The Ethics of Partiality

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Abstract

It is an undeniable truth that we are far from impartial in the way we conduct ourselves in our everyday lives. We do things all the time for people with whom we share certain types of special relationships that we would not do for equally deserving strangers, and we take ourselves to have good reason for being partial in this way. Just what is partiality though? Is it even intelligible to speak of reasons and duties of partiality? And if we do have such reasons and duties, what might the source(s) of these be? Commentators on the ethics of partiality frequently draw on notions of intrinsic, final, or non-instrumental value to explain why some partiality within special relationships is normatively appropriate, if not morally obligatory. In this thesis, I suggest that a focus on not only the intrinsic valuation of special relationships, but also the distinctive modal demandingness they exhibit, yields a much more compelling account of ethical partiality and one that can bring a fresh perspective to a number of substantive issues in the discourse of partiality. Key amongst these are questions about the conditions under which reasons of partiality come to have the status of associative duties; whether the duties we may have towards our countries and compatriots are properly associative duties; whether there exists a genuine and ineliminable tension between associative and general duties; and whether or not we can owe our loved ones that which could never be impartially justified.
Declaration

I, Robert Arrell, do certify that:

I. This thesis comprises only my original work towards the PhD;
II. Due acknowledgement has been made in the text to all other material used;
III. At 77987 words exclusive of bibliography, this thesis meets the requirement of being fewer than 100 000 words in length.

Robert Arrell
Preface

This is to indicate that Chapter V of this thesis constitutes a partial re-working of an article published in the *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* of which I was the sole author. The citation details of the article in question are as follows:

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Finally then, as is only befitting of a thesis about what we owe our loved ones, I should acknowledge some of what I owe mine. To my mum and dad first and foremost, I am forever indebted for their endless love and unwavering support, and for instilling in me a work-ethic and self-belief without any of which, I would not be where I am today. And to my friends, both near and far, thanks for putting up with me throughout!
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Introduction

Socrates: What is your case, Euthyphro? Are you the defendant or the prosecutor?
Euthyphro: The prosecutor.
Socrates: Whom do you prosecute?
Euthyphro: One whom I am thought crazy to prosecute…
Socrates: Who is it?
Euthyphro: My father.
Socrates: My dear sir! Your own father?
Euthyphro: Certainly.
Socrates: What is the charge? What is the case about?
Euthyphro: Murder, Socrates.
Socrates: Good heaven! Certainly, Euthyphro, most men would not know how they could do this and be right. It is not the part of anyone to do this, but of one who is far advanced in wisdom.
Euthyphro: Yes, by Zeus, Socrates, that is so.
Socrates: Is then the man your father killed one of your relatives? Or is that obvious, for you would not prosecute your father for the murder of a stranger.
Euthyphro: It is ridiculous, Socrates, for you to think that it makes any difference whether the victim is a stranger or a relative. One should only watch whether the killer acted justly or not; if he acted justly let him go, but if not, one should prosecute, if, that is to say, the killer shares your hearth and table. The pollution is the same if you knowingly keep company with such a man and do not cleanse yourself and him by bringing him to justice. The victim…was a servant of ours. He killed one of our household slaves in drunken anger, so my father bound him hand and foot and threw him in a ditch, then sent a man here to inquire from the priest what should be done. During that time he gave no thought or care to the bound man, as being a killer, and it was no matter if he died, which he did. Hunger and cold and his bonds caused his death before the messenger came back from the seer. Both my father and my other relatives are angry that I am prosecuting my father for...they say, it is impious for a son to prosecute his own father for murder. But their ideas of the divine attitude to piety and impiety are wrong, Socrates…
Socrates: Tell me then, what is the pious, and what the impious, do you say?
Euthyphro: I say that the pious is to do what I am doing now, to prosecute the wrongdoer...whether the wrongdoer is your father or your mother or anyone else; not to prosecute is impious.

(3e-5e)

In this excerpt from Plato’s *Euthyphro*, Socrates expresses surprise at Euthyphro’s revelation that he is prosecuting his own father for the murder of a servant who was himself murderous. Yet for Euthyphro, the fact that the man he is prosecuting is his father is irrelevant as to what it is pious to do. What piety, or perhaps morality or justice requires, he believes, ought to be wholly indifferent as to whether the agent
implicated is a relative or an utter stranger. Whether that is so or not is, in large part, the question that motivates this thesis. I think it is not and that at least sometimes, *who* the agent is and the quality of the relationship in which you stand to them (or lack of one) is very much relevant to the question of what is the right thing to do morally speaking.

Happily, it seems, I am in good company. As Socrates goes on (and as Euthyphro concedes) even ‘the gods are in a state of discord’ over such matters, for indeed, Euthyphro’s punishing his father ‘may be pleasing to Zeus but displeasing to Cronus and Uranus, pleasing to Hephaestus, but displeasing to Hera’ (8b).¹ This then, would appear to render Euthyphro’s initial definition of the one form of piety somewhat problematic for if ‘what is dear to the gods is pious, what is not is impious’ (7a), then Euthyphro’s punishment of his father would be at once pious and impious. Reluctant to concede the flaw, Euthyphro augments his definition to say ‘that the pious is what *all* the gods love, and the opposite, what *all* the gods hate, is the impious’ (emphasis added) (9e) and to add, in order to circumvent the discord between the gods, ‘that on this subject no gods would differ from one another, that whoever has killed anyone unjustly should pay the penalty’ (8b). Socrates however is swift to point out the question-begging nature of Euthyphro’s response. Perhaps indeed no god could differ as to whether someone who commits a moral wrong ought to pay the penalty, but as Socrates ventures, this is not where their disagreement lies: ‘For they do not dispute that they must not pay the penalty if they have done wrong, but I think they deny doing wrong’ (8d).

I do not purport to know what all philosophers love, but they are like the gods in at least this sense, for all, I think, would agree that if one commits a moral wrong, one must pay the penalty, but clearly not all philosophers agree as to what constitutes a moral wrong. In particular, for our purposes, there is much disagreement about the ethics of partiality. Over the next few chapters we will see something of what this disagreement consists in, but I suppose my ‘disagreement’ may be unveiled relatively succinctly, as a rejection of Euthyphro’s moral leanings, for I do not believe that to

¹ Cronus castrated his father Uranus, and was later overthrown and banished to the underworld by his own son Zeus. Hephaestus took revenge on his mum Hera for rejecting him by gifting her a magical throne to which she became bound by unbreakable invisible chains upon sitting on it.
behave partially when one’s behaviour cannot be impartially justified is in every time and every place to commit a moral wrong. Sometimes and in some places it is – I do not deny that – and it may well be that the situation in which Euthyphro finds himself in is one of these. Like I said, I only deny that it is a moral wrong in all places and all times. And I suspect I am not alone. Despite his incessant haranguing, Socrates is ultimately unable to extract anything like a universal definition of piety from Euthyphro that satisfies him, and certainly none which could enlighten him as to why someone’s being ‘my’ father matters not a jot as concerns piety. But in that way most of us are like Socrates. We take our felt partialities for granted, we take our special relationships to be in some sense fundamentally morally significant in their own right, and so if something counts against us acting on them, why is it not that which demands explanation? It is not enough for Euthyphro to show us why his impartiality is god-loved; what we really need – what Socrates needs – is to be shown why partiality is never god-loved.

Of course, this is perhaps as controversial a vignette of partiality as I could have opened with; thankfully partiality ordinarily requires a great deal less of us than covering up murder. And perhaps it would have been more in my favour to open with an uncontroversial example of partiality, such as the partiality a mother has towards her own child, and from there summarily dismiss impartiality as an impracticable standard of morality. I think it is important however, to avoid the temptation to caricature moral impartiality; to deprive ourselves, as John Stuart Mill might put it, of that portion of truth in the relationship between morality and impartiality (2006: 60). Indeed, it is no part of this thesis to rid anyone of the conviction that impartiality is an essential garment in morality’s wardrobe. My only hope is to show that sometimes, the decision between the garb of partiality and impartiality will present a genuine moral quandary and that, at least sometimes, morality must favour partiality. Indeed, I am not inhospitable to being persuaded that the arguments I make in this thesis could be incorporated within a moral framework of impartial genesis, but I have yet to encounter any such reduction that succeeds without doing violence to what seems to me a fundamental truth: that my family and friends matter to me more than anyone else in the world, and that there are things I would do for them that I would not do for anyone else, and that at least sometimes I have good reason, moral reason, to do these things for them, even when doing so cannot be impartially justified.
Chapter Summary

It is this contentious intersection of morality, impartiality and partiality that forms the focus of Chapter I. As an introduction to the broad discourse surrounding the topic, I draw on two famous thought experiments issued forth by William Godwin and Bernard Williams with a view to highlighting the apparently irreconcilable difference between them. Crudely put, for Williams, ‘she is my wife, friend, lover, daughter, etc.’ explains all; whilst for Godwin, ‘she is my wife, friend, lover, daughter, etc.’ explains nothing whatsoever. The further objective of introducing the Williams and Godwin hypotheticals is to shed some light on a common distinction employed in the literature between reductionism and non-reductionism about partiality. Consideration of this distinction in turn motivates discussion about the seeming intuitive appeal of a non-reductionist account of partialism on the one hand, and the apparent problem of demandingness a strictly reductionist account of impartial morality would seem susceptible to on the other. I will offer a number of reasons to think that to require strict adherence to principles of impartial morality, at least in terms of practical reasoning, is for the vast majority of us not only overly demanding, but also psychologically impossible, and perhaps even undesirable.

However, whilst impartiality as a guide to how we ought to act in our special relationships seems difficult to sustain, that is not to say that impartial principles have no role to play in shaping our moral frameworks and the rules that emanate from them, for as we all know, there are many situations in which impartiality is perfectly appropriate and indeed sometimes morally required. Nevertheless, a puzzle remains as to what happens when apparently good impartial moral rules and principles clash with what the non-reductionist sees as morally basic reasons and duties of partiality. If it seems accurate to lived experience that the fact that someone is ‘my’ someone can, at least on occasion, ‘overturn the decisions of impartial truth’ to paraphrase Godwin (1985: 169-170), what does that mean? Does it literally overturn impartial morality so that what is impartially demanded turns out not to be the right thing to do morally-speaking? Or does it leave impartial morality intact, but say that sometimes the demands of partiality are simply beyond impartial moral justification – that they lie outside of its remit as it were? If the latter, does that mean reasons of partiality are not
always moral reasons? Or might it mean that the sphere of what count as moral reasons is not confined to only those reasons that can be impartially justified?

As important as these questions are, this is first and foremost a thesis about partiality, and specifically ethical partiality – the sort of partiality we see ourselves as having good reasons for towards loved ones. And whilst it is undoubtedly important to explore its fit with impartial morality, for the most part I propose to assume that ethical partiality in some form or another exists, or at least that no plausible framework for morality can argue it out of existence, and to explore it as a concept in its own right. In doing so, I follow the lead of Simon Keller, not only in this, but also in terms of his characterization of the three main views of the ethics of partiality: the Relationships View; the Individuals View; and the Projects View (2013). The exposition of these three views and their most immediate objections forms the focus of the first half of Chapter II. I then proceed in the second half to elaborate on certain distinctions in value and valuing – distinctions that will be crucial on the one hand in exposing the formal structure of the concept of partiality generically conceived, and on the other, for reaching a more precise understanding of what it means to value our loved ones and the relationships we share with them.

With this typology of distinctions in value and valuing in place, in the first part of Chapter III I draw in particular on the definition given therein of what it is to extrinsically value some X to sketch an account of the essential features of partiality common to all its myriad forms (whether moral, non-moral, or immoral). In the first place, I claim that to be partial towards X is to have a special (or greater) concern for X, and/or that certain states of affairs essentially involving X be a certain way, than one otherwise would in the absence of some relevant factor Y. Secondly, that to be partial one must have reason for special concern, treated as distinct from special reasons of partiality. The third feature of the concept of partiality broadly construed then makes explicit what is implied by the first two: that to have a special concern for X is to extrinsically value X; that is, it will always (with the sole exception of special concern for oneself) be some distinct Y that is the source of reasons for special concern for X. I then conclude the chapter by fleshing out the Individuals View before going on to suggest that if the preceding account of the formal concept of partiality is
persuasive, it would appear to pose a significant problem for proponents of that view of ethical partiality.

In Chapter IV then I start to make in-roads on the particularisation puzzle of partiality: the puzzle of why for example my friendship to my best friend Tommy generates special reasons of partiality for me, whilst other equally valuable relationships, such as your friendship to Agatha say, do not. The solution to this puzzle, I believe, lies in depicting not only what is ‘special’ about the relationships relevant to the discourse of ethical partiality, but also in identifying the precise sense in which the reasons they generate are ‘special’. To begin with I consider various types of relationships that, whilst conceivably special in some sense, are not ‘special’ in the requisite sense, since they are not capable of generating genuinely ‘special’ reasons of partiality. With a view to circumventing the immediate charge of circularity in this bare claim, I then proceed to provide a positive account of what it is for a reason of partiality to be ‘special’, or, to borrow Niko Kolodny’s term, ‘subject nonuniversalizable’ (2003: 182, fn.4). I then go on to suggest that beyond generating subject nonuniversalizable reasons, a further feature of our special relationships is that they must have the capacity to generate not only reasons, but also what are commonly termed ‘associative’ duties of partiality, and I seek to explain how special reasons of partiality translate into associative duties under certain circumstances. If the claim that special reasons must in relevant scenarios translate into duties of partiality is correct however, this would look to be distinctively problematic for the Projects View for as I explain in the final part of this chapter, project-dependent reasons do not look like the sorts of reasons that can translate into duties at all.

So, of the Individuals View, the suggestion is that if we accept the claim that structurally speaking partiality constitutes a form of extrinsic valuing, then we must reject the core contention of that view (and thus the view itself): that it is the individuals with whom we share special relationships that are themselves the sources of our reasons and duties of partiality. Of the Projects View, the claim is that whilst it may be capable of explaining permissible partiality, its inability to account for duties of partiality should lead us to ultimately reject that view as problematically incomplete. If these negative arguments are correct, then of the three candidate views discussed here the Relationships View is the only viable option, or so I argue.
In Chapter V then I begin to construct a positive account of how our special relationships generate distinctively special reasons and associative duties of partiality. The first question any proponent of the Relationships View must address is the question of what makes special relationships ‘reason-creating’ in the distinctive sense in which they generate reasons and duties of partiality. In line with the conventional view, I concur that the reason they are distinctively ‘reason-creating’ in this way is because we value them *intrinsically*. But then that immediately spawns a second question: what is it about our special relationships that give us reason to value them intrinsically? Or have we reached the limits of explanation, such that the best we can say is that to be someone’s friend, lover, caring relative, *just is*, in part, to value your relationship to them intrinsically? I think not, and drawing in particular on arguments developed by Philip Pettit (2011; 2012; 2013; 2015)\(^2\) concerning modally demanding goods, I begin to fill in the pieces of my own Relationships View, the spine of which can be summarised thus:

Certain of our special relationships are intrinsically valuable to us because common to such relationships is the generic rich good of modally robust special concern. Our enjoyment of this rich good of robust special concern requires not only that we enjoy the thin good of partiality in the actual world whereby we do things for, to and with one another beyond what we otherwise would in the absence of our relationship, but also that we are disposed to provide each other with this thin good of partiality across a range of possible worlds in which things might be quite different. But before we can intrinsically value our relationship for the rich good of modally robust special concern – before, that is, we can realise the good of knowing we can rely on each other for the thin good of partiality not just in this world, but also in other possible worlds where things might be otherwise – we must first enjoy from each other the thin good of partiality in this world. It is in this sense then that I believe intrinsically valuing our special relationships to be conditional on their possessing extrinsic value, for until such time as we enjoy the thin good of actual partial treatment (one of the properties of relationships that makes them extrinsically valuable) we cannot enjoy the

\(^2\) Where I make reference to Pettit (2015), the source cited (with the author’s express permission) is an unpublished manuscript of Philip Pettit’s forthcoming book *The Robust Demands of the Good: Ethics with Attachment, Virtue and Respect*, which he was kind enough to share with me.
rich good of robust special concern (the good of relationships that makes them intrinsically valuable).

That is why we intrinsically value our relationships. But then there is the question of how those relationships generate special reasons and duties of partiality. When we enjoy the rich good of each other’s robust special concern our provision of the thin good of partial treatment takes the form of subject nonuniversalizable reasons of partiality; they are reasons special to me and no-one else, because only through my provision of the thin actualist good of partiality can you enjoy the rich good of my – Robbie’s – special concern. Sometimes, the particular special reason I have to do something for, to, or with you, will be insignificant as regards its impact on your enjoyment of the rich good of my robust special concern and you might not especially mind whether I or somebody else does it for you, but I might still have reason to do it, and my reason is still a subject nonuniversalizable one. But sometimes, my failure to do something for, to, or with you – to be there for you when you really need me to be in this world – will be such as to significantly deprive you of the rich good of knowing that I will be there for you should you really need me to be in other possible worlds (after all, this world in which I am not there for you was itself but a possible world only yesterday). What I suggest then, is that when I have a subject nonuniversalizable reason to do something for you, and my failure to do it would significantly deprive you of the rich good of my robust special concern in this way, we may say that I not only have special reason to do it, but am in fact required to do it.

Herein then lies the promise of distinguishing when special reasons of partiality translate into associative duties of partiality. The hope here is to fill something of a lacuna in much of the literature, for many move straight from the claim that a relationship is intrinsically valuable to the claim that it generates associative duties. But this is too quick, or at least too coarse. From a moral perspective, everything that is required is appropriate, and everything that is appropriate is permitted, but perhaps not everything that is morally permitted is morally appropriate, and certainly not everything that is morally appropriate is morally required. There are distinctions between special reasons and duties of partiality that need to be made, and distinctions of some import at that, particularly as regards the so-called ‘distributive objection’ to associative duties which forms the focus of Chapter VII.
Up until this point, the focus is exclusively on close special relationships between individuals and the special reasons and duties of partiality they generate, but for many, the story of ethical partiality does not end there. In particular, some commentators would argue that the duties we have towards our countries/compatriots are ‘associative duties’, putatively similar in form to the duties we have in virtue of being parents, children, friends, lovers, etc. However, for this to be so, it must be true that such relationships constitute the type of association that can not only be valued intrinsically, but also that exhibits the sort of reciprocal normativity requisite for the grounding of associative duties, and I suspect this is not the case. In the first section of this, the sixth chapter, I suggest that we do not *intrinsically* value our relationships to our countries/compatriots broadly conceived. In the second section I reject the narrower claim that we can have associative duties to nations/co-nationals or *patriae*/fellow patriots, and in the third I reject the claim that we have associative duties to our polities/co-citizens. Finally then, I go on to suggest that even if all the preceding arguments of this chapter fail, the occasions when the further condition of instrumental necessity required to trigger associative duties would obtain would be so limited as to strip the argument of any practical import.

I should stress from the outset that the impetus of this chapter is not to deny that we have any special duties to compatriots (however conceived); rather it is only to demonstrate that if we do, they are not associative duties owed to compatriots *qua* compatriots. Why should this distinction matter? Firstly, it matters for the account and defensibility of associative duties in general; and secondly, it matters insofar as identifying the range of persons to whom we can plausibly owe associative duties is crucial for assessing whether there may be times when they ought to override general duties, which is the question I turn to in the next and final chapter when I ask: 'Is there a genuine and ineliminable tension between associative duties and general duties?'

The final chapter brings us then to what is perhaps the bone of contention concerning ethical partiality: can our associative duties ever justifiably trump the general duties we owe to all persons everywhere simply in virtue of shared humanity? More specifically: what should you do when faced with a choice between performing either a general duty or a morally basic associative duty in situations where you cannot
perform both? Can the associative duty ever justifiably take precedence over the general duty, even if your associate’s need is comparatively much less urgent than the stranger’s? The suggestion of this chapter is that, at least sometimes, the answer must be yes, and so we must conclude that the tension between general and associative duties is indeed, genuine and ineliminable. At least sometimes, in other words, we should not be Euthyphros. That said however, whilst the tension between associative and general duties in terms of priority is genuine and ineliminable, it is not, for various reasons I offer, as thoroughgoing practically-speaking as we are often led to believe. Ultimately then, I conclude that although associative duties can in principle justifiably override even our basic general duties sometimes, the penchant for the affluent to excuse themselves from fulfilling general positive duties by appeal to associative duties is, by and large, morally unsustainable.

**The Driving Questions**

The controversies and issues that animate the ethics of partiality are manifold, and whilst I by no means profess to address them all, the chapters as they unfold are all oriented in some measure by what I take to be the critical sites of contestation in the discourse. How are we to understand the relationship between partiality, impartiality and morality? Must what is permissible, appropriate or obligatory by way of partiality always and everywhere reduce to impartial justification on the basis of general moral considerations and principles? And just what is partiality anyway? What does valuing relationships and the persons with whom we share them involve, and how does this relate to the value those relationships and persons possess? What does it mean to have a special concern for these persons, and how does being so-disposed towards them generate reasons and sometimes even obligations to behave partially towards them? What might the source(s) of these reasons for special concern and the special reasons and duties that flow from it be? Is it the relationship itself that is the source, or is it the special value or worth of the unique individual with whom you share the relationship, or perhaps even the role both play in your personal projects? What explains why certain reasons of partiality strike us with the force of moral obligations, or is it simply just part of the fabric of what it is to value our special relationships that we are obligated just so? Can co-membership of large impersonal associations like polities, nations, and patriae also give rise to genuinely associative duties? Is there a genuine tension between general and associative duties, and if there is, what are the
implications of it for distributive justice? What can I keep for myself and my loved ones, even despite the fact there are strangers in the world whose need is much direr than ours?

Through my attempts to address these questions and more beside, my hope is to construct an account of the moral foundations of partiality that can help us better understand the nature and application of the special reasons and associative duties of partiality we commonly take ourselves to have. This of course is no small task, but it is, I think, an important one. The conviction that we do indeed have justifiable special reasons and sometimes extremely stringent moral duties of the associative type towards our nearest and dearest is one that in recent years appears to have been gathering pace in the halls of philosophers. Thankfully of course, the self-same intuition has resided for infinitely longer in our hearts and minds as ordinary folk.
Chapter I
Partiality and Impartiality

Introduction
It is an incontrovertible truth that we are far from impartial in our everyday conduct. We accommodate friends who come to visit us, wine them and dine them, yet the thought of doing the same for a homeless stranger – a person that one can suppose has much greater need of food and shelter – scarcely crosses our minds. We lavish gifts on our loved ones at birthday times, when instead we could donate the money we spend on them to those who, as a result of crushing poverty and disease, cannot be certain of seeing their next birthday. And it is not just sporadic events and occasions like these that elicit partial behaviour on our parts; the whole edifice of everyday life and the vast majority of social interaction we partake in on a day-to-day basis is shot through with partiality, or so it seems to me. At least I am not impartial as to how most of the particular persons I interact with daily fare in comparison with persons I have never met. How the lives of a great many of those persons go seems to be of some special concern to me, be they friends, neighbours, family members, colleagues, students, the guy who serves me my coffee each morning, the bartender at my local pub, or even the girl with whom I exchange smiles every morning as I pass her on the way to university. Needless to say, there are significant differences of degree here, both in terms of depth of fullness and what they can expect of me and indeed I of them, and some may query whether the thinner examples constitute forms of partiality at all, but it seems to me that they do, at least on some level. The point is simply that partiality is, as it were, everywhere.

Be that as it may, as we will see in the first section of this chapter, not all philosophers are quite so enamoured with partiality as I suspect I am. Indeed, some it appears would prefer that practical reasoning and its application specifically with regards to morality be all but expunged of every last vestige of partiality. To them, the notion of ‘ethical partiality’ which forms the focus of this thesis might seem little short of oxymoronic, and as I go on to note in the second section, this is perhaps not really so surprising given what is intuitively a relatively happy marriage between morality and impartiality, at least in certain respects. Not all, or perhaps even most critics of ethical
partiality are so thoroughly dismissive of it though; rather, the disagreement between what we may loosely term partialists and impartialists more frequently has less to do with the content of what partiality requires and more to do with the provenance of its genesis. As such, despite a conceptual disagreement concerning moral foundations, what moderate impartialists condone by way of partiality often overlaps significantly with what partialists condone.

Illuminating what is at stake in this conceptual disagreement forms the focus of the third section of this chapter, but the crux of it can be briefly summarised thus: whilst impartialists demand that all partiality must reduce to fundamental general principles in order to be morally justifiable, partialists broadly speaking endorse a form of non-reductionism whereby certain of our reasons and duties are generated by some aspect of special value inherent to our relationships that admits of no further reduction to general moral principles or rules. In the fourth section then, I suggest a number of reasons to think that to require strict adherence to principles of impartial morality is for the vast majority of us not only too demanding, but psychologically impossible and perhaps even undesirable. As I go on to stress in the final section though, despite the problems with reducing all partiality to impartial justifications, the non-reductionist account of partiality need not deny the relatively happy confluence of morality and impartiality wholesale, for surely no-one seeks to condone unbridled partiality. Indeed, it is no part of this thesis to deny that we have very strong impartial moral obligations to all persons everywhere, or even to allow that they exist but deny that they can ever trump the partial obligations we have. The only thing I do wish to deny is that they always trump the special obligations we have towards our nearest and dearest.

**A Brief Introduction to the Discourse**

The complexity of debate surrounding the concepts of partiality and impartiality and their relationship to morality is such that, as Maximilian de Gaynesford points out, the respective positions sometimes appear to represent such polarity of convictions as to fail to meet even the basic preconditions of debate in the form of some common

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3 Reference to ‘partialists’ and ‘impartialists’ in this chapter as though they were straightforwardly dichotomous and internally harmonious positions is merely an expository artifice. In reality, proponents of either position differ significantly in terms of the particular claims they propound.
ground, however minimal, to start from (2010: 84). To put it in terms that will be familiar by the end of this thesis, if not already, it seems that for one side (the partialists) ‘she is my wife’ explains all, whilst for the other (the impartialists) ‘she is my wife’ explains nothing whatsoever (de Gaynesford, 2010: 84). To illustrate what is at stake in these apparently polar positions, consider two well-known hypothetical scenarios from two of the most frequently cited protagonists in this story: William Godwin and Bernard Williams. Godwin’s thesis may be crudely characterised by the conviction that the first person counts for nothing in practical reasoning, and that impartiality is all that truly matters morally-speaking. Partiality, on this view, is basically passion unconstrained by judgment, and should therefore play no part in determining how we ought to act. To that effect Godwin argued in what Charles Lamb dubbed his ‘famous fire cause’ (1857: 72) that if faced with the choice of being able to save only one of two people in a fire, one being the Archbishop Fénelon, a benefactor to the whole human race, the other his valet, justice would require that you show preference for the more valuable life of Fénelon over that of the valet. But what if the valet happens to also be my brother, my father, or my benefactor? According to Godwin, the addition of these details would do nothing to alter the truth of the proposition as it stood prior to their insertion into the mix; morality, that is, would demand the same – that I act impartially for the greater good – which means that I ought to save Fénelon and leave my brother/father/benefactor to perish. And with this, we are invited to ponder the question with which Godwin famously framed his thesis: ‘What magic is there in the pronoun “my”, that should justify us in overturning the decisions of impartial truth?’ (1985: 169-170).

Ostensibly diametrically opposed to this view is what we might call the Bernard Williams thesis, which posits the contrary conviction that in fact the first person is strongly essential in moral reasoning (de Gaynesford, 2010: 89). The classic statement of the Williams thesis comes in the form of the response he offers to his equally famous thought experiment: if faced with the choice of saving the life of a drowning stranger, or that of my wife, I would be justified in choosing to save my wife simply because ‘she is my wife!’, and recourse to any further justification that could be impartially defended would amount, quite simply, to ‘one thought too many’ (1981: 18). On this view, the partiality which my decision to save my wife expresses is simply part and parcel of what it is to share a valuable relationship with her and stands
in no need of any further, or derivative, justification. Admittedly, this is a rather crude
depiction of the theses of Godwin and Williams, and of what is a deeply complex
tension between impartiality and partiality more generally, but I think it serves as well
as any as a leaping-off point.

And yet, as to the question of which of these two theses we ought to prefer, you might
think your mind made up already. When faced with making a choice between these
apparently irreconcilable positions, it may come as no surprise that many tend to opt
for the Williams thesis at first blush, given the affront Godwin’s thesis with its
unerring impartiality seems to present to common sense morality. Intuitively, that is,
many are inclined to agree with Williams when he writes, ‘it might have been hoped
by some people (for instance, by his wife) that his motivating thought, fully spelled
out, would be the thought that it was his wife, not that it was his wife and that in
situations of this kind it is permissible to save one's wife’ (1981: 18). But just what is
it about the standards of impartiality implied by Godwin’s thesis that sits so
uncomfortably with us?

The problem, it seems, is that such lofty standards tend to strike most of us as
implausibly demanding in practice. As Brian Feltham depicts it, the staunchly
impartialist conception of morality apparently ‘makes us all third parties to our own
interests’, and if we cannot live with that, ‘then either we must face our own hypocrisy,
or revise our moral judgements’ (2010: 2). With a similar hint of incredulity, John
Cottingham writes: ‘the impartiality thesis does not simply maintain (1) that I must, to
be moral, take account of the interests of others before acting; it insists (2) that to be
moral I must give the same weight to the interests of others that I give to my own’
(original emphasis) (1983: 85-86). It seems then, supposing there to be some moral
stock in intuitive appeal, the first strike goes to the partialist: there is simply no
question – you should save your wife.

The impartialist can hit back immediately however, for in truth, this stringent
interpretation of the application of impartiality in practical reasoning is one that
perhaps few amongst them would endorse. Not all, or perhaps even most critics of
partiality, declare that ‘Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself’, to the extent that one
must weigh their (i.e. all persons’) interests the same as one's own. John Stuart Mill, it
is true, felt the biblical prescription depicted ‘the ideal perfection of utilitarian morality’ (1998: 148), but if utilitarianism or any other moral theory genuinely asks so much of us, and such extremeness of impartiality inexorably invites extremeness of impracticality, it would seem that in the end, all we are left with, as J. L. Mackie put it, is ‘(t)he ethics of fantasy’ (1990: 129). Few impartialists however turn out to be ethical fantasists. Much more subtle arguments are available to the would-be defender of impartiality. For example, it might be argued that impartiality need not require one to love one’s neighbour as oneself; rather, the moral requirement might be that partiality, wherever it exists, must correspond with what could be found to be mutually fair and just from the perspective of something like an ‘impartial spectator’ of the kind envisaged by Adam Smith (2002). Or perhaps, rather than outlawing partiality tout court, we can look to impartial justifications that would permit (within limits) modified partialities towards family, friends and loved ones on the basis that a world characterised by these partial attachments is likely to better foster overall utility and well-being than one without (Singer, 2004: 162). Of course, it is precisely this desire to reduce partiality to impartial justifications in order for it to be morally justifiable at all that Williams rails against, but on deeper inspection, the impartialist conviction that this is what morality requires is by no means bereft of appeal.

**Impartiality and Morality**

Whilst in one sense, the demandingness of morality as impartiality may seem to render it impracticable, in another, the apparent alignment of morality and impartiality is really not so surprising at all. At least, there seems little to cavil about concerning the appeal to impartial principles in framing the abstract of morality; in this respect I think most would agree with Brad Hooker when he says, ‘the impartial application of good moral rules is virtually always appropriate’ (2010: 27). Specifying which rules are the good moral rules is in itself doubtless a task fraught with difficulties, but that does not detract from what appears, in certain respects at least, to be a reasonably happy marriage between morality and impartiality. And indeed there are many situations in which we uncontroversially believe impartiality to be entirely morally appropriate, if not required, the most obvious concerning the allocation of goods when said goods are not mine to assign at will. It is violation of this requirement that marks out practices such as nepotism towards one’s child say as morally wrong with failure to comply with moral imperatives to be impartial in cases like these no doubt fuelling the tendency to
view partiality with suspicion, and on occasion even tantamount to narrowly self-serving bias and prejudice. Whatever about the question of what one is permitted to do with one’s own resources in the name of partiality, as Hooker points out, for the most part ‘(t)here is no implication that the agent is permitted, much less required, to commandeering someone else’s resources for the benefit of the agent’s child’ (original emphasis) (2010: 32).

Perhaps only ‘for the most part’ though, for even this seemingly uncontroversial imperative of impartial morality may not go entirely unassailed by partial considerations in every conceivable situation. The stock counterexample is that in which a destitute mother steals a loaf of bread from a stranger to feed her starving daughter. If we think the mother’s actions are justifiable, then that alone would seem to suffice to throw into question the claim that even negative duties as defined by impartial morality take blanket priority over what partiality sometimes requires of us. Here then, we see already something of the fragility of the application of impartial moral rules in the face of what partiality sometimes requires. Still, scenarios (even hypothetical ones) in which duties of partiality might justifiably override impartial or general negative duties do not spring readily to mind (which is in itself not to be bemoaned), and even as regards those that do, there are two further points worth stressing: firstly, they need not undermine the basic claim that, all things being equal, the principle of impartiality provides the correct prima facie moral standard in cases like these. And secondly, arguably the perspective of the impartial spectator may serve as well as any to determine whether the mother’s actions constitute a genuine violation of impartial morality or rather something like an instance of morally justifiable exceptional illegality. Suppose, by contrast, a poor but far from destitute mother steals some nice clothes from a stranger’s clothes-line so as to spare her daughter the shame of wearing her poverty amongst her peers. To many, one suspects, her actions in this case may appear unjustifiable, and impartial evaluation of both scenarios through the eyes of the impartial spectator at least holds some hope of explaining why this should be so in this case, but not the last.

In any event, in circumstances as dire as those depicted in the loaf-stealing case, perhaps not even impartialists would blame the mother if she gives no thought at all to the respect she is required to show for others’ property whilst her daughter’s life hangs
in the balance. Indeed, the impartialist need not demand that each and every decision one makes about how to act must be directly guided or preceded by a process of impartial reasoning, but rather only that they emit of second-order impartial justification. In other words, whilst impartialists need not deny the way partiality impacts practical reasoning, they are nevertheless committed to saying that when it does, it cannot be justified by anything other than principles that would withstand impartial scrutiny across all relevantly similar scenarios, irrespective of the particular identities and relationships of those implicated. Primarily what they object to then is the notion of non-derivative reasons or duties of partiality, arguing instead that if our reasons and duties of partiality are to admit of any genuinely moral force, we ought to be able to explain them in terms of more fundamental or general principles that are themselves morally significant; indeed, we must, they argue, since relationships bear no fundamental moral significance at all.

Impartial Reductionism versus Partial Non-reductionism

This brings us to the very heart of the disagreement between impartialists and partialists: the contention over whether the explanation of all reasons and duties of partiality must reduce to impartially justifiable general principles or not. On the side of reductionism sits the impartialist; on the side of non-reductionism, the partialist. As we have seen, the reductionist about partiality need not claim there is nothing to special relationships or deny the descriptive fact that we are in practice inclined to do more for those with whom we share special relationships, but what they do deny, is the inclination to grant special relationships and the reasons and duties of partiality they generate any fundamental moral purchase (Wellman, 1997: 184). Christopher Heath Wellman for example allows that we may have special duties towards associates, but demands that whatever else they may be, they must be explicable in terms of more fundamental moral facts which themselves bear basic significance (2000: 540). ‘She is my wife!’ might be part of a bigger explanation on this sort of reductionist view, but it cannot be the explanation, for contra what the non-reductionist argues, relational facts bear no non-derivative moral significance, and thus cannot provide us with basic moral reasons for action at all (2000: 540). In other words, every associative duty requires a story beyond simply saying that someone or something is mine; what their justification in fact always demands, is ‘one thought more’.
Non-reductionists about partiality on the other hand, are very much impressed by the thought that the special relationships we participate in are morally valuable in their own right, and one consequence they see of this is that such relationships can, as a result, generate morally basic reasons and duties to do things for those with whom we share them that we do not have to anyone else; reasons that would not exist were it not for the relationship, and that cannot be explained by, derived from, or reduced to any more fundamental level beyond the relationship itself. The crucial point then, is that for a non-reductionist about partiality, persons are not, as the reductionist is inclined to suggest, the only bearers of basic moral value in this world; according to the non-reductionist, relationships possess fundamental value too, hence their ability to generate morally basic reasons and duties of partiality. This is not to deny that we do of course also have morally basic general reasons and duties that are generated by the equal moral value of all persons, but rather to deny that this is the only source of moral reasons and duties. Unlike the impartialist then, the non-reductionist account of ethical partiality ‘holds that relations between persons are part of the basic subject-matter of ethics, so that fundamental principles may be attached directly to these relations’ (Miller, 1995: 50).

How the non-reductionist account of partiality holds up to scrutiny in large part depends on how that claim is understood. One problem with imputing any moral magic to the pronoun “my” as the non-reductionist putatively does is that although all special relationships of the type we are concerned with are, by definition, ineliminably self-referential, we do not think all self-referential special relationships generate duties. As Wellman observes, it would seem absurd to suppose that someone’s being “my” enemy would be sufficient to generate duties for me to be partial towards them (2000: 552). But if this is right the question the non-reductionist is left with is this: if the pronoun “my” is not always magic, how are we to adjudge when it is and when it is not? To this, Wellman supposes the partialist has two avenues of response: the first appeals to moral intuitionism, and the second to further reasons in support of the moral significance of particular relationships that genuinely do create duties of partiality (2000: 552-554). The second option is the only available one in Wellman’s eyes, but to take that route he suggests would seem to require after all ‘one thought more’ by way of justification, thus in fact consigning non-reductionists about partiality to the very sort of reductionist account of duties he defends and they had hoped to reject. As
Wellman himself puts it, ‘(i)f associativism can save itself only with such a story…then its “salvation” is actually a surrender’ (2000: 553).

It is difficult to see why this should be so however. Wellman is right that ‘she is my wife!’ taken in isolation as a skeletal social fact about the relation we stand in towards one another cannot explain my duties to her. We do not typically think the mere relational fact that ‘she is my wife’ means I have duties towards her irrespective of any further considerations; she may treat me abominably or perhaps even be violently abusive towards me, in which case it would be positively perverse to require my dutiful devotion to her to persist. On some level, our relationship must be one of moral moment – one that we have reason to value, and indeed do – in order to be able to generate reasons and duties of partiality at all. But the suggestion that to say as much is to capitulate to reductionism would seem to imply a rather more anaemic interpretation of non-reductionism than I think most proponents of that view have in mind. For one thing, the insistence that only those relationships we have reason to value generate reasons and duties of partiality is still unequivocally non-reductionist in the sense that said reasons and duties are generated by the relationship itself, not the value persons have as beings of equal moral worth. For another, I doubt we can say anything very worthwhile about ethical partiality without taking care to bed it in with general or impartial moral considerations; if that is what non-reductionism about partiality requires – that the explanation of partiality must proceed absent any general claims concerning moral value – then non-reductionism is surely consigned to failure before it even begins.

Arash Abizadeh and Pablo Gilabert’s reductionist critique of Samuel Scheffler’s non-reductionism seems to imply the need for this sort of strict separation:

A necessary condition for his argument to work is that the justification of each of the two components said to be in tension [i.e. the special responsibilities generated by relationships and general duties demanded by cosmopolitan egalitarianism] can in principle be developed without reference to the other’ (Abizadeh and Gilabert, 2006: 354).

The fact that Scheffler’s argument does not satisfy this condition, they argue, shows that Scheffler’s special responsibilities are in fact always ‘moral-conditional’ (Abizadeh and Gilabert, 2006: 356-359) on their not violating the demands of cosmopolitan egalitarianism, and thus are not in tension with them, but essentially
reducible to them. However, as Lenard and Moore point out, their claim that special responsibilities must be moral conditional, and especially their claim that Scheffler tacitly subscribes to this claim, grossly misconstrue Scheffler’s non-reductionist account of the way in which special responsibilities are ‘moral conditional’ (2009: 402). For Scheffler special responsibilities are moral conditional in that they can be moral duties only if based on morally valuable relationships. By contrast, what Abizadeh and Gilabert claim is that associative duties can be moral duties only if they are subject to ‘deontic constraints’, but whilst this move might eliminate any tension between general and associative duties, in doing so it elicits the dubious claim that for any duty to have moral value at all, it must be constrained by general duties (Lenard and Moore, 2009: 402-403). Moreover, whilst reductionism unavoidably requires this type of absolute normative independence of explanations since coherence demands that all reasons of partiality reduce to impartial explanation, the same is simply not true of non-reductionism. For the non-reductionist, reasons and duties of partiality, whilst being independently sourced from the moral value of our relationships, do not exist utterly apart from the rest of morality; it is rather just that they are not entirely explicable by reference to the general moral considerations that populate that sphere (Horton, 2008: 14).

Finally, it is worth noting that whilst sometimes reasons and duties of partiality can be explained equally well by reduction to impartial principles, even though the non-reductionist might think it ‘one thought too many’ to do so, sometimes they cannot. Although a paradigmatic example of non-reductionism, the duty to save my wife in the Williams case quite clearly yields of an impartial justification: the reductionist can just say I must rescue someone, and since the duties I am faced with are incompossible, it is permissible if the fact that ‘she is my wife’ breaks the tie in her favour, but that the duty nevertheless ultimately derives from the value of persons generally in the form of an incompossible general duty of rescue, not from the value of our relationship. However, there are some reasons and duties of partiality that do not seem to be amplifications of general duties in this sense at all. For example, as a father, it would seem appropriate if not required of me that I attend the nativity play at my daughter’s school in which she is performing the part of Mary, but whether a reason or a duty, it is

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4 See Chapter VII for discussion of the tension between associative and general duties.
clearly not an amplification of a general reason or duty I owe to all little girl-actors playing Mary in nativity plays everywhere. Rather, it is a reason or a duty that I simply would not have – that would not exist (for me) at all – in the absence of the father-daughter relationship I am part of; it is, as the non-reductionist would have it, a reason or duty that is \textit{morally basic}. My reason or duty is in fact generated by the valuable relationship \textit{itself} that I share with my daughter; to attempt to reduce it down further to the equal moral value of persons simply seems implausible, and even espousing some impartial principle like ‘all good fathers should attend their children’s school performances’ would not change this.

