, we may use, say, 'defective' relationship instead.

decentness-makers are *constitutive* of a decent relationship, their value can be understood as constituting the intrinsic value of the relationship. I think it is a mistake to understand the goods associated with close personal relationships solely in terms of a means-end relationship. Keller seems to presuppose that relationships are mere instruments which *produce* the well-being (or whatever constitutive of it) of persons involved. But there can be an alternative picture of well-being or flourishing that takes intimate relationships or the activities in such relationships as part of what constitutes the well-being or flourishing itself.

Keller's other argument against the relationships view makes an appeal to the phenomenology of partiality, just as his argument against the projects view did (Keller 2013, 62-64). That is, according to him, the thoughts of our *relationships themselves* are not what characteristically motivate us when we act on the reasons of partiality. He further points out that one who *is* motivated by the thoughts of relationships would not be the one we want as our family or friend. For example, if a person saves his wife motivated by the thought, "It's my marriage!" (Keller 2013, 63), it certainly does not seem to be an appropriate motivation for a good husband.

However, I am not sure if Keller is being fair to the relationships view in suggesting that this view implies a thought like "It's my marriage!" as a man's motivation in saving his drowning wife. Instead, consider the thought, "It's my *wife*!" which does seem to be an appropriate motivation for a good husband. This thought is distinguished from thoughts like "It's a human being!" or "It's Sandra!" in that it *presupposes* or *implies* a certain relationship between the subject and object of the

thought, namely, a marital relationship. In contrast, the thought "It's a human being" at best implies the relationship among fellow human beings, and the thought "It's Sandra" does not say anything about the relationship unless something more is said about Sandra and her relationship to the agent (i.e., that she is his wife). Thus, insofar as the thought about the relationship between the agent and the intentional object is playing its motivating role in this way, the proponents of relationships view do not have to suggest some thoughts like "It's my marriage" as the motivating thought in saving one's wife. "It's my wife!" will do.

In fact, Keller makes a qualification in making his point about the motivation that the relationships view would suggest:

> [F]acts like "They are my parents" and "It is my wife" do not usually serve as our motivations for acting well within special relationships, if they are read as directing us to *the relationships themselves*. It is not the thought of your *parent-child relationship* that moves you to rush off to comfort your parents after the fire, and it is not the thought of his *marriage* that moves the husband to jump in and save his wife from drowning. (Keller 2013, 70-71; emphasis added)

Here Keller seems to assume that relationships in question as either mere socially binding norms or abstract entities.

To value a relationship with someone involves regarding that particular person as someone special to oneself. The thoughts like "They are my parents" or "It is my wife" are to be understood as thoughts of the particular individuals in question as special and precious *in the light of* the relationship. I believe this is what people

usually mean when they say something like "It is my wife."[70] Suppose that Harry saves his wife motivated by the thought of his marriage merely as a socially binding institution or a legal relationship. If so, this would not be an ideal husband's motivation and surely his wife will be rightly disappointed by him as his wife if she finds his motivation. On the other hand, Mason saves his wife moved by the thoughts such as what she means to his life and how much he loves her, which characterize a good marriage. I would like to suggest that Mason's motivation, not Harry's, is the motivation of one who truly *values his relationship with his wife*.

7.4. The Individuals View

After criticizing other views, Keller introduces his own *individuals view* (Keller 2013, Ch. 4). This view holds that the reasons of partiality arise from facts about the ethical importance of the individuals who share special relationships with us. The gist of this view is that the *individual person* is the only thing that really matters. Keller claims that the individuals view can best capture the phenomenology of partiality. To show this, he invites us to consider two famous examples independently offered by Bernard Williams and Michael Stocker. The first is Williams's "Saving Wife" case (Williams 1981). A man is at the pier and sees two people are drowning. One is his wife and the other is a stranger, and he can save only one. It seems to be a "thought

[70] I believe Keller added a qualification—i.e., "if they are read as directing us to the relationships themselves" (Keller 2013, 71)—because he is also aware of this fact.

too many" for the man to think about something like general utility or moral principles in saving his wife. The second is Stocker's "Hospital Visit" case (Stocker 1976). In this example, you have your friend's surprise visit when you are hospitalized. Stocker points out that, when you ask her about her motivation, the answer you may rightly expect is something like, "I came here because you are my friend!" rather than "Because it promotes general happiness" or "Because it is my moral duty."