As we will see later, it is the clash between general duties and these sorts of morally basic associative duties in particular that most clearly evinces the tension between our commitment to the equal moral value of persons on the one hand, and our commitment to our valuable special relationships on the other. The crucial point to take from here though, is that there is no good reason to suppose that a non-reductionist account of partiality must proceed without reference to the wider sphere of morality, sometimes being pared back by it, but also sometimes paring it back in turn. Indeed non-reductionists need not deny Wellman’s claim that ‘a willingness to contribute to causes \textit{with which one has no connection} is supremely selfless and maximally laudable’ (original emphasis) (1997: 185). What they do deny however, is the conclusion this leads him to: that, ‘(i)n the shadow of both extremes, associativism is a half-way house of altruism in which partiality plays an understandable role in motivating agents but detracts from their moral praiseworthiness’ (Wellman, 1997: 185).\footnote{In fairness, Wellman makes this claim in a paper concerned primarily with associative political obligations, and as far as \textit{they} are concerned we are in some agreement, but nevertheless this specific quotation is expressly made at a level of generality that encompasses all associative obligations.}

\textbf{The Phenomenology of Partiality}

Wellman’s depiction of the prevailing tendency to be partial or perform associative duties towards those with whom we share valuable relationships as an understandable but nevertheless regrettable social practice is apt to be met sceptically. Most, one suspects, would be disinclined to say of the husband who saves his drowning wife rather than the stranger, or the person who opts to rescue their brother/father/benefactor from a flame-engulfed house rather than the Archbishop
Fénelon, that whilst their actions are comprehensible, they are nonetheless morally sub-optimal. As we have seen, not all reductionists do deny that our rescuers’ actions can be justified, but even within the most considered and sophisticated of impartialist accounts of partiality, the reason and duties of partiality generated thereof cannot but be derivative, and it is this point which seems to render reductionism about partiality so at odds with the phenomenology of it. Indeed, it is this inherent inability to ever fully capture the deep moral value of our relationship to friends, families and loved ones and the phenomenology of partiality as we experience and understand it through them that makes reductionism so alien to our shared moral experience. As Scheffler points out, the non-reductionist finds phenomenologically compelling the fact that we often explain or justify our partiality toward certain people by citing our relationships to them, as when Williams’ husband exclaims ‘she is my wife!’ (2001: 100). Or, to borrow Niko Kolodny’s example, if I were sitting outside a hospital theatre awaiting the outcome of Maureen’s operation and someone asked me why I looked so anxious, it would seem rather odd were I to rattle off a list of impartial justifications for my special concern for her, and then add, as if as an afterthought, that ‘she is my mum’ (2003: 139).

It is worth noting perhaps that the non-reductionist justification ‘she is my mum’ here lacks the exclamation mark of ‘she is my wife!’ in order to nip a certain misconception about what the Williams case shows in the bud. That is, it might be thought that what is wrong with the picture painted there is that the husband even takes time to ponder the question while his poor wife flounders. What Williams intended by this argument has been widely discussed and disputed, but what I take him to be saying is that the husband’s reasons for partiality towards his wife are irreducible to impartial reasons under any circumstances whatsoever, not just where urgency is a factor, as in the drowning scenario. That is, it is not because he takes pause to ponder whether the situation can be impartially justified when time is pressing that might bother us, but that he ponders whether the situation can be impartially justified, full stop. As Susan Wolf suggests, there looks to be something vaguely objectionable about seeking impartial justification or what she calls ‘offstage reflections’ (2012: 79) even after the fact. In the Kolodny example moreover, we need not suppose the situation to be one of urgency at all; my mum’s operation might be fairly routine and one for which she was booked in for months ago, so even before the fact I will have had plenty of time,
were I of a mind, to subject the question of whether or not my accompanying her to the hospital is an impartially justifiable allocation of my time. But the very thought that I would bring impartial reasoning to bear on the question at all seems repugnant to me, and even supposing my deliberations should fall out in favour of accompanying my mum to her operation, she would I suspect be upset were I, in a moment of cruel candour, to report to her how I reached my decision (Stocker, 1976: 462). Imagine, as a twist on the popular motto of North American Evangelical Christian youth groups: ‘What would Jesus do?’ (usually abbreviated to WWJD?), a person who rigorously determines how they will act in any given situation by asking themselves: ‘What would an impartialist do?’ I suspect that for most of us, this is not a person that we would want to find ourselves in a special relationship with. For example, suppose you ring a friend and ask them over because your wife has just walked out on you and you need to talk, but it turns out that there is also a one-off charity pub quiz happening that night they could attend instead. A friend who had to ask themselves ‘what would an impartialist do?’ if faced with this choice would, one suspects, hardly be someone you would consider a friend at all.

Even supposing my decision to accompany my mum to hospital appropriately coheres with the motive ‘she is my mum’ rather than some external rationale, if my apparently rampant candour leads me to report that, as her loving son I see it as my duty to accompany her, that still seems rather like something she might not want to hear. In general, what we want is for our loved ones to be there for us because they want to be, not because they have to be. And for the most part we do not seem to experience duties of partiality as duties in the more conventional sense, but this by no means shows that they are not duties or that we are not required to fulfil them; rather, all it shows is that wanting to be there for loved ones and having to be there for them do not come apart in quite the same way as is sometimes true of other kinds of duties. Moreover, a further feature of our shared moral experience that would seem to bear out the thought that our special relationships are fundamentally valuable in some sense is that most people tend to be much more convinced of the moral force of their duties of partiality towards their loved ones (even if they often do not experience them as such) than they are of their general positive duties to all humankind. The special relationships we take part in and the requirements that befall us as a result of partaking in them tend to possess precisely the sort of deontic characteristics we associate with moral norms, whereas the deontic
character of general positive duties can often appear relatively less self-evident. Indeed, it is not uncommon for duties to family, children, friends, loved ones, etc. to be held up as the paradigmatic moral requirements, with frankly it often seems, little need for any further justification as to why (Scheffler, 2010: 129).

Moreover, given how deeply ingrained this thought that we owe more to our loved ones than we do to strangers is – so deeply ingrained in fact that we rarely even register the claims our loved ones make on us as duties at all – even if Wellman were right and a world in which the moral praiseworthiness of all persons were maximally realised would be one characterised by unadulterated impartialism, there would remain what we might call the problem of psychological impossibility. For most of us one suspects, being impartial with regards to our nearest and dearest is about as possible (psychologically speaking) as being impartial with regards to ourselves. Perhaps the psychological impossibility argument can be easily countered by simply pointing out that a descriptive account of how things are or how they have evolved to be says nothing about how things ought to be (although it is doubtful that moral theorising can be so neatly abstracted from socially-constructed psychological dispositions). Nevertheless, I am inclined to think that the special concern one has for the integrity of one’s personal bonds and ties of affection are no less disposable in terms of what it is to be human than the sort of special concern one has for the well-being and integrity of that most intimate of intimates, oneself (Cottingham, 1983: 89).

Moreover, such supremely selfless altruism seems not only to be psychologically impossible for the vast majority of people, but also downright undesirable. At least, it is far from clear that even if we could eliminate the deeply ingrained psychological

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6 Indeed, this observation has motivated some philosophers to attempt to construct a relational view of morality itself. This extension seeks to establish that all moral duties are essentially relationship-dependent by stretching our common-sense conceptions of what constitutes a relationship. Thomas Nagel for example suggests that mistreatment establishes a relationship where none existed before; others have suggested that all moral duties can be derived from the relationship of common humanity that all people share; Scanlon proposes that the ‘reciprocal normativity’ (Scheffler, 2010: 120) that characterises friendships, which generates reasons on which you must act, as well as reasons for others to complain if you do not, similarly characterises our relations to all human beings, and that it is this bipolar normative nexus that gives both general and relationship-dependent reasons the character of moral requirements (Scheffler, 2010: 119-123). None of these attempts succeed in convincing that a relational view of morality can convincingly be applied outside of the context of genuine interpersonal relationships however. As Scheffler points out, given that one of the central features of morality is the aspiration to regulate behaviour among strangers as well as intimates, seeking to trace the source of all moral reasons back to particular historical relationships seems fraught at best (2010: 124).
impulse to partiality in humans that our lives would be morally enriched. Suppose modern science were to produce a pill of impartiality – a drug capable of eliminating partial preferences in individuals entirely. In theory, if all were to take this pill of impartiality, global injustice would presumably be eliminated relatively quickly which would of course be a good thing, but at what cost? Surely a world of entirely impartial individuals would be nothing short of a dystopian nightmare. Love would no longer exist because to love someone essentially requires having a greater concern for their well-being than for that of all persons generally; that is just part and parcel of love as we know it, the elimination of which surely could not be countenanced by any viable blueprint for human welfare. Perhaps an alternative form of love might emerge in a global society of these impartial atomistic individuals, but it would surely be but an impoverished shadow of what we recognise as love, and any moral theory the telos of which entails the impoverishment of love given the centrality of it to human flourishing and well-being as we know it is not, I think, a moral theory we ought to endorse.

Certainly it is no stretch to suppose that very few if any individuals in affluent countries would agree to take the pill given the centrality of special relationships to most people’s conception of the good life. Perhaps more telling though, is the thought that surely even the vast majority of those living with disease and poverty would also reject this pill that would in theory lift them out of their state of desperate need if it came at the price of relinquishing their special relationships to family, friends, etc. Perhaps if one’s children were on the brink of death from disease and starvation, and supposing the distributive effect of enough people taking the pill of impartiality might be so immediate as to save them, then one might well take the pill and sacrifice your special relationship to your children. But then, the reason behind your sacrifice would not be the elimination of global injustice or immoral partialities, but rather to secure the well-being of your children, which, if anything, seems to support the thought that special relationships bear some sort of intrinsic moral significance. In the end then, I find it hard to imagine that anyone would truly want the kind of world that a globally unanimous agreement to take the pill of impartiality would yield, and indeed, for those of us who bend our efforts towards remedying global injustices, the usual motivating objective is not to foster blanket impartiality, but rather a world in which all people, present and future, might be able to enjoy fulfilling relationships with their families.
and friends untrammelled by fears of oppression, starvation and premature death. In short, part of the justification of some forms of partialism is in fact extremely simple: it is an essential ingredient in one of the highest of human goods, i.e. love.

**Conclusion**

The main point I want to stress from this brief introduction to the discourse is that whilst the phenomenology may count strongly in favour of a non-reductionist account of reasons and duties of partialities over one that seeks to reduce all such phenomena to impartially justifiable principles, adherence to non-reductionism by no means commits one to a rejection of the pivotal role of impartiality in any plausible moral framework. Although impartiality as a guide to how we ought to act in our relationships seems difficult to sustain practically-speaking, that is not to say that impartial principles have no role to play in our moral frameworks. Both impartialism and partialism have their own moral appeal, but whilst most defenders of morally basic partiality would not purport that their paradigm alone can offer a full account of morality, that is precisely what the impartialist appears to claim: that an account of morality can proceed without reference to the basic value of relationships at all. Or, to put it another way, whilst non-reductionists frequently find themselves faced with what appear to be genuine moral quandaries when their commitment to the equal moral worth of all persons and their commitment to the fundamental moral value of special relationships pull them in opposite directions, the reductionist it seems finds none; moral quandaries of this ilk are for them, conceptually impossible.

But it is difficult to concede that the sorts of moral quandaries the non-reductionist struggles with are in the end merely apparent. At least, it seems to me that if faced with a choice between doing something for a loved one and doing what is required of you by justice for a stranger, and you genuinely cannot do both, at least sometimes the choice you are faced with will weigh on you with all the force of a genuine moral quandary of a category for which there is simply no one-size-fits-all solution. As should by now hopefully be clear then, whilst I do not deny the normative force of impartial morality (as I doubt anyone can) I find myself firmly in the camp of the partialists. And whilst that camp is perhaps not as lonely as it used to be, to argue the case for ethical partiality still, I suspect, goes somewhat against the philosophical zeitgeist, since such ‘favouritism’ is precisely what a great many contemporary moral
and political philosophers seem at pains to discourage or at least limit. The seed of this widespread opposition to defences of partialism can probably be traced to the prominence of highly universalistic moral theories within modern moral philosophy, although it seems to me that such frameworks are increasingly coming under fire in the contemporary literature. And whilst I absolutely recognise the paradigmatic objective of emphasising the pressing need for people to take their general moral duties much more seriously than they presently do, I cannot, in good faith, endorse those arguments that would require the extensive stripping back of individuals’ partial tendencies in order to cover the shortfall. In my opinion, the existence of such tendencies is fundamental to special relationships, without which the good of human flourishing and fulfilment would surely be unobtainable. As such, I believe that for a theory of morality to be plausible, it must be able to accommodate the basic normative force of the special relationships that people share – indeed the sorts of relationships that make life worth living – and the special reasons and duties that arise from them.

On a final note, as a partialist plagued by niggling doubts about whether impartiality truly deserves its exclusive pedestal, I remain unconvinced by the sort of claims made by those who would argue that even if not practicable, impartiality nevertheless provides a shining ideal we should all strive for, and suspect that even the likes of Singer and Wellman who hold it up so (despite its being a non-practicable one, even for themselves) could not, in the end, seriously support the application of principles of impartiality at all levels of the social order. I myself am inclined to agree with what Cottingham says in relation to this point: that ‘there must be some connection between the holding of a moral principle and the actions of those who hold it...It’s adherents should either act on their maxims or cease to say something which they cannot really mean’ (1983: 93). To say that participation in special relationships with our loved ones entails certain morally basic reasons and duties of partiality is not to condone unbridled partiality, the practice of which is rightfully singled out for denigration by those critical of partiality and what they regard as the unjust distributive effects of according priority to the interests of those with whom we hold dear. We can however recognise the weight of this objection without having to go so far in the other direction as to demand complete impartiality. Even if this is true though, the onus remains firmly on any proponent of partialism to provide a compelling defence of when and why acting partially is the right thing to do, since the fact that individuals *qua*
individuals are worthy of equal respect yields at least a *prima facie* reason for treating all alike (Cottingham, 1986: 373). And that, in a nutshell, is the task I have set myself in this thesis, to which I will now turn in earnest.
Chapter II
The Relationships View, the Individuals View, the Projects View, and Distinctions in Value and Valuing

Introduction
It is uncontroversial, I take it, to say there are few things people value more than their closest relationships, these being among our most fundamental and enduring sources of human flourishing. In this chapter, I explore the ways in which we value our personal relationships, and the reasons and duties of partiality that are generated as a result through the prism of what Joseph Raz terms ‘the value-reason nexus’ (2001: 5). The first section offers an overview of three approaches to the ethics of partiality as depicted by Simon Keller in his book Partiality (2013) – the Relationships View, the Individuals View and the Projects View – as well as introducing the primary objections each face. In the second section then, I lay bare some crucial distinctions concerning value and valuing upon which much of my defence of the Relationships View turns. Our valuing of special relationships comprises a complex interspersing of dispositions, attitudes, beliefs and emotions such that abstractions about what it is to value them tend by nature to be unsatisfactory. Nevertheless, certain cautionary generalisations may be posited, and throughout this thesis I introduce various claims about what valuing persons and relationships involves, about how persons and relationships can possess value, and about the relation and direction of entailment between how things possess value and how we value them.

The Relationships View, the Individuals View, and the Projects View
Simply put, the Relationships View of partiality says the sources of our reasons and duties of partiality are the special relationships we share, whereas the Individuals View says the sources are not our relationships, but the persons we love. Samuel Scheffler, a key proponent of the Relationships View, states the basic claim of that paradigm thus:

To value one’s relationship with another person non-instrumentally is, in part, to see that person’s needs, interests and desires as providing one, in contexts that may vary depending on the nature of the relationship, with reasons for action, reasons that one would not have had in the absence of the relationship (Scheffler, 2010: 103-4).
To intrinsically value\(^7\) one’s special relationships then is to see them as reason-giving, and to grant the interests, desires and needs of those with whom you share them a certain ‘deliberative significance’ (Scheffler, 2010: 104). The exact nature and content of reasons of partiality will, it is true, vary depending on the context and degree of fullness of the relationship, which in turn may render those reasons more or less defeasible. However, though in principle defeasible by competing reasons, if one were never disposed to see oneself as having decisive reasons of partiality towards say, one’s friend, it would be unclear in what sense the relationship could qualify as friendship at all (Scheffler, 2004: 248). The germane point for the Relationships View then, as another proponent Niko Kolodny puts it, is that ‘(t)he reason one has for loving Jane, in any given case, is that she is one’s daughter, sister, mother, friend, or wife’ (2003: 136).

However, an objection to the Relationships View emerges almost immediately which in part animates the Individuals View: we do not love relationships, we love people. The claim that it is the relationship, and not ‘Jane’ that generates reason to love her, seems, that is, to give love the wrong object (Kolodny, 2003: 136). On the Individuals View, by contrast, it is not the relationship but rather the unique special value Jane possesses in her own right – the value to which one responds when one acts well in special relationships – that renders partiality towards her normatively appropriate (Keller, 2013; Velleman, 1999). In this sense, one’s reason to give special treatment to Jane arises from the value she possesses and indeed would possess irrespective of being one’s daughter, sister, mother, friend, wife, etc. (Keller, 2013: 79). But then straight away the Individuals View encounters an immediate objection too: whilst a focus on Jane’s self-standing value may render the attitudes one has towards her intelligible, it struggles to explain why one should regard her differently than all individuals that possess the same qualities in equal measure. It fails, one might say, to adequately explain why one should have a special concern for her (Keller, 2013: 79).

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\(^7\) Whereas Scheffler talks of non-instrumental valuing, I speak of intrinsically valuing so as to avoid confusion, since aside from non-instrumentally valuing X as an end (i.e. intrinsically), it is also perfectly coherent to non-instrumentally value X extrinsically (Langton, 2007: 163). Moreover, as I suggest in chapter V (p.104), what Scheffler intends on closer inspection must be the former rather than the latter.
Notwithstanding their respective appeal, the Individuals View and the Relationships View are by no means the only two accounts of the ethics of partiality. In particular, some argue it is our personal projects shaped by the roles our loved ones play in them that generate our reasons and duties of partiality, not relationships or the individuals party to them at all. The general idea of the Projects View is this: we take our ground projects and commitments to be centrally constitutive of who we are, and since our special relationships are commonly bound up in our conceptions of self in various ways, this is what explains our reasons for partiality within those relationships. It is because my own projects hold special value for me, and at least some of my projects consist in a commitment to, and an investment of agency in, my special relationships and those with whom I share them, that I therefore have reasons to be partial to them.

At first blush the Projects View may seem somewhat at odds with the concept of ethical partiality, bound up as it is with special concern for others, for the concept of projects is generally cast in an altogether more self-referential light. This need not be the case though, for projects can clearly be other-directed as well as narrowly self-directed. If one of my personal ground projects is tied up in respecting, protecting and sustaining the environment, that project seems predominantly other-directed (to future generations for example) rather than self-directed. Thus, the value of my personal projects need not be easily reducible to my interests alone, even though their value for me necessarily lies in their being mine, being part of who I am.

One way we might convey the appeal of the Projects View is through speculating about the following question: supposing you find yourself with time for reflection on your death bed, what kinds of questions are you likely to ponder when reflecting back on your life? I hope it not too serious an indictment of my character, but I think that for me (and, I suspect, for the vast majority) it will be questions such as ‘was I a good father, a good son, a good husband, a good friend?’ that would fill my thoughts should I have such an opportunity for reminiscence. If I could answer these questions to some degree of satisfaction in the affirmative, I suppose I may pass away reasonably content with myself. And to the extent that these ground projects of mine – of being a good father, son, friend, husband, etc. – reveal themselves to be the commitments which are
centrally constitutive of my sense of self, indeed my very conception of a life well lived, this looks to be an outcome particularly friendly to the Projects View.  

However, like the other two candidate views, the Projects View faces an immediate objection too, for although projects need not be ‘selfish’ as such, the types of reasons they generate tend to be, as Scheffler puts it, ‘normatively individualistic’ (2010: 111) in a way that renders the Projects View singularly ill-equipped to explain why some reasons are duties of partiality. Scheffler posits a deontic asymmetry between reasons generated by projects and relationships, noting that whereas relationship-dependent reasons often take the form of moral requirements or duties, project-dependent reasons cannot, due to the fact that one reserves unilateral authority to disregard the latter in a way one may not the former (Scheffler, 2010: 109). As Scheffler sees it, relationships give rise to two corresponding sets of reasons: reasons for partiality, and reasons to form normative expectations of each other (these effectively being two sides of the same coin as it were). If the source of my reasons for partiality is the relationship we share, and those reasons are compelling, then my reasons for behaving partially towards you are complemented by your having reasons to expect that I will respond in an appropriate fashion. However, no such parallel exists regarding project-dependent reasons because of their inherently normatively individualistic hue (Scheffler, 2010: 110).  

As Scheffler writes: ‘I have unilateral authority to disregard such reasons, however strong they may be, and this gives content to the idea that, even though I may be foolish or unreasonable not to act on them, nevertheless I am not “required” or “obligated” to do so’ (2010: 111).

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8 Should my departure from this world be prolonged for whatever reason, my thoughts might also turn to the question ‘was I a good person?’ One might suppose that a string of yeses in response to the previous enquiries might go some way to yielding an affirmative response here also, but that cannot be the full story. After all, history gives us numerous examples of people who were loyal and loving fathers, friends, brothers, sons, but who also committed loathsome evils against others. So, before I may ascend in my reverie, I will also need to ask how much have I knowingly or avoidably harmed others. Notwithstanding the tricky issue of acts and omissions (I doubt anyone is fully innocent of harm by omission), if so far as is reasonable I never intentionally harmed another, I might again feel that I have lived a life largely beyond moral reproach. Or at least, I might by the standards of common-sense morality, which tend to put greatest stock in what we owe to loved ones on the one hand, and the negative general duties we owe strangers on the other.

9 It may be problematic to hang claims about sources of associative duties on the formation of normative expectations since partiality is sometimes morally required even when the ‘relative’ to whom it is owed lacks the normative expectation of me. The capacity to form such expectations may be absent in, for example, my new-born or my relative who is severely mentally handicapped, yet I may still have associative duties to care for them, protect them, etc. Whether this can be circumvented does not however matter for the argument here, for regardless of whether or not all relationships fit this standard of reciprocal normativity, the claim here is merely that personal projects apparently do not.
That, then, is the lay of land of ethical partiality and the dominant conceptual cleavages within it. In this thesis, I attempt to tease out the rudiments of a revised Relationships View of partiality which, though more or less true in spirit to its predecessors, comprises an attempt to address conspicuous holes in those arguments. In its basic guise, the claim I want to defend is this: Certain of our special relationships are intrinsically valuable to us because common to such relationships is the generic rich good of modally robust special concern. Our enjoyment of this rich good of robust special concern requires not only that we enjoy the thin good of partiality in the actual world whereby we do things for, to and with one another beyond what we otherwise would in the absence of our relationship, but also that we are disposed to provide each other with this thin good of partiality across a range of possible worlds in which things might be quite different. If we have reason to intrinsically value our relationship for the rich good of special concern we enjoy from one another, our relationship will generate special reasons of partiality, and we will regard ourselves as having special claims on one another beyond those that persons in general have on us. And whenever the performance of a special reason of partiality (and thus the realisation of the thin good of actual partiality in this world) is not just conducive to realising the rich good of robust special concern but in fact instrumentally necessary to substantiate it, the provision of the thin good of partiality the situation requires translates from a special reason into an associative duty of partiality.

The intricacies of all three views, the objections to them, and possible responses to those objections will come out in the wash over the course of this thesis as I attempt to defend and revise the Relationships View of partiality, but before proceeding one more preliminary merits flagging. Throughout this thesis I posit various claims about what valuing persons and relationships involves, about how persons and relationships can possess value, and about the relation between how they possess value and how we value them. In particular, clarity concerning distinctions pertaining to what it is for something to possess intrinsic or extrinsic value, and what it is to value something intrinsically or extrinsically is critical, so in the next section I shine a spotlight on these conceptual distinctions that may better enable us to pin down what the terms intrinsic and extrinsic value mean, drawing primarily on arguments from Christine M. Korsgaard (1983), Shelly Kagan (1998) and Rae Langton (2007).
In the first place, we might distinguish two concepts of ‘intrinsic value’. On one reading, to say an object has intrinsic value is taken to mean that it has value ‘in and of itself’, independent of all other objects – that it has value solely in virtue of its intrinsic properties. This first concept, according to Kagan, can be distinguished from a second concept of intrinsic value, which can be characterised as the value that something has ‘as an end’ (1998: 278). Korsgaard notes a similar conceptual distinction, although unlike Kagan, she proposes that these are not two different instances of intrinsic value as such; rather, only the first conception, wherein something has value solely in virtue of its intrinsic properties, merits the title of intrinsic value. To say that something is valuable as an end in the second sense (or ‘finally valuable’ in her words) constitutes a distinct claim, she argues, from the claim that something possesses intrinsic value. Thus, to describe something as possessing intrinsic value is not, by definition, to say that is valued as an end, or for its own sake (Korsgaard, 1983: 170). More precisely, Korsgaard suggests what she calls ‘two distinctions in goodness’: the first distinction, between intrinsic and extrinsic value, pertains to the way things possess value; the second distinction, between ends and means, or, as she puts it, between final and instrumental goods, pertains to the way we value things (1983: 170). Another way to put this might be to say that the former invokes the term value in its noun form, whilst the latter invokes it in its verb form (Scheffler, 2010: 101-103). Once these two distinctions are observed we can see, Korsgaard maintains, that ‘(i)ntrinsic and instrumental good should not be treated as correlatives, because they belong to two different distinctions’ (Korsgaard, 1983: 170); rather, the true correlative of intrinsic is extrinsic, and the true correlative of instrumental is final.

Rae Langton suggests some amendments to Korsgaard’s distinctions in order to plug what she sees as gaps in her account of the way we value things, and the way things have value (2007: 162-165). In particular, Langton argues that the two options Korsgaard offers as ways we value things – either as ends or as means – do not cover the whole ambit of valuing. The example she offers, which seems to fit neither category satisfactorily, is that of a wedding ring. Langton’s claim is that it does not seem quite right to say you value your wedding ring instrumentally for the good effects it has on your marriage, but nor does it seem quite right to say you value it as an end or
for its own sake either. Nevertheless, you might well value it, and if you do, it seems most plausible to say you value it extrinsically, i.e. for the sake of something else; presumably, for the sake of its association with your marriage (Langton, 2007: 162-163). Thus, Langton proposes an amendment to Korsgaard’s distinction, arguing that ‘there is room for extrinsic goodness not only in the way things have value, but also in the way we value things’ (Langton, 2007: 163). Incorporating this and other slight amendments\(^\text{10}\) Langton’s revision of Korsgaard’s two distinctions in goodness yields something like the following (2007: 164):

1) The ways in which things can have value:
   a. Intrinsic value: the value a thing has in itself/solely in virtue of its intrinsic properties
   b. Extrinsic value: the value a thing has from another source
      i. Instrumental value: the value a thing has from its effects

2) The ways in which we value things:
   a. Intrinsically: to value the thing for its own sake/as an end
   b. Extrinsically: to value the thing for the sake of something else
      i. Instrumentally: to value the thing for the sake of its effects

I am fundamentally in accord with Langton and her reworking of these distinctions concerning the ways things have value and the ways we value things. On the side of how things can have value, there is little I would change, and to a certain extent I think, little call for doing so here. That is because I believe questions of partiality are predominantly questions about the ways in which we value persons, relationships, projects, etc. and not about the ways in which those things possess value. On the side of how we can value things, I have altered Langton’s definitions slightly, although without, I think, straying too far from her interpretation. I reword her claims there so as to omit the phrase ‘for the sake of’ since it seems plausible to extrinsically value X because of Y, without valuing X for the sake of Y. For example, if we suppose one can extrinsically value a person non-instrumentally, a friend say, on the basis that the source of one’s reasons for valuing them is the friendship, not the friend their self, we would not I think say one values the friend for the sake of the friendship. This seems to suggest the unfortunate implication that absent the friendship as a source of reasons,\(^\text{10}\)

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\(^{10}\) Langton also suggests we should make room for instrumental value, not only in the way we value things, but also in the way things have value (2007: 163). The thought here is that it seems perfectly coherent to speak of something possessing instrumental value as means, irrespective of whether anyone values it so. For example, consider the way trees convert CO2 into oxygen. It seems plausible to say that trees have always possessed this instrumental value, even before anyone realised they fulfil this function, and therefore without being valued instrumentally.
one could have no reason whatsoever to value the friend at all; that if not for the friendship, there would be nothing left to value them for the sake of. But of course there is; after all one would still have reason to intrinsically value them for their own sake. One would not, it is true, have reason to value them specially in the requisite sense for partiality towards them, but then that is exactly what we would expect to find of two persons who don’t share a friendship, or special relationship of any kind.

For the purposes of the remainder of this thesis then, I will be working with the following adaptation of Langton’s two distinctions (2007: 164):

1) The ways in which X can possess value:
   a. Intrinsic value: the value X possesses solely in virtue of the intrinsic properties of X.
   b. Extrinsic value: the value X possesses because of some distinct Y:
      i. Instrumental extrinsic value: the value X possesses as a means to Y.
      ii. Non-instrumental extrinsic value: the value X possesses because of Y (though not as a means to Y).

2) The ways in which we value things:\textsuperscript{11}
   a. Intrinsically: to value X, and to take X to be the source of one’s reasons for valuing X.
   b. Extrinsically: to value X, and to take some distinct Y to be the source of one’s reasons for valuing X:
      i. To extrinsically value X instrumentally: to value X as a means to some Y, and to take Y to be the source of one’s reasons for valuing X.
      ii. To extrinsically value X non-instrumentally: to value X because of Y (though not as a means to Y), and to take Y to be the source of one's reasons for valuing X.

Although it is hopefully clear, it is worth stressing that on this account questions about how things possess value relate to the location of the source of value, and questions about how one values things to the location of the source of one’s reasons for valuing them. If the relevance of these distinctions for the debate surrounding partiality seems somewhat opaque for now, hopefully the discussion of the formal concept of partiality in the next chapter will shed some sideways light on the role these distinctions play in the internal mechanism of my argument. Before that however, it will perhaps be helpful to consider some uncontroversial examples of the multifarious ways in which

\textsuperscript{11} Intrinsic/extrinsic valuing here is derived from, and structurally analogous to, Kolodny’s account of final/non-final valuing (2003: 150).
intrinsic/extrinsic valuing of intrinsically/extrinsically valuable things can intersect and overlap.

Extrinsic value is the value X possesses because of some distinct Y, and we can distinguish two types of extrinsic value: instrumental extrinsic value, which is the value X has as a means to Y; and non-instrumental extrinsic value, which is the value X has because of Y (though not as a means to Y). At first sight, it might seem that to say X possesses extrinsic value X because of some distinct Y is rather lazily vague. However, it is vague by intentional design, for there are numerous ways in which something can possess extrinsic value.

Beginning with the simplest and most common interpretation, the instrumental extrinsic value something possesses is the value it has as a means to obtain other valuable things. A $100 (AUD) note possesses extrinsic instrumental value for it enables its possessor to obtain other goods to the combined worth of $100. Other times the extrinsic value X possesses is primarily non-instrumental (though it may be instrumentally valuable too). Although the $100 (AUD) note in my wallet is roughly equivalent in value to the £50 Irish punt note I have in my wallet (which although out of circulation since 2002, can still be exchanged for Euros at the Central Bank of Ireland), the extrinsic value of the Irish note consists in more (for me at least) than the value it possesses purely as a means, partly because of its scarcity, but mostly for the connotations it has for me of home and times past. This is often referred to as the extrinsic value something possesses for the sake of something else, or the value it has by association with something else, or by virtue of its being representative of something else that is valuable. Of course, such labels might as well apply to purely instrumental value too. The $100 (AUD) note in my wallet possesses purely extrinsic instrumental value, yet it is perfectly coherent to say I value it for the sake of or by association with or as representative of what I can procure with it. By contrast, whilst a fan who buys the sweaty rag that Joe Cocker used to mop his brow at Woodstock on eBay also values it for the sake of what it represents or the associations with Cocker and Woodstock it conjures up, the fan is unlikely to value it as a means at all; certainly, it would be surprising were he to put it to use washing his car. Rather, he values the rag because Joe Cocker used it to mop his brow at Woodstock, and not
because of anything he can get out of it, which is to say he extrinsically values it non-instrumentally.

Apart from these terms, I sometimes employ another expression which I think perspicuously captures the non-instrumental aspect of extrinsic value we find in relationships specifically, and that is ‘embodied value’. To explain what ‘embodied value’ is, consider an analogy with labour-command and labour-cost in economic theories of value (Smith, 1948: 196-198). The latter is what I have in mind by ‘embodied value’ and is the analogue of non-instrumental extrinsic value; that is, the value of commodity X determined on the basis of the labour expended in producing it – what went into it. The former then, is the analogue of instrumental extrinsic value; the value of commodity X calculated on the basis of its utility value, or the positive effects that it causes – what can be got out of it. Both kinds are clearly causal in character, but what the distinction highlights is the significance of where X stands in the causal context as a whole; i.e. whether it participates in the overall context as a cause or an effect. I suspect if it is true of anything that you get out of them what you put into them, it is true of our relationships to our loved ones. If the relationships that we do not value purely as means are indeed valuable, much of that value is surely there by virtue of the considerable investments we make in them, in terms of ourselves, our time and our agency. It is this aspect of the extrinsic value our relationships possess – a value that is not associational or representative exactly, but that is not straightforwardly instrumental either – that I term embodied value.

Turning now to the possession of intrinsic value as defined here, this is the value X has solely in virtue of the intrinsic properties of X. Now, it seems to me a tricky question just what can be said to have value solely in virtue of its intrinsic properties, being perhaps somewhat of the persuasion of what Kagan calls ‘radical subjectivism’ about value (1998: 281). That is, I am sceptical that we could describe very much as having value in the absence of some creature that actually valued it, and since being valued is an extrinsic property, I am inclined to believe the range of objects that possess value solely in virtue of their intrinsic properties to be fairly limited. That said, one candidate most can agree possesses value solely in virtue of intrinsic properties, are persons. Not even the radical subjectivist will find this claim objectionable, since by the act of valuing themselves persons can be said to be valued, and that property would
be an intrinsic one since they are themselves the valuer (Kagan, 1998: 281).\textsuperscript{12} The adoption of a radical subjectivist stance is not without its problems, but I will not go into them here. I will just assume, as most I think do, that persons do indeed possess intrinsic value, and willingly concede the possibility that things other than persons may be intrinsically valuable solely in virtue of their intrinsic properties too (certain non-human creatures for example).

What I cannot concede is the notion that something like a relationship could possess value solely in virtue of its intrinsic properties.\textsuperscript{13} Before the straw man accusations fly however, I am well aware that the majority (if not all) of the commentators on partiality refrain from pinning their arguments on claims that relationships possess value in this sense. Neither defenders of nor objectors to the Relationships View suggest that the distinguishing claim of that view – the claim that special relationships are intrinsically valuable – implies that relationships are somehow valuable solely in virtue of their intrinsic properties, as if they would retain their value were they the only thing that existed in the universe (Moore, 2005: 190). Indeed, many explicitly rule out any such understanding (Keller, 2010: fn30; Kolodny, 2003: fn21), or substitute terms like ‘non-instrumental’ or ‘final’ for ‘intrinsic’ value as an end presumably with an eye to avoiding such confusion.

Yet, whilst obvious to the initiated, I think this is worth stressing nonetheless as the terminological construction of arguments concerning ethical partiality almost unavoidably totter on the brink of equivocation when speaking of intrinsic value and

\textsuperscript{12} This would still pose a problem if we want to say, as I think we do, that even persons that don’t value themselves at all still possess intrinsic value. See Langton (2007) for further discussion of the ‘unconditional’ value of persons.

\textsuperscript{13} The thought that relationships could possess intrinsic value at all seems metaphysically vexed, at least on the basis of something like G. E. Moore’s isolation test, which posits that, ‘In order to arrive at a correct decision on…this question (about what things have intrinsic value), it is necessary to consider what things are such that, if they existed by themselves, in absolute isolation, we should yet judge their existence to be good’ (2005: 190). It is difficult to fathom how a relationship could stand alone as the sole entity in the universe, although one suspects that to say as much is not to reject outright the notion that a relationship could be valuable solely in virtue of its intrinsic properties, but rather suggests that total abstraction from all possible social settings is simply not the best way to compute value (Dancy, 2004: 166-7).

Perhaps some argument for the intrinsic value of relationships could be mounted on the basis that only ‘facts’ or ‘states of affairs’ can potentially be valuable solely in virtue of their intrinsic properties. For example, it could be argued that even the extrinsic properties of a relationship are nevertheless intrinsic properties of the ‘fact’ or ‘state of affairs’ of being in a relationship. I cannot do justice to such claims here, but for further reading see Kagan (1998: 293-4) and Zimmerman (2010: §4).
intrinsic valuing. For example, although all disavow claims about value possessed in virtue of intrinsic properties for the purposes of this discussion, the following sorts of common claims tend to blur the distinction: that the special relationships we value intrinsically are those which are valuable in their own rights, that have or hold intrinsic value for us, or are those that are valuable for their own sakes, or in and of themselves, or as such, etc. Whilst these are not unfitting terms with which to describe things we value as ends, it is easy to see how they might be misconstrued as referencing the value relationships possess. But even when described as intrinsically valuable in these terms, the claim that they are, is only ever a claim about how relationships are valued (i.e. intrinsically, as an end), not about the way they possess value.

Irrespective of how narrow or broad the range of things that actually do possess intrinsic value, one thing we can say of those things that do, is that one has reason to intrinsically value them; that is, one should value them as ends, regarding the things themselves to be the source of one’s reasons for valuing them so. This of course does not mean that if something is valuable solely in virtue of its intrinsic properties, one must value it merely intrinsically, but rather that one must never value it merely extrinsically. There is, to wit, nothing wrong with extrinsically valuing a person, even as a means, providing one simultaneously treats them as an end. For example, one might extrinsically value a shop attendant instrumentally as a means to procure a bar of chocolate. To do so, however, entails no violation of the Kantian categorical imperative for that requires that you not treat persons merely as means, and since you also have reason to intrinsically value the shop attendant as a valuable human being in their own right that is not the case here. Thus, whilst you might kick a chocolate bar vending machine that for some reason fails to fulfil its function with relative impunity, the same is not true of the shop attendant, for being a person you still have reason to value them as an end, irrespective of their chocolate bar-vending functionality. So for any X that is valuable solely in virtue of its intrinsic properties, one has reason to value X intrinsically (as an end), taking X itself to be the source of one’s reasons for valuing it so.

14 The reference here is to Immanuel Kant’s second formulation of the categorical imperative: ‘Act in such a way that you treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, never merely as a means to an end, but always at the same time as an end’ (G, 4: 429).
However, whilst it is widely if not universally accepted that if something has intrinsic value, then one has reason to value it intrinsically, entailment in the other direction can be rejected: the fact that one has reason to value something intrinsically does not entail that it possesses value in virtue of its intrinsic properties. Indeed, for defenders of the Relationships View this must be so if we want to reject the claim that relationships possess value in virtue of their intrinsic properties, but hold that one can nevertheless value relationships intrinsically. The literature offers various examples of things that possess only extrinsic value yet are thought to be valued intrinsically, such as mink coats (Korsgaard, 1983: 185), the pen Abraham Lincoln used to sign the Emancipation Proclamation (Kagan, 1998: 285), Princess Diana’s dress, or Napoleon’s hat (Rabinowicz and Rønnow-Rasmussen, 2000: 41). In each of these instances, the presiding thought is that we have reason to intrinsically value these items for they are valuable in themselves, though not in virtue of their intrinsic properties, but instead because of their relation to something or someone else deemed to be of worth.

In general however, I do not find these examples compelling. Rather, it seems more fitting to say we extrinsically value these things non-instrumentally (Langton, 2007: 162-163). That is, whilst we do not value these items merely as means, nor do we value them as ends; rather we value them because of their association with something or someone else deemed to be of special worth. This I think paints a truer picture of how we really value such things, even things we ourselves often profess to value intrinsically, such as those things we value sentimentally (indeed, the very notion of sentimentality implies you value a thing because of something else, something extrinsic to it which the thing evokes sentiments about). Despite this, I believe it is possible to value intrinsically something that possesses merely extrinsic value. In particular, in seeking an instance whereof one intrinsically values (as an end) something that possesses purely extrinsic value, I suggest we need look no further than our special relationships. This then, is the argument that will form the basis for the Relationships View, as I seek to develop it over the next few chapters. More specifically, I will argue that not only is intrinsically valuing one’s special relationships (and having reason to do so) perfectly compatible with their possessing merely extrinsic value, but that doing so is in fact conditional on their possessing extrinsic value. If successful, this claim enables us to hold onto the thought that we
value our relationships as ends, whilst at the same time endorsing the claim that relationships, if they possess value at all, can possess only extrinsic value.

A final point worth stressing is that whilst there is a pleasing structural isomorphism to Langton’s two distinctions and my adaptation of them that is absent from Korsgaard’s, this should not be taken to imply that a thing possessing intrinsic or extrinsic value in the sense of the first distinction straightforwardly maps reasons to value it intrinsically or extrinsically respectively in the sense of the second distinction. There is nothing in principle to rule out any of the various ways the kinds of value and valuing discussed might intersect and overlap: intrinsically valuable things are sometimes valued merely instrumentally (as when political leaders motivated by the “dirty hands” rationale treat persons as means); merely instrumentally valuable things may be intrinsically valued (as Ebenezer Scrooge values his riches); or one may extrinsically value something non-instrumentally that possesses no value at all (suppose the Joe Cocker fan were duped into buying a sweaty rag that was not the one used by Joe Cocker at Woodstock at all). In each case there is clearly nothing in principle to rule out saying that the Machiavel, the Scrooge, or the poor duped Joe Cocker fan can respectively value their objects merely instrumentally, intrinsically, or (extrinsically) non-instrumentally.

Nevertheless, however they actually value them, we would want to say they do not have reason to value them the way they do. For example, to extrinsically value the sweaty rag non-instrumentally is to see its association with Joe Cocker and Woodstock as the source of reasons for valuing it. If the sweaty rag lacks the association with Joe Cocker and Woodstock it is purported to have – if unbeknownst to the fan it is not really the rag he used at all – then we would want to say the fan has no reason to value it as they do (even though they mistakenly do). Their mistakenly extrinsically valuing it non-instrumentally cannot bestow non-instrumental extrinsic value on it, and the fact that they value it so (despite it being a fake), whilst demonstrating the possibility of valuing any old thing any old way, has no bearing on the normative reasons one has for valuing them, but rather more prosaically, shows that one can, quite simply, be mistaken about what one values. Similarly, we tend to think of the Machiavel and the Scrooge that they too have no reason to value persons and money as they do.
respectively. No doubt it is always possible to value something you have no reason to value, or indeed fail to value something that you do have reason to value, but if we should take anything from this, it is that we commonly take ourselves to have reason to value certain things in certain ways, as well as believing that valuing them so is normatively appropriate.

**Conclusion**

This then effectively concludes the analytic discussion of intrinsic and extrinsic value and valuing here. I will return to the Projects View to outline in somewhat finer strokes the deontic problems it faces in Chapter IV once we have fleshed out the features of special relationships and the subject nonuniversalizable reasons and duties they generate in the first part of that chapter. In Chapter V then, I will begin shoring up the details of the revision of the Relationships View I propose. Before any of that however, I turn in the next chapter to the task of deconstructing the concept of partiality into its component parts with a view to clarifying what the sort of special concern and ethical partiality characteristic of our special relationships consists in, before going on in the second half of that chapter to train the spotlight on the Individuals View, identifying in the process what looks to be a significant obstacle for proponents of that particular account of ethical partiality.

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15 This is admittedly not so straightforward in the case of the ‘dirty hands’ politician. An act-consequentialist for example might argue that, in a ticking time bomb scenario, the politician might well have reason to torture a terrorist in order to extract the information to defuse the bomb. What one thinks in such case is likely to say much about the ethical framework from within which one is operating, but assuming a fair degree of consensus that persons should never be treated purely as means, I will set this concern aside here.
Chapter III
The Concept of Partiality and a Problem for the Individuals View

Introduction
This is a thesis about partiality. It is not, or at least not primarily, a thesis about impartiality. Of course, there is a sense in which the one implies the other, but my intent in this chapter is to avoid framing my claims about partiality primarily as solutions to the various impasses that arise as a result of requirements of impartiality, and to focus instead on partiality as a concept in its own right. The assumption in the literature is almost always that impartiality is prior to partiality, general duties prior to associative duties, etc. such that much of what is written about partiality is primarily reactive. Whether those assumptions concerning priority are convincing or not (I address this question in Chapter VII), the effect of them is to load the die before the board is even set, but set it we must. With this in mind, rather than expounding an account of ethical impartiality and then observing how ethical partiality fits with it once the pieces are in motion, in this chapter I explore what happens when we push the other way; what happens if we try to develop a free-standing account of partiality from the nuts and bolts up first, and then ask how impartiality fits with that? The hope is that in doing so we will discover things about partiality that were not obvious before, and that these might further illuminate the intersection between partiality, impartiality and morality.

In the introduction to Chapter I, I suggested something of the extent to which I believe our everyday lives to be shot through with partiality. How the lives of a great many of the people I interact with on an ongoing basis seem to be of some special concern to me, be they family, friends, colleagues, students, or even the barista at the coffee shop I frequent each morning, the bartender at my local pub, or perhaps even the girl I happen to pass on the way to university with whom I exchange smiles every morning. There are no doubt significant differences of substance and degree here, but I believe each plausibly constitutes an instance of special concern formally speaking, at least on the definition of special concern I set forth in the first section of this chapter.
However, even if formally speaking, they share the structure of special concern that I suggest is common to partiality generally, the species of special concern I have towards my mum is clearly distinct ethically speaking from the special concern I have towards smiling girl. Exploring why this is so forms one of the objectives of this chapter, the focal question of which is not why I have reasons of partiality towards persons for whom I have a special concern but not persons for whom I have only a general concern, but rather why some species of special concern generate special reasons and duties of partiality whilst others do not. That is, rather than asking why I have special reasons of partiality towards my mum but seemingly not smiling girl, I start from the assumption that we can make sense of my having a special concern for both of them, and then ask what is distinct about my special concern for my mum that generates special reasons of partiality towards her in a way that my special concern for smiling girl apparently does not. The driving intuition here is that my special concern for my mum and smiling girl share more in common formally speaking than might initially be obvious, and that we will find the ethical difference in them not by looking for structural differences, but by attending to what is different within the formal structure they share.

In the first section of this chapter, I discuss the phenomenology of partiality and the respective appeal of the three candidate views introduced in the last chapter in this regard. In the second section then, with a view to deconstructing the formal concept of partiality, I go on to detail three features of the concept of partiality common to the phenomenon in all its myriad forms: the first is that partiality essentially entails special concern; the second is that there must always be reason for special concern (which I suggest may be usefully distinguished from special reasons of partiality); and the third is that the source of reasons for special concern are always extrinsic to the objects of partiality (with the exception of special concern for oneself). With this formal concept of partiality on the table, I go on in the final section to suggest that acceptance of the former claims presents something of a significant problem for the Individuals View, its only escape from which commits it to a relatively unappealing primitivist explanation of ethical partiality.
The Phenomenology of Partiality

Having introduced the three views of the ethics of partiality in the last chapter, perhaps the most obvious point of reference from which to start is with an assessment of how they stack up in terms of phenomenological appeal. When we train the spotlight thus, it seems that on first blush at least it is rarely our projects or relationships that figure uppermost in our deliberations when we act well within special relationships; rather, it is almost always the individual that is at the forefront of our thoughts. When I am moved to comfort my friend when she is sad, it would seem unusual, if not callous, to think that what motivates me are thoughts of the role she plays in my personal projects or the friendship we share, rather than thoughts of her directly. What most of us want, it seems, is that friends are motivated to act for you by thoughts of you. To the extent that this intuition resonates with us then, it would seem that of the views canvassed, the Individuals View appears to be truest to our motivations concerning special relationships, reflecting perhaps best the phenomenon of partiality as we actually experience it (Keller, 2013: 41-43, 62-64).

However, proponents of the Relationships View often espouse a phenomenological claim of their own. As Scheffler points out, defenders of that view are impressed by the fact that we often explain or justify our partiality toward certain people by citing our relationships to them (2001: 100). To borrow Kolodny’s example, if I were sitting outside a hospital theatre awaiting the outcome of Maureen’s operation and someone asked me why I looked so anxious, it would seem rather odd to rattle off a list of Maureen’s personal qualities and then add, as an afterthought, that she also happens to be my mum (2003: 139). And from the perspective of the Projects View, if my speculation about the sorts of questions most of us would ask ourselves on our deathbeds reminiscence – was I good father, mother, husband, wife, son, daughter, brother, sister, friend, etc. – reveals those to be the commitments by which we define whether the lives we lived were lives well-lived, then perhaps there is something intuitively appealing to be found here too. In any case, we should be wary of overstating the claim that we are never moved to behave in certain ways in special relationships by considerations of the relationships themselves, or the projects through which you are invested in them. At least sometimes thoughts of our relationships may feature uppermost, such as when, for example, one makes a special effort to ingratiate oneself with one’s in-laws for the sake of one’s marriage, or when one agrees to bury the
hatchet and try to move on from some dispute with one’s friend for the sake of your friendship. And if you count amongst your projects that of being a good son, there may be times when you arrive at decisions via thoughts of what is appropriate to do if you are to be true to that personal commitment. Nevertheless, Keller may be right that these sorts of motivations are perhaps not for the main part phenomenologically representative of how we generally act when we act well within special relationships (2013: 62-64). Ultimately, a friend who characteristically gives greater significance to thoughts of your relationship or the role you play in their projects when deciding how to behave towards you is scarcely the kind of friend most of us long for.

That said, I suspect claims about the site of the value to which we respond when acting well within special relationships are, in a subtle but nonetheless important sense, distinct from claims about the source of our reasons for partiality. When I rush to my mum’s side to comfort her when she is taken into hospital, it is indeed thoughts of her, and not of the relationship we share, that I most directly respond to. But just because I respond to her value, and not the value of our relationship or my project to be a good son, it need not follow that it is therefore her value that is the source of my reasons for responding as I do. At least, there seems no incongruity in saying ‘I have a special concern for X, because of Y’. The Individuals View however, seems to commit us to saying ‘I have a special concern for X, because of X’. But then, it is opaque as an explanation of why I respond to my mum’s hospitalisation in the special way I do. What we want to know, after all, is why I respond to her in that special way? What reason do I have for rushing to her side that I lack with regard to all equally distressed individuals? And what is the source of that reason? However true to motivational phenomenology it may be that relationships and projects rarely figure uppermost in our motives for acting well within special relationship, I see no reason to suppose it would follow therefore, that relationships and projects are not truly the sources of reasons for partiality. Indeed, not only does it seem plausible that the object of my partiality and the source of my reasons for partiality towards it be different things, I believe that, in order to account for partiality at all, this must in fact be the case, or so I argue in the next section.
The Concept of Partiality

The motivating thought of this section is that we can discern a formal structure that applies generically to all instances of partiality, whether moral, immoral, or amoral. Beginning with amoral partialities, there is a perfectly good sense in which various dispositions can be described as ‘partial’, not all of which concern morality, or at least not obviously so. Such partialities devoid of moral content find expression in phrases like ‘I am rather partial to Guinness’, or in the sense that a person who is heterosexual exhibits a partiality of sorts towards people of the opposite sex in their choice of sexual partners. Most of us would agree, I think, that my or their being so-disposed has little truck with morality (at least not obviously). At the same time, whilst the concept ‘partiality’ broadly construed need not have anything to do with morality, there is another sense in which it is perhaps already a morally loaded term. That is, the term ‘partiality’ insofar as it picks out a practice, tends, if anything, to be evocative of immoral or unfair conduct as typified by ‘bias’ and ‘prejudice’, at least in the popular imagination. To cleave all partiality to this immoral conception would perhaps effect a pleasing symmetry with the concept of ‘impartiality’ with its generally positive moral connotations (morality and impartiality are often portrayed as so thoroughly entwined as to be synonymous, as with Adam Smith’s ‘impartial spectator’), but the result is one that many will be reluctant to endorse. Common sense suggests that acts of partiality are not always immoral – we tend to think it morally appropriate if not required that parents be partial towards their children for example; and thus by implication acting impartially is not always morally appropriate, at least on some level. Whether required, appropriate, inappropriate, or uninteresting entirely, partiality clearly comes in many colours ethically speaking. If the presiding intuition I turn now to unpack is correct however, it comes in only one form.

Despite the fairly intuitive distinctions between moral partiality, immoral partiality and amoral partialities, there are arguably a number of features characteristic of the disposition of partiality broadly construed irrespective of content. The first of these is that to be partial towards some X is to have a special concern for X, and/or that some state of affairs which essentially involves X be a certain way. Second, to be partial towards X is to have reason for special concern for X, and I will suggest that reasons for special concern can be usefully distinguished from the special reasons of partiality relationships generate. The third and final generic feature I mention here is that,
formally speaking, reasons for special concern always derive from a source extrinsic to
the object of special concern. The definition of partiality these claims taken in tandem
yield is this: to say you are partial towards X is to say you have a special or greater
concern for X, and/or that states of affairs essentially involving X be thus and so, than
you otherwise would in the absence of some relevant factor Y, this being the source of
your reason for special concern.

Firstly, to be partial towards some X is to have a special concern for X, and/or that
some state of affairs which essentially involves X be a certain way. This claim is
fairly standard, and I think most grasp what it is to have a special concern for someone
or something, as well as intuitively registering its centrality to the concept of partiality.
It would, after all, seem odd to assert that you are partial towards your best friend say,
but in the same breath profess to have no special concern for her. But just what are we
talking about when we speak of special concern? In the first place to have a special
concern for X is to have a greater concern for X, and/or that certain states of affa
airs essentially involving X be a certain way. Still, we might ask: greater comparative to
what? Most commonly special concern for X is portrayed as greater concern for X
than for all other nominally similar Xs. And indeed, my special concern for my
partner Molly does imply my having a greater concern for her than I do for all other
nominally similar persons. However, whilst not wrong, it is scarcely the most
informative interpretation of what it is to have a special concern, for to say ‘I have a
greater concern for Molly than I do for all other nominally similar persons’ tells us
nothing about why I have a special concern for her. The more informative response
would be: ‘I have a greater concern for Molly than I would were we not in a romantic
relationship’ (the relationship being the relevant factor Y). I propose then, to define
having a special concern for X as having a greater concern for X, and/or that some
state of affairs which essentially involves X be a certain way, than one would have
under counterfactual conditions where some relevant factor Y were absent, rather than
as concern that is greater comparative to one’s concern for nominally similar Xs.

It will not have gone unnoticed that the definition of special concern here incorporates
not just an expression of special concern for X, but also a special concern that certain
states of affairs essentially involving X be a certain way. This extension of the
conventional definition is motivated by a desire to disrupt the common but wanting
practice of translating special concern for X into mere favouring of X’s interests or the preferential conferral of benefits on X. As Sarah Stroud writes, such simple characterisations are starkly ill-fitted to the lived reality of what it is to be specially concerned for friends, lovers, family members, etc. (2010: 144). When I return home to spend Christmas with my parents, my doing so is not primarily expressive of a desire to prioritise the realisation of their interests, or to confer some sort of benefit on them. Rather, I am specially concerned to maintain the close and loving relationship we share, to spend time with them, to eat turkey, to pull crackers and to enjoy a family Christmas with them (Stroud, 2010: 146). By the same token, my special concern for my partner Molly speaks to a concern that we will always be there for each other, that we will stay together, laugh together, even cry together; that our relationship continues to be one characterised by love, special respect, emotional openness and vulnerability, responsiveness, shared activities, mutual support and fun – in short, all the phenomena that makes sharing a special relationship with someone the rewarding experience it usually is. Yet none of this seems easily reducible to my having a special concern to see Molly’s (or indeed my) individual interests promoted or a bestowal of benefits, at least not primarily. Rather, my partiality towards Molly seems better characterised as a special concern that the states of affairs that make up her life in all its manifold aspects are such as to be conducive to a life of happiness, well-being and flourishing. Of course, it is in Molly’s interest to be happy and well, and as a general rule the states of affairs one is specially concerned to see realised usually will serve the interests of the person implicated. I say only ‘usually’ though; there are, I think, exceptions to the rule. Definitional intricacies apart, the first point is simply this: partiality, in any and all of its myriad forms, essentially involves special concern.

The second generic feature of the formal concept of partiality I suggest is that partiality always involves some reason for special concern. That is, we do not tend to say it is good to be partial, full stop. On the contrary, if you are specially concerned for some X, we tend to think there must be some explanation, some Y, some reason – for why

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16 Emotional vulnerability here does not merely imply you are especially vulnerable to how the person you share the relationship with treats you; rather, it means you are vested emotionally in how they fare – that you experience their triumphs and travails almost as though they were your own (Kolodny, 2003: 152).

17 For ease of exposition I will continue to speak of special concern for X, but unless explicitly stated otherwise, what is implied is a special concern that certain states of affairs in which X is implicated be realised, not a simple prioritisation of X's interests.
you find yourself so disposed. To lend this point some definition, we might usefully distinguish reasons for special concern from special reasons of partiality. The former refers to the reasons that explain your partiality, the latter the reasons explained by your partiality. It is the former I reference when speaking of reasons for special concern – the reasons that explain your disposition to be partial towards someone. Special reasons of partiality then reference the reasons you have to actually do certain things that your special concern/disposition to be partial gives rise to. If I have a special concern for Xavier, and/or that states of affairs essentially involving Xavier be thus and so, there must be some reason for it, e.g. because we share a special relationship, or because he makes a fantastic latte, or because I love his artwork, etc. Whether I also have special reasons of partiality – reasons to act in certain ways or do things for, to, or with Xavier – and what they might be, constitutes a further question the details of which I get into in the next chapter. For now though all I mean to do is highlight the distinction between reasons for special concern and reasons of partiality, and suggest that where there is special concern, there must be reason for it.

However, it might be doubted that where there is special concern there necessarily must be reason for it at all. Sometimes your special concern for someone might be an utter mystery to you, as in the case of love at first sight. To love someone at first sight, it might be said, is to love them even before you have any reason to; to love them inexplicably. But surely this is reason itself: that you are inexplicably attracted towards them. If it is a mystery to you why you love this person having just clapped eyes on them, yet love them you do, the very inexplicability of your love would itself seem to supply you with a reason to be specially concerned for them.

More disconcertingly perhaps, people sometimes continue to have a special concern for their others, even when we would want to say they have no reason to, as in the case of a domestic violence victim who nevertheless continues to be specially concerned for their abusive partner. But recall that we are not yet saying anything about whether an abused husband for example has special reasons of partiality – reasons to actually do anything for, to, or with his abusive wife; only whether or not he has reason to be

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18 I will primarily speak in terms of reasons for special concern when referring to the former, but if on occasion I write of reasons to be specially concerned/reasons for partiality/reasons to be partial, these phrases are to be treated interchangeably. Whenever the conjunctive term used is of as in ‘special reasons of partiality’, it is always the latter that is intended.
specially concerned for her. And I believe he does; at the very least, it seems he has reason to be less than fully impartially disposed towards her. But if it seems repugnant to suggest the abused husband has reason for special concern towards his routinely and violently abusive wife, or that anything short of saying he has no reason to be partial towards her whatsoever is a moral travesty – then you have already assumed that partiality necessarily entails prioritisation of interests, conferral of disproportionate benefits, promotion of well-being, or something favourable to that effect. However, nothing in the conceptual definition offered so far commits us to this assumption, and nor do I think should it. To that effect, partiality as I have defined it allows that your partiality towards X may unfurl as a special concern that states of affairs essentially involving X be inimical to their interests – a greater concern than you otherwise would in the absence of some relevant factor Y (e.g. in the absence of the abuse suffered at X’s hands). And if it is plausible to speak of having a special concern that someone fares worse in this sense, then we have an exception to the general rule that the states of affairs one is specially concerned to see realised will necessarily promote the interests of the person implicated.

I tended bar throughout my PhD, and once, in an effort to try and shed some light on what my thesis is about for the regulars, I decided to regale them with the Williams hypothetical thought experiment. Their response was almost unanimously one of guffaws that you would choose to save your wife at all! But whilst only meant jokingly (I think!), their response is perhaps nevertheless suggestive of a gap in the way we conventionally conceive of partiality. The assumption is that there are only two options available to the husband in Williams’s drowning wife scenario: either he can be impartial as to who he saves, or, he can be partial, which we assume means he prioritises the interests of his wife in survival over that of the stranger – to confer on her the benefit of partial treatment. But what if the husband is our long-suffering victim of domestic violence? If his wife has maliciously inflicted on him terrible abuses, perhaps we can envisage a third option he might consider: he could save the stranger, thereby condemning her to a watery, and perhaps (one might think) not entirely unbefitting, demise. If on this basis the husband opts to save the stranger and not his wife, that seems to me an act of partiality; at least, I think he does not act impartially, for his decision is dictated by fundamentally agent-relative considerations.
His reason for saving the stranger and leaving her to drown is not agent-neutral – it is not a reason we could or would necessarily expect anyone to have.

Perhaps what has happened here might be thought more accurately a denial of partiality: that the abused husband rather denies his wife the preferential treatment she may well still have the gall to expect. That may be so, but even if it is, surely what has occurred is not a reversion to impartiality, but an inversion of partiality. In any event, to be specially concerned to see some state of affairs realised that is inimical to someone’s interests does not require any pre-existing reasons for special concern at all.

Suppose someone abducts my child. Clearly they had no prior claim to partial treatment from me, thus I cannot deny them my partiality, but it nevertheless seems intelligible to think I might have a special concern that the state of affairs that is their life be such that their well-being, happiness, flourishing, etc. would be significantly diminished than I would had they not abducted my child. Admittedly, my special concern that they suffer for what they have done doesn’t straightforwardly map on to the notion of my having a special concern for them (as being for someone conventionally implies favouring them, fighting their corner, etc.), but that I am in some sense partial as regards their fate seems undeniable. Again, at the very least, my attitude towards my child’s abductor could not, I think, be described as fully impartial. That I have a special concern that they suffer for what they have done maybe would not paint me in the best light, and might be ill-advised (I’d perhaps do better to just let it go) or even psychologically unhealthy were I to allow it to consume me, but whilst perhaps neither prudent nor graceful, it is surely a form of partiality nonetheless and one that is at the very least comprehensible.

This notion of having a special concern that someone’s life go worse is (perhaps unsurprisingly) not one on which moral philosophers of have tended to dwell, but that persons sometimes harbour such ill-will towards others is scarcely news. Most people, I think, will at some time in their life develop a special concern to see some particular person’s life go worse in light of some perceived wrong they have committed. It might be a special concern to see some politician annihilated at the polls because of some wrong they are perceived to have inflicted on members of one’s class say. Or it might be a special concern to see the business interests of an ex-employer who treated you abominably take a nosedive. Whatever the case, instances of inverse special concern
and partiality of this type are probably not as uncommon as we might like to think. The worry however, is that if we assume that being partially disposed towards someone gives us reason to act in certain ways, then by opening up space for inverse partiality we run the risk of licencing spiteful behaviour. To address this concern we will need to disrupt the assumption that to have reason for special concern straightforwardly entails ‘special’ reasons of partiality. So here again, the distinction between reasons for special concern and special reasons of partiality seems pertinent.

Special concern is first and foremost an evaluative disposition, and as I have stressed, to say one is partially disposed in the sense of having a special concern for X is not yet to say anything very precise about what being so-disposed gives one special reason to do for, to, or with X. That said, it is I think sufficient to establish that you would be disposed to actually do things that you wouldn’t were it not for some relevant factor Y. Thus, to say I have a special concern to see my child’s abductor suffer is tantamount to saying there are things I am disposed to actually do so as to bring that about that I would not had they not abducted my child. In this sense, it makes perfect sense to speak of me having reasons of partiality – reasons to actually do specific things – that would be decisively harmful to their interests. But what I am permitted to actually do in this instance will presumably be restricted to that which could be impartially justified anyway. To devote my time and resources to ensuring the abductor is brought to justice would seem at least morally permissible from an impartial perspective; to devote the same to exacting some sort of private revenge on them or their family presumably would not. To vote and lobby against the despicable politician being elected would seem morally permissible from an impartial perspective; to fabricate a malicious slur campaign against them would presumably not be. To take my former employer to a tribunal for mistreatment would again likely be permissible from an impartial perspective; to torch their business would not be. In each case, these acts, whilst acts of partiality, seem permissible precisely because they can be impartially justified. By contrast, the kinds of partial treatment that ‘special’ reasons of partiality consist in are not (or at least not obviously) reducible to more fundamental impartially justifiable moral principles in this way. What this suggests moreover is that not all reasons of partiality are ‘special’ in the requisite sense of being subject nonuniversalizable. I develop this point in the next chapter, but the basic idea is that the genuinely ‘special’ reasons of partiality I have towards my love ones are reasons
for me and me alone because they correspond with the rich good of my special concern they enjoy. And insofar as the suffering I would see inflicted on my child’s abductor does not require for its realisation that any agent in particular brings it about (the abductor will likely be indifferent as to who brings him to justice), it is not a ‘special’ reason of partiality (though a reason of partiality nonetheless).

Still, I am inclined to think my having a special concern that my child’s abductor suffers is perhaps morally permissible (I doubt we would ever think my being so-disposed morally praiseworthy or obligatory), even though what I am permitted to actually do to bring that state of affairs about is perhaps restricted to that which could be impartially condoned.19 However, since most, if not all, of the philosophers with whose work I will engage in this thesis are concerned exclusively with partiality as a form of favourable treatment of particular others, it is not something that I will dwell too much on. Nonetheless, I believe it is worth opening up a space in the discourse for this overlooked aspect of partiality. For now though, all I want to stress is that where there is special concern there must be reason for special concern; that reasons for special concern can be usefully distinguished from reasons of partiality; and moreover, that we can distinguish between reasons of partiality, and special reasons of partiality.

The third and last suggestion I want to make about partiality generically conceived, is that to say one has a special concern for X is to say one extrinsically values X; that, as regards one’s reasons for special concern for X, the sources of those reasons are, in (almost) every instance, extrinsic to the object of special concern.20 Echoing what has gone before, for one to have a special concern for X, some distinct Y must be the source of one’s reasons for special concern for X. For example, if you have a special concern for your terrace house, we do not think it is anything about the house itself or the particular configuration of bricks and mortar of which it is comprised that explains why you are more concerned about it than your neighbour’s identical house, but rather the fact that it is your house – your home. In this sense you value your house extrinsically, which is to say you value your house, and take the source of your reasons

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19 Indeed, it is perhaps something like this that in part motivates the desire to believe in Karma. Although it would be wrong for me to torch my ex-employer’s business, I may well think that if it burns down by accident, that it is no less than he deserves given the way he treats his employees.

20 The one exception to this generalisation, as far as I can see, is the special concern one has for oneself, insofar as the source of one’s reason to be specially concerned for oneself may be oneself, or some intrinsic property thereof.
for valuing it so to be something extrinsic to the house itself, i.e. the fact that it is yours. If you attach special significance to an heirloom handed down through generations of your family, it is not the heirloom itself that is the source of your reasons for being especially concerned about what becomes of it, but rather the association it has with your family history. Again then, you value the heirloom, but take the source of your reasons for valuing it not to be the heirloom itself, but something extrinsic to it i.e. the familial history it symbolises.

When trying to fathom the source of reasons for special concern in relationships, one obvious in-road is to take the situation of person X and person Y (towards whom X is partial) and compare their situation with that of person X and person Z (towards whom X is impartial), dismiss all the properties both situations share in common, and then try to derive an explanation for partiality from some remaining property (i.e. a property that the former possesses and the latter does not). As per the three main positions canvassed, it is argued in this vein that the explanatory property is either the existence of an intrinsically valuable relationship between X and Y (which is absent between X and Z); X’s especially vivid awareness of Y’s intrinsic value (and lack of equivalent awareness with regard to Z); or else X’s appreciation of the constitutive role of Y and their shared special relationship in his very identity and sense of self (in which Z plays no equivalent role). The suggestion I want to make, is that X extrinsically values Y, and that this in part explains why X is partial towards Y but not Z (for X values Z merely intrinsically). It is important to stress that this does not comprise an alternative account of the source of reasons of partiality in its own right; it is not X’s extrinsic valuation of Y that is the source of X’s reasons of partiality towards Y. Rather the claim is meant only to complement the existing accounts by unpacking how we value persons with whom we share special relationships. That said, it turns out to be far more complementary to the Relationships View and the Projects View than it is to the Individuals View.

The basic thought is this: there are, crudely speaking, only two kinds of people in the world – those whose particular existence I am aware of, and those whose particular existence I am unaware of. Of all those persons whose existence I am unaware of – all those who are, in the most comprehensive possible sense, ‘strangers’ to me – we may say that I merely intrinsically value them. ‘Merely’ as I intend it here should not be
taken to imply paltry; rather, the thought is that if one values X merely intrinsically, then that is the sole sense in which one values X. More specifically, to ‘intrinsically value’ X, by my definition, is to value X, and to take X itself to be the source of one’s reasons for valuing X. Insofar as I value each and every person in the world, and do so in recognition of the fact that each is a self-standing source of reasons for my valuing them, I value each and every person intrinsically. And to the extent that I am unaware of the particular existence of most persons, it follows that I merely intrinsically value most persons in the world. That is just what it is to value persons as ends. Of course, if I only value most persons in the world this way, then it follows that there are some persons whom I do not merely intrinsically value. This does not mean that I do not value them intrinsically at all (I intrinsically value all persons); what it means is that as well as valuing them intrinsically, I also value them extrinsically (and recalling the taxonomy from the last chapter, to ‘extrinsically value’ X is to value X, and to take some distinct Y to be the source of one’s reasons for valuing X).

Thus, my having a greater concern for my mum than I have for all persons generally is in part explained by the fact that crucially, I actually value her differently than I do other persons. In particular, what distinguishes my mum is that I extrinsically value her. And whilst talk of extrinsic valuation of loved ones may seem grating, it is perfectly coherent. The claim is simply that, in addition to intrinsically valuing my mum as an unconditionally valuable individual in her own right (just as I value all persons), I also value her extrinsically, which is to say I value her, but see something extrinsic to her as being the source of my reasons for valuing her so (i.e. our relationship). Moreover, I believe that to say we extrinsically value our loved ones sheds light on yet another deeper, phenomenological intuition: I do not just value my mum differently than I value all persons generally (i.e. persons that I value merely intrinsically); I value her more. When I respond to the person who enquires why I am so agitated at the hospital, I think the truest interpretation of the response “she is my mother” is not exactly that she is my mum (the Relationships View), or that she is my mum (the Projects View), or that she is Maureen (the Individuals View) (Keller, 2013: 10-16), but rather “she is my mum, which of course means I value her more than I do any of these other patients awaiting their operations.”
This claim that one values one’s loved ones more than one values strangers is apt to cause some unease. There may not be many claims that all philosophers agree on, but if there is one, it is surely the thought that no human qua human is any more valuable than any other. It is this conviction of course that makes the notion of ethical partiality such a puzzle. But it would be odd, I think, to say you value your mum no more or less than strangers who have never even crossed your moral radar, and for the most part never will. For my own part, I believe I do in fact value my mum more – much more – than I value your mum, my friends more than your friends, etc. But of course, this is not to say that my mum is any more valuable than your mum or anyone else for that matter. I do not think it is inconsistent to recognise that, from the point of view of the universe/from the perspective of the ideal spectator/insert preferred standard of impartiality, my loved ones are no more or less valuable than any other persons, while at the same time asserting that I value them more than I do strangers. Consider the analogous claim in the less controversial parlance of special concern (which, as I am arguing, is structurally speaking a form of extrinsic valuing). To say that I have a special concern for (extrinsically value) my mum is to say that I have a greater concern for her than I have for all persons generally (that I value her more than I value persons generally). And I take it the claim that one can have a special concern for one’s mum without committing oneself to the thought that she is in any sense more valuable than anyone else is relatively uncontroversial.

A Problem for the Individuals View

I have referenced the relationship as the source of my reasons for special concern here, and indeed believe that to be so, but at this point it is not necessary to commit to that view. To claim that what distinguishes persons to whom I am partial is that I extrinsically value them, is not yet to say anything much about the sources of my reasons to value them so – they may in principle be anything except, that is (and this is the crucial point), the persons themselves. Thus, if you are convinced by the claim that what in part distinguishes those persons to whom we have reasons and duties to be partial is that we extrinsically value them (in addition to intrinsically valuing them), this would seem a significant blow to the Individuals View. By contrast, the Relationships View faces no such problem. It is perfectly coherent to say that I extrinsically value my friend Xavier (in addition to intrinsically valuing him), and that I take the source of my reasons for valuing him specially to be the friendship we share,
not Xavier himself. And nor is there anything in this purported alignment of partiality and extrinsic valuing that is inhospitable to the Projects View. It is perfectly plausible to say that, in addition to intrinsically valuing my mum, I also extrinsically value her because being my mother’s son is a central component of my understanding of who I am; and since being true to who I am is something I value, this component of my ground project provides me with an extrinsic source of reasons of partiality towards her. So if the Projects View is going to fall, it will not be because it is incompatible with the claim that the source of reasons for partiality must be extrinsic to the object of partiality.

This is by no means a new problem for the Individuals View, but rather just a different way of looking at an old one: what I will refer as the fungibility objection. This is the problem for the Individuals View. The problem is this: without referencing something extrinsic to the persons with whom you share special relationships as the source of your partiality towards them, and assuming there are other persons in the world who are equally as valuable, good, and virtuous as they are, it is very difficult to see how the Individuals View can explain why your partiality should be fixed on those persons with whom you share relationships rather than those you do not. It struggles, that is, to say why the object of partiality is not fungible with other qualitatively identical objects. As Kolodny puts it, ‘If Jane’s qualities are my reasons for loving her, then they are equally reasons for my loving anyone else with the same qualities’ (2003: 140). Thus, if it were possible for there to exist two individuals who were qualitatively identical, one would be required to respond to them in the same way – to have reason to be specially concerned for, or love them both equally. Jane may be just as kind, faithful and loyal, and indeed as beautiful, sharp and self-confident as my partner Molly, but whilst I see myself as having reasons and duties of partiality towards Molly and not Jane, it is difficult to see how that could be justified on the Individuals View. By contrast, it is open to proponents of the Relationships View or the Projects View to simply point to the existence of the relationship Molly and I share or the role the relationship and Molly herself play in my personal projects respectively and the absence of either with respect to Jane.

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21 Importantly, this does not mean I value Xavier for the sake of our friendship to reiterate the point I made in the last chapter (pp.36-37).
How might a proponent of the Individuals View try and overcome the fungibility objection? Different proponents offer different responses, but all of them depend in part on a claim about the ability to perceive the special value of one’s beloved. Thus, whilst something extrinsic to the object of partiality must be part of the explanation of partiality (i.e. we cannot explain why I am partial to Molly and not Jane without looking at how I perceive Molly), it is nevertheless Molly’s special value that is the source of my reasons to be partial towards her. For example, it might be said that an individual’s independent self-standing value is more than merely the sum of their ‘qualities’, however conceived. That it is rather in the unique constellation of Molly’s qualities, and all the manifold little details, perfections and imperfections she comprises, or her sheer Kantian personhood perhaps as J. David Velleman might say (1999: 363-364), that her true value resides. As I become more alive to Molly’s rational Kantian nature – more attuned to her special value, I let down my protective walls and allow myself to become emotionally vulnerable to her; I come, that, is to love her, and the more I do – the more vividly I come to really see her special value – the more it becomes a source of special reasons for me. Jane to be sure requires the required minimum of Kantian respect of me too, as do all persons, but in coming to love Molly, my valuation of her comes to require of me the optional maximum response to her Kantian rational nature, which in turn explains why I love Molly and not equally valuable Jane (Velleman, 1999: 365-366). Harry Frankfurt similarly sees love as a response to the unique special value of one’s beloved defined as utterly irreducible to her qualities and characteristics:

The focus of a person’s love is not those general and hence repeatable characteristics that make his beloved describable. Rather, it is the specific particularity that makes his beloved nameable – something that is more mysterious than describability, and that is in any case manifestly impossible to define (Frankfurt, 1999: 170).

Keller’s suggestion by which we might overcome the fungibility objection is to say that in order to understand how permissions of partiality are generated by the special value of persons, we must pay particular attention to the fact ‘that a person…has a point of view…a particular, distinct perspective on the world’ (2013: 142) in which their value as a person is tied up. He goes on: ‘Because a person has a point of view, it makes sense to think of yourself as seeing things from another person’s point of view, and…to perform an act for a person, or on behalf of a person, or for the sake of a person…The closer the attention you pay to a person’s value, the closer you come to
seeing the world as if from her point of view’ (Keller, 2013: 143). And so, the fact that I can readily put myself in Molly’s shoes and not Jane’s, explains why my being partial towards Molly but not Jane, even supposing Jane’s need is greater, is permissible, at least in principle.

For all their differences, each of the aforementioned responses to the fungibility objection seems to share the view that my loving or being specially concerned for Molly and not doppelganger Jane is in some sense explained by the privileged access or insight I have to her special value that I lack towards Jane. Of those considered here, I think Keller’s response offers the most plausible and descriptively accurate account of how we experience partiality and so it is that response I will focus on, but I think all of them fall somewhat short in the same two vital respects. First, the explanation of why it is that an individual’s special value becomes reason-creating the more attuned to it one becomes always remains somewhat mysterious; and secondly, the ability of the Individuals View to explain duties of partiality is problematically limited in that it lacks the necessary critical purchase to explain how a person can be morally required to behave partially towards someone even when they are not in the least inclined to pay special attention to their unique value or put themselves in their shoes (e.g. a deadbeat dad); or indeed, why sometimes appreciation of someone’s special value does not generate the right to confer partial treatment at all (e.g. a stalker).

Although it holds that the source of my reasons and duties towards Molly cannot reside with the relationship we share or me, the Individuals View clearly cannot proceed without referencing one or the other, or perhaps both. It will not do to say my partiality towards Molly is justified ‘because she’s Molly!’ where what is implied is her Kantian rational nature, her nameability, or her unique perspective on the world, for Jane may just as well say ‘but what about me? I’m Jane! I bear all those properties too!’ The first option then is to say something to the effect that the relationship I share with Molly ‘enables’ Molly’s special value to generate my reasons for partiality towards her (Keller, 2013: 135). Suppose Jane is in fact the famous English primatologist Dame Jane Goodall, and me her biggest fan, long-time admirer, and erstwhile biographer? Perhaps in my admiration for her work I have made it my mission to try and see the world as she does, to make her travails my travails; perhaps I
even come to love her in some sense. How then, can the Individuals View explain why I do not have special reasons of partiality towards her? Presumably it would say that the vivid awareness of the special value of someone you share a special relationship with is just different from the awareness you have (no matter how fastidiously cultivated) of the special value of someone with whom you share no salient relationship; that awareness of a person’s special value with whom you share a special relationship just does generate reasons in a way that awareness of a person’s special value absent any relationship between you does not. On the second option, it might be said that my intimate familiarity with Molly’s special value, Kantian rational nature, or perspective on the world will, by any stretch of the imagination be qualitatively deeper than my familiarity with Jane Goodall, no matter how obsessed with her I am, and to say that I have special reasons towards Molly and not Jane because I am intimately familiar with Molly’s special value and not Jane’s. On this option, it is not the presence/absence of a relationship per se that dictates whether some particular person’s value is reason-creating for some particular other, but rather presence/absence of some sort of deep familiarity with their special value. Thus when you are sufficiently intimate with someone’s unique special value, their value just does generate special reasons for you. So it seems, whether Molly’s special value is rendered reason-creating for me by the enabling presence of a relationship, or by the intimate familiarity unique to such relationships, the Individuals View must ultimately say: all individuals possess equal special value, but when you form relationships with people and become intimately familiar with their particular special value, their value just does becomes reason-creating for you in a way that other persons’ equal special value is not (Keller, 2013: 138).

The second problem is of a similar ilk. Stalking someone is probably not the best way to win their heart, but a quick scan of the internet reveals that it is not entirely unusual (although, I suspect, unpromising) for romantic relationships and even marriage to result from what started out as stalking. Yet, on the Individuals View it is unclear how the shift from morally prohibited partiality to morally appropriate and sometimes obligatory partiality on the part of the stalker-turned-husband can be explained; why now does his appreciation of her special value generate duties of partiality when it did not before? Or to take another well-worn example, how can the Individuals View explain the paternal duties we tend to think a deadbeat dad has towards his daughter,
even though he has been absent from the time of her conception and as such knows nothing whatsoever of her special value? Again, in both cases, it seems that the best the Individuals View can say is some variant on ‘that is just the way it is’. In order to put some flesh on the bare bones of this claim, Keller suggests this to be ultimately unavoidable given the ‘fragility of the morality of partiality’ which, as compared to other standards of morality, ‘is unusually dependent upon contingent background conditions’ and cannot proceed without reference to social context and human nature (2013: 145-148). We do want to say that the deadbeat dad has duties to provide in various ways for his daughter despite the fact that he does not especially value his daughter, but part of that explanation, in the end Keller suggests, has to be because in societies like ours these are simply the kinds of duties fathers have. If society were quite different – if rather than being raised by their biological parents children were raised communally, or by their grandparents, or adopted parents, or neighbours, it simply would not make sense in those societies to charge the deadbeat dad with anything like the parental duties we do in ours. As Keller puts it: ‘Part of the reason why parents have certain special duties of partiality toward their own children in our society is that this is the way we do things around here’ (2013: 146).

As unsatisfying these responses on behalf of the Individuals View may be however, according to Keller, the problem of ‘primitivism’ as he puts it is by no means unique to the Individuals View (2013: 114). As he points out, the Relationships View faces a problem analogous to the first that the Individuals View faces. That is, just as Molly is no more valuable than Jane, we can assume my relationship with Molly is no more valuable than Jane’s relationship to her partner Tom either, so why does my relationship to Molly generate reasons for me while Jane’s equally valuable relationship to Tom does not? Keller’s point then, is that the standard response of the Relationships View – that your own valuable relationships just do generate reason in a way that others’ equally valuable relationship do not – is no less unsatisfying than the analogous response available to the Individuals View (2013: 138). And nor is it obvious that the standard Relationships View fares any better when it comes to explaining why the deadbeat dad has duties towards his daughter either, for in the absence of any valuable relationship between them, let alone one that they value intrinsically, what can they say, except perhaps that he does have paternal duties
towards her because in our time and place this *just is* what is required of biological parents.

**Conclusion**

Can the Relationships View do any better than resort to primitivism about reasons and duties of partiality? In addressing these issues over the next two chapters I will argue that it can, although its ability to do so will turn on the plausibility of some significant revisions I propose to the standard view. The foundations of those revisions are now laid however, for it is in the understanding of the formal concept of partiality as a form of extrinsic valuing that we begin to see a way of getting past primitivism about ethical partiality. If like virtually all other forms of partiality, the source of one’s reasons for special concern must be extrinsic to the object of one’s special concern, I believe that whether partiality is morally permitted, appropriate, or obligatory can be determined by discerning what it is that fills the boots of the extrinsic source. And it is worth noting that as yet, nothing has been said to rule out the possibility that what that is might be our projects. Indeed of the three views canvassed, the Projects View plausibly can explain why my projects in which Molly and our relationship are implicated generate reasons for me, whilst Tom’s projects involving Jane and their relationship does not, for my projects are necessarily of special significance to me and the focus of my energies in a way Tom’s are not (Stroud, 2010: 142). However, whilst it tells a very plausible story about permissible partiality, as we will see in the next chapter the Projects View seems ultimately inadequate to the task of explaining why and how reasons of partiality sometimes translate into *duties* of partiality, and to that extent remains problematically incomplete.

In its broadest form, to be partial towards X is in the first place to have a special or greater concern for X, and/or that certain states of affairs essentially involving X be a certain way, than one otherwise would in the absence of some relevant factor Y; secondly, that to be partial one must have reason for special concern, treated as distinct from special reasons of partiality; and thirdly, to have a special concern for X is to extrinsically value X whereby some distinct Y is the source of reasons for partiality towards X. Yet whilst having a special concern for extrinsically valuing X because of Y seems a fitting way to describe just about every other conceivable form of partiality, the Individuals View denies the equivalence of having a special concern for X because
of Y and extrinsically valuing X because of Y in the case of special relationships, preferring instead to say you can have a special concern for X because of X. The upshot of doing so however is to succumb to primitivism once and for all, because there looks to be no possible way to respond to someone who questions why you have a special concern for X because of X, except to say in the end, ‘I just do’. I believe the Relationships View I develop over the next two chapters can avoid degenerating into primitivism, but even if it could not – even if primitivism were as much a problem for the Relationships View as the Individuals View, I still think that an account that is consonant with the formal concept of partiality would be preferable to one that is not. Thus, if we are convinced by the claim that what distinguishes those persons to whom we have reasons and duties to be partial is that we extrinsically value them (in addition to intrinsically valuing them), I think we have little choice but to jettison the Individuals View.
Chapter IV

What are the Specials? Relationships, Reasons, Duties and a Problem for the Projects View

Introduction

The final section of the last chapter brought out something of the puzzle that all commentators on ethical partiality must address: why does my Molly, my relationship to her, or perhaps the pivotal role they together play in my projects generate reasons and duties of partiality for me, whilst Tom’s Jane, or their equally valuable relationship, or indeed their projects as vested in their relationship, do not? (Keller, 2013: 114-116). Before we can begin to solve this puzzle, we need to get clearer about what it is about our relationships that qualify them as ‘special’ in the particular sense relevant to ethical partiality. As such, in the first section of this chapter I ask, quite simply, just what are special relationships? In addressing this question, discussion will be restricted to the sorts of relationships that amount to some sort of socially salient connection between two individuals. That is not to say one cannot have special relationships of moral moment to other entities such as communities, religions, companies, etc., but the nature of what Scheffler calls ‘membership-dependent reasons’ (2010: 106) invites a complexity that I wish to postpone for now. It is a common enough artifice amongst those concerned with the ethics of partiality to restrict their inquiry to special relationships between individuals in just this fashion, so I hope this (temporary) narrowing of the lens will not prove unacceptable.