The point Williams and Stocker are trying to make in these examples is that the thoughts like "It's my wife" or "You are my friend" should be enough to motivate the agents to act as they do and that the references to any impartial consideration such as general utility or moral principles would be inappropriate as a motive in such a situation. What is objectionable in these examples, according to Keller, is that the story offered about reasons to act here seem to conflict with what we actually experience when we act well within special relationships.

To illustrate how his individuals view can capture our reasons of partiality as we experience them, Keller introduces a modified version of Williams's example, which he calls "Two-Leveled Pier" case (Keller 2013, 90-92). This example is specifically designed to show what kind of knowledge is required for a motive of partiality to be "fully shaped."[71] In this example, you are on the lower level of the pier and I am on its upper level. I am in a better position to gather information about the person drowning, while you are in a better position to save that person by throwing

[71] According to Keller, a motive is "fully shaped" when the motive fully "grips on" to the reason for performing the act. Thus, if the agent acts in a certain way while lacking full knowledge of what reason she has for performing that act, her motive to act so is not "fully shaped" (see Keller 2013, 87-89).

the life preserver. So you are motivated to save the person in question according to the information I provide. At this imaginary pier, I offer you further information piece by piece, increasing the level of its specificity:

(1) "You have a good reason to throw the life preserver!"
(2) "There is someone drowning in the water!"
(3) "Someone you care about is drowning in the water!"
(4) "A good friend of yours is drowning in the water!"
(5) "Donald is drowning in the water!"
[Suppose you have exactly one good friend called Donald.]
(6) "Donald is drowning by inhaling water through his nose, not his mouth!"

Keller claims that your motive is fully shaped or "grips on" to the reason for saving him at stage (5), that is, when you discover which particular friend of yours is drowning (i.e., Donald). Here your motive to save Donald is your concern for him, and any further information (e.g. one that offered at stage (6)) would be irrelevant insofar as this motive is concerned. Based on this thought experiment, Keller concludes, "It is only when we can think directly of the person for whom we act that we can have a clear sense of why we act. So far as our motives of partiality are concerned, then, our reasons of partiality make essential reference to *particular, specified individuals*" (Keller 2013, 94; emphasis added).

7.5. Response to Keller's Individuals View

I am not sure, however, that the 'Two-Leveled Pier' case successfully defends Keller's individuals view. First, he says that this example's point is "to show that a

motive of *partiality* becomes fully shaped only when we are aware of the identity of the individual for whom we are performing the act in question" (Keller 2013, 94; emphasis added). However, if this were his point, the example should have involved at least *two* potential victims: one who is your friend (i.e., Donald) and one who is not. And the question should be at which stage your motive to save one *over the other* is fully shaped. Otherwise, the example only shows the degree of vividness or concreteness of your motivation to save the given person.

According to Keller's individuals view, "Your reason to give special treatment to a friend is grounded in the ethical significance of your friend" (Keller 2013, 98). However, although the ethical significance of the individual himself may ground your reason to treat your friend *well*, it does not ground the reason to treat him in a *special* or *partial* way, that is, in the way you would not treat strangers. The fact that the individual in question is a person with intrinsic value would not explain this reason for special or partial treatment since it does not distinguish her from other similarly situated individuals, insofar as they are also persons with equal intrinsic value.

In fact, in Keller's original example, your act of saving the victim can be adequately explained with the information given at the stage (2): "There is someone drowning in the water!" And the information added would increase at best the degree of vividness or concreteness of your motivation to save the given person. Even in the modified 'comparative' example, your preferential treatment for your friend Donald over a stranger would be fully explained by the information of (3) ("Someone you care about is drowning in the water!"), and even that of (4) ("A good friend of yours is

drowning in the water!") would not be required.