Having elaborated an account of what such special relationships consist in, in the second section I begin to hone in on the question of what it is for reasons of partiality to be ‘special’ in the requisite sense. In some sense, reasons are relevantly ‘special’ when they are generated by relevantly ‘special’ relationships, but by focusing more closely on what is distinctive about special reasons of partiality we can perhaps escape something of this circularity. Specifically, by paying closer attention to the subject-nonuniversalizable quality reasons of partiality exhibit, and what it is that makes those

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22 See chapter VI for discussion of this as it pertains in particular to membership of countries and relationships to compatriots.
reasons subject-nonuniversalizable or ‘special’ to me, I think we can tentatively lay the foundations for a solution to the puzzle of why I have special reasons of partiality towards Molly and not Jane. What it is that gives my provision of the thin good of partiality towards Molly the quality of subject-nonuniversalizable special reasons, I suggest, is the rich good of robust special concern which constitutes a sort of morally basic good we enjoy that is unavailable to us via any other medium than the valuable relationship we share.

In the third section then, I suggest that once we discern more closely the dialectical correspondence between our realisation of the rich good of each other’s robust special concern and our mutual provision of the thin actualist good of partiality as and when suitably prompted, a picture begins to form of how we might explain a further necessary condition of all special relationships: the requirement that they have the capacity to generate not just special reasons, but also, what are commonly termed ‘associative’ duties of partiality. The suggestion, in brief, is that subject-nonuniversalizable reasons of partiality are properly associative duties of partiality whenever provision of the thin good of partiality in some specific instance is not just conducive to the realisation of the rich good of robust special concern, but instrumentally necessary to substantiate it.

It is in these arguments that I think our best hope of avoiding the insidious primitivism highlighted in the last chapter lies. If the second section yields a more satisfying response to the puzzle of why my relationship to Molly generates special reasons for me in a way that Tom’s equally valuable relationship to Jane does not, rather than resigning ourselves to saying ‘it just does’, the third section suggests a better way of explaining why reasons of partiality sometimes translate into duties of partiality without again having to say ‘they just do’. In essence, the special relationships relevant to ethical partiality are those that generate subject nonuniversalizable reasons of which it is a necessary condition that they can, when appropriately prompted, translate into associative duties of partiality. However, if this is correct, it would seem to pose a significant obstacle for proponents of the Projects View, for as I note in the final section, it is doubtful that project-dependent reasons of partiality can translate into duties at all.
What is it for a relationship to be ‘special’?

So what are ‘special relationships’ of the type relevant to the ethics of partiality? The first thing we can say, is that for a relationship to be ‘special’ in the relevant sense, it must generate reasons beyond those you have towards persons generally, and in order to do so it must reference something more than merely descriptive facts the parties to it share. If you are left-handed and red-headed, there is a perfectly good sense in which you and Greta Garbo can be said to stand in certain sorts of special relations to one another. But these are not the types of special relations that matter for ethical partiality; the argument here centres on relationships proper, and not simply standing in some special relation to others by virtue of characteristics and attributes held in common. You might be Just Like Greta, to coin the title of the Van Morrison song, but the fact that you are is, for our purposes, morally uninteresting, since these kinds of ‘relationships’, such as they are, do not generate reasons at all.23

A second type of relationship that is conceivably special but nevertheless irrelevant here, is the type of relationship that does generate reasons, but not reasons of partiality, such as those that arise in the fleeting social interactions that pedestrian strangers engage in with each other when walking along the footpath. We have all experienced that awkward side-stepping dance you find yourself in upon coming too late to the realisation that you are on course for a head-on collision with another pedestrian. It seems plausible to suppose that, in that instant, when all the norms and conventions of mobile interaction and manoeuvre bear down on both parties with the weight of obligation to take each other into consideration, the passers-by, however momentarily, stand in a special relationship to one another. As Erving Goffman writes in his microsociological analysis of street encounters between strangers:

City streets, even in times that defame them, provide a setting where mutual trust is routinely displayed between strangers. Voluntary coordination of action is achieved in which each of the two parties has a conception of how matters ought to be handled between them, the two conceptions agree, each party believes that this agreement exists and each

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23 This is not to deny that shared characteristics can perhaps indirectly lead to special relationships of membership. If you and Garbo both belong to the ‘Ginger Club’, or if you both belong to the ‘Left Handers Club’ (both actually-existing societies), then it perhaps does make sense to speak of you sharing a real special relationship, although in virtue of co-membership of the clubs rather than in virtue of sharing the attributes of being red-headed and left-handed.
appreciates that this knowledge about the agreement is possessed by the 
other (Goffman, 2010: 17).

Sociological import notwithstanding however, these sorts of fleeting relationships are 
not what we have in mind when thinking of special relationships of the type relevant 
here, for though this time the relationship *does* generate reasons (i.e. to get out of each 
other’s way) they are not reasons of *partiality*. You do not, as it were, exhibit any 
greater concern for them, as a particular individual, than you would any other stranger 
in their place, and moreover, your reason (to get out of their way) would be as much a 
reason for anyone else who found themselves in your position. So special 
relationships of the type we are concerned with cannot be those that, though they do 
generate reasons, generate agent-neutral reasons that are merely the product of a 
fleeting response to a problem of voluntary coordination of action between strangers.

There is another conceivable type of special relationship still, that features not only 
reasons, but reasons of partiality at that, but is nonetheless not ‘special’ in the relevant 
sense since the reasons generated are not ‘special’. To draw out what I mean here, 
consider Keller’s identification of what he sees to be a significant problem for the 
Relationships View; the problem being that it is unable to explain why we can 
sometimes find reasons for partiality within relationships that we do not value at all, let 
alone intrinsically (Keller, 2013: 68). One of the examples Keller employs to 
highlight this problem is that of Ted’s love for Mary in the movie *There’s Something 
About Mary* (1998). He writes:

Ted’s relationship with…Mary, is, for Ted, a source of crippling 
embarrassment and self-loathing…It is a relationship of bungling obsessive 
to oblivious crush object, and Ted does not consider it valuable, let alone 
intrinsically valuable. Yet the point of the movie is that Ted, of all Mary’s 
many suitors, is the one that truly loves her and truly wants what is best for 
her (Keller, 2013: 53).

This would appear quite problematic for a Relationships View such as Kolodny’s, in 
which he claims that ‘relationships are reasons for love’ (2003: 136). If this is right, 
insofar as Ted and Mary share no valuable relationship, the implication is not just that

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24 The corollary problem for the Projects View is that sometimes one can have reason to be partial 
towards a person with whom one shares a special relationship even though neither they nor the 
relationship plays a constitutive role in one’s personal projects (Keller, 2013: 39-41). Thus, not all 
reasons of partiality in special relationships can be traced to personal projects, for in some cases the 
former might obtain where the latter does not.
Ted’s love for Mary is somehow incomplete given the absence of a valuable relationship; it is that Ted does not love her at all. This seems an unintuitive implication that we might want to resist, but whether or not we want to say that Ted genuinely ‘loves’ Mary, we can certainly allow that he genuinely has a special concern for her, and this, despite the fact that he doesn’t value their relationship whatsoever.

Yet, in much the same way that Ted has a special concern for Mary, I too have a special concern for the girl I pass on my way to university with whom I exchange smiles every morning. It would be a stretch, to say the least, to suppose that the source of my reasons for special concern for her is the ‘relationship’ we share, such as it is, or the role that she plays in my projects or my sense of self; and by virtue of the extrinsic value claim of the last chapter, it cannot be her (in any case, I know nothing about her). Rather, the source of my reasons for special concern for smiling girl seems to me to be the simple pleasure I take from our morning encounters, or perhaps the pleasant daydreams of the romance that one day might blossom between us should I ever pluck up the courage to speak to her. And much the same, I think, could be said for Ted’s special concern for Mary. To this extent then, Keller is right; the value of Ted and Mary’s relationship has nothing at all to do with Ted’s special concern for her, any more than the value of mine and smiling girl’s relationship has anything to do with my special concern for her. The source of Ted’s reasons for special concern for Mary may be all sorts of things extrinsic to her – the happy glow he gets from their encounters, the pleasant daydreams of a love that could be, or indeed, at the end of the movie, the romantic relationship that they come to share. All that follows from my claim that special concern is a form of extrinsic valuing is that the one thing that cannot be the source of Ted’s reasons for special concern is, as it were, Something about Mary.

But does the fact that Ted has a special concern for Mary mean he has reasons to actually do things for, to, or with Mary; that he has reasons of partiality towards her? I think it not impossible that he might. At least, I think for Ted to be specially concerned for Mary is minimally for him to be disposed to do things for, to, or with her that he would not were he not enchanted with her so, given half the chance. For example, Ted might be disposed to take Mary on a date if he could only summon the courage to ask her, even though he is not disposed to take just any old gal on a date.
And if it is plausible to think that Ted would see himself as having reason to go on a date with Mary, I think it is plausible to call that a reason of partiality; it is a reason to actually do something with Mary that he wouldn’t do with just anyone generated by the special concern he has for her. However, although Ted’s reason to take Mary on a date may be thought ‘special’ in the sense that it is a reason that he has towards only a delimited range of persons (i.e. Mary herself), and not a reason he has towards all persons, defining reasons as ‘special’ by reference to objects rather than subjects seems wrongheaded. In the philosophical parlance, what makes reasons ‘special’ is the fact that they are ‘agent-relative’ reasons – in this case, reasons for Ted and Ted alone. If this were not so, we would call them ‘object-relative’ reasons; but we do not. Thus to the extent that anyone equally infatuated from afar with Mary would also have reason to take her on a date, neither Ted’s reason, nor theirs, though reasons of partiality, are ‘special’ in the requisite sense, because they are not yet special or uniquely identified with them. The suggestion then is that reasons of partiality are only ‘special’ in the sense that matters for ethical partiality if they are subject nonuniversalizable, and since whatever reasons of partiality Ted might have towards Mary are not ‘special’ in the requisite sense, nor is their relationship genuinely a ‘special’ one in the sense relevant for the ethics of partiality.

Immediately however, we see that the endpoint of this excursus through three kinds of relationships that do not matter for the ethics of partiality – the relationships that aren’t ‘special’ in the relevant sense – looks to be an insidiously unsatisfying impasse. What we can say about the relationships that do matter, is that they must generate some sort of reasons (unlike the relation of common attributes shared with Greta Garbo); the reasons must be reasons of partiality (unlike the reasons the pedestrians have to avoid colliding with one another); and the reasons of partiality must be ‘special’ in the sense of being subject nonuniversalizable – reasons for you and you alone. So the answer to the question of what makes a relationship ‘special’ in the sense relevant to the ethics of partiality, would look to be: relationships are ‘special’ when they generate reasons that are ‘special’; or, that only ‘special’ relationships generate special reasons of partiality, and only relationship that generate ‘special’ reasons of partiality are special relationships. The circle could hardly be more perfect. To breach it will require a more positive account of what renders reasons of partiality towards associates ‘special’.
What is it for a reason of partiality to be ‘special’?

What is it then that makes reasons of partiality ‘special’? As suggested by the Ted and Mary case, the first thing we might say is that reasons of partiality are special in the relevant sense when they are subject nonuniversalizable. But then we must ask: what is it that makes reasons subject nonuniversalizable? The basic claim I offer in response is that what gives my provision of the thin good of partiality towards Molly the quality of subject nonuniversalizable special reasons, is in part explained by the rich good of robust special concern which constitutes a sort of morally basic good we enjoy; a good that is unavailable to us via others’ ostensibly similar or qualitatively identical relationships or indeed any other medium than the particular relationship we share. This is not to deny that other people’s relationships (or even other relationships of ours) may be in some sense equally valuable, but simply to point out that the rich good of robust special concern – what I take to be the good of special relationships generally – is always fundamentally special or unique to particular relationships. There is, in this sense, no such thing as ‘a relationship like ours’.

We have in this, I think, the beginnings of a solution to the puzzle of partiality. That puzzle, and in particular Keller’s iteration of it with regards to the Relationships View, asks: Why does one relationship – e.g. my friendship with Tommy – generate special reasons of partiality for me, whilst another equally valuable relationship – e.g. your friendship with Agatha – does not? (2013: 115). As noted at the end of the last chapter, proponents of the Relationships View frequently respond that intrinsically valuing my friendship just does generate reasons for me in a way that your friendship does not; or that for me to value my relationships intrinsically just is for me to see them as reason-creating in a way that you do not. However, in the hope that we can do better, the suggestion here is that a valuable special relationship I share with someone generates special reasons for me, because I am in fact the only person who can realise for them the rich good of my robust special concern, which depends for its very existence on my providing them with the thin good of actual partiality. So it is not that my friendship with Tommy just does generate reasons of partiality for me, but that they are reasons for me and no-one else, because it is only by providing Tommy with the thin good of partiality as and when he requires it that I can realise for Tommy the rich good of my – Robbie’s – robust special concern. And by the same token, your
friendship with Agatha does not generate reasons of partiality for me in the way it does for her, because not I, nor anyone else, via providing you with the thin good of partiality, can realise for you the rich good of Agatha’s robust special concern – only she can.

Why subject-nonuniversalizable reasons rather than agent-relative reasons? Perhaps the best way to convey the quality of subject-nonuniversalizable reasons is to begin with a discussion of agent-relative reasons, as they are more conventionally known. By way of a distinction between agent-relative and agent-neutral reasons, Brian Feltham writes: ‘I have an agent-relative reason for action if my having that reason depends on something’s being mine; while reasons that don’t depend on such a relationship are agent-neutral’ (2010: 3). Or, as David O. Brink puts it: ‘Reasons to promote the good, as such, are agent-neutral reasons, whereas reasons to promote the good of those to whom the agent stands in special relationships are agent-relative reasons’ (2001: 163). What is of particular importance to note, however this distinction is drawn, is that the pivotal point of reference for agent-relative reasons is the reason-bearing agent and not the reason-recipient object. As Anne Raustøl suggests, what matters for agent-relative reasons, is not so much that the object is mine, but that the reason is mine; that is, the reason itself necessarily refers to me, the particular agent, and not to just anyone (2010:17-18; see also Pettit, 1987: 75). Agent-neutral reasons by contrast primarily reference the reason-receiving object (or some characteristic thereof), and are reasons for anyone insofar as they do not necessarily refer back to any specific agent, nor depend on the existence of a special relationship between agent and object.

The reason I am loathe to speak in terms of agent-relative/neutral reasons is that I suspect they too readily admit of imprecision. In particular, whilst all subject nonuniversalizable reasons are agent-relative, it might be thought that not all agent-relative reasons are necessarily subject nonuniversalizable (even if to do so is perhaps mistaken). Nevertheless, there is no denying the centrality of the agent-relative/neutral

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25 The terms agent-relative and agent-neutral are sometime also invoked to similar effect with respect to value. In those terms, to say that X has value agent-relative to me is simply to say that X is valuable to me in a way X is not for all persons generally. This is what it is for my relationship to Molly to have agent-relative value for me; I value my relationship to Molly in a way that I do not value other persons’ relationships, nor they mine, because my relationship to Molly is valuable to me.
distinction to much of the existing discourse concerning partiality and impartiality, with partiality conventionally aligned with agent-relativity on one side, and impartiality with agent-neutrality on the other. However, these purported correspondences are not as neat as they initially appear. In addition to straightforward agent-neutral reasons for impartiality, it may also make sense to speak of agent-relative reasons for impartiality; and in addition to straightforward agent-relative reasons for partiality it may also make sense to speak of agent-neutral reasons for partiality. And certain reasons of partiality are perhaps neither entirely agent-relative nor entirely agent-neutral – what Marita Nordhaug refers to as ‘role-relative’ reasons (2013: 49). It may prove fruitful to work through these permutations of the agent-relative/agent-neutral distinction as it relates to the distinction between partiality/impartiality, before turning the focus on subject nonuniversalizable reasons. In doing so, I hope the decision to speak in terms of subject nonuniversalizable reasons rather than agent-relative reasons will be validated.

Firstly, despite the common assumption, impartiality does not always correspond with agent-neutral reasons. There are also agent-relative reasons for impartiality that necessarily refer back to the reason-bearing agent in that they are reasons for someone in particular to be impartial, though not for just anyone. I have agent-relative reason to be impartial between my twins for example – reasons that necessarily reference me and the special relationship I stand in to them as their parent. But although the fact that my twins share the object-characteristic of being ‘Robbie’s child’ provides me with a reason to be impartial between them, it is not a reason for their different sets of friends to be impartial between them. Thus my reason to be impartial towards my twins is mine specifically; it is a reason for me in particular to be impartial, not a reason for just anyone. But perhaps it might seem this special reason to be impartial between the twins is not mine alone; after all we would think this a reason for their mum Molly also. This is not so however, for Molly’s reason to be impartial between our twins is different to mine in that what matters is that the twins are hers – they share the object-characteristic of being ‘Molly’s child’ which is a reason for her specifically to be impartial between them, not anyone else, not even me. Thus, what makes being impartial between my twins a reason for me in particular has less to do with whether anyone else has a similar reason (as Molly does), and more to do with the fact that the rich good of my robust special concern, in this instance the good my twins enjoy of
knowing I will always love them equally substantiated by my providing them with the thin actualist good of impartiality, is one which no-one else can provide them with except me. Thus, my reason to be impartial towards my twins is thoroughly subject nonuniversalizable. What we have then is an agent-relative special reason of impartiality that defies the neat division we began with.

Secondly, some reasons that are commonly characterised as agent-neutral impartial reasons are more plausibly agent-neutral reasons of partiality: reasons of partiality that do not reference a specific reason-bearing agent but are rather reasons that anyone ought to have. In other words, as Maximilian de Gaynesford points out, there is a perfectly good sense in which one can be said to be partial towards some X where that X is not yours in any meaningful sense (2010: 95). For example, when you give preference in terms of your time and resources to assisting the poor, you effectively exercising partiality towards that cohort, yet your reasons appear to be agent-neutral in that they are reasons for anyone. As such, the act of practising a preferential option for X ‘because X is poor’ appears a perfectly viable form of partiality (de Gaynesford, 2010: 96). Understood in this sense, I suspect the oft-used example of Charles Dickens’s Mrs Jellyby who dedicates all her time and effort to helping the poor children in Africa while cruelly neglecting her own children is more plausibly a form of ill-conceived agent-neutral partiality, rather than a condemnable caricature of what it is to be unrestrainedly impartial as it is usually portrayed. If this is plausible, we again have another departure from the neat correspondences we began with.

Thirdly, certain reasons appear not to fit neatly into the categories of agent-relative or agent-neutral reasons at all, but are better thought of as ‘role-relative’ reasons (Nordhaug, 2013: 49).26 Consider the special reasons I have towards my students. My reason to be impartial between them is intelligibly agent-relative in the sense that it is a reason for me and not just anyone; the fact that my students share the object-characteristic of being ‘Robbie’s students’ is not a reason for their parents to be impartial between them. In another sense, my reasons also appear agent-neutral for they are reasons for any teacher, not just me, yet they are not fully agent-neutral for though reasons for all teachers, they are not reasons for all people generally. And the

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26 For an excellent discussion of these ‘role-relative’ reasons for impartiality and partiality, see Marita Nordhaug’s thesis on partiality and justice in nursing care (2013).
same is true of my reasons to be partial towards my students over other students; they are also agent-neutral, albeit again in a limited sense of being reasons for all teachers, but not reasons for all people generally. The important point however is that whilst my reasons (whether of partiality/impartiality) are less than fully agent-neutral they are also less than fully agent-relative in the sense of being subject nonuniversalizable; they are relative to the role, not to any specific individual, and it is exactly this type of conflation we must avoid. In particular, I want to stress that the agent-relative special reasons I have towards my twins are distinct from the agent-relative, or as we might now say ‘role-relative’, reasons I have towards my students, precisely because the former are subject nonuniversalizable reasons for me – Robbie – whilst the latter are not.

What it is then that makes special reasons subject nonuniversalizably mine is not merely the fact that X is my X, but that the reason is mine specifically; it is a reason for me – Robbie – in particular, not anyone else. I have special reasons to do things for you that may be ostensibly similar to special reasons others have towards you, but what distinguishes my reasons from theirs, is that it is only through my provision of the thin good of partiality the special reason picks out, that you enjoy the rich good of my robust special concern. As such, no-one else in the world can provide my parents, my children, my partner, my friends, etc. with the rich good of knowing they can rely on me to provide them with the thin good of partiality even across other possible worlds in which the situations we find ourselves in were quite different from how they are now. And it is because they can only know that – because they can only enjoy the rich good of my modally robust special concern – if in fact they actually enjoy the thin good of my partiality in this world, which explains why I in particular have special reason to provide them with partial treatment as their need dictates.

**Special Relationships and ‘Associative’ Duties of Partiality**

If special reasons of partiality are subject nonuniversalizable in the sense just described, it follows that ‘associative’ duties of partiality will also be subject nonuniversalizable. As I suggest in Chapter VI, this poses a problem for anyone wishing to establish associative duties towards countries/compatriots, but for now I am only concerned to explore the conditions under which a special reason translates into an associative duty of partiality. The basic claim I seek to develop is that the
translation occurs when provision of the thin good of partiality in a specific instance is not just conducive, but in fact instrumentally necessary to substantiate the rich good of robust special concern. Conversely, if your failure to provide someone with the thin good of partiality in this world is such as to significantly deprive them of the rich good of knowing that they could rely on your provision of the thin good of partiality in other possible worlds, your provision of the thin good of partiality in this world is *prima facie* moral required.

To tease this claim out, consider again Keller’s Ted and Mary example. In the first section of this chapter I intimated that Ted may have reason to take Mary on a date, but although plausibly a reason of partiality, I claimed it was not ‘special’ in the sense of being subject nonuniversalizable. Why this matters, in part, is because until such time as his reasons do take this character, we would scarcely deem it morally appropriate or obligatory that he take Mary on a date. Indeed, there is no sense in which were Ted to cease loving Mary (suppose he meets someone else and forms a genuine and reciprocated love with them), anybody could accuse him of wronging Mary, and she, insofar as she is oblivious to his crush on her, could have no moral complaint against him. What this indicates, is that until such time as Ted’s reasons become ‘special’ in the relevant sense of being subject nonuniversalizable, his reasons towards Mary can at best be moral permissions, if not morally uninteresting, or possibly even morally inappropriate (if for example, Ted’s partial behaviour towards Mary were to slip over into the realm of stalking). What they cannot be are associative duties of partiality.

In fairness, Keller’s Ted and Mary example is not designed to show that you can have duties of partiality in relationships you do not value, only special reasons of partiality, but I think the point applies nonetheless. Keller writes: ‘It is not as if Ted suddenly…finds that his reasons to give her special treatment take a completely different character, once he comes (in the last scene of the movie) to share with her a relationship he does value’ (2013: 53). But surely his reasons do take on a completely different character once Ted and Mary come to share a genuine relationship, for there may now be circumstances in which he no longer has the unilateral authority to disregard them. Indeed, to the extent that Ted’s initial reasons are not subject nonuniversalizable, and the possibility of them translating into associative duties not live, they are distinctly different from the special reasons of partiality he comes to have.
towards Mary at the end of the movie. Of course, I am not denying that Ted’s special concern for Mary and whatever initial reasons of partiality towards her that may generate may strike him with a force that is compelling and consuming, but to the extent that he may disregard them with moral impunity, and Mary lacks any kind of a claim that he – Ted – be the person to perform them, they lack the requisite ‘reciprocal normativity’ whereby normative reasons of partiality on one side are mirrored by normative expectations of partiality on the other (Scheffler, 2010: 110-112).

Importantly, this is not to say that all subject nonuniversalizable special reasons are automatically associative duties of partiality. The point is only that special relationships must have the capacity to generate associative duties; that the possibility of special reasons translating into duties of partiality must be live. Conversely, if a relationship lacks the capacity to ever generate associative duties under any circumstances whatsoever, then that relationship is not ‘special’ in the relevant sense at all. This claim marks something of a departure from more conventional Relationships Views, for many proponents of that view suggest that to intrinsically value a special relationship to someone just is (amongst other things) to have associative duties towards them. Joseph Raz for example claims that a friendship that were entirely bereft of associative friendship duties could not, in fact, count as friendship at all (1989: 19). Scheffler too posits an argument to the effect that one cannot non-instrumentally value one’s relationship to another person and the shared history it embodies without seeing it, in effect, as generating associative duties (2010: 100). In essence, what these types of conceptual claims all say is that associative duties are internally related to the value of the relationship which justifies them – a value which in turn cannot be fully realised except via the fulfilment of associative duties by participants in the relationship. Thus, there cannot be associative duties except in relationships that are intrinsically valuable, and intrinsically valuable relationships cannot persist without the fulfilment of associative duties; they are mutually dependent, or so the claim goes.

Perhaps what motivates the conceptual argument, in part, is the thought that intrinsically valuable relationships necessarily entail an associative duty of special concern. And indeed, it may seem odd were I to say I am a friend of Tommy’s but I have no duty of special concern for him. However, on the account developing here
special concern is not itself an associative duty, but rather the rich robust good constituted by valuable special relationships which, correspondingly, have the capacity to generate associative duties to provide the thin good of actualist partiality. Moreover, if the value of relationships entirely reduces to the value of performing ‘duties of special concern’ (which is plausibly implied, if we are to suppose no intrinsically valuable relationship could obtain in their absence) then to appeal to the value of the relationship would effectively only be to appeal to the value of the duties to justify the duties, rendering the value of the relationship redundant to their justification. As such, I think it simply inaccurate to say that I have an associative duty of special concern for the well-being of my friend Tommy. What we should say instead, is that the intrinsic value of our friendship is constituted by the rich good of our robust special concern for one another, the substantiation of which will on occasion necessitate the fulfilment of associative friendship duties.

Of course, it is arguably true that, in this world, the value of deep personal relationships such as one’s relationship to one’s child is undoubtedly dependent on the fulfilment of some associative duties, but then, not all intrinsically valuable special relationships are as deep as our relationships to our children. As Keller observes, many of us also enjoy what he calls ‘undemanding’ friendships (2013: 51), or what we might call friendship-lite; that is, friendships that we value in perfectly familiar ways, without taking them as involving moral duties as such. Keller gives the example of his friendship with the owner of the local coffee shop he frequents as a genuine, enjoyable and durable friendship which yields special reasons they would not have towards just anyone (2013: 51). For example Keller would seem to have special reason to continue going there even if a much nicer coffee shop opened up around the corner, and the coffee shop owner might have special reason to occasionally throw in a free cookie with Keller’s coffee, whereas he would have no reason to do that for just anyone. The point of course, is that neither of these reasons looks much like a duty (Keller, 2013: 51). And indeed, most of us enjoy these sorts of friendship-lites with people – the bartender at your local, the owner of your corner shop, etc. – without seeing ourselves as having moral duties to them above and beyond what we have to all people generally.
However, whilst I agree that intrinsically valuable relationships can, and often do persist in the absence of fulfilment of anything like associative duties, even friendship-lite cannot persist in the absence of a robust disposition to fulfil associative duties when instrumentally necessary. In other words, your friendship must still have the capacity to generate associative duties, no matter how unlikely it may be in actual fact that you will find yourselves in a situation which triggers the translation of special reasons into duties of partiality. Moreover, there is nothing in this claim unique to friendship-lite in particular. In fact it seems to me that many special relationships are undemanding in this way by default, and even those that genuinely are demanding in that they on occasion do generate associative duties, the translation I suspect does not occur as often as might be imagined. What really matters is that participants in a special relationship be robustly disposed to discharge associative duties whenever doing so is instrumentally necessary to substantiate the value of the relationship, whether ‘lite’ or otherwise.

Suppose for example, Keller’s coffee shop inexplicably closes down one day, and six months later he happens across the former owner begging on the street and homeless. In such circumstances, I think Keller perhaps would be morally required to assist his forlorn friend. Certainly, if he recognises him, but stealthily carries on his way, his actions would warrant moral disapprobation. So whilst true that in the normal course of events Keller might well never have an associative duty towards the coffee-shop owner of any note, if he is not at least disposed to assist him in his hour of need and indeed to see himself as having a duty to do so, and does not to some extent believe that were their places switched his coffee-shop friend would do the same, then surely this is no friendship at all, ‘undemanding’ or not. In fact in this respect, there is perhaps a sense in which no special relationships are undemanding; that is, part of what it is that makes relationships ‘special’ is that they are modally demanding in just this way. Of course, the capacity of friendship-lite to trigger associative duties will be sharply circumscribed comparative to fuller relationships. My friendship-lite with the barman at my local may be utterly undemanding with respect to the more commonly cited duties of friendship that characterise my fuller friendships: I would not expect him to lend me money were I to fall on hard financial times, and nor would I feel it my duty to rush to his side to support him were he to experience some sort of family crisis. Yet, were a customer to attack him one night while I am in the bar, I would surely feel
duty-bound as a friend to assist him; at least, I think it would be impermissible for me to run off and leave him to fend for himself, all the while assuaging my conscience with the thought that our friendship is, and was only ever meant to be, undemanding.

**A Problem for the Projects View**

If the previous argument is plausible, then a necessary condition of our special relationships is that the translation of special reasons into duties of partiality must be a live possibility, however improbable the eventuality of it being triggered is. However, the fact that this is so presents a significant problem for the Projects View, for it is not clear that project-dependent reasons can translate into duties at all. Suppose, for example, one of my personal projects is to complete a full marathon. Whilst my project plausibly generates special reasons for me to hold myself to a training regime, we do not think my failure to do so generates normative grounds for complaint on the part of anyone else. These kinds of purely project-dependent reasons are, as Scheffler puts it, ‘normatively individualistic’ (2010: 111) – they lack the reciprocal normativity characteristic of relationship-dependent reasons since I retain the unilateral authority to disregard the former in a way I cannot the latter. It is in this sense then that projects seem incapable of explaining duties, for surely in order to be a duty at all, a duty to do X must not be contingent on the subjective will of the duty-bearer. Whatever project-dependent reasons I may have, if I can, by an act of my subjective will and without moral censure, divest myself of them, then surely they cannot be duties.

There are at least three responses a defender of the Projects View might look to in repelling this claim. The first is to invoke what we might call relational project-dependent reasons, such as those suggested in Chapter III: the project of being a good son, daughter, mother, father, friend, lover, etc. The claim then might be that if you count these amongst your projects, and being a good son, daughter, mother, father, friend, or lover means being sometimes required to provide for them the thin good of partiality, then it may seem that in such cases your project are a source of duties. And as suggested by the discussion of death-bed reminiscences in chapter II, the reality that there can be significant convergence between project-dependent reasons and relationship-dependent reasons is difficult to deny. However, the fact that project-
dependent reasons can, and often do coincide with relationship-dependent reasons does not alter the fact that the former are incapable of ever translating into genuine duties.

In the first place, it is not clear what is gained by fusing reasons in this way as opposed to disambiguating them more clearly. It seems at least less confusing to call one’s reasons for partiality towards one’s child relationship-dependent reasons rather than relational project-dependent reasons (arising from one’s project of being a good parent). And where project-dependent reasons co-extend with relationship-dependent reasons, it seems to always be the latter that do all the explanatory work. One can, I think, have the personal project to one day be a good parent before one even has children, and that may be a source of reasons to do what one can to bring it about that you actually have children, but it does not seem that anyone would have normative grounds for complaint were one to never have children. If a child does come along however, we would want to say that you do now have various duties of partiality towards them, and since what has changed about the situation is not the existence of the personal project to be a good parent (for that existed already), the inclination is to seek some other explanatory factor for the shift (which essentially foreshadows what the other two views do: the Relationships View positing the coming into existence of a relationship; the Individuals View the coming into existence of a particular independently valuable individual). Perhaps it might be suggested that this merely reflects the change in the nature and stringency of the personal project when actualised as compared to when it was merely prospective, but this would only move the argument back a step. We would still want to know what brings about this shift in stringency, and my suspicion is that whatever answer we give will still have to make reference either to the coming into existence of a new relationship, or a new individual. So although there may be significant overlap of project-dependent reasons and relationship-dependent reasons, where there is it is the latter that is normatively dominant (Scheffler, 2010: 111).

The real problem though lies with the thought that it is possible to lack, or by some ill-motivated feat or another, divest oneself of one’s project to be a good son, father, lover, or friend. It may be heinously cruel, stupid, and selfish to do so, but to the extent it can be successfully achieved, nothing remains to which proponents of the Projects View can appeal in order to establish outstanding duties you may have to
these associates. In the 2004 film *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*, for example, one of the protagonists Clementine has her ex-boyfriend Joel erased from her memory (or, for our purposes, her projects). In the wake of the procedure, she has absolutely no idea who he is, and is completely unaware that they once had a romantic relationship. But assuming she is aware the procedure exists, although utterly unaware that she has had it, we could I think, if we somehow found a way to prove to her that she and Joel were once a couple, convince her that she owes him *something* in virtue of the loving relationship they once shared, even if she has no memory of it anymore. What we could not say in our attempts to entreat her to help lift him out of his depression, is that she owes it to him because of the pivotal role he plays in her personal projects or sense of self. After all, once she has him erased from her projects, nothing remains that could be appealed to at all. Of course, project-erasure on this scale is somewhat fantastical, but the same point holds for more plausible cases. I might decide that really, what I am all about – what defines me – is helping those living in severe poverty, and that I should give myself over to this project 100% heart and soul, and if this means effectively deserting my children to go and live in those places where my help is most needed, well so be it. Yet, however successful I may be in divesting myself of the project of a good father, most of us would not think that by doing so I can thereby also successfully divest myself of my parental duties, but the fact that I cannot is something that the Projects View lacks the normative capacity to explain.

A second response might look to *joint* projects, and point out that, as a matter of fact, those kinds of projects often do generate duties. If in training for the marathon, you and I commit to training for it together, then perhaps we do have duties to show up for scheduled training sessions. Or maybe I have committed to co-authoring a book with you, and am thus obligated to see it through in a way I might not be if I were the sole author of the book. However, it seems that for the most part, when joint projects like these generate obligations, it is usually because some kind of contractual agreement or promissory commitment has been made. This is most obviously so when you and I are relative strangers. If we are not strangers – say we are old friends who have decided to run the marathon together or co-author the book – then I may also have distinct duties that perhaps pertain to our joint projects, but that are nonetheless duties of friendship.
for all that. Still, in neither case does it seem to be the joint project itself that is the source of duties, but rather the explicit agreement or our valued friendship.

In any case, there are two further problems that count against the joint projects response. The first references a point Stroud makes about project-dependent permissions of partiality, but which applies just as forcefully to project-dependent duties of partiality: if our reasons and duties of partiality are generated by the joint projects we pursue, the Projects Views does not treat anything else you are involved in beyond what directly implicates these particular projects as generating reasons or duties of partiality for me (2010: 148). Thus, in the case of our shared project of running the marathon, I would not have any special reasons or duties towards you that were not generated by or related to this particular project. I may have some special reason or obligation to support you and encourage you as you begin to tire over the last few miles of the race; but our joint project could not generate any reason or obligation whatsoever to support you if your wife left you. One response to this might be to reference our friendship itself as the joint project, not the joint projects we engage in as friends, but this move brings out the second problem, for whilst this might be plausible as regards friendship, other types of special relationships which we take to be archetypally characterised by duties of partiality do not look like ‘joint projects’ at all (Keller, 2010: 16). As Stroud points out, it looks rather like intellectual overreach to say we jointly pursue projects with our new-born infants or perhaps severely mentally-handicapped relatives, especially since the fact they are arguably not moral agents at all means there is no sense in which they could be seen to form part of a plural agent with you (2010: 148). Yet, we feel strongly that we have duties to care for our new-borns and mentally-handicapped relatives, and to the extent that the Projects View (whether personal or joint) cannot assist us in making sense of where those duties come from, it remains significantly inadequate as an account of duties of partiality.

Perhaps if anything fits the bill of being a joint project in which one simply finds oneself embroiled without explicit agreement, it is membership of a community of some sort. The question then becomes, can what Scheffler calls ‘membership-dependent reasons’ (2010: 112) translate into duties? This question will be addressed in much greater detail in chapter VI with the discussion of ‘Countries, Compatriots, and Associative Duties’ but the basic puzzle can be stated relatively succinctly. Whilst
membership of a group or community implies co-membership, and is thus not normatively individualistic like project-dependent reasons, nor is it precisely characterised by the reciprocal normativity identified with relationship-dependent reasons. On Scheffler’s account, one of the conditions of duties of partiality is that individuals lack the unilateral authority to disregard them since special relationships are also a source of reasons for moral complaint on the part of recipients. However, it is not obvious who, if anyone, has grounds for moral complaint in the membership scenario. Nor is it obvious, at least in large-scale communities, who could reasonably claim to have been wronged if one member declines to act on membership-dependent reasons, or if the notion of wronging others is even appropriate at all in such contexts. Scheffler himself highlights these complexities concerning membership-dependent reasons although he does not delve into them in too much depth (2010: 112), but in chapter VI I suggest a number of arguments that, whilst cast in terms of rejecting associative duties to countries and compatriots, can just as well be read as a rejection of membership-dependent duties as generated by joint projects more broadly.

A final possible response to the claim that project-dependent reasons cannot translate into duties might assert that, in fact, personal projects properly conceived are themselves duties: duties to oneself. Most accept that duties of partiality towards intimates can be justified, even if they disagree on what basis, but what about duties to that most intimate of intimates – oneself? Certainly in common parlance we often speak of persons ‘owing it to themselves’ to do X. The plausibility of moral duties of partiality towards oneself faces a number of issues however. For one thing, as Richard Arneson suggests, it would seem to imply that exemplary altruists who give no less weight to others’ interests than they do to their own (Mother Theresa for example) violate moral obligation (2003: 384), and this would seem a somewhat odd conclusion. For another thing, it is hard to assess how having reason for moral complaint against oneself would cash out in reality. If you cave in to alcoholism, what grounds for moral complaint against yourself could you have? Being simultaneously the duty-bearer and the duty-recipient, it is difficult to see what could prevent you from unilaterally waiving the duty. There appears, then, to be little to recommend the claim that one is morally required to be partial towards oneself. Admittedly, in the case of your duty not to allow yourself to become ravaged by alcoholism, it is easy to see that failure to satisfy that duty might give others grounds for moral complaint against you (your
children for example), but as previously noted, when project-dependent reasons overlap with relationship-dependent reasons, the normative weight tips the balance in favour of the latter. Under these circumstances, it is simply not the case that this duty is owed to yourself; rather it is owed to your children, and we think it normatively appropriate that you owe it to them to stay sober.

It is worth stressing that none of this is to say personal projects are incapable of generating reasons of partiality that are genuinely special in the sense of being subject nonuniversalizable; indeed, I suspect that no moral framework, if it is to be plausible, can eschew the idea that it is permissible to show a legitimate preference for one’s own projects (within limits) (Cottingham, 1986; Hooker, 2010: 35; Jeske, 2014: §7; Stroud, 2010). As John Cottingham puts it: ‘the principle of according a special extra weight to one’s own concerns just because they are one’s own…is one which seems an essential prerequisite for thinking of oneself as a human agent, as an individual, as a person with a distinctive identity’ (1986: 364). Thus, we should not rule out a place for the Projects View in the discourse surrounding the permissibility of ethical partiality. All that I have sought to show is that insofar as it cannot yield a plausible story about how we come sometimes to have not just permissions, but obligations of partiality, it remains problematically incomplete.

Conclusion

In last chapter I set forth the generic features of partiality with a view to revealing something of the formal structure common to all forms of partiality in its myriad guises. But of course the crux of our discussion is a particular creed of partiality – what might be termed ethical partiality – as it presides within and through special relationships. In this chapter then, I asked ‘what are the specials?’ that are referred to time and time again in the discourse surrounding ethical partiality. In the first section I set out to explain just what it is for a relationship to be ‘special’ in the sense relevant to ethical partiality, but found defining them as ‘special’ on any other basis than their ability to generate ‘special’ reasons to be somewhat troublesome. I turned in the second section then to the question of what it is for a reason to be ‘special’ in the requisite sense, and through exploration of that issue sought to forge a way forward past the circularity of the last section. In doing so, I focused in particular on the subject nonuniversalizable nature of special reasons, and suggested that once we see
what it is that makes them subject-nonuniversalizable, we start to discern a solution to the puzzle of why my relationships generate reasons for me in a way that the equally valuable relationships of others do not that can perhaps escape degenerating into a ‘they just do’ type claim. What it is, I suggest, that gives my provision of the thin good of partiality towards Molly the quality of subject-nonuniversalizable special reasons, is the rich good of robust special concern which constitutes a sort of morally basic good we enjoy that is unavailable to us via any other medium than the valuable relationship we share.

In the third section then, I went on to suggest that not only can this dialectical correspondence between the rich good of robust special concern and the thin actualist good of partiality help explain why our reasons of partiality are special in the sense of being subject nonuniversalizable, but that it can also explain the requirement that special relationships have the capacity to generate not just special reasons, but also, what are commonly termed ‘associative’ duties of partiality. The basic claim here was that subject-nonuniversalizable reasons of partiality translate into associative duties of partiality whenever provision of the thin good of partiality in some specific instance is not merely conducive to the realisation of the rich good of robust special concern, but instrumentally necessary to sustain it. As I went on to highlight in the final section however, if it is indeed a condition of special relationships that they have the capacity to generate associative duties, this would seem quite problematic for the Projects View, since it seems doubtful project-dependent reasons of partiality can translate into duties at all. If this is correct, then insofar as only relationship-dependent reasons can translate into associative duties of partiality, I think we have good reason to prefer the Relationships View to the Projects View. Indeed, if we are to be able to explain duties of partiality at all, it seems the only option of the three main contenders left is the Relationships View. And I think that is as it should be.

As for the ‘specials’, there is perhaps always more we could say about what is distinctive about our special relationships and reasons. As Scheffler describes them, special relationships are characterised by ‘ongoing bonds between individuals who have a shared history that usually includes patterns of engagement and forms of mutual familiarity, attachment, and regard developed over time’ (2010: 115). Kolodny suggests similar conditions when he speaks of the interpersonal relationships we are
concerned with as being ‘historical’ in that they depend on the existence of some facts about our past that constitute a socially salient connection, and ‘ongoing’, which is to say, diachronically persistent (2003: 148). But whilst these characteristics are so intuitive as to scarcely bear mention, it may seem that there is another altogether more fundamental, indeed, load-bearing pillar of the Relationships View that has thus far been largely conspicuous by its absence, for I have not made much mention of the way we intrinsically value our special relationships, except in passing. It is to this critical piece in the puzzle of partiality that I turn in the next chapter as I attempt to construct a Relationships View that, though true in spirit to its predecessors and their focus on intrinsic valuable relationships, seeks to go further by asking, ‘Will you still love me tomorrow?’
Chapter V

Will You Still Love Me Tomorrow? Partiality and Modally Robust Special Concern

Never shall a young man,
Thrown into despair
By those great honey-coloured
Ramparts at your ear,
Love you for yourself alone
And not your yellow hair.

But I can get a hair-dye
And set such colour there,
Brown, or black, or carrot,
That young men in despair
May love me for myself alone
And not my yellow hair.

I heard an old religious man
But yesternight declare
That he had found a text to prove
That only God, my dear,
Could love you for yourself alone
And not your yellow hair.

For Anne Gregory’, by William Butler Yeats.

Introduction

It was Carole King who asked the question that forms part of the title of this chapter: ‘Will you still love me tomorrow?’ More than this though, I think that what most of us want, nay require, is to know, would you still love me tomorrow, even if, for whatever reason, I were not as you find me now. Would you not love me, as Yeats’s Anne Gregory desired, and as most of us do I think, ‘for myself alone’? It is of course no accident that our literary and musical culture is laced with famous examples of distress-addled heroes and heroines wrestling with precisely this question – after all, there are few things people value more than their closest interpersonal relationships, these being among our most fundamental and enduring sources of human flourishing and reasons for action.
In this chapter, I propose to take the question ‘Will you still love me tomorrow?’ quite seriously with a view to teasing from it the rudiments of a revised Relationships View which attempts to integrate the requirement that love be steadfast, with the ways in which we value our personal relationships. This attempt to incorporate the requirement of robustness in relationships into the story of how we value them is motivated by three core objectives: the first is to offer an explanation of why we intrinsically value our relationships with a view to filling what is otherwise a problematic lacuna in the conventional Relationships View; the second is to show how valuing them so on this explanation paints a more satisfying picture of how such relationships generate special reasons and duties of partiality; and the third is to propose, on the basis of these claims, a principled way of distinguishing those variations across which robustness of special reasons and duties of partiality is required from those across which it is not.

The first section introduces the central pillar of the conventional Relationships View whereby it is claimed our close personal relationships are distinctively reason-creating because we value them *intrinsically*. In the second section I seek to augment this claim by suggesting that one’s reason to intrinsically value one’s special relationships is in part explained by the fact that they constitute what Philip Pettit calls modally demanding goods (2011; 2012; 2013; 2015). I go on then in the third section to address the question of when robustness of the disposition to fulfil associative duties is and is not required, and within that what I term the misanthropy objection to the Relationships View. Having shown that objection to be empty, I respond in the final section to a number of outstanding objections and problems this Relationships View must deal with in the hope that in doing so, we begin to see that this account offers not only the most plausible account of the source of reasons and duties of partiality, but the fullest account of the ethics of partiality in general.

**The Relationships View and Intrinsic Value**

We have special reasons and responsibilities to certain people that we do not have to others, some of which come about as a result of specific types of interaction, such as when we make promises or enter into contracts. The special reasons and duties we have to our loved ones do not however seem to fit this description; we do not generally speaking contract ourselves into having special responsibilities for our loved ones. So
the first question proponents of the Relationships View must address then is that of what makes special relationships ‘reason-creating’ in the sense in which they generate reasons and duties of partiality, as distinct from those you may have to pedestrians with whom you share a collision course, your bank manager, promisees, etc. One explanation is that offered by Scheffler, and it turns on a claim about the particular way we value our relationships to our loved ones, and what valuing them so entails. He writes:

(I)f I have a special valued relationship with someone, and if the value I attach to the relationship is not purely instrumental in character…then I regard the person with whom I have the relationship as capable of making additional claims on me, beyond those that people in general can make…It is, in other words, to be disposed, in contexts which vary depending on the nature of the relationship, to see that person’s needs, interests, and desires as, in themselves, providing me with presumptively decisive reasons for action, reasons that I would not have had in the absence of the relationship…If there are no circumstances in which I would see a person’s needs or interests as giving me such reasons, then…it makes no sense to assert that I attach (non-instrumental) value to my relationship with that person (Scheffler, 2001: 100).

On Scheffler’s account then, the sense in which our special relationships to our loved ones are reason-creating in a distinctive way is in part explained by the fact that we value them non-instrumentally (2010: 104).

Intuitively, this notion that we do not value our relationships purely instrumentally seems largely correct. We do not, generally speaking, value our friendships, romantic relationships or familial relationships solely as means to some independently specified ends. So perhaps this does in part explain why my friendships, my romantic relationship, and my familial relationships generate distinctive special reasons for me in a way that your equally valuable friendships, romantic relationship, and familial relationships do not; the explanation being that in valuing these relationships of mine

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27 For reasons already discussed in chapter II, whereas Scheffler talks of non-instrumental valuing, I speak of intrinsically valuing so as to avoid confusion, since aside from non-instrumentally valuing X as an end (i.e. intrinsically), it is also perfectly coherent to non-instrumentally value X extrinsically (Langton, 2007: 163). Moreover, as I suggest later in this chapter, I believe what Scheffler intends on closer inspection must be the former rather than the latter (p.104).

28 Scheffler’s claim is in fact stronger than this in that he suggests that to value a relationship non-instrumentally is to see it as generating not only reasons, but duties of partiality. As intimated in the last chapter, I think special relationships must have the capacity to generate duties of partiality – that the parties to them must be robustly disposed to fulfil associative duties as and when the fulfilment of them is instrumentally necessary to substantiate the rich good of robust special concern they consist in – but believe this, rather than the actual fulfilment of associative duties, to be what constitutes the good of special relationships.
non-instrumentally, I value my relationships differently to the way I value yours (Keller, 2013: 120; Scheffler, 2010: 104). Supposing this to be plausible, Scheffler argues that sceptics’ denial of special reasons of partiality would require an argument repudiating our non-instrumental valuation of our special relationships, which would in turn be tantamount to rejecting fundamental categories of human valuation in a way that no plausible moral framework can countenance (2010: 106).

In line with the conventional view, I concur that the reason our close personal relationships are distinctively ‘reason-creating’ in this way is indeed partly explained by the fact we value them intrinsically. But then that immediately spawns a further question: just what is it about our special relationships that gives us reason to value them intrinsically? Or have we reached the limits of explanation, such that the best we can say is that to be someone’s friend, lover, caring relative, just is, in part, to value your relationship to them intrinsically? I think not, and the answer I propose in lieu of this primitivist claim is that it is the rich good of modally robust special concern that makes our special relationships goods in their own right, thus explaining why we have reason to value them intrinsically.

The Modally Demanding Good of Special Concern

This claim draws on an argument developed by Philip Pettit (2015) in which he notes that certain of the goods we enjoy exhibit a correspondence between thin actualist goods – goods that others confer on us in the here and now; and rich modally demanding goods – goods that require your provision of the corresponding thin good to be robust not just in this world, but also across a range of possible worlds in which things were quite different. To illustrate what it is for something to be modally demanding, Philip Pettit discusses the value of freedom as robust non-interference as

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29 The same kind of argument could also work for the Projects View, since to attach special significance to your own projects just is, amongst other things, to see them as reason-creating for you. And so again the sceptics’ denial of special reasons of partiality would seem to require agents to refrain from forming projects, but as Sarah Stroud argues, to ask as much would be to ask them to not be agents, and no plausible moral framework could make such a demand (2010: 142-143). It is not clear however, if there is a comparable type of argument the Individuals View can make. Implicit in the claims about relationships and projects is the thought that we value them non-instrumentally. In the case of valuing individuals though, we ordinarily agree that to value anyone non-instrumentally (as indeed we should) is to see them as reason-giving, so that doesn’t seem to shed any light on why we see ourselves as having special reasons towards some and not others. This claim partially motivates the thought that what distinguishes people to whom I am partial is that I extrinsically value them, in addition to intrinsically (non-instrumentally) valuing them just as I do all persons.
Isaiah Berlin famously conceived of it. To enjoy the rich good of freedom, it does not seem sufficient that one enjoys the thin good of non-interference in the actual choice one makes; it must also be the case that your choice would not have been interfered with had you chosen differently (2012: 7-8). Pettit proposes that this exemplifies a structure that can be found in a range of goods, not just freedom, but amongst others, love, friendship, honesty, fidelity, loyalty, trustworthiness and candour (2011). In each instance, the thought is that it will not be enough for me to enjoy your provision of the good as things stand in the here and now; rather I need to be assured of robustness even were things otherwise. On the robustly demanding good of honesty for example, Pettit writes: ‘I enjoy [the rich good of] your honesty insofar as I enjoy [the thin good of] your truth-telling, not just in the actual world where it is more or less convenient for you to tell the truth, but also in various possible worlds where it becomes inconvenient’ (2012: 9).

What I think Pettit’s account of modally demanding goods provides us with then, is an answer to a question that is by and large overlooked on the conventional Relationships View, for although it seems true to lived experience that we generally do value our special relationships intrinsically, we are never given any explanation of why we value them so. And so, in the hope of filling this lacuna in the discourse, my suggestion, adapted from Pettit’s model, is that it is the modally demanding rich good of special concern that makes our special relationships intrinsically valuable. More specifically, I argue that the actualist good of special relationships is the thin good of partial treatment we are prompted to provide in our close relationships from time to time, and that the modally demanding good of special relationships is the rich good of robust special concern – the good of knowing that I would still enjoy the thin good of your partiality even were I somewhat different than how you find me now. What we see moreover is that although enjoying the thin good of partiality is a necessary condition of, for example, friendship possessing extrinsic value, the thin good of merely actualist partiality is not sufficient for friendship. True friendship requires that we also enjoy the rich good of each other’s special concern – that we would continue to provide each other with the thin good of partial treatment even were things quite different, and it is this that I claim is the good of friendship, and special relationships generally. In its absence, it makes no sense to class our relationship a friendship at all. What it is then that gives us reason to value our relationships intrinsically, or so I argue, is this
modally robust good of special concern – or, if you like, the good of knowing you will still love me tomorrow.

**Will you still love me tomorrow?**

The requirement that love be steadfast over change has been a recurring motif in literary and popular culture from at least as far back as Shakespeare, who famously wrote: ‘…Love is not love/Which alters when it alteration finds’. And as we have already seen, Yeats’s Anne Gregory desperately yearned for assurance that the despairing young men would still love her, even if her hair were not yellow, but brown, black, or carrot. More recently, The Beatles pondered: ‘What would you do if I sang out of tune? Would you stand up and walk out on me?’ And just in case we should be in any doubt that lovers today continue to wrestle with these same questions, just last year Lana Del Rey felt compelled to ask: ‘Will you still love me when I’m no longer young and beautiful? Will you still love me when I’ve got nothing but my aching soul?’

Most of us, I think, grasp what is required of love in the sense implied in these examples. If my losing my singing ability, or my hair going grey, or my growing old is sufficient to cause your love for me to lapse, then on almost any account we are inclined to think it never deserved the name of love to begin with. In other words, it doesn’t seem to be enough for me that you love me, or behave partially towards me merely as I am in the here and now. For me to believe you to be a real, true friend, lover, or caring relative, I need to believe that you would still love me tomorrow (next week, next year) and be disposed to be partial towards me, even were I in some sense quite altered from how you find me now (Pettit, 2011).

However, though we would seem to require robustness of your provision of partiality across a range of possible variations in me, we do not require robustness across all possible changes. For example, if my partner Molly were to suddenly and inexplicably become monstrously cruel towards me, we might suppose my partiality towards her ought not be robust across that kind of change. Indeed, it would seem positively perverse to require my loving devotion to remain steadfast then. The question then is this: is there any principled way of distinguishing those variations across which
robustness of the provision of the good of partiality is required from those across which it is not?

The suggestion I want to make is, in some sense, trivially uncontentious. The answer I propose, is that whether robustness of your reasons and duties of partiality towards me is required in the face of some change in me/you/our circumstances, will depend on whether our relationship remains extrinsically valuable or not.

**The Misanthropy Objection**

Yet, despite the ostensible simplicity of this standard for robustness, it seems that perhaps the Relationships View cannot plausibly lay claim to it at all, for to do so would look to be inconsistent with its central premise that special reasons and duties of partiality are generated by the relationships one values *intrinsically*. Proponents of that view, Keller avers, would seem forced, that is, to concede that even a relationship that were to so atrophy as to become thoroughly devoid of extrinsic value, or even detrimental to the well-being of participants might *still* be valuable – valuable *intrinsically* that is – and could in principle therefore still require robustness of reasons and duties of partiality (Keller, 2013: 57). So it seems, even were Molly to become monstrously cruel to me, the question of my continuing to be duty-bound to her would remain an open one on the Relationships View, when really we would want to say it is not (Keller, 2013: 57). This then is what I term the misanthropy objection, which concretizes something of the uneasiness Keller feels about the Relationships View’s claim that reasons and duties of partiality are generated by intrinsically valuable relationships; indeed, partly motivating him to reject the claim that relationships can be intrinsically valuable at all. His real antipathy to the Relationships View then, is that in ascribing special significance to relationships on the basis that they are fundamentally or intrinsically valuable (for their own sakes, or in their own rights), it attempts to explain the importance of relationships by dissociating them from what *actually* matters – the actual contributions they make to the welfare, flourishing and interests of the persons themselves – hence the charge of misanthropy (Keller, 2013: 77).
By contrast, the Individuals View is fundamentally oriented by how individuals actually fare in relationships: whether reasons and duties of partiality are required to be robust or not hinges entirely on whether or not the relationship continues to serve the interests and well-being of the individuals within it, and not some esoteric account of its intrinsic value. This seems right I think, at least in part. Thus, I grant Keller’s claim that ‘relationships possess only extrinsic value, insofar as their value is relevant to the generation of reasons of partiality’ (2013: 56), and share his conviction that a plausible ethics of partiality should not attempt to ‘explain the importance of human relationships by dissociating them from the contributions they make to human needs and interests’ (2013: 77). However, contra the misanthropy objection, I contend that the Relationships View can, and indeed must, answer to the values of human welfare and flourishing, every bit as attentively as the Individuals View does, and that doing so is perfectly consistent with taking the relationships we value intrinsically to be the source of our reasons and duties of partiality. More specifically, I argue that whilst to intrinsically value a relationship is to see it as a source of reasons and duties of partiality, one could never have such reasons and duties in, or indeed reason to preserve, a wholly destructive relationship, since I believe intrinsically valuing a relationship to be in fact conditional on its actually possessing extrinsic value.

Keller acknowledges that a response along these lines might circumvent the objection, but resists it on the grounds that ‘it leaves the suggestion that special relationships have intrinsic value looking unmotivated’ (2013: 58), drawing on the following analogy to support that objection:

[Suppose] I claim that winter coats are intrinsically valuable, meaning that they have value additional to the good they do in keeping people warm. You say that it seems implausible to think that a winter coat could be valuable even when it does nothing to keep anyone warm. I reply that it wouldn’t be; I say that the intrinsic value of a winter coat is conditional upon the coat’s also having the value of keeping someone warm...You would be within your rights to think that I am just trying to make trouble. Given my concessions, what more could I possibly need to see that the value of a winter coat is purely extrinsic? (Keller, 2013: 58)

And indeed, the objection here would carry if my claim were that special relationships are intrinsically valuable because they are extrinsically valuable - that their possession of intrinsic value is conditional on their possession of extrinsic value. But that is not
my claim. What I am saying is that intrinsically valuing a relationship is conditional on its possessing extrinsic value, which amounts to something rather different.

Indeed, like Keller, I find it implausible that the value a winter coat possesses could be anything other than purely extrinsic, but nothing obvious follows from this about the way in which one might value it. Keller writes that ‘it seems implausible to think that a winter coat could be valuable even when it does nothing to keep anyone warm’ (2013: 58), but this seems too quick, for we might imagine that my winter coat has some special significance for me that gives me reason to value it beyond the protection from the elements it provides (perhaps it was the first winter coat my parents bought me as a child). Nevertheless, even if I can value the first ever winter coat my parents gave me despite the fact that it no longer fits me, never mind keeps me warm, Keller is undoubtedly rights that I cannot value it intrinsically. I do not value my childhood winter coat for its own sake, and nor do I value it for the sake of its warmth-preserving properties; rather, I extrinsically value it non-instrumentally for the association it has with my parents and my childhood (Langton, 2007: 162-3). That is, I value it in much the same way I believe we might value mink coats (Korsgaard, 1983: 185), the pen Abraham Lincoln used to sign the Emancipation Proclamation (Kagan, 1998: 285), Princess Diana’s dress and Napoleon’s hat (Rabinowicz and Rønnow-Rasmussen, 2000: 41). As I suggested in Chapter II (pp.42-43) it seems a mistake (though not an uncommon one) to say one intrinsically values any of these things for on my definition, that requires that the X that is valued is itself the source of reasons for valuing it, and none of these objects, my childhood winter coat included, are themselves the source of reasons for valuing them.

Yet, although I agree with Keller that the notion one could have reason to value a winter coat can be rejected, the general claim that having reason to value a thing intrinsically does not entail that it possesses value in virtue of its intrinsic properties, I think, cannot. Consider my relationship with Molly. The value our relationship possesses is purely extrinsic, which is to say all of the value it possesses derives from sources extrinsic to it. This may sound rather mercenary, but it is not. That our relationship possesses merely extrinsic value does not imply that I value it merely extrinsically; indeed I do not. I intrinsically value the relationship I share with Molly. And the reasons why, I think, is because unlike Diana’s dress for example, the
constellation of extrinsic value in our relationship constitutes the further rich good of robust special concern – a good that whilst conditional on our relationship possessing extrinsic value, is nonetheless irreducible to it. In other words, my relationship to Molly is not valuable to me purely on the basis of utility value or what I can get out of it (its instrumental extrinsic value), nor for the time and agency we have expended cultivating it or for what we have put into it (its embodied extrinsic value), or even some complex summation of the two. Diana’s dress, by contrast, reduces entirely to its extrinsic value; that is, *what went into it*, i.e. Diana, *what we can get out of it* (e.g. by selling it, displaying it in museums, cultivating national pride, etc.), or the sum of these aspects of its embodied and instrumental value, but no more than the sum.

Moreover, it seems to me all proponents of the Relationships View must subscribe to the claim that one can intrinsically value merely extrinsically valuable relationships for none, as far as I can see, want to suggest that relationships somehow possess value in virtue of their intrinsic properties. And yet, as I have said, no-one ever really says *why* we intrinsically value them, which is doubly strange since with regards to special reasons and duties of partiality, the claim is often not simply that they are generated by intrinsically valuable relationships, but rather by those relationships we have *reason* to value intrinsically. The suggestion I have made is that part of the explanation of why we have reason to value our relationship intrinsically has to do with the rich good of robust special concern we realise in them. But even then, two questions remain: firstly, how is intrinsically valuing a relationship for the rich good of robust special concern conditional on its possessing extrinsic value? And secondly, how exactly do relationships which are intrinsically valuable in this sense generate special reasons and duties of partiality?

**How is intrinsically valuing a relationship conditional on its possessing extrinsic value?**

The response to the first question, in brief, is this: Certain of our special relationships are intrinsically valuable to us because common to such relationships is the generic rich good of modally robust special concern. Our enjoyment of this rich good of robust special concern requires not only that we enjoy the thin good of partiality in the actual world whereby we do things for, to and with one another beyond what we otherwise would in the absence of our relationship, but also that we are disposed to
provide each other with this thin good of partiality across a range of possible worlds in which things might be quite different. Conversely, if we could not rely on each other to provide one another with the thin good of partiality in which relationships partly consists even were things somewhat different, then it would make no sense to say we enjoy a genuinely loving relationship at all. But before we can intrinsically value our relationship for the rich good of special concern – before we can realise the good of knowing we can rely on each other for the thin good of partiality in other possible worlds – we must first enjoy from each other the thin good of partiality in the actual world. It is in this sense that intrinsically valuing your special relationship is conditional on its possessing extrinsic value, for until such time as we enjoy the thin good of actual partial treatment (one of the properties of relationships that makes them extrinsically valuable) we cannot enjoy the rich good of special concern (the property of relationships that gives us reason to value them intrinsically).

Of course, the claim that intrinsically valuing a relationship is conditional on its possessing extrinsic value requires not simply that the relationship retains extrinsic value of just any old kind. The value in question must in the first place be agent-relative such that the focus is specifically the way the relationship I share with Molly is extrinsically valuable to us. Our relationship might be utterly dysfunctional and therefore instrumentally valuable as an exemplar to others of the sort of relationship they ought to avoid, but that would certainly not give us reason to value it. Nobody I take it would want to say that the instrumental deterrent value to others of witnessing Molly’s monstrous cruelty to me would outweigh the extrinsic disvalue of our relationship such that I would still have reason to value it intrinsically and thus treat it as reason and duty generating. The key point then is that if our relationship were to become dysfunctional or thoroughly destructive and thus one of net extrinsic disvalue for us, the rich good of robust special concern for which we once valued it intrinsically would be lost, as would its capacity to generate special reasons and duties of partiality. It is thus the rich good of modally robust special concern that we enjoy through our close relationships – a special good unrealisable via any other medium – that gives us reason to value them intrinsically, and since this rich good cannot be realised except in relationships we vest with extrinsic value via provision of the thin good of actualist partiality, one would not have reason to value (intrinsically or extrinsically), nor special reasons and duties of partiality within, a wholly destructive relationship. If this
is plausible, we can jettison what I take to be the claim propping up the misanthropy objection – the notion that special relationships can possess value independent of their being extrinsically valuable to participants – whilst retaining the claim that special reasons and duties of partiality are generated by those relationships we value intrinsically (on condition of their possessing extrinsic value).

**How does the rich good of robust special concern generate special reasons and duties of partiality?**

The response to the first question places front and centre the rich good of modally robust special concern and its dependence on provision of the thin good of actualist partiality as the properties which give us reason to value our relationships intrinsically and extrinsically respectively. From this then we can extrapolate a response to the second question: if friends can only enjoy the rich good of special concern by virtue of being assured that their provision of the thin good of partiality for one another extends to not just this world (where it is perhaps more or less convenient to be friends), but also a range of possible worlds (in which friendship might prove somewhat more demanding), this in part explains why friendship generates the special reasons it does in this world, for enjoying the rich good of modally robust special concern depends, for its very existence, on enjoyment of the thin good of partiality in this world. In simple terms, before friends can enjoy the rich good of special concern (which is what makes friendship intrinsically valuable as a good in its own right), they have to enjoy the thin good of partiality in the actual world, and the only way that can happen is if they appropriately invest themselves in their friendship such that it embodies net extrinsic value.

Sometimes moreover, this good of friendship generates not just reasons, but duties of partiality, for occasionally, your failure to do something for, to, or with a friend – to be there for them when they really need you to be in this world – will be such as to significantly deprive them of the rich good of knowing that you will be there for them should they really need you to be in other possible worlds (after all, this world in which you are not there for them was itself but a possible world only yesterday). Herein then lies the promise of distinguishing when special reasons of partiality translate into associative duties of partiality, for when you have a subject nonuniversalizable reason to do something for someone, and your failure to do it
would rob them of the rich good of your robust special concern in this way, we may say that you not only have special reason to do it, but that you are in fact required to do it. This is not a precise metric to be sure, but given the contextual nature of relationships, to purport to specify with any greater precision when associative duties arise would, I think, be to purport to show too much.

That effectively concludes the exposition of the main planks in my proposed revision of the Relationships View of ethical partiality. In the last two chapters I apply some of claims I have made over the first five chapters in order to shed some new light on issues pertaining to associative duties to countries/compatriots, and the apparent tension between general and associative duties, but before we turn to any of that, let us consider three objections and the responses this Relationships View can offer.

First Objection

We do not judge which relationships matter to us by surveying them for intrinsic value

If the synthesis of these claims about intrinsic and extrinsic valuing and the corresponding goods of special concern and partiality is plausible, it suggests a possible response to another of Keller’s arguments against the claim that relationships can be intrinsically valuable: that the Relationships View yields an implausible story about the basis of our judgements concerning the value of relationships (2013: 59-61). Whether special reasons exist in many kinds of relationships is not always easily discerned absent contextual detail. A few of the examples Keller offers include the kinds of relationships you might share with your hairdresser, your friend’s parent, your father’s new girlfriend, or your second cousin. Yet the Relationships View purports to yield a simple formula by which we can judge whether even relationships such as these generate special reasons of partiality: if you value them intrinsically, they do; if you do not, then they do not. But of course Keller is right that this is hardly true to the basis on which we actually judge whether a given relationship yields special reasons. As he writes: ‘When deciding whether a relationship is valuable, we do not try to isolate the relationship from its context and effects. We do not try to set aside its extrinsic value and see whether any value remains’ (Keller, 2013: 60). And with this I think we can agree. It is indubitably true that ‘when we make judgements about whether particular relationships generate special reasons, we properly do so by conceiving of the relevant
relationships as possible sites of extrinsic value’ (Keller, 2013: 61) and certainly not on the basis of fiddly philosophical notions of intrinsic value.

On the account developing here though, whilst it is perhaps equally esoteric to assert that the good of our most valued relationships depend on claims about other possible worlds, this is just a philosophical representation of how most of us, I think, intuitively measure the value of our relationships. The truth in the revised Relationships View is that when deciding whether a relationship genuinely is valuable, we do not base our judgements solely on the basis of whatever thin goods and benefits we realise through them in the context of the here and now; what we also really want to know, or so I have been arguing, is that the provision of those goods and benefits would remain steadfast across certain changes in our situations.

Second Objection

Subject-nonuniversalizable reasons and duties of partiality sometimes obtain in relationships that possess no extrinsic value and therefore cannot be valued intrinsically at all

Sometimes people can have subject-nonuniversalizable reasons and duties of partiality even in relationships that are not valuable extrinsically (and thus not intrinsically) at all. To resurrect the example from Chapter III, we might think that a daughter is capable of making moral claims on a deadbeat dad absent from the time of her conception, despite the fact that neither of them value their relationship at all. One response here might reference a condition that special relationships constitute reason-creating histories, which is to say they comprise socially salient ties or connections between the participants in light of certain facts about the past, and commonly, patterns of mutual engagement, familiarity and attachment, shared emotions and activities. The significant word here is ‘commonly’, for whilst common, the latter features are not necessary insofar as a relationship that lacks them may still constitute a reason-creating history in virtue of certain facts about the past. We might then perhaps suggest this still constitutes a special relationship, for despite the fact he does not share the sort of full relationship with his daughter that we think he should, he is nevertheless meaningfully connected to her in a reason-creating history by virtue of the fact of being her biological father. At the same time however, one might be plausibly sceptical of the notion that biological ties suffice to generate special reasons and duties
of partiality. A second more promising response offered by Scheffler, is to say the deadbeat dad has reason to value his relationship to his daughter non-instrumentally, and therefore has special reasons towards her, irrespective of the fact that he does not actually attach non-instrumental value to their relationships, and thinks he lacks any such reasons (2001: 102-103).³⁰

On Scheffler’s account, the relationships we value non-instrumentally are only ever negatively defined as those relationships that we do not value purely instrumentally (2001: 100), but the claim that the deadbeat dad has reason to value their relationship, whether he actually does or not, is evidently more suggestive of intrinsic valuing rather than extrinsic non-instrumental valuing. After all, insofar as their relationship possesses no extrinsic value whatsoever as it stands, whether instrumental, non-instrumental, or embodied – indeed no value at all – the deadbeat dad could not have reason to extrinsically value it non-instrumentally. Just as a Joe Cocker fan could not have reason to extrinsically value Joe Cocker’s sweaty rag if it did not in fact possess the non-instrumental extrinsic value (of being the rag Cocker used to mop his brow at Woodstock) he was duped into believing it did, nor could the father having reason to extrinsically value a relationship non-instrumentally that possesses no non-instrumental extrinsic value. Thus, if we do think the father has reason to value his relationship to his daughter (and I think we do), even though as things stand it possesses no value whatsoever, the reason must, I think, refer to something like the generic intrinsic good of paternal/filial special concern such relationships ordinarily consist in which, whilst conditional on their possessing extrinsic value, does not reduce to it.

One strategy by which to cajole the father into action might be to point out not only what the daughter is missing out on, but also what he is too – what he stands to lose, and almost certainly come to regret in time, if he does not change his ways. To convince him, in effect, that in failing to actually value their relationship, he is depriving both her and himself of the rich good of robust special concern of which such relationships ordinarily consist – a good that she can only enjoy through him, and

³⁰ Indeed, given that Scheffler’s argument is not just that to value a relationship non-instrumentally is to have special reasons of partiality, but that it is in fact to have duties of partiality, his move here is critical to avoid bringing duties of partiality under the subjective will of the duty-bearer.
he through her against the background of an extrinsically valuable relationship. However, whilst you may convince him that he has reason to value his relationship to his daughter, it is important to stress that until such time as it consists of the rich good of robust special concern, he cannot actually value it intrinsically, since the only way his relationship to his daughter can realise that good is by his actually investing himself in it and providing for her the thin good of actualist partiality as befits an active caring father.

Of course, the deadbeat dad might simply decide to, and succeed in, intrinsically valuing their relationship without mending his ways one jot, but if he does he is simply wrong to, just as Scrooge is wrong to intrinsically value his riches. It may be plausible to intrinsically value money for the happiness it brings you, but sooner or later you will come to the revelation that money cannot buy you real happiness at all, just as Scrooge does at the end of Dickens’ *A Christmas Carol*; that indeed, the good of happiness you thought you enjoyed because of it was never there in the first place. By the same token, whilst it may be plausible for the self-deluded perennial deadbeat dad to intrinsically value his relationship to his daughter for the robust good of her filial special concern (despite never having changed his ways), sooner or later he will find out no such good exists in their relationship at all; that indeed, the good of his daughter’s special concern that he deceived himself into thinking he enjoys and could rely on, was never there in the first place. Picturing this deadbeat dad calling upon his daughter to come to see him in hospital, we might imagine him saying ‘I know I have never been there for you, and I am deeply sorry for that, but whatever my failings, I am still your father, so please come and visit me; surely you owe me that much’. Surely she does not.

One concern here might be that by saying the deadbeat dad has reason to value his relationship to his daughter intrinsically despite it being utterly devoid of value, we perhaps run the risk of having to concede that one could thus also have reason to intrinsically value a thoroughly destructive relationship. Scheffler however, does not see his Relationships View as having this implausible consequence, and nor do I mine, for similar reasons. Scheffler says no reasons or claims at all can arise from relationships that are destructive or even degrading and demeaning and which serve only to undermine human flourishing, and this is because what is implied by the term
'reason' in his argument is always ‘net reason’ in the following sense: ‘if a person has some reason to value a relationship but more reason not to, then…the principle does not treat it as generating special responsibilities’ (2001: 101). And given the various interpretations of how a thing can possess extrinsic value suggested earlier, I think we can make better sense of what it would be to have ‘some reason to value a relationship but more reason not to’ (Scheffler, 2001: 101). In particular, if one has some reason to value a relationship for whatever embodied value it possesses as a residue of happier times past, but more reason not to if this embodied value is outweighed by the extrinsic disvalue of the relationship in the present, we should not treat that relationship as reason-creating. By contrast, the deadbeat dad has no good reason not to value his relationship to his daughter at all, and therefore no grounds for rejecting the legitimacy of the moral claim she has to the good of paternal partiality she can only realise by his hand, since their as-yet non-existent relationship is not by assumption detrimental to their well-being, but rather a source of as-yet untapped well-being.

**Third Objection**

You can sometimes value a relationship (intrinsically) for the rich good of knowing someone will be there for you in other possible worlds, even if they treat you poorly in this world

Still, it might be suggested that sometimes even in relationships that have become such as to diminish the well-being of the participants, it is not uncommon that they can still enjoy the good of modally robust special concern from one another. For example, even though my ex-girlfriend and I ended our relationship on account of it becoming one of disvalue for both of us, we would, I believe, still be there for one another if certain relatively significant harms were to befall either of us, even now. The suggestion then might be that we would still have reason to value our relationship intrinsically despite it being one of net extrinsic disvalue. This is not so however, for all it shows is that just as the actualist thin good of partiality in the here and now is not sufficient absent modally robust special concern to realise the good of special relationships, neither is modally robust special concern sufficient absent actual partiality in the here and now.

This is really just to say, in the last instance, that whilst talk of possible worlds is useful for philosophers, in reality what matters to us is what happens in this world. If
you never provide me with the good of your partiality when I need it in this world, it will scarcely matter to me what you would be willing to do in other possible worlds. You simply cannot have reason to intrinsically value a relationship to someone who is never disposed to do anything for, to, or with you in this world that they would not do for just anyone, even if you knew that if the chips were really down in other possible worlds than this one, they would step up. And I think this is characteristically what happens when special relationships fail or end. I know that if I really needed my ex-girlfriend she would be there for me, but this robust special concern was not enough to save a relationship that towards the end had become devoid of actual partiality in this world. And this further attests to the error we noted in chapter III (pp.50-51) of thinking of special concern and partiality merely in terms of prioritising interests or conferring benefits. Partiality and special concern consist in much more than that. Once you cease wanting to spend time together, cease wanting to engage in the sorts of activities typical of that type of special relationship, become less emotionally vulnerable towards one another, less respectful of one another, and, if things hit rock bottom, contemptuous of one another, essentially excluding each other from the community of those you recognise as having moral authority to which basic respect makes you answerable to (Darwall, 2010: 167), what you have is a failure of special concern, properly conceived. And when the corresponding thin good of partiality evacuates a special relationship in this way, the good of knowing you can rely on one another in other possible worlds can do nothing to save, or give you reason to save, the relationship in this world.

**Conclusion**

At the beginning of this chapter I posited three objectives, the first of which was to offer an explanation of why we intrinsically value our relationships with a view to filling what is otherwise a problematic lacuna in the conventional Relationships View. In the first section, I broadly agreed with Scheffler’s claim that it is the fact of your valuing your relationships non-instrumentally (or intrinsically, as I think we should now say) that generates distinctive special reasons for you. Not entirely satisfied however with the conventional conceptual claim that we just do have reason to value our own relationships intrinsically, I went on to suggest it is the rich good of modally robust special concern that makes our special relationships something to be valued as goods in their own right.
The second objective was to demonstrate how this understanding of how and why we value our special relationships yields a more satisfying explanation of the way in which our relationships generate special reasons and duties of partiality. Again, the conventional Relationships View invariably says something to the effect that to intrinsically value a relationship just is to see it as reason and duty-generating. But again I think we can do better. The basic thought here is that before we can ever realise the rich good of robust special concern that makes our relationships goods in their own right or enjoy the good of knowing we can rely on each other for the thin good of partiality in other possible worlds at all, we must first enjoy from each other the thin good of actualist partiality as and when prompted in this world. It is in this sense that intrinsically valuing our special relationships is conditional on their possessing extrinsic value, for until such time as we provide for our others the thin good of actual partial treatment (thus vesting our relationships with extrinsic value) we cannot enjoy the rich good of special concern (the property of relationships that makes them intrinsically valuable). Thus, we can say that our relationships generate special reasons of partiality whenever the specific act of partiality prompted is conducive to sustaining the rich good of special concern in our relationships, and where that act is not just conducive but instrumentally necessary to substantiate this good which makes our relationships intrinsically valuable, we may say one is morally required to perform it.

The third objective was to propose, on the basis of these claims, a principled way of distinguishing those variations across which robustness of the provision of the thin good of partiality is required from those across which it is not. In discussing this issue, we noted that although we would seem to require robustness of your provision of partiality across a range of possible variations in me, we do not require robustness across all possible changes. By way of example, I suggested that were my partner Molly to suddenly and inexplicably become monstrously cruel towards me, we would not require my partiality towards her to be robust across that kind of change. What I suggested and what I believe distinguishes all changes across which robustness of provision of partiality is required from those across which it is not, is that partiality cannot be required to be robust across variations which would render the relationship one of extrinsic disvalue. Conversely, the relationship must remain one of positive net
extrinsic value in order to generate special reasons and duties of partiality and since this would not be so were Molly to become monstrously cruel to me, there can be no question of my continuing to be duty-bound to be partial towards her.

However, there is one final complication that needs to be addressed. Suppose as we grow old together, Molly becomes ravaged by Alzheimer’s. And suppose far from being robustly disposed to be partial or loving towards me, she no longer even recognises me. Indeed suppose, if you will, that in the foul grip of that terrible disease, Molly becomes monstrously cruel to me. Surely even despite her cruelty to me then, we would want to say that I do still have special reasons and duties of partiality towards Molly, this woman with whom I spent my entire life. So what are we to say about this?

As I said in the introduction, this chapter in one sense or another takes seriously the questions ‘Will you still love me tomorrow?’ , and I think that for Molly to know that I really love her today, she needs to know I would still love her and be there for her tomorrow even if she were to develop Alzheimer’s. At least, if she has good reason to suspect I would not be, or indeed I confess I would not be, she could be forgiven for thinking I do not genuinely love her at all, even if I actually treat her as lovingly as any partner might in the here and now. Yet, whilst Molly’s developing Alzheimer’s seems like a variation across which she might reasonably require my love for her to be steadfast, it is clearly not a variation across which I require her love for me to be steadfast at all. It would be absurd of me to complain to Molly ‘how can I know that you really love me at all when I do not even know that you would still love me if you developed Alzheimer’s?’

What this points to I think is that the range of variations in your beloved across which you could demand their love for you to remain steadfast are, and must be I think, limited to those Pettit describes as ‘modest’ in the specific sense of being ‘disposition-conserving’ (2015). And in some sense I think this requirement relates back to the distinctions drawn in Chapter III between reversions to impartiality and inversions of partiality (pp.52-56). In the Alzheimer’s case, it is not as if Molly professes to still love me or is disposed to be partial towards me but for contingent reasons fails to manifest the loving treatment or partiality I expect from her. Rather, she is
permanently disabled by the Alzheimer’s of thinking about me as an object of her love or special concern at all. What she has undergone, with respect to how she is disposed towards me then, is properly a reversion to impartiality. This however, is quite different to what occurs in the original case, for the disposition abusive Molly inhabits towards me seems more expressive of an inversion of partiality rather than a mere absence of partiality. So again, my suspicion is that conventional accounts of partiality are missing something; in particular, what we seem to be missing is a clear idea of what the opposite of partiality is. I confess I am still unsure what that is exactly, but what it is not, I think, is impartiality, because impartiality implies but an absence of partiality, and there has to be more to it than that, much in the same way that there is more to the opposite of love than the mere absence of love (something like hate perhaps).

Of course, not all love that is lost turns to hate, and nor do I think all or even most failed relationships degenerate into inverse partiality (for want of a better term). The vast majority of relationships that atrophy do so one suspects predominantly as a result of negligence with respect to provisions of the thin good of partiality. But cases like that of abusive Molly or domestic violence cases more generally are not like this. And the fact that they entail something more sinister than mere absence of partiality is in part what explains why, in the Alzheimer’s case my relationship to Molly retains much of its embodied value despite the radical and permanent suspension of her capacity to love me at all, whilst abusive Molly’s inverse partiality towards me in the original case devours whatever embodied value our relationship holds from happier times past like a cancer. In effect then, what distinguishes the cruelty served up by abusive Molly from that of Alzheimer’s Molly is not the instrumental value of these relationships, for there is a very real sense in which neither of these relationships would any longer contribute to my well-being at all (I would arguably be better off without either of them), but rather the resilience of the embodied extrinsic value of our relationship from happier times past in the Alzheimer’s case in the face of Molly’s involuntary reversion to impartiality as opposed to the constant erosion of it in the face of abusive Molly’s inverse partiality towards me.

But still it might be wondered, even if my relationship to Molly remains one of extrinsic value, if the good of Molly’s robust special concern is what gives me reason
to value our relationship intrinsically and thus generates special reasons for me, how can I still have those reasons when I no longer enjoy the rich good of her special concern? The simple answer is that my being robustly disposed to provide the thin good of partiality for Molly would still be active in constituting the rich good of our relationship for which I value it intrinsically even if she is not. It is true that I may no longer enjoy the rich good of Molly’s robust special concern, but it is also true that we do not just intrinsically value our relationships for the rich good of robust special concern we enjoy from our significant others, but also for the rich good of our special concern that we are able to provide for them. In this sense, it would remain valuable to me to continue to provide Molly with the safety net of my love and special concern whether she is fully aware or even welcoming of it. Or to take a different example, consider the relationship of Giuseppe Conlon to his son Gerry Conlon of the Guildford Four. Even if in many respects Giuseppe did not enjoy the rich good of Gerry’s robust special concern, their relationship I think always remained intrinsically valuable to him, and the reason it did was not because he could rely on Gerry coming through for him when he needed him, but I think rather because he knew Gerry could always rely on him being there to do whatever he could for him, come hell or high water.

On a final note, whilst it is perhaps true that Molly herself might no longer have any expectation that my partiality towards her should remain robust, the lack of normative expectations on her part does not alter the fact that my reasons and duties of partiality towards her are subject nonuniversalizable nor indeed the fact that the rich good of our relationship as constituted by my stubborn love and special concern is unrealisable by anyone other than me. And nor does it change the fact that my robustly providing her with the thin good of partiality will continue to be, perhaps more than ever, instrumentally necessary to substantiate the value of our relationship, both for my own good and for Molly’s, whether she has the capacity to form normative expectations of me or not. As such, my deontic situation with regards to what I owe Molly remains binding. It may well be that third parties, seeing how the strain of our relationship weighs on me, might be prepared to forgive me were I to pull back from the relationship somewhat, and perhaps this combined with Molly’s lack of normative expectations might go some way to excusing me were I to do so. Yet, I think I would still find much positive value embodied in the relationship, even if it is mostly, or solely, sustained by my doing – the sort of value that is, that makes our relationship
itself a source of special reasons for me, and a source of moral claims that Molly has of me, whether she is capable of pressing them or not. And anyway, regardless of the relaxed normative expectations of third-person spectators in the face of Molly’s cruelty, or indeed the total absence of them on the part of Molly herself, in the final analysis first-person normative expectations remain. What kind of lover, indeed person, would it make me, if, after all the years she was there for me, I stood up and walked out on Molly now.
Chapter VI

Countries, Compatriots, and Associative Duties

Introduction

Up until now, the focus has been exclusively on special relationships between individuals and the special reasons and duties of partiality they generate, but for many, the story of ethical partiality does not end there. In particular, some commentators argue that the duties we owe to countries/compatriots are ‘associative duties’, putatively similar in form to the duties we have in virtue of being parents, children, friends, lovers, etc. However, there appears to be something more troublesome about the claim that individuals have duties of partiality towards co-members of their communities than there is to the claim that individuals have duties of partiality towards their nearest and dearest. In this chapter I suggest one respect in which we are right to be troubled by such claims; that we cannot have associative duties to our countries/compatriots; and that this is so whether we are said to have these duties in virtue of the value we attach to our places of citizenship/co-citizens, our nations/co-nationals, or our patriae/fellow patriots.31

By citizenship, what I have in mind is the purely legal status based on for example place of birth, or naturalisation that can, but need not, coincide with subjective attachment to one’s place of citizenship. Both patriotism and nationalism by contrast necessarily entail a crucial subjective component, and following Igor Primoratz we can distinguish patriotism from nationalism primarily in terms of the object to which the subjective attachment and special concern cleaves. Thus, the patria, as the specific object of patriotism, references the territorially defined political community with which the patriot identifies, and the natio, as the object of nationalism, references the nation with which the nationalist identifies on a specifically ethnic or cultural basis (leaving aside more political or civic conceptions of nation) (Primoratz, 2013: §1.2).