I believe what actually explains your *special* or *partial* treatment, as opposed to a mere good treatment, to Donald in Keller's example is the fact that he is your *friend* or someone you especially care about. It is crucial to note that, at the stage (5) in the two-leveled pier case, Keller does not just say, "Donald is drowning in the water!" but also adds, "(Suppose you have exactly one good friend called Donald.)" (Keller 2013, 91). Without the information that Donald is your friend, the fact that Donald is drowning would not add anything to your motivating reason. Again, it seems that the only role this particular information seems to play is just to make the motivation more vivid and more concrete. Similarly, when someone asks you why you help your parents when their house is burned down, saying "They are Bill and Mary!" would not be a good explanation of your motivation unless you add, "And they are my parents!"

It might be objected that the information that it is Donald, not some other friend of yours, can make your motivational reason stronger, not just more vivid. This would be plausible, for example, if Donald is one of the closest friends, not just one among many friends. But even in this case, what generates the stronger motivational reason for the partial treatment is the fact about the relationship between you and Donald, namely, that he is your *close friend*, rather than any non-relational fact about Donald himself as a particular individual.

Furthermore, I do not think Keller's strategy successfully meets the main challenge against the individuals view. The challenge is to explain why we have

stronger reasons to do what is good for those who share special relationships with us than to do what is good for those who do not, given that all those individuals have equal intrinsic value and thus equally deserve the good you are to provide. Keller makes an appeal to Jonathan Dancy's conceptual distinction between a *favorer* and an *enabler* to defend his individuals view (Keller 2013, 133-136). According to Dancy, a favorer is a fact that provides with reasons for the given action, while an enabler is a fact that enables another fact to give a reason without being itself a reason-giving fact (Dancy 2004, 38-40). For example, the fact that you promised me to give me a ride to the airport is a favorer that gives you a reason for giving me a ride to the airport, and the fact that your promise is not made under duress is the enabler that enables this favorer to give a reason to do so.

Keller applies this conceptual distinction to the case of reasons of partiality, aiming to "explain why you should have reasons that others lack, just because you participate in certain special relationships" (Keller 2013, 18). According to him, only the facts about the value of individuals serve as favorers, while the facts about the relationship are mere enablers. He says, "[W]hen you give special treatment within a special relationship your reason for acting is that your act would be good for the person with whom your relationship is shared," and the fact that "you share a relationship with someone is *not itself a reason* of partiality, but it *enables* other facts to be reasons of partiality" (Keller 2013, 135; emphasis added). By categorizing them as mere enablers, as opposed to favorers or 'reason-giving facts,' he seems to aim to explain the reasons of partiality in terms of something other than the special

relationships themselves. If this move is successful, he would be able to hold onto the individuals view, according to which reasons of partiality are explained only by the facts about individuals' value, without appealing to any fact about relationships.

I am not sure, however, that the distinction between a favorer and an enabler would enable him to achieve this aim. The main worry is that the facts about the special relationships seem to play a central role in making sense of one's partial actions toward those who share such relationships. Suppose that you helped your friend fix her car, and someone asks you, "Why did you help her fix her car?" You may answer by referring to some facts about the value of this individual: "Because she is valuable and my helping her is good for her." But suppose that the questioner further asks, "Okay. But why did you do that only for *her*, and not for someone else in a similar situation? Aren't they equally valuable human beings?" To give an adequate answer to this question, you would need to refer to some facts about the special relationship you share with her. You would need to say, for example, "Because she is my friend," which amounts to saying that you share friendship with her. In fact, it seems the second question (i.e., "Why her, not others?") that demands what Keller calls reasons of *partiality*. For the puzzle of partiality is not about why we do good things to any individual at all, but about why we give *partial* treatment to those with whom we share special relationships. The fact that she is your friend in this example is a consideration that counts in favor of your treating her in a partial way. At least, this fact is what you normally perceive as a *reason* to prioritize fixing her car over fixing a similarly situated stranger's car. Thus, in this and similar cases, the reference to facts about the special

relationships shared seems essential for rationalizing partial treatment.

In fact, Dancy's own conception of enabler does not suggest that enablers play such a crucial role in explaining or justifying the action in question, at least not in normal circumstances. Take Dancy's own examples of enablers (Dancy 2004, 38-40). What makes sense of, say, your giving someone a ride to the airport is that you promised to do so, which is a favorer. Dancy says enablers—such as that your promise was not given under duress, that you are able to do so, or that there is no greater reason not to do so—do not give you any additional reason to the given person a ride to the airport, and thus does not play a significant role in rationalizing our action. This suggests that the role of an enabler is to clear up the ground so that the favorer can play its *normal* role of rationalizing. The name 'enabler' in this sense is somewhat misleading. The existence of enabler is usually better described negatively as the *absence of disabler*. In explaining or justifying what one did, the default seems to talk only about favorers, unless the possibility of the existence of a particular disabler happens to be salient in the given context. For example, if someone asks you why did you help your neighbor to move, to say "Because I promised" would help her make sense of what you did, but it would not help to add "And I was not under duress" unless she is particularly curious about whether you were under duress. Nor do other sorts of enablers Dancy mentions—e.g., "I am able to do it" or "There is no greater reason not to do it"—seem to help us to make sense of the actions in question.

By contrast, in Keller's application, enablers play a crucial role in making sense of the given action. While Keller takes the fact that the person involved is your

friend as a mere enabler, this fact plays an important role in explaining and justifying your partial treatment toward that person. What his individuals view suggests as favorers or reason-giving facts of partial treatment are facts about the value of individuals, namely, that "your act would be good for the person with whom your relationship is shared" (Keller 2013, 135). But offering only the facts of this sort is inadequate for explaining or justifying the partial treatment unless we also refer to some facts about the special relationship shared. If the facts about relationships are indispensable for explaining or justifying our partial treatment towards those who share special relationships with us, it seems more reasonable to regard them as favorers or *reason-giving* facts, rather than as mere enablers.

Moreover, as Errol Lord points out, Keller's account has the counterintuitive implication that "the value of individuals that I happen to not stand in a special relationship with fails to provide me with reasons" (Lord 2015a, 1308). Lord suggests that the facts about special relationships are better understood as *intensifiers* rather than enablers. Note that Dancy himself introduces intensifying as another role that a relevant consideration can play other than favoring or enabling (Dancy 2004, 41-42). Intensifiers, like enablers, affect reasons without being reasons themselves. Here is Dancy's own example: (1) She is in trouble and needs help; (2) I am the only other person around; (3) So: I help her (Dancy 2004, 41). Here, according to him, (2) is the intensifier that makes the reason given by (1) stronger. It is different from an enabler because (1) would still favor my helping her even if there were others around.[72]

[72] Interestingly, in a parenthetical paragraph, Keller does mention the possibility that "the fact

Although I am more sympathetic to Lord's strategy than to Keller's, it seems to have its own challenges. One important challenge is that it is hard to make sense of the combination of *agent-neutral reasons* with *agent-relative intensifiers*. On the one hand, the value of each individual person gives agent-neutral reasons since it is supposed to provide a reason to benefit her regardless of who the agent is. On the other hand, the fact that you share a special relationship with her is an agent-relative intensifier, since it intensifies only your reason to benefit her, but not strangers' reason to benefit her. For Lord's alternative strategy to work, it should be able to explain both how reasons of partiality are not agent-relative and why the facts about special relationships play such a differential intensifying role.

7.6. The Relational Activity View

Let me now introduce a sketch of my own view on the ethics of partiality, which I call the *relational activity* view.[73] This view offers an Aristotelian picture of the relationship between intimate relationships and human flourishing in that it understands virtuous activities among intimates as special cases of virtuous activities that are constitutive of human flourishing. Virtuous relational activities are exercises

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that you share a certain relationship with someone serves as an intensifier, rather than an enabler, on the particularist version of the individuals view" (Keller 2013, 136). As Lord complains, however, Keller still assigns facts about special relationships an enabling role, rather than an intensifying role (Lord 2015b, 1309)

[73] My relational activity view focuses on the partiality in *intimate* relationships such as parent-child relationship or close friendship rather than partiality in general.

or expressions of what I call *relational virtues*, by which I roughly mean the virtues required for each participant of intimate relationships such as filial piety and the virtue of friendship.