Whilst there can be significant overlap between what it is to be a citizen, a co-national, and a fellow patriot, there need not be. One may subjectively identify as a patriot or a

31 Some of the authors’ works I address here focus on citizenship duties (Mason, 1997; Honohan, 2001; Lazar, 2010; Seglow, 2010, 2013); others refer more broadly to political obligations (Horton, 2006, 2007; Simmons, 1996; van der Vossen, 2011), whilst still others speak in specific terms of duties of patriotism (Moore, 2009; Primoratz, 2009) and some of co-national duties (Miller, 2010; Moore, 2001).
nationalist of one country whilst being a citizen of another (e.g. Northern Irish UK citizens who identify themselves as being Irish); one may subjectively identify as a member of a political or national community within a polity the objective membership of which one disdains (e.g. pro-Independencia Catalans); or indeed one may be a citizen of one country but a patriot or nationalist of none. These definitions are far from comprehensive, but as will become apparent, it is the distinction between subjective and objective membership upon which much turns in the various arguments I posit in this chapter. When speaking generally, I will treat ‘compatriots’ as an umbrella term for co-citizens, co-nationals, fellow patriots and ‘country’ as an umbrella term for polity, nation and patria. Otherwise, I will use the appropriate terms explicitly.

Although I reject the existence of associative duties towards our countries/compatriots, I do not deny that we may owe them non-associative special duties, or that we have political obligations at all, as some have (Simmons, 1996: 264). But whether associative or special, or whether the focus is on political duties, citizenship duties, duties of patriotism or duties of nationalism, the puzzle to which all commentators must attend is essentially the same: why does my relationship to my country/compatriots generate special reasons and duties towards it/them for me, whilst your equally valuable relationship to your country/compatriots does not?

Some proponents of special duties to countries/compatriots have sought to solve this puzzle by appeal to principles such as assigned responsibility, reciprocity, gratitude, etc. Robert Goodin for example suggests that it is because I am better situated to effectively execute general obligations to my fellow compatriots than I am to execute general obligations to your fellow compatriots that it makes sense that I should be assigned special responsibilities to discharge my general obligations to my compatriots but not yours (1988: 678-679). Yet, it is unclear why the most effective way of discharging moral obligations is to assign them to compatriots, as opposed to all individuals who normally reside within the territory and legal jurisdiction of my country. The reciprocity-based solution says it is because I participate in a mutually

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32 I do not distinguish duties and obligations as some do (Brandt, 1964; Hart, 1955: 179 fn.7; Lazar, 2010: 246)
33 Although associative duties are properly speaking ‘special duties’, wherever I refer to the latter, they are to be construed as non-associative special duties.
advantageous cooperative enterprise with my compatriots but not yours that I have duties of reciprocity to my compatriots and not yours. But then, what of infants, or the severely mentally disabled? Given that their contribution to mutual advantage may be non-existent (through no fault of their own), this argument seems to have the unintuitive implication that we would have no special duties towards them (Mason, 1997: 434). The gratitude-based solution suggests that since my relationship to my country/compatriots bestows on me certain goods that your relationship to your country/compatriots does not, I owe a debt of gratitude towards my country/compatriots that I do not owe yours. However, as Primoratz points out, this claim is undermined ‘by the fact that many (if not most) of the benefits one receives from one’s country are not gifts, but rather things one has earned or paid for’ (2009: 63).

This does not exhaust the grounds philosophers have posited as solutions to the puzzle, and indeed the briefly stated objections to them may not be indefeasible, but the only solution I am concerned to refute in this chapter – the one that, if successful, establishes political duties as genuinely associative duties – is that which says I have duties towards my country/compatriots that I do not have towards your country/compatriots because my relationship to my country/compatriots is intrinsically valuable to me in a way that your relationship to your country/compatriots is not. In generic form, this ‘associative argument’ may be summarised thus:

P1: Our relationships to our countries/compatriots are intrinsically valuable;
P2: To be part of an intrinsically valuable relationship just is (amongst other things) to have associative duties towards those with whom you share it (these being partially constitutive of, and indeed justified by, the very value of those relationships);
C: Therefore we have associative duties to do things for our countries/compatriots that we do not have towards other countries/non-compatriots.

In the first section of this chapter, I suggest that we do not intrinsically value our relationships to our countries/compatriots. In the second, I reject the claim that we can have associative duties to nations/co-nationals or patriae/fellow patriots on the basis that even allowing that we do intrinsically value national or patriotic attachments, since what we value is not our relationships to our nations/co-nationals or
patriae/fellow patriots, but rather the central role of them in our identities construed in terms of personal projects, these attachments are incapable of generating duties.

In the third section, I reject the claim that we have associative duties to our polities/co-citizens. In doing so, I reject various specific associative duties to polity/citizens authors have posited: associative duties to protect and improve the political institutions of our countries (Lazar, 2010); associative duties of special concern (Mason, 1997; Moore, 2009); associative duties to obey the laws of our countries (Seglow, 2013); and associative duties to participate in our common public life (all). I reject the first three for independent reasons, but the problem that afflicts the last, afflicts all: even allowing for the sake of argument that we can intrinsically value our relationships to our polities/co-citizens, the special reasons we would have as a result, being hostage to the subjective evaluative will of citizens who bear/reject them, could not be associative duties.

In the fourth section, I assume the truth of the first premise of the ‘associative argument’ despite all of the preceding arguments to the contrary and assess premise 2 – what I term the ‘Constitutive Condition’: that ‘to be part of an intrinsically valuable relationship just is (amongst other things) to have associative duties towards those with whom you share it (these being partially constitutive of, and indeed justified by, the very value of those relationships)’. I reject the Constitutive Condition as a claim about special relationships generally, arguing that associative duties are not straightforwardly constitutive of intrinsically valuable relationships as conventionally assumed. The upshot of this is that even if we did intrinsically value our relationships to our countries/compatriots, and even if we could not, by acts of our subjective evaluative will, divest ourselves of the duties thereby generated, the occasions when the further condition of instrumental necessity required to trigger associative duties would obtain would be so limited as to strip the argument of any practical import.

Do we intrinsically value our relationships to our countries/compatriots?

As a matter of fact, we often do see ourselves as obligated to our countries/compatriots in ways we are not to other countries/non-compatriots. Of course, it does not necessarily follow from the fact that we feel obligated that we actually are (Dagger, 2000: 108); that we are not labouring under a kind of ‘false consciousness’ (Simmons,
1996: 264). But nor does the bare possibility that we may be suffering some mass delusion establish that we are mistaken to feel obligated either (Horton, 2006: 431). Indeed, the accusation of slippage from felt to actual obligations seems more a blunt denial of the associative argument rather than an argument against it, at least if we interpret how we feel about our countries/compatriots as indicative of how we value them, since it is precisely this that is said to explain our obligations on the associative argument (van der Vossen, 2011: 483).

In any event, it is hardly surprising that we commonly feel specially obligated to our countries/compatriots; there are, after all, a great many tremendously valuable goods like ‘order, security and some measure of social stability’ (Horton, 2007: 8), amongst others, that we enjoy in virtue of being members of polities that might be otherwise unrealisable in the world as presently situated. We need not deny that membership of a polity is immensely valuable, nor that the realisation of this value is perhaps partly dependent on the fulfilment of some political duties of the sort we commonly take ourselves to have. But none of this commits us to an associative rather than a special solution to the particularisation puzzle. It is perfectly plausible to suppose the obligations many of us feel towards our countries/compatriots derive from some/all of the grounds just mentioned (e.g. gratitude, reciprocity, assigned responsibility), perhaps as part of a multi-grounds model of political obligation. Thus, you might consistently deny you intrinsically value your relationship to compatriots while recognising the various very real ways in which your fates are interconnected, and believe that this generates significant positive civic duties towards them.

Nevertheless, we commonly exhibit a special concern for our countries/compatriots in ways that suggests we do value our relationships to them intrinsically (or at least not purely instrumentally). And perhaps, as Jonathan Seglow writes, if we are convinced of the claim that ‘more proximate relationships can embody moral value, then it seems somewhat arbitrary to rule out citizenship as a relationship too large to do so too’ (2010: 58). In particular, to say we cannot intrinsically value our relationships to our

34 Although none of these ‘solutions’ are without their own problems, it is not obvious that we need a single grounds model of duties to countries/compatriots; that we could not have a multi-grounds model where overlapping principles would paper over each other’s cracks. Indeed, I think this must be the case, although I will not argue for it here. If the arguments of this chapter are correct though, intrinsically valuable relationships to country/compatriots cannot be even one of the grounds of such a model.
countries/compatriots because we are not intimately acquainted might seem especially arbitrary, particularly if we grant that we intrinsically value other ‘imagined communities’ such as religious associations, professional associations, football supporter societies, or local communities. Some authors even suggest that unless compatriots do intrinsically value their membership of their political communities and take themselves to owe them associative duties, those communities will struggle to function effectively. Iseult Honohan for example thinks it ‘seems implausible that citizens may be effectively bound together by only a vertical commitment to principles or institutions’ (2001: 54). David Miller argues that ‘the instrumental value of nationality…is parasitic on its intrinsic value in the following sense: compatriots must first believe that their association is valuable for its own sake…in order to be able to reap the other benefits that national solidarity brings with it’ (2010: 384). And John Horton believes the generic goods of polity membership to be dependent on citizens feeling a sense of shared community or identifying with each other. Horton recognises that what he calls the objective and the subjective can come apart, but bemoans this as leading inevitably to apathy, cynicism and political alienation:

No doubt a polity can survive a measure of these dysfunctional attitudes, at least under relatively favourable circumstances. However, if extensive, persistent and deep-rooted, the bonds of a polity will in time be corroded; and, ultimately, even its ability to secure the generic good of a polity will be undermined (Horton, 2007: 14).

For these authors then, it is not just that this is how we actually do value our communities, but also how we must value them if they are to function effectively.

Of course, all would perhaps concede that even if true, the mere fact that we intrinsically value our relationships to our countries/compatriots does not suffice to show that they are intrinsically valuable. But as Miller writes:

echoing John Stuart Mill’s famous remark that “the sole evidence it is possible to produce that anything is desirable, is that people do actually desire it”, the onus surely falls on those who want to deny the value of national attachments to show why people’s actual valuations are misguided (Miller, 2010: 385).

Are people’s actual valuations misguided? Is, as Veit Bader sceptically ponders, ‘a compatriot – the common mix of a co-national (common fate, shared language and culture) and a co-citizen (membership in a liberal democratic state) – really just a stranger?’ (2005: 90).
In response to Bader’s question, I am inclined to say yes, agreeing wholeheartedly with Iris Marion Young who wrote: ‘Politics must be understood as a relationship between strangers’ (1990: 234). Someone I have never met is someone I have never met – it scarcely matters if they live one street away from me (making them a member of my neighbourhood, my community, and potentially my polity, my nation, my patria, etc.) or if they live 2000 miles away. I cannot intrinsically value a relationship that I do not have with a stranger whose existence I am not even aware of – someone that has simply never even crossed my moral radar – no matter how many characteristics and attributes I share with them. Surely the time of what Shue called concentric circles of moral responsibility defined by physical proximity is long past (1988: 693).

In order to flesh out the claim that there is nothing intrinsically valuable about the relationships between individual compatriots qua compatriots, consider Igor Primoratz’s adaptation of Bernard Williams’ well known ‘one thought too many’ argument (2009: 65-66). Crudely put, Williams’ original argument was designed to show that, if faced with the choice of saving the life of a drowning stranger, or that of my wife, I would be justified in choosing to save my wife because “she is my wife!”, and recourse to any further justification would amount, quite simply, to ‘one thought too many’ (1981: 18). In his assessment of Andrew Mason’s claim that co-citizenship generates associative duties internally related to the intrinsic value of co-citizenship (1997: 442), Primoratz employs the same hypothetical scenario, only this time implanting a fellow compatriot in the place of the wife. Now we are asked whether, upon deciding to save your compatriot over the non-compatriot, “she is my compatriot!” is adequate justification in itself, as in the original wife-case. Intuitively, the answer seems to be no, which would seem to undermine the thought that relationships between compatriots qua compatriots are intrinsically valuable or capable of grounding associative duties comparable to those which permeate other special relationships, such as that of husband and wife (Primoratz, 2009: 66-67).

The concentric circles picture of positive obligations rests on the assumption that such obligations decline in priority as one reaches circles farther away from the centre (i.e. from: family→friends→neighbors→community→nation→distant foreign strangers). What is wrong with this picture, according to Shue, is not that it highlights a centre of intimates as such, but that there is insufficient reason to think that our positive obligations towards strangers decline progressively with their distance from us (1988: 692-693).
**Do we have associative duties to nations/co-nationals or patriae/fellow patriots?**

I think Primoratz’s argument strongly supports the response to Bader’s question that I favour: that we do not *intrinsically* value our relationships to strangers who happen to be our co-citizens/co-nationals/fellow patriots. Nevertheless, Miller’s phenomenological observation that many of us do not value our own nations and/or *patriae* purely instrumentally would seem to remain largely intact (there will perhaps be less consensus regarding the way we value citizenship, so the focus of this section is solely on associative duties to co-nationals/fellow patriots). So presumably the onus remains on me to show why our valuations are misguided. However, I need not show this; indeed I share the view that shared national, and/or patriotic identity often does have basic ethical significance for us such that we might be said to intrinsically value it. But to say as much is not to concede that we intrinsically value our relationships to our nations/co-nationals or patriae/fellow patriots. Rather, it is to say that Primoratz’s proposal ‘to use the idea of “one thought too many” as a test for finding out whether a relationship is indeed valuable in itself’ (original emphasis) (2009: 66) is too quick in presuming that it is the *relationship* that is valued, and not something else. As Simon Keller observes, the implicature of “she is my wife/compatriot!” is somewhat less clear than this suggests, for:

> you could be interpreted as implicitly adding, ‘which of course means I share with her an intrinsically valuable relationship’, but you could just as well be interpreted as implicitly adding, ‘which of course means that she has a central place in my ground projects’, or ‘which of course means that I am especially concerned with her value as an individual in her own right’ (Keller, 2013: 74).

The last interpretation whilst perhaps plausible with regards to your wife (although my rejection of the Individuals View entails rejection of this interpretation), seems clearly unsuitable as regards your compatriot. And of the two remaining options, the Projects View interpretation in the compatriot-case seems much closer to the mark than the Relationships View interpretation.

If this is correct, the actual solution to the particularisation puzzle most proponents of associative duties to co-nationals/fellow patriots posit, is really this: the reason *my* attachment to Ireland/Irish compatriots generates associative duties *for me* in a way that other people’s national/patriotic attachments do not, is not because I intrinsically
value my *relationship* to Ireland/Irish compatriots exactly, but rather because I intrinsically value being Irish (where being so takes a central place in my ground projects as a defining pillar of my identity) and subjectively identify with Ireland/Irish compatriots in an ethically significant way that I do not with other countries/non-compatriots. On this view then, the onus Miller places on me to show why people’s actual valuations are misguided is displaced. It does not follow from the claim that people do not value their *relationships* to their nations/co-nationals or *patriae*/fellow patriots intrinsically, that their actual intrinsic valuations of them are misguided. All it means is that the source of their reasons for valuing them so is not their *relationship* to them, but their personal projects.

However, this is not an insignificant difference, for whilst my subjectively identifying as an Irish patriot can ground special reasons of partiality towards Ireland/Irish compatriots, it cannot ground associative *duties* of partiality. As I argued in the last chapter, only relationship-dependent reasons can translate into associative duties of partiality and my special reasons of partiality towards Ireland/Irish compatriots, being grounded in my identity, are not relationship- but project-dependent. Thus, although I may have project-dependent reasons of permissible partiality towards Ireland/Irish compatriots, since personal projects are incapable of generating *duties*, acceptance of this portrayal entails rejection of associative duties to co-nationals/fellow patriots. And indeed, this mirrors Primoratz’s conclusion: whilst it does not appear to be morally *obligatory* to save your drowning compatriot in the same way as it is for your wife, it may still be morally *permissible* to opt to save them (Primoratz, 2009: 66). However, when queried as to the reasoning behind your decision, it seems you would need to produce reasons beyond “she is my compatriot!” to justify your choice. And one such reason might be that, faced with the difficult choice of having to save one or the other, your ability to identify with your compatriot more than the stranger swung the decision in her favour. Moreover, as Primoratz points out, offering up such justification would not seem to be ‘one thought too many’ (2009: 66). In sum, to deny that our *relationships* to our countries/compatriots are intrinsically valuable is not to deny them any ethical significance whatsoever; it is just to say these attachments are not ethically significant in the requisite sense to generate associative *duties* of partiality.
Do we have associative duties to polities/co-citizens?

Perhaps wary of this problem with associative duties to co-nationals/fellow patriots, some authors have alternatively sought to establish associative duties to co-citizens, usually by identifying broadly acknowledged duties of citizenship, and then showing them to be justified by appeal to the intrinsic value of liberal citizenship, independent of subjective identification. Their solution to the particularisation puzzle then, turns on a claim about the way we value citizenship.\(^{36}\) Your relationship to your polity/co-citizens may be just as extrinsically valuable as my relationship to my polity/co-citizens, but my citizenship generates associative duties for me in a way that yours does not, because I have reason to intrinsically value my relationship to my polity/co-citizens in a way that is different, not from the way you intrinsically value your relationship to your polity/co-citizens, but from the way I value your relationship to your polity/co-citizens.\(^ {37}\)

Why then do we have reason to value our relationships to our polities/co-citizens intrinsically? In the first place, it might be responded that to demand an explanation of why we have reason to value our relationships to our countries/compatriots intrinsically is somewhat unfair since explaining why we value relationships intrinsically is not something proponents of associative duties are very clear about generally. Indeed, the thought is often that intrinsic value arguments mark the limits of explanation such that no answer to the question why we value a relationship intrinsically is possible. At some point, it looks like we have to say that we just do. This has some plausibility as regards relationships like friendship; that to be someone’s friend just is to value your friendship with them intrinsically. If you do not – if you value your friendship with them merely instrumentally – then we tend to say you are no friend at all, or at least that you lack understanding of what friendship is. So

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\(^{36}\) As I have stressed throughout this thesis, even though we can value relationships intrinsically, they can only possess extrinsic value, so their claim cannot be that the relationship of citizenship itself possesses value solely in virtue of its intrinsic properties.

\(^{37}\) The phrasing in terms of ‘reason to intrinsically value’ is important here. We can after all fail to intrinsically value relationships we have reason to value (and thus have reasons and duties of partiality we believe we do not), and we sometimes intrinsically value relationships we have no reason to (and thus do not have the reasons and duties of partiality we believe we do). As such, the relationships that generate special reasons and associative duties are only those that we have reason to value intrinsically (i.e. in the case of personal relationships those constituted by the good of modally robust special concern – the good which explains why we have reason to value them).
perhaps proponents of associative citizenship duties may say the same: we just do have reason to intrinsically value our polities/co-citizens. However, it is much less obvious that to be a citizen just is to value your relationship to your polity/co-citizens intrinsically. At least, if you do not – if you value your citizenship merely instrumentally – then it is not obvious that we would say you are no citizen at all (indeed, to say as much would be clearly false given that citizenship is a legal status based on place of birth or naturalisation), or that you lack understanding of what citizenship is (Primoratz 2009: 65). But if the claim that to be a citizen just is to intrinsically value one’s relationship to one’s polity/co-citizens does not satisfy, proponents of associative citizenship duties must offer an explanation of why we have reason to intrinsically value our relationships to our polities/co-citizens. So what, according to the proponents of associative citizenship duties, is the good of citizenship that gives us reason to value it for its own sake?

One of the authors whose arguments I will consider, Andrew Mason, writes:

> Citizenship has intrinsic value because in virtue of being a citizen a person is a member of a collective body in which they enjoy equal status with its other members and are thereby provided with recognition. This collective body exercises significant control over its members’ conditions of existence (a degree of control which none of its members individually possesses). It offers them the opportunity to contribute to the cultural environment in which its laws and policies are determined, and opportunities to participate directly and indirectly in the formation of laws and policies (1997: 442).

So for Mason it seems, we have reason to intrinsically value our relationships to our polities/co-citizens, and thus bear associative duties towards them, because in virtue of shared citizenship we enjoy ‘equal status (standardly, equal political rights)’ (1997: 443), recognition, and the ability to significantly shape our collective conditions of existence.

In his paper ‘A Liberal Defence of (Some) Duties to Compatriots’ (Lazar, 2010), Seth Lazar writes that:

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38 Perhaps to be an Irish patriot or a nationalist ‘just is’ to intrinsically value being Irish or ‘just is’ to have a special concern for Ireland/Irish people, but: (1) the arguments under discussion here are meant to apply to citizenship absent subjective identification; and (2) as previously suggested, to value one’s patriotic or national identity in this way, though capable of generating special reasons of partiality, cannot generate associative duties.
In general, the sense that we are respected as an equal helps to secure for us the bases of self-respect...in doing political, distributive, and criminal justice, our citizens affirm our moral competence, the importance of our lives going well, and our inviolability to unjustified harms. Each of these gives us the invaluable sense that we matter, [and] that we have dignity in the eyes of others...It is the feeling that we are equals that is such an important part of our well-being, and likewise it is the feeling that our opinion matters, and the fact that we respect one another’s moral liberty, that makes political justice non-instrumentally valuable, and the same goes for distributive and criminal justice (Lazar, 2010: 251-252).

For Lazar then, we have reason to intrinsically (or in his words ‘non-instrumentally’) value our relationships to our polities/co-citizens because without the political, distributive, and criminal justice we enjoy in virtue of liberal citizenship, we could not realise the sense of moral equality, or the goods of respect, affirmation, and recognition, which taken together suggest that indeed ‘liberal citizenship does make a non-instrumental contribution to individual well-being’ (Lazar, 2010: 251).

Jonathan Seglow believes ‘many relationships themselves are morally valuable just because they are constitutive of human flourishing’ (2010: 56), and that if, like friendship, family, etc. our relationships to co-citizens ‘also foster human flourishing it is natural to believe that associative duties can obtain in these relationships too’ (2010: 57). And indeed, he believes relationships of citizenship are constitutive of human flourishing for through them citizens come to enjoy the good of ‘democratic respect’:

Citizens’ equal standing to shape the law realises a kind of public equality I call democratic respect. Democratic respect is realised by citizens in their role as political agents in a democracy...One dimension of democratic respect...consists in public recognition of each citizen’s equal standing as an ultimate law maker...The other...reflects the other aspect of the civic role: citizens are subject to the law...Democratic respect is realised when citizens obey just those laws which are created and maintained in their name (Seglow, 2013: 140-141).

So I think were Seglow to address the specific question here, his answer would be that it is this good of democratic respect which citizens realise in virtue of being equal co-authors and recipients of their polity’s laws that gives them reason to value their relationships to their polities/co-citizens intrinsically.

Margaret Moore is the final author whose arguments I will consider, but in a way her claim is one to which I think all proponents of associative citizenship duties must
subscribe. She marks a number of generic goods of liberal citizenship, such as peace, order, justice, the rule of law, and responsible and accountable government, but recognises that ‘they do not explain why I might owe duties to my legitimate political authority, rather than some other political authority, which is equally effective in realising the said goods’ (2009: 391). What does, she argues, is the fact that my relationship to my polity/co-citizens secures for me not only these goods, but also the good of being a co-participant in and co-creator of a common life through which we imbue our particular political community with the value of being collectively self-determining. In effect then, Moore’s response to our question looks to be that we have reason to intrinsically value our relationships to our polities/co-citizens because by participating in them, they ‘enable us to be collectively self-determining over the conditions of our existence, which is intrinsically valuable’ (original emphasis) (2009: 391).

My first point is more observation than argument, but it seems to me that in most of the claims just outlined, the source of your reason to value your relationship to your polity/co-citizens is always something other than the relationship of citizenship itself. That is, it seems to be by appeal to the goods of equal status, democratic respect, recognition, affirmation and/or collective self-determination that we come to understand why we have reason to value citizenship, not by appeal to the value of the relationship itself. As I have defined it, to intrinsically value a relationship X is to value X, and to take X itself to be a source of reasons. If the source of your reasons is anything other than X, then you value X merely extrinsically (either instrumentally or non-instrumentally). And no doubt a great deal of the considerable extrinsic value of citizenship resides in its function of realising these goods which are perhaps themselves modally demanding goods – goods that ought to be robust across other possible worlds in which things were quite different; a world in which I were disabled for example. But nevertheless, it looks to be these goods that give me reason to value my citizenship, and not the good of citizenship itself (even if citizenship is instrumentally necessary to realise them) such that in their absence, there would be nothing left to value. Indeed, even the fact that these authors endorse the claim that only liberal democratic citizenship is intrinsically valuable seems suggestive of this.
Perhaps it will be objected that these authors’ arguments are not actually responses to the question: ‘why do citizens have reason to intrinsically value their relationships to their own polities/co-citizens, but not others?’ but rather the question: ‘why do citizens have associative duties towards their own polities/co-citizens, but not others?’ This is, as a matter of fact, true, but irrelevant since their responses to both will be the same in light of the broad consensus concerning the Constitutive Claim (the second premise of the ‘associative argument’ p.115): that ‘to intrinsically value a relationship just is (amongst other things) to have associative duties towards those with whom you share it (these being partially constitutive of, and indeed justified by, the very value of that relationship)’. In this sense, the two questions are usually not thought to be strictly independent: a positive affirmation of one straightforwardly entails a positive affirmation of the other. In any event, whichever terms the question is couched in, the outcome is the same. The solution to the particularisation puzzle does not look to be that you have associative duties towards co-citizens that you do not towards non-citizens because your relationship to your polity/co-citizens is intrinsically valuable, but rather because the particular institutional relationship you share with them enables you to realise certain valuable goods critical to well-being such as that of equal status, democratic respect, recognition, affirmation and collective self-determination that might otherwise be unavailable. And if this so, whatever special citizenship duties might be grounded by these goods, since they are not grounded in the value of the relationship itself, they cannot be genuinely associative duties.

There is, however, a more concrete way to respond to these authors’ arguments, which involves assessing the specific associative citizenship duties each of them posit. Lazar for instance claims to establish associative duties to ‘protect and improve the institutions [of liberal citizenship] through which we do justice to one another’ (2010: 253), from a conception of citizenship which he describes as ‘substantive liberalism’:

Substantive liberalism starts from the obvious premise that each person is of great, and equal, moral worth, and aims to establish, on this basis, what we owe to each other as a matter of justice – that is, what we can demand from one another, and coercively enforce...These are general duties of justice, owed equally to all. However, since they require the establishment of stable political institutions for their realisation, they are at present performed only within subsets of humanity (2010: 249).
Ostensibly, this looks more like a Goodinesque account of special duties of citizenship rather than associative duties per se, given ‘(t)he relationship of liberal citizenship…is wholly constituted by the performance of our [general] duties of justice to one another’ (Lazar, 2010: 252). And indeed, Lazar readily concedes that citizens’ assigned special duties of justice cannot be genuinely ‘associative’, since given the fact that citizenship’s ‘value as a relationship must entirely reduce to the value of performing those duties’ (Lazar, 2010: 252), to appeal to the value of the relationship, is effectively only to appeal to the value of the duties to justify the duties. The argument is therefore circular and the value of the relationship superfluous to the justification of the duties of justice we have as citizens, so Lazar concludes that we cannot justify particularising duties of justice to co-citizens by appeal to the value of the relationship, and therefore they cannot be genuinely associative duties (2010: 252).

This does not however, according to Lazar, mean that we can defend no associative duties to liberal co-citizens; in order to do so, he argues, ‘we simply have to distinguish them adequately from the duties that constitute that relationship’ (2010: 253). So whilst he suggests that although duties of justice may be special, they cannot be ‘associative’, he argues that duties to protect and improve institutions of liberal citizenship are not only special, but indeed genuinely associative duties, ‘grounded in the non-instrumental value of the relationship of liberal co-citizenship between us’ (Lazar, 2010: 254). The latter can be justified by appeal to the value of the relationship, because although instrumentally necessary for the relationship to obtain, they are not wholly constitutive of its value, thus freeing up ‘the “wider context” of value that we need’ (Lazar, 2010: 253) to ground associative duties (and avoid circularity). What really matters for Lazar’s argument, it seems, ‘is that there be a clear distinction between the duty and the value of the relationship’ (2010: 257 fn.35), and that the duty (in this case the duty to protect and improve institutions) be ‘clearly distinct from the good of liberal citizenship – the realisation of justice’ (Lazar, 2010: 254).

However, even if this duty is not wholly constitutive of, and clearly distinguishable from, the value of the relationship, this alone cannot suffice to establish the ‘wider context’ of value required to generate associative duties as Lazar suggests it does, for the ‘wider context’ of value must still be one of intrinsic value. And in order to
establish the intrinsic value of citizenship it will not suffice to show that *this* duty to protect and improve institutions is not wholly constitutive; it must be the case that *no* duty is wholly constitutive of the value of citizenship. It is here then, that I believe Lazar’s argument runs into a problem. If his argument against associative duties of justice on the grounds that they are wholly constitutive of the value of citizenship is correct, then Lazar succeeds in demonstrating not only that duties of justice cannot be genuinely associative duties, but also that the relationship of citizenship *is not itself intrinsically valuable*, and since it is this self-same relationship that generates special duties to protect and improve institutions, they cannot, by definition, be associative.

The thought here is that if the performance of some particular duty is wholly constitutive of the value of the relationship that generates it, then it is obscure in what sense that relationship could be said to be intrinsically valuable. Or, put another way, if one cannot conceive of a world in which the performance of the particular duty in question would not be required but in which the valuable relationship said to generate it would nevertheless obtain, then to the extent that this reveals the duty to be wholly constitutive of the value of the relationship, it is unclear on what basis one could be said to have reason to value that relationship intrinsically. If this is right, and since on Lazar’s conception the relationship of liberal citizenship could never obtain without duties of justice, I think we must conclude not only that special duties of justice are not associative (*pro* Lazar), but that (*contra* Lazar) citizenship is not itself intrinsically valuable at all.

It may, however, seem that there is a flaw to this argument, and consideration of it bears on the second type of associative citizenship duties to which I now turn: the claim made by Mason and Moore (amongst others) that we have associative duties of special concern to protect and promote the interests of co-citizens (Mason, 1997: 429; Moore, 2009: 392). The apparent problem is this: if associative duties of special concern are wholly constitutive of the value of special relationships, such that it is indeed impossible to conceive of a world in which any special relationship could obtain absent a duty of special concern for the person(s) with whom you share it, not only must we conclude that citizenship relationships are not intrinsically valuable, but also that *no* special relationship is intrinsically valuable – not even your relationships to your friends, lovers and family members. This is not so however, for there is an
alternative conclusion we may draw. That is, if some purported duty to X is wholly constitutive of the value of the relationship, it may yet be that the relationship is intrinsically valuable, but the supposed duty to X in fact not a duty at all, and I think this is the right conclusion as regards the purported duty of special concern.

Admittedly, it may sound strange to say I am a friend of Tommy’s but I have no duty of special concern for him. However, something about that thought does not seem quite right to me. It would not of course make sense to say I am Tommy’s friend, but have no special or greater concern for him than I do for all persons generally; that simply could not be friendship. However, nor does it seem to me that ‘special concern’ is itself a duty, but rather a necessary feature of special relationships of the kind that are capable of generating associative duties. As such, I do not believe I have a duty of special concern for Tommy, nor he for me, but rather that the good of our friendship – the good that gives us reason to value it intrinsically – is constituted by the good of our modally robust special concern for each other, from which specific associative duties to do things for each other (duties we would not have duties to do in the absence of our friendship) arise, as and when they are instrumentally necessary to substantiate the good of modally robust special concern we enjoy, i.e. the good of our friendship. On this view then, to have a special concern for Tommy is for me to inhabit an evaluative disposition towards him, and although I must have reason for special concern, or reason to be so disposed towards him (i.e. because he is my friend) and as a result I will sometimes have special reasons of partiality and duties to actually do things for him that I otherwise would not, being so disposed cannot itself be a duty.

Thus, contra Mason and Moore, I reject the claim that we have associative duties of special concern to protect the needs and promote the interests of co-citizens, not because of anything to do with the particular instance of citizenship, but because there is simply no such thing as an associative duty of special concern – not towards citizens, friends, lovers, family members or, for that matter, anyone with whom you share an intrinsically valuable special relationship. Lazar and Seglow, it should be noted, also reject the claims that citizens have an ‘associative duty of favouritism’ (Lazar, 2010: 254) or an associative duty ‘to put each other’s interests ahead of non-citizens’ (Seglow, 2010: 68). They offer independent grounds for their claims, but if
what I have argued here is correct, they need not concern us, since the composite claim they seek to rebuff is in fact a straw man.

Despite rejecting the claim that we have an associative duty of special concern towards co-citizens, Seglow believes that since, like our more proximate special relationships, relationships of citizenship also foster ‘human flourishing it is natural to believe that associative duties can obtain in these relationships too’ (2010: 57); in particular, he posits associative citizenship duties to obey the laws which are created and maintained in our name (2013: 141). As regards the first observation, even if it is true that all intrinsically valuable relationships are constitutive of human flourishing, it does not of course follow that all human flourishing is constituted by intrinsically valuable relationships. Special relationships are undoubtedly one our most cherished sources of human flourishing, but they do not have the monopoly on it. To most people the enactment of their agency through the pursuit and realisation of their personal projects is a source of human flourishing, and indeed perhaps they intrinsically value their personal projects, but as I argued in Chapter IV, special reasons that are project-dependent cannot translate into duties at all (pp.82-87).

Seglow’s more specific claim about associative citizenship duties to obey the law seems to be this: whilst I have a duty to obey laws everywhere, being an Irish citizen, my duties to obey Irish laws are stronger compared to my duties to obey the laws of other polities because, as a putative co-author of them, my obedience of them signifies recognition of my co-citizens’ equal standing with me as co-authors and subjects of Irish law, thereby realising for them the good of democratic respect that only Irish citizens can realise for Irish citizens. Thus, when I disobey Irish law, I commit a special wrong that I do not when I disobey, for example, Australian law. This is because I fail ‘to honour the equal standing that citizens enjoy in a democratic society’ (Seglow, 2013: 142); I fail ‘to honour the dimension of democratic respect which highlights each person’s equal civic status with respect to the law’ (Seglow, 2013: 142); and I fail ‘to honour the other dimension of democratic respect as public recognition of each citizen’s equal standing as an ultimate lawmaker’ (Seglow, 2013: 142). In sum, by disobeying Irish laws, I signify that I count my interests as more important than those of my fellow citizens, and thereby fail to honour their democratic equality.
Seglow’s claim here has a certain intuitive plausibility, although again it does not appear to me to be the value of the relationship of citizenship itself that matters, but the fact that you have co-authored the laws (in which case the duty would be special, but not associative). In any case, there are other reasons for doubt. In the first place (and this is so whether the duties are special or genuinely associative), whilst my breaking a rule I have myself penned does seem like a special wrong – e.g. suppose I institute a ban on smoking in my share-house, but then smoke in the house whenever I feel like it – it is not obviously worse than my breaking the same rule that somebody else has penned in their house. There seems to be something quite distasteful and at least equally disrespectful about seeing myself as being outside the rules in both cases. Or consider two men whose disobedience of UK law arguably showed a flagrant disrespect for them (as if they did not apply to them); who seemingly did not regard the multitude of UK citizens to be in any sense their equals; and by dint of their violation of UK law showed a flagrant disrespect for the public equality of the UK citizens who co-authored them: Jimmy Saville and Rolf Harris. It would seem odd, I think, to say that any single instance of child molestation that Saville committed constituted a greater moral wrong than any single instance of child molestation that Harris committed, simply on the basis that Saville was a co-author of the laws he violated, whereas Harris was not.

Moreover, if I do have an associative duty not to disobey the laws of Ireland in virtue of my Irish citizenship, it seems that, in essence, this is a negative associative duty to refrain from breaking the laws which I have co-authored. And that may be so, for whilst negative associative duties tend to receive scant shrift in the literature, I am inclined to agree with Scheffler that it would be ‘a mistake to think of associative duties as exclusively positive in character’ (2001: 53). Thus, since my flouting the law would constitute a distinct species of disrespect towards my fellow Irish citizens that is only possible in virtue of our shared citizenship, it seems plausible to say the duty here is a negative one. However, if this is indeed what Seglow has in mind, it is not clear that such a finding would be particularly interesting in the broader scheme of the discourse. In general, negative duties are not zero-sum in the way that positive duties are, thus it is not obvious why my fulfilling my associative duty to refrain from breaking Irish laws would necessarily be incompossible with my fulfilling whatever
general duties I have (whether negative or positive). But then, if the associative duty never comes into conflict with general duties at all, much of the sting in the tail of the debate is lost anyway.

There is however an obvious response Seglow might offer here, which brings us to the final associative citizenship duty, and one that I suggested all of the authors considered here would endorse: the associative citizenship duty to participate fully in the collective self-determination of our common public lives and conditions of existence. Thus, Seglow might respond that the realisation of the good of democratic respect that citizens enjoy from one another will require not only that they observe the negative duty to refrain from breaking their laws, but also that they fulfil various positive duties derived thereof in order to sustain their legal system – amongst them a positive associative duty to participate fully in the collective determination of their legislation and shared conditions of existence.

As Margaret Moore writes: ‘If we think there is value in protecting a common life, and ensuring that the political community can be collectively self-determining over its conditions of existence, then we can also justify or explain associative duties to protect and promote the interests of the community’ (2009: 392). I have already argued that we do not have ‘associative duties to protect and promote the interests’ of our polities/co-citizens on the basis that duties of special concern do not exist generally, but as I interpret Moore’s argument, I think she means to say more than this. That is, given the pivotal importance she accords the value of collective self-determination in her argument, I take it that the associative duties to protect and promote the interests of the community she speaks of might be more broadly interpreted as associative duties to actively participate in the self-determination of our shared conditions of existence. Mason is more explicit in claiming that citizens have an associative duty ‘to participate in public life’ (1997: 429). The thought then might be that it is not just that I co-authored the laws by which me and my fellow citizens do justice to one another, but that participating in co-determining our collective conditions of existence is itself intrinsically valuable to me in a way that your participating in co-determining your collective conditions of existence with your co-citizens is not. So a civic republican of sorts might say that citizenship is intrinsically valuable because it is about more than simply doing justice to one another; it is about participating in the common public life,
and not just because doing so realises the goods of democratic respect, or moral equality and dignity, or justice, but because actively participating in the common life of one’s own community is simply a good in its own right.

For Moore then we should find justifying or explaining associative citizenship duties to participate in the collective self-determination of our polities eminently feasible ‘(i)f we think there is value in protecting a common life, and ensuring that the political community can be collectively self-determining over its conditions of existence’ (emphasis added) (Moore, 2009: 392). Yet, whilst the conditionality of Moore’s statement here is not intentional, it is, I think, telling when taken in tandem with her claim that being ‘collectively self-determining over the conditions of our existence…is intrinsically valuable’ (2009: 391). Taken together, the claim looks to be: if you intrinsically value participating in the protection of the common life you share with your co-citizens and ensuring your polity is collectively self-determining over your shared conditions of existence, then you will have associative duties to participate in your political community in ways that protect and promote the interests of your community/co-citizens.

The problem however is that even if this is correct, it brings the duty to participate under the subjective evaluative will of the duty-bearer; that is, a citizen who genuinely does not subjectively endorse the value of political participation as a good in its own right could not be said to have associative citizenship duties to participate in their political community so as to protect and promote the interests of their polity/co-citizens. Of course, the same could be said of a person who genuinely does not subjectively endorse the value of friendship as a good in its own right: they cannot be said to have associative duties of friendship. But then, a person who genuinely does not intrinsically value friendship cannot, I think, be a friend at all, or at least not a genuine one. And furthermore, you would imagine such a person would studiously avoid being friends with anyone. It may not be appealing to most of us, but we must respect the subjective will of anyone who chooses such a solitary course: if they genuinely don’t find any value in friendship, and as a result do not engage in friendships, no-one will want to say they have associative duties of friendship nonetheless. But are proponents of associative citizenship duties to participate in public life willing to say the same? Supposing it were not intrinsically valuable to me
to participate in the common political life of Ireland and the processes through which myself and other Irish citizens collectively determine our conditions of existence, and as a result do not engage with it/them on those terms, would they concede that I therefore have no associative citizenship duties at all?

Moore seems willing to accept this in the case of nationalism – that having associative duties to one’s nation/co-nationals will depend on whether or not one subjectively identifies with them (2009: 397) – so unless she denies that it is possible that subjectively an Irish citizen might not intrinsically value participating in the collective self-determination or common life of Ireland – a hermit living on the remote Aran Islands say – then the conclusion to her ‘collective self-determination argument’ must mirror that of her ‘well-being argument’: ‘if the persons feels X and thinks that there is value in the X culture and way of life, then he or she may have some [associative] duties of support toward that common life’ (emphasis added) (Moore, 2009: 397). On this account then, only those citizens who do in fact intrinsically value participating in the collective self-determination of their polity would have associative duties of citizenship, whilst those who do not will not.