To begin with, like the projects view, the relational activity view holds that the reasons of partiality arise from the deepest commitment of the agent whose reasons they are, which is the commitment to living a flourishing human life. This explains the agent-relativity of reasons of partiality. Unlike the projects view, on the other hand, the relational activity view can capture the duties or requirements of special relationships. For example, parental virtue understood as the virtue of a good parent demands the agent to take good care of one's child. Thus, while engaging in a parental activity is the agent's own project, it is in some sense what she is *morally demanded* to do in relation to her child. Nor does it appeal to the idea of the *joint* project to explain the requirements involved, since the reason to be a good parent does not rely on her child's being able to undertake any joint project together. Also, my view does not necessarily fly in the face of the phenomenology of partiality, since it does not imply that the focus in benefiting the parent's child is mainly on the agent herself or the relationship itself. For it is constitutive of being a good parent to have genuine care and concern and pay enough attention to the child for her own sake.

Second, like relationships view, the relational activity view regards intimate relationships as a source of our reasons of partiality. Recall that one of Keller's main objections against the relationships view is based on his assumption that relationship has *no intrinsic value*. Although I think there is some truth in this assumption, I suspect

that Keller's view on relationships and value is not sufficiently sophisticated. The main issue between Keller and the proponents of the relationships view is whether a relationship would still be valuable even when it is deprived of all the extrinsic values it produces. But I think value associated with personal relationships deserves more careful consideration.

Let me suggest a way of understanding the value of intimate relationships and its relation to human flourishing. A good is not the same good when it is given *through* intimate relationships since it becomes *special*. Suppose that Jayden gets a gorilla doll as a Christmas present from his father. It is more than just a toy that he can play with. It is also an expression of his father's love for him. He spent a lot of time thinking about what Jayden would like and put efforts to work to afford the gorilla doll. Suppose, on the other hand, Alice gets the same gorilla doll from an anonymous benefactor and that she is as interested in having this type of gorilla doll as Jayden is. But she is not in any special relationship with the benefactor and does not even know who that benefactor is.[74] While the same objects are distributed to Jayden and Alice, only Jayden gets it *through* a special relationship.

The love and concern involved in this case of present-giving are what make the present itself so special. It is about *how* to give the present, not just *what* to give. To Jayden, the gorilla doll that his father gave to him is never the same as other dolls. It can be even more valuable to him than other more expensive and fancier toys. And

[74] I'm assuming here that the benefactor is not someone like 'Daddy-long-legs,' in that he or she also does not know who the beneficiary of the gift will be.

one who shares no loving relationship with anyone cannot get a present in the way Jayden gets. What is exchanged *through* a genuine loving relationship is given and taken *with love*. In a sense, this is how *love itself* is exchanged. Since love itself is not an object that can be exchanged in a visible way, love is exchanged through something more tangible such as gifts. While one may give a loaf of bread to a person in need of it, one cannot give *love*—especially special love as opposed to general love for humanity—to someone just because she *needs* it.

So understood, love cannot be exchanged among people in no special relationship with each other, as in the case of Alice and her anonymous benefactor. Similarly, no stranger's visit can have the same meaning to you as your dear friend's visit. Thus, intimate relationships transform the goods exchanged through those relationships into the kind of goods that are hardly found anywhere else. No matter how valuable a certain good is, independently considered, it cannot simply replace the good exchanged through an intimate relationship with love. The exchange of goods among intimates in this way constitutes virtuous relational activities.

Then, how are we to understand the value of an intimate relationship? On the one hand, it may be hard to say intimate relationships themselves are *intrinsically* valuable, since it may not be valuable when it is stripped of its function of transforming goods into a special kind. In this sense, the value of intimate relationships relies on the goods exchanged through such relationships. It may be right to say that its value is derived from other more fundamental value, that is, the value of the virtuous relational activities. On the other hand, however, it would be a mistake to say that intimate

relationships are mere *means* for the flourishing of those involved in them. I believe the view that intimate relationships have value in themselves is motivated by the thought that it is inappropriate to see them as a mere means to other things that are external to the relationships themselves. For example, if I take such relationships merely as an instrument for my own flourishing, the way I take the relationships does not seem appropriate.

I think we can avoid this problem by adopting an Aristotelian picture of the relationship between intimate relationships and human flourishing: the activities of virtues required in intimate relationships are *constitutive* of human flourishing. In the Aristotelian picture, one's virtuous activities constitute one's own flourishing. Activities of relational virtues, like those of non-relational virtues such as courage and temperance, are constative of human flourishing. It is not as if those activities are exploited as a means for something called 'well-being' or 'flourishing' which is external to those activities. These activities constitute the flourishing in question. Thus, according to the relational activity view, an intimate relationship owes its value to its being part of the relational activity. This is why it is hard to capture the value of an intimate relationship with the conceptual dichotomy between intrinsic versus instrumental or extrinsic values.