If correct, this conclusion, though not as far-reaching as proponents of associative citizenship duties might have hoped, would nevertheless be a significant finding in its own right. Or at least it would be if we see no reason to think all citizenship duties must share a single ground, for if the preceding argument establishes one of those grounds, that would be a coup for anyone interested in developing a multi-grounds model of citizenship duties. But the conclusion is not correct. It cannot be the case that if I intrinsically value my Irish citizenship then I owe associative duties to Ireland/fellow Irish citizens; if not, then I do not (though I may still have non-associative special duties of citizenship). With regard to associative duties to co-nationals, Moore readily concedes that the ‘subjective element in the…argument is in some tension of how we think of obligations’ (2009: 397), but does not go so far as to deny they can be obligations at all. However, I think we must, for surely a definitive feature of a duty to do X is that whether to do/not do X must not be answerable to the subjective will of the duty-bearer. If citizens can, by acts of their subjective will, divest themselves of associative citizenship duties, then surely they are not duties at all. If this seems right, the conclusion is weaker still: if I intrinsically value my Irish
citizenship, then I may be permitted (but not required), to do things for the Ireland/Irish citizens that I would not necessarily do for say Australia/Australian citizens.

The temptation of course is to say that I would simply be mistaken not to value my Irish citizenship for without it there would many goods that I would not enjoy, but it is difficult to imagine how such an appeal could coexist with the claim that the citizenship duties I have (whether I like it or not) are grounded in the value of the relationship of citizenship itself, and not its extrinsic value derived from whatever further goods are alluded to. And in any case, I do value my Irish citizenship, just not intrinsically. Ultimately then, the claim that co-citizens have associative duties to participate in the collective self-determination of their common public lives fails for the same kind of reason arguments from co-nationality and patriotism do: that is, even if we did have reason to intrinsically value our relationships to the polities of which we are citizens/co-citizens, to say that it is our intrinsic valuation of them that generates associative citizenship duties is to bring citizenship duties under the subjective evaluative will of the duty-bearer in a way that ill-befits the notion that they are genuinely duties at all.

It will perhaps be countered that this problem, though real enough, is not unique with respect to the grounding of associative citizenship duties. It might seem, that is, that consistency would force us to conclude that for example, a deadbeat dad who does not intrinsically value his relationship to his daughter has no associative duties towards her. However, this is not so, because there is something quite different about our close personal special relationships to those we stand in to impersonal groups/communities. As I argued in chapter V, part of what explains why a special relationship that I share with someone and have reason to value intrinsically generates special reasons and duties for me, is the fact that I am the only person who can confer on them the rich good of my robust special concern. This is why we think the deadbeat dad has reason to conduct himself as a father appropriately should, because in his failure to do so, he deprives his daughter of the intrinsic good of a father-daughter relationship – the good of knowing that whatever happens, her father will be there for her no matter what; a good she certainly cannot enjoy so long as he is not even there for in the here and now. Thus, the fact that no other person in the world can realise this particular rich good of
paternal special concern for her, except *him*, explains not only why he has *reason* to intrinsically value their relationship, but also why it generates special reasons and associative duties for *him* in a way that it does not for anyone else, irrespective of the fact that he does not actually intrinsically value their relationship, or see himself as having such reasons/duties.

Perhaps one way to appeal to the deadbeat dad might be to say: you have reason to intrinsically value your relationship to your daughter because it is only through your relationship to her that you can enjoy the rich good of her modally robust filial concern; an intrinsically valuable good which is unavailable to you except through your particular relationship to your daughter. And perhaps the same could be said to the deadbeat citizen: you have reason to intrinsically value your relationship to your polity/co-citizens because it is only through your relationship to it/them that you can enjoy the good of participating in the common public life; an intrinsically valuable good which is unavailable to you except through that particular relationship. But if this were all, so long as both sincerely did not endorse the intrinsic value of modally robust filial concern or participating in the common public life respectively, then it would be difficult to see on what grounds we could charge them with special reasons or associative duties of partiality at all.

However, there looks to be a further move available to the cajoler of the deadbeat dad that is not so obviously available to the cajoler of the deadbeat citizen. That is to say to the deadbeat dad: you have reason to intrinsically value your relationship to your daughter because it is only through your relationship to her that *she* can enjoy the rich good of your robust paternal concern; an intrinsically valuable good which is unavailable to her except through your particular relationship to your daughter; a good which no-one else in the world can realise for her except you. Thus, whether you like it or not, you have special reasons and duties of partiality (and she legitimate moral claims to them) which you lack the unilateral authority to disregard, irrespective of whether you actually value your relationship to her or not. By contrast, it is more difficult to see how the deadbeat citizen’s associative citizenship duties could be enforced irrespective of the fact that he does not intrinsically value participating in the common public life of his polity on the grounds that his failure to fulfil special reasons and duties of partiality towards his co-citizens would deprive them of the intrinsic
good of participating in the common public life. Indeed even if 99% of the citizenry consisted of deadbeat citizens who found no intrinsic value in participating in common public affairs, it is not obvious that even then this good would be unavailable to the 1% who do intrinsically value political and civic participation. It might be thought that there would be much wrong with such a situation, but to say as much only assumes the conclusion I have sought to rebut: that were citizens to value their citizenship merely extrinsically (in response to both the ‘embodied extrinsic value’ of their citizenship – what they have put into, as well as its instrumental extrinsic value – what they get out of it), that something of deep irreducible value would be lost, irrespective of whatever further goods their citizenship realises for them/embodies.

It will be seen that this last argument depends on a claim that goes beyond the typical claim of proponents of ethical partiality. That is, I do not think that even the fact that I have reason to intrinsically value a special relationship sufficiently explains why one relationship – i.e. my friendship with Tommy (through which we enjoy the rich good of each other’s modally robust special concern, which in turn explains why we have reason to value it intrinsically) – generates special reasons and duties of partiality for me, whilst another relationship – e.g. your friendship with Agatha (through which you enjoy the good of each other’s modally robust special concern, which in turn explains why you have reason to value it intrinsically) – does not. On most accounts, the answer tends to be that intrinsically valuing my friendship just does generate reasons and duties for me in a way that your friendship does not. On the account developing here however, it is not that my friendship with Tommy just does generate reasons and duties for me, but that they are reasons and duties for me and no-one else, because only I can realise for Tommy the rich good of my – Robbie’s – modally robust special concern. And your friendship with Agatha does not generate reasons and duties for me in the way it does for her, because not I, nor anyone else, can realise for you the rich good of Agatha’s modally robust special concern – only she can. The upshot of rejecting the primitivist claim in favour of mine, however, is that it would perhaps render any relationship to a group/community incapable of generating associative duties. I think that is correct, and that we can only have associative duties in personal
But since this is not an argument anyone else makes, I will focus instead on the one that most do. Indeed, for the purposes of the final section, I will assume that all of the preceding arguments fail. That is, I will suppose that you do have reason to \textit{intrinsically} value your attachments to your countries/compatriots; that what you value is your \textit{relationships} to them, and not the fact that you identify with them as central constituents of your personal projects; and that failure to value them so is not sufficient to divest you of the associative duties that you have in virtue of being a participant in those relationships.

\textbf{Rejecting the Constitutive Claim}

With these concessions in place, on most models of associative political duties the day is won. This is because philosophers who have sought to establish such duties almost universally agree that it is a conceptual fact that intrinsically valuable special relationships entail associative duties. I refer to this as the Constitutive Claim. Just as it is said to be a conceptual fact that in virtue of our intrinsically valuable friendship, Tommy and I find ourselves with associative duties of friendship towards each other that we would not have had were we not friends, so too, in virtue of our intrinsically valuable relationships to our countries/compatriots, we simply find ourselves with associative duties towards it/them that we would not have had were we not compatriots. Essentially, the Constitutive Claim is the second premise of the generic \textquote{associative argument} (p.115) and states that \textquote{to be part of an intrinsically valuable relationship just is (amongst other things) to have associative duties towards those with whom you share it (these being partially constitutive of, and indeed justified by, the very value of those relationships)}.

There are particular problems the Constitutive Claim gives rise to that others have sought to dispel. For example, it would seem to suggest that even inherently unjust and morally despicable associations may generate associative moral duties providing their members intrinsically value their membership of them. Those troubled by this tend to either bite the bullet and accept the logical consequence, but say the associative duties the unjust associations generate will be subject to being outweighed by more

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39 This, incidentally, would evade the earlier charge that it would be unconscionably arbitrary to rule that our relationships to countries/compatriots are not intrinsically valuable/cannot generate associative duties whilst holding that other \textquote{imagined communities} including religious associations, professional associations, football supporter societies, local communities and extended families are/can.
general moral duties (Tamir, 1993: 102); or, they build in further conditions to the
effect that the association ‘should not inherently involve injustice’ (Miller, 2010: 383)
if it is to be capable of generating associative duties at all. In the context of this
debate, I think the ‘outweighing’ view is the more plausible, but will not argue for it
here. Instead I want to suggest that the context against which the debate is set is itself
wrong. That is, the Constitutive Claim, as a claim not just about associative political
duties but about special relationships and associative duties generally, is wrong. It is
not true that to intrinsically value a relationship just is to have associative duties to the
person(s) with whom you share it.

As suggested in Chapter IV (pp.77-82), there are good reasons to reject this widely
endorsed claim. As I argued there, it is not the fulfilment of associative duties that is
constitutive of the value of special relationships, but rather the disposition to fulfil
them as and when they are instrumentally necessary to substantiate the rich good of
modally robust special concern. And there are two considerations that favour this
interpretation. One is that you can often enjoy the good of knowing that someone will
be there for you even when, whether because of circumstance (e.g. you live on
opposite sides of the world) or because the relationship shared with them is
undemanding (e.g. friendship-lite), they are rarely required to fulfil anything like an
associative duty towards you. And the second is that, in the absence of the condition
of instrumental necessity, the apparent truth that not all special reasons of partiality are
associative duties tends to be unsatisfyingly explained away as a mysterious
conceptual fact: some special reasons just are associative duties.

Insofar as the authors considered here (if not all) are concerned to show that we have
associative duties, not just special reasons or permissions of partiality towards our
countries/compatriots, it must be that the duties they purport to establish would be
instrumentally necessary to substantiate the intrinsic good of those relationships
(whatever that may be). Yet, it seems doubtful that the sorts of duties that those
relationships are ordinarily thought to entail typically satisfy this condition. If I really
needed Tommy’s support on some occasion, but his support was not forthcoming
(absent any good reason why he couldn’t be there for me), I might well feel that he has
badly failed me in my time of need and I will likely feel that his inaction demonstrates
not just a lack of concern for me in the here and now, but more importantly that he
does not have the modally robust special concern for me that I thought he did; that I
don’t, after all, enjoy the good of his friendship that I thought I did. Though not
always clear-cut, it is I think, on occasions like this, when an action of some kind is
instrumentally necessary in order to substantiate the rich good of robust special
concern, that said action is properly an associative duty.

By contrast, it is not obvious that any particular duties citizens have will ordinarily be
instrumentally necessary to realise the intrinsic good of citizenship for their co-citizens
in the same way, be it the good of democratic respect, equal status, recognition, or
being collectively self-determining over the conditions of our shared existence. At
least, my failure to fulfil any particular duty of citizenship will not rob my fellow
citizens of the good of citizenship in anything like the same way Tommy’s failure to
fulfil his duty of friendship robs me of the good of our friendship. On this model,
associative citizenship duties would remain a live possibility (if counterfactually we
did intrinsically value our relationships to our countries/compatriots and not the
pivotal place of national or patriotic identity in the personal projects and self-
understanding of many compatriots; and if failure to value them so was not sufficient
to divest you of the associative duties that you have in virtue of being a participant in
those relationships). That is, were such a situation to arise in which an action of some
kind were truly instrumentally necessary to substantiate whatever the intrinsic good of
citizenship is, then that action would indeed be an associative citizenship duty.
However, it seems such duties would be so rarely triggered as to have negligible
practical import, and certainly the sorts of citizenship duties proponents of the
associative argument commonly profess to establish, would not satisfy the conditions
required of an associative duty on this model.

Conclusion

The claims of this chapter are both ambitious and modest. They are ambitious in that
if correct, they show we do not have duties to co-citizens, co-nationals or compatriots
in virtue of those shared relationships. They are modest in that firstly, they allow that
your being a citizen, co-national, and/or patriot may generate special reasons towards
your co-members that you lack towards non-members; and secondly, they allow that
you may have other kinds of non-associative special duties towards them. All I have
sought to establish is that if you do have some such duties, it is not because they are your co-citizens, co-nationals, or compatriots.

Yet, one niggling doubt remains. Consider the following scenario: Whilst holidaying in America I fall into the clutches of an evil mastermind who is bent on causing destruction on a vast scale. He has two nuclear missiles in position – one aimed at Ireland, and the other at Norway. He informs me that if I choose one and press the launch button that will fire the missile at that country, obliterating it from the face of the earth, then he will spare the other country. If I refuse, perhaps on some sort of acts and omissions logic, he informs me that he will obliterate both countries. In this situation, my intuition is that as an Irishman, I would indeed feel obligated to save Ireland and trigger the missile that would obliterate Norway. If then required to somehow justify my choice to save Ireland and not Norway, it seems that the response because “it is my country!” might well be justification in itself, such that any further justification could be said to require “one thought too many”. Ostensibly then, as regards the hypotheticals discussed in the first section of this chapter, “it is my country!” seems closer to “she is my wife!” in Williams’ argument than it is to “she is my compatriot!” in Primoratz’s.

As per the argument of the second section however, this need not imply that it is my relationship with Ireland/Irish compatriots that I intrinsically value. “It is my country!” may just as well be shorthand for ‘which of course is to say I intrinsically value my Irish identity as a defining part of who I am; asking me to obliterate Ireland would, in effect, be akin to asking me to obliterate part of myself. If this fully spelled-out version of the “It is my country!” claim is plausible, then the justification of my choice to save Ireland over Norway would look to be project-dependent rather than relationship-dependent. However, if this is so, I can at best be said to be morally permitted to save Ireland as project-dependent reasons of partiality cannot translate into (associative) duties of partiality. Indeed, it is this consideration that yielded the conclusion of section 2: forms of political membership that turn on subjective identification with nations/co-nationals or patriae/fellow patriots cannot generate duties at all. And ultimately, the argument for associative citizenship duties falls at the same fence, as I argued in section 3. That is, it seems that if I do not, in fact, intrinsically value my citizenship of Ireland/Irish co-citizens, then I cannot be said to
have an *associative* citizenship duty to save Ireland, despite being objectively speaking an Irish citizen.

And yet, I’m inclined to think I have not just a permission, but genuinely a duty to save Ireland in this situation. And if I do, it would intuitively seem like an *associative* duty of partiality. In the final section, I rejected the Constitutive Claim of the associative argument, but in replacing it opened a window to associative citizenship duties whereby I allowed for the possibility that under circumstances in which some act were instrumentally necessary to substantiate the good of citizenship, it could perhaps be a genuinely associative citizenship duty. The evil mastermind scenario undoubtedly satisfies the instrumental necessity condition. Moreover, it echoes a far less fantastical scenario in which the substantiation of the good of your relationship to your polity/co-citizens, nation/co-nationals, or *patria*/fellow patriots might well necessitate action on your part in the form of a duty: the duty to protect it/them from unjust aggression in times of war. And arguably, of all the duties we owe to our countries/compatriots, the one that looks more obviously associative rather than otherwise special, is the duty to protect or fight for one’s country when its very life and liberty is at stake. If these were to turn out to be associative duties however, the implications for my overall claim would be stark, for recall that opening the window to associative citizenship duties required not only that they satisfy the condition of instrumental necessity, but also that all of the preceding arguments failed. Is this then an example of a genuinely associative duty that I owe to my Irish compatriots *qua* compatriots?

There are, I think, at least two possible responses to this. The first would deny that this is really any different to the drowning compatriot case. That is, just as in that case, presuming I am morally required to save one given that I am in a position to do so – that it would be impermissible to step away and watch the evil mastermind obliterate both – we may say it is permissible for me to choose to execute my duty to save Ireland rather than Norway given the fact that Ireland is my country. But note that what this response depicts is not an associative duty at all but a general one. Thus, my duty to save Ireland on this account would be an instance of a general duty that is amplified by the fact that I subjectively identify as Irish; it would not, that is, be
generated by the morally valuable relationship I share with Ireland/Irish people itself, and would not therefore be genuinely associative.

Whilst the first response would support the claim that we do not in fact have associative duties to countries and compatriots, I think it does not sit quite right with our intuitions in this case. The second response by contrast would say that my duty to save Ireland genuinely is an associative duty and not merely permissible partiality, and I believe this response to be the right one. And the reason I do, is because I think the source of this associative duty is not my relationship to Ireland/Irish people per se (for that relationship is not intrinsically valuable), and nor is it my Irish identity (for projects cannot generate duties); rather, I think the duty arises out of the associative duties I have to protect my loved ones in Ireland. Indeed, as Lazar suggests, the same explanation may even go some way to explaining the intuition that we have an associative duty to protect our countries in the event of unjust aggression (2013: 30-33). They are duties we have, not as compatriots, but as fathers, mothers, sons, daughters, brothers, sisters, husbands, wives, uncles, aunts, nephews, nieces, lovers and friends, and they are duties that are operationalised through our authorising our armed forces to be the executors of them (Lazar, 2013: 32). This will perhaps be clearer if we imagine a more primitive time of smaller villages consisting of closely interlinked family and friendship networks. Were some evil warlord to abduct me and inform me that I must torch either my own village or some other village, or else he will torch both, then if we think I have a duty to choose to torch the other village so that mine will be spared, the justification for my opting to torch the other village surely derives from the associative duties I owe to my family and friends in my village to protect them from unjust harm.⁴⁰

⁴⁰Lazar develops an account of how the associative duties we have to protect our loved ones become institutionalised via transferral to our armed forces which we authorise as executors of them (2013: 30-33). I cannot give his argument the attention it deserves here, but the basic thought is clear enough. Supposing the evil warlord remains at large after my ordeal, at the next village meeting, we collectively decide that a number of the strongest and best warriors in the village should be made full-time guardians of the community so that all villagers will be better protected from harm, abduction, etc. These warriors are paid a small sum so as to relieve them of the need to leave the village on hunting expeditions and enable them to spend their days training and honing their fighting skills. However, creating this ‘army’ does not change the fact that their duty to protect the village is fundamentally derived from all our associative duties owed to protect our families and friends; it is just that through our assent to, and provision for, this institution on the basis that it will protect us more effectively, we – the villagers – authorise the army warriors to be the executors of our associative duties to protect our families and loved ones in the village.
So I think we may say that I have an associative duty to save Ireland in the evil mastermind scenario, and that the source of this duty is not my relationship to Ireland/Irish people, but that it rather derives from the special relationships I have to all manner of loved ones and friends in Ireland – that it is a duty to protect *them*, not a duty to protect compatriots *qua* compatriots. Would this mean that I would have no associative duty to save Ireland if all of my loved ones were evacuated first? I think not for it seems to me that I would still have a duty to save Ireland, and that the duty still fundamentally derives from my special relationships to my loved ones and not my compatriots *qua* compatriots. Whilst my evacuated loved ones may no longer be in physical harm themselves, the associative duties I have towards them even in normal circumstances ordinarily stretch to more than merely securing their bodily integrity. In this situation that is, I think my associative duties towards them extend to protecting the integrity of their homes, the integrity of their wider families and friendship networks, the integrity of their communities and indeed the integrity of their psychological selves which would surely be shattered irreparably were Ireland obliterated off the face of the earth.

More would need to be said to establish these rather controversial claims, but considered in their own right, these claims are not what should trouble us most about the evil mastermind scenario. What *should* perhaps, is what this associative duty I purportedly have in virtue of my special relationships to loved ones in Ireland requires me to do: after all, it requires me to kill some 5 million innocent strangers in Norway. Can this be? Can the associative duties I have towards family, friends, lovers, etc. ever really outweigh the general duties I owe to all persons everywhere to refrain from harming them, or perhaps even killing them? To answer this, we will need to assess the apparent tension between general and associative duties more broadly, and it is to this issue I turn in the next and final chapter.
Chapter VII
Is there a Genuine and Ineliminable Tension between General and Associative Duties?

Introduction
The conclusion of the last chapter brings us to what is arguably the bone of contention concerning ethical partiality: can associative duties ever justifiably trump the general duties we owe all persons everywhere simply in virtue of shared humanity? More specifically, the question that forms the focus of this final chapter is this: what should one do when faced with a choice between performing a general duty and an associative duty in situations of incompossibility, i.e. situations in which one cannot fulfil both?

When compossible, presumably there is no morally compelling excuse for not fulfilling both; when incompossible, a decision is required as to which duty prevails. I begin, in section one, as many who have pondered what we should do in situations of incompossibility have, by outlining Samuel Scheffler’s ‘distributive objection’ to associative duties. In doing so, I draw attention to a second dimension that operates alongside that of in/compossibility across which the choice between the associative duty and the general duty in question can either be content-symmetric or –asymmetric: that is, one can either perform a general duty to X or an associative duty to X; or a general duty to X or an associative duty to Y respectively. When the associative duty and general duty are incompossible and content-symmetric, there is again no controversy: the associative duty trumps the general duty, as the relationship acts as a tie-breaker, amplifying the duty to one’s associate. But what happens when the duties in question are incompossible and content-asymmetric? This then is where the crux of the controversy resides. In particular, what we really want to know is: in situations in which you can either perform a general duty to a stranger (generated by the equal moral value of persons), or a morally basic associative duty to an associate (generated by the value of the special relationship you share), but not both, can the latter ever justifiably take precedence over the former, even if your associate’s need is comparatively much less urgent than the stranger’s? The suggestion of this chapter is that, at least sometimes, the answer must be yes, for there is simply no compelling
strict priority rule available to us that could settle the issue across all scenarios. It is in precisely this sense, that I conclude the tension between general and associative duties to be indeed, genuine and ineliminable.

This chapter is split into two halves, the first focusing on the conceptual tension between associative and general duties, and the second on the practical implications of it. I begin the first half with some observations about Scheffler’s basic case as stated, before going on to mount the claim that in situations of incompossibility there is no set of priority rules that could determine whether content-asymmetric duties to associates and non-associates should take precedence over the other in all scenarios where both cannot be performed. I then go on to suggest however, that if this is in fact true, then the further conclusion of the distributive objection that Scheffler posits – that associative duties are unjustifiable insofar as they work to the detriment of the neediest (2001: 58, 63-64, 74, 92) – must be rejected. That is, I claim that at least sometimes, associative duties to attend to the comparatively less urgent needs of associates can trump general duties even on some minimal conception of what global justice requires (pro Scheffler), and that, at least sometimes, their doing so can be morally justified (contra Scheffler).

However, as I go on to argue in the second half of this chapter, whilst this tension between associative and general duties concerning priority is ineliminable, it is not as thoroughgoing we are often led to believe. Firstly, associative duties (as opposed to mere reasons of partiality) are less common than often assumed, so the occasions in which clashes with general duties will occur are far less common than critics of associative duties would have us believe, and the occasions when they genuinely do clash and the associative duty justifiably does override general duty less common still. Secondly, if the arguments of the last chapter are persuasive, and we do not have associative duties to countries/compatriots, although this does not dispel the tension between general and associative duties entirely, it nevertheless significantly dilutes it in various ways. Thirdly, once associative duties to compatriots are eliminated, the overwhelming focus on material resource distribution or transfer in the discourse, though arguably defensible regarding the dispensation of general positive duties to needy strangers, ill-captures anything but the most anaemic portrait of our remaining associative duties. Thus, whilst the tension between general and associative duties in
terms of priority is genuine and ineliminable, and whilst associative duties can in principle justifiably override even our basic general duties, the penchant for the affluent to excuse themselves from fulfilling general positive duties by appeal to associative duties is, by and large, morally unsustainable.

The Distributive Objection

In his most extensive discussion of what he terms the ‘distributive objection’ to associative duties, Scheffler (2001: 82-96) asks us to imagine three women, Alice, Beth and Carla, none of whom share any special relationship to each other. Given the absence of any such relationships we are to assume a distribution of general duties amongst them that is perfectly egalitarian in character (Scheffler, 2001: 83). However, Alice and Beth then become members of an In Group of which Carla is not, thereby acquiring associative duties towards each other that in relevant contexts would require them to do things for one another that they are not required to do for Carla. The relevant contexts are, Scheffler suggests, of two different kinds:

First, in the absence of their special responsibilities to each other, Alice and Beth might on occasion have done certain things for Carla despite their not having a duty to do so. Now, however, discharging their responsibilities to each other must take priority over providing any sort of optional assistance to Carla. Second, there may now be situations in which Alice and Beth may have to give their responsibilities to each other priority, not over the provision of optional assistance to Carla, but over their general responsibilities to her (Scheffler, 2001: 84).

Thus, by virtue of Alice and Beth becoming friends, the previously egalitarian distribution of duties now appears decidedly inegalitarian and unfavourable to Carla (Scheffler, 2001: 84). In particular, if Alice and Beth are already wealthier than Carla, the thought that as a result of entering a special relationship with each other morality now requires them to do more for each other than they do for Carla would appear to unjustly reinforce and exacerbate the prior inequality of resources. The claim of Scheffler’s distributive objection then, is that ‘this is unfair, and that associative duties cannot be justified when they work to the disadvantage of those already worse off’ (2001: 74).

What this reflects, Scheffler contends, is a genuine tension within liberal theory regarding the accommodation of two central values: the value of moral equality, and
the value of partiality: a tension which Scheffler perceives to be, not a flaw of liberal theory, but rather a virtue insofar as it encapsulates its sensitivity to these distinct values that really matter to us (Scheffler, 2001: 76). The point of the distributive objection then is to challenge us to find a better way of accommodating the value of partiality, expressed here in the idea that special relationships are an independent moral source of associative duties, and the value of moral equality – the idea that all people are of equal moral worth and that their needs and interests are of equal moral importance.

From the global justice perspective, it is not difficult to see the practical force of the distributive objection. Of the notion that associative duties provide a mandate for the affluent to turn their attention inward and to largely ignore global poverty and suffering, few will need convincing of its prevalence in the world as we know it. Many philosophers who discuss the distributive objection focus in particular on the purported tension between general duties and associative political duties, but if the arguments of the last chapter are correct, we do not, in fact, have associative duties towards our countries/compatriots at all. This goes some way to diluting the force of the distributive objection, but even restricted to the level of close personal relationships it is clear the objection obtains, for family, friends and lovers are often no less guilty of ignoring the cries of the neediest even as all the while lavishing each other with surplus goods under the cloak of partiality.

**Assessing Scheffler’s Basic Case**

In order to put some flesh on the bones of Scheffler’s basic case, let us suppose A was one of the many unfortunate young women in Ireland in the middle of the 20th century to have her new-born baby daughter B cruelly snatched away from her by the Catholic Church which then sold her new-born baby girl to an adoptive American family. And let us say then, that the point at which strangers A and B become members of an In Group, is that at which they eventually track one another down, reunite and begin to build a socially salient mother-daughter relationship some 40 years later: the point at which stranger A becomes Alice for stranger B; and stranger B becomes Beth for

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41 Scheffler speaks of the ‘value of loyalty’ (2001: 76) rather than partiality, but in this context they amount to roughly the same.
stranger A.\footnote{\textit{\textsuperscript{42}} It might be suggested they always have shared the special relationship of mother to daughter biologically speaking, but given their complete ignorance of anything about each other pre-union, for the purposes of depicting their duties to one another, it seems plausible to suppose that up until that time, their duties to one another as duties between strangers A and B were no different from their duties to all.} It is at this point then, that the previously egalitarian distribution of general duties between A, B, and C which held when they were all strangers to one another alters so as to become relatively inegalitarian. By virtue of their embarking on a mother-daughter relationship (beyond the merely biological relationship), Alice and Beth it seems are now likely to be prepared do much more for one another, than they are prepared to do for C, or indeed, D, E, F…etc.

In the first of Scheffler’s two relevant contexts, he suggests that stranger C is disadvantaged by Alice and Beth entering into a mother/daughter relationship with each other, because prior to their reunion and acquisition of associative duties towards each other, strangers A and B might on occasion have done things for stranger C despite not having a duty to do so (Scheffler, 2001: 84). However, even if Scheffler is right that Alice and Beth are now less likely to do supererogatory things for C when doing so is incompossible with their associative duties, if the benefits were ‘optional’ (2001: 84) or supererogatory in the first place, then it is hard to see how C can be said to suffer any kind of injustice (Lazar, 2009: 92-93; Miller, 2003: 116).

Tougher to deflect is Scheffler’s claim arising from the second relevant context: that there may be situations now in which Alice may have to give the duties she has towards Beth in virtue of their mother/daughter relationship priority, not over the provision of optional assistance to C, but over her general duties to C, when she cannot fulfil both (Scheffler, 2001: 84). As suggested, there are two ways we might interpret this: Alice’s duty to Beth might be content-symmetric with her duty to C, or it might not. On the first interpretation, if C does not have her general duty towards her performed when Alice must choose between fulfilling a content-symmetric duty to either her daughter Beth or stranger C, it again seems C can have no complaint of injustice (Miller, 2003: 116-117). For example, if Beth and C are drowning, and Alice can save one but not both, we tend to think that Alice ought to save her daughter Beth rather than C. C might well think herself tragically unlucky that the prospective rescuer happens to be the mother of the other drowning person and not a mutual
stranger (in which case she would have a 50% chance of being rescued rather than 0%), or even her husband (in which case she would have a 100% chance rather than 0%). But tragic as it may be, suffering a misfortune is not the same as suffering a misjustice.

However, one suspects the first interpretation of the second context as one in which C will now lose out to Beth whenever Alice must choose between fulfilling a content-symmetric incompossible duty to one or the other, falls somewhat short of the claim intended by Scheffler. It is with the second interpretation that the real controversy lies: that there will now be times when, in situations of genuine incomposibility, the duties that Alice has to her daughter Beth will take priority over not just her content-symmetric duties to C as in the drowning case, but also when her duties to Beth and C are content-asymmetric. More specifically, there may now be times when Beth’s less urgent interests may require Alice to perform an associative duty to her that precludes Alice from fulfilling even her basic general duties to stranger C (and indeed, strangers D, E, F…etc.), even though C’s need may be far greater than Beth’s.

With regards to the general duties we owe all persons, Scheffler writes that ‘the precise content of these general responsibilities is not very important’ (2001: 83) for the purposes of his argument, but in one sense it is, for the plausibility of the distributive objection depends in part on whether he has in mind a comparative or non-comparative conception of what global justice requires (Seglow, 2010: 62). If comparative, and general duties require that we give equal consideration to all persons, everywhere, all of the time, then the distributive objection would be conceptually insurmountable, as any acknowledgement of associative duties would immediately involve a narrowing of the general ones (Miller, 2003: 117). But if we assume that what Scheffler has in mind is a non-comparative conception of justice of some kind, such as a global difference principle, or a principle that limits our general duties to realise the basic needs and human rights people require to live minimally decent lives, then it might seem that the distributive objection loses much of its force (Abizadeh and Gilabert, 2008; Ashford, 2003: 108-109; Jeske, 1996: 300; Miller, 2003: 116; Pogge, 2002: 90-91; Seglow, 2010: 61). This is because, on a non-comparative conception, compossibility of associative duties and general duties becomes a live possibility. Of course, we would need to know more about what our general and associative duties actually require of
us, but supposing the former would not be excessively demanding, and the latter not unrestricted, it is plausible to think that many amongst the affluent could, if only appropriately disposed, dispense both.

This then is the first of two moves which taken together form a response to the distributive objection that is variously framed as the ‘Additional Duties Defence’ (Seglow, 2010: 65), or the ‘Blanket Priority Thesis’ (Lenard and Moore, 2009: 403). The basic claim is that if general duties are construed as duties to realise the basic needs and human rights of all rather than global equality, our fulfilment of them will oftentimes be compossible with our also attending to our additional associative duties. The second move by which the argument proceeds then, is to say that in situations of genuine incompossibility, the tension is merely apparent, since being additional to general duties, associative duties can never override them – general duties always take priority. This blanket priority thesis is what underwrites Thomas Pogge’s claim that understanding and conducting yourself as a citizen of the world does not preclude you from having special obligations to those with whom you share special relationships, for whilst ‘special relationships can increase what we owe our associates…they cannot decrease what we owe everyone else’ (2002: 90-91). Similarly, Diane Jeske writes: ‘I must continue to give Henry’s needs the same weight in deliberations as I would have given to those needs if I did not have special obligations to Emma’ (1996: 300). So it seems, although clashes may occur and trade-offs will sometimes be necessary, they pose no problem and are easily resolvable since general duties always trump their associative counterparts (Lazar, 2009: 90). If correct, the distributive objection is defeated.

**The Priority Question**

We need not query the first move of the blanket priority thesis. As I said from the start, in the event that one’s general duties and associative duties are compossible, it is in principle morally inexcusable not to perform both. What we might question, however, is the second move pertaining to situations of incompossibility, and the purportedly tension-dissolving claim that in such situations general duties always trump associative duties.
As already noted, the obverse priority claim is in fact more plausible in situations where incompossible duties are content-symmetric. This was the point of the drowning case: if Alice’s daughter Beth and stranger C are both drowning and she can only save one, in virtue of their mother/daughter relationship it seems all things considered justified for Alice to save Beth, and that C has no complaint when she does. It may be objected, however, that it is misrepresentative to depict this as a clash between an associative duty and a general duty, rather than simply between two general duties; that it is inconsistent with non-reductionism to call general duties amplified by the existence of a special relationship ‘associative’ duties at all. But whether one includes or excludes such duties from the category of associative duties is insignificant here. When content-symmetric and incompossible, whether Alice’s duty to Beth is labelled an associative duty or a general duty amplified by the existence of their relationship, the outcome is the same: in all such situations, Alice may justifiably give priority to her duty to her daughter Beth over her general duty to stranger C, and there is no distributive injustice to be objected to. Of course, this is only to reiterate what I have already said: if the distributive objection is to have legs at all, it must turn on clashes between general and associative duties that are not only incompossible, but also content-asymmetric.

The more perspicuous problem is that the claim that general duties always trump associative duties when trade-offs between content-asymmetric duties are necessary, is never really argued for but rather simply assumed. Yet, it is not clear why we should assume this. Presumably, the claim cannot be that general duties are morally prior, for to assert as much would be question-begging. Perhaps temporal priority is what is implied, but that seems questionable too. Admittedly, if, as just discussed, we do label Alice’s duty to save Beth from drowning rather than C as an ‘associative’ duty, amplified to that status in virtue of their mother/daughter relationship, then perhaps by definitional fiat, the general duty is temporally prior. After all, it might seem that the general duty has to pre-exist the associative duty if the latter is to be construed as an ‘amplification’ of the former at all. But as we have seen, even then, the conclusion is precisely the obverse of what proponents of the blanket priority thesis hope to establish. Thus, if the purpose is to establish blanket priority of general duties over associative ones, they must show that morally basic general duties are somehow temporally prior to morally basic associative duties.
In any case, as Lazar points out, the assumption of temporal priority of general duties is inherently problematic. On the one hand, it seems descriptively inaccurate, for some of our associative duties seem at least co-originary with our general duties, or at least to deny this would suggest a worrying conception of self as a universal atom at birth and appear unduly dismissive of the conviction that we are always and inextricably socially embedded within morally valuable relationships from the start. On the other (and more significant) hand, it is simply unclear why we should treat temporal priority as an indicator of moral priority at all (Lazar, 2009: 96). Alice and Beth’s general duties to strangers C (D, E, F…etc.) undoubtedly pre-date their reunion as mother and daughter, but it does not follow that the associative duties they come to owe one another are therefore secondary, morally speaking, to their general duties to strangers C, D, E, F…etc., at least not absent any argument why this should be so. What really matters is not whether Alice’s general duties precede her associative duties to Beth temporally, but whether the latter are all derivative of the former, and some at least are not, or so the non-reductionist claims. Not all of Alice’s parental duties to Beth will be amplifications of pre-existing general duties she owed her when they were strangers A and B; some at least will be morally basic associative duties – duties to do things for her that would not exist at all were it not for the relationship, since they derive from the value of the relationship itself, and not from the value of persons qua persons at all. Of course, nothing said proves that general duties are not morally prior to associative duties, but it is sufficient to show that proponents of the blanket priority thesis supply no persuasive reason to think that they are, and unless they can their argument remains incomplete as it rests on an unproven assumption.\(^{43}\)

Scheffler himself offers a two-pronged response to the blanket priority thesis, the first of which is to say that although it might successfully defuse the distributive objection, in doing so, ‘it would nevertheless grant the conclusion that objection seeks to

\(^{43}\) A thesis that accords blanket priority to morally basic associative duties over general duties would be unpersuasive for the same reasons the conventional one is. To simply claim moral priority begs the question, and the difficulties of establishing temporal priority, or indeed why it should even matter morally, are the same whatever the purported direction of priority. In any case, defenders of associative duties will resist any temptation to go so far in this opposite direction as to posit associative duties as the baseline and general duties as additional. Even if refutable, there is at least some intuitive appeal to the thought that general duties have blanket priority over associative duties; by contrast, there seems little, if anything, to recommend a view that says associative duties trump general duties across the board.
establish’ (Scheffler, 2001: 86). That is, even though it might eliminate the apparent tension between general duties and associative duties, it would be self-defeating to the extent that it concedes that when the affluent invoke associative duties in order to legitimate resistance to the claims of global justice, the associative duties invoked would be unjustifiable. On the second prong then, he goes further to say:

(A)lthough the [blanket priority] argument is not altogether without merit, it is ultimately untenable. We may grant that special responsibilities serve in part to increase one’s total share of responsibility. Yet at the same time, part of it is to have such responsibilities to one’s associates is to be required, within limits, to give their interest priority over the interests of non-associates, in cases in which the two conflict (Scheffler, 2001: 86-87).

This second prong of Scheffler’s distributive objection is further elaborated in his response to the blanket priority theses of Ashford and Miller. The tension, he argues, cannot ‘be simply defused by suggesting that the claims of justice constitute a set of minimum general obligations’ (Scheffler, 2003: 128), for most affluent people ‘do not seem to believe that they must give the fulfilment of global human rights priority over every less urgent need of their own children, or even that it would be morally acceptable for them to do so’ (Scheffler, 2003: 129). And surely that is true; it is by no means inconceivable that Alice might, on occasion, be required, within limits, to give the less urgent needs of her daughter Beth priority over the basic needs and interests of strangers C, D, E, F…etc. in case in which she cannot dispense her duties to both. At the very least, as Lenard and Moore note, even one single instance of this type would suffice to throw the blanket priority thesis into question (2009: 405).

The conclusion I think we must draw from the second prong of Scheffler’s response then, is this: the tension between general and associative duties is indeed a genuine and ineliminable one between two sets of morally basic duties, neither of which takes strict priority over the other across the board. However, I think we now see that there is also a genuine and ineliminable tension in Scheffler’s distributive objection as stated. It seems, that is, that he can either endorse the claim of the second prong – that associative duties can on occasion trump even minimal general duties (as he does); or, he can endorse the claim of the first prong – that although associative duties can on occasion trump even minimal general duties, whenever they do and their doing so works to the detriment of the neediest who do not even enjoy minimally decent lives, they are morally unjustifiable. But he cannot endorse both: if he endorses the latter
claim, then surely he must reject the former, for the claim that those associative duties would be unjustifiable presupposes the moral priority of general duties, and if he wants to hold fast to the former, it seems he must reject the latter, for if general duties do not enjoy blanket moral priority, then associative duties that trump them are not conceptually unjustifiable.

So we have seen that if Alice and Beth’s mother/daughter relationship makes them less likely than before to do supererogatory things for stranger C, C has no grounds for moral complaint. And we have also seen that if Alice is faced with a choice between fulfilling a duty to her daughter Beth and a content-symmetric duty to stranger C, in situations where she cannot do both she will be justified in fulfilling the duty to Beth, and C again has no grounds for complaint. But if what has just been said is right, in situations in which Alice can fulfil either an associative duty to Beth, or a general duty to C, but not both, C cannot even now have grounds for complaint against Alice if she breaches her minimal general duties to attend to some less urgent need of Beth’s, providing: Alice’s duty to Beth is genuinely associative; it is genuinely so demanding as to preclude her from fulfilling her minimal general duty to C; and, associative duties are sometimes capable of overriding general duties. To be sure, insofar as C’s basic human rights and interests are going unmet she would still have grounds for moral complaint against those who are not fulfilling their general duties to her, even though doing so would be eminently compossible with the fulfilment of their associative duties (i.e. the vast majority of people in affluent countries), but not, it would seem, against Alice.

In the end then if we think it is at least possible that Alice could be required to give some less urgent need of Beth’s priority over the much more urgent basic needs and human rights of stranger C (D, E, F…etc.), and that at least sometimes a failure of Alice to do so would be morally unacceptable, then really, the only obstacle to reconciling Alice’s ‘particularist responsibilities with the claims of global justice’ (Scheffler, 2003: 129) in instances where she genuinely cannot attend to both, is the presumption that the claims of global justice are lexically prior to her particularist responsibilities. As Lazar writes, ‘(t)he argument is tilted against associative duties, by its assumption that they must be consistent with our general duties’ (2009: 93).
Mitigating Factors

To many, the conclusion of the first half of this chapter, if correct, will not be very morally appealing, but the claim that on occasion duties to attend to the less urgent needs of our associates can be justified, even if performing them precludes us from fulfilling our duties to those who do not even enjoy minimally decent lives, should not be exaggerated.

In the first place, whilst some of our special reasons of partiality to those with whom we share special relationships are properly associative duties, not all of them are. In fact, my suspicion is that quite a lot of the time, none of them are. The account of associative duties favoured by Scheffler, Raz, Moore, and Kolodny (amongst others), says that to intrinsically value your relationship to someone just is (amongst other things) to have associative duties towards them (these being partially constitutive of, and indeed justified by, the very value of those relationships) absent which, the relationship simply could not obtain. In short, associative duties are part and parcel of the value of rewarding special relationships (1997: 194).

However, the move from saying you intrinsically value your relationship to someone, to the claim that you therefore bear associative duties towards them skips a beat. The intuition, which I share with Simon Keller (2013: 50-52), is that in fact many of the special relationships we enjoy are not deontically demanding, at least not all of the time. Indeed, even though I value them intrinsically, most of even my close friendships rarely require anything much that looks like a duty of me in the normal scheme of things. And in my thinner friendships – my friendship-lites – the fact they are not deontically demanding at all is precisely part of their appeal; it is what makes them uncomplicatedly enjoyable. It seems, quite simply, empirically false to say that all of the intrinsically valuable relationships we participate in and enjoy are internally dependent on the fulfilment of associative duties. That said, although associative duties are not themselves constitutive of the good of relationships, as I argued in Chapter IV, being modally disposed to fulfil them in situations in which doing so is instrumentally necessary to substantiate the value of the relationship is. And it is this condition that I believe is the beat skipped.
If this is right and much of the partiality we show towards our loved ones is explicable in terms of special reasons rather than associative duties, since special reasons are not by definition necessary to substantiate the good of those relationships there can be no question of their interfering with our general duties. Of course, when they are instrumentally necessary and thus properly associative duties, and where the performance of them is genuinely incompossible with the performance of general duties, then the tension may surface and a considered judgement specific to the circumstances may need to be made as to which ought to prevail. The point is merely that situations of this type are perhaps less common than often suggested.

A second mitigating factor pertains to what is arguably the predominant motivation behind the distributive objection: the thought that there is something terribly wrong with a world in which members of affluent societies invoke associative duties to their compatriots to legitimate resistance to the claims of distant strangers living in abject poverty who are denied even the most rudimentary of basic needs and human rights. Indeed, Scheffler himself supposes that the distributive objection perhaps applies with greatest force at the level of associative duties said to be owed to countries/compatriots (2001: 58). But if the arguments of the last chapter are persuasive, we have no such associative duties. There I argued that even if one does intrinsically value one’s country what one actually values is the role it plays in one’s identity-project and not one’s relationships to compatriots, and if it is a conceptual feature of duties is that they be independent of the subjective will of duty-bearers, then one cannot have duties towards compatriots qua compatriots at all. As such, associative duties of this type are objectionable not because of the injustice of their distributive effects, but simply because they cannot be justified at all. Of course, they are often invoked by members of affluent societies to legitimate neglect of general duties, but such appeals seem unfounded, and indeed repugnant, especially if, as the cosmopolitan is wont to say, where one happens to be born is morally arbitrary. By contrast, the claim that, on occasion, your loved ones needs and interests will be so demanding as to preclude temporarily, and sometimes perhaps permanently, your ability to attend to your positive general duties as well, does not seem so grating, even if you are relatively

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44 One may, as I noted then, still have non-associative special duties towards one’s compatriots that one lack towards non-compatriots, but on the surface at least, it seems less likely that special duties will be capable of overriding general duties on a non-comparative justice principle.
speaking much better-off. But then, this is hardly surprising, for although it is true that what family you are born into is as arbitrary as what country you are born into, whatever the controversy about the latter, there is nothing morally arbitrary about the former, or so the non-reductionist maintains. Taking associative duties to countries/compatriots off the table will not dispel the tension between general and associative duties entirely, but it does reveal what seems to me an insidious hi-jacking of it for self-serving purposes.

A further consequence of the last point is that with associative duties to countries/compatriots out of the picture, a narrow focus on resource distribution begins to look less and less perspicuous with respect to those associative duties that remain. Resource transfer may well be the most plausible and effective means available to us in terms of fulfilling our general positive duties of assistance, but whilst resource-transfer would be a significant feature of associative political duties (if they existed), the impact on one’s available pool of material resources that associative duties to transfer resources to friends, families, lovers, etc. tend to have, is not as thoroughgoing as one might imagine. In fact, Niko Kolodny suggests that if we limit our focus strictly to resource transfer, the assumption that associative duties prevent the realisation of global distributive justice is not generally true at all (2002: 250). Kolodny’s argument is not without its problems, but consideration of his arguments can serve to highlight how the tension between general and associative duties can be further mitigated.

In his paper ‘Do Associative Duties Matter?’ (2002), Kolodny puts forward a basic case in which A and B are associates, as are C and D, and we begin with a distribution of <8, 0, 0, 0> where A has 8 and the rest have none. Assuming a global duty to realise equality of resources, A should act so as to bring about <2, 2, 2, 2> if there were no associative duties in play. However, given that there are, and that Kolodny assumes associative duties to take full priority over general duties, from <8, 0, 0, 0>, A is duty-bound to bring about <4, 4, 0, 0> (assuming associative duties also require realising equality of resources). With 4 each A and B have fully realised their associative duties to each other, but the distribution cannot stay at <4, 4, 0, 0> because A and B each have a general duty to give C and D 2 each, and they cannot appeal to their associative duties towards each other to escape their general duties because they
are already fully realised at <4, 4, 0, 0>. And so, short of A and B invoking some sort of ‘personal prerogatives’ (Kolodny, 2002: 262) that would permit them to retain all or part of their resources even though this would prevent them fulfilling their general duties to C and D (in which case it is the personal prerogative and not associative duties that prevents distributive equality), the ultimate distribution must be <2, 2, 2, 2>. Thus, Kolodny concludes that, in the basic case at least, ‘(a)ll that associative duties accomplish is to exchange one initial distribution for another...The global duty still applies at the new distribution, and it still requires the same result, <2, 2, 2, 2>’ (2002: 251). His suggestion then, is that associative duties do not adversely affect the global distribution.

Kolodny’s basic case assumes a comparative conception of justice, but he believes the conclusion – that associative duties do not affect the distribution – follows even on a non-comparative conception. In the examples he uses to demonstrate this however, the duties are either compossible (and thus obviously cannot justifiably impede the realisation of non-comparative distributive justice) (Kolodny, 2002: 256-257); or incompossible, but content-symmetric:

If the initial distribution is <2, 0, 0, 0> and resources...come in indivisible units, then <0, 0, 1, 1>, <0, 1, 0, 1>, <0, 1, 1, 0>, <1, 0, 0, 1>, <1, 0, 1, 0>, and <1, 1, 0, 0> all satisfy leximin. If there are associative duties, then a is required to transfer one unit to b, making the distribution <1, 1, 0, 0>. Since <1, 1, 0, 0> already fully satisfies leximin, a and b have no global duties to alter the distribution...associative duties do not make the distribution worse according to the global principle or...cause fewer people to have the basic minimum or leximin to be unsatisfied (Kolodny, 2002: 257).

This makes the force of Kolodny’s argument somewhat difficult to judge. His only consideration of what looks like a clash between incompossible and content-asymmetric duties features in a footnote, and whilst he recognises it to be problematic, he perhaps underestimates how problematic it is. I adapt it here to our Alice, Beth, and stranger C case so as to highlight the problem more clearly, but without altering Kolodny basic contention. Suppose the initial distribution between strangers A, B, and C is <8, 0, 0>, the associative distributive principle is maximal welfare, and the global distributive principle a minimum of two units. In the absence of associative duties, A should bring about <4, 2, 2>. Once reunited as Alice and Beth however, the distribution Alice brings about will be <2, 6, 0>. From here, Beth fulfils her general
duty to C so as to bring about $<2, 4, 2>$. This is not the final distribution however, for Beth must now bring about $<4, 2, 2>$, then Alice must bring about $<2, 4, 2>$, and so on. Though distributively unstable, the result is nevertheless distributively just (Kolodny, 2002: fn11). However, this would appear strangely inconsistent with Kolodny’s concession to grant associative duties full sequential priority over general duties, for surely from $<2, 6, 0>$ Beth should bring about $<6, 2, 0>$, then Alice $<2, 6, 0>$, and so on. As such, it would seem the addition of associative duties to the mix does render global distributive justice impossible in this case.

Few, I take it, would endorse associative duties that require maximising welfare as a general distributive rule amongst associates, but it is not inconceivable that on occasion it may be required. Suppose Beth falls severely ill and requires expensive hospital treatment, and does not have health cover (as many Americans do not). Alice might well reduce herself to the global minimum, perhaps selling her house and giving all the proceeds along with her life-savings to Beth to help pay for her treatment, at which point she is precluded from fulfilling her general duty to C. Supposing Beth recovers, it would seem quite callous if when she starts to get back on her feet, the first thing she does is attend to her general duty to stranger C to raise her up to a minimally decent existence, if doing so is incompossible with transferring resources back to Alice to reinstate her, as far as possible, to a level of welfare not too far short of what she enjoyed before. This then seems to support the claim that, at least sometimes, attending to the less urgent needs of associates can justifiably trump general duties to the neediest.

For the most part, happily, associative duties do not require one to reduce oneself to a minimally decent existence. But a further point bears mention concerning Kolodny’s exclusive focus on the transfer of resources between associates, this being in his eyes ‘the kind of associative duty that one would expect to have the most immediate and significant impact on the distribution’ (2002: 250). That is, it seems that oftentimes,

$^{45}$ Although Kolodny’s endowing associative duties with sequential priority serves the point here, much as with temporal priority, there is no reason to suppose that sequential priority matters morally at all. Indeed, it seems that whatever about sequential ordering, the examples Kolodny cleverly develops in his paper in fact all ultimately assume the moral priority of general duties. To that extent, Kolodny’s argument looks like just another blanket priority thesis, and thus the claim that associative duties do not adversely affect global distributive justice rings hollow in much the same way as those of the blanket priority thesis do.
associative duties do not require transfers of resources, or at least not in the sense that terminally diminishes one’s overall pool of material resources, and there are three points that lend support to this claim.

Firstly, in many instances the parties to a special relationship are both associative duty-bearers; as such, when you lend a friend money, you usually suppose you will get it back at some point. Of course, your friend might not repay you, in which case your resource-pool will indeed be depleted, but presuming they have no good excuse for not doing so, it is not your performance of your associative duty to them that depletes your resources, but rather their non-compliance with theirs. No doubt some associative duties do require resource transfers that deplete material resources – in particular those we owe to dependent intimates – and these will often be substantially demanding in that respect. But few, I think, would deny that it is justifiable (within reason) to direct some portion of one’s material resources towards realising the well-being of one’s children, one’s aged parents, or one’s infirm or impoverished spouse or friends where the return of one’s resources does not amount to non-compliance on their part, perhaps even when doing so would leave you with insufficient resources to perform your general positive duties of assistance towards the neediest. The question remains of course of what ought to be the limits of partiality regarding how much of one’s material resources it is justifiable to allocate to dependent intimates, but then, almost all difficult moral question require careful weighing of competing moral claims. The fact that such difficulties remain is neither surprising, nor a reason for rejecting the moral force of associative duties.

Secondly, often what associative duties require is not transfer of resources at all, but expenditure of them. Kolodny’s compossibilist account suggests that it is the exercise of personal prerogatives to retain resources that exacerbates distributive justice, and not associative duties at all, for ‘if prerogatives are exercised, equality will not be achieved whether or not there are associative duties, and if prerogatives are not exercised, then equality will be achieved whether or not there are associative duties’ (original emphasis) (Kolodny, 2002: 263). However, some expenditure of one’s resources is surely an inevitable feature of many of one’s associative duties to friends, family, lovers, etc. For example, if occasionally visiting and staying in continual contact with my parents is an associative duty, my spending money on flights and
phone calls, etc. seems a precondition of my associative duty to them, even if this depletes my resources to the point that I am unable to perform my general duties as a result. The fulfilment of associative duties is, one suspects, scarcely an entirely cost-free exercise.

Moreover, assuming it is justifiable to spend X amount of resources on oneself\(^\text{46}\) in the absence of special relationship, it is not clear that the addition of special relationships into the mix will ordinarily require spending more than X amount of resources (again assuming it bears the hallmark of reciprocity special relationships to non-dependents usually do). Imagine that A has no friends, but nevertheless enjoys going out to his local restaurant alone and enjoying a nice meal every Friday night. Now imagine an individual B who is rather more sociable and is part of a group of 4 friends who get together for dinner every Friday night. A buys himself dinner and drinks at a cost of $40. B contributes $40 for his share of the bill, safe in the assurance that each of his three friends will also contribute their share. The amount of money A and B spend is the same; the fact that B has special relationships and A does not, makes no difference regarding their respective expenditure of resources. The point then is that generally speaking partaking in special relationships to non-dependent intimates will not necessarily alter the resource-pool at your disposal to perform your general duties that you would have had in the absence of those relationships (assuming expenditure of one’s resources on oneself to be justifiable within limits).

Of course, B may have many friends, but for most people the time they have for socialising with friends and family is finite, so we need not assume that if B has twenty close friends she will dine out twenty times more a week than friendless A. In any

\(^{46}\) Whilst disproportionate expenditure of resources on one’s dependent children for example is likely to be regarded as entirely appropriate (within limits), disproportionate expenditure of resources on oneself, even when such expenditure is essential to what one regards as a good and worthwhile life, is likely to meet with greater moral censure. Certainly it would seem problematic to posit the prioritising of one’s own interests as a ‘duty’, such that the failure to accord might be deemed a moral wrong. However, one must surely be entitled to have special concern for one’s own well-being, needs and interests, for ‘to be a person, to have a sense of identity and personal integrity, implies the possession of plans, projects and desires which have a special status in your scale of values precisely because they are yours’ (original emphasis) (Cottingham, 1983: 87) and these rarely come for free. As Diane Jeske suggests, whilst the idea of having duties of partiality to oneself seems somehow awkward, it nonetheless seems plausible that individuals have various kinds of agent-relative reasons that are fundamental, and that one of these is to take special care of oneself (2014: §7). Indeed, some degree of self-directed partiality is arguably not only defensible, but in fact an essential pillar of any conceivable moral system (Cottingham, 1986: 365).
case, if B does dine out twenty times a week, and cancels her subscription to Oxfam to keep up her hectic social life, that would scarcely be justifiable. To accord excessive weight to one’s own satisfactions regardless of the consequences for others is straightforwardly selfish, but self-directed partiality (or resource-equivalent partiality towards friends) need not amount to selfishness. Moreover, it is unlikely that B’s taking up each and every dinner invite will be instrumentally necessary to substantiate the good of her friendships, and thus her attendance will not, for the most part, amount to associative duties capable of overriding her general duties anyway. In the general mill of things, being unable to keep your social life in check will scarcely suffice as an excuse for reneging on general duties. And just as we would not think it justifiable for loner A to renege on his general duties so that he may dine out 20 times a week, the same I think must be said of B. The fact that she eats with friends rather than alone does not fundamentally alter anything.

One final, and perhaps obvious point, is that associative duties to loved ones are not solely or even primarily cashed out in terms of material resources at all. Indeed money, whether transferred or spent, is surely the poorest indicator of love there is. And although I have suggested that associative duties may not be as costly in terms of material resources as many critics would have it, they can be, and commonly are, extremely demanding in terms of time, effort and emotional outlay, which may impact the time, inclination and capacity one has to address oneself to global injustices. If this was the beef of the distributive objection it might indeed be insurmountable. However, it is almost always wealth distribution that is at the crux of such objections, and whilst the resource distribution focus ill-captures anything but the most anaemic portrait of what our associative duties by and large consist in, it is arguably much more plausible with respect to the dispensation of general positive duties. In reality perhaps, global justice is unlikely to be achieved by mere resource transfer from rich to poor alone, but a more just system of global resource distribution might nonetheless be a first step in the right direction. At least, convincing people of the need to redistribute their material resources more justly would look to hold more promise as a way to tackle some of the world’s problems than trying to convince them of the need to reallocate their time and emotional resources.
In sum, to the extent that the resource-focused distributive objection is premised on the assumption that associative duties ineluctably deplete the monetary resources people have, the casualty of which will be general duties to non-associates in dire need, we have further reason to suppose clashes between general and associative duties to be less common than assumed. The suggestion has been that the existence of associative duties between non-dependent intimates will not ordinarily alter the resources at one’s disposal. If this is right, then perhaps the only real source of tension is that between general duties and associative duties to dependent intimates (as regards specifically material resources), but a genuine tension it is nonetheless. And when these clash, as reality tells us they sometimes will (contra Kolodny), at least sometimes the associative duty will trump the general duty (contra the blanket priority thesis).

**Conclusion**

In one respect, there is really only so much we can conclude about the force of the distributive objection as regards what justice requires of us globally in the absence of a fuller account of just what that is precisely. That is, it would be useful to know what the precise content of our general duties is so as to better evaluate where our associative duties sit in relation to them (Ashford, 2003: 109). To construct such an account, however, is beyond the remit of this thesis. Certainly, the arguments of this chapter will not appease anyone believes that global justice requires a comparative egalitarian distribution, but since on that conception all associative duties entailing resource-distribution would be conceptually unjustifiable immediately, I think we have good reason to be suspicious of any such conception of global justice. My belief is that a viable account of global distributive justice will have to be non-comparative, the primary objective of which should be to establish a set of baseline obligations on the parts of individuals to human beings everywhere, and one that can be institutionally delivered. In the world as it is, it is not the needier who require our immediate concern, but the neediest who fall below even the most minimal baseline standards of living.

However, if the arguments of this chapter are plausible, even some non-comparative minimum baseline requirement of global justice would still be susceptible to defeat by associative duties in certain circumstances. Thus, I am at least in agreement with Scheffler that ‘(t)his tension cannot...be defused simply by suggesting that the claims
of justice constitute a set of minimum general obligations’ (2003: 128). To some extent however, my agreement with Scheffler ends there, for if we accept that the tension between general and associative duties is indeed genuine, it seems difficult to reconcile this with his further claim that ‘it is unfair if special responsibilities work to the detriment of people who already have less, whether or not their already having less is also unfair’ (2001: 92). If, as Scheffler suggests, it is this claim that is ‘(t)he central point…according to the distributive objection’ (2001: 92), the die, it seems, is already loaded. Indeed, if the limits are drawn such so that any associative duty that precludes fulfilling a minimal general duty is rendered thereby ‘unfair’, then Scheffler’s argument is really just another blanket priority thesis of sorts. Defenders of associative duties can simply deny that it will always be necessarily unjust or unfair for associative duties to trump general ones, however regrettable or unfortunate their doing so may be. And the reason they can, I think, is because we have two independent sources of moral duties that come with no set of priority rules such that could determine which duties should always take precedence over the others across the board (Horton, 2008: 4). This being so, sometimes at least the associative duty will win out, and win out justifiably.

Just how demanding an associative duty must be to legitimately require one to attend to it to the preclusion of one’s general duties is likely something that cannot be settled in abstraction, but even if only the very weightiest of associative duties can trump general duties, the conclusion would stand nonetheless. That said however, for many of us who live relatively affluent lives, attending to our associative duties, despite our protestations to the contrary, would not I think (if only we were honest with ourselves) preclude us from attending to our general duties as well. It is, if anything then, this self-deception that deserves moral approbation, not the decision to attend to associative duties when doing so is genuinely incompossible with the fulfilment of general duties.

As should be abundantly clear then, I do not believe associative duties always trump general duties; my aim has been only to show that we have no good reason to believe general duties always trump associative duties. And, in the spirit of that conclusion, nor do I think we can say anything very worthwhile about associative duties of partiality without locating them amidst general and/or impartial moral considerations. If that is what non-reductionism about partiality requires, as some critics would seem
to imply, then a non-reductionist I am not. I believe that some of our associative duties are morally basic, but not that their being so by any means insulates them from paring at the plane of impartial morality. But this need not mean they are fundamentally explicable or reducible to general moral considerations. Whilst the point of this chapter, and indeed this thesis, has been to highlight that at least sometimes, general moral considerations will be pared back by partial considerations, the objective was never to deny the sense in which they stand in a relation of bilateral constraint. Indeed, what kind of moral framework is it that denies that associative duties and general duties can evolve in a collaborative rather than strictly adversarial relationship with bilateral modification rather than unilateral constraint as the normative ideal? To endorse unilateral constraint so as to curtly resolve the tension once and for all would seem to require either denying the deep moral value of our relationships and the partial treatment partaking in them sometimes requires, or denying the deep moral value persons possess and the impartial treatment that respect of that value demands. Neither is plausible, but more than this, neither is especially appealing, whichever side of the fence you find yourself on. Theoretical wrangling aside, in the end, what separates impartialists and partialists, at least with respect to resource distribution in the name of justice, will likely be a whole lot less than the conceptual antipathy would suggest. One need not, I think, be a card-carrying cosmopolitan to find the practice of buying one’s 17 year old a brand new car for passing their exams excessive; and nor need one be a devout partialist to find the ‘telescopic misanthropy’ of a Mrs Jellyby objectionable.
Conclusion

A Summary of the Arguments

At the top of this thesis, I posited a number of driving questions that, in one way or another, I have sought to address as the various chapters have unfolded. The questions that set up the first chapter were: How are we to understand the relationship between partiality, impartiality and morality? And must what is permissible, appropriate or obligatory by way of partiality always and everywhere reduce to impartial justification on the basis of general moral considerations and principles?

As an entry point into the discourse to which these questions pertain I tried to tease out what is at stake in the debate by contrasting the position of William Godwin with his now well-worn query: ‘What magic is there in the pronoun “my”, that should justify us in overturning the decisions of impartial truth?’ (1985: 169-170), with that of Bernard Williams in which any justification beyond the “my” was said to be ‘one thought too many’ (1981: 18). Introducing the debate in this way in turn motivated discussion of the point at which impartialists and partialists fundamentally diverge with respect to the justification of reasons and duties of partiality, in particular shedding light on the common distinction employed in the literature between reductionism and non-reductionism. With that distinction in place, I then went on to suggest a number of reasons to think we ought to reject the sort of reductionism about partiality that impartialists espouse, for on reflection, not only is strict adherence to principles of impartial morality implausibly demanding, at least in terms of practical reasoning, but also it would seem, psychologically impossible, and perhaps even undesirable. However, whilst in light of these problems impartiality as a guide to how we ought to act in our special relationships is difficult to sustain, as I stressed in the last section of that chapter, the non-reductionist need not outright deny the integral role impartial principles derived from the equal moral worth of persons play in shaping our moral frameworks. All that the non-reductionist does deny – and I believe rightly so – is that the equal moral value of persons is the *only* source of moral reasons and duties. The relationships we share with our loved ones are also immensely morally valuable to us on almost any conception of what constitutes a good life; to deny their value and the reasons and duties that this gives rise to is not, as I concluded there, something any plausible moral framework should aspire to.
Having introduced the discourse and made space for the possibility of morally basic reasons and duties of partiality, in Chapter II I went on to ponder possible responses to the question: what is the source of the special reasons and duties of partiality we have to our nearest and dearest? Following Simon Keller’s lead, I outlined three candidate responses to this question as well as briefly introducing the main objections to each of them. On one view – the Relationships View – it is argued that the sources of our special reasons of partiality are the intrinsically valuable relationships we share with our loved ones. On another – what Keller terms the Individuals View – it is said that the source of reasons of special concern in special relationships is not the relationships themselves, but rather the self-standing special value of the individuals party to them. Others still make the case for what is termed the Projects View, whereby the source of our special reasons of partiality is deemed to be the personal projects which define us and the role our special relationships and those we share them with play in our projects and identity-constitutive commitments. I then went on in the second half of Chapter II to introduce some crucial distinctions in value and valuing on the conviction that conceptual clarity with respect to them would prove critical on the one hand for bringing out something of the formal structure of the concept of partiality; and on the other, to help us better understand what valuing relationships and the persons with whom we share them involves.

With the three main accounts of ethical partiality and this typology of distinctions in value and valuing in place, I then took a step back in Chapter III to ponder the next of the questions I set out with: just what is partiality anyway? In many ways, the main goal of the first half of this chapter was to strip down the formal concept of partiality into its component parts only to put it back together, in the hope that by doing so we might come to a better understanding of how the concept operates as a whole. In my attempt to do just that, I posited what I believe to be three essential features of partiality in any of its myriad forms. The first is that partiality necessarily involves special concern; the second, that where there is special concern, there must be reason for it (which I suggested might be usefully distinguished from the reasons of partiality it generates); and thirdly, that these reasons must always reference something extrinsic to the object of special concern.
I then went on to suggest that, even if the Individuals View is phenomenologically truer to our motivations in acting well within special relationships than the other two views, there is little in that observation that would imply that an object of partiality and the source of reasons for partiality towards it need be numerically identical. More than this indeed, I argued that in fact this cannot be the case, at least not if we are convinced by the claim that to have a special concern for X is to value X extrinsically. To reiterate that claim, when I say that I extrinsically value my mum (in addition to intrinsically valuing her), what I am saying is that although she is the proper object of my special concern, she herself cannot be the source of my reasons for special concern for her (she herself would be a source of reasons for my being generally concerned for her of course, but it is the source of reasons for special, not general concern that I set out to unearth). And, moreover, I contended that this claim is not entirely barren of phenomenological appeal of its own insofar as it offers a potential explanation of what it means to say I have reason to be partial towards my mum because I value her more than I do other persons. As I noted in the last part of this chapter then, if this account of the formal concept of partiality is compelling, I think it leaves us with little choice but to jettison the Individuals View given its central claim that the source of special reasons and duties of partiality you have to someone with whom you share a special relationship is the individual since, after all, a person cannot be extrinsic to themselves.

Having clarified the conceptual underpinnings of partiality in the hope that a more fine-grained analysis may provide us with a more comprehensive understanding of this phenomenon that has long intrigued and divided moral philosophers, I went on in Chapter IV to ask ‘what are the specials?’ Or, somewhat less cryptically: what is it about the relationships and reasons relevant to the discourse of ethical partiality that marks them out as ‘special’? To begin with, I ruled out three types of relationships that might hold between individuals which, though special in some sense, are not special in the sense relevant to the discussion here. The first to be discarded were special relationships that do not generate reasons at all beyond what we have towards persons generally; the second, special relationships that are capable of generating reasons, but not reasons of partiality; and the third, special relationships capable of generating reasons of partiality, but not ‘special’ reasons of partiality.
Seeing that this brief excursus around relationships that are not special led us in something of a circle, I went on then to explore what it means precisely for a reason of partiality to be ‘special’. In doing so, the suggestion that emerged was that it is perhaps not straightforwardly something about the quality of my relationship that decides the normative status of my reasons at all, but rather the quality of my reasons that indicates whether or not the relationship is ‘special’. Thus, the explanation of why my friendship with Tommy for example generates special reasons for me and not you say, has nothing much to do with the magic in the pronoun ‘my’ where what is referenced is ‘my’ relationship with him, but is rather to do with the magic in the pronoun ‘mine’ where what is referenced are those reasons that are subject nonuniversalizably ‘mine’ in virtue of their corresponding with the rich good of my modally robust special concern Tommy enjoys. Having fleshed out the notion of subject nonuniversalizable reasons, in the next section I explained how they translate into associative duties of partiality under conditions in which the performance of the thin good of actualist partiality specific to the circumstances is not just conducive to the realisation of the rich good of robust special concern, but instrumentally necessary to substantiate it. As I noted in the last section of this chapter however, if the translation of special reasons into duties of partiality must be a live possibility in all relevant special relationships (and I think it must, however likely or unlikely the actual translation may be), this would look to be distinctively problematic for the Projects View insofar as project-dependent reasons seem incapable of translating into duties at all.

If the problems posed for the Individuals View and Projects View over the course of Chapters III and IV are as obstinate as they appear, then the only viable candidate account of the ethics of partiality we have is the Relationships View, or so it seems to me. This being so, I set out in the fifth chapter to suggest that a philosophical treatment of the question posed by Carole King, ‘Will you still love me tomorrow?’ might provide us with a foundation from which to revise the Relationships View. In particular, I sought to incorporate the requirement of robustness in relationships as depicted by Philip Pettit into the story of how we value them with a view to finding more satisfying answers to the following questions: why do we intrinsically value our relationships in the first place? Secondly, how do such relationships generate special reasons and duties of partiality? And thirdly, how might we distinguish those
variations across which robustness of special reasons and duties of partiality is required from those across which it is not?

The pivotal argument of the revised Relationships View as constructed out of the responses to these questions can be recapitulated thus: Certain of our special relationships are intrinsically valuable to us because common to such relationships is the generic rich good of modally robust special concern. Our enjoyment of this rich good of robust special concern requires not only that we enjoy the thin good of partiality in the actual world whereby we do things for, to and with one another beyond what we otherwise would in the absence of our relationship, but also that we are disposed to provide each other with this thin good of partiality across a range of possible worlds in which things might be quite different. However, before we can intrinsically value our relationship for the rich good of special concern – before we can realise the good of knowing we can rely on each other for the thin good of partiality in other possible worlds – we must first enjoy from each other the thin good of partiality in the actual world. In this sense, intrinsically valuing our special relationship is conditional on its possessing extrinsic value, for until such time as we enjoy the thin good of actual partial treatment (one of the properties of relationships that makes them extrinsically valuable) we cannot enjoy the rich good of special concern (the property of relationships that gives us reason to value them intrinsically).

Essentially then it is this rich good of modally robust special concern that explains why we have reason to value our relationships intrinsically, and since we cannot enjoy the rich good of special concern unless we provide each other with the thin good of actualist partiality (thus vesting our relationships with extrinsic value), this also explains how relationships generate special reasons. And finally, since intrinsically valuing a relationship for the rich good of robust special concern is conditional on its possessing extrinsic value, robustness of special reasons and duties could never be required across variations which would render a relationship one of net extrinsic disvalue. Having fully articulated the proposed revision of the Relationships View, I then went on in the final section to show how it is better able to withstand some of the more prominent objections and problems levelled against this view, thus establishing it, I believe, to be not only the most plausible account of the source of reasons and
duties of partiality, but also the most plausible account of the ethics of partiality in general.

Up until this point in the thesis, the focus was exclusively on close special relationships between individuals. However, whilst the existence of obligations to one’s family, friends and loved ones is rarely flatly denied even by those of an impartialist persuasion, as the circle of those to whom associative duties are said to be owed expands to include community, polity, patria, natio, etc. so too does the degree of controversy, which is variously captured and reproduced across an array of prominent dualisms within political and moral philosophy, including that of liberalism vs. communitarianism, nationalism vs. cosmopolitanism, particularism vs. universalism, and partialism vs. impartialism. The question driving this, the sixth chapter then was: Can co-membership of large impersonal associations like polities, nations, and/or patriae also give rise to genuinely associative duties?

In response, I argued that we do not have associative duties of this ilk, since in the first place we do not **intrinsically** value our relationships to our countries/compatriots broadly conceived; and in the second, even if we do intrinsically value national or patriotic attachments, what we value is not our **relationships** to them, but rather the central role of them in our identities construed in terms of personal projects which (as argued in Chapter IV) are incapable of generating **duties**. I then went on to reject the claim that we have associative duties to our polities/co-citizens. In doing so, I suggested that the main problem for any such claim is that even allowing for the sake of argument that we can **intrinsically** value our **relationships** to our polities/co-citizens, the special reasons we would have as a result, being hostage to the subjective evaluative will of citizens who bear/reject them, could not be associative duties. In the final section then I went on to conclude that even if all the preceding arguments could be defeated – if, that is, we did **intrinsically** value our **relationships** to our countries/compatriots, and we could not, by acts of our subjective evaluative will, divest ourselves of the duties thereby generated – the occasions when the further condition of instrumental necessity required to trigger associative **duties** would obtain would be so limited as to strip the argument of any practical import.
In the final chapter then I turned to explore the question of whether there is a genuine tension between general and associative duties, and if there is, what the implications of it are *vis-à-vis* distributive justice. To what extent, if any, might I be allowed to favour the interests and needs of my nearest and dearest, despite the fact there are strangers in the world whose need is much direr than theirs? The first part of this chapter focused on the conceptual tension between associative and general duties, and the second on the more practical aspects of it. I began by outlining Samuel Scheffler’s ‘distributive objection’ to associative duties, before going on to mount the claim that in situations of incompossibility there is no set of priority rules such that could determine whether content-asymmetric duties to associates and non-associates should take precedence over the other in all scenarios where both cannot be performed. I further suggested however that if this is so, then the sub-conclusion of the distributive objection Scheffler posits – that associative duties are unjustifiable insofar as they work to the detriment of the neediest (2001: 58, 63-64, 74, 92) – must be rejected. That is, at least sometimes associative duties to attend to the comparatively less urgent needs of associates can trump general duties even on some minimal conception of what global justice requires, and on occasion their doing so can be morally justified.

However, as I went on to argue in the second half, whilst this tension between associative and general duties concerning priority is indeed ineliminable, it is not as thoroughgoing as we are often led to believe. Firstly, associative *duties* (as opposed to special *reasons*) are less common than often assumed, so the occasions in which clashes with general duties will occur at all are far less common than critics of associative duties would have us believe, and the occasions when they genuinely *do* clash and the associative duty justifiably *does* override a general duty less common still. Secondly, if the arguments of the previous chapter were persuasive and we do not have associative duties to countries/compatriots, the effect of this would be to significantly dilute the tension between general and associative duties (although stopping short of dispelling it entirely). Thirdly, once associative duties to compatriots are erased from the scene, the overwhelming focus on material resource distribution or transfer in the literature, though perhaps defensible regarding the dispensation of general positive duties to needy strangers, ill-captures anything but the most anaemic portrait of our outstanding associative duties.
What I hoped to demonstrate then is that associative duties properly understood on the basis of this explication do not straightforwardly undermine our capacity to attend to our general duties, or at least not to the extent that is often assumed in the literature. The obvious corollary of that objective then is to encourage debate about what – if not our commitment to associative duties – is at the root of the current situation marked by the endemic failure of the vast majority of us to attend to, or perhaps even recognise, the general duties each owes to all. The overall conclusion of this final chapter, however, is that the tension is nevertheless genuine, so even if individuals’ minimum general duties could be identified and meted out fairly, there would, I suspect, still be times when associative duties might legitimately override them. However, it may be that only associative duties to dependent intimates are capable of this, that these are much fewer than usually assumed (though still more or less demanding), and that it is relatively self-evident when the limit past which associate partialism should not override general universal duties has been reached.

**Final Thoughts**

Going right back to the very beginning of this thesis, I opened with a passage from Plato’s *Euthyphro*, in which Socrates greets with some surprise Euthyphro’s revelation that he is prosecuting his own father for the murder of a murderous servant. As we saw there, in the face of Socrates incredulity Euthyphro was unequivocal in espousing that piety, or perhaps morality or justice, ought to be utterly indifferent as to whether the agent implicated is one with whom you share some special relationship or a complete stranger. And yet, as I suggested then and still believe now, at least sometimes it seems to me that who the agent is and the quality of the relationship which you share with them is very much relevant to the question of what is the right thing to do morally speaking. But still, surely Euthyphro was right to prosecute his father for we would hardly want to countenance the possibility that partiality could ever licence the cover up of murder, would we?

Around 3:30am on the morning of August the 31st 2000 18 year-old Brian Murphy was beaten and kicked to death outside a nightclub in Dublin at the end of a night out with friends. Nothing so remarkable about that you might think; the sad truth is that reports like this adorn our papers with such frequency now that they scarcely warrant more
than a few column inches. This story however, not only made the front pages of every Irish newspaper at the time; it captured the attention of the entire nation of Ireland and would hold it enthralled for months to come. What sparked the massive media and popular interest in this particular case was that the central protagonists did not fit the popular preconception of the class of persons usually involved in these sorts of incidents. They were not from rough areas of the city, or downtrodden and broken families, nor were they poorly educated or involved in the Dublin underworld of drugs and gangs. No, the young men implicated in this tale of woe came from backgrounds of prestigious private rugby playing colleges, having grown up in the well-to-do South Dublin suburbs of Clonskeagh, Foxrock, Dalkey and Donnybrook. Their families were, in the best sense, non-remarkable – proud, loving and supportive of them. None of them had ever been in any kind of trouble with the law before, and each to a one were described by friends and family to be as affable, kind and caring as anyone you are likely to meet. They had their whole live ahead of them and their futures seemed bright.

There was nothing unusual about the night itself, and, it seems, nothing premeditated about the altercation between Murphy’s group of friends and the group comprising the accused. The nightclub the young men had been at outside which the incident itself took place was Club Anabel’s in the Burlington Hotel – one of Dublin’s plushest hotels located in the leafy south-Dublin suburb of Ballsbridge. They had all reportedly been drinking, and whilst the details remain unclear, there is a suggestion that the fight broke out as a result of inter-school rugby taunting. The fracas was apparently remarkable for its brutality and ferocity; ‘not a normal fight’ as witnesses described it, but rather a ‘short, intensive attack’. Witnesses claim to have saw Murphy pushed to the ground, kicked in the head amidst a group of young men, and with that, Murphy’s life was gone from him. As one Irish newspaper headline put it, it was ‘30 seconds of madness that led to Brian Murphy’s death’.

The protagonists in this story seemed, in many ways, not unlike me. That the victim was not unlike me was not insignificant; there is something in the thought “it could have been me” that stirs emotions like no other, but it was not the fact that the victim did not fit the usual profile that explained the media hysteria surrounding the Brian Murphy murder; after all, bad things happen to good people all the time. What marked
this case apart from others was that the *accused* were not unlike me; the young men that beat and kicked Murphy to death were not monsters – they were just a group of care-free young men on a night out with bright prospects which looked to be snuffed out in a flash by the briefest of moments of insanity. If anything, it was *this* sense in which “it could have been me” that I think captured the popular imagination at the time. Certainly it was not beyond the realms of possibility that I could find myself in an altercation like that, and nor was it unimaginable that were I forced to fend for myself or a friend that I might land a freak but lethal blow. One stupid stray blow would be all it would take and my life, as I knew it, would be effectively over.

At the time of this incident as a young man living in Dublin, I found myself questioning the reach of ethical partiality before I had even the slightest conception of what ‘ethical partiality’ is. What if it had happened to me? What if it were my best friend that struck the unintended fatal blow in my defence, and me the only witness? What then? What would I do? What *should* I do? There is an old joke often recounted in the discourse of ethical partiality that goes something like this: a best friend is someone who, when you show up at their door in the middle of the night carrying a dead body, says nothing, grabs their shovel and follows you. For the most part, philosophers take it as given that friendship – even that between best friends – does not require or even permit this, and as we have seen, Euthyphro leaves us in no doubt about what ought to be done in cases such as these. There can be no question of lying so as to provide cover for someone who has killed another, be they your murderer-murdering father, your heavy-handed defensive friend, or your body-toting best mate. The point of course is that to behave in these ways would be morally unacceptable regardless of whether you shared a relationship with the killer at all. To invoke one last time William Godwin’s memorable query: ‘What magic is there in the pronoun “my”, that should justify us in overturning the decisions of impartial truth?’ (1985: 169-170). The fact that it happens to be *my* father who kills the murderer, or *my* best friend that delivers the untimely fatal blow in my defence is, from a moral point of view, utterly irrelevant.

Except, even still, I am not altogether convinced it is. I would not want to say, even in cases like these complicated by the apparent lack of murderous intent, that one could ever be morally required to lie to cover for your friend that ‘accidentally’ kills
someone while defending you, nor that doing so could ever be deemed morally appropriate or even permissible. Yet I cannot help wondering whether, if it were a feasible option, maybe – just maybe – you could perhaps morally recuse yourself of what, in the absence of your friendship, would surely be an obligation to see the killer brought to justice. There is, I think, more to be said about this notion of ‘moral recusement’, but exploration of whether it can be developed into a coherent moral concept and, if it can, what it might look like, will have to await another time I am afraid. For now, I will just register it as a thought for tomorrow.

With that (what feels rather like a) sheepish confession of sorts out of the way, there is one final confession I would make. I have always struggled to situate myself with any degree of certainty when queried as to which school of normative ethics I align myself with, although not for a lack of trying. Part of what originally motivated my Masters and in turn my PhD was a desire to find where I fit in the pantheon of ethical paradigms because I could never find a label that quite fit. I still have not. But I think I am a little closer now. At least, I think if the claims of this thesis could be said to cleave to one ethical framework more closely than it does to any other, the framework in question would be that of ‘virtue ethics’.

I have refrained from couching this thesis about ethical partiality in terms of virtues given the likely discord over the extent to which partiality in special relationships is virtuous at all, but there is a sense in which the rich good of robust special concern we enjoy in our special relationships is, and I think must be, the product of virtue. In order to make sense of this, consider the following claim by Pettit:

> Standard views of virtues…suggest that they may…make people more likely to do good and they may enable people to recognise the good that they may do…But on the line emerging here, virtues…may…serve a distinct function, which is ontological rather than practical or epistemological. They may enable the creation of goods – robustly demanding goods – that are otherwise unavailable. It is only in the presence of virtue that you can enjoy the friendship or honesty or justice of others (Pettit, 2012: 10).

The point we should take from Pettit’s insight is that enjoyment of the rich good of special concern in special relationships requires not only that the thin good of partiality be robustly provided, but crucially that this robust provision comes about as a result of
the parties being appropriately disposed to provide it, and not just for any old contingent reason (Pettit, 2015).

This marks a kind of dispositional robustness required within special relationships that is evident not just with respect to special concern and partiality but also with respect to a range of goods that we treasure in our relationships, including honesty, fidelity, loyalty and trustworthiness amongst others (Pettit, 2011). Consider for example the rich good of fidelity monogamous lovers enjoy. Suppose I have always been faithful to my partner Molly in the actual world where being so has been easy – say no other woman has ever taken the slightest interest in me, but I admit that in the event that were one to someday proposition me, I would jump at the chance. I doubt we would want to say I am faithful at all, irrespective of the fact that I have never actually been unfaithful; at the very least, we would not say I possess the virtue of fidelity, for to do so is surely to be disposed to be faithful to Molly not just in this world, but also in others where the temptation and option to stray presents itself.

But the point runs deeper still, for supposing that for whatever reason there were no possible worlds in which any other women take an interest in me, and as a result I am faithful to Molly not just in this world, but all possible worlds. Even then she could not enjoy the rich good of my fidelity, again, despite the fact that I have never actually been unfaithful and never will be. Thus the rich good of fidelity Molly enjoys is solely the product of my being virtuously disposed to be faithful to her and utterly unrealisable by any other means, and the same is true of the rich good of robust special concern around which I have based my argument for ethical partiality. If you provide me with the thin good of partial treatment in this world, that world, or indeed all possible worlds, but only as a result of some sort of ‘cosmic accident’ (Pettit, 2015), that will not suffice for me to enjoy the good of your special concern. Not only do I need to enjoy the robust provision of your partiality; I need to know that the reason I do is because you are appropriately disposed to provide it for me, and that, it seems to me, is of a piece with being virtuous.

All stories, and I suppose theses, end somewhere. But nobody professes to be able to say with any precision where that somewhere is, for no two theses, or no two stories, are ever the same. What your thesis requires and what your thesis seeks to realise is
likely very different to mine in almost every respect. But the fact that every story ends somewhere is not quite the same thing as saying that there is somewhere where all stories end. And something similar I think is true of the relationships we share with our loved ones. I cannot tell you anything much at all about what, in the end, your relationships to your mum, your dad, your children, your friend Jane, or your husband Tom require or where they will take you; I barely know the specifics of what my own relationships to my mum, my dad, my sister, my niece, my nephew, my friend Tommy or my partner Molly require. Yet I think I know now with quiet assurance that there is, so to speak, somewhere that all of my relationships end up, and that is with the good of knowing that, whether you are my mum, my dad, my sister, my brother, my friend or my lover, you would still love me tomorrow even if my hair were to turn black, brown or carrot, or my singing were to become less tuneful, or I were to turn 64. That is what I know about my relationships, and I believe it to be true of all such relationships – yours included. If you are still not convinced, then I suppose the day is lost and my thesis has failed. Still, better to have loved and lost than to have never loved at all as they say.
Bibliography


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