I have argued that the virtuous relational activities in intimate relationships are constitutive of human flourishing. However, one might argue that it would be too self-centered if the reason we should treat our intimates preferentially is that it is necessary for our flourishing. We can see this is not necessarily the case if we carefully

consider how persons in a genuine loving relationship would think of each other. One who is in a genuine intimate relationship *takes the good of one's intimate as part of one's own good*. To put it in another way, her attitude is like, "What is good for you is also good for me" or "Making you happy makes me happy."

It reminds us of a familiar argument against altruism, according to which altruism is reduced to egoism if one enjoys altruistic activities too much. Consider Harold, a rich philanthropist who enjoys donating money to Oxfam. Whenever he donates, he feels very good about himself. But the problem is that he does not even care who is benefited by the money he gives. In this case, the primary reason for his donating is egoistic rather than altruistic. The beneficiaries are likely to be disappointed if they discover Harold's real reasons for his donation. They may be grateful to him, just in the way they feel grateful to rain that relieves from drought, but no more than that. But things are different in the case of benefiting our intimates. It is true that, for example, making my wife happy makes me happy. The crucial difference is that my wife herself, who is the beneficiary of my activities, would *want me to feel that way as well*. That is, as a person who shares a loving intimate relationship with me, as opposed to a simple benefactor-beneficiary relationship, she would rather be disappointed if she discovers that my contributing to her well-being is not part of my self-interest at the same time.

Thus, again, the fact that I enjoy making her happy is part of what makes her happier. In other words, *in a loving relationship, it is desirable, if not required, that my other-regarding activities toward the intimate are at least partly self-regarding at the same time*.

In this way, it is hard to draw a sharp line between self-regarding and other-regarding concerns when it comes to intimates. One important sort of intimate relationship that is constitutive of human flourishing would be one that unifies self-regarding and other-regarding in this way.

7.7. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have examined possible ways of solving the puzzle of partiality. I have sketched the way Keller categorizes and evaluates three different accounts of reasons of partiality and argued that some of his criticisms against the projects view and the relationships view are mistaken, while others retain their critical power. I have also argued that Keller's defense of the individuals view ultimately fails because it does not adequately address the puzzle of partiality. I believe that the value of individuals, considered independently, offers at best a partial story of reasons of partiality. As an alternative, I have sketched my own relational activity view, which suggests a new way of understanding intimate relationships and their value. I hope I have shown at least a step toward giving an adequate solution to the puzzle of partiality.

Conclusion

In my dissertation, I have introduced new conceptual tools—such as relational virtue, gratitude for being, and relational activity—to better capture the nature and value of intimate personal relationships such as parent-child relationship and friendship. Despite the importance of our relationship with family members and close friends, we did not have adequate conceptual tools to make sense of the distinctive value that exists in a 'healthy' intimate relationship. I have argued that a virtue-ethical approach based on the idea of relational virtue can better capture the normative significance of filial love and the distinctive nature of gratitude for our caring parents.

Filial piety and the virtue of friendship have been introduced as paradigmatic examples of relational virtue. I have focused on showing how they are different from general virtues such as benevolence and compassion and how they help us see what it takes to have a good parent-child relationship and friendship. In particular, I have examined the ways in which my relational virtue view of filial piety is similar to and different from the traditional Confucian conception of filial piety.

Moreover, I have explored the relationship between relational virtues and morality in general. An impartial conception of morality has been prevailing in the contemporary Western moral theories. My research has important implications on how partial values such as filial love, gratitude, and friendship can be harmonized

with the demand of morality in general. In particular, I have suggested my own relational activity view of partiality to solve the puzzle of partiality in moral theory.

Human lives are woven together. Most, if not all, of us have someone near and dear to us. Being virtuous in relation to them is an important part of living a flourishing and ethical life. I believe my work here can serve as the stepping stone for future research on this important yet relatively neglected realm of ethics.

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Biography

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